

A Framing Analysis of New Zealand Mainstream Media's Textual Reports on the Matthew Hunt Case

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Abstract

This thesis delves into the intricate dynamics of the framing of media reports in New Zealand on gun violence in the case of Constable Matthew Hunt. The Christchurch Mosque attacks in 2019 caused New Zealand to be recognised as a country with gun law and violence issues. But despite several policy changes since then, police statistics continue to show a steady rise in gun crime in the community; therefore, the media continues to report on this social issue. The death of Constable Matthew Hunt further illustrated the crisis the country faced, which led to heated debates in the community and in the media about the government's existing strategies and policies, with many advocating for immediate change and resolutions such as tougher sentencing acts, arming the police, and special tactical squadrons. This study employs a quantitative approach by meticulously examining a sample of four news articles from three mainstream New Zealand news outlets to discern the prevalent news frames and sources. By drawing on framing theory and utilising the content analysis approach, this research compares the articles and investigates the variations and dominance of news frames and sources between the NZ Herald, RNZ and Stuff NZ articles. Preliminary findings indicate the dominance of the societal impact and political consequence frames in the sample, and within these two frames, a variation of frame valences were identified between the three outlets in the societal impact frame. A mixture of episodic and thematic frames were also examined and compared to emphasise the multifaceted nature of news framing. Sources in the sample reports showed a dominance of authoritative voices. It is recommended that news outlets diversify their sources and narratives beyond authoritative figures. They could organise a public forum with feedback opportunities from citizens and report on this. News outlets should also aim to diversify the variety of news frames as findings indicated an inconsistency between specific frames and the frame valences. The comparison between the outlets showed that RNZ covered the case with the best practice in terms of news framing. There was also evidence of ethical journalism in the news framing by the three media outlets. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by offering fresh insights into the study of news frames in the media reportage of New Zealand gun laws and gun violence in the Matthew Hunt case.

Keywords: Framing research, framing analysis, content analysis, news coverage, gun violence, gun crime, New Zealand, quantitative analysis, media discourse.

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Attestation of Authorship

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

Signed:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

On 15 March 2019, a white supremacist terrorist opened fire in two Mosques in Christchurch and caused 51 casualties. This was the deadliest terror attack in New Zealand history (Ford, 2020). The vicious attacks received tremendous amounts of media attention from both local and international news agencies, with CNN labelling the attack as “orchestrated for the social media age” when referring to how the attacks were live streamed and then reshared like “wildfire” (Marsh & Mulholland, 2019). The attacks also reflected the message to the world that New Zealand was no longer a peaceful country and was instead a country with escalating gun violence issues and extreme ideologies.

In response to the attacks, a fortnight later the Arms Amendment Bill was passed by New Zealand parliament which banned all semi-automatic firearms in the country and any parts and magazines which could be used to assemble weapons through a gun buyback scheme (New Zealand Parliament, 2021). This was just the beginning of many changes to New Zealand laws and policies targeted at firearm offences in the community. These included a gun registry, the first of its kind, which was launched in June 2023 (Hipkins, 2022). However, according to police records, gun violence remains a public safety hazard in the country because of the continued rise in firearm offence rates since 2019 (New Zealand Police, 2023). At the time of research, the firearm offence statistics in 2022 were the highest in history with 2023 seemingly on track to overtake that record (New Zealand Police, 2023).

Since the Christchurch Mosque attacks, there continues to be extensive media coverage on the escalating gun violence crisis in the country, with one case standing out that sparked national coverage and public debate: the murder of Constable Matthew Hunt (Owen, 2020). Constable Hunt was shot in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop on 19 June 2020, and he became the first officer to be killed since 2009. It was a case which shocked the nation and further emphasised New Zealand’s escalating gun crisis (Owen, 2020). Hunt’s case directly sparked public discussions on whether New Zealand police officers should be armed and if the penalties for police killers should be more severe, akin to Harper’s Law in the UK (Leask, 2021). Many, including Hunt’s mother, petitioned for New Zealand lawmakers to follow Harper’s Law which enforces mandatory life sentences for convicts who murdered emergency service personnel

(Leask, 2021). Despite all of the public awareness, policy changes and strategies since the Mosque attacks on gun violence in New Zealand, Hunt's death reminded the nation the predicament the country continues to face. This prompted further debates on the issues of police arming, police funding and safety, gun laws and gang crime. Earlier research has identified that extreme occurrences such as Hunt's case can indelibly alter public opinion and modify the political agenda (Birkland et al., 1998, as cited in Every-Palmer et al., 2021).

