



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

1-1-2009

From Yellow Peril to Model Minority? A Comparative Analysis of a Newspaper's Depiction of the Chinese in New Zealand at the Start of the 20th and 21st Centuries

G. Hannis

Massey University, New Zealand

Recommended Citation

Hannis, G., From Yellow Peril to Model Minority? A Comparative Analysis of a Newspaper's Depiction of the Chinese in New Zealand at the Start of the 20th and 21st Centuries, *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 19, 2009, 85-98.

Available at:<http://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss19/9>

From Yellow Peril to Model Minority? A Comparative Analysis of a Newspaper's Depiction of the Chinese in New Zealand at the Start of the 20th and 21st Centuries

Grant Hannis

Massey University, New Zealand

Abstract

The mainstream media are often held to represent ethnic minorities in stereotypical ways. This paper analyses coverage of the Chinese in New Zealand in a major newspaper at the start of the 20th and 21st centuries to determine the nature of that coverage, what voices dominated, and changes over time. In both periods the newspaper portrayed Chinese largely through the eyes of white New Zealand, the country's dominant cultural voice. In the earlier period, the Chinese were depicted as the conventional Yellow-Peril stereotype of the time. In the later period, the Chinese were depicted far more tolerantly, but there was a focus on Chinese involvement in violent crime. The results only partially support overseas research and suggest the issues raised merit further analysis.

Introduction

The mainstream media are often held to represent ethnic minorities in stereotypical ways that conform to the dominant culture's prejudices and interests. This paper tests that proposition by analysing one newspaper's coverage of Chinese in New Zealand at the start of the 20th and 21st centuries.

After considering the background to both the news media's depiction of ethnic minorities and the Chinese in New Zealand, the paper uses content analysis of a major New Zealand newspaper to answer two questions:

- 1) How were Chinese portrayed in the newspaper and did this change over time?
- 2) To what extent did Chinese have a voice in the coverage and did this change over time?

Background

Commentators have long held that in determining what stories to tell and how to tell them, the press acts as gatekeeper, determining whose voices will be heard and how they will be heard (Tuchman, 1980; Shoemaker and Reese, 1990). Such voices tend to be those of the dominant culture of a society, as this is the primary market for news journalism and the culture from which most of the journalists are drawn. According to this line of reasoning, the dominant cultural voice minimises, distorts or excludes the voices of others, such as ethnic minorities. In Western nations the dominant culture is white, and the Western press is frequently criticised for depicting other ethnic groups in ways that conform to the dominant cultural voice's preconceptions and interests (Chambers et al., 2004; Global Media Monitoring Project, 2005; Wilson et al., 2003).

For instance, the dominant white culture in the United States has long viewed Chinese in stereotypical ways. Chinese first came to America in large numbers during the West Coast gold rush of the mid-1800s. The dominant culture regarded these Chinese as a Yellow Peril that might overwhelm white America and take their jobs. Alarmed legislators passed laws to stem the inflow of Chinese miners. The Yellow-Peril image soon found its way into popular and journalistic representations of East Asians (Laffey, 2000; Lee, 1999). Indeed, the by-word for sensationalist reporting in the United States is Yellow Journalism, a term that takes its name from the Yellow Kid, a grotesque cartoon of an Asian boy in the pages of the early sensationalist press (Stephens, 2007). After that, it is argued, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and other East Asians in the United States continued to be the victims of biased reporting, in which they are represented as a dangerous, alien 'other' (Cropp, 2003). Although use of the overtly racist Yellow-Peril stereotype has subsided today, commentators argue that the dominant culture has replaced it with a no less insidious stereotype: the 'model minority'—a community that knows its place, preferring to silently and diligently achieve (Benson, 2005; Kim et al., 2006; Kawai, 2005).

The Chinese in New Zealand

The formal white colonisation of New Zealand began in 1840 with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi by representatives of Maori (New Zealand's indigenous people) and the British Crown. Following the subsequent major inflow of British settlers,

English-speaking white European culture soon became the dominant culture in New Zealand (King, 2003).

