

Harden Up! Analysing Soft News in New Zealand's Prime-Time Television News Bulletins.

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand television news programming is an area of media research that has been widely explored in previous decades. Studies have determined that in the wake of deregulation in 1989, *One Network News* adopted a more informal and tabloidized news format, and heightened the dramatization and personalisation of the news bulletin. This change has not only been seen in news programmes, but in current affairs programmes as well. Measuring these changes is important as the news media's most crucial function in an ideal democratic system is to inform and educate the public. If the news media is not fulfilling this role, then it stands to reason that this would significantly impact upon democracy itself. Yet, despite the need for ongoing critical analysis of the news media, prime-time news content in New Zealand has not been critically analysed since the 1990s.

By focusing on 2015 news bulletins from *One News* and *3 News*, this study updates existing New Zealand television news research. A content analysis with a sample size of two constructed weeks was used to determine what comprised *One News* and *3 News* bulletins. The main objective was to analyse and compare the content of the competing channels' bulletins, and to determine if *One News* had changed significantly in comparison to the *One Network News* findings from the 1990s. Not only were news bulletins measured for all non-news and news content, they were also analysed for the presence of hard and soft news stories. The study found that there was little difference between the *One News* and *3 News* bulletins. It identified a large presence of non-news content (such as advertising and weather) compared to previous studies, and found that political news content has continued to decrease while tabloidized content has increased. Additionally, soft news—especially soft sports news—dominated both the *One News* and *3 News* bulletins, which reflects the changes in presentation and style identified by earlier research. The most profound finding of the study was the emergence of hybrid news items; whereby a traditionally hard news story had been given a soft news treatment by stripping it of political or societal context and providing only a personal or emotional focus. The large presence of soft news—combined with the emerging news hybridity—indicates that soft news approaches have become embedded in journalistic practices in television news. This raises serious concerns over the quality of information that is disseminated to the New Zealand public, and the effectiveness of the New Zealand television news media in facilitating a healthy public sphere.

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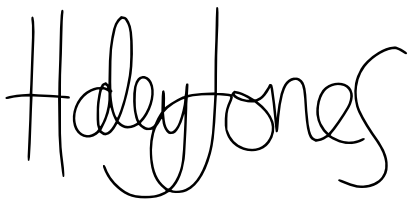
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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Haley Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and 'J'.

Haley-Georgia Jones
3/08/2017

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to critically examine the content of the leading prime-time news bulletins in New Zealand. Specifically, a content analysis will be used to examine a sample of the 2015 *One News* and *3 News* 6pm bulletins, which will determine how much of the news hour is occupied by news content, what subjects are discussed in the bulletins, and how much of the news content is soft or hard news. Television news in New Zealand has been widely studied, with researchers determining that prime-time news became more tabloidized, sensationalised, and depoliticised in the years following deregulation (Atkinson, 1994a; 1994b; Comrie, 1996; Cook, 2002). This reflects global concerns media scholars hold for the impact commercialisation is having on television news, as news programmes move towards entertainment-focused content to maintain audience numbers. However, the content of New Zealand's prime-time television news programmes has not been analysed since 1996. This study aims to update the existing research and determine if the trends outlined by previous research have continued today.

1.1 Personal Background

Growing up in a middle-class New Zealand family, watching the 6pm news was an unchangeable part of the daily ritual. When I was young, I used to think Judy Bailey and Richard Long were married, and I felt like they were part of the family. Most of the time, the news demanded the attention of both my parents (to my and my brother's boredom), and other times it was simply background noise while they made dinner. But either way, the television would be turned to channel one at 6pm every night. Perhaps the reverence my parents had for the news is what sparked my interest in the journalism industry—I figured it must be important if people dedicated an hour of their evenings to listen to what the newsreaders had to say. They were doing something valuable, and I wanted to be a part of it.

After completing a Bachelor of Communication Studies majoring in Journalism, I was working part-time as an autocue operator at TV3; it was my 'foot in the door'. From the dark corner of the studio, I observed that the newsreaders were as manicured and eloquent as I had expected, and the rush of live news was as exhilarating as I had hoped. But, I often found myself perplexed

by some of the stories appearing in the bulletin (for example, one story reported on rumours of the boyband One Direction breaking up), and how the newsreaders would comment and laugh about the news on-air. This did not meet the journalism ideals I had learned about in my degree. I then got a job on the assignments desk in the newsroom at TVNZ, where I found that things were not much different there, either. From these experiences, I formed the hypothesis that current prime-time news programmes in New Zealand contained higher levels of entertainment-focused content than in previous decades. Consequently, in pursuit of an answer, I decided to conduct this study.

1.2 Research Questions

This research proceeds on the basis that New Zealand television news has made significant changes to its content and format in response to the commercialisation of the broadcasting environment in New Zealand. Previous research has identified an increase in entertainment-focused, tabloidized news content and a decrease in political or 'serious' news stories in the wake of deregulation in 1989 (Atkinson, 1994b; Comrie, 1996; Cook, 2002). Without re-regulation, these trends were expected to continue. Based on this insight, a primary research question and list of sub-questions were developed.

Primary Research Question: *What is the content of contemporary One News and 3 News prime-time news bulletins in New Zealand?*

1. How much of the news bulletin is actually news content?

- *How much is soft news?*
- *How much is hard news?*
- *How often does a soft news story lead a bulletin?*
- *How often does a hard news story lead a bulletin?*

2. How much of the news bulletin is non-news content?

- *How much is advertising content?*
- *How much is presenter chit-chat/studio shots?*
- *How much is headlines?*
- *How much is weather content?*

3. On average, how long is a news story?

- *How long is an average hard news story?*
- *How long is an average soft news story?*
- *How long is an average news story from each subject category (crime, politics, etc.)?*
- *What length is the longest and shortest news stories?*
- *How many stories appear per news bulletin?*

4. How many news stories are National (produced in New Zealand)?

- *How many news stories are Overseas Request/Foreign Correspondence (produced by a New Zealand reporter overseas)?*
 - *How many news stories are Overseas Feed (produced and/or recorded overseas by a foreign news agency)?*
- 5. What percentage of the news fit within particular subject categories?**
- *What is the overall percentage of each subject category (crime, sport, celebrities, etc.)?*
 - *What are the overall percentages of hard news and soft news within each subject category?*

These research questions will allow a comprehensive analysis of the content of *One News* and *3 News* bulletins to be made, which will identify if the trends towards tabloidization, morselisation, and depoliticisation have continued today. I would like to note that the original list of research questions did not include sub-questions for hard news and soft news. This was because the concept of hard and soft news categories was only identified while reviewing the secondary literature [see pp. 18-22]. Hard news and soft news categorisation allows news subject areas to contain both hard and soft stories; an important aspect of this study as it developed.

1.3 Thesis Structure

Firstly, this thesis will define television news and journalism in Western democratic societies, and situate journalism's role in facilitating the public sphere. The literature review explores the three dominant broadcasting frameworks—the state-led model, the public-service model, and the commercial model—and describes New Zealand's broadcasting experience with all three frameworks. Critical analyses of commercialised television news have arisen globally, and these are explored before discussing New Zealand's empirical research of television news. This is followed by the methodology chapter, which outlines the methodology, research design, and areas of measurement. The results of the content analysis are then described: Chapter Four identifies the composition of the bulletins and details the news story characteristics, while Chapter Five explores the subject category findings. Both chapters relate the findings to previous empirical research, and together they form a detailed impression of the *One News* and *3 News* bulletins. Chapter Six analyses the content analysis' significant findings, and discusses the implications the findings have for government, media, and society. This is followed by an explanation of the study limitations and areas of potential future research. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes this body of research by drawing conclusions about the current state of prime-time news programmes in New Zealand.

CHAPTER TWO: BROADCASTING, JOURNALISM, AND TELEVISION NEWS IN NEW ZEALAND

2.0 Introduction

To accurately understand contemporary television news in New Zealand, the historic processes and decisions that have shaped television must first be considered. This chapter discusses television and television news from a historical standpoint. It begins with an exploration of the traditional democratic functions of news, and moves on to an analysis of the three main television news frameworks: the state-led, public-service, and commercial model. New Zealand's experience with all three models is discussed, with a close focus on the critical analysis of commercially-driven television news. The chapter concludes with an analysis of previous empirical findings on television news in New Zealand, before providing a case for further research in this field. Although much of the legislation discussed in this chapter affected both television and radio broadcasting, the focus will be on television and the consequences these changes have had on this particular broadcast medium.

2.1 Citizenship, News Media, and the Public Sphere

Fundamentally, the traditional role of journalism has been to create and facilitate an informed citizenry, and this function remains an essential part of democratic society. As Phillips and Witschge (2012) argue, "information is to democracy what oxygen is to fire" (p. 3), and an uninformed citizen cannot participate in democracy as an informed, intelligent voter. Every citizen living in a democratic society has the right to be informed (Murdock, 2004). Habermas (1989) theorised that the defining feature of modern democracy is the ability for the public to deliberate upon political practices, which is done in an arena he called the public sphere. The news media plays an integral role by disseminating political, economic, and cultural information, and Phillips (2012) states that citizens need to access reliable information that can be discussed within the public sphere. Therefore, in an ideal democratic system, the news' most important function is to inform and educate the public without bias, and to provide a platform for public discourse on the political goings-on of society (McNair, 1995).

This ideal role applies to all form of news media, including broadcasting. According to Comrie (1996), the common view of the Western world is that one of broadcasting's crucial functions is

to maintain healthy public discourse. When looking specifically at television news, Paterson (1998) argues that this medium's role in the creation of an international public sphere is growing, as it is a vehicle for vital public discourse. Yet, he argues that "the globalization of television news is producing an international public sphere, but one dominated by mainstream Anglo-American ideologies" (p. 95). This is a problematic development, as from a liberal-pluralist perspective, the general public should be able to access and choose from a variety of opinions, policies, and attitudes in political discourse (Mullen, 2010). By not providing this variation of choice, television news may not be meeting its democratic responsibility to provide relevant and unbiased information to the public so that they can contribute to the public sphere.

Within the journalistic and political public sphere, the news media is also responsible for holding governmental and political institutions to account (McNair, 1995). This function is often referred to as being the "fourth estate", where the media operates as the "watchdogs" of those in power within the democratic system (Mullen, 2010, p. 674). However, Atkinson (2002), argues that this viewpoint is misleading. He believes television news media are not "transmission belts for information, mirrors of external reality and independent watchdogs on government actions" (p. 119). Instead, Atkinson argues that the media functions as a persuader, rather than as an independent set of institutions that hold those in power to account. The media plays an active role in constructing 'reality', and this reality is influenced by economic and political sources. Bogart (1980) argues that "TV produces an edited version of reality. Occasionally it offers a concocted or rehearsed version" (p. 226). This idea is supported by Paterson (1998), who states that news agencies can manufacture a version of reality. Thus, the ideal view of journalism and media institutions of being independent 'watchdogs' on the state may not be an accurate description. Arguably, the national and international news media may not be adhering to traditional journalistic functions as the information disseminated from the news media may be a distorted version of reality. It is perhaps more accurate to say that mediated constructions of reality are politically contested rather than pre-given.

Thus, although there is accord among media scholars over the role of the news media within a democratic society, there are concerns emerging over how well the news media—in particular, television news—is meeting these responsibilities.

2.2 Broadcasting Frameworks and the Construction of Television News

News norms and local culture exert somewhat stronger and more insistent pressures, but the most powerful and enduring constraints on news content remain economics, technology and bureaucracy. More than other factors, this trio dominates the system of causal constraints that produces news structures. (Atkinson, 2002, p. 126).

Although media scholars have a somewhat unanimous view of the traditional role of journalism, this role can distort and change depending on the democratic, cultural, and social environment. There are three predominant models of broadcasting: the state-led model, the public-service model, and the deregulated commercial model. These news structures sit on a spectrum, with the state-led model at one end (with the most government control), followed by the public-service model (with limited government influence), and finally at the other end of the spectrum, the commercial model (with little to no government involvement). Although media separation from the state is considered an essential principle of democracy, Rantanen (1998) believes this principle takes different forms in different countries. The level of government control has a considerable effect on how news programmes are produced, disseminated, and understood by the public, and thereby the public sphere. "News undergoes redefinition with every succeeding generation, and in the era of televised news this reassessment has taken place rapidly but without general awareness" (Bogart, 1980, p. 215). Therefore, these three broadcasting models must be explored in order to understand how social, cultural, and, most importantly, political influences within news structures affect the production of the news itself. The history of broadcasting in New Zealand is in the somewhat unique position of having experienced all three forms of news structures to some degree. Thus, the effect on New Zealand will be used as an exemplar of how news and news formats are shaped by the level of government involvement.

2.3 The State-Led Model

I now explore the state-led model of broadcasting, and what impact this model has on news and current affairs. The state of New Zealand's broadcasting under the complete government-controlled model will be analysed to understand its impact on news and current affairs during the time this model was used.

2.3.1 Government-Controlled Broadcasting and the News

State-led broadcasting is generally present in authoritarian states, and it involves heavy political influence, ownership, and government control over broadcasting. Examples of countries under this kind of control include the People's Republic of China under the Communist Party, Russia under Vladimir Putin, and North Korea under the Kim Dynasty and Korean Worker's Party (Freedom House, 2017). In the state-led model, radio and television content—including news and current affairs programmes—are managed by the government, and censorship and propaganda is commonly used to control what information is communicated to the public.

According to Ma (2016), propaganda reached its peak in the twentieth century, when authoritarian governments created strong nation-focused narratives by disseminating political messages in the media and censoring messages that went against the government's ideology. The rise of mass and multi-media enabled this to flourish (Welch, 2014). However, with the introduction of the internet, some authoritarian governments have had to adapt their propaganda agendas (Ma, 2016). Xu (2015) argues that although China continues to censor media content, their television broadcasts are becoming increasingly depoliticised. Russia, on the other hand, continues to have significant control over broadcast media. The Kremlin spreads propaganda and misinformation through television broadcasts to control its national narrative, while suppressing other ideologies and often distorting the truth (Ma, 2016). This practice obstructs the traditional role of journalism, as it stops the dissemination of unbiased and accurate information to the citizenry. This ultimately affects the function of the public sphere as the public are not able to access unbiased information and discuss it freely; the information and the spaces in which to deliberate are heavily controlled by the state.

2.3.2 New Zealand State-Led Broadcasting: From Radio to Television News

State-led broadcasting does not only occur within totalitarian states. For example, New Zealand once used the state-led model of broadcasting. Before the introduction of regular television transmission in 1960, broadcasting in New Zealand referred to radio transmissions. From the 1930s to the 1960s, the broadcasting framework in New Zealand was that of state-control, where the governing party had significant power over broadcast content: "Broadcasting was firmly regarded as existing to support the purposes of the state" (Cocker, 1994, p. 240). The *Broadcasting Act 1936* transferred broadcasting control from the New Zealand Broadcasting Board to the Crown. Radio content was under ministerial control in the form of the New Zealand

Broadcasting Service (NZBS)—initially known as the National Broadcasting Service—where it was treated as a government department. By 1936, the newly elected Labour Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage had assumed the broadcasting portfolio, which gave government the control over state-owned stations. Another specification of the act required all privately-owned radio stations to also be under ministerial inspection (An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 1966), which essentially permitted the government total control over what information was disseminated to the general public. This kind of political presence within the media was not uncommon for New Zealand. Before the introduction of radio, the four main newspapers in the country were owned by families entrenched within business and politics: “Politicians, businessmen, and newspaper owners were often the same people” (Hirst, Hope, & Thompson, 2017, p. 354). Newspapers were closely tied to the dissemination of propaganda, so it was not abnormal for broadcasting to follow suit.

Day (2000) notes that the benefits of this model included providing a united national voice and almost-universal broadcasting coverage of the sparsely-populated country. But, of course, the most notable disadvantage of the state-led model was the lack of independence from the government. When it came to facilitating serious political discussions, only voices favoured by the government were broadcast to the public (Day, 2000). As Hope (2012) states: “National regulations authorised an institutional voice that equated the public with public service and public service with protection of the so-called public good” (p. 31). It can be assumed that under the state-led model, broadcasting was not facilitating an informed citizenry as the information being transmitted was controlled by the government. Therefore, the information was biased, and, arguably, inaccurate. This would have impeded the formation of the public sphere, as the information available for deliberation had been filtered by the government. A functioning public sphere cannot exist under state-controlled media frameworks, and consequently, the democratic system is at risk when a government employs the state-led model.

In the late 1950s, public resistance to the amount of political control the New Zealand government had over broadcasting began to grow, as well as disapproval of the government’s reluctance to allow broadcasting innovations into the country—particularly television (Day, 2000). Government, persuaded by public and industry demand, began the first television service in 1960 with four regional stations in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin (Comrie, 1996; Day, 2000). However, like radio, television was subject to ministerial control.

2.4 The Public-Service Model

The following section explores the public-service framework of news, and specifically discusses how this model was implemented in New Zealand broadcasting.

2.4.1 Public-Service Broadcasting and Television News

Public-service broadcasting began with the inception of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the United Kingdom, and it swiftly became a major reference point for all broadcasters seeking to implement a public-service model around the world (Murdock, 2004). Sparks (1995) refers to the British model as the “characteristic product of the state capitalistic epoch” (p. 141); it was born out of the combination of historical circumstance, convenience, and design (Comrie, 1996). It was designed so an appointed authority ran the service in the needs of the public interest, according to the requirements set out by parliament (Comrie, 1996). The focus of this government-funded service is to provide the public with trustworthy choices of educational and enlightening information, while also remaining impartial and separate from the state (Hendy, 2013). “Public broadcasting’s very nature then is to nurture the public sphere as a means of serving the public good” (Tracey, 1992, p. 19). Theoretically, by fulfilling this objective, public-service broadcasting abides by the traditional role of journalism; news programmes disseminate accurate and unbiased information to facilitate an informed citizenry, who can deliberate upon this information within the public sphere. “The core rationale for public-service broadcasting lies in its commitment to providing the cultural resources required for full citizenship” (Murdock, 2004, p. 2). Public-service broadcasting has a significant role in informing and educating the citizenry. This ‘imperial’ BBC model continues to run in Britain today, while also being used as the benchmark for public-service broadcasting around the world.

2.4.2 Public-Service Broadcasting in New Zealand

Although both the state-led model and public-service model are government-owned, they have varying levels of political influence and control, and therefore the effect on broadcasting content is markedly different. To exemplify this, New Zealand’s news output under state control contrasted to the news output under the public-service model. New Zealand entered a period of public-service broadcasting during the 1960s. Before this time, the governing Labour Party was of the mind-set that television, like radio, was a national resource and as such should only be controlled by the government, whereas National had vowed to respond to the growing public

resistance to departmental rule over broadcasting (Cook, 2002). After National won the 1960 general election, Labour saw the benefits in permitting a change in broadcasting structures (Day, 2000), and thus the process of disentangling broadcasting from the government began.

National introduced new legislation with the 1961 *Broadcasting Corporation Act*, which effectively ended government control of broadcasting in New Zealand, and shifted the framework closer to a public-service model. Britain's BBC public-service model was used as inspiration in the formation of the New Zealand service (Cook, 2002), and steps were taken to separate broadcasting from the state. The NZBS was replaced with the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) in 1962, which was the country's pioneering broadcasting authority; it was to operate as a commercial business as well as a state corporation (Rennie, 1992). In theory, the NZBC was to operate without influence from the government. Gregory (1985) states that the introduction of political programmes like *Gallery* in 1968 facilitated open political discussion, rather than broadcasting information authorised by the government. Presenter Brian Edwards had an "assertive, even aggressive" interview style, which radically departed from political interview styles of the past (Day, 2000, p. 141); the media began to hold politicians to account. By 1969, the development of regional networks across the country coincided with the development of broadcasting news and current affairs (Day, 2000). For the first time in New Zealand's history, radio and television were not broadcasting information solely approved by the state. "The 1960-1975 period thus saw the emergence of a nationwide public sphere shaped by a semi-independent broadcasting network, a modern commercial press and current affairs journalism" (Hope, 1996, p. 20). At this point in time, New Zealand broadcasting was beginning to fulfil some of its public-service objectives.

Yet, despite the progression from state-led broadcasting to public-service, the New Zealand public-service framework contained notable shortcomings. Gregory (1985) notes how the NZBC was originally intended to be shielded from parliamentary control and influence, but governmental disputes endangered this principle. Cocker (1996) states that one of the BBC's defining features—its independence from the state—was not considered to be a major priority in the New Zealand model. This was problematic, as an ideal public-service model requires such independence to disseminate accurate and unbiased information to the public. According to Day (2000), while public-service broadcasting matured in New Zealand during this decade, succeeding governments struggled to adjust to the loss of power over news and current affairs content on television. The fact that the NZBC was owned by the government yet needed to be independent of the state, while still complying with government policy, made the broadcasting framework in New Zealand complicated. The New Zealand Government was not prepared to

give up total control of broadcasting (Gregory, 1985). “Underneath lay bureaucratic systems and attitudes, a desire to influence society through the programmes it transmitted, and a stern resistance to television based in commercial rather than public interest policies” (Rennie, 1992, p. 61). Those on the board of the NZBC were government-appointed board members (Cook, 2002), so despite the impression of being independent of the state, there was still a considerable amount of political influence from within the public-service broadcast model. As Chomsky (2002) argues, “propaganda is to democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state” (pp. 20-21). Government-approved information—or propaganda—in New Zealand broadcasting was interfering with the democratic role of public broadcasting. Thus, the information transmitted through radio and television within this model was not wholly accurate, and therefore the New Zealand model was not meeting its objectives of acting entirely within the public interest. An unhappy Opposition, combined with a Labour win at the 1972 election, led to numerous broadcasting restructures that continued in the following twenty years (Cook, 2002).

Comrie (1996) states that complete political independence was never reached in New Zealand, while Cocker (1996) is doubtful that the New Zealand structure could even be classed as ‘public-service’ with the level of political interference it experienced: “In New Zealand the myth developed that the politically sullied structures of our broadcasting past represented regulated public-service broadcasting” (p. 6). History shows that the government exerted considerable influence over broadcasting content. Throughout the 1970s, the government stopped several shows going to air (Cook, 2002). Comrie (1996) uses the overriding governmental decision not to show the controversial film *Death of a Princess* in 1980 as an example of this. Cook (2002) argues that the NZBC was essentially a failure as an example of public-service broadcasting, as it never achieved complete separation from state interference. Thus, it never attained the quality of public-service broadcasting displayed by the BBC. Instead, New Zealand’s broadcasting model struggled in the “middle path” between the British public-service framework and the American commercial model (Cocker, 1996, p. 5). Throughout the 1970s, broadcasting (still owned by the state) was developing as a hybrid model with running and production costs partly funded by the state, partly covered by a licence fee paid by the public, and partly paid for by advertising (Day, 2000). Comrie (1996) notes how broadcasters, grappling in the mixed system, were beginning to develop a dependence on advertising revenue as they realised the competitive reality in New Zealand.

So, although New Zealand had moved away from a state-led broadcasting model and attempted to introduce a public-service model, there was considerable political resistance to the shift and growing commercial pressures. The general result of this was a flawed public-service framework.

Murdock (2004) argues that although public-service broadcasting is 'ideal', the framework also has restrictive elements and can therefore become fiercely contested. Cocker (1996) points out that "by the 1980s New Zealand's broadcasting structures had few defenders among the public or the broadcasters and thus were able to be swept away with relative ease" (p. 6). Arguably, the fundamental flaws within the New Zealand public-service model—such as its inability to achieve independence from the state and growing dependence on advertising—further subjected this public-service model to political pressure, and eventually led to its demise.

2.5 The Commercial Model

I now discuss how news and current affairs is shaped by a commercially-driven framework. The critical concepts that have emerged in response to this model's popularity will be explored, before analysing New Zealand's television news and current affairs environment since the adoption of commercially-driven imperatives.

2.5.1 Commercially-Driven Broadcasting and Television News

The most prominent commercially-driven broadcasting environment in the world is the American model, which purports to value a free-market with vigorous competition among broadcasters to gain audiences and advertisers. In theory, this model makes social, economic, and democratic sense. A competitive commercial market, supposedly separate from the state, allows for a variety of politically independent voices to be broadcast, where the audience can select information to deliberate in the public sphere. Thus, a healthy democracy is created as the informed citizenry can participate in a stimulating public sphere after considering diverse ideas and opinions from multiple broadcasters.

However, the commercial broadcasting framework comes with its own set of difficulties produced by the actual nature of the system. Habermas (1992) theorises that increased commercialisation degenerates the public sphere. Phillips and Witschge (2012) support this view, and claim that commercialisation is detrimental to the public-service function of the news media as the framework removes public-service obligations and replaces them with commercial imperatives. Bourdieu (2005) argues that although competition is considered to be a precondition of freedom, it also has the effect of creating homogeneity within the media. For example, within a commercial model, news outlets often steal each other's stories and editorial content (Bourdieu, 2005), which has the effect of creating a homogenous media market instead

of a diverse one. Epstein (1973) claims that this is the product of broadcasting organisations trying to survive in a competitive world, and not due to a group of biased or political men. According to Phillips (2012), news organisations need to resist the “death pull towards monopoly and increasing homogeneity” (p. 97) by finding their own stories, which would result in deeper democratic debate. Commercialisation has the effect of creating uniformity among broadcasters, rather than fostering a space where different stories, views, and opinions are aired with the aim of facilitating public discourse. However, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) argue that there are complex and competing interests within broadcasting organisations, and some may view these influences as creating homogenisation, while others would perceive it as fragmentation and competition, and is thus good in an open market.

This homogeneity is due, in part, to a commercial broadcaster’s need to gain the largest possible audience share. These audience numbers and the disposable income represented by demographics make the broadcaster more attractive to advertisers, and thus the broadcaster can make more profit. This is a critical feature of the commercial model: the capitalisation process shifts the attitude towards the audience members. Instead of being treated as citizens, they are treated as commercial units and as part of the audience-commodity (Phillips and Witschge, 2012). Smythe (2012) argues that “audience power” (p. 187) is the main product of commercial mass media in monopoly capitalism; “Because audience power is produced, sold, purchased and consumed, it commands a price and is a commodity” (p. 187). Thus, the aim of commercial media is to generate audience numbers that can be sold to advertisers.

However, Paterson (1998) claims that the focus on advertising revenue means television news is not fulfilling its socio-political function. Atkinson (1994b) argues that current affairs television has become “too fast-paced and fragmented to be capable of deepening our understanding of political events” (p. 159). This attitude towards the audience has a profound effect on news and current affairs content. Picard (2005) states that commercial pressures, which create the need for larger audiences, heavily influence decisions over content. It can be argued here that a broadcasting organisation treating a person as a citizen would provide programming with the aim of informing and educating. By contrast, a broadcasting organisation treating people as consumers would be more interested in providing programming that would attract large audience numbers with considerable disposable income, in order to generate advertising revenue. When looking at news programming within a commercial framework, omitting or softening economic, cultural, or political news content in favour of more entertaining stories is endangering the news’ democratic responsibility.

Additionally, although commercial news organisations are often not owned by the government, this does not necessarily signify complete independence from the state. To remain competitive in a commercially-driven model of broadcasting, a news company must be financially stable to ensure its independence from the state and to maintain a political 'watchdog' role (Picard, 2005). Without financial security, the independence of any given commercial broadcasting framework is called into question. Additionally, Herman and Chomsky (2002) believe that corporate and political elites in capitalist liberal-democratic societies often use propaganda as a fundamental tool of social control. If, for example, a broadcasting network was owned by a media mogul with outspoken political views and ties to a major political party and/or incumbent government, it is reasonable to assume that this would affect the public viewpoints of the network. Hence, even in a 'free-market', there can be a certain level of political influence that implies that the commercial model of broadcasting is not completely detached from the state.

2.5.2 Critical Concepts Concerning Commercially-Driven Television News

Despite the notion that news is central to a functioning democratic society, there is growing rhetoric among media scholars about the negative effect commercialisation is having on journalism and news broadcasting. There are growing concerns over the shift from quality, investigative journalism to softer news content, mainly due to the ratings-driven nature of modern-day broadcast television. As Franklin (2008) states: "Infotainment is rampant" (p. 13). It must be clarified that the discussion undertaken here is limited specifically to news programmes in Western societies, as they have developed media markets with shared global news agencies that sit within neoliberal policy frameworks. News provides information to the citizenry, yet there are changes emerging in response to Western societies' commercially driven television broadcasting frameworks, which are altering the traditional role of journalism. Later in this section I will discuss how the presence of entertainment, which is seen in contradiction to information, is increasingly shaping the format and content of news programmes. In addition, the rise of "tabloidization" in television news will be explored, before considering the concepts of 'hard' and 'soft' news, and how these concepts alter the way news programmers set the news agenda. Furthermore, the idea of television news audiences moving from being treated as valuable citizens to viable commodities will be discussed. With the spread of commercialism, television news has been undergoing a remarkable transformation. It is important to recognise and evaluate these changes in terms of how they impact news journalism's role in informing the citizenry and in the context of a democratic society.

2.5.2.1 Audience Shift from Citizen to Commodity

Commercially driven broadcasting has shifted how broadcasters approach their audience. A television audience member is treated very differently within a public-service broadcasting model than in a commercialised one. As Habermas (1992) argues, the public sphere can degenerate such that members of the public shift from active participants in cultural and political discourse into consumers of media messages and imagery. If the public sphere is characterised by the ability for citizens to interact without state prerogatives, religious authority, and commercial influence (Hope, 2012), then it can be assumed that the public sphere is at risk in a commercially saturated media market.

The audience in a commercial market is commodified, and media organisations regard people as little more than the raw material for ratings (Matheson, 2007). The aim for a commercial broadcaster is to compete against other broadcasters to attract the largest amount of audience numbers to a particular show so that they can sell them to advertisers and thus make a profit. However, as Atkinson (2002) argues, the audience is “intellectually passive but frequently distracted” (p. 124). Therefore, it is the television news programmer’s aim to overcome this distraction by offering content that appeals to the largest number of audience members. Programmers will never be able to broadcast content that appeals to *all* members of a society, as audience members watch television programmes for individual gratifications according to their own individual tastes (Glynn, 2000; Dennis and DeFleur, 2010). Instead, broadcasters aim to provide content that the majority of people would enjoy, which suggests that if a person has marginalised interests, these interests will not be readily apparent in a commercial television market.

In addition to this, Morley (1992) suggests that the dominant meaning of a television programme will not be received in the manner it was intended if the audience member does not hold the same or similar ideologies. Consequently, television shows that contain views or ideas held by a minority of the audience may not be understood or appreciated by the majority, who do not hold the same views. In order to attract the largest potential share of the audience, programmers in a commercialised media environment may choose to broadcast content that will appeal to dominant tastes and ideologies. It could be argued that broadcasting content for the majority of the members of society solidifies the impact of commercialisation and fastens homogeneity within the television media market. By catering only to popular ideologies and idioms, marginalised or subordinated values and tastes may be underrepresented or omitted in mainstream television content. This content does not attract large audience numbers and therefore does not hold monetary value in commercial broadcasting.

On the other end of the spectrum, a broadcaster's interests within a public-service broadcasting model align with the traditional functions of journalism. Tracey (1992) states that public broadcasting's aim is to serve the public good by nurturing the public sphere: "It is a fundamental principle then that public service broadcasting must motivate the viewers as citizens possessing duties as well as rights, rather than as individual consumers possessing wallets and credit cards" (p. 19). Within the public-service model, the audience members are treated as valuable citizens that must be informed in order to fulfil the democratic process, while a commercialised media market sees the audience as viable commodities to be sold to advertisers for profit.