Research aim

Despite the killer's sentencing on 10 December 2021, there continues to be news reports on the Matthew Hunt case. In particular, debates about the severity of the sentence the killer received and whether front line police officers should be armed continue to be a topic of interest in the news. A 2021 survey found that 73% of Police Association members supported general arming of the police constabulary leading to vocal resistance in the news from ex-prime minister Jacinda Ardern, the police minister and the police commissioner (RNZ, 2021). Earlier research has suggested that the voices of people in political power tend to dominate news media despite the media supposedly intended to serve the role of an equal public forum to support democracy and encourage the public sphere (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). This raises the question of whether news articles displayed a dominance of authoritative voices, particularly in the Hunt case, which could sway political opinions towards new gun policies and legislation.

Considering that recent research on the perceived pernicious effects of disinformation and fake news displayed that only 42% of New Zealanders trusted the media (Myllylahti & Treadwell, 2023), this further emphasises the need to dissect how the New Zealand mainstream media covers important societal issues. By definition, the mainstream media is "to be situated within the ideological norms of society, with a widespread range of influence, rely on professional reporters and are heavily connected to corporate and government entities" (Kenix, 2011, p. 3). Considering that the Matthew Hunt case has continued to garner public interest and extensive media coverage, it is worth exploring the media coverage of the case as earlier research has found that media frames provide audiences tools about how to interpret policy controversies through specific narratives (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010), and because the media is intended to represent politics, social institutions, governments and the citizens (Kenix, 2011).

Despite the low credibility of the New Zealand media and the escalating gun violence situation, there were very few studies conducted on the mainstream media's role in the gun violence crisis. There were few studies on the public perceptions of the Christchurch Mosque attacks; these included a poll conducted by Research New Zealand in 2019, a phone poll conducted by 1 News Colmar Brunton in 2019, and a repeat survey of Victoria University's annual Colmar-Brunton trust survey in 2019 (Chapple & Prickett, 2019). There were also research articles written that provided perspectives on the Christchurch Mosque attacks. These works included a research article on the representations of Islamic and Muslim identity in New Zealand media, where it was found that the news used negative framing in visuals and supported negative stereotypes in the news (Rahman & Emadi, 2018). Another research article covered the effects of distance on the media's coverage of the attacks by using a proximity filter (Ellis & Muller, 2019). A descriptive analysis by researchers from the University of Otago investigated the media's themes when reporting the attacks and the subsequent changes to gun control reformations in New Zealand (Every-Palmer et al., 2021). Because the Matthew Hunt case was recent, there have been no studies on the case available at the time of research. This signifies the need for research, considering the case received extensive national media attention, sparked public debates, and triggered political responses.

This study uses content analysis to examine the news frames used by New Zealand mainstream media in the coverage of the Matthew Hunt case from the day Hunt was killed on 19 June 2020, to the day the killer was sentenced on 10 December 2021. Entman (1993) asserted that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient in text in order to promote the definition of a problem, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and recommendations" (Brewer & Gross, 2009, as cited in D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2009). This study aims to form a better understanding of the media's narratives on Matthew Hunt's case through the communication lens of framing theory and to explore the various frames utilised in the coverage.

To be representative of the New Zealand mainstream media, three of the biggest New Zealand media outlets were selected in the research, which were Radio New Zealand, the New Zealand Herald, and Stuff New Zealand. As a result of the literature review, it was identified that episodic and thematic frames were prominently present in news framing research on political policies and social issues (Iyengar, 1991). The frame of valence and frame substance were the other types of news frames present in existing news framing studies on political policies and

social issues (de Vreese et al., 1999). While episodic and thematic frames are based on how news coverage is framed, frame valence and frame substance are concentrated on the media content and the narratives of the reports to analyse whether it is specific, generalisable, positive, neutral, or negative. Discovering what has been reported and how the New Zealand media has framed the stories and narratives in the Matthew Hunt case merits scholarly attention to deepen understandings of how the media has helped to guide representations and perceptions of reality (Goffman, 1974).