In creating a new Britain in the South Pacific, one trend the New Zealand government had not anticipated was Chinese immigration. Chinese gold miners began to arrive in large numbers in the 1860s and prospected in Otago and the West Coast of the South Island. Most were rural Cantonese males, who planned to return to China once they had earned enough money. This, plus their collective working style and distinctly different culture and language, meant the Chinese did not assimilate into New Zealand's white society (Te Ara, 2008a; Ng, 1999). Chinese became a significant proportion of two specific regions of the country. In the 1874 census six per cent of the West Coast population and four per cent of the Otago population were Chinese. No Chinese were living in other parts of the country (King, 2003).

As in America, the Chinese in New Zealand soon aroused the antagonism of the dominant white culture. Various anti-Chinese organisations were established and white New Zealanders came to associate the Chinese with opium smoking and prostitution, including the supposed kidnapping of white women for the trade (Murphy, 1995; Shum, 2003). Driven by such racist ideas and concerns over competition from Chinese workers, laws were passed to limit Chinese immigration. Most notable was the poll tax on each new Chinese immigrant, first imposed in 1881 at a rate of £10 per head and increased to £100 in 1896.

Although the number of Chinese dramatically declined with the end of the gold rush in the late 1880s, anti-Chinese sentiment became more pronounced. Various anti-Chinese organisations, such as the Anti-Chinese Association and the Anti-Asiatic League, were formed and in 1908 the Immigration Restriction Act consolidated laws to impede Chinese immigration. Only a small hardcore of Chinese remained in New Zealand by then, who found it difficult to obtain jobs in mainstream white New Zealand culture (Ng, 1999). Many gravitated to the cities and towns, favouring occupations like storekeeping, laundries, and market gardening, as such enterprises were relatively inexpensive to establish, operated as family businesses, and did not require highly developed English language skills. In the 1901 census, Europeans were the overwhelming ethnic group in the country, accounting for 94 per cent of the total population of 815,853. Most of the rest were Maori, with Chinese comprising less than one per cent of the population (Te Ara, 1966).

The New Zealand government waived the poll tax from 1934, finally repealing the law in 1944, but a range of other laws ensured that throughout most of the 20th century New Zealand effectively continued to have an anti-Chinese immigration policy. For instance, between 1908 and 1951 Chinese could not become naturalised New Zealanders, until 1936 Chinese were not eligible for the old age pension, and immigration tests favoured Europeans (Brawley, 1995; Murphy, 1995; Te Ara, 2008a).

The second wave of Chinese—and, more generally, Asian—immigration into New Zealand occurred from 1987, when the government changed the immigration laws to permit equal access into New Zealand for all ethnic groups. This, plus uncertainty over the status of Hong Kong and a general sense among Chinese that New Zealand was a good place to start a new life, saw many Chinese emigrate to New Zealand. This influx was abetted by a sharp increase in the number of Asian international students,

although this effect was mitigated by the Asian economic downturn of the late 20th century (Ng, 1999).

These trends have seen a dramatic increase in the proportion of Asians in the New Zealand population (Table 1). Between 1991 and 2006, the proportion of Asians in the population trebled, from three per cent of the population to nine per cent, easily the largest increase for any single ethnic group over the period. By contrast, the percentage of European New Zealanders fell five per cent, from 83 per cent to 79 per cent.

Note: Percentage totals may exceed 100%, as respondents could give multiple answers.			
Ethnicity	1991	2006	% change
European	83.2	78.7	-5.4
Maori	13	14.6	12.3
Pacific	5	6.9	38
Asian	3	9.2	206.7
Other	0.2	0.9	350
Source: Statistics New Zealand (2008)			

Of course, just as European New Zealanders come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, so Asians are not a homogeneous group. In the 2006 census, 42 per cent of Asians in New Zealand were Chinese; the next largest group was Indians (30 per cent), followed by Koreans (nine per cent) and Filipinos (five per cent) (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).

Most Asians settled in Auckland, the country's main commercial centre. In the 2006 census, two-thirds of Asians lived in the city. The next largest proportion was the 10 per cent who lived in Wellington. Nearly 20 per cent of the Auckland population (18.9 per cent) was Asian; the next largest proportion being in Wellington, where 8.4 per cent of the population was Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).