Matheson (2007) argues that the media is losing sight of engaging and valuing the audience and instead is focused on addressing them as consumers. This idea is supported by Witschge (2012), who claims commercialisation has "fetishised" the wants of the audience, and television broadcasters change their processes to meet those "top priority" demands (pp. 103-104). However, Edwards (1992) claims that the integrity of the news itself must come before satisfying the wants of the audience: "News must remain a matter of record, untarnished by prejudice or sympathy" (p. 22). This calls into question how television news broadcasters can continue to play their democratic role in developing an informed citizenry when their interests do not lie in informing citizens, but entertaining them for commercial purposes. Bogart (1980) believes that the audience's judgement is impaired by what is shown on news programmes, but audiences may be unaware of this restriction on their freedom of observation. So, the responsibility remains with the news programmers to provide content in the public interest, yet commercial pressures endanger this process. Franklin (2008) warns: "Without an informed citizenry, democracy is impoverished and at risk" (p. 14). The modern commercialised television market has shifted the role of the audience from valued member of the public to viable consumer, which has altered the focus of news programmers. In a commercialised market, it is no longer the top priority of news broadcasters to provide information to the citizenry, but to provide content that will entertain their audience and attract advertising revenue.

2.5.2.2 Entertainment in Television News

One of the primary concerns of critical media scholars is the growing presence of entertainment in the news media. However, the concept of "entertainment" in the context of news and current affairs must first be defined. Moss (2009) theorises that not everything that stimulates the senses is entertainment, but anything that uses sensory stimulation to invoke an emotional

response, is. Thus, entertainment content in the news media is there to elicit an emotional reaction from the audience. Entertainment content has become pervasive in contemporary media, with television emerging as the entertainment hub of the media world. According to Cooper-Chen (2005), entertainment amounts to the biggest category of television content in almost all countries. As a result, Postman (2005) argues that “the content of much of our public discourse has become dangerous nonsense” (p. 16). Entertainment has never before been be so readily accessible (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000), and Western society has entered an age where entertainment is ubiquitous.

Although academics agree that the aim of all television departments is, in part, to ‘entertain’ their audience—whether they produce sport, news, or political content—they argue that the quantity of entertainment content is growing exponentially. Entertainment is often depicted as a separate entity from news and information, but there are concerns over the extent to which entertainment is encroaching on news content. As Dennis and DeFleur (2010) argue, there is so much blurring between entertainment and information on television, that it is difficult to separate the two concepts. Franklin (2008) believes entertainment is endangering informational content altogether: “human interest has supplanted the public interest; measured judgement has succumbed to sensationalism; the trivial has triumphed over the weighty” (p. 13). The pervasiveness of entertainment is threatening the traditional news content found in the television bulletin, which causes concern over how well news programmes can fulfil their democratic duty of informing the citizenry while entertainment content grows.

In this context, Moss (2009) warns that there is a danger for subjectivity to determine what constitutes entertainment, as its quality is often determined by the degree that it invokes an emotional response in the audience. This suggests that television broadcasters may look at entertainment and informational content subjectively, and, without truly comprehending the difference between the two concepts, broadcast whatever content evokes the most audience response; such content is simply assumed to be more ‘entertaining’. This substantiates the media scholars’ concerns about rapidly growing entertainment content in television, and explains the rise of entertainment in the news broadcast. Television programmers look at news subjectively and may broadcast more entertainment-focused news stories. Such news stories attract more audience numbers than purely informational ones.

Although there is agreement among media scholars about the rise of entertainment, the negative impact of this growth is contested. Gray (2008) holds a less cynical view, and argues there is a great fear concerning the power of television entertainment, where it is often seen as

information's "handsome yet dangerous" perverting brother (p. 5). He claims entertainment does not deserve the 'trash' label it is so often given by critics, and asserts that there are three main attacks on entertainment. Firstly, entertainment is perceived as lacking in quality content, and Western society's fixation with it is seen as an extraordinary waste of time. Secondly, entertainment is presented in opposition to information and education, and is often described as "creeping" into information like a virus (p. 6). Finally, audience members are frequently described as slaves to their addiction, alluding to the idea of entertainment as being bad for popular consumption. Instead, Gray (2008) believes entertainment plays a substantial role in communicating cultural ideas to society. Essentially, he argues that entertainment has a valuable place in the growth and dissemination of a society's culture. However, other media scholars have a more disparaging view of the presence of entertainment in television, and in particular, its presence in television news. Atkinson (2002) states that television news bulletins are reducing the number of 'serious' news stories in favour of "highly melodramatic and entertaining storytelling that is both formulaic and conventional" (p. 122). This concept is supported by McGregor and Comrie (2002), who argue that commercial forces have created a hybridisation of news that is both superficial and careless, which has weakened journalism and led to decreasing public faith in its integrity.

2.5.2.3 Tabloidization and Soft News

The idea of heightened drama and sensationalism in television news stories is often referred to as tabloidization. Tabloidization stems from tabloid journalism, which is often referred to as the journalistic 'other' (Glynn, 2000; Ornebring & Jonsson, 2004). Dennis and DeFleur (2010) describe tabloid journalism as "maddening" and sensationalist, which makes it an unreliable news source (p. 210). Discourse around the rise of tabloidization in television has been circulating for the last thirty years. Bogart (1980) notes how television news increases its entertainment value by packaging its content in a way that emphasises its dramatic qualities. For example, news stories contain a set of readily-identifiable images that are designed to have emotional appeal (Epstein, 1973). A policeman may represent authority, while a half-naked child may symbolise poverty. These individuals are representative of a larger group, and Epstein (1973) claims they are expected to evoke an emotional response in the audience. In turn, this makes the content more entertaining for the audience. Lichty and Gomery (1992) state that there had been a clear rise in entertainment-focused news by the early 1990s. However, they also claimed tabloid news would not be a threat to television news. Yet, it appears that rather than competing with tabloid journalism, television news has instead adopted many of its emotional and sensationalistic characteristics and thus become "tabloidized". Many media scholars have been critical of how tabloidization has spread into mainstream news outlets.

Glynn (2000) believes there is a decreased distinction between “serious news”, “tabloidism” and “entertainment media” (p. 234). McGregor (2002a) notes how certain news subject categories, like crime, have gained more prominence in the news bulletin due to their sensationalistic nature. Additionally, the magazine-style format of a tabloidized news bulletin enables television news producers to offer “something-for-everyone”, which helps hold audience members’ attention (Atkinson, 2002, p. 124). It appears that as tabloidization rises in television news, the line between serious news stories and entertainment stories becomes blurred. This calls into question the effect tabloidization is having on the quality of news stories and if it is affecting the accuracy of information disseminated to the public.

However, when looking at tabloid journalism as its own entity, there are differences of opinion over how much it negatively impacts upon traditional mainstream news and current affairs. Although Glynn (2000) is extremely critical of tabloid journalism itself and claims it should be treated as a form of popular culture instead of a legitimate form of journalism, he does credit tabloid television with challenging the traditional media’s constricted view on what can be a “public issue” (p. 233). Ornebring and Jonsson (2004) believe the tabloid press can have a positive impact on journalism due to its ability to address the subordinate classes: “it is quite possible that the tabloids would cover different issues using different forms, giving voice to different participants” (p. 286). Tabloid journalism can provide an alternative media outlet for marginalised public discourse. However, these allowances are for independent tabloid media formats and outlets. Media scholars remain critical of how traditional television news formats have adopted tabloid journalism characteristics to attract and maintain audience attention. Gray (2008) believes television entertainment is too powerful and influential to ignore. Thus, its growing presence in the television news bulletin must be examined critically.

The idea of news content becoming ‘soft’ is another idea discussed by media academics. They generally regard such news a synonym for infotainment, entertainment, or tabloidization. Despite the lack of one universal name to describe the ‘soft’ phenomenon, there is a consensus that the mass media industries are increasing the amount of entertainment news, or ‘soft news’, in a bulletin to try and maintain audience numbers in a commercialised media environment. Franklin (2008) claims broadcast journalism and news media have seen a retreat from investigative and ‘hard’ news reportage to the safer environment of entertainment-focused ‘soft’ news stories: “The task of journalism has become merely to deliver and serve up whatever the customer wants; rather like a deep-pan pizza” (p. 14). Franklin (2008) is extremely critical of this approach to current news journalism, and has a strong belief that traditional news values are experiencing a change, despite having a lack of empirical evidence to substantiate his views.

However, there is much support for this viewpoint. Edwards (1992) argues objective reporting is being replaced by “sympathy, prejudice, and sheer drama” (p. 17). Merrill (2004) believes society has become addicted to entertainment; he believes taking a simple glance into any country’s television systems would confirm this fact, which has had a significant effect on the presentation of the news. This indicates a decline in traditional investigative and ‘hard-hitting’ journalism in favour of stories with emotional appeal. Although Merrill (2004) does suggest there are small pools of quality journalism prevalent across the globe, he says it is becoming increasingly harder to find them in the “shallow voices” of the world’s media (p. 31). This is somewhat foreboding for the future state of journalism, as it raises doubts about the solidity of traditional hard-hitting news in television news bulletins.

The temptation for television news programmers to include ‘soft’ tabloidized content is understandable. With sensationalised news, elevated melodramatics, and a format that allows for wide audience appeal, it can be argued that the emotional response among the audience is strengthened and the content is therefore found to be more entertaining for a larger audience share. The need to sustain viewer interest puts pressure on news channels to provide softened, entertainment-focused content, and, by discouraging them from changing channels, the broadcaster’s commercial needs are satisfied (Atkinson, 2002; Glynn, 2000). Atkinson (2002) explores the idea of news producers ‘fearing’ their audience—if they lose their audience then they lose their advertisers. Television news broadcasters include content that meets the apparent wants and needs of the largest portion of the audience, which in turn creates advertising profit. Yet, in this tabloidization process, the focus of commercialised television broadcasters is not to provide information to the citizenry and facilitate a political public sphere, but rather meet bottom-line demands and draw audience numbers. Instead of providing content within the public interest, television news broadcasters want an interested public. Thus, television news programmers continue to include tabloidized news content in the bulletin, which solidifies a place in mainstream news bulletins for soft, lurid, and melodramatic content while endangering the space for traditional “hard” news.

Although there is much academic research on the rise of entertainment and tabloidization in television news, there are differences in how each scholar defines the terms. For example, Franklin (2008) uses the term ‘Newszak’ to encompass the entire softening and tabloidization process. Newszak describes the conversion of news into entertainment, and it is especially evident in the changes to television programme formats as well as in news content itself. He claims news stories are becoming destabilised by the increasingly gimmicky presentation of the news. Although the term is not widely used, the characteristics of Newszak are commonly noted

by media scholars around the world. The lack of a standardised definition to define this 'soft' phenomena has proved problematic when trying to compare empirical findings. It has been suggested that a universal definition be formulated to encompass tabloidization, the softening of news, and rising entertainment in the news media. Lahva (2009) states: "it is hard to think of other concepts that are so important and popular and at the same time so poorly defined and theorized" (p. 1). Some researchers have aimed to provide globalised terms for use within news and current affairs research. Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, and Legnante (2011) conducted a study that looked at a multitude of news research from around the globe and compared how academics used different terms for the same or similar concept. Their empirical findings concluded that although scholars describe the same phenomena, they used very different terms in their research—that being either tabloidization, entertainment, or infotainment—and the lack of a universal term made it difficult to compare their results accurately. Reinemann et al. (2011) offered a standardised definition to rectify this issue within the social sciences:

The more a news item is politically relevant, the more it reports in a thematic way, focuses on the societal consequences of events, is impersonal and unemotional in its style, the more it can be regarded as Hard news. The more a news item is not politically relevant, the more it reports in an episodic way, focuses on individual consequences of events, is personal and emotional in style, the more it can be regarded as Soft news. (p. 233).

By this definition, if a political story is reported in a thematic way and is focused on societal consequences, it would be hard news. Conversely, if a political story is reported in an episodic manner with a personal or emotional style and little focus on the political issue, it would be classified as soft news. This standardised definition was created so that media researchers can compare multiple studies from around the world.

2.5.2.4 Changing Presentation of Prime-Time News

The presentation of prime-time news has adjusted to fit the growing commercial media environments of Western societies, which has resulted in a shift in the news format and content. In its original format, prime-time television news comprised of one news reader who read the day's stories in a sober and serious style. However, news formats have changed to adapt to the new commercial demands. Atkinson (2002) argues that global commercial television news broadcasters have adopted a magazine format that provides content to appeal to the largest portion of the audience. In this format, two newsreaders—a male and female—are commonly used to read the prime-time news bulletin. However, some media scholars are critical of how the additional newsreader affects the news programme. According to Edwards (1992), using two

newsreaders results in a dramatised presentation style of the news: "One newsreader is a newsreader; two newsreaders are an act" (p. 21). When newsreaders insert their feelings about a news story and when editors dramatise the news, they are not allowing the facts to speak for themselves and are thus assuming roles as "interpreters of events to which they are not entitled" (Edwards, 1992, p. 23). This has not only shifted the way prime-time news is presented, but also how the audience consumes the news as well. Within a commercialised media market, Bogart (1980) questions if the television news audience places any value on the news itself, or if they instead watch the news habitually for the familiar news personalities. In a 1976 San Francisco study, Newman, as cited in Bogart (1980), found viewers recalled only 1.2 news items out of the 19.8 news stories viewed in a thirty-minute news bulletin earlier the same evening. This implies that audience members watch the news more for the viewing experience itself, rather than for the news stories.

The need for high ratings also impacts upon the presentation of the news. News programmes use audience ratings to determine how successfully the programme is operating in the commercial market. According to Bogart (1980), when a prime-time news programme is failing to meet certain ratings expectations, a 'program doctor' is often summoned to provide advice on how to boost ratings. He says this often involves utilising newsreaders who have "the right combination of cheerful smiles and sex appeal" (p. 213). The idea of the news becoming more personal and dramatised is further supported by Atkinson (2002), who does not describe them as 'newsreaders' but as 'presenters'. He argues that presenters of prime-time news become on-screen celebrities who command high-paid salaries that can surpass those of the corporation's top executives. However, this is not a television-wide phenomenon. Atkinson (2002) clarifies that television journalists are not better paid than journalists in the radio or print mediums. In a commercialised market, the job of the prime-time television newsreaders is to no longer just read the news, but present the news in an entertaining manner that attracts and maintains audience numbers. Television presenters provide a human face to the corporation and, combined with the dramatised format of the bulletin, they evolve from newsreaders to celebrities in their own right.

Additionally, the news format within prime-time news programmes has evolved in response to commercialisation. With the responsibility of providing the citizenry with information, news producers and programmers have the power to set the news agenda, and, in turn, influence what is discussed within the public sphere. However, commercialisation has seen a shift in how the news agenda is created and understood by the audience (Comrie, 1996). The role of the news agenda has been greatly explored by media scholars. According to Bogart (1980), a news

story may be seen to be important and worthy of public discussion simply because a news organisation decides to cover it. To make these decisions, journalists and news producers often employ a set of news values, which are learnt through newsroom socialisation (McGregor, 2002b), to determine if a story is worthy of appearing in the news bulletin. Galtung and Ruge (1965) introduced twelve news values to define what qualities are newsworthy. These values included threshold, frequency, personalisation, references to elite nations or people, and negativity. The more a story adheres to these values, the more likely it is to be reported. As a news item is passed through the journalists and news producers, it is subjected to a filtering process to determine if the story is “newsworthy” enough to be disseminated to the public. News agencies make the initial judgement on how and if a story will be broadcast to television, and this comes with a level of responsibility. Epstein (1973) argues that news executives often do not self-reflect on their news selection processes, as they do not consider how economic realities and governmental regulations shape their choices. When taking into account the commercial needs of a broadcaster to attract and sustain audience numbers, how can one ensure that the news items in a bulletin have been chosen objectively and with the sole function of meeting their democratic responsibilities? Broadcasting is a vital tool in fulfilling the public interest (Epstein, 1973), but there is a concern that international stories from the fringes of the non-industrialised world are often overlooked (Paterson, 1998). This raises the question as to whether news agendas provide a diverse range of information from all areas of the globe to the public. News producers hold a great responsibility for setting the news agenda and ultimately deciding what news is worthy of broadcast, which in turn has a significant impact on what information is publicly available for personal and social deliberation.

Moreover, the position of a news story within a bulletin also affects how the audience perceives its importance. Dennis and DeFleur (2010) outline the agenda-setting theory, which was first proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. It surmises that stories placed further up the news bulletin are given a higher status over the news stories that follow it, and this order is based on the cultural and social context of the news programme. The audience then understands that the stories broadcast earlier in the news hour are more important than those broadcast later (Dennis & DeFleur, 2010). In addition, Paterson (1998) argues that the images, sounds, and information that news agencies broadcast have the ability to change the audience reception of a news item. So, not only does the presence and position of a news item in the bulletin affect audience perception, but the auditory and visual elements also play a role in how the audience understands and evaluates a news item. Thus, news producers and programmers have a profound power to set the news agenda, which shapes the topics of discussion in public debate and therefore plays a crucial role in influencing the citizenry.

2.5.3 Deregulation and Commercialisation: The New Zealand Experience

New Zealand's broadcasting environment is unique in that it has experienced the full spectrum of broadcasting frameworks to some degree. New Zealand's commercialised model of broadcasting emerged in the 1970s, grew in the 1980s, and prevailed from the 1990s to today. Cook (2002) argues that New Zealand's shift toward commercialised broadcasting reflected the economic and political changes that were happening worldwide. Specifically, Thatcherism in the United Kingdom, Reaganomics in the United States, and even Rogernomics in New Zealand, introduced free-market policies which saw deregulation and privatisation burgeon. Here I will explore how New Zealand broadcasting moved from the state-led oriented system to the present commercially-driven framework, and discuss the impact of this change on the content, presentation, and development of news and current affairs on prime-time television. Although New Zealand broadcasting moved away from complete state control in the 1960s and was operating with a stronger public-service focus by the 1970s, economic pressures led to the commercialisation of the New Zealand media market. Legislative changes under National Party leader Robert Muldoon in the 1970s paved the way for dramatic broadcasting reforms in the 1980s that led to complete deregulation of the broadcasting market in New Zealand. These radical reforms reshaped New Zealand broadcasting and have provided the foundation for the growing commercialisation of television news today.

2.5.3.1 *Rising Commercialisation in New Zealand Broadcasting*

With the slogan 'Time for a Change', a 1972 Labour election victory heralded the dramatic changes in New Zealand broadcasting, led by the radical Minister for Broadcasting, Roger Douglas (Smith, 1996). Another notable occurrence that same year was the NZBC's success in stopping a privately-owned broadcaster gaining the rights to a second channel (Rennie, 1992). The government was more interested in introducing a second state-owned channel alongside Television One instead of a private broadcaster.

In 1973, Douglas formed a committee to provide a report on the future of broadcasting in New Zealand. The Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, also known as the Adam Committee, was wary of an open market where broadcasting would function in accord with commercial interests and broadcasters would compete against each other for audience ratings (Smith, 1996). Instead, the committee suggested that a second competing channel should provide complementary programming, so that similar programmes would not be broadcast at the same

time and the channels would not fight for audience numbers. In addition, the committee recommended that advertising be restricted to four days a week (Smith, 1996).

In 1974, Labour announced that three independent corporations would replace the NZBC (Smith, 1996): Television One, Television Two, and Radio New Zealand. However, the Adam Committee's recommendations were not closely followed, and although the establishment of a second television channel came with the intention of improving broadcasting in New Zealand, the reality was quite different. When TV One went to air in March 1975, followed "limply" by TV2 three months later (Smith, 1996, p. 7), the commercial and competitive nature of the broadcasters meant that complementary programming was not achieved and advertising content rose to five days a week. It should be acknowledged here that even as competition grew between TV One and TV2, there was also a clear public-service ethos in New Zealand broadcasting, with long-form current affairs and news programmes thriving during this decade (Hope, 2012). However, the competition between TV One and TV2 between 1975 and 1979 sparked the gradual change in how broadcasters approached their audience. As television viewer numbers rose sharply during this period, the broadcasters' perception of the audience began to change from that of informed citizens to profitable consumers.

Under Robert Muldoon's prime ministership, a growing reliance on advertising and fiercely competitive programming schedules became the norm. Between 1975 and 1988, successive National administrations refused to increase the licence fee which intensified the reliance on advertising revenue (Day, 2000). Cocker (1994) notes that "commercial imperatives arguably began to pervert public service commitments" (p. 251). The government refused to increase the licence fee, so to generate more profit, TV One and TV2 included more commercial programming and advertising content (Day, 2000). This pushed the hybrid broadcasting model further from its public-service orientation and closer to commercial imperatives. The management of two competing channels proved costly for the government, and further regulatory changes were introduced in 1979. When the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) was formed in 1980, Television One and Television Two were brought together as Television New Zealand (TVNZ). The somewhat controversial move was an attempt to cut costs, and although some saw an opportunity to implement complementary programming, others saw the change as governmental repression (Comrie, 1996). In subsequent years—and with an unchanged licence fee—BCNZ became even more reliant upon advertising revenue (Day, 2000) and television broadcasting became more commercially oriented. This shift ultimately affected the format and content of television. According to a 1983 UNESCO study, only 25 percent of all New Zealand's broadcasting content was local content—this included game

shows, sports, news, and current affairs (Newcomb, 2014). Australia, on the other hand, reached 50 percent, while Great Britain logged 85 percent local content (Newcomb, 2014). In New Zealand's small market, growing commercial pressures were overpowering television broadcasters' ability to fulfil their national public-service functions.

However, as Day (2000) explains, although commercialisation in television had begun to grow rapidly in New Zealand, public attention to television news and current affairs did not decline. Despite its public popularity, news and current affairs did not gain the same support from politicians. Prime Minister Muldoon and his cabinet often accused news journalists and current affairs producers of being biased, and there was little interest in ensuring that public ownership of broadcast journalism remained (Day, 2000). Thus, when a new Labour government was elected in 1984, what little remained of public-service broadcasting in New Zealand television was about to undergo a profound reorganisation.

2.5.3.2 Deregulation

From 1984 to 1996, New Zealand underwent a period of extreme economic change. This was the "Neo-Liberal Revolution" (Hope, 1996, p. 21), which was catalysed by the Fourth Labour Government opening the finance sector to international trade and investment. These policy changes made under finance minister Roger Douglas (a period often referred to as 'Rogernomics'), saw mass market deregulation and increased commercialisation occur in New Zealand, which ultimately reshaped the role of the state and the operational structures of New Zealand's broadcasting industry.

Once Labour won the 1984 election, the government appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate how broadcasting was financed and structured in New Zealand. The commission, made up of community, educational, and religious group leaders, recommended tighter regulation in broadcasting to ensure it operated in the public interest (Cocker, 1996). However, with Rogernomics unfolding, these recommendations were largely ignored. As Horrocks (2004) argues, neo-liberal politicians in New Zealand held the view that public input and interference only muddled the operations of the market. Broadcasting was to be deregulated and made more reliant on commercial revenue. After Labour's re-election in 1987, multiple government departments were converted to commercial enterprises, including telecommunications (Hope, 1996). The *Broadcasting Act 1989* saw the abolition of BCNZ, leaving Radio New Zealand and TVNZ to function as separate entities. Radio New Zealand was to be an independent public broadcaster, and TVNZ was to be turned into a state-owned enterprise (SOE), whose chief focus

was to generate profit for the Crown (Thompson, 2005; Day, 2000). The legislation passed during this time was complemented by the establishment of the Broadcasting Commission, self-dubbed as New Zealand on Air (NZOA). The aim of NZOA was to promote and fund New Zealand content (Horrocks, 2004) to counterbalance the growing commercialism in New Zealand television. NZOA also allowed radio and television frequencies to become privatised, tradable commodities (Day, 2000).

The 1989 broadcasting reorganisation was the most significant the country had seen since the inauguration of the NZBC in 1961 (Day, 2004). Horrocks and Perry (2004) state that the government restructured TVNZ by employing commercially-focused executives to ensure the enterprise was managed cost effectively and efficiently. In reality, these structural changes were made so that the broadcaster could maximise revenue for the state. Furthermore, Atkinson (2002) states that TVNZ's SOE model "stressed top-down financial accountability and profitability rather than journalistic requirements" (p. 125). The restructure of New Zealand television broadcasting completely quashed its public-service past and produced an entirely commercial entity. And, just as structural changes reflected the exclusively commercial agenda of television broadcasting, programme content and perceptions of the audience changed accordingly.

Day (2000) argues that many of society's values and morals are mediated through broadcasting—whether it be through advertising, news, or other content. As part of its public function, broadcasting communicates important cultural and societal ideologies. Consequently, the dependence on broadcasting is so great that society would barely function without it. However, Cocker (1998) has condemned the political treatment of such an important medium:

The deregulation of broadcasting in New Zealand represents a low point in the policy maker's attitude towards its role and value. Its treatment as just another business in a free market denigrates the social, political and cultural role broadcasting performs. (p. 18).

Commercial and political imperatives significantly impacted upon the public service functions of broadcasting. Horrocks (2004) believes the deregulation and commercialisation of television in New Zealand changed how airtime was understood by television producers and executives. Airtime, he argues, was a "scarce resource" (p. 58) that could only be filled by commercially successful programmes. Success was measured by ratings figures and by constant calculations to ensure each time slot maximised profit by attracting numbers and commercially viable audience members (Horrocks, 2004). In the deregulated and commercialised market, New

Zealand television viewers were no longer treated as informed members of society, but as valuable commercial units who were there to consume television's products and generate revenue (Horrocks & Perry, 2004).

2.5.3.3 *Competition Comes to Television*

As part of the 1980s broadcasting reforms, a third privately-owned television channel was approved by the government, in addition to many more private radio stations (Day, 2000). According to Smith (1996), the arrival of competition had a profound effect on every aspect of New Zealand television, including the programming purchases and scheduling choices. TV3 went to air in 1989, and Horrocks (2004) argues that despite the mounting competitiveness between the two television broadcasters, there was also a positive impact on the industry: the total monopoly TVNZ had once held was broken. However, six months after its launch and in the face of fierce competition from TVNZ, TV3 was in receivership with a \$50 million deficit. Foreign ownership laws restricting overseas investors to owning no more than 5% of a company was having a considerable effect on the operation of TV3. In response to this, Labour proposed to raise the limit to 15%, but they lost the election to National before implementing the changes (Smith, 1996).

After unsuccessfully trying to sell TV3 when they came into office, National introduced further broadcasting changes. In 1991, the Broadcasting Amendment Bill saw foreign ownership restrictions removed in New Zealand, allowing for 100% foreign ownership. CanWest, a large transnational conglomerate, took control of TV3 and revitalised the competition for audiences and advertising revenue in the New Zealand television market (Baker, 2012). TVNZ responded to this by implementing significant structural changes, which ultimately transformed the culture of the company. Smith (1996) compares the 1990 TVNZ Annual Report to the public-service ideals laid out in the *Broadcasting Act 1976*. The act required broadcasting, by law, to educate, entertain, and inform. However, after deregulation, TVNZ's objectives were first and foremost to be commercially successful, and secondly to serve the people of New Zealand (Smith, 1996). Deregulation and intense competition had transformed the objectives of the broadcasters. Their only interest now was to make a profit, and TVNZ was successful at this. They generated impressive revenue streams for the government as an SOE (Thompson, 2005).

However, the impact of deregulation and competition on news and current affairs in New Zealand quickly became apparent. By removing the public-service responsibility of TVNZ and replacing it with commercial objectives, the news product itself became more commercialised. Butterworth (2002) notes that the news in New Zealand had developed a "news-as-

entertainment mode” (p. 185) by the early 2000s, and Atkinson (2002) argues that TVNZ has adopted a bureaucratic and risk-reducing approach to news production, where “populist norms” are used to “elevate the opinions of everyday people” (p. 126). Norris (2002) points to this commercialisation as the underlying reason why the length of stories and sound bites have been reduced, and why there has been a declining focus on politics and economics in the bulletin, in favour of human interest and celebrity stories. TVNZ’s focus was to compete against TV3 by attracting bigger audience numbers, and to do so they had to broadcast content their audience would watch. Atkinson (1994a) observes that TVNZ sought advice from an American journalism professor, Fred Shook, on how to improve their prime-time news programme. Based on Shook’s recommendations, TVNZ began to use the ‘active-voice’ in news items to make stories seem more urgent and interesting, while the news stories began to shorten in their key components: sound bites, camera shots and item length (Atkinson, 1994a). This was a process he called the “morselisation of *One Network News*” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 121). His observations signal the first instance of media scholars commenting on the changing presentation of the news in New Zealand. Norris (2002) argues that this change in the presentation of news was due not so much to the competition posed by TV3, but to the commercial requirements placed on TVNZ as an SOE by the state. The arrival of pay-to-view television provider SKY TV added further competition for TVNZ and TV3 (TVNZ, 2016), and demonstrated the maturing commercial nature of the New Zealand television market. According to Horrocks and Perry (2004), producing investigative journalism became arduous in the commercial environment. Broadcasters could not guarantee its commercial success so did not invest their resources into it. TVNZ’s principle objective was to generate profit and return a dividend to the Treasury.

2.5.3.4 TVNZ Charter

Television broadcasters continued to operate in this competitive deregulated system for another decade, until the 1999 Labour/Alliance government recognised the problems associated with New Zealand’s fully commercialised model (Thompson, 2005). Labour introduced broadcasting reforms in 2003 to re-regulate broadcasting and to return a public-service focus back into TVNZ. The private television sector, on the other hand, was to remain deregulated. TVNZ was restructured as a Crown-owned company (CROC) with a public-service charter; the broadcaster would still need to generate money for the state, but they would also have to meet certain public-service obligations (Thompson, 2005). These obligations included broadcasting content that would contribute to national identity and citizenship, while serving the interests and needs of all New Zealand society (TVNZ, 2003). The aim was to refocus the state broadcaster on performing its cultural and democratic functions so that viewers were treated as citizens, not just consumers (Thompson, 2005). TVNZ 7, launched in 2008, was an

example of this. TVNZ 7 was a commercial-free channel owned by TVNZ, which broadcasted “quality local and international content” that was “challenging, diverse and educational” (TVNZ, 2011, para. 3). However, TVNZ was initially funded a limited amount of \$12 million by the government (Baker, 2012). This limit was increased in subsequent years as TVNZ struggled to satisfy the requirements of meeting the Charter demands while also providing a dividend to the Crown. As Cocker (2006) argues, the Charter was a flawed public policy, and the dual demands of the Charter proved increasingly difficult to meet as commercialisation and competition grew stronger. In addition, attracting a high audience share was becoming harder to achieve due to audience fragmentation. Norris (2005) points to the emergence of new media technologies—such as broadband, video-on-demand services, and mobile phone accessibility—as reasons for audience fragmentation. This fragmentation has drastically affected traditional television broadcasters by directly threatening the economic model on which free-to-air commercial television is built (Norris, 2005). Without audience numbers to sell to advertisers, a commercial model cannot function.