This study aims to answer the three research questions which were formulated as a result of the literature review:

RQ1: What are the dominant frames used in the textual coverage of the Constable Matthew Hunt case from RNZ, NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?

RQ2: How do these frames vary across RNZ, NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?

RQ3: What were the primary sources cited in the news sample from RNZ, NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?

Structure

Following this introductory chapter, which discusses the context and significance of the study, chapter two firstly presents the theoretical basis for the study through a review of the origins, development and utilisation of framing theory and framing analysis. This is followed by a background review of the New Zealand gun violence crisis and its origins and policy reformations. Hunt's case is then reviewed to provide further background context for the study. The literature review section also provides existing and relevant materials within New Zealand gun violence news studies, which is what motivated the research questions for this study.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach utilised in this study. The scope and limitation of the study are also discussed. In order to examine the news frames within these articles, the techniques of systematic sampling and content analysis are employed. Key findings of the analysis are presented in Chapter four, which are enhanced by tables to present what findings were generated from the data. Chapter five discusses the findings with detailed interpretations of the data and implications of the study. Chapter six concludes by discussing the significance of the study and recommending future research directions. Overall, it establishes how this study has contributed to knowledge about the framing of New Zealand gun violence reports in media studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

The second chapter is the review section, which consists of relevant literature from diverse fields such as media effects, social science, psychology, firearm policies, new media networks and framing theories and analysis. It presents the origins, development and utilisation of framing theory and framing analysis. This is followed by New Zealand's history of firearms and firearm policies to provide the background context of the escalating firearm crisis. This will then be followed by a review of the Matthew Hunt case to provide further background context on this specific case. Lastly, existing research on gun violence in New Zealand will be explored to identify a gap in the knowledge and to explain the motivation behind formulating the research questions.

Framing theory

Framing research is a burgeoning field in communication studies, widely employed to analyse human interaction across various disciplines (Rendahl, 1995). In recent years, framing theory has been found to have overtaken the agenda-setting and cultivation theory as the most applied theory within communication studies (Bryant & Miron, 2004). Due to the wide applicability of framing theory, framing has been particularly prominent within political communication research, which has been defined and operationalised from the basis of social constructivism (Scheufele, 1999).

Social Constructionism

Carter (2013) attributed Berger and Luckmann's work in 1966 as setting the bar for all subsequent framing research through their work *The social construction of reality*. Berger and Luckmann (1966) specified that language is what defines and differentiates humanity and that understanding the basic mechanisms of how meaning is constructed and shared is necessary before exploring the epistemology of framing. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), social constructionism refers to the creation and institutionalisation of reality through social interactions. In the context of communication studies, the approach implies that the makers of media materials control the variations of reoccurring frames that influence the audiences' ability to construct social reality.

This concept is repeated through constructivist media effect models that observed that audiences build versions of reality through personal experience, social interactions and interpretations of messages from selections of the mass media (Neuman et al., 1992; Scheufele, 1999, as cited in Carter, 2013). Consequently, frames could be classified as conceptual tools for media organisations and the public to rely on in order to process information (Van Gorp, 2007). This further highlights the importance of the functionality of frames and why this study deserves scholarly interest and examination.

Framing definitions

Van Gorp (2007) identified that frames appeared to be perceptible in all shapes and sizes and can appear across diverse fields of studies. The first study on framing was from anthropologist Gregory Bateson's (1972) book titled *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* where he described framing as "a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages" (p. 197). However, Erving Goffman is more widely known as the first sociologist to use framing analysis to explain social phenomena (Carter, 2013). In his book *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*, he wrote that interpretive designs constituted the key elements of cultural belief systems (Goffman, 1974). Goffman (1974) used the words "cultural resonance" and "narrative fidelity" when describing the context dependency of media frames and believed that cultural roots and principles of organisations affected the meaning of frames. The emphasis on culture is repeated throughout media framing research as culture is considered the key foundation to establishing meaning and our understanding of the world (Hall, 2019). Framing is understood as a bridging concept between culture and cognition (Gamson et al., 1992, p. 384).