Contemporary New Zealand society is generally tolerant towards its Chinese community. A 2007 survey of New Zealanders found that 81 per cent believed Asians in New Zealand contribute to the economy and 76 per cent believed Asian immigrants bring valuable cultural diversity to the country. Respondents were asked to rate how warm they felt about different Asian groups, with 0 meaning coldest and 100 warmest. The mean rating for Chinese was 68, slightly less than the mean of 72 for all the Asian groups mentioned (Colmar Brunton, 2007).

The New Zealand political climate is also generally favourable towards the Chinese. In 2002 the government apologised for the anti-Chinese laws of the previous centuries (Clark, 2002; Wong, 2003) and the current mayor of Dunedin, the commercial centre of Otago, is of Chinese ethnicity (Te Ara, 2008b). When Dunedin recently opened an authentic Chinese garden, the city council declared it was "to commemorate the contribution the Chinese people have made, and continue to make, to the city" (City of Dunedin, 2008, para. 2).

But tensions do remain. High-profile politician Winston Peters, leader of political party New Zealand First, successfully used anti-Asian immigration rhetoric to build a constituency among older white New Zealanders and conservative Maori (Wong, 2003). Moreover, the New Zealand Press Council, a self-regulatory body charged with

maintaining standards in print journalism, has upheld fully or in part two complaints about inaccurate and discriminatory reporting on Asians in New Zealand (New Zealand Press Council, 1993, 2007). In the second case, a major national magazine had depicted the Chinese in New Zealand as frequently violent criminals, when in fact the crime rate among Chinese in New Zealand is far lower than that for the population generally¹.

Research method

To answer the two research questions posed at the start of this paper, analysis was undertaken of coverage of the Chinese in New Zealand in *The Evening Post*, a Wellington daily newspaper established in 1865. For many years, *The Evening Post* was the capital's leading newspaper, but faced with declining demand in 2002 merged with its morning rival, *The Dominion*, to become *The Dominion Post*. Analysis of this newspaper's coverage therefore provided insight into how the Chinese were portrayed in the primary newspaper of the nation's capital. And, as the only newspaper in Wellington to have been in existence at the start of both the 20th and 21st centuries, analysing coverage in *The Evening Post/The Dominion Post* allowed a consideration of changes in coverage in the same newspaper over time.

The first period considered was 1 June 1906 to 31 May 1908 inclusive. This two-year period covered the public debate over the Immigration Restriction Act, allowing the analysis to target the time when the status of Chinese in New Zealand was a major journalistic topic. The second period considered was 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2008 inclusive. This two-year period was exactly 100 years later, allowing an assessment of how attitudes may have changed over a century.

Papers Past was used to obtain newspaper reports for the first period. *Papers Past* is an online database of historical newspapers available at New Zealand's National Library (www.natlib.govt.nz). *Newztext* was used to obtain newspaper reports for the second period. *Newztext* is an online database of modern New Zealand newspapers available at The Knowledge Basket (www.knowledge-basket.co.nz). Searches were undertaken in both databases to obtain all articles that reported on Chinese in New Zealand and Chinese immigration to New Zealand. Once all the articles had been coded, the total area of the material, measured in cm², was calculated. The search produced 141 articles for the period 1906-08 (42,939 cm²) and 106 articles for the period 2006-08 (33,979 cm²), the large amount of copy ensuring we can have confidence in the results obtained.

Two research assistants undertook the content analysis on the material, with the author in a close supervisory role. A sample of 10 per cent of the articles produced a strong inter-coder reliability score of 90 per cent, a robust result.

Each line of each article was coded by:

- **Topic.** The overall topics were: Chinese immigration into New Zealand, Chinese activity in New Zealand, crime involving Chinese, Chinese protests over their treatment in New Zealand, and other. These subjects were identified as the likely main subjects prior to coding, in light of the theoretical and historical analysis discussed above, and refined during the coding process. The material was also classified into sub-topics, as detailed in the results section below.

- **Tone.** The tenor of the reportage was coded as negative, neutral, or positive. If the tone of the article painted Chinese in a poor light, this was coded as negative. If it was disinterested reportage, it was coded neutral. If the article was pro-Chinese, it was coded positive. Examples are given in the discussion below.
- **Voice.** Each line's attribution of material to either Chinese or non-Chinese voices was coded. Chinese voices were identified as such when—as was commonly done in the reportage—the people speaking were identified as Chinese. Where text was not attributed, the voice was deemed to be the newspaper, a non-Chinese voice.

