Leading the Nation through Social Media: Jacinda Ardern's Self-presentation on Facebook during the Covid-19 Crisis

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis aims to answer three research questions about politicians' increasing use of social media. These questions are specifically related to New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who has gained a great deal of popularity since coming to power in 2017, and who I noticed engaged with New Zealanders particularly in terms of their national identity during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. I investigate how Prime Minister Ardern used Facebook Live to engage with New Zealanders during the Covid-19 pandemic, how she appealed to New Zealanders' sense of national identity as a tactic for compliance during Covid-19, and in what ways her use of Facebook Live affected her self-presentation. I elect to position this thesis within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and draw on analytical tools from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and Visual Grammar of social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) to examine identity construction of Prime Minister Ardern (that is, her self-presentation) as well as the construction of New Zealanders that are presented on her Facebook home page and particularly in her Facebook Live chat sessions. The analysis covers both visual and linguistic aspects.

The main findings showed Ardern's intention to allay fears and to regulate behaviours through her engagement with people on her Facebook page and in her live chat sessions. A discourse of national identity that emphasised the connection as a nation and upheld the value of compliance was adopted to encourage New Zealanders to fight the virus together. Ardern also presented herself in a more maternal way, to explain in simplistic terms to a wide audience what was happening and to encourage compliance with the social distancing and lockdown rules that were instigated. The findings suggest that the trust and support of New Zealanders during the pandemic could add a positive light to Ardern's self-presentation on Facebook, which could be utilized for electioneering purposes and giving instructions as to how they could vote for her.

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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.

20 August 2021

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Date

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, world leaders were under pressure to respond in the ways they thought most effective to keep their nations safe in a time of crisis. It was apparent that in speaking to their nations, these leaders drew on a strong sense of national identity to get people to respond positively to public health policies and in particular requests for certain public health behaviors (van Bavel & Boggio, 2020) such as social distancing, the wearing of masks and complying with lockdown initiatives.

Many leaders used a range of news media to communicate to their nations to define the virus as the common enemy, using specific words such as pronouns like the deictic 'we' to talk about who 'we' are and how 'we' should battle against the virus together. The use of collective discourse is of great significance when it comes to helping people conquer negative emotions like fear and helplessness, and encouraging them to take shared actions for a common purpose. Some leaders, however, took advantage of social media platforms to address their nation on a more personal level. One of these leaders was the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern (referred to hereafter as JA), whose regular use of social media led her to be crowned "the Facebook Prime Minister" by news media (Kapitan, 2020).

During the pandemic, JA frequently posted information on her Facebook page to update her followers about Covid-19 infection and mortality rates. She also conducted numerous Facebook Live sessions – real-time videos transmitted to the audience while being recorded – to communicate directly with the audience and allowed them to ask her questions. Her approach differed from her daily press conferences in parliament where she addressed the nation through the mainstream news media, because on Facebook she acted more informally with a cozy chat style when it came to interacting with the New Zealand public. This approach appeared to work in two ways. First, JA's appeal to New Zealanders, whom she repeatedly referred to as the "team of five million", to fight the pandemic was tightly associated with discourses of inclusiveness associated with New Zealand identity which featured in her social media performance. Second, JA's use of discourse on national identity

was also evident on her personal Facebook page but seemingly presented her in a more intimate and informal way not usually associated with a nation's leader.

With so many political leaders around the world maintaining a more formal approach when it came to addressing their people (apart from President of the US, Donald Trump, whose daily tweets became infamous for their radical use of language), I was keen to investigate further JA's use of Facebook, and in particular her use of the 'live' video sessions on Facebook to engage with the nation during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. I wished to focus on how discourses on national identity were presented on her Facebook platform to persuade the nation to comply with public health measures, and I was also keen to understand how this impacted her public image. My research questions in this study therefore ask:

1. In what ways did Prime Minister Ardern use her Facebook Live to engage with New Zealanders during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2. How did Prime Minister Ardern appeal to New Zealanders' sense of national identity as a tactic for compliance during Covid-19?

3. In what ways did Prime Minister Ardern's use of Facebook Live affect her self-presentation?

1.2 The rationale for the study

This study is timely and important for several reasons. Firstly, it aims to contribute new knowledge to the scholarly literature on politicians' use of social media. Although past literature has examined the discursive practices adopted by politicians, most have investigated how politicians build self-image (Lee, 2013), describe opponents/disagree with issues (Sakki & Pettersson, 2015), and spread political ideologies (Masroor et al., 2019). There appears to be limited scholarship examining politicians' discursive construction of national identity on social media platforms, focusing rather on either using it strategically for winning election campaigns (e.g., Gupta-Carlson, 2016; Kreis, 2017), or applying it in the process of national cohesion (Avedissian, 2016). To my knowledge, the examination of the discourse of national

identity on politicians' social media self-presentation in the context of crisis is a neglected area for research and a gap that this thesis seeks to address.

Secondly, this study contributes to the understanding of how to respond effectively to the current pandemic situation. Evidence has shown that a strong sense of national identity correlates with positive public health behaviours and support for public health policies (van Bavel & Boggio, 2020). Given that around 53% of the world's population – 4.20 billion people – are social media users (Kemp, 2021a) and they were increasingly interested in following leading politicians' social media pages after the breakout of the pandemic (Rufai & Bunce, 2020), it is essential to study successful cases to find out how politicians' discourses about national identity are transferring from their older forms of communication (mainstream media and speeches) to the newer forms of communication.

Thirdly, this research serves to offer a more critical understanding of the power behind the phenomenon of government leaders using uniting discourses on social media. The leader of a country has immense power when it comes to getting their nation to behave a certain way. With the power that politicians yield in leading their country in times of crisis, it is important to gain a better understanding of not only how they use uniting discourses that draw on national identity, but how they use this approach through social media to strategically maintain their positions as leaders.

1.3 Jacinda Ardern's communication style

Jacinda Arden, the leader of the Labour Party, became the 40th Prime Minister of New Zealand in 2017 and only the third woman to take on this role. The government she led was in fact a coalition of the Labour and Green parties formed under the mixed-member proportional (MMP) political process. Starting her first term as Prime Minister at the age of 37, she was the youngest female government leader in the world (The Economist, 2017, October 26). She was also the youngest government head in New Zealand since Edward Stafford in 1856 (Atkinson, 2020).

The New Zealand Labour Party, which she heads, is widely recognized as a centre-left

political party based on the ideology of social democracy, emphasizing humanitarian and socialist principles (Aimer, 2015). JA has called herself "a social democrat", who believes in "the values of human rights, social justice, equality democracy and the role of communities" (Murphy, 2017). She also called herself a "progressive" (Stuff, 2017), which means she supports "growth" and "expansion" (Nilsson, 2012, p. 252).

Since JA started her first term as the youngest female government leader in the world, "Jacindamania" or "the Jacinda effect" have been put forward by news media, referring to "the explosion of interest and positive support she has brought to Labour" (Shuttleworth, 2017). This term kept appearing in the media whenever she performed her role publicly at significant events especially, for example, her attending the 2018 UN General Assembly with her new-born baby and her partner (Peacock, 2018), and her response to the Christchurch, New Zealand mosque attacks (Nagesh, 2019).

JA is well known for her ability to communicate effectively and with an empathetic leadership style, which is fully embodied in her use of 'us' to evoke collective will during the Christchurch attacks and the Covid-19 pandemic (Nagesh, 2019; Friedman, 2020) and the way she draws on elements of national identity as in using the metaphor "team of five million" (referring to the population of New Zealand) which can fight the spread of Covid-19 (McGuire et al., 2020).

As mentioned previously JA's naming by news media as "The Facebook Prime Minister" (Kapitan, 2020) resulted from her appearance on her Facebook page where she posted information or livestreamed discussion wearing casual clothes, wearing little make-up, and having a baby cradle placed in the background. JA's Facebook presentation appears to have gone through several stages from a conventional politician's work updates to a confident government leader who is also happy to display her personal life with her partner and her role as mother to a young daughter who she gave birth to in her first year as Prime Minister (Cave, 2020). She has made good use of social media power to build a neighbour-like image (Cave, 2020). News media hailed her cozy chat style and her audience for her motherly tone (Vance, 2020b) and she has been considered a social media influencer as well as a government leader

because of her use of platforms such as Facebook. But this high popularity shaped online also turns into criticism of her being a "show pony" (Lloyd, 2020) and leading to "unhealthy" "hero-worship" (Vance, 2020a) .

New Zealand kept a low rate of Covid-19 cases and deaths in 2020, which was considered as a successful response to the pandemic (Baker et al., 2020). Jacinda's Facebook performance during the pandemic has been regarded by local and global media as contributing to raising the spirits of New Zealanders and uniting them as they worked towards successfully eradicating Covid-19 from the country (Wilson, 2020; Menon, 2020; Friedman, 2020; Campbell, 2020).

Unlike Donald Trump, JA chose Facebook instead of Twitter as her major communication platform because, compared with Twitter's core of promoting idea exchanging among people of different stands, the core of Facebook is to extend relationships based on existing ones (The Economist, 2020, June 4). This guaranteed a precise engagement with her targeted audience of New Zealanders, allowing her to strengthen her relationship with current supporters and attract others. Also, Facebook's dominant user size among all social media platforms – 2.6 billion monthly active users (Statista Research Department, 2021, August 2), and specifically, 3.2 million users in New Zealand (Kemp, 2021b) – made it a prime choice for the Prime Minister to spread messages and expand influences. But with so many people in lockdown, it seems that JA's live Facebook chats added an extra dimension to her communicative strength during the challenging time of Covid-19.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. This chapter has introduced the topic to be investigated: how New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, used her personal Facebook page to interact with New Zealanders during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, with a particular focus on her discourses of national identity to unite the nation, and how this impacted her self-presentation as Prime Minister of New Zealand. This chapter also explained the rationale of this study and provided a description of JA and her communication style, which contributed to the background of this thesis.

Chapter Two explores existing scholarship on theories of national identity and identity formation. It explains how national identity relates to solidarity to provide background for why national leaders are so keen to construct a united national identity, followed by an exploration of what nations are and how to define national identity. Also, scholarship on identity formation is investigated to understand the nature of political self-presentation, focusing on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management.

Chapter Three presents literature on the relationship between social media and political communication to provide the architecture for which discourses of national identity are produced and disseminated. This chapter presents how social media is defined and explained in terms of the impact it has had on identity formation and representation. It also investigates scholarship on political communication to understand the process and participants of political communication, followed by an explanation of power relations, two forms of politics – media politics and personality politics – and past literature on politicians' social media presentation. An exploration on applying Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model, the theory that underpins the analysis, to the online context is also included.

Chapter Four situates this study within the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and in particular includes aspects from the Discourse Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and Visual Grammar of social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). It presents details about CDS including its main principles, highlights some of the different approaches that can be followed, and outlines the key concepts of chosen approaches and analytical framework that best suits my research. This chapter then goes on to describe the process of data collection and research design by applying the analytical tools to examine JA's Facebook page and in particular her recorded live chat sessions.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six present the findings of my analysis of Jacinda Ardern's use of Facebook to engage with New Zealanders, and to assess the ways in which discourses of national identity are used to appeal to their sense of nationhood and collective responsibility during Covid-19. Chapter Five presents my findings relate to the analysis of JA's Facebook home page and some quantitative data from her Facebook Live sessions. They provide

contextual information to understand how JA engaged with the audience using social media, particularly any evidence of discourses of national identity, and how this impacted her self-presentation. Chapter Six presents my findings from the meso and micro analysis of the discursive features in JA's direct verbal communication with her audience as well as the visual aspects of her live chats. DHA's discursive strategies are drawn on to help me to answer the research questions of how JA attempted to unify the nation at this time and to position herself as the nation's leader.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of this thesis where I first review its process, and how the design of the study was used to answer the research question. I summarise and discuss the findings and reflect on the observations I have made as a result. I then outline the contributions and limitations of my research and conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores existing scholarship on national identity and identity formation, which are relevant to the research focus of this thesis. Firstly, how national identity relates to solidarity is explained to provide background for why national leaders might regard the construction and reinforcement of a unified national identity as an important discursive strategy. This is followed by an exploration of what nations are and how to define national identity. Secondly, scholarship on identity formation is investigated to understand the nature of political self-presentation, and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management is introduced as the lens through which the analysis will be viewed.

2.2 National identity

National identity reminds people of their bonding to the nation (Billig, 1995) – that they make the nation, and the nation makes them (Cooley, 1902). They can transform the nation (Mead, 1934). The nation is the foundation of their present life (Renan, 1882). People's belief that their nation is significant (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) gives them the sense of pride that this significance comes from their devotion (Renan, 1882), and a feeling of assurance to be its members (Billig, 1995). It promotes people's self-esteem when comparing with people of other nations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People desire to maintain or increase their self-esteem, which gives people a sense of responsibility to protect and make further devotions to their nation (Renan, 1882). This sense of responsibility drives people to take action when the nation is in need (Billig, 1995) such as fighting for one's country. In a word, from an individual perspective, national identity can drive people to take actions to protect and devote themselves to their nation.

National identity is established on the "imagined" nation (Anderson, 2016, p. 5). People imagine that they have a connection with all the other members of the nation (Anderson, 2016). This imagination of commonality makes people feel all the members are in the same boat, thus asking them to do what they believe others are doing. Therefore, from a collective

perspective, national identity inspires unity.

National identity can be constructed by political actors. Political actors, by "inventing" elements such as symbols, traditions, rituals and myths of the nation (Hobsbawm, 2012, p. 1), give new meanings to the core value of the nation (Smith, 1991). They build a system of those elements and repeat this system, making them a part of people's daily life, which increases people's bonding to the new meaning of nation and recognition of national identity often unconsciously, or in a "banal" way (Billig, 1995).

2.2.1 Situating the context to the contemporary world

The origin of nations is as early as the beginning of human history. The English word 'nation' comes from the Latin 'natio', meaning "birth, tribe, or people, but also race, species, class, kind, or breed" (Pecora, 2001, p. 16). The earliest use of the word 'nation' can be found in Genesis of the Hebrew Bible recording the families of Noah's sons, referring to people with kinship or in the same ethnic group (Pecora, 2001). The Bible also shows the connection between nation and their language and land (Pecora, 2001).

At the beginning of the 18th century, the reference of race was separated from the word 'nation' and called by Smith (1991) 'ethnie'. The modern nation in scholarship refers to a political entity governing its people within a definite geographic territory (Pecora, 2001). This meaning comes with the newly emerged phenomenon, the nation-state, within which a nation and a state must coincide with each other in the general acknowledgement of scholars (Cameron, 1999; Smith, 1991). However, reality is more complex than ideal as most of those political entities in the world have mixed 'ethnies' and the boundaries are often inconsistent with the inhabited places of their 'ethnies' (Smith, 1991). Therefore, as Smith (1991) says, "the nation is not a once-for-all, all-or-nothing concept; and that historical nations are ongoing processes, sometimes slow in their formation, at other times faster, often jagged and discontinuous, as some features emerge or are created, while others lag" (Smith, 1991, p. X). However, Smith also points out that, for the purpose of analysis, it is useful to look at scholars' explanations of what a nation is (Smith, 1991).

In the contemporary world, with the expansion of technology, population, and division of labor, ethnicity is believed as something in the past by some scholars (Smith, 1991) and their versions show more of the impersonal perspective of a nation. For example, philosopher and social anthropologist, Ernest Gellner (1983), refers to a nation as a new form of social organization that is mixed with culturally different micro-communities and political units. He says the rulers "established their identity by differentiating themselves downwards, and the ruled micro-communities differentiated themselves laterally from their neighbors grouped in similar units" (Gellner, 1983, p. 301). His view indicates a cultural homogeneity – a uniform social culture and political structure (Walicki, 1998).

Historian Eric Hobsbawm stresses the artificial sides in the making of nations. He says that traditions "which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" (Hobsbawm, 2012, p. 1). Those traditions are invented in order to ensure the continuity with the past. This is not only manifested in the creation of new symbols and devices such as the national anthem and the national flag, but also in the re-interpretation of history in textbooks and artworks such as semi-fictions. (Hobsbawm, 2012).

Political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson holds the view that a nation is "an imagined political community" (Anderson, 2016, p. 5). It is imagined because individuals cannot interact with everyone within the nation. Their view of the whole nation is based on their imagination through symbols, rituals, and ceremonials, which make them imagine that they are connected to other people of the nation. Anderson believes that printing technology promotes the imagination of a nation by offering the same language to people, and political institutions use it to construct and dismantle an imagined nation to the people.

No matter nations are invented or imagined, people's sentiments towards their nation are real in mass base and have cultural roots (Smith, 2002). National identity is based on sentiments towards one's nation.

National identity of respective nations is shaped by "state, political, institutional, media and everyday social practices, and the material and social conditions which emerge as their results, to which the individual is subjected" (Wodak et al., 1999, p. 29), and therefore should be

analysed within the specific national context (Wodak et al., 1999; Verdugo & Milne, 2016).