Another well-known definition of framing theory is from Robert Entman (1993, p. 52), who postulated that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation". Other contributors to the concept of framing include Iyengar (1991, p. 11), who said that "framing encompasses subtle alterations in a statement or a presentation of an issue", while Morley (1976) saw frames as "the basic conceptual and ideological frame-work through which events are presented and are given dominant/primary meanings" (Reese, 2001, p. 10). Chong and Druckman (2007) reformed the premise of framing theory and argued that issues may be viewed and interpreted from a variety of perspectives and that framing refers to the process by which people develop

particular conceptualisations of issues or reorient their perspectives and opinions of an issue. As observed, scholarly definitions of frames and framing theory vary in their description and terminology. According to Carter (2013), Reese's work in 2001 is regarded as one of the best definitions and systematic treatments of framing effects (Carter, 2013). Reese (2001, p. 11) specified that "frames are organising principles that are socially shared and persistent over time to symbolically and meaningfully structure the social world" and conceptualised six aspects of framing; the organisation of frames, the principles of frames, the sharing of frames, the persistence of frames, the symbolic nature of frames, and the structure of frames to enhance understandings of how frames function and influence media audiences.

Reese (2001) identified the organisation of frames, specifying that frames are continuous and reinforced through cognition and culture to elucidate deeper comprehension beyond the immediate available information. The principle of frames refers to their abstract elements such as the implicit values, cultural references and underlying assumptions that are used by media organisations to socially construct an objective event by turning it into a subjective one. Frames can also be further classified into personal, idiosyncratic, social and shared (Reese, 2001, p. 15). The sharing of frames is especially crucial because audiences rely on 'interpersonal and social influences' and 'moral values' to construct reality, meaning that media organisations could use the sharing of frames as a tactic to shape meaning. The persistence of frames refers to the repetitiveness and number of frames. Reese (2001, p. 16) wrote that the "more persistent" a frame is, the more it deserves examination because by routinising frames, specific pieces of information could be deeply engrained in the human conscience. However, Reese (2001) believed that the symbolism of frames was one of the most important aspects of framing because media organisations structure information within symbolic contexts and excludes other narratives beyond the main points. Reese (2001) then emphasised the structure of frames by examining the patterns and combinations of frames and how frame structures influence interpretations. In summary, Reese's work identified that frames transfer knowledge and are organised, repeated, principled, structured and shared with symbolic implications.

Agenda Setting Theory

In communication research, framing theory is often associated and compared with the agenda setting theory based on the similarities of the two concepts. The first level of agenda setting theory argues that the mass media influences what audiences think and that media content does

not reflect reality but filters and shapes the truth through its concentration on specific issues and topics. This in turn leads the public to perceive a reality that aligns with the main narratives in the media (Dearing & Rogers, 1988). Considering that framing categorises the focus of news on specific issues to provide prominence over specific perspectives, scholars including McCombs have debated that framing supports the second level of the agenda setting concept (Weaver, 2007). The second level of agenda setting theory emphasises the complexity of transferring the saliency of issues to the public and proposes four dimensions such as subtopics, framing mechanisms, affective and cognitive elements (Golan et al., 2007). McCombs (1997, p. 37) suggests that framing can be considered within the language of the second level of agenda setting because framing can be seen as the selection of thematical reasonings for inclusive choices within the agendas of media. In summary, agenda setting theory emphasises the media's role in determining the prominence of public issues. This shapes public perceptions by allocating the levels of attention and importance of specific issues, while framing highlights specific issues and frames them in ways which emphasise or downplays perspectives to influence the way audiences interpret issues. Both theories support the other through emphasising the effects news has on its audience.

Framing and the agenda setting theory are commonly used in researching public opinion and media effects in communication studies. Although the two theories relate to the idea of shifting realities, the distinction is that framing selects certain aspects of an issue to make them more prominent, while agenda setting increases the salience and accessibility of topics (Weaver, 2007). It is important to note that both theories emphasise that the media holds a considerable amount of power because the public are constrained by the limited available information from mass media and media coverage (McCombs et al., 1991). While the media does not dictate public opinion, it has the power to spark and persuade political discussion among citizens (Kim et al., 1999).