Table 2 summarises the content analysis of the newspaper coverage in the two periods. The results are now discussed (all quotes below are from *The Evening Post*/*The Dominion Post*).

Topics

Chinese immigration

The single largest topic in the 1906–08 material was Chinese immigration to New Zealand, accounting for 42 per cent of all reportage. Virtually all this coverage (92 per cent) was about the Chinese being unwanted in New Zealand.

Not surprisingly, the Anti-Asiatic League advocated this view, arguing that it “was unnecessary to go into the immorality of the Chinese; their ways were well known” (2 May 1907:2). The opinion was openly expressed by leading politicians, including Premier Joseph Ward, who was reported as saying: “it was all important that the white inhabitants of Australasia should preserve their racial purity” (3 December 1906:7). The *Post* itself agreed the Chinese should be excluded from the country, describing them as “undesirable immigrants” (14 November 1907:6) and citing the threat the Chinese posed to white men's jobs: “The Chinese is not a better worker, but he is a cheaper one” (22 June 1907:9).

Only two per cent of the material concerned Chinese being wanted in New Zealand. This figure mostly comprised the opinion of a Mr Gow, sent to China to obtain the Chinese government's support for an international exhibition to be staged in New Zealand. He formed a favourable opinion of the Chinese he met, saying that if they should ever come to New Zealand, they could not “fail to open the eyes of those of his people whose sole belief appeared to be that every Chinese is a coolie” (3 July 1906:8).

The remaining six per cent of coverage simply reported on Chinese immigration, with no explicit judgements regarding its desirability. However, this coverage included regular items on the trivial numbers of Chinese entering the country, and it is difficult not to sense some Yellow-Peril paranoia:

The weekly influx of Chinese continues. The [ship] Maheno, which arrived yesterday from Sydney, brought across a party of thirteen. Of this number seven have to pay poll-tax; the others being former residents (26 March 1908:7).

The steamer Manuka, which arrived from Sydney yesterday, brought seven Chinese for New Zealand ports (11 October 1906:4).

By contrast, in the 2006–08 material Chinese immigration was the smallest single topic area, accounting for only nine per cent of reportage. Furthermore, nearly three-quarters of the coverage (72 per cent) focussed on Chinese being wanted in New Zealand. For instance, one article profiled a young Chinese woman who had moved to Wellington: “It very well may be that the first word every Asian immigrant learns on coming to New Zealand is ‘cool’. Si-Si says it a lot. And she is, actually” (17 January 2007:6). Reports on immigration policy also reflected this positive view: “Skilled workers from India and China will find it easier to migrate to New Zealand when the Government relaxes restrictions to fill skill shortages” (1 July 2006:6).

Table 2: *The Evening Post/The Dominion Post* coverage of Chinese in New Zealand, 1906–08 and 2006–08 (percentage of cm²).

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Category	1906-08		2006-08	
	% of total reportage	% of category	% of total reportage	% of category
Topic				
Chinese immigration to NZ	42.1		9.0	
- <i>Chinese unwanted</i>		92.4		21.1
- <i>Chinese wanted</i>		1.9		72.2
- <i>Other</i>		5.7		6.7
Chinese activity in NZ	18.9		35.4	
- <i>Business general activity in NZ</i>		38.1		29.1
- <i>Other</i>		61.9		70.9
Crime	18.5		36.4	
- <i>Chinese committing crime</i>		77.8		82.7
- <i>Chinese victims of crime</i>		22.2		17.3
Chinese protest their treatment in NZ	8.8		15.8	
Other	11.7		3.4	
Totals	100.0		100.0	
Voice				
Non-Chinese	87.5		80.2	
- <i>Non-Chinese negative</i>		67.7		62.6
- <i>Non-Chinese neutral</i>		25.5		7.7
- <i>Non-Chinese positive</i>		6.9		29.7
Chinese	11.5		20.0	
- <i>Chinese negative</i>		7.0		50.0
- <i>Chinese neutral</i>		22.6		9.0
- <i>Chinese positive</i>		70.4		41.0
Totals	100.0		100.0	
Source: Content analysis				

Twenty-one per cent of immigration coverage focussed on Chinese not being wanted in New Zealand. This included reports of hate crimes—“a Chinese student was assaulted by three men in a racially motivated attack” (11 December 2007:4)—and comments from a New Zealand First politician, including that increased immigration would lead to “division, friction and resentment” in New Zealand (3 April 2008:1).