This thesis starts from the viewpoint that the world is at the age of liberal nationalism (Billig, 1995; Tamir, 2020) – that each nation places itself at the center of its concerns and endeavors to promote its own benefit (Smith, 2002) - and banal nationalism is a universal phenomenon that symbols of nations are displayed in everyday life and people gradually take them for granted (Billig, 1995), such as symbols of nations on money.

For the purpose of analysis, Smith's definition of national identity is adopted as the foundation for this thesis, which fits well in the context of nationalism and a distinctive national feature of New Zealand – a multicultural society and a bicultural national framework (as discussed in the next section). In this sense, national identity is "the continuous reproduction and re-interpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compost the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements" (Smith, 2002, p. 18).

Therefore, two crucial relationships should be examined in the analysis: first, the relationship between collective and individual levels of identity; and second, the relationship between continuity and change of identity (Smith, 2002). That is to say, the salient and durable cultural features of dominant ethnic populations in the New Zealand national identity should be focused on because they contribute to the core value of the nation. Social changes – in this thesis referring to the pandemic – should be studied from the perspective of how new elements relating to the core value of the nation are created.

2.2.2 New Zealand and its identity

According to official texts, "New Zealand is a diverse nation, made up of many cultural groups, with many different customs and traditions, … (while) Māori culture has a unique place" (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Its history as a bicultural nation stemmed from the signing of a founding document of the nation - the Treaty of Waitangi – in 1840 between the British Crown and the indigenous Māori (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017). As a result, New Zealand became a colony of Britain and Māori became British subjects

though New Zealanders of European descent became the dominant majority and there were issues relating to injustice to Māori such as the confiscation of their land which the government has tried to address in later years (Orange, 2012).

New Zealand's national identity was not constant however, because of changes to its demographics over the decades including the rise of Māori nationalism. Its "mixedness" or ethnic diversity also increased rapidly in the later 20th century (Rocha & Webber, 2019) as a result of globalization and the arrival of immigrants from a range of countries including the United Kingdom, Asia and the Middle East. While New Zealanders have "traditionally seen themselves as tolerant and open" (Barker, 2012) the government, particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s under the leadership of the second woman to be a Prime Minister, Helen Clark, emphasized the need for social cohesion because of fear of division. She encouraged New Zealanders to a new, unified national identity that welcomed integration of people from many different backgrounds. This was evidenced through government departments such as the Ministry for Social Development which stated that New Zealanders are expected to "have a strong national identity and a sense of belonging and value cultural diversity. Everybody is able to pass their cultural traditions on to future generations. Māori culture is valued, practised and protected" (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).   But scholars too, such as (Rocha & Webber, 2019, p. 22), also saw New Zealand identity in a collective fashion describing the country as:

> a diverse, multicultural society; a bicultural national framework; a long history of intermixing between populations; a strong indigenous culture and identity; and crucially, an institutional acknowledgement of mixed race/ ethnicity that began well before the current moves at the state level in other parts of the world.

2.3 Identity formation

From an individual perspective, national identity is a form of collective identities, a social extension of personal identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). It is necessary to examine its formation and features.

As Cooley (1902) says, people are social. They are a part of the society and everything about

them is based on the past of the society. In this sense, society and individuals themselves together shape one's identities. Cooley (1902) also points out that identity is a linguistic construction in communication.

Mead (1934) points out one's identity formation from a psychological perspective, suggesting two aspects of the self – the 'I' and the 'me'. There is a mechanism in the aspect of the 'me' incorporating the society into one's identity. The 'I 'is built on every past of the 'me' and is reflected in behaviors in responding to society. Mead reveals that identity is formed on the basis of one's understanding of what others' attitudes towards them are. However, Mead over-stresses the self-determined power of self and does not explain the relationship between the self and society. Psychological identity is not the driving force of history (Billig, 1995).

Brewer and Gardner (1996) point out that identities are relational. There are three levels of one's identity – personal, relational, and collective. Personal identity is the perception of how people themselves are distinguished from all others. Relational identity reflects one's relationship with certain people. Collective identity reflects one's identification to significant social groups. These three levels of identity co-exist within the same individual, but are presented in different contexts. In this sense, one can have multiple identities according to their social relationship. They also believe that the groups they are in are meaningful. Tajfel (2010) points out the limitation that it lacks a discussion on the contribution of group memberships. "Some of these memberships are more salient than others; and some may vary in salience in time and as a function of a variety of social situations" (Tajfel, 2010, p. 2).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) say social identity is based on individuals' desires to promote their self-esteem, which is achieved by in-group and out-group comparisons. Tajfel and Turner (1979) also find the power of the 'minimal group' – in-group and out-group distinctions can be created simply when people are named as the members of a specific group – which gives an insight into why political actors frequently name their citizens into the nation. However, while Tajfel and his colleague attempt to explain the dynamics of intergroup relationships, the theory of social identity narrowly focuses on intergroup conflict and differentiation (Breakwell, 1993).

No matter how identities are built, it is clear that identities are based on people's understanding of how they relate to this world and other people in this world. Social relationship is key to one's identity formation. People's understanding of their relationship with others also influences their view of others. Good relationship promotes trust in others, making people believe what others say or do (Baym, 2015). This trust is key in politics, allowing political actors to mobilize people to support them, helping political actors achieve their political purposes (Mannin, 1997).

People prefer politicians with good qualities. Those who look good are more likely to gain people's favor and support in policymaking or elections (Mancini, 2011). This gives importance to image management; how politicians perform in front of their audience.

2.4 Goffman's dramaturgical model

Goffman (1959) has suggested that identity is constructed through self-presentation, in other words, people try to perform who they are and their qualities to others. Goffman (1959) draws on dramaturgical metaphors, saying that everyone is born to be actors who perform on the stage of everyday life, with different roles in their social interaction with others. Like a theatre, there are the front stage and the backstage. People spend most of their lives performing on the front stage while sometimes relaxing on the backstage and drop all the identities they perform on the front stage. When performing on the front stage, people try to control their self-presentation – presenting the positive sides of themselves while hiding the negative ones – so as to make an ideal impression on their audience. Goffman (1959) names this strategy impression management.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management consists of three key components: the performer, the audience, and the front.

(i)   Performer

'Performers' refer to people who present themselves to others and who apply the strategy of impression management. The performer's activity of self-presentation is called 'performance'

(Goffman, 1959, p. 13). Goffman (1959) suggests that performers intend to influence "the definition of the situation" (p. 2) – the shared expectation of what should be said or done in the specific situation – so as to influence others' responses, which is beneficial for their self-presentation. This can be intentionally designed or unconsciously conducted.

(ii)   Audience

Those who watch the performance are the 'audience'. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model suggests that social interactions are not completed by the performance alone. The audience plays a role in this process, who engage with the performer and try to avoid any embarrassing disruptions during social interactions (Goffman, 1959). In this process, the performer and the audience have shared expectations and guidelines for behaviors, which are applied to avoid disruptions.

(iii)   Front

'Front' refers to "the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman, 1959, p. 13), which includes 'setting' and 'personal front'. 'Setting' refers to the background items of the performance, including furniture, decoration, physical layout, and etc. 'Personal front' refers to 'appearance' and 'manner' that are related to the identities of the performer, including "insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like" (Goffman, 1959, p. 14).

Although this model is based on face-to-face context, Goffman suggests any social establishment – "places surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place" (Goffman, 1959, p. 152) – can be studied within this framework of impression management. Scholars also figure out Goffman's use of metaphor "stage" and "backstage" refer to different kinds of stage, "not as a true private and a false public" (Tseëlon, 1992). In this sense, politicians can be regarded as performers, and social media platforms as a stage, where the audience can engage with the performers in their performance. This application of Goffman's dramaturgical model is associated with social

media and political communication, which is to be presented in Chapter Three.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored existing scholarship on national identity and identity formation, and situated this thesis into the current global context and, in particular, New Zealand in the period of the pandemic. I discussed the need to study national identity in a specific national context and historic moments, and from both individual and collective levels. I drew attention to the importance of relationship-building in identity formation and explained how Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model can be associated with self-presentation followed by a description of its key components. In the next chapter, I review the scholarly literature relating to social media, its use by politicians, and the application of Goffman's model to the context of social media.

Chapter Three Social Media and Political Communication

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents literature on the relationship between social media and political communication because it is these aspects that provide the architecture for which discourses of national identity are produced and disseminated. Not only is it important to understand the role that digital technologies have increasingly played in people's lives both as producers and consumers, but it is also necessary, in terms of this thesis, to show the literature when it comes to social media behavior and discourses of today's politicians, which all give insights into how political actors conduct performance on the stage of social media platforms in line with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model.

Firstly, social media is defined and explained in terms of the impact it has had on identity formation and representation. Secondly, scholarship on political communication is investigated to understand the process and participants of political communication. It is followed by the explanation of power relations and two forms of politics – media politics and personality politics. An exploration of past literature on politicians' social media presentation is displayed after that. Thirdly, I explore the literature on the application of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model to the online context.

3.2 A brief history of social media

The Internet was established in 1969 when the USA built a network called the ARPANET to connect researchers within the USA who worked for the Pentagon. From the late 1970s onwards, it started to be used for personal communication in the forms of the Bulletin Board System (BBS), emails, Project Gutenberg, Multiuser Dungeon (MUD) and etc. (Han, 2011).

The history of social media began with the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1989. Tim Berners-Lee connected a global hypertext system to the Internet to manage information. It laid the foundation for networked communication (van Dijck, 2013). The period of 1995 to 2000, also known as the dot-com or IT bubble, was labelled as Web 1.0. It saw the rise of the

Web into mainstream media with numerous internet service providers coming up and personal computers coming into households. Email, virtual communities, and various aspects of the Internet were added onto the Web as there was no requirement for expert knowledge to use the Web (Han, 2011). The WWW provided general services and did not connect people automatically (Baym, 2015). People could actively take part in online activities, like creating personal Web pages (or blogs), joining chat rooms, or building groups. Web 1.0 was featured as "information consumption" – there was limited interactivity but no content creation (Han, 2011, p. 24).

Web 2.0, also known as the participatory web, started in 2001 with the setup of Wikipedia and its following open-source movement. A new system of values emerged, centering on users being content generators instead of mere information consumers (Han, 2011). Service providers have shifted their focus from general services to customized services and developed interactive two-way social media sites (van Dijck, 2013). People moved more of their daily activities online. Web 2.0 is a gathering of "commercial interests, the technological bias towards sociality intrinsic to the Internet, and the always unexpected ways in which people create new ways of using technology, which were either unforeseen by their developers or even forbidden" (Han, 2011, p. 24).

Social media technologies emerged with Web 2.0 technology in the late 1990s as both business and social phenomena (Obar & Wildman, 2015). The term 'social media' refers to "Web 2.0 internet-based applications" (Obar & Wildman, 2015), which provide services in the interactive, two-way networked communication (van Dijck, 2013).

According to van Dijck (2013), there are four major types of social media:

1.social network sites (SNSs): focusing on building and maintaining social relationships, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+

2.user-generated content (UGC): aiming at creating or exchanging content, e.g., YouTube, Flickr, Myspace, and Wikipedia

3.trading and marketing sites (TMSs): for exchanging or selling products, e.g., Amazon, eBay, and Taobao

4.play and game sites (PGSs): for providing various types of games, e.g., FarmVille, CityVille, and AngryBirds

As van Dijck (2013) points out, boundaries between each type are blurring as social media sites are developing tools to embed various functions into themselves for the purpose of dominating the market. For example, Facebook has added tools to enable users to create content of photos and short videos while its major target is to promote social networking. YouTube, on the other side, has a function of social networking as it has communities sharing specific postings. Therefore, "All web-based applications which allow for creation/exchange of user-generated content and enable interaction between the users can be classified as 'social media'" (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012, p. 9). This social interaction includes one-to-one and one-to-many communication, with a potential for many-to-many communication (Jensen, 2015).

The world has witnessed a dramatic growth of social media users since their emergence from the late 1990s. Nearly half of the world population used social media in January 2020 (Kemp, 2021a) and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has boosted the figure of social media users to 4.2 million in 2021, accounting for 53% of the world population (Kemp, 2021a). Apart from generating creative content, social media users have also constructed online identities and formed relationships, which I present in the following section.

3.3 Social media and online identities

As mentioned in Chapter two, individuals' identities are shaped through social relationships with others but also through their self-presentation. Social media facilitates online identity formation by building and strengthening relationships, and enabling customized self-presentation – people can use various digital elements such as avatars, icons, nicknames, music, and video to represent themselves (Marwick, 2013). Baym (2015) notes the importance of social media when it comes to building and strengthening relationships as well

as constructing an image of oneself online. Features such as algorithms, for example, enable people with common interests to connect with each other, which widens their social networks. Also, social media enables people to generate their own content and develop their personal profiles. That is, people can choose what aspects they want to show to others, and many have strategically designed their self-representation – virtual depictions of oneself – before they create and update their online profile (Marwick, 2013). Besides, social media promotes interaction in online relationship formation and self-presentation. Interaction in a face-to-face context is largely coordinated by non-verbal cues (i.e., facial expression, direction of gaze, posture etc.), but the online environment has largely reduced those cues. To replace them, social media offers various media tools, like videos and images, functioning as coordinators.

Online identities in social media sites are usually similar to individuals' offline identities (Marwick, 2013; Baym, 2015). This is because people today use social media mainly for the purpose of communicating with people they know in real life. However, unlike in an offline environment where people shift among multiple identities quickly according to contexts and audience, people cannot easily change their identities in one account due to the limitation of social media technologies. Therefore, people intend to maintain different social media accounts to fit in their multiple identities – e.g., Facebook for personal identities and LinkedIn for professional ones (Marwick, 2013). This means people have to imagine the audience before they create their online profiles so that they can manage their choice of language, cultural referents, style, etc. (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). While the imagination of a potential audience is confined by social media, whose features have determined the types of users, one's online self-presentation is thus greatly influenced by platform features.

Social media can also increase the sense of belonging generated from shared collective identities (Baym, 2015) – e.g., national identity. People with shared identities are connected by social media and formed into online groups. By means of in-group and out-group comparison, people get a more positive evaluation of their group, which gives pride to themselves as group members, and they are more willing to obey the rules of their group (Marwick, 2013). This makes sense of why JA prefers to use Facebook because Facebook is beneficial for online group formation and therefore it is much easier for JA to persuade the

audience to comply with government initiatives during the pandemic. In some cases, social media also enables people to negotiate and reconstruct their national identity to adapt themselves to the global community by incorporating global culture with local culture and religion – e.g., an online Iranian identity highlighting similarities between Western and Iranian cultures in the study of Yadlin-Segal (2017).

3.4 Social media as a tool for political communication

Although there is a view that social media plays a leading role in reconnecting citizens into politics and promoting social democracy (Grant et al., 2010; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Ross et al., 2014; Baldwin-Philippi, 2018), KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) point out that this view emerges from an ideal context where societies are affluent, and citizens do not talk about politics. In many parts of the world, however, it is a "saturated politicized society" – where people have political demands and are eager to express – that plays this role, and social media is only a tool and platform utilized by society (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 212), such as in the case of the Egyptian uprising of 2011 where Facebook served to provide a communicative platform for people to express opinions. Also, in the context of democratic societies, young citizens are making use of social media to express their political needs through monitoring politicians' policies and actions, sharing information with friends, and engaging in political activities (Loader et al., 2014). In this sense, social media offers a meeting place for diverse groups to have their say. As Castells (2007) says, communication technologies like social media function to extend mass media systems to all social aspects, and power structures remain the core for study in political actors' media performance.

This thesis is interested in viewing social media as a political tool that is used by elite groups and politicians such as Jacinda Ardern and who are often reliant on a team of advisors, publicists or communications specialists to manage their public image (Francis, 2016). JA in fact has a chief press secretary, Andrew Campbell, who leads a team of four staff who "handle incoming questions for the prime minister, set up interviews and press conferences, and accompany her through her various media engagements, always recording every media appearance she makes, so they have their own record of it" (Stuff, 2020). Incorporating social

media as part of their communication strategies enables politicians to not only speak directly to their nations, but also to facilitate their own positive self-representation and identity performance online.

In democratic political systems, the purpose of political communication is to persuade (McNair, 2017). It is intentional and incorporates:

1. All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives.
2. Communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and activists.
3. Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials and other forms of media discussion of politics, such as blogs and social media posts.

(McNair, 2017, p. 4).

Citizens are the targets of persuasion with political actors sending messages to citizens in order to persuade them to take actions that can support political actors in the decision-making process. Castells (2007) states that power relationships remain the basis of all societies (Castells, 2007), and it is not surprising that this can occur when political information is transmitted through the media, whether this is in traditional forms (e.g., news articles, political broadcasts) or through social media.

Social media, in fact has been regarded as changing the power relations in political communication because the mass media system has long been viewed to have decisive power in conveying political messages and influencing citizens' understanding as it is the only channel connecting the other two participants (Foster, 2010). In this sense, the emergence of social media is viewed to challenge the power of mass media and transform power relations in political communication (Gibson, 2013). At the same time, it is believed that citizens are empowered by social media because they are able to become active participants in the process (Foster, 2010).