Frames and Framing devices

As previously specified, there are various and complex definitions of frames and framing devices. Gitlin (1980), identified media frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse” (as cited in Holody, 2006, p. 7). According to Entman (1993), media frames help to make parts of information more noticeable, meaningful and

memorable to an audience and is part of news narratives through encouraging the development of a guided understanding.

Earlier works from Reese (2001) identified six aspects of framing; organising, principles, shared, persistent, symbol and structure. The process of organising involves the arrangement of information within frames. While “principles” refers to the abstract foundation upon which frames are built, “shared” refers to the significance of frames when shared, emphasising their communal importance. “Persistence” relates to the enduring nature and longevity of frames. Symbolic frames display the expressive forms of symbolism. Lastly, structure pertains to how frames establish identifiable patterns and structures (Reese, 2001).

Hallahan (1999) has also identified seven models of framing, including the framing of situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility and news. These seven models are particularly applicable to public relations and the news. Framing of situations refers to the reality constructed through language and everyday interactions and can be labelled as relational or situational framing. The framing of attributes refers to the focus on the characterisation of objects, people and events through semantic framing and is often persistent in consumer behavioural research that examines the cognitive process of visuals through attention to specific attributes. The framing of choices is the most extensively researched area of framing, which is when individuals must make a choice between two independent options when there are levels of uncertainty present and an emphasis on the influence of framing towards gains versus losses.

The framing of actions is similar to pure-valence framing and goal framing that focus on persuasive attempts to maximise cooperation in situations without independent choices through focusing on positive versus negative actions and consequences. The framing of issues refers to examination of alternative interpretations of social reality, which results in extensive public debate and requires resolution within a public policy. The framing of responsibility refers to the attribution of an event to either personal, environmental or social factors, specifically in news that assigns responsibility. This is slightly different to the final model of the framing of news, which dissects how the media uses frame selectivity to shape the news to reflect culturally resonating terms by using dominant social frames (Hallahan, 1999).

Aside from Hallahan (1999) and Reese (2001), other scholars have argued that frames can be classified within two elements; under either a framing or a reasoning device (Droog et al., 2020). A framing device is defined through the linguistic packaging of the frame and a reasoning device is defined through the frame's conceptual content (Joris et al., 2014, as cited in Droog et al., 2020). According to Droog et al (2020), both reasoning and framing devices can be considered metaphorical framing as metaphors are typically used for disseminating complex topics. Droog et al.'s (2020) framing research also identified a gap in the knowledge of the impact of emerging technologies on the framing process, while Yacoub (2012) identified the lack of study in the role of emotions in framing.

Emotional Effects of Framing

Yacoub (2012) identified that researchers have primarily focused on the cognitive process behind framing but failed to comprehend the role of emotions inherent in the process. Earlier research has identified that frames rely on emotional appeals because the purpose of news frames is to elicit reactions from recipients (Iyengar, 1991). However, Yacoub (2012) believed that little research was conducted on how frames affect emotional responses and furthermore, how emotions influence opinions. Yacoub (2012), believed that the intensity of emotions has the ability to perform as a mediator between frames and beliefs. Aaroe (2011), had a similar viewpoint, believing that episodic frames in particular played a key role in evoking emotional responses. Aside from episodic frames, Yacoub (2012) found that simply inserting emotional words with high intensity were insufficient to manipulate respondent's emotional reactions, but instead, factors such as values, narratives, symbolism and imagery were more effective factors in evoking emotional reactions. Although Yacoub's (2012) experiment displayed results that were misaligned with his theoretical proposal, his study identified the need for future research to deepen an understanding of how emotional manipulation works when framing the news.

Episodic vs Thematic frames

In media communication, the choice of using either episodic or thematic frames can significantly influence the audience's perception and comprehension of specific issues. Iyengar (1991) identified that episodic framing involves storytelling from the perspectives of people and individual events while thematic framing provides a comprehensive report on the wider societal background of a given issue (Hallahan, 1999). Iyengar (1991) identified that news

coverage is dominated by episodic framing as opposed to thematic framing and that the difference in the effects on an audience is that episodic framing attributes liability to individual people or events when discussing social problems.

