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Women, Politics and the Media:
The 1999 New Zealand General Election

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of PhD in Communication & Journalism
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ABSTRACT

New Zealand's shift to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system of government contained a two-fold promise for women. Explicitly, there was the prospect of increased electoral diversity, meaning more women in Parliament, and implicitly, there was a promise of better political reporting and therefore qualitatively better coverage of women. The country's second proportional representation election campaign, in 1999, appeared to deliver on these promises. The 1999 General Election was historically significant because it featured two women - incumbent Jenny Shipley and Labour leader Helen Clark - contesting the role of Prime Minister. Female politicians also featured in important electorate races, and made the headlines during New Zealand First's gender-based list controversy. According to one media commentator, women determined the outcome, dominated the news and changed the nature of the campaign (Harris, 2000).

However, popular opinion that women influenced the character of the campaign, and especially that they dominated the campaign, is in contrast to empirical research, from around the world, which has consistently suggested women politicians receive less news coverage, are "framed" or packaged in stereotypically feminine ways, and ultimately disadvantaged by traditional news coverage (e.g. Bathla, 1998; Braden, 1996; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Herzog, 1998; Norris, 1997c; van Acker, 1999). Therefore, the main aim of this study was to explore, using a combination of corroborative methodologies, how and why the news media covered female politicians during the 1999 election campaign. Three methodologies (content analysis, qualitative interviews, and a case study), and a framing typology, were employed.

Content and frame analysis showed that female politicians were used as news subjects to a comparable, if not better, extent than men but were marginalised as political news sources. In other words, there was a tendency for women to be talked about, rather than talked to. This reflects dominant news structures and, in some cases, the women's own approach to self-promotion. It was also revealed that female politicians were subjected to more polarised media coverage, influenced by status, incumbency and context, and again, partly a result of their own positioning. There were significant differences in media coverage of men and women, but framing of political news did little to advance

women's perspectives, suggesting election campaigns that ostensibly feature women are not necessarily of a different nature.

Overall, these results suggest a blurring of the traditional "public/private" dichotomy, as an outcome of changes in the media (such as the contemporary trends toward personalisation and "celebrification") and women's campaigning. Gender remains a factor in the presentation and interpretation of political women, by the news media (which, for example, portrayed the female leaders as Xena princesses) and by the women themselves (for example, Shipley portrayed herself as a mother figure).

To some extent, there appears to have been a maturing of political journalism about women but it is too soon to tell if the shift to MMP has resulted in any significant long-term change for female politicians. However, this unique study, in examining the media-politics-gender nexus in the 1999 General Election campaign, focuses attention on the two-fold promise of MMP for women, and explores the extent to which the new political system and the media have begun to deliver.

On a practical level, the thesis concludes that it is important to encourage female politicians to work within, and use the current system to their advantage. However, it also urges researchers to take a critical approach to exploring the systemic socialisation and pervasive news structures, processes and values that contribute to women's ongoing political marginalisation. Finally, the thesis considers the wider implications for women, the news media, and the electoral system.

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Chapter One

Scope of the Research

1.1 Introduction

The radical change in New Zealand's political system, from First Past the Post (FPP) to Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), contained a two-fold promise for women. Explicitly, there was the promise of greater electoral diversity, and consequently more women in Parliament. Implicitly, there was also the promise of better political journalism, with qualitatively better reporting of women, inherent in the challenge of proportional representation. This thesis considers the extent to which the new political system has delivered on this promise, and examines the gender-media-politics nexus in the context of New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign.

In 1997, when Jenny Shipley mounted a coup against National Party leader Jim Bolger and became New Zealand's first woman Prime Minister, the stage was set for a unique election campaign. Almost two years later, in November 1999, women led the two main parties into the country's second MMP-style election campaign. The small but electorally significant Green Party also had a female co-leader. Overall, a total of 318 election candidates (32.9%) were women. After the campaign, one commentator wrote that women shaped the outcome of the election, dominated and changed the nature of the campaign (Harris, 2000). The 1999 General Election therefore offered an exciting opportunity to explore media coverage of women politicians, from party leaders to candidates. In New Zealand, there has been little systematic, empirical attention paid to media coverage of women politicians or "gender politics". Further, the 1999 General Election campaign, featuring two women leaders, is of international interest because of its rarity.

The intersection of media representation and political representation has implications for the political process. Ross (1995) asked how the press is implicated in "compromised democracy", which sees women remain virtually invisible in Britain's political institutions. In a similar vein, McFadden (1998) claimed that democracy and media are categorised by three common elements: exclusion, privilege and maleness. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) wrote that the two central aspects of "representation" are speaking for others politically, and mediated representation through

word and image. They argued that recent feminist theory has explored the former, but that a “notable lacuna” (p.105) exists in analysis of the gendered nature of mediated politics.

1.2 Gender, News and Politics

In the 1970s, feminist researchers came to recognise the social importance of the media and turned their attention to news coverage of women. Media representations became a site of political struggle, as it was noted that women were under-represented and negatively portrayed in news coverage. Tuchman (1978a) used the term “symbolic annihilation” to describe the media’s treatment of women, characterised by omission, trivialisation and condemnation. By the late 1990s, media representations had - to some extent - “caught up” with social change in women’s lives, and a European Commission study concluded that crude stereotyping, of the type documented in the 1970s and 1980s, had become less prevalent (Gallagher, 2001). Around this time, there was a research shift towards more nuanced analysis, particularly frame analysis (e.g. Norris, 1997c; Ross, 1995) and discourse analysis (e.g. Motion, 1997), and the intersection of gender, news and politics emerged as a research area in its own right. Much of the work in this field has come from the United States (e.g. Kahn, 1992 and 1994; Norris, 1997c; Norris & Carroll, 1997; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998; Smith, 1997) and to a lesser extent Britain (e.g. Ross, 1995; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996), but important work has also emerged from Australia (e.g. Haines, 1992; van Acker, 1999), and the Middle East (Herzog, 1998; Lemish & Barzel, 2000; Lemish & Tidhar, 1999).

Throughout the 1990s, Kahn (1992; 1994; with Goldenberg, 1991; with Gordon, 1997) used content analysis as well as surveys and experiments to examine the media strategies and coverage of female political candidates. Her early results led her to conclude that inequitable media coverage should be investigated as a possible barrier to women’s electoral success (Kahn, 1992). The results of a similar but more recent content analysis suggest that the situation is improving, to the point that some parity exists although exceptions to the rule have tended to be at the expense of women (Smith, 1997). By the late 1990s, frame analysis was showing that women politicians and leaders are positioned in “gendered” ways (e.g. Norris, 1997c) and that women are framed in relation to the “private sphere” (e.g. Herzog, 1998; Lemish & Tidhar, 1999). Further, British researchers turned their attention to understanding how female MPs

view media coverage, its perceived impact and what strategies they have for dealing with reporters (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996).

1.3 Research Strategy and Choice of Methods

This research aims to explore media coverage of women politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign through the use of a combination of three inter-related methodologies as well as a framing typology. The election campaign is an important site of media and political research, and the 1999 General Election was particularly valuable because it featured two women leading the main political parties. This is a rare occurrence internationally, and a first for New Zealand. Further, the campaign was also partially dominated by issues of “gender politics”, as the rankings in the New Zealand First party list resulted in accusations of sexism and a “women trouble” theme for leader Winston Peters.

In introducing their text on media research methods, Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold (1998) wrote that:

good research usually benefits from the use of a combination of methods...researchers should not only consider which is the most appropriate method for study of their chosen topic or problem but also what *combination* of research methods will produce a better and deeper understanding of it. (p.1, italics in original)

This research fulfils this requirement by employing a combination of relevant research methods. The three inter-related methodologies used in the study are content analysis, interviews and a case study. Content analysis provides quantitative data about the coverage of male and female politicians, particularly in relation to their use as news subjects and news sources, as well as tone of coverage. The content analysis also yields qualitative data about the use of gendered language and references to politicians’ physical appearance. In addition, a framing typology is also employed, based partially on the content analysis, particularly its identification of the New Zealand First list as an important campaign event which was responsible for much of the coverage in which non-leader women politicians became a central focus. The other application of frame analysis considers coverage of the women leaders in relation to an established political news frame (the strategy or “game” frame). The second methodology, in-depth interviews with women MPs, permits a deeper understanding of the relationship

between women politicians and the media, and allows the research to address possible reasons and potential solutions for women's under-representation as political news sources. Third, the case study draws on a combination of content and document analysis, and interviews, to further explore the relationship between one woman MP - Marian Hobbs - and the news media, during an electorate campaign. The case study also extends to examine the media coverage Hobbs received after the election, when she became a Cabinet Minister.

This mixture of corroboratory methodologies allows a valuable analysis of the 1999 campaign and its wider implications. It is a unique perspective that builds on a tradition in the field of combining content-based analysis with other methodologies such as surveys, interviews and experiments (e.g. Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Kahn & Gordon, 1997; McGregor, 1996; Motion, 1997; Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994). In part, it also builds on existing frame analysis rather than merely identifying new and context-specific news frames in the coverage of women politicians. By combining a traditional approach to the study of women in news (i.e. content analysis) with the more nuanced analysis of framing, and seeking women politicians' views and perspectives, the study makes an important contribution to the international work on women, politics and the media, while establishing a framework for further New Zealand-based research.

1.4 Research Questions

The overall question guiding this research asks how and why the news media covered women politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign. The methodologies concentrate on six related research questions which indicate how the thesis will unfold:

1. How did newspapers cover female politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign?
2. How did the press frame the gender-based New Zealand First list controversy? Why?
3. How did the strategy or "game" frame manifest itself in coverage of the women leaders?
4. How do women MPs perceive the media coverage they receive? What influences their perception?

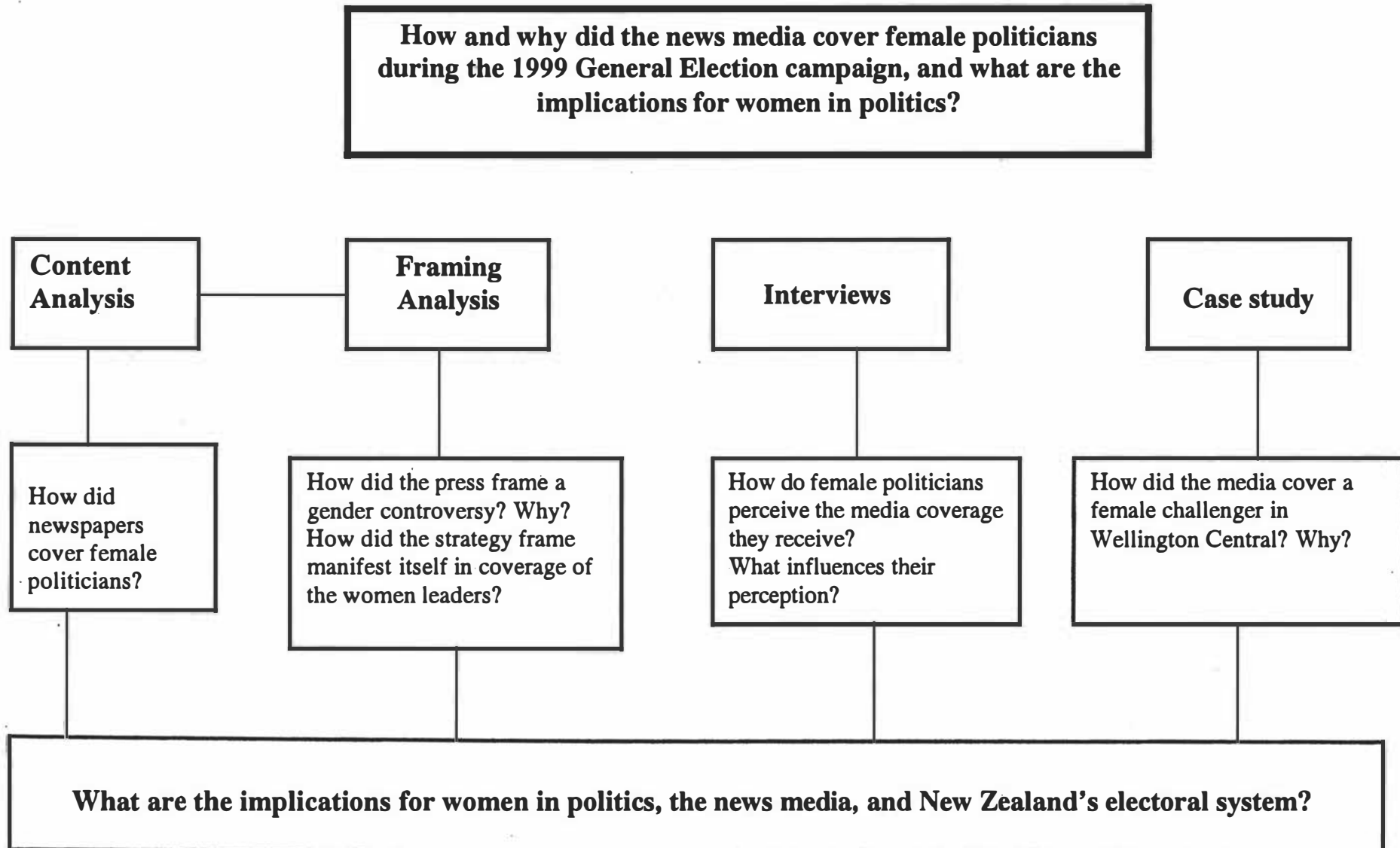
5. How did the media cover a female challenger in the bellwether Wellington Central electorate? Why?
6. What are the implications for women in politics, the news media, and New Zealand's electoral system?

Figure One indicates how the methodologies and framing typology relate to the research questions. The quantitative and qualitative content analysis answers the question about media coverage of women politicians generally. The quantitative content analysis also informs the selection of the New Zealand First list controversy for frame analysis. The frame analysis of the leaders draws on existing theory about the "game frame", and shows how coverage of Shipley and Clark employed these themes and brought about a new aspect of gendered framing, relating to motherhood. The interview material is used to address the question of how women perceive both the media coverage they receive, and their relationship with news reporters. The case study, which also draws on interviews, looks more closely at the relationship between a female politician and the news media, and shows the impact of a change of circumstance - from a candidate contesting an electorate seat, to a Cabinet Minister. All three methodologies, the framing typology as well as the theoretical perspective, are drawn on to answer the sixth and final question, relating to the implications for women politicians, the news media, and the electoral system.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

When researchers reveal patterns of inequitable coverage and criticise the news media's performance in relation to women, they do so guided by a belief that there are certain social standards and expectations of the media, which they are demonstrably failing to meet. It is an often unspoken assumption of research in this area that the media can and should be held to standards of equity, diversity and professionalism. These expectations derive from the dominant normative theory guiding mainstream Western media organisations and reporters, that of social responsibility (Baran & Davis, 1995; Altschull, 1995). One of the key principles of this theory is that the media have certain obligations to society, which should be met through the pursuit of "high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance" (McQuail, 1987, p.117). Further, the media should be pluralist and reflect social diversity (McQuail, 1987).

Figure 1: Research Questions and Methodologies



The theory of social responsibility has dominated our understanding of the role of the media over the past fifty years, although there has – at least since the 1970s – been concern over its inability to deliver on these ideals, particularly in relation to coverage of women and ethnic groups. This concern, along with the increasingly fragmented mediascape and widespread social change, has led some theorists to argue for a new articulation of the media’s role in society. For example, democratic-participant theory argues that groups can best serve their own interests through establishing and running their own media outlets (Baran & Davis, 1995) – and this is already happening in New Zealand (e.g. Māori radio stations), as it is around the world. However, this thesis is based on the belief that a socially responsible press, committed to diversity and professionalism, is still highly desirable, especially for the delivery of political news. New Zealand’s electoral system of proportional representation ostensibly offers the chance of consensus politics, and relies for its success on public knowledge and understanding of a wider range of political options. Further, and from a more practical viewpoint, women politicians rely for their success on reaching the widest possible audience of voters.

1.6 A Note on Terminology

The strategy frame and in particular the “horse race” metaphor is so central to news coverage that it is difficult to find another easily understandable way to describe the media’s construction of the campaign as a contest or race. In this study it is noted that dominant political news frames, with their emphasis on competence and viability, may create barriers for women politicians. However, because this research is concerned with the realities of media coverage of the 1999 General Election campaign, it was decided to speak of the election of individuals and leaders using media terms such as race and contest. The irony of using, and therefore, to some extent, validating these terms and themes in academic work which questions their widespread use, is noted.

Appendix A provides a summary of the political terms and abbreviations used throughout the thesis.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The following two chapters make up the literature review. Chapter Two sets the wider media and political scene, introducing the concept of a socially responsible press,

discussing trends in, and criticism of, contemporary political journalism, and concluding with an outline of New Zealand's unique political system. Chapter Three looks more closely at the intersection of gender, news and politics. It explores literature about the framing of women politicians, with particular reference to the notion of public and private spheres, and considers structural and social reasons why the media fail to cover female politicians in a fair and equitable way. In Chapter Four, the key methodology of content analysis is explained, and the steps taken in its application are described. It is followed by a chapter containing the results of this content analysis, with particular attention to how politicians' gender influences depth of coverage, sourcing and tone. Chapter Six considers these results with reference to literature. Chapter Seven discusses the framing typology, its benefits and drawbacks. The two chapters which follow show the results of a frame analysis of the New Zealand First list controversy (Chapter Eight) and the application of the "game" frame to the leadership race between Shipley and Clark (Chapter Nine). Chapters Ten to Twelve represent a shift in focus, and are predominantly concerned with the perspectives of women Members of Parliament (MPs). Chapter Ten opens with a discussion of the interview methodology and then goes on to cover the themes that emerged in interviews with twenty women politicians. Chapter Eleven is also based on this interview material, but focuses on the advice the participants offered to other women politicians. It is followed by Chapter Twelve, which takes a more in-depth approach to the relationship between women politicians and the media by studying Wellington Central candidate, Marian Hobbs, and her experiences during the campaign, and afterwards when she became a Cabinet Minister. Finally, Chapter Thirteen summarises the findings from all three methodologies, and considers the implications for women politicians, the news media, and the electoral system.

Chapter Two Media and Politics

2.1 Introduction

The theory of social responsibility, which has tended to guide mass media in the developed world over the past 50 years, provides a framework against which the news media's performance can be judged. In particular, the theory commits news organisations and journalists to the standards of diversity and professionalism (McQuail, 1987). However, in recent years it has been acknowledged that the media are failing to fulfil many of the tenets of social responsibility, particularly in regard to coverage of women (as well as ethnic minorities), a situation which is attributed to news processes as well as wider social factors such as sex stereotyping. This, in conjunction with the changing nature of society and the media landscape, is leading some theorists to call for a new standard of media performance. However, the ideals of social responsibility continue to guide the majority of mainstream news organisations, and it remains the most widely accepted model of media behaviour. In fact, news organisations have reaffirmed the importance of journalist and content diversity in a bid to remain relevant to contemporary society (Gross, Curtin & Cameron, 2001).

The chapter begins by discussing social responsibility theory and its implications for diversity and media coverage of women. It explores the media-politics nexus, and outlines theoretical and popular concerns about political journalism, internationally and locally. Finally, the chapter describes New Zealand's unique political system of proportional representation.

2.2 Social Responsibility Theory

The theory of social responsibility is based on the premise that the media perform essential functions in a democratic society, and should fulfil these by providing information, acting as a platform for diverse views, and adhering to standards of professionalism (McQuail, 1987). Although many news media outlets are run as commercial entities, they are also of cultural significance, and have obligations to society as well as consumers and shareholders. Both private print media companies and public broadcasting organisations are "answerable through various kinds of democratic procedure to the society" (McQuail, 1987, p.116).

Social responsibility is a normative theory which outlines how the media should meet its obligations to society. It has its roots in America's Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, which was convened in response to concern that the free market approach had resulted in lowering of press standards and decreased diversity, and in an effort to offset pressure for greater government regulation. The Commission's report provided guidance to media practitioners based on established principles of the media's role and ethics. More radically, the media was also urged to prioritise cultural pluralism.

The theory attempts to reconcile three principles, relating to individual freedom and choice, media freedom, and media obligation to society (McQuail, 1987). The main principles of the theory are:

- [The] Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society
- These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance
- In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions
- The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder or give offence to minority groups
- The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights of reply
- Society and the public, following the first named principle, have a right to expect high standards of performance and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good
- Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market. (McQuail, 1987, pp.117-8)

Social responsibility has become the main theory in the United States, providing practical guidelines for media operations and legitimising what they do (Baran & Davis, 1995). It also became a standard sought by the rest of the world's media (Altschull, 1995):

The commission's report...not only wrote the term *social responsibility* into the world of the U.S. media but also came to dominate the discussions of press philosophy and ethics that followed, up to the present, all over the world. (Altschull, 1995, p.138, italics in original)

Journalists tend to draw on ideas of social responsibility when explaining what they do (Altschull, 1995; Baran & Davis, 1995). Even in an increasingly competitive media market, principles of social responsibility appear to co-exist with a market-driven approach to journalism (Gross et al., 2001). However, as Baran and Davis (1995) noted:

Most journalists take seriously the central values of social responsibility theory such as pluralism and cultural diversity. There is little evidence, however, that they have developed an effective means of promoting these values through their work. (p.98)

They suggested more work is needed on implementation if the theory is to remain valid. For example, Baran and Davis (1995) questioned whether news production practices help the media meet societal goals, and drew on studies such as Tuchman (1978b) to suggest they do not.

Under the mantle of social responsibility, the media avoid some – but not all – government regulation. The two main outcomes of the theory are public management of broadcasting and development of professionalism as a way to increase standards and encourage industry self-regulation. For example, in New Zealand, the Broadcasting Standards Authority (a statute-based regulatory authority) and the Press Council (a self-regulatory body) monitor complaints and commit the industry to the highest standards of professionalism.

The rate of change in the media over the past decade, and the increasingly fragmented media market, has put pressure on the normative theory of social responsibility. If society means the whole population, the mainstream media have clearly failed to be socially responsible, especially in relation to reporting of race and gender. Altschull (1995) went so far as to say that the theory is a masquerade. Growth in technology and rise of indigenous rights has made it more feasible – and possibly preferable – for ethnic and other specialist groups to produce and consume their own media. Democratic-participant theory suggests groups can best serve their own interests by having access to

media resources, through the “development of innovative, ‘small’ media that can be directly controlled by group members” (Baran & Davis, 1995, p.100). While there are examples of this in New Zealand (e.g. Māori and Pacific Island radio stations), as there are around the world, the “mainstream” news media still express their commitment to serving a range of people, and acting in a socially responsible fashion. The ideals remain valid, and rather than changing the criteria, it may be better to examine the barriers to their full achievement. Further, it should be noted that the mainstream media remain an important tool for the politician, who must seek to maximise his or her exposure to the greatest number of potential voters.

2.3 Social Responsibility and Diversity

The social responsibility theory prioritises cultural pluralism and diversity. “An idea essential to diversity is that media should, in some way, reflect or express approximately the same diversity as exists in that particular society” (McQuail, 1987, p.129). The notion of diversity is central to the metaphor of media as “the marketplace of ideas”.

The concept of a marketplace of ideas reflects the belief that the media should provide a diverse range of ideas and viewpoints, from which the audience can - and do - freely pick and choose. This is the application of *laissez-faire* doctrine to media, summarised by Baran and Davis (1995):

If ideas are “traded” freely among people, the correct or best ideas will prevail. The *ideas* compete and the best will be “bought”. (p.83, italics in original)

Supporters of the marketplace of ideas concept have divided roughly into two groups: those who have taken a democratic theory approach, and those who have seen it purely as an economic system. However, the need for diversity is accepted in both approaches:

Economic theory-based interpretations of the marketplace of ideas emphasize efficiency, consumer satisfaction, and competition, whereas democratic theory-based interpretations emphasize citizen knowledge, informed decision-making, and effective self-government. (Napoli, 1999b, p.151)

The purely economic approach to the marketplace metaphor, however, is tempered in a media guided by social responsibility. Social responsibility recognises that “unregulated mass media inevitably served the interests and tastes of large or socially dominant groups” (Baran & Davis, 1995, p.94).

Diversity is a basic principle used to evaluate media performance. However, it is a broad term that is seldom clearly defined, and causal relationships between aspects of diversity have been assumed rather than proven. Diversity can be “measured” by the number of separate and independent media which exist in a society, and the different information and viewpoints which exist in one particular medium (internal diversity). As Napoli (1999a) said, “diversity focuses both on the number of choices and the differences among them” (p.10). Napoli (1999a) considered three dimensions of diversity: source, content and audience. He said the former two have received more attention than the third, reflecting the traditional belief (which he rejected) that the availability of a range of voices is most important, not actual consumer choice. Napoli (1999a) argued that exposure diversity is likely the most important, for while policymakers have tended to assume that diversity of sources (e.g. in terms of ownership and workforce) leads to diversity of content, this link has not been proven. Even if it is correct, the audience is not necessarily interested in exposing itself to diversity in media consumption (the limited research available suggests increase in diversity of content can result in decrease in diversity of exposure).

Those who discuss the limitations of the marketplace metaphor (rejecting it for its conceptual fuzziness) and are critical of the causal links made between different aspects of diversity (i.e. that diversity in media workforce and ownership will lead to diversity in products) point to the structural barriers to diversity and question whether the audience is sufficiently interested in the ideal. Structural barriers to diversity include gatekeeping (particularly in relation to cost and the need to economise), and the barrier created by the conventional way of doing things (Entman & Wildman, 1992).

2.4 Social Responsibility, Professionalism and Media Coverage of Women

It is in regard to professional standards and promotion of diversity that the theory of social responsibility has particular relevance to the study of gender politics. Norris (1997a) made explicit the link between social responsibility theory and media coverage of women politicians, when she asked “whether journalists meet the criteria set by their own professional bodies when covering women in public life” (p.2).

The principle of diversity suggests that women should be represented in the media industry and content in ways which at least reflect their presence in society. If, as the

New Zealand Press Council (2001) maintained, a newspaper is “society talking to itself” (p.9), women clearly have a case for equal representation on the basis of their proportion of the population. McQuail (1987) identified two sub-principles of diversity that he maintained cannot be completely reconciled: reflective diversity, which holds that media differences should roughly correspond with social differences; and open access, which suggests all points of view are of equal value, and therefore a small or “fringe” group is entitled to the same media access as a large, established body. On both these counts, women have a strong case for representation in the media.

What prevents the media achieving diversity and being “professional” in covering women? Research suggests that the structure and nature of news itself is a factor, as is the male dominance of newsrooms. Together, these factors contribute to the dominance of male sources. External factors such as social tolerance of the status quo, and sex stereotyping, must also be considered. These issues are explored further in the following chapter. While there is little conclusive evidence as to how diversity is best achieved it is widely believed that ownership and workforce composition have implications for media content.

In 1992, Leitch recorded that twenty years of feminist pressure had resulted in the “worst excesses of sexist language” disappearing from New Zealand’s media coverage. However, she concluded that that “The language of the news media may not be sexist but the stories they tell remain male dominated. Moreover, the gender-neutral face of the news discourse serves to conceal the sexist nature of news story content” (Leitch, 1992b, p.179). In a chapter that addressed the ways media coverage of women could be improved, Beasley (1997) concurred. She maintained that when considering how news coverage of women in politics could be improved, it was necessary to consider the wider context, including professional codes. In the US, professional codes have tended to reflect the tenets of social responsibility (e.g. responsibility, freedom, fair play) but have only recently advocated avoiding stereotypes and giving voice to all social groups. Pressure from women’s groups has resulted in some changes. For example, Beasley (1997), like Leitch (1992b), described shifts such as the adoption of gender-free terms (e.g. firefighter rather than fireman) and decreased use of courtesy titles. However, she also suggested that the spirit of change is not always followed, for while acknowledging that blatant stereotyping is less common, “women still do not have parity with men in

either political participation or portrayal in the news media” (p.239). Beasley (1997) suggested the “professional” approach to journalism is a factor in women’s under-representation, as its reliance on official sources and experts tends to exclude women from public policy discussions.

2.5 Media Coverage of Politics

The media are an essential part of the political process in New Zealand, as in other western-style democracies (Leitch, 1992a). McNair (2000) wrote that now, more than ever before, “the media are politics, and politics are the media” (p.ix). The media’s constitutional role requires them to provide the public with information about the functioning of the executive government and Parliament, and the activities of political parties (Palmer, 1992). According to Comrie and McGregor (1992), the media are the eyes and ears of the community, serving as a check on the abuse of power and acting as “the voice of a democratic society” (p.10). This is the basis of the traditional “watchdog” role ascribed to the news media.

As few people have first hand experience of politics, their perceptions are shaped by the news media. As Herzog (1998) noted, for politicians to exist in the minds of the public, they depend, to some extent, on media exposure. Yet, as Kahn (1994) pointed out, the selective nature of the news media means the political picture they draw is neither complete nor objective:

As a result of this selectivity, the news media shape, rather than mirror, the political landscape. The news media’s ability to shape political reality is especially potent during electoral campaigns where citizens rely almost exclusively on the media for their political information. (p.154)

According to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), the fragmented nature of contemporary society (in which the influence of traditional institutions such as the nuclear family, social class, religion and political parties has waned), combined with the more active role of the media in the political process, has resulted in politicians and voters becoming increasingly dependent on the media and their messages. They argued that the centrality of the media to politics is exemplified in labels such as “press-politics” and “mediated politics” (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). The election campaign period becomes even more important in the context of increased volatility in party loyalties and delayed decisions about how to vote (Vowles, 2002a). For example, New Zealand data

showed that nearly half (48%) of voters made up their minds during the 1999 election campaign (Vowles, 2002a). Vowles (2002a) also suggested that New Zealand's proportional representation system of government (see section 2.7 for more on this system) means the campaign is potentially even more important:

The success and failure of the smaller parties during the campaign can determine not only their own future political roles, but also that of one of another of the major parties. MMP is sensitive to all changes in party support. The importance of the campaign period is therefore potentially greater under the new voting system than under the old. (p.16)

Leadership debates may be a particularly significant election campaign event, as 1999 data showed evaluations of Clark's leadership ability rose to match Shipley's after a strong performance in this area (Banducci, 2002).

In the British context, Negrine (1994) wrote that the media have clearly "made a difference" to politics. He quoted Seymour-Ure (1974) to support his point:

One cannot talk sensibly of a national campaign at all in the absence of mass media...The national campaign is formed by a continuous interaction between the behaviour of party leaders and managers and that of the mass media. (p.154)

Interest in the role of the news media is heightened during election campaigns. According to Negrine (1994), "Few events typify the concern over the political importance and effect of the mass media more than the coverage of general elections" (p.152). The two key issues relate to the media's effect on voters, and the impact of journalistic practices (such as television's desire for visual material) on the nature of the political struggle and political debates. The issue of media influence on voters is a slippery one, although the media are clearly a very important source of information (Negrine, 1994).

The relationship between politicians and news organisations is often described as symbiotic, with the two groups needing each other to function. Politicians and other official sources provide a constant stream of information to the media who, in turn, give these sources access to a mass audience. As a result, politics and politicians dominate news coverage (Gans, 1979). But although the relationship is a close one, their interests are often different, and the two groups compete for control of the news agenda. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer (1992) wrote:

The media and politicians are bound together by a powerful bond of mutual need. Politicians provide news for the media. The media provides exposure for politicians to the public. The journalists carry the messages and fashion the images. It will always be a tense relationship, lacking in mutual trust. (p.200)

Politicians, because of their status as elected representatives of the people, have the opportunity to be “primary definers” of the news. The concept of primary definers was advanced by Stuart Hall and others, and comprises “those people or groups who are first to have their version of an event accepted by the news media” (Maharey, 1996, p.95). Thus, politicians (particularly government) tend to have the ability to set the news agenda, although this access is not guaranteed and will be influenced by competition between politicians, indirect influence (particularly through off the record briefings), favouritism, and tension between journalists and politicians over who is in control (Maharey, 1996). Maharey noted, with approval, that “There is always an air of unease about the politician/journalist relationship because neither can be absolutely certain of what the other is doing” (p.100). Increasingly, politicians have come to rely on specialist staff - often former journalists - to assist in their attempts to manipulate the media. It should be noted that not all politicians are equal in the eyes of the news media. Chapter Three explores the impact of leadership and incumbency, two important influences on the relationship between a politician and the media.

However, the ability of politicians to set the news agenda appears to be waning in the still emerging “third age” of political communication (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). It has been acknowledged that politicians are making increasing use of professional communicators, and that the political process is becoming more stage-managed (e.g. Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, used the term “the permanent campaign” to describe the huge amount of publicity surrounding routine political events such as party and press conferences, budgets and speeches). But Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) suggested this has been accompanied by a growth in adversarial spirit, with journalists taking a more prominent role in framing news and adopting a more judgmental tone. They wrote that “The relentless scrutiny and ‘unmasking’ of the manipulative strategies and devices of politicians and their advisers by skeptical journalists compromise the authority of the politician as spokesperson” (p.217).

2.6 Contemporary Criticism of Political Journalism

Much contemporary criticism of political journalism has centred on the media's failure to be socially responsible. In particular, the media are said to have trivialised politics and contributed to what is regarded as a crisis in civic communication, in Britain and the United States as well as many other liberal-democratic societies (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) summed up many of these concerns, related to personalisation, trivialisation and media management, when they wrote that:

confidence in the norms of citizenship is waning. Tactics of political campaigning appear ever less savoury. The watchdog role of journalism is often shunted into channels of personalization, dramatization, witch-huntery, soap-operatics and sundry trivialities. It is difficult for unconventional opinions to break into the established "marketplace of ideas", and political arguments are often reduced to slogans and taunts. Suspicion of manipulation is rife, and cynicism is growing. (p.1)

McNair (2000), too, summarised the key criticisms of political journalism, some of which he noted appear to be contradictory:

- dumbing down of media content and the rise of "infotainment",
- political information overload, elitism and insider orientation (including too much focus on horse-race reporting and the process of politics rather than the policy),
- an excess of interpretation,
- "hyperadversarialism" (i.e. coverage which is "excessively gladiatorial"),
- both too much balance and outmoded impartiality,
- and political public relations and the rise of spin.

The main concerns identified and discussed in this chapter relate to the strategic framing of political news and its likely impact on voters, the trends toward media management and "intimizing", and commercial pressures.

In short, the strategic focus of contemporary political journalism means it fails to promote or support serious political discussion, gives preference to conflict over debate, and is obsessed with the election campaign "horse race" (McGregor, Fountaine & Comrie, 2000). The "horse race" approach to reporting political campaigns concentrates on winners and losers, often linked with discussion of electoral strategy. It is one component of the strategy or "game frame" style of political reporting, which has

been linked to audience cynicism about politics. In a particularly in-depth study, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) linked voters' media consumption of strategy and issue-based news stories with levels of cynicism about politics and the media. Their conclusions, based on content, experimental and survey data, reinforced their belief that a basic theory of human behaviour explains the impact of the strategy approach to news coverage:

The central goal of campaigns, candidates and elections is winning. When actions are placed in this interpretive frame, the motivation for action...is reduced to a single, simple human motivation – the desire to win and to take the power that elected office provides. In such an interpretive frame, all actions are tainted – they are seen not as the by-product of a desire to solve social ills, redirect national goals, or create a better future for our offspring but are instead viewed in terms of winning. Winning is equivalent to advancing one's own agenda, one's own self-interest, so the actions stand not for themselves but for the motivational system that gives rise to them – narrow self-interest. (p.34)

Academic analyses of the horse race approach to politics have often attributed it to the dominance of television. Sigelman and Bullock (1991) wrote that,

Of all the criticisms leveled at campaign coverage during the television era, none has proven more persistent than the charge that the media are “horse racist”, and for good reason. (p.20)

Sigelman and Bullock (1991) documented the American media's reliance on polling-based stories during presidential campaigns and associated the “meteoric rise of the horse race theme” (p.21) in newspaper coverage, with the wider shift from what they called the radio era to the television era. However, their historical analysis suggested that newspapers in the 1800s demonstrated the same tendency towards horse race coverage, but that this died down in the earlier part of the 20th century. They identified a “reversion to, and intensification of, a time-honored way of covering presidential campaigns rather than as a novel mode of coverage” (p.22). Similarly, Patterson (1994) noted that the press have been reporting on who is winning and losing for almost a century but that the strategic, or “game”, frame is a deeper and more troubling development, which is:

embedded in virtually every aspect of election news, dominating and driving it. The game sets the context, even when issues are the subject of analysis. The game, once the backdrop in news of the campaign, is now so pervasive that it is almost inseparable from the rest of election content. (p.69)

Patterson (1994) suggested that the reason for the media's reliance on the game frame is linked to its desire and search for new and different material. The game frame is "a perpetually reliable source of fresh material" (p.61) with a clear plot linking events of consecutive days. In *News and Power*, Tiffen (1989) agreed, suggesting that the attraction of covering the election as a contest is partially linked to the media's need to appear impartial (as well as journalists' belief that the audience is not interested in policy expositions and debates). He said that:

the polls appeal to the media because they appear as an authoritative guide to the intangible key to the contest, the electorate; because they are seen as independent of the parties, and a departure from the staple fare of party leader formats and partisan predictability. (p.132)

One of the problems that political candidates may face as a result of the media focus on polls, standing and viability, is that voters tend to respond strategically, voting for candidates who the media suggest – explicitly or implicitly – have the best chance of winning (Ramsden, 1996).

The second related concern is the global trend towards media management or political public relations. In the American context, Graber (1997) identified four major consequences of "the televisual computer age" for media politics, three of which are relevant to New Zealand: a decline in party influence as radio and television allow candidates more direct access to voters; the need for candidates to "televise well" (p.231) to succeed politically; and the evolution of made-for-media campaigns. In fact, Graber (1997) argued that:

mass media coverage has become a pivotal campaign goal. Campaigns are structured to garner the best media exposure before the largest suitable audience and, if possible, with the greatest degree of candidate control over the message. (p.238)

The perceived importance of the media as a political arena is demonstrated by the increased emphasis placed on media management. Politicians employ large numbers of public relations staff (often former journalists enticed by superior pay packages), and political parties and governments spend considerable amounts of money on advertising. This increasingly common feature of political life in a democracy, labelled the "packaging" of politics, has both supporters and detractors. A number of politicians, broadcasters and academics have regarded it as the inevitable outcome of changes in

media technology, and suggested the process results in greater public awareness, participation and government accountability (Franklin, 1994). On the other hand, critics have argued that the public is manipulated and deprived of significant debate:

Packaging politics impoverishes political debate by oversimplifying and trivializing political communications. Negative attacks on opponents' policies have come to be preferred, as well as judged to be more effective by many politicians to the positive elaboration of their own case. It places a premium on personalities and presidentialism. Persistent television portrayals of a select clique of "telegenic" politicians, mouthing pre-rehearsed slogans and automaton soundbites, has supplanted the rational and sustained advocacy of policy. Photo opportunities represent the logical conclusion of this process of packaging politics. (Franklin, 1994, pp.9-10)

Another relatively recent trend in political journalism is the "intimizing" of news, which is characterised by attention to human interest topics and an intimate mode of address (van Zoonen, 1991). It is argued that intimization has deflected attention away from substance and toward personality (van Zoonen, 1991). For example, in the New Zealand context, Brian Edwards (1992) wrote about the "cootchie coo" news – "no longer a dispassionate recital of the day's events at home and abroad, but a dramatic and frequently melodramatic presentation of the good, the bad, and the ugly" (p.21). And, he noted that:

[Newsreaders] Judy and Richard began to talk not just to us but to one another. And then they talked to Jeremy, who was there to read the sports news and to Penelope who was there to read the weather. And to make things cosier, and just like a real family, they sat at the same table and talked. Well, they could hardly ignore one another, could they? Not members of a family. (Brian Edwards, 1992, p.22)

It was argued by van Zoonen (1991) that female news presenters, who are traditionally seen as representatives of the private sphere (see Chapter Three), have contributed to this shift towards intimization.

Finally, there is concern that the media marketplace is becoming increasingly fragmented and commercialised. The "third age" media system is likened to a hydra headed beast, with its proliferation of television and radio channels and bulletins (as well as an increase in information available via computer), providing around-the-clock news coverage. Thus, the news cycle has accelerated and "Time for political and journalistic reflection and judgment is squeezed" (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p.213). Similarly, Seaton (1998b) identified three problems "that currently trouble the (in some

respect) disturbingly calm waters of contemporary democratic politics” (p.1). The first problem is whether there is actually too much choice, resulting in a diffusion of talent and “squeezing out serious discussion of the kind a healthy democracy requires” (p.1). As market pressures trivialise discussion, politicians become entertainers, and the second difficulty therefore related to the naivety of expecting journalists to be serious under such circumstances. The final problem identified by Seaton (1998b) was the extent to which the media have become the main political arena, “brokering the most important events and staging the most important exchanges” (p.2).

The New Zealand news media are not untouched by these international trends. However, issues surrounding the news media have been “dangerously under-debated” (Comrie & McGregor, 1992, p.9), despite – or perhaps because of – industry deregulation and restructuring throughout the 1980s and 1990s. McGregor (1996c) described the trend towards “news management” as “a creeping condition [which] threatens to close the arteries of political journalism in New Zealand” (p.120. See also Eileen O’Leary, 2002). Commentators and some politicians have been scathing of standards in political journalism, and the prospect of electoral reform prompted calls for more sophisticated reporting. Rudd (1992) drew on Seymour-Ure (1974) when he identified two interrelated ways in which the media, television in particular, have changed election campaigns in New Zealand – by trivialising elections and presidentialising the campaign. Adding to international examples of leaders using “pseudo events” to gain positive media coverage, he recounted how during the 1987 election campaign, the two main party leaders (Bolger and Lange) were shown “variously planting trees, holding babies, visiting potters, glass-blowers, breweries and schools, driving steam engines and piloting helicopters” (Rudd, 1989, quoted in Rudd 1992, p.133). Media organisations may be aware of the way politicians manipulate them yet such events continue to be covered. Further, “there is a concern that campaign reporting, and political coverage in general, has become increasingly negative and dominated by the American model of reporting” (Banducci & Vowles, 2002, p.34). Continuing in the vein of trivialisation, Atkinson (1989, cited in Rudd, 1992) noted that the media, especially television, have reduced the intellectual aspect of politics and focused instead on voice, looks and “stylistic peculiarities”. This benefits those politicians who “sell mood, confidence and image; but it disadvantages the less ebulliently self assured...or the wooden performers” (p.134). Bassett (1999) argued that

television played a significant role in the New Zealand election campaign as early as 1963, and it quickly “weeded out the old political practitioners” (p.110). James (1990, cited in Rudd, 1992) maintained that the media have concentrated on the leadership race because the two main parties made leadership a campaign issue. He suggested they did this because there were few major policy differences between the parties and the leaders were therefore a point of differentiation. However, Rudd (1992) refuted the simplicity of this argument, maintaining that television has been a major force in this development.

This, then, is the wider context within which we must consider portrayals of women politicians. Media coverage of politics and politicians generally is criticised for its focus on personality (leaders especially) rather than policy, and the increasing prevalence of the strategy frame is held partially responsible for voter cynicism. But in addition to this, the literature shows that women - a specific sub-group of politicians - are also subjected to “gendered” news coverage. These patterns and the possible reasons for them are explored further in the following chapter. But first, the following section describes New Zealand’s system of governance, and points to particular ways it too intersects with politicians’ press coverage.

2.7 New Zealand’s Electoral System

Interestingly, concerns about social responsibility and diversity also underpinned New Zealand’s adoption of proportional representation in 1996. It was in part disillusionment with First Past the Post (FPP) politics which contributed to the move to Mixed Member Proportional or MMP. In the words of Aimer and Miller (2002), “Cynicism had become deeply embedded in New Zealand’s democratic process” (p.2). Proportional representation promised a more diverse parliament, better gender and ethnic representation, and an era of consensus politics. According to Boston, Levine, McLeay and Roberts (1996),

The attractiveness of MMP in the early 1990s arose at least in part out of the stresses felt by many New Zealanders as a result of the fairly single-minded application of the politics of market liberalism. MMP appeared to offer a means by which those unhappy about those policies might yet regain some influence. There was also a measure of revenge against the established parties, held responsible for the excesses of the market liberal approach, in the vote for MMP. (p.9)

New Zealand has one chamber of Parliament, referred to as the House of Representatives. Within this House, there are 120 Members of Parliament (MPs) elected under the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. This electoral system replaced the winner-takes-all, First Past the Post system in 1996. In short, it means that over half of the country's MPs (69) represent electorate seats and the remainder (51) come from party lists. Electorate MPs are elected by voters in a particular geographical region, who use one of their two votes to indicate their choice of local representative. Voters use their second vote to indicate their preferred party. It is this party vote that determines a party's overall proportion of seats in the House. However, a party must gain over 5% of the party vote (or at least one electorate seat) to qualify for a place in Parliament.

In New Zealand, the move to MMP government prompted increased attention to the shortcomings of the political media, and the challenges it would face under the new system. MMP is an electoral system based on the principles of proportional representation, and has a strong tendency to produce coalition governments (Palmer, 1996). Minority governments are not uncommon. Writing in the mid-1990s, former New Zealand Prime Minister and constitutional lawyer Geoffrey Palmer noted that MMP would change the way public power was distributed, the way the system of government worked, and would have repercussions for the legislative process, decision making within the Executive Government, and the operation of Parliament. The select committee system was likely to become more important. In essence, he regarded the shift to MMP as "the most important constitutional change New Zealand has made this century" (p.22), and suggested the news media, in their current form, would be unable to meet these challenges:

Policy is likely to evolve and to be vigorously debated as it evolves. There will be a very considerable need for high-quality analysis in the media of what is going on and why. Policy analysis is not the strong point of political journalists in New Zealand now and they are going to need to develop their skills very considerably to cope with these challenges. (p.27)

Journalist Alistair Morrison (1996) suggested that under MMP, the news media would have more potential to expand its role in public debate. Echoing Palmer (1996), he wrote that:

MMP is, at its best, a process of reaching national consensus. This cannot happen simply by presenting either the conflict or agreement that exists in “both sides of the story”. It will require sophisticated policy debate. (p.38)

Morrison (1996) identified the media’s role as central to the public’s expectations of greater inclusion and accountability under MMP, but noted that there were no guarantees they would deliver. On the positive side, he argued the reporting of politics in New Zealand serves the public well, given market size and available resources. While noting a move towards “infotainment”, he believed it did not come at the expense of “non-commercial responsibilities” (p.41).

A key challenge for politicians wishing to build relationships with the media in the MMP environment is the widely held perception that list MPs are “second class” (Ward, 1998). As mentioned before, there are two types of MP under MMP, as voters have two votes – one for their local electorate MP, and one for the party they support. Electorate MPs are elected in a particular territory and are required to represent the interests of those living there. The other MPs are called list MPs because they are selected from lists of candidates put forward by parties prior to the election. “A party’s complement of electorate MPs will be topped up from its list of candidates until the number of seats it holds in Parliament is in proportion to its party vote” (Boston et al., 1996, p.23). List MPs do not have a direct link with any particular geographical region, but their parties may require them to look after certain local problems or politically important groups or communities (Mulgan, 1997). For example, Pansy Wong is a National list MP who, as the first Asian representative in Parliament, focuses upon the Asian community. List MPs may also be assigned to local areas where their party does not have an electorate MP. However, there is a perception that list MPs do not have the same workload as their electorate-based counterparts.

The list is regarded as an important mechanism for increasing the proportions of women and other minority groups in parliament. According to Street (1996), the party list acts as a gender balance tool. The Green Party, for example, has a policy of alternating list places by gender (Drage & Nicholl, 2000). Writing after the 1999 election result, Drage and Nicholl (2000) pointed out that, as in 1996, the majority of women in the minor parties (Act, Greens, Alliance) were list members, reinforcing earlier research which

suggested women do better on the list. In total, 21 women were elected through party lists in 1999 (Drage & Nicholl, 2000).

However, as mentioned above, list MPs tend to be regarded by the media, colleagues and the public as “second class” (Ward 1998), and a citizens’ initiated referendum at the time of the 1999 General Election revealed that the majority of voters wanted a reduction in the number of politicians. Support for MMP generally has dropped since its implementation. From the time of the 1993 referendum until the first MMP election, majority support remained stable, but dropped markedly after the 1996 election, reaching a low just prior to the first coalition government’s breakdown in 1998. Support levels began to recover by the 1999 election, and have continued to do so, with the most recent polling data showing a recovery to majority support, consistent with referendum levels. It should be noted, though, that qualitative studies have strongly suggested that much of this support is “soft” (Vowles, Karp, Banducci & Aimer, 2002). Another important finding is that many voters do not fully understand MMP, in particular that it is a system of proportional representation. Therefore, Vowles et al. also concluded that there may be hidden levels of support for MMP, amongst those who strongly support the principle of proportional representation, but do not understand that this is what MMP offers. The system of government is currently under review, but little attention has been paid to the media’s role in the perceived success or failure of MMP. There is strong public support for decreasing the number of MPs, which reflects the unpopularity of politicians generally. However, the media’s possible contribution to this should be considered in light of research that has suggested coverage of politics contributes to public cynicism and isolation from the political process (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). A writer of a letter to the *Evening Standard* newspaper, who argued that MMP deserves a chance to succeed, called for voters to:

immediately demand that the mass media comes to terms with the new system by focusing upon quality rather than quantity, encouraging debate, and producing more analysis of alternatives instead of repeating propaganda. (Hockey, 1999, p.9)

Yet analysis of the 1999 election campaign showed that “Without exception, the editorials were critical of MMP and its impact on party politics and government” (Hayward & Rudd, 2000, p.99). National MP Annabel Young (2000), describing her Party’s campaign, argued that the media again focused on constituency seats, ignored

party lists, and failed to publish a final record of confirmed list MPs. She suggested the print media appeared overwhelmed by the “myriad possibilities” (p.34) and stuck in a FPP mindset.

Finally, New Zealand’s change to MMP has had implications for media coverage of leadership. Political reporter Ruth Laugeson (1997) argued that journalistic resources have been stretched under MMP, as there are more parties to cover – and that consequently following the leaders provides enough work for the media. The result, she said, was a more presidential style campaign in 1996. However, it should also be noted that in 1999, the Labour Party clearly based its campaign on Clark’s leadership qualities (Vowles, 2002a).

2.8 Conclusion

Social responsibility theory provides a framework for interpreting the media’s performance in relation to coverage of women politicians. While the theory is being attacked at the fringes, the mainstream media continue to express commitment to the standards of diversity and professionalism. However, news values, systems and processes, the male domination of newsrooms, and external factors such as sex stereotyping mean equality in news coverage remains elusive. This is explored further in the following chapter.

When setting out to explore how women politicians are covered in the news media, it is important to also consider the wider media and political context. Therefore, this chapter has addressed the interdependent relationship between the news media and politics, and discussed the key academic and popular concerns about the quality of political reporting (centring on “horse race” and strategy coverage, presidentialisation and trivialisation), internationally and in New Zealand. Further, New Zealand’s unique system of government has also been considered. At the time of New Zealand’s move to proportional representation, high-profile public and media figures questioned whether journalism was up to the challenges it would raise. The media’s performance since the first MMP election in 1996 has not been subjected to on-going empirical scrutiny, and such questions remain unanswered. However, editorially, newspapers remain opposed to MMP, and it has been observed that the media in general continue to report politics as they did under FPP. This chapter provides contextual information about the nature of

political journalism and the New Zealand electoral scene, both of which will contribute to the following analysis of how women politicians are reported and framed in the news. The results of this analysis can be found in Chapters Five, Six, Eight, and Nine. The following chapter looks at the literature surrounding media representations of women politicians, likely reasons for this coverage, and other political factors which impact on media coverage of political figures.

Chapter Three

The Intersection of Gender, News Media and Politics

3.1 Introduction

Throughout the world, women are under-represented as holders of political office and according to figures collated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2002), there is not one national Parliament that has equal proportions of male and female political representatives. The possible reasons for this, and the likely barriers to women's political representation, include personal issues such as family commitments and education, and structural barriers, reflecting traditional power structures, such as selection and male incumbency.

Women who attain political positions, and election results that show breakthroughs in representation for women, are presented in the media as “good news” stories. For example, the record (although low) number of women elected in Australia in 1996 was “loudly applauded by politicians and the press... an event that tells us a great deal about the different treatment of women and men in Australian politics” (van Acker, 1999, p.1). Similarly, when record figures of women contested and gained political office in the United States in 1992, “mainstream print and television news coverage was replete with hosannas for female politicians, praised as strong and politically powerful figures” (Vavrus, 2000, p.194). The American media have often given a positive spin to the “dramatic” gains made by women in various elections, although as Norris and Carroll (1997) noted, the 1992 increases made US figures equal with the world average, rather than better. Hype and exaggeration, they suggested, may leave the public with the impression that change was more dramatic than it really was and “this process disguises both the complexities of gender politics, and the long-term and persistent patterns that are repeated every election year” (p.16). Cameron (1997) argued that the British media's reaction to the election of so many women in 1997 – including the so-called “Blair's babes” – gave the impression that the “main role of women at Westminster will be to civilise the place and make it look a bit more decorative” (quoted in Brown, 1998, p.29). It is unsurprising, then, that inequitable treatment by the media has been identified as a possible reason for women's lack of political success (Kahn, 1992).

This chapter examines the literature relating to gender, the news media and politics, drawing on American, Australian and British research traditions. The primary focus is literature about the framing of women politicians in the news media, although an important body of research, predominantly in the US, has also examined the media framing of women voters (namely in the form of the “gender gap” – see for example Norris & Carroll, 1997) and First Ladies (e.g. Edwards & Chen, 2000). The chapter begins by outlining the wider context of gender scholarship, which has provided the grounding for subsequent research into gender, news and politics. It then summarises research into the extent and focus of coverage about women politicians, and discusses the shift toward more nuanced analysis. It explores the notion of public and private spheres, as a basis for understanding how women are framed in the news media. Finally, the chapter considers incumbency and political leadership as two important political structures which impact on media coverage of all politicians, but which pose a particular challenge for women who are less likely to be either incumbents or leaders.

3.2 Gender Theory

In daily life, people tend to take gender for granted, recognising others as male or female, and following social conventions which are based on these distinctions (such as marriage, dressing a particular way, using designated public toilets) (Connell, 2002). These categories and conventions are so familiar that they are often regarded as “natural”, and those who defy them (e.g. homosexuals) have traditionally been judged “unnatural” or bad (Connell, 2002). Laws and regulations, as well as social “norms” about gender-appropriate conduct (circulated in society by groups such as advertisers, teachers and parents) and public events, guide behaviour and contribute to the maintenance of gender difference. Connell (2002) wrote that:

gender must be understood as a social structure. It is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern. (p.9)

Or, as the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1988) famously put it, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (p.295). Gender, then, is not fixed by nature but nor is it merely imposed by social authority. As Connell (2002) said:

We claim a place in the gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life. (p.4)

For some, this means embracing gender polarity by dressing in a clearly masculine or feminine fashion, and acting in particular gender-specific ways, but psychological research has suggested most personalities include a blend of masculine and feminine characteristics (Connell, 2002). Gender ambiguity or “gender blending” can both attract and repel, and certainly there are social movements dedicated to maintaining clear gender demarcations, for example by advocating the traditional family structure. As Connell (2002) noted, “These movements are themselves clear evidence that the boundaries they defend are none too stable” (p.5). Similarly, Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000) wrote that:

The validation of femininity as a more virtuous way of life on one hand, the denial of gender difference on the other, and the acknowledgment of some difference and some sameness, all show that gender is continually in debate and that its discourse(s) have become more open and ambiguous than before. (p.5)

So gender is a complex pattern or construction, influenced by laws, regulations, and social norms, which are in turn shaped by social movements and events. Writing about the political identity of women in Latin America, Craske (1999) also noted the importance of culture and society, observing that:

Gender construction is a cultural phenomenon, inasmuch as the content and significance of being a woman (or man) is not constant across different countries or indeed necessarily within one country. (p.10)

Olesen (2000) maintained that feminist qualitative research is still to fully address the various ways race, class and gender intersect and affect women’s experiences.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the notion that the categories of gender sustain “gender relations” that have had a detrimental impact on women of all ages – economically, politically and socially. Connell (2002) explained:

The harm of gender is first and foremost in the system of inequality that produces a patriarchal dividend, a system in which women and girls are exploited, discredited, and made vulnerable to abuse and attack. (p.143)

Thus, women earn less than men although they do at least as much work, are vulnerable to male violence and under-represented in the public sphere. The mass media continue to circulate images of female passivity and “ending the misogyny and homophobia in international media” is one goal Connell (2002) identified for the democratisation of global institutions. According to Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000), from the late 1960s,

feminist movements argued that “sexual and gender domination were systematically constituted through legal provisions, representative politics, and other institutional arrangements” (p.4), and - in a celebrated phrase - that “the personal is political”. The value of this slogan is that it draws attention to “the gendered organization of both public and private space” (Landes, 1998, p.1).

“Gender relations are always being constituted in everyday life” (Connell, 2002, p.54). One way this occurs, on a symbolic level, is through language. According to Connell (2002), spoken and written language is the most studied site of symbolic gender relations. Of particular interest to feminist researchers is the question of who does the talking, the status of women’s voices and hence the notion of in/visibility. As Spender (1985) pointed out, “A firmly held conviction of our society is that women talk a lot” (p.41). Yet studies have consistently shown that this is not the case; rather men talk more than women (Spender, 1985). “Talk” research has also identified other differences in the way men and women use language (e.g. Mills, 1995; Coates, 1998; Holmes, 2000).

In a chapter entitled “Constructing women’s silence”, Spender (1985) explained why women’s voices have seldom been heard:

Historically, women have been excluded from the production of cultural forms, and language is, after all, a cultural form – and a most important one. In fairly crude terms this means that the language has been made by men and that they have used it for their own purposes. (p.52)

Later, she wrote that this silencing of women has been a cumulative process:

Conceptually and materially excluded from the production of knowledge, their meanings and explanations have been systematically blocked and their invisibility has been compounded. (p.59)

Spender (1985) also explained that - perhaps paradoxically - one way of making women more visible was by recording their absence/silence. Feminist researchers have, since the very beginning, worked to “find and express women’s voices” (Oleson, 2000, p.231), and have continued to debate how best to do this. In particular, concerns about the absence and silencing of women have been addressed by feminist methodologies which promote interviews and oral histories as means of allowing women’s voices to be heard (Fontana & Frey, 2000). “Refusing to be rendered historically voiceless any

longer, women are creating a new history – using our own voices and experiences” (Gluck, 1984 quoted in Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.656).

This wider documentation of women’s silence has implications for media coverage of women. Interest in visual and verbal representations of women in popular culture and literature has been a focal point since the beginning of academic research into gender (Kitch, 1997). Tuchman, Daniels and Benét’s (1978) book, *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, broke new ground in the communication field by focusing on women as media subjects and readers. As Tuchman (1978a) noted in her introduction to the book, until the late 1960s and early 1970s research was chiefly by, about and for men, and “No one considered the way women experienced the world” (p.4).

Although the depiction of women in the news media is now an important sub-field of communication research, findings continue to show that throughout the world women are under-represented as news sources and subjects (e.g. Spears & Seydegart, 2000). In particular, structural inequalities have been noted in media coverage of women in sport (e.g. Brown, 1995; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999), politics (e.g. Kahn, 1994; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Lemish & Tidhar, 1999), and more recently, business (e.g. McGregor, 2000). The following section explores the research in this area, with particular reference to the coverage of female politicians.

3.3 Research About Female Politicians’ Media Coverage

Tuchman’s (1978a) work on symbolic annihilation is considered a benchmark study in the area of women and media. Subsequently, the portrayal of women has been explored in front-page news stories (e.g. Hernandez, 1994, 1995, 1996), newspaper sports pages (e.g. Brown, 1995; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999), magazine covers (e.g. Johnson & Christ, 1989), cartoons (e.g. Gilmartin & Brunn, 1998) and politics (e.g. Norris, 1997b). This body of evidence, collected over time and in a variety of countries, together with extensive accounts of anecdotal information (e.g. Braden, 1996; Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994), shows that women are under-represented, portrayed in stereotypical and often negative ways, and subjected to “gendered” framing.

Gidengil and Everitt (1999) suggested that while systematic attention to media coverage of female politicians is a recent development, it is possible to identify three phases in the study of women, politics and the media. From an initial focus on the visibility/invisibility of women, as typified by Tuchman (1978a), attention shifted to the content of coverage. Researchers such as Carroll and Schreiber (1997), Jamieson (1995), Kahn (1994), and Ross (1995) have documented a narrow focus in coverage of female politicians, “dwelling on their viability and framing their issue competencies and personality traits in stereotypically feminine terms” (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999, p.49). Gidengil and Everitt (1999) argued that a recent shift to the idea of gendered mediation is prompted by research (e.g. Norris 1997b, Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996) suggesting the existence of a more complex situation:

The gendered-mediation thesis shifts the focus from the use of feminine stereotypes to the more subtle, but arguably more insidious, form of bias that arises when conventional political frames are applied to female politicians. (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999, p.49)

These phases, however, are not distinct. For example, Tuchman’s (1978a) idea that women are “symbolically annihilated” by the mass media, through omission, trivialisation and condemnation (which Gidengil and Everitt, 1999, regarded as the initial phase) remains a key reference point for contemporary studies of women, media and politics. For example, McGregor (1996b) wrote that “it is startling to see how relevant her critique remains to the contemporary condition” (p. 316). Similarly, after studying the 1996 election campaign in Israel, Lemish and Tidhar (1999) concluded that the coverage “seems to leave us on the road to...‘symbolic annihilation’” (p.410). However, a European Commission study published in 1999 concluded that, across all media, the status of gender portrayal “is no longer monolithic stereotyping of the kind described in content studies of the 1970s and 1980s” (Gallagher, 2001, p.5). Thus, some researchers, such as Luebke (1992), have called for an end to content analyses, arguing that there is already ample evidence of women’s marginalisation, and encouraging different approaches. Despite this, content analysis continues to be a valuable tool for researchers interested in documenting how much coverage women receive, and plotting changes in content over time.

For example, Smith (1997) examined whether there has been a shift in media portrayals of women candidates since the influential work by Kahn and others published in the

early 1990s. His verdict was mixed for women: systematic gender-based bias is not as evident as it was but “while the rule was one of rough parity in coverage, most exceptions to the rule were at the expense of female candidates” (p.79). He quoted a female political candidate, Kathleen Brown, who said that while the gender barrier had been broken, women continue to face some unique problems.

Another illustration comes from Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which documented news media coverage of women on a particular day in 1995 and 2000, and reported little improvement in the status of women over this period. Overall, in 1995 women comprised just 17% of news subjects, rising slightly to 18% in 2000 (Spears & Seydegart, 2000; Fountaine & McGregor, 2001). The study also showed that the only category of news source where women outnumbered men was that of “homemaker/parent”. This is consistent with Rakow and Kranich’s (1991) assertion that:

As “signs of the times”, women are used to illustrate the private consequences of public events and actions. Women as sources in the capacity of institutionally unaffiliated individuals located in the private sphere serve to illustrate the consequences, emotions, or behaviors that underlie a story. (p.16)

Similarly, Sapiro (1993) argued that to analyse women in politics it is necessary to understand them as “symbolic women, representatives of their gender as well as many other things” (p.143). Thus, while gendered mediation has provided an important new way of analysing media coverage of women, studies have continued to raise questions about visibility/invisibility and document the narrow focus of news about women.

While the news media might also pose challenges for men, especially those who are non-white, working class and poor (Croteau & Hoynes, 1992), women have a particular outsider status because of their traditional association with society’s “private” or “domestic” sphere. Witt et al. (1994) argued that the pattern of coverage received by high profile women has changed little - despite the obvious gains of feminism - since the election of the American Congress’ first female member, Jeannette Rankin, in 1916. This pattern is characterised by a focus on physical appearance and dress, an interest in supposedly aberrant behaviour, an insinuation that the voting of one woman representative reflects the views of all women, and “constant spoofing, which barely veiled hostility, at the notion a woman had either the right or the authority to be a

politician” (p.186). As Herzog (1998) warned, rather than draw conclusions from the amount of coverage women politicians receive, “we have to examine how women are conceptually ‘packaged’ when they are marketed as a ‘new product’ in the media culture” (p.28). The concept of public/private spheres provides an important way of understanding this packaging.

3.4 The Private and Public Spheres

The notion of the “public sphere” originated in the work of Habermas who, in the context of the period from the 17th century to the early 19th century, defined it as a space where (privileged) private citizens gathered to debate issues of public concern. The occurrence of such a public space in this era was linked to increased economic independence, availability of printed materials, growth of an independent press, and the availability of venues for discussion, such as coffee houses and salons. Habermas’ analysis has been criticised for its initial idealism and historical inaccuracies but “it offers nevertheless a powerful and arresting vision of the role of the media in a democratic society” (Curran, 1996, p.82). McNair (2000) argued that the media are at the core of a properly functioning public space. Similarly, Bathla (1998) suggested “In contemporary times no discussion of the public sphere is complete unless it takes into account the role of media in representing concerns of citizens” (p.160). She wrote that the media “acts as the mediator and facilitator between policy makers and the citizenry” (p.15), and drew on the work of Gurevitch and Blumler (1994) to describe what the media are expected to do to fulfil their public sphere role: report happenings likely to impact on citizens’ welfare, identify key issues and set the political agenda, speak on behalf of a range of perspectives and interest groups, and facilitate dialogue “between rulers and the public and across a diverse range of views” (quoted in Bathla, 1998, p.15). Concerns about the way the media are falling short of these standards were explored in the previous chapter.

As an element of the public sphere, the media pose a challenge for women who have traditionally been linked to its opposite, the private sphere comprising the domestic, family space to which women are confined, and hence kept away from power (Bathla, 1998). Women are denied equal access to the media and their issues are often sidelined in the news. Research since the 1970s consistently shows women are omitted or covered in stereotypical ways. Suggestions to remedy this, such as increasing the number of

women in the media, have not, on the whole, resulted in significant change. According to van Acker (1999), "The scope and structure of the public sphere have not served men and women equally well" (p.142). Given the importance of the media to the public sphere, it is unsurprising that feminist scholars are increasingly conscious of the central role it plays in shaping gender relations and underpinning women's oppression (Cirksena, 1996). Herzog (1998) maintained that:

The media do more than hold up a mirror to sociopolitical processes; they are also one of society's mechanisms for strengthening and entrenching the social order. The media play a significant role in the ongoing construction of gender discourse. (p.26)

Far from being neutral, it is argued that the news is a masculine construction, which positions women as "other" (e.g. Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998; Jamieson, 1995), drawing on existing power structures, which are "embedded in the political and social order" (Zoch & Turk, 1998, p.764). Witt et al. (1994) wrote that:

What constitutes "news" is partly whatever editors or news directors decide and partly a hundred years of a tradition that has defined women and their issues as "soft" news, while politics is "hard" news and a man's domain. (p.183)

In his study of the social construction of women in news, Bybee (1990) wrote of power/knowledge as,

"an integrated, mutually reinforcing discourse of truth" that both keeps the media consumer from seeing and hearing women's voices presented in the news, and women from presenting the news. (quoted in Zoch & Turk, 1998, p.764)

The concepts of public and private have proved useful for explaining the secondary position of women in politics (van Acker, 1999). Bathla (1998) wrote that the distinction between the spheres, and the absence of democratic theory around the nature of the private sphere, are key issues for feminist writers and researchers. However, it should be noted that the gendered connotations of the private and public spheres are a social convention rejected by many of these same writers. Brown and Gardetto (2000) pointed out that:

the distinction between political life and family life and the association of men with politics and women with family is not a necessary one, rather it is part of an ideology that has symbolically masked women's subordination. (p.24)

Craske (1999) encouraged "de-gendering" the public-private divide (i.e. refraining from mapping female-male onto private-public and resisting making either subordinate to the

other), and argued it does not adequately reflect the reality of many people's lives. For example, women have long had the role of bringing up children (sons in particular) to be good citizens, with a sense of public duty. Further, the boundaries between what is considered private and public are changing, as more women take on roles in the public sphere, and private sphere issues enter the public domain (Herzog, 1998). Consequently, issues such as domestic violence are discussed, and solutions addressed, in public forums. However, the downside of this, which has not been widely noted in feminist writing, is that the contemporary news media, with their increased tendency to personalise and "celebrify" political news, no longer distinguish between conventional public and private boundaries. Ironically, the news media now treat "private" as "public", and both male and female politicians face greater scrutiny of their personal lives than ever before (see also Chapters Ten and Twelve).