Castells (2007) points out, however, that media channels can be used by political actors to influence people's beliefs and attitudes. The power structure existing in political communication remains the same as the top ends of a hierarchy–political actors–hold the

power to decide what to say or not to say (Baym, 2015).

For electoral purposes, there emerged personality politics as citizens prefer to vote for politicians who look good and honest. Politicians become the faces of their parties and in a large sense, "faces of politics" (Castells, 2007, p. 243). Self-presentation is key to personality politics. When it comes to social media, it only "extend(s) the reach of media communication to all domains of social life" (Castells, 2007, p. 239). However, within a social media context, politicians are increasingly using various digital platforms to facilitate their self-presentation, particularly on Facebook, which is the leading social network service with an average of 2.6 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2021), and specifically, 3.2 million users in New Zealand (Kemp, 2021b)

3.4.1 Politicians' self-presentation on social media

The use of social media in political communication has received more attention since Barack Obama used it in his 2008 election campaign. His success in being voted in as President of the United States of America has led to a global trend for candidates to use social media in electoral campaigns (Ross et al., 2014; Baldwin-Philippi, 2018). Obama's taking of selfies with other national leaders at Nelson Mandela's funeral–the former President of South Africa–also showed the increasing interest of politicians in using social media in daily life, although it led to criticism of it being inappropriate for a funeral (Soal, 2013).

Researchers have found that social media can be an ideal place for candidates to present themselves directly to the audience, without being influenced by a third party (Peres et al., 2020). Politicians can also determine public opinion on their policies and their own political positions directly from the audience on social media (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). The feedback can be quick and comes first-hand from voters, which is a valuable reference point for politicians. Direct conversations may also strengthen their relationship with supporters (Baldwin-Philippi, 2018). By engaging with the audience and having a political discussion with them, politicians can also gain a better understanding of the current issues of public concern (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012) and use this to their advantage when they appear in public.

There are other advantages that are considered to be of value to politicians. Politicians can use social media to collect and summarize information, build databases about who their audience is, and identify emergent issues (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). This is beneficial for political leaders because they can respond quickly and comprehensively to those issues. When there is a crisis, the public can receive information quickly from politicians on social media.

Previous research has found that politicians also use social media platforms to highlight their personal traits (Ross et al., 2014). Blogging, posting messages, or tweeting on social media platforms about topics that the public cares about, enable politicians to be seen as more human and caring because they can open up about their personal lives, families, and hobbies (Ross et al., 2014). They also post selfies, which are popular among young people, though as indicated earlier with the example of Barak Obama – a selfie can also backfire. However, this social media activity is often carefully planned to meet the purpose of a politician's political orientation (Hurcombe, 2016; Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017). For example, Donald Trump largely used his Twitter page for expressing negative sentiments and strong feelings to attract the light of news media and the attention of the public (Crockett, 2016). Although this made him notorious in his Twitter use, it sheds light on the power of social media. Scholars have argued that this strategy often blurs "the lines between identity, pop culture, and politics" and it is particularly suitable for political communication on social media (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017).

Some scholars have argued that social media offers equal or better opportunities for female politicians (Patterson, 2016; Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2018). They believe the low cost of social media makes it an equal resource for politicians of both genders (Patterson, 2016), and the flexibility of social media – easily accessible wherever and whenever – is user-friendly, particularly for female politicians who juggle their professional and family lives (Patterson, 2016). Female politicians have also been found to be more active than their male counterparts on social media by the number of postings (Ross et al., 2014), making use of their stereotypical feminine features (e.g., caring and empathetic), especially their roles as caregivers and mothers, to present a positive political image (McGregor et al., 2017; Chen & Chang, 2019). Their postings have received more Likes and Shares from netizens (Yarchi &

Samuel-Azran, 2018; Chen & Chang, 2019).

3.4.2 New Zealand politicians

Researchers conducting studies in the specific context of New Zealand have discussed social media behaviour of Members of Parliament (Ross & Bürger, 2014) and candidates' use of social media for political marketing in election campaigns (Cameron et al., 2014), which suggest that politicians in New Zealand are well aware of the benefits that social media can bring to their self-presentation. Former New Zealand Prime Minister John Key had his own social media advisor (Trevett, 2015) and JA's use of Instagram has also been documented as a strategy that serves her personal and professional interests (Social Samosa, 2020),

Jacinda Ardern (JA) has been studied recently on her crisis leadership abilities in leading New Zealand's response to the pandemic (McGuire et al., 2020). While this research has examined JA's Facebook Live broadcasts during the pandemic, it includes other media genres such as statements and speeches, which cannot fully display JA's social media strategies. Besides, although it has touched upon the roles of JA in her crisis leadership, it does not give insights into how she unified New Zealanders by constructing and conveying the national identity which I have identified in JA's Facebook and intend to examine in this thesis. Apart from that, my research takes a critical standpoint and adopts the CDS approaches (see Chapter Four), which is different from the analysis of McGuire et al.'s (2020) study.

3.5 Application of Goffman's dramaturgical model

As presented in Chapter Two, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management can be applied to any social establishment. A review of the past literature verifies this model can be applied to the online context. Miller (1995) argues that online pages are interactive; in many ways – they are read by others and invite comments, thus falling into the category of Goffman's social establishment – an interactive system but a restricted one. Also, as Hogan (2010) says, although social media can be split into "performance" space, where individuals present themselves by behaviors, and "exhibition" space, where individuals present themselves by displaying artifacts, Goffman's dramaturgical model can work in both

spaces, which means it can be applied to the context of social media. Many researchers have drawn on Goffman's model in their studies of online phenomena, particularly relating to online identities, such as online hate (Kilvington, 2020), online anonymity (O'Leary & Murphy, 2019), influencers (Ezzat, 2020), and politicians' online self-presentation (Colliander et al., 2017). These studies provide me with more context on the application of Goffman's model to online self-presentation, but they have not specifically looked at how performers interact with the audience and appeal to the collective identity of the audience in the performance, which I intend to investigate in this research.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored existing scholarship on social media and political communication, pinning down the role of social media as a tool that politicians can use, and situating the scope of this thesis within political communication in times of crisis. I have given a brief history on the development of social media and explained how it has influenced identity formation and promoted people with shared identities (e.g., national identity) to follow the rules within their community. These pave the way for viewing social media as tools in this thesis. Then there was a discussion about power relations in political communication, which adopted Castells' (2007) view as political actors retaining their power in a social media context. There followed an investigation on scholarships about politicians' use of social media both in a global range and in New Zealand, showing that politicians are making use of the advantages of social media in their self-presentation. I have in particular looked at what researchers found about JA's use of media during Covid-19. However, I also identified that, how she drew on national identity discourses specifically on Facebook, has yet to be examined. Finally, I elaborated that Goffman's dramaturgical model of impression management can be applied to any social establishment, including the online context, and point out my intention to investigate how performers interact with the audience and appeal to the collective identity of the audience in the performance. In the next chapter, I present the design and method of my study using a Critical Discourse Studies approach to examine exactly that.

Chapter Four Design and Method

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the design and method of my study to answer the questions about the ways in which New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (JA) used the social media platform of Facebook during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and in particular her application of a discourse of national identity. This, I believe, requires a critical standpoint because political leaders are an elite group where they exercise authority and power through language and image to be persuasive. I therefore elected to position this thesis within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) which offers a combination of the critical analysis of discourse within a social, political and cultural context. This chapter therefore first presents details about CDS highlighting its main principles. Second, I describe how I applied a CDS approach drawing on analytical tools from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and Visual Grammar of social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). I outline their key concepts and explain why they suit my research. I then go on to describe the research design explaining the research procedures, details of data collection, and analytical tools. I conclude this chapter by discussing my position as a researcher.

4.2 Critical Discourse Studies

CDS is an established paradigm in linguistics characterized by a set of principles, even though studies of CDS cover a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, methods, and research topics, which are different from each other (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this sense, scholars prefer to use the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) to replace the former descriptor of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to avoid misunderstanding.

CDS researchers Wodak and Meyer (2009) have pointed out four principles followed by most researchers: discourse, critique, power, and ideology. I will discuss these in this section as they provide important context when it comes to explaining the design of my study.

(i)   Discourse

CDS takes discourse as an analytic tool as a way to investigate how meaning is conveyed whether written, verbal or visual. Discourse is described by some as "language use in speech and writing" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 5) but it is also considered a form of "social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 17). Koller (2017) also says that discourse is "the way in which people use linguistic and other signs, and the way they behave in conversations, in order to relate to others and project an identity for themselves and others" (p. 27). In other words, the written, verbal and visual signs that have been expressed by people to engage with others can all be regarded as discourse and could reflect their various identities. This has relevance to my study as it looks to analyse the discourse contained within JA's Facebook page in her engagement with the audience during the Covid-19 pandemic as a way to unite the nation, but also to position herself in a positive light particularly when a general election was looming.

(ii)   Critique

CDS adopts the concept of critique in critical theory which was greatly influenced by the Frankfurt School and Jürgen Habermas. This concept requires critiquing societies from all major social aspects for the purpose of changing societies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Van Dijk (1993) points out that a critique should be "general, structural and focused on groups" and leads to "fundamental causes, conditions and consequences" of social issues (p. 253). Further to this, CDS has also emphasised the understanding of critique in terms of researchers' positions, where they are required to clearly state their positions and justify the validity of their interpretations in the research (Wodak, 2001) because they are motivated by desires to change societies and thus cannot be totally objective in the research process (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In my case, my interpretation of this research is based on my position as a Chinese national living in New Zealand, observing and experiencing the Covid-19 crisis, but also critiquing the political landscape during this time and taking note of New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and how she developed her relationship with the public through the social media platform of Facebook.

(iii)   Power

CDS views power as a key foundation of social life. Power is "about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10). It is "exercised and enacted in discourse" and there are "relations of power behind power" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 73). CDS focuses on social power – properties of social groups – and regards individuals as group members who contribute to realizing group power (van Dijk, 1993). A hierarchy of power exists with power elites, who play key roles in power enactment, being given symbolic power to represent dominant groups or institutions (van Dijk, 1993). In terms of my study, I view politicians as elite members of society who are reliant on power as a form of control when it comes to persuading the public to follow their lead. This of course was an essential process globally when it came to how governments managed the Covid-19 crisis.

(iv)   Ideology

Ideology, the final CDS principle that I highlight, refers to "a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 8) that feature in everyday life and which some people may not be aware of (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Van Dijk (1993) believes that ideologies are "the fundamental social cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests and values of groups" (p. 258), while Fairclough (2003) says ideologies serve to establish and maintain relations of power, domination and exploitation and can be formed through interacting and conveyed by identities. When it comes to the Covid-19, a government might spread an ideology that highlights the compliance of a nation in response to the pandemic, and the role of a strong national identity in achieving this.

In sum, CDS is "not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se", but rather it aims to "study social phenomena which are necessarily complex" and therefore "require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 2). CDS takes a sociopolitical stance, trying to understand social phenomena and identify social inequalities behind them. It studies what role discourse plays when dominance – the power exercise by powerful social actors which leads to social inequalities – is (re)produced and challenged. The

ultimate goal of CDS is to enlighten people about social inequalities in the hope of positive social change (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). For instance, the study of Alaazi et al. (2020) revealed discriminatory stereotypes towards African immigrant parenting practices when examining the large database of Canadian newspapers and called for public education on African parenting traditions to reduce discrimination. George Mwangi et al. (2018) studied the 2014 online student activist movement, pointing out the micro-aggressions towards marginalized students on campus and asking institutions to create campus climates that enable marginalized students to have a say when they are confronted with micro-aggressions. As powerful social actors always have more capability to control discourse, CDS is thus more interested in "top-down" relations and how powerful social actors carry out discursive practices (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 250).

As indicated earlier, while there are main principles to CDS, there is a range of approaches that can be applied. Some of these are the Dialectical-Relational Approach of Norman Fairclough (1999), the Socio-Cognitive Approach of Teun van Dijk (2009), the Discourse-Historical Approach of Ruth Wodak (2001), the Social Actors Approach of Theo van Leeuwen (2009) and the Dispositive Analysis of Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier (2009).

As my study is interested in JA and how she 'performs' on Facebook as a way to appeal to the nation in 2020 to regulate people's behaviour in complying with the pandemic requirements, I considered two approaches suitable for this thesis: the Discourse-Historical Approach which has had a focus on identity construction, and the grammar of visual design which is also concerned with representation through image and multimodal visual features.

4.3 Drawing the best from DHA and Visual Grammar

This thesis is concerned with the discursive construction of identities – namely that of JA – and how she represented herself on Facebook during the time of the pandemic in 2020 and how she constructed New Zealanders' collective national identity in a time of crisis.

Zotzmann and O'Regan (2016) recommended two approaches to study identities:

Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach (DRA) and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) developed by Wodak and Reisigl. While DRA takes a "grand-theory-oriented" stance and is more interested in broad linguistic analysis (Wodak, 2001, p. 27), the discourse-historical approach (DHA) involves a greater emphasis on micro-linguistic analysis (Wodak, 2001). With the intention to examine JA's Facebook page in detail and given the Prime Minister's reputation as a wonderful communicator as indicated by the news media, I believed that the major task of this thesis would be to examine the discursive construction of identities on the macro, meso and micro levels when it came to looking at language and image. The DHA enables a historical view on identity construction offering context to research topics requiring an investigation on how JA has worked on this sense of national identity to bring people with diverse backgrounds together as a nation to follow the government's rules relating to Covid-19. Besides, the DHA has been widely applied to topics of collective identity (e.g., Wodak et al., 1999; Wodak & Boukala, 2015; Rehman et al., 2019), national leaders' top-down discourses (e.g., Graham et al., 2004; Demata, 2017; Wodak, 2021), as well as recent identity presentation of social elites on social media sites (e.g., Mahfouz, 2018). Therefore, DHA seemed to be the most relevant approach for my research.

The concept of a four-level context is the foundation of the DHA analysis, which involves:

> 1.the immediate, language or text-internal co-text and co-discourse
> 2.the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses
> 3.the extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation'
> 4.the broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to
>
> (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 93)

While the first two levels can be dealt with through the meso and micro-analysis of Facebook data, the second two levels help form part of the overall discussion of the findings in terms of JA's self-representation and to her construction of New Zealanders and their collective identity in a time of crisis. In conjunction with applying DHA tools, I also decided to draw on the notion of Visual Grammar of social semiotics as the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) highlights the very valid notion of the relationship between image and text when it

comes to meaning-making, and my study involves looking at images, and written and spoken text as displayed and composed on JA's Facebook page. Like language, visuals require interpretations on a social and cultural base, which lie in "their application over history, and in specific instances of use" (p. 4). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) provide various concepts and corresponding analytic tools for interpreting visuals, among which the concepts of representation, interaction and composition are of particular note in this thesis. The concept of representation explores objects (and people) as they are "represented in the real world" (Ping, 2018). Interaction is about the relationships between the social actors in this world. And composition is about the "the layout of image which consists of information value, framing and salience" (Ping, 2018). These concepts and their associated analytical tools that are used when considering the visual aspects of this study are discussed in more detail in section 4.4.2 below.

The next section presents the research design based on this four-level context, and the choices of methods and analytical frameworks drawn from the DHA and the grammar of visual design.

4.4 Design and method

My initial intention for this thesis was an overarching topic of JA's social media self-presentation during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 because the pandemic was a crisis that required government intervention to regulate people's daily behaviour which had an overwhelming effect on them. I was aware of JA's communication skills, but also noticed in my initial viewing of her behaviour when reported on by the news media, that one of her discursive strategies was to appeal to New Zealanders that were fighting the pandemic together as a nation, as the way to succeed. This was notable in news articles and her press conferences which were broadcast live during 2020. Goffman's dramaturgical model of impression management as highlighted earlier in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, provides the theoretical basis for my analysis of JA's online performance not only in her self-representation but also in how she constructed the collective identity of New Zealanders. But I also intended to draw on theories of the social construction of national identity as

outlined in Chapter One and Chapter Two.

The design of my study involved the collection of two sets of data for analysis: JA's Facebook home page and JA's Facebook live sessions.

4.4.1 Data collection

I identified a specific period during the pandemic in 2020 which would be manageable within the scope of this thesis. Because the virus started to have an impact on New Zealand in February (when the first Covid-19 case emerged) and the whole nation went back to a much normal life (with a low Alert Level 1) in October, I decided to collect data in the period between 1 February 2020 and 31 October 2020 as this coincided with the first lockdown in New Zealand in March and went through to the New Zealand General Election on 17th of October (this latter event, where a politician's public self-representation may play a major role in their success, I felt would be interesting to incorporate to see if there was any alteration in her political discourse). While I was aware of the live chat sessions on Facebook where JA directly engaged with New Zealanders and decided to focus analysis on this particular part as a dataset, I also felt an initial analysis of JA's home page would be useful for the following reasons. The home page is the first entry point for the audience before navigating to the live chat sessions so reviewing this would give me a sense of context and how viewers might observe JA's self-representation as the Prime Minister of New Zealand and any discourses of New Zealand national identity that I had become aware of in more general contexts. This would also guide my analysis of the second dataset where I would look for similarities or differences. The collection of the datasets is described next.