The Charter, with its dual objectives, exposed a principal flaw in Labour’s broadcasting policy, and the dependence on ratings numbers and advertising revenue remained. TVNZ struggled to reconcile the contradictory pressures (Thompson, 2007), and in 2011, three years after the election of John Key’s National government, the Charter was discontinued. National followed this with the shutdown of TVNZ 7 in 2012, removing the last public-service television channel left in the country. Phillips and Witschge (2012) point to emerging international concerns that television news broadcasters have a stronger focus on their business targets than on their democratic responsibilities. Arguably, this is now true for TVNZ. Free from the need to meet certain public-service objectives, TVNZ began to operate with a completely commercial focus, and this commercial framework has remained today. It should be emphasised that commercialism has not just been seen in television news, but throughout the television media landscape. A study by Johnson (2000) found that during the 1990s, the growth of advertising, infomercials, and sponsorship on New Zealand television advanced consumer culture. According to Hope and Johnson (2001), New Zealand had become, perhaps, the most “commercially saturated” society in the world (p. 127).

2.6 Commercialisation and Tabloidization of Prime-Time Television News in New Zealand: Empirical Studies

So far, this chapter has discussed the impact broadcasting frameworks have on news content, with a particular focus on the growing commercialisation of television broadcasting and prime-time news. The changes in content, structure, and presentation of prime-time television news and current affairs in New Zealand have been widely explored by media scholars. The studies of four prominent New Zealand academics will be considered here: Joe Atkinson (1994a; 1994b), Margaret Comrie (1996), Daniel Cook (2002), and Sarah Baker (2012). Their studies map the changing landscape of television news and current affairs since deregulation in the 1980s, and point to an increase in the tabloidization of programme content in response to commercialisation.

2.6.1 Joe Atkinson

Atkinson's work was the earliest research on post-deregulation television news undertaken in New Zealand, and subsequent studies in the field have built on his initial findings. In a 1994 *Metro* article titled 'Hey Martha! The reconstruction of *One Network News*', Atkinson discussed the changes in the content and presentation of the *One Network News* bulletin. He was critical of the advice TVNZ received from American professor of broadcast journalism Fred Shook in 1988. Influenced by the American news models, the network encouraged newsreaders to cue emotional responses in their audience and this ultimately changed the presentation of the news (Atkinson, 1994a). The new model favoured a longer bulletin with two newsreaders instead of one. Atkinson (1994a) argued that the American models preferred "Barbie and Ken anchor teams, folksy weathermen and breezy sportscasters" (p. 96), with a faster pace and a focus on humour, emotion and sensationalism. Acting on Shook's advice, TVNZ employed Judy Bailey and Richard Long as the 'Barbie and Ken' anchors and pushed the bulletin back to start at 6pm, while also adopting a less formal style to the news bulletin. Additionally, TVNZ began to include visual teasers and write scripts in enticing language to encourage viewers to come back and discover what happens after the next advertising break (Atkinson, 1994a). These changes were designed to appeal to the audience's emotions.

Atkinson carried out a content analysis study of TVNZ's *One Network News*, looking at the years 1985, 1988, 1990, and 1992. He found that news items had become depoliticised and morselised in the years following deregulation (Atkinson, 1994b). Depoliticisation is the removal of news stories from the bulletin that address serious public affairs as the commercial pressure to attract audience numbers intensifies (Atkinson, 1994b). Morselisation refers to the shortening of camera shots, sound bites, and item lengths (Johnson, 2000). This coincided with interviews

being cut into 'sound bite' snippets to keep the news catchy and fast paced, and the length of sound bites had reduced. From the years 1985 to 1992, sound bite lengths decreased from an average of 16.348 seconds to 7.46 seconds. Item lengths saw a peak with 105.59 seconds in 1988, before dropping down to 66.22 seconds in 1992. Atkinson also found changes to the news content itself—most notably, the decrease in political news stories. Atkinson analysed five subject categories: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy/Defence, International Politics, Accidents/Disasters, and Crime/Police/Justice. Domestic Politics saw a peak in 1988, occupying 18.87% of total news time, before dropping to 11.28% and 10.8% in 1990 and 1992 respectively. On the other hand, Crime/Police/Justice saw an increase from 2.51% in 1985 to 19.68% in 1992. Thus, he found there was a declining focus on content relating to economics and politics in favour of content focusing on crime, human interest, and disasters. Atkinson argued that these changes were due to deregulation and the placement of heavy commercial pressures on television news. "Television deregulation was supposed to rid us of a state-controlled broadcasting establishment filled with stuffy and obsequious bureaucrats... What actually occurred was the replacement of one master by another: the state by the market" (Atkinson, 1994b, p. 150).

As a result, Atkinson (1994b) stated that the whole context and complete explanation of a story or interview was no longer provided to the viewer. Instead, the advice from Shook moved TVNZ's focus to attracting and maintaining audience numbers. "The role of the journalist was shifted gradually away from that of telling citizens what they needed to know, towards that of giving audiences what ratings seemed to show they wanted" (Atkinson, 1994a, pp. 97-98). Atkinson remained critical of this change, and claimed that Shook's advice was beneficial because it boosted TVNZ's ratings, without necessarily promoting better journalism. Instead, the acute focus on storytelling to retain audience numbers was quashing the journalistic need to provide accurate and objective reportage (Atkinson, 1994a). Atkinson's studies highlight the depoliticisation and commercialisation of *One Network News* in the late 1980s, and his work provided the foundation for subsequent researchers to base their own studies on.

2.6.2 Margie Comrie

Comrie's 1996 study revealed how the growing strain between commercial and public-service principles was reflected in news programming and news content. More specifically, she furthered Atkinson's research by systematically examining how deregulation and competitive

pressures had shaped TVNZ news from 1985 to 1990. She used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve this.

The results of Comrie's content analysis are of particular interest, as they corroborated the trends outlined by Atkinson two years earlier and confirmed the commercialisation of TVNZ's prime-time news programme. She found that news content had moved toward entertainment-focused content, such as crime, disasters, and human-interest stories. For example, in 1985, Crime accounted for 3% of the newshole, but by 1990, Crime accounted for 5.3% of the newshole. In 1985, Accidents and Disasters accounted for 3.8% of the newshole, but climbed to 6.6% by 1990. Comrie found Sport to be an extremely large category, as it dominated the newshole significantly in every sample year. Comrie noted that although TVNZ continued to use official sources for their stories, there had been an increase in the use of victims and ordinary citizens as news sources, which reflected the trend toward tabloidization that Atkinson first noted. When examining the average number of stories per bulletin, Comrie made interesting findings. In 1985, there was an average of 19.95 stories per bulletin, which dropped down to 15.38 in 1989 in response to deregulation. According to Comrie (1996), producers shortened the story length significantly in 1990, so the newshole shrunk again despite the average story number per bulletin rising to 17.19. Overall, the news bulletins Comrie studied from 1985 to 1990 displayed a reduction in overall story lengths, story numbers per bulletin, and sound bite length.

The qualitative aspects of Comrie's research supported these quantitative findings. In her qualitative analysis of the news, she found that the language of the news was changing. There was frequent use of emotive words in stories and headlines, which, she argued, heightened the emotional response by making the news more exciting and engaging for the viewer. In turn, the bulletins became more attractive to a larger audience and thus made the news programme more profitable to advertisers (Comrie, 1996). This reflected the commercial pressures facing TVNZ in the late 1980s. Comrie's research highlights how commercialisation threatens the news' democratic function in New Zealand. At the time of her 1996 study, she argued that current news practices were falling short of this function. Commercial interests had become overwhelming, and, as Comrie argued in 1996, information had become a commercial commodity: "The need for reform is urgent in New Zealand" (p. 396).

2.6.3 Daniel Cook

Cook's 2002 study built on previous research by further exploring the impact deregulation had on New Zealand news. His content analysis study examined both pre- and post-deregulation news bulletins from 1984 to 1996. For each sample year, he chose 15 random bulletins to analyse, excluding weekends. His aim was to examine changes in the content and presentation of *One Network News* over the twelve-year sample period, and to link these changes to the increasing commercial pressures felt by TVNZ over this time. Cook conducted a macro-analysis of news content, as well as a micro-analysis of political content.

Cook found that political news halved between 1988 and 1989, while softer news categories—such as Crime, Human Interest, and Disasters—increased. Cook also found that, by 1996, the average *One Network News* bulletin contained more chatter between presenters than information on political policy. In the wake of deregulation, the *One Network News* prime-time news bulletin allocated more time to presenter chit-chat than to serious political news (Cook, 2002). Commercialisation was reshaping the format, presentation, and content of the news. In particular, Cook (2002) aimed to examine how political reportage had changed over the sample years as commercialisation grew. As Cook (2002) argues, one of the most vital roles the media plays in democracy is the coverage of political processes and issues. The results of his political micro-analysis were critical of how TVNZ had implemented a human-interest focus on political coverage, which undermined the “essence of serious journalism” (p. 179). Cook's study added another layer to the study of tabloidization and personalisation in the news in New Zealand. He found that by 1996, there had been a rise in visual storytelling and a demise of serious, public affairs reportage. This research solidified the fact that in the wake of deregulation, the news in New Zealand had indeed undergone a profound transformation.

2.6.4 Margie Comrie and Susan Fountaine

As an update to her 1996 study, Comrie—in partnership with Fountaine—conducted a small content analysis of TVNZ and TV3's news programmes. In the former case, the researchers sought to find out if the Charter—in its first year of implementation—had made a significant difference to its programming (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005a). Analysing TV3's *3 News* provided a more comprehensive understanding of the news environment. This was the first study to comparatively analyse TVNZ and TV3's news programmes. The sample consisted of 56 news bulletins, which contained 1,386 news stories. The bulletins were taken from the years 2000—before the Charter had been implemented—and 2003—the year the Charter began. This study was similar in nature to Comrie's 1996 doctoral research, but it was on a much smaller scale. One significant result was the continued supremacy of sports news content. Sports dominated

One News and *3 News* in both years; they noted that “Sports coverage was so big that overall it was greater than the news three categories—crime, politics and human interest—combined.” (p. 183). When examining politics and crime, an interesting shift occurred between the sample years. Comrie and Fountaine (2005a) found that in 2000, both programmes dedicated more time to politics than to crime. However, by 2003, this order had switched and crime had become more dominant. Comrie and Fountaine (2005a) considered this development especially problematic for TVNZ, as 2003 was the first year of the Charter, and a decrease in politics content seemed to indicate a departure from their Charter commitments. Overall, the study found that more emphasis was placed on entertainment-focused news stories than serious political items: Sport, combined with tabloid categories—crime, human interest, public moral problems, and accidents and disasters—occupied 57% of TVNZ news and 64% of TV3 news, yet, across both channels and years, only 19% of news was dedicated to politically-focused subject categories—politics, economics, and diplomacy and foreign affairs (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005a). Thus, despite the introduction of the Charter and its public-service ethos, TVNZ still devoted more time to entertainment-focused tabloid content in its news programme than politically-focused stories. After placing their data alongside previous TVNZ studies from 1985 through to 1996, Comrie and Fountaine (2005a) found that the general trend toward tabloidization and sports coverage had worsened over time. While TVNZ’s results seemed slightly better than TV3’s, Comrie and Fountaine (2005a) argued that most of the news space was “taken up with topics that do very little to contribute to intellectual, scientific and cultural development” (pp. 186-187). National political news was struggling to be perceived as newsworthy (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005b). The results of Comrie and Fountaine’s study showed there had been little sign of improvement with the introduction of the TVNZ Charter. Television news in New Zealand was trying to survive in the commercial market instead of providing citizens with informative news that might enhance democratic knowledge and debate.

2.6.5 Sarah Baker

Baker’s 2012 doctoral thesis focused on the impact deregulation had on current affairs programming from 1984 to 2004. To map the changes to current affairs in New Zealand, she utilised a content analysis of representative current affairs programmes from 1984, 1994, and 2004. She also included a qualitative exploration of how current affairs programming became restructured as ‘infotainment’. The twenty-year time span covered both pre- and post-deregulation programming, including current affairs programming during the Charter period. While previous studies confirmed there had been a reduction in item length in news bulletins,

Baker's study found this trend also extended to current affairs. The quantity of entertainment-focused content increased, while serious and informational subject matter decreased (Baker, 2012). Her study also found a reduction in politician and expert news sources, while celebrity and sports people as news sources grew in popularity over the research period.

Baker's qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative content analysis, as they confirmed the style, format, and presentation of current affairs programmes in New Zealand had changed. She noted structural changes, like faster cuts and a quicker pace, and changes in the delivery of information, such as an emotional emphasis on the subjects interviewed and in the reporter's reactions when conducting the interviews. She also found there was a tendency to provide less factual evidence in current affairs stories, and instead there was a reliance on opinion (Baker, 2012). During the Charter period—when current affairs shows were theoretically supposed to improve with public-service objectives—Baker's data revealed there was a rise in the number of entertainment-focused stories and a decline in serious informational stories. She claimed that although these changes in style may have occurred naturally over time, her findings suggest the change experienced in New Zealand current affairs has been “dramatic”, and “the current affairs genre itself has greatly altered” (p. 227). Baker's study found there had been a complete reconstruction of current affairs programming in New Zealand in response to the commercialised media environment, and this was having a detrimental effect on the current affairs topics themselves. Complex topics were either completely removed from the current affairs programmes, or were given simplistic treatment, while soft and simple stories became news (Baker, 2012). Baker's research aligns with Atkinson, Comrie, and Cook's studies on prime-time news in New Zealand, and validates the concern academics have about commercialisation internationally. Combined, these New Zealand studies clearly solidify the process of depoliticisation, tabloidization, and morselisation in New Zealand's news and current affairs programmes since deregulation in 1989.

2.7 Prime-Time Television News in New Zealand: The Case for Further Research

The five empirical studies outlined in the previous section extensively analysed the changes that occurred within news and current affairs in New Zealand before, during, and after deregulation, as well as during the Charter period. However, there has been little research of an empirical nature on news and current affairs content since 2004 - the final sample year examined in Baker's 2012 current affairs study. A content analysis study of prime-time news in New Zealand

has not been performed since Comrie and Fountaine's 2005 study, which focused on the years 2000 and 2003. This means that although there has been plenty of commentary on the content of New Zealand's 6pm news bulletins, there has not been a deep level of content analysis for 10 years. The performance of the news media should always be subjected to "robust" scrutiny to prevent it from becoming "complaisant and self-serving" (Comrie & McGregor, 1992, p. 10). The news is too important to leave to the influences of the economy (Phillips & Witschge, 2012), and it must be subjected to careful analysis.

Therefore, a new study is required to update the research in this field. A content analysis will examine the content of TVNZ and TV3's news bulletins to provide a contemporary evaluation of the news, as well as an analysis of the specific content that makes up the bulletin, such as news stories, advertising breaks, headlines, and weather segments. In particular, there is a need to examine the categories of news in the bulletins to determine if, as previous research indicates, there has been a continued growth of entertainment-focused news stories and an absence of serious informational content in the commercialised media environment. Despite the common misunderstanding that audience members do not care about the news (McGregor & Comrie, 2002), it continues to play an integral role in the functioning of a democratic society, and thus must be scrutinised to ensure that this role is performed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

There is a strong consensus that commercial pressures in the television newsroom continue to have a profound effect on news and current affairs content. However, prime-time television news programmes in New Zealand have not been critically examined for decades. The methodology outlined in this chapter is designed to update the existing television news research in New Zealand. Namely, the studies by Atkinson (1994a; 1994b), Comrie (1996), Cook (2002), and Comrie and Fountaine (2005). Atkinson first began television news research in New Zealand by examining news content from the late 1980s and early 1990s, while Comrie's 1996 study and Cook's 2002 study analysed the content of *One Network News* in the mid 1990s. Comrie conducted a secondary study with Fountaine in 2005, and compared the content of TVNZ and TV3's news programmes in the pre- and post-Charter period. With concerns growing over the quality of television news in New Zealand, there is a critical need to extend the research conducted by Atkinson, Comrie and Fountaine, and Cook. This content analysis aims to extensively measure the content of New Zealand's two 6pm news bulletins, not only to record the ongoing impact of commercialisation, but to provide an updated prime-time content comparison of TVNZ's *One News* and TV3's *3 News* programmes. This chapter will begin by outlining the research questions that will drive this study and explain why content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method. The content analysis template has been adapted from studies by Baker (2012) and Comrie (1996), and an explanation of how this study builds upon their research is given. This chapter concludes with a detailed research design that includes a discussion of the context, sample, subject categories, and areas of measurement for the content analysis.

3.1 Research Method and Research Questions

Research methods are the tools used to collect data, such as interviews, questionnaires, and observations (Denscombe, 2010). To critically evaluate the content of New Zealand's 6pm news bulletins, a content analysis informed by a political-economic understanding of broadcast media institutions and television news networks was chosen as the most appropriate research approach. The political economy approach concerns the structures of capitalism. Specifically, it centres on the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of wealth, and the effect

this has on society (Baker, 2012). According to Golding and Murdock (1991), the political economy approach “goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good” (p. 20). One of the primary concerns for political economists is the distribution of material resources in capitalist societies, and they aim to analyse inequalities and “suggest strategies for intervention against the status quo” (Baker, 2012, p. 42). Thompson (2011) believes there is an urgent need to understand how relationships of power, control of resources, and interactions of different interests impact the media. Casey, Casey, Calvert, French, and Lewis (2002) argue that there are four areas of interest for a political economy analysis of the media: the concentration of media ownership, the globalisation of media production, the increase of new media technologies, and the deregulation of communications policy. This thesis is mainly concerned with the consequences of the latter, regarding the changes to the content of prime-time television news bulletins. In the late 1980s, neo-liberalism in New Zealand turned media and communication resources into commercial commodities. Thus, to critically analyse contemporary prime-time news programmes in New Zealand, a political economy approach was chosen as the most suitable for this study.

Several researchers have employed the content analysis method to conduct similar studies, including Atkinson (1994b), Comrie (1996), Cook (2002), and Baker (2012). As discussed in Chapter Two, their research recognised a shift toward tabloid entertainment-focused content in prime-time news programmes. This was due to the deregulation of the New Zealand broadcasting market and the rise of commercial imperatives in the late 1980s, which heightened the demand for audience numbers with disposable incomes. By employing a content analysis method, this study provides a contemporary update on the prime-time 6pm news bulletins in New Zealand and potentially maps the continued trend towards tabloidization that was identified by previous research. Stempel (1989) argues that content analyses in general are “designed to secure data relevant to a research question or hypothesis” (p. 120). He also argues that content analysis begins with asking good questions. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of *One News* and *3 News*’ bulletins, a primary research question was chosen to shape the content analysis, and a list of sub-questions was also developed. The content analysis aims to answer the following questions and sub-questions:

Primary Research Question: *What is the content of contemporary One News and 3 News prime-time news bulletins in New Zealand?*

1. How much of the news bulletin is actually news content?

- *How much is soft news?*

- *How much is hard news?*
- *How often does a soft news story lead a bulletin?*
- *How often does a hard news story lead a bulletin?*
- 2. How much of the news bulletin is non-news content?**
 - *How much is advertising content?*
 - *How much is presenter chit-chat/studio shots?*
 - *How much is headlines?*
 - *How much is weather content?*
- 3. On average, how long is a news story?**
 - *How long is an average hard news story?*
 - *How long is an average soft news story?*
 - *How long is an average news story from each subject category (crime, politics, etc.)?*
 - *What length is the longest and shortest news stories?*
 - *How many stories appear per news bulletin?*
- 4. How many news stories are National (produced in New Zealand)?**
 - *How many news stories are Overseas Request/Foreign Correspondence (produced by a New Zealand reporter overseas)?*
 - *How many news stories are Overseas Feed (produced and/or recorded overseas by a foreign news agency)?*
- 5. What percentage of the news fit within particular subject categories?**
 - *What is the overall percentage of each subject category (crime, sport, celebrities, etc.)?*
 - *What are the overall percentages of hard news and soft news within each subject category?*

One News and *3 News* bulletins will be compared based on the above questions. By analysing the programmes' bulletins by the above questions, a detailed analysis of what comprises each of the news bulletins can be formed. This data is used to systematically compare the similarities and points of difference between *One News* and *3 News*' prime-time bulletins.

The research undertaken is solely quantitative. Quantitative research is the measurement of phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity (Thamilarasan, 2015). Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) define quantitative analysis as the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication. These symbols are assigned numeric values according to measurement rules, and by analysing the relationship of these values, the researcher can describe the communication itself, or make evaluations about its meaning (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005).

According to Hartley (2004), content analysis is “reassuringly quantitative” (p. 38), and allows researchers to create hard evidence from textual or social phenomena. It is a method used to provide a quantitative description of the contents of mass-mediated texts, with the aim of making interpretations about the content (Hartley, 2004; Davies & Mosdell, 2006). The content analysis method provides a quantitative description of the social phenomena that is the *One News* and *3 News* 6pm news bulletins. According to Krippendorff (2004), a content analysis involves a systematic reading of a text, image, or symbolic matter. The method usually draws representative samples of content by using category rules to measure the differences in content, and the quantitative content is analysed to identify patterns, characteristics, or relationships (Baker, 2012). This study will identify certain patterns, characteristics, and relationships in the *One News* and *3 News* data, which can be compared to each other, as well as to previous news research.

Krippendorff (2004) argues that content analysis is useful for formulating replicable interpretations to the contexts of their use. The researcher increases the chance of the validity of their study if the categories and rules are “conceptually and theoretically sound and are reliably applied” (Baker, 2012, p. 88). The replication ability of content analysis studies is a clear benefit of the method, as it increases the reliability of the data and credibility of the study itself. Additionally, the replicability of content analyses allows for comparisons to be made between samples within the study itself and to other research over a period of time. There is much academic support for using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in research projects to provide a more holistic reading of a text. Jick (1979) argues that a mixed methods approach enables researchers to examine the same phenomenon from different angles and allows new meanings to arise. Content analysis is seen mainly as a quantitative method, but Stempel (1989) believes it can also identify qualitative content. Although this study is quantitative, an unexpected qualitative reading arises from the quantitative data, and thus provides an alternative interpretation of the news content collected. However, it should be clarified that this qualitative reading is only small, and this study remains definitively quantitative.

3.2 Research Design and Context

The following section outlines how the research was carried out using content analysis to systematically examine the *One News* and *3 News* 6pm bulletins. The research design of this study used the content analyses from Comrie (1996) and Baker’s (2012) studies as templates to build from. Many of the subject categories used by Comrie and Baker were recreated for this

study, along with other areas of measurement, such as the length of stories, geographical source of stories, length of advertisement breaks, and so on. I also chose to code each news story into a subject category, just as Comrie, Baker, and Cook did in their own content analyses. However, after conducting further reading, I added another layer of measurement to the analysis. After placing each news item into a subject category, the story was then coded as either 'soft' or 'hard'. As discussed in Chapter Two, Reinemann et al. (2011) offer a definition of hard and soft news to standardise these categories in social science research, and their definition was used in this study [see p. 21]. By using this definition, a subject category was not restricted to being either 'entertainment' or 'informational'. Coding a story as 'hard' or 'soft' acknowledged the emerging hybridity of news items. For example, soft news qualities could exist in a traditionally serious subject category like Politics, and vice versa. This additional layer of measurement allowed for a deeper reading of the text; the entertainment level of each news story could be confirmed, depending on how much the story adhered to certain hard or soft news qualities. Collecting this additional layer of data was not only critical to analysing the distinction between hard and soft news, but to identifying the quantity of hard news and soft news stories in the bulletin. I chose to include a hard and soft measurement to gain an extensive reading of the news items, and therefore a deeper understanding of the context that shapes the news bulletins.

Krippendorff (2004) argues that it is important to understand the context—or “conceptual environment” (p. 33)—of the text analysed in a content analysis, as it plays a role in how the researcher interprets the text. The context of this particular study was the post-deregulation and post-Charter commercial broadcasting environment in New Zealand. Understanding the implications of this environment (as discussed in Chapter Two), such as the commercially-driven nature of news and current affairs, played a key role in how the data is interpreted and analysed. Based on this context, it was important to understand that the data may not reflect a sudden change in news content, but instead may illustrate an intensifying commercial broadcasting environment that has continued to shape news content and format over time.

3.2.1 Sample and Dates for Analysis

The population from which the sample was chosen was the 6pm news bulletins from TVNZ's *One News* and MediaWorks' *3 News* from January to December 2015. It should be noted that *3 News* rebranded their news programme in January 2016 to *Newshub*, with the aim of creating a more holistic news channel that would interconnect their television, radio, and online news

content. News bulletins from after this rebrand were not included in this study. When choosing the sample, there were two sampling options to choose from: consecutive-day or constructed-week sampling. In Atkinson's (1994b) study, he used a consecutive five-day week sample for each sample year studied. However, this approach has limitations. According to Hester and Dougall (2007), consecutive day sampling is not as effective as constructed week sampling. This is because certain phenomena—such as economic activity, seasonal activity, or major sporting events—may be more present at certain times of the week, month, or year, which can dominate the consecutive-week sample and distort the findings (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993). In a constructed week, sample dates are stratified by day of the week, which allows each day to be represented in the sample (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993). Essentially, a random Monday date from the sample time period is chosen, then a random Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on, until a complete week is constructed. This process is then repeated, depending on how many constructed weeks are needed for analysis. Constructed week sampling acknowledges cyclic variation of content for each day of the week (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993). By randomly choosing dates throughout the chosen time period, the likelihood of cycles affecting the results are reduced and thus provides a fairer result. This randomness also reduces the chance of major news events distorting the findings by appearing more frequently in the sample (Baker, 2012). For this reason, a sample size of two constructed weeks for each news network was chosen.

Comrie (1996) claims that the ideal sample size for use in television research has been a point of contention, and there has been little research in the field that might validate one sample size recommendation over another. However, Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993) have reviewed studies on sample size regarding newspaper and television analyses. Their findings indicate that one week is as effective as four, and that two constructed weeks of television programming would equate to a year's worth of newspaper entire issues. Hester and Dougall (2007) recommend using at least two constructed weeks to accurately represent a sample of news content, while Stempel (1989) advises that constructed samples give a fairer result. Researchers that have built on Atkinson's (1994b) study have used constructed week samples in their studies. In 1996, Comrie used a sample size of three constructed weeks. In 2012, Baker used a constructed sample size of fifteen current affairs programmes per year for the three years of study. Based on constructed week theory and acknowledging previous researchers' sample size choices, I used two constructed weeks of television bulletins per network as an adequate sample size that provided random—and therefore fair—representative results.

Table 1**One News Dates for Constructed Weeks 1 & 2**

Constructed Week One	Constructed Week Two
Mon, 09/02/2015	Mon, 07/12/2015
Tue, 25/08/2015	Tue, 24/11/2015
Wed, 14/10/2015	Wed, 20/05/2015
Thu, 02/07/2015	Thu, 24/09/2015
Fri, 12/06/2015	Fri, 17/04/2015

Table 2**3 News Dates for Constructed Weeks 1 & 2**

Constructed Week One	Constructed Week Two
Mon, 09/02/2015	Mon, 07/12/2015
Tue, 25/08/2015	Tue, 24/11/2015
Wed, 14/10/2015	Wed, 20/05/2015
Thu, 02/07/2015	Thu, 24/09/2015
Fri, 12/06/2015	Fri, 17/04/2015

It should be noted here that television news content relies heavily on business and government sources. The fact that these industries operate predominantly from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 5pm has a significant effect on news programming. Typically, this means the content from weekend bulletins is markedly different from weekday bulletins (Stempel, 1989). For this reason, weekend bulletins were excluded from this study. Furthermore, the Christmas/New Year time period (December 15 – January 15) often sees a rise in human interest news content due to a decline in business activity and the unavailability of political sources, which could distort the results of the content analysis (Comrie, 1996). For this reason, this time period was also discounted from the study. Ten dates were randomly chosen to create two constructed 5-day weeks. From the 2015 calendar year (excluding weekends and the Christmas/New Year period), a random Monday date was chosen, then a random Tuesday date, and so forth until a complete Monday to Friday week was formed. This process was repeated to create the second Monday to Friday constructed week. The dates were randomly chosen from different months in the 2015 calendar year; this removed the potential for major news events—such as the Rugby World Cup—to appear in multiple bulletins in one month and thus distort the

findings. *One News* and *3 News* were analysed on the same dates, which provided twenty 6pm bulletins (ten from each news programme) to be analysed. The dates that comprise the two constructed weeks are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

3.2.2 Areas of Measurement

The first area of measurement in the content analysis was the percentages of news content and non-news content in each news sample. News content refers to all general news items and sports news items. Non-news content includes advertising breaks, headlines, weather forecasts, and chit-chat/studio shots. All news and non-news content within each bulletin was timed and measured. The recording of a news item started at the presenter's introduction to the story, and stopped either at the end of the item or, if applicable, after the presenter's back-announcement. Not only did this measurement reveal how much of the bulletin each news and non-news category occupied, but it provided more specific measurements, such as how much of the bulletin contained advertising, weather, or headlines. Timing each news bulletin and all news content within it determined the average length of news stories, including hard and soft news stories. The prominence of certain subject categories in the samples could also be identified, and this data could be compared to studies by Atkinson (1994b), Comrie (1996), and Cook (2002). The news item's position in the bulletin was also noted. By doing so, the frequency of soft news items or hard news items leading the bulletin could be determined. Additionally, the number of news items per bulletin was counted to obtain the average number of stories per bulletin for *One News* and *3 News*. This area of measurement also provided insight into the number of hard news and soft news stories per bulletin.

The next area of measurement in the content analysis was the subject category placement. The study built upon subject categories developed by Comrie (1996) and Baker (2012) in their studies. Stempel (1989) argues that it is valuable to use subject categories that have already been developed and tested by other researchers. By doing so, there is evidence that they work and allows the researcher an indication of probable results (Stempel, 1989). Based on previous content analyses, I could reasonably hypothesise that my own research would continue to map a trend away from serious news items like Politics, and would possibly identify a further rise in entertainment-focused soft news stories, such as Crime, Celebrities, and Accidents & Disasters. Subject categories used in Comrie (1996) and Baker's (2012) studies were adapted to construct the list of 25 subject categories in Table 3. After being placed in a subject category, each news item was then analysed for its hard or soft news qualities—using the definition provided by Reinemann et al. (2011)—and codified as such.

Table 3**List of 25 Subject Categories, with Descriptions**

Subject Category	Description
Politics	Local, regional, national, and international government acts and politics.
War and Defence	Includes WWII anniversaries and NZ military overseas.
Diplomacy & Foreign Relations	Both foreign and domestic. Includes United Nations, the nuclear debate, worldwide climate change policy, and the TPP.
General Economic Activity	Includes the share market, money, prices, labour wages, natural resources.
Agriculture, Farming, & Fisheries	Dairy and farming industry. Includes information on primary exports.
Environment	Includes forestry, pollution, and climate change impact to NZ/the Pacific.
Labour and Employment	ACC, wages, work conditions. Includes strikes and workplace safety.
Public Health & Welfare	Health, public welfare, social and safety measures (national security), welfare of children.
Education	Includes resourcing and industrial matters.
Science, Technology, & Invention	Science and technology other than that related to defence or health and medicine.
Justice, Police, & Law Changes	Police activity/resourcing, law changes, and stories without reference to specific criminal activity.
Crime	Specific criminal activity, including criminal court proceedings.
Road Accidents	Includes road toll stories and vehicular crime.
Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made	Includes building collapses, oil spills, fires.
Accidents & Disasters; Natural	Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, severe weather events.
Transport	Travel and tourism, public transport, public walkways.
Terrorism	International and national terrorism (does not include national security).
Religion	Includes religious activity and institutions (churches, Vatican, etc.).
Culture	Classic arts, literature, history, and cultural events (excludes Māori).
Māori	Māori issues. Includes political issues, resources, people, and culture.
Sport	Organised sport and sporting events.
Human Interest	Includes animals, cute children, youth interests, planetary events, etc.
Public Moral Problems	Human relations and moral problems. Includes alcohol, divorce and sex, race relations, and civil court proceedings.
Celebrities	Celebrities and/or public figures. Includes obituaries.
Royalty	References to public royal figures or the Crown.