Valence framing

De Vreese et al. (1999) described frames within the categories of frame valence and frame substance. Frame valence distinguishes frames as having positive, negative, or even neutral tones (as cited in De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003), while frame substance can vary from ambiguous to substantive (William & Kaid, 2006). Ambiguous frames are often vague and indistinct, with its sole purpose acting as a guideline for audiences to obtain basic information, while substantive news frames are detailed and informative (de Vreese et al., 1999). To compare with the previous framing aspects identified, episodic and thematic frames are about how the coverage was framed, while frame valence and frame substance are about media content and whether it is specific, generalisable, and positive, negative or neutral. Reese's (2001) six aspects and Hallahan's (1999) seven models of framing are also more specifically about how the coverage is framed and what factors influence the frames. The overall history of framing theory has identified that framing plays a pivotal role in defining social problems (Gergen, 1992, as cited in Holody, 2006) and that frames have a powerful effect in influencing how people view, interpret and understand the world.

New Zealand's history of firearms, laws, and offences

New Zealand's gun history began in the 18th Century when early European explorers, traders and missionaries brought muskets for protection, hunting and for use in the ongoing battles with Māori tribes (Keane, 2012). Firearms played a critical role in the musket wars between Māori tribes and significantly changed the dynamics of intertribal warfare (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). In the post-colonial period, firearms were widely utilised in New Zealand for hunting, pest control and recreational use and were also used during the World Wars when New Zealand troops were sent to support the British empire (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). According to an appraisal of the 1997 review of Firearms Control, New Zealand's firearms control began with the Arms Ordinance of 1845 (Huffadine, 2019). Prior to 1983, New Zealand gun ownership was relatively unrestricted, and the police would only record partial firearm information (Taylor, 2019, as cited in Huffadine, 2019). Once the Arms Act of 1983

was established, the focus of licenses transitioned from firearms to the person, based on the theory that if the licence holder was fit and proper, they would cause a minimal risk to public safety (Taylor, 2019, as cited in Huffadine, 2019). This act categorised restricted weapons and set up two kinds of licenses; the standard firearms license and the endorsed license. For the standard firearms license, classes were created from classes B to F ranging from pistols to restricted weapons, dealing weapons, military-style weapons and dealers' staff licenses for demonstrations (Taylor, 2019, as cited in Huffadine, 2019). For an endorsement license, applicants must go through more layers of vetting and checks than for the minimal requirement of a standard license. The Arms Act of 1983 appeared to be effective as New Zealand saw a high level of control and success with low rates of firearm offences by license holders until a turning point in 1992 (Taylor, 2019, as cited in Huffadine, 2019).

In 1992, a male resident in Aramoana purchased a semi-automatic rifle through mail order and went on a rampage following a verbal dispute with a neighbour, which caused one of the deadliest mass murders in New Zealand history (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). The massacre sparked lengthy debates about gun control and triggered an immediate amendment to the regulations on military-style semi-automatic firearms, increased security precautions, import permits for firearm parts and adjusted mail order regulations (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). Aside from these changes, the Arms act had not been updated since 1992, despite changes in technology and increased civilian access to the international firearms market (NZ Police, 2019, as cited in Huffadine, 2019).

In a briefing to Stuart Nash as incoming police minister in 2017, several points were presented by the New Zealand Police on what they believed to be inadequate measures for gun control legislation (NZ Police, 2018). Firstly, the police had been proposing substantial amendments to the Arms act since 2010 but had seen no progress, and only seven of the twenty recommendations were accepted in 2017 (NZ Police, 2018). Secondly, since 1992 there had been an apparent increase in the possession of semi-automatic firearms, but police did not have exact data on firearms and believed the current legislation was insufficient to fully mitigate the risks associated with an estimated 1.5 million firearms possessed by civilians (NZ Police, 2018). Thirdly, the police requested more assistance to help prevent the flow of firearms to the criminal community as the police operated on a firearms licensing regime that did not allow police to operate a registry of firearms except for restricted categories. This prevented police from knowing the exact numbers of firearms owned by license holders (NZ Police, 2018).