(i)   Dataset of JA's Facebook home page

Based on the concept of a four-level context, it is necessary to understand "the extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation'" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 93), which can be achieved by an investigation of JA's Facebook home page. In this

sense, I examined this home page, focusing on the representation, interaction and compositional components of Visual Grammar, that is, mainly its layout and JA's profile elements. This would help me to assess how JA appealed to the New Zealand national identity and presented herself while also identifying what features on Facebook would enable her to interact with the public. I therefore decided to collect some screenshots of the page as it would appear when a Facebook user goes there during various times in my analysis period. Because this material was historical, I collected a screenshot on 15 March 2020 which was an early time of the pandemic outbreak. I also collected a screenshot of JA's latest updated profile photo and cover photo after 12 October 2020. To collect these historical views of JA's home page I used the Wayback Machine (https://web.archive.org/), which is an internet archive that allows users to view the screenshots of various websites in the past (the Internet Archive, n.d.) This enabled me to conduct a visual analysis of the Facebook page to provide the context within which the live chat sessions were situated.

(ii)   Dataset of JA's Facebook live chats

For this dataset I identified the recordings of the live chats conducted by JA which initially featured on the home page but were later archived under a section 'Videos' that appeared on the Facebook page menu bar. This function presumably gives easier access for users wishing to view all of JA's videos, or to catch up on those that they may have missed in real time. I collected 57 of JA's 'Facebook Lives' that were archived between 1 February 2020 and 31 October 2020. Those Live videos were transcribed into word documents so that I could analyse the spoken text, but I also made notes and paid attention to appearance and style of communication for the visual communication. A list of the 57 Live videos with their dates, and historical association with NZ Covid-19 alert levels appears in Appendix 1.

In this process, I used some website tools to assist me with the collection and transcription of data set. They were Getfvid (https://www.getfvid.com/) – Facebook Video Downloader – and Xunfei Tingjian (https://www.iflyrec.com/) – online automatic transcription services with a stated accuracy of up to 97.5%. I also did further proofreading by myself to check for the accuracy of the transcripts. An extract from one of the transcripts can be seen in Appendix 2

to demonstrate the format that was used.

In addition, I accessed a timeline of key events listed on the New Zealand official Covid-19 website (New Zealand Government, 2021) which gave an indication of changes in alert levels up until 7 October 2020 (see Appendix 3) which I could use to cross-reference when looking at the Live videos to see how JA would respond.

As indicated earlier I drew on specific analytical tools as applied in the DHA and in Visual Grammar of Social Semiotics, but I also felt that some quantitative data would be useful to provide further context. These tools are explained in the next section.

4.4.2 Analytical tools

As indicated above, I was interested in the ways in which JA used Facebook to connect with New Zealanders. While the visual and linguistic analysis would offer insights through qualitative analysis, I decided to include some quantitative data about the different features used in the data sets. I investigated JA's Facebook Live activities during the pandemic, including frequency, timing, video length and locations. The results could then be placed alongside a timeline of Covid-19 key events to establish any patterns in JA's performance on Facebook and this will be discussed in more detail in the findings chapters.

(i)   Visual analysis

For the visual analysis of JA's Facebook home page, I was mainly interested in the compositional aspect as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) which offers a descriptive framework. Composition is concerned with "how features of the design and layout define purpose and build meaning" (School Library Owl, 2019). Layout relates to the placement of the various communicative features on the Facebook page, but also within the live chat sessions. I planned to look at representational features and how the audience is invited to interact with JA in the space that she had created on the page through aspects such as a person's eye gaze (whether they are looking directly at the viewer or away), and the social distancing (whether images are close-ups or long shots, whether people are positioned above,

below or on an equal footing with the viewer). The notion of salience is also considered: what is more eye-catching. So, I look for elements such as cultural symbols (e.g., flags), features in the foreground and the background, and colours that stand out because "salience can create a hierarchy of importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 201). In particular, I would be looking for signs of JA's identity construction of New Zealand and of herself.

(ii)   Linguistic/textual analysis

For analysis of the language used in the datasets, the tools for analysis were drawn from the DHA. I adopted two discursive strategies which have been used by a number of researchers to analyse the discursive practices in constructing national identity (e.g., Wodak et al., 1999) and elites' self-identities (e.g., Mahfouz, 2018), nomination and predication (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95), which I decided to use in my analysis. Nomination relates to how people are referred to, labelled and categorized, while predication is about the qualities or traits that are assigned to an individual or a group. These two strategies serve to categorize the major strategies employed by JA in constructing New Zealanders' national identity and her self-identities. I explain these strategies in Table 1 below where I have added specific questions to assist me when analysing the datasets of this study.

Table 1 Specific questions, corresponding strategies and examples of linguistic means for this study

Questions	Strategies	Linguistic means
How did JA construct her own identity and that of New Zealanders during the pandemic?	Nomination strategies: to name persons for the purpose of categorizing them into groups	e.g., deictic 'we', anthroponymic generic terms such as "New Zealanders"
What traits, characteristics, qualities and features did JA attribute to New Zealanders and to herself?	Predication strategies: to point out their traits, characteristic, qualities and features for the purpose of labelling them positively or negatively	e.g., metaphors ("team of five million")

The column of linguistic means in Table 1 provides examples of how meaning is made in these strategies through various grammatical components such as metaphors and pronouns. During early analysis of the data, I found two linguistic means that stood out for me when it came to JA's engagement with the audience that emphasised national identity in the 57 Facebook live videos. These were the metaphor of the "team of five million" and the use of the deictic 'we' pronoun, both being indicative of a collective identity for the nation. These features and others I noted in my initial reading of transcripts I felt were significant and deserved closer analysis to see how they worked as part of her political discourse to unite the nation and for her to form a bond with New Zealanders. These will be explained in the findings chapters.

4.5 Researcher's position

As mentioned above, CDS researchers need to clearly state their positions and justify the validity of their interpretations in the research (Wodak, 2001). In this research, I position myself as a researcher who is able to have some distance when it comes to observing and analyzing the data.

On one hand, I am a Chinese national who has stayed in New Zealand only for a short period of time (less than one year) and I came from a country with a different political system. This means I am not assimilated by New Zealand social ideologies and am able to observe the power structure behind its political system. I am not a member of any political party in New Zealand and was not eligible to vote in the 2020 election. That means I do not have a preference for specific political parties and can retain an objective position when investigating the political ideologies of JA and the Labour Party.

On the other hand, I acknowledge too that I was caught in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns and experienced the same concerns as other New Zealanders about the possible effects that this might have on me and my family's well-being. In spite of this, I made an effort to be objective in my research when it came to observing JA and analysing the FB data, often checking in with my thesis supervisor when it came to my interpretation of the discourse, and highlighting in this thesis where my own bias might

surface in the findings.

Therefore, while observing and experiencing the Covid-19 crisis here in New Zealand, I could also critique the political landscape during this time by taking note of JA to see how she developed her relationship with the public through the social media platform of Facebook.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the design and method of my study. First, I described the field of Critical Discourse Studies in which my research is situated, outlining its principles of discourse, critique, power, and ideology. I then discussed the design of my research based on aspects of the Discourse-Historical Approach and Visual Grammar that would aid me in my analysis of JA and her use of her Facebook page to engage with the nation by emphasizing the country's collective identity as New Zealanders. The DHA offered discursive strategies and tools for analysis that would assist in looking at the identity construction of JA (that is, her self-presentation) as well as the construction of New Zealanders. After that, I elaborated on the research design, the collection of data and the methods and analytical tools. I also explained the ways in which I would combine quantitative and qualitative analysis, the two discursive strategies and focusing in particular on two linguistic means in my analysis. The next chapters present the findings of my analysis.

Chapter Five Findings on Facebook Home Page and Some Quantitative Data

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I present the findings of my analysis of Jacinda Ardern's use of Facebook to engage with New Zealanders, and to assess the ways in which discourses of national identity are used to appeal to their sense of nationhood and collective responsibility during Covid-19. My findings presented in this chapter relate to my analysis of JA's Facebook home page and some quantitative data from her Facebook Live sessions. They provide contextual information to understand how JA engaged with the audience using social media, particularly any evidence of discourses of national identity, and how this impacted her self-presentation. These findings helped to inform my analysis of language and image in Facebook Live sessions that are then presented in Chapter Six.

In the first section of this chapter, I look at JA's which would be the first entry point for her Facebook viewers. I look at the overall layout and construction of the page and pay particular attention to how JA presents herself as the leader of the nation within the confines of the Facebook template that this social media platform requires. A visual analysis is made with specific attention to her choice of profile and cover photos which attract the attention of the viewer in the first instance. A comparison is made of these photos when their updating occurred during the study period to assess the changes. In the second part of this chapter that presents the quantitative data of JA's Facebook Live chats I present details of the recordings of these sessions that include their frequency, the time of day they occurred, their location settings, the length of the videos and the frequency of the Q&A sessions. This quantitative data provides an overview of JA's Facebook Live activities identifying patterns and features of interest, providing an indication of not only how she used sessions but also how much she might value the sessions for communicative purposes.

5.2 JA's Facebook home page

This section of my findings relates to my visual analysis of JA's Facebook home page as it would be viewed by the audience before they accessed her Live videos. An examination of

JA's self-presentation on this page offers insights as to how this worked within the limitations of the Facebook template. When users join up with Facebook, the template provides them with blank spaces to fill in to create their own unique identity and to attract followers.

Figure 1 is a screenshot showing the layout of JA's Facebook home page which is how it looked at the early stages of the pandemic. This indicates the standard template features such as the blue Facebook banner at the top, the navigation menu down the left-hand side and the toolbar of buttons in the middle with features for audience interaction – e.g., "Like", "Share", and "Send Message". On the right-hand side is the space that displays statistics and information related to the account such as 'Community' (numbers of people that like or follow the page), 'Page Transparency' (the date when the page was created), 'About' (contact information, website link, and occupation category) and 'People' (number of people who like the page). 'Posts' down below the toolbar in the middle displays texts, images, and videos that were posted recently. The top part of the home page involves the areas of most interest for my initial analysis: the profile photo, and the cover photo.

Figure 1 Screenshot of Jacinda's Facebook home page on 15 March 2020 (accessed through the Wayback machine on 3 August 2021)
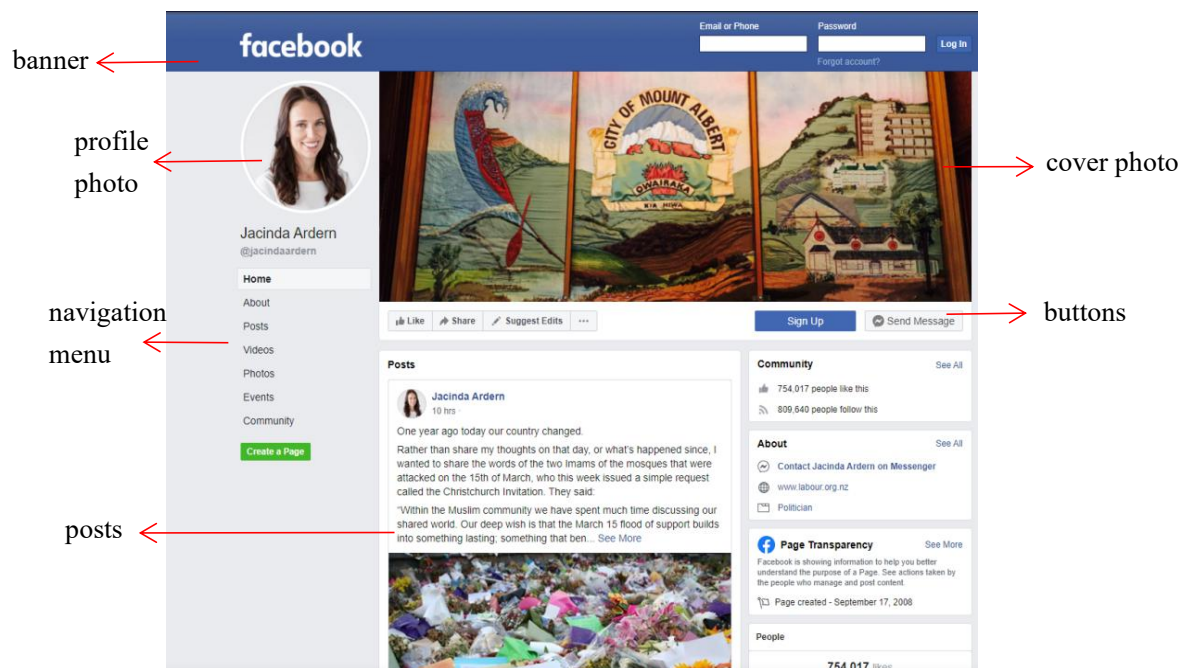
The standard Facebook template which provides familiarity for Facebook users, appears to be designed to be eye-catching and to highlight users' identity because the profile photo and the

cover photo are positioned at the top of the page and take up almost half of the screen, making them stand out on the page. As they were left for users to design by themselves, a visual analysis of those two photos of JA's Facebook page could reflect any intention of JA to appeal to the audience's nationhood when presenting herself as the leader of the nation. As shown by Figure 1, JA chose a close-up head-and-shoulders photograph where she is wearing white, and her dark hair is flowing down across her shoulders. Her gaze is directed at the audience establishing eye contact with them although on an imaginary level which creates a sense of intimacy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). JA's smile helps to establish a friendly and welcoming tone. In the photo, JA's body is slightly turned to the right side rather than front-facing which is also a more casual, and less affronting pose. Overall from my perspective as the researcher who is also one of the (presumably) targeted audience, this profile photo creates a more casual look compared to a suited politician and suggests that she is more approachable, on a more equal footing to her viewers – though still in a commanding role.

JA was highlighting her feature as a young and competent female politician. By leaving hair long down to her shoulders, she conveys a sense of naturalness and being down to earth. While the white colour of her clothing might suggest a meaning of purity to some people (Sherman & Clore, 2009) – and perhaps honesty as a key quality of politicians, at the same time it serves as a contrast to her dark hair and leads the viewer to focus on her smiling face. Interestingly she is not wearing red – the colour of the Labour Party which she leads – and maybe a way that she tries to position herself as a Prime Minister, rather than allowing her party to dominate.

The cover photo that sits to the viewer's left of her profile picture is of the Mt Albert Jubilee Wall Panels at Ferndale House – a historical building in Mt Albert suburb – the location of her electorate. Mt Albert suburb was named after the mountain displayed in the background of the photo. The left panel shows a canoe paddle, representing the Māori mythic figure of Wairaka (Taonui, 2005) who was believed to be the origin of this mountain's name Ōwairaka (Timespanner, 2010). The middle panel shows the crest of Mt Albert City Council, on which the mountain's English name "MOUNT ALBERT" – after the name of British Queen

Victoria's consort (Reed & Dowling, 2010) – is displayed upon its Māori name "OWAIRAKA". The right panel shows the landmark buildings including Ferndale House (Timespanner, 2010), which was a heritage building of New Zealand with British settler/European design of the 1860s (Heritage New Zealand, n.d.). This cover photo hints toward New Zealand's national identity with its signals of Māori culture, the historic connection between the British Crown and Māori people, and the multicultural foundation of New Zealand's history (see Chapter Two).

Mt Albert, as mentioned, is JA's electorate and it is the people in this area who are responsible for voting her in as their Member of Parliament. So, while she is also Prime Minister, on this page she is demonstrating more her representation of the people in her area and her acknowledgement and her commitment to them. At the same time, this historic representation of Mt Albert includes banal nationalism (see Chapter Two), and hints at discourses of national identity that underpin JA's position as a politician.

Apart from this more subtle nod to New Zealand's biculturalism, the first impression of JA's Facebook page in March 2020 – an early time in the Covid outbreak – did not necessarily create a strong indication of her identity as New Zealand's leader in the time of a global pandemic. It is interesting that there is no mention of her as Prime Minister, or a large representation of the New Zealand national flag which one might expect. The home page appears a little understated in this respect – though the importance of JA's Facebook pages may yet to have been realized for their importance as a communicative device as the pandemic had yet to take its grasp on the nation and the existing home page was yet to fully reflect this. It is interesting to note however that Jacinda changed both photos on her Home Page six months later, on 12 October 2020, just a few days before the 2020 general election. First, she introduces the colour red (that of the Labour Party) in her red jacket in her profile photo which stands out starkly beneath the Facebook blue banner, and presents a much stronger character than her earlier presentation in white clothing. Second, the cover photo changes from her focus on her Mt Albert electorate to show her public speaking – presumably during the lead-up to the election – perhaps at a Labour Party conference as the sign on her podium "Let's Keep Moving" was the election mantra for her party. Figure 2 is a screenshot

showing the new photos displayed on her Facebook page.