It should be noted that the process of determining the subject category and the hard/soft categorisation of a news item is somewhat subjective. But as Cook (2002) argues, one must maintain consistency with decision-making during the coding process to ensure reliability of results. The explanations and conclusions drawn by the researcher through their analysis of the content are derived through objective observation, rather than through the researcher's own ideology or reasoning (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). I aimed to maintain a high level of objectivity and consistency throughout the coding process. I acknowledge that my work experience within the TVNZ newsroom meant I understood some of the journalistic processes and pressures that may have influenced content decisions. However, this subjectivity did not interfere with the analysis and discussion of the collected data. By carefully following the subject category descriptions in Table 3 and Reinemann et al.'s (2011) hard/soft news definition, I aimed to reduce the subjectivity of the coding process.

For example, a news story was placed in the 'Māori' category if it concerned Māori politics or culture. It may have been defined as soft if it was a story centred on a cultural festival, had limited socio-political impact and heightened emotional response. It may have been defined as hard, however, if the story's focus was on Māori land rights, had political impact, and was structured thematically as such. A news story was placed in the 'Celebrity' category if it concerned celebrities or well-known public figures. It may have been defined as soft if it was about a foreign actor's movements while visiting New Zealand, was structured episodically, and had a personal frame or style. It was defined as hard if, say, the story was about a group of female celebrities speaking out about equal rights for women. This would have been politically relevant and would have had a wide societal impact.

The final area of measurement in this content analysis was the geographical source of each news item. Each story was coded as being either:

- National (a story produced in New Zealand)
- Overseas Request/Foreign Correspondence (a story produced by a New Zealand reporter overseas)
- Overseas Feed (a story from an overseas news organisation, such as the BBC, or footage recorded overseas, usually appearing in the bulletin as a live voiceover)

3.3 Limitations of Study

Some researchers might argue that the sample size of two constructed weeks for this study was not enough to provide an accurate representation of the news programmes. However, as this sample size has been used in studies before with accurate results, it was deemed an appropriate sample size for this study. The possibility of human error during the timing process must also be acknowledged. A stopwatch with lapping technology was used to record the length of the bulletin and all content categories within it (news items, advertisement breaks, and so on). There was a one-second margin for error during the timing process. However, due to the small size of this margin for error, the overall representation of ratios within the bulletin was not greatly affected.

The eTV website was used to obtain the twenty *One News* and *3 News* bulletins used in the sample (<http://www.etv.org.nz/>). This site provides an extensive catalogue of national and international programmes that licensed users may access for educational purposes. Being able to easily access any of the bulletins on the randomly selected days was especially important for this study. However, there was a limitation to using this database. Often, a given programme's bulletin was not uploaded in its entirety. In some cases, the beginning or the end of a bulletin was cut-off, which occasionally meant that the bulletin could not be measured accurately in terms of its length. Because the playback on eTV occasionally began after the bulletin had started or stopped before the bulletin had finished, the measurement of non-news content (commercials, headlines, weather forecasts, chit-chat/studio shots) was not always precise; such content may not have been wholly recorded. Therefore, this study can only draw conclusions based on the actual content recorded, and I must concede that the affected content may be underrepresented in this study—although by only a matter of seconds. However, I would emphasise that this limitation does not extend to the recording of the news items themselves. The news items are the main focus of this study, and their measurement was unaffected by the eTV playback. Thus, this limitation is minor when considered in the wider context of this content analysis.

3.4 Summary

The methodology outlined above employs a quantitative content analysis, using twenty bulletin samples from *One News* and *3 News*' 2015 news programmes. Although this content analysis relies heavily on frameworks constructed by previous researchers, the design of this analysis is

unique. The study categorises each news item as hard or soft news—an area of analysis that has not been made before in New Zealand prime-time television news research. Although content analysis cannot analyse what the media does not cover, it can point out a shift in the media's focus over time (Anderson & Sharrock, 1979). This study provides an update to television research from the 1990s and early 2000s, which allows the trends identified by previous studies to be compared and correlated. Qualitative approaches have not been actively employed, as this study is predominantly interested in analysing content quantity. This content analysis aims to provide a deep level of insight to the current structure and content of New Zealand's 6pm television news programmes, and thus continues to map the trend towards tabloidization in a deregulated commercial broadcasting market.

CHAPTER FOUR: BULLETIN CONTENT FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents part of the results from the content analysis as described in the methodology chapter. The primary aim of this chapter is to outline the general composition of New Zealand's prime-time news bulletins by answering the first four research questions. The relevant research questions answered in this chapter are: How much of the bulletin is actually news content (with a focus on the percentages of hard news and soft news)? How much is non-news content? On average, how long is a news story? And finally, how many news stories are National (produced in New Zealand)? The corresponding subquestions will also be answered here. *One News* and *3 News* are analysed separately and comparatively to find similarities and divergences in the data. The *One News* sample data is compared to previous research on *One Network News*. *One News* can be compared to the majority of previous studies, as TVNZ's news programme has been the subject of analysis since the mid-1980s. However, the *3 News* data can only be compared to the study by Comrie and Fountaine (2005), as this was the first content analysis study of TV3's news programme. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the main patterns and correlations to other research identified in the data.

Before exploring the results of this content analysis, certain terms of measurement should be noted. The mean, median, and mode are three statistical measures of central tendency used by quantitative researchers (Neuman, 2003), and when appropriate, they are used in this study to provide statistical data. The mean is the calculated average of a collection of data, and it is the most commonly used measurement of central tendency (Neuman, 2003). The median is the exact middle point of a collection of data, and the mode is the most common or frequently occurring number in the collection (Neuman, 2003). When a mean, median, or mode is not an appropriate measurement to interpret the data in this study, a percentage, time, or numerical unit is used instead.

4.1 General Bulletin Composition

The driving focus of this study is to identify the content of 2015 *One News* and *3 News* prime-time news bulletins. To ascertain this, the content of the sampled bulletins from *One News* and *3 News* had to be measured in their entirety. This meant measuring—in seconds—all of the news

content in each bulletin, as well as the non-news content to discern the content composition of each bulletin. In the *One News* sample, a total of 10 bulletins were measured, which equated to 10 hours 3 minutes 59.54 seconds (36,239.54 seconds). Ten bulletins were also measured in the *3 News* sample, which equated to 9 hours 59 minutes 12.92 seconds (35,952.92 seconds). Overall, 20 hours 3 minutes 12.46 seconds (72,192.46 seconds) of news bulletins were measured. For clarification, news content refers to all general news items and sports news items, while non-news content refers to everything in the bulletin that is not a news or sports item, such as advertising breaks, headlines, weather forecasts, and chit-chat/studio shots. The quantitative results of these measurements will be discussed here.

4.1.1 News Content

From the sample of two constructed weeks for each news programme analysed in this study, the general news (non-sports news) and sports news content of *One News* and *3 News* were measured. In the *One News* sample, the newshole occupied a total of 5 hours 38 minutes 10.18 seconds (20,290.18 seconds), or 56% of the sample. This meant that just over half of the total *One News* sample was comprised of actual news content. Interestingly, sports news content occupied a considerable portion of the sample. Sport occupied 1 hour 50 minutes 3 seconds (6,603.00 seconds), or 18.2%, of the entire *One News* sample, leaving general news content to occupy just 3 hours 48 minutes 7.18 seconds (13,687.18 seconds), or 37.8%, of the sample. These numbers affirm that less than half of the *One News* sample contained general news—news that did not include or reference sporting events or people.

The measurement of news content from *3 News* diverged slightly from the *One News* data. The newshole occupied a total of 6 hours 5 minutes 1.4 seconds (21,901.4 seconds), which equated to 60.9% of the *3 News* sample. The *3 News* sample contained 26 minutes 51.22 seconds (1,611.22 seconds) more news content than the *One News* sample. This means the percentage of news content in the *3 News* sample was 4.9% larger than that of *One News*. Like *One News*, sports news in the *3 News* sample took up a considerable portion of the news content. Sports news in the entire *3 News* sample occupied 1 hour 46 minutes 17.66 seconds (6,377.66 seconds), or 17.7%. This was just 0.5% less than the comparable figure for *One News*. When examining the *3 News* sample for general news, there was a total of 4 hours 18 minutes 43.74 seconds (15,523.74 seconds) of general news content. Thus, 43.2% of the whole *3 News* sample was comprised of non-sports news. *3 News* had 30 minutes and 36.56 seconds (1,836.56 seconds)

more non-sports news content than *One News*, which meant that *3 News* contained 5.7% more general news content in its bulletins.

It must be noted here that the general news and sports news measurements are given here as percentages of the entire bulletin. When examining the newshole in the *One News* sample on its own, 32.5% was sports news and 67.5% was general news. When analysing the newshole of the *3 News* sample, 29.1% was sports news and 70.9% was general news. This is a difference of 3.4% between the samples, and demonstrates that although *One News* included more sports news in its bulletins than *3 News*, this number is only of marginal significance. Regardless, it can be said that both samples included high percentages of sports news. Figure 1 illustrates how sports news accounted for over one quarter of both samples' newsholes.

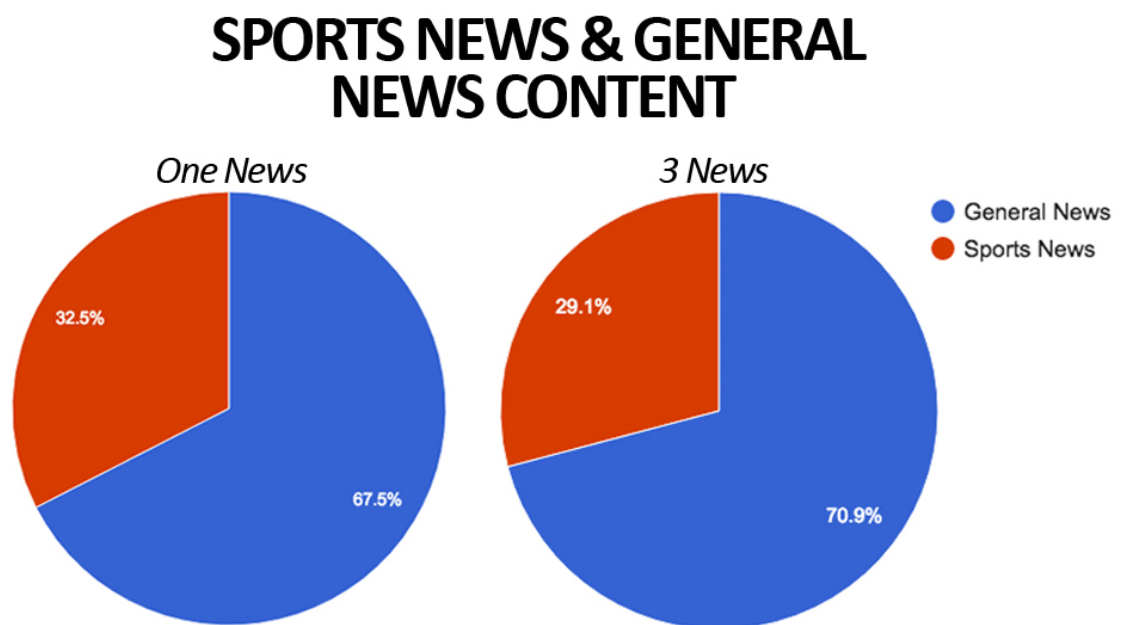


Figure 1. Sports News and General News Content.

4.1.2 Non-News Content

In addition to measuring the percentages of news content in *One News* and *3 News* bulletins, the remainder of the bulletins were measured to identify the quantity of various kinds of non-news content. This non-news content was separated into four different categories: advertising breaks, headlines, weather forecasts, and chit-chat/studio shots. News content in the *One News* sample occupied 5 hours 38 minutes 10.18 seconds (20,290.18 seconds), or 56% of the sample. Naturally, non-news content occupied the remaining 4 hours 25 minutes 49.36 seconds

(15,949.36 seconds), or 44% of the sample. On the other hand, the *3 News* sample contained 6 hours 5 minutes 1.4 seconds (21,901.4 seconds) of news content, which meant the remaining 3 hours 54 minutes 11.52 seconds (14,051.52 seconds), or 39.2%, was taken up by non-news content. Comparatively, *One News* and *3 News* show a notable divergence, with *One News* containing 4.8% more non-news content than *3 News*.

When looking at the four sub-categories of non-news (advertising breaks, headlines, weather forecasts, and chit-chat/studio shots), both *One News* and *3 News* dedicated the most amount of bulletin time to advertising breaks, followed by weather forecasts. In the *One News* sample, advertising occupied 2 hours 42 minutes 17.70 seconds (9,737.70 seconds). This meant that 26.9% of the total *One News* sample was advertising content. The second most popular non-news category was weather forecast content, which occupied 1 hour 4 minutes 32.46 seconds (3,872.46 seconds) of the sample, or 10.7%. Headlines measured 31 minutes 29.53 seconds (1,889.53 seconds), or 5.2% of the *One News* sample. Chit-chat/studio shots occupied the least amount of time in the *One News* bulletin sample, measuring 7 minutes 29.67 seconds (449.67 seconds), or 1.2% of the sample.

The measurement of non-news content in the *3 News* sample showed little divergence from the *One News* results. Advertising breaks also led this category, occupying 2 hours 43 minutes 26.88 seconds (9,806.88 seconds) of the sample, or 27.3%. This is 0.4% more than the comparable percentage for *One News*. Weather forecast content for *3 News* measured 39 minutes 20.38 seconds (2,360.38 seconds) or 6.6% of the whole sample. Although weather forecast content was the second largest non-news category for both the *One News* and *3 News* samples, *3 News* contained 4.1% less weather content than *One News*. The measurement of *3 News*' headlines also returned a lower percentage than the *One News* sample. Headlines occupied 23 minutes 12 seconds (1,392 seconds) of the *3 News* sample, or 3.9%. This was 1.3% less than the percentage for *One News*' headlines (5.2%). Chit-chat/studio shots took up 8 minutes 12.26 seconds (492.26 seconds) or 1.4% of the *3 News* sample, which is just 0.2% more than the comparable *One News* figure (1.2%). From this data for non-news percentages, the area of most interest is the large quantity of advertising content in both the *One News* and *3 News* samples. Advertising accounted for over one quarter of the bulletin in both samples. The pie chart comparison in Figure 2 demonstrates how similar the composition of *One News* and *3 News* were regarding news and non-news content.

BULLETIN COMPOSITIONS

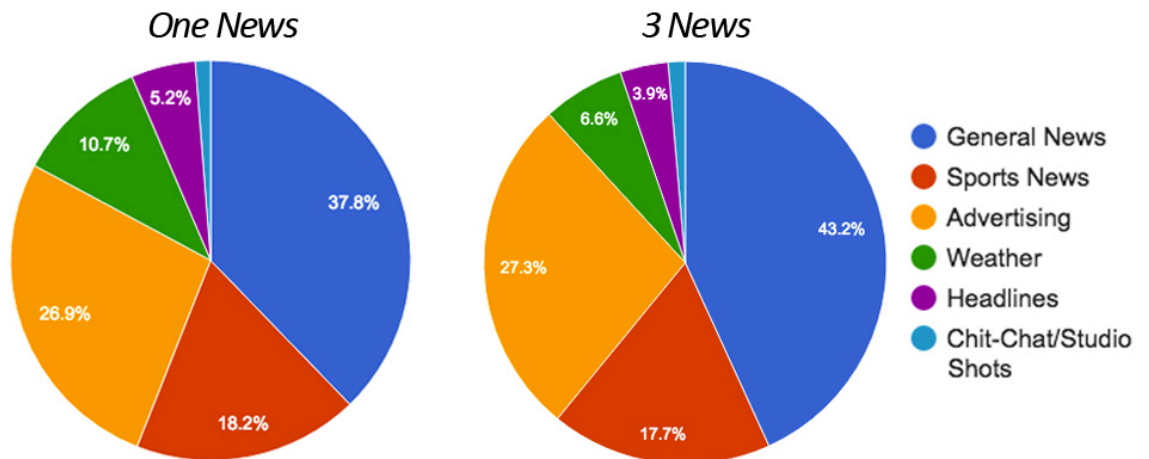


Figure 2. Bulletin Compositions for *One News* and *3 News*.

Overall, although *One News* and *3 News* had little divergence in their bulletin compositions, the latter sample did have higher percentages of general news content and advertising. *One News* had markedly more weather in their bulletin (10.7% compared to *3 News*' 6.6%). An explanation for this difference may be due to the design of the *One News* bulletin. Often, *One News* presented a shortened version of the weather forecast before a commercial break, and then provided the full weather forecast in the fourth quarter of the programme, after the sports bulletin and third commercial break. *3 News*, on the other hand, provided only one weather forecast in their bulletin in the last quarter of the programme after the sports bulletin and third commercial break. This additional 'slice' of weather in the *One News* bulletin may explain why the *One News* sample not only contained more weather than *3 News*, but why it contained less news content. It could be assumed that to make room for additional weather content, time allocation for news content was reduced.

4.2 Hard and Soft News

While the analysis of news and non-news content demonstrated that the *3 News* sample contained more news content than the *One News* sample, it is now important to examine the news items themselves to determine the levels of hard news and soft news for each news

programme¹. This content analysis examined 478 news items. This equated to 236 news items in the *One News* sample, and 242 news items in the *3 News* sample. As outlined in the methodology chapter, stories were determined to be either 'hard news' or 'soft news' stories. Stories were categorised as hard news if they were: politically relevant, reported in a thematic way, focused on societal consequences of events, and/or were impersonal and unemotional in their reportage style. Stories were categorised as soft news if they were: not politically relevant, reported in an episodic way, focused on individual consequences of events, and/or were personal or emotional in their reportage style. The following discussion will examine the quantity and proportions of hard and soft news stories in the given samples, and will explore the frequency of soft news items leading the bulletin. Where relevant, story examples will be provided.

4.2.1 Percentages of Hard and Soft News

The combined *One News* and *3 News* sample contained 478 news items to analyse. Of these items, 154 items were found to be hard news while the remaining 324 items were soft news. Figure 3 illustrates the overall ratio of hard news to soft news in the combined news sample.

There was a significant imbalance between hard news and soft news stories within the samples. Of the 236 news items analysed in the *One News* sample, 78 were hard news stories, while 158 were soft news stories. This meant that of all the news stories in the *One News* sample, 33.1% were hard news items, while 66.9% were soft news items. Of the 242 news items analysed in the *3 News* sample, 76 were hard news stories and 166 were soft news stories. Thus, of all the news stories in the *3 News* sample, 31.4% were hard news stories, while 68.6% were soft news stories.

The *3 News* data shows a divergence from the *One News* sample. The *3 News* sample contained 1.7% less hard news content than *One News*, and contained 1.7% more soft news content than *One News*. It should be noted here that the divergence between the news programmes was only small, and that, overall, the *3 News* and *One News* samples contained only a marginal difference between their hard news and soft news quantities. However, the statistics ultimately affirm that

¹ While analysing each news story for its hard and soft news qualities, it was discovered that not all news stories adhered completely to a hard news or soft news definition. Some news items were hybrid, and displayed both hard news and soft news characteristics. Using the methodology outlined in Chapter Three, these hybrid news stories were analysed closely to decide if the story adhered more closely to hard news qualities or soft news qualities, and were codified as such. These hybrid news stories were not quantifiably measured in this study, but one should acknowledge their presence in news bulletins as they allude to the tabloidization of television news and softening of traditionally hard news items.

although the *One News* sample contained less news content, the news items themselves were harder than the *3 News* bulletin, and while *3 News* contained more news content, it had a higher percentage of soft news stories. Regardless, it is important to recognise that both *One News* and *3 News* contained more soft news content than hard news content.

OVERALL RESULTS FOR HARD & SOFT NEWS

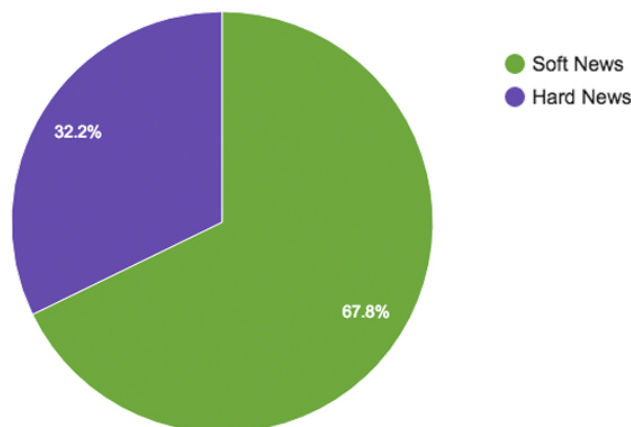


Figure 3. Overall Results for Hard/Soft News

Of the 10 bulletins analysed in the *One News* sample, the average number of soft news stories per bulletin was 15.8, while the average number of hard news stories was 7.8. The highest number of soft news stories to appear in a *One News* bulletin was 20, and this occurred in two different bulletins (Wednesday 14/10/2015; Friday 17/04/2015). The lowest number of soft news stories in a bulletin was 12, and this occurred in three different bulletins (Tuesday 25/08/2015; Thursday 02/07/2015; Tuesday 24/11/2015). The highest number of hard news stories to appear in a *One News* bulletin was 13, which occurred on Thursday 02/07/2015 in the Week One sample. The bulletin had 12 soft news stories, and was the only occasion in both the *One News* and *3 News* samples where there were more hard news items than soft news items in a news bulletin. The *One News* bulletin that contained the lowest number of hard news stories was on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample, which contained just five hard news items compared to 20 soft news items.

Of the 10 bulletins in the *3 News* sample, the average number of soft news stories per bulletin was 16.6, while the average number of hard news stories per bulletin was 7.6. On average, the *3 News* bulletins contained 0.8 more soft news stories and 0.2 fewer hard news stories per

bulletin than *One News*. Overall, this demonstrates little divergence between the average *number* of soft news and hard news items per bulletin between *One News* and *3 News*, but this figure does not consider the amount of *time* hard news and soft news occupied in the bulletin. Such analysis will come later in this chapter during the discussion of story lengths. The highest number of soft news stories in a *3 News* bulletin was 21, which occurred on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. The lowest number of soft news stories in a bulletin was 13, which occurred on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. The *3 News* bulletin that contained the highest number of hard news stories was on Monday 07/12/2015 in Week Two, which had 14 hard news items. The lowest number of hard news items to appear in the *3 News* sample was five, which occurred in two different bulletins (Tuesday 25/08/2015; Friday 17/04/2015).

In both samples, sports news accounted for a large portion of the soft news statistics. Of the 158 soft stories in the *One News* sample, 84 stories were soft sports stories while the remaining 74 soft news items came from the other 24 subject categories (an analysis of all subject categories will be made in Chapter Five). This means sports news occupied 53.2% of *One News*' soft news category. In the *3 News* sample, similar results were found. Of the 166 soft news items analysed, 76 were soft sports stories. This means that 45.8% of *3 News*' soft news category was made up of soft sports news content. Figure 4 exemplifies how much of the soft news category was occupied by soft sports news.

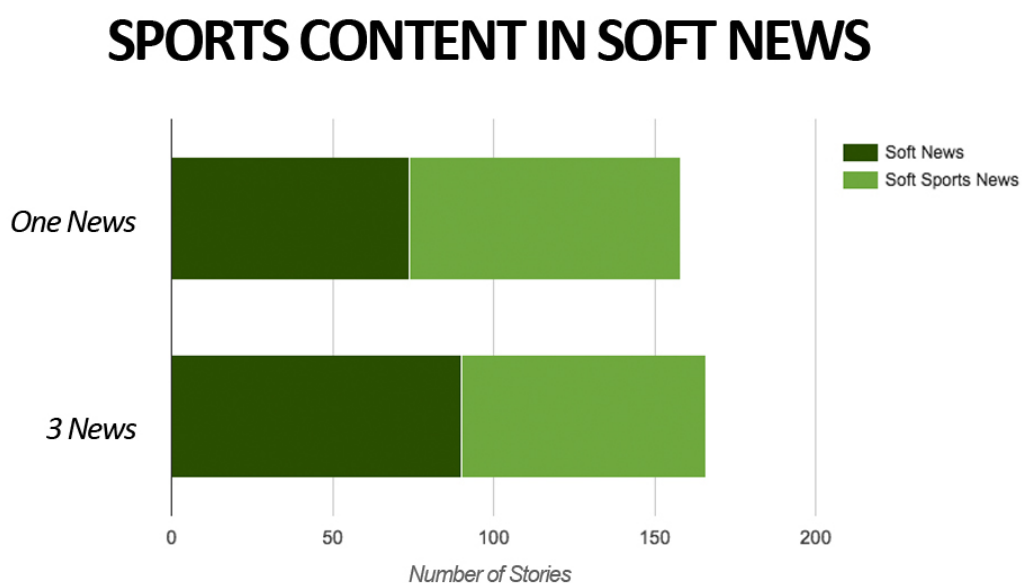


Figure 4. Sports Content in Soft News.

Interestingly, when examining the hard news category for both samples, there was no subject category that dominated the results in the way that sports news dominated soft news. There was just one hard sports story in the *One News* sample and two hard sports stories in the *3 News* sample. Thus, it can be said that sports news is essentially soft news, which accounts for the high levels of soft news in both samples.

As Comrie (1996) argues, removing sports news from the data allows the researcher to consider how much of the news bulletin is dedicated to “real” news (p. 216). Sports news is essentially soft news, and due to the high volume of sports (because of the dedicated sports section in each bulletin), the soft news results were disproportionately high. The removal of sports news data provided a more accurate representation of the levels of hard news and soft news in the samples. After removing all sports news content from the *One News* sample, 74 soft news items and 77 hard news items remained. Thus, when removing sports news from consideration, 49% of *One News* stories were hard while 51% of the stories were soft. This is just a 2% difference, and indicated that the *One News* sample was relatively even in terms of its hard/soft news ratio when disregarding sports news. However, after removing all sports news content in the *3 News* sample, 90 soft news items and 74 hard news items remained. When disregarding sports news content, 54.9% of the *3 News* stories were soft, while 45.1% were hard. Thus, the *3 News* sample still contained slightly more soft news than hard news items. The 9.8% difference between hard and soft news demonstrates that although the *3 News* sample contained more news content overall, it held a significantly higher level of soft news items than the *One News* sample. Even though *One News* contained less news content than *3 News*, the news items themselves were harder.

4.2.2 Soft News Leading the Bulletin

As part of the analysis of *One News* and *3 News* bulletins, the placement of each story within the bulletin was also noted. By doing so, I could discern how often a soft news story led the bulletin compared to a hard news story. Of the twenty news bulletins from the *One News* and *3 News* samples analysed in this study, soft news stories led the bulletin 12 times. This equates to 60% of news bulletins leading with a soft story, while hard news led the bulletin on 8 occasions, or 40% of the time. Essentially, less than half of the news bulletins’ top stories were hard news stories.

In the *One News* sample, soft news items led the bulletin seven times out of 10, or 70%, while hard news items led the bulletin three times out of 10, or 30%. Interestingly, five of the seven

soft news lead stories were crime news items, while none of the hard news lead stories were crime news items. In the *3 News* sample, there was an equal share of hard and soft news lead stories, with each leading the news bulletin five times out of 10, or 50%. Of the soft news leads, three were crime news stories, while two hard news lead stories were crime items. This meant that in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, soft crime news stories led the bulletin 8 times out of 20, or 40%. A soft crime story would typically focus on the criminal charges or behaviour of one person, which removed the context, societal trends, and political relevance associated with the crime story. For example, on Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample, *One News* led with a soft crime news story on Kim Dotcom's trial. It explained Dotcom's charges of fraud and copyright, and it had a personal focus on Dotcom. However, it did not provide any societal context or political relevance, such as information on New Zealand copyright laws or statistics on wider criminal trends regarding fraud and copyright infringement. The lack of political or societal relevance meant the story was coded as soft news. On Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample, *3 News* led with a soft crime news story about a murdered Levin boy's older brother, who was in court charged with his murder. Again, the story provided limited societal interpretation or political relevance, and only focused on the personal consequences of those involved in the crime. It was thus categorised as soft news.

To clarify, not all crime news leads were soft news. On Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample, *3 News* led with a hard crime news story about two police drug busts which seized \$120 million worth of methamphetamine. The story focused on police concerns over a new ingredient, which had societal consequences and reported thematically without emotion or personalisation. This could be seen as an appropriate lead story as it focused on the societal context of the seize, and was thus relevant to all New Zealanders. *One News* also covered this story with a hard news focus, but it did not lead the news bulletin. On Monday 09/02/2015 in the Week One sample, both news programmes led with a crime story about Mark Lundy being retried for the murder of his wife and daughter. However, the *3 News* story was hard, while the *One News* story was soft. Although the *3 News* reportage was focused on the personal consequences for Lundy, the story was presented in a thematic way and had political elements. This made the story borderline soft, but ultimately it contained stronger hard news elements. On the other hand, *One News* presented the story with a strong personal focus, and it did not contain any political relevance. These elements made the presentation of this story soft. This illustrates that a single news event can be reported differently; a story has the potential to be hard news or soft news, depending on how the reporter and/or news organisation choose to cover it. The frequency of a soft news item leading the bulletin as the night's top story was significantly high. More specifically, the frequency of soft crime news leading the bulletin is of

interest, as it alludes to the rising popularity of crime news throughout the bulletin. An analysis of crime news as a subject category within the news will be explored in Chapter Five.

4.2.3 Hybrid News Stories

During the codification process of the twenty news bulletins, there were a number of items that adhered to the definitions of both hard news and soft news. These hybrid news items required careful examination before being categorised. Often, the subject matter of a news story was a traditionally hard news subject, such as politics, but the reportage adhered to soft news qualities. To illustrate, *3 News* reported on a Public Health & Welfare story on Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. The story focused on Women's Refuge calling for all females speaking out about violence to be taken seriously. The subject matter itself was hard as it would traditionally have a wide societal impact. However, the focus was only on personal examples of domestic violence that made the story have stronger personal consequences than societal ones. Additionally, the story itself was presented emotionally and episodically. Thus, the story displayed hybridity as it contained elements of both hard news and soft news. However, after further review, this news item was categorised as soft news, as the soft news qualities outweighed the hard news characteristics.

In another case, *One News* aired a War & Defence story on Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. The story was about an \$8 million exhibition about WWII opening at Te Papa, and again, the subject matter of this story would traditionally be hard. However, the story did not focus on its societal relevance, nor did it report thematically or unemotionally. Instead, the story had strong personal and emotional elements, focusing on how the descendants of soldiers shown in the exhibition reacted to the models. This gave the news item hybridity, but due to the lack of hard news qualities, this borderline story was categorised as soft news. Another example of hybridity was on Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample, when *One News* reported an Agriculture Farming & Fisheries news item. The story was about a new safety campaign that aimed to reduce accidents in the farming industry. The story included some emotional sound bites, but it had strong political relevance with societal consequences. Although this hybrid story contained some elements of soft news, there were stronger hard news characteristics and was thus categorised as hard news.