The public-private dichotomy can be criticised for failing to realise that the social world is in reality more complicated, that the private and public spheres are not separate but overlap, and for reinforcing the notion that "private" equals "female" and "public" equals "male". However, it should be noted that in many countries politics is a male arena, dominated by male representatives. Consequently, media coverage of politics is based on "basic exclusionary social interpretative frames that rest on the dichotomous notion of masculine/public/political versus feminine/private/apolitical" (Herzog, 1998, p.26). Public/private sphere theory provides a framework for understanding and interpreting the media's portrayal of women. Even feminist critiques of Habermas' original work have been used to strengthen the value of the concept for analysis of media texts. For example, Peer (2000) used Fraser's (1992) critique (centred around questions of access and the idea of multiple rather than one public sphere) to examine what talk radio offers women in terms of a public space for discussion. Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000), in their introduction to *Gender, Politics and Communication*, concluded that:

whereas women's political activities try to undermine just that gendered distinction between public and private, it seems to remain the inevitable frame of reference to understand it. Paradoxically then, it seems that it is through communication that women's political resistance to the public-private divide simultaneously implies its confirmation. (p.17)

In a similar vein, Lemish and Barzel (2000) wrote:

A central mechanism reflecting and legitimizing the gendered separation between the public sphere of the open, rational, political world and that of the private sphere of the closed, emotional, private world is the media's portrayal of social life. (p.150)

Thus, media criticism of Hillary Rodham Clinton, who combined political duties with the more traditional work of First Lady, may be the result of her violation of conventional boundaries through occupying the public sphere (Piper-Aiken, 1999). Saxonhouse (1992) argued that:

By ascending to the public realm of political renown, women contaminate the pristine conceptual model of public and private. The dismissive and denigrating language often used today in the representations of women in the male world of politics becomes a mechanism for preserving the boundaries of the past and the normative flavors of those divisions. (p.8)

Herzog (1998) wrote that "women are introduced into the public sphere by assimilating the binary differentiation between the two spheres into the public realm" (p.33). Her work on the portrayal of Israeli women politicians suggested the news media attempt to resolve the threat women politicians pose to the binary structures of public and private in a variety of ways, such as by compartmentalising media coverage of women, referring to biological destiny, portraying politics as "dirty" and "ugly" and no place for a woman, and by focusing on role conflict and the price of politics. Herzog (1998) concluded that:

Using textual strategies, the press demarcates the boundary between private and public, entrenches women in the private realm, and defines women in politics as trespassers who are trying to achieve the impossible: to be part of two spheres that are by nature closed to each other. (p.44)

Many of these patterns have also been documented elsewhere. Witt et al.'s (1994) description of news stories about, for example, the contents of Congress member Claudine Schneider's refrigerator and Josie Heath's breakfast preparations (the television report opened with visuals of Heath on her knees wiping up broken eggs) lent further support to Herzog's (1998) argument that political women are defined in terms of the "private sphere":

Female politicians are portrayed as giving up their femininity or as bringing their entire feminine world into politics, so that, even if they have ostensibly crossed the lines, they remain in the feminine/domestic sphere. (Herzog, 1998, p.44)

Therefore, high profile women politicians such as Australia's Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner (the first woman Premiers of Western Australia and Victoria respectively) have been portrayed as wives and mothers, and questions have been raised about what their children would do without them, and how they were going to manage their home roles. On Australian radio's *The Media Report*, convener of the National Women's Media Centre, Helen Leonard, argued this type of coverage is more intrusive for women, and perpetuates stereotypes. She asked, "When was the last time you saw, just about on every story about a male politician, that he was a father of so many children and questions about his home role?" (ABC Radio National, 1997, para.82).

The challenge this poses for women is summed up in a comment by Brown and Gardetto (2000):

The contradiction for women, who participate in the so-called public sphere, is that they signify nature/sexuality/family, even as they engage in the social realm of rational and universal citizenship. (pp.24-25)

Herzog (1998) argued that this is not, in the most, a deliberate construction but a result of the hegemonic view of how society is structured, what women's role in it is, and the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Witt et al. (1994) stated that the reasons for this interest are both simple and complex:

To discuss political women in intimate, almost Playboy-like detail is an expression of confusion, not about any individual woman and her politics or public record, necessarily, but at the very concept that women should be put out in the public world and running for office...To ask political candidates to help create a "photo-op" or "TV visual" by invading their homes – or to ask the wives of male candidates for their cookie recipes – symbolically forces all women back into their kitchens, or back in time to a place where gender roles were rigidly defined, where husbands were the public persons and wives "covered" things at home, and the mythologies about men and women's sexual natures could go unchallenged. To put it another way, the press coverage of women in politics is an artefact of this country's age-old but unresolved debate over women citizens' proper roles versus "proper women's" place. (p.182)

However, Rakow and Kranich (1991) suggested that the media, in failing to reflect on journalistic practice, play an active role in maintaining this picture of gender relations (rather than just passively reflecting the status quo):

Women's absence from the public sphere as well as their lack of status as authority figures or experts gives the news media a ready-made justification for women's absence from news programs – without the media's having to confront their complicity in setting the conditions for women's appearance. (p.13)

One of the ways the media do this is through the focus on personal appearance, grounded in stereotypical views about femininity.

3.5 Stereotypes and Femininity

There is a well-established strand of anecdotal and empirical evidence that the news media pay greater attention to women politicians' personal appearance (e.g. Kitch, 1997; McGregor, 1996a, 1996b; Motion, 1996; Sullivan & Turner, 1996; van Acker, 1999; Witt et al., 1994). Herzog's (1998) argument that Israel's female politicians are often described in ways which emphasise their femininity, thus reinforcing their "separateness" from masculine politics (p.37), fits well with American examples discussed by Witt et al. They described the way the *New York Times* described Illinois' 1992 Senate candidates, Carol Moseley-Bruan and Richard Williamson:

"She is commanding and ebullient, a den mother with a cheerleader's smile; he, by comparison, is all business, like the corporate lawyer he is..." Not until the twenty-second paragraph did the *Times* note that Moseley-Bruan was also a lawyer and a former federal prosecutor and veteran state senator, as well. (p.181)

Motion (1996) argued that the media's focus on women's appearance privileges the body over the mind. For female politicians, physical appearance is a political commodity evaluated as an aspect of performance. In an interesting analysis, Motion (1996) used a Foucaultian framework to discuss the positions and functions available to women politicians in media discourse. In particular, she discussed the practices of surveillance and normalising judgement, the forms these practices take in media coverage, and the ways women may resist them:

Surveillance is viewed as the continuous gaze of the media on women politicians. Normalising judgement is discussed in terms of how the media control prescribed gender roles. Women politicians need to subject themselves to media surveillance in order to gain a public profile, in order to get elected, and therefore turn themselves into subjects of media discourse. Resistance to the dividing practices and subject positioning within media discourses is a possible power for the women politicians to wield. (p.111)

Efforts to resist, however, are far from universally successful. Motion (1996) analysed an infamous example when New Zealand's Helen Clark became leader of the Labour Party. The *Dominion* newspaper published a front-page photograph of Clark sitting slightly in front of her husband, leaning back to kiss him. She had her mouth partially open and looked uncomfortable. Clark later revealed that she was anonymously sent a

copy of another “beautiful photo”, which was the next frame taken during the same photo session but not used by the newspaper, a decision she contemplated could have been anti-women, anti-Labour or anti-Clark (Ralston, 1994, cited in Motion, 1996, p.113). The Press Council, upholding a complaint laid by Media Women,

stated that the sexual significance identified in the caption introduced elements of ridicule and bad taste that reflected a lapse of judgement and a departure from accepted journalistic standards. (McGregor, 1996a, p.185)

Motion (1996) argued that Clark was positioned as lover, not politician:

Rather than positioned as an organisational or occupational subject which Clark has attempted to construct through public relations practices, she has been positioned by the media within traditional media discursive frames as gendered, as feminine. (p.113)

Similarly, Ross and Sreberny-Mohammadi (1997) wrote that British MP Shirley Williams, despite her talent and experience, never completely transcended media interest in her appearance, and was weakened by the “bag-lady” image constructed of her. As Motion (1996) explained,

The media would seem to have predilections as to what subject-positions a female leader can have and acts as a normalising force, reifying and protecting the constraints which limit the public image and discursive positions of a female political leader. (p.112)

McGregor (1996a) argued that the news media judge women politicians against an ideal, which appears to be a “Beehive bimbo-Boadicea who combines political energy and power with a stereotypical femininity expressed in conventional prettiness” (p.183). She regarded this as evidence of its antiquated beliefs about women’s place in society.

Along with the focus on appearance, it has been shown that women politicians are portrayed in stereotypical ways, and confined to a limited range of portrayals. It has been suggested that women are depicted in a narrower range of ways - saint-virgin, loose woman or mother character - and while men may be classified in similar ways, Sylvia Spring of Media Watch believed they are allowed greater variation than women. On Australian radio’s, *The Media Report*, she stated that:

sure, there are times when they [men] are stereotyped, but they’re allowed more scope, they’re allowed to be older, they’re allowed to be fatter, they’re allowed to be uglier, they’re allowed to change their minds, they’re not put in these narrow little boxes. (ABC Radio National, 1997, para.68)

Eveline and Booth (1997) referred to the “matron saint icon” with which Western Australia Premier Carmen Lawrence was linked, and noted that cleanliness metaphors were an important part of her public image. The media played a role in constructing “the cultural myth of St Carmen” (p.114) but when she was implicated in a state scandal about the (mis)use of executive power (known as the Easton affair) they mocked this image they had helped to produce, branding her a liar, referring to “Mrs Clean’s stretched credulity” and writing that “Saint Carmen’s in a devil of a mess”. Eveline and Booth (1997) asked if expectations of women politicians are overly pure. They drew on feminist research which suggested that the idea women “will do it cleaner and better than men is itself a way of minimising the presence of women” (p.116).

However, as mentioned earlier, a number of researchers are moving away from the idea that coverage of women is simply sparse and based on gender stereotypes, suggesting instead that we are in an era characterised by ambiguous coverage. Overt sexism is less likely to be tolerated in Western society that is at least superficially committed to gender equality, but media coverage still contains mixed messages about gender roles and relations. Some recent American studies have concluded there is little in the way of crude stereotyping or bluntly negative news coverage (e.g. Carroll & Schreiber, 1997; Smith, 1997), but such results are not yet cause for celebration. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) argued that:

another, more subtle line of argument is challenging the too-easy assertion of negative coverage. By showing that coverage is indeed different for men and women leaders and that the media may send mixed signals, some negative and some positive, the way is opened for a more nuanced assessment of gendered media representations and strategies to improve them. (p.106)

Gidengil and Everitt (1999) supported this shift in focus, using the concept of gendered mediation to analyse the 1993 Canadian leaders’ debates. Their argument is that political news, with its metaphors of war and conflict, subtly reinforces politics as a male arena, and thus creates particular challenges for women leaders. In other words, the women who took part in the 1993 leaders’ debates ran the risk that their behaviour, if contrary to expectations of how women should behave, would be interpreted negatively. Their findings lent support to this, suggesting “that what is perceived – positively – to be combative in a man may be judged – negatively – to be aggressive in a woman” (p.62).

Taking a more global approach, Norris (1997c) studied media coverage of female world leaders during their first week in office. She predicted that while there was evidence to suggest women are less visible in the news, there were good reasons for supposing that women leaders would receive more front page attention, and coverage that is gender neutral. These “good reasons” include the fact that news about leaders is institutionalised – “The White House press covers the President, whether male or (if ever) female” (p.152) – that coverage would be country-related and event-driven, and that women leaders are unusual and hence more newsworthy. However, she found that women leaders receive significantly less press attention in their country than their immediate male predecessor, although she cautioned that the difference was moderate and the sample limited. Norris (1997c) observed that the great majority of coverage did not include simple or crude sex stereotyping in relation to personal appearance or characteristics such as compassion and sensitivity. None of the leaders campaigned on traditional compassion issues, and although some did stress women’s rights, it was only Ireland’s Mary Robinson who was “defined first and foremost by these issues” (p.160). However, she concluded that gendered news frames did exist in coverage, and “reflected a more subtle conventional wisdom about how women are seen as politicians” (p.161). The most common frames were the leadership breakthrough for women (which is common in coverage of all women who are the first to do or achieve something); women leaders as outsiders (concentrating on the lack of conventional qualifications and political experience, and particularly common in coverage of women who become leaders through family connections); and women leaders as agents of change, who will clean up corruption in politics. (While this latter angle, which partially reflects campaign positioning, may accompany any change in leadership, Norris, 1997c, regarded it as a dominant motif in coverage of women leaders.) She also concluded that although women are often seen as agents of change, especially when they first come to power, this framing could create difficulties. Sharing Eveline and Booth’s (1997) reservations about the purist expectations of women, she wrote:

This framing device may prove positive for women leaders, if their country is going through a period when people want a change from the past, such as the end to the old politics of corruption and graft. Nevertheless, this frame may create false expectations for what the new leader can achieve and, therefore, in the long term may set women leaders on a pedestal from which they can only fall. (pp.164-5)

Like Norris (1997c), who found little proof of crude sex stereotyping in media coverage of women leaders throughout the world, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) uncovered limited evidence of bias and trivialisation in coverage of women in the 103rd Congress. They concluded that while the overall portrayal of women in Congress was a positive one (with women shown as agents of change, making a difference despite sexism and family demands), the reporting did suggest women were active in a narrow range of issues such as women's health, abortion and sexual harassment. Carroll and Schreiber (1997) conceded that while coverage was not perfect, there was in fact a bigger problem, that of omission:

There were some articles about bathrooms, occasionally a reporter would mention a woman's appearance or attire, and some articles about women in Congress were relegated to the style pages. However, the major problem we found with coverage of women in Congress could be better characterised as one of omission rather than commission. The major problem is not so much with the coverage that exists but rather with what does not exist...What is missing from general press coverage on women in Congress is any sense that women are important players on legislation other than women's health, abortion, and a handful of other related concerns. There is barely a mention anywhere of women's involvement in foreign affairs, international trade, the appropriations process, or regulatory reform, for example. (p.145)

Furthermore, the authors were aware that individual women had, in this period, made considerable contributions to the Crime Bill and played major roles in health reform debates. Thus, while the more subtle "gendered mediation" approach is useful, researchers must also remain open to evidence of more traditional bias in media content. The drop in the number of front page references to women in the mid 1990s was attributed to a backlash (Hernandez, 1996) and Danner and Walsh (1999) also found evidence of backlash themes, including stereotypical portrayals of women and lack of substantive coverage, in newspaper coverage of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. While Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found little support for the charge of bias and trivialisation often levelled at news coverage of women, they identified something equally as fundamental – omission, one of the original aspects of Tuchman's (1978a) symbolic annihilation. The changing social status of women is no guarantee of changing media coverage, as Lemish and Tidhar (1999) also discovered. They expected that changes in the status of Israeli women between 1988 and 1996 would be reflected favourably in election campaign coverage of women in 1996, but:

In contrast to what might have been expected, persistent biases typical of traditional gender representations in the media prevailed in the 1996 campaign: In comparison with men, women appeared less, were younger, and were assigned lower status. (p.407)

Further, the issue of motherhood came to dominate Israel's 1996 campaign. The following section outlines the relationship between motherhood and politics, and discusses recent research that shows this traditional gender role still pervades media coverage of women.

3.6 Motherhood and Politics

Motherhood not only is the act of bearing and rearing children but also is a symbol of womanliness, love and nurturance. (Klein, 1984, p.62)

Motherhood has been associated with women and politics since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when suffrage movements gained momentum around the world. According to Klein (1984):

twentieth century suffragists abandoned feminism, the belief that men and women are equal, by accepting differences between the sexes as inherent and stressing the vote as a means of protecting the sanctity of the home and preserving their families. (p.14)

Dixon (1992) concurred, arguing that women who ran for Parliament in the early part of the twentieth century tried to offset the belief that they were unnatural and a threat to the family by taking care not to behave in ways which could be interpreted as aggressive or unwomanly, and championing "non-political" issues, such as the welfare of women and children. This is still the case today, Dixon (1992) argued, when high profile female politicians position themselves as ordinary women (e.g. Golda Meier was photographed bathing her grandchild), portraying an acceptable image to offset concern that they have crossed the gender barrier. In New Zealand, the first country in the world to grant women the vote, women politicians throughout the mid-twentieth century drew on their status as wives and mothers to strengthen their political authority (Wallace, 1992).

Women's experiences as mothers are believed to affect their views on policy and impact on how they govern (Okin, 1990 cited in Kahn & Gordon, 1997). Historically, women have also been associated with morality, probably because of their status as mothers and

the link between the suffrage and temperance movements. According to Klein (1984), those who opposed women's suffrage were concerned about the effect of women on voting patterns: "the liquor industry, for example, worried about prohibition, while urban machines dreaded the potential for 'clean-up' campaigns" (p.142). This trend continued throughout the century, and in the 1990s, Norris (1997c) identified "women leaders as agents of change" (suggesting women will clean up corruption in politics) as a common frame in media coverage of women leaders, although she noted that this partly reflected women's campaigning.

Motherhood necessarily positions women in relation to (male) others, and in the domestic, "private" sphere, yet as women make advances in public life, it is not unreasonable to expect that media portrayals will change to better reflect this (Lemish & Tidhar, 1999). In regard to New Zealand's 1990 General Election, Wallace (1992) noted that, "Women no longer perceived the need to explain why they as women sought to enter Parliament, and very few of them outlined their qualifications in gender-based terms" (p.337), or focused predominantly on "women's issues". However, she went on to note that media coverage of some of the women did focus on their links with "influential men". For example, Judith Tizard was referred to as a daddy's girl, Christine Fletcher was described as Hugh Fletcher's sister-in-law, and Pauline Moran's selection in the Wairarapa electorate resulted in the headline, "Boorman's wife wins seat" (Wallace, 1992) According to Bourque and Grossholtz (1984), this "assumption of male dominance" (p.104) is a way of distorting the participation of women in politics. They wrote:

It has been asserted and accepted, without proper evidence, that men dominate and women are dependent at the primary level of community life – the family. This asserted dominance of the male is then extended to a wider realm. For example, women's political attitudes are assumed to be reflections of those of the father or husband. (p.104-5)

There is other evidence that coverage of women has not changed much over the past decades but instead exhibits signs of a "backlash" against progress. For example, Danner and Walsh (1999), in their analysis of coverage of the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, found that the media persisted in presenting a feminist/mother dichotomy, problematic for several reasons:

the constructs “feminist” and “traditional mother” serve a prescriptive function in determining what are “appropriate” or “natural” female behaviours for each role. Further, the gendered distinctions that exist regarding the (male) public and (female) private spheres implicitly dictate that women who are “traditional mothers” are acting within their appropriate feminine domain, while women who are acting publicly in the open, masculine spaces of politics and international affairs (i.e. feminists) are not. (p.74)

In other words, it appears that while many women candidates no longer position themselves in traditional gender-based ways, the media continue to portray them in relation to men (i.e. in the private or domestic sphere) or subtly set the criteria for their participation in public life.

On the other hand, this reading of the situation is complicated by research that suggests that women comply with and even court this traditional media focus. In Lemish and Tidhar (1999), the issue of who is responsible for the prominence of “nurturant women” in media coverage, and the corresponding “motherhood strategy”, is not addressed. Women in this category appeared to be mostly non-politicians but even an incumbent female politician spoke about peace – “a public- sphere male issue” – using (or as the authors suggest, “exploiting”) the personal experience of motherhood. Lemish and Tidhar (1999) noted that the reliance on personal experience and participatory interaction is a familiar feminine style (Mathison 1997, cited in Lemish & Tidhar, 1999), and suggested that it lent legitimacy to the women and their message. However, they were disturbed by the way women were portrayed and argued that:

It raises the question whether campaign coverage of women and women’s issues leads voters to maintain traditional evaluations of the possible roles women can play in political life. (p.410)

Pušnik and Bulc (2001), in their research into the discursive strategies of female politicians in the Slovenian press, also noted that the women contributed to the focus on traditional femininity and motherhood. They wrote:

These women seem far from demystifying or deconstructing hegemonic discourses and behaviours. Consequently, the dominant discourse of women is not reproduced only by their male counterparts or the media but also by women politicians who contribute significantly to it as they are subjected to that discourse. (p.409)

To place the blame for “disturbing” campaign coverage with the media, when women appear to collude with these images, is to overlook deeper issues, centred around the

thorny question of whether women should exploit and thereby entrench gender stereotypes if they will gain politically; or if women should take the “moral” and “feminist” high ground and refuse to make use of such tactics. Eveline and Booth (1997) addressed this issue in their article on “Saint” Carmen Lawrence, when they wrote that the women politicians face the impossible and unrealistic task of satisfying both the general public and feminists.

The “risk” of this flirtation with motherhood for political gain – even if it is genuine – lies in the potentially negative connotations of motherhood, as McCarthy and Clare (1999) discussed in relation to Australian MP Cheryl Kernot:

The difficulty for women within the public domain is perhaps that our first experience of power and authority is generally through the mother. Part of the maturation process is the separation from the mother and it can be argued that our feelings about powerful women can be traced back to such patterns originating in childhood. Maternal nurturance has been reified within our culture, which Bayes and Newton (1978) suggest is perhaps one of the reasons we feel ambivalent about accepting women within powerful public positions of leadership. (p.6)

Pickles (2001), in an article that set out to explain how the world’s first women Prime Ministers and Presidents achieved success, argued that “motherhood is the source of women’s weakness, as well as their strength” (p.15). She documented ways in which women leaders have tried to make motherhood an advantage, and cited former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir as an example of someone who was both positively constructed as mother and grandmother yet also judged negatively by it. Pickles went on to identify Helen Clark as an exception to many other women leaders throughout the world, because of her decision not to “project or imply a maternal image” (p.18). She concluded that Clark’s acceptance as a national leader, despite her childlessness, may be a sign that women are transcending biological determinism, and suggested that this may serve to further weaken the positioning of women leaders as “other”.

3.7 Social and Structural Influences on Media Coverage of Women

The notion of public and private spheres is informative from a theoretical perspective, but researchers have sought more tangible indicators of why coverage of women politicians is the way it is, particularly whether the media are themselves “anti-women” or whether they reflect the views of society generally. This section explores research in this area.

Content analysis has been usefully linked with other methodologies (such as interviews and discourse analysis) to provide some insight into likely reasons. These reasons fall into two broad categories – coverage occurs as a result of news media processes (structural news bias), and coverage occurs as a result of wider social conventions (social bias). However, it should be noted that the reasons for structural news bias are often attributed to wider social bias. Kahn (1994) also suggested coverage could reflect the actions of women themselves, although she later discounted this (see Kahn & Gordon, 1997). McGregor (1996a) provided a useful account of gendered representations in New Zealand politics, and combined this with interviews in an effort to redress the scant attention that has been paid to the question of why such representations occur. She identified five possible reasons: appearance is part of the message and expectations of women's appearance are socially based; men dominate the top jobs in journalism; the trend towards "personalisation" of news; the gender bias inherent in political polling; and the emotional expectations of women. The second, third and fourth of these reasons related to news processes, while the first and last drew on broader social trends.

With regard to coverage of women politicians, the most researched aspect of news production relates to the impact of reporter gender on the way a story is written. The key issue here is whether male and female reporters write stories that reflect their gender sympathies, or whether newsroom socialisation produces a uniformity of media content. Early feminist analyses of media content led to calls for increased numbers of women journalists, who it was believed would write different stories, address female perspectives and interests, and include more female sources. Empirical research, however, provides little evidence that increased numbers of women journalists have changed the nature of news writing (although it is noted that women still hold few high and potentially powerful positions in journalism, in New Zealand and around the world). Weaver (1997) noted that his and other analyses demonstrate that the majority of reporters, even those with a great deal of freedom, work within the confines of specific news organisations, and are required to meet organisational, occupational and audience expectations. Furthermore, media organisations are influenced by their environment. Weaver (1997) addressed the structural constraints faced by reporters, but was careful to avoid excusing reporters completely:

Given these layers of influences, it is not too surprising that the individual characteristics of journalists do not correlate strongly with the kinds of news content they produce, but it would be a mistake to think that individual journalists have no freedom to select and shape news stories – or to change the nature of the news organisations for which they work. (pp.38-39)

For example, Weaver's (1997) convenience sample showed that women are "somewhat" more likely to include female news sources in their stories, and Zoch and Turk (1998) found that women reporters are more likely than men to attribute information to female sources.

The impact of newsroom allocation of stories was noted by Carroll and Schreiber (1997), who found that of those articles with a significant focus on women in Congress, 46% were written by women and 33% by men. They suggested that "Perhaps women more often volunteer to write these stories or perhaps they are more frequently assigned to them because of their gender" (p.137).

In reality, it is likely that women reporters who wish to advance their careers will have to conform to the dominant system of political reporting. Barton (2002) quoted an author of a report on diversity in the newsroom: "Professional trained women in a newspaper have been socialized. They have the same Rolodexes as men" (Cameron, quoted in Barton, 2002, p.19). The same report concluded that a racial identity was a more important influence on content than gender. Writing about Ugandan reporters, Tamale (1999) noted that "Paradoxically, many of the female reporters who have started to make inroads into the male media world seem to have brought into the masculinist culture of biased sexist reporting" (p.191), focusing, for example, on physical appearance and disagreements between women representatives. Tamale (1999) went on to say that:

Negative portrayals of women politicians by women journalists can be attributed to the resentment that rises out of the normative operations of patriarchy...It also results partly from the traditional training that female reporters receive. And it comes as no big surprise in view of the fact that almost all the leaders in public and private media charged with the power of selecting what, at the end of the day, deserves column or air space are men. Women in the media, therefore, count for very little in regard to enhancing the image of female politicians. (p.191)

The other dimension of the debate about political news coverage is the perspective of women politicians. Former New Zealand MP, Marilyn Waring, whose time in Parliament (1975-1984) coincided with an increase in the number of women political reporters, has argued that they have a “different ethos of operating” (quoted in McGregor, 1996a, p.188), characterised by respect for sources and unwillingness to indulge in “extraneous commentaries” about personal appearance (McGregor, 1996a, p.187). On the other hand, while British women MPs interviewed by Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) appeared to approve of the increase in women reporters, they “readily acknowledged that women journalists are socialised into the masculinist norms of the news industry and often find it hard to report in a different frame” (p.116). (See also Chapter Ten.)

Also on the structural side, Kahn (1994) found evidence that the news media are more receptive to the messages of male candidates, and one of the possible reasons she considered is different campaign strategies employed by male and female candidates. Kahn compared the content of political advertising with the same period’s campaign coverage and found that while women were more likely than men to talk about issues, they received less issue coverage in the media. There was “considerable incongruity” (p.167) between what female senatorial candidates were saying and what the newspapers were reporting. Kahn outlined three possible reasons why the media covered male and female candidates differently. First, coverage might reflect the stereotypes held by news staff. Second, organisational imperatives such as newsworthiness may result in, for example, a woman candidate receiving more coverage because she is considered a novelty. Third, differences in coverage may reflect different campaign strategies employed by male and female candidates. The third reason was later discounted by Kahn and Gordon (1997) who, to explore the question of campaign competence, examined whether women candidates do in fact campaign differently from men, and found that while men and women presented alternative agendas to the public, they did so in a very similar way. Drawing on the results of a survey of campaign managers, they concluded that:

differences in the electability of men and women candidates are not due to differences in the campaign abilities of the candidates. Instead, the success of women candidates may depend more heavily on the alternative agenda articulated by women candidates. During times of economic turmoil and international uncertainty...social issues like education, welfare, and health are less likely to resonate with the news media and voters. In contrast, during periods of economic prosperity and international peace...women's messages may be represented more faithfully by the news media and embraced more heartily by voters. Given the importance of the campaign context, women candidates may be well advised to consider public priorities when choosing among campaign themes. (pp.74-75)

The way an issue such as unemployment is framed can affect the public's evaluation of men or women's ability to deal with it (Huddy, 1994 in Kahn & Gordon, 1997, p.61).

For example:

If a woman candidate talks about the issue of jobs by discussing her desire to end the hardship of the unemployed, people's stereotypes about women's compassionate nature may lead them to see the woman candidate as superior at handling unemployment issues. However, if a male candidate frames the issue of unemployment by talking about the candidate's experience with creating jobs in the private sector, then people's stereotypes about the greater competence of male candidates may produce an advantage for the male candidate. (p.61)

Wider social bias appears to influence media coverage. Sex stereotype research reveals that people (and reporters are, after all, also people) link certain traits with women candidates (such as dependence, compassion, honesty, passivity, gentleness, and weak leadership) and different traits with men (such as independence, strong leadership, aggressiveness, and ambition) (e.g. Duke, 1996; Jamieson, 1995; Kahn, 1992). In addition, male candidates are judged better able to deal with particular issues such as foreign policy, defence, arms control and the economy, and women candidates better able to deal with issues of daycare, poverty, education, health, women's rights, drug abuse and the environment (Kahn, 1992). According to Haines (1992), women generally are perceived to be more honest and trustworthy, and less ruthless and self interested.

The media, of course, are not separate from society at large and it is not surprising that reporters absorb social values. The problem is that the media do not always reflect wider social change, or at least are slow to do so (what Tuchman, 1978a identified as "culture lag") and some argue that this is a deliberate distortion which works in their

own interest. The challenge of this social conditioning for women is that there is some evidence that “male” traits are more prevalent in media coverage:

In general, reporters discuss “male” traits more frequently than “female” traits, perhaps because they consider these traits more relevant for statewide office. They may think, for instance, that questions about a candidate’s leadership are more important than questions about a candidate’s compassion. Yet by emphasizing these “male” traits and by making them salient to the public...reporters may encourage voters to develop more favourable impressions of male candidates. (Kahn, 1994, p.170)

The difficulty for female candidates is exacerbated by the accompanying finding that even when female candidates stress these “male” traits – as they did in Kahn’s (1994) study of Senate candidates’ advertising – news coverage still shows a greater correspondence with messages of male candidates. Furthermore, there is some evidence that women candidates who do not act in “gender appropriate ways” are judged more harshly by the public (e.g. Gidengil & Everitt, 1999) although paradoxically “Women are at their most newsworthy when they are doing something ‘unladylike’, especially arguing with each other” (quoted in Braden, 1996, p.4). However, in contrast, Serini, Powers and Johnson (1998) concluded that a female candidate may be more successful if she presents herself as “manlike”. In a case study of the 1994 Illinois democratic gubernatorial primary, the female candidate (Dawn Clark Netsch) successfully,

positioned herself as one of the *good ol’ boys* in a commercial that showed her prowess at shooting pool. The copy read that she was a *straight-shooter*; the nonverbal text, which showed her playing pool with the silent determination and skill of a pool shark, said that she was *man-like*. (p.200, italics in original)

The lack of policy issue coverage, and the greater emphasis on horse race coverage, did not hinder Netsch’s nomination. The authors suggested coverage of strategy benefited her, suggesting “the ability to emulate a man, to speak a man’s language, and to position herself as a man seems to be key to understanding this long-shot victory” (Serini et al., p.202).

As the above findings suggest, women leaders encounter “double binds” (Jamieson, 1995). One of these, with particular relevance to this discussion of leadership, Jamieson labelled “femininity/competence”. She reproduced adjectives from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory that illustrated the prevalence of sex stereotyping among both men and women. “Masculine” items, commonly labelled instrumental characteristics, included

aggressiveness, ambition, forcefulness, leadership ability and decisiveness whereas “feminine” items (expressive) included compassion, gentleness, love of children and warmth. This sort of stereotyping, according to Jamieson (1995), is strengthened by the widely held belief that expressive and instrumental characteristics are bipolar opposites. She wrote that:

because the male is the norm, his competence is assumed and we rarely question his expressive capabilities. A woman’s competence is not assumed; her deviation from the supposed masculine “norm” is more likely to be noticed and, once noticed, penalized. Trying to satisfy this complex set of expectations is impossible. Women are penalized both for deviating from the masculine norm and for appearing to be masculine. When women try to establish their competence, they are scrutinized for evidence that they lack masculine (instrumental) characteristics as well as for signs that they no longer possess female (expressive) ones. They are taken to fail, in other words, both as a male and as a female. When women exceed at female (expressive) behaviour, the significance of their skills is undercut by the fact that these are devalued behaviors. (p.125)

3.8 Electoral Consequences and Viability

Kahn (with Goldenberg, 1991; 1992; 1994; with Gordon, 1997) has made a substantial contribution to the literature on female politicians and the news media, investigating how coverage of male and female candidates differs, and the electoral consequences of this. Her earlier work (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991) established that systematic differences do occur in coverage of male and female candidates. American women running for Senate received less coverage, and the coverage they did get concentrated more on their viability and less on their issue positions. Consequently, she identified media coverage as a particular challenge for women running for Senate.

Lemish and Barzel (2000) examined the media coverage of the “Four Mothers” peace movement in Israel and concluded that journalists used gender-biased strategies in their reporting of the women. They suggested that there are conflicting ways of interpreting this. For example, the women’s play on gender-based expectations of motherhood may be seen as a subversive strategy which was able to legitimise women’s participation in the traditionally “male” discourse of war and national security. On the other hand, the movement has also been criticised for hindering women’s long term fight for equal status, and doubts have been cast over its chances of survival as a important political movement. Lemish and Barzel (2000) quoted a feminist author’s reservations on the topic:

The female voice in the public sphere is not necessarily beneficial to both the political issue and the women's issue...Peace movements in Israel take upon themselves, in many ways, the traditional division of roles between the sexes...To engage in politics in the name of the "female voice" means to fixate ourselves in "women's roles"...Significant political influence is not going to grow from this, and it is very doubtful if it empowers the women as a public. (p.163)

This comment reflects the current tension in gender politics, which was perhaps first signalled in the 1970s, when second wave feminism gave rise to political candidates with different understandings of what it meant to run as a woman. Wallace (1992) argued that much of the media coverage received by women who contested political office in New Zealand before the 1970s treated them "first and foremost as women" (p.291). While comments and articles about appearance, clothing and motherhood were common, and there was little "serious" coverage, Wallace (1992) maintained that this did not have had negative consequences for women of this era. Although this focus had negative connotations and suggested there were attempts by the media, male politicians and others to downplay women's political contribution and confine them to traditional female roles, she argued that it could work in candidates' favour by reassuring the public that they were not deviating too greatly from their socially prescribed positions.

And:

it is also important to remember that many of the women candidates built their political power on the special qualities which they possessed as wives and mothers. Consequently press reports which stressed such roles could serve to emphasise women's political authority. (p.304)

However, elsewhere Wallace (1993) suggested that the media's focus on appearance may have hampered former beauty queen Christina Dalglish's 1966 campaign:

While her appearance earned Christina more press attention than she would otherwise have received, the benefits of it are ambivalent. Certainly it drew public attention to her candidacy but by highlighting her appearance instead of her political views it cannot be said to have portrayed her as a serious political figure. In fact the extra press attention which she received was of a trivial nature only and in many ways may have harmed her campaign more than it helped it. (pp.34-35)

Once serious campaign issues were raised, Dalglish's profile disappeared, and she did not win the electorate she contested. Wallace's (1992, 1993) somewhat contradictory stance, suggesting simultaneously that women were and were not hampered by coverage, is perhaps an indication of the particular difficulties faced by women

candidates in this era. It is likely that the feminist movement posed a particular challenge for women candidates in terms of how they positioned themselves, particularly when media attention to the feminist movement has tended to be negative (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Danner & Walsh, 1999; Lind & Salo, 2002). One of the few women MPs in Parliament around this time was Marilyn Waring. In the 1970s, tabloid newspaper, the *Truth*, ran a story claiming she was in a lesbian relationship, and called for her resignation. When the newspaper raised the issue again, in 1978, Waring responded by questioning whether a male politician would be asked the same type of question (McCallum, 1993). The *Truth* article signalled a change in media coverage, marked by greater interest in the private lives of women. This was perhaps, as Jenkins argued in the Australian context (ABC Radio National, 1998), related to society's fear of feminism and its consequences.

3.9 The Impact of Incumbency and Political Leadership

Gender is just one of several factors which influences the relationship between a political candidate and the media. In interviews with women MPs, many suggested aspects such as status and other personal characteristics were also important (see Chapter Ten). This section explores the particular challenge the structure of politics and its intersection with the news media, creates for women. The two key aspects here are political status (incumbency) and leadership. Both these have implications for media coverage, particularly as women are less likely to be incumbents and are much less likely to be political leaders. These issues need addressing to understand the context of women's political representation.

3.9.1 Incumbency

Incumbency has been defined as “the length of time a legislator retains political office” (Nicholl, 2000, p.12). The theory of incumbency suggests that political figures who already hold power are more likely to be returned to power, and:

Because it is notoriously difficult to dislodge a sitting MP, incumbency is seen as a major hurdle for all aspiring political candidates...All first-time candidates, male and female alike, are affected by the incumbency problem. (Nicholl, 2000, p.12)

While it may be true that both male and female first-time candidates are affected by incumbency, studies suggest women face greater barriers to selection and are therefore

less likely to have the opportunity to become incumbents. In the Australian context, van Acker (1999) argued that “The issue of preselection is a major constraint on women’s entry into Parliament” (p.108). According to Kelber (1994), one of the major obstacles to political equality for American women is male incumbency. Certainly, research from around the world shows that once selected, women are just as likely as men to win seats. Hill and Roberts (1990) wrote that:

Studies of the performance – and vote-pulling powers – of women candidates in America, Australia and Britain have all tended to dispel the myth that women lose votes for the political parties they represent. (p.62)

In a chapter devoted to debunking the myths about women and politics, Seltzer, Newman and Leighton (1997) rejected the notion that women have a tougher time winning political office than men:

When similar races are compared, women win as often as men. Electoral success has nothing to do with sex, and everything to do with incumbency...Incumbents, most of whom are men, win much more often than challengers. (U.S. House incumbents win about 95 percent of the time, challengers about 5 percent.) For women to have a level playing field, they have to wait for men to retire, resign, or die, and then run for the open seat. (p.7)

Because of the importance of incumbency and selection, Hill and Roberts (1990) suggested that:

The willingness of a political party to field women as candidates when vacancies occur in its parliamentary ranks, and the types of seats into which a political party puts women who are not already Parliamentarians, is a litmus test of that party’s attitudes towards women. (p.75)

In New Zealand, with its recently introduced Mixed Member Proportional system of government, list placings are another telling indication of party attitudes toward women. Female candidates running in marginal seats rely on sufficiently high list placings to ensure a Parliamentary seat. But in the 1999 election, long-time National MP Katherine O’Regan contested the marginal Tauranga seat and was placed low on the list. Nicholl (2000) wrote that the reason why National treated O’Regan so badly was never explained. Another incident within the ranks of New Zealand First caused a gender-related embarrassment for the party. Two New Zealand First women MPs from the 1996-1999 term contested unwinnable seats and were placed so low on the party list (ranked below some new, male candidates) that they would not enter Parliament. On the

other hand, the Green Party compiled a gender-balanced list and had a male and female co-leader.

A more recently identified problem is that New Zealand women MPs are staying in Parliament for less time than their predecessors only a decade or so earlier (Nicholl, 2000), and are therefore not benefiting from their incumbent status. Possible reasons why women tend to voluntarily leave Parliament more often than men have been explored elsewhere (e.g. Nicholl, 2000; Randall, 1987).

However, in some circumstances non-incumbent women candidates may benefit from anti-political sentiment, although those who are identified as incumbents will still carry traditional liabilities. Jamieson (1995) explained:

In the past, the argument from difference made it more difficult for women to secure leadership positions, particularly in areas not identified with “women’s issues”. But when those in power are condemned as “insiders” corrupted by that power and in bad need of term limits, being “different” is no longer a bane but a blessing. (p.115)

Some female MPs have also felt a responsibility to be different from men, to “clean up” politics and represent women’s issues (Haines, 1992). According to a political consultant quoted by Jamieson (1995), gender difference has gone from being a liability to an asset:

Now with public discontent about politics as usual, being in government is no longer as [sic] asset. There is unhappiness with conventional politics. People think it leaves them out. Women are still considered outsiders. Because they had to struggle to get where they are, voters think: “women candidates are more likely to know what my life is like and less likely to forget about me”. (Ann Lewis, quoted in Jamieson, 1995, p.116)

The relevance of incumbency to this research relates to its impact on the quantity and tone of media coverage, particularly during electoral contests. Commonsense suggests that incumbency is an advantage, to the point that some New Zealand media outlets refrained from using the title of Prime Minister during the 1999 election campaign, instead referring to Shipley as “the National Party leader” (Harris, 2000). An incumbent Prime Minister has greater resources as a result of the logistical backing of government, and policy announcements tend to carry greater authority (Harris, 2000). According to Goddard, Scammell and Semetko (1998), “incumbent prime ministers almost always

get more coverage than other leaders” (p.164). Political incumbency can also bring with it greater access to the national and local news media for those who hold ministerial roles or who are the local electorate MP. While incumbents and challengers may receive about the same amount of campaign coverage, incumbents are advantaged by the extra coverage they receive while going about their official duties (Graber, 1997). Graber (1997) summarised research findings from both congressional and presidential contests, demonstrating that challengers get only a fraction of coverage that incumbents do, with tone and focus tending to reflect incumbent’s campaign objectives (p.256). In New Zealand, McGregor and Comrie (1995) found evidence that political incumbency impacted on broadcast news. Their study of balance and fairness - a benchmark study of the news media over ten years - showed that almost twice as many Government sources as Opposition sources spoke on air, and when Opposition sources spoke their average speaking time was shorter. Graber (1997) argued that an imbalance of coverage between incumbents and challengers is the result of structural bias in the media. She wrote:

Reducing an incumbent’s coverage to that accorded to a challenger seems unfair and inappropriate because the public needs to know what office-holders are doing. It would be equally inappropriate to automatically expand a challenger’s coverage to an incumbent’s proportions. Imbalanced coverage in these instances results from *structural bias*, which is caused by the circumstances of news production. (p.250, italics in original)

However, Graber (1997) noted that it can at times be difficult to identify where structural bias ends and political bias begins, and discussed research done on the 1983 Chicago mayoral primary election as an example:

In the Chicago election, for instance, newspeople could argue that the heavy emphasis on negative stories about incumbent [mayor, Jane] Byrne was structural: There were many mayoral failures to cover. One could also claim that newspeople revelled in digging up negative news about her while ignoring her challengers’ flaws. (p.250)

The flipside of incumbency (or anti-incumbency bias) was explained by Harris (2000), who suggested that in the 1999 election Prime Minister Shipley’s incumbency:

evoked her party’s controversial legacy and imposed constraints. “National has had nine years to act; why do it now?” became a refrain, and National, aware of this, kept policy announcements modest and minimal. (p.78)

In a five-month analysis of one newspaper's coverage of Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark, in the build-up to the 1999 election, Sarah O'Leary (1999) found that incumbent Prime Minister Shipley received more overall coverage than Clark, but also received more negative coverage. Graber (1997) argued that incumbents tend to be treated more harshly "because their records in office always provide targets for criticism" (p.249). Lowry and Shidler (1999), though, found only minimal evidence of an anti-incumbent bias (testing soundbite length and positive/negative slant) in their examination of presidential and vice-presidential campaign stories during 1992 and 1996. They concluded, "the overall finding is that the anti-incumbent bias hypothesis was definitely not supported as an across-the-board generalization" (p.726).

There is evidence that the different coverage received by incumbents and challengers encourages a more positive evaluation of incumbents' viability, which creates additional difficulties for women candidates, who are mostly challengers (Kahn, 1992). Media theorists have explored the interaction of gender and incumbency with media coverage, and their results have particular implications for women, who as noted above, are less likely to be political incumbents.

3.9.2 Political Leadership

What are we to say about the relations between mass media and political leadership? The two are so utterly entwined. (Seymour-Ure, 1987, p.3)

Throughout history, politicians have worked at their public communication, using the channels open to them (Seymour-Ure, 1987). In a modern democracy, one of the most – if not the most – important channels is the media, which a political leader relies on to communicate with the public. Furthermore, a leader's reputation within the party and Parliament is, to some extent, reliant on a positive media image. In particular, television is the main direct medium for political leaders (Riddell, 1998). In the words of Seaton (1998a), the definition of political leadership "depends, to an extraordinary extent, on the capacity of a politician for self-projection on the screen" (p.117).

For the news media, political leadership exists when a person says or does something: in a certain place (e.g. Parliament), during an event (such as a by-election), as a member of a group (such as Cabinet) or by tenure of office (e.g. Prime Minister) (Seymour-Ure,

1987). The media rank politicians in terms of status and power: the Prime Minister tops the list, followed by Cabinet and the Opposition leader while at the other end of the scale backbenchers and “extremist” party members struggle for coverage (Seymour-Ure, 1987). The media are attracted to the status of political office, and through their actions influence the way individual leaders are perceived by the public:

First, leadership may be seen, from the viewpoint of media involvement, as a process of emergence, after someone has entered an arena. Media can help or hinder the process, for they provide other people in the arena with a gauge of a colleague’s performance: they help build (or destroy) a reputation. Secondly, a leader’s emergence will be cemented, for media, if it culminates in office. As one would expect from the nature of news values and procedures, media have a very strong bias to office. Just as media attention may be a gauge of a Leader’s success for his colleagues, so the attainment of office is a gauge of success for the media. (Seymour-Ure, 1987, p.14)

The growth of television has had a major effect on politics and political leadership. The election campaign, in particular, has become an “orchestrated event” (Negrine, 1994). Television has, according to Seaton (1998b), “been the most powerful pressure on the politics of appearances” (p.3). According to Negrine (1994), television is infatuated with leadership, resulting in a move toward “packaging” or “presidentialising” leaders in recent British elections. Britain’s 1997 election was judged to be more leader-centred than 1992 (Goddard, Scammell & Semetko, 1998) and in newspaper coverage, the leaders’ personality aspects received much more attention than their professional skills (Seymour-Ure, 1998. See also Graber & Weaver, 1996 for discussion of the US situation). But while television’s fascination with leadership has resulted in greater scrutiny of political leaders, this has often been at a personal rather than a policy level (see section 2.6 for more on the “intimizing” of media coverage). However, research by Lichter and Noyes (1996) suggested that speculation about the private lives of presidential candidates, such as Bill Clinton, is regarded by the public as less relevant than issue stance, past experiences and qualifications.

This trend towards greater personal interest in the lives of leaders is exacerbated when these leaders are women. As discussed earlier, women politicians face the uncomfortable task of reconciling their roles in the public and private spheres, which makes interest in their personal life more complicated, according to Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000):

The family life of female politicians is constructed as suffering because of their political careers and often female politicians themselves are quoted as feeling torn between public and private commitments. Although female politicians are also described as able and respectable, their participation in the public sphere remains an oddity, in opposition with their private lives. Male politicians, on the other hand, are seen as having supportive families and do not therefore experience feelings of division between public and private lives. (p.14)

Women who become political leaders do so in an arena that has long been dominated by men. Throughout history, politics has had an:

explicitly masculine identity. It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavor and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices. (Brown, 1988, quoted in Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995, p.24)

This male domination of politics has repercussions for media coverage of politics, as Gidengil and Everitt (1999) explained:

The political arena has traditionally been dominated by men, and around it there has arisen a descriptive jargon full of the imagery of other traditionally male activities, such as war and sports. The media reinforce these images through their coverage of political campaigns. Elections are described as battles between competing political parties, and debates are viewed as boxing matches or duels between different candidates. (p.61)

Moreover, as Jamieson (1995) pointed out, these analogies are seldom^{applied} to sports in which women and men compete on an equal basis, such as skating, tennis or gymnastics, but to male-dominated, contact sports such as boxing and football. And, “As the tension in a campaign mounts, war metaphors add an additional point of reference to domains until recently denied women” (p.175).

The apex of politics is party and/or national leadership, and given the fact that relatively few women have reached such heights, it is likely that the culture of maleness, prevalent throughout all levels of politics, is particularly strong here. Unlike men, women leaders - even those in the private business sector (McGregor, 2000) - must confront issues of gender. According to Sapiro (1993):

In male-dominated political systems in which politics and public life are understood as male domains and in which political leaders are usually expected to be male, women cannot fit into positions of political leadership easily. Their gender is an issue in a way that men's is not. Gender, especially notions of masculinity and femininity, carry important connotations about character, capabilities, and behavior that have potentially important political significance. (p.145)

According to King (1995), four key factors have contributed to the masculine identity of leaders and leadership positions: organisations are a male domain, more likely to have male leaders; expectations about gender roles result in a cultural preference for the masculine over the feminine; the state is a masculine domain because it reflects the cultural preference; and leadership-management is also a masculine domain in which "our cultural preferences for masculine can be seen most clearly in our definitions of leadership and preferences for certain types of leaders" (p.69). Therefore, political institutions such as Parliament:

have privileged men and masculinity: the way of interacting is male; the language and power structures are male; the agenda setting is male; the building of relationships is male. (Office of the Status of Women, 1995, cited in van Acker, 1999, p.85)

Randall (1987) argued that this makes political institutions uninviting for women:

Simply because they have been until recently exclusively male, because men still dominate their leadership positions, women are discouraged. Then also male dominance tends to generate a "masculine" style and atmosphere. Political scientists often specify the behaviour traits, not commonly associated with women, that effective political participation in contemporary democratic politics requires. (p.93)

Women leaders may have to confront the issue of gender, but Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) argued that while the concepts of governance and leadership have been marked by men and masculinity, few scholars have acknowledged their gendered nature. For example, they referred to Anthony King's chapter on former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in *Political Leadership in Democratic Societies*, in which he said she was an unusual Prime Minister and a minority in her own party, but "ignores the way in which being a woman, an outsider, likely shaped her position as 'unusual' or 'a minority'" (p.25). Similarly, McGregor (1996a) is one of the few researchers to suggest that media polling of political support for leaders, in the form of questions about "preferred Prime Minister", may disadvantage women contenders who are up against a

tradition of male leadership. However, Campbell's (2000) writing on the leadership of Margaret Thatcher makes explicit reference to gender, to the point that he argued it was "an almost unqualified source of strength" (p.229) to her. The three advantages she enjoyed as a woman Prime Minister (although she herself did little to feminise politics) were that she was the star of every summit she attended, she had a wider range of possible roles she could play (her repertoire was mother, sexual woman, housewife, woman in authority and queen – all used to her advantage in different contexts), and the ability to use her femininity to manipulate men (Campbell, 2000). It is important to note, however, that the advantages Thatcher may have enjoyed because of her gender are specific to the time and era in which she governed. For many of the women who have followed her, gender roles such as housewife and mother, are more complicated and their endorsement more politically risky (Lemish & Tidhar, 1999; McCarthy & Clare, 1999).

In a chapter entitled "The Maleness of the American Presidency", Whicker and Areson (1996) identified four possible reasons why no American woman has become president. First, throughout the world, women presidents are slightly less common than women prime ministers. It is argued that women fare better in systems where leaders are not directly elected by the public, as "Party members and long-term colleagues likely have less traditional bias against women as political leaders than does the general electorate" (p.176). Second, fewer women have experience in the "training grounds" for presidency – the offices of vice president, US Senator and governor – and therefore "the selection pool for female presidential candidates has been minimal" (p.181). A third possible reason is that their predominantly non-incumbent status and gender means women candidates at all levels encounter difficulties raising money. Finally, traditional beliefs about the role of women in society continue to handicap women candidates. "There is still a proportion of voters who will not support female candidates because they *are* women" (p.183, italics in original). However, in some countries the visibility of women in high profile leadership positions has prompted speculation about the "feminisation" of leadership. In Australia, in the early 1990s, pollster Rod Cameron interpreted Carmen Lawrence's state premiership as proof of the feminisation of political leadership. Leaders, he argued, were increasingly valued "more for intelligence, commonsense, honesty and creativity – an unusual combination of virtues, more likely to be found among women than men" (quoted in van Acker, 1999, p.86).

However, Haines (1992) began her chapter on media attitudes and the status of women with a discussion on the “extraordinary” coverage Carmen Lawrence received when she became Australia’s first woman premier in 1990:

The media seemed nonplussed. How were they to write about a woman in such a senior position? In the end, the Australian solved the problem in the time-honoured way of, first, noting the approval of a male “superior” and secondly linking her to several other women who had been elected to leadership positions internationally. The male approval validated her achievement, and the association with other women set her apart from the male norm. (p.173)

Haines (1992) went on to argue that the media coverage of Lawrence in 1990 was little changed from 1974, when the headline “Kissable Senator” topped an article about Kathy Martin, “the new 34-year old blue-eyed blonde Liberal senator-elect from Queensland” (pp.174-5). Van Acker (1999), too, found little evidence of a “feminisation” of Australian political leadership, and noted that women politicians continue to grapple with gender issues, such as whether they should be the same as men or highlight their differences. Women who do succeed in what remains a male orientated arena also risk becoming victims of their own success. Despite speculation about the feminisation of leadership:

High profile women are regarded as novel and unusual and often experience the “golden girl” or “saint” syndrome. Elevated expectations are built around them when they enter the political arena. Virtually reaching “sainthood” these women can do no wrong, but the minute they make mistakes they are judged harshly. (van Acker, 1999, pp.88-89)

Finally, it should be noted that at the time a woman reaches a leadership position, her gender is likely to be of increased interest, namely in regard to what it means to have a woman leader. For example, at the first press conference after Shipley became New Zealand’s first female Prime Minister, she was asked what difference being a woman made to her (to which she responded that it was more difficult to negotiate the television cables in high heels). Sapiro (1993) suggested that as the novelty of women politicians wears off, and they grow to be more familiar, gender becomes a more integrated part of their portrayal. She argued that gender is likely to be used more to interpret women when they first become prominent, or at particular turning points in their career:

In other words, gender is an important element of the meaning of the figure at all stages of a woman’s political career, but it may work differently at different stages of that public career. (p.146)

Sapiro's (1993) comments act as a reminder of the importance of continued monitoring of media coverage of women politicians.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored key research in the area of gender, news and politics, from quantitative studies concerned primarily with how much coverage women politicians receive, to more nuanced research that looks at the way women are framed or packaged in the news media. The concept of private and public spheres is central to understanding how women are framed in the news media. Despite the gains of feminism, the media still tend to position women in relation to men, and in the domestic sphere, concerned with "private" issues such as appearance and motherhood. Women politicians take varying approaches to how they package themselves, ranging from "gender-appropriate" to more masculine ways. There is mixed evidence about the success of both, and Jamieson's (1995) argument that women face "double binds" remains relevant. Feminine and private sphere values and perspectives are not always regarded as appropriate in the public sphere, as suggested by some theorists, and tentatively supported by analysis of the 1999 General Election in New Zealand (see Chapter Nine). However, constant change in the media landscape (see Chapter Two) demands on-going attention to the repercussions for women. Of particular importance is the trend toward "intimizing" of media coverage (characterised by increased interest in human interest stories, personal and intimate forms of address and the reducing of political issues and behaviour to questions of personality. See Chapter Two and van Zoonen, 1991) which on the surface suggests that private sphere values are gaining political currency, and therefore weakens the traditional distinction between public and private. But as Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000) suggest, private sphere values intersect with the gender of politicians in different ways. The double binds that continue to exist for women, despite social and media change, reinforce the value of sustained attention to questions of gender, news and politics. While the research discussed here comes predominantly from the Northern Hemisphere, an analysis of New Zealand during the 1999 General Election has an important contribution to make to theory. The following chapter moves toward this by discussing the value of content analysis to the study.

Chapter Four

Content Analysis Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The overall focus of the thesis is the news coverage of women politicians during New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign. Content analysis formed the foundation of the thesis and provided quantitative (and some qualitative) data to answer the first research question: How did the press cover women politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign?

Over the past thirty years, gender and media theorists have become interested in how the media cover women, and have theorised about the relationship between patterns in media content and the political status of women (e.g. Kahn, 1992). The intersection of gender, news and politics has subsequently become a research field in its own right (e.g. Norris, 1997b; Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000). While many contemporary studies in the area have moved away from traditional content analysis and toward more nuanced investigation, such as frame and discourse analysis, content analysis remains an important tool for researchers interested in monitoring gender portrayals, and establishing empirical underpinnings for studies of women in the news. As McGregor (1993) argued, content analysis which is factual, consistent and non-biased has value as a basis for activism and policy debate, and will enjoy more credibility in the wider community. Further, content analysis is the intuitively reasonable methodology given that women's in/visibility has been one of the central concerns of gender theorists. In the words of Tuchman (1991), the established rule of research is that "the method one should choose when approaching any topic, including news, depends upon the question one wants to answer" (p.79).

Much of the literature which informs the content analysis in this thesis has come from the United States, where research interest in "gender politics" appears most strongly, but work from Britain, Australia, Canada and the Middle East has also provided guidance. Content-based studies of gender in electoral contexts have tended to use a small number of different newspapers, analyse all dates during the election campaign, and code every story which mentions one or more of the candidates in the race/s (e.g. Kahn, 1994; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998; Smith, 1997). The amount of coverage

has also been measured (e.g. Kahn, 1994; Smith, 1997), or in the case of broadcast news, the amount of time (Lemish & Tidhar, 1999). These measurements have provided various indicators of the amount and type of coverage women politicians, in various countries and electoral contexts, receive during election campaigns. They have also made an important contribution to our understanding of women's in/visibility in the news.

In this study, content analysis was used to explore how newspapers covered female politicians, and also to identify key individuals and campaign events, and provide information about story variables, both of which underpin the two applications of frame analysis (see Chapters Eight and Nine). Specifically, the content analysis was used to answer three sub-questions about the media's coverage of women politicians during the 1999 election campaign:

- Under what circumstances are women politicians the central focus of news stories?
- To what extent do women politicians appear in news stories, as news sources and what is the tone of this coverage?
- Do the media make use of gendered language and employ references to physical appearance in their coverage of women politicians?

The way the methodology of content analysis was employed to answer these questions is discussed later in this chapter. But first, the following sections explain what content analysis is and why it is useful for this research.

4.2 What is Content Analysis?

At its most simple, content analysis may be regarded as a “formal system for doing something that we all do informally rather frequently, drawing conclusions from observations of content” (Stempel, 1989 quoted in McGregor, 1995, p.312). However, the classic definition of content analysis, a methodology with a long pedigree (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998), is “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, quoted in McQuail, 1987, p.183). According to Kaid and Wadsworth (1989), the uncontested requirements of a definition of content analysis are objectivity

and a systematic approach. There is, they have argued, little disagreement about the need to employ consistent criteria in a rigorous and thorough way, and display a lack of bias. There has, however, been controversy about the focus on manifest content and quantification. In response, Krippendorff (1980) has proposed a less restrictive definition, of content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (p.21).

Since Berelson’s definition was originally published in the 1950s, the field of media research has come to recognise the difficulty of referring to “the content”, given the proliferation of studies which demonstrate that people “read” the news in different ways, interpreting and taking away different messages. In turn, this brings into question the claim of objectivity. On accepting there is not only one way to read the content, researchers must recognise their own subjectivity. Hansen et al. (1998) wrote:

Content analysis, of course, could never be objective in a “value-free” sense of the word: it does not analyse everything there is to analyse in a text (no method could, nor would there be any purpose in trying) – instead the content analyst starts by delineating certain dimensions or aspects of text for analysis, and in doing so, he or she is of course also making a choice – subjective, albeit generally informed by the theoretical framework and ideas which circumscribes his or her research – and indicating that the dimensions chosen for analysis are the important or significant aspects to look at. (p.95)

A systematic approach to media content, using rigorous guidelines and categories, is different from casual reading, and the ideal of objectivity remains a somewhat contested aim of content analysis. For example, as mentioned above, instead of referring to objectivity, Krippendorff’s (1980) definition required content analysis to be “replicable”.

The issue of quantification has also been controversial, and Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) conceded that there is no easy resolution:

A researcher who engages in counting alone might incompletely describe the programming content...on the other hand, quantification guards against the problems of allowing novelty to substitute for importance. (p.199)

Hansen et al. (1998) argued that the essence of the definition of content analysis is quantitative – it requires researchers to identify and count occurrences and then uses these numbers to “say something about the messages, images, representations of such

texts and their wider social significance” (p.95). However, the numerical outcomes are of little value on their own, for there is no simple relationship between the frequency of occurrence and its reception and implications. Any inferences, argued Hansen et al., are dependent on the context and framework of interpretation. Holsti (1969) made a similar point, adding the need for generality to his definition of content analysis, and arguing that “simple descriptions of content are of limited worth without comparisons and relationships drawn from theoretical concerns” (quoted in Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989, p.198). Gunter (2000) noted that content analysis’ emphasis on quantification is:

Increasingly challenged as the value and insights provided by positivist empirical research have been challenged by critical and interpretivist paradigms. (p.57)

He went on to write that frequency of occurrence is not everything, and that some infrequent events may in fact be most salient for the audience (see Chapter Seven for more on salience and framing).

4.3 Why Content Analysis?

Hansen et al. (1998) have pointed out that all people are, to varying degrees, consumers or casual observers of media content. People are, however, also “implicitly selective” (Hansen et al., p.91) in their descriptions of media content and “tend to over-generalize from what they do see and remember” (Lichty & Bailey, 1978, p.112). Content analysis enables a more comprehensive and systematic examination of the news, for in the words of Lichty and Bailey (1978), “a valid and reliable study is sharply different from casual watching” (p.112). The aim of much media content analysis has been to examine how various media reflect “social and cultural issues, values and phenomena” (Hansen et al., p.92). A formalised system of media observation is valuable because some social issues (like media coverage of elections) are too important to be left to people’s impressions (Stempel, 1989 quoted in McGregor, 1995, pp.312-3).

Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) concluded there are several advantages of content analysis, namely its ability to deal with sizeable quantities of material, in a fairly quick and unobtrusive way and with a minimum of resources. They noted that content analysis allows for monitoring of content over time, and is particularly useful for retroactive measurement. It is also easily combined with other methodological approaches. In fact,

this is one of the key advantages of content analysis. Since the mid twentieth century, content analysis has been:

increasingly integrated into larger research efforts involving not just the analysis of media content, but also other methods of inquiry (surveys, experiments, participant observations, qualitative and ethnographic audience research) and types of data. (Hansen et al., 1998, p.93)

Seminal studies of news production (e.g. Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987, 1989; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978b) have combined news analysis with observation and interviews. In fact, many of the potential limitations of content analysis can be offset by careful research design, including complementary methodologies to fill in any gaps or build on content-based findings. This provides corroborative value to findings based on content analysis.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative applications of content analysis need not be exclusive. Sepstrup (1981) summed up this matter:

Qualitative analyses will always be necessary to produce actual understanding, to give detailed descriptions and analyses which are to describe and comprehend overall media content. But they will always be unable to cope with large amounts of data, and their results will be difficult to communicate and will have low general credibility. Traditional positivistic quantitative content analyses will always be suitable to describing many simple forms of data, and their results are easily communicated and normally enjoy considerable credibility. But they are always inadequate when it comes to *understanding* the texts and *explaining* their content, especially in a broad societal context. (p.155, italics in original)

4.4 Limitations of Content Analysis

As mentioned earlier, there are limitations associated with content analysis, some of them easier to overcome than others. First, content analysis is possible only when communication has been disseminated or published, and recorded in some way. Related to this fact is “the difficulty of drawing inferences about the intentions of sources or of isolating effects” (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989, p.213). Content analysis, therefore, can offer no insight into the gate-keeping process of the news cycle. McGregor (1995) suggested such limitations have little effect in the New Zealand context, where the lack of investment in journalism means reporters are not assigned to stories which will not be published, and consequently almost all copy produced by reporters is published. She wrote,

When nearly all the news that is covered is published, editing becomes a series of choices about “where” in the newspaper, and “how” it will be presented, not “if” the story will make it at all. (p.318)

A second key limitation is that the rigidity required in the construction of content analysis categories may result in the researcher overlooking important insights. Other limitations are related to the way the process is implemented in a particular research project. For example, in some circumstances it may be impossible to use a random sample, and instead a convenience sample may be employed. However, provided such limitations are addressed, and the potential impact on findings discussed, the methodology makes a very important contribution to media research, particularly that concerned with questions of visibility and invisibility in the news.

Finally, it should always be borne in mind that trained coders might see different things in media coverage than the general audience. Although this limitation applies particularly to studies where content analysis is used as the starting point for exploration of audience effects – of which this thesis is not one – it is important to be cautious in discussion of results, and “be aware that not everybody will perceive the world in the same way” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p.123).

In summary, content analysis - like any methodology - has limitations, and useful results are reliant on careful application. While the use of content analysis is widespread, and increasing, Riffe and Freitag (1997) lamented the lack of a “clear parallel trend toward more theoretical rigor that would allow linkage of content to process and effects” (p.879). In a similar vein, Berger (2000) wrote that quantitative content analyses are often purely descriptive and fail to make any inferences about “the potential significance of their findings in the context of what they reveal about production ideologies or impact of media content on audiences” (p.81).

4.5 How Content Analysis is Used in This Study

The relationship between content analysis and gender research is long established. Content analysis, even in its most basic form, lends itself to monitoring of media patterns, and is useful for critique and advocacy work (Gallagher, 2001). However, Gallagher (2001) also noted that restricting analysis to easily quantified aspects of content often means the more complex and subtle messages are lost. In relation to

monitoring of gender in the news, she wrote that “it is usually necessary to dig more deeply to reveal the nuances that contribute to particular patterns in gender representation” (p.123).

For this reason, the thesis employed content analysis not merely as an end in itself, but also as a basis for framing analysis. The relationship between content analysis and framing is explored further in Chapter Seven.

The recommended steps in content analysis have been broken down in numerous ways, with scholars setting out anything between four and five, to ten or twelve steps in the process (Hansen et al., 1998). This section follows the six stages set out by Hansen et al., comprising definition of research problem, selection of media and sample, definition of analytical categories, construction of a coding schedule, piloting of coding schedule and reliability checks, and data preparation and analysis.

4.5.1 Definition of Research Problem

Most empirical research requires the formulation of research question/s, and content analysis is no exception. Clearly conceptualising the research problem, and the aspects and categories of content to be examined are important initial stages (Hansen et al., 1998). The content analyst needs to consider, “what is it that we would hope to be able to say something about by analysing a body of media texts?” (Hansen et al., p.99), and then formulate the categories accordingly. The overall research question for this section asks how the press covered women politicians during New Zealand’s 1999 General Election campaign.

4.5.2 Selection of Media and Sample

As discussed earlier, one of the advantages of content analysis is that it allows for the analysis of large amounts of material. Still, in the majority of cases, it will be necessary to sample: particular forms of media; issues or dates; and relevant content.

4.5.2.1 Sampling Media Forms

In choosing which media (i.e. television, radio, newspapers, and which titles inside these categories) will be sampled, geographical reach, audience size and type, format and content characteristics, and availability must all be considered in light of the

research question. Hansen et al. (1998) stated that most content analyses examine only one or two types of media. This study focused on newspapers, which in New Zealand are a major provider of news at election time (Leitch 1991, cited in Hayward & Rudd, 2000). In fact, New Zealanders are among the top readers of newspapers in the world (Le Duc, Niemi & Norris, 1996 cited in Hayward & Rudd, 2000). Data gathered by the New Zealand Election Study in 1999 showed that about 90 percent of voters followed election news on television “always” or “sometimes”, as did almost half of voters follow newspaper coverage (Banducci & Vowles, 2002). Roberts and Levine (1996) drew on survey data from 1974 to 1990 to show that “a very high proportion of adult New Zealanders ‘regularly read a daily paper’” (p.197). Although television has replaced newspapers as the major source of news and information for voters, newspapers are regarded as a more reliable source of political information (Roberts & Levine, 1996). Alter (2000) argued that print journalism is still an “indispensable link” in what he called “the Great Media Food Chain” (p.89). Newspapers tend to drive other media coverage, cover the more complicated or revealing nuances of politics, and establish the terms of debate (Alter, 2000). In New Zealand, the print media are currently enjoying a period of readership growth, with 55% of people over 15 years reading a daily newspaper (Chapple, 2002).