Chinese activity in New Zealand

In the 1906–08 material, Chinese activity in New Zealand comprised the second-equal largest topic area, at 19 per cent. Chinese business activity comprised 38 per cent of this coverage, with the majority of that coverage (91 per cent) reporting on Chinese market gardeners. Fears that the Chinese were monopolising market gardening at the expense of whites’ economic interests were strongly evident in this reportage. As the *Post* insisted:

The main interest in the fruit struggle is a European attack on the Chinese monopolists... John [ie, John Chinaman, a racial epithet] is heavily fortified; he has barricaded himself behind his towers of apples, peaches, and oranges (30 March 1907:5).

The remaining activity material covered a wide range of topics, including missionary work among New Zealand’s Chinese community and local Chinese moves to stamp out opium smoking (for instance, 25 June 1906:5; 14 December 1906:3).

Chinese activity in New Zealand also figured significantly in the 2006–08 material, at 35 per cent of all reportage. Again, the largest single sub-category was Chinese business activity in New Zealand (29 per cent). The days of Chinese market gardeners were long gone, however. The modern coverage included accounts of the sale of a well-known Chinese restaurant (22 May 2007:6), the opening of an Asian supermarket (12 May 2007:10), and a profile of a leading Chinese New Zealand lawyer (12 December 2007:4). The coverage was overwhelmingly free of value judgements: there was no sense in this coverage of Chinese crowding out whites’ economic interests.

A broad range of other activities were reported, including Chinese international students in New Zealand and Chinese New Zealanders’ cultural activities (for instance, 30 May 2007:7; 26 August 2006:13).

Crime

In the 1906–08 material, crime coverage was as common as activity coverage (19 per cent of all reportage). Just over three-quarters focussed on Chinese committing crimes. This centred on Chinese shops staying open after shops run by white New Zealanders had closed (for instance, 30 July 1907:6), as well as Chinese smoking opium and gambling (for instance, 30 November 1907:9). Such activities were ostensibly prohibited by law at the time (Te Ara, 2008c). There were no reports of Chinese committing violent crime.

Of the 22 per cent of material about Chinese being the victims of crime, 67 per cent concerned violent crime. These were often hate crimes. For instance, a Richard Power and three others entered Wellington’s Chinese district and “assaulted every Chinese who passed them. They threw stones and even a piece of iron” (20 July 1907:4).

In the 2006–08 material crime accounted for 36 per cent of all coverage. This was marginally more than the activity coverage, making crime the single most commonly reported Chinese news in the period. Of this, 83 per cent was coverage of Chinese committing crime. Just over half of this crime reportage (56 per cent) involved Chinese committing violent crimes. This included reports on Nai Yin Xue, who allegedly murdered his wife Anan Liu in Auckland, abandoned their daughter in Australia, and fled to the United States:

Anan Liu, was murdered, her body stuffed in a car boot, and American authorities are hunting for Qian's father, Nai Yin Xue, in Los Angeles (24 September 2007:3).

Other violent crimes included three Chinese students who kidnapped and murdered a fellow Chinese student (for instance, 5 September 2007:5). Twenty-eight per cent of the coverage concerned crimes involving drugs, such as the jailing of two Chinese drug couriers (14 September 2007:12). The remaining crimes included Chinese travelling on false passports (21 August 2006:4).

Seventeen per cent of coverage involved Chinese as the victims of crime. Nearly three-quarters of this coverage (73 per cent) involved violence. These included hate crimes, such as when a woman punched a Chinese woman for speaking in her own language (29 June 2006:6) and crimes within the Chinese community, such as the kidnapping and murder of a Chinese student mentioned above (for instance, 5 September 2007:5).

Chinese protest their treatment in New Zealand

The last major topic area in the 1906–08 material was Chinese protesting their treatment in New Zealand. This accounted for nine per cent of the coverage. The majority was comments from a Chinese organisation set up to protest the proposed further restriction of Chinese immigration into New Zealand. In a letter to King Edward VII, presented via New Zealand's Governor, the organisation argued that:

Chinese residents of the Dominion [ie, New Zealand] are peaceful, hard-working, and law-abiding. The proportion of law-breakers among them is considerably smaller than among European residents, and practically all offences committed by them are of a minor character (4 March 1908:2).