Of most interest was the soft treatment of political news items. On Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample, both *One News* and *3 News* ran a political story on Prime Minister John Key's

reshuffle of Cabinet. Both news programmes focused on Judith Collins’ return to Parliament, but used emotive and personal language. For example, *3 News* announced that “the Crusher is back”, and referred to Collins’ return as a “rebirth” and “resurrection”, while *One News* said Collins was back “in from the cold”. Despite the political nature and societal relevance of the story, both stories had a strong personal focus on Collins’ previous political scandals, and both items ran episodically. Therefore, both news items were categorised as soft news, as the soft news characteristics far outweighed the political hard news qualities. Despite these news stories covering traditionally “hard” subject matter, they have been given a soft news treatment and are consequentially coded as such. This phenomenon indicates a shift in how news is reported, and is indicative of the continual growth of personalisation in the news, first outlined by Atkinson (1994a; 1994b) in the wake of deregulation.

4.3 Length of News Items

The news content in the *One News* and *3 News* samples were timed to measure the length of each news item per bulletin. The length of news items will be discussed here in terms of the mean, median, mode, minimum, and maximum measurements. Table 4 identifies the number of stories and average length (in seconds) for the *One News*, *3 News*, and combined samples.

Table 4

Story Length Measurements for Each News Sample, in Seconds, and for the Overall Sample

Programme	<i>One News</i>	<i>3 News</i>	Overall
Number of Stories	236	242	478
Total Length of Stories	20,290.18	21,901.4	42,191.58
Mean Length	85.98	90.5	88.27
Minimum Length	14.13	12.51	12.51
Maximum Length	228.08	235.33	235.33

Note: Overall = combined *One News* and *3 News* data.

In the *One News* sample, there were 236 news items to measure, which equated to 5 hours 38 minutes 10.18 seconds (20,290.18 seconds) of news content. The mean duration of a *One News* news item was 1 minute 25.98 seconds (85.98 seconds). The median length of this sample was 1 minute 41.77 seconds (101.77 seconds), and there was no single mode. The longest news item

recorded in the *One News* sample was 3 minutes 48.08 seconds (228.08 seconds), which belonged to a soft news item about Mark Lundy's retrial for the murder of his daughter and wife. The Crime news story had no political relevance and little societal consequences, as it focused mainly on the personal and emotional consequences for Lundy. The shortest news item was just 14.13 seconds, which belonged to a hard news item about out-of-control burn-offs that had killed 29 people in Russia. The Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made story was not personal or emotional, and reported the events thematically.

There were 78 hard news items in the *One News* sample, which equated to 1 hour 57 minutes 56.5 seconds (7,076.5 seconds) of hard news content. There were also 158 soft news items, which equated to 3 hours 40 minutes 13.68 seconds (13,213.68 seconds) of soft news content. The length of hard news items was on average slightly longer than soft news items. The mean duration of a hard news item in the *One News* sample was 1 minute 30.72 seconds (90.72 seconds), while the mean duration of a soft news item was 1 minute 23.63 seconds (83.63 seconds). This is a difference of 7.09 seconds, and demonstrates that hard news stories were on average longer than soft news stories in the *One News* sample.

In the *3 News* sample, there were 242 news items, which equated to 6 hours 5 minutes 1.4 seconds (21,901.4 seconds) of news content to measure. The mean duration of a *3 News* news story was 1 minute 30.5 seconds (90.5 seconds). This was a 4.52 second increase to *One News*' data, and shows only a minimal divergence between the two programmes. The median length of the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 45.94 seconds (105.94 seconds), and there was also no single mode in this sample. The longest news item for *3 News* was 3 minutes 55.33 seconds (235.33 seconds), which belonged to a hard news story about the government accidentally revealing its plans to develop 430 hectares of public land for housing. This Public Health & Welfare story was politically and societally relevant, and reported thematically. The shortest news item recorded in the *3 News* sample was 12.51 seconds, which belonged to a soft news story about 11 jury members of the Blessie Gotingco murder trial were sent home when one jury member did not show up. The Crime news story focused on personal consequences, and had no political or societal relevance. When comparing the *3 News* data to *One News*, the former sample contained both the longest and shortest news item, yet held a slightly higher average length.

There were 76 hard news items in the *3 News* sample, which equated to 2 hours 4 minutes 20.24 seconds (7,460.24 seconds) of hard news content. Additionally, there were 166 soft news items, which equated to 4 hours 0 minutes 41.16 seconds (14,441.16 seconds) of soft news content. On average, a hard news item was slightly longer than a soft news item in the *3 News* sample,

which is consistent with *One News*' data. The mean duration of a hard news item in the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 38.16 seconds (98.16 seconds), which is 7.44 seconds longer than *One News*' average hard news story length. When looking at soft news, the mean story length in the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 26.99 seconds (86.99 seconds), which is 3.36 seconds longer than *One News*. The difference between an average hard news story length and average soft news story length in the *3 News* sample was 11.17 seconds. This shows a small divergence from *One News*' data, but ultimately affirms that both samples had longer length averages for hard news stories than soft news. Overall, the average length of a *3 News* story was notably longer than a *One News* story, as Figure 5 illustrates.

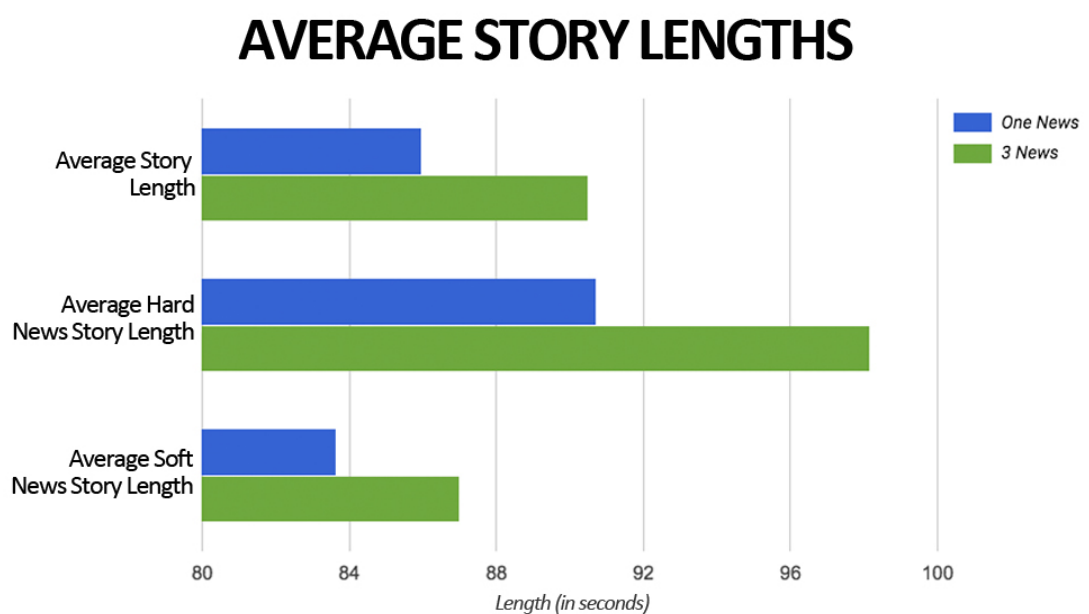


Figure 5. Average Story Lengths.

When looking at *One News* and *3 News* collectively, there were 478 news items. This equated to 11 hours 43 minutes 11.58 seconds (42,191.58 seconds) of news content. When looking at the data collected in each sample collectively, the average length of a news item was 1 minute 28.27 seconds (88.27 seconds). The median length was 1 minute 44.61 seconds (104.61 seconds), and there was no single mode. The shortest news item measured just 12.51 seconds, which belonged to a soft news story, while the longest measured at 3 minutes 55.33 seconds (235.33 seconds), which belonged to a hard news story. When examining the combined 154 hard news items, the mean length was 1 minute 34.39 seconds (94.39 seconds). When looking at the combined 324 soft news items, the mean item length was 1 minute 25.35 seconds (85.35 seconds). Overall, an average hard news story was 9.04 seconds longer than the average soft news story. Thus, although more time was occupied by soft news stories in both samples,

individual hard news stories were typically longer, and arguably this means they provided more detail or information to the viewer.

The number of news stories present in each bulletin is an area of interest, as this measurement provides crucial data about how much information is being communicated to audiences in each news bulletin. When looking at the *One News* sample and *3 News* sample combined, there was an average of 23.9 news stories per bulletin. More specifically, the *3 News* sample had an average of 24.2 stories per bulletin, and the *One News* sample had an average of 23.6 stories per bulletin. There was almost no divergence between the samples, with *3 News* having an average of just 0.6 more news stories per bulletin than *One News*. This means *One News* and *3 News* provide their audience about the same variation in the number of news stories.

4.4 Geographical Source of Stories

The geographical source of the 478 news items analysed in this study was recorded to determine how much of the newshole was produced in New Zealand. A story was placed in one of three categories: National (the story was produced in New Zealand), Overseas Request/Foreign Correspondence (the story was produced by a New Zealand reporter overseas), and Overseas Feed (the story was produced and/or recorded overseas by a foreign news agency).

Table 5

Number of Stories (and Percentage of Newshole) per Geographical Source in the *One News*, *3 News*, and Combined Samples

Geographical Source	<i>One News</i>	<i>3 News</i>	Combined
National	118 (50.0%)	127 (52.5%)	245 (51.3%)
Overseas Request (Foreign Correspondence)	16 (6.8%)	15 (6.2%)	31 (6.5%)
Overseas Feed	102 (43.2%)	100 (41.3%)	202 (42.2%)
TOTAL	236 (100%)	242 (100%)	478 (100%)

Looking at the data displayed in Table 5, the percentages for all three categories were almost identical for the *One News* and *3 News* samples. Approximately half of the newshole in the *One News* and *3 News* samples were National news stories; 50% of *One News* items were National,

while 52.5% of *3 News* items were National. This means half of the stories that appeared in New Zealand's prime-time news bulletins were produced in New Zealand and concerned New Zealand issues. The second largest category for both samples was Overseas Feed. Stories from an overseas feed occupied 43.2% of the *One News* newshole and 41.3% of the *3 News* newshole. Overseas Feed stories were foreign news items that *One News* or *3 News* found interesting, and they appeared as either news stories made by foreign news agencies (such as the BBC or CNN) or live voiceovers. The smallest category in this analysis was Overseas Request, which was made up of foreign stories that were commissioned by *One News* or *3 News*; this included Foreign Correspondence. This category took up just 6.8% of the *One News* newshole and 6.2% of the *3 News* newshole.

4.5 Patterns and Correlations

While analysing the *One News* findings, several patterns and correlations with other studies on *One Network News* were identified. Not only do these patterns establish the similarities and differences between this study and the work by Atkinson (1994b), Comrie (1996), Cook (2002), and Comrie and Fountaine (2005), they also allude to the commercial pressures influencing the content and structure of prime-time news today. It should be clarified here that Comrie's work produced the most accurate comparison to my own work, as this study used a similar methodological framework.

When comparing the *One News* data to previous research, the *One News* newshole has less variation in news story content as the average number of stories per bulletin has declined. The length of news stories has increased, but only marginally in relation to earlier studies. Comrie's (1996) analysis of *One Network News* found that in 1990, there were 17.19 average stories per bulletin. However, Comrie analysed *One Network News* in its half-hour format, while the data collected in the 2015 *One News* sample was from its current one-hour format. To accurately compare the 2015 data to Comrie's numbers, I halved the 2015 data². This gave an average of 11.8 stories per half-hour of programming, and indicated a drop of 5.39 stories per half hour since 1990. A comparison to Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) study of TVNZ and TV3 reinforces

² In 1990, *One Network News* ran from 6-6:30pm, with current affairs show *Holmes* running from 6:30-7pm; there was only 30 minutes of news programming in 1990. In 1995, the 30-minute time slot for *One Network News* was increased to 60 minutes, and this has remained today. Thus, the 1990 data relates to a 30-minute news programme, while the 2015 data relates to a 60-minute news programme. Halving the 2015 data for certain areas of measurement—such as the number of stories per bulletin, chit-chat, and headlines—allowed me to understand the data as part of a 30-minute programme, rather than a 60-minute one. This allowed me to compare the 1990 and 2015 samples with each other, and thus gave a more accurate comparison of data.

these findings. Comrie and Fountaine looked at *One News* and *3 News* bulletins—in the hour-long format—from 2000 and 2003. The average number of stories in the *One News* bulletins was 25, while *3 News*' average was 24. Comparatively, the 2015 programmes—in their hour-long format—contained an average of 23.6 news stories per bulletin for *One News*, while *3 News* bulletins contained 24.2. There is very little difference between Comrie and Fountaine's study of *3 News* and the 2015 results. However, the findings suggest that the average number of stories per *One News* bulletin has decreased by 1.4 stories since the Charter period.

These figures are not necessarily negative ones; with fewer news stories per bulletin, *One News* could potentially increase the length and detail of each news story. However, the average length of each *One News* story has increased only marginally when compared to Comrie's doctoral research. In Comrie's (1996) measurement of *One Network News* bulletins from 1985, 1987, 1989, and 1990, she found an average story length of 1 minute 20 seconds, 1 minute 27 seconds, 1 minute 24 seconds, and 1 minute 7 seconds respectively. Her analysis found that story length dropped significantly in the wake of deregulation in 1989. The 2015 *One News* measurements had an average story length of 1 minute 25.98 seconds (85.98 seconds), which indicated an increase of 18.98 seconds per news story since 1990. Yet, when considering the additional 30-minute time slot present in the 2015 *One News* programme, this increase is somewhat underwhelming. A comparison with Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) TVNZ data reinforces this. In the years sampled, the average story length of a TVNZ news item dropped from 1 minute 28.9 seconds (88.9 seconds) in 2000 to 1 minute 26.3 seconds (86.3 seconds) in 2003 (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005a). By 2015, the average length of a *One News* story had dropped again to 1 minute 25.98 seconds (85.98 seconds). Although this decrease is not substantial, it represents a continual decline in the average length of *One News* stories since deregulation.

Similar conclusions can be made when comparing the data to Atkinson's (1994b) figures. He calculated the average news story length for 1985, 1988, 1990, and 1992. Beginning at 1 minute 21.194 seconds (81.194 seconds) in 1985, the average length then increased to 1 minute 45.59 seconds (105.59 seconds) in 1988. One year following deregulation, the 1990 data showed the average story length had dropped to 1 minute 17.21 seconds (77.21 seconds), and decreased again in 1992 to 1 minute 6.22 seconds (66.22 seconds) (Atkinson, 1994b). Comparatively, the 2015 *One News* data showed an increase in story length by 19.76 seconds since 1992. But, like Comrie's study, Atkinson's work analysed *One Network News* bulletins in the half-hour format. Thus, it remains surprising that the average length of a *One News* story has increased by just 19.76 seconds since 1992, despite the bulletin gaining an additional 30-minute time slot.

If one calculates the 2015 measurements alongside Comrie's data, it becomes clear that *One News*' newshole has increased by an average of just 3 minutes 43.96 seconds (223.96 seconds) per half-hour of news bulletin since 1990. This means the *One News* newshole has grown by a total of only 7 minutes 27.92 seconds (447.92 seconds) since 1990, despite having an additional 30 minutes of programming available. When considering these numbers as a percentage of the sample, the newshole reduction is significant; the *One Network News* newshole occupied 63.4% of the sample in 1990, and by 2015, the *One News* newshole had decreased by 7.4%, occupying 56% of the sample. *One News* has not compensated the reduction in stories per bulletin by significantly increasing the length of the stories despite gaining an additional half-hour time slot.

These numbers corroborate the findings in Cook's (2002) study. Cook studied *One Network News* between the years 1984 to 1996, which meant he tracked the changes to the bulletin when it shifted to a one-hour format in early 1995. He found that although the bulletin duration increased by 20 minutes over the sample period, the newshole grew by just four and a half minutes (Cook, 2002). It should be clarified here that Cook did not include sports news in his newshole, but included it in the non-news category instead. In the 2015 study, sport was included as part of the newshole. This difference made a comparison between Cook's data and the 2015 findings inappropriate, as it would not have produced an accurate correlation.

However, a better comparison can be made to Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) more contemporary study. In their 2000 and 2003 sample of *One News* and *3 News*—in their hour-long formats—Comrie and Fountaine found that the average length of a *One News* newshole was 37 minutes per bulletin, while *3 News*' average newshole spanned 35 minutes per bulletin. In 2015, the *One News* newshole occupied 33 minutes 49.02 seconds (2,029.02 seconds) of an average bulletin, which indicates a fall in news content of 3 minutes 10.98 seconds (190.98 seconds) since the Charter period. Yet, such a significant drop was not seen in the TV3 comparison. In the years following Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) study, the *3 News* newshole has grown by 1 minute 30.14 seconds (90.14 seconds), spanning 36 minutes 30.14 seconds of an average 2015 news bulletin. It is interesting to note that since the discontinuation of the TVNZ Charter, *One News* has drastically reduced the amount of news content in its bulletins and now has a smaller newshole than that of its competitor.

The *One News* newshole now occupies a smaller percentage of the bulletin than ever before. Instead, the bulletin has seen an increase in non-news content, including headlines, advertising breaks, and weather. A comparison between the 2015 *One News* data and Comrie's 1996 analysis identifies an increase in the time spent on headlines. Comrie found that headlining

surged after deregulation, jumping from 7 minutes 44 seconds (464 seconds) in 1987 to 11 minutes 10 seconds (670 seconds) in 1989. By 1990, headlines occupied 11 minutes 34 seconds (694 seconds) of the sample. Looking at the 2015 *One News* data, headlines took up 31 minutes 29.53 seconds (1,889.53 seconds) of the sample. Again, the data was halved to compare this data to Comrie's measurements of *One Network News* in its half-hour format. This gave a total of 15 minutes 44.77 seconds (944.77 seconds) of headlining per 30 minutes in the 2015 sample. A comparison to the 1990 headlining numbers illustrates an increase of 4 minutes 10.77 seconds (250.77 seconds) per half-hour of news programming.

Advertising breaks were the largest non-news category in this study, which follows a trend outlined by Cook (2002). In his study, he found that advertising content steadily increased over the sample period. Starting from 12.9% in 1984, advertising grew to occupy 18.5% of the sample by 1990, before reaching 23.7% in 1996. In the 2015 sample, commercial breaks occupied 26.9%, indicating an increase of 3.2%. The steady rise of advertising in the bulletins attests to the commercialisation of New Zealand news programmes, as news organisations focus on attracting and maintaining advertisers within the commercial and deregulated market.

Additionally, when comparing the 2015 data on weather content to Cook's (2002) study, it appears the weather category has also continued to grow. Cook found that 5.3% of the 1984 sample was occupied by weather content. In his study, weather content peaked in 1990, reaching 8.8%, but fell to 6.3% by 1996. The 2015 data indicated that 10.7% of the *One News* sample contained weather content, which is an increase of 4.4% since 1996. This growth is probably due to the extra weather segments inserted into most *One News* bulletins in the 2015 sample. In addition to the traditional weather bulletin after sport, a smaller segment of weather was often broadcast earlier in the programme. In fact, one could argue that this smaller weather segment acted like its own headline or teaser for the ensuing main weather bulletin.

However, not all patterns identified in previous research have continued to grow. In Comrie's 1996 analysis, she found a dramatic increase in the time allotted in the *One Network News* bulletin for presenter chit-chat. She found that chit-chat was almost completely absent in 1985, with a total of 30 seconds present in the sample, averaging 1.4 seconds per comment. However, by 1990, 4 minutes 37 seconds (277 seconds) of chit-chat was present in the sample, averaging 13.2 seconds per comment (Comrie, 1996). The 2015 data did not identify an increase in chit-chat in the *One News* bulletin. The 2015 *One News* sample contained 7 minutes 29.67 seconds (449.67 seconds) of chit-chat, with an average of 7.25 seconds per comment. In order to compare this data to Comrie's 1990 analysis, the chit-chat data was once again halved. This gave

a total of 3 minutes 44.84 seconds (224.84 seconds) of chit-chat per half-hour, which was 52.16 seconds less than the time spent on chit-chat per half-hour in 1990. This is a somewhat interesting finding, as Comrie's results suggested there would be a continued growth in this category. It should be noted here that I included studio shots in my 2015 measurement of chit-chat, as the presenters would chat to each other during the studio shots at the opening and closure of the bulletin. A comparison to Cook's (2002) data on chit-chat in the bulletin could not be made, as Cook included headlines and teasers as part of his analysis of the chit-chat category, while I analysed these categories separately.

News stories were analysed for where they were geographically sourced, which gave an indication as to how much of the news was nationally-produced. By comparing the *One News* data to Comrie's 1996 study on *One Network News*, a decrease in the number of National stories was found. Comrie used eight categories to code the geographical source of a story and specified the city or region the story was created. I collapsed some of these categories to create three for the 2015 analysis: National, Overseas Request (Foreign Correspondence), and Overseas Feed. When looking at the combined national categories from Comrie's study, 61.5% of the 1990 newshole were national news items. This shows a drop of 11.5% in nationally-produced news over the last 25 years. On the other hand, stories from overseas have grown. When combining the Overseas Request and Overseas Feed categories, overseas stories occupied 38.5% of Comrie's 1990 sample, while overseas stories occupied 50% of the 2015 *One News* sample. Stories from overseas have grown to comprise half of the *One News* bulletin. This increased reliance on foreign news items may be because they are cheaper and easier to produce than national news stories; this alludes to the commercial pressures facing newsrooms in the current hyper-commercialised broadcasting environment.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUBJECT CATEGORY FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the remaining results of the content analysis as described in the methodology chapter. Specifically, the last research question is answered: What percentage of the news fit within particular subject categories? The most dominant subject categories are identified, followed by an analysis of the item lengths within each category. More importantly, this chapter builds on the previous chapter's findings by correlating the high percentages of soft news stories to the subject categories themselves. Thus, soft news categories and hard news categories are identified. Finally, this chapter concludes with an analysis of the patterns and correlations between this study and previous research, which corroborate the trends towards tabloidization and depoliticisation in prime-time news bulletins in New Zealand.

5.1 Subject Category Percentages

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, there was a total of 478 news stories. This equated to a total newshole of 11 hours 43 minutes 11.58 seconds (42,191.58 seconds). After being measured for its length, each news story was categorised as hard news or soft news and placed into a subject category. Table 6 sets out the total time spent on each subject category in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, as well as the total time spent on each hard news or soft news item within each subject category. Table 6 also outlines what percentage of the newshole each subject category occupied, as well as the number of stories present in the sample. By examining the *One News* and *3 News* samples together, a general reading of New Zealand's contemporary prime-time news can be made.

The most dominant subject category was Sport. In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, there were 163 Sports stories, which occupied 3 hours 36 minutes 20.66 seconds (12,980.66 seconds), or 30.8% of the total newshole. This was over twice the size of the second largest category—Crime—which occupied 1 hour 22 minutes 16.91 seconds (4,936.91 seconds), or 11.7% of the newshole. After Crime, Public Health & Welfare was the most popular subject, followed by Politics. With just 21 stories, Politics occupied 43 minutes 4.71 seconds (2,584.71 seconds), or 6.1% of the total newshole. Politics was four times smaller than the Sports category, and just over half the size of the Crime category. However, if one compares the length of time

spent on these categories with the number of stories, the measurements affirm that political stories were on average longer than crime news items. Human Interest closely followed Politics, occupying 5.3% of the newshole. Celebrities, Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made, War & Defence, and General Economic Activity were next, occupying 4.3%, 4%, 3.6%, and 3.4% of the newshole respectively. Terrorism and Science Technology & Invention had similar lengths, occupying around 20 minutes (approximately 3%) of the total newshole. Next, category lengths dropped to 14 minutes 33.01 seconds (873.01 seconds), or 2.1% of the combined newshole, with Accidents & Disasters; Natural. Following this, the subject categories gradually decreased in length from Public Moral Problems at 13 minutes 5.28 seconds (785.28 seconds), or 1.9%, through to Culture at 8 minutes 29.94 seconds (509.94 seconds), or 1.2%. The category lengths dropped slightly with Diplomacy & Foreign Relations, which occupied 7 minutes 8.31 seconds (428.31 seconds), or 1% of the newshole. Religion, Road Accidents, Education, and Māori occupied the least amount of time in the bulletin, with all four subject categories accounting for less than 1% of the entire newshole (0.8%, 0.6%, 0.5%, and 0.3% respectively).

After analysing the subject categories for *One News* and *3 News* separately, there was little difference between the samples. Table 7 and Table 8 outline the subject category measurements for *One News* and *3 News*. Within these tables, subject categories are ranked in order of most popular to least popular subject category. There were small divergences between the *One News* and *3 News* samples, but there were also some notable similarities. The most prominent finding was the overwhelming dominance of sports news, with Sport being well over twice the size of the second largest category (Crime) for both *One News* and *3 News*. Sport occupied 32.5% of *One News*' newshole and 29.1% of *3 News*' newshole, while Crime took up 11.3% of *One News*' newshole and 12.1% of *3 News*' newshole. The first five subject categories in the *One News* and *3 News* sample aligned in terms of their popularity in the samples. After Sport and Crime, *One News* and *3 News* followed with Public Health & Welfare (6.6%; 7.2%), Politics (5.7%; 6.5%), and Human Interest (4.9%; 5.6%) respectively. The numbers indicate that although the popularity of the subject categories aligned in the two samples, there was a small difference in the amount of content in each subject category. Apart from Sport, *3 News* contained slightly more news content in the top subject categories than *One News*. However, the samples diverged from each other significantly when examining the remaining subject categories.

Table 6

Time Spent on Subjects in Seconds, Percentage of Newshole, and Number of Stories in Each Subject Category for Combined *One News* and *3 News* Samples

Subject Category	Hard News	Soft News	Overall
Sport	257.57 (0.6%) 3	12,723.09 (30.2%) 160	12,980.66 (30.8%) 163
Crime	1,001.78 (2.4%) 12	3,935.13 (9.3%) 49	4,936.91 (11.7%) 61
Public Health & Welfare	2,285.83 (5.4%) 20	638.52 (1.5%) 6	2,924.35 (6.9%) 26
Politics	1,532.7 (3.6%) 13	1,052.01 (2.5%) 8	2,584.71 (6.1%) 21
Human Interest	99.07 (0.2%) 1	2,129.69 (5.0%) 22	2,228.76 (5.3%) 23
Celebrities	0.00 (0%) 0	1,824.69 (4.3%) 17	1,824.69 (4.3%) 17
Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made	769.3 (1.8%) 13	915.14 (2.2%) 11	1,684.44 (4.0%) 24
War & Defence	841.65 (2.0%) 8	663.68 (1.6%) 5	1,505.33 (3.6%) 13
General Economic Activity	1,425.62 (3.4%) 14	0.00 (0%) 0	1,425.62 (3.4%) 14
Terrorism	670.43 (1.6%) 7	620.51 (1.5%) 6	1,290.94 (3.1%) 13
Science, Technology, & Invention	784.16 (1.9%) 7	385 (0.9%) 4	1,169.16 (2.8%) 11
Accidents & Disasters; Natural	660.73 (1.6%) 9	212.28 (0.5%) 2	873.01 (2.1%) 11
Public Moral Problems	407.88 (1.0%) 6	377.4 (0.9%) 4	785.28 (1.9%) 10

Table 6 Continued:

Transport	326.79 (0.8%) 3	415.98 (1.0%) 4	742.77 (1.8%) 7
Labour & Employment	570.92 (1.4%) 7	171.07 (0.4%) 3	741.99 (1.8%) 10
Agriculture, Farming, & Fisheries	702.02 (1.7%) 6	0.00 (0%) 0	702.02 (1.7%) 6
Justice, Police, & Law Changes	483.57 (1.1%) 8	205.5 (0.5%) 3	689.07 (1.6%) 11
Royalty	303.54 (0.7%) 3	339.25 (0.8%) 6	642.79 (1.5%) 9
Environment	469.44 (1.1%) 6	121.73 (0.3%) 1	591.17 (1.4%) 7
Culture	106.52 (0.3%) 1	403.42 (1.0%) 5	509.94 (1.2%) 6
Diplomacy & Foreign Relations	428.31 (1.0%) 4	0.00 (0%) 0	428.31 (1.0%) 4
Religion	300.94 (0.7%) 2	16.69 (0.0%) 1	317.63 (0.8%) 3
Road Accidents	0.00 (0%) 0	247.62 (0.6%) 3	247.62 (0.6%) 3
Education	107.97 (0.3%) 1	110.77 (0.3%) 1	218.74 (0.5%) 2
Māori	0.00 (0%) 0	145.67 (0.3%) 3	145.67 (0.3%) 3
TOTAL TIME	14,536.74 (34.5%)	27,654.84 (65.5%)	42,191.58 (100%)
TOTAL NUMBER	154	324	478

Table 7

Time Spent on Subjects in Seconds, Percentage of Newshole, and Number of Stories in Each Subject Category for *One News*

Subject Category	Hard News	Soft News	Total
Sport	111.52 (0.5%) 1	6,491.48 (32.0%) 84	6,603.00 (32.5%) 85
Crime	463.21 (2.3%) 7	1,823.03 (9.0%) 22	2,286.24 (11.3%) 29
Public Health & Welfare	1,202.00 (5.9%) 11	147.05 (0.7%) 2	1,349.05 (6.6%) 13
Politics	928.76 (4.6%) 8	221.76 (1.1%) 1	1,150.52 (5.7%) 9
Human Interest	0.00 (0%) 0	1,001.78 (4.9%) 11	1,001.78 (4.9%) 11
Celebrities	0.00 (0%) 0	891.63 (4.4%) 7	891.63 (4.4%) 7
Terrorism	465.17 (2.3%) 4	317.11 (1.6%) 3	782.28 (3.9%) 7
War & Defence	241.73 (1.2%) 3	468.5 (2.3%) 3	710.23 (3.5%) 6
Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made	287.28 (1.4%) 7	366.16 (1.8%) 5	653.44 (3.2%) 12
General Economic Activity	645.59 (3.2%) 6	0.00 (0%) 0	645.59 (3.2%) 6
Labour & Employment	429.38 (2.1%) 5	171.07 (0.8%) 3	600.45 (3.0%) 8
Royalty	235.52 (1.2%) 2	219.67 (1.1%) 3	455.19 (2.2%) 5
Accidents & Disasters; Natural	188.20 (0.9%) 4	212.28 (1.0%) 2	400.48 (2.0%) 6

Table 7 Continued:

Science, Technology, & Invention	330.15 (1.6%) 3	28.83 (0.1%) 1	358.98 (1.8%) 4
Public Moral Problems	127.56 (0.6%) 2	209.4 (1.0%) 2	336.96 (1.7%) 4
Transport	105.7 (0.5%) 1	223.44 (1.1%) 2	329.14 (1.6%) 3
Justice, Police, & Law Changes	284.55 (1.4%) 4	31.45 (0.2%) 1	316.00 (1.6%) 5
Environment	297.56 (1.5%) 3	0.00 (0%) 0	297.56 (1.5%) 3
Agriculture, Farming, & Fisheries	229.56 (1.1%) 2	0.00 (0%) 0	229.56 (1.1%) 2
Education	107.97 (0.5%) 1	110.77 (0.5%) 1	218.74 (1.1%) 2
Religion	154.57 (0.8%) 1	16.69 (0.1%) 1	171.26 (0.8%) 2
Diplomacy & Foreign Relations	134.00 (0.7%) 2	0.00 (0%) 0	134.00 (0.7%) 2
Culture	106.52 (0.5%) 1	20.51 (0.1%) 1	127.03 (0.6%) 2
Road Accidents	0.00 (0%) 0	123.44 (0.6%) 1	123.44 (0.6%) 1
Māori	0.00 (0%) 0	117.63 (0.6%) 2	117.63 (0.6%) 2
TOTAL TIME	7,076.5 (34.9%)	13,213.68 (65.1%)	20,290.18 (100%)
TOTAL NUMBER	78	158	236