Figure 2 Ardern's latest profile photo and cover photo (accessed through the Wayback machine on 3 August 2021)
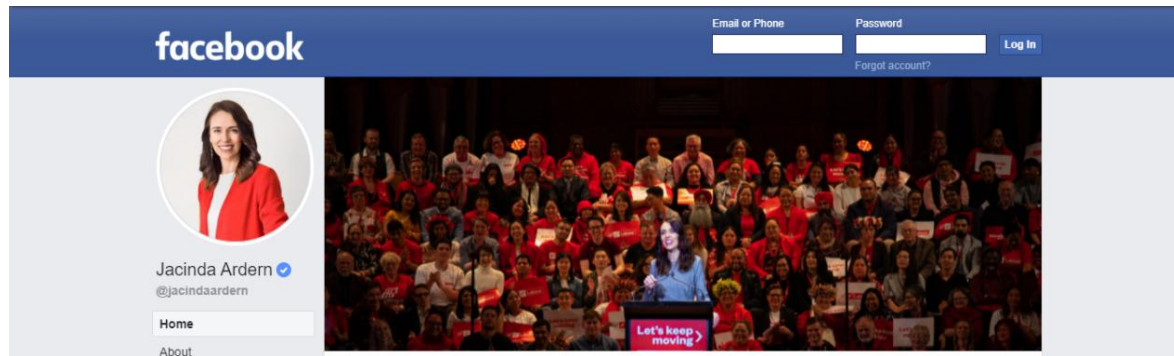
In the profile photograph, JA's gaze maintains direct eye contact with the audience, the photo adopts a medium close shot showing more of her body than her previous photo but still engaging the audience in a more intimate manner (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The red colour in her jacket marks her identity as Labour's leader, but also shows her energetic and aggressive attitude in leading the nation in the aftermath of the pandemic. She is slightly turned to the viewer's left in her profile photo which may suggest a psychological implication for her viewers to vote for the left-leaning party. For the cover photo, instead of using a conceptual of her electorate as in the Wall Panels in Figure 1, JA chose a cover photo that suggests a reactional narrative – that is, it is of herself seemingly responding to an audience of supporters at a Labour party meeting or conference. Her popularity is reinforced by the many supporters who are sitting behind her. While one might have thought that, as Prime Minister, she might provide visuals that are more representative of New Zealand, this new display reinforces her party affiliation and leadership and perhaps confidence about winning the forthcoming election. The polls were showing that she was in a good position with 47% support against the opposition (the National Party 32% and other parties lower than 10 %) on 8 October (1 NEWS, 2020). This cover photo continued to appear after she had won the election.

In reviewing the transformation of the photos on the home page, it is clear that JA's strategy in her initial appearance on the Facebook page was to promote herself, her electorate and her party with the intention of getting re-elected. Her party affiliation and leadership roles appear to dominate, whereas the New Zealand national identity has less exposure here and any connection with the pandemic is not obvious. However, as the next section of the analysis of JA's live chats shows, there appears to be a much greater focus on the pandemic where she engages directly with people through the videos and live comments, and a greater emphasis on the collective role of New Zealanders in overcoming this common enemy. My analysis in the next section presents findings of my initial collection of some quantitative data of JA's Facebook Live chats to assess where discourses about national identity might be presented, and also to identify any features or patterns that may exist in terms of JA's Live activities that serve to form the direct connection with the audience.

5.3 Facebook Live patterns and features in the pandemic

Facebook Live is a feature that Facebook launched in 2015 (Hern, 2017), which allows the audience to directly interact with account holders in real time (i.e., synchronously) on their page. What is noticeable about Facebook Live is that real-time comments remain online and can be seen along with the recorded broadcasts for future viewing.

JA had her first Facebook Live broadcast on 3 May 2017, two months after she was elected as deputy leader of the Labour Party. On 1 August 2017, she was elected as the Labour's leader, and immediately conducted several Facebook Live broadcasts for Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions during the month of August (3 August 2017, 9 August 2017, 17 August 2017, 22 August 2017, and 29 August 2017) as a campaign activity for the 2017 general election. This suggests that JA, perhaps with assistance from her communications team, recognized the value of using this particular communicative genre as a way to connect with the New Zealand public and gain their support. Her use of Facebook Live continued after she took office, including on her maternity leave at home after giving birth to her first baby, and on attending the UN General Assembly (2018) where she gave a speech on multilateralism (United Nations, 2018). However, it appeared that she avoided using Facebook Live at the time of the 2019

Christchurch mosques shootings, presumably because this may have been a topic that was too disturbing or inappropriate to talk about on social media. Interestingly, and in contrast to this, JA's frequent engagement with the audience later in the pandemic seemed an attempt to raise a sense of togetherness, which was much needed in this period when it required the nation to comply with measures to try and eliminate the virus.

To understand JA's engagement with the audience in using Facebook live chats to provide context for her performance and impression management (Goffman, 1959) in applying discourses of national identity, I first collected some quantitative data of my live video dataset to see how these sessions coincided with the Covid timeline in New Zealand mentioned earlier. I divided the data set into seven time periods according to the Covid events:

(i) P1– the pre-pandemic period, when the virus had not appeared in New Zealand, but the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared it as a global health emergency.

(ii) P2 – the first outbreak, from 28 February 2020 when the first case was confirmed – which led to Alert Level 4 nationwide lockdown that began on 25 March 2020 – till the lockdown ended and the alert level moved to level 3 on 27 April 2020.

(iii) P3 – lowering of alert levels from Level 3 to Level 1, which was from 28 April 2020 till 8 June 2020, when the number of cases steadily decreased and New Zealand began to remove restrictions to allow people to go out and businesses to open.

(iv) P4 – the first elimination of active cases existing in New Zealand communities, which was from 9 June 2020 till 11 August 2020, when the whole nation was at Alert Level 1.

(v) P5 – a resurgence of community transmission in Auckland, which began on 12 August 2020 and ended on 30 August, when Auckland had a regional restriction at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the nation moved to Alert Level 2.

(vi) P6 – alert level downgraded from level 3 to level 2 in Auckland, and the rest moved to level 1, which was from 1 September 2020 to 7 October 2020.

(vii) P7 – the second elimination of active cases in New Zealand communities and the whole nation was at Alert Level 1 since 8 October 2020 (also the general election was held in this period on 17 October 2020).

Videos of each period are listed in Table 2. I also looked at the features such as timing (which day and what time of the sessions were conducted), video length (how long of each session lasted), locations (where each session took place – in her home or in government buildings), frequency (how often JA had live chats in different periods), and the frequency of Q&A sessions (how often JA answered the audience's questions). Details of these are listed in Table 2.

My initial observations showed that patterns existed in JA's Facebook live sessions. Firstly, in terms of timing, evening time after 18:00 pm was the time mostly selected for a live session, but there were rarely any live chats on Friday (except in P6 when the election campaign began) – perhaps when there might be the least number of people viewing her page. Secondly in terms of locations, live chats were conducted in different places, but mostly moved between her office in the Beehive building (the Executive Wing of Parliament Buildings in Wellington), and Premier House (the official residence of the Prime Minister in Wellington). For example, during the period of the first outbreak (P2), she had four videos in her Beehive office, and four in Premier House while only one video in another room in parliament buildings (see Table 2). Interestingly, among the other locations she chose for live chats, were her in moving vans (e.g., P3, P4, P6 and P7), or at airports (e.g., P6) – showing her on the move – and in her Auckland home, or her mum and dad's office (e.g., P6) – displaying her personal life. Thirdly, in terms of frequency of the live chat sessions, these occurred at least once a week in the pandemic (i.e., from P2 to P7), but at times could be as many as three videos per week (e.g., P6) which seemed to link with the election campaign in P6. Fourthly, normally there were Q&A sessions for JA to answer questions from the audience, but their frequency showed a relationship with pandemic events (see below).

Regarding the different event periods in Table 2, on the one hand, there were more long videos (over 10 minutes) than shorter videos (less than 10 minutes) when Alert Levels were

high. For example, in P2 (Level 4), there were eight long videos and one short video. Also, in P5 (Auckland at Level 3), there were four long videos but one short video. This was in contrast to periods of low Alert Levels, such as in P4 (Alert Level 1) when more short videos (seven) were conducted than long videos (three). On the other hand, JA had Q&A sessions in all live chats in the periods with high Alert Levels, for example in P2 when the nation was at Alert Level 4, in P3 when the alert level was just moving down from Alert Level 4, and in P5 when the Auckland was at Alert Level 3.

The findings show some interesting points regarding her intention of engaging with the audience, and her self-presentation.

On the one hand, JA tried to display a close relationship with the audience. This can be seen from her choice of evening time to have the live chats because this was usually a time when people might be home from work and spend more time looking at social media. New Zealanders would end a long day's work to join the family, chat with friends, or enjoy relaxation. Also, the choice of locations with her Auckland home, her mum and dad's office and Premier House reinforced this intimacy because people usually displayed their homes, and their home casual style (discussed in Chapter Six) to only friends and families. Therefore, JA was welcoming her followers into her domestic situation as if they were friends. She extended the video length and focused on Q&A sessions during the first outbreak of the pandemic as well as the resurgence period (P2, P3 and P5) presenting herself showing a caring attitude to the audience to help them process what was going on, which is an act normally in an intimate relationship when people experience difficulty in life. However, it was interesting that she did not conduct live chats on Friday as people are pressured to get work done by the end of the week and wish to escape and to start enjoying the weekend. This showed that JA (and her communication advisors) was aware of that and was managing the sessions where they could receive maximum benefit.

On the other hand, this close relationship benefited her by presenting herself as an approachable and diligent leader, who kept connecting with the audience at least once a week no matter how busy she was. Her diligence was presented in her showing up in late evenings

or in various locations – even in a moving van or at an airport – which implied she was busy with her government responsibilities and could not make other time for live chats. Her self-presentation in these many locations gave people insights into her busy life but also showed that she was willing to make time for them, again creating a more intimate relationship with her audience.

Table 2 JA's use of Facebook live chat sessions that coincided with specific Covid events

Period associated with event	Videos	Timing		Video Length	Location	Frequency of live chats	Frequency of Q&A
		Day of Week	Time[1]				
P1 – Pre–pandemic: 1 February 2020 –28 February 2020	5 February 2020 19 February 2020	Wednesday: 2	Morning:1 Afternoon:1	2 < 10 minutes	the Beehive:1 Waitangi:1	2 videos in 28 days average:1/2 weeks	no Q&A
P2 – First outbreak: 29 February 2020 –27 April 2020 Level 4	29 February 2020 25 March 2020 28 March 2020 29 March 2020 1 April 2020 5 April 2020 13 April 2020 16 April 2020 20 April 2020	Monday:2 Wednesday:2 Thursday:1 Saturday:2 Sunday:2	Morning:1 Afternoon:5 Evening:3	1 < 10 minutes 8 > 10 minutes	Premier House:4 the Beehive:4 room in parliament buildings:1	9 videos in 58 days Average:1/week	9 videos with Q&A Percentage: 100%
P3 – Lowering of alert levels: 28 April 2020 –8 June 2020 Level 3 – Level 1	4 May 2020 7 May 2020 11 May 2020 14 May 2020 14 May 2020 19 May 2020 27 May 2020 2 June 2020 8 June 2020	Monday:3 Tuesday:2 Wednesday:1 Thursday:3	Morning: 1 Afternoon:1 Evening:7	3 < 10 minutes 6 > 10 minutes	Premier House:5 the Beehive:2 room in parliament buildings:1 Van:1	9 videos in 41 days Average:2/week	7 videos with Q&A Percentage: 78%

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[1] Morning: 12:00am –11:59am; Afternoon: 12:00pm–17:59pm; Evening: 18:00pm–11:59pm

P4 – Elimination of active cases: 9 June 2020 –11 August 2020 Level 1	16 June 2020 24 June 2020 29 June 2020 5 July 2020 15 July 2020 20 July 2020 3 August 2020 8 August 2020 8 August 2020 11 August 2020	Monday:3 Tuesday:2 Wednesday:2 Saturday:2 Sunday 1	Morning: 3 Afternoon:1 Evening:7	7 < 10 minutes 3 > 10 minutes	Premier House:4 Van:2 the Beehive:1 Room in parliament buildings:1 NZTV:1 Auckland Town Hall:1	10 videos in 63 days Average: 1/week	5 videos with Q&A Percentage: 50%
P5 – Resurgence: 12 August 2020 –30 August 2020 Auckland in Level 3 The Rest in Level 2	12 August 2020 16 August 2020 18 August 2020 24 August 2020 30 August 2020	Monday:1 Tuesday:1 Wednesday:1 Sunday:2	Evening: 5	1 < 10 minutes 4 > 10 minutes	Premier House:4 the Beehive:1	5 videos in 18 days Average: 2/week	5 videos with Q&A Percentage: 100%

P6 – Alert levels downgraded: 1 September 2020 –7 October 2020 Auckland from Level 3 to Level 2 The rest from Level 2 to Level 1	3 September 2020 7 September 2020 9 September 2020 10 September 2020 16 September 2020 18 September 2020 21 September 2020 24 September 2020 25 September 2020 27 September 2020 28 September 2020 30 September 2020 2 October 2020 6 October 2020 7 October 2020	Monday:3 Tuesday:1 Wednesday:4 Thursday:3 Friday:3 Sunday:1	Morning: 3 Afternoon:3 Evening:9	15 < 10 minutes	Premier House:3 Airport:2 Van:3 MIT:1 Mum and Dad's office:1 Wigram:1 Cafe:1 Q Theatre:1 Christchurch:1 Home in Auckland:1	15 videos in 36 days Average: 3/week	5 videos with Q&A Percentage: 33%:
P7 2nd elimination 8 October 2020 – 31 October 2020 All in Level 1	10 October 2020 10 October 2020 12 October 2020 14 October 2020 21 October 2020 31 October 2020 31 October 2020	Monday:1 Wednesday:2 Saturday:4	Morning:1 Afternoon:4 Evening:2	7 < 10 minutes	Van:2 volunteer hub:2 TV show:1 Room in parliament buildings:1 the Beehive:1	7 videos in 23 days Average: 2/week	1 video with Q&A Percentage: 14%

Attention was also made to her increased activity in P6 which was also a time of the election campaign. So, regardless of the pandemic, JA was also very focused on trying to win the election again. Although JA did not conduct lengthy videos, the frequency of the sessions increased – perhaps as she tried to get more and more information out to the public in short bursts but more frequently. She also conducted videos on Fridays indicating that she was making the most of every opportunity as the pressure of the election increased and she had fewer videos including Q&As meaning perhaps that she was not willing to spend time engaging with the audience or when difficult questions could arise. This might be because in this period, the audience might be busy looking at other delegates so shorter videos would be quicker to get her messages across. She could focus on one topic each time so that it would be clearer for the audience to understand each point. Another reason might be the high frequency on a social media platform – even on Fridays – was better for JA to catch the attention of a wider audience, so more audience would see what she was talking about. Also, it would help her keep connected with her supporters, so in important events – e.g., rally, debate, or speech – they could come to support her or do some volunteer jobs. In this sense, JA was more using the relationship and her audience's preference of her image, which was established before the election, than presenting them. While this quantitative data presents some interesting patterns, it is the analysis of language and images in live chat videos in Chapter Six that provide further insights that help to answer the research questions about discourses of national identity and JA's self-presentation during Covid–19 through her Facebook live chat sessions.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the construction and visual layout of JA's Facebook home page to assess what the audience would encounter as a first entry point before proceeding to watch live chat sessions during the pandemic. I wanted to assess the ways in which JA performed in terms of her initial appearance and presentation on her Facebook page as Prime Minister of New Zealand, as the MP for Mt Albert electorate, as leader of her party – all at the time of the Covid–19 pandemic which also coincided with the general election. My findings showed that her signalling of national identity was initially quite subtle on the home page – mostly

through her banner photograph – and its transition just prior to the election emphasised a great deal more her party affiliation particularly with the visuals used and the reinforcement of the colour red of her party. It is worth noting here that as a busy Prime Minister it is likely that she had staff who constructed and monitored any changes on her Facebook page – though she would likely have given approval to what was done. But this was also an indication that her familiarity with the use of Facebook was still emerging and that it was the live chat sessions on Facebook where she was really able to 'perform' for the nation.

My next analysis involved an investigation into some quantitative data of Facebook Live videos to indicate the context for my intended linguistic and visual analysis of the live chat sessions. This included looking at the frequency with which these sessions were held, the day and time they were run, the locations where they were held, video length, and the frequency of Q&A sessions in different periods. The findings indicated a general pattern for Ardern's live activities – evening time, no Friday, anyplace, more than once a week, and with Q&A – and an impact from the pandemic (and the election) on JA's live activities. It also suggested JA's intention of presenting her identity as an approachable and diligent government leader who enjoyed a close relationship with her audience. However, it appeared that instead of presenting herself and establishing the relationship, JA was using what she had established at the time of the election. While this chapter has helped to provide the context for the live chat sessions, in the next chapter I present findings of the linguistic and visual aspects of the sessions to identify and assess any discursive strategies relating to JA's use of appealing to the nationhood of New Zealanders as had been noted in the mainstream media.