A total of nine newspapers were analysed (see Table 1), and these were chosen because of their national focus, geographical spread and publication times. Seven of these were daily newspapers, comprising a census of all New Zealand’s metropolitan dailies at the time (*New Zealand Herald*, *Dominion*, *Evening Post*, *Press* and the *Otago Daily Times*) and the two leading provincial dailies, the largest circulating *Waikato Times* and former Newspaper of the Year, the *Evening Standard*. (It should be noted that the *Dominion* and *Evening Post* merged in 2002, to become the *Dominion-Post*.) The selected newspapers also provided a valuable mixture in terms of geographical spread, and morning and evening publication times. The other two newspapers included in the study were the only Sunday publications in circulation, the *Sunday Star Times* and the *Sunday News*. Television coverage of the election was also monitored but not subjected to formal analysis.

Table 1*Newspapers Sampled in the Content Analysis*

Type of Newspaper	Newspapers
Metropolitan daily	<i>New Zealand Herald, Dominion, Evening Post, Otago Daily Times, Press</i>
Provincial daily	<i>Waikato Times, Evening Standard</i>
Sunday	<i>Sunday Star Times, Sunday News</i>

4.5.2.2 Sample Dates

The choice of dates is dependent on the research problem, particularly whether it is concerned with coverage of a particular event (such as a war or an election) or whether it aims to establish how a particular group or issue is portrayed in the media generally. As indicated in the research question, the content analysis focused on the 1999 campaign period, which officially began on November 1, and ran for four weeks, up to (but not including) the election date of November 27. Table 2 shows the dates sampled.

Table 2*Sample Dates for the 1999 General Election Campaign*

Day of the Week	Date
Tuesday	November 2
Thursday	November 4
Saturday	November 6
Monday	November 8
Wednesday	November 10
Friday	November 12
Sunday	November 14
Tuesday	November 16
Thursday	November 18
Saturday	November 20
Monday	November 22
Wednesday	November 24
Friday	November 26

While the study of election campaigns is well established in the political and media literature, there is some concern about the validity of focusing only on election

campaigns rather than longer-term political coverage. Writing about the British election campaign, which lasts only three to four weeks (similar to New Zealand's four weeks), Negrine (1994) warned that:

During that period, political activity increases enormously as all attention is turned to the outcome of the election race. In spite of this increased activity, the period in question is a very short one and by concentrating on the campaign, one risks ignoring the period preceding the campaign: a period which may be equally, or more, significant. (p.152)

This warning was heeded, and the thesis is careful to describe the context and background to the 1999 campaign (see Chapters Two, Eight and Nine) and refrains from generalising from this period to the wider political context. However, it is precisely these characteristics of election campaigns (i.e. the increased activity and attention to the outcome), which made New Zealand's 1999 campaign an important site for research into the media portrayal of women politicians.

The need for representativeness and sufficient size (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989) were considered when deciding which dates to sample within this population. Thirteen days were included, comprising each second campaign day, beginning November 2 and ending November 26. In effect, this was similar to two constructed week samples, as particular days or weeks were not overrepresented. There is limited research on content analysis sampling during short periods of time such as election campaigns, but the work of Riffe and others has made an important contribution to our understanding of what type of sampling works best, depending on what form of media is under scrutiny (e.g. daily or weekly newspapers, broadcast media). Riffe, Aust and Lacy's (1993) study, demonstrating the superiority of constructed week sampling, remains a key guide for those sampling daily newspaper content. A constructed week sample gives the most reliable indicator of news content, as it allows for daily variations in newspaper size and content, and between-week differences. Riffe et al.'s study was concerned predominantly with which form of sampling provides the most effective and efficient estimate of the story population, and concluded, in part, that "two constructed weeks would allow reliable estimates of local stories in a year's worth of newspaper entire issues" (p.139). More recent work considered the most efficient way to sample news content over an extended period such as five years (Lacy, Riffe, Stoddard, Martin, & Chang, 2001). Given that this thesis is concerned with a much shorter and more

focused period of time (i.e. an election campaign, rather than a year of political coverage), their findings were not directly applicable, but the principles of including equal number of various weekdays, and sampling a range of weeks, are relevant, and were adhered to, with one limitation - because of the election campaign dates and consequent thirteen day sample size, only one Sunday ended up in the sample.

The sample size of thirteen days (almost two constructed weeks) provided a strong and reliable indicator of election news content, and meant that any major news event was unlikely to fall outside its parameters. It was also deemed important to have a sample of sufficient size to deflect criticism about the predominantly small size of samples in New Zealand news media research (McGregor & Comrie, 1995). All the newspapers were pre-purchased and delivered to the researcher throughout the campaign period.

4.5.2.3 The Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is what is counted by the researcher (Hansen et al., 1998). The unit of analysis may be, among other things, an individual word, a sentence, a paragraph or a story. For the purposes of this research, there were two units of analysis – the election news story and the individuals identified in each story.

Careful decisions had to be made about what, for the purposes of the thesis, constituted an election news story. Establishing what content is relevant involves “the task of identifying the articles, reports, programmes which are ‘about’ or refer to the subject or issue under scrutiny” (Hansen et al., 1998, p.105).

As Comrie (1996) noted, political categories in content analysis require careful thought, “because many subjects have a political dimension” (p.199). The obvious election news stories in the sample were clearly concerned with politics generally, and/or politicians, and/or aspects of the campaign (such as the leaders’ travels around the country, electorate meetings and election organisation. However, note that stories which were simply lists of candidates were not coded). In many instances these were identified by banners on pages (e.g. “politics”, “Election 99 – the campaign”) or newspaper logos. On the other hand, there were a small number of less obvious, potential “election news” stories and in making decisions about these, the researcher relied on wider political knowledge. For example, stories on Lotteries Commission payouts and “golden

handshakes” were judged to be election news stories because of the salience of these issues during the lead up to the 1999 campaign. However, stories about events or issues (such as Masterton hospital staff going on strike) which may have been of interest to voters, but which did not make reference to political aspects or use any political sources, and which were not placed alongside other election news stories, were not included. This decision was made on the basis that such stories could have been written and presented as election news stories, with a political context, angle or slant, but were not, and therefore these connections should not be projected onto content by the researcher.

Similarly, most but not all stories that mentioned political candidates were included in the sample. For example, an item about the court appearance of a group of protestors against genetically engineered food, which - in the last paragraph - mentioned the presence of Green Party co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimons as a supporter, was not coded. Once selected, all political news stories and the individuals identified within them, were coded. The individual unit of analysis was restricted in number. This meant that a maximum of nine individuals was coded for each story.

4.5.3. Defining Analytical Categories

The “conceptually most taxing” part of any content analysis is defining the dimensions or characteristics which should be analysed (Hansen et al., 1998, p.106). As well as a number of standard questions, known as the identifier categories (e.g. medium, date, page number etc.), a content analysis is likely to include questions about actors/sources/primary definers, subjects/themes/issues, vocabulary or lexical choice, and value dimensions or stance (Hansen et al.). The latter questions are the hardest to get agreement on. As Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991) argued, “people in various settings at different settings in different times give it [the news] significance according to their circumstances and their selves” (p.153). Therefore, it is important to have clear guidelines for all content analysis categories.

Formulating categories is one of the most critical tasks undertaken by a content analyst (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989). It can be useful to use categories developed by other researchers, and it is therefore advisable to examine a number of other studies in the field. However, it is likely that categories will need some fine-tuning if they have been used in different electoral contexts. Much of the content-based research into coverage

of women politicians has been done in the United States, which has a very different system of government to New Zealand (with its one parliamentary house and recent change to proportional representation). Further, categories that have been usefully employed in other studies, even in the same cultural context, need updating to reflect changes in media and public agendas. The following section discusses the construction of the coding schedule, and provides detail about the key content categories, in both the story and individual sections.

4.5.4 Constructing a Coding Schedule

Surveying the literature provided ideas for content analysis questions and categories, which, once decided upon, needed to be translated into a codeable form - a coding schedule. International research suggested a number of avenues for content analysis questioning, along with researcher knowledge of the election campaign build-up and context. For example, it was deemed important for this study to examine the extent to which gendered language was employed in media coverage, in light of pre-campaign references, reflecting the presence of two high-profile women leaders, to “Xena princesses” and “catfights” (e.g. Barber, 1999).

The coding schedule for this research was divided into two sections, the first concerned with the story, the second with the individual (see Appendix B for a copy of the coding schedule). Thus, for each story the coder filled in Section One, and a number of second sections, depending on the number of individuals identified in the story (but limited to nine).

4.5.4.1 Story Categories

The first section began with five basic identifying questions relating to story number, newspaper, date, page number and story type. Other story-based questions were concerned with the main topic, reporter by-line, presence of controversy and the use of visual material. A short series of questions at the end of the story section asked about references to Shipley and Clark, their families, competence and viability issues, and descriptive words and phrases. Material gathered in these latter questions contributed to the frame analysis of the women leaders (see Chapter Nine). Of particular importance to the thesis were the story questions on women as a central focus, and the use of gendered language. These are explained in more detail below.

Women as a central focus

The sixth question in the content analysis asked whether a woman or women were a central focus of the news story. To be classified as a central focus, the woman/women as individuals or a group had to be the focus, not merely the dominant source, in a story. For example, a “roadshow” story about Helen Clark’s day of campaigning in Dunedin (in New Zealand’s South Island) was coded as having a woman as a central focus, whereas a story about the party’s arts policy, as launched by Clark, was not. Therefore, it is possible that a woman or women may have dominated the story as sources, but not, as people, been a central focus. Data about women as the central focus of a story contributed to the decision to conduct a frame analysis of the New Zealand First list controversy (see Chapter Eight).

Gendered language

A question was also included which asked if there was any “gendered language” in the news story. This was deemed important in light of research which shows that language is a symbolic site for the negotiation of gender relations (Connell, 2002; see also Spender, 1985), as well as analysis that documents differences in the way male and female politicians are talked about in the news media (e.g. Ross, 1995; Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994). To qualify as gendered language, a word or phrase needed to have sexist connotations, reduce a woman or man to a purely gender status, be preoccupied with masculine or feminine attributes, or be based on generalisation. For example, it was not considered “gendered language” to say that Shipley was accompanied by her children, but it was to describe a candidate as “the grandmother who came from the dole”.

4.5.4.2 News Subjects and Sources

In the second section of the coding schedule, a series of questions was asked about all news subjects. News subjects were defined following the Global Media Monitoring Project, as all individuals identified in a news story, whether or not they speak (Spears & Seydegart, 2000). Non-politician sources were identified and their role recorded, but no additional information was gathered.

Table 3*News Subject Categories Used in the Study*

Prime Minister*	Jenny Shipley
Leader of Opposition*	Helen Clark
Other party leader*	Leader of political party other than Labour or National.
Other politician*	All non-leader politicians, including non-incumbent candidates.
Politician's spouse	Husband, wife, or partner of politician.
Politician's other family member	Children or extended family.
Politician's spokesperson	A person making comment on behalf of a politician. Includes office or public relations staff.
Former politician	Any former Prime Minister, party leader or elected representative.
Political commentator	Commentators, observers and researchers, excluding journalists. Often commenting on leaders' debates or poll results.
Political party official or staff	Party presidents, workers and volunteers, including campaign managers.
Member of public	Voters, "person on the street", children.
Public servant	Non-political Government employee, such as policy analysts, Electoral Commission representatives, Police.
Lobby group spokesperson	Person representing an interest group, such as Federated Farmers.
Journalist	Reporter or news host/presenter.
Company or organisation spokesperson	Representative of private company or organisation (e.g. Telecom, Standard and Poors).
Other	Any other news subject who does not fit into above criteria.

Note. All political news subjects were subjected to further analysis. Non-politician news subjects were not.

All politician news subjects were analysed further, in regard to identity, gender, status and extent to which they appeared in the story. The politician was identified by reference to a list of 321 names (identity), as either male or female (gender), and as an incumbent or non-incumbent (status). The final, and more interpretative question, asked about every politician news source in the story, was concerned with the degree to which they were mentioned.

Extent to which a politician was mentioned in a news story

The question about extent mentioned was used to establish the degree to which a politician appeared, and to determine if further questions should be asked about their news treatment. Politician who were judged to be “mentioned only” were not subjected to further analysis.

Table 4
Categories of Mention Used in the Study

Politician is “mentioned only”	A “throwaway” or passing reference, not accompanied by a visual depiction. Politician does not speak, directly or indirectly.
Politician “appears to a limited extent”	Appears in a small portion of the story. May be briefly cited and/or quoted, and may be visually depicted.
Politician “appears to a moderate extent”	Makes a substantial contribution to the story. May be discussed in some depth and/or cited/quoted.
Politician “dominates the story”	A central player in the story. Only one politician can dominate in a particular story, but not every story has one politician who dominates it.

Politicians who were more than “mentioned only” were subjected to yet another level of analysis. It was noted what issue the politician was linked to, as well as whether they were mentioned in the headline or appeared in a visual depiction. The tone of coverage and visual depictions was examined, prompted by a range of research findings about gender based expectations and criticism of women (e.g. Eveline & Booth, 1997; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Smith, 1997). The tone was judged to be positive, negative or neutral on the basis of overall news treatment of the politician within the story. For

example, if a politician was criticised in a news story but got the opportunity to defend his/her actions and respond, the overall tone of that politician's story coverage was neutral. On the other hand, a more one-sided story in which a party leader was attacked by an Opposition MP and did not have the chance to respond, was likely to be judged negative in tone for the leader concerned.

A large body of anecdotal and empirical research has shown that there is greater media scrutiny of women politicians' looks and clothing (although some women politicians believe this trend is increasingly encompassing men as well – see Chapter Ten), so a question was also asked about reference to politicians' physical appearance. However, of particular importance in this second level of analysis was the way in which politicians spoke in news stories (i.e. their use as news sources).

Politicians as news sources

The content analysis included questions about the extent to which politicians appeared in stories (i.e. as “news subjects”), and the degree to which they were used as “news sources”. Sources are a vital part of news content and presentation (e.g. Gans, 1979; Maharey, 1996) and play a key role in how events and issues are framed. According to Berger (2000), it is especially insightful to analyse sources in news stories and:

In news or factual output, analysis of the use of different types of information source can provide evidence of balance, neutrality, thoroughness and impartiality of reporting. (p.65)

Women tend to be under-represented as news sources (e.g. Spears & Seydegart, 2000) and it was therefore deemed important to analyse if and how male and female politicians were used as news sources during the 1999 General Election campaign. Table 5 explains the categories used.

Hansen et al. (1998) have advised that a coding book be written, setting out guidelines for coders. The following sub-section goes some way to fulfilling this, by describing some key coding decisions in relation to those questions which were particularly open to interpretation. The coding schedule itself contains category explanations where necessary (see Appendix B).

Table 5
Source Categories Used in the Study

Cited and/or quoted first	Politician is the first to speak in the news story, either directly or indirectly.
Cited and/or quoted along with others	Politician speaks, but is neither the first nor the only person to speak in the story.
Not cited or quoted	Politician is more than just mentioned in the news story, but does not get the opportunity to speak, directly or indirectly.

4.5.5 Key Coding Decisions

The following summary demonstrates how questions of the leaders' competence and viability, and the tone of coverage and visual depiction, were approached. Other more technical coding guidelines (such as what comprises a mention, appearance to a limited or moderate extent, or domination of a story) were provided in the previous section.

Issues of competence and viability, raised in relation to the women leaders, were generally considered separate from standard campaign politicking. This was to avoid overplaying these issues by coding politicians' attacks on one another, standard during election campaigns, as comments on competence and viability. For example, the *Otago Daily Times'* lead story on November 10 was not coded as questioning Clark's competence. It began "Labour's core campaign promises were under threat because of leader Helen Clark's apparent willingness to do a deal with New Zealand First leader Winston Peters, Treasurer Bill English speculated yesterday". However, some politicians' comments about each other were coded. For example, a comment made by Peters during a leaders' debate - that Shipley was "making it up again" - was coded when the *New Zealand Herald* referred to it in a post-debate analysis. This was because such a comment drew on reader knowledge of Shipley's earlier leadership blunders. In general, though, a story was said to raise issues of competence and viability if the media or other "objective" commentators or non-politician news sources questioned aspects of the leaders' performance, including in coverage of leadership polls. Stories focusing on the negative response to Shipley's roadshow were also said to indirectly

raise issues of viability, as were more positive items about Clark being anointed as future Prime Minister.

The way a news story was written and presented was a key factor in determining the tone of a politician's coverage. For example, an *Evening Post* story, which claimed the Wellington Central Labour candidate wanted party votes to go to the Alliance (Brent Edwards, 1999b) was judged as negative for Hobbs. The headline of "Hobbs endorses Alliance vote" distorted Hobbs' comments, and the notion was misleading and unfavourable to her. In another story, mentioned in the previous paragraph, about Clark's apparent willingness to "do a deal" with New Zealand First, the tone of the coverage was judged as negative for the Labour leader. This was because the story was dominated by English and the National Party, and did not include Clark's perspective or response. However, another story, published in the *New Zealand Herald* on November 4 and headlined "Clark faces hospital critic 10 years on", was coded as neutral because although the angle was negative, she had the opportunity to put across her point of view and the overall impression of the story was not negative for the Labour leader.

Visual depictions were also coded as positive, negative or neutral. This took into account the impact camera treatment can have on the way a source is perceived (McGregor & Comrie, 1995). On one level, the way visual depictions were coded relied to some extent on the coder's emotional response to a photograph or cartoon. A positive or negative depiction was recognised as flattering or unflattering, whereas a neutral depiction was unlikely to prompt a strong response. More rigorously, the coder asked whether a depiction enhanced or diminished (or neither enhanced nor diminished) a politician. An example of a positive depiction was the *Otago Daily Times'* front page, cropped head-and-shoulders photograph of Shipley at the races. She was wearing a hat which matched her race-day outfit, looking directly at the camera and smiling. On the other hand, the *Evening Post* published a relatively big front-page photograph of Labour's Marian Hobbs which was coded as negative. In this "action" shot, taken during a speech, Hobbs was not looking at the camera and had her mouth wide open.

4.5.6 Piloting the Coding Schedule and Checking Reliability

Once the coding schedule is constructed, it is necessary to pilot it on a small sub-sample, to allow for fine-tuning. Hansen et al. (1998) have outlined four types of

problems which are fairly typical of coding schedules: categories confuse different levels of categorisation (e.g. race and religion), categories are not sufficiently differentiated, leading to large proportions of content being classified into one category; there are too many categories, when only a very small proportion of these will ever appear in the coding; and finally, units of analyses are confused, resulting in the inability to relate different categories and dimensions.

When piloting the schedule, consistency is the main concern – consistency between the different coders used, if appropriate (inter-coder reliability), and consistency of one coder over time (intra-coder reliability). The clearer the coding guidelines, the more consistency should be obtained. Despite their importance, measures of intra-coder and inter-coder reliability tend to not be widely reported (Riffe & Freitag, 1997).

The previous section summarised some key coding decisions, which were described in order to promote consistency, particularly for intra-coding checks and validation purposes. As the one researcher coded the entire sample, a measure of inter-coder reliability was not relevant. However, a selection of fifty stories, chosen at random from the newspapers, was recoded, to measure intra-coder reliability (i.e. the researcher's reliability over time). The intracoder reliability was 91%. According to Berger (2000), reliability above 90% is acceptable. Further, another person was employed to help establish the validity of the researcher's coding. This man, a former journalist, recoded a random selection of newspaper stories, focusing on those content analysis questions which required a level of coder judgement. The level of agreement between this coder and the researcher was 83%, which also fell within acceptable parameters.

4.5.7 Data Preparation and Analysis

It may be possible to analyse the results of a simple content analysis without using a computer, but in general it is advisable to enter data into a computer programme. This allows for more flexibility in manipulation of the data, and helps reveal relationships and trends. The research questions will give an indication of what sort of analyses should be done, but Hansen et al. (1998) have advised researchers to stay open-minded about different and unexpected way of grouping dimensions. The content analysis data

for this research were entered into, and analysed using SPSS Version 11. This assisted with data analysis, particularly frequencies, cross tabulations and tests of significance.

4.6 Conclusion

Content analysis is a widely used methodology in the study of women and news coverage. It is the intuitively reasonable approach to measure whether the theory of in/visibility remains valid, and if so, to what extent. In this thesis, it has contributed quantitative data about how women politicians were covered during the campaign, and also provided an empirical underpinning for frame analysis of the leadership race and the New Zealand First list controversy. This chapter has explored the advantages and limitations of content analysis, and documented the steps in its application to this thesis. The following chapter shows the results of the content analysis of newspaper coverage during New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign.

Chapter Five

Content Analysis Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the results of an extensive content analysis of newspaper coverage of New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign. These results provide empirical evidence to answer the key research question of how the press covered female politicians during the campaign, and also contribute to decisions about framing analysis (see Chapters Seven and Eight). The specific questions addressed in this chapter are:

- Under what circumstances are female politicians the central focus of news stories?
- To what extent do female politicians appear in news stories, as news sources and what is the tone of this coverage?
- Do the media make use of gendered language and employ references to physical appearance in their coverage of female politicians?

The content analysis concentrated on newspaper coverage during the official election campaign period. Nine newspapers were sampled, over thirteen days (see Chapter Four for more detailed information). A total of 1192 stories were published in the nine newspapers during the sample period. Of the daily newspapers, the *New Zealand Herald* published the most election stories (270) and the *Waikato Times* the least (107). One edition of each of the Sunday newspapers was included in the sample, and on this day (November 14) the *Sunday Star Times* published twelve election stories and the *Sunday News* six.

The 1999 newspaper stories referred to in this chapter are referenced in Appendix C.

5.2 Female Politicians as the Central Focus of News Stories

A large proportion of election news stories are about candidates and campaigning, rather than party policy. Content analysis results show that "election campaign (candidates)" was the single largest category of election news (165 stories, 13.8%). This focus on individuals was also explored in a question about women as the central focus of news stories, that revealed which women – politicians and non-politicians – were of

particular interest to the news media, and contributed to decisions about the framing analysis.

There were 219 stories (18.4%) with women as a central focus. Some of these stories were about women generally, such as the workers at the Bendon underwear factory who were about to lose their jobs, or teenage mothers. Some were about male politicians' spouses, such as the story about ACT leader Richard Prebble's wife, dubbed "dutiful Doreen", or the article about Gerada Herlihy (wife of MP Gavan Herlihy) who received vicious telephone calls because of her husband's job. However, most of the 219 stories with women as a central focus were concerned with women politicians. Shipley and Clark were the focus of various stories, predominantly related to leadership and centring around their daily campaigning, style and performance (e.g. in leaders' debates). Other female politicians gained a high profile because of their electorate campaigns, particularly in marginal seats such as Wellington Central and Coromandel. New Zealand First candidate Suzanne Bruce was a central focus of several news stories during the Party's list controversy (see Chapter Eight). Other female politicians were a central focus in just one or two stories.

It is not surprising that the leaders were a central focus of many news stories, for women in traditionally male-dominated roles stir public interest (what Norris, 1997c refers to as the "first woman" frame) and - gender aside - leaders' performance is regarded as important for parties' electoral success. More surprising, in comparison to previous research findings about the importance of political incumbency, is that several non-incumbent women should be the central focus of news stories. This appears to be the result of a proportional representation electoral system which increases the chances of "unknown" candidates and smaller parties ending up in Parliament, and tentative moves by the media - in response to some public criticism after the 1996 election - to analyse party lists in more depth.

Disregarding Clark and Shipley (who are analysed further in Chapter Nine), eighteen female politicians were, alone or with others, the central focus of at least one news story. Eight of these women were non-incumbent candidates. Of the ten incumbents, one was the leader of a small new Māori party, Mana Wahine, consistently polling below the "margin of error" (although the media tend to use this term in a misleading

way, see Gendall & Hoek, 2002) and unlikely to make it into Parliament. Another was co-leader of the Green Party, which had broken away from the Alliance Party and was polling close to the 5% threshold required for parliamentary representation under MMP. Table 6 summarises, in descending order, the political status, party and focus of coverage of the eighteen women who were, at some stage, alone or with others, the central focus of news stories.

Table 6 also shows two groups of women – those who were mentioned three or fewer times, and those who were mentioned eight or more times. The latter group was clearly more newsworthy, and deserves closer attention. Table 6 shows that three of these women were consistently the central focus because of their importance in electorally significant seats (Bunkle and Hobbs in Wellington Central – see Chapter Twelve; Fitzsimons in Coromandel), and a further three women were widely covered due to the New Zealand First list controversy (Suzanne Bruce, Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald). In fact, this was the one main reason why women were a central focus of media coverage during the campaign, and as one aspect of this controversy related to the Party's treatment of women, the issue is the subject of a frame analysis in Chapter Eight.

The media attention paid to Alamein Kopu, the other woman in the top four, can be explained in relation to anti-MMP sentiment, which was common in coverage during the election campaign (see Church, 2000). To the media, Kopu signified everything that was wrong with MMP, or at least its application during the first term following its introduction. Coverage of Kopu was overwhelming negative and focused on her incompetence. For example, there were news stories about the NZ\$28,000 legal bill she incurred defending herself against charges of breaching parliamentary privilege (and which it was revealed she paid using electorate funding), and her Party's failure to meet election organisation deadlines (e.g. for the submission of its party list).

Table 6
Female Politicians as Central Focus of News Stories

Politician (No. of times as a central focus)	Focus of Coverage
Suzanne Bruce (19)	New Zealand First's top ranked woman list candidate, who resigned after tax fraud charges were revealed.
Jenny Bloxham (18)	Incumbent New Zealand First woman MP given an unexpectedly low list ranking.
Alamein Kopu (14)	Incumbent list MP and party defector who set up new party (Mana Wahine) and was polling badly.
Robyn McDonald (13)	Incumbent New Zealand First woman MP given an unexpectedly low list ranking.
Phillida Bunkle (10)	Incumbent Alliance MP, who withdrew from Wellington Central to boost Labour's chance of winning the marginal seat.
Marian Hobbs (9)	Incumbent list MP and Labour candidate in marginal Wellington Central.
Jeannette Fitzsimons (8)	Green Party co-leader and incumbent list MP who contested the marginal Coromandel seat.
Marion Smith (3)	Independent challenger in marginal Wellington Central.
Margaret Hawkeswood (3)	Labour challenger in marginal Coromandel seat.
Laura Mason (3)	Mauri Pacific candidate taken to court for rent arrears.
Dianne Yates (2)	Incumbent MP coverage in local newspaper (the <i>Waikato Times</i>).
Katherine Rich (2)	Challenger coverage in local newspaper (the <i>Otago Daily Times</i>).
Georgina Beyer (2)	Challenger in closely fought Wairarapa seat, who appeared likely to become NZ's first transsexual MP.
Sue Kedgley (1)	Green Party challenger and city councilor who left meetings early to campaign.
Pansy Wong (1)	High profile Asian MP who visited provincial city on the campaign trail.
Judith Tizard (1)	Incumbent Labour MP who featured in an electorate feature as the likely winner.
Stephanie Chadwick (1)	Labour challenger, polling well in an electorate seat against incumbent National Cabinet Minister.
Donna Awatere-Huata (1)	ACT MP who (through her husband's actions) was potentially implicated in an immigration scandal.

5.3 Female Politicians in News Stories, as News Sources, and Tone of Coverage

This section shows the results of quantitative content analysis and focuses on key indicators of female politicians' treatment in the news media: their appearance in stories, use as sources, and tone of coverage.

5.3.1 The Most Mentioned Politicians

Of the 4251 names identified in election news coverage, 2854 references or two-thirds (67.1%) were to politicians. Slightly over one third of politicians mentioned in news stories were female (1038 or 36.4%), and the remainder were male (1816 or 63.6%). The great majority of politicians who were mentioned in news stories were incumbent MPs: 2319 (81.3%) incumbents as opposed to 535 (18.7%) challengers.

Throughout the course of the campaign, 312 different individual politicians (defined as both election candidates and incumbent MPs) were identified in news stories. Of the 312 different politicians who were identified in news coverage, 83 were women (26.6%) and 229 were men (73.4%). The bulk of the 312 politicians identified in the content analysis received little media coverage. In fact, over two thirds (216 individuals or 69.2%) were identified fewer than five times (including 121 who were mentioned only once). Thus, it becomes apparent that a small number of politicians dominate media coverage during election campaigns. Table 7 shows the politicians identified as the most newsworthy "story subjects". These "top 15" politicians had the highest number of appearances in the key categories of "appearing in stories to a limited extent", "appearing in stories to a moderate extent" and "dominating the story". This adjusted total, which does not include the category of "mentioned only", provides a more realistic indication of the depth of coverage politicians received.

The two women who dominated the top positions in this table were, unsurprisingly, incumbent Prime Minister Shipley and Opposition leader Clark. They were followed by the other main party leaders (Peters, Prebble and Anderton), and National and Labour's finance spokesmen, Bill English and Michael Cullen. The other women, who appeared far fewer times than Shipley and Clark, were Green Party co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimons, New Zealand First MP Jenny Bloxham and candidate Suzanne Bruce.

Table 7
The Most Mentioned Politicians

Ranking	Politician	No. of times mentioned (adjusted)	Percent
1	Jenny Shipley	259	12.6
2	Helen Clark	194	9.4
3	Winston Peters	146	7.1
4	Richard Prebble	90	4.4
5	Jim Anderton	87	4.3
6	Bill English	64	3.1
7	Michael Cullen	56	2.7
8	Jeanette Fitzsimons	52	2.5
9	Tuariki Delamere	44	2.1
10	Jenny Bloxham	27	1.3
11=	Max Bradford	26	1.3
11=	Nick Smith	26	1.3
11=	Tony Ryall	26	1.3
11=	Pete Hodgson	26	1.3
12	Suzanne Bruce	25	1.2
13	Wyatt Creech	24	1.2
14	Steve Maharey	22	1.1
15	Tau Henare	21	1.1

5.3.2 Gender of Politician and Extent Mentioned in News Stories

Table 8 is concerned with the relationship between gender and extent mentioned in a story, and shows the expected and observed differences, calculated using a chi square test of significance, within each of the four categories of mention (mentioned only, appearing to a limited extent, appearing to a moderate extent, dominating the story). Table 8 also shows the contribution of Shipley and Clark to the female figure, in brackets.

The adjusted residual provides an indication of the difference between the observed and expected count for each cell. Values below -2 or above $+2$ indicate cells that deviate markedly from what was expected if gender had no effect on the extent male and female politicians were mentioned in news stories.

Table 8
Gender of Politician and Extent Mentioned in Stories

Extent mentioned	Statistical measures	Male	Female
Mentioned only	Observed count	548	259 (102)*
	Expected count	513.5	293.5
	% of gender total	30.2	24.9
	Adjusted residual	3.0	-3.0
Appearing to a limited extent	Observed count	685	387 (210)*
	Expected count	682.1	389.9
	% of gender total	37.7	37.3
	Adjusted residual	.2	-.2
Appearing to a moderate extent	Observed count	362	254 (162)*
	Expected count	392.0	224.0
	% of gender total	19.9	24.5
	Adjusted residual	-2.8	2.8
Dominating the story	Observed count	221	138 (81)*
	Expected count	228.4	130.6
	% of gender total	12.2	13.3
	Adjusted residual	-.9	.9
Total		1816	1038 (555)*

Note. Bracketed figure shows contribution of Shipley and Clark (combined) to female totals.

The biggest category of reference for both genders was “appearing to a limited extent” followed by “mentioned only”, “appearing to a moderate extent” and “dominating the story”. Although the pattern was the same for male and female politicians, for women the in-depth end of the scale was weighted more heavily – 37.8% of women compared to 32.1% of men were classified as “appearing to a moderate extent” or “dominating the story”. The biggest difference in percent between men and women was at the “mentioned only” end of the scale (30.2% of male politicians fell into this category, compared to 24.9% of women).

Chi square analysis showed an overall significant difference in the extent male and female politicians were mentioned in news stories ($\chi^2(3, N=2854) = 13.37, p < 0.01$). When examining the findings for extent mentioned in a story by gender, two categories in particular stood out, as evidenced by the adjusted residual: mentioned only and appearing to a moderate extent. The proportion of women who appeared in news stories to a moderate extent was greater than expected, and the proportion of women who were mentioned only was less than expected. This result is favourable for women politicians. However, Table 8 also shows that the two main women leaders contribute markedly to this heavy weighting of the in-depth end of the scale. Between them, Shipley and Clark accounted for nearly a quarter (22.5%) of all subjects who dominated stories, and over half of the female figure in each of the categories of appearing to a limited extent, appearing to a moderate extent, and dominating the story.

The “newsworthiness” of the women leaders, in comparison to other female politicians, was also apparent in results about the naming of politicians in headlines. Between them, Clark and Shipley accounted for 105 headline mentions: 34.3% of all headline mentions and 70.9% of all female politicians’ headline mentions. Thus, they contributed to the finding that women were mentioned in headlines 148 times (48.4%) and men 158 times (51.6%), a surprisingly balanced figure considering the greater number of male politicians in the sample. Commonsense suggests this has more to do with the newsworthiness of their position than gender.

The findings in this section show that female politicians appear in stories in comparable, if not more in-depth ways, than their male counterparts. While there were many more male subjects in the analysis, men were also proportionately more likely to fall into the

category of “mentioned only”. However, given the dominance of the female leaders, this finding is not as favourable for female politicians generally.

5.3.3 Gender of Politician and News Sources

All politicians who appeared in a story to a limited extent or more were also coded for the degree to which they spoke or were cited, using the following categories: cited and/or quoted first, cited and/or quoted along with others, not cited and/or quoted. In other words, this section examines politicians as news sources. In the previous section, the extent to which male and female politicians appeared in stories, as “news subjects”, was examined. This section builds on that by exploring the patterns in the use of male and female politicians as news sources, who are cited and/or quoted in stories. Again, the figure for Shipley and Clark is shown in brackets in Table 9.

Table 9
Gender of Politician and Extent Used as News Source

Extent cited and/or quoted	Statistical measures	Male	Female
Cited and/or quoted first	Observed count	416	244 (151)*
	% of gender total	32.8	31.2
	Expected count	408.8	251.2
	Adjusted residual	.7	-.7
Cited and/or quoted along with others	Observed count	501	249 (136)*
	% of gender total	39.5	32.0
	Expected count	464.6	285.4
	Adjusted residual	3.4	-3.4
Not cited and/or quoted	Observed count	351	286 (166)*
	% of gender total	27.7	36.8
	Expected count	394.6	242.4
	Adjusted residual	-4.3	4.3
Total		1268	779

Note. Bracketed figure shows contribution of Shipley and Clark (combined) to female totals.

The results show a significant difference in the way women and men were used as sources in election stories ($\chi^2 (2, N=2047) = 20.48, p<0.000$). For female politicians,

the results were spread relatively evenly between the three categories of cited and/or quoted first, cited and/or quoted along with others and not cited and/or quoted. Similar proportions of men (32.8%) and women (31.2%) were cited and/or quoted first but a higher than expected proportion of men were cited and/or quoted along with others, at the expense of women. In addition, more women than expected fell into the category of not cited and/or quoted.

This result, when considered along with the finding that women are mentioned in more depth than men, suggests that once men get past the hurdle of being “mentioned only”, they are more likely to speak in stories. Conversely, female politicians are “talked about” more than they are given the opportunity to speak. If it were not for the presence of Shipley and Clark, this result would be dismal for female politicians in general. The advantage women seem to have in the extent they are mentioned in news stories is cancelled out by the much higher proportion of stories in which they are not cited and/or quoted.

5.3.4 Gender of Politician and Tone of Coverage

Each time a politician dominated a story or appeared to a limited or moderate extent, a question was asked about the tone of the coverage – be it positive, negative or neutral. For both genders, story tone was most likely to be neutral (80.3% of all references to male politicians and 74.5% of references to female politicians are coded as neutral), and a negative tone was more common than a positive tone. The percent of negative references was similar for men (13.2% of all mentions were classed as negative) and women (15.1%), but women’s coverage also tended to be more positive: 10.4% of mentions of female politicians were classed as positive, compared to 6.5% for men.

Chi square analysis again showed an overall significant difference in tone for male and female politicians ($\chi^2(2, N=2047) = 12.39, p<0.01$). In particular, an unexpectedly high proportion of female politicians enjoyed a positive tone in coverage (and fewer than expected men), while fewer than expected women fell into the neutral category as did more than expected men. The proportions for negative tone were neither higher nor lower than expected.

Table 10
Gender of Politician and Tone of News Coverage

Tone	Statistical measures	Male	Female
Neutral	Observed count	1018	580
	% of gender total	80.3	74.5
	Expected count	989.9	608.1
	Adjusted residual	3.1	-3.1
Positive	Observed count	83	81
	% of gender total	6.5	10.4
	Expected count	101.6	62.4
	Adjusted residual	-3.1	3.1
Negative	Observed count	167	118
	% of gender total	13.2	15.1
	Expected count	176.5	108.5
	Adjusted residual	-1.3	1.3
Total		1268	779

Further analysis of tone in relation to the most mentioned politicians showed that the finding for women is influenced by the highly positive coverage given to Clark (as the second most mentioned politician overall, she received 16.5% positive coverage and 11.3% negative) and Fitzsimons (seventh most mentioned, with 19.2% positive and 3.8% negative). Shipley was the most mentioned of all politicians but her positive tone rating was lower than the other women in the top 15, 7.3% positive and 23.2% negative. In the top 15, only Tuariki Delamere and Winston Peters had higher proportions of negative stories than did Shipley. Winston Peters was the third most mentioned politician, likely due to his anticipated role as “queenmaker”. Over a quarter of references to him were classified as negative (26.7%) and none were rated positively. The only other top 15 politician with highly negative coverage (25.0%, although partially offset by 11.4% positive) also had a link to New Zealand First. Tuariki Delamere was one of the Party’s defectors who ended up supporting the minority National government. He was sacked as Immigration Minister by Jenny Shipley just days before the election, after defying Ministry advice and giving permission for a

scheme that would allow preferential treatment to potential Chinese immigrants who agreed to invest in Māori land development.

These results are supported by media analysis of One News coverage (Banducci & Vowles, 2002), which showed Fitzsimons enjoyed the most positive evaluations, and Peters the least (overall marginally negative). However, the findings for broadcast news revealed less difference between Shipley and Clark in relation to tone, showing Clark was evaluated positively only slightly more often than Shipley, although a marked difference between the two female leaders emerged with Shipley's attack on the Green Party. And overall, Clark's television coverage became more positive as the campaign went on, and Shipley's more negative (Banducci & Vowles, 2002).

5.3.5 Gender of Politician and Tone of Visuals

Content analysis showed 523 election news stories (43.9% of all stories) contained visual material of some sort, reflecting the value newspapers place on their election coverage. Photographs were the most common visual. When a politician was depicted in a visual, in the form of a photograph or cartoon, the tone was coded, as either positive, negative or neutral. Overall, visual material tended to be less neutral than written coverage. For women and men, the largest category was neutral, but as with written coverage, women had both more positive and more negative slanted depictions.

A higher proportion of male politicians were depicted neutrally (63.8% versus 50.9% of females), while a larger percentage of female politicians were depicted positively (41.0% of females, compared to 30.9% of males), and negatively (8.1% of women and 5.3% of males). Overall, the differences between male and female candidates were statistically significant ($\chi^2(2, N=423) = 7.49, p < 0.05$). The pattern is the same as for tone of written coverage: fewer men and more women than expected were depicted positively, but more men and fewer women were depicted neutrally. When this is considered along with the pattern in tone of written coverage, it is interesting to note that, overall, women were covered in a more polarised way – less likely than men to be covered neutrally and more likely than men to be covered positively. Further, as with tone of coverage, a larger proportion of visuals depicting women was negative but not to an unexpectedly large extent. There is some support for the idea that a “saint syndrome” exists in media coverage of high-profile female politicians (van Acker,

1999), which can give way to particularly harsh evaluations once they make mistakes. The “saint” syndrome tends to be experienced by novel and unusual women, and certainly the key women players in the 1999 election campaign fell into this category because of their leadership status.

Table 11
Gender of Politician and Tone of Visuals

Tone	Statistical measures	Male	Female
Positive	Observed count	81	67
	% of gender total	30.9	41.0
	Expected count	91.7	56.3
	Adjusted residual	-2.2	2.2
Negative	Observed count	14	13
	% of gender total	5.3	8.1
	Expected count	16.7	10.3
	Adjusted residual	-1.1	1.1
Neutral	Observed count	167	81
	% of gender total	63.8	50.9
	Expected count	153.6	94.4
	Adjusted residual	2.7	-2.7
Total		262	161

It is also interesting to consider the use of visuals in relation to the most mentioned politicians. Of the visual material which depicted politicians (photographs and cartoons), party leaders were the most common subject matter: 11.8% showed Shipley, 7.8% showed Clark, 6.6% showed Peters, 4.5% Anderton, 4.3% Prebble. However, after the party leaders, the next most depicted politician was female challenger, Suzanne Bruce – 2.6% of all depictions were of her, a surprising finding given the New Zealand First list controversy occurred only partway through the campaign. Looking at this data in a different way, considering the ratio of appearance in visual to the ratio of appearance in stories, the politician whose photo accompanied her reference in a story the highest proportion of times was the only challenger among the most mentioned politicians, Suzanne Bruce. In eleven instances (44% of the time in which she appeared

in stories), discussion of Bruce was accompanied by a visual of her (in all cases a photograph and not a cartoon). Comparatively, the Prime Minister was accompanied by a visual 19.3% of the time, and Clark 17% of the time. See Chapter Eight for more on Suzanne Bruce's media appeal.

5.4 Gendered Language in Media Coverage of Female Politicians

Each story was examined for the presence of gendered language. A total of 68 stories (5.7%) were coded as containing gendered language. In most instances a comment was classified as either "gendered language" or "reference to physical appearance" but there were some comments which fitted into both categories (for example, Colin James' comment that "Mrs Shipley, stern school-marm, has been airbrushed into Jenny, sweet, smiling mumsie-pie"). This section explores the qualitative findings about the use of gendered language in election campaign coverage.

Much of the gendered language was used by sources rather than reporters (for example, one article quoted a waterside worker who said he would vote for Labour "even if it is a woman"; another quoted crossdresser Jewelry Sparkle as saying that Shipley's dress sense must be an inspiration to housewives around the country), although headlines did provide several examples of gendered language used by the media (see below). Further, it should be noted that politicians themselves were often the source of comments classified as "gendered language". The oft-mentioned nickname given to National's campaign bus had its origins with Shipley, who told the media her children referred to it as "Lipstick One". This comment led one *New Zealand Herald* "wag" to suggest lipstick was the defining difference between her and Bolger, and speculate that she wanted the "Lipstick One" appellation to catch on before the cynics' choice, "Blunderbus" (Putting on the gloss, 1999). More commonly, other politicians made sexist or "gendered" comments about their opponents. For example, Winston Peters was quoted as saying his electorate rival Katherine O'Regan's "greatest achievements were fat-free ice cream and fireproof pyjamas" (Beston, 1999e, p.7). Jenny Bloxham's comment that those who had achieved higher list rankings than her "obviously have skills and attributes I lack – maybe a penis" was also widely reported (e.g. Main, 1999c, p.2).

It is of particular interest to this study to examine the instances of gendered language used by the media. As mentioned above, headlines provided several examples of gendered language, which is of concern given the role headlines play in the framing of a story (see Chapter Seven), and their importance as a shorthand code to lure readers into a story. Two examples from the sample period contained sexist generalisations, which distorted the reality of the situation being reported. First, a story about the spouses of Lotteries Commission members losing their travel perks was headlined “Wives lose travel perks” (1999) although one of the Commission members was a woman, and therefore unlikely to have a wife! Second, two stories about fishing crews and their families’ concern about the prospect of female observers on-board boats with inadequate facilities, were framed as being about wives’ concerns. The *Otago Daily Times* story began, “Fishermen’s wives are upset their husbands will be at sea with female observers” (Privacy on boats an issue, 1999, p.3). But the story’s only source, Aoraki MP Jim Sutton, was cited as saying that some crew and their wives were unhappy about the lack of privacy, although other skippers and crew, and some of their wives and partners, were unconcerned (Privacy on boats an issue, 1999). The *Press* ran an abbreviated version of the same story, headlined “Wives upset about female observers” (1999).

Gendered language linked to domestic and family roles was used, although not widely, particularly in relation to Shipley, and particularly in the *New Zealand Herald*. For example, the newspaper’s political editor wrote that “Jenny Shipley should demand the hides of National’s campaign team and hang them out to dry on her Ashburton washing line” (Armstrong, 1999d, p.A5). Earlier in the campaign, the newspaper ran a headline “PM sparkles in the malls” (1999), a reference to shopping which is unlikely to be used in relation to a male Prime Minister. The motherhood issue was also alluded to in a *New Zealand Herald* caption of “Big Daddy” (1999) for a photograph of Shipley with a prize bull along with the comment made by “one wit” that “The Mother of the Nation met the father of 180,000” (p.A5). A similar photograph of Shipley and the bull, but without the reference to parental status, was published in the *Otago Daily Times*.

The more common form of gendered language drew on gender stereotypes. For example, the *Evening Post* variously described Richard Prebble’s wife as “dutiful Doreen” (Edwards, 1999c), Marian Hobbs’ style as “warm, sometimes woolly”

(Espiner, 1999e, p.2) and Green Party co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimons as meek and mild (Edwards, 1999e). Similarly, the *Dominion's* Victoria Main described Fitzsimons as “a steel magnolia of a politician” (Main, 1999f). The *Dominion* alluded to the stereotype of women’s indecisiveness in its page-one headline, “Bruce changes mind again, quits election” (Bain, 1999j). In the *Evening Standard*, political reporter Alister Browne (1999b) described Bruce as “the 39 year old grandmother [who] runs a dairy farm”. In a *New Zealand Herald* essay by John Roughan (1999a), he described public health researchers as “sensible to a woman and socially responsible to a fault” (p.A18). A NZPA item in the *Press* described New Zealand First MP Robyn McDonald as “jilted”, as a result of her low list ranking (McDonald confident, 1999, p.40). In other coverage of the same issue – the New Zealand First list rankings – Jenny Bloxham was described by the *Waikato Times* as leaving party meetings in a hysterical state (Bloxham, NZ First fallout continues, 1999, p.2) although the other newspapers described her demeanour more neutrally, as agitated. Her party leader Winston Peters was often referred to as “queenmaker”, an updated version of the traditional “kingmaker” reflecting the presence of two female leaders. One headline announced “Queenmaker versus queen bee” (1999), with a further pun in relation to the Beehive – the widely adopted name for the distinctively shaped building which is part of the national Parliamentary Buildings housing the Prime Minister’s Office. Main (1999d) wrote that Peters was learning quickly that he’ll has no fury like a woman scorned, as McDonald sought his resignation as leader. The infamous reference to Shipley and Clark as “Xena princesses”, attributed to Labour Party president Bob Harvey and reported widely in the lead up to the campaign in October 1999 (e.g. Venter, 1999b), spawned variations such as the dubbing of Suzanne Bruce as “Xena, dairy princess”, due to her links with the dairy industry (e.g. Orsman, 1999b; Catherall, 1999). A cartoon of Shipley and Clark in Xena-inspired outfits was used by the *Dominion* throughout the campaign, including a full-page version on the front of its election supplement.

Male stereotypes were also present in media coverage but not to nearly the same extent. When National candidate John Stringer tried to re-enact Ann Hercus’ grocery shopping trip (first done by the former Labour MP in the early 1980s, and often repeated at elections to make a political point about changes in consumer buying power) but got a different total to his leader as a result of buying some incorrect products, *Press* reporter

Dave Wilson (1999) concluded “That’s what happens when you send male politicians to buy groceries” (p.3).

The media were primed for signs of a catfight (e.g. Main 1999b), which did not satisfactorily eventuate, according to an editorial cartoon published after the last leaders’ debate (see Chapter Nine). Although Clark and Shipley were reported to have circled each other like wary cats (Roughan, 1999b), the behaviour of the women during the campaign did not lend itself to the catfight metaphor. However, on November 14, the *Sunday News* led with debate host Paul Holmes’ rebuttal of Brian Edwards’ suggestion that he had tried to stage a catfight, which Holmes said was an outrageous suggestion and demeaning to both women (Clausen, 1999b). See Chapter Nine for more on this.

Finally, it is noted that newspaper columnists were responsible for many “gendered” comments, reflecting the opinion-based nature of column writing, its difference in tone to news reporting, and the often deliberately controversial stance taken in columns. For example, a guest columnist in the *Waikato Times* (Chris Williams, the managing director of Rimmington Advertising) wrote that the sight of Clark on television made him want to slash his wrists, and consequently he had voted National for the first time in 1996. He also likened the 1999 leaders to a “bunch of ageing, trussed up fighting cocks who, beneath carefully chosen suits and PR patter, don’t stand for a damn thing” (Williams, 1999, p.6).

5.5 References to Physical Appearance

The final question asked in relation to politician sources was about any references to physical appearance. In total, there were 98 references and due to the small number, this section is also discussed qualitatively rather than quantitatively. It should be noted that this question was only asked in relation to politicians and therefore does not include physical references or descriptions of other sources. Thus, examples such as political reporter Helen Bain’s (1999l) description of a “bogan chick” encountered by Shipley on the campaign trail - “wearing tight black leggings, a black waistcoat, with bleached hair and a roll-your-own” (p.2) – are not included (according to McGill, 1998, a “bogan” is a long-haired, heavy metal listener).

There were 98 instances where reference was made to politicians' physical appearance, occurring in 68 different stories. Shipley accounted for a fifth (19 references, 19.3%) of all references to physical appearance, and Clark for 13.3% (13 references). Altogether, the three male leaders accounted for fewer references than Clark and Shipley individually. Peters was subjected to comment about his appearance six times (6.1%), Anderton four (4%) and Prebble just once (1%).

Of the 68 stories that made reference to politicians' personal appearance, 22 were written by women, 22 by men, 23 had no by-line and one was by a male and female reporter together. Women were over-represented as writers of such stories, compared to the proportion of stories they wrote overall (in total, twice as many by-lines were male - 393 or 41.9% - as female - 195 or 20.8%). *New Zealand Herald* reporter Dita de Boni (1999) addressed this tendency when she observed that:

The perfect opportunity exists to have female issues properly addressed, but unfortunately womenkind too likes to join in the "prominent-women" bashing, fixating on issues such as how female candidates look, how they speak, if they have children or not, how sexy their husbands are. (p.A2)

Some of these references were benign, such as one describing a (National MP) Max Bradford lookalike competition. Candidates from the anarchic McGillicuddy Serious Party were often described, light-heartedly, in relation to their appearance. For example, the Party's "genetically modified" candidate was described as resembling a half man-half fish (Serious fun, 1999), and three articles focused on the Party's statement that the public need not worry about it spending public money on underpants, as the members do not wear any (e.g. Party is undie-free, 1999). Comments about what politicians - especially Shipley - wore to the Addington races were also regarded as acceptable within the tradition of race day fashion.

There were four discernible trends in references to politicians' appearance, centring on weight (particularly for men), appearance during the televised leaders' debates, clothing choices, and the "airbrushing" of the female leaders. It was also noted that articles on electorates, and the candidates contesting them, tended to include comments around appearance. For example, a male reporter described Taupo's National candidate David Steele as "a grey-haired Taupo chartered accountant who oozes charisma" (Inglis, 1999,

p.7). The *New Zealand Herald's* Theresa Garner (1999) went one better, beginning her article on the Auckland Central electorate with:

Take one rosy-cheeked investment banker, a dreadlocked eco-activist and three of Parliament's fiercest raven-haired women and watch them battle it out between the park benches and penthouses of Auckland Central. (p.A7)

A male reporting on the Waimakariri electorate wrote that candidate Cosgrove looked like his predecessor Mike Moore and dressed smartly (Rentoul, 1999). Feature articles about politicians also tended to contain this form of comment. For example, in a feature on retiring National MP, Doug Graham, Ruth Berry (1999) wrote that he looked a bit gaunt, and reported his one-time self-description of "short and fat" (p.5). Similarly, the two male reporters who profiled the contenders for Finance Minister described Cullen as a little tired and grey, and referred to Bill English's "chunky shoulders" (Bedford & Love, 1999, p.15). Finally, in a *Sunday Star Times* feature article on Helen Clark, reporter Anthony Hubbard (1999) described her as a visionary in a maroon jacket.

5.5.1 "Weighty" Comments

At the start of the campaign, a protestor who gatecrashed the National Party launch accused MP Gerry Brownlee of "manhandling" him off the premises. In reporting the fracas, Helen Bain (1999d) wrote that "the generously proportioned Mr Brownlee" (p.2) had also been present when fellow MP Max Bradford allegedly assaulted a student protestor who impeded his path during a university visit earlier in the year. In other reporting of this event, by Chris Daniels (1999a), the protestor is quoted calling Brownlee "a huge man" (p.A5). In another story by Daniels (1999b), about George Hawkins' "midget" campaigning car, he described Jonathan Hunt as "substantial" (p.A4). Later in the campaign, reporter Bruce Holloway (1999) noted that Coromandel MP McLean had lost 3kg during the campaign. The *Otago Daily Times* reported, in its "election capers" column, that Helen Clark had advised supporters not to give Labour candidate Benson-Pope too many scones and biscuits:

"I don't need them," Mr Benson-Pope, a man of not inconsequential stature replied. Ms Clark: "The expanding waist line is the number one problem for male MPs. I have never found it a problem myself". (Stretching the limit, 1999, p.4)

Jim Anderton's weight loss through adherence to the "Zone" diet was given a positive spin in the *New Zealand Herald*. In an article devoted to the leader's weight loss,

reporter Warren Gamble (1999) suggested, “It seems more than political cosmetics. Something has changed Jim Anderton from a political thunderhead into a sunnier personality...He has lightened up, in temperament and suit-size” (p.A6).

Comparatively, the only comment made in relation to a woman’s weight was in reference to Jenny Shipley. (In the earlier days of her political career, she had encountered some negative comments about her size. See McGregor, 1996a.) Two newspapers reported the comment made by an attendee at a Wellington Central electorate meeting. When Phillida Bunkle said that she had withdrawn from the race because there was something bigger at stake, this person yelled “Jenny Shipley” (Edwards, 1999b, p.2). This was reported in the *Evening Post*’s coverage of the meeting, and was also picked up by the *New Zealand Herald*, in a brief headlined “Weighty comment”.

5.5.2 Leaders’ Appearance During Televised Debates

The appearance of party leaders during the televised leaders’ debates has become an acceptable focus for media commentary, both through the verdict of commentators and reporters themselves. Comments that Clark came out dressed in red and Shipley in blue reflected the (female) leaders’ tendency to dress in party colours on such occasions. Other aspects of appearance were also commented upon. For example, on November 2 the *Dominion* quoted Professor Boston as saying Clark looked hunched whereas Shipley was poised and confident (Bain, 1999c). The *Evening Post* political reporter Guyon Espiner (1999c) reported that Anderton sat awkwardly next to Shipley and wanted performance enhancers, calling for a cushion to boost his stature. Columnist Tom Scott (1999a) put it more bluntly, writing that Anderton looked like an ageing jockey sitting next to Shipley.

5.5.3 Choice of Clothing

Comments about politicians’ choice of attire were, for the most part, light-hearted although there were a handful of more serious feature stories based around this, and appearance generally (see also Chapter Nine). The *Waikato Times*’ Susan Pepperell (1999) noted Shipley and Clark both wore cerise during their visit to Hamilton, and she challenged Peters to do the same or better, but suggested Prebble and Anderton did not suit pink. Similarly, the *Otago Daily Times* noted the uniform look adopted by

Labour's male candidates in Dunedin. It may be that these comments about politicians' "uniform" reflect the belief that there is little to distinguish between candidates and parties, something which the New Zealand First Party referred to in its billboards featuring the merged features of Clark and Shipley, with the words, "Even their policies are the same" (Face-off tactics, 1999, p.A2).

In another example, the *Dominion's* diarist reported that Wellington Central candidates were asked, at a public meeting, to explain why they wore what they did. The columnist deemed Alliance candidate Phillida Bunkle's response the "most perplexing comment of interminable election verbiage so far", after she said that she had overheard ACT leader Richard Prebble tell Rodney Hide that her legs drove him mad, so she'd worn a short skirt to "really do it tonight" (Diary, 1999, p.6).

Finally, it is noted that a New Zealand First MP, Tukoroirangi Morgan, accounted for five references to appearance, all centred on his infamous choice of underwear. In this case, the media's reminder that he spent NZ\$89 on boxer shorts, during a shopping spree with public money, was not an indicator of superficial attention to appearance but a symbol of a salient political point about the inappropriate use of public funds.

5.5.4 The Airbrushing of Female Leaders

Related to the above, but with a slightly different focus, was the media interest in the manipulation of, in particular, the female leaders' images – on the road and in party advertising (see also Chapter Nine). Reporter Helen Bain (1999f), in an article entitled "Attention to looks 'part of the package'", described Clark's campaign photo as "an airbrushed vision of loveliness" (p.11). She also wrote that out on the hustings, Shipley did not let the hullabaloo "ruffle so much as a single lacquered hair in her new campaign hairstyle" (Bain, 1999i, p.2). Columnist Tom Scott (1999b) suggested that "it's as if Clark's voice has been airbrushed to match her extraordinarily flattering billboard portrait" (p.2), and argued the photo was not sufficient likeness to be used on a passport. This theme in coverage of female leaders is explored in more detail in Chapter Nine.

5.6 Conclusion

The results of an extensive content analysis of New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign revealed significant differences in the media coverage of male and female politicians. The key quantitative findings located these differences in three areas, relating to news subjects, news sources and tone of coverage. Specifically, women appeared in news stories (as "news subjects") in more depth than men, but were less likely to speak; in other words, women were "talked about" in news coverage more than they were given the opportunity to speak. Further, there was a tendency for women to be covered in more polarised ways, receiving more positive coverage but also, to a lesser extent, more negative coverage. On the other hand, male politicians received more neutral news treatment. The implications of these findings are explored in the following chapter.

Other content analysis findings also provided further insight into the relationship between female politicians and the news. The importance of leadership positions for media coverage was demonstrated throughout the chapter, and Shipley and Clark's contribution to the figures for female politicians noted. The high profile of these women, and their importance as news sources during the election period, meant their experiences were not "typical" of female politicians generally. Other female politicians tended to become the focus of news coverage when they contested electorally significant seats (particularly if their performance appeared likely to upset an incumbent MP or influence the shape of the coalition government), or because of their association with election "scandals" (especially the New Zealand First list controversy). Finally, the content analysis findings indicated that gendered language and references to physical appearance - while not widespread - are still present in news coverage, particularly in relation to the female leaders and New Zealand First candidate Suzanne Bruce. However, men were also subjected to comments about appearance, especially in relation to size and/or weight.

In summary, the content analysis revealed significant differences in the coverage received by male and female politicians. These points of differences are discussed further in the chapter that follows. This chapter, while addressing a key concern of this research - namely the way female politicians are covered in the news media - also provides an empirical grounding for the frame analysis of the female leaders and the

New Zealand First list controversy (see Chapters Eight and Nine). The following chapter discusses the quantitative content analysis results with reference to the literature on media coverage of female politicians.

Chapter Six

Content Analysis Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The newspaper content analysis showed significant differences in the coverage of male and female politicians, in regard to degree of inclusion in story, use as news sources, and story and visual tone. Further, qualitative analysis showed gendered language and references to physical appearance were present in coverage, although these were not widespread and not always at the expense of women. This chapter explores these findings in relation to other research, and with reference to key ideas in the study of gender, news and politics. Quantitative content analysis must consider what is counted in relation to a theoretical framework which addresses social significance and meaning (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998). Thus, it is important to bear in mind the principles of a socially responsible press, in particular its commitment to diversity and professionalism.

6.2 Female Politicians as News Subjects and Sources

The masculine character of the news is also recognised in the choice of sources and spokespersons who are overwhelmingly male, despite the growing numbers of female politicians, public officials and other professionals. (van Zoonen, 1998b, p.35)

An important content analysis result documented the extent to which women politicians were used as news subjects and sources. Overall, women comprised just over a third of political news subjects (36.4%) and politician news sources (34.9%). Clearly, during the 1999 General Election campaign there were many more male news subjects and sources in media coverage than there were female. This is consistent with previous research, and may also be considered a “natural” reflection of the greater number of men in national politics. In their discussion of underrepresentation of female news sources, Zoch and Turk (1998) wrote:

As much as one might like to blame the media for NOT telling it like it is, in this instance the media’s “schemata of interpretation” may actually be mirroring reality, as unfortunate and inequitable as that reality might be. (p.772, emphasis in original)

However, Zoch and Turk's (1998) rationale - that women's comparatively low status in organisations makes them less likely to be identified as "viable sources" - is hardly appropriate to the New Zealand political scene during the 1999 General Election, when women held the two most important positions. So, are these content analysis findings good or bad news for women? The difficulty in answering this question lies with what benchmarks should be considered when attempting to monitor progress and representation of female politicians. Official election figures show that 318 of total election candidates (32.9%) were women, and 647 (67.1%) were men – meaning women were represented in the media in similar proportions to their representation among political candidates. However, these official figures do not consider other factors which have implications for news coverage, such as status and incumbency (instead, the incumbent Prime Minister is identified as one candidate, as is an unknown person contesting the list vote for a fringe party with consistently marginal poll results). In an effort to answer this question, a number of key findings are considered in relation to previous research.

First, the content analysis found that female politicians were used as news subjects in comparable if not better ways than men (i.e. women were less likely than their male counterparts to be mentioned only and more likely to appear to a moderate extent). Women's appearance in the media as news subjects has been studied as an important indicator of visibility (e.g. Spears & Seydegart, 2000), and on this aspect of visibility New Zealand female politicians performed well, and these results are encouraging.

However, this is a limited measure for these figures do not reveal whether or not women have a voice in the news. The ability to speak is regarded as one of the most fundamental aspects of media portrayal, deserving of research interest in its own right. Although many more studies examine women as news sources, the value of a parallel documentation of women's presence in the media as news subjects is found in Gilmartin and Brunn (1998). Their study of representations of women in political cartoons, which gathered data about both the presence of women and men and the identity of those who spoke, found that while women outnumbered men in terms of depictions, it was the men who had the voice. The authors wrote:

Since speech (who has the right and authority to be heard?) represents one of the most fundamental manifestations of power differentials in human interactions, noting which of the characters in these cartoons is speaking provides one indication of who wields power, control, or initiative. (p.539-540)

Their findings, although in relation to a different medium and in a different political context, are similar to those of this thesis. Content analysis of the 1999 General Election campaign showed that while female politicians did better than males in the extent to which they appeared in news stories, they were significantly more likely not to be cited and/or quoted in news stories. This is of concern because news sources are key to how news is framed, and what perspectives are included and validated. According to Cappon (1991, quoted in Gidengil & Everitt, 2000), "News, to a remarkable degree, is what people say and how they say it" (p.7). Similarly, Turk (1985, quoted in Zoch & Turk, 1998) wrote that "News is not necessarily what happens but what a news source says has happened" (p.763). Journalist Curtis MacDougall (1968) has pointed out that billions of events – potential news stories - are constantly occurring in the world but:

They do not become so until some purveyor of the news gives an account of them. The news, in other words, is the account of the event, not something intrinsic in the event itself. (quoted in McGregor, 1992, p.180)

However, these "people" and "purveyors" are not usually "average" citizens but tend to be institutionalised individuals and representatives of the "public sphere". In other words, they are "accredited" or "official" sources. This reliance on "official" sources, particularly from government, is often identified as a reason for women's under-representation in the news (Leitch, 1992b).

Croteau and Hoynes' (1992) study of ABC News' *Nightline* programme showed that "the news is interpreted almost entirely by men" (p.156), particularly when this news is concerned with "hard" political and economic events and issues. However, they also noted that only certain types of men enjoy this regular access, namely elite and white men. Carter, Branston and Allan (1998) concurred, summarising results of studies showing journalists rely mainly on white, middle-class, middle-aged professional males. Hartley (1982) wrote that "News is not simply mostly...about and by men, it is overwhelmingly seen through men" (p.146).

The reliance on male sources is part of the masculine nature of news, and is regarded by women in the industry to reflect male journalists' personal networks rather than the reality of gender divisions (van Zoonen, 1998b). In this way, the traditional notion of news professionalism, in particular objectivity, disguises the structural problems that exist for women as news sources. The absence of female sources implies powerlessness and is evidence of symbolic annihilation (Zoch & Turk, 1998). Further, when women do appear in the news, it tends to be as private individuals. Or in the words of Rakow and Kranich (1991), "either as an anonymous example of uninformed public opinion, as housewife, consumer, neighbour, or as mother, sister, wife of the man in the news, or as victim – of crime, disaster, political policy" (p.14). This pattern is also linked to:

an alignment of "serious" news values with public-sphere events deemed to be of interest to men, whilst so-called "women's issues" are more likely to be framed in relation to the "private" or domestic sphere. (Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998, p.6)

The content analysis finding that women and men were quoted first in stories to a similar extent, but that women "dropped off" and were overall more likely not to be cited and/or quoted at all, both supports and contradicts other research. Croteau and Hoynes (1992) found that:

The overwhelming numerical over-representation of men is only one part of how men dominate the *Nightline* guest list. They also appear earlier in the program, and are afforded more opportunity to speak. (p.157)

In Chinese newspapers, men are twice as likely as women to be quoted (Yuan, 1998 cited in Gallagher, 2001). A large study of broadcast news in New Zealand from 1985 to 1994 showed that male sources are used more often than female sources, in all topics examined (crime, politics, health and Māori) (McGregor & Comrie, 1995). The difference was most marked in political news stories (87% male sources) and least obvious in health (66% male sources). In addition, male sources overall spoke on average for a longer time (57.1 seconds, compared to an overall average for female sources of 43.7 seconds). However, in 1994 (the last year sampled), McGregor and Comrie (1995) noted a general closing of the gap in average speaking times of men and women. More recent results, from the Global Media Monitoring Project 2000, suggest this shift may have continued in New Zealand. The report authors - although warning about the limitations of individual country data - noted that New Zealand's results stood

out, with women accounting for 40% of politicians and government spokespersons in the news. The report also noted the likely impact of female leaders on this result:

But the fact that the country has a female Prime Minister must have contributed to the high visibility of women as political and governmental news subjects – a good illustration of the extent to which news media focus on top leaders and authorities. (Spears & Seydegart, 2000, p.64)

However, it should be pointed out that the sampling method means these results should be interpreted cautiously. Finally, new research in the US shows that female political candidates in the 2000 primary races received more newspaper coverage than their male counterparts (Bystrom, Robertson & Banwart, 2001).

6.3 Tone of Coverage

The content analysis of the 1999 General Election campaign showed that female politicians were more likely to enjoy a positive tone in coverage while male politicians were more likely to be covered neutrally. These results do clearly advantage women – at least in the short term. Studies that have monitored coverage of female politicians over longer periods suggest that an initially positive image can eventually create problems when women fail to live up to expectations. For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, Australian Carmen Lawrence’s image was linked to the “matron saint icon stirred by the hope for a new, clean ‘womanly’ parliamentary politics” (Eveline & Booth, 1997, p.106), but such high expectations made her subsequent fall from grace much harder. Phillips (1993) explained:

if you’ve got to be so different that you give politics a whole new name and character, so virtuous that you can overcome the very negative perceptions people have about politicians, then...any mistake you make is seen as catastrophic. It’s actually an impossible agenda. (quoted in Eveline & Booth, 1997, p.116)

Similarly, Norris (1997c) suggested the gendered framing of female leaders as agents of change, while positive, may create false expectations as to what such women can achieve, and “in the long term may set female leaders on a pedestal from which they can only fall” (p.165). Van Acker (1999) also wrote about the “golden girl” or “saint syndrome” experienced by high profile female figures.