Table 8

Time Spent on Subjects in Seconds, Percentage of Newshole, and Number of Stories in Each Subject Category for 3 News

Subject Category	Hard News	Soft News	Total
Sport	146.05 (0.7%) 2	6,231.61 (28.5%) 76	6,377.66 (29.1%) 78
Crime	538.57 (2.5%) 5	2,112.1 (9.6%) 27	2,650.67 (12.1%) 32
Public Health & Welfare	1,083.83 (4.9%) 9	491.47 (2.2%) 4	1,575.30 (7.2%) 13
Politics	603.94 (2.8%) 5	830.25 (3.8%) 7	1,434.19 (6.5%) 12
Human Interest	99.07 (0.5%) 1	1,127.91 (5.1%) 11	1,226.98 (5.6%) 12
Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made	482.02 (2.2%) 6	548.98 (2.5%) 6	1,031.00 (4.7%) 12
Celebrities	0.00 (0%) 0	933.06 (4.3%) 10	933.06 (4.3%) 10
Science, Technology, & Invention	454.01 (1.6%) 4	356.17 (2.1%) 3	810.18 (3.7%) 7
War & Defence	599.92 (2.7%) 5	195.18 (0.9%) 2	795.10 (3.6%) 7
General Economic Activity	780.03 (3.6%) 8	0.00 (0%) 0	780.03 (3.6%) 8
Terrorism	205.26 (0.9%) 3	303.4 (1.4%) 3	508.66 (2.3%) 6
Accidents & Disasters; Natural	472.53 (2.2%) 5	0.00 (0%) 0	472.53 (2.2%) 5
Agriculture, Farming, & Fisheries	472.46 (2.2%) 4	0.00 (0%) 0	472.46 (2.2%) 4

Table 8 Continued:

Public Moral Problems	280.32 (1.3%) 4	168.00 (0.8%) 2	448.32 (2.0%) 6
Transport	221.09 (1.0%) 2	192.54 (0.9%) 2	413.63 (1.9%) 4
Culture	0.00 (0.0%) 0	382.91 (1.7%) 4	382.91 (1.7%) 4
Justice, Police, & Law Changes	199.02 (0.9%) 4	174.05 (0.8%) 2	373.07 (1.7%) 6
Diplomacy & Foreign Relations	294.31 (1.3%) 2	0.00 (0%) 0	294.31 (1.3%) 2
Environment	171.88 (0.8%) 3	121.73 (0.6%) 1	293.61 (1.3%) 4
Royalty	68.02 (0.3%) 1	119.58 (0.5%) 3	187.60 (0.9%) 4
Religion	146.37 (0.7%) 1	0.00 (0%) 0	146.37 (0.7%) 1
Labour & Employment	141.54 (0.6%) 2	0.00 (0%) 0	141.54 (0.6%) 2
Road Accidents	0.00 (0%) 0	124.18 (0.6%) 2	124.18 (0.6%) 2
Māori	0.00 (0%) 0	28.04 (0.1%) 1	28.04 (0.1%) 1
Education	0.00 (0%) 0	0.00 (0%) 0	0.00 (0%) 0
TOTAL TIME	7,460.24 (34.1%)	14,441.16 (65.9%)	21,901.40 (100%)
TOTAL NUMBER	76	166	242

Following Human Interest, the next most popular subject category in the *One News* sample was Celebrities (4.4%), followed by Terrorism (3.9%). For *3 News*, the next most popular subject category after Human Interest was Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made (4.7%), followed by Celebrities (4.3%). *One News* followed with War & Defence (3.5%), Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made (3.2%), and General Economic Activity (3.2%). *3 News* followed with Science Technology & Invention (3.7%), War & Defence (3.6%), and General Economic Activity (3.6%). *One News* and *3 News* display similar levels of General Economic news content, which is somewhat surprising given the lack of dedicated time to news about the economy in *One News* bulletins. In half of all *3 News* bulletins analysed, specific time was allotted for general economic news about the New Zealand dollar and markets, often followed by a short interview with a correspondent from ASB Bank. Conversely, *One News* did not dedicate sections of the bulletin for such content. Instead, general economic information was provided in news stories rather than in a dedicated segment of the bulletin. When analysing the data on Table 7 and Table 8, the average economic news story in the *3 News* sample was shorter than the average economic news item in the *One News* sample. This explains why the results for this category were so similar for both samples; *3 News* frequently included small sections of general economic news content in the news bulletin, while *One News* provided fewer but longer general economic news stories.

Following General Economic Activity, *One News* and *3 News* diverged again. *One News* followed with Labour & Employment (3.0%), Royalty (2.2%), Accidents & Disasters; Natural (2.0%), and Science Technology & Invention (1.8%). *3 News* followed with Terrorism (2.3%), Accidents & Disasters; Natural (2.2%), Agriculture Farming & Fisheries (2.2%), and Public Moral Problems (2.0%). There were a few points of difference in the samples here. *One News* dedicated considerably less time to Science Technology & Invention compared to *3 News*. Specifically, *3 News* included 1.9% more news stories about science. On the other hand, *3 News* had less content related to terrorism, measuring 1.6% less than *One News*.

After Science Technology & Invention, the most popular subject category in the *One News* sample was Public Moral Problems (1.7%), Transport (1.6%), Justice Police & Law Changes (1.6%), Environment (1.5%), and Agriculture Farming & Fisheries (1.1%). The popularity of the subject categories in the *3 News* sample show only a slight divergence here. After Public Moral Problems, *3 News* followed with Transport (1.9%), Culture (1.7%), Justice Police & Law Changes (1.7%), Diplomacy & Foreign Relations (1.3%), and Environment (1.3%). When comparing the percentages for Transport, Justice Police & Law Changes, Public Moral Problems, and Environment, the measurements show almost no divergence between *One News* and *3 News*.

Towards the bottom of the Tables 7 and 8, there was a mix of similarities and differences between the *One News* and *3 News* samples. Education appeared next on the *One News* table (1.1%), followed by Religion (0.8%), Diplomacy & Foreign Relations (0.7%), Culture (0.6%), Road Accidents (0.6%), and lastly, Māori (0.6%). On the *3 News* table, Royalty appeared next (0.9%), followed by Religion (0.7%), Labour & Employment (0.6%), Road Accidents (0.6%), Māori (0.1%), and at the bottom of the table with no data measurements, Education (0%). Interestingly, the *One News* sample contained 1.3% more news content about royalty, and 1.1% less news content about culture. Both samples contained very similar measurements on Road Accidents and Religion. When comparing the bottom subject categories in Table 7 and Table 8, a notable difference is the time allotted to Education. In the *One News* sample, 1.1% of the newshole was occupied by stories relating to education, yet there was no education content in the *3 News* sample.

A prominent similarity in the *One News* and *3 News* samples is the small amount of time dedicated to Māori issues. In the *One News* sample, 0.6% of the newshole was occupied by Māori stories, while 0.1% of the *3 News* newshole was occupied by Māori stories. This is an extremely low number, especially when considering that the Māori subject category sits lower than Royalty on both the *One News* and *3 News* tables. This indicates that both news programmes opted to include more news items on foreign royal families—a subject category that was somewhat tabloid—than on Māori people and issues in New Zealand—a subject category that was not tabloid. Despite both samples containing low numbers of Māori stories in their samples, Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that *3 News* contained 0.5% less Māori-related news content than *One News*. However, this number is extremely marginal, and the measurements reiterate the proportionally low percentages of Māori content in both news samples.

5.2 Item Lengths per Subject Category

Sport

Sport was undeniably the most dominant subject category across both samples, but it did not have the longest average story length. When examining the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a sports news story was 1 minute 19.64 seconds (79.64 seconds). This was 43.46 seconds shorter than the average length of a story in the Politics category which held the longest average length in this study.

When looking at the *One News* sample, the average length of a story on sport was 1 minute 17.68 seconds (77.68 seconds). The longest *One News* story in the Sport subject category was 3 minutes 35.31 seconds (215.31 seconds), which appeared on Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item was the second longest news story in the entire *One News* sample. It was about the Rugby World Cup, and looked at how the All Blacks were preparing for their next game against Namibia. The story focused on the New Zealand rugby players themselves, which made it personal with little societal consequence. Interestingly, this news item was not part of the sports bulletin later in the programme, but earlier in the line-up, appearing ninth in the bulletin. The shortest sports story from *One News* was 21.43 seconds from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news story was about the Japanese rugby team performing a Samoan song after returning home from the Rugby World Cup. The story was personal and somewhat emotional, with little political or societal context provided.

The average length of a *3 News* story about sport was 1 minute 21.76 seconds (81.76 seconds), which was 4.08 seconds longer than the comparable measurement for *One News*. When looking at the *3 News* sample, the longest news story about sport was 2 minutes 49.54 seconds (169.54 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. Like *One News*, the longest sports story for *3 News* was about the All Blacks preparing for their Rugby World Cup game against Namibia. The story also reported on the Kiwi fans who had travelled to the U.K. to watch the games, which gave the story a personal focus. When comparing this length to the comparable *One News* data, *One News* had the longest story in this category by 45.77 seconds. The shortest sports story in the *3 News* sample was 18.66 seconds, which appeared on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a soft news item about Lydia Ko, who had finished three points behind the leader of a golf tournament. The story had only personal consequences, and was just 2.77 seconds shorter than the shortest Sports story in the *One News* sample.

Crime

The average story length of a Crime news item in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample was 1 minute 20.93 seconds (80.93 seconds). When examining the *One News* sample, the average length of a Crime news item was 1 minute 18.84 seconds (78.84 seconds). The longest *One News* story about crime was 3 minutes 48.08 seconds (228.08 seconds) from Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news story was about Mark Lundy's retrial for the murder of his wife and daughter. The story focused on the personal consequences for Lundy, and had no political or societal context. The shortest news item in this category was 19.56

seconds from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story focused on a man charged with murder in Wellington, which had only personal consequences.

In the *3 News* sample, the average length of a Crime news item was 1 minute 22.83 seconds (82.83 seconds). This was a difference of 3.99 seconds from the *One News* data, which shows minimal divergence. The longest news story in this category for *3 News* was 2 minutes 31.49 seconds (151.49 seconds) from Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. Like *One News*, *3 News*' longest story was about the Privy Council retrying Mark Lundy for the murder of his wife and daughter. The story focused on the personal consequences for Lundy, but it also reported thematically and included the political relevance of the trial. This particular news item was hybrid, as it contained both soft and hard news qualities, but was coded as hard news as the hard news qualities outweighed those for soft news. Interestingly, this story was 76.59 seconds shorter than *One News*' same news item. The shortest Crime news story in the *3 News* sample was 12.51 seconds, which was also the shortest news item in the entire study. The story appeared on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample, and was a soft news item about 11 jurors in the Blessie Gotingco murder trial being sent home after one jury member did not show up. It focused on the personal consequences of those involved, and provided no societal or political context. This story was 7.05 seconds shorter than *One News*' shortest story in this category.

Public Health & Welfare

When examining the combined *One News* and *3 News* data, the average length of a story in the Public Health & Welfare category was 1 minute 52.48 seconds (112.48 seconds). The average length of a *One News* story in this category was 1 minute 43.77 seconds (103.77 seconds). The longest Public Health & Welfare story in this sample was 2 minutes 6.69 seconds (126.69 seconds) from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story was about the teenaged daughter of a Melanoma patient calling for funding of the Keytruda drug. The story had a strong personal and emotional focus, with little focus on the political or societal relevance. This news item had the potential to be hard due to its political relevance, but the reportage was extremely personal and emotional, which made the story soft. The shortest news item in this category for *One News* was from the same news bulletin. Measuring 20.36 seconds, this soft news story focused on a young mother and her baby moving to a new state house after living in a cockroach-infested caravan park. Again, this story was personal and provided no societal consequences or political context, and was thus coded as soft news.

The average length of a Public Health & Welfare story in the *3 News* sample was 2 minutes 1.18 seconds (121.18 seconds). This was 17.41 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable data, which is a considerable difference. The longest story in this category for *3 News* was 3 minutes 55.33 seconds (235.33 seconds) from Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news item about the development of 430 hectares of public land for housing. The story had political relevance, as the government had accidentally revealed this information, and focused on the societal context. This was 1 minute 48.64 seconds (108.64 seconds) longer than the longest *One News* story in this category, which is a significant increase. The shortest *3 News* story in the Public Health & Welfare category was 30.56 seconds from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item was about a housing deal between the government and Salvation Army, which meant the organisation was involved in the building of 500 extra social houses in Auckland. The thematic story was impersonal and politically relevant, and was 10.2 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable data.

Politics

The average Politics news story was 2 minutes 3.1 seconds (123.1 seconds) in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample. This was the longest average story length of all subject categories analysed in the study. When examining this category in the *One News* sample, the average story length was 2 minutes 7.8 seconds (127.8 seconds). The longest political news story was 3 minutes 41.76 seconds (221.76 seconds). This was from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample, and was a soft news story about the Prime Minister's Cabinet reshuffle. The story focused on Judith Collins coming back "in from the cold" and obtaining two portfolios. This story contained hybridity, as it was political, but contained little of societal consequence due to the strong personal focus on Collins. The shortest *One News* political story was from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news story was 26.88 seconds long, and was about the four nominees for the male co-leader of the Green Party. The story had political relevance, its reportage was thematic, and it did not have an overriding personal or emotional focus.

After examining the Politics data for *3 News*, there was a slight divergence from the *One News* data. The average political news story for *3 News* was 1 minute 59.5 seconds (119.5 seconds) which means a *3 News* political story was on average 8.3 seconds shorter than a *One News* political story. The longest political news item in the *3 News* sample was 3 minutes 31.69 seconds (211.69 seconds), from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This is just a 0.7 second difference between *One News*' comparable data. Like *One News*, the longest political news item in the *3 News* sample was a soft news story about the Prime Minister's reshuffle of

Cabinet. Again, this story had hybridity as it had contained political relevance, but was coded as soft news due to the strong personal focus on the return of Judith Collins, who was described as “The Crusher” who had been “rebirthed” and “resurrected” following the *Dirty Politics* scandal. The shortest political news story in the *3 News* sample was from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story measured 32.63 seconds and was about the debunking of Donald Trump’s claim that he saw Muslims celebrate after 9/11. The story had a personal and emotional focus on Trump and provided no societal or political context. The shortest political news item in the *3 News* sample was 5.75 seconds longer than *One News*’ shortest political news story.

Human Interest

The average length of a news story in the Human Interest category for the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample was 1 minute 36.9 seconds (96.9 seconds). When looking at the *One News* data, the average length of a news story in this subject category was 1 minute 31.07 seconds (91.07 seconds). The longest Human Interest news story for *One News* was 2 minutes 23.69 seconds (143.69 seconds) from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item was a special report on the conditions in Antarctica, with regard to wind farming and the weather. The story had limited societal or political relevance, had a personal focus on those living in Antarctica, and was episodically reported. The shortest news item in this category for *One News* was 17.46 seconds from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a soft news item about a group of people dressed as Santa Claus in the U.S. who skied to raise money for charity. The story was personal, and provided little societal context about the charity.

In the *3 News* sample, the average length of a Human Interest news item was 1 minute 42.25 seconds (102.25 seconds). *3 News* had a longer average length in this sample, with a difference of 11.18 seconds between the samples. The longest Human Interest item for *3 News* was 2 minutes 58 seconds (178 seconds), which appeared on Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a soft news story about the release of the new Star Wars film trailer, which had sent fans into a frenzy. It was emotional, and had no societal or political relevance. This story was 34.31 seconds longer than the comparable data for *One News*. The shortest Human Interest story for *3 News* was 22.88 seconds from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item was about a New Zealand company performing a jetpack flight in China. The story focused on personal consequences, with no reference to the societal context or wider technological implications of the event. This story was 5.42 seconds longer than *One News*’ shortest story in this category.

Celebrities

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a Celebrity news item was 1 minute 47.33 seconds (107.33 seconds). The average length of a story on celebrities in the *One News* sample was 2 minutes 7 seconds (127.38 seconds). The longest story in this category for *One News* was 2 minutes 20.36 seconds (140.36 seconds) from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a soft news item about the death of actor Christopher Lee at 93 years old. The story was personal, and focused on his life achievements. The shortest story in the Celebrity category for *One News* was 1 minute 51.42 seconds (111.42 seconds) from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item focused on the speculation that singer Taylor Swift was in New Zealand. The story had a personal and somewhat emotional focus, and was reported episodically. It had no societal or political relevance.

In the *3 News* sample, the average length of a news item in the Celebrity category was 1 minute 33.3 seconds (93.3 seconds), which was 34.08 seconds shorter than *One News*' average story length in this category. This is a considerable difference between the samples. The longest Celebrity news item in the *3 News* sample was 2 minutes 36.67 seconds (156.67 seconds), from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a soft news story about Peter Jackson paying tribute to Christopher Lee, who had died at 93 years old, and had a personal and emotional focus. This story was also the longest Celebrity news item in the *One News* sample, but the *3 News* story was 16.31 seconds shorter. The shortest news story in this category for *3 News* was 25.61 seconds from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. Again, this was the same story as *One News*' shortest story about the sighting of American singer Taylor Swift in the country, which had a personal focus. However, *3 News*' coverage of this story was 1 minute 25.81 seconds (85.81 seconds) shorter than the comparable *One News* item.

Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made

When examining the combined *One News* and *3 News* data, the average length of a story in the Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made category was 1 minute 10.19 seconds (70.19 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a news story in this category was 54.45 seconds. The longest story in this category was 2 minutes 45.62 seconds (165.62 seconds) from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news story was about how the reconstruction of the MH17 plane had confirmed it was struck down by a missile. The focus was on the family member's concerns, which made the news story personal and emotional. No societal context was provided, and only a small reference to its political implications was made during the back-announcement of the news item. This was another example of a news story that could have been hard if there was less of an emotional focus on the individuals involved, and a stronger

focus on the societal and political implications of the disaster. The shortest news item in this category was 14.13 seconds from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item focused on out-of-control burn-offs in Russia which had killed 29 people. The story was not personal and included the societal context.

The average length of a story in the Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made category for *3 News* was 1 minute 25.92 seconds (85.92 seconds). This was 31.47 seconds longer than the comparable data for *One News*, which shows a significant difference. The longest story in this category for *3 News* was 2 minutes 15.55 seconds (135.55 seconds) from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story was about how four bodies from a Fox Glacier helicopter crash could not be retrieved due to bad weather. It focused on the emotions and personal consequences for the family of the victims. Comparing this length to *One News*, *One News* had the longest news story in this category by 30.07 seconds. The shortest news story in the Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made category for *3 News* was 16.96 seconds, which appeared on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item focused on a Norwegian cruise ship that had been re-floated after losing power and running aground. The story reported thematically, and was not personal or emotional. Comparing the shortest story data in this category, there was a difference of just 2.83 seconds between *One News* and *3 News*.

War & Defence

The average length of a War & Defence story in the combined *One News* and *3 News* samples was 1 minute 55.8 seconds (115.8 seconds). When looking at the data from *One News*, the average story on War & Defence was 1 minute 58.4 seconds (118.4 seconds). The longest news item in this category was from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item measured 3 minutes 21.46 seconds (201.46 seconds), and was about the opening of Te Papa's *The Scale of Our War* exhibition. The story had a strong personal focus, as it showed the reactions of the familial descendants of those featured in the \$8 million WWII exhibit. The shortest War & Defence news item came from the same news bulletin, and measured 26.65 seconds. As it was in the lead-up to ANZAC day, this hard news story focused on the history of the poppy. It had strong historical political relevance and societal consequences.

In the *3 News* data, the average length of a War & Defence news item was 1 minute 53.6 seconds (113.6 seconds). This was just 4.8 seconds shorter than *One News*' comparable data. The longest story in this category for *3 News* was 2 minutes 47.97 seconds (167.97 seconds), which appeared on Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. Similar to *One News*, this soft news item detailed the opening of two WWII exhibitions; one by Te Papa and one by Peter Jackson. The story had a

personal and emotional focus with limited societal or political relevance. Interestingly, the longest item in the *One News* sample was a similar story, yet it was 33.49 seconds longer than the *3 News* equivalent. The shortest War & Defence news story in the *3 News* sample was from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item measured 26.76 seconds, and was about Jerusalem shutting down due to Palestinian violence. The news item had strong societal consequences and political relevance. When comparing the shortest War & Defence story data to *One News*, there is almost no divergence between the samples (0.11 seconds).

General Economic Activity

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a General Economic news story was 1 minute 41.83 seconds (101.83 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a news item in this category was 1 minute 47.6 seconds (107.6 seconds). The longest General Economic story in the *One News* sample was from Tuesday 25/08/2015 in the Week One sample. Measuring at 3 minutes 33.58 seconds (213.58), this hard news item reported on the impact that China's Black Monday was having on the New Zealand markets. With a focus on falling oil prices and milk prices, the story had large societal relevance. The shortest General Economic story in the *One News* sample was 52.48 seconds, which appeared on Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news story focused on how New Zealand had been affected by the Greek financial crisis, and reported in a thematic and impersonal way.

When examining the *3 News* data for the General Economic Activity category, the average news story was 1 minute 37.5 seconds (97.5 seconds). This was 10.1 seconds shorter than the comparable data for *One News*. The longest news story for *3 News* in this category was 2 minutes 32.42 seconds (152.42 seconds). This appeared on Tuesday 25/08/2015 in the Week One sample. Like *One News*, this hard news story focused on the impact China's Black Monday had had on the New Zealand market. The story was highly political and had wide societal consequences. Despite the longest story for *One News* and *3 News* covering the same issue, there was a difference of 1 minute 1.16 seconds (61.16 seconds) between the samples, with *One News* having the longer item. The shortest General Economic news item from *3 News* was from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. Measuring 57.2 seconds, this hard news item provided general economic information about the New Zealand dollar and markets, which had wide societal impact. When comparing this data, the shortest General Economic Activity news story in the *3 News* sample was 4.72 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable data.

Terrorism

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a news item about

terrorism was 1 minute 39.3 seconds (99.3 seconds). When looking at the *One News* sample, the average length of a Terrorism news item was 1 minute 51.75 seconds (111.75 seconds). The longest news story in this category for *One News* was 3 minutes 5.31 seconds (185.31 seconds), which appeared on Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news story about the U.S. declaring a global travel alert in the wake of the Paris terrorism attacks. The story was politically relevant and focused on the societal consequences of the travel alert. The shortest news item about terrorism in this sample was 23.06 seconds from the Monday 7/12/2015 bulletin in Week Two. The hard news item focused on the London underground increasing its police presence following a stabbing in which a person yelled “This is for Syria!”, prompting a terrorism investigation. The story had some personal elements but predominantly focused on the societal consequences of the incident.

In the *3 News* sample, the average length of a story about terrorism was 1 minute 24.76 seconds (84.76 seconds), which was 26.99 seconds shorter than the comparable measurement for *One News*. This demonstrates a significant difference and indicates that *3 News* included shorter news items on terrorism than *One News*, who included more lengthy news stories in this category. The longest Terrorism item in the *3 News* sample was 2 minutes 37.55 seconds (157.55 seconds). This soft news item appeared on Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. The story revealed new information about the couple responsible for the San Bernardino massacre in the U.S. The story had a strong personal and emotional focus with little societal context provided. This was 27.76 seconds shorter than the longest *One News* story about terrorism. The shortest story in this category for *3 News* was 23.65 seconds from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news story about Islamic State claiming responsibility for a car bomb that killed a Yemen official. The item was not personal or emotional, and included its political relevance. Comparatively, the shortest *3 News* Terrorism story was just 0.59 seconds longer than the comparable *One News* measurement.

Science, Technology, & Invention

The average length of a Science Technology & Invention story in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample was 1 minute 46.29 seconds (106.29 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a news item in this category was 1 minute 29.75 seconds (89.75 seconds). The longest *One News* story in this category was from Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. Measuring 2 minutes 7.89 seconds (127.89 seconds), this hard news item was about concerns growing over high Broadband prices. It had societal context and reported thematically. The shortest Science Technology & Invention news story from *One News* was 28.83 seconds. This

soft news story appeared on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. The story focused on a Boeing 878-9 performing a vertical take-off, and had no societal or political relevance.

When examining the *3 News* sample, the average length of a news item in the Science Technology & Invention category was 1 minute 55.74 seconds (115.74 seconds). This was 25.99 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable measurement. The longest *3 News* story in this subject category was 2 minutes 29.20 seconds (149.20 seconds), which appeared in the Tuesday 25/08/2015 bulletin in the Week One sample. This was a hard news story on rock being moved to form a new foundation for a Japanese city that was destroyed by the 2011 tsunami. The story was thematic, unemotional, and focused on the societal impact of the rebuild. This was 21.31 seconds longer than *One News*' longest story in this category. When looking at *3 News*' shortest Science Technology & Invention news story, *3 News* again had longer measurements. Measuring 1 minute 25.80 seconds (85.80 seconds) and appearing on Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample, the shortest story was 56.97 seconds longer than the comparable data from *One News*. This hard news item focused on the societal consequences of a 500-tonne bridge undergoing earthquake repairs in Christchurch.

Accidents & Disasters; Natural

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of an Accidents & Disasters; Natural news item was 1 minute 19.36 seconds (79.36 seconds). When looking at the *One News* sample, the average length of a news item in this category was 1 minute 6.75 seconds (66.75 seconds). The longest Accidents & Disasters; Natural news item for *One News* was 2 minutes 4.15 seconds (124.15 seconds) from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item focused on 10 tourists in Malaysia who were being blamed for an earthquake after they took naked photos on a sacred mountain. The story focused on the personal consequences for the tourists. The shortest news story in this category was from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. Measuring 20.85 seconds, this hard news item was about a volcano erupting in Mexico. The story focused on the societal consequences of the event.

The average length of an Accidents & Disasters; Natural news item in the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 34.51 seconds (94.51 seconds), which was 27.76 seconds longer than the comparable data for *One News*. The longest news item in this category for *3 News* was 2 minutes 2.42 seconds (122.42 seconds) from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a hard news story that focused on a group of New Zealanders who were ferrying building supplies to the Solomon Islands to help rebuild medical centres destroyed by Cyclone Pam. This story contained hybridity; it focused on the individuals involved in the rebuild, but the story was coded

as hard news as the overriding focus was on the impact the rebuild would have on the Solomon Islands society. The story focused on the societal consequences, and remained unemotional and impersonal. This was a difference of 1.73 seconds to the longest *One News* story in this category for *One News*. The shortest Accidents & Disasters; Natural news item for *3 News* was 34.15 seconds, which appeared in the same Friday bulletin. This was also a hard news story, and focused on a 10 hectare blaze southwest of Timaru that firefighters hoped would be put out by the weather. The story focused on the societal consequences of the fire, and was 13.3 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable data.

Public Moral Problems

The average length of a Public Moral Problem story in the combined *One News* and *3 News* samples was 1 minute 25.45 seconds (85.45 seconds). When looking at the *One News* sample, the average length of a story in this category was 1 minute 24.24 seconds (84.24 seconds). The longest news story was 1 minute 55.72 seconds (115.72 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a soft news story about Hamilton Zoo reopening after a keeper was fatally mauled by a tiger. The story focused on the family members who had come to the zoo to mourn, and was personally relevant to the friends and family of the victim. The shortest news story in this category for *One News* was 27.76 seconds from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item was about the ban on Ted Dawe's book *Into the River* being lifted. The book, aimed at young adults, was banned after concerns over its sexual content. The story was not personal, and focused on the societal consequences of the ban.

When looking at the Public Moral Problems category in the *3 News* sample, the average length of a news story was 1 minute 26.42 seconds (86.42 seconds), which was a difference of just 2.18 seconds to *One News*' comparable data. The longest news item in this category for *3 News* was 2 minutes 22.49 seconds (142.49 seconds) from Tuesday 25/08/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item was about two people who committed suicide after being caught in the Ashley Madison hacking scandal. Although the content itself affected a worldwide community, this particular news item was episodic and focused on the personal consequences of the hack for only some of those affected, including TV3 journalist Duncan Garner. This made the story soft. When comparing the length of this story to the longest measurement for *One News*, this news story was 26.77 seconds longer. The shortest *3 News* story in this category was 16.24 seconds, which appeared on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. Like *One News*, this was a hard news story about the lifting of a ban on New Zealand book *Into the River*, which focused on the societal consequences of the ban. The *3 News* version of this story was 11.52 seconds shorter than *One News*' coverage.

Transport

When examining the combined sample of *One News* and *3 News*, the average length of a news item from the Transport category was 1 minute 46.11 seconds (106.11 seconds). The average length of a news item in this category for *One News* was 1 minute 49.71 seconds (109.71 seconds). The longest Transport news item in the *One News* sample was 2 minutes 1.19 seconds (121.19 seconds) from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item was about Air New Zealand offering cheap flights to London as the airline celebrated 75 years of flying the route. The story had no political relevance and very limited societal context, instead focusing on the consequences for the individual travellers buying tickets. The shortest Transport story for *One News* was in the same news bulletin, and was 18.94 seconds shorter than the longest story. Measuring 1 minute 42.25 seconds, this soft news item was about a baggage handler's 911 call to authorities in the U.S. after he fell asleep in a plane's hold and woke up after take-off. This humorous story had personal consequences and no political relevance.

The average length of a *3 News* story in the Transport category was 1 minute 43.41 seconds (103.41 seconds), which was 6.3 seconds shorter than the comparable length for *One News*. The longest Transport news item in this sample was 1 minute 50.69 seconds (110.69 seconds), which appeared on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item was about Port Otago deepening its shipping channel to allow for larger ships in the port, and focused on the societal consequences of the upgrade. This item was 10.5 seconds shorter than *One News'* longest Transport news story. The shortest *3 News* story in this category was 1 minute 27.82 seconds (87.82 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a soft news story about a boy who had been given special access to the Interislander ferry, which had been named after him after undergoing renovations. The news item had a personal focus, with little societal consequences. The length of this story was 45.57 seconds longer than the shortest Transport story in the *One News* sample.

Labour & Employment

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a Labour & Employment news item was 1 minute 14.2 seconds (74.2 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a news story in this category was 1 minute 15.06 seconds (75.06 seconds). The longest Labour & Employment news item for *One News* was 2 minutes 14.2 seconds (134.2 seconds), which appeared on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item was about the Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society calling for government funding after being swamped by an influx of New Zealand deportees from Australia. The story was politically

relevant and impersonal, while focusing on societal consequences. The shortest *One News* story in this category was 14.91 seconds from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item focused on the potential merger of beer companies Miller and Budweiser, which would create a beer-making giant. The story did not include the societal or political implications of the merge, and thus had only personal consequences.