Chapter Six Discourse Analysis of Jacinda Ardern's Facebook Live Sessions

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five's findings of JA's use of Facebook's social media platform to engage with New Zealanders during Covid-19 in 2020, indicated a seemingly blander way of home page presentation than might have been expected during the various alert levels for the Prime Minister, compared with a switch to a more dominant presence just prior to the election. I noted that elements of national identity were presented more in terms of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) mainly through the banner image representing her electorate of Mt Albert. Her visual self-representation as a leader changed closer to election time making her look stronger and more powerful through the use of the red colour of her party and her choice of banner photograph, showing her reactional narrative during electioneering with supporters behind her. However, as my analysis moved to focus on the live chat sessions on Facebook, it appeared that this was where she made a more concentrated effort to interface with New Zealanders about Covid-19, and where discourses of national identity were more obvious.

In this chapter, I present my findings from the meso and micro analysis of the discursive features in JA's direct verbal communication with her audience as well as the visual aspects of her live chats. I drew specifically on DHA's discursive strategies relating to identity construction, i.e., nomination and predication, to investigate the linguistic and visual features that served to construct national identity in terms of the audience of New Zealanders and on JA herself. These two discursive strategies that are used to name and identify the social actors, and to attribute qualities, traits and characteristics to them, helped me to answer the research questions of how JA attempted to unify the nation at this time and to position herself as the nation's leader. With regard to language use I pay attention to two linguistic features that stood out for me within the discursive strategies of nomination and predication: metaphors and the use of the deictic 'we' pronoun which will be discussed in detail. Both offer insights as to how JA connected with the nation through the sense of collective identity and in particular the naming of the "team of five million". To demonstrate the visual aspects of the live chats, I drew on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar structure of

composition, representational features, and interactive meaning which are also discussed in this findings chapter.

In the first section, I describe the visual aspects of the live chat sessions and how JA presented herself within the frame of the camera. I then go on to take a closer look at the discursive moves within the live chat sessions, focusing on the common patterns in which they were delivered. This is followed by the findings of my analysis of the discursive and linguistic features of the live chat sessions, based on my viewing of them and analysis of the live chat transcripts to illustrate JA's use of Facebook for self-presentation and also the inclusion of New Zealand's national identity. In the second section I go on to discuss more specifically the discursive strategies of nomination and predication in both JA's self-presentation and her construction of New Zealanders as a nation.

6.2 Visually Engaging with the audience

In the live chat sessions that I viewed in my dataset, JA is commonly framed close up within the portrait view of her mobile phone camera – that is, her head and top part of her torso as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Screenshot of JA's live session in the office of Premier House on 8 June 2020

She is usually smiling, her gaze offering the audience direct eye contact which creates a closer relationship between herself and the audience. Her dress altered from formal attire when in her workplace (e.g., black suit jacket, shirt/blouse) to a more informal look in her domestic life while live streaming from home (e.g., sweatshirt, robe). She also wore a range of earrings in both situations which were often long rather than studs – which seemed to suggest a more flamboyant side to her personality. Her range of appearances indicated her comfort in taking her audience back and forth between her personal spaces at work and at home – spaces that not many nation leaders do in such an

informal way.

Although the background in these live sessions enabled the location of the sessions to be relatively easy to distinguish through furniture or decor, JA would often tell the audience where she was – again showing her versatility and commitment to connecting with her viewers anywhere and at any time. To provide context she introduces the surroundings of her office indicating to the audience that this will become familiar to them as she will be live streaming from there at different times. Here she is inviting the audience into her personal workspace. Viewers would also become familiar with seeing these locations on repeated occasions. For example, in Figure 3, the white printer (on the left) and the bookshelf (on the right) showed she was sitting in front of her desk in the Premier House office as she once had introduced this position.

In the private locations of her study in Premier House and in her lounge in her Auckland home, JA appeared to be conducting her live sessions alone, seemingly filming herself with no other people present in the background behind the camera. Again, this sense of a 'private' chat increased a sense of intimacy with the audience and may have been a way to create trust which would be of great value to the Prime Minister particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic when she wished to encourage New Zealanders to comply with requirements.

At times however JA would be joined by others such as her partner, Clark Gayford, who once briefly entered the shot through a doorway behind her to bring her a cup of tea in their lounge before disappearing again. It is not known whether there was anyone else in the room when she filmed her FB Live sessions, or whether such incidents of being brought a cup of tea are 'staged' or not. Never-the-less, this conveyed a sense of domesticity, stability of family life and a nod to the role reversal compared with more conventional, marital partnerships whereby women traditionally took on more responsibilities when it came to child-rearing and housekeeping.   This, I suggest, created a much greater sense of JA's roundness and capability as an elite leader, partner and mother.

Figure 4 Screenshot of JA's live session in a moving van with colleagues behind on 27 September 2020

In her live streaming from other public locations, such as being a passenger in a parliamentary van or in an airport, other people were present whether colleagues or passersby in the background. In Figure 4 for example, JA turns attention to her colleague in the bus travelling from Dunedin to Invercargill, who she introduced as "Andrew who works with me" and who had "lived in every city in New Zealand". She said it in a way that she was introducing a new friend to her audience. By doing so, JA also implied strong cohesion within the Labour Party, which would enable the audience to feel confident in their team. Telling the audience he had lived in many places around New Zealand suggests that he would be familiar with and understand New Zealanders' lifestyles in many different locations.

Figure 5 Screenshot of live session hosted by JA and the Minister of Health on the topic of Covid-19 on 29 February 2020

In some specific cases, particularly during important events such as New Zealand reporting its first Covid-19 case, she would invite colleagues in charge to join her in the live sessions to help provide information. In Figure 5, for example, the Minister of Health, David Clark, joins her on 29 February just after they visited the team of Healthline to talk about the government response to the first confirmed case, giving reassurance to the audience on New Zealand's health system and strict protocols (note that the words in the posters behind JA and the Minister appear backward because the camera records a mirror image for the audience.)

The visual aspect of these sessions indicates that these are not professionally produced videos,

but the personal communications of the Prime Minister. That is, there is no interference by others. The intimacy that is created through the informality whether in her workplace, travelling or in domestic situations, enables trust to be built with her audience which is the desired effect that a politician wishes to achieve in order to regulate the population's behaviour, particularly in this time of crisis and when a general election is forthcoming. While visually there were only a few instances of signs that directly referenced the nation (these will be discussed later), it appeared that JA was more likely to apply discourses of national identity in her verbal language use, which I turn to next.

6.3 Discursive moves of the live chat sessions

While a detailed description of all the chat sessions is beyond the scope of this thesis, I examined the process which they generally followed which included six moves: greeting; introducing the sessions; updating information; answering questions (Q&A); signalling the end of the sessions, and; saying goodbye.

(i)   Greeting the audience

JA regularly started off by greeting her audience which set the tone for the Live chat session.

Example 1:

> Good morning, everyone. It's occurred to me – I've been told that post cab press conference, which I usually do is a Facebook Live, at least broadcast on my Facebook page, may have had some technical glitches, which means that you might not have got the update from post cabinet. So instead of doing it down here [turns the camera to show the background of her desk], I'm now doing a little update from my office which you will probably see videos taken from here from right here at the desk from time to time.   (19 February 2020)

Example 2:

> Evening, everyone, thought that I would jump online quickly and just check in with everyone, really as we all prepare to hunker down for a few weeks. Now many of you, of course, will have got the message from Civil Defence Systems this evening, the blast of the horn on your phone, and in some messages that we're really keen for everyone to stick to as we go through the next several weeks at home, as we all join together in the fight against Covid-19.   (25 March 2020)

Example 3:

> Kia ora everyone. I'm here in the Beehive. So, the reason that I'm coming to you from here is because a few hours ago I came from the behind the Theater downstairs, that place you see on television, to stand with the Director General of Health as we shared the very sad news that we have lost, now, our first New Zealander to Covid-19. I know that the entire nation will be thinking of their family right now and wanting to respect their privacy. (29 March 2020)

In all of these examples, JA addresses the audience inclusively referring to them as 'everyone'. While this suggests that there might be a lot of people who were watching the session (and thus inferring her popularity), this term is inclusive and does not differentiate between groups relating to ethnicity, religion, gender or nationality – showing that she welcomes all people to be part of her session. In example three she uses a te reo Māori greeting from the language of the indigenous Māori people in New Zealand. Kia Ora, which translates as "hello! cheers! best wishes!" according to the Māori Dictionary (Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary, 2021) is an informal greeting familiar to most New Zealanders regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, but at the same time it acknowledges Māori as an important part of New Zealand's bicultural status and more recent moves to include Māori words in everyday talk.

This chatty approach that set a welcoming tone, supports the idea that JA was giving her personal time to engage with her followers on Facebook and constructed herself as both an accessible politician and a caring person.

(ii)   Introducing the topic

While some of the live chat sessions had been advertised earlier as to what would be discussed by offering preview headlines such as "Very quick update on the week so far – from the Beehive!" or "A quick update on today's cases, and the week ahead!", JA would always introduce the topic in her opening words and explain the purpose of the live stream. This immediately drew the audience in while she went on to explain the purpose of her live stream which ranged across different topics as can be seen in the following examples. In example one above JA appears to apologise for the technical glitches of the coverage of her press conference through Facebook earlier, so wants to take the time from the privacy of her office

to tell the audience again about what was said after her Cabinet meeting. In contrast to example two above, JA takes a more serious approach to tell the audience that the topic is about the civil defence mobile phone alert system that most of the nation will have received. She refers to the alert metaphorically as "the blast of the horn on your phone", which informs people individually about going into lockdown. As this is a new experience for many people to receive these piercing alerts by mobile phone, it appears that she wishes to make sure that they are not fearful and understand what the requirements are. In the third example, JA is providing a narrative about how she has just delivered bad news at a press conference in the Beehive, standing alongside the Director General of Health, about the first Covid-19 death in New Zealand. It seems she has come to tell her audience behind the scenes in a more intimate and empathetic way about what has happened and acknowledging the family of the deceased person. So, while each of the reasons for the live sessions is different, JA's interaction is on a more personal level than one would see through television and in the news. In some ways she can be seen to be treating the audience of New Zealanders on her Facebook chats as if they were family.

(iii)   Updating information

JA's sessions applied many declarative statements to information on the topic that she had introduced. On occasions she repeated information that had already been delivered through the more traditional means of the broadcast daily press conferences. Her determination to not only reinforce the seriousness about what was happening, but also remind them of the details can be seen in these two examples:

> So you might have seen the update on numbers again today, but I thought I'd just repeat them for all of you. We now have officially 514 people who have Covid-19 in New Zealand. (29 March 2020)

> Just as a quick refresher, we have border controls at the moment. So, if anyone has been in mainland China in the last previous fourteen days, then at present, you're not able to come into New Zealand unless of course you're a permanent resident here or a citizen. (19 February 2020)

In both examples, JA had shown her message was related to the audience by using the deictic

'we' to suggest that she is talking on behalf of the nation. Firstly she restates the latest tally of Covid cases in the country "we now have officially…" and in the second example she reminds that nation that "we have border controls" and therefore anyone who is not a New Zealander, cannot come into the country. She alludes to the nation of New Zealand and the need to protect from 'others' who are not New Zealanders who may try to enter through the borders. In this sense she is indicating a national identity by those who belong and who will be protected.

(iv)   Q&A

While the audience was unable to verbally ask questions, they were able to upload them as part of the chat function on the live stream videos to which JA would respond after repeating the question as in this example:

> Penny, you've asked you've got four children. Can you walk with all of them? Or should you just take two at a time?
> You can walk with the people that you will be with for the next month. For the people that you're living with. You can walk with them. They're your - the people that will be in your life consistently over this period of time. And you can walk with them. But when you're walking, you pass by someone, keep your distance, keep two metres between everyone. (25 March 2020)

Here we can see that JA names the person (Penny) and addresses her directly using the pronoun 'you'. However, the information she is giving will be useful to the wider audience as she explains how Penny might deal with social distancing requirements when she has four children in her 'bubble'. She wishes to reassure Penny, but also advises of her need to remain distant from other people.

In one instance JA appeared to be bombarded with questions and apologized to her viewers that she was having difficulty keeping up. However, she then answered them collectively rather than directing her response to individuals:

> Sorry, if I'm missing some of your questions they are coming through quite quickly.
> Some were asking about people in Australia and help over there.
> At the moment, if you are a New Zealander employed in an Australian business who's eligible for support, then you're not excluded from that support being passed on to

you. (25 March 2020)

Here she references New Zealanders living in Australia and the income support they might receive during the Covid-19 restrictions. Again, she is reassuring those people who are identified as New Zealanders that the government will look after them.

(v)   Signalling the end of the session

When wishing to wrap up her live chat sessions, JA signaled the end of her chat sessions offering various reasons to exit the conversation rather than bringing them abruptly to an end.

Example:

> But for now, I'm gonna need to go because I need to do a phone …that they're probably waiting for me to call in the country show and a few others.
> So, look, … next time maybe I'll give you a bit of a loop around the office so you can see a bit more than just the spectrum, which isn't particularly exciting. … next time, maybe I'll give you a little walk through. (19 February 2020)

In this example, JA indicated her hectic life, showing she had to participate in another seemingly important call with other world leaders. While she conveys this sense of urgency, it also suggests however, that in her caring way she had taken the time to connect with her nation to make sure they were abreast with what was happening during Covid-19. Again, this personable inclusive approach no doubt gives supporters a feeling of intimacy and trust with a politician which would not necessarily be common behaviour with other politicians of elite status around the world. Particularly not a Prime Minister or President. It is interesting that her informality even extends to JA promising to give the viewers a quick tour and "walk through" of her office "next time maybe". Not only did this again make people feel that they were welcomed in her personal space (video tours are something families or friends often do when travelling or living apart), but it also enables signs of New Zealand national identity to be included (the national flag in the left corner of the background).

(vi)   Saying goodbye

At the end of each session, JA said goodbye to the audience, expressing her wishes, and made

promises for keeping in touch.

Example 1:

> But till then, hope everyone has a very, very happy Wednesday. And I'll touch base with you again very, very soon. Have a great day. (19 February 2020)

Example 2:

> Okay, I'm staying in touch, so you'll be seeing me lots and lots. I'll try and answer as many of your questions as I can. If you have any others, pop them here. And I'll try and pick them up in the next time that I jump online for a Facebook live. (25 March 2020)

Example 3:

> So do take very good care of yourselves. Otherwise, I'll be back online soon to share with you the latest updates on information. But till then, thanks everyone for tuning in. Take care. (29 March 2020)

This very caring, empathetic language emphasizing the need for happiness and looking after ourselves is reinforced through modal constructions repeating words such as "very" (very, very happy Wednesday" and "very, very soon"). The promise that she will talk to the nation ("staying in touch", "touch base" and "back online soon") again reinforces her commitment to her people to guide them through the pandemic. Her direct address maintains her intimacy and connection and prompts people to return to view her future live sessions so that they can be personally updated by her.

The identification of these discursive moves within the live chat sessions serve to show in particular JA's self-presentation as a caring leader who is informed and wants to ensure the nation 'understands'. There is some indication here as well that she feels some people might be incapable of understanding what is going on or have a fear about the pandemic – which constructs New Zealanders as being needy and requiring government guidance and control. A more in-depth investigation of the nomination and predication discursive strategies by JA in her self-representation and construction of New Zealanders is therefore called for and

discussed in the next two sections of this chapter.

6.4 Constructing the nation

In this section, I specifically look at the discourses of national identity that were applied by JA in constructing New Zealanders in her live chat sessions through nomination and predication. I first present the labels used, followed by examples from the transcripts and the discussion of the qualities, traits or characteristics that might be suggested as a result.

(i) New Zealanders

This term of course defines people who have been born or are citizens of New Zealand and was the most commonly used term in the live chats. This is a formal description of people who belong to the country and, in terms of being able to re-enter from abroad, it gives them a legal status to do so as seen in this example:

> But one thing to keep in mind is that these are returning New Zealanders. They have a right to live and be in New Zealand and the right to come home. (29 June 2020)

The notion that New Zealanders have rights reinforces the government's commitment to allowing them to return. But interestingly the label 'New Zealanders' was also used for a different effect in the live chat, particularly when the general election was approaching:

> If you haven't voted yet - and you may have because hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders have already voted - if you have not voted yet, we have even more voting booths that are open today. (10 October 2020)

By categorizing the audience into "New Zealanders", JA was asking people to take the same action that the majority of the others had done.

(ii) Citizens

The term citizens too is indicative of New Zealanders' rights to be in their legally designated country whether they were born here or received citizenship at a later date. It is an inclusive term when it comes to New Zealand national identity, particularly since the country has become more multicultural over time. Although there have been some criticisms as to which

immigrants it accepts over others when it comes to citizenship (RNZ News, 2019), JA's use of the term citizens reflects her intention to include all in the time of the pandemic. She stated:

> I think it's important to make that point because citizens have always, regardless of where they have been, have always been able to come home. And we need to make sure that our citizens are able to return to New Zealand. (29 February 2020)

In this example, JA again shows her commitment to ensuring those New Zealand citizens who legally belong to New Zealand will be looked after.