While the negative tone for women was not statistically significant, it is substantively interesting. The trend was the same for both story content and visuals, and certainly

women were less likely to be covered neutrally. This raises the question, what will the positive slant become when the novelty of female leaders and the unique nature of the prime ministerial race wear off? Neutral coverage might well be preferable in the long term. Norris's (1997c) concerns may be particularly applicable in New Zealand, where the rise of female leaders has coincided with the appearance of a worldwide trend of voter cynicism about politics. But any public expectations of female leaders, in a new era of MMP politics, have been dealt a blow by a news media which – in the aftermath of the 1999 election – judged the relationship between Shipley and Clark to be the worst between a Prime Minister and Opposition leader in some years, and employed a “women behaving badly” frame to dismiss any idea that women would deliver more inclusive politics (e.g. Venter, 2001). More recently, Clark's “protracted honeymoon with the media” (Eileen O'Leary, 2002, p.191), mainly the result of her personal accessibility and “disciplined approach to setting the week's news agenda” (Eileen O'Leary, 2002, p.192), appears to be giving away to resentment over the leader's invincibility and concern that the media have been too soft on her (e.g. Armstrong, 2002; Campbell only doing his job, 2002; Roughan, 2002). This is in stark contrast to the content analysis finding that Clark's 1999 election coverage was notably positive, and lends further support to the idea that initial high expectations can work against women in the long term (e.g. Eveline & Booth, 1997; Norris, 1997c; van Acker, 1999). For example, political reporter John Armstrong (2002), discussing Clark's dented credibility following the “Paintergate” scandal (in which it was revealed that the Prime Minister had signed a painting, sold at a charity auction, that was not her own work), wrote that “Teflon Woman comes unstuck” and suggested that Clark had “lost her Midas touch” (p.A23). Van Acker (1999) suggested that it is partially because there are so few women in politics that those who are elected receive a lot of media attention, and this intense scrutiny leads to “expectations that women exercising political power will stumble or fall” (p.148). She also argued that while Australia's female politicians such as Lawrence and Kirner have learnt the skills to handle the media, they still find it hard to prevent themselves being cast as saviours, saints or sinners – a situation she attributed to the nature of news production.

In the US, Smith (1997) identified an overall tone to election news coverage that was advantageous to women. His research found that female candidates' average day's coverage was neutral in tone, whereas male candidates' was negative. He suggested

that his finding about women fits quite well with Kahn's (1994) findings, while his male results were a point of departure. While agreeing with the latter, the idea that the neutral tone he identified in women's coverage fits with Kahn is more debatable. Kahn (1994) identified eight prototype articles based on her content analysis: two of the four female prototypes (female incumbent in senatorial race and female incumbent in gubernatorial race) had a mixed tone (positive and negative), whereas two were neutral; compared to one mixed coverage among the four male prototypes and three neutral. In fact, she noted that, "Women incumbents are criticized in their news coverage twice as often as their male counterparts" (p.173, note 10). Similarly, Heldman, Carroll and Olson (2000) documented that coverage of presidential candidate, Elizabeth Dole, contained considerable positive and negative sentiment, although the largest proportion of headlines and story content was neutral (note that they examined tone in the headline, story and description of candidate traits, but most examples came from opinion pieces). In particular aspects of content (such as "horse race"), tone was overwhelmingly favourable for the male candidate George W. Bush and almost all negative for Dole. In conclusion, Heldman et al. (2000) borrowed the concept of "symbolic racism" – used to explain the shift away from overt prejudice to discrimination hidden in other terms – to suggest that "symbolic sexism" lay behind the more subtle bias at play in Dole's coverage. However, other recent research in the US showed that in primary races, male and female candidates' coverage is similar in tone. Bystrom et al. (2001) wrote that:

In terms of the slant – positive, negative, or neutral – of their coverage and assessment of their viability as candidates, the women and men candidates in these races were treated almost equally. Women and men candidates received mostly neutral coverage, though the negative coverage of both outweighed their positive coverage. (p.2009)

6.4 Gendered Language and References to Physical Appearance

Media attention to women's appearance is an established issue in the study of gender politics, and recent research suggests it still occurs. Devitt (1999) wrote that journalists more often describe the appearance of female candidates than male. He also suggested that when more than one woman runs in a race, personal coverage may increase rather than decrease. For example, he noted how the different shades of blue worn by two women candidates were said to hint at the differences between them.

Attention to the physical appearance of men signals a shift toward more interest in the personal lives of public figures generally, regardless of gender. This was suggested by some female politicians in their interviews (see Chapter Ten) and is consistent with the finding that media coverage is becoming more “intimate” generally. Van Zoonen (1991) used the term “intimization” to describe changes in journalism that include “a growing attention to human interest subjects, an intimate and personal mode of address and the treatment of political behaviour and issues as though they are matters of personality” (p.217). Gamble’s comments about Anderton’s weight loss reflecting a political change in the Alliance leader (see previous chapter), clearly reflect this trend.

6.5 The “Intimization” of News

The trend towards intimation (van Zoonen, 1991; van Zoonen, 1998a) is of interest given the relationship between appearance and power. Theorists have suggested dress is a particular challenge for women, who face a greater range of conflicting advice about what is appropriate for the workplace, which Johnson and Lennon (1999) said may be because a “powerful woman” is an oxymoron. Ogle and Damhorst (1999) concurred, noting that women in business receive conflicting media advice about what is appropriate and face “double binds” about looking sexy and feminine or appearing powerful and competent. They noted that partial adoption of a more masculine style of dress could “soften” women’s entry into positions of authority and control, “but also slow assimilation by lending questions about women’s fitness for the role” (p.95). Ogle and Damhorst (1999) drew on the work of feminist writers Susan Faludi (1991) and Naomi Wolf (1991), who have contended that the endless advice offered to women about appearance prevents them from achieving in more important areas. These writers also claimed that the fashionable appearance advocated for women makes them look inappropriate and hinders leadership opportunities.

Female politicians interviewed for this research were clearly aware of the “rules” about what is appropriate for women in public positions (see Chapter Ten). Evidence that such rules about dress still exist is found in the news stories that followed Prime Minister Clark’s decision to wear trousers to a reception held for the Queen during her New Zealand visit in 2002 (e.g. Dressing down raises eyebrows, 2002). Media comment and speculation about appropriate outfits and protocol continued when the Prime Minister attended the funeral of the Queen Mother (e.g. McCurdy, 2002; see also

Fountaine, 2002) and met with United States President, George W. Bush (e.g. van Beynen, 2002).

6.6 The Female Leaders

At this stage it is useful to make some mention of the content analysis findings in relation to the female leaders, although these are also explored in more depth in Chapter Nine. Clark and Shipley contributed substantially to the positive results for female politicians, especially in relation to inclusion in stories and headlines, and sourcing. The female leaders were plainly – and understandably in a presidential-style campaign – a central focus of the media’s attention, and the most elite political news sources. However, there is a risk in unquestionably assuming that the attention given to Shipley and Clark represents a victory for female politicians in general. The nature of political news, and its obsession with leadership, worked in favour of Clark and Shipley but the overall findings were less positive for female politicians generally. In fact, by concentrating on two leaders – who happened to be women – the media shifted attention away from the wider political picture, and created an environment where other issues related to women’s representation were marginalised (e.g. questions about unexpectedly low list placings for other women MPs in 1999, such as Katherine O’Regan, were not raised. See Nicholl, 2000). The tendency of news coverage to concentrate on the positive aspects of women’s political representation, and thereby deflect attention away from less encouraging interpretations, has been documented by United States researchers. Norris and Carroll (1997) argued that the hype and exaggeration surrounding 1992’s increase in elected female politicians (billed the “Year of the Woman”) may have led voters to believe the change was more dramatic than it really was, by glossing over persistent patterns of marginalisation and the complex nature of gender politics. Daughton (1994) also noted the media’s tendency to overstate the small gains made by women, and argued that this focus on how far women have come “can serve to placate many women, preventing them from seeing how much farther they have yet to go, and keeping them from realizing the necessity of organizing for further group benefit” (Introduction section, para.5).

6.7 Gender and Political Structures

Political and gender research suggests women are more likely to be linked to “soft” topics such as health and education, rather than “hard” topics such as trade and foreign

affairs. For this reason, the content analysis schedule (see Appendix B) included a question about the topic with which each news subject was linked. However, this ended up contributing little to the research due to the nature of the New Zealand political and media scene. It became increasingly obvious that the way topics were commented upon in the media reflected party structures (i.e. Cabinet Ministers dominated discussion of “their” particular issue, along with - on some important topics - party leaders) rather than media stereotyping by gender. During the campaign period, the National-led government was dominated by male Cabinet Ministers and while there is likely an underlying gender dimension here, it occurs at the level of National Party Cabinet postings, rather than media coverage reinforcing traditional gender distinctions regarding male and female expertise. For example, the reporting of economic policy - traditionally a “male issue” - was dominated by Michael Cullen (Labour Finance Spokesperson), Bill English (National Cabinet Minister and Treasurer), Jim Anderton (Alliance leader), Helen Clark (Labour leader), Jenny Shipley (National leader), Winston Peters (New Zealand First leader) and Richard Prebble (ACT leader), who altogether made up 79.8% of politicians linked to the issue. This is a reflection of their positions rather than any direct gender bias, and is likely to be a contributing factor in other political systems as well.

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that gender is just one component of a politician’s persona (albeit one that results in significant differences in media coverage), which at all times requires contextualisation. For example, during New Zealand’s 1999 General Election, unlike the majority of other election campaigns studied around the world, women held the two highest leadership positions, and were also well represented amongst high profile candidates and in important electorate seats. The proportional representation system of government meant that a diverse range of candidates contested the election and one-time “fringe” parties had the potential to influence the composition of the new coalition government. While this does mean media coverage becomes more fragmented (as news organisations must cover a wider range of parties and candidates), the potential of women and other minority groups to make a difference to the election outcome may result in greater media attention for these traditionally marginalised groups. However, while there are more viewpoints for the media to cover and delve into (Palmer, 2002), news deadlines still restrict the media’s ability to widely canvas opinion, and when political power is spread among a larger number of parties, there is

also more competition for media coverage (Eileen O'Leary, 2002). Radio New Zealand's political editor Al Morrison (2002) noted that reporters are still coming to terms with what form balance and fairness takes in a multi-party system. Future research could usefully examine whether women and other minority groups receive more political coverage in multi-party systems of government.

6.8 Limitations and Future Research

In Chapter Four, the general shortcomings of content analysis were discussed. The following section is concerned with the limitations of this research's application of the methodology.

First, the content analysis provided only a snapshot of the 1999 General Election campaign and female politicians' coverage. Therefore, interesting trends in coverage of particular women over their years in politics are not revealed. Yet the experiences of Helen Clark prior to the 1999 General Election, and following her ascent to Prime Minister, show marked shifts in her news coverage and media relationships over time (see, for example, Aimer, 1997; Kilroy, 1996; McCallum, 1993; McGregor, 1996a; McGregor, 1996b; Eileen O'Leary, 2002; Palmer, 2002). Therefore, it is not possible to widely generalise from this content analysis, although it does provide a useful and in-depth account of coverage during a historically significant election campaign. Another related limitation is that the results for female politicians overall were influenced by the presence of two high profile party leaders. This must be borne in mind when considering how non-leader female politicians fared during the election campaign.

The second main limitation is the focus on newspaper coverage only. It would have been useful to also apply formal content analysis to television news during the campaign period. However, to keep the research manageable, a decision was made to concentrate on newspapers. Therefore, the results should not be seen as a reflection on election coverage in its entirety for television news differs from newspaper news in several ways. For example, Barnhurst and Steele (1997) noted that television news coverage of elections is becoming more visual and faster-paced, and that the emphasis on imagery has changed the nature of political campaigning. Further, it should also be borne in mind that other research findings from the 1999 General Election suggest that newspapers primed leadership evaluations more than television (Banducci & Vowles,

2002). Therefore, it is possible that if the content analysis had monitored television coverage as well, there might have been less emphasis overall on the female leaders and their viability. Therefore, the content analysis finding about Clark's positive coverage, which seemed to correspond with polls consistently showing her as the more likely winner, should be treated with caution.

In terms of future research directions, it would be valuable to follow up the content analysis result that showed female politicians were quoted in significantly different ways to their male counterparts. In particular, the work of Devitt (1999), and Aday and Devitt (2001), has suggested that there are qualitative differences in the way male and female candidates are quoted. For example, reporters were:

more likely to quote male candidates backing their claims with evidence than they were female candidates...by quoting female and male candidates differently, female candidates may appear to voters as less in command of the facts or less prepared to discuss issues of public concern. (Devitt, 1999, p.21)

It would be interesting to explore whether this is the case in the New Zealand context, where women hold a number of high profile political positions. There would also be value in an on-going monitoring of women in political news generally, as well as during election campaigns. Clark contested a second election campaign in 2002, against a male opponent. Her coverage during her first three years as Prime Minister suggested "gendered" issues continue to be encountered by female politicians, even when enjoying high poll results and strong public support. As Norris (1997c) noted, our understanding of how female leaders are covered and framed in the news media has been limited by the few available to study. New Zealand offers researchers a unique opportunity to gain further insight into the framing of women as political leaders.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored key content analysis findings in relation to female politicians as news subjects and sources, the tone of media coverage, and references to physical appearance. The content analysis results have implications in regard to "social responsibility", especially its advocacy of diversity and professionalism. Particularly discouraging is the finding that during the 1999 General Election campaign, female politicians were significantly less likely than their male counterparts to speak in news stories. The media's inability to give women an equal voice, along with a tendency for

less neutral coverage of women, points to news structures (such as objectivity and immediacy, as well as commercial imperatives which have increased sensationalism in the news and reduced journalistic resources) that discourage genuine diversity and professionalism (for recent discussion in the New Zealand context, see Morrison, 2002 and Palmer, 2002). While similar proportions of women appeared in news stories as contested the election – which may be seen as some form of reflective diversity – the inequities in source selection suggest a system of news-gathering that does not allow women’s voices to be strongly heard. The positive results for the female leaders reinforce the traditional outcomes of professionalism, which holds high regard for elite and institutionalised sources. However, the content analysis results suggest it is premature to conclude that the prevalence of Shipley and Clark as news subjects and sources represents a victory for female politicians generally. In fact, a closer reading of campaign coverage shows that the presence of female leaders prompted only superficial change to dominant election news frames (see Chapter Nine), and other female politicians and gender issues were sidelined to issues relating to male leadership (see Chapter Eight). The following chapter discusses the framing typology that informs this more qualitative analysis of news content.

Chapter Seven

Framing Theory and Application

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on framing theory, which comes to media scholarship through cognitive and social psychology, sociology and public opinion research. As these varied roots suggest, framing is a “scattered conceptualization” (Entman, 1993, p.51) although it consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text (Entman, 1993). Framing is variously considered a theory, paradigm, model or perspective (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001), and according to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), it has been examined at least since the mid-1970s (for example, Goffman, 1974). This chapter discusses the debate around framing, and the rationale for its use in this research.

7.2 What is Framing?

Framing, or frame analysis, is a widely used yet loosely defined term (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001), which has been employed to describe both “internal structures of the mind” and “devices embedded in political discourse” (Kinder & Sanders, 1990 quoted in Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p.57). Scheufele (1999) wrote that the vague conceptualisation of framing is at least partially responsible for the use of the term to describe a range of “similar but distinctly different approaches” (p.103). He argued that there is a need to differentiate framing from “closely related concepts in mass media effects research”, such as agenda setting (see also Maher, 2001), and develop a “general conceptual definition” (Scheufele, 1999, p.104). Scheufele (1999), along with others such as Gamson (1992) and Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992), advocated distinguishing between media frames (those employed in media coverage) and individual frames (used by people to make sense of events and issues), and subsequently recognised that “a concept explication of framing must take into account both kinds of frames and link them consistently” (p.106). This is in contrast with early framing research which tended to use the words “schemas” and “frames” interchangeably. The terms are now recognised as different, with the essence of this difference lying in their individual or media nature. According to Neuman et al., schema, script and cognitive structure “refer primarily to individuals’ structures of thought and often imply a deterministic or hierarchical structure of information and ideas within the mind” (p.60). Cappella and

Jamieson (1997) agreed, reserving the terms schema and script “for the knowledge that audiences have, and use [ing] the term ‘frames’ to describe the structuring of texts” (p.39). Later, they argued that news frames and audience schemata need to be “kept conceptually distinct” (p.44) although they noted the interaction between them is of interest.

Cappella and Jamieson (1997) also concurred that one of the main problems of framing is that the term is too broad. They wrote:

A general definition of framing seems to reduce to “the way the story is written or produced”, including the orienting headlines, the specific word choices, the rhetorical devices employed, the narrative form, and so on. Any production feature of the verbal or visual text would seem to qualify at least as a candidate for framing the news. (p.39)

This leads to “conceptual indeterminacy” and an approach that is too diffuse. Framing should only be studied, they argued, “where particular frames carried by specific stylistic and rhetorical devices are reliably identified and consistently utilized” (p.40).

Reese (2001) defined framing as “the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences” (p.7). He also proposed a working definition which highlights six aspects of framing, each of which spawns a series of research questions: “Frames are *organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (p.11, italics in original). Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss and Ghanem’s (1991) defined a frame as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (quoted in Tankard, 2001, pp.100-101). Gamson (1992) called a frame “an implicit organizing idea” (p.3). Lawrence (2000) wrote that there is general agreement, in relation to news, that “frames are journalistic devices that bring certain elements of political reality into focus over others” (p.111). Norris (1997a), who has used the concept of framing to explain how female politicians are covered in the media, talked of frames as bundles of “key concepts, stock phrases and conventional images to reinforce common ways of presenting developments” (p.6). A good example of such an approach to framing is provided in Ross’ (1995) study of

Britain's 1994 Labour leadership campaign, which demonstrated how binary words were used to describe contenders Tony Blair and Margaret Beckett:

Where Blair was a youthful 40-something, Beckett was post-menopausal; where Blair kicked against old-fashioned socialist values, Beckett wanted a return to 1945; where Blair was happily married to the daughter of an actor, Beckett had stolen another woman's husband. (p.502)

Many definitions of framing are expressed in terms of what framing does. For example, Entman (1993) wrote that framing selects and makes salient some aspects of reality, thereby encouraging a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or recommendation. Scheufele (1999) suggested that Entman's approach to framing - with its emphasis on selection and salience of aspects of an issue rather than the issue itself - is especially useful when trying to distinguish between framing and other media effects (such as agenda setting or gatekeeping). Many more definitions draw on metaphors to explain what framing is and how it works. Taking such a metaphorical approach, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) wrote:

Like the framing of a house, a news frame creates a structure on which other elements are built. There is much in a house that is not the frame, but without the frame there is no house. And the frame determines the shape of the house. (p.38)

They also likened the framing process to the taking of a photograph: a reporter, like a photographer, decides what to include and exclude, what is salient and what is unimportant, and therefore left out. Tankard (2001) wrote that there are three clear ways that the framing metaphor has been applied in studies of media content - two related to the "picture frame" metaphor, and one to the "house frame". He explained the two aspects of the picture frame analogy in the following way:

one of the functions of a picture frame is to isolate certain material and draw attention to it...A frame placed around a picture - whether the picture is a painting, a photograph, or a real-world scene - cuts one particular "slice" from that picture and excludes other possible slices...Another function of a picture frame can be to suggest a tone for viewing a picture. For instance, an elaborately carved, wooden frame provides a different feeling from a mass-produced, metal one. Similarly, the news media can set a tone for an event or issue by the choice of frames. (pp.98-99)

Tankard (2001) went on to describe how the frame of a building is also a useful metaphor: "In architecture, the frame is the organizing structure used to construct a

house. In newswork, a frame can be the organizing idea on which a story is built” (p.99).

Frames, then, shape media coverage by providing a structure for the telling of stories.

According to Norris (1997a):

news frames give “stories” a conventional “peg” to arrange the narrative, to make sense of the facts, to focus the headline, and to define events as newsworthy. Frames provide contextual cues giving order and meaning to complex problems, actions and events. (p.2)

Thus, frames work to allow both reporters and readers to “make sense” of the news.

Norris and Carroll (1997) stated that they:

represent consistent, predictable narrative stories that are embedded in the social construction of reality. Without such devices, journalists – and readers – would lack coherent news narratives that link disparate events. (p.2)

Scheufele (1999) drew on the work of Gamson, Tuchman, Gitlin and Entman to describe what it is that media frames do: provide an organising idea or view of reality in an attempt to provide meaning, and allow reporters to package news stories for the audience. Referring to the work of Gans (1979), Norris (1997a) wrote that “frames are located within a particular culture and are the product of the complex interaction between sources, media, and audiences” (p.7). Media frames become institutionalised through routine use, and are reinforced by professional training, journalistic practices, and “news cultures which promote a common interpretation of events” (Tuchman, 1978 cited in Norris, 1997a, p.8).

Entman (1993) argued that frames occur in at least four parts of the communication process – the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture. In the text alone, frames are “manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements” (p.52). Cappella and Jamieson (1997) concurred: “Framing the news is a question of slant, structure, emphasis, selection, word choice and context” (p.57). Zoch and Turk (1998) identified choice of information source as one of the most important aspects of framing. In their study of sourcing, they concluded that:

the “maleness” frame that media employed in this study extended not only to attaching greater importance to male sources but also to diminishing the importance of women even when they were used as sources. (p.772)

Scheufele (1999) broke framing studies into those which approach media and individual framing as dependent variables (i.e. those which examine the influence of various factors in the creation or modification of frames. On a media level this could be social-structural or organisational, individual or ideological variables; on an audience level the outcomes of the media’s framing for the audience) or independent variables (i.e. those which are focused on the effects of framing. On a media level such studies would examine any links with audience frames; in regard to audience frames, it includes those studies that examine the impact of framing on audience evaluations or actions). He went on to propose a “process model of framing” which addresses frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing and journalists as audiences. Scheufele (1999) argued that while studies have examined the influence of factors such as organisational restraints, professional values and understandings of audience, research:

has not determined how media frames are formed or the types of frames that result from this process. Future research, therefore, should address the *processes* that influence the creation or changes of frames applied by journalists. (p.115, italics in original)

He graphically depicted frame building as a process with inputs such as organisational pressures, ideologies and attitudes, with outcomes of media frames.

Approaching news as discourse, Pan and Kosicki (1993) identified four broad structures which contribute to framing: syntactical, thematic, script and rhetorical. Scheufele (1999) placed this research into the category of media frames as independent variables. The syntactical dimension related to “the stable patterns of the arrangement of words or phrases into sentences” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p.59). For the most part, these patterns consist of the inverted pyramid style of news writing and conventions of source attribution (for example, to imply authority or marginalise). Pan and Kosicki (1993) believed that in this aspect of framing, it is the headline, followed by the lead, episodes, background and closure, that is the most powerful framing device. Second, script structures referred to the way news is presented in the form of stories, with particular social functions – namely to describe the events of history as they unfold and “to orient audiences toward their communal environment and to help link audiences with the

environment that transcends their limited sensory experience” (p.60). News stories are presented according to a “script” – “an established and stable sequence of activities and components of an event that have been internalized as a structured mental representation of the event” (p.60). For example, the “who, what, when, where, why and how” of story writing. This gives the impression that a news story reports a discrete occurrence, with a beginning, climax and end. Third, the thematic structure was based on the fact that most stories (particularly issue stories but also, to a lesser extent, action oriented) contain elements of hypothesis testing. “A theme is presented or implied, and evidence in the forms of journalists’ observations of actions or quotations of a source is presented to support the hypothesis” (p.60). Causality is implied or often made explicit. Pan and Kosicki (1993) suggested a thematic structure consists of a summary (usually the headline, lead or conclusion) and a main body (evidence for the hypothesis, such as episodes, background and quotes). Finally, they defined rhetorical structures as the “stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects” (p.61). Here they placed Gamson’s five framing devices – metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images. Such devices may be used to “invoke images, increase salience of a point, and increase vividness of a report” (p.62). They also placed in this category those features of news presentation which “tout its facticity” (p.62) – such as labelling some news as opinion or interpretation, an act which implies other news stories are factual.

Recent framing scholarship has studied both media content and citizens’ reaction to it, and in general is more concerned with individual frames or schemas. Examples include Neuman et al. (1992), and Cappella and Jamieson (1997). In-depth interviews have been used to gain an insight into how people make sense of issues, and to explore the extent to which media frames influence this process. The general findings indicate that the media are one important component people refer to when talking about events or issues. Gamson (1992), for example, stated that “The public discourse that people draw on is much broader than the news and takes many forms” (p.118), but also noted that, in his research, every group, on every issue, demonstrated an awareness of public discourse. Consistent with Graber (1988), he showed that media discourse is seldom the only resource used and instead is often integrated with popular wisdom. The following section looks more closely at the area of framing effects.

7.3 Framing Effects

It is in the area of framing effects that much controversy about the approach occurs. According to Cappella and Jamieson (1997), one of the problems of framing research is that researchers have often assumed that differences in framing result in differences in outcome. They wrote:

Constructing, understanding, and proving the existence of framing in the news is in no way equivalent to determining its effects on the consumer...The two worlds may be connected...but the connection is *not* a foregone conclusion. The framing of a message does not logically imply its consequences for receivers. (p.48, italics in original)

They were critical of research which assumes what remains to be proven. There is, however, clear evidence that framing effects do exist. The oft-cited example comes from Kahneman and Tversky's (1984) classic experimental study, which showed that wording formally identical choices in different ways (in one instance talking about the death rate following a particular action and in another stressing the survival rate) resulted in marked differences in people's level of support (Entman, 1993). Public opinion researchers have long been aware that the way a question is posed impacts on how people answer it. More recent research by Valkenburg, Semetko and de Vreese (1999) also showed that the way news stories are framed has a significant impact on readers' "thought-listing" and defines the way they present information. However, some types of news frames resulted in greater retention of information than did others.

The power of frames lies in the way they select and call attention to some aspects of a story while simultaneously deflecting attention from others. As Tankard (2001) suggested:

Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. Media framing can be likened to the magician's sleight of hand – attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point. (p.97)

However, the power of news frames is contested. There are likely to be framing effects but the extent and form of the effect should not be assumed. The presence of news frames does not guarantee influence on the audience – "salience is a product of the interaction of texts and receivers", and "the frame has a common effect on large portions of the receiving audience, though it is not likely to have a universal effect on

all” (Entman, 1993, p.54). Reese (2001) warned that “In spite of a more nuanced approach than traditional content analysis, framing research slips just as easily into the effects paradigm” (p.8).

Research consistently shows that people do make use of media frames, but to varying extents, with the “effect” of news frames tempered by individual knowledge, beliefs etc. A number of studies (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Gamson, 1992; Graber, 1988; Neuman et al., 1992) have examined the link between media frames and the frames used by people when talking about events or issues, and tend to show that in some circumstances people use similar framing to the media. Neuman et al. identified morality as one of five central frames the media and the public draw on to make sense of a range of public issues. Their study demonstrated that the media and the public use the same frames but in different ways. For example, whereas both the media and the public employ morality frames, individuals use this frame much more (4% media, 15% public). People, the authors concluded, frame issues in “a more visceral and moralistic” style than do the media (Neuman et al., p.77). On the other hand, the media’s moral framing, while less common, was also more likely to be indirect, in the manner of the objective style of journalism, using sources to raise particular concerns and making inferences, whereas nearly all interviewees “used moral and value-laden statements” (p.73). Neuman et al. wrote:

Regardless of the medium in which they work, journalists eschew the moral frame which figures prominently in the public’s understanding of issues. The public, in contrast, relished and drew out the moral dimension in the human impact of issues, and underscored the moral dimensions of public policy. (p.112)

Gamson (1992) concluded that people use media frames like they use a map of a forest pathway; just as people deviate from signposted paths when out walking, so do people sometimes ignore or reject media framing in favour of their own approach:

Think of each issue as a forest through which people must find their way. These are not, of course, virgin forests. The various frames in media discourse provide maps indicating useful points of entry, provide signposts at various crossroads, highlight the significant landmarks, and warn of the perils of other paths. However, many people do not stick to the pathways provided, frequently wandering off and making paths of their own. (p.117)

Consequently, he suggested that the media provide people with a basic tool kit of ideas. Often these frames will overlap but the degree to which they are used will differ (Neuman et al., 1992). Therefore, it becomes clear that while the media frame issues in certain ways, people – while drawing, to some extent, on these frames – come up with various, different readings of the issue. In the words of Neuman et al., “the creation of the pictures in our heads is an interaction between the extraordinarily diverse ‘habits, tastes, capacities, comforts and hopes’ of each private citizen and the formal traditions of public and media discourse” (p.1). Later, they wrote that “in their active interpretation of the political world, audience members alternatively accept, ignore, and reinterpret the dominant frames offered by the media” (p.62). And:

Individuals and the media tend to use many of the same frames across each of the issues. Although the frames used by the media are similar to those used by individuals in terms of typology, they are not the same in terms of the nature of their applications. Media coverage is preoccupied with covering the who, what, when, where, and (somewhat less often) the why of events...the media’s use of frames, then, echoes the constraints under which the media operate. Individuals’ frames, on the other hand, are free to be richer, more affectively laden constructions of the world outside. (Neuman et al., p.76)

Neuman et al. (1992) argued that the media and the audience have different priorities: while reporters are concerned with the specifics of events and the doings of public officials, the audience is concerned with wider issues and how these impact on their communities, their interest “mitigated by pressing personal and immediate concerns” (p.111). As a result, media interest in apartheid in South Africa was not reflected in public concern amongst an American audience. They suggested this may be due to a feeling of powerlessness and called for journalists to include more information about actions readers can take.

Iyengar’s (1991) ground-breaking work on episodic and thematic framing also suggested a relationship between media and individual framing. Episodic news framing refers to the media’s propensity to report issues in terms of specific events or cases, as opposed to thematic framing which places issues or events in a broad context (Iyengar, 1991), or as Pavlik (2001) said, “offers aggregate or general evidence” (p.313). For example, Dickerson (2001) drew on Iyengar’s work when she wrote about the “political correctness” debate in universities, noting that the media tend to:

frame the issue around specific events and personalities on America's campuses rather than as a story about academic freedom, human dignity, freedom of speech, or individual rights. (p.163)

This is important because Iyengar's (1991) research found that episodic framing, which focuses on events and personalities rather than underlying issues, encourages the audience to see social problems as matters of individual responsibility rather than attributing them to social systems and structures. In the long term, the news media's inability to explore the broader context of news events and issues maintains the status quo: "News events are framed within the prevailing paradigm of social and political reality, reinforcing stereotypes, existing political agendas, and prevailing conventional wisdom" (Pavlik, 2001, p.313).

The headline is the most powerful framing device (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) or "media cue". According to Graber's (1988) study, media cues are an important way in which people are alerted to particular stories:

Everything else being equal, the panelists were more likely to notice a story that appeared on prominent pages of the paper, was characterized by large headlines or pictures, and was given lengthy and often repeated exposure. On television, observed prominence cues included announcement of the story followed by lengthy treatment early in the show and the appearance of important people or well-known commentators. (p.97)

Media cues about importance, however, do not necessarily correspond with the importance the audience places on the story. "Although large headlines grabbed attention, small ones did not doom a story to oblivion" (Graber, 1988, p.98). Again, the audience makes up its own mind; people are not interested in particular news stories just because the media place a high importance on them, and can be interested in stories with a low media profile. Interest is aroused not only through headlines but also by key words (words of interest to the audience appearing in headlines and opening paragraphs) and cues from social environment (people seek information when they hear others talking about an event or issue or become aware of a public controversy).

Finally, Witt, Paget and Matthews (1994) summed up the positive and negative effects of framing:

While we all carry conceptual frames in our heads – they enable us to sort and make sense out of any type of new information – framing can be an insidious, even when inadvertent, barrier to new ideas, as well as a potent drumbeater for both stereotypes and the status quo. Because we expect X, we see X. (p.194)

7.4 Why Framing is Used In This Research

Framing has provided an especially helpful way of understanding the part the media play in political life (Reese, 2001). Reese (2001) argued that framing helps prevent “unduly compartmentalizing components of communication” (i.e. sender, content, audience). Framing is also commended for allowing researchers to gain a better understanding of how coverage is “packaged” (e.g. Blood, Putnis, Pirkis, Payne & Francis, 2001; Herzog, 1998). It provides a more nuanced reading of media content than content analysis alone. Entman (1993) devoted a section to how the concept of framing could benefit, and overcome some of the limitations of, traditional content analysis:

content analysis informed by a theory of framing would avoid treating all negative or positive terms or utterances as equally salient and influential. Often coders simply tote up all messages they judge as positive and negative and draw conclusions about the dominant meanings. They neglect to measure the salience of elements in the text, and fail to gauge the relationships of the most salient clusters of messages – the frames – to the audience’s schemata. (p.57)

Herzog (1998) also addressed the issue of what framing can add to traditional content analyses. In relation to news coverage of women, she warned against basing conclusions on quantity, and advocated examining the way women are “packaged”. Indeed, there is a growing tradition of frame analysis in the area of gender, news and politics. In America, a common news frame is the gender gap, “retold, with suitable permutations that freshen and dramatize the familiar pattern, (e.g. the Soccer Mom) in every election” (Norris & Carroll, 1997, p.16). In an overview of American election coverage from 1980 to 1996, Norris and Carroll (1997) identified several variations on gender frames related to voters and candidates. Other studies have employed the concept of framing in analyses of female politicians during party leadership votes (Ross, 1995), the use of female sources (Zoch & Turk, 1998) and the framing of the women’s movement (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Lind & Salo, 2002).

With its attention to selection and salience, frame analysis helps researchers locate media coverage of women within wider political culture. As Norris (1997a) wrote,

“Whether stories are framed as gender-neutral or gender-relevant is itself part of the battle over cultural politics” (p.6). The following example illustrates how a story can be framed in a gender-neutral or gender-relevant way (in the latter, gender would be considered “salient”):

Coverage of the 1992 California Senate race between Barbara Boxer and Bruce Herschensohn, for example, could have been framed in terms of a contest between a far-right, flat-tax, conservative Republican and a liberal, anti-Gulf War Democrat...Or stories could have framed the election as a contest between a former member of the Board of Supervisors from Marin County, San Francisco’s trendy suburb, versus a Los Angeles television and radio commentator, Nixon speechwriter, and Reagan enthusiast. Or the story could be framed, as it commonly was, as a breakthrough for women in the U.S. Senate. (Norris, 1997a, p.7)

Further, Norris (1997a) exposed the misleading nature of the “Year of the Woman” frame (widely used in coverage of the US’s 1992 election), which emphasised the positive aspect of the election outcome (four new women in the Senate, and 24 new women elected to the House) and ignored the fact that this result meant the level of women’s representation in the US was only average internationally. She wrote that “the frame offered one meaning to the outcome, out of many alternatives” (p.5). It is likely that the frame was so widely used because it offered a convenient “peg” or angle for the election coverage, as “journalists commonly work with gendered ‘frames’ to simplify, prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events when covering women and men in public life” (Norris, 1997a, p.6).

Identification of news frames raises questions about their effects on women’s participation in public life. For example, Lemish and Tidhar (1999) demonstrated that the Israeli press frame local and national female politicians in the private sphere, by associating them with their dependency roles (e.g. mothers, daughters, wives), printing coverage in the women’s columns rather than the news columns, emphasising gender and presenting politics as a hazard to femininity and gender roles. In their conclusion they wrote:

Bearing in mind that political campaigns not only reflect but also influence norms through a continual process of molding and shaping schemas voters bring with them to the screen, the portrayal of women in the 1996 campaign is disturbing, to say the least. It raises the question whether campaign coverage of women and women’s issues leads voters to maintain traditional evaluations of the possible roles women can play in political life. (p.410)

Similarly, Herzog (1998) argued that the distinction between the private and public sphere is reinforced through reporting on women in separate sections of the newspaper, publishing photographs of models or a recipe alongside an article about women in politics, photographing political women in their kitchen or in “feminine” poses, and asking them particular questions, such as “What’s it like to be a woman politician?” She argued that not only are women defined by gender but also by their roles as mother and wife, which has implications for their ability to combine political and private duties:

The identification of women with the domestic sphere is taken for granted and engenders the thesis that is constantly raised in press stories about women in politics: that the basic conflict between home and politics calls into question women’s ability to function as mother and wife. (Herzog, 1998, p.39)

While the identification of news frames should not itself be taken as evidence of effects, Norris and Carroll (1997) are two of the few gender politics researchers who have linked empirical data about political trends to news framing of female candidates, aiming “to see how accurately news frames reflect the realities of gender politics” (p.3). Their findings suggested that the differences between men and women are exaggerated - made “larger and sharper and brighter and newer” (p.17) - in the most commonly used news frames (e.g. the gender gap). They speculated that this has important consequences as the pervasive gendered frames enter political discourse and begin to be believed. In their words:

“Angry White Males” and “Soccer Moms” may be political myths, compared with the hard numbers in surveys, but they take on a reality if candidates start to believe in them, and thereby shape their political strategy accordingly. (Norris & Carroll, 1997, p.17)

Gidengil and Everitt (1999) also tentatively explored the link between media framing of female politicians and public perceptions. They wrote about “gendered mediation”, the notion that bias is created when female politicians are covered using the conventional (and “male”) political frames. During the 1993 Canadian leaders’ debates, Gidengil and Everitt (1999) compared “metaphoric reconstructions...with the actual behavior of the participants” (p.48) and concluded that the post-debate analysis over-emphasised the women’s aggressive behaviour, and thereby misrepresented them. Although the authors did not examine audience response to the debates, they discussed the results of a telephone poll in which Kim Campbell (incumbent female leader) was judged to be the most aggressive debater while a male challenger was regarded the most convincing.

They concluded that “what is perceived – positively – to be combative in a man may be judged – negatively – to be aggressive in a woman” (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999, p.62).

To conclude then, framing is useful to this study because it allows a more detailed and sophisticated analysis of media content. Further, frame analysis offers gender theorists a new way of understanding the possible reasons for women’s low-level political representation, for if women are being framed in ways which suggest that they do not belong in public life, this may be hindering long-term progress. Of course, the likely “effects” of framing are tempered, particularly by context:

The use of a frame where gender is regarded as relevant to the description of candidates, issues, or leaders may help or hinder women’s participation in public life, depending upon the broader context. But the labelling process involved in gendered framing is likely to have significant consequences for cultural politics. (Norris, 1997a, p.7)

The following section gives an overview of how framing analysis is employed in this study of media coverage of female politicians (see Chapters Eight and Nine for more detailed information). Framing offers a way of understanding how female politicians were “packaged” by the media in the New Zealand election context where gender was clearly salient, particularly because of the unique nature of the Prime Ministerial contest.

7.5 The Application of Framing Theory In This Research

Framing has been suggested as a general theory in the study of communication texts. However, applications are predominantly qualitative, which is valuable in many respects but “thick description can go on and on without producing patterns that transcend the particulars” (Reese, 2001, p.8). This may be one reason why the theory of framing has been slow to build, for “some precise conceptualization and careful empirical measurement of framing will be necessary if we are to move beyond description and do any serious theory building” (Tankard, 2001, p.104). As Hertog and McLeod (2001) pointed out, framing analysis has not “settled on a core theory, or even a basic set of propositions, nor has a widely accepted methodological approach emerged” (p.139). This they regarded as both a blessing and a curse – some of the most creative media analysis has occurred as a result, but “methodological insights and theoretical conclusions don’t ‘add up’” (p.140). Therefore it is essential for researchers

to be clear about their own approach. This section outlines the two ways framing analysis is applied in this research, and the rationale for taking what Tankard (2001) termed a more empirical approach.

This research uses the definition offered by Tankard and others, of a news frame as a “central organizing idea”, promoted through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration, and based in a particular context (cited in Tankard, 2001). More succinctly, Entman’s (1993) definition of framing as concerned with “selection and salience” is also relevant. Further, this research clearly distinguishes between media frames and individual frames or schemas, and focuses on media discourse, “a meaning system in its own right, independent of any claims that one might make about the causal effect on public opinion” (Gamson, 1992, p.27). However, efforts are made to link the framing of the two key events (the leadership race and the New Zealand First list scandal) to public response. This is done through examining letters to the editor and referring to poll results, both of which have been used in previous framing research (see Norris & Carroll, 1997; Wiggins 2001). Although this does not allow the research to make claims about individuals’ framing of these issues, or the “effects” of news framing, research consistently shows the audience do, to at least some extent, draw on the media in the process of “making sense” of events and issues.

Other valuable checks on framing include review of literature and intercoder reliability (Tankard, 2001). An empirically based approach to framing is built on the premise that there are “defining characteristics of media frames that different observers can recognise and agree upon” (Tankard, 2001, p.103). However, Tankard’s (2001) framing coders were unable to reach acceptable levels of reliability until the list of issue stances was reduced to just two: for and against. This prompted Gandy (2001) to note that, “paradoxically...much of the meaningful insights that a framing perspective might ultimately provide is threatened by the demands of scientific precision” (p.361).

The frame analysis in this research is built on a foundation of content analysis, and is empirically grounded. It is bolstered by content analysis which identifies key issues and individuals, and story presentation variables, as well as existing literature on political news framing. This empirical grounding also guards against framing analysis revealing simply what it sets out to do. Scholars in the area of gender politics plan their framing

analysis informed by research suggesting women are framed in particular “gendered” ways, and therefore such studies, if not at least partially based on empirical data, run the risk of being overly influenced by researchers’ expectations.

Tankard (2001) collected examples of measuring frames such as the “media package” method and the “multidimensional concept”, and advocated his own “list of frames” approach. This approach suggested that coders are alerted to frames through the inclusion and exclusion of particular keywords in media content. Tankard (2001) identified eleven framing mechanisms, which he regarded as the “focal points for identifying framing” (p.101). These are headlines and kickers (small headlines over the main headlines), subheadings, photographs and their captions, leads, selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, pull quotes (those quotes blown up in size for emphasis), logos (alerting to series), statistics, charts and graphs, and finally, the concluding statements or paragraphs of articles. Many of these mechanisms were examined in the content analysis and feed into framing analysis via results. In addition, this research draws on Entman’s (1993) notion of frames developing a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and/or moral evaluation or recommendation, through selection and salience. The selection part of the framing process concerns what sources and visuals are used, and salience refers to how these selections are emphasised, through aspects such as layout (placement in the newspaper and on the page), headlines, visual material and tone. These framing mechanisms are examined in the frame analysis of the New Zealand First list scandal (see Chapter Eight), an important event according to content analysis results. The following chapter describes how the New Zealand First list emerged as an election issue, how it developed through the campaign (with particular reference to sources, visuals, placement, headline and tone), and how these combined to privilege a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, and moral evaluation. The frame analysis of the New Zealand First list controversy explores a unique event, located specifically in the culture and time of New Zealand’s 1999 General Election, and allows for the exploration of frame creation and development.

The second way framing theory is applied in this research is in relation to the leadership “race”. Existing theory on political news framing was particularly important for this analysis. The existence of a “game frame” in political news coverage is well documented (see, for example, Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Lawrence, 2000; Patterson,

1994). The frame meets Cappella and Jameson's (1997) requirement for reliable identification and consistent usage. By taking an already identified frame, and examining how it is used in a different context and cultural setting (i.e. in an MMP election, with two women as leading contenders for Prime Minister), this research also goes some way toward theory building. Chapter Nine, then, is concerned with the framing of the leadership race between Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining what framing is, in all its permutations. It then went on to explore the literature on framing effects, and explain why and how the approach is used in this research. The following two chapters describe the results of two applications of framing, drawing on newspaper coverage during the 1999 General Election campaign.

While the term "framing" has in the past been loosely defined, growing recognition of its importance to the field of media, and particularly its intersection with politics, has led to increased academic attention and interest, and efforts towards theory building. Tankard (2001), in particular, has led the call for a more empirical approach to framing research, and the publication of a collection of scholarly writing on framing has done much to clarify and organise a field of study known to be diverse, fractured and wide-ranging (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001). Gandy (2001) noted that progress has been made, particularly in terms of defining framing, conceptualising its relationship to agenda-setting, identifying the distinct frames that dominate news and public discourse, and understanding the individual and social differences that help predict framing effects. Future research, however, needs to tackle issues such as: the origins of frames; the factors that influence which frames dominate in different communication channels; the development of framing strategies; the life cycle of frames; the impact on frames of the relationship between reporters and sources; and the way in which framing works in an increasingly computer-mediated environment (Gandy, 2001). While there is clearly much work still to be done, Gandy (2001) suggested that the journey of framing has no planned destination but that "it is the journey itself that provides the reward" (p.375). Indeed, the future for framing scholarship looks bright. Gamson (2001) noted that "framing analysis is alive and thriving in communications land" (p.xi). It also has a valuable contribution to make to the area of gender politics, offering a way to

understand media “packaging” of women which goes beyond the traditional preoccupation with quantity of coverage, yet incorporates many of the empirical principles of content analysis. The following chapter uses framing in this very way, exploring newspaper framing of the New Zealand First list controversy during the 1999 General Election campaign.

Chapter Eight

Framing Gender Politics: The New Zealand First List Controversy

8.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the media framing of the New Zealand First list controversy, with particular reference to sources, visuals, placement, headline and tone, and how these combined to privilege a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, and moral evaluation. The content analysis data showed that one of the main reasons why female politicians (Clark and Shipley aside) were the central focus of news stories was the New Zealand First list controversy (see Chapter Five). The overall research question guiding this analysis is “How did the press frame the New Zealand First list controversy during the 1999 election campaign?” However, it should be noted that unlike the content analysis sampling method (see Chapter Four), this frame analysis draws on all the newspapers’ campaign coverage of the issue. The 1999 newspaper articles referred to in this analysis are referenced in Appendix C.

One of the basic frames that guides the selection and presentation of news is conflict (Price & Tewksbury, cited in Nelson & Willey, 2001, p.247). This chapter focuses on how a gender-based conflict developed during the 1999 General Election campaign, with reference to a framing typology, developed deductively. It draws on Entman’s (1993) notion of frames, developing a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and/or moral evaluation or recommendation. The selection part of the framing process concerns what sources and visuals are used, and salience refers to how these selections are emphasised, through such aspects as layout (placement in the newspaper and on the page), headlines, visual material and tone.

8.2 Background

The 1996 General Election was New Zealand’s first under MMP. After protracted negotiations New Zealand First leader Winston Peters, who held the balance of power, made an unpopular decision to form a coalition government with National, despite comments throughout the campaign which suggested he would not do so. Many of the New Zealand First MPs who subsequently found themselves in government, and in some instances as Cabinet Ministers, were new to politics, and their inexperience showed over subsequent months. Early on, MP Tukoroirangi Morgan was embroiled in

a high profile scandal when it was revealed he had spent taxpayer money, allocated to Aotearoa Television (of which he was a director) on expensive clothing, including a NZ\$89 pair of underpants. Later, the Party's Associate Health Minister, Neil Kirton, was dropped from Cabinet after disagreements with his National counterpart, Bill English, and in mid-1998, he resigned from the Party. Deputy New Zealand First leader Tau Henare was also dropped. In August 1998, Prime Minister Shipley sacked New Zealand First leader and Treasurer Winston Peters and continued to govern supported by defectors from New Zealand First and other parties. Later in the year, New Zealand First MP Deborah Morris also resigned from the Party and her replacement from the party list, Gilbert Myles, was caught in a secretly-taped telephone conversation saying he would vote with National when he came in. Through this series of resignations and defections, only a small number of New Zealand First MPs remained loyal to their leader, Winston Peters, and the Party under whose banner they were elected. Included in this number were Robyn McDonald, who had been a Cabinet Minister during the coalition, and Jenny Bloxham. Both McDonald and Bloxham had been subject to some negative media attention during their time in coalition government. Their use of taxpayer money (McDonald made an expensive trip to a conference in Paris, and Bloxham used her office postal budget to pay her car registration) demonstrated a lack of political judgement rather than the breaking of any particular rules.

8.3 The Release of the New Zealand First Party List

New Zealand First's list became news following the release of parties' list and electorate nominations on November 3, 1999. A late edition of the *Evening Post* was first to cover the women's relegation, in a page two article headlined "MPs upset at low list rank". The shift in emphasis, from "MPs" to "women MPs", had occurred by the following morning when the *Dominion* led with a story headlined "Peters dumps his women MPs". The *New Zealand Herald*, which also led with this story, concentrated on Bloxham's anger at Peters, in a story titled "Axed MP vents ire at Peters". From the beginning, there was an emphasis on the personalities involved in the conflict, particularly Peters and, to a lesser extent, Bloxham. This is consistent with the trend towards personalisation of political news, and as Jamieson (1992) noted, "The story structure of news lends itself to reporting that personalizes" (p.25).

Taking a similar Bloxham-versus-Peters approach, the *Waikato Times* led with a story headlined “Peters’ decision gutless, MP says”, and the *Otago Daily Times* with “NZ First MP feels betrayed by Peters”. In a series of related articles, the *Evening Standard* published a front page brief about the local woman candidate with the highest list ranking (“Suzanne tops”), a page two lead headlined “NZ First in recovery mode” and a page four lead, “Bloxham gutted by Peters’ betrayal”. *The Press* treated the issue in a low-key way, with a story on page eight, “MP angered by demotion”. These were all negative stories which made salient Peters’ (rather than the Party’s) lack of loyalty, by use of words such as “dumps”, “gutless”, “betrayed” and the anger of the women (Bloxham, in particular, was described as “upset”, “vent [ing] ire” and “gutted”). It is interesting that Peters, rather than New Zealand First’s President Doug Woollerton, was the main Party source - and target - during the conflict, even though list rankings are a party, and not a leader’s, responsibility.

On November 3, the *Dominion* was the only newspaper to suggest a gender aspect to the dropping of Bloxham and McDonald, both female incumbents, and was the only newspaper to publish photographs of both women. The selection of both the women’s photographs visually highlighted the gender dimension of the conflict. The other newspapers conveyed it predominantly as a one-on-one issue, between Bloxham and her leader. For example, Bloxham attacked Peters’ lack of loyalty, called him a “dickwit”, and labelled the Party a “boys’ club”.

Overall, the tone of initial coverage was supportive of the two women. McDonald’s controversial trip to Paris was mentioned towards the end of an article in the *Dominion*, after she and Bloxham had spoken of their hard work, experience and loyalty. The *New Zealand Herald* reported Bloxham’s anger with Peters, and then stated that both women had caused embarrassment for the Party: McDonald had spent \$27,261 on airfares to Paris and Bloxham had used taxpayer-funded stamp vouchers to pay her car registration. Neither Peters nor the Party’s President, Doug Woollerton, chose to comment on the reasons for the rankings, but the newspapers reminded readers of the women’s earlier mistakes and speculated about other factors. For example:

The *Waikato Times* understands a \$27,261 ministerial trip by Ms McDonald to Paris influenced some council members against her. Mrs Bloxham used taxpayer-funded vouchers to pay her car registration. (Peters' decision gutless, 1999, p.1)

The *Press* noted that Bloxham was forced to resign as the Party's Vice-President in 1997 and was apparently frustrated at her exclusion from the Associate Health Minister's role. It also said that McDonald went on a "high flying trip" and that she later apologised for the \$34,000 cost (a larger figure than that used by the *Waikato Times*) (Wellwood, 1999a, p.8). On the other hand, the *Otago Daily Times* did not speculate about any of these possible factors and reported Bloxham's belief that part of the reason for her low ranking could be her challenge to the "male domination thing" in the Party, where women had to wait for the call but men "pop in on each other" (Mackenzie, 1999a, p.1). In fact, the *Otago Daily Times* had an on-going and close relationship with Bloxham (a local electorate candidate and therefore an important news source during the campaign), interviewing her a number of times during the election campaign, and simultaneously demonstrating a strong anti-Peters bias in editorials and cartoons. Also on November 4, the *Evening Post*, which had broken the story of the women's demotion the previous evening, published Peters' defence on page one. Peters said it was not a personal issue and the list rankings had been reached through democratic channels (Espiner, 1999d, p.1). The *Evening Post* linked the relegation to a similar episode in the lead-up to the previous election, and quoted two candidates, who quit New Zealand First in 1996 after low placings, as saying that the Party was a "personality cult" (Espiner, 1999d, p.1).

8.4 Peters, the New Zealand First Party List and the Female Leaders

The fallout for New Zealand First continued on November 5 and although these stories were outside the content analysis sample period (see Chapter Four), they were subjected to qualitative analysis as part of this chapter. The *Dominion* published a front page article, in which Peters responded to other party leaders' criticism of the list. Headlined "Peters: I have no problem with women", it began:

Prime Minister Jenny Shipley has questioned the ability of Winston Peters to work with women as the fallout continues over the demotion of the two women MPs on the NZ First party list. But Mr Peters dismissed criticism from Mrs Shipley and other party leaders as "cheap political humbug". (Venter, 1999c, p.1)

Shipley was quoted as saying Peters “should explain why he finds it so difficult to recognise the ability of his female colleagues” (p.1) and Clark said the women had been treated badly despite their loyalty. The story also contained a cartoon of Shipley raising a dagger, saying “On behalf of the gentle sex, Winston”. This depiction mocked the idea that women bring a softer approach to politics, by drawing on reader knowledge of Shipley’s own leadership coup against predecessor Jim Bolger.

On page three, the *Dominion* also published a photograph of McDonald, addressing a Youth Speak conference from behind a podium decorated with the billboard advertising the newspaper’s previous edition - “Dumped because I don’t have a penis” (Poster adds impetus to speech, 1999, p.3). In the accompanying article about the youth conference it was reported that Labour leader Helen Clark had been given a present for being New Zealand’s answer to “girl power”, and that ACT leader Richard Prebble refused to speak in front of the offending poster. The sensitivity associated with Bloxham’s comment was reinforced the following day, when the *Dominion* ran a short item which said that McDonald “wishes to make it clear that she did not say she was demoted because she did not have a penis. This comment was made by fellow MP Jenny Bloxham” (Comment clarified, 1999, p.3).

Also on November 5, the *Press*, which initially downplayed the gender aspect of the MPs’ low list ranking, ran a page three lead headlined “NZ First women ‘last’” (with the subheading “Dumped MPs hit back at leader Peters”). The story, written by Elinore Wellwood, began:

New Zealand First’s two women MPs, facing an end to their political careers after being relegated in the party list, are livid at leader Winston Peters’s urging them to accept their placings. The country’s two woman leaders, Helen Clark and Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, have weighed in to the argument along with ACT leader Richard Prebble, saying New Zealand First is guilty of sexism. (Wellwood, 1999b, p.3)

On page five (with its page banner, “Election 99 – the campaign”), the *New Zealand Herald* published a lead story in a similar vein – “PM jumps into NZ First list row”. In typical adversarial style, the story contained photographs of Shipley and Peters, accompanied by quotes. As in the *Dominion* story (see above), Shipley said “Mr Peters should explain why he finds it so difficult to recognise the ability of women colleagues” and Peters said “One minute Mrs Shipley says we worked co-operatively, the next that I

frustrated good government” (Laxon & NZPA, 1999, p.A5). The possible gender bias behind the women’s relegation was never developed as an issue by the media, but as this story demonstrates, was covered using the age-old “strategy frame” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994). This established political news frame tends to privilege discussion of style and form over policy (see Chapter Nine). The comments made by Shipley and Clark were regarded less as genuine statements about the sexism women politicians face, and more about the leaders’ unwillingness to work with Peters to form a coalition government. Polls at this time were suggesting Peters would hold the balance of power after the election, a situation which was regarded as a negative outcome for Shipley, in particular, who had previously sacked him as Deputy Prime Minister. The *New Zealand Herald*, then, regarded Shipley’s questioning of Peters’ ability to work with women as a personal issue, rather than indicative of concern about sexism generally:

A bad-tempered slanging match over New Zealand First’s party list blew up last night into a personal row between leader Winston Peters and Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley...Despite the renewed hostility between the two leaders, today’s New Zealand Herald-DigiPoll survey shows they may have to work together. NZ First continues to hold the balance of power, with National and Labour each unable to form a government without Mr Peters’ support. (Laxon & NZPA, 1999, p.A5)

The story reporting Shipley’s response to Bloxham’s and McDonald’s relegation was published adjacent to an article entitled “Clark wins ‘girl power’ praise at youth forum”. There is an unmentioned irony apparent in the juxtaposition of the two articles, one about a high profile female leader who is praised for her “girl power”, and the other concerning two women MPs who have been relegated in a decision they regard as sexist, but which is not considered in terms of its implications for women.

On the same day, the *Otago Daily Times* continued with its Bloxham focus (her views were consistently sought by the newspaper as she was a candidate in the Dunedin South electorate), in two, page four articles headlined “Peters has lost plot, says demoted MP” and “Support rolls in for Bloxham after snub”, both by the newspaper’s political editor Dene Mackenzie. The *Evening Post* published a page two brief about Peters’ denial of Shipley’s and Clark’s allegations of sexism and, in its “Scoring the exchange” election feature, awarded Shipley 7/10 for her attack on the Peters over the list and noted it was “a rare moment of common ground with Labour leader Helen Clark” (Scoring the

exchange, 1999, p.2). Peters was awarded 4/10 for his response: “There would be no MP in this country with as powerful a woman’s organisation as I have enjoyed in Tauranga since 1984...” (Scoring the exchange, 1999, p.2).

8.5 Allegations of Sexism Within New Zealand First

On the following day, November 6, former New Zealand First Cabinet Minister, Deborah Morris, spoke out about the treatment of women in the Party. The *Dominion* published a page two lead headlined “Raw deal for women, says Morris”, which also made it onto the front page of the *Press*. The *Evening Post* turned its attention to the future of Jenny Bloxham’s role as the Party’s health spokesperson, and published an editorial on the women’s demotion, labelling it a “public kneecapping without anaesthetic” (A political kneecapping, 1999, p.4). The editorial questioned the loyalty and accountability of Peters and New Zealand First, rather than attributing the decision to sexism. Once more, a “personality frame” (focused particularly on Peters) dominated coverage of the issue. Also on November 6, the Party’s President responded to the criticism, saying there had been problems with Bloxham owing money on her Wellington accommodation, her behaviour during caucus meetings and with her treatment of staff, and that the list rankings were the appropriate way to deal with this. These comments were widely reported. However, the *Otago Daily Times* continued to select and make salient Bloxham’s view, in an article headlined “Lack of trust prompts return of election material”. She said she had last seen Peters at New Zealand First’s campaign launch on October 31 and found him “clammy and disorientated” (Mackenzie, 1999b, p.4).

In the *Sunday Star-Times* on November 7, Peters criticised Bloxham and McDonald for neglecting their grass roots electorate organisations, and “lashed out” at Morris for her comments, maintaining it would be wrong to accept lesser standards from some people because of their gender or race. In the same article, the credibility of the Party’s top woman candidate, Suzanne Bruce, along with fellow list candidate, Ian Walker, was questioned, with the reporter stating that:

Farming leaders were privately scathing about the pair, with Food and Fibre Minister John Luxton one of the few to make on-the-record comment. “Their views on agriculture are flaky and will do nothing to advance farmers’ interests,” he said. (Peters lashes demoted MPs, 1999, p.A5)

8.6 Peters' Credibility In Tatters

On November 8, the *Otago Daily Times* published, on its election news page, an NZPA article, "Peters vague about Bloxham's health role", and as the lead story, an analysis piece by the newspaper's political editor, entitled "Winston Peters embarks on a power trip but his credibility is in tatters". Political editor Dene Mackenzie began by asking, "Is there anyone in this country who does not believe New Zealand First is the 'Peters Party'?" (Mackenzie, 1999c, p.4). He wrote that as someone who had been dumped by a party in the past, Peters should have appreciated the loyalty of Bloxham and McDonald. Mackenzie also questioned Peters' claim that he had little influence over the make-up of the party list, and noted that:

The new people high on the list are untried, just as the people who defected from New Zealand First last year were untried. The new people have no long history with the party and may find themselves in a similar position of not being able to work with Mr Peters. (Mackenzie, 1999c, p.4)

These words were strangely prophetic – within four days a further list related problem had emerged for New Zealand First.

On November 12, in a front page story headlined "NZ First woman faces GST charges", the *New Zealand Herald* broke the news that the top ranking woman on New Zealand First's list, Suzanne Bruce, was facing tax fraud charges. Her gender was probably a salient factor – mentioned in the headline and the first sentence of the story – because of the previous ructions over the dropping of women MPs Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald. The article said that on current polling, Bruce was likely to be elected to Parliament, and even if she were to be convicted of the charges she would not have to resign (Orsman, 1999a). Bruce could not be contacted, but Peters, in his role as leader, said she was not aware of the charges and had not been served any papers. He went on to say that if the charges were true, the Party would act immediately but also warned of other actions if they were revealed to be false and politically motivated (Orsman, 1999a.). The *Evening Standard* published a front page lead emphasising the fact that Bruce was a local electorate candidate ("Candidate faces GST charges"), with a large photo of Bruce. The story itself did not make gender salient. It began with "Rangitikei NZ First candidate Suzanne Bruce is facing charges relating to filing false GST returns", and later described her as a prominent rural activist (Browne, 1999a, p.1). The photograph, however, was captioned "Suzanne Bruce...highest ranked woman on NZ

First list, faces charges relating to filing false GST returns”. Again, the point was made that Bruce could not legally be dropped from the party list at this stage.

The news value of consonance (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; McGregor, 2002) helps explain how Peters’ tattered credibility so quickly became the key focus of the list conflict. As noted in Section 8.2, Peters’ decision in 1996 to enter into a coalition arrangement with National was unpopular, and the arrangement short-lived. Aimer and Miller (2002) wrote that Peters made a tactical error, and that the decision was a surprise and “an anathema” (p.6) to many voters and Party workers, who had believed they were voting for a change of government. The notion that Peters could not be trusted was therefore already established among voters and the news media when the list conflict arose during the 1999 campaign. Consonance suggests that events that have been predicted are more likely to receive media coverage, as expectation and/or desire prepares the way for such events to be recorded (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). In 1996, Peters had shown a lack of loyalty and unreliability when he entered into a coalition with National. In 1999, the Party’s dropping of Bloxham and McDonald was interpreted by the women and in the news media as evidence of the same traits (e.g. Espiner, 1999d, noted that two low-ranked candidates had quit the Party in 1996, calling it a personality cult). The media’s verdict was that Peters was foolish to rank untried candidates above loyal MPs, and the way was prepared for one such untried candidate - Suzanne Bruce - to cause the Party further political embarrassment.

8.7 The Development of the “Women Trouble” Frame

Coverage over the next two days centred on Bruce’s charges, and the lack of clarity surrounding her resignation. Bruce resigned soon after the charges were revealed, but it was too late to have her name withdrawn from the ballot paper, meaning her resignation was not able to be actioned until after the election. In the face of this fact, she then appeared to reverse the resignation, but later reaffirmed it. On November 13, the *Dominion* published a front page lead, with a large headline proclaiming “Women trouble”, and a smaller one, “Triple strife for harassed Peters”. According to political reporter Helen Bain (1999i), Peters was staring down the barrel for three reasons: a poll had put him in second place in his Tauranga seat, behind National candidate Katherine O’Regan; McDonald had said she would take legal action against the Party for her low list ranking; and the highest ranked woman candidate, Suzanne Bruce, had resigned

after tax charges were laid. The story was illustrated with a selection of photographs: a cropped picture of Peters' face, head-and-shoulders photographs of McDonald, O'Regan and Bloxham, and a full-length, posed photograph of Suzanne Bruce, wearing a red jacket and short skirt, with knee-length black boots.

The gender dimension to the initial controversy involving Bloxham and McDonald formed a "news peg" for coverage of Suzanne Bruce. As two women had already "caused problems" for the New Zealand First leader, the news value of consonance meant Bruce was portrayed as another difficult woman, confused and constantly changing her mind. Furthermore, the fact that a woman candidate was polling ahead of Peters in his Tauranga seat allowed the four women to be grouped together, with gender the common element. Other than this obvious symbolism (women causing trouble), there was no reason why Bruce's and O'Regan's gender should have been a salient factor in news coverage.

On the following day, the *Sunday Star Times* devoted much of its front page to an article headlined "NZ First on the ropes", which began:

Chaos reigns in New Zealand First's election campaign, with demoted MP Robyn McDonald calling for Winston Peters to be dumped as leader, and top-ranked woman candidate Suzanne Bruce casting doubt on her own withdrawal. (Catherall, 1999, p.A1)

This article was illustrated with mug shots of McDonald and Tu Wyllie (McDonald was nominating Wyllie as a replacement leader, and the article noted that she was involved in a personal relationship with him), and a large head-and-shoulders photograph of Bruce. Bruce appeared in several large front page photographs in this time period, possibly a result of the attractive appearance and striking dress sense that had apparently made such an impression on male party selectors (Vowles, 2000). In fact, quantitative data from the content analysis showed that party leaders were the most photographed politicians, followed by Suzanne Bruce (see Chapter Five). Photographs of Bruce were consistently selected and made salient through size and the use of colour. It is also noteworthy that Bruce was described as a 39-year-old grandmother who runs a dairy farm (Browne, 1999b), and "Xena dairy princess" (Orsman, 1999b; Brockett, 1999; Catherall, 1999; "Dairy princess" leads NZ First's rural attack, 1999).

On November 15, the *New Zealand Herald's* lead story ("Fracas in NZ First's ranks") painted a negative scenario for the Party. The article began:

New Zealand First, the likely post-election queenmaker, remained in disarray last night – unable to end the political hemorrhaging involving its three best-known women candidates. Three days after the *New Zealand Herald* revealed that prominent list candidate Suzanne Bruce would face tax charges, prompting her resignation, the party is still trying to wash its hands of her. (Bingham & Orsman, 1999, p.A1)

By November 16, the *Dominion* was drawing on an old gender stereotype in its coverage of Bruce's unclear electoral status. A front page story headlined "Bruce changes mind again, quits election", began "After much to-ing and fro-ing, NZ First's highest ranked female candidate, Suzanne Bruce, announced yesterday that she would not stand for election" (Bain, 1999j, p.1). Bruce said the situation between her and the Party was clear-cut but she had been confused by media comment. Party President Woollerton concurred, saying there had been no change in her status and she had been confused. This was widely reported. The *Dominion* editorial on the same day continued its theme of Peters' women troubles, demonstrating how media framing defines a problem and makes a moral evaluation:

Winston Peters, once known as "Luigi" or "Winston Pizza", whose plausibly Italian looks and double-breasted dapperness have helped win many a female voter, is having a spot of woman trouble. And not just the one woman, either, but several. One is bitter, one is blaming, one is baffled and one is beating him in the polls. It could have all been so different. If his party had not demoted MPs Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald, then their fury at Mr Peters, whom they suspect of a central role in their humiliation, would not have been provoked. If they had kept their list positions, then Suzanne Bruce would not have been the top-ranked woman on the list and the focus of so much damaging publicity over allegations of GST fraud. If NZ First had handled the Bruce episode crisply, then confusion over whether or not she is a candidate need not have emerged. And if his campaign had not become so suddenly bumpy, then perhaps Mr Peters would not be trailing National's Tauranga candidate, Katherine O'Regan, in opinion polls. (NZ First's meltdown, 1999, p.8)

The editorial, clearly defining the problem for Peters as "women trouble", suggested the dropping of Bloxham and McDonald was the catalyst for his current problems and hence - in a moral evaluation - self deserved. The behaviours of the women were reduced to simplistic categories - bitter, blaming, baffled, or beating - which said more about their relationship to Peters than their situations per se. This is consistent with the framing of the issue as a problem for Peters.

On the same day, the *Waikato Times* also ran an editorial about Peters and his “problem with women”. This newspaper, like the *Dominion*, noted the irony in the fact that he had always won over women voters with his good looks and charm (and displaying a belief that it is on such criteria that women base their voting decisions!) but now faced the prospect of women ruining his chances of being the “man most likely to call the political shots” (Peters’ problem with women, 1999, p.6). The personalisation of the issue meant it was portrayed as being about one man (Peters) and his “women problems”, rather than dealing with structural concerns about women and politics.