The average length of a *3 News* story in the Labour & Employment category was 1 minute 10.77 seconds (70.77 seconds). This was a 4.29 second difference to *One News'* average story length for this category, which demonstrates little divergence between the samples here. There were just two news stories that fit within this category in the *3 News* sample, and both stories appeared in the same bulletin on Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. The longest news item was 1 minute 59.79 seconds (119.79 seconds), and was a hard news story about Volkswagen chief executive, Martin Winterkorn, resigning in the wake of an emissions cheating scandal. Interestingly, although this story involved personal consequences, the focus was on the political and societal consequences, which made the story hard. This was 14.41 seconds shorter than *One News'* comparable data. The shortest story in this category was 21.75 seconds. This hard news story was about the company Agriseach announcing it will cut 20% of its workforce. The story focused on the societal consequences of the job cuts and remained impersonal. The shortest story in this category for *3 News* was 6.84 seconds longer than the comparable length for *One News*.

Agriculture, Farming, & Fisheries

The average length of an Agriculture Farming & Fisheries news item in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample was 1 minute 57 seconds (117 seconds). Looking at the *One News* sample, the average length of a story in this category was 1 minute 54.78 seconds (114.78 seconds). With only two stories about agriculture or farming in the *One News* sample, the longest news item was 1 minute 56.12 seconds (116.12 seconds). This story appeared on Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample, and was a hard news item about the launch of a new safety campaign aimed at reducing accidents in the farming industry. This story had emotional elements, but the main focus was on the political and societal relevance of the campaign. Measuring 1 minute 53.44 seconds (113.44 seconds) and appearing on Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample, the shortest story was just 2.68 seconds shorter than the longest item in this category. This hard news item was about Fonterra announcing a \$500 million profit, and had a strong focus on societal consequences for farmers.

The average length of an agricultural story in the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 58.12 seconds (118.12 seconds). This was 3.34 seconds shorter than *One News*' comparable data. The longest news story in this category for *3 News* was from Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item measured 2 minutes 18.27 seconds (138.27), and was about farmers shipping livestock out of Canterbury due to a drought, which focused on the societal consequences. This was 22.15 seconds longer than *One News*' longest news story in this category. The shortest *3 News* Agriculture Farming & Fisheries news item was 1 minute 44.72 seconds (104.72 seconds) from Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news story that focused on a graphic advertisement taken out by SAFE in the U.K.'s *The Guardian* newspaper which highlighted bobby calf cruelty in New Zealand. The thematic story focused on the economic and societal consequences of the advertisement. This was 8.72 seconds shorter than the shortest agricultural story in the *One News* sample.

Justice, Police, & Law Changes

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a Justice Police & Law Changes news item was 1 minute 2.64 seconds (62.64 seconds). The average length of a *One News* story in this subject category was 1 minute 3.2 seconds (63.2 seconds). The longest Justice Police & Law Changes news item for *One News* was 2 minutes 16.94 seconds (136.94 seconds) from Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item focused on the government ruling out a law change on cannabis oil treatment, which had political and societal relevance. The shortest news item in this category was 20.60 seconds, which appeared on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item was about two U.S. police officers facing charges for killing a black unarmed teenager, which had sparked a movement across the country. The story had strong societal and political relevance.

Looking at the *3 News* sample, the average length of a Justice Police & Law Changes story was 1 minute 2.18 seconds (62.18 seconds). This was just a 1.02 second difference to the average length of a *One News* story in this category. The longest news item for *3 News* was 2 minutes 8.72 seconds (128.72 seconds) from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story focused on the personal consequences for a police officer in the U.S. who shot and killed a man; he had not completed his arms training and had falsified his records. This item was 8.22 seconds shorter than *One News*' comparable measurement. The shortest *3 News* story in this category was 24.85 seconds, which appeared on Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item focused on the government spending \$15 million on restoring Dunedin's historic courthouse, which included its political and societal context. The shortest *3 News* news story in this category was 4.25 seconds longer than *One News*' shortest story. When comparing

the *One News* and *3 News* measurements in this category, there is little divergence between the samples.

Royalty

When examining the combined sample of *One News* and *3 News*, the average length of a news item from the Royalty category was 1 minute 11.42 seconds (71.42 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a news item on royalty was 1 minute 31.04 seconds (91.04 seconds). The longest Royalty news item in this sample was 2 minutes 1.30 seconds (121.30 seconds), which appeared on Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a hard news item and focused on Prince Charles meeting Jordan's prince as a sign of support against terrorism and ISIS. The story was politically relevant and reported thematically. The shortest news story in this category for *One News* was from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. Measuring 19.30 seconds, this soft news item outlined the details of Prince Charles and Camilla's visit to New Zealand in November. The story had a personal focus on the royal couple, and provided no societal or political context.

The average length of a Royalty news item in the *3 News* sample was 46.9 seconds, which was 44.14 seconds shorter than the comparable *One News* measurement. This is a significant difference and indicates that *One News* included considerably longer news items about royalty than *3 News*. The longest news item about royalty in the *3 News* sample was 1 minute 8.02 seconds (68.02 seconds) from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news item was about Prince Charles commenting on climate change and Syrian refugees, which had wide societal consequences and political relevance. This measurement was 53.28 seconds shorter than the longest Royalty story for *One News*, and signifies a considerable divergence. The shortest news item in this category for *3 News* was 25.50 seconds from Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item was about the Queen's guard accidentally striking a little girl in the face at an event, which only had personal consequences. Looking at the shortest lengths for the Royalty category, there was just a 6.2 second difference between the samples.

Environment

The average length of an Environment news item in the combined *One News* and *3 News* samples was 1 minute 24.45 seconds (84.45 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of an environmental news item was 1 minute 39.19 seconds (99.19 seconds). The longest news item in this category for *One News* was 2 minutes 6.37 seconds (126.37 seconds). Appearing on Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample, the hard news item focused on the demand for more scientists at Scott Base, as workers tried to complete climate change work.

The story had global societal relevance and reported thematically. The shortest story in the Environment category for *One News* was 47.7 seconds from Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news story was about Greenpeace activists spending a ninth hour chained to a NIWA ship to protest oil exploration in New Zealand. The story was not personal or emotional, and instead focused on the societal and political relevance of the protest.

In the *3 News* sample, the average story length of an environmental news item was 1 minute 13.4 seconds (73.4 seconds). This was 25.79 seconds shorter than the average length of an environmental story in the *One News* sample. When looking at the longest story in this category for *3 News*, there was a 4.64 second decrease to the *One News* comparable data. Measuring 2 minutes 1.73 seconds (121.73 seconds) and appearing on Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample, the longest *3 News* story was a soft news item about the three Greenpeace activists spending nine hours chained to a NIWA ship to protest oil exploration in New Zealand. This story was coded as a soft news item as it had a stronger personal and emotional focus on the activists. Interestingly, this was the longest news item in the Environment category for *3 News*, yet it was the shortest news item in this category for *One News*. The shortest Environment story in the *3 News* sample was 32.90 seconds, which appeared on Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item was about milk giant Fonterra being found guilty of dumping milk in Taranaki. The story was thematic and impersonal, and focused on the consequences for the Taranaki community. This *3 News* story was 14.8 seconds shorter than the shortest environmental news item in the *One News* sample.

Culture

When examining the combined sample of *One News* and *3 News*, the average length of a news item from the Culture category was 1 minute 15.17 seconds (75.17 seconds). The average length of a *One News* story in this category was 1 minute 3.52 seconds (63.52 seconds). There were just two news items in this category for *One News*. The longest news item was 1 minute 46.52 seconds (106.52 seconds) from Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news item was about a flag from the Treaty of Waitangi signing being displayed at Te Papa after restoration work. The story had historical political and societal relevance. The shortest news item in this category for *One News* was 20.51 seconds from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. The soft news story was about Jamaican author Marlon James winning the Man Booker Prize, and focused on the personal consequences.

When looking at the *3 News* sample, the average length of a Culture news story was 1 minute 19.83 seconds (79.83 seconds). This was 16.31 seconds longer than *One News*' average length

for this category. The longest cultural news story for *3 News* was 2 minutes 8.30 seconds (128.30 seconds), which appeared on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a soft news story about Niue marking 100 years since the island sent soldiers to the Western Front and how it had shaped its community. The story was episodic, emotional, and focused on the personal recounts of the journey. It was 21.78 seconds longer than *One News*' longest cultural news item. The shortest story in this category for *3 News* was 20 seconds from Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. Like *One News*, the shortest cultural story in the *3 News* sample was a soft story about Jamaican author Marlon James winning the Man Booker Prize, which included little societal context and focused on the personal consequences for James. The story was just 0.51 seconds shorter than the *One News* item.

Diplomacy & Foreign Relations

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* samples, the average length of a Diplomacy & Foreign Relations news item was 1 minute 47.1 seconds (107.1 seconds). In the *One News* sample, the average length of a Diplomacy & Foreign Relations news story was 1 minute 7 seconds (67 seconds). The longest news item in this category for *One News* was 1 minute 52.52 seconds (112.52 seconds), from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This hard news story was about Italy calling for a Europe-wide solution as thousands of migrants poured into the country. The item had wide political and societal relevance. The shortest diplomatic or foreign relation news item for *One News* was from Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news story measured 21.48 seconds and focused on the societal and political consequences of Cuba and the U.S. agreeing to open embassies in each other's capital cities.

Looking at *3 News*, the average length of a news item in this category was 2 minutes 27.6 seconds (147.6 seconds). This shows a marked increase to *One News*' comparable data, as *3 News* included an average of 1 minute 20.6 seconds (80.6 seconds) more news content in this particular category than the *One News* sample. This is more significant considering that *3 News* only had two news stories within this category. The longest news item was from Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample. This hard news story measured 2 minutes 33.12 seconds (153.12 seconds) and focused on the U.S.'s concerns over Chinese growth in the South China Sea due to their international dispute over oil, gas, shipping lanes, and fisheries. The story was politically relevant, reported thematically and provided societal context. *3 News*' longest news story was 40.6 seconds longer than *One News*' comparable data. The shortest Diplomacy & Foreign Relations news item in the *3 News* sample was from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. Measuring 2 minutes 21.19 seconds (141.19 seconds), this hard news story was about European leaders pledging 1 billion Euros to migrants who stay in the Middle East. The

story was politically and societally relevant, and reported thematically. Comparatively, the shortest news item in this category for *3 News* was 1 minute 59.71 seconds (119.71 seconds) longer than *One News*' shortest story, which is a significant difference.

Religion

The average length of a news item from the Religion category in the combined *One News* and *3 News* samples was 1 minute 45.88 seconds (105.88 seconds). When examining the *One News* sample, there were just two news stories on religion with an average length of 1 minute 25.63 seconds (85.63 seconds). The longest story was 2 minutes 34.57 seconds (154.57 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news story that focused on Pope Francis' environmental message delivered during a speech on his U.S. tour. The story was politically and societally relevant. The shortest news item in this category for *One News* was 16.69 seconds from Friday 17/04/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news item was about retired pope Benedict XVI celebrating his 88th birthday, which had a personal focus.

In the *3 News* sample, there was just one news item that belonged in the Religion subject category. This news item was 2 minutes 26.37 seconds (146.37 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This was a hard news item that focused on Pope Francis delivering an environmental message while on his U.S. tour, and had societal and political relevance. This was the same news story as *One News*' longest Religion story, but the *3 News* item was 8.2 seconds shorter.

Road Accidents

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a Road Accidents news item was 1 minute 22.54 seconds (82.54 seconds). In the *One News* sample, there was only one story in the Road Accidents category. This soft news story appeared on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample, and measured 2 minutes 3.44 seconds (123.44 seconds). The story was about a rural area of road in South Auckland which had recently experienced a high death toll. The item had potential to be hard news, but the focus was on one family's emotional experience and personal consequences of a crash on the road, with little societal context.

The average length of a *3 News* story in the Road Accidents category was 1 minute 2.09 seconds (62.09 seconds). This category had just two stories for *3 News*. The longest story was 1 minute 29.18 seconds (89.18 seconds) from Thursday 24/09/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story reported on three scaffolders surviving a 300-metre plunge when their car went off

the road, despite none of them wearing seatbelts. The story focused on the personal consequences of the accident, and not on the societal context. The shortest Road Accidents news item was 35 seconds, which appeared on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item was about an Australian cafe owner dying after a car crashed into her cafe. The story was emotional and focused on the personal consequences of the accident for the family.

Education

When examining the *3 News* sample, it was found that there were no stories that fit within the Education subject category. Thus, there was only data from the *One News* sample to analyse. The average length of an Education news item in the *One News* sample was 1 minute 49.37 seconds (109.37 seconds). The *One News* sample had only two news stories within this subject category. The longest Education news story was 1 minute 50.77 seconds (110.77 seconds), which appeared on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample. This soft news story was about a Stewart Island primary school trying to keep their teaching staff numbers by finding a family to move to the island on Facebook. The story was personal and somewhat emotional, with limited social context provided. The shortest news story was just 2.8 seconds shorter. Measuring 1 minute 47.97 seconds (107.97 seconds) from Thursday 2/07/2015 in the Week One sample, this hard news item focused on the government denying funding for better swimming education in schools to counter high drowning rates. The story was politically and societally relevant.

Māori

In the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample, the average length of a Māori news item was just 48.56 seconds. Not only did the Māori subject category have the least amount of news content in the study, it also had the shortest average length of all the subject categories. In the *One News* sample, there were just two news stories in the Māori category. The average length of a news item in this category was 58.82 seconds for *One News*. The longest story was 1 minute 36.18 seconds (96.18 seconds), which appeared on Friday 12/06/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news story was about a plea for Māori and Pasifika bone marrow donors. The story had potential to have wide societal consequences and thus be hard news, but it was presented in a personal and highly emotional way. The shortest *One News* story in the Māori subject category was 21.45 seconds from Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. This soft news item reported on the death of Ngati Porou leader Dr Apirana Mahuika after a long illness. The story was personal and emotional, with little reference to the societal or political consequences of his death.

In the *3 News* sample, there was just one news story that fit within the Māori subject category. This story was 28.04 seconds, and appeared on Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample. This was a soft news story focused on the same subject as the shortest *One News* Māori news item; the death of Ngati Porou leader Dr Apirana Mahuika, which, like *One News*, was emotional and personal. This story was 30.78 seconds shorter than the average length of a Māori story in the *One News* sample.

5.3 Hard and Soft Subject Categories

So far, this chapter has discussed the subject categories in terms of their overall prominence in the samples, as well as their average story lengths. Now, the subject categories will be analysed for the presence of hard and soft news to determine if certain subject categories were prone to higher levels of hard news or soft news. The measurements presented here arise from an analysis of the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample.

5.3.1 Soft Categories

The subject category with the highest level of soft news content was the Celebrity category. Soft news accounted for 100% of this category, which measured 30 minutes 24.69 seconds (1,824.69 seconds) and contained 17 stories. This is the greatest difference between the hard and soft news statistics of all the subject categories, but it is not an isolated measurement. Soft news accounted for 100% of a further two categories; Road Accidents and Māori. However, a key difference between the Celebrity category and the latter two is the number of stories within the categories themselves. With 17 celebrity stories to code, it can be said with some certainty that the Celebrity news category was a soft news category, as 100% of Celebrity stories were soft. The same conclusion cannot be made with the Road Accidents and Māori categories, as there were just three news items in each category. The data cannot absolutely determine that Road Accidents and Māori were soft news categories; it may have been coincidental that the three news items were soft stories.

Following these subject categories, Sport contained the next highest percentage of soft news content. Soft news accounted for 98% of the Sports category, while hard news accounted for just 2%. This is a sizeable difference, especially when considering that the Sports category contained 163 news items, equating to 3 hours 36 minutes 20.66 seconds (12,980.66 seconds); just three news items were coded as hard news. The disproportionately high number of soft

news content in this category confirms that sports news is essentially soft news. After examining the data, it can be determined that Human Interest is another soft news category. Measuring 37 minutes 8.76 seconds (2,228.76 seconds) and containing 23 stories, this category was 95.6% soft news and 4.4% hard news. It could be argued that it is the nature of this category to be soft, as most of the news stories coded into this category were concerned with issues or events that traditionally had little societal impact or political relevance. Therefore, it is not surprising that the percentages of soft news were so high in this category.

Crime contained particularly high levels of soft news content. This category had 61 news stories, which equated to 1 hour 22 minutes 16.91 seconds (4,936.91 seconds). Of these crime stories, 79.7% were soft, while 20.3% were hard, which is indicative of the personalisation of crime news stories. Often, crime news stories focused on the individual consequences of the event, and provided little or no societal or political context. Instead, emotional and personal stories were favoured, which increased the percentages of soft news in the category. Interestingly, the Culture category had an almost identical ratio of hard and soft news to the Crime category. With six stories, Culture comprised of 8 minutes 29.94 seconds (509.94 seconds) of news content, of which 79.1% was soft and 20.9% was hard. The high proportion of soft news was less surprising in this category, as, like Human Interest, the type of stories coded into this category often involved people or events that had limited societal consequences or political relevance.

5.3.2 Hard Categories

Hard news accounted for 100% of three subject categories in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample. The largest of these categories was General Economic Activity, which measured 23 minutes 45.62 seconds (1,425.62 seconds) and contained 14 stories, all of which were hard news. Thus, this subject category can be described as a completely hard category. Hard news accounted for 100% of another two news categories; Agriculture Farming & Fisheries, and Diplomacy & Foreign Relations. However, these subject categories were considerably smaller than General Economic Activity. Agriculture Farming & Fisheries measured 11 minutes 42.02 seconds (702.02 seconds) and contained 6 news stories. This provided enough data to assume that this was a hard news category, but not enough to claim that this category was definitively hard news; the probability of the stories being coincidentally hard is higher with fewer news stories. The same can be said for Diplomacy & Foreign Relations. Measuring 7 minutes 8.31 seconds (428.31 seconds) and containing 4 news stories, the measurements may suggest that this category was a hard news category, but the data itself was not rich enough to form concrete

conclusions. It can be said with certainty that General Economic Activity was a completely hard category, but the same analysis cannot be made with Agriculture Farming & Fisheries and Diplomacy & Foreign Relations. Following these categories, Religion had the next highest percentage of hard news. Hard news accounted for 94.7% of this category while soft news accounted for 5.3%. It should be mentioned that this was a small news category, measuring just 5 minutes 17.63 seconds (317.63 seconds) and containing 3 news stories. Due to the lack of stories, the data can only be indicative of a higher presence of hard news in this category and cannot absolutely determine if Religion was a hard news category.

Environment and Public Health & Welfare had similar percentages of hard news. Looking at the Environment category, there were 9 minutes 51.17 seconds (591.17 seconds) of environmental news content, which equated to 7 news stories. Hard news accounted for 79.4% of this category, while 20.6% was soft news. Looking at Public Health & Welfare, there were 48 minutes 44.35 seconds (2,924.35 seconds) of news content, which equated to 26 stories. Hard news accounted for 78.2% of this category, and soft news accounted for 21.8%. Due to the large amount of data in the Public Health & Welfare category, it can be said with certainty that it was a hard news category; the stories were more likely to be politically relevant or hold societal consequence. A further three categories contained high levels of hard news content; Labour & Employment (76.9% hard news and 23.1% soft news) Accidents & Disasters; Natural (75.7% hard news and 24.3% soft news) and Justice Police & Law Changes (70.2% hard news and 29.8% soft news). Science Technology and Invention sat on the lower end of the hard news spectrum, with 67.1% of this category occupied by hard news and 32.9% occupied by soft news.

The remaining subject categories were relatively balanced in terms of their hard news and soft news content. The percentages of hard and soft news in these subject categories fit within the ratios of 6:4 and 4:6. The most evenly balanced subject categories were Royalty (47.2% hard news and 52.8% soft news), Transport (44% hard news and 56% soft news), Education (49.4% hard news and 50.6% soft news), Public Moral Problems (51.9% hard news and 48.1% soft news), Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made (45.7% hard news and 54.3% soft news), and War & Defence (55.9% hard news and 44.1% soft news). Interestingly, Politics was another relatively balanced category, although it did hold slightly higher levels of hard news than soft. Hard news occupied 59.3% of the category, while soft news occupied 40.7%. The somewhat balanced measurements were surprising here, as, theoretically, this category adheres to the definition of hard news more so than any other category in the study.

5.3.3 Hybrid Categories

Most subject categories analysed in this study sometimes contained hybrid news stories, but some subject categories appeared to have higher levels of hybrid news items than others. There were two categories with notable hybrid tendencies; Politics and Royalty. I must clarify that the percentages of hybrid news items were not quantitatively measured, as the methodology outlined in Chapter Three only allowed for the coding of news items as hard *or* soft, with no room for hybridity. Hybrid news items were only discovered during the coding process, and the qualitative discussion undertaken here is based on observations made during the study.

The category that I noted to have the highest presence of hybrid news items was Politics. As described in the previous chapter, there were a number of political news items that were hard news, but were given a soft news treatment. In addition to those stories described in Chapter Four, there were several other examples of hybridity in this category. On Monday 9/02/2015 in the Week One sample, *One News* ran a political story about Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott vowing to change his leadership style after he survived an attempt to oust him. The story was coded as hard news, but it also had some soft characteristics; it was politically relevant and had societal consequences, but also focused on the personal consequences for Abbott, which gave the story hybridity. Another example was from *3 News* on Wednesday 14/10/2015 in the Week One sample. The story was about Finance Minister Bill English getting the government back in surplus. The story was coded as soft, but it displayed hybrid characteristics. It had a strong personal focus on English with little societal context provided, but it was also politically relevant and reported thematically, thus giving it hybridity. On Tuesday 24/11/2015 in the Week Two sample, *3 News* ran a story on the New Zealand flag referendum. The story focused on recent polls indicating that Prime Minister John Key's plan to change the flag was going to fail, and stated that Key had used rugby player Jonah Lomu's death to support his cause. The story was coded as soft news as it focused on the emotional and personal aspects of Key's motives to change the flag, but the story had hard news features too, as it was politically and societally relevant, which gave the story hybridity. The Politics category tended to contain hard news items that had been given a soft news treatment by focusing on the personal and emotional consequences of the story.

Despite there being just nine stories in the Royalty category, there were a number that displayed hybridity. *3 News* aired a story on Wednesday 20/05/2015 in the Week Two sample about Prince Charles shaking hands with the Northern Ireland prime minister. The story was coded as soft news, but contained elements of hard news which gave it hybridity. It focused on the personal

aspects of the reconciliation between the two leaders, with no focus on the societal consequences of the meeting, but had political relevance and reported thematically. Another example of hybridity in this category was in the Week One sample on Friday 12/06/2015. *One News* ran a story about Zara Phillips coming to New Zealand as patron of the CATWALK Spinal Cord Injury Trust to hear about spinal cord research. The story was coded as hard as it focused on the societal impact of the research and how it would help, but it was also soft due to its personal focus on Phillips' visit. The tendency for Royalty stories to display both hard and soft news characteristics gave the category hybridity. Although hybrid news appeared mostly in Politics and Royalty, hybrid news also appeared throughout almost all other categories, as discussed in the previous chapter.

5.4 Patterns and Correlations

When comparing the *One News* findings to previous research on *One Network News*, some interesting patterns were identified. Specifically, the research conducted by Comrie (1996), Atkinson (1994b), and Cook (2002) were used for critical comparison. Again, the correlations with Comrie's work produced the most accurate comparisons due to the studies' similar methodological frameworks.

5.4.1 Depoliticisation of *One News*

When comparing the 2015 *One News* data to the studies by Atkinson (1994b), Cook (2002), and Comrie (1996) there has been a significant decrease in political news content that suggests *One News* is experiencing ongoing depoliticisation in the deregulated and commercialised broadcasting environment. Subject category sizes in the 2015 sample show a significant change when compared to the data collected by Atkinson (1994b). Atkinson's content analysis charted the depoliticisation of *One Network News* from 1985 to 1992. He split politics into three categories: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy/Defence, and International Politics. Domestic Politics went from 15.91% of the newshole in 1985 to 10.8% in 1992, and Foreign Policy/Defence dropped from 11.58% in 1985 to 2.12% in 1992. International Politics, however, experienced both an increase and decrease, rising from 0.32% in 1985 to 11.65% in 1990, before dropping to 8.1% in 1992. To compare these figures to the 2015 data collected on *One News*, Atkinson's political categories were combined, as the 2015 study only had one political category: Politics, both national and international. Atkinson's combined results indicate that in the years following 1992, *One News* has experienced further depoliticisation. Atkinson's data showed that 21.02%

of the newshole was occupied by political news content in 1992, while the 2015 data demonstrated that just 5.7% of the newshole was taken up by political content. This is a considerable decrease of 15.32%, which reinforces Atkinson's claims of prime-time news depoliticisation. It should be noted that Atkinson included 'Defence' in the Foreign Policy/Defence category. In the 2015 categories, I included War & Defence as a separate category, and did not include it in this comparison. However, when including the category percentage for War & Defence (3.5%) to the Politics percentage (giving a total of 9.2%), there is still a considerable difference of 11.82% between the 2015 data and Atkinson's 1992 measurements. So, regardless of the inclusion of 'Defence' news stories, these numbers solidify Atkinson's claims that political news content in prime-time news programmes has continued to decrease.

A comparison to Comrie's data returns similar results. In 1990, Politics occupied 14.3% of the *One Network News* newshole and was ranked second largest subject category. In 2015, political news took up 5.7% of the *One News* newshole, demonstrating a drop of 8.6%. Additionally, Politics ranked fourth largest subject category in 2015, overtaken by Sport, Crime, and Public Health & Welfare respectively. However, it should be clarified that the 1990 data was taken from an election year, while the 2015 data was not. This makes the comparison between 1990 and 2017 somewhat problematic as more political news may have appeared in 1990 than what was considered normal. To more accurately compare Comrie's political data to the 2015 results, I looked at Comrie's 1989 sample instead. In 1989, Politics occupied 12.5% of the *One Network News* newshole (Comrie, 1996), which indicates that political content in the *One News* bulletin has decreased by 6.8% over the last 26 years. Furthermore, the reality of depoliticisation in prime-time news is confirmed when looking at Cook's (2002) study of *One Network News*. Cook found that in the years from 1984 to 1996, the Politics subject category dropped from 40.6% of the newshole to 20.0%. When comparing Cook's measurements to the 2015 *One News* data, political news content has continued to drop by another 14.3%.

The most interesting change emerges when comparing the political data to the study by Comrie and Fountaine (2005a). Table 9 demonstrates how Comrie and Fountaine found that political content occupied 8.9% of the *One News* newshole in 2003—the year the Charter was introduced. However, Politics dropped by 3.2% to just 5.7% of the newshole in 2015. *3 News* reduced its political content by 1.5%, with Politics falling from 8.0% of the 2003 newshole to 6.5% of the 2015 newshole. While both news programmes reduced their political news content, the *One News* decrease is the most alarming. This is because, firstly *One News* has moved further away from public-service responsibilities since the disbandment of the TVNZ Charter, and

secondly, because *One News* has experienced a faster decline in political content than *3 News*. In 2003, there was more political content in *One News* bulletins than in its competitor's bulletins, yet by 2015, *One News* had less political content than *3 News*. Clearly, political content in the *One News* bulletin has significantly dropped since the 1990s, which reinforces the view that *One News* was depoliticising its news content in the years following deregulation. Yet, this trend has not just been seen at *One News*, as the results from Comrie and Fountain's (2005a) study also reflect the same depoliticisation on *3 News*.

Table 9

Politics Data from 2000, 2003, and 2015, shown as Percentages of the Newshole, for TV1 and TV3's News Programmes

	<i>One News</i> (TV1)			<i>3 News</i> (TV3)		
	2000	2003	2015	2000	2003	2015
Politics	13.0%	8.9%	5.7%	14.1%	8.0%	6.5%

Note: The 2000 and 2003 data for TV1 and TV3 comes from a content analysis of these news programmes by Comrie and Fountaine (2005a).

5.4.2 Tabloidization of News

A comparison of the 2015 *One News* sample to Comrie's 1990 analysis of *One Network News* shows a definitive rise in tabloid subject categories. In particular, the growth of crime news has been significant. In Comrie's 1990 sample, the Crime subject category accounted for 5.3% of the newshole. When comparing this to the 2015 *One News* data, Crime has grown by 11.3%. Interestingly, Crime was ranked as the 7th popular news category in 1990, but ranked 2nd in the 2015 sample, overtaking Politics and General Economic Activity. The growth of this category epitomises the tabloidization of prime-time news. However, not all tabloid subject categories demonstrated growth. The Accidents & Disasters category occupied 6.6% of *One Network News'* 1990 newshole (Comrie, 1996). To compare this data to the 2015 *One News* sample, I combined Accidents & Disasters; Man-Made with Accidents & Disasters; Natural. When combined, the Accidents & Disasters category took up 5.2% of the 2015 newshole, which is a drop of 1.4% since 1990. When comparing Comrie's 1990 data on the Human Interest category to the 2015 *One News* sample, there was again another decrease, this time of 5.6%. Yet, despite the decreases, this was not indicative of an overall drop in tabloidized news content. The 2015 sample included more tabloid subject categories than Comrie's study, including Celebrities, Road Accidents, and Royalty. When combining all tabloid categories in the 2015 sample (Crime, Accidents &

Disasters, Road Accidents, Human Interest, Public Moral Problems, Celebrities, and Royalty), tabloid news content occupied 30.3% of the newshole. Comparatively, tabloid categories in Comrie's 1990 sample (Crime, Accidents & Disasters, Human Interest, and Public Moral Problems) occupied 27.3% of the newshole. Thus, tabloid content has grown by 3%. A comparison to Cook's (2002) study generated similar results. In his research, Cook found the subject categories of Disasters, Human-Interest, Celebrities, Obituaries, Miscellaneous, and Crime to increase in size over the study period. When combining these tabloid categories, they occupied 19.5% of the 1984 newshole, and 37.7% of the 1996 newshole. By this number, the tabloid categories in the 2015 *One News* sample have grown by 7.4%.

Additionally, the data was compared to Atkinson's (1994b) research. Atkinson looked at a further two subject categories in his content analysis: Accidents/Disasters, and Crime/Police/Justice. However, comparing the 2015 *One News* data to Atkinson's subject category measurements produced very different results than when the data was compared to Comrie (1996) and Cook's (2002) studies. In order to compare Atkinson's categories to the 2015 data, I needed to combine subject categories. The two Accidents & Disasters categories were combined, and Justice Police & Law Changes was combined with Crime. Atkinson found that Accidents/Disasters rose steadily over the research period, going from 2.07% in 1985 to 11.9% in 1992. The 2015 data for the combined Accidents & Disasters categories show they occupied 5.2% of the newshole. This indicates a drop in news about accidents or disasters of 6.7% in the years since 1992. Atkinson's data on Crime/Police/Justice showed a huge increase over the research period, starting at 2.51% in 1985 and rising to 19.68% in 1992. The 2015 data for the combined Justice Police & Law Changes and Crime categories show they occupied 12.9% of the newshole. Again, this demonstrates a drop in this category's news content since 1992, and indicates that the Justice/Police/Crime measurements were similar to what they were in 1988 (11.78%). When compared to Atkinson's 1992 measurements, the size of every subject category has decreased. However, the reason why a comparison to Atkinson's research indicates a drop in Crime and Accidents/Disasters may be due to the different sampling technique used. Atkinson did not use constructed week sampling in his analysis, which explains why some subject category measurements seemed more dramatic as they may have been influenced by a major news event that dominated his sample. Comrie, on the other hand, used constructed week sampling to reduce the chances of distorted results, and was thus a more accurate study for comparison. When looking at Comrie and Cook's research, the increase in tabloid categories and content from the 1990s to 2015 confirms the rise of tabloidization in prime-time news.