(iii) The 'nation'

JA also referred to the people in New Zealand with the label 'nation'. This is a collective noun that, like 'citizens', creates a sense of belonging and connection to the country of New Zealand. In this example we can see that there is predication in showing that the people in New Zealand possess the qualities of empathy and caring for one another as constructed by JA:

> I know that the entire nation will be thinking of their family right now and wanting to respect their privacy. But we have shared just a little bit of information that the person who has sadly passed away was on the West Coast and did have some significant other health issues. (29 March 2020)

JA suggests that the entire nation will be concerned for the family of the first person who died from Covid-19. It built a sense of connection among members of the nation in the sense that this can be "imagined" (Anderson, 2016), relating them to the individual as well as to each other, giving people a sense that they shared the same feeling and thought in the same way. This was also a technique to try and get people not to criticize the person who got the virus or contact the family who needed to grieve privately.

(iv) the pronoun 'we'

JA also adopted the deictic 'we' to address the nation.

> We all have to focus on doing everything we can for this period – that we're in Alert Level Four – to be as successful as possible...The better we do, the more likely that we can get out in the time frames that we'd like. (5 April 2020)

In this example, while JA indicated the meaning of "sameness" by constructing a common present ("in Alert Level Four"), and a common future ("get out"), she highlighted the need to unify in her construction of a common will ("the time frames that we'd like") and a common mission ("focus on doing everything"). This unifying feature was also reflected in her predication strategies displayed in the next section. As Wodak et al. (1999) suggest, the deictic 'we' could indicate a relationship between the speaker and the audience. In this case, it also served to connect JA with her audience, making the audience feel that JA was the one who reinforced a collective identity under her leadership.

(v) "Kiwi"

The label "Kiwi" is a te reo Māori word for the unique kiwi bird in New Zealand and later was used by New Zealanders to refer to themselves, particularly the soldiers that fought in the two World Wars alongside allies of the British and the Australians (McCrone, 2017). The image of the kiwi bird appeared on military badges and was used by cartoonists to symbolise New Zealand's army in the First World War, and in the Second World War "Kiwis" became a nickname for New Zealand soldiers by foreign people (Phillips, 2007). JA used this reference to talk to the audience as a term of endearment, particularly those who were returning to New Zealand as in this example in one of her live chat sessions:

> What we ask of everyone, regardless of your reason for coming in or regardless of the permission you've been given, everyone has to quarantine whether you're a Kiwi or whether you are someone who's received an economic exception to come in season. (2 June 2020).

In this case she is using the term 'Kiwi' to distinguish people from those who are not New Zealanders when it comes to returning home from New Zealand. Just like the Kiwi soldiers during the war, these 'Kiwis' were welcomed.

(vi) The "team of five million" metaphor

This metaphor seemed to be a unique reference to the population of New Zealand at the time of the Covid-19 crisis and was an attempt to unite the nation in fighting the virus. It was repeatedly used in the government media conferences and by the media and JA in particular.

However, the nomination label and the predication that emerges from the metaphor are interesting to look at more closely.

> So, to the team of five million, thank you so much for everyone working so hard. Just supporting the plan again, as you did the first time. (12 August 2020)

The "five million" referred to the population of New Zealand in 2020 (Stats NZ, 2020 May). The metaphor served to transform New Zealanders into a "team" rather like a sports team or a large group of people who work together to achieve a goal. The qualities of this team are that they are diligent emphasises through material verb processes such as "working hard" and mental verb processes where they are unified in "supporting the plan". JA thanks them for behaving this way. This sense of the team is also supported by other comments JA made when she talked about the vast majority of people "following the rules around lockdown" (1 April 2020), and "staying at home, breaking that chain of transmission, making sure that we help save lives together" (29 March 2020).

In praising the nation through nomination and predication strategies, JA would hope to have greater compliance with the pandemic rules. But of course, her own image and impression management was important to her, especially when a general election was not far away. In the next section, I present findings on JA's self-presentation, and how she related herself to the audience by adopting a unified national identity to promote her own political image.

6.5 JA's self-presentation

As indicated in the findings in the previous section, JA constructed New Zealanders in her Facebook Live sessions as having positive qualities when it came to being resilient about the Covid-19 pandemic – though she also constructed them as perhaps being anxious and fearful about the situation and seemingly needing her guidance. Her language use therefore indicated that she was serving a role to reassure people that they could work together as a nation ("a team of five million") to fight back and eliminate the virus. At the same time this led to her own positive self-representation not only as someone they could trust in being directed to follow the rules, but also perhaps indirectly reinforced her as someone they should vote for in the forthcoming general election because of these qualities which I discuss here.

(i) A capable and humble government leader

In terms of nomination, JA had used the deictic 'we' not only in an inclusive meaning giving her a connection to the audience, she also used it in an exclusive way to refer to herself and the New Zealand Government. For example:

> But we just ask people to behave differently, to be vigilant, to play it safe, and (to) create a new normal without constantly building on hand hygiene and distancing, and so on. (7 May 2020)

The 'we' was in a demanding position ("ask") towards "people". Here she displayed her own collective identity with the members of her government indicating the support that she had from them in handling the crisis.

JA presented herself as a capable leader by positively labelling 'we' - the government - positively. For example:

> Hopefully that covers off some of your frequently asked questions on self-isolation while on Alert Level 4. I know there are lots of other questions. We're monitoring what you're asking. (1 April 2020)

> We have been quick to move. We have been agile. And we have been responsive. (29 June 2020)

> So, we would not be making this decision if we did not believe it to be safe. (11 May 2020)

JA displayed the positive qualities of herself and the government by referencing various behaviours and attitudes in using this collective 'we'. These included "monitoring" the audience's questions, being "quick to move", being "agile" and "responsive", which all showing positive qualities such as being responsible and capable. The conditional structure "not...if" implied a cautious attitude of the government. As the leader of the government, its positive image benefits JA as a strong and capable leader who led the government through the time of crisis while retaining those positive features.

JA also highlighted the government's quality of loyalty to the people, again using pronouns "we" and "our".

So we need to look after them, and then we're gonna look after all of you by steering clear where we check that we are OK. (25 March 2020)

Our focus on having a strategy which says we go hard and we go early was focused on preserving and looking after new Zealanders' health. (13 April 2020)

We'll give time. We won't do anything immediate. We don't move straight away. We'll give time so people can prepare for any future move. (4 May 2020)

The expressions such as "look after" which is repeated again in "preserving and looking after" suggest that New Zealanders are receiving the utmost care from the government. The fact that JA stresses that she and her government have a "strategy" indicates the effort that is being put into the role of looking after everyone, is further reinforced by the fact that they are not being forceful but rather they "give time" for them to adjust to the new conditions.

(ii) An individual and a parent

JA also refers to herself as an individual ("I") who, although the Prime Minister of New Zealand, must also be compliant along with the rest of the nation – though interestingly in this example her statement is not correct grammatically when it comes to her use of pronouns 'we' and 'I', though it still gets the message across:

we're also asking you and I to make sure that when we're out and about, we're not socializing with more than 10 people. (11 May 2020)

JA also constructs herself as a parent caring for a young child but acknowledging the difficulties that are involved when trying to keep social distance at a playground.

I know that is so hard for parents. I'm certainly a parent and has used a lot of playgrounds around the country. (25 March 2020)

In this example JA shows empathy with other parents, and in using this collective noun "parent" and indicating her attendance at playgrounds presumably with her own daughter, she demonstrates that she has multiple roles in society other than just being Prime Minister.

This integration of the roles of both politician and parent also came through in other ways as this set of screenshots shows:

Figure 6 Screenshots of JA's live chats on 1 April 2020, displaying the buzzy bee toy to the audience

Here JA is responding to a comment posted on the Facebook Live chat from Sarah about a toy that she noticed in the background of her office. JA remarks:

> Last question, Sarah. Sarah just asked me about this…this Buzzy Bee that's sitting behind me. Neve, when she comes in - which hasn't been obviously for this period - so when she used to come into the office would come and play with this. And this is a random fact. This was given to me by Hillary Clinton when she came to New Zealand, which is lovely that she knew that this was something that was so important in the New Zealand culture that she gave it to Neve. So it was a lovely gift. (1 April 2020)

This buzzy bee toy is a piece of Kiwiana, that is a nostalgic icon that many New Zealanders grew up with as children because it originated in this country (100% Pure New Zealand, n.d.). JA's parenting role is made clear when she describes her young daughter Neve having played within her office previously. But then JA goes on to say that a US politician gave it to her as a present for Neve when she visited. Hilary Clinton too is a progressive politician and mother and such a demonstration of ability and power transfers also to JA as part of her self-presentation. The toy of course is another example of banal nationalism – an icon that

unites the country for those who are familiar with its history, and in some ways the reference to this piece of Kiwiana and the story behind it is a welcome light relief following the seriousness of the pandemic discourse.

Another way in which JA expressed her individuality was when she confessed that she did a 'dance' on her own when she heard the news of that New Zealand no longer had active community cases.

> I confess that when I heard that information, I did do – I don't even know if I could describe it as a dance [laughs out]. Some semi-coordinated movement around the lounge, which Neve couldn't quite understand. So just started dancing yourself, which was lovely. (8 June 2020)

Expressing her joy through dance, but also inviting the audience to her space in confessing what she did reinforces JA's human side.

Her repeated demonstration of empathy featured constantly throughout her live chats as a way to connect with people.

> I know how hard that is, but one of the things we've seen overseas is the heaping outbreaks from funerals, their events where you want to be physically close to one another. You want to support one another. You want to help one another as you grieve in some way that at a wedding you want to celebrate together. (11 May 2020)

JA had expressed her empathy to the audience by suggesting her own experience through words such as "I know" and giving details of knowing what people "want" based on her own experience. This feature of empathy seems to be much easier for a female politician to demonstrate more frequently than a male politician might do because they might be seen to be weak – though this is based on people's own gender judgments.

(iii) Multiple roles in the election campaign

During the election campaign, JA showed the audience an integrated identity of herself as both a politician and an individual. This was specifically highlighted in the voting period. One day before voting opened, she displayed the envelope New Zealanders could use for postal voting:

> I thought I jump online very quickly to just give a little prompt, a little reminder that you will be seeing envelopes like this coming through your letterbox [displays the envelope] ...And the reason I thought I would show you my opened envelope is because polling opens tomorrow, which in some ways I know will feel like it's come around very quick. And in otherwise, I'm sure this equally feels like the longest election campaign we've ever experienced. (2 October 2020)

This "reminder" indicated her role as a candidate as well as a citizen who had the right to vote. She then cast light on her partner Clarke Gayford, talking about him trying to steal the chocolate from her but she had "no shame" to speak out. It seemed to be a correspondence to her next "awkward" but "yes" statement of voting for herself (the second example below), which she felt "no shame" too.

> Clarke has been very opportunistic and just using the fact that I'm doing a Facebook Live to steal my chocolate [displays the chocolate]. Because he feels like I won't raise that because I'm on a Facebook Live. But I have no shame in raising that he's just stolen my chocolate right from next to me. (2 October 2020)

> I have been asked the question, and I can confirm that I will be voting for myself, as awkward as that is, but yes. (2 October 2020)

While this analysis has revealed JA's bold and confident personality, it also placed her in the family role, showing the support she had received from her family members, presenting the audience a real-life version of herself in multiple roles as a leader of the nation, government politician, an individual, a mother, and a partner. No doubt the many roles appeared to many different people and groups within the nation. As Nilsson (2012) points out, politicians tend to post on social media in a manner of "blurred borders" which incorporates their personal experience and private life into professional matters so as to create a desirable image for the public (p. 256).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from meso and micro linguistic analysis based on visuals and verbal language of JA's live chats during the pandemic. It forms key observations including the ways in which JA tried to develop a more intimate relationship with her audience on Facebook live – but where discourses of national identity were more likely to be

in the words that she uttered rather than in the visuals through the camera. JA's caring and use of rather simplistic language constructed New Zealanders – or at least her target audience – as people who were scared about the pandemic and needed a friend, or motherly-type person to explain to them what was going on and what they needed to do. Her discourse was reassuring but also included elements of national identity to persuade the nation to work together and follow rules during the time of the pandemic, such as the metaphor "team of five million". However it is also noted that JA's self-presentation – that is impression management of Goffman (1959) – and connection with the audience as part of their national identity might have a beneficial effect when it came to voting her in for the next election – after all, JA herself admitted that the general election of 2020 would be a Covid-election where people were more concerned about how the government could get them through this crisis, rather than focusing on other policies (Manch, 2020).

Chapter Seven Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the conclusion of this thesis where I first review its process, and how the design of the study was used to answer the research question. I summarise and discuss the findings and reflect on the observations I have made as a result. I then outline the contributions and limitations of my research and conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

7.2 Reviewing the Thesis

This thesis aimed to answer three research questions about politicians' increasing use of social media. These questions specifically related to New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who had gained a great deal of popularity since coming to power in 2017, and who I noticed engaged with New Zealanders particularly in terms of their national identity during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, which I raised in Chapter One. My awareness of JA's use of the social media platform, Facebook, and in particular her use of the live chat sessions, led me to ask:

1. In what ways did Prime Minister Ardern use her Facebook Live to engage with New Zealanders during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2. How did Prime Minister Ardern appeal to New Zealanders' sense of national identity as a tactic for compliance during Covid-19?

3. In what ways did Prime Minister Ardern's use of Facebook Live affect her self-presentation?

Chapter Two and Chapter Three provided the theoretical background of this thesis. I reviewed existing scholarship on national identity, identity formation – with attention to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management, social media and political communication, to form an understanding of the related theories that would support an

investigation of JA, her use of social media, her performance in front of the nation and related discourses of national identity to bind the nation in dealing with the pandemic. With little scholarly literature about politicians and their use of social media during the pandemic available, I identified the gaps in the research that my study could address.

In the design of my study which I articulated in Chapter Four, I elected to position this thesis within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) which offers a combination of the critical analysis of discourse within a social, political and cultural context. Analytical tools from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and Visual Grammar of Social Semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) were drawn on to examine the identity construction of JA (that is, her self-presentation) as well as the construction of New Zealanders. My data selection was drawn from Facebook in the period between 1 February 2020 and 31 October 2020 as this covered the initial Covid-19 lockdown requirements and ended with JA's successful re-election as Prime Minister. The data I looked at included first JA's home page as the first entry point that viewers would encounter and I looked at the layout of the page within the Facebook template, how JA presented herself in her profile photo and other information and any evidence of national identity discourse. The second set of data I examined were JA's Facebook Live chat sessions and I collected quantitative data of 57 archived videos to understand aspects such as their frequency, timing, video length, and locations. I then conducted a closer visual and linguistic analysis of those videos, particularly paying attention to those related to pandemic events such as lockdowns, changes in alert levels, New Zealand's first Covid death, etc.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six presented the findings of the analysis of this study, giving details on the results of language and image of JA's Facebook home page as the point of entry for viewers, and more specifically on her live chat sessions that could be accessed there. The main findings were:

1. The analysis of JA's Facebook home page showed a relatively soft approach in her presentation where she appeared in white, had no profile description and the only nod to national identity was her cover photo of the historic panels in a building in her electorate. No

evidence of reference to Covid-19 stood out. The transition of her home page however, just prior to the election showed a more concerted effort to connect her to the Labour party – where she wore a bright red jacket to match the party colour in her profile picture, and her cover photo now included people – her in the foreground at a podium presenting at a meeting with a large number of supporters behind her. Again, elements of national identity were missing, and, although there is no reference to Covid-19, the photo still positions her as a strong leader and perhaps someone who can lead the nation through the pandemic.

2. JA used her Facebook Live chats to develop a more intimate relationship with her audience, behaving more informally and treating the audience at times as her friends rather than as just as an 'audience'.

3. Visual aspects of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) were found to exist in small ways such as the location of the NZ parliament (the Beehive) which would appear as part of JA's surroundings in the live chats, or the symbols within the Mt Albert panels on JA's Facebook home page. Though there were some more obvious expressions of New Zealand nostalgia such as the Kiwiana of the buzzy bee toy in JA's live chat.

4. Discourses of national identity were more likely to be in the words that JA uttered than in the visuals through the camera, though there was some evidence of banal nationalism such as the location of the Beehive. The language that she used was reassuring but also included elements of national identity to persuade the nation to work together and follow rules during the time of the pandemic, such as the metaphor "team of five million" and the deictic pronoun 'we'.

5. JA's caring and use of rather simplistic language constructed New Zealanders – or at least her target audience – as people who were scared about the pandemic and needed a friend, or motherly-type person to explain to them what was going on and what they needed to do.

6. JA's self-presentation showed that she had multiple, intersecting roles from a mother to a politician.

7. JA's connection with the audience on Facebook most likely had a positive effect when it came to garnering votes for her in the next election and her discourse in her Facebook live chats and in the images on her Facebook home page did show a shift to encourage this.

At this point that in this chapter I will turn to the discussion of the findings and the key observations that emerged in terms of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management, Anderson's (2016) "imagined" nation, Billig's banal nationalism (1995), and scholars' view on the power relations on social media platforms (Castells, 2007; Baym 2015) which were demonstrated in the literature review.