While “women trouble” was the overall problem defined by the media, a further difficulty was identified as Bruce’s unclear resignation, partly the result of contradictory statements made by her, and partly the result of electoral rules. The *New Zealand Herald’s* story on November 16 was headlined “‘Resigning’ candidate to campaign on” and began “Suzanne Bruce is legally still a New Zealand First electorate and list candidate despite ‘resigning’ again yesterday” (Young & Orsman, 1999, p.A3). Given the electoral rules said she did not have to resign and the Party could not make her, Bruce’s ambiguous comments about her intentions were regarded as a problem for the democratic process. The *Evening Post* reported Peters’ belief that the charges against Bruce would not affect the Party’s election prospects, and that New Zealanders could “smell a rat” (i.e. recognise the unethical way the case had been handled and the anti-New Zealand First sentiment inherent in it). This was a reference to the way the case was leaked to the media before Bruce and her partner had been officially served with papers, and was also consistent with Peters’ oft-made declarations that the media were biased against him. The Crown Law Office was asked to investigate (Brent Edwards, 1999d). Bruce’s claims, made days later, that a smear campaign was being mounted against her, resulted in some coverage and kept the New Zealand First list issue in the news, albeit in a low-key fashion. On November 20, the *Evening Standard* led with an article headlined “Dead stock probe smear”, and the *Press* ran with a page nine version of the same story. Similarly, on November 26, the *Dominion* and the *Otago Daily Times* both published a “brief” about Bruce laying a complaint of trespass with the Feilding Police, and the *Press* published a display story on the same topic. Her ambiguous political status meant Bruce retained some interest as a news source, and comments on her candidacy were also selected as news. The *New Zealand Herald’s* last story on the subject ran the same day, and again raised the question of whether Bruce

was a candidate. The page four story began, “Confusion surrounds the status of NZ First’s on-again, off-again candidate Suzanne Bruce on the eve of the election” (Party won’t affirm “I’m back” boast, 1999, p.A4). Bruce was quoted as saying the Party had reaffirmed her candidacy, but the newspaper reported that no one on the Party’s council could confirm this. The *Otago Daily Times* and the *Waikato Times* reported the same news in page two briefs on November 25, as did the *Dominion* on page one.

The Bruce “problem” sidelined the issue of Bloxham and McDonald’s list rankings, although the two were closely linked because of the “women trouble” frame. However, as noted earlier, the *Otago Daily Times* in particular continued to run stories about local candidate Jenny Bloxham. For example, on November 10 it selected an NZPA story covering the launch of the Party’s health policy, and alongside this ran an article by political editor Dene Mackenzie noting that Bloxham did not attend the official launch. Bloxham was quoted as saying she and Peters had “cleared the air a little”, after he contacted her several days after the list announcement, and were getting along “fine” (Mackenzie, 1999d, p.4). On November 18, the newspaper covered Peters’ visit to Dunedin (headlined “Peters tells veterans to rely on NZ First”), and printed a photograph of Peters and a 90-year old war veteran, with Bloxham looking on. Alongside this, another story explored Bloxham’s reaction to Peters’ visit, which she said helped her to move on (Mackenzie, 1999e, p.9).

8.8 Peters’ Problem Takes Precedence

Framing theory maintains that news frames work by directing attention toward some aspects of an event or issue, and deflecting it away from others. During the New Zealand First list controversy this became apparent when, at all times, the problem was defined as one for Peters, chiefly of his own making. Newspapers mentioned Bloxham and McDonald’s “mistakes” but these were not dwelt upon, and Bloxham gained some traction with her suggestion that she and McDonald were relegated because of gender. However, this underlying issue of sexism within political parties was not scrutinised, but was superceded by continued reference to Peters’ lack of loyalty and credibility. Personality was privileged over any meaningful analysis of gender and politics. The moral evaluation apparent in the framing of the list rankings saga was that the Party’s leadership had failed and the Party had reverted to a personality cult and fallen into chaos. The lack of clarity surrounding Bruce’s status as a candidate, in the news up

until election day, added to this sense of chaos. Coverage of the New Zealand First list, in conjunction with strong anti-Peters sentiment in newspaper coverage generally, appeared to warn the public against voting for New Zealand First.

The *Otago Daily Times* was the only newspaper that continued to cover the implications for Bloxham, but none of the newspapers examined the issue in terms of what it meant for women generally. For example, there was no analysis of what this might mean for women's voting patterns in the election nor was there any attempt to link the issue to structural barriers to women's selection as political candidates. Yet there were other instances of incumbent women being relegated to unexpectedly low list placings, as Nicholl (2000) pointed out:

During the list-ranking process, parties were not always kind to their sitting women MPs. Long-serving and loyal National Party MP Katherine O'Regan contested the electorate of Tauranga, losing by a margin of 63 votes. Even though she has been in Parliament since 1984 and had been a Minister outside Cabinet, she had been given the low ranking of 27 with several newcomers appearing ahead of her on the list. (pp.15-16)

It is noteworthy that an event, which might have been explored in terms of the possible sexism political women face, was reversed to become a story about women creating electoral difficulties for men. Drawing on the work of Iyengar (1991), it is apparent that the New Zealand First list controversy was covered using an "episodic" news frame, characterised by a focus on a particular case or specific event. Such a frame, in contrast to a "thematic" approach which places issues and events in a general context and prompts a sense of societal responsibility (Iyengar, 1991), is likely to encourage the public to see the issue as "an individual problem and not one requiring social or government action" (Blood, Putnis, Pirkis, Payne & Francis, 2001, p.63). In this way, news coverage of the list controversy deflected attention away from the broader issue of female politicians' status and treatment, and may have discouraged voters from assigning accountability to political or social structures (Iyengar, 1991).

8.9 The Wider Context: Anti-Peters and Anti-MMP Sentiment

Part of the moral evaluation associated with the New Zealand First Party list issue related to the electoral system itself. The day after the initial list announcement, the *New Zealand Herald*, in a front page brief headed "No. 20 with a bullet" (1999), delivered

the following verdict on McDonald's career, which it regarded began and ended through the foibles of MMP:

Join New Zealand First. Get on the list. Go straight into Parliament. Go straight into ministerial job. Take expensive trip to Paris. Get 15 minutes of fame. Stay loyal to Winston when coalition collapses. Lose portfolios. Stay loyal to party. Get rewarded with dead-meat slot of No. 20 on party list. That's Robyn McDonald. That's NZ First. That's MMP. (p.A1)

A dislike of Peters and New Zealand First (as well as small parties in general), and criticism of MMP, were common themes in newspaper editorials and cartoons during the 1999 General Election campaign (Hayward & Rudd, 2000). The two are entwined, as the negative attention paid to Peters during the election campaign reflected news media reservations about MMP generally. Television analysis also showed that Peters was the least favourably assessed party leader, and further, that "the evaluations of leaders in the media influenced support during the campaign for preferred Prime Minister" (Banducci & Vowles, 2002, p.48). The media's dislike of Peters stemmed in part from their (and the public's) perception that he misused the power accorded him after the first MMP election. New Zealand First list MP Brian Donnelly (2000), in a summary of his Party's 1999 election strategy, wrote of the negative sentiment towards Peters, and the perception that the Party was responsible for National's continuing hold on power after the 1996 election. Vowles (2000) described how New Zealand First support dropped two percentage points during the 1999 campaign when Peters indicated that, as in 1996, his Party would not make any deals before election day nor indicate its preference for a coalition partner. Political journalist Stephen Harris (2000) suggested:

Peters overplayed his hand as potential "queenmaker". For many people, this pivotal role seemed like a re-run of a bad dream. Peters had formed a government with National in 1996, despite campaigning explicitly to run them out of office, and then kept New Zealand guessing for six weeks while he played National and Labour off against each other in coalition negotiations. (p.84)

Hayward and Rudd (2000) found that the *Otago Daily Times* (along with the *Dominion*) had nearly twice as much coverage of Peters as did the other newspapers and noted that much of the Peters' coverage, across all newspapers, was linked to the Bloxham and Bruce issues. The editorials in the newspaper also "demonstrated a healthy dislike for MMP" (p.97) and one in particular was very critical of Peters, saying, among other things, that his word could not be trusted and the country did not need the political instability his Party offered. Further, Hayward and Rudd (2000) stated that "All the

cartoons echoed the editorials in being anti-Winston Peters and New Zealand First, and anti-MMP or the election generally” (p.100). Consequently, Boston, Church, Levine, McLeay and Roberts (2000), commenting on the anti-MMP sentiment apparent in the media at that time, expressed surprise that “so many individuals should seek election under a voting system which had been so criticised by some in the media as to be discredited with a significant portion of the electorate” (p.8). However, by mid-2001 there had been a resurgence in public support for MMP, linked to the popular and stable Labour-Alliance coalition government (Vowles, Karp, Banducci & Aimer, 2002).

The 1996-1999 term had offered the media another lesson in MMP politics. In particular, there were list MPs (such as the Alliance’s Alamein Kopu and several New Zealand First MPs) who defected from the parties whose lists had elected them to Parliament and ended up supporting the government, much to the public’s distaste. Karp (2002) suggested New Zealand’s First Past the Post tradition, which allowed MPs to claim a direct mandate from voters, has contributed to the clear distinction between list and electorate MPs, and the continued questions about list MPs’ political accountability. National MP Annabel Young (2000) noted that “After the 1996 election, there were many complaints that no one had seriously examined the contents of the party lists during the campaign” (pp.33). Yet she went on to say that this was again a problem in 1999; that the media did not “turn their steely gaze on the 1999 lists” (p.34) but focused on constituency contests. This research, however, does not fully support Young’s assertion that lists were not scrutinised. The news media did, for example, report on a Mauri Pacific list candidate, Laura Mason, who was charged with rent arrears, and the possible fraud charges against New Zealand First candidate Doctor Andrew Gin, as well as the on-going problems with the women candidates on the New Zealand First list. The media’s sustained attention to Alamein Kopu and her Party’s failure to meet electoral deadlines, can also be interpreted as further indication of concern about the “quality” of MPs who enter Parliament on party lists. Instead, this analysis suggests that the media were more likely to scrutinise the smaller parties’ lists. One of the problems of MMP, as defined by the media during the New Zealand First list controversy, was the untested candidates who had relatively easy access to Parliament – not requiring a direct mandate from the people but “only” party support. The public currently has no input into party lists (which are collated on a “closed” basis), and indeed Peters refused to comment on the Party processes that led to the list rankings. This perceived lack of

public mandate, along with the perception that list MPs are less qualified to perform their duties and do not work as hard as their constituency colleagues, means list MPs are often regarded as “second class” by the media, political colleagues and the public (Ward, 1998) and have become a target for voter discontent (Church, 2000). Yet the electoral system relies on securing the legitimacy of list MPs:

To some extent the legitimacy of New Zealand’s new electoral system is itself bound up with the unresolved questions about the role and purpose of the country’s new class of MPs. The doubts about the calibre and effectiveness of list MPs – and confusion about who, if anyone, they actually represent – are a reflection of the concerns many (or indeed, most, if letters-to-the-editor columns are a reliable indicator) New Zealanders have about MMP. Establishing the legitimacy of list MPs may thus be crucial to public acceptance of a voting system still very much under scrutiny. (Ward, 1998, p.143)

8.10 Conclusion

The New Zealand First list controversy provided a unique opportunity to explore how the news media frame issues of gender politics in New Zealand, a topic which has not previously been studied. The controversy satisfied several standards of newsworthiness, particularly in relation to conflict, consonance and personalisation, and retained this status due to the on-going developments and high-profile comment associated with it. However, the episodic framing of the issue as “Peters’ women troubles” did a disservice to women because it deflected attention from other potential interpretations, such as sexism in political and social structures, and instead emphasised individual responsibility in the form of Peters’ leadership. Previous research suggests such framing works in favour of the status quo:

Episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility...its effect is generally to induce attributions of responsibility to individual victims or perpetrators rather than to broad societal forces, and hence the ultimate political impact of framing is proestablishment. (Iyengar, 1991, pp.15-16)

The thesis’ analysis of the list controversy has implications for women in politics, as well as for the electoral system. The non-binding MMP referendum carried out on election day in 1999 indicated strong public support for a decrease in the number of MPs. The high-profile coverage of New Zealand First’s list problems, presented in part as a consequence of MMP, would have done little to allay concern about the electoral system. Yet female politicians do better in proportional representation systems and New Zealand’s gender representation has increased since the introduction of MMP. A

reversion to First Past the Post, which could follow prolonged public dissatisfaction with MMP, would have negative implications for women.

Further, although the women MPs Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald gained some traction with their comments about gender bias within the Party, this was interpreted by the media as evidence of Peters' personal failings, rather than as a potential factor contributing to women's political under-representation. In fact, it took a campaign "scandal" to put gender on the news agenda at all. While female leaders were at the centre of the 1999 General Election campaign, women's issues (such as gender equity and childcare) were not publicly discussed, and "very little of either party's rhetoric focused on women" (Banducci, 2002, p.51). Politicians who were interested in women's issues also reported difficulties in gaining media coverage (see Chapter Ten). Instead, the 1999 campaign was characterised by attention to, and promotion of family, with the main parties presenting their policies as "family friendly" (Banducci, 2002). This family focus has a further implication for women, who are situated in particular and limited ways, chiefly as mothers. This is a challenge for female politicians who do not fit into this mould, and is also a perilous area for those - such as National leader Jenny Shipley - who deliberately position themselves in relation to family. The emergence of the family frame in coverage of the leaders is discussed further in the following chapter.

The following chapter employs a slightly different approach to frame analysis, drawing on existing political theory to examine how the leadership race between Clark and Shipley was framed. Together, these chapters make an important contribution to our understanding of the framing of female politicians and gender politics.

Chapter Nine

Women Players: The Strategy Frame in the 1999 General Election Campaign

9.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on qualitative data from the content analysis, and an in-depth reading of newspaper coverage during the sample period (as outlined in Chapter Four). It takes an inductive approach in looking for evidence of the strategic framing of political news, already well established in the literature (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994), and asks whether aspects of this frame were influenced by the gender of the two main party leaders. The research question is: How did the strategy frame manifest itself in news coverage of Shipley and Clark during the 1999 General Election campaign?

The impetus for this focus on the “gendering” of the strategy or game frame was research suggesting that questions of competence and viability (predominantly strategy issues) are raised more in relation to women candidates (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), and that female politicians are disadvantaged by the application of dominant political news frames (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999).

Cappella and Jamieson (1997), drawing on the work of Jamieson (1992) and Patterson (1994), identified three main ways of framing political news: a strategy or “game” frame, an issue, and a mixed frame. Of these, the strategy frame is increasingly dominant. Although much of this evidence comes from research in electoral contexts, there is increasing support for the notion that the strategy news frame is also common in news coverage of political policy (Lawrence, 2000). The game frame is characterised by five inter-related themes: winning and losing; language of war, games and competition; emphasis on performers, critics and audience; focus on performance, style and perception of candidates; and heavy weighing of polls and candidates’ standing (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

This chapter begins with an overview of Helen Clark’s and Jenny Shipley’s political careers and summarises the lead-up to the election campaign, when many of the themes in subsequent election coverage were established. It then discusses examples of the five aspects of the game frame and considers if and how coverage of strategy was influenced

by the gender of the leaders. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section on the motherhood theme in media coverage. The 1999 newspaper articles referred to in this chapter are referenced in Appendix C.

9.2 Background Information on the Female Leaders

The election campaign period is clearly delineated by dates, but “the key to understanding the role and nature of media coverage would often necessitate analysis of coverage both before and after the dates or period of a specific event” (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998, p.102). Therefore, to best understand the strategic framing of the two female leaders during the election campaign, it is necessary to look briefly at their backgrounds, Shipley’s term as Prime Minister which led up to the election, and the media coverage surrounding the accession of New Zealand’s first woman Prime Minister.

9.2.1 Helen Clark

Helen Clark entered national politics in 1981, elected in the Mount Albert electorate. She is currently the longest-serving woman MP in Parliament. In 1987 she became a member of Cabinet and held the conservation, housing, labour and health portfolios. From 1989 to 1990, at the age of 39, she was Deputy Prime Minister. She was a lecturer in political science before becoming an MP. According to Hill and Roberts (1990):

She has had a dramatic rise to power: she was elected to Parliament in 1981, was made Minister of Health and of Housing in August 1987, and became a frontbench Cabinet Minister in February 1989. Many political observers in New Zealand have credited Ms Clark’s election as Deputy-Prime Minister partly to both the strength of women within the Labour Party’s parliamentary caucus, and the desire of the Labour Party to extend its appeal to women in the electorate. (p.68)

Clark became leader of the Labour Party in 1993, overthrowing male incumbent Mike Moore. The resulting media coverage was not favourable, according to Clark:

Because a woman had never before led a major political party in New Zealand, the news media implied that it was therefore somehow illegitimate for one to aspire to do so, particularly when she shoved a bloke out of the way... Everything Mike Moore said was always cranked up because I was this awful woman who pushed a nice bloke out of the way. (quoted in McGregor, 1996a, p.190)

It is generally accepted that Clark has had more than her share of negative media coverage since entering politics, mainly focused on her physical appearance and androgynous looks, her deep voice and her childlessness. However, the tone of coverage improved following her strong performance in the 1996 General Election campaign. More recently, in her role as Prime Minister, Clark has adopted an open media policy, characterised by personal accessibility (Eileen O’Leary, 2002). As a result, her relationship with the news media has been very positive, although towards the end of her first term as Prime Minister there was speculation that her “charmed ride” with the media was over (Roughan, 2002).

9.2.2 Jenny Shipley

In 1987, Jenny Shipley, a primary school teacher and farmer, entered Parliament as the member for Ashburton. She was Minister of Social Welfare from 1990 to 1993, and Minister of Health from 1993 to 1996 – two difficult portfolios probably given to her by then-Prime Minister Jim Bolger because he knew she was tough enough to carry out the desired changes (Clarke, 1999, p.A3). Indeed, she received a great deal of criticism for some of the changes she implemented in this period, such as cutting welfare benefits and increasing the superannuation surcharge. It has been suggested that she deliberately adopted the “toughest man in Cabinet” role - first attributed to Margaret Thatcher - as her public image (Dyer, 1997). “Later, she was given the transport, state owned enterprises and accident compensation portfolios, jobs which [fellow National MP] Maurice Williamson once said would enable her to develop a ‘softer image’” (Clarke, 1999, p.A3).

By 1997, Shipley was National’s fifth ranked Cabinet Minister, holding five portfolios. She became New Zealand’s first woman Prime Minister on 8 December 1997, after mounting a leadership coup which ousted Jim Bolger as leader of the National Party. The fact that Bolger was out of the country at the time was not overlooked in subsequent media coverage. Dyer (1997) labelled Shipley’s action a “classic act of political treachery...[and] she even looked like she enjoyed doing it” (p.6). Harris (2000) noted that the way both Shipley and Labour leader Helen Clark came to power was more in the style of Lady MacBeth than Queen Victoria, and Brent Edwards (1997) also observed that both Clark and Shipley gained their top leadership positions through subterfuge, trickery and treachery.

Early in her political career, Shipley was often described in terms of her physical size as, for example, an “armoured personnel carrier” (McGregor, 1996a, p.181). However, she used the attention to her appearance and stature to advantage, always appearing well-dressed and quickly becoming known for her distinctive glasses (e.g. Bowron, 1998; Proof that PM’s glasses are for real, 1998) and silver jewellery. However, she was critical of media interest in her appearance (Bartlett, 2000; Shipley wants better media coverage for her policies, 1998).

Media criticism of Shipley during her term as Prime Minister centred on her inability to “think on her feet”, and tendency to make mistakes under pressure (e.g. Importance of leadership, 1999). Generally, she performed better when well-prepared, although this occasionally meant she came across as too scripted. Her background as a teacher was often blamed for her habit of taking a condescending, “mother knows best” tone, when speaking publicly.

9.3 Shipley’s Term as Prime Minister, 1997-1999

Shipley supporters hoped the change in party leadership would give the government more direction, and breathe new life into a tired and indecisive administration (Catherall, 1998). Dore (1999) agreed that the desire to rejuvenate the National Party was one of the main reasons for the coup, but also suggested there was a perceived need to counter Clark’s gender advantage. Polling data from 1996 clearly showed the existence of a “gender gap” (more than 60% of those who voted for the Clark-led Labour Party were women). As this was a new trend for New Zealand, it was linked to the gender of party leaders, for “a salient feature of the election was that for the first time in New Zealand’s electoral history, one of the major parties was led by a woman” (Levine & Roberts, 1997, p.193).

As Prime Minister, Shipley got off to a slightly shaky start, leading to the observation that “her legendary poise has temporarily deserted her” (Laugesen, 1997, p.A2), but quickly entered a relatively long honeymoon period. In March 1998, she had 31% support in preferred Prime Minister polling, but this dropped to 16% by the end of the year. A combination of factors contributed to this drop in support, some of these outside Shipley’s control. First, the National Party was in its third consecutive term, and as such was perceived as “tired”. Second, this third term was the first of MMP

government in New Zealand, and the public was adjusting to both coalition politics generally, and an unstable coalition, which would eventually break down and leave Shipley running a minority government, relying on unpopular, party-hopping MPs. A number of defections from smaller parties and from coalition partner New Zealand First meant there were nine independent MPs in the house prior to the 1999 election, and these MPs were courted by National, who relied on them for its political survival after the formal coalition broke down. Aimer and Miller (2002) noted, however, that “Irretrievably lost...was any remaining image of the administration’s stability and cohesion” (p.11).

Third, National had to contend with the Asian economic crisis, which began to bite in early June. Just prior to the breakdown of the coalition in August 1998, Professor Jonathan Boston observed that Shipley had “inherited a poisoned chalice” (Catherall, 1998, p.7) from Bolger, and argued the job would be difficult for even the most brilliant leader. However, it was widely agreed that Shipley was at times her own worst enemy, making a number of miscalculations and displaying a lack of wisdom in her decision making, such as revealing and then denying she considered calling an early election (Catherall, 1998). James (2000) argued that from September 1998 on, Shipley’s leadership was characterised by a series of easily avoidable blunders and the National-led government was erratic, unstable and strategically inconsistent. In contrast, the Labour and Alliance parties were “building a very public friendship to reassure voters they can work together behind closed doors in cabinet” for 18 months prior to the election (Laugesen, 1999d, pA3). A series of political scandals also dominated news about the government, centring on payouts to Tourism Board members, mismanagement in the public service and the Prime Minister’s fabrication of the amount of money paid to a sacked Television New Zealand newsreader. According to *North and South* writer, Warwick Roger (1999), “It probably all added up to a public perception the government was drifting in wild seas and with no firm hand on the tiller. That was certainly how a rampant Opposition was portraying it” (p.54). In an August 1999 column, *Sunday Star Times* political editor Ruth Laugesen (1999a) wrote:

Now any hopes National has of imposing firm control on the tide of bad news are expressed more tentatively. Since June the Government has continued to drift on a sea of ill omens: from public sector extravagance, to more troubles with electricity reforms, to the Hawkesby “I made it up” snarl-up, to the disastrously expensive collapse last week of the INCIS [Police computer network] project. (p.C2)

Closer to the election, Shipley recovered somewhat after successfully hosting an Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) meeting in Auckland. However, Aimer and Miller (2002) noted that for most of her term as Prime Minister, the “size and fragility of her lead over Clark were a bad sign for the government” (p.13). Labour’s campaign manager Mike Williams (2000) still felt Clark had the upper hand:

We felt we had a major advantage in the Shipley vs. Clark decision, which would influence many party votes. Helen Clark had spent three years carefully building on the credibility developed in the 1996 campaign while Mrs Shipley had seemingly frittered away a promising start with a series of gaffes and “unforced errors”. By the time the campaign proper began, Shipley’s APEC exposure had partly offset this perception. (p.23)

9.4 The Impact of a Female Prime Minister

To fully understand how the strategy frame may have been influenced by the presence of two female leaders, it is necessary to first consider the way the gender angle was covered during Shipley’s term as New Zealand’s first woman Prime Minister. There was, predictably, speculation about what exactly having a woman Prime Minister meant for the country. While women’s groups and left wing politicians were uncertain that Shipley’s leadership would benefit New Zealand women generally, polls showed an increase in the number of women supporting National (First lady of politics, 1997). When asked, at her first press conference, what difference it made to her, Shipley replied that “it’s harder to negotiate the television cables in high heels”. Yet according to one newspaper editor, commentators and the public felt gender should make her different – “eminently better or frighteningly worse” (First lady of politics, 1997, p.6). A female leader of a right wing party, the editor argued, faces greater challenges in reconciling the contradictory criteria of “right wing leader” and “woman”. The editorial concluded:

Much as Shipley would like to ignore the female factor, she cannot. She will be judged as a woman in the job as much as for the job itself...like Ruth Richardson before her, she will be aware of her image, especially when pitted against another woman who represents the benevolent left wing. She must not be diverted. She has been chosen for her ability to do a tough job for the party she represents. In the end, being true to her ideals is more important than being loyal to her gender. (First lady of politics, 1997, p.6)

Brent Edwards (1997) questioned the ability of women to change the nature of politics, referring to both women's bloody rise to power:

Some feminists might hope politics will take a more constructive turn. Common sense would convince us that it will be politics as usual. After all, both Clark and Shipley got to where they are through machiavellian politicking...Both make it clear they will target the other, although they emphasise their attacks will be based on policy, not personality. (p.7)

Political scientist Nigel Roberts also played down the significance of a woman Prime Minister, saying it would be a bonus for Shipley in terms of publicity and the honeymoon period, but that the novelty would soon wear off (Pepperell, 1997). Reporter Susan Pepperell (1997) predicted that come the 1999 election, there would be intense interest in the two women's styles, but concluded, "That they are both women is incidental" (p.13). Indeed, towards the end of the 1999 campaign period, James (1999b) noted that relatively little attention had been paid to the unique nature of the race:

The most remarkable element in this election is the unremarkability that the choice of Prime Minister is between two women...in the media there is no gee-whizz about this extremely rare factor. It seems the country has become used to it. (p.A19)

Banducci (2002) concurred, noting there was little "symbolic attention" (p.51) paid to the fact that the main party leaders were women, and few consequences for the campaign:

In this historic campaign between two women we see that they were neither hampered nor favoured by stereotyped responses to leadership traits. Ironically, the campaign seemed to be absent of gender stereotyping by the voters, or any unique focus on women's issues, or even much focus on the two leaders as women. Having women leaders competing for the role of Prime Minister evidently does not push women's issues onto the agenda. Clark and Shipley were both well-known leaders, and voters did not need to rely on stereotypes to evaluate them. Also, a great number of New Zealanders do not see women in politics as a novelty, given women's high numbers in Parliament. (Banducci, 2002, p.64)

However, reflecting on the 1999 campaign, Harris (2000) wrote:

Women not only determined the outcome of the 1999 general election, they dominated the news throughout...the prominence of women added a new dimension to the 1999 campaign among the leaders, and *altered its character fundamentally* [italics added]. (p.77)

An obvious example of this “new dimension” was the attention to parental status of the candidates, both prior to and during the election campaign. The motherhood issue, which emerged in the lead-up to the campaign, is discussed further in section 9.7.

International research has shown gender does influence the framing of media coverage women leaders receive when first rising to power. Norris (1997c) identified three gendered news frames common in the reporting of female leaders: the leadership breakthrough for women, women leaders as outsiders and women leaders as agents of change. The “first woman” frame was widely applied to Shipley, particularly in the early days of her leadership but also at various other times throughout her term as Prime Minister. In an article he admitted would never been written had Bolger been overthrown by a man, Brent Edwards (1997) compared the women on the basis of age, marital status, children and experience. He stated that both women were determined and ambitious, and “have been universally unpopular” (p.7). And almost a year after becoming Prime Minister, the prospect of Shipley being the first woman leader to attend the APEC meeting in its ten year history, led to a story entitled “Shipley to give APEC first woman’s touch” (1998). The article began by pointing out the historical significance of Shipley’s presence, which “has forced a discreet change to the practice requiring leaders to parade themselves wearing shirts showcasing the host nation’s traditional style” (p.22).

9.5 The 1999 General Election Campaign

It was against this background, then, that the election campaign (traditionally regarded as the four weeks prior to the election) began on November 1, the day National and Labour opened their official campaigns. Shipley’s first week of campaigning was marred by media attention to the discrepancies in comments made by her and Finance Minister Bill English over tax cuts. The resulting press coverage contained reminders of her earlier blunders, and, as one commentator noted, while Labour did nothing to put National on the back foot, “National is perfectly capable of doing that itself” (Armstrong, 1999a, p.A6). However, Clark was not regarded as performing particularly

well either, judged to be lacking in personality and contributing to her Party's early loss of traction in the polls. The verdict on November 6 was that the first week had been a wobbly one for both leaders, but the preferred Prime Minister poll showed Shipley "with legs" on her rivals (Shipley has legs on rivals, 1999, p.A1). By November 12, Clark was making inroads with her criticism about Shipley distancing herself from voters and failing to "front up", although Shipley in turn was reportedly stepping up her attacks on Clark (Nats launch law offensive, 1999). At the half-way point of the official campaign period (November 14), neither leader was judged to be igniting the campaign, although two days later a picture was emerging of a prime ministerial roadshow beset by protestors, contrasting with Clark's successful campaigning in Auckland. The suggestion that Shipley was staying away from voters continued. By November 18, National's strategy for dealing with the Green Party threat in the marginal Coromandel seat was being widely questioned. As one political reporter pointed out, "The main impact of the National attack has been to give the Greens the sort of publicity money could not have bought" (Luke, 1999c, p.11). Newspaper coverage of the raucous public meeting in Thames (Shipley's first during the campaign) and continuing protests, contrasted with reports that an audience had "lapped up" Clark's arts policy (Johnston, 1999, p.A5).

By November 20, the protest angle associated with Shipley was well established, with, for example, news headlines such as "Pigeon protest greets PM in kiwi sanctuary". At the same time, there was "another dismal poll result for Shipley" (Laxon, 1999, p.A1), and for the first time, Clark led in the poll for preferred Prime Minister, reaching a two-year high in her support (Laxon, 1999). National Party strategy continued to be questioned in the media and the Party's lack of vision again contrasted with Clark's plans for her first 100 days in power, widely reported by November 22. On November 24, the coverage of the women was dominated by leaders' debate analysis, and opinion was divided as to whether Clark won by a slight margin or it was an equal result. On the same day, coverage revealed Shipley was still being ambushed on the election trail, which led to the cancellation of a Wellington press conference (Bain, 1999). By the last day of election campaign coverage, November 26, Clark was reported to be all set to form a new government, planning a meeting with Alliance Party leader (and likely coalition partner), Jim Anderton, for the day after the election, and all but assured of victory (Clark all set to form new govt, 1999). Meanwhile Shipley was unable to

provide the required momentum, and was criticised for providing too little, too late (Beston, 1999c). All predictions were - correctly - for a centre-left victory.

9.6 Feminising the “Game” Frame

The following section discusses media coverage of Shipley and Clark during the election campaign in regard to the established characteristics of the “game” frame (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). In particular, this section explores if and how these characteristics were modified by the gender of the leaders, and then discusses in some depth the motherhood theme, a feminised aspect of the emphasis on performance and style.

9.6.1 The Emphasis on Winning and Losing

One of the most pervasive features of the strategic frame is the emphasis on winning and losing, which is both a category in its own right and an aspect of other characteristics of the strategic frame (particularly polling, and war and sporting language). The media’s preoccupation with who is winning is often referred to as the “horse race” approach to political journalism (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1994). While the “horse race” is particularly linked to First Past the Post style politics, MMP offers at least as many opportunities for “calling the race”, in individual electorates and with regard to level of party support, preferred Prime Minister and centre left/centre right coalition numbers. Winning and losing are also important concepts in the media’s analysis of leaders’ debates (see Section 9.6.3).

A particularly pertinent feature of early campaign coverage was speculation about the likely impact of the All Blacks’ Rugby World Cup loss on the election outcome. Sporting analogies are not uncommon in the reporting of politics, and are in themselves a component of the strategic frame (see the following section). In New Zealand, rugby is regarded as the “national game” and according to the Rugby Football Union is an integral part of our culture and identity. Thus, it is unsurprising that research, carried out by Adrian Orr, has examined whether there is a correlation between All Black losses and incumbent governments losing elections (there is; see Bain, 1999b), and that this research would resurface when the Rugby World Cup coincided with an election campaign. Thus, the loss was interpreted as a prediction of loss for National and victory

for the political left, particularly as the incumbent government had aligned itself with the team:

National's campaign had incorporated the expected feel-good factor from an All Black win: Apec leaders' outfits were styled on an "Awe Black" theme, the November 27 election has been alleged to be timed to coincide with the World Cup, and Mrs Shipley publicly farewelled the team and has frequently worn a silver fern brooch. (Bain, 1999b, p.2)

However, Shipley continued to support the team, attending an airport gathering to welcome the players back, and drawing her own conclusions about what the loss meant for National by stating, in a widely reported comment, that the favourite does not always win.

The cartoons of the time also contained various rugby images and references. The *New Zealand Herald* of November 4 depicted Shipley on the telephone to Pierre Villepreux, seeking advice from France's assistant coach on how to beat the favourites, and saying (in a reference to the All Blacks' accusation that the French had resorted to testicle-grabbing during the game), "...bite them and grab them by their what? Mister Villepreux?!" Another cartoon, also in the *New Zealand Herald* (on November 6) showed a perspiring Shipley, dressed in an All Black uniform, running to kick a rugby ball labelled "employment figures". In a news review story in the *Press* of November 6, there was a cartoon of Shipley, her Finance Minister Bill English, and two other "All Blacks" tackling Clark and her Finance spokesperson Michael Cullen over a rugby ball labelled "tax policy", with a commentator saying, "And they've blown the advantage by going over the top!" Depicting Shipley and other National MPs as All Blacks associated them with loss, a sentiment continued in a widely published Tremain cartoon on November 8 which showed Shipley saying to her presumably desperate Finance Minister, "It's a brilliant idea, Bill...but I'm not sure [resigning All Black coach] John Hart would want to coach Labour". Finally, on November 10, the *Dominion's* editorial cartoon had the All Black captain receiving a welcome kiss from Shipley, while a strategist rushed towards her, shouting "No, no, no, Jenny! Only if he was a winning skipper remember?" This not only continued the association of Shipley with loss but also alluded to her tendency to make mistakes under pressure.

Shipley as a rugby-playing figure appeared to have two dimensions – one, an allusion to her size (as mentioned earlier, Shipley has been described in terms of her physical invincibility); the other as a more positive image of her “ordinariness” and “common touch” (Dore, 1999, p.13). This contrasted her with “Opera-loving Labour leader Helen Clark” (Main, 1999a, p.2), who was widely known to enjoy more cerebral activities and who indicated her desire to be Arts Minister during the election campaign. While Shipley’s ordinariness (Dore, 1999) and one-of-us identity with ordinary families (James, 1999b) were regarded as her greatest strengths, Clark’s greatest weakness were her reserve, intelligence and passion for elite and solitary activities such as opera and cross-country skiing (James, 1999b). For example, during the campaign period the *New Zealand Herald* reported that Clark, a classical music fan, admitted to feeling “quite dizzy” over a violinist’s performance (Johnston, 1999, pA5).

In addition, the All Black loss created a challenge for Clark, for while it appeared to be a positive indicator of impending victory for Labour, it would not be patriotic to acknowledge this. In fact, Mike Munro, Clark’s senior public relations advisor, wrote to the *Dominion* newspaper defending her comments about the loss, in response to a reader’s letter which criticised her “gloating” as a “national disgrace” and “anti-New Zealand”, and questioned whether such traits were desirable in a future Prime Minister. Munro (1999) wrote that “Like all loyal New Zealanders, Miss Clark expressed shock and disappointment about the outcome of Monday’s semi-final” (p.20).

For both the women, then, the loss of the Rugby World Cup created difficulties, and although these were not explicitly related to gender (but to their chances of winning the election), the dominance of male sporting metaphors in New Zealand politics meant the female politicians were subtly positioned as outsiders. This is because women are always “outside” the game of All Black rugby, however interested and committed they are to it. In other words, they are loyal “supporters” rather than “players”, and this is the only position they can occupy when commenting on significant games. While the news media continue to use images of (male) sporting wins and losses in its coverage of politics, “the perpetuation of male dominance in public life is rendered unproblematic” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000, p.59).

9.6.2 Language of War, Games and Competition

Contextualised by a language of struggle, loss, conquest, and victory through peaceful war, sports project a heterosexist world of simulated unity and solidarity, a model national community based on male bonding. (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000, p.58)

There were various examples of the language of war, games and sport being applied to politics and the leaders in particular. As well as the rugby linkages explored above, there was on-going reference to the two female leaders as Xena princesses or warriors (in fact the *Dominion* used a cartoon of the two women fighting in Xena-like costumes on several occasions), particularly after Labour Party President Bob Harvey made this analogy, saying “We’re interested in a male country, which we are, in seeing two women battle it out – the two Xena princesses. That’s what it’s about. It’s the combat” (Venter, 1999b, p.2). In April 1999, a writer in Australia’s *The Age* newspaper wrote that:

The media has adopted predictable labels for the contest between the two leaders. References such as “Battle of the Boadiceas” and “Clash of the Xenas” have been used to describe the contest leading up to the general election in November 1999. (Barber, 1999, p.25)

An examination of election campaign coverage showed the traditional sports and military-inspired language of politics did not change because of the presence of two women leaders. For example, in an article headlined “Shipley, Clark even; Anderton wins”, Helen Bain (1999c) drew on boxing metaphors when she wrote:

When it came down to a direct contest between the two women who could lead the next government, Mrs Shipley and Miss Clark were about even on points, and neither scored a knockout blow. (p.3)

Other examples of war imagery included:

Labour leader Helen Clark ventured into enemy territory yesterday, trawling for votes in an area which most rejected her party in 1996. (Peters, 1999, p.2)

National wants to widen police powers so officers can force suspected burglars to give DNA samples. Prime Minister Jenny Shipley’s announcement has heated up the pre-election law and order bidding war... (Wellwood, 1999c, p.1)

National plans to blitz the South Island...with the election just two weeks away, the gloves have come off...National clearly intends to take the fight to the opposition. Her comments over Labour “lying” came as National struck the first blow in the campaign advertising battle... (Luke, 1999b, p.3)

In their leaders' debates Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark have crossed swords over whether there is a link between tax rates and economic growth. (Fallow, 1999, p.A4)

Prime Minister Jenny Shipley stayed calm under fire last night as she met the Green Party threat head on at a feisty meeting in the Coromandel electorate. (Beston, 1999b, p.1)

The explicit addition of gender to the war imagery trivialised the confrontation between the two leaders as a "catfight". On November 14, the *Sunday News* published a front-page story headlined "Holmes: I didn't stage a catfight". In it, broadcaster (and media adviser to Helen Clark) Brian Edwards apologised after saying on his radio programme that he had been told that members of the *Holmes* leaders' debate team had expressed regret that the women had not engaged in more of a catfight. Host Paul Holmes called Edwards' statement outrageous, demeaning to both women and offensive to everyone. Shipley responded by saying that some people would have loved a catfight but, "we should be able to form conclusions rather than have the gladiatorial type of contest" (Clausen, 1999b, p.1). In Clark's response, also reported in the *Sunday News*, she herself drew on a sporting metaphor: "I'm not going to buy into pressure to mount an underarm bowling attack" (p.1). Earlier in the campaign, Main (1999b), too, drew on the catfight analogy when she wrote, in relation to the first leaders' debate, that "Clark kept her claws in, opting to avoid the catfight expected of the two women leaders" (p.2). However, despite media priming, Clark and Shipley's behaviour throughout the campaign suggested both women were committed to refraining from actions that could be interpreted as a catfight. (See Chapter Ten for Clark's perspective on mounting negative attacks.)

9.6.3 Performers, Critics and Audience

The strategic framing of election campaigns results in story or play-like narratives, complete with performers, critics and an audience. There is concern that this, along with other aspects of the game frame, contributes to public apathy as voters are treated as spectators (i.e. the audience) rather than active participants in the political process (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The 1999 election campaign was played out in a series of roadshows, starring the women leaders as the central performers. In particular, National's campaign roadshow featured Shipley and her husband, as well as the almost

constant presence of protestors. For example, a story about Shipley's visit to Dunedin began:

Prime Minister Jenny Shipley was ambushed by protesting students in the Labour territory of Dunedin yesterday, with scuffles and shouting matches breaking out...Mrs Shipley's husband Burton engaged in loud arguments with a couple of the protestors, who numbered about eight but were vocal, and shadowed Mrs Shipley's entire visit. (Scuffles as students ambush Shipley, 1999, p.2)

Another example came during television news on November 11. A Television New Zealand story about National's crime policy began with shots of protestors yelling anti-National messages, and the reporter's voiceover saying, "Protestors getting tough on National – and Jenny Shipley getting tough on burglars".

The political spouse as a campaign performer is a relatively new phenomenon in New Zealand. Reporter Helen Bain (1999h) described Burton Shipley as "ubiquitous", and wrote:

The media spotlight has become a more frequent intrusion into the lives of political spouses. Though they have always been hard workers behind the scenes, they are finding themselves on the campaign stage more often. (p.19)

What is not noted in Bain's account of the rise of the political spouse is the likely gendered dimension to this development, which is an extension of the attention to the marital and maternal status of the two female leaders. Burton Shipley was a popular figure, but this popularity was only possible because of his almost constant presence at the side of the Prime Minister. Jenny Shipley deliberately included him in her campaigning, and their affectionate interactions served to highlight her campaign persona of a warm and caring mother figure. Another perspective on the high level of interest in Burton Shipley is that husbands of female political candidates are scrutinised by the media because they are assumed to be manipulating and advising their wives (Wilkinson, quoted in Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994).

In the newspaper analysis of the televised leaders' debates, the media's role as critic was particularly clear. Political commentators and reporters gave their verdicts on the debates, and identified winners and losers. Similarly, TV3's panel of three journalists "focused almost exclusively on the performance style of the leaders, rather than on what they had to say, and its members were asked outright by the host, 'who won?'" (Church,

2000, p.117). Post-debate analysis was widespread in the newspapers, with content analysis showing that 21 stories had debates as their main topic. The media's evaluation of who won, widely reported, is likely to have influenced voters' perception of viability. Church (2000) wrote that "although televised leaders' debates provide an opportunity for parties to promote their campaign policies, the control of these contests by the media allows them to focus attention on the style and performance of the leaders" (p.117). (For more discussion on the impact of debates, see Delli Carpini, Keeter & Webb, 1997 and Roper, 1999.)

The idea that women's aggressive behaviour is overplayed in media comment about debates (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999) was not supported in analysis of the 1999 General Election. In fact, the opposite seemed to occur, with - for example - one commentator commending Shipley's uncompromising approach, and awarding "an aggressive Mrs Shipley the first half of the debate and an assured Miss Clark the second" (Leaders neck and neck, 1999, p.1). If anything, it seemed commentators were looking for more "fight" from the women leaders, who were apparently overshadowed by the men in the earlier debates (e.g. Bain, 1999c), and were disappointed that the women had been so well behaved. This reading of the situation is supported by a cartoon, published on November 24 by two newspapers including the *Evening Post*, depicting three male meat-workers discussing the recent leaders' debate. The first said, "Did you catch the sheilas on the box?" The second responded with his verdict: "I thought both Jenny and Helen were well groomed, well prepared, moderate, intelligent and articulate..." The third said, "So that's what politics has sunk to in this country".

The *Otago Daily Times* also noted the good behaviour of the leaders, writing:

They sometimes talked over each other during a well-behaved, hour long Holmes show but did not get much beyond the occasional "that's rubbish" as they dealt with the economy, taxation, labour relations and education. (Honours about even as two leaders go head-to-head, 1999, p.12)

Similarly, a NZPA report in the *Waikato Times* described the first radio debate between Shipley and Clark as "a low-key, civilised display...more like a relaxed, roundtable discussion than a quickfire sparking debate" (No waves from the leaders, 1999, p.2). Also, some domestic references occurred in other accounts of leaders' debates during the campaign. A *Waikato Times* report on the Sky TV leaders' debate, headlined

“Political queens squabble in the lounge”, began “It was billed as a ‘rumble in the jungle’ but was more like a squabble in the sitting room” (Beston, 1999a, p.1). There were also occasional references to the “love match” between Clark and Anderton, as evidenced in their behaviour during these debates.

Newspapers also used traditional “horse race” and other sporting analogies in coverage of the leaders’ debates, for example reporting that the women were overall neck and neck but “Clark a nose in front” (Leaders neck and neck, 1999, p.1). On November 24, the *New Zealand Herald* headlined its front-page story “Clark a clear winner on points” and explained, “John Roughan reports from the ringside as the heavyweights slug it out. It’s always a prize fight, even when the combatants are the first women to go head to head for the prime ministership of New Zealand”. The article summarised the debate, round by round, and concluded:

Referee Paul Holmes wound things up with some personal jabs of his own. Was Helen Clark, childless, able to understand the concerns of parents? She had probably been prepared for this punch from the start of the campaign and delivered a powerful homily on her own family relationships. The jab to Mrs Shipley was rather softer. Did her background enable her to understand Maori? She reminded him of her performance at Waitangi this year. All in all, a decisive win on points to Helen Clark. (Roughan, 1999b, p.A1)

9.6.4 Importance of Polls and Candidates’ Standings

Polls showing levels of party, candidate and leader support were reported throughout the campaign. In total, 110 newspaper stories (5.4%) were coded as being about polls. Furthermore, during the official campaign period, TVNZ and TV3 news programmes frequently broadcast stories based on poll results. Patterson (1994) wrote that “The press relies on polls to maintain a running tally on the game” (p.81). Thus, polling is an important element of the game or strategy framing of political news.

According to Jamieson (1992), “Polling data often provide the trip wire that activates the discussion of strategy in news” (p.175). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the results of both party support and preferred Prime Minister polls appear to have impacted upon the coverage of Clark’s and Shipley’s strategy. The fact that Clark reached a two-year high in support, and overtook Shipley as preferred Prime Minister during the campaign, contributed to her gradual emergence as Prime Minister in waiting. (Prior to the campaign, Clark and Shipley had alternated as preferred leader and while Clark’s

support remained relatively constant, Shipley's fluctuated widely. For example, between May and August 1999, she lost a third of her support, then doubled it between September and October 1999, after successfully hosting the APEC conference and USA President Bill Clinton, and agreeing to send peace-keeping troops to East Timor). Clark's plans for her first 100 days in office were widely reported in the latter days of the campaign. Clark's portrayal of herself as Prime Minister in waiting was accepted and given credence by a news media confident of a centre-left victory. For example, by November 26, a speech by Clark was - according to the *Waikato Times* - sounding like the final touch to a winning campaign (Beston, 1999c). Reporting on Clark's and Anderton's plans to meet in Wellington the day after the election, the *Evening Post* proclaimed "Clark all set to form new government" (1999).

Consistent with Jamieson's (1992) belief that candidates' status in the polls contributes to language choice, Clark was described as "supremely confident" (Bain, 1999k, p.1) while a "defiant" Shipley (Beston, 1999d) was seen to be merely "going through the motions" (Luke, 1999d). The women's standing in polls also influenced the way the leaders' debates were interpreted. For example, an NZPA article in the *Waikato Times* said that Shipley performed better than Labour expected, but it was "probably not enough to bolster her party's flagging fortunes" (Close bout, 1999, p.3).

Low poll results for Shipley and the National Party also provided a rationale for the Party's negative advertising campaign, and the well-publicised visits to the Coromandel electorate. When Clark first overtook Shipley as preferred Prime Minister, *New Zealand Herald* political reporter Andrew Laxon (1999) wrote "National will unleash a blitz of negative television advertising between now and election day next Saturday in a last-ditch effort to head off defeat" (p.A1). When a new poll showed Green co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimons to be leading over the National incumbent, the *New Zealand Herald* reported that National was to "throw top guns into fight for key seat", pulling out all stops to prevent a victory for the Greens and the centre-left vote (Orsman, 1999c, p.A4). In the same article, a photograph of the local National MP and a visiting Cabinet Minister putting up a new billboard relating to traffic congestion, was captioned "Bridging gap: National candidate Murray McLean and Transport Minister Maurice Williamson try for an edge in Coromandel as Greens rival Jeannette Fitzsimons rules in the polls". Also in the *New Zealand Herald*, political reporter Bernard Orsman credited

Shipley with the Greens' surge in poll support, writing that "Jenny Shipley's 'reefer madness' leaves National feeling cold turkey and the Greens on a high with up to eight MPs" (Who's going to win tomorrow?, 1999, p.A5). The *Evening Post* also attributed the rise in support for the Greens to National tactics, writing that "They've come from almost nowhere, courtesy of National's clumsy attacks last week" (Clark all set to form new government, 1999, p.1). In a post-election analysis, James (2000) described the way Shipley's attack on the Greens was received by the media and the public:

This not only was a blunder (it activated dormant Green votes), it was also portrayed in the media as a blunder. Labour focus groups immediately began to recall her earlier political ineptness and ACT also recorded a negative reaction. It highlighted a contrast between a blundering Shipley and a careful, sure-footed and increasingly "prime ministerial" Helen Clark which worked to Labour's advantage, as evidenced in polls in the following few days. (p.76)

Patterson's (1994) comments can be used to explain why Shipley's campaign poll results would not enable her strategy to be favourably evaluated:

The issues, the images, the tactical adjustments – all of these factors at some point must make sense in terms of the race. A reporter cannot routinely say that the candidate who is in second place has the better strategy; to do so is to invite a complex explanation that might not be persuasive and that would call into question the reporter's objectivity. (p.97)

Finally, it is worth noting that there was some evidence of polling effects during the 1999 election campaign. Vowles (2000) wrote about the impact of a mid-campaign poll on media coverage of the Green Party:

The Green surge provides the clearest indication so far encountered in New Zealand that strategic information generated by a critical poll can reverse a campaign trend. The Green decline prior to that poll on 10 November also hints that media coverage assuming non-viability of a party can have significant effects. Following the poll, media coverage of the Greens increased, a factor that probably further reinforced the message of Green viability to voters who were less strategically-minded. (p.159)

This finding has implications for Shipley and the National Party, which in the latter days of the campaign were cast as "in trouble". For example, in an opinion piece headlined "Polls and debates have PM on ropes", political editor John Armstrong (1999d) was critical of National strategy, based on fear (of change) and hope (that Labour and the Alliance would fall out).

Gender theorists have bemoaned the preoccupation with the “horse race”, in light of research showing women receive more negative viability coverage and are thus more likely to be evaluated negatively (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). However, the New Zealand campaign, although centred on two women, did not fit the mould of “viable male” against “non-viable female”. Instead, poll stories and the resulting strategic coverage presented voters with a choice between a viable woman and a non-viable woman.

9.6.5 Centrality of Performance, Style and Perception of Candidates

The focus on candidates’ performance and style rather than issues is another characteristic of the game frame. Patterson (1994) wrote that “In the journalists’ eyes, the campaign at times boils down to little more than a personal fight between the candidates” (p.63). During election campaigns, the leaders’ performances are heavily scrutinised, particularly as New Zealand campaigns have become more presidential in style, and because of the perceived relationship between preferred Prime Minister polling and the all-important party vote.

Shipley’s performance as Prime Minister had been under scrutiny for several months prior to the election campaign. The media had noted her tendency to make off-the-cuff comments when under pressure, her accident-prone behaviour and erratic leadership, and had raised questions about her credibility. Against this background, it is not surprising that Shipley’s election campaign performance was often criticised. Reporters’ comments throughout the campaign illustrated the widespread perception that Shipley made a number of misjudgments (particularly in regard to tax policy and the marginal Coromandel seat), an evaluation which was consistent with earlier performance “blunders”. At the same time, there were occasional positive comments about her leadership, reflecting James’ (1999b) belief that “in flashes she has been very impressive” (p.A19). Shipley’s performance was scrutinised to a greater extent than Clark’s, which may be indicative of anti-incumbency bias or a reflection of a genuinely less successful campaign, captured in consistently low poll results. Throughout the campaign, the attention to polling kept viability issues at the forefront for both women leaders. Content analysis showed that of the 430 stories which mentioned Clark and/or Shipley, 134 (31.2%) raised issues of competence and/or viability in relation to at least one of the women leaders – usually Shipley.

The theme of political misjudgment was apparent in coverage of Shipley and English's views on the likelihood of tax cuts, with one reporter advising, "Here's how not to run a press conference" (Brent Edwards, 1999a, p.2). It was also reported that the performance of the two was being criticised within their own party (Laugesen, 1999b, pA1). Shipley's earlier difficulties haunted her throughout the campaign. When Shipley was quoted as saying that her children had named National's campaign bus "Lipstick One", the *New Zealand Herald* suggested "the obvious conclusion is that she wants that to catch on before Blunderbus does" (Putting on the gloss, 1999, p.A1). There were also more implicit references to her reputation for making blunders, in comments - particularly about the leaders' debates - that she was too well rehearsed (e.g. Roughan, 1999b), well prepared and slick (Bain, 1999c). Even when Shipley performed well, comments were double-edged. For example, political reporter Victoria Main wrote in the *Dominion* that "the notoriously accident-prone Mrs Shipley impressed many commentators with her poise" (Main, 1999b, p.2).

Media coverage of the Coromandel electorate was critical of Shipley's strategy but more positive about her performance. In terms of strategy, Shipley's approach to the Coromandel was labelled a late and reactive run (Orsman, 1999d), and according to the *Otago Daily Times*, her extraordinary decision to hold a meeting in Coromandel only gave the Green Party unprecedented media attention and boosted party support (Mackenzie, 1999f). The *New Zealand Herald* said Shipley's "sledgehammer to crack a nut offensive" was looking a bit dopey (Where there's smoke, 1999, p.A1) and that the Prime Minister and her ministers had managed to lift the Greens' profile higher than any expensive public relations campaign (Brent Edwards, 1999e). Her continued attack on drug policy when a number of her MPs supported decriminalisation was also criticised (Brent Edwards, 1999e). One newspaper suggested she would be better off following Clark's example and articulating a vision, but instead, she was seen to have "a bit of an unhealthy fixation with the enemy" (Bain, 1999g, p.2). However, during her public meeting in the Coromandel, while she dropped some clangers, she gave as good as she got and won some applause (Espiner, 1999f), stayed relaxed and carried it off with aplomb (Beston, 1999b).

In the last days before the election, the media concluded – based on polling data – that Shipley's approach of walking around, saying "Hi, I'm Jenny", had not worked, and

while she was expected to come out fighting, it was probably too late. The *Evening Standard* stated that Shipley's serene performance had not been successful, and that she had not really taken the fight to Labour. Shipley's style of campaigning was also criticised for being too insular, a criticism begun by Clark which quickly gathered momentum and haunted her throughout the campaign. For example, two of a group of five articles published by the *Otago Daily Times* about her visit to Dunedin, contained references to Shipley defending and trying to shake off allegations about her removed approach to campaigning.

A selection of personal comments, made during the campaign, also contained elements of performance-related information, much of it conflicting. Shipley was described as gung-ho (Luke, 1999a), confident and upbeat (Taylor, 1999) but was also said to lack charisma and be impassive and cold like a "small blue mountain" (Hubbard, 1999, p.C2). One newspaper said she had proved to be an accident-prone Prime Minister, with shaky judgement and relative inexperience but could be relied on to fight for her government (Main, 1999f). Shipley was labelled the underdog, fighting for her political life (Right slams Green "revolutionary", 1999), but also a politician of strong convictions (Armstrong, 1999d). Alternately, she demonstrated abysmal political management, lacked political feel, and left the fashioning of vision to others but also was said to learn fast, be impressive in flashes (James, 1999b) and be something of an enigma with a Nero-like indifference (Armstrong, 1999b). In the early days of the campaign it was suggested that while Labour gambled on Shipley being a spent force, she had recovered her poise and confidence (Armstrong, 1999a).

In contrast to Shipley, Clark enjoyed a well-established reputation for seldom making mistakes. However, early in the campaign the *New Zealand Herald* suggested she had jeopardised this by letting herself be reported as wanting to halve unemployment, over-reacting to National's family push, and by taking poetic licence in campaign advertising (James, 1999a). Her cautious and careful image occasionally left her open to calls for greater risk taking (Armstrong, 1999a) and she was also criticised for lacking in personality (Scott, 1999a). For example, in the *Evening Post*, columnist Tom Scott wrote that while National was doing all it could to bring Shipley's personality to the fore, Labour was doing its best to disguise the fact that Clark did not really have one. The article included a cartoon figure saying "Helen should have flair – we've drilled

and drilled, and drilled spontaneity into her". Positive comments about Clark's election campaign performance related to her co-operative relationship with Alliance leader Jim Anderton (e.g. Anderton wants deputy leader slot, 1999), her popularity with the person in the street (Clark leads team, 1999), and her vision, the latter providing a positive contrast to the late deluge of negative ads from National (Armstrong, 1999c).

As in the case of Shipley, there were descriptive comments made about Clark which related, in part, to her performance. She was variously described as the perfect good sport (Poll vaults, 1999) and a conspirator in lethargy (Laugesen, 1999c), as deeply reserved and shy, moderately rumbustious but not generally witty (Hubbard, 1999). Clark was said to be an engaging speaker but rarely entertaining, impressive with intelligence and forcefulness but not winsome and charming, and strong and serious with no charisma (Hubbard, 1999). She was regarded as a cautious leader (Main, 1999e), with a prickly stare (Roughan, 1999b); a person who is cool under pressure, with a steely ability to withstand assaults that would have felled most men (James, 1999b). Finally, she was said to be funny, warm and open in private (James, 1999b).

While talk of blunders and cautious leadership will also occur with male candidates in similar ways, the female leaders did face a particular performance issue linked to gender, attention to physical appearance. For example, in an article about the "strong feminine feel" in the campaign, Bain (1999f) judged the leaders partially on their visual impact:

The difference appearance can make was apparent in Parliament's adjournment debate last month. Mrs Shipley was radiant in a stunning new cobalt blue suit, while Miss Clark was drab in olive. Miss Clark's speech was well focused, strong on content and confidently delivered, but it was the visual impression left by Mrs Shipley on the television news that was most striking. (p.11)

Also during the campaign, Clark's billboard picture was the subject of speculation about whether her image had been digitally enhanced. The *Dominion* seemed particularly interested in the appearance of the female leaders. On November 6, it ran an article headlined "Clark's mouth 'really is hers'" (1999), with two accompanying photographs captioned "Helen Clark billboard style, and in real life". The unidentified reporter wrote:

During the past month, Miss Clark's swept up, glamorous image has been the subject of gossip by political junkies. Is that really Helen? Who's her hairdresser and how can I get an appointment? How did she get rid of the shadows under her eyes during an election campaign? When did she get her teeth done? (p.2)

When the Party's campaign manager maintained the photo was not digitally altered, and that the effect was achieved through lighting, the *Dominion* quoted a "Wellington design company employee with good industry links" (Clark's mouth "really is hers", 1999, p.2), who said the billboards had definitely been worked on. The article also claimed that Clark was not the only politician to have her image doctored; hordes of other politicians had also done so but only Shipley was mentioned as an example. Three days later the *Dominion* ran another appearance-based article, "Trying to look the part", which also appeared in the *Press* (see above). Reporter Helen Bain (1999f) argued the campaign was not all policies and promises; there was also interest in make-up and frocks, giving the campaign a strong feminine feel, and intensifying the focus on appearance.

While male leaders may also be subjected to this type of scrutiny, the tone of such coverage appears to differ. For example, McNair (2000) said the extensive coverage of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's hairstyle "was tinged with humour and irreverence" (p.50), and was often used as a lead-in to analysis of voting patterns and performance. This angle did not eventuate in appearance-oriented coverage of Shipley and Clark. McNair (2000) also suggested that interest in the stylistic aspects of leaders may indicate deeper reservations about performance, and that such stories can lead to more serious analysis:

The coverage of Tony Blair's hair, for example, far from being a journalistic dereliction of duty or a commercially driven surrender to the principles of infotainment, should be seen instead for what it was – one of those rare occasions in the pre-election period when the Labour leader's highly manicured, carefully designed public persona was challenged by the media, and the more serious issue of New Labour's style consciousness interrogated. Jokes about hair were used as way into quite deep analysis of the MORI poll on women's attitudes to Blair, and New Labour's attitudes to women...Here the integrity and authenticity of the performance was publicly questioned, becoming part of the critical discourse through which readers of the media could evaluate the substance of the New Labour. Thus does coverage of style frequently become critique of performance and policy, and themes of merely "human interest" acquire genuine political significance. (pp.51-52)

In New Zealand, the media's approach to the issue of the female leaders' appearance was more contradictory. On one hand, newspapers adopted a critical approach to Clark's doctored image – which may be, as McNair (2000) suggested, an attempt to open debate about style consciousness. On the other hand, they also published features about the importance of appearance, and commended, for example, cobalt blue outfits over drab olive suits. The double bind women face becomes clear when Bain's (1999f) comment about choice of dress was compared to the *Dominion's* (and other newspapers') implied criticism of women for appearing overly perfect in advertising images. It may also be considered in light of two *Dominion* articles, both on the same day, in which two different women political reporters (Victoria Main and Helen Bain) referred to the “dazzling smiles” of male politicians. Main (1999c) wrote that voters may think twice before falling for Peters' dazzling smile while Helen Bain (1999e) described Mauri Pacific candidate Api Malu as “he of the dazzling smile” (p.11). No questions were raised about the genuineness of these smiles, in contrast to the questions the *Dominion* went on to pose about Clark's teeth.

Finally, there was another particularly interesting aspect of performance and style which was even more clearly related to the gender of the women leaders. This was the issue of motherhood, and it is worthy of further exploration in the following section.

9.7 “I'm a Politician, But I'm a Mum as Well”: The Motherhood Theme

A particular noteworthy aspect of style and performance, and thus the strategy frame generally, was the motherhood dimension of the campaign, which - judging by the comments of reporters, commentators and members of the public - was a salient factor during the campaign. Shipley appeared to deliberately highlight her status as a mother, in an attempt to influence the media framing of her and Clark's leadership styles.

Banducci (2002) suggested that the two main parties positioned themselves as “family friendly” rather than focusing on women's issues: “Even though there is overlap between family and women's concerns, the symbolic rhetoric was focused on family issues rather than on gender equity issues” (p.51). However, Banducci's comment understates the historic intersection of women's political campaigning and family matters. Given that women candidates have traditionally based their political authority

on familial status and duty (Wallace, 1992), there is an “entwining” rather than simply an “overlap” of concern.

While the content analysis showed little mention of family members during the campaign (6% of stories which mentioned Shipley and/or Clark mentioned family members), it is likely that the earlier attention to motherhood made salient those references which did occur, and gave them greater resonance. The majority of references to family occurred in stories which mentioned Jenny Shipley. Of the 26 references to family members, three occurred in stories in which Clark alone was mentioned, twelve in stories in which Shipley only was mentioned, and eleven in which both female leaders were mentioned. There were fifteen stories which referred by name to Burton Shipley, the Prime Minister’s husband, who had proved to be a popular figure during her reign. As her husband accompanied her throughout her campaign, including to the Addington races where she left him to place the bets (she was often described as having her husband Burton “in tow”), this is not surprising. In contrast, there were just two articles which mentioned Clark’s partner, Peter Davis, reflecting the much less public role taken on by him. The level of perceived public interest in the Shipleys’ marriage was apparent in a *Sunday News* story devoted to the relationship between the Prime Minister and her husband, headlined “Burton gets Jenny’s vote”, and beginning “No matter what happens in the election, Prime Minister Jenny Shipley is a winner in the love stakes” (Clausen, 1999a, p.4). Mrs Shipley, who appeared in the accompanying photograph with her husband, son and the family cats, told the newspaper her marriage continued to thrive despite the pressures of the job. Other references to family members occurred in stories on the women leaders’ backgrounds and lives, both of which mentioned their partners, and in Shipley’s case, her children. The partners of other politicians were also mentioned, perhaps because Burton Shipley had stimulated greater interest in the “political spouse” (e.g. two stories reported that Green Party co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimon’s partner had challenged Burton Shipley to a sheep shearing competition, and another mentioned that ACT leader Richard Prebble, like many other politicians including Shipley, had included photographs of himself and his wife meeting US President Bill Clinton, in election campaign materials).

The main references to family which occurred around Clark were related to her childlessness. Four stories focused on her response to debate questioning about her

decision not to have children, and another one reported the Opposition leader's attack on National for its attempts to look "caring and sharing" and promote family. On the other hand, references to Shipley's children tended to be made by the woman herself. For example, she told reporters that her children had bestowed the name "Lipstick One" on her campaign bus, and in a leaders' debate made a policy point in reference to her offspring, when she asked why middle class New Zealand should pay taxes to fund her children's university education.

The attention to family began earlier in the year. In April and May of 1999, a "dirty campaign" was predicted by both Labour and National, with gender as one component of this. For example, a National Cabinet Minister told a division conference that Labour was working on "the dirtiest campaign for many years" which he predicted would focus on personal denigration of Shipley (Clark says Nats playing dirty, 1999, p.4). In response, Clark said there was evidence National was attempting to denigrate her on the basis of childlessness (Clark says Nats playing dirty, 1999), an attempt she labelled "dirty pool" in a current affairs programme which screened in May 1999. A copy of a National Party memo was leaked to the media in May 1999, in which the Party's Woman's Vice-President, Sue MacKenzie, suggested contrasting Shipley's mother role with Clark's lack of children, and encouraged members to question her health and appearance (Bain, 1999a, p.2). The memo acknowledged the importance of "the 'soft block' of NZ women voters" and divided the women's vote into seven sub-groups. One of these sub-groups, which McKenzie felt should be pursued, was "Mrs Ordinary/Average", and ideas to reach them included "Push Jenny Shipley OK – Mother, working woman, team player versus Helen Clark – cold, academic, solo, removed approach". McKenzie later said the memo was "not official party strategy but contained suggestions that needed to be taken into account as National planned its election campaign" (Leaked memo "not National policy", 1999, p.2). This strategy had been foreshadowed earlier in the year, when Shipley stressed, in a key speech, that she was a mother – a move interpreted as her way of showing the public she identified with the "hopes and concerns of ordinary families" (Clark mum over jibes, 1999, p.2) but also as a veiled attempt to portray Clark as remote (Clark mum over jibes, 1999).