5.4.3 Dominance of Sports News

The dominance of Sport as a subject category in the news is not a new phenomenon. Of the 1,490 stories analysed in Comrie's 1985-1990 sample period, 391 stories were sports news stories. When looking at the overall newshole, the Sports category accounted for 23.5% in Comrie's study period. Specifically, 26.6% of 1985 news stories were sports news, and sports news occupied 24.2% of the 1987 newshole. In the 1989 sample, sports news dropped to 18.7% of the newshole, before climbing back up to 23.8% in 1990. Comparatively, the Sports category occupied 32.5% of the *One News* newshole in 2015. These measurements indicate that in the 25 years following Comrie's 1990 analysis of the *One Network News* bulletin, sports news has increased by 8.7%, and has continued to dominate all other categories of news.

A comparison with Cook's study also showed an increase, although the measurements were made differently. In his 2002 study, Cook classified 'sport' as a non-news category, placing it with the likes of weather, advertising, and chit-chat. As such, it was measured as a percentage of the entire bulletin, rather than just the newshole. Sport occupied 16% of the 1996 *One Network News* sample. When looking at the 2015 data, sport occupied 18.2% of the entire *One News* sample, indicating a rise of 2.2% over the 19-year period. This increase is not as significant as the increase to Comrie's data. This may be due to sports content increasing from 1990 to 1996, and thus providing a smaller margin of difference between Cook's study and my own. Or, this may be due to Cook's different coding methods. Sport was not a news category in Cook's study, and he instead considered it to be a non-news category. However, sports stories were coded into other news categories if they contained certain themes. For example, if a sports story included a political element, it was coded into Politics, and a sports story involving a famous individual would be coded into Celebrities. In my 2015 study, all sports stories were coded into Sport, unless there was a more dominant focus or theme, and sport was subservient. This means Cook's Sports category was possibly underrepresented in his study, and thus makes Comrie's 1996 study and Comrie and Fountaine's 2005 study more accurate points of comparison.

Furthermore, in Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) study of TVNZ and TV3's news programmes in 2000 and 2003, they found that Sport dominated both sample years. While sport continued to be the most dominant category for both *One News* and *3 News* in 2015, a comparison with Comrie and Fountaine's data shows that only *One News* has increased their sports news content, but only marginally: Sport has grown by 1% since 2003 in the *One News* bulletin. However, sports content at *3 News* has dropped by 7.3% since 2003, which is a significant decrease. Table 10 illustrates how *3 News* contained much higher levels of sports news in 2000 and 2003, but

drastically reduced its sports content by 2015. Thus, by 2015, *One News* had a slightly larger Sports category than *3 News*. The data suggests that *One News* continues to include a similar percentage of Sports news as it did 13 years earlier, while *3 News* contains significantly less. Regardless, Sport occupied over a quarter of the newshole in both samples, which reinforces the dominance of the category.

Table 10
**Sports Data from 2000, 2003, and 2015, shown as Percentages of the Newshole,
for TV1 and TV3's News Programmes**

	<i>One News</i> (TV1)			<i>3 News</i> (TV3)		
	2000	2003	2015	2000	2003	2015
Sport	31.3%	31.5%	32.5%	38.6%	36.4%	29.1%

Note: The 2000 and 2003 data for TV1 and TV3 comes from a content analysis of these news programmes by Comrie and Fountaine (2005a).

5.4.4 Low Māori and Educational Content

The Māori and Education subject categories had very low levels of news content in the *One News* and *3 News* samples, with *3 News* containing no educational content at all. However, the small percentage of the newshole that Māori and Education occupied was not surprising, as it reflected a historical trend. These categories were at the bottom of the overall subject category table in Comrie's (1996) study of *One Network News*. In 1985, Māori ranked 14th and Education 15th, occupying 1.0% and 0.9% of the newshole respectively. Throughout the years studied, Education grew to occupy 1.5% of the 1990 newshole, climbing to a 12th ranking. However, Māori dropped to the bottom of the table, occupying 0.9% of the 1990 newshole. Since then, the categories have continued to reduce in size. Education dropped to 1.1% of the 2015 *One News* newshole, while the Māori category decreased to just 0.6%. Comrie (1996) argued that the 1985-1990 study period covered a "renaissance in Māori culture" (p. 231) in New Zealand, including significant debates over Māori rights to land and resources, and the declaration of Te Reo Māori as an official language. While Comrie (1996) claims that some of these issues were reflected in the *One Network News* sample, the overall level of Māori coverage was low.

Table 11

**Māori Data from 2000, 2003, and 2015, shown as Percentages of the Newshole,
for TV1 and TV3's News Programmes**

	<i>One News</i> (TV1)			<i>3 News</i> (TV3)		
	2000	2003	2015	2000	2003	2015
Māori	3.0%	1.6%	0.6%	3.3%	--	0.1%

Note: The 2000 and 2003 data for TV1 and TV3 comes from a content analysis of these news programmes by Comrie and Fountaine (2005a).

Even during the Charter period, Māori coverage was extremely low. As Table 11 demonstrates, Māori content in the year 2000—before the Charter was introduced—comprised 3.0% and 3.3% of the *One News* and *3 News* newshole respectively. By 2003—the year the Charter began—Comrie and Fountaine (2005a) found that Māori content occupied 1.6% of the *One News* newshole, and this dropped to just 0.6% by 2015. On the other hand, *3 News*, did not contain any Māori content in 2003, and this grew only slightly to 0.1% by 2015. It could be argued that *One News* contained slightly more Māori news content in 2003 than its competitor because of the Charter requirements. However, the fact that Māori content did not even reach 1% of the newshole for either channel in 2015 strongly suggests that Māori people and issues are being ignored by the prime-time news media in New Zealand.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

So far, this study has explored the global concerns surrounding commercially-driven television news, and has analysed the content of the 2015 prime-time television news samples in New Zealand. The content analysis identified that in today's hyper-commercialised broadcasting environment, *One News* and *3 News* have continued to depoliticise and tabloidize their news content. These changes are indicative of soft news approaches replacing traditional hard news practices. This chapter discusses the major findings of Chapters Four and Five, and considers their broader implications for New Zealand media and society.

6.1 Newshole Size and Story Length

The size of the newshole for *One News* was almost 5% smaller than the *3 News* newshole, but both programmes contained the same number of stories per bulletin (approximately 24 stories per bulletin). The newshole size difference between the samples was because *One News* included more weather content, and news content (rather than commercial content) was sacrificed to make room for additional weather. Media scholars in New Zealand state that news content has become less diverse and more entertainment-focused following deregulation (Cocker, 1994; Atkinson, 1994b; Comrie, 1996; Cook, 2002). This phenomenon can be seen in the comparison of the *One News* data to Comrie's (1996) analysis—the newshole has shrunk by 7.4% and contains 5.39 fewer news stories per half-hour since 1990. Over the same period, the number of stories produced in New Zealand reduced by 11.5%, in favour of stories from overseas. The comparison to Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) work solidifies this trend. Since the Charter period, the *One News* newshole shrunk by 3 minutes 10.98 seconds, and included 1.4 fewer news stories. However, a comparison of Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) data with *3 News* did not produce the same result. In the years following the 2000 and 2003 sample, TV3's newshole grew by 1 minute 30.14 seconds, while the number of news items per bulletin increased marginally by 0.2 stories. It could be argued that the discontinuation of the Charter had a clear impact at *One News*, as its newshole has shrunk significantly, and there is a clear reduction in the number of stories appearing per bulletin. The *3 News* data, on the other hand, has barely changed since 2000-2003. As an overall observation, contemporary *One News* programmes have continued to decrease the size and variety of the newshole in response to the commercial pressures that make news production costly. In a hyper-commercialised

broadcasting environment, prime-time *One News* bulletins are delivering less news—and less *New Zealand* news—to the New Zealand public.

In their studies, Atkinson (1994b) and Comrie (1996) discussed the concept of the news becoming ‘morselised’ as the average story length decreased over the sample time period. Comparatively, the 2015 *One News* data showed that news stories have increased by almost 20 seconds since 1990. This might appear to be a reversal of morselisation, but when considering the additional half-hour of news programming available in 2015 bulletins, the numbers instead reiterate the continued shrinkage and morselisation of the *One News* newshole. The comparison to Comrie and Fountaine’s (2005a) data reinforces this trend, as story lengths have continued to reduce in size since 2000. However, the decrease in story length from 2003 to 2015 was only marginal (0.32 seconds). At best, it demonstrates a plateau of story length reduction since the 1990s. At worst, it signifies a continued trend of shrinking news story lengths since deregulation.

In a commercial broadcasting market, production values—such as bulletin shape and style—are more important than information values (Comrie, 1996). In a free-market with no regulation, the need to attract and maintain audience numbers has surpassed the need to deliver detailed and diverse news stories. It is as though news organisations have lost sight of what the news is for. The commercial focus is especially troubling when considering television’s vital role in disseminating information to the citizenry—if prime-time television news sources in New Zealand are delivering less information to their audiences, then they are under-informing the New Zealand public. This opposes journalism’s very purpose: to inform the citizenry.

6.2 Weather

The *One News* newshole was slightly smaller due to the higher levels of weather in its sample. *One News* fetishized weather in a way that *3 News* did not. Arguably, New Zealanders have a long-standing interest in weather content—as a colonial nation built on the farming, agriculture and fisheries industries, there has always been a need to know and understand the weather forecast. However, this does not explain why *One News* included more weather content in its bulletin than *3 News*. If it was purely for commercial gain, then it stands to reason that *3 News* would have had similar levels of weather in its bulletin. The reason may lie in the historical influences that have affected the *One News* format. As part of the changes made in response to deregulation, American consultant Fred Shook created the TVNZ “news family” (Atkinson, 1994a, p. 97), which included young weather presenter Jim Hickey. According to Doherty and Barnhurst (2009), American news programmes had been using a “weatherman jester” to

“happy-talk” and boost ratings since the 1970s (p. 213). Hickey filled this role in the TVNZ news family, and solidified weather as an important part of the *One News* culture. In the 2015 sample, TVNZ weather presenter Dan Corbett often presented more than one forecast per bulletin³, while *3 News* included just one weather forecast at the end of the bulletin. Additionally, I have observed that 2017 *One News* bulletins sometimes include a third ‘slice’ of weather content at the start of the news bulletin. The different treatment of weather content between the samples reinforces the idea that perhaps weather holds a stronger cultural value at *One News*. Of course, this conclusion is merely speculative. Another reason may be because weather offers an alternative to producing news stories, and thus saves the network money. However, there does not appear to be any clearly apparent reason as to why *One News* opts to include more weather content in its news bulletins, while *3 News* does not.

6.3 Advertising, Headlines, and Chit-Chat

The content analysis confirmed that *One News* and *3 News* had similar bulletin compositions. Of most interest was the almost identical percentages of advertising in the samples, with over one quarter of each bulletin containing advertising content. Cook (2002) identified an increase in advertising in *One Network News* over the 1984 to 1996 sample period. Since 1996, advertising content in *One News* has grown by another 3.2%, which illustrates the continual impact commercialisation has had on the news network. Interestingly, in the 2015 sample year, both TVNZ and MediaWorks reported a loss in advertising revenue: TVNZ’s advertising revenue dropped by 1.9% (TVNZ, 2015), and MediaWorks’ acting chief executive David Chalmers said the advertising market had been challenging in 2015 (Armitage, 2016).

The high levels of advertising in the samples reflects the difficult and highly competitive commercial market where the networks compete for audience share. Including more advertising space in the bulletin gives broadcasters greater opportunity to make advertising revenue. However, within the hour-format, the level of commercialisation is affecting the newshole as stories are sacrificed for commercial content. The growing presence of advertising aligns with

³ Another observation concerned the language and mode of delivery in the weather segments. Arguably, the simplistic, emotive, and folksy weather phrases—such as “weather bomb” and “weather highlights”—plus descriptive illustrations—such as “it looks like a mad octopus of sorts”—give the forecasts an entertainment value, designed to amuse and engage the audience. This kind of folksy language also appeared in some soft news stories. For example, in the political Cabinet Reshuffle story, Judith Collins was referred to as “the Crusher” who was “in from the cold”.

Johnson's (2000) research, to exemplify how television media continues to promote consumerism⁴.

The samples had similar percentages for a further two non-news categories: Headlines and Chit-Chat/Studio Shots, with a difference of 1.3% and 0.2% respectively. After comparing the *One News* data to Comrie's (1996) *One Network News* measurements from 1990, it becomes apparent that headlines have increased while chit-chat has decreased. In 2015, *One News* included over four additional minutes of headlines in the bulletin per half hour compared to 25 years earlier. However, the 2015 news programme also included almost one minute less chit-chat content. When considering headlines and advertising, one would expect this category to also increase, as it too is a by-product of commercialisation. The prevalence of headlining in both the *One News* and *3 News* bulletins reflects the need to maintain audience attention. Headlines express the "most important information about a news event" (van Dijk, 1991, p. 51). They typically appear at the start of the bulletin (after the opening graphics and before the first news story), before each advertising break, and around halfway through the bulletin, when the newsreaders remind the audience of the night's top stories. News producers hope to make their audience 'stay tuned' through the next advertising break.

6.4 News Content

There was a common level of commercial saturation in the samples, which had a significant impact on the news content. The lack of political subject matter and prevalence of tabloidized news content was a major finding of the content analysis. Politics ranked fourth largest subject category for both samples, overtaken by Public Health and Welfare (ranked third), Crime (ranked second), and Sport (ranked first). When comparing the 2015 *One News* data to Comrie's (1996) analysis of *One Network News*, political news content has decreased by 6.8% since 1989 and dropped two place rankings. In comparison with the 2003 sample year from Comrie and Fountaine's (2005a) study, politics in the newshole has dropped by 3.2% for *One News* and 1.5% for *3 News*. Thus, the political news content in *One News* bulletins has dropped significantly in the years following the discontinuation of the TVNZ Charter. The similar measurements of political data for *One News* and *3 News* suggests that news programmes in New Zealand have

⁴ Johnson (2000) also found that sponsorship in New Zealand television rose over the 1990s. I observed the presence of sponsorship in the 2015 news programmes in the form of news segment sponsorship, such as weather and sport. At the time of writing, both segments are sponsored in the *One News* bulletin, with weather sponsored by HRV Ventilation and sport sponsored by Z Energy. On the other hand, *3 News* has just one sponsor, Suzuki, who sponsors sport. This is a continuation of a trend that started in the 1990s, and reflects the commercial saturation of news content and news formats.

continued to depoliticise news content since deregulation, while tabloid news content—like crime—has grown significantly. McGregor (2002) argues that “crime news is prime news because it is visual, violent and evokes moral judgement” (p. 81). Crime was almost twice the size of Politics for both samples, which reflects the popularity of sensational, emotive crime content. In theory, crime news should play a public-service role as it highlights important social problems (Surette, 2007), but in reality, crime news stories typically focus on the individualistic reasons for the crime, and give little attention to macro crime trends or social factors (Chagnon, 2015). This was especially true in the 2015 *One News* and *3 News* sample; wider criminal trends and the social factors behind criminal activities were often removed from news stories, in favour of a strong personal or emotional focus on the individuals involved in the crime. The content analysis indicated that 79.7% of crime news stories were soft, as they lacked societal and political context and focused on the personal consequences. By presenting the news thus, the social causes behind the story are concealed (Chagnon, 2015), which negates the fundamental principles of journalism in democracy. The comparatively large size of the crime category and the rise of other tabloid categories such as Accidents & Disasters, Celebrities, and Human Interest, illustrate the preference for entertainment-focused and sensationalised stories over political or hard news content. The tabloidization and depoliticisation trends identified in previous research (Atkinson, 1994b; Comrie, 1996; Cook, 2002) have continued today, as *One News* and *3 News* turn to such content to attract viewers and entertain—rather than inform—their audience.

The dominance of sport is another example of this. Almost one third of the newshole was dominated by sports news in both the *One News* and *3 News* sample. Of course, a certain level of sports news is expected in the news bulletin, as there is a dedicated sports section with a sports presenter and sports reporters. However, a comparison of Comrie’s (1996) *One Network News* data from 1990 with the 2015 *One News* numbers shows that sports news content has continued to grow over the last 25 years. This may be due to New Zealand’s preoccupation with sporting events and sporting people—especially rugby. According to Thomson and Jackson (2016), sport has historically been an important part of the New Zealand way of life, with Pitt (1973) stating that some writers claim rugby is “the only true national religion” (p. 158). Although I did not quantitatively record the subject of each sports story, I did notice the prevalence of rugby stories in all sports news bulletins. When considering New Zealand’s strong rugby culture, it becomes clear as to why sports news content dominated both samples. Television broadcasters include high levels of sports news content to capitalise on the cultural and social value sport holds for New Zealanders, as their main objective in a commercial environment is to attract the highest possible audience share. This trend is not unique to New

Zealand. Hutchins, Meese, and Podkalicka (2015) claim that sport is the “most valuable form of content in the global media marketplace” (p. 66), and Goldsmith (2015) claims ‘sportization’ has allowed broadcast television to come to be defined by sport. This explains the pervasiveness of sport in the samples; sports news serves an entertainment purpose and attracts interest both in New Zealand and worldwide, which makes it simultaneously powerful and profitable in a commercial television news market. However, when one considers that the Sports category was almost three times the size of the second largest category, Crime, the prepotence of sport over other news subject matter must be questioned.

The prevalence of sport, crime, and other entertainment-focused subject categories should be a cause for concern for all New Zealanders. *One News* and *3 News* currently contain alarmingly low levels of political news content when compared to previous decades, which means the public is receiving an inadequate amount of political information from prime-time television news. In addition to this, the removal of societal and political context from traditionally hard news items means the public is not receiving the complete narrative of a news story. By decontextualising news content, the public is deprived of crucial societal and political knowledge in favour of stories that focus on emotional and personal consequences. This bias towards entertainment-focused or sensationalistic content is at the expense of more serious news items. This hinders the citizenry’s ability to understand crucial government and party policies, which in turn hinders the ability to cast informed votes. This may significantly impact the citizenry’s role in a functioning, healthy democracy.

When examining the Māori subject category, there were extremely low levels of Māori news stories in both samples—less than one percent of each newshole. Māori stories appeared in the combined *One News* and *3 News* sample on three occasions—once in a story pleading for Māori and Pasifika bone marrow donors, and twice for the stories on the death of Ngati Porou leader Dr Apirana Mahuika after a long illness. According to Nairn et al. (2012), the media in New Zealand want consumers to think of Māori as unfortunate citizens, while Branston & Stafford (2002) argue that marginalised people are often depicted as victims in the media. In nearly all Māori news stories, Māori were depicted in this way. In short, “Māori news equals bad news” (Comrie & McGregor, 2002, p. 11). In the *One News* and *3 News* samples, there were no positive representations of Māori. It could be said that with the growth of Māori TV and the presence of the dedicated Māori news programme *Te Karere* on TV1, *One News* and *3 News* programmers have become less inclined to include Māori stories as they are covered by these other news outlets. Māori have created these alternative news sources in response to the negative representation of Māori in mainstream media (Walker, 2002). Arguably, *One News* and *3 News*

are abandoning their bi-cultural responsibilities by omitting or misrepresenting Māori issues in their mainstream prime-time news bulletins. According to Branston and Stafford (2002), when images of an oppressed group appear in the media, they must bear the “burden of representation” (p. 100), which is the constructed ‘reality’—either positive or negative—that is presented to society. People utilise the media to understand their identities and recognise their social positions (Murdock, 1999). The under-representation of Māori could have a detrimental effect on the fostering of nationhood and cultural identity not only for Māori, but for all New Zealanders.

6.5 Soft News, Hard News & Hybridity

A major finding of the study was the ratio of hard news and soft news. This ratio was disproportionate for both samples, with soft news more prevalent than hard news. Almost three quarters of the combined *One News* and *3 News* newshole was soft news. *One News* led the bulletin with a soft news item 70% of the time, while 50% of *3 News* leads were soft news stories, and on most occasions, these soft leads were crime news stories. The prevalence of soft news in the samples reflects the sensationalised and tabloidized tendencies of commercial prime-time news, as each channel tries to hook audience members’ attention to the programme with highly emotional, personal, or sensationalised news content. Almost all sports news was unquestionably soft news, and this pushed the soft news measurement considerably higher. After removing sport, the ratio of hard and soft news for *One News* was about equal, however, *3 News* maintained a higher level of soft news. This becomes significant when one considers that the *3 News* newshole was larger than *One News*. *3 News* contained more news content in its bulletin, but the news stories were more likely to be soft, which calls into question the quality of the information. On the other hand, *One News* had a smaller newshole, but contained more hard content. According to Nielsen (2016), *One News* was ranked as the most popular television programme in 2015, while *3 News* did not rank in the top ten programmes. TV1 had an audience share of 31.2% for that year, while TV3 had 15.5% (Nielsen, 2016). Thus, TVNZ had a significant influence over the population, and although the levels of soft news were high, the majority of the television audience was at least watching the ‘harder’ of the two prime-time news sources.

Although it was not quantitatively measured, the existence of hybrid news was perhaps the most substantial finding of the study. Hybrid news reflects the softer journalistic approaches to traditionally hard news stories that has become embedded in contemporary television news media. The political or societal context of a story was eclipsed by the emotional or personal qualities. Hybrid news stories appeared in almost all subject categories, demonstrating that all

subject matter was susceptible to soft news treatment, but the category that contained the most notable hybridity was Politics. Hybrid political news stories stripped away the political and societal relevance of the story and instead had a strong personal or emotional focus on the political figure/s involved. Although this perhaps made the story more 'digestible' and 'interesting' in a commercial news environment, it removed important context and deprived the audience of an accurate understanding of the social and political issues at stake. For example, the Cabinet Reshuffle story (aired on both networks on Monday 7/12/2015 in the Week Two sample) almost solely focused on Judith Collins' return to Parliament, with barely any mention of other Cabinet changes, the reasons behind the changes, or what it meant for the future of the government. An understanding of such context is integral to fostering an informed citizenry who need this knowledge to cast informed electoral votes. The presence of hybrid political news further confirms the depoliticisation of commercial news in New Zealand.

6.6 Wider Implications

These findings have significant implications for television news and New Zealand society as a whole. Overall, the bulletin composition and news content was markedly similar for *One News* and *3 News*. This suggests that the news has become homogenous, and as Phillips (2012) warns, news organisations need to resist the "death pull" (p. 97) towards homogeneity by finding stories that produce deeper democratic debate. The high levels of soft news in the samples—combined with the presence of hybrid news stories—suggests that *One News* and *3 News* lack stories that foster deep democratic debate, and instead the focus is on competing to attract higher audience numbers. Considering that news content has become further depoliticised, tabloidized, and commercialised since the 1990s, such unregulated competition becomes deeply problematic. An integral role of the news media is to politically scrutinise those in power. However, if being a watchdog involves critically analysing and communicating political goings-on to the citizenry, then who scrutinises the watchdogs to ensure they are fulfilling this role? According to Comrie and McGregor (1992), "the news media are in a unique position to massage their own image as the self-appointed watchdogs of society" (p. 10). Chagnon (2015) argues that mainstream news organisations no longer operate as watchdogs as they restrict the public's capacity to understand important social issues by protecting "powerful interests" (p. 107). The decrease in political content and the hybridity of political stories during prime-time news suggests that television news organisations in New Zealand are struggling to perform this crucial role in the current commercial environment. The reinstatement of public-service objectives might rectify this issue, and this could only happen with another major broadcasting reform. However, this may be resisted by politicians who could experience a higher level of scrutiny if a

subsequent resurgence in investigative journalistic practices occurred. Such a reform would be difficult to achieve without political and industry support.

The design of the content analysis originally aimed to identify the levels of entertainment-focused news content in prime-time news bulletins. Unexpectedly, the study identified the softening of traditionally hard news stories, like politics, which reflects the impact commercialisation and competition has had on prime-time news. The move towards personalisation in New Zealand started when Fred Shook triggered the restructuring of TVNZ in 1988. Shook argued that facts alone were not enough, and that the audience had to also feel an emotional connection to the facts for them to be memorable (Atkinson, 1994a). Arguably, when removing the context and focusing on personal or emotional aspects, the audience connects the news event to an individual's actions, rather than understanding the underlying social or political issues. When considering the findings of this research in conjunction with Baker's (2012) findings on the state of current affairs in New Zealand, it becomes clear that the television news media in New Zealand is falling short of meeting its democratic responsibilities as it embraces entertainment-focused content. Not only do the results of this content analysis indicate that the citizenry's ability to understand crucial government and party policy is being hindered, but the citizenry's knowledge of important national issues is also being affected. Like all nations, New Zealand has critical social, economic, and political issues that need consideration (housing and property prices, widening social inequality, national security and surveillance, and environmental issues, to name just a few). Meanwhile, television continues to be a primary resource with 84% of the population over the age of five watching television every week (Nielsen, 2016). This makes the findings of this content analysis troubling. The citizenry cannot gain knowledge of these fundamental issues and deliberate upon them if prime-time news programmes are not providing sufficient analytical coverage. By focusing on the personal or emotional elements of a news story, the wider societal context or potential political relevance is lost.

6.7 Further Research and Limitations

The study often used Atkinson, Cook, and Comrie's research as points of comparison. These comparisons were crucial to understanding how *One News* had changed in format and content since the late 1980s. However, the researchers covered multiple sample years, which included election years. The 2015 study was not from an election year, which made comparisons of political data from 1987, 1990, 1993, and 1996 election years problematic; more political news may have appeared in these samples than what was typically present. Instead, I had to choose

political data from alternative sample years to ensure a fair comparison was made. Another study could be made of *One News* bulletins from the 2017 election year to accurately compare the percentages of political news content from today's news programme with previous election years. This would be an interesting comparison to make, as it would identify whether *One News* has also reduced its political coverage during crucial election periods.

Additionally, a study of TV3's 2017 news programme would also be beneficial. MediaWorks rebranded its flagship news programme *3 News* to *Newshub* in February 2016. This was followed by a channel name change from TV3 to Three in February 2017. The aim of the rebrand was to integrate its television, radio, and digital news services into one platform, with a "strong emphasis on digital" (Newshub, 2016, para. 6). By conducting a content analysis of this new prime-time television news programme, a comparison could be made with the 2015 data to identify how significantly—if at all—the programme's content has changed after the rebrand.

The inferences drawn in a content analysis are restricted to the content of the text (Prasad, 2008). Thus, although the data paints an interesting picture of contemporary television news in New Zealand, it does not perfectly represent it. Instead, the inferences made in this study can only apply to the 2015 sample year. However, this research does confirm the earlier findings of Atkinson (1994a; 1994b), Comrie (1996), Cook (2002), and Baker (2012), and raises important questions about the state of news in New Zealand in the hyper-commercialised broadcasting environment. In future studies of *One News* and *Newshub*, the sample size should be increased. This is because some subject categories in this study did not have sufficient news stories to determine whether they were primarily hard or soft news categories. Increasing the sample size from two constructed weeks per programme to three constructed weeks would rectify this issue, and allow for more confident interpretations concerning all subject categories.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Since the inception of broadcasting in New Zealand, television has experienced varying levels of political regulation depending on the existing broadcasting framework. In the wake of deregulation in 1989, media scholars observed that television news in New Zealand became tabloidized, depoliticised, and sensationalised (Atkinson, 1994a; 1994b; Comrie, 1996; Cook, 2002). Prior to starting this study, I hypothesised that tabloidized and sensationalised news content—such as crime, celebrity, and sports stories—had continued to rise in New Zealand’s prime-time news bulletins. This hypothesis was based on the time spent as an autocue operator at TV3 and an assignments desk co-ordinator at TVNZ, where I questioned the amount of entertainment-focused news stories present in the news bulletins. A content analysis of 6pm bulletins from the 2015 *One News* and *3 News* samples revealed an increase in tabloid news categories, which confirmed that the commercialisation trends identified in the 1990s have continued to worsen. However, there were several other findings that were not predicted. Not only did the content analysis demonstrate that prime-time news in New Zealand became further depoliticised after the 1990s, it also identified the growth of soft news characteristics in traditionally hard news stories. This hybridisation of news content further illustrates the commercial focus of the television news media in New Zealand. The New Zealand networks are relying upon tabloidized and entertainment-focused news to attract audience numbers, and, perhaps even more worryingly, traditionally hard news content—such as politics—is being softened for the same reason.

These findings have alarming consequences for New Zealand’s public sphere, and the continued prevalence of television news in New Zealand makes these concerns more poignant. Television’s ties to political institutions and debate over major issues means it controls the quality of the mediated public sphere (Price, 1995). In the current hyper-commercialised broadcasting environment, *One News* and *3 News* are driven by ratings, rather than the responsibility to provide comprehensive information to the public. An uninformed public is not able to make dependable decisions on political, economic, social, or cultural matters. These results cannot be acceptable to the New Zealand Government, or to the New Zealand public at large. From this study, there is cause for serious concern over the future of hard and investigative news in New Zealand. To compete for audience numbers, the networks offer the same soft, entertainment-focused news content, and there are no alternative news sources for television viewers—*One News* and *3 News* are the only options in the prime-time television news slot. With no regulation, this appears to be a slippery slope. As soft news approaches become embedded in

contemporary journalistic practices, one can assume that the emotional and personal treatment of news will become increasingly commonplace. Who wants to watch a four-minute political report when they can laugh along with the presenters as Madonna falls offstage? The results of this content analysis—combined with previous television news and current affairs research—necessitate a broadcasting reform, as the commercial model continues to drive New Zealand television news networks away from any semblance of public-service broadcasting.

The decrease in political news and the soft treatment of political stories also cast doubt upon the television news media's ability to be an effective watchdog on those in power. While Western news media often falls short of its ideal role (Chagnon, 2015), the impact that deregulation has had on New Zealand prime-time news is extensive. Deregulation was supposed to rid broadcasting of political interference and allow organisations with different interests to pursue different stories, while citizens perused their options before making informed programme choices. But in reality, deregulation created a commercial and homogenous environment where the audience was positioned as a commodity instead of an informed individual. The news media in New Zealand have lost sight of their role as the Fourth Estate, and are thus forgetting the important role they play in fostering a healthy democratic society. However, the beneficiaries of the commercial model—such as the government, advertisers, and large media corporations—may make political change difficult. If Comrie (1996) believed that the need for broadcasting reform was urgent in 1996, then today it is critical.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Adlib	See chit-chat
Back-announcement	Information told by a news presenter at the end of a story
Chit-chat	Informal chatter or banter between news presenters
Depoliticisation	The removal of serious public affairs news content from the news bulletin as commercial pressure to attract audience numbers intensifies
Headlining	The act of using promotional headlines of the bulletin's top stories or upcoming stories
Hybrid News	News stories that display characteristics of both hard news and soft news
Morselisation	The shortening of camera shots, sound bites, and item lengths
Newshole	The portion of a news bulletin dedicated to only news content: not including advertisements, headlines, chit-chat, etc.
Prime-time	Peak television viewing hours between 6pm and 10pm
Reaganomics	The era of politics and economics in the United States shaped by President Ronald Reagan
Rogernomics	The era of economics in New Zealand shaped by Finance Minister Roger Douglas
Sound Bite	An audio and/or visual excerpt of an interview used in news items
Thatcherism	The era of politics and economics in the United Kingdom shaped by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher
Voiceover	Video footage overlaid with an audio commentary