7.3 Key observations

A number of observations can be made from my analysis. Based on the principles of Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), I discuss my findings regarding ideology and power. Ideology refers to "a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 8) that feature in everyday life and which some people may not be aware of (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Fairclough (2003) says ideologies serve to establish and maintain relations of power, domination and exploitation and can be formed through interacting and conveyed by identities. JA's discursive practices revealed some interesting points in this research when it came to ideologies around maintaining order and social cohesiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Firstly, as JA was the only authority in her live chats, what she stated was overwhelming. She had access to information that was not fully displayed to the audience. JA appeared to recognize the anxiety and fear of some New Zealanders. This was achieved by targeting those who were most fearful and by repeatedly telling them that JA and the government were making efforts to "look after" them. During the lockdown, it appeared that all New Zealanders were concerned about the impact of the pandemic on varying levels. This situation which no one had experienced before created anxiety and fear in the nation – and some people felt this more than others. JA sought to disseminate the idea that she and her government were making extra efforts in their response to the pandemic – but her focus perhaps was on those who felt more vulnerable and required nurturing. JA recognized the

difficulties people had and with concern about potential rule-breakers – either intentional or unintentional. JA chose to engage with people on her Facebook page and through her live chat sessions to allay fears and to regulate behaviours. This performance by JA reflects Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management where there is also a focus on a person presenting the positive sides of themselves while avoiding any negative impressions.

Secondly, JA determined the way to release, or further explain information to the nation, which increased the positive impact of her own identity as the nation's leader. This then relates to the view of Castells (2007) that media channels can be used by political actors to influence people's beliefs and attitudes, and of Baym (2015) that the power structure existing in political communication remains the same as the top ends of a hierarchy (political actors) hold the power to decide what to say or not to say. JA's Facebook Live chats were an opportunity to present herself in a more maternal way, to explain in simplistic terms to a wide audience on a range of educational levels and understanding what was happening and to encourage compliance with the social distancing and lockdown rules that were instigated. One way to do this was to use informal, conversational language in her own personal spaces at work and at home that ensured an intimate relationship.

JA was able to use the social media platform of Facebook as a place where she could 'perform' to the nation of New Zealanders, gain their trust and establish confidence in herself as a leader (and one that should be re-elected), especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her elite position of power as Prime Minister enabled her to attract a faithful, but also 'needy' audience where they could engage with her by posting questions online for JA to answer. Though JA selected those questions she wished to answer.

Thirdly, JA and the government had the power to construct national identity through "the continuous reproduction and re-interpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compost the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements" (Smith, 2001, p. 18). The value of compliance was continually emphasised (JA's live chats as one of the channels). Symbols (e.g., "the team of five million") and rituals (e.g., follow rules, stay at home, social

distancing) were invented to display this new image of New Zealanders as fighters in the time of the pandemic, which can be a way to regulate and control people's behaviour. JA also incorporated and repeated discourses of national identity where New Zealanders could be encouraged to comply and fight the virus together. But this would also be interpreted as New Zealanders achieving better than other countries where cases of Covid-19 were escalating at a phenomenal rate. One tactic that she appeared to draw upon was to make her audience feel part of an imagined nation, connected through a common identity (Anderson, 2016). This was expressed through nomination strategies that categorized the shared identity of New Zealanders even though they came from many different backgrounds. Making people feel connected as a nation, with JA as the conduit, had benefits in maintaining order and compliance with government requirements during the Covid-19 lockdowns and with ongoing social distancing.

The fourth observation is that the findings have shown that JA was able to take advantage of what has become known as the "Jacindamania" or "the Jacinda effect" as explained in Chapter One which is further evidence of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of impression management in which performers – in this case JA – tried to influence the "the definition of the situation" (p. 2) and gain the trust and support of New Zealanders during the pandemic. This control of context led the audience to an understanding that JA's purpose was to give them confidence in her and her government's actions and decision making, provide them with feelings of security and being looked after. This could add a positive light to JA's self-presentation on Facebook, which could also be utilized for electioneering purposes and giving instructions as to how they could vote for her, such as making a postal vote.

7.4 Reflecting on the study – Contributions and Limitations

This study has made several contributions. Firstly, it provides new knowledge to the scholarly literature on politicians' use of social media which seems to be becoming an important tool for this elite group. Although past literature has examined the discursive practices adopted by politicians, most have investigated how politicians build self-image (Lee, 2013), describe opponents/disagree with issues (Sakki & Pettersson, 2016), and spread political ideologies

(Masroor et al., 2019). Limited scholarship has been devoted to examining politicians' discursive construction of national identity on social media platforms, focusing rather on either using it strategically for winning election campaigns (e.g., Gupta-Carlson, 2016; Kreis, 2017), or applying it in the process of national cohesion (Avedissian, 2016). None seems to have examined the discourses about national identity used by politicians on social media that have also led to enhancing their self-presentation in the context of crisis. This Critical Discourse Study contributed through its application of theories and analytical tools of the DHA and of Visual Grammar when it came to studying politicians' interface with the nation, appealing to their national identity to comply with public regulations, and impression management.

Secondly, this study contributes to the understanding of effective public communication to the current pandemic situation. Evidence has shown that a strong sense of national identity correlates with positive public health behaviours and support for public health policies (Van Bavel & Boggio, 2020). Combining this with the fact that around 53% of the world's population – 4.20 billion people – are social media users (Kemp, 2021a) and they were increasingly interested in following leading politicians' social media pages after the breakout of the pandemic (Rufai & Bunce, 2020) served as a good basis for study. Applying this in terms of New Zealand and its internationally popular Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, enabled me to demonstrate how she took discursive practices to alleviate negative emotions, influence people's knowledge on Covid-19, and guide them to follow regulations.

Thirdly, this research serves to offer a more critical understanding of the power behind the phenomenon of government leaders using uniting discourses on social media. The leader of a country has immense power when it comes to getting their nation to behave in a certain way. With the power that politicians yield in leading their country in times of crisis, it is important to gain a better awareness of not only how they use uniting discourses that draw on national identity, but how they use this approach through social media to strategically maintain their positions as leaders. From the Facebook home page to Facebook Live, this thesis displayed multimodal features of social media platforms and indicated the ways of controlling self-image both on the home page with still pictures and on live chats with moving images,

revealing the fact that the power imbalance that exists through politicians' performances on social media platforms can have a range of effects that serve them well.

7.4.1 Limitations

This study, while offering a number of contributions, also had its limitations.

Firstly, as a social practice, the study of language is closely related to the understanding of social context. There are non-verbal cues that can only be understood by members of society. I am an international student from China, who has only lived in New Zealand for one year. Although I can position myself as an outsider and perhaps be more objective in my research, my different cultural background, my understanding of political systems, and my English language ability can lead to a different understanding of the discourses in their context. I tried to overcome this by discussing some of my results with New Zealanders who I met during my time conducting this research.

Secondly, as Page et al. (2014) point out, transcription activities are biased because "the researcher's decisions about what features to transcribe and how they transcribe them have implications not only for how the data is presented, but also on what can be analysed at all" (p87). As the scope of my study had to be limited, I aimed to focus on aspects of the transcripts that would help to answer the research questions. I tried to avoid any bias in this respect, but it also enables me to offer suggestions for future research.

7.5 Conclusion - suggestions for future research

In terms of future studies, I turn first to suggest those that might further investigate national identity. The identities of nations are shaped by "state, political, institutional, media and everyday social practices, and the material and social conditions which emerge as their results, to which the individual is subjected" (Wodak et al, 1999, p. 29), and should be analysed within the specific national context (Wodak et al, 1999; Verdugo & Milne, 2016). The findings of this thesis, which are situated within the context of New Zealand and JA as the national leader, might prompt more critical analysis of the discourses of leaders of other

countries and their contexts, particularly when it comes to focusing on social media use for political purposes.

I also suggest that future studies could turn to look at the audience's comments on politician's social media platforms and especially live chats as conducted by JA. This could provide insights as to how audiences respond to politicians' performances online. As Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical model suggests, social interactions are not completed by the performance alone, and the audience plays a role in this process.

Other studies could continue to focus on Jacinda Ardern who continues to use social media to this day to engage with New Zealanders as the pandemic continues to rage. It would be interesting to assess whether her discourses of national identity have changed, or whether she continues to apply this in her social media engagement with the audience. At the time of writing this thesis, another lockdown has occurred and the words "team of five million" have resurfaced. The question is, at what point will the team tire of this as the effects of repeated lockdowns continue to take their toll?

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Appendices

Appendix 1 57 Live videos with dates and historical association with NZ Covid-19 alert levels

No.	Date	Alert levels	COVID-19 events in New Zealand
1	5 February 2020		
2	19 February 2020		
3	29 February 2020		The first Covid-19 case was reported in New Zealand on 28 February 2020.
4	25 March 2020	Level 3 → Level 4	At 11:59pm, New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4.
5	28 March 2020	Level 4	
6	29 March 2020	Level 4	The first Covid-19-related death was reported in New Zealand.
7	1 April 2020	Level 4	
8	5 April 2020	Level 4	
9	13 April 2020	Level 4	
10	16 April 2020	Level 4	
11	20 April 2020	Level 4	JA announced a 5-day extension of Alert Level 4.
12	4 May 2020	Level 3	No new case of Covid-19 was reported in NZ. (Note: New Zealand moved to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm on 27 April 2020.)
13	7 May 2020	Level 3	
14	11 May 2020	Level 3	JA outlined the plan to move to Alert Level 2.
15	14 May 2020	Level 2	New Zealand moved to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm on 13 May 2020.
16	14 May 2020	Level 2	
17	19 May 2020	Level 2	
18	27 May 2020	Level 2	
19	2 June 2020	Level 2	
20	8 June 2020	Level 2 → Level 1	There was no active case in New Zealand. New Zealand moved to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm.
21	16 June 2020	Level 1	
22	24 June 2020	Level 1	

23	29 June 2020	Level 1	
24	5 July 2020	Level 1	
25	15 July 2020	Level 1	
26	20 July 2020	Level 1	
27	3 August 2020	Level 1	
28	8 August 2020	Level 1	
29	8 August 2020	Level 1	
30	11 August 2020	Level 1	Four new cases of Covid-19 were recorded in the community.
31	12 August 2020	Auckland: Level 1 → Level 3 The rest: Level 1 → Level 2	Auckland moved to Alert Level 3 at noon while the rest of NZ moved to Alert Level 2.
32	16 August 2020	Auckland: Level 3 The rest: Level 2	On 14 August, JA announced a 12-day extension of Alert Level 3 for Auckland and Alert Level 2 for the rest of New Zealand.
33	18 August 2020	Auckland: Level 3 The rest: Level 2	
34	24 August 2020	Auckland: Level 3 The rest: Level 2	
35	30 August 2020	Auckland: Level 3 → Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	Auckland moved to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm with extra restrictions on travel and gatherings (which was called as Level 2.5) while the rest of New Zealand remained at Alert Level 2.
36	3 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	
37	7 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	
38	9 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	
39	10 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	
40	16 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	

41	18 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2	
42	21 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2.5 The rest: Level 2 → Level 1	Auckland remained at Alert Level 2.5. The rest of New Zealand moved to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm.
43	24 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	Auckland moved to Alert Level 2 (without extra restrictions on travel and gatherings) at 11:59pm on 23 September 2020.
44	25 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
45	27 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
46	28 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
47	30 September 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
48	2 October 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
49	6 October 2020	Auckland: Level 2 The rest: Level 1	
50	7 October 2020	Auckland: Level 2 → Level 1 The rest: Level 1	Auckland moved to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm.
51	10 October 2020	Level 1	
52	10 October 2020	Level 1	
53	12 October 2020	Level 1	
54	14 October 2020	Level 1	
55	21 October 2020	Level 1	(Note: the 2020 general election was held on 17 October 2020)
56	31 October 2020	Level 1	
57	31 October 2020	Level 1	

Appendix 2 Example of transcripts

DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2020

HEADING: Very quick update on the week so far - from the Beehive!

Good morning, everyone. It's occurred to me- I've been told that post cab press conference, which I usually do is a Facebook Live, at least broadcast on my Facebook page, may have had some technical glitches, which means that you might not have got the update from post cabinet. So instead of doing it down here [turns the camera to show the background of her desk], I'm now doing a little update from my office, which you will probably see videos taken from here from right here at the desk from time to time.

I'll give you a different view just to mix it up a little bit. Stand over here so you can see the the misty backdrop of a Wellington summer's day. I don't mean that in a disparaging way. I love Wellington. It's a beautiful city.

So on Monday a post cab, one of the post cabinet where I do a press conference in every Monday, I gave an update on where we were on coronavirus in particular.

We have had analysis from Treasury, as you would expect that the impact of coronavirus globally is going to take a toll in terms of economic impact. And you can already see of course China acknowledging that and some of the revisions that's been putting out. And that has a knock on a fix. So it's not just an impact because of what we're doing domestically, but also because of that global effect.

Just as a quick refresher, we have border controls at the moment. So if anyone has been in mainland China in the last previous fourteen days, then at present, you're not able to come into New Zealand unless of course you're a permanent resident here or a citizen. Now the reason for that is of course because then you're able, if you're someone who lives here, it's much easier for you to self-isolated at home and just make sure that you're well if you've been in mainland China. If you don't have a residence here, that suggested it's going to be harder for you to go into isolation - it means you're more likely to be someone who's come here for

tourism reasons, and very unlikely to want to spend two weeks sitting in a hotel. So that's why we've managed it in that way. We've done it of the back of advice from public health officials and evidence. That is the only criteria we're using for those decisions.

Now we know that it has an impact, particularly in our tourism market. So just start there: on Monday, we announced an $11 million package to support our tourism industry. A portion of that is going to the domestic promotion. And another portion majority is going towards promotion into other international markets, where a large portion of our tourists coming. We also have plans to build- to rebuild our tourism market in China when the time is right, when we're able to again- when travel starts again.

We're keeping a very close eye on what's going on in forestry. I expect, actually Wednesday today, a paper would be going to one of the cabinet committees on a plan around what we can do to support the forestry industry.

And we're keeping an eye on our exports and so on. Supply chains are but problematic at the moment. Obviously not all the work force is back and work in China, so that's causing a backlog for some of those exporters from New Zealand.

So that's a bit of an update on what we're doing so far.

We've also assisting to keep back some of the New Zealanders who are on a cruise ship recently, but they'll be quarantined. From our PRO, we had our last quarantined, which has gone very, very well.

[paragraph outlining the schedule for the next week]

But for now, I'm gonna need to go because I need to do a phone call (...) that they're probably waiting for me to call in the country show and a few others.

So look, [New Zealand flag appears in the left corner of the background.] next time maybe I'll give you a bit of a loop around the office so you can see a bit more than just the spectrum, which isn't particularly exciting. So next time, maybe I'll give you a little walk through. But

till then, hope everyone has a very, very happy Wednesday. And I'll touch base with you again very, very soon. Have a great day.

Appendix 3 Covid-19 timeline of key events in New Zealand

28 February 2020

- ➢ First COVID-19 case reported in New Zealand.

14 March 2020

- ➢ The Government announces anyone entering New Zealand must self-isolate for 14 days, except those arriving from the Pacific.

19 March 2020

- ➢ All indoor gatherings of more than 100 people are to be cancelled.
- ➢ Borders close to all but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.

21 March 2020

- ➢ The Government introduces the 4-tiered Alert Level system to help combat COVID-19. The Prime Minister announces that New Zealand is at Alert Level 2.

23 March 2020

- ➢ At 1:30pm the Prime Minister announces New Zealand has moved to Alert Level 3, effective immediately. In 48 hours, New Zealand will move to Alert Level 4.

25 March 2020

- ➢ At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 4, and the entire nation goes into self-isolation. A State of National Emergency is declared at 12:21pm.

29 March 2020

- ➢ New Zealand reports its first COVID-19-related death.

31 March 2020

➤ The State of National Emergency is extended at 9:27am. Further extensions are made at:

9:25am on 2 April 2020

12:21pm on 8 April 2020

12:21pm on 15 April 2020

12:21pm on 22 April 2020

12:21pm on 29 April 2020

12:21pm on 5 May 2020.

20 April 2020

➤ The Prime Minister announces New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 4 for an additional 5 days. New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 3 for 2 weeks, before the status is reviewed.

27 April 2020

➤ New Zealand moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.

4 May 2020

➤ No new cases of COVID-19 are reported in New Zealand.

11 May 2020

➤ The Prime Minister outlines the plan to move to Alert Level 2.

13 May 2020

➤ New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm. The State of National Emergency expires at 12:21pm.

8 June 2020

➢ The Ministry of Health reports that there are no more active cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand. At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

11 August 2020

➢ 4 new cases of COVID-19 are recorded in the community.

12 August 2020

➢ At 12 noon, Auckland region moves to Alert Level 3. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2.

14 August 2020

➢ The Prime Minister announces that Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3 and the rest of New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 2 for 12 more days.

30 August 2020

➢ Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm, with extra restrictions on travel and gatherings. The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

21 September 2020

➢ All regions except Auckland move to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm.

23 September 2020

➢ Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 without extra restrictions on travel and gatherings at 11:59pm.

7 October 2020

➢ Auckland moves to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1