In fact, the motherhood image had been adopted by Shipley since early on in her term as Prime Minister. From "the toughest man in Cabinet", she had begun evolving into a

mother figure. It is likely that Shipley positioned herself as a mother at least partially to soften her personal image and attract women voters to National. In traditional gender terms, Shipley's one advantage over Clark (who was popular with women voters in the 1996 election) was her status as mother. After six months of Shipley's leadership, the *Evening Post's* political editor observed the strategic nature of her references to family:

[She] has no qualms about using her family to promote her political ideals. Shipley's speeches are liberally laced with anecdotes of her life as a mother and wife. Partly, it's because family is important to Shipley. Partly, it's politics. Shipley, the country's first woman Prime Minister, has managed to undermine much of the support Clark enjoyed as a woman leader. And Shipley has one advantage over Clark. She has children; Clark does not. (Brent Edwards, 1998, p.5)

By late 1999, it was noted that Shipley "has managed to recast herself as a warm and possibly tough but ultimately caring mother" (Dore, 1999, p.13). In National's election campaign advertising, Shipley referred to her role as a mother when she spoke about the Party's education policy, saying "I am a politician, but I am a mum as well. I have the same hopes and concerns for my children as other parents do" (Shipley's "mum" angle misjudged, 1999, p.1). Church (2000) noted the issue of motherhood was an implicit comparison running through the campaign. Shipley, he said:

oozed maternal pride as she talked about the strengths of the nation, was seen sipping lattes with her husband and children in a picture of familial bliss usually confined to the fantasy world of advertisers, and made frequent reference to "families" in framing the policies of her government. (p.107)

And in an article in *The Australian*, entitled "Mother of a challenge", Christopher Dore (1999) agreed that Shipley's approach was far from subtle:

Jenny Shipley, so the slick election ad begins, is the mother of Ben and Anna, a wife and the New Zealand Prime Minister. She is all those things, of course. The first woman to lead the country, in fact. But voters going to the polls tomorrow know this already – they've been told repeatedly since Shipley took over the job two years ago – and husband Burton and the children have all taken prominent public roles to reinforce the point. It's hardly subtle, but the real aim of the television ad is to remind New Zealanders that the woman hoping to end Shipley's reign as Prime Minister, Helen Clark, is not a mother. The underlying message of the National Party campaign is that Clark could not possibly understand traditional family values because she hasn't got a family. How can she run the great New Zealand family, so the argument goes, if she has never run her own? This theme is at the heart of the personal contest between the National Party's tough but motherly Shipley and Labour's cold and scholarly Clark. (p.13)

When questioned about her family references by a writer for news magazine *North and South*, Shipley responded by saying:

We won't be making an issue of it...But having said that, I'm not going to pretend to be who I'm not. I'm Jenny Shipley and I happen to love my husband very dearly and I've got two wonderful children who're ambitious for their country. I'm not going to apologise for any of that. That's who I am. They'll be with me and they'll do what they normally do in politics. (quoted in Roger, 1999, pp.54-55)

Comparisons on the basis of parental status may well have been inevitable. Harris (2000) suggested the subject of motherhood was one on which the leaders could not escape comparison (see also *Contrasting home lives*, 1999, p.4), and noted that "Whether or not the sobriquet 'mother of the nation' was a purely media notion, both leaders saw the need to justify themselves on this issue" (p.80). He went on to say that it was not until late in the campaign, during a leaders' debate, that Clark confronted this issue squarely and convincingly, which did more to neutralise it than anything else. In a sense, this may have been the final hurdle Clark had to overcome before being judged suitable to lead the country. As Jamieson (1995) noted about former US Attorney-General, Janet Reno, who was unmarried with no children, "Since the presence of children certifies that a woman is sufficiently warm to pass the femininity test, familial affections must be certified in other ways for her" (p.168). Clark's comments during the final televised leaders' debate, reported in a page three article in the *Press* headlined "Clark quizzed on kids", did just that. The NZPA article began:

Labour leader Helen Clark, who has no children, was asked in a television debate whether that affected her ability to understand the pressures that families face. "It might be a source of enormous sadness to me one day," she replied in a rare comment about her personal life. She said she came from a strong family background that gave her a sound understanding of difficulties that families faced. (Clark quizzed on kids, 1999, p.3)

Whereas Harris (2000) refrained from identifying Shipley as the source of the mother comparison, other commentators have noted the way the Prime Minister deliberately highlighted this aspect of her life. This was a reversion to an old pattern in New Zealand for in a study of female candidates in the twentieth century, Wallace (1992) concluded that women's tendency to base their political authority on their marital or familial status, common earlier in the century, had all but disappeared by 1990. Clark certainly placed the blame for the motherhood comparison on the National Party, arguing that not having children was her choice, and as an issue was irrelevant to the campaign:

What the public wants to know is “What direction will these two women take us in? What are their policies?” That’s what they’re interested in – not our family circumstances. If that is (National’s) pitch, then I think they have misjudged. People will be saying “Oh God, who wants to know?” (Shipley’s “mum” angle misjudged, 1999, p.1)

Some commentators agreed, suggesting that the mother angle backfired for the National leader (e.g. Dore, 1999), or was at least unsuccessful (Vowles, 2002b). The media may well have contributed to the cynicism surrounding politics by regarding Shipley’s motherhood references as pure political strategy, but members of the public expressed similar sentiments, rejecting the National Party’s framing of the issue. Several letters written to the daily newspapers in this period read:

The National party is promoting its leader as “a good wife and mother”. So am I and thousands of other New Zealand women. But that does not qualify us to lead a political party. Nor do we extol our domestic virtues from the rooftops. If these are Mrs Shipley’s only qualifications for office, heaven help us. Mrs Shipley will not. (Metherell, 1999, p.10)

This appears to be the election in which babies are going to play a prominent part. Jenny Shipley and Wyatt Creech have recently taken upon themselves to show their gentler side and be photographed with the younger members of society; the inference apparently being that because Helen Clark has no children, she is less than whole. A Prime Minister should be above such things. Come on Jenny, fight the election on your record and future policies. (Gallagher, 1999, p.12)

Surely I can’t be the only person nauseated by Prime Minister Jenny Shipley’s portrayal of herself as the Mother of the Nation. Mrs Shipley’s children have been second fiddle to her political career for some years and are only being wheeled out because they are politically useful. The spectacle of Cabinet Ministers rushing up to the stage at the end of the National Party launch clutching babies was equally nauseating. These are men who would see their children for perhaps a few hours in a good week, posing as perfect parents... (Cross, 1999, p.4)

Mrs Shipley harping on about motherhood, being photographed with children and babies, in an attempt to embarrass the Leader of the Opposition, Helen Clark, puts a slur on all women who do not have, and cannot have, children. (Mainwaring, 1999, p.6)

I suspect National promoting Shipley as a mother is just for vote scoring and it is unpleasant and irrelevant. When all the leaders were men we didn't hear about their dad role. I don't remember women political leaders with children, such as Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir and Indira Gandhi, promoting their mumsy image. They got on with providing leadership. Would they have lowered themselves to such political point scoring? (Knowles, 1999, p.A10)

Data from the New Zealand Election Study also showed that while Shipley tried to position herself as the “compassionate mother” (Banducci, 2002, p.57), and was often accompanied by her family on the campaign trail, Clark actually scored higher for compassion in leadership trait polling. However, the “feminine” traits of trustworthiness and compassion were significant predictors of support for Shipley and not Clark. While voters overall did not rate Shipley as more compassionate as Clark, those who did were likely primed by Shipley's attempts to position herself as the loving mother (Banducci, 2002).

9.8 Conclusion

As Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine have discussed and demonstrated, the typology of framing can be gainfully used alongside traditional content analysis, and enables researchers to explore issues of selection and salience. The application of media framing to this thesis shows that while framing theory has tended to place selection and salience on a par (e.g. Entman, 1993), it is at the level of salience that the typology makes its key contribution to news research. The New Zealand First list incident (see Chapter Eight) acts as a reminder that selection principles work first in accordance with news values. This event satisfied criteria of consonance, continuity, personalisation and negativity, as well as being a conflict based around elite people (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), and was hence selected as news. Within the issue, certain individuals were selected as news sources because of their role in the conflict and their political status. However, while quantitative content analysis can be used to determine the extent to which women are selected as news sources (e.g. as in Chapter Five), and to what degree women's issues are selected as news, only framing offers a way of exploring salience. Media framing theory which focuses on salience offers gender researchers the opportunity to explore the more nuanced patterns in coverage of women and women's issues. For example, attention to salience revealed how the New Zealand First list saga was framed as a leadership problem, and uncovered the marginalisation of underlying issues about gender representation, even as content analysis findings showed the

apparent domination of New Zealand First women in news coverage of the issue. Media frame analysis that is grounded in the strengths of traditional content analysis makes a valuable contribution to research on gender politics, allowing for further exploration of salience while not surrendering the empirical data so valuable for on-going monitoring of women's news treatment.

As mentioned above, media frame analysis of the New Zealand First list conflict revealed the salience of Peters' leadership problems over issues of gender bias within political parties. This is consistent with the finding that political news draws predominantly on episodic frames, which "depict public issues in the form of concrete instances or specific events" rather than thematic frames which operate on more abstract levels and are concerned with general outcomes (Scheufele, 1999, p.112). The theory of newsworthiness expounded by Galtung and Ruge (1965) also tells us that occurrences that can acquire meaning in a short period enter the news system with greater ease than those that develop over a long period of time. The implications of the event focus of hard news for media coverage of gender issues were addressed by Tuchman (1978b), who wrote that the women's movement and "consciousness raising" fell outside the "news net" because they were not easily observable. Further, the movement's unwillingness to identify leaders did not fit with the preference for institutional sources. In summary, the "event" focus of news and prevalence of episodic framing, combined with the contemporary obsession with leadership, the trend towards personalisation in political news, and the anti-Peters sentiment present during the 1999 General Election campaign, all contributed to the framing of the New Zealand First issue as Peters' "women troubles". The structure of political news worked against any in-depth examination of the implications and consequences for women in politics.

This chapter on the framing of the female leaders provided further evidence that the strategy or "game" frame dominates news coverage of campaign politics, even in nations with proportional representation systems of government, and when women leaders dominate the political scene. The established themes of the strategy frame remained predominantly unchanged, and did not appear to have been significantly influenced by gender, with one key exception: the interest in motherhood. On one level the lack of substantive change in media framing during the 1999 General Election campaign suggests that the presentation of politics is relatively fixed and consistent

across time and context. When the news media use the same frames to cover politics despite the gender of politicians, it symbolically denies gender difference by implying that gender is irrelevant or unimportant. On the other hand, the attention to motherhood acts as a reminder of gender difference and subtly positions women as political outsiders. This contradictory stance reflects deeper tension about gender sameness and difference, or what van Zoonen (1991) called a “two-faced” trap (p.228). At the centre of this trap is the question of whether women are the same as men and therefore equal, or whether women are different. In simplistic terms, the choice is between entering the public sphere of politics on an equal basis and surrendering positive private sphere values, or maintaining gender difference and working for a long-term modification of the public sphere which takes into account private sphere values (van Zoonen, 1991). The promotion of motherhood, and the media attention and debate surrounding it in the 1999 campaign, reflects female politicians’ and the news media’s struggle to reconcile this tension. The notion of sameness and difference is explored further in the following chapter based on interviews with female politicians.

The findings about the strategy frame in the 1999 General Election campaign have two main implications for female politicians. First, women have to work within dominant male strategy frames, and this evidently means showing the expected amount of political “fight”. While it has been suggested that the language and prevailing narratives of politics have negative repercussions for women leaders’ electability (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999), the findings from the 1999 General Election suggest that if women work the conventions of politics to their advantage, they can be successful. The New Zealand media appeared to be looking for more aggression from the women leaders, and were prepared to reward such behaviour (for example, in their verdicts on who won the televised leaders’ debates), supporting Serini, Powers and Johnson’s (1998) assertion that a woman candidate is more successful if she presents herself as “manlike”. Although the analysis of the game frame themes revealed some gendered and stereotypical labels applied to the women leaders and their confrontations, it was not sustained and did not disadvantage them uniformly (instead, just one of the woman – National leader Jenny Shipley – appears to have been disadvantaged by the attention to polling and strategy, which likely reflects her Party’s tired image and erratic leadership.) As Banducci (2002) pointed out, there is little known about gender stereotyping by voters when both candidates are female but “there are reasons to expect that gender

stereotyping will be less prominent in races where both candidates or (as in our case) both party leaders are women” (p.56). Indeed, the New Zealand Election Study in 1999 found little evidence that voters drew on gender stereotyping when evaluating the two main leaders (Banducci, 2002).

The second key implication is that women must consider how best to deal with questions of gender, and calculate risks, when choosing which debates to enter and which issues to champion. National leader Jenny Shipley’s positioning as a mother figure appears to have worked against her, for as Pickles (2001) noted, “women leaders who are constructed as mothers face being judged by maternal identity” (p.15). The strategy frame in campaign coverage - with its focus on winners and losers, and metaphors of sport and war - is brutal for all politicians, and while it may create certain challenges for women, lessons from the past show they cannot expect special exemption. Indeed, this chapter’s analysis exposes the limitations of the notion that women politicians can change the nature of political reporting. Although there were some superficial changes to the established themes (for example, in language), which reflected the gender of the leaders, the themes themselves remained the same. Women leaders, then, did not effect change on dominant modes of news presentation during the 1999 General Election campaign. Nor did women politicians succeed in placing questions of gender politics firmly on news agendas. This finding is particularly disappointing given the recent shift to a proportional representation system of government, and the corresponding hope that this would lead to more diversity in politics and political reporting.

Media frame analysis has much to offer the growing number of gender politics researchers seeking to understand the complexities of women’s depiction in political news. Influential work, such as that by Norris (1997c) and Norris and Carroll (1997), is already being done in this area. As framing scholarship continues to become more robust and accessible, it will encourage further exploration of individual-level framing, and the intersection of media and audience frames. Such research could usefully build on analyses of media framing of gender politics and women leaders during election campaigns (as in this thesis), and explore the potential link with audience or voter responses.

The following chapter looks at media coverage of women politicians from a different perspective, that of the women themselves. Chapter Ten draws on extensive interview material in its exploration of female politicians' views on the impact of gender on media coverage.

Chapter Ten

Interviews With Female Politicians

10.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the interview methodology as it applies to this thesis. As discussed earlier, the “old rule” of research is that the choice of method should be guided by the research question being asked (Tuchman, 1991). In a study which asks, in part, how female politicians perceive the media coverage they receive and their relationship with the news media, the qualitative interview is a logical choice. It is, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), a powerful data collection tool, which is appropriately employed to gain in-depth knowledge of issues and relationships.

The second part of this chapter explores the women’s responses to interview questioning about the impact of gender on media coverage, describing and discussing how they “make sense” of their and others’ experiences. According to Seidman (1991), “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p.3).

10.2 Why Interviews?

The term interview is vague and can refer to many forms of data gathering. The interview continuum ranges from unstructured and open-ended to highly structured and closed-ended (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Interviews are characterised by their relatively informal style, a thematic, topic centred, biographical or narrative approach, and the assumption that data are generated through the interaction (Mason, 1996). For this thesis, the structure was one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The “depth” interview, according to Priest (1996), is “an open-ended conversational exploration of an individual’s worldview or some aspect of it” (p.26). Burgess (1984, cited in Mason, 1996, p.38) defined interviews as “conversations with a purpose”.

Qualitative interviews allow for in-depth exploration of ideas, including clarification of comments. The opportunity for women to express their ideas in their own words – rather than being confined to choose from pre-set options – allows for a full discussion, particularly useful in exploratory research.

Open-ended interviews encourage researchers to be receptive to new ways of looking at things. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) stated:

The opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry. To the above sets of circumstances add the serendipitous learnings that emerge from the unexpected turns in discourse that your questions evoke. (p.65)

Green (1999) documented the trend of using focus groups in communication research, but urged a re-examination of the interview. She drew on Hawkins et al's (1994) discussion of when the individual in-depth interview is appropriate: for detailed probing of a person's behaviour, attitudes or needs; when the subject matter is confidential or emotionally charged; in situations where strong socially acceptable norms exist (which may result in participants conforming in a group discussion); when a very detailed picture of behaviour or decision-making patterns is needed; or when the interviews are related to people's work or profession. She concluded by saying that "Unless there are specific reasons for investigating a 'group', rich, deep, thick data is more likely to be generated by an individual interview" (p.45).

10.3 Previous Interview-Based Research

A rich vein of empirical research has focused on female politicians' representation in the news media but much less systematic attention has been paid to how women perceive and make sense of these depictions.

Of particular relevance to this research is the work of Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996), who interviewed 28 British female MPs about their views on coverage, its impact, and strategies they had developed to cope with the media. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) found that while female politicians perceive they are subject to more media comment about appearance and age – to the extent that gender is a "primary descriptor" (p.111) – they ultimately excuse the media their behaviour, arguing:

that journalists want to write longer, in-depth stories with more background but the sub-editor will not allocate the space; or that journalists do not deliberately practise gender exclusion by always interviewing male sources but deadline pressures block their creativity in finding a less well-known woman as spokesperson, expert or commentator; or that the media are better tuned to public opinion than are politicians and that gender biases only reflect the norms of the wider society; or that men (including journalists, editors, politicians) do not realise the sexism in their behaviour or language because such is the extent of socialization that these are entirely unconscious. (p.115)

Other evidence of political women's attitudes towards the media - while interesting - tends to be fragmented, drawing on politicians' reported comments about the media (e.g. Braden, 1996; Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994), or appearing in accounts of women's experiences in politics generally (e.g. Byrski, 1999; Hartman, 1999; Henderson, 1999; McCallum, 1993; Sawyer & Simms, 1993). In accounts of the political life of women leaders from around the world, discussion of the media appears alongside such issues as succession and political background (e.g. Liswood, 1995). One of the few empirical studies of a number of political women in the United States has suggested that male and female state legislators have different attitudes towards media coverage of state legislatures (Sussman & Lovrich, 1996).

Former Australian senator Janine Haines (1992) interviewed and surveyed a number of women from Commonwealth countries including Australia, Britain and New Zealand, for an account of the first one hundred years of women in politics. In a chapter devoted to media attitudes and the status of women, she wrote that "While some British women MPs told me they had 'no problems' with the media in the 1990s, others had some trenchant criticisms to make" (p.177), particularly about the media's patronising attitude toward women, and their obsession with appearance. Drawing on her own political experience, she wrote:

Most of us were determined not to be portrayed as single issue politicians, nor as just another politician. We made our gender a plus willingly, if sometimes uncomfortably, becoming role models and capitalising on the fact that the uniqueness of our position made us natural focal points for the media. (p.181)

Australian politician Joan Kirner, who became the state of Victoria's first woman Premier in 1990, had only a short-lived honeymoon period. Bryski (1999) noted that the flattering and positive photographs of the leader's first day in office were, the very next day, replaced by insulting cartoons. Kirner believed that:

By exaggerating the personal characteristics of an ordinary working-class girl who was now Premier, they were trying to say that a woman like this should never hold that office. (Bryski, 1999, p.172)

Elsewhere, Kirner said that her experiences with the media have, in general, been positive, and that she has had a mutually respectful relationship with women in the media (Kirner, 1996, p.114). However, there have been some battles, mainly with male journalists and editors, and mainly over power.

Recently, fellow Australian Cheryl Kernot also spoke out about the media coverage she received while leader of the Democrats, and when she moved to the Labor Party in 1997. In an extract from her controversial book, Kernot (2002) noted that her living arrangements were scrutinised much more than those of her male counterparts. She also argued that the “dominant masculine instincts of the Canberra press gallery” (p.17) were out of touch with ordinary Australians, as evidenced by the public support she received after pictures of her in a sexy red dress, taken during a *Women’s Weekly* photo shoot, were leaked to the media. Kernot (2002) documented many incidents of misreporting and occasions when she felt her privacy was unduly invaded, and questioned the objectivity and pack mentality of contemporary political coverage. However, because of the controversy surrounding Kernot, it should be noted that she herself played a part in blurring the line between public and private (Shanahan, 2002), and has been criticised for relying on “image politics” (Blair, 2002).

In a study of gender and parliamentary politics in Uganda, Tamale (1999) interviewed 40 female legislators about their experiences and found that 94% were dissatisfied with their press coverage. She quoted one member who said, in part, that:

During the CA [Constituent Assembly], I was very disappointed with the press. We were portrayed very, very negatively; they wouldn’t talk about our positive contribution in the House but would report on our physical looks. The *Monitor* went as far as giving us nicknames. I was the “Yellow Pumpkin”, Rhoda Kalema was the “Grandmother”. Hope Mwesigye was called the “Most Beautiful”. (Tamale, 1999, p.189)

In New Zealand, McGregor (1996a) explored politicians’ varying views on “media misogyny”, recording Helen Clark’s belief that “The whole thrust of [my] media coverage from December 1993 right through 1994 had a sort of sub-theme of the illegitimacy of my holding the position” (p.190), and former National MP Marilyn

Waring's perception that female reporters operate differently. More recently, Nicholl (2000), drawing on a combination of reported comments, speeches and interviews, identified media intrusion as a contributor to New Zealand's "revolving door of female representation" (p.12). She wrote:

Media-shy politicians, especially those who wish to rise through the ranks or are list MPs, are at a disadvantage. They need to draw the attention of the leader to themselves through their performance in Parliament and/or through their constituency work, yet they find it difficult to cope with the consequent intrusion of the media into their personal lives. (p.15)

Motion (1996; 1997; and with Leitch, 2000) also drew on interviews with New Zealand female politicians (national and local), as well as their public relations advisers, in her study of:

the relationships between the increasing number of women politicians, their public relations advisers and the news media, and the way in which these relationships result in the production of particular kinds of truths within media discourse. (Motion & Leitch, 2000, p.65)

Motion and Leitch (2000) identified six themes from this interview data: truth, news values, coterie communication, gatekeepers, media training, and informalisation.

Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark, the first women to lead major political parties in New Zealand, have both spoken publicly about the media's emphasis on appearance. It is widely documented that Clark has had a difficult time with the media (e.g. Aimer 1997; McCallum, 1993; McGregor 1996a), although she was the media "discovery" of the 1996 campaign (Aimer, 1997, p.134). Clark claimed that, as a woman leader, she has been subject to "relentless, cruel and vicious stereotyping" (Kilroy, 1996, p.2), and that women leaders are judged in ways that men are not. Speaking at the 100th anniversary dinner of the Newspaper Publishers Association, during her reign as Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley said that too much attention was devoted to her glasses, clothes and haircut and not enough to policies. She was aware, in her own case, that this:

had led to talks of "battle", "Amazons", an "Iron Lady" and a "stern boss" by male commentators and "queens", a "farming woman", and "Matron Shipley" by female commentators. (Shipley wants better media coverage, 1998, p.2)

Shipley told a group of school children that although there were no real difficulties in being the first woman Prime Minister, she found it irritating when people focused on

her hair, fashion accessories and clothing, noting that men's clothing and family situations were not deemed similarly newsworthy (Bartlett, 2000, p.7).

10.4 Interview Participants

The research aimed for a census of Labour and National women MPs from the 1996-1999 term. Prior to the 1999 general election, there were 35 women in Parliament, 22 of them in the two main parties, Labour and National. While the smaller parties had women MPs, none of them were constituency MPs (see Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of New Zealand's proportional representation system of government). For this reason, and because National and Labour both – for the first time – had women leaders, who were leading contenders for the role of Prime Minister, the research focused on sitting female MPs from the two main parties (with three exceptions – see below). This ensured a mixture of list and electoral MPs from the same parties were included in the research.

The process of interviewing takes a substantial amount of time and effort (Green, 1999). It can also require a certain amount of tenacity on behalf of the researcher. According to Mason (1996), “the informal and conversational style of this form of interviewing belies a much more rigorous set of activities” (p.43). Arranging interviews with high profile public figures is always a challenge for researchers, and the demands of election year created added difficulties. Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman (1988) wrote that negotiating access to organisations is more about chance than skill, and while they recommended an opportunistic approach, nevertheless offered five pieces of advice: allow adequate time, use friends and relatives wherever possible, use non-threatening language to explain your research, try to offset reservations with respect to time and confidentiality, and offer a final report of your findings. Similarly, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) stated that “it helps to have an ‘informant’, an insider who knows the individuals and the politics involved, to advise you in making access decisions” (p.34).

Personal connections were vital to establishing initial contact with participants. The researcher attended a Labour Party Congress with one supervisor (who was addressing the conference) and was introduced to a number of the Party's female MPs. The opportunity was used to briefly outline the research and ascertain whether they would be interested in taking part. A few days later, letters were sent to these women,

reminding them of the conversation and providing more details about the project. This was then followed up by a telephone call, and interview times were arranged. All the women the researcher met at this congress agreed to be interviewed. At a later stage, the remaining Labour women were contacted by letter and a follow-up telephone call. Of the thirteen sitting Labour women, ten took part in the study, a 77% response rate.

National Party women were approached through one of the Party's former MPs, now a staff member of the university at which this research was conducted. A letter was written to Associate Professor Marilyn Waring, and she forwarded it to friend, MP Katherine O'Regan. O'Regan then circulated the letter among her female colleagues, some of whom then contacted the researcher. The rest of the National women were followed up with telephone calls. From a total of nine National women MPs, seven took part – a 78% success rate. Overall then, the interviews were conducted with over three-quarters of the women MPs in each of the two main parties, and are therefore a valuable and unique aspect of the thesis.

The researcher's preference was for an initial face-to-face interview slot of 45 to 60 minutes. However, the demands of parliamentary life meant this was not always possible. If the choice was between a reduced time slot and no interview, a reduced time slot was deemed preferable. Two women requested a written interview, which was done via email. Further, two women were interviewed over the telephone. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) advised, "you take what you can get and defer to the preferences of the respondent" (p.73). According to Buchanan et al. (1988), "The practice of field research is the art of the possible"(p.55).

Jenny Shipley, the National Party leader and Prime Minister prior to the 1999 general election, did not agree to take part either before or after the election. After several attempts to arrange a time, a spokesperson for the Prime Minister said the interview was "not a priority" for her. Other non-respondents cited time difficulties, and one agreed to be interviewed but a time could not be established despite several attempts by the researcher.

The women who were interviewed prior to the election campaign were contacted again in the two months after the election, and asked to take part in a ten-minute telephone

interview about their election experiences. The response to this was lower than for the initial interview, reflecting in particular the time demands on Labour MPs in the period after the election.

On the advice of Seidman (1991), the people interviewed in the course of this research are referred to as “participants”, reflecting their active involvement in the interviews, and equal status. Table 12 lists all interview participants. It is interesting to note that following the 2002 General Election, just one of these National Party women remains an MP (Pansy Wong). Fletcher and Quigley retired in 1999, O’Regan was voted out in 1999, and Hasler, Vernon and Young were all victims of a dismal result for National in the 2002 General Election. In contrast, all the Labour women, except Judy Keall who retired from politics in 2002, remain in Parliament.

Table 12 demonstrates that the interviews were conducted with a range of women within the two main parties. Participants varied in terms of their status and political experience, and the type of constituency served (i.e. rural or urban voters, particular ethnic communities). In addition to the sitting women MPs, three other women were interviewed, selected for particular reasons. The first of these was Margaret Wilson, President of the Labour Party from 1984-1987, placed at number nine on the Labour Party list in 1999, and therefore guaranteed a place in Parliament. Her long association with politics and interest in women’s issues made her of special interest. Second was Carterton mayor, Georgina Beyer, running for the first time in the National-held Wairarapa electorate. Beyer had had a high national media profile since entering local body politics, predominantly due to her transsexuality. It was anticipated that the way the media dealt with her gender and sexuality would be of interest to this research. Beyer ended up winning her electorate race in the highest swing against a sitting MP in ten years, and became a Labour Party backbencher. Third, Deborah Morris was a high profile MP in the first coalition government. She entered Parliament on the New Zealand First list in 1996, at the age of 27, and became Minister of Youth Affairs and Associate Minister of the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Women’s Affairs and the Environment. She left Parliament after the breakdown of the coalition government, and went to work as government relations manager for a public relations firm in Wellington. Her combination of gender and youth led the researcher to believe her perspective would be valuable to the study.

Table 12
Interview Participants

Labour MPs	National MPs
<p>Helen Clark (leader) Entered politics 1981 Currently holds Mt. Albert electorate (urban) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Christine Fletcher Entered politics 1990 Held Epsom electorate (urban) until retiring in 1999 Mayor of Auckland 1998-2001 <i>Telephone interview</i></p>
<p>Lianne Dalziel Entered politics 1990 List MP (1996-1999) Currently holds Christchurch East electorate (urban) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Marie Hasler Entered politics 1990; left 1993 Re-elected in 1996 to Waitakere (urban) List MP 1999-2002 <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Helen Duncan Entered politics 1996 List MP 1996- <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Katherine O'Regan Entered politics 1984 Held Waipa electorate (rural) 1984-1996 List MP 1996-1999 <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Ruth Dyson Entered politics 1993 Currently holds Banks Peninsula electorate (rural/urban) <i>Email interview</i></p>	<p>Joy Quigley Entered politics 1990 Held Western Hutt (urban) electorate 1990-1996 List MP 1996-1999 Retired 1999 <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Marian Hobbs Entered politics 1996 List MP (1996-1999) Currently holds Wellington Central electorate (urban) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Belinda Vernon Entered politics 1996 Held Maungakiekie electorate (urban) 1996-1999 List MP 1999-2002 <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Judy Keall Entered politics 1984 MP 1984-1990; 1993-2002 Recently retired from Otaki electorate (rural) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Pansy Wong Entered politics 1996 List MP 1996- (Asian representative) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Annette King Entered politics 1984 MP 1984-90; 1993- Currently holds Rongotai electorate (urban) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Annabel Young Entered politics 1996 List MP 1996-2002 <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Nanaia Mahuta Entered politics 1996 List MP (1996-1999) Currently holds Māori electorate of Tainui <i>Email interview</i></p>	<p>Other participants:</p> <p>Margaret Wilson Successful Labour list candidate in 1999 Currently Cabinet Minister in Labour-led government Former Party President <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Jill Pettis Entered politics 1993 Currently holds Whanganui electorate (rural) <i>Telephone interview</i></p>	<p>Georgina Beyer Successful first time Labour candidate in 1999 Currently holds Wairarapa (rural) electorate <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>
<p>Dianne Yates Entered politics 1993 List MP (1996-2002) Currently holds Hamilton East (urban) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>	<p>Deborah Morris Former New Zealand First list MP and Cabinet Minister (1996-1998) <i>Face-to-face interview</i></p>

All the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher and a transcriber.

10.5 Interview Questions

The preparation of interview questions is central to the material gathered, and researchers must have a clear understanding of what it is that they are interested in. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggested that in drafting interview questions:

We turn to our topic and ask, in effect: If this is what we intend to understand, what questions must we direct to which respondents? (p.65)

Patton (1990) identified five types of interview questions, which can be asked in the present, past or future tense: experience/behaviour, opinion/values, feeling, knowledge, and sensory questions. Experience/behaviour (what a person has done, what they do) and feeling questions (emotional responses to experiences and thoughts) are particularly relevant to this research.

The interview began with the researcher giving participants a brief outline of how the interview would proceed, asking about the media coverage participants had received, and then moving onto their relationship with the media. The first question invited respondents to give an overview of the media coverage they had received since entering national politics. This meant the interview began with a recall question, prompting respondents to revisit the coverage they had had, which was also non-threatening. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) warned, it is a frequent mistake for interviewers to ask about a “hot” topic before rapport has been established. It is important to note, however, that in qualitative interviewing the order of questions can change as respondents answer one question in their reply to another, or begin discussing a particular line of questioning earlier than intended. It is interesting to note that as participants knew the topic of the research before the interview began, they would often begin to talk about gender in their answer to the first question (for example, denying gender had any impact on the media coverage they had received since entering politics).

Once drafted, questions were checked and revised. Question wording was examined for clarity and neutrality. While it is desirable to pilot test the questions on a relevant population, the pool of female MPs is a small and not easily accessible one, and

therefore this was not possible. However, the early interviews were approached as opportunities for learning and revising. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) wrote:

Since formal pilot studies are not always feasible, you might design a period of piloting that encompasses the early days of interviews with your actual respondents, rather than a set-aside period with specifically designated pilot respondents. Such a period, if conducted in the right frame of mind – the deep commitment to revise – should suffice for pilot-testing purposes. (p.68)

The interview questions were revised after the first interview, and some re-wording occurred as a result. An additional question, on media training, was added to the schedule.

Establishing rapport is central to the success of interviews and requires trust, which in turn will determine what sort of response interviewers gain from participants. Although there is no list of steps to establishing rapport (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), it is cultivated by the interviewer showing interest in what participants say, and is “built on the ability to convey empathy and understanding without judgement” (Patton, 1990, p.317). It is different from friendship, a term with which it is sometimes used interchangeably, because it does not require “liking” to occur (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). A researcher can increase the likelihood of striking rapport by monitoring behaviour, appearance and speech.

10.6 Making Sense of Interview Data

There are three main ways of “reading” interview text: literal, interpretive and reflexive (Mason, 1996). It is the interpretive approach which is used in this research:

An interpretive reading will involve you in constructing or documenting a version of what you think the data mean or represent, or what you think you can infer from them. (Mason, 1996, p.109)

A researcher can look at both participants’ interpretations and understandings – how they make sense of something – and their own. Patton (1990) stated that:

Data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said. (p.347)

A key step in analysing interview material is to decide on the approach, whether it be a case analysis (writing a case study for each person interviewed) or a cross-case analysis

(grouping together responses from different people to a common question, or analysing various perspectives) (Patton, 1990). Following Seidman (1991), this research uses a cross-case analysis:

First, the researcher may find connections among the experiences of the individuals he or she interviews. Such links among people whose individual lives are quite different but who are affected by common structural and social forces can help the reader see patterns in that experience. Those connections the researcher calls to the readers' attention for inspection and exploration. Second, by presenting the stories of participants' experience, interviewers open up for readers the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study. (p.42)

Consequently, the interview material was examined for commonality of experience, among the female politicians generally, but also among particular subsets of participants, such as list MPs. These common experiences contributed to the identification of themes, which are discussed later in this chapter.

10.7 Limitations of Interview Research

In terms of reliability and validity, it is important that the researcher's potential effect on participants is recognised. In fact, the tenets of qualitative research demand that these issues are addressed. As Seidman (1991) argued, interviewers must be recognised as part of the process for they ask the questions and respond, and shape the material. But:

Rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, we say the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact and understanding. (p.16)

However, "we still have to leave open the possibility that other interviewers and crafters of profiles would have told a different story" (Seidman, 1991, p.103).

The interviews were limited by the available time, and it is also acknowledged that the material would have been influenced by interviewer characteristics (including gender), and the participants' perception of the researcher's stance on the topic. Finally, it is noted that there was less participation by Māori women, which likely reflects comparatively less interest in gender, and more concern for ethic-related research. The ways in which ethnicity shapes female politicians' views on media coverage need to be researched further, particularly as more women from non-European backgrounds enter

national politics. Feminist qualitative research has been slow to address the intersection of gender, race and class (Olesen, 2000).

The focus of the remainder of this chapter is the summation and discussion of material from the interviews with twenty female politicians. The interviews permitted a deeper understanding of the relationship between news, gender and politics by describing and discussing how women MPs “make sense” of the media coverage they receive. The overall question guiding the interviews asked how women MPs and candidates perceive the media coverage they receive, and what influences their perception. The extent to which they felt coverage was influenced by gender is also explored. The interview material showed a mixed response from participants, and some contradictions within individual interviews. Some participants felt that gender had little or next to no bearing on the coverage they received, and that status and personality were more important factors. Other participants believed gender did impact on media coverage, in potentially positive and negative ways. The following section summarises the participants’ views on political news generally.

10.8 Female Politicians’ Views on Political News

Female politicians observe media coverage from a unique vantage point. Their status as elected representatives means they are political “insiders”, but as women they also tend to be positioned outside the public sphere (see Chapter Three). Further, women in politics rely on the news media for publicity, and therefore political survival, but may have to reconcile this with personal reservations about the way the media cover women. For these reasons, the women who participated in this research were asked about their views on political news generally.

It is often said that the relationship between politicians and the media is symbiotic, but this does not mean it lacks tension. As former New Zealand First Cabinet Minister Deborah Morris said, “the media need politicians and politicians need the media but at times it’s a very uneasy relationship.” Retiring National list MP Joy Quigley noted that what the two sides want is often opposed:

Now what the media thinks is a good story, of course, is usually an embarrassing one and what the politician hopes is a good story is one which reflects well on them, so there’s always constant tension there.

Similarly, Labour MP Marian Hobbs noted that when she first came into politics she felt that the media wanted to discredit her character and motives, quite a change from the tone of coverage she received as a school principal (which treated her as an expert).

There was a general feeling among participants that media coverage of politics lacked depth (consistent with theoretical concerns outlined in Chapter Two). According to Labour list MP, Helen Duncan, the news focuses on personality and trivial issues, with little in-depth coverage of the important issues facing society. Party leader Helen Clark and list MP Lianne Dalziel both felt that there was not enough invested in in-depth coverage, and many participants felt New Zealand lacks appropriate forums for debate. Whanganui MP for Labour, Jill Pettis, mourned the loss of journalists' jobs through recent bouts of restructuring and expressed a sense of frustration about the shallow analysis of politics. She argued that this contributes to a feeling among the public that politics has nothing to do with them. Annabel Young, a National Party list MP, suggested that coverage is shallow because reporters lack background knowledge about issues:

You're not likely to get a good analysis of APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation], because they don't know, and it's much easier to talk about whether Jenny Shipley's winning versus Helen on the APEC thing, because that's a story they [the media] know.

Government MPs bemoaned the negative focus of news coverage. For example, Marie Hasler felt that, in general, the media are only interested in what is confrontational or negative, to the extent that the criticism becomes the headline. But she also noted this is part of the territory and has to be put up with. Joy Quigley felt the same, alluding to the "A versus B" style which dominates political reporting:

If I have a huge criticism about journalism in New Zealand, and I don't think I'm being overly...sensitive or generalising, but somebody puts something up, it could be a politician, it could be local body, whatever, and the immediate response is to find someone who is against it. Rather than look at an analysis of why it's good or bad, they just look for someone who's antagonistic to that proposal.

On the other side, Labour frontbencher Annette King felt that coverage was often not balanced, which she saw as a disadvantage of being in opposition. Māori MP Nanaia Mahuta believed that the Pakeha media are more fond of "character assassinations" than the specialist Māori media. Asian list MP Pansy Wong felt the mainstream media had

been fair and compassionate towards her, but she observed a tendency to reduce issues down to one or two points, and saw too much emphasis on personality and individual's conduct. Although it went against her better judgement, she sometimes simplified things so as to grab the media's interest.

The impact of shallow and sensational journalism on democracy was a concern often raised by interview participants. For example, Labour's Ruth Dyson expressed concern that the average New Zealander does not get balanced and full information:

It's shallow, biased, sensational – and unreal, in that it does not reflect the level or true content of the issue. I think it's harmful for our democracy.

Belinda Vernon, National MP for Maungakiekie at the time of the interview, felt that the news media decide on the angle and then make the story fit. She also noted that politicians who do something “silly, stupid or wrong” get on the front page, whereas those who have in-depth knowledge of some particular issue that does not capture the public imagination, struggle to get coverage. Although this was frustrating, it was also a challenge:

If you've got a difficult issue, I think you need to invest a lot of time in working with the media, talking through the issues and somehow getting a hook that actually interests them, captivates them and then they say “yes, this is an important issue, we're going to promote it”. But translating a complex issue into simple language, and short language, is a real challenge.

National Party MP for Epsom (and also mayor of Auckland at the time of the interview), Christine Fletcher, expressed concern that the media have not adjusted to the changes in politics under MMP. She stated that:

I received quite a lot of coverage [but] I didn't believe it was necessarily fair... it reflected the attitude of the media to power, and their inability to acknowledge the changing way that we resolve issues and the way policy is formulated... I don't think the media were fast to respond to the MMP environment and understand that it wasn't all executive control... Select committees are a hugely influential part of law making now... But the media still haven't got their head around it... they were still being fed... ministers' edicts, and buying that and printing the stories and not going and doing their own work. Now that could be because they just didn't have the staff or it could be they were lazy.

Labour candidate Georgina Beyer, however, was less concerned about the state of political news in New Zealand, saying that New Zealanders have access to “pretty good” political coverage, and questioning whether it is widely read or observed. She

argued that the only public demonstration of politics occurs in a conflict situation such as Question Time in the House, whereas much of politics is long, drawn out, tedious and boring. Beyer's then-status as a challenger may have influenced her opinion. As political players, incumbent MPs have a vested interest in in-depth coverage that reflects the complexity of issues they deal with, and are more likely to judge the media's performance on this basis. Also, incumbent politicians arguably approach media coverage from a more knowledgeable "insider" perspective, and therefore with higher expectations, than challenger MPs. Beyer's comments in a post-campaign interview suggested this might be the case, for after the campaign she expressed disappointment in the amount and depth of media coverage, and noted the absence of analysis and debate.

Finally, Lianne Dalziel raised the question of whether the media reflect society's beliefs or drive them. She suggested they do both and as such, would like them to take a more responsible approach, and deal with issues rather than superficialities:

I mean, there was this long period when Helen's hair was an issue, and I used to say to people, "aren't you more interested in what's inside her head than what's on the outside?"

The concerns of the female politicians are shared by media commentators in New Zealand and around the world (see Chapter Two). They are also consistent with those of their British counterparts (see Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996). The next section describes the responses of those participants who downplayed the impact of gender on media coverage.

10.9 The Downplaying of Gender Influence

A number of participants were dismissive of the suggestion that gender influences media coverage. National's Marie Hasler was particularly adamant that the media do not treat women any differently to men. During the research interview she said:

I have thought about this because a lot of women tend to whinge a bit about this, and I can't say I've really noticed it - and I've thought about it - because I notice that men also have problems. So I don't think it's so much a gender issue as a personality issue... I mean a lot of these things are quite subtle and you don't always know what the reasons are...I don't go round thinking and expecting some sort of discrimination in the news because I'm a woman.

This response is consistent with Hasler's public denouncement of the idea that women have a tougher time in politics, and her refusal to "play the 'victim' when things did not go her own way" (House "tough on women and men", 1999, p.7). Political reporter Helen Bain (1998) wrote that Hasler has "never held back her opinions about women in politics" (p.11). She has described her colleague, Christine Fletcher, as having a "long-standing transfixion with and dread of male behaviour" (after Fletcher complained about macho behaviour in Parliament), and criticised Helen Clark's tears at a Waitangi Day celebration as a "tearful plea for public sympathy [which] came across as pathetic and totally self-centred" (Bain, 1998, p.11).

During the interview for this research, Hasler argued that the presence of two women leaders made it hard to say women were penalised in any way. When asked it she thought that the women leaders were treated differently to their male predecessors, she referred to the different social expectations of women, asking "But what's the use of being a woman if there's no difference? We'd all be the same and naturally we are different." She did not believe appearance was more of a challenge for women leaders and argued that this focus is a thing of the past. Hasler could not identify any particular difficulties women have:

I don't know what, really. I can't think what they would be... I know that sometimes they concentrate on our hair...but I think that's probably slightly a thing of the past too. I just think there's more things you can say about women because we ring the changes a bit more...in the early days I think they used to talk about who's looking after your children or something like that, those old hoary myths you hear. But I think those days are gone.

However, later she conceded that:

there seems to be more interest in two women arguing or fighting than men...perhaps because we're not used to seeing it...So therefore if women start being vitriolic they sometimes call it a catfight or that sort of thing. That's probably one slight difference whereas if men are going head to head that's quite normal.

The perception that gender is peripheral to women's experiences with the media appeared to be held more strongly by National Party MPs. This is perhaps a reflection of party ideology, as the centre-right National Party places less emphasis on social structures and more on individual choice and personal accountability. However, as the

next section shows, there are factors widely regarded as having more influence on media coverage than gender.

10.10 Other Influences on Media Coverage

This section explores the factors that the female politicians identified as more important (or at least as important) influences on media coverage than gender. Status, personality and other personal characteristics are explored here.

10.10.1 Status

The participants had a clear understanding of the importance of status for media coverage. For Government and Opposition backbenchers, in particular, status is regarded as the main reason for existing patterns in media coverage. An MP who does not hold a spokesperson role has limited opportunities for media coverage, and media outlets prefer higher profile politicians, unless, as Government (National) backbencher Belinda Vernon noted, a backbencher says something critical of the government, or “comes up with something extraordinary”. First term Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta was also aware of this pattern, and said she would not rely on the media to improve her profile although it would be “a bonus” if they did.

The local giveaway papers are less status orientated, and are therefore important outlets for backbench MPs, competing for coverage in large urban centres or in provincial areas where the commercial media are less dominant. According to long-time Labour MP, Judy Keall:

When I was in Auckland - I was MP for Glenfield - I would never get in the [*New Zealand*] *Herald* because I was a backbencher, and you had to...stand in Aotea Square and take your bra off and burn it in order to get on the front page of the Herald. But I was in my local paper all the time, the give-away, the North Shore Times Advertiser, all the time.

And leader Helen Clark noted:

When you get to Parliament no one's terribly interested in you as a backbencher, unless you strike up a maverick role...I should qualify this by saying in a big city...If it was someone in a provincial town like Palmerston North, of course, then you get the media, but as a big city, backbench MP you don't.

Clark alluded to the fact that in less populated regions, the local MP is an important news source for the local media. According to Annette King:

Since I have been in national politics, which is twelve years, it [media coverage] has been dependent on where I have been geographically, and what my role has been. For example, when I was the Member of Parliament for Horowhenua, which is a rural provincial seat, I got magnificent media coverage in the print media and radio - no television to speak of...everything you did was a story.

And while backbench MPs might not be able to compete with their more high profile colleagues, Jill Pettis pointed out that during an election campaign, incumbency is an advantage. Annabel Young summed up:

It's certainly easier to get coverage as an MP than it is as a candidate, and as minister than an MP. I mean there's a real pecking order there and you've just got to understand where you are in the pecking order and know that to get into the paper you need an angle.

Labour backbencher Helen Duncan suggested gender is of little importance but instead introduced a further aspect relating to status. She said:

I don't think it has much to do with gender, I think it has to do with the fact that I'm a Labour MP and the three constituency MPs that make up the North Harbour kind of area where those papers go are government MPs...one of them is a Cabinet Minister and one of them was a deputy speaker until he lost that...I think it's got more to do with party politics and the difference between constituency and list MPs.

The struggle to secure media coverage is apparently heightened for list MPs. While it has been documented that MMP is good for women's representation (over half of the 1999-2002 women MPs were list members – see Drage & Nicholl, 2000), list MPs have been referred to as “second class” by the media, political colleagues and the public – a situation of “serious concern” to some observers (Ward, 1998, p.135). It is perhaps because of this prevailing attitude toward list members that some participants suggested list MPs face greater difficulties securing media coverage. In light of evidence that women MPs are less visible in the media anyway, the added challenges created by the media's slowness to adapt to MMP may be a burden unfairly shouldered by women list members. For example, Katherine O'Regan (former constituency MP and National Cabinet Minister but a list MP in her last term in government, 1996-99) found the issue of media coverage a more complex one for list MPs, saying:

I'm only a list MP. I shouldn't say only a list MP, but I am a list MP, and you don't have the same sense of ownership of your electorate that you happen to be in...until I win the seat...I cannot really feel that I have any power, if you like, to march in and say "hey look, I'm the local member here", because that local member - despite MMP - being the local member, voted by the constituents, actually carries a lot of weight.

For Joy Quigley, another Government list MP who had previously been an electorate MP, the move from constituency to list MP at the 1996 election contributed to her decision to leave politics at the end of 1999. She said that:

[As] a constituency MP...you can generate your own publicity or feedback in terms of positive response from the public at the voting box, whereas as a list MP you actually have to physically generate publicity...I do feel that I have not done that job well in the last two years, as a list MP, because I haven't utilised every opportunity I've had to be able to say "hey, the National Party is the best party for government in this country", and that is one of the primary roles of a list MP.

Lianne Dalziel described the development of media coverage during her three terms in Parliament, linking it to changes in her political status. However, in light of the comments of other list MPs, it may be pertinent to note that Dalziel was a list MP in her third term, from 1996 to 1999:

I think there was a relatively high level at the beginning of my political career because there were only 29 Labour MPs in Parliament at that time so it wasn't difficult to get coverage for comments you made or statements you put out...and we were doing quite high profile jobs early on because there were so few of us. And then in the second term I was the spokesperson on health which is a high profile portfolio so yes, I had a lot of publicity. Then the third term [1996-1999] would be the complete opposite, I've sort of quietened down a wee bit but that is partly because I'm no longer in a high profile portfolio, but I can get coverage on issues when matters come up.

Dalziel admitted she did not enjoy being a list MP, and in 1999 contested and won a constituency seat.

10.10.2 Personality and Personal Characteristics

National's Belinda Vernon expressed several times her belief that while the media may be a challenge for women in certain ways, men face similar problems. Like her colleague Marie Hasler, she did not see why women should experience any particular difficulties dealing with the media, saying:

I don't think there's any reason they should, I think some women do just as some men do, and again I think it comes down to personality – nine times out of ten it's personality that gets you into strife rather than your gender.

Similarly, O'Regan also regarded personality as more important than gender. She admitted finding publicity difficult but pointed out there were men who shared her reluctance.

There are other personal characteristics that, for a handful of participants, had detracted from gender issues, or compounded them. According to Myers (1994), gender and then race are the first human characteristics that people notice when meeting others. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that Asian National list MP Pansy Wong was approached for comment on ethnic issues. She explained how the media come to her for comment on immigration, race relations, and multiculturalism, and suggested that this same logic was apparent when women were approached for comment on paid parental leave, or opposition to the gun lobby. From her perspective, ethnicity overpowered gender because of the novelty value that comes from being “a first” – in her case the first Asian MP. Wong noted that her ethnicity had both helped and hindered her. She spoke about the advantage of being an “MP with a difference”, but would like to be recognised for her business and commercial skills (Wong is a qualified accountant). Furthermore, she felt that her relationship with the media was complicated by reporters' perception of her as a polite Asian woman: “I think I'm not quite ‘one of us’”, she said.

The fact that Wong is the only Asian MP in Parliament, and often regarded as the voice of the Asian community, made her more cautious, and she preferred some distance between her and the media. However, she did have a special relationship with the Asian media and considered herself closer to them, writing special press releases reflecting their interests, and providing information in Chinese. The Asian media do not embrace negativity or controversy in the same way, and hence she felt the mainstream media might have found her material a bit mild.

For former New Zealand First Cabinet Minister, Deborah Morris, it was her youth in conjunction with gender that was of particular interest to the media. She described how her name - unlike that of other Cabinet Ministers - was often mentioned followed by her

age (26 at the time). (On the other hand Labour's Dianne Yates said that women over 45 did not appear to be of interest to the media). Morris commented that:

There was also a lot of interest in...fashion and...hair colour...physical appearance, rather than just on what I was saying...but I think in general I probably got...a lot more coverage than other ministers outside of Cabinet...but it wasn't always good stuff, and it wasn't always communicating the message that I had intended. Whether that was a result of my... lack of experience with the media, I'm not sure.

Like Wong and Morris, Labour's Georgina Beyer is another groundbreaking woman politician who has faced greater media interest centred on personal characteristics. She explained:

Naturally there was interest when I put myself forward for [local body] election in '92. The *Evening Post* came out with a first banner headline of "Transsexual stands for council". I found that the local media seemed excited, they found it newsworthy: one because of gender, I guess; two because I was ...quite different, and out of left field if you like, coming into local politics.

When Beyer was interviewed during her first national politics campaign in 1999, she said that the gender aspect had diminished over the years, although it was occasionally resurrected as the "hook" for a story. However, after the election she expressed disappointment over some of the developments later in the campaign, in particular a television story aired on the current-affairs show *Holmes*, which was preoccupied with her transsexuality and gender. She felt that the reporter asked voters leading questions, such as "what do you think of having a Māori transsexual MP?", in an effort to play up the potentially negative angle. Beyer still believed her gender was irrelevant to voters, and the high swing in support to her in the Wairarapa seat supports this claim, but suggested the media needed to "have a look at themselves and get off that subject".

10.11 The Impact of Gender on News Coverage

Those politicians who felt gender did influence their media coverage recounted instances and examples which have been classified here as double standards, categorisation by gender, and bias. There is some overlap between these sections but comments are placed where they fit best. These comments tend to relate to the speaker herself; comments specifically about the two women leaders are explored further in Section 10.12.

10.11.1 Double Standards

Many women MPs believed that there are double standards in media coverage of male and female politicians, related to appearance, voice, age, and occupation. For the purpose of this research, double standards comprise implicit or explicit references to the different expectations of women and men. For women, this includes a preoccupation with family, appearance, and stereotypical standards of behaviour which are subtly or blatantly the subject of comment when women fulfill or defy them. For example, one woman MP interviewed in a British study described a double standard often applied to her:

I don't know how many times I've been described as having my claws out, instead of saying here's a woman being robust, which is what they would say about men. Who would describe a man's claws being out? (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996, p.113)

Many of the female MPs who participated in this research noted the same pattern in New Zealand media coverage. Ruth Dyson, in a written response, went to the heart of the matter:

Generally, the gender stereotypes in coverage still exist in terms of comments about voice level, type of clothes, whether you are married or not, whether you have children or not – these issues are only important if you a woman of course – one almost assumes that men don't wear clothes, get married or have children!

Women in public positions continue to grapple with issues relating to physical appearance and personal presentation. Dyson noted a “continuing tendency for the media to make more personal comments about women than they do about men” but suggested there is a trend towards more personal comments about men as well. Belinda Vernon admitted female politicians walk a fine line:

If you go overboard in the make-up and the clothes, you get just as much a hard time as the ones who abandon all that...I certainly am conscious about appearance and making sure that I don't...go too far one way or the other.

Helen Duncan pointed out that:

a male politician could wear the same suit for a week and nobody would comment. If a woman politician, a woman leader, wore the same suit for a week, there would be a headline, “when's she going to change her clothes?”

The issue of grooming is different for men and women, according to Labour's Marian Hobbs. “I really rebelled and hated that stuff but I've had to conform and do it... that's

where it's different from being a man." She was not aware of any instances where her appearance had been publicly dissected but noted that women were often advised about what to wear and not wear, whereas male politicians were not.

National MP Christine Fletcher felt that women's appearance continued to be a media preoccupation:

You have to confront the "how do you look to them"...and that's all been done to death but there is...still a tendency to focus on how their [Helen and Jenny] hair's done, what clothes they're wearing, whether they got the make-up right or whether they should have had a different dentist for their teeth, and all that stuff that you would never, you would never, hear being said about a man.

Lianne Dalziel explored the implications of such double standards:

Despite the fact that people use examples of the occasional male, it is the woman politician who is sussed out for her lipstick, her clothes, her hairstyle, the depth of her voice....all these things are commented on freely in the media, and although it's irrelevant, it isn't, because it impacts on how people think about you. When they think about you as a serious contender they think about whether your hairstyle's right.

For some, however, this attention to appearance was not a problem. National list MP, Pansy Wong, admitted to not being too sensitive to this sort of interest, as she enjoys dressing up smartly and feels there are so many more comments that can be made about the way women dress. But on the other hand, Judy Keall spoke of a "terrific pressure to...have your hair right and be dressed reasonably; I find it a terrible strain actually."

However, appearance was not the only concern for interview participants. According to Labour's Dalziel, Hobbs and Keall, media attention to voice, displays of emotion, age and occupation revealed further double standards. Lianne Dalziel remembered:

the editor of the *Dominion* describing me as the increasingly shrill member for Christchurch Central, in an editorial once. That was my personal favourite, not that I'm bitter [laughs] but I just thought that language was really directed at a woman.

She also recalled how a newspaper unfairly described her as being "in tears" after she was prevented from entering a parliamentary debate. She felt her response – if made by a male – would have been interpreted as moving, or not commented upon at all.

Labour backbencher Marian Hobbs spoke of being furious that when she was first elected, at the age of 49, the *Evening Post* said she was “past it” and would “never be in leadership because I was too old for it.” She perceived that to be an ageist more than a sexist comment, but did suspect there was a sexist agenda in the media’s use of words and references relating to her (and others) who have teaching backgrounds: “There is that school ma’am thing they try and put on you, and that irritates me, I must admit”.

Judy Keall, MP for Otaki, recounted how, when she first ran in the Glenfield electorate (in 1984), her male opponent was portrayed as an educated man and she as a housewife, despite the fact that she held an honours degree in English: “they had my CV and they had his CV, but they portrayed me as a housewife”. Although, as she went on to win the seat, she suggested it did her little harm. As Wallace (1992) noted, female candidates around this era were not necessarily disadvantaged by media attention to traditional roles (such as wife and mother), as this served to reassure the public that the women were not deviating too far from what was socially acceptable. However, traditional gender roles have been eroded since the “second wave” of feminism in the 1970s, making the “mother” and “wife” positions more complex for contemporary female politicians (see Chapters Three and Nine).

For Helen Clark, the greater media interest in the lives of women MPs reflects greater societal interest in women’s lives. Commenting on the *Assignment* current affairs programme, which took a “day in the life” approach to the two women leaders in the lead-up to the 1999 General Election, Opposition leader Helen Clark said:

not to say I agree with everything about it, but in the circumstances I thought it was fine...[but] can you imagine that television would have done a piece like that on the personal lives of two male leaders?...but then again, it’s not just media, the public is more interested in women. Maybe they don’t feel they need to know more about men, I don’t know.

10.11.2 Categorisation

Categorisation refers to a tendency, noted by participants, for the media to place women into categories that reflect traditional views of women and “women’s issues”. For example, Labour MP Dianne Yates suggested that there was a mother/wife/sweetheart stereotype which dominated media coverage of women. She suggested that Helen Clark

posed a threat to some sectors of society, because of her intelligence and the fact that she had no children (which suggested that she was not under male control).

Christine Fletcher felt that she was often categorised as “soft” and “flaky”, and that there was a gender element to this:

The media are still looking for really grunty leadership – “I’ve got the numbers”, you know, just drive it on home – whereas I think that the New Zealand public certainly have a yearning for a...maturing, I suppose, of the decision making process, and yet the media are very very slow to reflect that...I’m proud of the feminine side of my nature, I am proud of my women’s skills...I don’t want to think and act like a man. I’ve fought bloody hard as a woman for my representation, I wasn’t about to compromise it, but the failure to compromise and actually play the media game meant that...I was put into this little category of soft, flaky woman.

In particular, Fletcher referred to the day she resigned as a Cabinet Minister, one of the most difficult days of her life:

I felt that normal human emotion of saying farewell to my staff and I can remember the coverage I got, it was all close up photographs to show whether or not I was crying...For a man to cry in Parliament, it makes him - look at [former Minister of Justice] Doug Graham when he’s talking about resolution of treaty issues - ...it increased his mana. When [MP and former All Black rugby player] Grahame Thorne cried during the adoption debate, that increased his mana. Chris resigns...and it didn’t increase my mana, it’s “oh flaky”.

Wong felt that one of the main difficulties for women is the assumption that they are only interested in particular issues, such as paid parental leave, and not others, such as economic matters. However, she pointed out that men are also discriminated against in this way (i.e. they are not asked to comment on issues such as paid parental leave).

Politicians with an interest in “women’s issues” referred to the struggle to engage the media. Christine Fletcher talked about how school zoning was judged a “soft” issue – a misinterpretation in her view. Dianne Yates, a Labour list MP, worked hard at her relationship with the media but found there to be a general disinterest in women’s affairs, matrimonial issues and paid parental leave. In addition, she felt that “a pair of trousers is seen to equal knowledge” and different standards are applied to men and women (for example, men can be loud and raucous without it being the subject of comment).

10.11.3 Bias Against Women

Finally, bias relates to a perception that women are sometimes treated differently by the media because of an underlying “anti-women” agenda. While no participant held this as an overall view, some noted instances when women had been deliberately targeted in this way.

Helen Duncan told how:

[During] the last election there was a nasty little paper in the Auckland Central electorate, called *The Local Rag*, which didn't like either Judith [Tizard] or Sandra [Lee]...they ran scurrilous stories but quite often they'd have things about all the MPs, and they'd have photos of the others and they'd have this dreadful caricature of Sandra Lee which was just, just dreadful, dreadful.

When asked what she thought prompted this, she replied “I think it's party politics but I do think that women are seen as an easier target, if you like”.

Vernon, too, recalled incidents where she thought the media had played on some of her female colleagues' vulnerabilities (although note that in the following comment she pulled back, and was careful to balance this by reference to men):

I think the media have, when they've cracked under the pressure...zeroed in, zoomed in, honed in. And I guess if we look at the Helen Clark and Jenny Shipley examples, when they cry it's a big deal. However, there have been a few examples when men have cried and it's a big deal as well [laughs]. Politicians aren't allowed to have emotions.

Joy Quigley believed there have been improvements in coverage of female politicians over recent years, and that the media have moved beyond the “dolly bird” aspect and the fascination with difference. However:

I think when you make mistakes they are held against you, or you're held up or held responsible for your mistakes far more quickly as a minister if you're a woman...I think that Jenny [Shipley] gets a bit of bad press because she is a woman, so therefore she tends to express herself as a mother, and the mother-ish things that she tends to do can either make people feel warm towards her or irritate like hell, and I think the media now pick up on that and show the irritating bits.

There were a number of MPs who had observed what they felt to be sexism or stereotyping in coverage of other women MPs, although they were not aware of this happening in their own situation. Katherine O'Regan said, “I don't think I was

criticised any more because of my gender but that's not to say that I haven't seen it happen in other areas, to other women, particularly leaders" She noted that both Helen Clark and Jenny Shipley had received a lot of "flak" about their appearance, and that cartoons had perhaps been the harshest medium. In relation to her former colleague, Minister of Finance Ruth Richardson, O'Regan went on to say that "the decisions themselves were hard enough without having the overlay of gender on it as well". Participants' views on coverage of the female leaders are explored in more depth in the following section.

10.12 Particular Difficulties Women Face: The Experiences of the Party Leaders

Female politicians and candidates throughout the developed world face the same sort of challenges when it comes to news coverage. Beasley (1997) quoted Frank Wilkinson, Communications Director for EMILY's List:

"It's considered perfectly acceptable to belabor [appearance] when it's a woman. No one would give two paragraphs to what kind of suit a man was wearing," he said. Disagreements between women candidates, Wilkinson said, are played up as unseemly scratching matches, whereas male candidates engage in "legitimate debate". The husbands of women candidates undergo much more scrutiny than male candidates' spouses because it is assumed the men are "big manipulators" and "important advisers" to their wives, he continued. Also, there is an assumption that "if a woman candidate has young children somehow she's not a good mother by running for office whereas with a male candidate it's never an issue". Rumours that single women are lesbians may or may not be given credence by the news media, Wilkinson said, but "single male candidates are not subject to the same rumour mill generally". (p.243)

Wilkinson's comments have a particular relevance to New Zealand's women leaders in the build-up to the 1999 General Election. This section focuses on the interview participants' discussion of Shipley and Clark. All participants were asked if they believed political women had any particular difficulties dealing with the media, and the focus here is on comments relating to the leaders (including some made by Clark herself about the leadership attention). It appears that in talking about the women leaders, the participants were more able to identify challenges faced by female politicians generally.

For the Labour MPs in particular, the treatment of their leader provided a focus for comments about the difficulties experienced by female politicians. There were two broad strands of thought on the Clark versus Shipley race: some saw it as a gender

issue; others, such as Judy Keall, thought it had put an end to gender as a campaign issue. Keall said that whereas Clark had suffered from male prejudice:

one thing that has neutralised it is having Shipley as leader of the National Party...whatever way they go now it's going to be a woman leader, so it's neutralised it very nicely.

Wong also felt that having two high profile women leaders had “neutralised the advantage”, stating that:

Now that we have two leaders... to a certain extent, the gender issue has neutralised which I thought was good for the Prime Minister and also the Opposition leader because people start to look at...their capability, their personality, their leadership style.

Several participants noted the attention paid to Clark's and Shipley's appearance. Keall said that “...what a woman leader looks like seems to be much more important than what a male leader looks like.” Annette King considered the media attention paid to Clark's looks and concluded:

I don't really know [why]. It is almost like they can't cope with her intellect so they have to find something else and so they don't listen to what she is saying, they just look at her and say “Oh I don't like her hairdo” or “she doesn't look nice in that”.

King also noted a tendency for the media to:

choose her [Clark] in the worst light or the worst photograph, or they will write a negative editorial against her or there will be carping criticism of her and what she said and so on, and I think that reflects her leadership role and some of it is gender biased.

The special challenge created by visual material was mentioned, as was the power of selectivity and editing. Helen Duncan referred to the “dreadful photo” of Helen Clark which appeared on the front page of the *Dominion* when she first became leader of the Labour Party (see Chapter Three for more on this), saying:

I do think that the visual images of women are often chosen according to the slant of the editor or the political bias of the newspaper. I think in the last election...Helen Clark's image was presented in some very strange ways.

She saw this as a consequence of societal views towards women and appearance, and suggested it was easier to present visual images of women in ways that provoke a negative reaction.

Similarly, Judy Keall spoke about the impact of editing:

I think Helen Clark suffered a lot from being edited and because they were put off by her appearance, I think male editors – and I’m talking about editors because it’s the editors who make the final decision – male editors did not always show her favourably and they were quite unkind to her. But where she shone through was when she went direct to the public, when she was unedited in those “worm” [leaders’] debates...And I do think editing, for women, it’s probably happening to Shipley too, it’s how you’re edited, isn’t it?

Helen Clark herself was more reticent. She felt the way she was reported by the media was “pretty straight” when she was a minister, but when she became the leader of the Party, “...then I think the media just had a field day for the best part of the first three years”. At the time of the interview she had come to regard this as a phase society goes through, and suggested:

The media doesn’t act in a vacuum...the sort of things that the media is picking on, the general public’s picking on. I mean, the media wouldn’t be writing about people’s appearance and their haircut if it wasn’t something that everybody gossiped about. I think that’s just a phase society goes through when women first get into these sort of positions.

Later, she reinforced her point when she said, “I suppose the most fundamental comment is that the media doesn’t operate in a vacuum; it reflects the interests, prejudices and obsessions of the general public”. When she was interviewed in July 1999, she said that “by and large” gender was no longer an issue, due to her well-run election campaign in 1996, and because National also had a woman leader, and any tendency to treat women leaders differently had been cancelled out:

Before that I don’t think I got a particularly fair run but then...the truth is that my own party created difficulties for me and the media reported them, so I can’t really hold the media responsible for that.

She said that the media are hard on people who make mistakes, “irrespective of what the gender is” and suggested women need to be on their guard against the stereotype of being shrill and nagging: “it’s very difficult for women to be successful in politics when they’re mounting negative attacks - it doesn’t play particularly well at all.” Similarly, Labour’s Dianne Yates pointed out that there were problems with running a negative campaign and suggested not starting with the negative lines unless provoked.

Annabel Young conceded there was probably more comment about Shipley’s and Clark’s clothing but recalled former Prime Minister Jim Bolger’s change of glasses also

became a news story. She noted the issue of parental status had been more high profile with two women leaders but suggested this was the first time a situation has occurred when one contender had children and the other did not. Then, on recalling that former Prime Minister Mike Moore did not have children:

Well, Mike Moore not having children was never a story, probably because Mike was so busy creating other stories. This is true...if you create some stories they're not going to go round digging for something else, which you don't want.

This comment seems to suggest Young believes women have a responsibility to avoid this sort of coverage themselves.

Lianne Dalziel also noted the early campaign trend towards "Mrs Shipley, mother of two; Helen Clark, mother of none". King predicted that having two female leaders would lead to comparisons made on the basis of gender:

I am sure they are going to try to do some sort of comparisons from a gender perspective. They have already done that: Jenny the mother, Helen the motherless; Jenny with the big useful husband who looks good, Helen with the intellectual professor.

List MP Ruth Dyson also noted these comparisons and stated that the reporting of Shipley versus Clark was very gender biased:

We should as a country, note and be proud of the fact that we have two women as the leaders of our political parties. But to then start comparing them on the basis of who cooks, who has the nicer husband, children, personal habits etc. – which I cannot ever recall being the basis of any comparison between two male leaders in the past. What has happened to what they believe in as politicians?

Also on the issue of personal comparisons between Helen Clark and Jenny Shipley, Helen Duncan said:

The gender issue has been a facet of this campaign, with the issue of Helen Clark not having children and Jenny Shipley having children. I think that's another gender issue that should have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with a political campaign! And it's interesting that it hasn't actually been an issue for Helen Clark until it was another woman at the top, it's as if they have to compare them. I don't remember anybody ever making comparisons between Jim Bolger having nine children and David Lange having two or three or whatever...how many children they had wasn't an issue but it's become an issue in this election and I think that's definitely a gender issue.

She suggested the Prime Minister's children may be newsworthy to, for example, women's magazines, and:

I understand that you might get a bit of publicity about your children - you don't get it if you haven't got them - but it doesn't mean it should be the focus of negative comment, or speculation, for whatever reason.

Finally, Dalziell suggested Shipley had benefited from her status as first woman PM, and:

there is a line between the political and the personal...sometimes Mrs Shipley does get away with stuff that goes unchallenged by the media because she's a woman. So I think that goes a little bit in her favour... I think it's an undercurrent that I can't quite put my finger on it but I just feel that...reporters are going "well we can't quite say that because she's a woman, and it would be seen to be attacking her personally".