This topic was also significant in the 2006–08 material, but accounted for relatively more coverage: 16 per cent. Most centred on the group Falun Gong complaining that Wellington City Council was preventing it from taking part in city festivals, for instance: "Falun Gong is taking action against Wellington City Council to challenge a ban on taking part in street parades" (1 November 2007:7). Some of the reportage also dealt with the removal of a local Chinese journalist from Parliament during a visit by a Chinese governmental delegation (for instance, 12 May 2007:4).

Voice

Non-Chinese voice

In the 1906–08 material, 88 per cent of the coverage was in a non-Chinese voice. Of this, just over two-thirds was negative in tone. Half of all the negatively toned coverage was voiced by the newspaper itself, a quarter from community leaders and professionals (such as lawyers and judges), 16 per cent from politicians and the remainder from anti-Chinese organisations. This indicates how widespread anti-Chinese feeling was throughout New Zealand society at the time.

Racist and derogatory terms abounded. For instance, the *Post* described Chinese people as living in “hovels” and that “Their jowls are sleek, their slant eyes twinkle” (22 June 1907:9). Elsewhere, the newspaper said Chinese break into “the inscrutable, mirthless smile of the East” (29 July 1907:3) and it headlined an item on Chinese immigration “THE YELLOW PERIL” (23 July 1907:2).

In some cases, non-Chinese voices castigated white New Zealanders as hypocrites, such as when a politician declared: “The labour man was heard crying out against the Chinese in Wellington, but the same labour man could be seen walking daily into the Chinese fruit shop to make a purchase” (5 July 1907:2).

One quarter of the non-Chinese voice material was neutral in tone. Seventy per cent was the newspaper, such as this report of an accidental death:

Ah Mousie, a Chinese gardener, of Beaumont, was killed by the capsizing of his cart in consequence of the horse taking fright at a motor-car (24 January 1908:8).

Only seven per cent of the non-Chinese voice material was positive. About 60 per cent of this was voiced by the newspaper, such as in its description of a Chinese child adopted by a New Zealand missionary: “Pih is aged five years, and she is a bright, intelligent-looking, ruddy-cheeked girl” (7 February 1908:3). Most of the rest, 26 per cent, came from community leaders and professionals, such as the comments from Mr Gow mentioned above.

Compared to the earlier period, a somewhat smaller proportion of the 2006–08 material (80 per cent) was in a non-Chinese voice and a slightly smaller proportion (63 per cent) was negative. Far more, however, of this negative voice was the newspaper (72 per cent), with most of the remainder again being community leaders and professionals (23 per cent). Politicians contributed only three per cent of the negative tone.

As would be expected, the newspaper eschewed the use of racist and derogatory terms favoured in the earlier period. But the newspaper’s propensity for crime reporting meant this coverage of the Chinese in New Zealand was often presented in a negative tone:

Retired Chinese couple Ena and Hok Lai Dung were trying to help a younger friend fuel her drug addiction when they agreed to take part in an elaborate scam to get supplies of the painkiller pethidine (18 September 2007:6).

An example of negative comments from a professional person occurred when the city council demanded that Falun Gong remove a banner from the council gardens:

‘We do not permit banners, political concerts or other contentious activities in the garden for the simple reason that it is a place of rest and recreation,’ acting gardens manager David Sole said (26 February 2008:3).

Compared to the earlier period, proportionately far more of the non-Chinese voice was positive (30 per cent). The lion’s share of this was the newspaper, at 71 per cent. For instance, an editorial described a New Zealand First politician’s criticism of Asian immigration as “a distasteful attempt to revive his party’s flagging fortunes by singling out a minority distinguished by its skin colour” (4 April 2008:4). Another 23 per cent were community leaders and professionals.

Chinese voice

Twelve per cent of 1906–08 material was in a Chinese voice. In turn, 70 per cent of this voice was in a positive tone, primarily Chinese protesting New Zealand’s anti-Chinese laws, as discussed above.