10.13 Does Gender Help or Hinder Female Politicians?

Women and men candidates face many common obstacles...but the gender difference for women reduces their strategic options, drains extra resources, adds visibility to their mistakes, and filters their message [and] may ultimately be the marginal difference between winning and losing. (EMILY's List report, quoted in Witt et al., 1994, p.226)

This section looks at what participants regarded as the positive and negative aspects of being a woman politician when dealing with the media. There were mixed feelings among participants as to whether gender helped or hindered them in their dealings with the media, and subsequent news coverage. In some situations, being a woman became the angle of a news story, and for many participants, it appeared that "any publicity is good publicity". For example, Marie Hasler suggested gender was an advantage for female politicians seeking media coverage and offered as evidence a (then) recent news story about her, entitled "Hello Sailor". This story featured a photograph of Hasler, accompanied by a caption beginning, "Culture and Heritage Minister Marie Hasler, a former hairdresser, is careful not to mess up her hair as she tries out the headwear of a French sailor..."

There remains a novelty value in being a woman politician which National backbencher Annabel Young suggested had its advantages:

In terms of photo opportunities it is easier for a woman to think up a photo opportunity because it's just inherently more interesting to have a woman in front of a billboard than say a man in front of a billboard. So in that sense it's easier.

Young took a very proactive approach to media coverage, and while she identified both advantages and disadvantages, she believed there was no overall hindrance – “you just play the angles differently.” The media might take a different approach to a situation that involves a women politician, as she explained:

Is it different for a man in the same situation? The angles are different, and an example of that is that military photo...it would've been a bit interesting to have a man on a rifle range...but it's very interesting to have a woman on a rifle range ...the fact that I have a different CV to a lot of women, not just that I've been in the army but I'm a tax lawyer and things like that, is an angle that you can play. With a man it wouldn't be a surprising thing at all but for a woman it's a surprising line.

Labour MPs Judy Keall, Jill Pettis and Dianne Yates chose to co-operate with political reporter Helen Bain for her “paintstrippers” article, working with the novelty of their reputation for interjections in the House. Keall said that:

we decided to do that one, I mean we had to think quite carefully about that because we all interject in the house, Dianne, Jill and I, and possibly sometimes overdo it. But I mean they make you so mad...it's just so irritating. Anyway, we got ourselves a bit of a reputation for interjecting so Helen Bain asked if we would do this interview, and we sat down and had a bit of a chat about it...Di thought we should, I wasn't too sure whether we should or not, but in the end we decided that it was up to us to run the interview as well as we could, and we did it together, and we did it in a supportive way...It went all right – three gutsy women, it was a bit different.

A few participants pointed out that there are some media more readily available to women, which does work in their favour. Annette King felt that in some situations being a woman had helped her gain coverage, such as in news magazine *North and South* (she was named by the magazine as a “woman for the future”) and the *Woman's Weekly*. Witt et al. (1994) noted that some political women have recognised:

that they can benefit from some of the old “soft news” tradition regarding women. It can help them connect with voters in a way that is not equally available to their male counterparts, and would not yet seem appropriate in coverage about a man. (pp.205-6)

Jill Pettis saw some advantage in being a woman as it is easier to talk about issues at an emotive level. King also felt women were often more comfortable in a community setting, and this got her into places which could lead to media coverage:

I have noticed that some of my male colleagues, if they ever go into a *kohanga reo* or a kindy or whatever, stand back from the kids and watch them, whereas I think this is mainly women, your instinct is to actually go to the children and be with them so you can get opportunities that appeal to photographers or media coverage or whatever, rather than a set-up shot.

Belinda Vernon described another way in which gender contributed to media coverage. One of the issues she had championed since coming into politics was MMP and when the MMP issue was publicly debated, reporters often went to her for comment because “I am a woman in MMP, and clearly MMP has delivered more women”. In addition, she could be asked for a female perspective on an issue such as paid parental leave issue or superannuation: “the journalist would say ‘as a woman, what is your view on this?’ But I don’t think their coverage of me per se, the angle they’ve put on it, is a woman thing”. She also regarded gender as useful during election campaigning:

I think that the fact that I was a woman did make a difference [in winning her seat in the 1996 election], and I guess that was an underlying thing in some of my own promotion material, and playing on, or playing up, or fostering the caring image, which the men aren’t quite so good at. And so, in terms of my media coverage... I want to be seen as an intelligent, caring, thoughtful person, and I happen to be a woman.

Dalziell also regarded her gender as an electoral advantage, and consequently it was something she used in her campaigning:

What I’m focusing on in that part of the campaign [the constituency seat]...is that I’m a woman, that I’m approachable, that I’m a good constituency MP, that I’ve not liked being a list MP so much because I’ve got more people skills. So I’m selling that people skills side, and the fact that I actually enjoy representing people and having an electorate base, which I think come from being a woman. I mean, men probably feel similarly but I think women feel it more, that it’s that sense of representing people that they feel quite strongly.

The overall feeling was that gender does not either help or hinder, and that context is important. From a purely pragmatic point of view, gender sometimes helped these women obtain coverage, yet this raises the question, what are the implications of this for women politicians and women generally? Is all and any coverage desirable? This issue is explored more in this chapter’s conclusion.

10.14 The Relationship Between Female Politicians and Female Reporters

The extent to which female reporters can and do report from a female perspective has been the focus of research attention, particularly because the question seemed to offer

hope to those concerned about gender bias in the news (see also Chapter Three). Get more women in the newsroom, the argument went, and there will be changes in media coverage. Mills (1988) argued that such a change has occurred:

Simply put, the presence of more women in the newsroom has changed some attitudes of their male editors. The presence of more women covering stories has led to more women being interviewed. Many men see only men as subjects for quotation while women, who are used to listening to both women and men, interview both women and men as a matter of course. The presence of more women (not many more but more) editing stories has given some reporters pause before they described a woman's physical attributes or marital status. How relevant were those, after all? The presence of some women on assignment desks has meant that stories about rape-law reform, abortion, and sexual harassment and about local women who are politicians might get straight news treatment. (p.10)

However, in the New Zealand context, McGregor (1992) wrote that "enlightened and energetic women can only marginally alter the male-ness of the news" (p.189), mainly because of the commercial rationale that underpins the media.

Overall, contemporary New Zealand female MPs - like their British counterparts (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996) - did not feel that female reporters wrote more favourable stories. The participants expressed no overall preference for dealing with female reporters, although some indicated they tended to strike a different rapport with women.

Ruth Dyson wrote, "I don't have any gender preference in dealing with reporters - I like competency and fairness and it's shared between the genders pretty equally!!" Hasler, too, expressed no particular preference, pointing out:

I have more rapport with some female reporters perhaps, and with some males, not others. So again it's a question of personality and chemistry, but that's always going to be the case, whoever you meet.

Later, she pointed out that although a politician might get on really well with a female reporter, she could still write the most terrible article. O'Regan also felt it should not make any difference whether a reporter was male or female and although:

you strike a different rapport with women...that can also be deceiving because if they're being professional and you're being a bit loose, they're quite within their rights, as professional people, to act, or print or report something which you may have said.

Morris, too, expressed no particular preference but noted the same tensions as Hasler and O'Regan when she said, "I don't think I'd want to generalise, it really depends on who they are and...how they work, what they're about, what their priorities are". She felt that she had a good relationship with a few of the young women reporters in the parliamentary press gallery, who were able to report in quite a different way, but pointed out that this could bring its own difficulties as they might have higher expectations and be that much more critical.

Young expressed no preference for male or female reporters:

I think there is a generalised desire that they [female reporters] want women MPs to do well because I think they understand some of the problems we have, but I don't think they see it as their job to help any particular woman MP.

She suggested there is no great sisterhood, and gave an example of a problem she had experienced with the female political editor of one of Wellington's daily newspapers. According to Young, each time this reporter mentioned her, she added in brackets that Young was the sister-in-law of then National Cabinet Minister, Max Bradford. Young responded:

I do have to live with it but it strikes me as extraordinarily petty to write every story about me as though the only reason I'm here is to support my brother-in-law's pretensions to a leadership bid that isn't happening! It was all very weird, so that would be the one problem I have, and I haven't got to grips with what that's all about but I do wonder whether it's a woman not supporting woman thing.

Vernon suggested women reporters are harder on other women. On the other hand, Nanaia Mahuta indicated feeling more comfortable dealing with female reporters. King also admitted a preference for female reporters, with whom she had her best relationships (although there were a couple of male reporters she also found very good – the ones she called "the sensitive new age men").

Fletcher did not necessarily prefer dealing with women reporters but felt that on certain issues women were more likely to be empathetic. For example, an issue she had championed was school zoning policy, which she regarded as being about both education provision and traffic congestion. There was a "fundamental misunderstanding" that this was a soft issue whereas in her view there was "an inter-relatedness thing that's easier to explain to a woman".

In discussing her relationship with the news media Helen Duncan said, "I would have to say that I tend to get spoken to at more length...if the news media person is a woman".

Asked if she preferred to deal with women reporters:

That's an interesting question, I hadn't really crystallised it as far as that. I just think that perhaps women just talk more to women, I don't know. But certainly, yes, I probably do find it a little easier to talk to the women media.

Lianne Dalziell believed that empathy for the issue was the key thing, although when she quickly ranked all the reporters she knew, the women reporters were at the top.

However, she was conscious of the effect of the media hierarchy:

The health reporter on the *Christchurch Press* is just superb, but she's got a real empathy with health issues and therefore she is very easy to communicate things to, and have them reflected accurately in stories, so I'd rate her as a very good reporter. But the paper she works for is, sort of a bit strict in its editorial line...sometimes reporters get hammered by the editorial line the paper's taking, so even though they've written a good story, it's been knocked about and sometimes I've approached individual reporters about that. But there's nothing they can do; they're at the bottom of the heap.

Marian Hobbs felt computer magazines had given her the best coverage in relation to her broadcasting portfolio:

They have no gender bias that I can see, it's quite fascinating, it's like it's a new age, maybe, of journalist or their subs, they are literally interested in their subject, absolutely to the exclusion of everything else, and so you argue and they just focus straight on that...one of them, the other day, ended up saying and she's a proud mum...and they explained why, of my son, and they said go and have a look at his web site. I thought it was fabulous...I don't see that as a put down in any sort of way, it had a nice roundness to it, a nice humanity to it.

10.15 Conclusion

This chapter explored material gained during interviews with seventeen female MPs from the 1996-1999 term of government. These seventeen women all came from the two main parties of the time, National and Labour. Further, three other women were interviewed: two Labour Party candidates (who were both elected in 1999), and one former New Zealand First Cabinet Minister. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face, and sixteen of the participants were interviewed in this way. The remaining four women requested telephone or email interviews.

Unsurprisingly, the face-to-face interviews - allowing for a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication - yielded the best data. Telephone interviews also permitted

a “conversational exploration” (Priest, 1996, p.26), but rapport building was hampered by the absence of non-verbal cues. The difficulty with email “interviews” was that they were not genuinely interactive; rather the participants answered a series of questions submitted to them. The written answers tended to be brief and to-the-point, whereas the face-to-face interviews were less structured, more fluid and consequently more revealing.

Following the advice of Seidman (1991), this chapter has discussed interview data with a view to identifying common media experiences and beliefs among Labour and National women politicians. There was a widespread belief that status influenced the level and tone of media coverage, but less agreement about the influence of gender. For example, gender helped some participants secure media coverage, and assisted during campaigning. On the other hand, participants recounted instances of gender stereotyping, categorising and media bias against women. In general, Labour Party women appeared more open to gender as an influence on media content and relationships, which may reflect ideological beliefs or more simply, closer observation of the coverage received by their leader, Helen Clark. For Labour participants, the predominantly negative coverage received by Clark during her early years as leader was a particular point of reference, although Clark herself justified it by referring to internal party ructions, and societal expectations and interests. The need to temper the influence of gender was also apparent in politicians’ recognition of other factors, such as ethnicity, age, personality and sexuality.

Motion and Leitch (2000) interviewed female politicians, including some who also participated in this research, about their public relations strategies and media relationships. Many of their findings are similar to those in this chapter. For example, the women MPs in their study were also aware of the importance of building relationships, particularly with their local reporters, and noted the media’s interest in negative news stories, and the power struggle between reporters and politicians. It is also interesting - and adds to the validity of this research - that some women who participated in Motion and Leitch’s (2000) study, but were not included in this chapter, expressed similar sentiments to these participants (see Chapter Eleven, at section 11.5).

The participants in this chapter did not, however, unanimously share Waring's belief that female reporters operate differently from men and have more respect for political news sources (McGregor, 1996a). The experiences of the participants in this chapter were mixed, with some noting they establish a different rapport with women reporters, but others feeling there was no "sisterhood" and observing the limitations imposed by news structures.

The interviews raised two inter-related points that are of wider theoretical interest. Both relate to the tension between gender "sameness" and "difference", which was clearly alluded to in some of Hasler's comments. At one point she said "I can't say I've really noticed [any differences in coverage of men and women]" but later asked "But what's the use of being different?...there's more things you can say about women". She both denied difference and used it as a justification for greater personal interest in women (particularly around appearance). The sameness/difference tension can also be detected in comments made by some participants about the use of women's media outlets and news angles relating to gender. As noted earlier, such comments reflect a deeper and unresolved tension facing feminism, which is should female politicians be aiming for media coverage that is the same as men's or coverage that is different? Van Zoonen (1991) summarised the dilemma, which has led to "paralyzing antagonisms" (p.229):

On the one hand, women can opt for full integration in the public sphere on present conditions: they thus become the same as men and equal. Some highly esteemed private sphere values will be lost in the process. On the other hand, women can choose to maintain their private sphere values in public sphere conditions, aiming in the long run at a modification of the public sphere. They will remain different from men. (pp.228-229)

Van Zoonen (1991) noted that this tidy summary of the two key choices women face is useful but overly simplistic and remote from the "real" problems facing women. She advocated a more contextual evaluation of journalism, which moves away from the focus on institutional context into audience and reception studies. This chapter's focus on female politicians and their understandings of media content goes some way toward addressing this call. However, Hasler's (and others') comments suggest that the women politicians themselves are caught up with questions about sameness-difference. This is perhaps no surprise given the academic, media and public interest in female politicians as a distinct group. "What's it like to be a woman politician?" is a common question and there is a similar level of interest in other women working in traditional, male-

dominated areas. In fact, exploration of the ways women from different backgrounds, with different predispositions and careers, relate to media coverage must allow for contradictions if it is to avoid falling into the trap of universalism (van Zoonen, 1991).

The second and related point concerns the women's willingness to take responsibility for the way the media cover them (e.g. not blaming the media, providing stories to deflect attention from other areas, playing the appearance game). Several of the female politicians argued that men share many of their difficulties with the media and make the same sacrifices, which suggests they believe male and female politicians are, to some extent, equal. Realistically, female politicians have little to gain from the belief that the media are male dominated, male oriented, and biased against women. But it is useful to ask, do their male colleagues really make the same sacrifices and cope with the same difficulties? Although this question is deserving of more investigation, recent evidence showing women politicians voluntarily leave politics in greater numbers (citing media intrusion as one reason, see Nicholl, 2000), and the significantly lower percentage of women in national politics (which Kahn, 1992, proposed may be linked to media coverage) suggests they do not. Witt et al. (1994) wrote that female politicians have learnt to take the press as it is, working within journalism's confines to get their message across, "at least until their numbers are such that they can change the stereotypes to which they are held" (p.203). The interview material shows that, on the whole, the participants do accept the media as they are, but there is little indication that they will become more proactive once their numbers reach a certain level. In fact, the presence of two women leaders in the New Zealand General Election appeared to result in an increase in gender-based stereotyping (e.g. motherhood) rather than a shift away from this pattern (see also Chapter Nine), and while some participants - including Clark - did not welcome this, they tended to justify it on the basis of public interest.

In conclusion, there remains a clear need for more research into "gendered" experiences of the media, alongside the more traditional monitoring of coverage. In particular, it would be interesting to explore the impact of Helen Clark, a very media-savvy Prime Minister, on other female politicians' views about news coverage and media relationships. There appears to have been a "maturing" of journalism about women in the wake of the currently successful Clark-led government, and it would be useful to examine any flow-on benefits for other women in politics. The women who

participated in this research might have been witness to a turning point in the relationship between female politicians and the news media in New Zealand. The following chapter summarises the media advice these women shared during their interviews.

Chapter Eleven

Tips and Tactics: Advice From Female Politicians

11.1 Introduction

The twenty female politicians who were interviewed in the course of this research all had advice to share, based on their experiences with the news media, and training they had received during their time in politics. This advice was sought because of the particular difficulties women candidates face when seeking election:

It becomes clear...that despite the unprecedented advances made by women, the most critical remaining problem for any woman candidate still is tackling the fine line of ambiguities and stereotypes that voters and tradition superimpose on her. She must craft a message and a public persona that persuades party, pundits, and public – and not necessarily in that formerly preordained order – that she can be as clear and independent a decision maker as any man, but more caring and trustworthy. (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p.214)

Witt et al. demonstrated what form these difficulties take, by drawing on a campaign publication for male political candidates:

One bit of advice: “Emphasize macho middle class issues.” Pull out the military records, ride a horse, be photographed playing touch football with your children. A second suggestion: “Rope-a-dope” – try to goad a woman into attacking or fighting back so she looks shrill and unladylike. If all else fails “say something soothingly paternalistic”. (How to run against a woman or a black, from *Campaigns and Elections Magazine*, quoted in Witt et al., p.226)

This chapter summarises the tips and tactics shared by women participants. As National MP Marie Hasler pointed out, media coverage is important because:

They [voters] want to know about what’s happening, and you need that profile. You need the profile because it’s not sufficient just to be a politician; you have to be seen to be one.

The advice offered by the women MPs varied from the general to the specific, but some key points came up several times. First, the relationship between MP and reporter should be cultivated and maintained. Second, a politician should be professional, approachable but business-like, and always remain a little bit wary. National’s Pansy Wong felt there was no fixed formula but noted the media enjoy people who have personality and passion for the issue. Third, honesty was also deemed important – “play it absolutely straight”, Labour leader Helen Clark advised.

Specific advice and considerations are covered under the headings: “positioning”, “don’t blame the messenger”, “build relationships”, “media training”, “look the part” and “be informed”.

11.2 Positioning

Opinions were divided on the subject of positioning. Be natural, urged some participants; decide how you want to be portrayed, advised others. Although these two viewpoints are seemingly contradictory, they both encourage women to take responsibility for themselves, and at least consider the issue of positioning.

National list MP Annabel Young noted:

The thing every intake learns is that the media aren’t your friends and that the only reason they are wanting you to talk to them is because they want to get a story out of it, and the story is for their purposes, not your purposes... you can see it in this intake, the ’96 intake, they all get through a phase of thinking, “isn’t it great, I’ve got another story in the newspaper”, and suddenly realising that every story they got in the newspaper was making them look flaky, or dippy or anti their own party, and actually it’s not the look they want. And you then get back to what are the stories I can run that are the image I want to create, that are my branding, but that newspapers will run.

Labour candidate (and former Labour Party President) Margaret Wilson offered the following advice: decide how you want to be constructed before the media do it for you, but be comfortable with this image because one day you might be off guard; have a consciousness about everything; take responsibility, think and be consistent.

11.3 Don’t Blame the Messenger

Clark advised never blaming the media:

You can’t carry grudges, and you should never blame the media for your problems, the problems will lie somewhere else, with your own associates...when I wasn’t given a fair go, it was really I wasn’t given a fair go by my own colleagues.

Labour MP for Otaki, Judy Keall, echoed this, but at the same time indicated her proactive stance:

I don't complain too much because I learnt from my son, my middle son who's a journalist, that it doesn't do you any good to complain and I think it's a pity nobody told Jenny Shipley that... So I don't go down and attack [a local newspaper editor] but every now and again I go in and I say "these are the last five press releases I sent you and not one of them has been covered, can you explain why?" And I smile.

National's Belinda Vernon suggested politicians look at themselves rather than blaming the media:

I think politicians contribute to the coverage that they're getting and if we didn't give the media stories, then they wouldn't be able to make them up, so we've really only got ourselves to blame when we get that press... we just have to be a bit cleverer at making sure that we get our message across... But I don't like getting into media bashing because I think that at the end of the day we're the ones who are responsible for the stories that get printed – if we don't make muck ups then they don't get printed.

It is interesting to note that even in the context of the research interviews, participants heeded this advice, appearing unwilling to be overly critical of media coverage except in the most general of terms.

11.4 Build Relationships

It was widely agreed that building and maintaining a relationship with the media is essential. The local newspapers are important, and of these it is often the community newspapers that are more accessible, particularly for backbench MPs. For Labour's Dianne Yates, maintaining a relationship with her local media means telephoning at least weekly and taking something in "every so often" (she regarded the act of turning up at the offices as important). Although having a positive relationship is important, Yates also advised utmost caution in dealing with the media, having an agenda set out beforehand and not deviating from it.

On her father's advice, Annabel Young compiled scrapbooks of her news coverage:

and it's been quite good advice, not from any sort of huge ego sense but sometimes you do want to refer back to an article, sometimes it's just quite interesting to remind yourself.

She took a pro-active approach to the press gallery (she went down at least once a week - "it's absolutely the case that you have to work them") whereas other participants admitted never or very rarely going there. Young argued:

When you first start doing that it's a really hard thing to do because you're bouncing into people's offices and chatting, and they're busy, they're doing other things. But the interesting thing is that the more you do that, the more they want to stop and talk because the more they think, "oh, she might know something about this".

11.5 Media Training

Media training is almost mandatory for the modern day politician, particularly those in high profile positions, and on the whole the participants accepted and welcomed this.

According to McGregor (1996b):

Women who aspire to leadership in civic or national politics must acknowledge the media-centric nature of public life and develop an early understanding of news media processes. Understanding must then be transformed into a successful media style which sees women in politics develop effective source relationships with journalists. (p.315)

As Labour frontbencher Annette King said:

Having looked at me on television when they've caught me totally unaware and I was wearing something that doesn't look good on television and then seeing when you're prepared - I'd be prepared any day, because what I know is that people remember how you look, they don't necessarily remember what you say.

She had also trained herself in some areas, such as speaking in soundbites.

An important component of training is being prepared. Annette King also warned that the media would always win, and have the last word. She regarded preparation as very important – in particular trying to find out what the reporter wants before starting to talk, to avoid getting "trapped".

National backbencher Annabel Young felt that backbench MPs were on their own in dealing with the media, although conceded that if someone was experiencing particular problems, the Party might step in and help. She drew on a lifetime in politics for guidance. However, her Party colleague, Belinda Vernon, regarded the lack of training as a problem:

That is a real failing of the system. When we came in, we had a sort of lecture...from someone, an ex-media person who told us the do's and don'ts, but... we've had no formal media training and I think it's a real shortcoming because...it's something that everybody needs and I think you need it continually. I think one of the problems is that people tend to think it's an admission of failure to say that, "hey I want some media training". Well I'm not afraid to say that at all – I would love to have media training...particularly with television (and the excuse they give is that so few get on television that it's not worth wasting the money on training you to do it) but also radio, soundbites...and with the print media as well...just getting to know their techniques. I mean you learn a lot of that on the road but you know, there would be no harm in reinforcing it, and just sharing ideas as well, talking with each other, which I guess some of us do to a certain extent.

Television is the medium for which the most training is required to use well. As Helen Clark pointed out, "You need to keep your hand in with television, for sure, because television requires a certain amount of acting and people aren't born actors". Margaret Wilson also felt that training was vital, and she would never go into a major interview without a session. She found that her law background helped her; she would run through possible questions and answers beforehand. She also advised making sure "you know what you want to say before you say it", and if that's "no comment", to explain why.

However, the training National MP Joy Quigley had when she first came into politics made her re-examine her attitude to publicity and the media. She said:

I worked through with myself whether or not it was because I was uncomfortable dealing with the media, because I didn't know how to deal with it, or because I just was genuinely uncomfortable and didn't wish for the public profile that went with it. And I have come to the conclusion that it's the latter. I think I can be quite adept at it if I choose to but I have become progressively less desirous of it.

Pansy Wong also offered some cautious words about training:

We do have people coming in...telling us, giving us tips, that sort of thing, which is fine but ultimately you are the best person to understand yourself. I don't think people should try too hard to follow all the hints, because you have to tailor them to yourself. My gut feeling is if I'm not comfortable I would rather let go an opportunity...you have to look at your long-term reputation, rather than short term so I don't think you need to feel the need for jumping into everything.

Such reservations about training are consistent with those expressed by some female politicians and public relations practitioners interviewed by Motion and Leitch (2000).

For example, Labour MP Janet Mackey had some of the same reservations about media training as Pansy Wong and Joy Quigley, and was:

highly resistant to the notion of media truth games. She considered the techniques taught in the media training sessions that she had attended to be offensive and inappropriate. (Motion & Leitch, 2000, p.77)

While media training is commonly regarded as a panacea, it is important to note that not all politicians accept the nature and ethics of such an approach.

National MP Katherine O'Regan advised finding a "trusted media person" to advise on what is expected by the media, and to lay out the rules as to what journalists are entitled to ask:

There are good jourmos out there who are very happy to come and talk about their profession, what is expected of them and what is expected of you, and even give you tips on how, how not, what to say, how to say things and how not to say things.

She advised people to answer the question and then stop talking, and warned against filling a silence by "running on".

11.6 Look the Part

Appearance was mentioned by several participants in the context of advice. Labour's Lianne Dalziell summarised the tension between pleasing oneself and pleasing others, and explained how she justified it to herself:

Well, despite all the things I've said about appearances, they do matter, and therefore you just simply concede to them...I got my hair cut for the election campaign. I spent two years growing my hair because I always wanted to have long hair and people said "no, not a good look, get a good stylist and get it cut". And I'm happy that I've done that. I don't mind making that concession, but you actually have to. The reality is that the whole essence of winning a campaign is that you've got to make connections with people, because it's only people who are going to cast votes. And if you don't connect with people, if there's some barrier standing in the way of that connection with people, then how are you going to get your message through? So, even though I think it's a total and utter and complete sell out of myself, I think that I don't care because it's for the right reasons. That by making the odd concession to these things, then I have the ability to connect with a wide range of people and I think that's a good thing. So, appearances do matter, even though they don't.

Dalziell pointed out that in regard to appearance, it's very expensive being a female politician. Margaret Wilson also conceded that personal appearance is important –

people should not be aggravated by the way a politician looks. National MP Belinda Vernon advised women not to overplay their sexuality for it “will come back to bite you”.

11.7 Be Informed

In the absence of formal media training, there were still skills a politician could learn for herself. Labour candidate Georgina Beyer encouraged individuals to learn something about the different media, and tailor messages to them (for example, recognising that the broadcast media are after the ten-second soundbite). She pointed out that the media are sometimes in search of:

This very instant reaction to things, and you have to be cool, calm and collected about what you're saying. Sometimes you're damned if you do and damned if you don't, whatever you say. Some people say, “well, don't say anything at all”, but then the media can misconstrue that as not wanting to make comment in a particular fashion...So, it's having an intuition sometimes about how to deal appropriately with the given situation. Always, if you're being asked a quite complex question on something you have very little knowledge...about, ask them “when's your deadline...can I call you back with my comment about that later?”...it's the best thing to do rather than making some statement which you hope might be all right.

There are particular approaches used by MPs operating in rural/small town electorates. Like other participants, Whanganui MP Jill Pettis advised establishing a relationship with the media and working hard at it, being totally honest (not trying to mislead) and always going with a well researched story (not “half a story”). However, she also considered that, particularly in provincial areas like her own, giving information to the media – not for personal gain or as a scoop, but simply alerting reporters to issues - was a useful thing to do.

Keall also demonstrated a pro-active approach to media coverage in her predominantly rural/small town electorate, where her goal was to have something in the newspaper every week:

I initiate situations and when there was a wee while at the beginning of this year when Roger Sowry [her political opponent in the same geographical area] had his mug on the front page of the newspaper every week for three weeks, I went in... – I'm always very pleasant to them – and I said, "You jokers lost my photograph?" and they said "What?" And I said, "Well, Roger Sowry's had his photograph on the front page of the newspaper three weeks running and I haven't". I said, "I thought you might have lost it". And they said "No, no, we're quite happy to put your photo in the paper, Judy", and I said "Good, because I'm launching this petition to save the Plunket Line at 1 o'clock today and I'll be at the CAB in Durham Street at 1 o'clock". So they came down and took my photo.

Keeping in touch with the local reporters was important to Keall, and she aimed to see them every week. However she was careful not to be too personal and would always watch what she said, including being particularly aware of the "exit interview". Some other techniques were:

Well, when it comes to the election, if I've got somebody standing against me and I've already gone and had my careful, pleasant, friendly interview with the editor about equal coverage, about balance...the right of reply if anyone writes a nasty letter about me...then I ease off my publicity so that my opponent can't get as much...so you see they'll say "Judy Keall will be breathing my neck if we put Roger Sowry in too much"...so I ease off which means he can't get as much. Very good technique.

Other practical advice from Keall included:

Don't get into conflict with them. State your case. Make sure your press releases aren't too long: one side of the paper, double-spaced. Don't just do propaganda press releases, do a press release on a specific issue and back it up with some evidence. Like I did one last week on [election] enrolment: I had the figures, where Otaki stood in the scheme of things, and the fact that...4000 people here are still to get on the roll...The other thing is to find out what topics they're interested in...before I do a press release on something ...I'll ring them up and say, "I was thinking of doing a press release on such and such, are you interested?"

"Preparing the ground" is the phrase Keall used to describe this process:

Maybe I have to do a lot more than other people do, but...I've got my secretaries well trained, if I'm going to be at something, to make sure that people know who I am, that I am the local MP, how to spell my name correctly, that I'm Mrs not Ms, what part would they like me to play in the programme, so I'm not just a decorative extra.

Finally, former New Zealand First MP Deborah Morris took a more holistic approach and recommended:

not falling into the trap of allowing yourself to be too defensive but at the same time making sure that you're kind of protecting yourself, and it's a very fine balance and it takes practise. I mean people need to be able to see that you are a real person, who you really are, but you've kind of got to preserve a little bit for you as well

11.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the media strategies suggested by the female politicians who participated in this research. In short, the women advised establishing and cultivating a relationship with the media, and being professional and accessible. Specific ways of doing this have been outlined. There were various views on the subjects of positioning and training, reflecting individual preferences and attitudes. An occasional tension was noted between the women's ideals or preferences, and the practical demands of political life. For example, Labour MP Lianne Dalziel noted that while appearance should not matter, in politics it does, and she was willing to compromise her personal preferences in the pursuit of electoral office. On the other hand, retiring National MP Joy Quigley said she had gradually become less willing to ignore her personal discomfort over publicity seeking, and this was one factor leading to her withdrawal from national politics.

Finally, comments in this chapter also support what was observed at the end of the previous chapter - that many of the participants appeared unwilling to criticise the media. While it is clearly necessary for female politicians to take responsibility for their media strategies, and to consider issues such as positioning, training and appearance, the media also have a responsibility to report women in a fair and reasonable way. It needs to be recognised that the best efforts of female politicians alone are not enough, and that the news media must take a socially responsible approach to the reporting of historically marginalised groups such as women.

The following chapter also draws on extensive interview material, along with documents and archival records. Chapter Twelve describes the results of an in-depth case study of the Wellington Central election campaign of Labour MP, Marian Hobbs.

Chapter Twelve

Marian Hobbs and Wellington Central: A Case Study of “Horse Race” and Gender in Election News Coverage

12.1 Introduction

This chapter uses a case study approach to examine how one female candidate was covered by the news media during the 1999 electorate race in Wellington Central, and to explore her perceptions as the campaign developed. Marian Hobbs was already a Labour Party list MP when she was nominated to contest the bellwether Wellington Central electorate. After a closely fought and occasionally “dirty” campaign, characterised by MMP politicking, Hobbs ousted her main rival, incumbent Wellington Central MP and ACT leader Richard Prebble. She began her second term in Parliament as a Cabinet Minister in the new Labour-Alliance coalition government. However, her community-based style and low-key approach to the media made the transition from backbencher to Cabinet Minister a difficult one. Hobbs’ experiences with the news media after the 1999 election are deemed sufficiently interesting that this chapter extends the main focus of the thesis to include some discussion of this, and its implications for women in politics.

The main question guiding the study of the Wellington Central election campaign asks, “how did the media cover a female candidate in the bellwether Wellington Central electorate, and why?”

12.2 The Case Study Approach

Case studies are the preferred strategy when researchers are asking how and why questions, when they have little control over the events they are studying, and are focusing upon a contemporary event occurring in a “real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p.1). A case study is characterised by its exploration of the situation which it studies, setting it apart from other methodological tools:

You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover the contextual conditions - believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study. (Yin, 1994, p.13)

The case study section of this thesis draws on a single case – the Wellington Central electorate. According to Yin (1994), a single case may be used when the case is deemed critical, extreme or unique, or revelatory. Wellington Central was a critical electorate in

the 1999 General Election because of the importance of the seat for the incumbent MP and right-wing ACT Party leader, Richard Prebble. Prior to the 1999 election, Prebble was the only ACT MP to hold a constituency seat, and therefore the future success of his Party was at least partly reliant on him retaining it (under MMP, for a party to be represented in Parliament it must gain an overall 5% of the vote or at least one electorate seat). For the same reasons, the centre-left parties regarded the seat as significant because unseating Prebble could put an end to the Party's presence in Parliament, simultaneously denying National a coalition partner.

The case study approach is a distinct mode of inquiry, yet according to Yin (1994) is also a misunderstood one, often judged easy to do and lacking in rigour. Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) argued that "the case study remains an extraordinarily useful and important strategy for social analysis" (p.vii). It is "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon" (p.2). However, in one of the few books devoted to case study research, Yin (1994) argued that a case study could include any combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

The study of election campaigns lends itself to a case study approach because of the individual contests that occur in electorate based or federal voting systems. In the US, the study of media and politics is often researched on a state level, and aspects of election media coverage, such as gender, ethnicity, and "horse race" focus, have been studied with reference to particular state elections (e.g. Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998). In addition, the case study has been used to study female political figures such as Hillary Rodham Clinton (e.g. Brown & Gardetto, 2000), Janet Reno (Sullivan & Turner, 1996) and Barbara Mikulski (Robson, 2000), as well as Presidential hopeful Elizabeth Dole (Heldman, Carroll & Olson, 2000).

Yin (1994) outlined five components which are particularly important to case study research: a study's questions; its propositions, if any; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions and the criteria for interpreting the findings. This case study's proposition, or hypothesis, relates to "horse race" and its intersection with women in politics. The process of linking data to propositions involves exploring the extent to which the data supports "horse race" (see section 12.6 below and Chapter Two) and gendered mediation theory (see Chapter Three), in what is known as a

“pattern matching” technique. This contributes to Yin’s fifth point, relating to the criteria used to interpret the findings. Yin (1994) warned that:

Currently, there is no precise way of setting the criteria for interpreting these types of findings. One hopes that the different patterns are sufficiently contrasting that...the findings can be interpreted in terms of comparing at least two rival propositions. (p.26)

Yin (1994) noted there is little detailed guidance available for the last two steps.

12.3 Validity and Reliability

The Wellington Central electorate was not chosen because it was representative of other electorates or because the race developed in a way which is “typical” of New Zealand electorate campaigns. The goal of a case study is to expand and generalise theories – analytic generalisation – rather than enumerate frequencies (Yin, 1994). In fact, Yin went as far as to say “A fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalisation as the method of generalising the results of the case” (p.31). In the Wellington Central case study, then, the goal was to explore, in some depth, an electorate race with a woman challenger, and to place this within the context of “horse race” and gender theory.

There are three measures of validity particularly relevant to case studies: construct validity, internal validity and reliability. Construct validity requires a case study to be designed in a way which ensures that the selected measures of x do in fact reflect x . The researcher should use multiple sources of evidence, create a chain of evidence and have the draft reviewed by key informants. Second, internal validity is particularly important in the causal or explanatory case study, in which the researcher seeks to establish if event x led to event y . In such cases it is important for the researcher to consider if her inferences are correct, by examining opposing explanations and possibilities, checking that the evidence converges and whether it appears sound. Thus, for this case study, does “horse race” theory explain the level and focus of Hobbs’ media coverage? Or is the pattern more consistent with gender bias or incumbency theory? If different forms of evidence (e.g. interviews and examination of content) point to the existence of a particular pattern, this strengthens the internal validity of the research. Finally, in the interests of reliability, it is desirable to create an audit trail when conducting case study research. All procedures should be documented, and steps should be made operational

wherever possible, so that the research can be replicated. Yin (1994) advised researchers to conduct the research as if someone was looking over their shoulder. The steps taken in this case study are outlined later in this chapter.

It should be noted that the traditional research standard of external validity, which requires findings to be generalisable to other situations, is not relevant to the case study approach. According to Yin (1994), this focus misunderstands case studies, for as mentioned earlier the case study researcher aspires to analytical rather than statistical generalisation, seeking to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory. In this case, the theory considered is “horse race” and gendered mediation, situated within an MMP environment.

12.4 Designing a Case Study

In the absence of codified case study research designs, Yin’s (1994) book included a basic set of research designs for researchers doing single or multiple case studies, in an attempt to produce “more rigorous and methodologically sound” (p.19) applications. Broadly, the four principles of data collection in case study research are: use of multiple sources of evidence; triangulation; creation of a case study database (made up of notes, documents, tabulated material, narratives etc.) and the maintenance of a chain of evidence.

The six sources of evidence available to case study researchers - of which two or more should be employed - are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts. Table 13 summarises the sources of evidence for this case study.

Table 13
Sources of Evidence in the Wellington Central Case Study

Source of Evidence	Application in Wellington Central Case Study
Interviews	With key informant Marian Hobbs With political reporter and campaign volunteer
Documents	Content analysis
Archival records	Information about the electorate (census data)

Interviews, content analysis of printed material and archival records were used in this research. Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 1994).

Finally, a case study researcher is required to be able to ask good questions, be a good listener, be adaptable and flexible, have a firm grasp of the issues and be unbiased. In this area, Yin (1994) wrote that the case study is more demanding than experimental or survey research. To meet these requirements, the researcher formed interview questions with the assistance of the thesis supervisors (both former journalists), drew on knowledge of listening skills garnered from teaching business communication, and gained familiarity with the electorate and campaign issues through extensive media monitoring.

12.5 Analysing Case Study Evidence

Analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and more difficult parts of case study research (Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) discussed two general strategies; the first and preferred is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to the case study. Alternately, and particularly in the absence of a theoretical proposition, the researcher can begin by developing a framework for organising the case. Pattern matching – comparing an empirically based pattern with a predicted one – is one of the dominant modes of case study analysis, and is used in this project. The following section on “horse race” sets up the key proposition explored in the pattern matching process (see also Chapter Two).

12.6 “Horse Race” Coverage

The “horse race” approach to covering election news is common and it is taken for granted that the notion of winners and losers provides an appropriate way of interpreting election developments. The “horse race” is one of several themes that contributes to the “game frame” style of political news (see also Chapter Nine). However, media theorists (and some practitioners) have become increasingly concerned about the “horse race” focus of news, suggesting it contributes to rising public disinterest in the political process, and cynicism about politics and politicians (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994). A new type of journalism, known as public or civic journalism, has evolved as a response to this concern but has not replaced the traditional approach to

news, tending to be used in an ad hoc rather than sustained way, particularly in New Zealand (McGregor, Comrie & Fountaine, 1999). Researchers interested in the intersection of gender and media have also become interested in the limitations of “horse race” journalism, regarding it as a dominant and “male” news frame, characterised by gladiatorial images of war and sports, the application of which disadvantages women. For example, Gidengil and Everitt (1999) wrote about gendered mediation, an approach that:

shifts the focus from the use of feminine stereotypes to the more subtle, but arguably more insidious, form of bias that arises when conventional political frames are applied to female politicians. (p.49)

Evidence about the impact of “horse race” coverage on women candidates is mixed, however. Serini et al. (1998) found, in their case study of a gubernatorial contest won by a woman candidate, that “horse race” coverage assisted her. Although coverage of polls showed her behind until the end, her strategic positioning as “one of the boys” was covered positively. This is in contrast to Kahn and Goldenberg’s (1991) research showing that women candidates tended to receive more negative viability coverage, which stressed their outside chance of victory. The lesson from these studies appears to be that gender alone should not guide female politicians’ choice of election strategy, although the way gender is packaged and promoted may be important in some electoral contexts. It should also be noted that these studies have all been carried out in First Past the Post style electoral systems.

12.7 The Wellington Central Electorate

The last one was so good they made it into a movie. The battle for Wellington Central 1996 was captured in *Campaign*, an intriguing behind the scenes look at life on the hustings by Wellington film-maker Tony Sutorius. The campaign for Wellington Central 1999 looks like that rarest of things: a sequel that matches the original. (Espiner, 1999b, p.2)

Wellington Central is acknowledged as a bellwether electorate, and it became even more important in 1999 when tactical decisions about party candidates saw the electorate reduced to a race between ACT leader Richard Prebble and Labour MP Marian Hobbs. It was regarded as a key seat for ACT’s representation in Parliament, and as such was the subject of much local and national attention.

According to the 1996 census, there were 53,109 people living in the electorate, predominantly of European descent (76.9%), followed by 7.4% Asian and 6.3% Māori. The electorate is relatively high income, with 37% of inhabitants earning over NZ\$30,000 per annum (and of these, 17% earning over NZ\$50 000). At the 1996 election, the seat was won by ACT leader Richard Prebble. Labour and the Alliance collected 35% of votes.

The Wellington Central electorate is also interesting because of its proximity to Parliament, which saw it selected as the subject of a film documentary based on the 1996 election campaign. In pragmatic terms, it was also accessible to the researcher, being just a two-hour drive away from home. Further, in June 1999, when Labour MP and Wellington Central candidate Marian Hobbs was interviewed for another aspect of this research (see Chapter Ten), she agreed to be contacted at regular intervals throughout the campaign. Her agreement was crucial to the decision to focus on Wellington Central.

The development of the Wellington Central campaign provided some insight into the realities of campaigning under MMP. On November 3, the Alliance candidate Phillida Bunkle announced that her name would not be on the electorate's ballot paper, as she had decided to contest only the party vote. (As early as June 1999, when poll results showed Hobbs ahead of Bunkle, Hobbs had suggested Bunkle consider standing down.) This decision was made to avoid vote-splitting on the left, and was partially a response to National's decision, two weeks earlier, not to field a candidate, in support of ACT leader Richard Prebble. With the contest reduced to two main players, the Wellington Central electorate took on national importance, and was easily portrayed as a two horse race in the traditional, pre-MMP style so familiar to journalists and the public. ACT needed to retain at least one electorate seat or break the 5% threshold, and its presence was also vital to the National Party's chance of leading a coalition government.

12.8 Marian Hobbs' Campaign

Marian Hobbs entered national politics in her late 40s, leaving a job as Principal of Avonside Girls School in Christchurch to become a Labour list MP. Her "unconventional" background included time spent living in a commune and membership of the Communist Party (Espiner, 1999a).

Hobbs' 1999 Wellington Central campaign has been described as employing a community style (van Der Kaay, 2000). This was a deliberate choice, reached after consideration of Hobbs' relatively low profile. She had been a list MP for just one term, whereas Prebble was a well known, experienced politician and party leader. According to van Der Kaay (2000):

Hobbs knew that as a backbench MP in opposition she stood little chance of winning the seat through the media. Conversely, Prebble enjoyed a reasonably high profile and as ACT's leader was able to maximise on more media opportunities. (p.4)

The nature of MMP meant that Hobbs ran for the Wellington Central seat in 1999 as an incumbent MP, but not in the traditional sense. She had entered Parliament in 1996, as a Labour list MP, after unsuccessfully contesting the Selwyn by-election in 1994. The conventional understanding of incumbency is of limited value in an MMP environment, for seats may feasibly be contested by the incumbent electorate MP as well as several other incumbent (list) MPs. In the Wellington Central seat, Prebble was the incumbent electorate MP, but Hobbs and Alliance candidate, Phillida Bunkle, were also incumbent MPs, via party lists. Further research is needed to see whether the traditional advantages of incumbency (see Chapter Three) still apply in the MMP context.

12.9 The Interview Process

The initial face-to-face interview was in June 1999, with a follow-up in October 1999. The first telephone interview was on October 28, and during the official month-long campaign period, three more telephone interviews were conducted: on November 8, 16 and 22. The telephone interviews occurred in free moments around Hobbs' busy schedule. A de-brief interview, planned for early 2000, was postponed due to Hobbs' busy schedule after becoming a Cabinet Minister. It was eventually done on 30 June 2000.

This section summarises the responses Hobbs made to the following questions, which she was asked during each of the four telephone interviews. The main aim of the weekly interviews was to establish how Hobbs dealt with the media during the campaign, whether this changed over the course of the campaign, and to explore factors which may have influenced this, such as incumbency and gender. The following list shows the questions asked during these weekly interviews.

Operational questions:

- 1 What media coverage have you had in the past week?
- 2 Estimate how many times you have been contacted by the news media in the past week. Over what issues?
- 3 Estimate how many times you have contacted the news media in the past week. Over what issues?
- 4 In total, how much of your time has been spent dealing with the media in the past week?
- 5 Approximately how much of your time has been spent monitoring media coverage in the past week?
- 6 What are your media goals for next week? Are you planning to create media opportunities from events of the coming week?

Satisfaction:

- 7 How satisfied are you with the media coverage you have had in the past week?

Perception:

- 8 Do you perceive your media coverage to be predominantly reactive or proactive?
- 9 What (if any) “frames” have you been aware of in your election coverage of the past week?

Attitude:

- 10 What words describe your attitude towards the news media in the past week?

Gender:

- 11 Has gender been an issue in the past week? If so, how?

General:

- 12 Any other comments?

Questions 7 and 8 used a five point Likert scale to plot satisfaction and reactive/proactive stance.

12.10 Hobbs' Contact With the News Media

The first question, about media coverage, was used as a lead-in, to set the tone of the interview and remind the candidate of the coverage she had received. Because of people's tendency to recall media coverage selectively, Hobbs' summary is not taken as

a complete or fully reliable indicator of the coverage received. A summary, based on content analysis, is provided later in this chapter.

Table 14
The Number of Times Hobbs Recalled Being Contacted by the News Media in the Preceding Week

Date	No. of Contacts
Campaign week 1 (Interview date: 28 October)	4
Campaign week 2 (8 November)	9
Campaign week 3 (16 November)	6
Campaign week 4 (22 November)	3

In the first week of the campaign, Hobbs recalled being contacted by the media four times. Two of these were to arrange in-depth interviews, one with a local community newspaper (the *Capital Times*) and one with Helen Bain of the *Dominion*. An information technology magazine also contacted her, as the Opposition’s spokesperson on broadcasting, communications and information technology, seeking an opinion on Internet access through Television New Zealand (TVNZ). Finally, TVNZ’s political editor, Linda Clark, contacted her suggesting they meet at some stage, but this did not eventuate.

The second interview with Hobbs occurred after Alliance candidate Phillida Bunkle withdrew from the race. Hobbs described herself as receiving “an excessive amount” of coverage in this period. Eight interviews resulted from nine media contacts: five of these centred around Bunkle’s withdrawal, one related to Hobbs’ comments about the party vote, one was about the *City Voice* election forum and the other related to an incident which saw a Wellington port company call the Police after refusing Hobbs access to the staff canteen to address waterside workers. This period was the only time

that Hobbs contacted the media herself, writing a letter to the *Evening Post* editor complaining about a headline which suggested Hobbs was encouraging Labour voters to give their party vote to the Alliance, and did not match her reported comments.

In the third week of the campaign, the number of contacts dropped from the previous week, to six. The issues were the sausage sizzle “treating” debate (in which Hobbs was accused by National list MP Annabel Young of breaking election rules which forbid candidates from providing bribes to voters), Hobbs’ style of campaigning (in particular her street corner speeches), and broadcasting (reflecting her spokesperson role).

In the interview of November 22, Hobbs recalled being contacted by the media just three times. She had a radio interview on that day, and had already spoken with the *Evening Post* about her response to the latest poll. She had also been contacted about the acrimony at candidate meetings in the electorate.

12.11 Time Spent Dealing With the News Media

During the weekly conversations, Hobbs was asked to estimate how much time she had spent dealing with the media in the previous week. Table 15 shows the amount of time Hobbs spent with the media, reflecting their level of interest in the withdrawal of Alliance candidate Phillida Bunkle.

Table 15
Amount of Time Hobbs Spent Dealing with the Media Each Week

Date	Amount of Time
Campaign week 1 (Interview date: 28 October)	30 minutes
Campaign week 2 (8 November)	“One sixth of my waking time”
Campaign week 3 (16 November)	3 hours
Campaign week 4 (22 November)	“Far less, about one hour at the most”

Hobbs was also asked to estimate how much time she spent monitoring coverage. Hobbs did no systematic monitoring, but others in her electorate team did. She read what she could, when she could, and watched television items that she knew were coming up (e.g. TV3’s story on the “treating” issue).

Hobbs rated her weekly media coverage on a five point Likert scale, where ‘1’ was very satisfied and ‘5’ very dissatisfied. In the first week of the campaign, she was not satisfied with the electorate coverage, but this improved, possibly due to Bunkle’s withdrawal which made it a clearer race, and Hobbs a more likely winner. In general, Hobbs was satisfied with her coverage, except for two particular incidents: the *Evening Post* headline which she felt distorted her message, and TV3’s coverage of the “treating” issue. Table 16 summarises her level of satisfaction during the campaign weeks.

Table 16
Hobbs’ Level of Satisfaction with Weekly Media Coverage

Date	Level of satisfaction*
Campaign week 1 (Interview date: 28 October)	“4” for electorate coverage; “2” for representation of her opinions
Campaign week 2 (8 November)	“2” (apart from the <i>Evening Post</i> headline mentioned earlier)
Campaign week 3 (16 November)	Generally “2”, but “4” for TV3’s coverage of the “treating” issue
Campaign week 4 (22 November)	“2”

Note. Scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is “very satisfied” and 5 is “very dissatisfied”.

Incumbency is generally regarded as having positive implications for media coverage, although a poor record in office is likely to put an incumbent at a disadvantage (see Chapter Three). However, as mentioned earlier the traditional concept of incumbency is of limited value in an MMP system, when any number of politicians contesting an

electorate seat may be incumbent MPs. The Wellington Central competition was reduced to Hobbs, and incumbent electorate MP Richard Prebble, also leader of ACT. In an effort to determine the perceived effect of Prebble’s local incumbency on Hobbs’ news coverage, she was asked to rate, on a five point Likert scale, whether she perceived coverage to be predominantly proactive (a ‘1’) or reactive (a ‘5’). In reality, it is difficult to separate Prebble’s coverage as a result of being the incumbent MP, from coverage as a result of his status as party leader.

Table 17
Hobbs’ Perception of Coverage as Proactive (1) or Reactive (5)

Date	Proactive/reactive
Campaign week 1 (Interview date: 28 October)	3
Campaign week 2 (8 November)	4
Campaign week 3 (16 November)	2
Campaign week 4 (22 November)	2

In the early stages of the campaign, Hobbs did not feel her coverage was predominantly proactive or reactive. However, in the second week when Bunkle withdrew from the seat, Hobbs felt she was tending towards reactive (Bunkle was setting the agenda, and the implications of the move were widely dissected). In the latter stages of the campaign, Hobbs perceived she was “getting more proactive”, perhaps reflecting her gain in confidence as the campaign progressed.

To gain insight into Hobbs’ thinking about the media, she was also asked what words described her attitude towards the news media in the previous week. In the first week, she said, “I’m more of an ‘event’ than a ‘candidate’. Running in Wellington Central, I am mentioned in despatches”. In the second week she deemed the media “insistent” and “relatively fair”. By the third week she talked of “fair coverage which has warmed

towards me” and felt that name recognition was increasing. In week four she felt the coverage was neutral and relatively objective, and noted, “I don’t feel battered”.

The issue of framing, which Hobbs was also asked about on a weekly basis, was slightly more complex. A candidate who does not regularly monitor coverage may not have strong feelings about how the media “framed” her or the election race. Hobbs said that in the early stages of the campaign an interviewer suggested to her that she was not a suitable candidate for the seat, which she laughed at and responded, “this is ACT talking”. Later, when she was moved to write to the *Evening Post* about its misleading headline, she felt that the newspaper had deliberately tried to convey her comments as indicative of a deal between Labour and Alliance (i.e. suggesting there was an agreement that the Alliance would withdraw its candidate in return for Labour encouraging voters to give their party vote to the Alliance). In the second two interviews, Hobbs did not feel any particular framing had occurred in her coverage.

Hobbs was also asked about the perceived impact of gender on her coverage in the Wellington Central electorate. She did not believe gender was an issue but recounted *Evening Post* columnist Tom Scott’s comment that she had a “dreadful haircut, a pudding basin”, to which her response was: “Pure Tom Scott”.

There was little indication that Hobbs ran a planned media campaign. At each weekly interview she was asked what her media goals were for the week ahead, and if she was planning to create media opportunities from any of the planned events. Hobbs placed a strong emphasis on direct contact with voters through targeted letters and advertising, and ran a community-style campaign. According to one political reporter who spent time on the inside of the Hobbs’ campaign, the Wellington Central electorate has some unique characteristics, which may mean the media are a less vital communication tool. In particular it is a highly political electorate with well attended candidate meetings. The “street corner” approach exemplified by Hobbs may work well in such electorates.

In the first weekly interview Hobbs said she did not have any media goals “unless you count targeted letters and the advertising programme being finalised”. She did not send press releases, and was not planning to create any media opportunities but predicted there would be events which would “blow up” on their own. She said she would not tip

off the media about the electoral forums, as she was not organising them, and noted that she was meeting with some Somali women, “but wouldn’t impose media on them”. Hobbs admitted to being rather shy about this form of promotional media activity, and was aware of her inexperience. “I’m the world’s worst on this,” she said during the second interview. At this stage in the campaign her media goals were to work on the arts angle, and respond to Prebble. A reporter from the *Evening Post* was going to spend a day accompanying her on the campaign trail.

Hobbs’ approach tended to be direct to the voters. She said her speeches were an important vehicle for her ideas, as well as targeted letters and leaflets (with copies sent to the media). By week three, the Labour candidate was aiming to keep her name out in the public arena, in a positive way, and to smile more (noting her tendency to feel and look nervous when she saw the media approach, television especially). At this point, media opportunities for the week ahead centred around a planned rally in Civic Square, and working on “something” about the arts in Wellington. In the last of the weekly interviews, Hobbs was focused on responding to anything negative. “ACT posters calling me Comrade Marian don’t bother me but anything about me not being a good MP is countered with leaflets”. Hobbs also discussed her low-key media strategy, which was based around making personal contact with as many voters as possible, with other interviewers. For example, she told *Dominion* reporter Nick Venter (1999a):

We decided we would never beat Prebble in the headlines. He is the incumbent. He is the leader of a party. He is really well known. So we decided to do a Peter Dunne model which is to get out and talk to people...You can’t go to any fair, any meeting in his area and he is not there. That is what I intend to do. (p.8)

Finally, there was an opportunity at the end of the weekly interviews for Hobbs to make any other comments. She reported having mixed feelings about the broadcast media in particular. While she enjoyed doing a story with one of the television channels, as she felt they were working with her, letting her be herself and employ her own style, her experience with the other channel was less positive, involving an interview in a noisy office, and journalists pushing the angle that Bunkle’s withdrawal was part of a “dirty deal”. On the other hand, a news interview for radio was enjoyable, as she did not feel trapped or pushed, and managed to take command.

12.12 *City Voice* Coverage

The now defunct *City Voice* was regarded as an influential and progressive community newspaper, which was run by a co-operative of staff and volunteers (Westaway, 2000). With its strong local focus, it took a particular interest in the Wellington Central, Rongotai and Te Tai Tonga electorate seats during the 1999 General Election campaign.

Hobbs regarded the paper as having centre-left tendencies, and preferred its coverage of her (issue based, with longer stories) to that of the commercial newspapers which circulated in the city at the time, the *Dominion* and the *Evening Post* (now a combined daily publication, known as the *Dominion-Post*). *City Voice* organised a number of election forums in the lead up to the election day, and reporting on these formed the basis of its election coverage. Thus, the bulk of Hobbs' coverage in the community newspaper was related to comments she made at the forums, and tended to be issue (e.g. transport, poverty, employment) rather than personality based. None of the *City Voice* stories mentioned personal characteristics of either Prebble or Hobbs, with the focus clearly on party policy, although there was some discussion of poll results showing how close the outcome was likely to be. In general, Hobbs felt this pro-active approach meant better coverage for her, as the larger newspapers were inclined to come to her only for reaction to Prebble's comments.

The focus on policy reflected the thrust of the *City Voice* forums (which were organised around particular issues), and perhaps also the fact that to a certain extent, Wellington Central voters were voting for parties rather than individuals, much as they would in the days of First Past the Post (FPP). Under MMP, voters have the opportunity to elect a local MP who they like or think is personally effective, but who does not necessarily represent their preferred party, without jeopardising their preferred party, to which they can still give their all-important party vote. But in Wellington Central, voters were faced with a clear choice of centre-left or centre-right in their local MP, which would have implications for the election outcome, in the manner of FPP.

12.13 Media Coverage of Hobbs in the Wellington Central Electorate

This section summarises the coverage Hobbs received in all the newspapers sampled as part of the wider content analysis of the 1999 General Election (see Chapter Four for details of these). However, this section is based on a census of campaigning days, as

opposed to the sampling described in Chapter Four. There were 62 stories about Wellington Central in the four weeks leading up to the election. The widest coverage of the seat was on November 4, when six of the daily newspapers covered Wellington Central. This initial interest centred on the MMP politicking which occurred around the withdrawal of Alliance candidate, Phillida Bunkle, from the seat.

Of the 62 stories identified, 24 (or well over a third) were published in Wellington's then evening newspaper, the *Evening Post* (which has since merged with the city's morning newspaper, the *Dominion*). The *New Zealand Herald* published ten, followed by seven in each of the *Dominion*, the *Press* and the *Waikato Times*, four in the *Evening Standard* and three in the *Otago Daily Times*. The relatively small number of stories about the Wellington Central electorate means this section is descriptive rather than quantitative.

Interest in the Wellington Central electorate peaked early on in the campaign, with eleven stories published on November 4 (four of these in the *Evening Post*). This early coverage centred around Phillida Bunkle and the relationship between the Alliance and Labour, with little mention of Hobbs or Prebble. The question of whether or not Bunkle would withdraw from the race to consolidate the centre-left vote, and the coverage when she subsequently did so, formed a large part of the electorate's coverage (18 of the total 62 stories - 30% - were published on or before November 4, the day after Bunkle withdrew from the seat). It may be that this form of MMP politicking, with its repercussions for coalition formation, was particularly salient, and once the race effectively became a variation on FPP politics, media interest - other than the sustained coverage of the *Evening Post* - waned. In fact, as the national campaign developed, polling pointed to the importance of the Coromandel seat for the shape and make-up of the new government. From this peak on November 4, overall coverage of Wellington Central tended downward.

The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the Wellington Central stories each newspaper covered. In particular, many of these stories were based around polling in the electorate, which was often tagged to national poll results such as party support and preferred Prime Minister. The *Evening Standard* and the *Otago Daily Times*, both of which published few stories on the Wellington Central electorate, covered Bunkle's

decision to step down from the electorate contest, and poll results. The *Dominion* covered the ACT launch in Wellington Central, Bunkle's withdrawal, the "treating" issue (when National list MP Annabel Young accused Hobbs of trying to buy votes by running a sausage sizzle) and poll results. The *Dominion* was also the only newspaper to cover the eviction of Hobbs and Labour's Te Tai Tonga candidate, Mahara Okeroa, from the Wellington wharf. The *Waikato Times* covered ACT's launch in Wellington Central, Bunkle's likely withdrawal, poll results, Auckland mayor and former National MP Christine Fletcher's pledge of support for Hobbs, and the occasionally violent style of meetings in the electorate. The *Press* also covered this latter issue, along with Bunkle's withdrawal, polls, vandalism of electorate hoardings, and treating. The *New Zealand Herald* covered Bunkle's withdrawal, polls, the confusion over candidate names and Fletcher's subsequent statement of public support for Hobbs, treating and Prebble's leadership – a feature which crossed the boundary between Prebble as party leader and Prebble as electorate MP.

Not surprisingly, Wellington's then afternoon newspaper, the *Evening Post*, provided the most consistent coverage of the electorate. As well as all the issues covered in the other daily newspapers, it addressed three subjects they did not, providing profiles of the other Wellington Central candidates, discussing the arts policies represented by Hobbs and Prebble, and monitoring the electorate campaigning of the two main candidates.

Richard Prebble, because he was also a party leader, understandably received greater news coverage overall than did Marian Hobbs. In fact, he was the fourth most mentioned politician during the 1999 campaign (see Chapter Five). This coverage tended to be about ACT policy or nationwide campaigning but there were some instances in which this type of coverage overlapped with Wellington Central, and thereby gave Prebble additional profile with which Hobbs could not compete. For example, the ACT Party launched its nationwide campaign in Wellington Central, and a number of issues that Prebble addressed in his opening speech - and which were subsequently reported - were specific to the electorate (e.g. Wellington Hospital, the Wellington town-belt preservation).

An example of the merging of Prebble as leader and Prebble as electorate candidate was found in the *New Zealand Herald* of November 23. In a story headlined “Prebble swoops home and away”, a political reporter who accompanied the ACT leader on a campaign trip to Timaru, wrote:

In some ways, his whole campaign has required him to have a split personality. He is, after all, fighting two battles. As leader, he is at the forefront of ACT’s push for the party vote, while on the home front, he is in a ding-dong battle for the crucial seat of Wellington Central...He has roved the country from Auckland to Timaru but his mind is never far from Wellington. (Bingham, 1999, p.A13)

The story goes on to describe the typically hostile reception Prebble received at a candidate meeting in his electorate, Prebble’s response, and his electorate message.

Table 18 shows the number of times Prebble and Hobbs appeared in news stories related to Wellington Central. The figure in brackets identifies how many of these stories were published in the *Evening Post*.

Table 18
Extent of Newspaper Coverage

Extent Mentioned	Prebble	Hobbs
Mentioned only	10 (<i>Evening Post</i> - 4)	13 (<i>Evening Post</i> - 5)
Appeared to limited extent	11 (1)	16 (5)
Appeared to moderate extent	28 (14)	19 (9)
Dominated story	4 (2)	2 (2)
Total	53 (21)	50 (21)

There was little difference in the total number of stories in which Hobbs and Prebble appeared. The key difference lies in the extent to which they were covered – in 60% of daily newspaper stories in which Prebble appeared, he appeared to a moderate extent or dominated, whereas Hobbs achieved this level of coverage in just 42% of stories. Similarly, in 76% of the *Evening Post* stories in which he appeared, Prebble appeared to a moderate extent or dominated, compared to 52% for Hobbs. It is intuitively reasonable that this disparity occurred because of Prebble’s status as leader of the ACT Party.

While overall Prebble was quoted and/or cited in more news stories than Hobbs (28 times to her 24), the difference in placement of comments was less marked, particularly when bearing in mind that Prebble appeared in slightly more stories than Hobbs anyway. Hobbs was cited and/or quoted first in eight stories (22% of those in which she was rated as more than a mention) and Prebble was cited or quoted first in nine stories (21% of those in which he rated more than a mention). Prebble's status as party leader may have contributed to the observation that while the *Evening Post* consistently quoted both leading candidates, the Auckland-based *New Zealand Herald* did not quote or cite Hobbs once, but quoted Prebble five times.

However, while Prebble received more coverage, possibly because of easier media access resulting from his status as leader and incumbent electorate MP, he also appears to have received more negative and less positive coverage than Hobbs. Overall content analysis results showed that 19 of 20 instances of in-depth coverage of Hobbs were neutral (95%) and one was positive, whereas for Prebble, 73 of his total 90 in-depth mentions were judged as neutral (81.1%), 15 were negative (16.7%) and just one was positive (2.2%). It should be noted, though, that this figure does not distinguish between coverage relating to the electorate and coverage relating to the national campaign.

12.14 The Last Interview

In consideration of events which occurred after Hobbs won the Wellington Central seat and became a Cabinet Minister in the Labour-Alliance coalition government, another interview was conducted in June, 2000. Although this is outside the main period of the case study, these events were deemed sufficiently interesting and relevant to justify inclusion.

In brief, Hobbs' difficulties began in February 2000, during her first parliamentary question time. As Minister of Broadcasting, she faced sustained questioning over the government's confidence in TVNZ management, after the state-owned broadcaster was ordered to pay \$5.2 million to a former newsreader it had lured away from its rival, only to dismiss him soon afterwards when ratings fell. Hobbs stumbled when she confused the chief executive with the head of the TVNZ board, and the Opposition quickly seized on this mistake, identifying Hobbs as "the weakest link" in a seemingly impenetrable

government. According to political reporter Elinore Wellwood (2000), “Within minutes of her first question time, she was labelled as being too ready to speak without thinking” (p.21). The broadcasting portfolio continued to be controversial, Hobbs was heavily scrutinised, and small and otherwise inconsequential lapses were seized upon by the Opposition and the media. Capitalising on the perception she made frequent mistakes, and reflecting her broadcasting portfolio, the Opposition nicknamed her “Booboo, the fifth Teletubby” (Bain, 2000, p.2), after the children’s television show. The low point of media coverage for Hobbs came when Prime Minister Clark, apparently surprised by Hobbs’ press conference comment that a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Genetic Engineering would be “more intelligent” than a select committee, told the media (before telling her) that Hobbs needed a minder.

Hobbs’ ascent to Cabinet Minister resulted in a major shift in her relationship with the news media. During the June 2000 interview, Hobbs described herself as “utterly defensive, I can’t describe to you how defensive I am”. Her defensiveness in the face of the media was a reaction she returned to over and again. She perceived that the media had “turned” on her, observing that characteristics which had never before been an issue - particularly her openness, extravagant language and tendency to think aloud - were suddenly construed negatively. Consequently, she stopped “giving profile”, and started avoiding particular people in the media, particularly women:

Mostly I avoid any profiles, any talking about feelings. I’ve got extremely short and focused on the issue and giving factual replies, stopped thinking aloud anywhere near the media...it’s quite extraordinary how defensive I’ve become.

When she did agree to take part in a profile piece with the *Evening Post* this was because of her status as an electorate MP in the region, and her sense that she owed it to people she represented.

Hobbs identified the shift in media content happening “as soon as I fudged it in the House, and that attack began”. She considered resigning because “I thought that I was a damage to the Government in the sense that I was a distraction”. Hobbs was “completely thrown” by some of the comments made by women in the media, and recalled an article quoting a woman journalist as saying she looked like a sack of potatoes. She was hurt by the attacks on her appearance, which she admitted really got to her, and made her much more conscious of what she was wearing. “But I’ve got

through it...one of the things that goes a little bit there is being older, and thinking ‘I know I’m OK’”. And through this period, she had great support from people in her electorate:

We had a lovely period of time when people were just coming in the doors, saying...they were furious. Now, there’s an interesting thing that happened – the women were furious at the attacks. I got flowers and letters...it was lovely. But they saw it as an attack on a woman and an attack on things that they valued – they value the fact that...I’m not polished, that I am ordinary...and that I’m open. I mean, a couple of times I’d say “yes, I have made a mistake, I’m sorry” – they thought that was a breath of fresh air in politics.

Hobbs took to heart a comment made by a friend and confidant who told her:

One of the things that’s different is that people expect their ministers to be self assured, give calm, non-flapping answers, and sometimes when you are searching for the word or using your extravagant language, it’s not what the public expects of a person in a position of responsibility.

She differentiated between the coverage she got in the electorate (about 10% of her total coverage), which she said was not about her but about issues; about what she was saying or doing, rather than profile. “That confirms to me that that media blitz was really about picking a weakness in the government, at a time when there was very little policy out”.

Hobbs regarded her workload as horrendous and said “I do have a problem with staffing and appropriate people and things like that, and it just got really lonely”. She admitted being “bloody tired”, and looked quite exhausted. At the time of the interview, she was also apprehensive about some issues building in her portfolios which she anticipated having to face that evening, and the prospect of being tired and having to face the media on some very tough issues was of concern to her: “I’m so tired that I could easily make a mistake and then it’s all on again, and I can’t...” (trails off).