Seven per cent of the Chinese voice material was negative in tone. This comprised local Chinese acknowledging shortcomings among some in the local Chinese community, such as a *Post* interview with a Chinese laundryman, who decried opium smoking and gambling among some of his compatriots. As was always the case when the newspaper directly quoted Chinese people, the newspaper quoted the laundryman in what it termed “pidgin” (30 November 1907:9). The intention was clearly to mock the man’s English and his accent:

No. Now b’long welly hard for Chinaman to come British subjee’. You make ‘m more hard. You talkee Chinaman no good; bad man; no clean; tief, liar (30 November 1907:9).

The remaining 23 per cent of the Chinese voice material was neutral, such as when a Chinese man appeared before a court charged with crossing a city intersection on horseback at faster than walking pace. The Chinese man’s defence, the newspaper explained, was that his horse “had been frightened into rapid motion by a tramcar” (19 May 1908:6).

In the 2006–08 coverage, the Chinese voice accounted for a higher proportion of the reportage (20 per cent). However, half of this was negative, of which 59 per cent were community leaders and professionals. These were often disputes between local Chinese and representatives of the Chinese government, such as the Chinese Embassy accusing Falun Gong of being a cult (12 May 2007:4) and a local Chinese reporter complaining he was ejected from an event at the behest of a Chinese official (for instance, 27 March 2007:2).

Only 41 per cent of the Chinese voice was positive, of which 60 per cent were community leaders and professionals. For instance, when a Chinese New Zealander became manager of the Wellington hockey team, she commented: “I want to use my skills of being an elite individual athlete to add value to a team environment” (14 May 2007:2). As this quote demonstrates, whenever Chinese people were quoted, it was in

good English and the newspaper made no attempt to mimic (much less mock) their English or any accent.

Conclusions

The mainstream media are held to represent generally the views of the dominant cultural voice in a society and represent ethnic minorities in stereotypical ways that conform to the dominant culture's preconceptions and interests. In New Zealand for the past 100 years the dominant cultural voice has been English-speaking white Europeans. In light of this, coverage of the Chinese in New Zealand in *The Evening Post/The Dominion Post* over the past 100 years was analysed to answer two research questions.

How were Chinese portrayed and did this change over time?

In 1906–08 the newspaper's coverage focussed on the undesirability of having Chinese in New Zealand, often centring on efforts to impede further Chinese immigration and the supposed ill effects of the Chinese already in the country. The reportage was frequently overtly racist and derogatory towards the Chinese.

In 2006–08, the nature of the coverage was strikingly different. There was little coverage of Chinese immigration, with most centring on the desirability of such immigration. There was also considerable non-pejorative coverage of Chinese activity in New Zealand. However, there was a much greater focus on Chinese being involved in crime, especially violent crime.

To what extent did Chinese have a voice and did this change over time?

In both time periods, the voice was overwhelmingly that of the dominant culture. In 1906–08, nearly 90 per cent of the coverage was non-Chinese, mostly the newspaper, community leaders and professionals, and politicians—all members of the dominant culture. In 2006–08, 80 per cent of the coverage was non-Chinese, again mostly the newspaper, and community leaders and professionals. About two-thirds of the non-Chinese voices in both periods were negative, in the later period largely because of the focus on crime.

But Chinese did have a voice in both periods. In 1906–08, despite being less than one per cent of the population, Chinese voices accounted for 12 per cent of coverage. In 2006–08, Chinese accounted for about nine per cent of the population, yet Chinese voices accounted for 20 per cent of the coverage. In the earlier period, Chinese voices were primarily positive. In the later period half of the Chinese voices were negative, in large part due to disputes within the Chinese community.

Across the 100 years, then, *The Evening Post/The Dominion Post* portrayed Chinese largely through the eyes of white New Zealand, the country's dominant cultural voice. In the earlier period, the Chinese were depicted as the Yellow Peril, threatening both white New Zealand's racial purity and economic interests. These results are in line with overseas research (Laffey, 2000; Lee, 1999; Cropp, 2003). In the later period, there was far greater tolerance shown. Nevertheless, the newspaper's focus on Chinese

involvement in violent crime may be regarded as a new form of Yellow Peril: Chinese who come to New Zealand today potentially bring violent crime with them. That was certainly the explicit theme of the national magazine article that fell foul of the New Zealand Press Council, and is an area that merits further study.