She agreed there is a “huge” confidence element in dealing with the media, and believed journalists smell weakness. Hobbs was unsure she would ever beat the label of “gaffe prone” applied to her, although she recounted how her press secretary challenged a media organisation to line up the gaffes, to count them, and recognise that there were only two. And Hobbs herself noted, other politicians got things wrong in the House without having that label applied to them.

The personal cost of constant media pressure meant that after this time no reporters got through to her directly, on the advice of her press secretary. She told how this was a lesson she eventually learned the hard way on the morning Prime Minister Clark's comment that Hobbs needed a minder was the lead story in the *Dominion*:

I was in bed, it was about half past six, quarter to seven in the morning and the phone went – it was Ruth Berry, *Evening Post* – and I was half awake and she said, “Have you seen the Dominion?” I said “no”, and then she read me the headline and I just, I was struggling not to burst into tears and keep that tremor out of my voice, and again, openly, quite honestly, said “Maybe I am, could be considered the class clown”. Headlines.

Hobbs' press secretary told her not to answer the telephone in future, to which her response was:

Well, it's extremely hard. You don't know, it's coming on your home phone, in the morning, at that stage it could be my daughter, a family member bloody dying, all those sorts of things – you just reach for the phone.

One of the things that particularly troubled her was the effect the media coverage had had on her teenage daughter, who had begun to hate the media because their portrayal was not consistent with the person she knew her mother to be.

The advice Hobbs would offer to someone in a similar situation was to not talk to the media:

Certainly don't be open with them about feelings or never talk about yourself to them. Only ever stay on policy...I used to just sort of talk aloud about the thought processes in my head or how I reached decisions. Don't do it now, only talk about the decision...Now for some people, they don't have to be told that because they are like that anyway.

Finally, Hobbs was unsure about any gender dimension to the coverage. She did feel her openness had a gender aspect to it (perhaps a more feminine trait), yet contrasted herself to leader Helen Clark who she felt dealt well with the media. Hobbs perceived that Clark never gets personal, is straight and clear with her message, and very focused.

12.15 Discussion

Marian Hobbs: Minister for the Environment, Biosecurity, Broadcasting, Radio NZ, TVNZ, NZ On Air, Associate Communications. Convent girl, commune founder, communist... (Brent Edwards, 1999f, p.1)

An *Evening Post* description of Hobbs following her Cabinet appointment in December 1999.

The case study set out to examine how media coverage of Hobbs developed during the Wellington Central campaign, the likely reasons why, and the implications for “horse race” and gender theory. The Wellington Central campaign and Hobbs’ approach should not be considered representative of electorate campaigns or women candidates in general, but the analysis adds to our understanding of “horse race” campaign coverage as it applies in MMP elections. Further, the combination of campaign material and information gathered after the election, in response to an eventful beginning as Cabinet Minister for Hobbs, makes a unique contribution to the theory about female politicians and the news media.

Hobbs ran a community style campaign, with little in the way of formal media strategy. Her reported contacts with the media peaked in the week of Bunkle’s withdrawal from the contest, as did media coverage of Wellington Central throughout the nation’s daily newspapers. Hobbs perceived she became more proactive in her dealings with reporters as the campaign developed, which coincided with more positive feelings towards the media (by the third interview, she felt that coverage had warmed towards her). She felt her electorate coverage improved after the first week, which likely reflected Bunkle’s withdrawal and resulting positive poll results, showing Hobbs and Prebble were closely placed. To illustrate, early in the campaign, Hobbs told how a reporter asked her whether she was a suitable candidate for the electorate, which she felt was a question inspired by ACT’s negative comments about her. Once Bunkle withdrew and poll results indicated a close race between Prebble and Hobbs, such an angle was difficult to sustain. Media attention to the “horse race”, which showed her as a viable candidate, is unlikely to have disadvantaged Hobbs at this stage of the campaign. Gendered mediation theory suggests women are disadvantaged when dominant news frames such as the “horse race” are applied to women. However, riding on a swing against the

government, Hobbs polled well, appeared to be a viable candidate, and in winning the seat does not appear to have been disadvantaged by consistent attention to polls.

Although “horse race” theory is the main pattern considered here, it was observed that media coverage by the daily newspapers and television also focused on other “strategy” themes. For example, ACT’s campaign launch, the treating controversy, poll results and voter behaviour at meetings were widely covered, while the only policy issue consistently linked to the electorate was the arts.

The way Hobbs’ media coverage developed also reflected the MMP environment. As mentioned above, media interest in the campaign and approaches to Hobbs by reporters reached their zenith in the days around Bunkle’s withdrawal. Hobbs was unhappy with coverage surrounding this event, particularly the media’s insistence that a “dirty deal” had been hatched between the Alliance and Labour. She also felt her resulting comments about the importance of the party vote were distorted, leading her to complain to the *Evening Post*. The media’s preoccupation with the possible backroom deal between the Alliance and Labour likely reflects the slow and safe start to the election campaign generally (meaning the media were looking for something interesting), cynicism about the behavior of politicians, and the anti-MMP sentiment of the time.

As the language suggests, the “horse race” approach to reporting politics is synonymous with a FPP electoral system. Much of the theory and critique of the “horse race” comes from democratic societies with “winner takes all” or “zero-sum” approaches to politics. When New Zealand voted to move to a system of proportional representation, political commentators and journalists raised concern about the media’s ability to cope with the new type of analysis that would be required (see Chapter Two). The coverage of Wellington Central suggests that the “horse race” remains a dominant frame, which has changed shape slightly in response to the realities of MMP politics. The new aspect of “horse race” coverage is “scratchings”, comprising attention to candidates who withdraw (or speculation about candidates who might withdraw) from the race after the line-up has been finalised, or in the early legs of the race. Related to this is speculation about “race fixing”, or what deals have gone on behind the scenes, and whose interests are served by these scratchings.

There was little evidence of gender bias in campaign coverage, and Hobbs herself did not account for her coverage in this way. She did recall columnist Tom Scott's comment about her hairstyle, but regarded it as indicative of his approach to writing, rather than evidence of gender bias towards her. However, she told van Der Kaay (2000) that "campaigning can be a tough time for some women because it is easy to take comments or criticism personally" and said "she often felt judged by the way she behaved, what she wore or even how she sounded" (p.4).

However, gender bias may have contributed to the shift in media coverage, which occurred after the election and was documented in the extended case study interview material. Sapiro (1993) suggested that the symbolic meaning of women can change at different times in their political careers, and Hobbs did feel gender was more of an influence during this post-election stage. This has implications for our understanding of gender and politics, and while a case study is not generalisable, it does raise a pertinent point. Hobbs campaigned in what may be considered a "feminine" way, relying on networks and community rather than media to get her message across (although note that Hobbs also attributed this style to the male leader of the small United Party, Peter Dunne). This decision was based on her understanding that Prebble's high profile made him more newsworthy and would give him the upper hand in a media-based campaign. However, Hobbs' approach also demonstrated what is often considered a typically "feminine" lack of confidence with the media amongst female politicians. Self-effacement is often perceived as a feminine virtue in Western society, and the impact of gendered socialisation on women politicians' behaviour must be considered. At the 1989 symposium of the International Parliamentary Union, most participants agreed that "a major barrier to women's equal participation in political life was the lack of self confidence among women" (Kelber, 1994, p.48). Female political candidates in the US reported a nearly universal fear of reporters (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994) and although Jane Danowitz of the Women's Campaign Fund has grown less sympathetic to this trend, it is something that comes up whenever they run training sessions. She said:

"My suspicion is...that women don't humour the press enough...I think women still need a lot of work learning to deal with the press....Women are fearful of reporters...and my sense is that discomfort is like being around a horse and being scared and the horse senses it. The press senses it. I think that's where it breaks down...There are a lot of women like this" – she grimaces in mock horror – "uptight, not comfortable with giving out information." (quoted in Witt et al., p.202)

Women candidates may have a tendency to be too honest and emotional in their dealings with the media, and demonstrate a degree of naivety in believing they do not need a media strategy. In the long term, and with the benefit of hindsight, Hobbs' decision to employ a "community style" in the electorate campaign might have worked to her disadvantage, simply because it did little to prepare her for the demands of the media once she became a Cabinet Minister. For Hobbs, lack of confidence and anxiety quickly turned into defensiveness after her negative experiences as a Cabinet Minister, which at least partially stemmed from a lack of experience, training and support. The *Evening Post* profile Hobbs agreed to in May 2000 quoted her campaign manager, who conceded that while some of Hobbs' comments were not especially wise, "I'm sure she'll learn. Too many women do put themselves down, they don't assume a false confidence. Good on her for being herself" (Lynn Middleton, quoted in Berry, 2000, p.3). However, Hobbs did pay a personal and professional price for her inexperience, and in the contemporary political age, it was perhaps misguided to believe that "being herself" was sufficient when it came to dealing with the news media. As Motion and Leitch (2000) noted:

Politicians who lack "media savvy" and who operate without public relations guidance are amateurs in a media world populated by highly trained professionals. Not only are they disadvantaged in relation to other politicians, they are also disadvantaged in relation to the media themselves. (p.79)

It has also been suggested that Hobbs' experiences post-election were related to the contemporary trend towards "dumbing down" in the media, accompanied by the rise of "Ministerial clones, coached by consultants to give repetitive answers regardless of the question...or schooled to shelter behind a stage-managed persona" (Wheeler, 2000, p.36. See also Chapter Two). In a media column, former *Sunday Star Times* editor Jenny Wheeler (2000) summarised Hobbs' reputation as a smart and politically skillful politician whose "originality, ebullience and wise-cracking made her a House stand-out" (p.36), and argued that her media downfall reflected the contemporary reality that politicians "survive less by policy than puffery" (p.36). Wheeler (2000) also noted that letters written to newspapers around this time suggested the public was more tolerant and welcoming of Hobbs' approach, and regarded the negative coverage she received as indicative of a self-important and cynical news media. As noted earlier, in Chapter Two, there is a growing body of evidence that political reporting is turning the public off politics and contributing to an increase in voter cynicism. Hobbs herself, in her role

as Broadcasting Minister, has made a similar point. During a speech in February 2000, she quoted French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's views on television:

So much emphasis on headlines and so much filling up of precious time with empty air – where nothing or almost nothing – shunts aside relevant news, that is, information that all citizens ought to have to exercise their democratic rights. (quoted in Berry, 2000, p.11)

The head of Canterbury University's journalism school, Jim Tully, has also suggested that the extent of coverage about Hobbs, some of it vicious, should be questioned. He argued that although it is not surprising that the slip-ups were reported, "Journalists focusing on such small mistakes...need to be asking themselves what they are not reporting" (quoted in Berry, 2000, p.11).

Marian Hobbs' experiences with the news media, particularly after she became a Cabinet Minister, can also be related back to the notion of "private" and "public" spheres (see Chapter Three). Female politicians occupy both the traditional space of women – the private sphere of family and domestic life to which they have been socialised – and the historically male, "public sphere" of politics to which they have been elected. While the concept of a clear division between these spheres is increasingly being criticised and eroded, the Hobbs case study demonstrates that there are still pitfalls for female politicians attempting to navigate a middle ground. It appears that Hobbs, a middle-aged woman with children, fell easily into a particularly "private" way of expressing herself, which was then used against her by the media. She herself acknowledged that her natural openness, arguably a more female characteristic, became a liability when dealing with the media. For example, when caught at a weak moment, she agreed with a reporter that she was perhaps something of a "class clown", and this personal concession became a news headline. The lesson of this case study, and it is one that is especially difficult for women yet very pertinent, is that in contemporary media politics where there is little respect for privacy, what is "private" should not be brought into the public realm. A cautious and considered approach to the media is vital.

12.16 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the Wellington Central electorate race, and the media coverage and perceptions of Labour Party candidate Marian Hobbs. It has drawn on a

combination of interviews, archival records and observation of content to reveal how media coverage developed along typical “horse race” lines, with some new features reflecting the context of proportional representation and MMP politicking. The case study methodology was also particularly valuable because it was adaptable to the events that unfolded soon after the 1999 General Election, when Marian Hobbs became a Cabinet Minister. It was also able to be reviewed by Hobbs herself, who read the final version of the case study and commented on it. As an approach, the case study had the flexibility to allow an expansion of the initial time frame and consequently, this chapter makes a stronger contribution to our understanding of gender politics and the news media in New Zealand.

The analysis of the campaign period provided little evidence of bias resulting from the application of a dominant “male” news frame to a female candidate, which suggests that viable women are not necessarily disadvantaged. However, Hobbs’ approach to the media - during and after the 1999 campaign - was consistent with anecdotal evidence suggesting women tend to lack confidence in their dealings with reporters.

The following and final chapter draws together the results of the thesis and concludes the research.

Chapter Thirteen

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

13.1 Introduction

The focus of the research has been the media coverage and framing of female politicians during New Zealand's 1999 General Election campaign. One hundred and six years after New Zealand became the first nation state in the world to give women the right to vote, the 1999 campaign offered a unique research opportunity because of the prime ministerial race between incumbent Prime Minister Jenny Shipley and Labour leader Helen Clark. Prior to this research, there had been few empirical studies in New Zealand of female politicians and media coverage, despite the comparatively high visibility of women in politics. The 1999 campaign was also New Zealand's second under its new electoral system, MMP. This shift to proportional representation had contained the promise of change for women, in terms of better electoral representation and improved political reporting.

As outlined in Chapter One, the broad research question which guided the study asked, "How and why did the news media cover female politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign and what are the implications for women in politics?" The six sub-questions were:

1. How did newspapers cover female politicians during the 1999 General Election campaign?
2. How did the press frame the gender-based New Zealand First list controversy? Why?
3. How did the strategy or "game" frame manifest itself in coverage of the women leaders?
4. How do women MPs perceive the media coverage they receive? What influences their perception?
5. How did the media cover a female challenger in the bellwether Wellington Central electorate? Why?
6. What are the implications for women in politics, the news media, and New Zealand's electoral system?

Chapters Five, Six, Eight and Nine explored content based material about female politicians generally, as well as the New Zealand First women MPs Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald, and party leaders Shipley and Clark. These chapters addressed the first three research questions. Chapters Ten, Eleven and Twelve covered the fourth and fifth research questions respectively, relating to interview and case study material. The aim of this last chapter is to consider the significance of these findings and relate them back to the sixth and final question: What are the implications for women in politics, the news media and New Zealand's electoral system?

This chapter begins by summarising the findings of the content and frame analysis, interviews and case study. It will discuss the key implications of these findings with reference to women in politics, and political and gender theory. Some pertinent post-1999 events, relating to women politicians and "gender politics", are also considered. But first, the following section outlines the overall limitations of the research.

13.2 Limitations

The limitations of specific methodologies and their application to the research are dealt with directly in the relevant chapters (see Chapter Four at 4.4, Chapter 6 at 6.8, Chapter 7 at 7.5, and Chapter Ten at 10.7). This section considers the methodologies' limitations separately as well as making some overall comments.

The content-based research (content analysis and frame analysis) is grounded in quantitative data from an extensive sample of newspapers' election campaign coverage. However, ultimately the frame analysis involves some personal judgement and is influenced by the researcher's focus and interests. Further, while the thirteen-day, constructed-week sample is of sufficient size and scope, and follows a new trend in New Zealand to larger content analysis samples (following criticism that sample sizes were too small), its focus on newspapers alone means it represents only one aspect of election campaign coverage. This is important in light of evidence that newspapers and television varied in their approach to leadership coverage (see Banducci & Vowles, 2002). The content analysis, however, was extensive and rigorous, and makes an important early contribution to the study of gender politics in New Zealand.

The researcher's personal bias must also be recognised in relation to the interviews. An interviewer brings a cluster of biases relating to her social and ethnic background, and in the case of this research, gender. Also, it is important to note the lower participation rate among Māori women MPs, which may reflect these women's greater commitment to what they see as more pressing issues relating to race rather than gender. In other words, it is likely that the non-participation of a number of Māori women MPs reflects a concentration of effort on racial rather than gender issues. There was also a tension between the interviewer's knowledge and awareness of the participants' media coverage, and the participants' sometimes selective recall and positive interpretation of news stories.

13.3 Summary of Findings

This extensive analysis of the historically significant 1999 General Election campaign, drawing on content and framing analysis, interviews and case study material, has yielded a breadth of results.

There are four major findings. First, female politicians are marginalised as political news sources, which reflects both dominant news structures and, in some cases, female politicians' approach to self-promotion. The second key finding is that female politicians are subjected to more polarised media coverage, influenced by status, incumbency and context, and partly a result of their own positioning. Third, coverage of campaign politics reveals a blurring of the public/private dichotomy, an outcome of changes in the media (e.g. the trends toward personalisation and celebrification) and women's campaigning. Finally, the thesis suggests that gender remains a factor in the presentation and interpretation of women in politics, by the news media (which portrayed the female leaders as Xena princesses) and the women themselves (for example, Shipley portrayed herself as a mother), and reflects an on-going tension about gender "sameness" and "difference", and conflict between short and long term political gain.

13.3.1 Content Analysis

The content analysis of newspaper coverage of the 1999 campaign provides an indication of when and how women politicians are covered in the news media. Women politicians are likely to be the central focus of news stories when they hold leadership

positions or if they are embroiled in some controversy which has implications for party leadership (such as the New Zealand First list incident), or if they are contesting a marginal or otherwise significant electorate seat. None of these common reasons for women politicians to be in the news explicitly relate to gender, although the New Zealand First controversy happened to have a gender aspect to it. While it was hoped that the change to MMP would lead to a more analytical style of political journalism, the 1999 data suggest that leadership, and to some extent personalisation, remains a media priority.

Quantitative data show significant differences in the way male and female politicians are covered in the news media. Women politicians appear in news stories, as “news subjects”, in more depth than their male counterparts but are not sourced as much. In other words, there is a tendency for women politicians to be “talked about”, rather than “talked to”. This finding may be reflected in the significant differences which exist in the tone of male and female politicians’ coverage. Although neutral coverage was most common for both male and female politicians, men were more likely than women to be covered neutrally, whereas women were more likely than men to be covered positively – as well as negatively (although this latter difference is not significant). This trend is also reflected in findings about the tone of visual depictions. Therefore, there is tentative support for the suggestion that women politicians, more than men, are cast as “saints” or “sinners”. Van Acker (1999) described how women politicians may become victims of their own success, with the “golden girl” or “saint syndrome” seemingly setting them up for a public fall. In particular, it is noted that Clark enjoyed positive media coverage during the 1999 election campaign, reflecting her Party’s high poll standings and the desire for change after nine years of National-led governments, as well as the media’s propensity to back likely winners.

A qualitative reading of newspaper coverage addressed the question of media attention to personal appearance and gendered language. References to appearance were not widespread, although there is evidence of a general (i.e. not confined to women) trend towards “intimizing” of coverage, particularly through discussion of weight, and clothing. The main appearance-related theme which impacted only on women concerned the “air-brushing” of Clark and Shipley’s promotional materials. The underlying issue appears to be the stage-managed nature of the women’s campaigns.

Gendered language, especially reference to gender stereotypes, while again not widespread, was more commonly employed in relation to women than men. As Smith (1997) noted, while there is a “rough parity” in coverage of male and female political candidates, any exceptions to the rule tend to be at the expense of women.

13.3.2 Frame Analysis

An important news event during the 1999 General Election campaign was the release and subsequent conflict over New Zealand First’s party list. The frame analysis suggests that while the issue was seemingly about the treatment of women candidates, the media were more interested in what it meant for the Party leader, Winston Peters. The “women trouble” frame kept the attention on Peters, his credibility as a leader and loyalty to the Party, and the resulting moral evaluations centred on him. Gender issues were peripheral, and the conflict was not used to explore issues such as women’s voting patterns and structural barriers to list selection. While under MMP party lists are an important vehicle for women’s political representation, negative attention to the smaller parties’ lists reflected wider anti-MMP sentiment in the media.

The second part of the frame analysis took an established political news frame – the strategy or “game” frame – and analysed how it was applied during an election campaign featuring two prominent women leaders. According to Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995), the concepts of leadership and governance have been “marked” by men and masculinity, although few researchers acknowledge this. Similarly, the gendered nature of established news frames (which have been consistently identified in media coverage of campaigns featuring male candidates) is often not recognised, and therefore Chapter Nine explored if and how the strategy frame was adjusted to address the presence of women candidates. The analysis suggests that the established aspects of the frame change little in races featuring women. Dominant sporting metaphors (especially rugby) remained, references to war and competition and interest in the “performers” continued, and polls were – unsurprisingly – persistent. However, these established elements were “feminised” in ways that explicitly or implicitly highlighted gender as a salient component of the campaign. For example, it was observed that references to war and competition drew on female popular culture figures such as Xena warriors, and the age-old depiction of female conflict, the catfight. A more subtle, “gendered” dimension was the attention paid to the women politicians’ partners, particularly Burton

Shipley but also Peter Davis, which stretched the traditional interest in “performers” to include the performers’ spouses. Further, a substantial difference was that motherhood emerged as a new and “feminised” aspect of strategy, in the months leading up to and including the election campaign. This was explored in Chapter Nine.

13.3.3 Interviews

The women politicians interviewed for this research overwhelmingly agreed that media coverage of politics in New Zealand lacks depth. There was an interesting range of opinion as to whether gender impacts on media coverage and the relationship between women politicians and reporters. Some participants were generally dismissive of the notion that gender was a factor, with many regarding other factors such as status, personality and personal characteristics, as more influential. However, in discussion of ways gender impacted on media coverage, the women noted double standards, categorisation, and in some instances, media bias against women. The coverage received by party leaders Clark and Shipley was the focus of a number of comments. Finally, there was evidence of a tension between gender “sameness” and “difference”, and participants’ remarks indicated different underlying beliefs as to whether or not any publicity is good publicity for a politician.

13.3.4 Case Study

The Marian Hobbs and Wellington Central case study combined content analysis and interview material to explore the relationship between one female politician and the news media during an election campaign. Labour candidate Hobbs ran a community-style rather than media-centred campaign, partly because she recognised that her main opponent was an established party leader with easier access to the media, but also because of her lack of confidence in dealing with reporters, expressed several times during research interviews. However, she did go on to win the seat by a narrow margin, and may have benefited from “horse race” coverage which showed her to be a viable contender, at least partially riding on a general swing towards Labour. As Hobbs instigated little media coverage, her contacts with reporters tended to reflect the changing level of media interest in the seat. Interest ran particularly high when the Alliance candidate withdrew from the race, in what was regarded as typical MMP politicking to consolidate the centre-left vote, but gradually dropped off as the Coromandel electorate replaced Wellington Central as the most important for the shape

of the new government. The case study extended its focus to include a segment on Hobbs' experiences as a Cabinet Minister. Her lack of media training and support, as well as inexperience, resulted in a bout of highly negative news coverage and made Hobbs much more wary in her dealings with reporters.

13.4 Implications for Women In Politics

In Chapter Two, it was noted that the historically important concept of “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman, 1978a) is being eroded by a new phase of research which places more emphasis on “gendered mediation” (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999). However, the tendency for women to be omitted, trivialised and condemned in political news coverage continues, and the concept therefore still has value in the study of gender, news and politics. The results of this study, particularly those from the content and frame analysis, support this position. For most women politicians (with the exception of the leaders), the main challenge is having their political voice heard in the news media. The findings of the quantitative content analysis revealed that women are still under-represented as political news sources, and frame analysis of the New Zealand First list controversy showed male party leadership issues took priority over women's issues. Both results imply some media bias exists towards women. However, there is sufficient media interest in women politicians that they appear as news subjects in more depth than their male counterparts, although this is not translating into sourcing (i.e. women politicians are talked about more than they are talked to). This also suggests women are not pro-active enough in instigating media comment during election campaigns.

The Wellington Central case study provides an insight here, albeit to just one woman's campaign. The importance of the Wellington Central electorate to the shape of the new government was acknowledged by the news media early on, and there were two Wellington-based newspapers in the sample, of which the *Evening Post* demonstrated the most on-going interest. Marian Hobbs, as the contender for the centre-left (up against Richard Prebble, leader of the right-wing ACT Party), was therefore an important person for the media to watch, as her performance and polling would have much wider implications for the shape of the new government. Yet Hobbs elected to run a community-style campaign and had little in the way of planned media strategy. She was talked about - because her performance in the bellwether electorate would have

far-reaching implications - but admitted not being proactive in media releases and contacting reporters. There is likely to be a gender aspect to this, for as McGregor (1997) wrote, “self promotion collides head-on with women’s social conditioning and value systems” (p.6). In her discussion of female corporate directors in New Zealand and the issue of “profile”, McGregor (1997) asked whether modesty really is a virtue, and noted that

Differences in social conditioning, in male and female value systems and in women’s views of themselves influence how comfortable women are with individualising their achievements. This, in turn, affects the degree to which women will promote themselves and the ways in which they choose to do this. (p.6)

Similarly, a survey by Candy Tymson (n.d.) for the Australian Businesswomen’s Network showed that members believe the main barrier to women getting ahead in business is a lack of self-promotion.

Some women politicians who participated in the research interviews acknowledged the accessibility of “soft” media outlets (e.g. magazines) for women, but others also admitted they found media publicity difficult, and few undertook sustained work in the parliamentary press gallery. This would have repercussions during a media-based election campaign, and the situation is exacerbated by a recent trend towards a “revolving door” of female representation in New Zealand (Nicholl, 2000), which sees women voluntarily leaving politics in greater numbers, citing media intrusion as one reason. This short time in Parliament means women have less opportunity to network and build relationships with the media. Women MPs will spend time finding their feet, only to leave and be replaced by a new group of women with media inexperience.

Compounding this problem is ambivalence among some female politicians about the appeal and value of media training (see Chapters Ten, Eleven and Twelve). This tension exists despite Motion and Leitch’s (2000) observation that many female public relations practitioners who had worked with female politicians exhibited “a feminist agenda to train women politicians so they could get more access to the media coverage, with the ultimate goal being to increase the political power of women” (p.76). As discussed above, there appears to be a conflict between women’s social conditioning and the demands of contemporary, media-based politics, which requires politicians to

take responsibility for their public visibility. McGregor (1997) urged women to accept the “pragmatics of self promotion without sacrificing feminine integrity” (p.8).

Evidence that female politicians, particularly leaders (Clark, Shipley and also Fitzsimons), were subjected to more polarised media coverage has implications for how women choose to position themselves when campaigning. First, the impact of status on tone of coverage must be acknowledged. Leaders - unlike low-profile MPs - do not struggle to attract media attention but instead may have to grapple with anti-incumbency bias or an unfavourable political context. During the 1999 General Election campaign, Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark led the two major parties and were the only viable contenders for the role of Prime Minister, and the unofficial title of first elected woman Prime Minister. In an increasingly presidential style campaign, it is unsurprising that the two women dominated media coverage. However, the reality is that few women politicians become party leaders, and will not have the easy access and newsworthiness associated with potential prime ministers during an election campaign. The implications of this research for women in politics must therefore address the key issue of status, which during an election campaign separates party leaders from all other MPs (from Cabinet Ministers to backbenchers), and particularly from non-incumbent candidates. This study shows that women leaders have a newsworthy status that allows them to overcome the traditional barrier for women politicians – inadequate media coverage – but also that their gender will intersect with their status to create feminised criteria and expectations of leadership, which have implications for tone of coverage.

In particular, it appears that women leaders face greater scrutiny of their familial status (from partners to children) and, to a lesser extent, their appearance. Interestingly, the media themselves did not appear to project the issue of motherhood onto the leadership race, although there was some “playing along” with Shipley’s positioning alongside media skepticism about the tactic. It is possible that Shipley, as the first woman Prime Minister but not elected as such, pushed motherhood in an attempt to make her leadership more attractive, drawing on acceptable social notions of female leaders. It is also possible that she was motivated by political point-scoring, up against a female adversary whose Party had enjoyed a significantly higher level of support from women voters in the previous election (See Chapter Nine). However, the question of why motherhood emerged, and Shipley’s role in this, may actually be less important than the

fact that it did (although see below for discussion of women's contribution to "gendered" media coverage). It demonstrates that women leaders have to consider the intersection of gender with their media image in ways which men, who "naturally" fit the established leadership mould, do not.

The media attention to motherhood also demonstrates the difficult path women walk in regard to the acceptability of feminine or "private sphere" attributes in traditional public sphere activities such as politics. While this issue may have been clear-cut as recently as the 1970s, when Wallace (1992, 1993) suggested women successfully based their political authority on their status as wives and mothers, it is now more difficult for women. Motherhood more than ever creates a particular tension for women. For example, recent attention to the fact that more "career women" are putting off having children in the apparently mistaken belief that they will be able to conceive in their late 30s and early 40s, has been interpreted as evidence of a backlash against women's careers. As Eveline and Booth (1997) wrote in their analysis of Carmen Lawrence, women politicians are confronted with the unachievable task of pleasing both the general public and feminists.

The "intimizing" of the political news agenda reflects the blurring distinction between the public and private spheres, and has implications for both male and female politicians. New Zealand is following international trends towards political news becoming more personalised, coinciding with a move - particularly evident among National Party leaders during the 1999 and 2002 campaigns - towards visible and high-profile spouses. These spouses are touted as political assets, but also run the risk of becoming media targets as the line between public and private erodes. It has not been widely acknowledged or theorised, in feminist writing about the public and private spheres, that the distinction has already been eroded by the news media's personalisation and celebrification of political news. When politicians push family values by bringing their relations into the political spotlight, they will inevitably end up attracting unsolicited media comment about the activities and involvements of their family members. There is some lack of foresight in using family for short-term political gain, especially when there is a general blurring of boundaries as a more commercially driven media display less respect for the tradition of overlooking personal events in the lives of public figures. As discussed above, the issue of motherhood remains

problematic for women politicians, particularly leaders. Playing the family card might work for men, for whom family is an uncomplicated form of support, but not for women, for whom family has connotations of responsibility and neglect. As van Zoonen (2000) noted, in her analysis of Dutch gossip magazines' reporting of politicians, "The families of male politicians sacrifice, the families of female politicians suffer...Men have their public careers supported by their private lives: Women's careers are presented as being in opposition to their private lives" (p.115). She argued that for women politicians, the focus on family served as a reminder of their "odd" position in politics, whereas for men it was an opportunity to demonstrate reliability and integrity.

Finally, it is concluded that gender remains a factor in the presentation and interpretation of women in politics, but it is not merely a case of the news media projecting social and cultural roles onto women. The contribution of women to the news coverage they receive must be acknowledged, particularly during New Zealand's 1999 election campaign, when Shipley clearly portrayed herself as a mother, in opposition to the childless Helen Clark. This is not, however, an isolated case, for Lemish and Tidhar (1999) also documented an exploitation of what they termed the "motherhood strategy" during the 1996 Israeli election. Pušnik and Bulc (2001), too, noted that women politicians do little to deconstruct the dominant discourses of motherhood and femininity. Similarly, back in the New Zealand, the 2002 local body elections yielded another example, when a young North Shore candidate, Paula Gillon, billed herself as "the naked politician" and posed in blue tulle and a smile for sexy billboards and postcards. She was elected, but many of her female opponents expressed despair that their fight to be taken seriously over the years had been effectively undone by Gillon's actions. There are bigger issues at stake for women politicians, who are advised to at least consider the long-term outcomes as well as the possibility of short-term gains. The question remains whether in an effort to boost the representation of women, short-term political gain should be emphasised over long-term change. Further, such strategies do carry risks, as McCarthy and Clare (1999) documented. When Jenny Shipley positioned herself as a mother, in a move widely interpreted as a veiled attack on Clark, she was actively seeking the "family values" vote – but at the expense of her female opponent. The move appears to have backfired in several ways, unpopular with a voting public who recalled her "anti-family" policies of the early 1990s, and activating societal ambivalence about the mother as political leader (McCarthy & Clare, 1999).

However, “placing some of the onus on women themselves should not...allow us to be blinkered to the resilience of traditional social structures and cultural patterns” (McGregor, 1997, p.9). For example, the finding that women politicians received more polarised coverage (less likely to be covered neutrally and more likely to be covered positively, and to a lesser extent, negatively) is a difficult one for the women politicians themselves to deal with. In some respects, this finding may reflect the specific context of the 1999 General Election, where women led both the high polling Labour Party (which translated into positive coverage of Clark), and the less popular National Party (Shipley was said to have inherited a “poisoned chalice” when she became leader in 1997). Further research into the persistence of this trend is desirable, particularly in relation to coverage of Clark, who enjoyed high levels of public support in the lead-up to the 1999 election, and indeed throughout her first term as Prime Minister (although this is in marked contrast to negative coverage earlier in her career - see Chapter Nine). There is some evidence in the literature, and in this research, that initially positive media coverage of women politicians can quickly be replaced by negative sentiment, in the classic “saint to sinner” theme (for example, coverage of Suzanne Bruce and Marian Hobbs – see Chapters Eight and Twelve). This form of gender bias raises further questions about the influence of news media structures.

13.5 Implications for the Media and the Electoral System

The research findings reveal that gender issues do not gain much traction in the news media, unless they involve conflict and challenge to leadership. The New Zealand First list controversy showed that issues of gender politics are glossed over, even when there is an indication of wider structural concerns for women candidates. This partially reflects the structural limitations of news (for example, events fit the news cycle better than issues and are therefore easier to cover). But it is also likely that the high profile of women in the 1999 election campaign blinded the predominantly male news media to genuine issues of political sexism. It is also likely that a preoccupation with anti-Peters and anti-MMP sentiment prevented deeper political analysis of this issue. The fact that National dropped one of its longest-serving woman MPs, Katherine O’Regan, to an unelectable position on the party list was not widely commented upon, even though it would have linked well to the experiences of New Zealand First politicians, Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald. And even in 2002, when National’s pruning of incumbent MPs to make way for a revitalised party was widely covered, only the

Listener's political columnist noted that National's women MPs had been the biggest casualties in the list rankings (Clifton, 2002).

The wider problem here relates to traditional news processes, and dominant and "masculine" political news frames. While journalism in New Zealand has become "feminised", with near-equal numbers of male and female reporters, and more women entering training programmes, senior newsroom positions tend to be held by men (McGregor, 1996a). Women politicians can do more to build strong relationships with the media, and political parties can provide better support in the form of advice and training, but they can not change the nature of political reporting, at least not immediately. However, it is anticipated that with greater numbers, women politicians may be able to formulate an alternative political news agenda, although the 1999 election campaign showed little evidence of this.

The findings of this research also have implications for a news media guided by notions of social responsibility and commitment to diversity. To remain relevant in contemporary society, newspapers must compete with other more specialised news formats (such as magazines, narrow cast news, Internet), and also need to change their style of political reporting to reflect the new and more diverse MMP environment (Morrison, 1996; Palmer, 1996). Their political and commercial value lies with this ability to reach a wide and varied audience. Of particular importance to journalism educators who place great value on professionalism are the findings that women are sourced comparatively less often than men, and that the tone of their political coverage is less likely to be neutral. On-going training, along with management and reporter commitment to equality and diversity, is vital if change is to occur. The best hopes for diversity of content lie with diversity among media producers. However, the recent backlash against diversity and "political correctness" in the media (see Lehrman, 2002), and the call to "let the press be the press", needs to be monitored.

Many New Zealand commentators have noted that MMP is good for women's political representation, and at the time of the 1999 General Election, and for the first time in the nation's history, women led (or co-led) three of the political parties. However, the media have been slow to rise to the challenges of reporting in an MMP environment (Palmer, 2002). Instead, anti-MMP sentiment was common in newspapers during the

1999 General Election campaign. This trend might unfairly burden women, particularly those from smaller parties, who are more likely to be list or “second class” MPs (Ward, 1998). Political parties are not formally accountable for their list rankings (New Zealand has chosen not to adopt what are known as “open lists”), so the media have a duty to scrutinise all parties’ lists equally, and not just single out the smaller parties. When the media fail to explore sexism in list processes, parties can continue to avoid gender balance, and one of the main potential advantages of MMP will be lost.

13.6 Conclusion

New Zealand’s shift to MMP promised women better electoral representation and the challenges of the new political system raised the prospect of qualitatively better media coverage. This thesis has examined the extent to which this two-fold promise has been kept.

The findings of this research serve as an important reminder that the high-profile successes of some female politicians do not mean the battle for political and media equity is over. It is too early to make any conclusive comment about the impact of MMP on women’s long-term political and media representation. There is empirical and anecdotal evidence that change is occurring, but researchers must continue to take a critical approach in exploring the social and news structures, processes and values that contribute to women’s political marginalisation. While the 1999 General Election in New Zealand marked an important step on the path towards political and media equity, on-going media monitoring and a genuine commitment to diversity are necessary to ensure future progress. The future of democracy depends on it.

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APPENDIX A:
GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED
IN THE THESIS

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
Electorate MP	A Member of Parliament (MP) elected in a geographical area. The person who wins the most votes in an electorate becomes the electorate MP. 69 of New Zealand's 120 MPs represent an electorate, either general (62) or Maori (7).
FPP	First Past the Post. "Winner takes all" electoral system, used in New Zealand until an electoral referendum in 1993 prompted a move to proportional representation (in the form of MMP).
List MP	A Member of Parliament (MP) elected through the party list. 51 of New Zealand's 120 MPs are list MPs.
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional. An electoral system based on proportional representation, and first used in New Zealand in the 1996 General Election. Each voter has two votes: one for their local electorate MP (electorate vote) and one for the party they most want to represent them in Parliament (party vote). The party vote determines the overall composition of Parliament.
MP	Member of Parliament. An elected representative in New Zealand's House of Representatives. Under MMP, an MP may be elected in a geographical area (electorate MP) or through a party list (list MP).
NZPA	New Zealand Press Association
Party list	A ranked list of candidates, decided on and put forward by a political party before the election. List candidates become MPs following the order of the party list. A candidate may contest an electorate and be on the party list but if they win an electorate seat, their name is deleted from the party list.

**APPENDIX B:
CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SCHEDULE**

**Content Analysis of Metropolitan and Provincial Newspaper Coverage
of the 1999 General Election**

Section 1 – The story

1. What is the number of the story?

2. In which newspaper was the story published?

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Dominion | 1 |
| Evening Post | 2 |
| New Zealand Herald | 3 |
| Waikato Times | 4 |
| Evening Standard | 5 |
| The Press | 6 |
| Otago Daily Times | 7 |
| Sunday Star Times | 8 |
| Sunday News | 9 |

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(1-4)

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(5)

3. What date was the story published? (day/month)

4. On what page was the story published?

--	--	--	--

(6-9)

5. Was the story published as a:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Lead story | 1 |
| Display story | 2 |
| Brief/campaign diary | 3 |
| Column (opinion) | 4 |
| Feature | 5 |
| Other | 6 |

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(10-11)

--

(12)

6. Does the story have a woman/women as a central focus?

- | | |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |

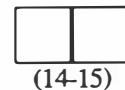
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(13)

Details

7. What is the main topic of the story?

Agriculture	1
Broadcasting	2
Budget deficit	3
Business development	4
Crime	5
Cultural issues	6
Defence	7
Economic policy	8
Education	9
Election campaign (style)	10
Election campaign (funding)	11
Election campaign (organisation)	12
Election campaign (advertising and publicity)	13
Election campaign (roadshow)	14
Election campaign (candidates)	15
Election campaign (leadership)	16
Election campaign (other)	17
Election campaign (polls)	18
Election campaign (coalition)	19
Election campaign (Maori seats)	20
Energy	21
Environment	22
Ethnic minorities	23
Fishing	24
Foreign Affairs	25
Greypower	26
Health	27
Housing	28
Immigration	29
Industrial relations	30
Inflation	31
Maori issues	32
News media	33
Proportional representation	34
Party list	35
Party vote	36
Political debates	37
Poverty	38
Religion	39
Regional issues	40
Sport	41
Social welfare	42
Taxes	43
Tourism	44
Trade	45
Transport	46
Unemployment/Employment	47
Women	48
Youth	49
Other	50
Local government	51



8. Is the story by-lined?

- Yes 1
- No 2

If the answer is no, go to Qu. 11

(16)

9. If the story is by-lined, is the by-line a:

- Political reporter 1
- Reporter 2
- Agency 3
- Agency and reporter 4
- Columnist 5
- Other 6

(17)

10. If the story is by-lined, what is the writer's gender?

- Male 1
- Female 2
- Unknown 3

(18)

11. Does the story contain gendered language? (e.g. Xena princesses)

- Yes 1
- No 2

(19)

If yes, please describe below (eg. what is said, who says it)

12. Does the story contain controversy? (Two or more sides in opposition)?

- Yes 1
- No 2

If the answer is no, go to Question 15

(20)

13. If the story contains controversy, is this controversy predominantly:

- Inter party 1
- Intra party 2
- Other 3

(21)

14. If the story contains controversy, is gender part of this controversy?

- Yes 1
- No 2

(22)

If so, please provide details

15. Does the story contain any visual material?

- Yes 1
- No 2

If the answer is no, go to Question 17

(23)

16. If the story contains visual material, what type of visual material is it?

- Photograph 1
- Cartoon 2
- Graphics 3
- Logo 4
- Other 5

(24)

17. How many individuals are identified in the story? (up to 9)

(If no individuals are identified in the story, end coding for this story now)

(25)

18. Does the story mention

- Clark only 1
- Shipley only 2
- Clark and Shipley 3
- Neither Clark or Shipley 4

(If answering '4', go straight to section 2. Otherwise, continue to question 19)

(26)

19. Are Shipley or Clark's family members mentioned?

- Yes 1
- No 2

(27)

If so, please provide details (e.g. who is mentioned, who mentions them)

20. Are any competence or viability issues raised in relation to Shipley and/or Clark?

Yes 1
No 2

(28)

If so, please provide details

21. What words or short phrases are used to describe Shipley and/or Clark?

Who are they attributed to?

Section 2 – The individuals

This section needs to be coded for EACH individual identified in the story.

22. What is the number of the story?

--	--	--	--

(1-4)

23. What is the number of the individual?

--

(5)

24. What is the role of individual?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Prime Minister | 1 |
| Leader of Opposition | 2 |
| Other party leader | 3 |
| Other politician (includes candidate) | 4 |
| Politician's spouse | 5 |
| Other Politician's family member | 6 |
| Politician's spokesperson | 7 |
| Former politician | 8 |
| Political commentator | 9 |
| Political party official/staff | 10 |
| Member of public | 11 |
| Public servant | 12 |
| Lobby group spokesperson | 13 |
| Journalist | 14 |
| Company representative | 15 |
| Other | 16 |

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(6-7)

(If answering 1,2,3 or 4, please continue to the next question. Otherwise end coding for this individual here)

25. Who is the politician?

- | | |
|----------------------|----|
| Anderton, Jim | 1 |
| Ardern, Shane | 2 |
| Awatere Huata, Donna | 3 |
| Barker, Rick | 4 |
| Beyer, Georgina | 5 |
| Birch, Bill | 6 |
| Bird, Tony | 7 |
| Bloxham, Jenny | 8 |
| Bradford, Max | 9 |
| Bradford, Sue | 10 |
| Brownlee, Gerry | 11 |
| Bruce, Suzanne | 12 |
| Burton, Mark | 13 |
| Carter, Chris | 14 |
| Carter, David | 15 |
| Carter, John | 16 |

Clark, Helen (Opposition leader)	17
Cosgrove, Clayton	18
Couper, Gideon	19
Creech, Wyatt	20
Cullen, Michael	21
Dalziel, Lianne	22
Delamere, Tuariki	23
Donald, Rod (PL)	24
Duncan, Helen	25
Dunne, Peter (PL)	26
Duynhoven, Harry	27
Dyson, Ruth	28
Elder, Jack	29
English, Bill	30
Ewen-Street, Ian	31
Field, Taito (Phillip)	32
Fitzsimons, Jeanette (PL)	33
Goff, Phil	34
Gosche, Mark	35
Graham, Doug	36
Hasler, Marie	37
Hawke, Joseph	38
Henare, Tau (PL)	39
Hawkeswood, Margaret	40
Herlihy, Gavan	41
Hide, Rodney	42
Hobbs, Marian	43
Hodgson, Pete	44
Hormia, Parekura	45
Hunt, Jonathan	46
Keall, Judy	47
Kelly, Graham	48
King, Annette	49
Kopu, Alamein (PL)	50
Kyd, Warren	51
Laban, Winnie	52
Lee, Sandra	53
Mackey, Janet	54
Maharey, Steve	55
Mahuta, Nanaia	56
Mallard, Trevor	57
Mapp, Wayne	58
Mark, Ron	59
McCully, Murray	60
McDonald, Robyn	61
McKinnon, Don	62
McLean, Murray	63
Neeson, Brian	64
O'Regan, Katherine	65
Peck, Mark	66
Peters, Winston (PL)	67
Pettis, Jill	68



(8-10)

Power, Simon	69
Prebble, Richard (PL)	70
Revell, Ian	71
Roy, Eric	72
Ryall, Tony	73
Samuels, Dover	74
Shipley, Jenny	75
Simcock, Bob	76
Simich, Clem	77
Smith, Lockwood	78
Smith, Nick	79
Sowry, Roger	80
Steel, Tony	81
Sutton, Jim	82
Swain, Paul	83
Tanczos, Nandor	84
Te Heuheu, Georgina	85
Tizard, Judith	86
Turia, Tariana	87
Upton, Simon	88
Vernon, Belinda	89
Wicks, Karehana	90
Williamson, Maurice	91
Wilson, Margaret	92
Worth, Richard	93
Wright, John	94
Wyllie, Tu	95
Yates, Dianne	96
Young, Annabel	97
Tame Iti	98
Angeline Greensill	99
Ken Mair	100
Derek Fox	101
Brian Freath	102
Frank Grover	103
Graham Capil (PL)	104
Phillida Bunkle	105
Doug Kidd	106
Patricia Schnauer	107
Pam Corkery	108
Mita Rinui	109
Grant Gillon	110
Michael Treen	111
Ken Shirley	112
Richard Steele	113
David Steele	114
Penny Webster	115
Ian Walker	116
Chris Lewis	117
Lindsay Perigo (PL)	118
Deborah Coddington	119
Richard McGrath	120
Bernard Darnton	121
Tina White	122
Peter Linton	123

Larry Timberlake	124
Owen Jennings	125
Michael Tritt	126
Katherine Rich	127
Hilary Calvert	128
Donna Waipouri-Baxter	129
Alan McDonald	130
Dave Harris	131
Paul McMullan	132
D'ugh Mackie	133
Val Dearman	134
Pip Direen	135
Gerry Eckhoff	136
Bill Holvey	137
Miles Notman	138
Peter Brown	139
Brian Donnelly	140
Doug Woolerton	141
Murray Pirret	142
Anthony Walton (PL)	143
David Brown	144
Murray Smith	145
Geoff Hounsell	146
Grant Bowater	147
Allana Hiha	148
Daryl Gregory	149
Kevin Harper	150
Larry Baldock	151
Eric Chuah	152
Gilbert Myles	153
George Hawkins	154
Marion Smith	155
Stephanie (Steve) Chadwick	156
Vanessa Neeson	157
Laila Harre	158
Wayne Harris	159
Jenine Clift	160
Tuku Morgan	161
Amy Ross	162
Atawhai Tibble	163
Jonathan Morgan	164
Stuart Roddick	165
Helma Vermeulen	166
Owen Dance	167
Don Murray	168
Sue Kedgley	169
Kerry Prendergast	170
Denis O'Rourke	171
Pat O'Dea	172
Charles Crofts	173
Andrew Gin	174
David Benson-Pope	175
Mark Ryan	176
Russell Keast	177
Pansy Wong	178

George Halligan	179
Matt Robson	180
John Tamihere	181
Mahara Okeroa	182
Muriel Newman	183
John Jamieson	184
Phillip Sherry	185
John Sturges	186
Tim Barnett	187
Clare Radomske	188
Dave Macpherson	189
Hendrik Koch	190
John Tonson	191
Rana Waitai	192
Api Malu	193
Derek Best	194
Rebecca Matthews	195
Kathryn Asare	196
Mike Sheppard	197
Aditya Prakash Kashyap	198
Ram Prakash	199
Jim Howard	200
Josie Anderson	201
Willie Jackson	202
Amokura Panoho	203
Derek Quigley	204
Ann Batten	205
Jill Henry	206
John Luxton	207
Christopher Milne	208
Philip Grimmett	209
Martin Gallagher	210
Garry Mallett	211
Dun Mihaka	212
Martin Poulsen	213
Christine Fletcher	214
Brett Ambler	215
Mana'o Mulitalo	216
Rodney Hansen	217
Gerry Campbell	218
Phil Raffills	219
Max Whitehead	220
Chris Comeskey	221
Sarah Martin	222
Chris Hay	223
Mark Thomas	224
Joy Quigley	225
Denis Marshall	226
Mike Appleby (PL)	227
Christine Mitchell	228
Jeanette Saxby	229
David Ball	230
Anton Foljambe	231
Ruth Gray	232

Michael Hansen	233
Ann Lewis	234
Rama Ramanathan	235
David Tranter	236
Eric Whitworth	237
Clifford Mundy	238
David Jacobs	239
Alex Swney	240
Lynne Pillay	241
Barrie Paterson	242
Bill Bevan	243
Mike Ferguson	244
Quentin Findlay	245
Willie Martin	246
Mark Servian	247
John Stringer	248
Steve Kidby	249
Paul Booth	250
Ian Douglas	251
John Allen	252
Laurence Boomert	253
Cathy Casey	254
Rob Harris	255
Paul Henry	256
Andrew Davies	257
Athol Gould	258
Eleanor Goodall	259
Fred Iakopo	260
Avon Johnson	261
Pita Cammock	262
Neil Kirton	263
David Fowler	264
John Pemberton	265
Keith Locke	266
Paul Cronin	267
Lindsay Tisch	268
Gordon Stewart	269
Lynda Scott	270
Geoff Braybrooke	271
Sylvia Taylor	272
John Banks	273
Mike Lloyd	274
Vic Jarvis	275
Craig Walsham	276
Peter Gresham	277
Gary Williams	278
Robert Shaw	279
Cliff Bedwell	280
Steve Richards	281
Graeme Cairns (PL)	282
David Cunliffe	283
Peter Jamieson	284
Woon Kim	285
Dick Quax	286
Patrick Hine	287

Trevor Barnard	288
Jane Hudson	289
Az Mumtaz	290
Pita Paraone	291
Barry Pepperell	292
David Rose	293
Chris Salt	294
Robin Corner	295
Michael Holt	296
Peter McArdle	297
Margaret McCarrigan	298
Paul Smith	299
Lei Graham	300
Arthur Anae	301
Chris Rivers	302
Laura Mason	303
Stephen Franks	304
Enosa Auva'a	305
Toia Lucas	306
Lech Beltowski	307
Uaita Levi	308
Lindy Palmer	309
Lum'ava Samuela-Pula	310
Stuart Boag	311
Damien O'Connor	312
Lorraine Anderson	313
Jonathan Mosen	314
Tricia Cutforth	315
Paul Hutchison	316
Trish Ryan	317
Kenny Barclay	318
Stephnie de Ruyter	319
Don Moore	320
Brian McNamara	321

26. What is the politician's gender?

Male	1
Female	2

(11)

27. What is the politician's political status?

Incumbent	1
Challenger	2

(12)

28. In the story, is the politician:

Mentioned only	1
Appearing to a limited extent	2
Appearing to a moderate extent	3
Dominating the story	4

(13)

(If the politician is mentioned only, end coding for this individual now. Otherwise, continue onto the next question)

29. Is the coverage of the politician predominantly:

- Positive 1
- Negative 2
- Neutral 3

(14)

30. What best describes the way the politician speaks in the story?

- Cited and/or quoted first 1
- Cited and/or quoted along with others 2
- Not cited and/or quoted 3

(15)

31. What is the main issue to which the politician is linked?

- Agriculture 1
- Broadcasting 2
- Budget deficit 3
- Business development 4
- Crime 5
- Cultural issues 6
- Defence 7
- Economic policy 8
- Education 9
- Election campaign (style) 10
- Election campaign (funding) 11
- Election campaign (organisation) 12
- Election campaign (advertising and publicity) 13
- Election campaign (roadshow) 14
- Election campaign (candidates) 15
- Election campaign (leadership) 16
- Election campaign (other) 17
- Election campaign (polls) 18
- Election campaign (coalition) 19
- Election campaign (Maori seats) 20
- Energy 21
- Environment 22
- Ethnic minorities 23
- Fishing 24
- Foreign Affairs 25
- Greypower 26
- Health 27
- Housing 28
- Immigration 29
- Industrial relations 30
- Inflation 31

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(16-17)

Maori issues	32
News media	33
Proportional representation	34
Party list	35
Party vote	36
Political debates	37
Poverty	38
Religion	39
Regional issues	40
Sport	41
Social welfare	42
Taxes	43
Tourism	44
Trade	45
Transport	46
Unemployment/Employment	47
Women	48
Youth	49
Other	50
Local government	51

32. Is the politician mentioned in the headline?

Yes 1
No 2

(18)

33. Does the politician appear in a visual?

Yes 1
No 2

(19)

(If the answer is no, please go to Question 35)

34. If the politician appears in a visual, is his/her depiction in the visual:

Positive 1
Negative 2
Neutral 3

(20)

35. Does the story contain any reference to the politician's physical appearance?

Yes 1
No 2

(21)

Details _____

APPENDIX C:
1999 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES USED IN CONTENT AND FRAME ANALYSIS
(CHAPTERS FIVE, EIGHT AND NINE)

- Anderton wants deputy leader slot in coalition (1999, November 2). *Evening Standard*, p.2.
- A political kneecapping. (1999, November 6). *Evening Post*, p.4.
- Armstrong, J. (1999a, November 6). Election week that was: Labour fails to wow voters but Clark isn't panicking. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A6.
- Armstrong, J. (1999b, November 20). Election week that was: Can National find hat with a rabbit? *New Zealand Herald*, p.A6.
- Armstrong, J. (1999c, November 22). Labour targets minor parties. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Armstrong, J. (1999d, November 26). Polls and debates have PM on ropes. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5
- Bain, H. (1999a, May 17). Childless focus pathetic – Clark. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Bain, H. (1999b, November 2). All Black loss could put boot into National's feel-good plan. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Bain, H. (1999c, November 2). Shipley, Clark even; Anderton wins. *Dominion*, p.3.
- Bain, H. (1999d, November 2). Whip may lay charge against protester. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Bain, H. (1999e, November 8). Mauri Pacific stresses identity. *Dominion*, p.11. d
- Bain, H. (1999f, November 10). Attention to looks "part of the package". *Press*, p.11
- Bain, H. (1999g, November 12). A campaign running out of pep. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Bain, H. (1999h, November 13). Seeking a spouse with nous. *Dominion*, p.19
- Bain, H. (1999i, November 13). Women trouble: Triple strife for harassed Peters. *Dominion*, p.1
- Bain, H. (1999j, November 16). Bruce changes mind again, quits election. *Dominion*, p.1
- Bain, H. (1999k, November 22). Clark sees herself as certain winner. *Dominion*, p.1
- Bain, H. (1999l, November 24). Noisy lunch yielded no break from campaigning. *Dominion*, p.2

- Barber, D. (1999, April 24). Warrior princesses prepare for battle in NZ poll. *The Age*, p.25.
- Bedford, D., & Love, P. (1999, November 20). Financial face-off. *Evening Post*, pp.15, 18.
- Berry, R. (1999, November 8). Sir Douglas: a convert to the Waitangi cause. *Evening Post*, p.5.
- Beston, A. (1999a, November 9). Political queens squabble in the lounge. *Waikato Times*, p.1.
- Beston, A. (1999b, November 18). Shipley stays relaxed in face of hostility. *Waikato Times*, p.1.
- Beston, A. (1999c, November 26). All the omens point to a Labour win. *Waikato Times*, p.2.
- Beston, A. (1999d, November 26). Nats will struggle to win: Dunne. *Waikato Times*, p.1.
- Beston, A. (1999e, November 26). Their famous last words. *Waikato Times*, p.7.
- Big daddy. (1999, November 4). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5.
- Bingham, E., & Orsman, B. (1999, November 15). Fracas in NZ First's ranks. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Bloxham, NZ First fallout continues. (1999, November 6). *Waikato Times*, p.2.
- Brockett, M. (1999, November 15). Bruce regrets telling NZ First of resignation. *Dominion*, p.1
- Browne, A. (1999a, November 12). Candidate faces GST charges. *Evening Standard*, p.1
- Browne, A. (1999b, November 16). Bruce officially not candidate. *Evening Standard*, p.1
- Catherall, S. (1999, November 14). NZ First on the ropes. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A1
- Clark all set to form new government (1999, November 26). *Evening Post*, p.1.
- Clark leads team on walkabout (1999, November 16). *Dominion*, p.2.
- Clark mum over jibes. (1999, February 5). *Waikato Times*, p.2.
- Clark quizzed on kids. (1999, November 24). *Press*, p.3.
- Clark says Nats playing dirty. (1999, April 19). *Evening Standard*, p.4.

- Clark's mouth "really is hers". (1999, November 9). *Dominion*, p.2
- Clarke, B. (1999, November 28). Shipley wants to stay boss. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A3.
- Clausen, J. (1999a, November 14). Burton gets Jenny's vote. *Sunday News*, p.4.
- Clausen, J. (1999b, November 14). Holmes: I didn't stage a catfight. *Sunday News*, p.1
- Close bout as main party heavyweights clash head to head (1999, November 24). *Waikato Times*, p.3
- Comment clarified. (1999, November 6). *Dominion*, p.3
- Contrasting home lives of party leaders. (1999, April 20). *Evening Post*, p.4.
- Cross, B. (1999, November 16). Nauseated by Shipley [Letter to the editor]. *Evening Post*, p.4.
- "Dairy princess" leads NZ First's rural attack. (1999, July 22). *Press*, p.22.
- Daniels, C. (1999a, November 2). Assault claim fanciful rubbish says MP. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5.
- Daniels, C. (1999b, November 4). Mamma mia! Manurewa MP drives point home. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A4.
- de Boni, D. (1999, November 20). Heads men win, tails women lose. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A2.
- Diary. (1999, November 12). *Dominion*, p.6.
- Dore, C. (1999, November 26). Mother of a challenge. *The Australian*, p.13.
- Edwards, Brent. (1999a, November 2). Tax cut tunes out of synch. *Evening Post*, p.2
- Edwards, Brent. (1999b, November 4). Hobbs endorses Alliance vote. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Edwards, Brent. (1999c, November 6). Dutiful Doreen braves husband's hustings. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Edwards, Brent. (1999d, November 16). Kiwis can smell a rat, says Peters. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Edwards, Brent. (1999e, November 20). Nats giving Greens most fertile soil. *Evening Post*, p.2.

- Espiner, G. (1999c, November 2). Yes-no questions stump leaders. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Espiner, G. (1999d, November 4). Peters defends party list. *Evening Post*, p.1
- Espiner, G. (1999e, November 10). Hobnobbing in the suburbs. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Espiner, G. (1999f, November 18). Shipley under fire in Coromandel. *Evening Post*, p.2.
- Face-off tactics. (1999, November 14). *Sunday Star Times*, p.A2.
- Fallow, B. (1999, November 26). Tax and growth – which party is right? *New Zealand Herald*, p.A4
- Gallagher, R. (1999, November 10). Letter to the editor: Forget babies [Letter to the editor]. *Dominion*, p.12.
- Gamble, W. (1999, November 24). Slimmer Jim’s new style. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A6.
- Garner, T. (1999, November 10). Tizard in clear as rivals go after party vote. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A7.
- Holloway, B. (1999, November 24). “Murray McWho” – Coromandel’s shy MP. *Waikato Times*, p.2.
- Honours about even as two leaders go head-to-head (1999, November 24). *Otago Daily Times*, p.12.
- Hubbard, A. (1999, November 14). Selling a vision. *Sunday Star Times*, pp.C1-2.
- Importance of leadership. (1999, August 28). *Evening Post*, p.4.
- Inglis, S. (1999, November 2). Burton has edge in Taupo. *Waikato Times*, p.7.
- James, C. (1999a, November 8). Soft sell with mistaken spin (honestly!). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5.
- James, C. (1999b, November 24). Is it time for a change of woman at the top? *New Zealand Herald*, p.A19.
- Johnston, M. (1999, November 18). Arts policy strikes a welcome chord. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5
- Knowles, R. (1999, November 14). Other mums [Letter to the editor]. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A10.

- Laugesen, R. (1999a, August 15). Shipley X-factor needed: Clark “more honest” but austere. *Sunday Star Times*, p.C2.
- Laugesen, R. (1999b, November 14). Polls grim for National. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A1.
- Laugesen, R. (1999c, November 14). Passionless politics fail to ignite voters. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A2.
- Laugesen, R. (1999d, November 28). Voters warm to very public friendship. *Sunday Star Times*, p.A3.
- Laxon, A. (1999, November 20.) Clark leads poll for PM. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Laxon, A., & NZPA. (1999, November 5). PM jumps into NZ First list row. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5.
- Leaders neck and neck in TV debate (1999, November 24). *Dominion*, p.1
- Leaked memo not National policy. (1999, May 10). *Evening Standard*, p.2.
- Luke, P. (1999a, November 6). National’s taxing week. *Press*, p.11
- Luke, P. (1999b, November 12). Gloves off as PM targets “lies”. *Press*, p.3
- Luke, P. (1999c, November 20). The campaign: smoke, but little sign of fire. *Press*, p.11.
- Luke, P. (1999d, November 26). National looks to an act of faith. *Press*, p.5.
- Mackenzie, D. (1999a, November 4). NZ First MP feels betrayed by Peters. *Otago Daily Times*, p.1
- Mackenzie, D. (1999b, November 6). Lack of trust prompts return of election material. *Otago Daily Times*, p.4
- Mackenzie, D. (1999c, November 8). Winston Peters embarks on a power trip but his credibility is in tatters. *Otago Daily Times*, p.4.
- Mackenzie, D. (1999d, November 10). Bloxham not at launch. *Otago Daily Times*, p.4.
- Mackenzie, D. (1999e, November 18). Peters’ visit helps Bloxham to move on. *Otago Daily Times*, p.9.
- Mackenzie, D. (1999f, November 26). Labour, Alliance, Greens expected to succeed. *Otago Daily Times*, p.4.

- Main, V. (1999a, October 18). When Sir William pays a visit, it's politics, not politeness. *Dominion*, p.2
- Main, V. (1999b, November 1). Bover boy Prebble puts the boot into "uncaring" Nats. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Main, V. (1999c, November 8). Shipley and Clark pounce on would-be queen-maker. *Dominion*, p.2
- Main, V. (1999d, November 15). Even a French farce could do without the melodrama. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Main, V. (1999e, November 20). Nats go all out to rein in Labour's lead. *Dominion*, p.1.
- Main, V. (1999f, November 22). Great dollops of mongrel aren't helping National. *Dominion*, p.2
- Mainwaring, D. (1999, November 10). A slur on women [Letter to the editor]. *Waikato Times*, p.6.
- McDonald confident of poll win. (1999, November 10). *Press*, p.40.
- Metherell, C. (1999, October 1). Shipley's qualifications [Letter to the editor]. *Press*, p.10.
- Munro, M. (1999, November 6). Clark shocked [Letter to the editor]. *Dominion*, p.20.
- Nats launch law offensive. (1999, November 12). *Evening Standard*, p.2.
- No waves from the leaders. (1999, November 1). *Waikato Times*, p.2.
- No. 20 with a bullet. (1999, November 4). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- NZ First's meltdown. (1999, November 16). *Dominion*, p.8
- Orsman, B. (1999a, November 12). NZ First woman faces GST charges. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Orsman, B. (1999b, November 13). Rising NZ star quits. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Orsman, B. (1999c, November 16). Nats throw top guns into fight for key seat. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A4.
- Orsman, B. (1999d, November 20). Shipley attack blunted by hospital concerns. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A6.
- Party is undie-free. (1999, November 22). *Evening Post*, p.2.

Party won't affirm "I'm back" boast. (1999, November 26). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A4.

Pepperell, S. (1999, November 10). Cerise is big with leading ladies. *Waikato Times*, p.2.

Peters, G. (1999, November 10). Into enemy territory. *Evening Post*, p.2.

Peters lashes demoted MPs. (1999, November 7). *Sunday Star Times*, p.A5.

Peters' decision gutless, MP says. (1999, November 4). *Waikato Times*, p.1.

Peters' problem with women. (1999, November 16). *Waikato Times*, p.6.

PM sparkles in the malls. (1999, November 6). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A6.

Poll vaults on the campaign trail. (1999, November 12). *Press*, p.2.

Poster adds impetus to speech. (1999, November 5). *Dominion*, p.3.

Privacy on boats an issue. (1999, November 12). *Otago Daily Times*, p.3.

Putting on the gloss (1999, November 2). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.

Queenmaker versus Queen Bee. (1999, November 8). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.

Rentoul, M. (1999, November 16). The tide may be turning along the Waimakariri. *Press*, p.5.

Right slams Green "revolutionary". (1999, November 22). *Evening Post*, p.1.

Roughan, J. (1999a, November 6). Return of the bluestockings. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A18.

Roughan, J. (1999b, November 24). Clark a clear winner on points. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.

Scoring the exchange. (1999, November 5). *Evening Post*, p.2.

Scott, T. (1999a, November 8). It's politics, but not as we know it. *Evening Post*, p.2.

Scott, T. (1999b, November 22). Politicians twitchy over poll. *Evening Post*, p.2.

Scuffles as students ambush Shipley (1999, November 16). *Dominion*, p.2.

Serious fun. (1999, November 16). *Otago Daily Times*, p.4.

Shipley has legs on rivals. (1999, November 6). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.

- Shipley's "mum" angle misjudged, says Clark. (1999, October 30). *Dominion*, p.1.
- Stretching the limit. (1999, November 12). *Otago Daily Times*, p.4.
- Taylor, K. (1999, November 12). Shipley confident in spite of polls. *Press*, p.6.
- Venter, N. (1999b, October 19). Neck and neck poll "like Xena princesses battling it out" – Harvey. *Dominion*, p.2.
- Venter, N. (1999c, November 5). Peters: I have no problem with women. *Dominion*, p.1.
- Wellwood, E. (1999a, November 4). MP angered by demotion. *Press*, p.8.
- Wellwood, E. (1999b, November 5). Dumped MPs hit back at leader Peters. *Press*, p.3.
- Wellwood, E. (1999c, November 12). National plan to widen police powers on DNA. *Press*, p.1.
- Where there's smoke there's fire... (1999, November 18). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A1.
- Who's going to win tomorrow? (1999, November 26). *New Zealand Herald*, p.A5.
- Williams, C. (1999, November 4). Election candidates bland, tired. *Waikato Times*, p.6.
- Wilson, D. (1999, November 20). Shopping for votes. *Press*, p.3.
- Wives lose travel perks. (1999, November 6). *Otago Daily Times*, p.2.
- Wives upset about female observers. (1999, November 12). *Press*, p.8.
- Young, A., & Orsman, B. (1999, November 16). "Resigning" candidate to campaign on. *New Zealand Herald*, p.A3.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW FORMAT

Coverage

1. Can you give a general description of the news coverage you have had since entering politics?
2. Have you been aware of any gender stereotypes in this coverage? If so, what form did this take?
3. Do you feel that any of the coverage you received might have been different if you were a man in the same situation?
4. What coverage are you seeking in the build up to the election? Is gender important to how you try to present yourself?
5. Have you had any media training? If so, what was involved?

Media Relationships

6. Do you feel that being a woman has helped or hindered you in your relationship with the news media?
7. Do you prefer dealing with female reporters?
8. Do you think there are any particular difficulties that political women have when dealing with the media?
9. Have you observed any differences in media coverage because we have two women “running” for Prime Minister?
10. What advice would you give other political women (what have you learnt?)

General

11. What are your views on political coverage generally?

Note: These questions varied slightly between interviews and were occasionally adapted to reflect constraints such as time. In some interviews, follow-up questions may also have been asked.