Chinese did have a voice in both periods, a voice proportionately far greater than their share of the population. In the earlier period much of this Chinese voice sought to counteract the views of the dominant culture. In the later period, the Chinese in New Zealand often used their voice to criticise Chinese activity in New Zealand, suggesting they feel confident enough with their place in New Zealand to do so. In other words, the newspaper never portrayed the Chinese as a model minority that silently achieves. The absence of the model-minority stereotype in the coverage is not in line with overseas research (Benson, 2005; Kim et al., 2006; Kawai, 2005), suggesting that this stereotype merits further analysis too.

References

- Benson, R. (2005). 'American Journalism and the Politics of Diversity', *Media, Culture and Society*, 27(1): 5-20.
- Brawley, S. (1995). *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America 1919-1978*, Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Chambers, D., Steiner, L. and Fleming, C. (2004). *Women and Journalism*, London: Routledge.
- City of Dunedin. (2008). 'Dunedin Chinese Garden Set to Open,' Retrieved June 11, 2008, from <http://www.cityofdunedin.com/city/?page=feat-chinesegarden08>
- Clark, H. (2002). 'Address to Chinese New Year Celebrations,' Retrieved January 20, 2008, from www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/address+chinese+new+year+celebrations
- Colmar Brunton (2007). 'Perceptions of Asia,' Retrieved 15 August, 2008, from <http://www.asianz.org.nz/research>
- Cropp, F. (2003). 'From a Troubled Past to a Confused Present: The Need for Better Coverage of Asian Americans,' In F. Cropp, C. Frisby, and D. Mills (Eds.), *Journalism Across Cultures*, Iowa: Iowa State Press (pp 221-240).
- Global Media Monitoring Project. (2005). 'Who Makes the News?' Retrieved December 1, 2007, from http://www.globalmediamonitoring.org/who_makes_the_news/report_2005
- Kawai, Y. (2005). 'Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Dialectic of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril,' *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 16: 109-130.
- Kim, E., Walkosz, B., and Iverson, J. (2006). 'USA Today's Coverage of the Top Women Golfers, 1998-2001,' *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 17: 307-321.
- King, M. (2003). *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Laffey, J. (2000). *Imperialism and Ideology: An Historical Perspective*, Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books.
- Lee, R. (1999). *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Murphy, N. (1995). *The Poll-tax in New Zealand*. Wellington: The New Zealand Chinese Association.
- New Zealand Press Council. (1993). *Case Number: 517 Adjudication of the New Zealand Press Council in a Complaint by Dr Trevor Snowdon Against the North Shore Times Advertiser*. Wellington: New Zealand Press Council.
- New Zealand Press Council. (2007). *Case Number: 1090 Tze Ming Mok and Others Against North & South*. Wellington: New Zealand Press Council.

- Ng, J. (1999). *Chinese Settlement in New Zealand*, Christchurch: New Zealand Centre for Chinese Studies.
- Shoemaker, P., and Reese, S. (1990). 'Exposure to What? Integrating Media Content and Effect Studies,' *Journalism Quarterly*, 67: 649-652.
- Shum, L. G. (2003). 'Remembering Chinatown: Haining Street in Wellington,' In M. Ip (Ed.), *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press (pp 73-93).
- Statistics New Zealand. (2008). 'Census,' Retrieved December 1, 2007, from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/default.htm>
- Stephens, M. (2007). *A History of News*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Te Ara (1966). 'Population,' Retrieved 10 August, 2008, from www.teara.govt.nz/1966/P/Population
- Te Ara. (2008a). 'Chinese,' Retrieved June 11, 2008, from <http://www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Chinese/en>
- Te Ara. (2008b). 'Peter Chin,' Retrieved June 11, 2008, from <http://www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Chinese/1/ENZ-Resources/Standard/2/en#breadcrumbtop>
- Te Ara (2008c). 'Anti-Chinese Legislation,' Retrieved 10 August, 2008, from www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Chinese/3/en
- Tuchman, G. (1980). *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: The Free Press.
- Wilson, C., Guitierrez, F and Chao, L. (2003). *Racism, Sexism and the Media*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Wong, G. (2003). 'Is Saying Sorry Enough?' In M. Ip (Ed.), *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press (pp. 258-279).

(Endnotes)

- 1 Declaration of interest: The current author was one of those who complained to the Press Council about the article.