Prior to the ban on semi-automatic weapons in 2019, gun law specialist lawyer Nicholas Taylor commented on the complications of bans on guns by emphasising the billions the government would need to compensate gun owners who had been previously authorised by the Crown to own semi-automatics, and the possibilities of a black market for these firearms from non-licensed owners (Huffadine, 2019). When the Christchurch Mosque attacks happened in 2019, it emphasised that the past changes to regulations surrounding military-style semi-automatic firearms were not sufficient to mitigate public safety since the assailant had used a semi-automatic weapon and caused the deadliest massacre in New Zealand (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021).

The Christchurch Mosque Attacks

In 2017, a 28 year-old white supremacist from Australia arrived in New Zealand and began preparation for the terrorist attacks which included joining rifle clubs to gain firearms expertise. He had also applied for and received a firearm license just two months after his arrival (Royal Commission, n.d.). On 15 March 2019, the attacker arrived at the Al-Noor Mosque in Christchurch and opened fire on 190 worshippers while live-streaming the massacre on social media. It took just 21 minutes of mayhem to end 51 innocent lives, causing the deadliest attack in New Zealand history (Arkilic, 2020). This attack shocked the world as it happened in Aotearoa New Zealand, one of the most peaceful countries in the world (Brown, 2020). Local media reports and prime minister Jacinda Ardern labelled the Mosque attacks as “one of New Zealand’s darkest days” (Newton et al., n.d.). When Ardern addressed the nation following the attacks she said of the victims “They are us. The person who perpetuated this violence against us is not. There is no place in New Zealand for such acts of extreme and unprecedented violence, which it is clear this act was” (Ardern, 2019, as cited in Satherley & Prendergast, 2019). The sentiment stuck with many people and the “They are us” quote was used as part of a social media movement to emphasise support for the Muslim community (Satherley & Prendergast, 2019). Following her speech, Ardern wore a hijab and consoled the Muslim community in person, which was swiftly followed by practical measures that imposed new gun legislation (Malik, 2019). Her actions following the attacks earned her praise from around the world with reports labelling Ardern as “what a leader should be” (Malik, 2019). In response to the livestreams, Ardern repeatedly criticised Facebook’s failure to automatically shut down the gunman’s livestream because it was “not gruesome enough” and emphasised that more needs to be done for protection against harmful content (Cheng, 2019).

In terms of gun law reform, parliament acted swiftly after the attacks and introduced the Arms Amendment Bill which aimed to remove semi-automatic firearms from circulation through a gun buyback scheme. The Bill was accelerated and became law in eleven days (New Zealand Parliament, 2021). The Arms Legislation Bill introduced in September 2019 established tighter controls on the use and possession of firearms and was granted Royal Assent in June 2020 (New Zealand Parliament, 2021). The government has since worked on further restrictions on firearms including:

1. To set up a register in 2023,
2. To review and impose harsher penalties for the illegal manufacture, trafficking or changing markings on firearms,
3. To prevent overseas visitors with one-year licenses from owning or buying firearms,
4. To reduce license expiry dates,
5. To extend the ban on semi-automatics to include shorter rifles,
6. To review new rules on gun dealer licenses
7. To impose new restrictions on shooting clubs and add new rules to assess firearm owners (Palmer, 2021).

The government also provided an additional \$562 million to fund police and corrections units over four years; \$208 million of this is specifically allocated for a new firearms unit within police to follow through the ban on semi-automatic weapons and for the tightening of gun registration laws (Kapitan & Trevett, 2022). A further \$164.6 million was allocated to increase police numbers and to equip police units to the standard of the Armed Offenders Squad Officers (Kapitan & Trevett, 2022). A criminal activity intervention legislation bill, which was part of a package of legislative reforms, has since been established to provide police with more tools and warrants to tackle gang crime and to search and confiscate firearms (Pearse, 2022).

The government's efforts to mitigate the harm of firearms received mixed reactions in the community. While many public members and 120 members of parliament supported the Arms Amendment Bill (New Zealand Parliament, 2021), there were mixed opinions on several of the government's newly imposed policies. Firstly, offences that could lead to a firearms prohibition order included participating in crime groups and serious firearms or violence offences, which caused concern as a public consultation document suggested that this new legislation would most likely impact Māori given the importance of Whanau within te ao Māori (Jacobson, 2021).

Green Party MP Golriz Ghahraman stated that there was potential for innocent people with loose gang connections to be criminalised, and considering Māori and Pacific people are disproportionately impacted by the administration of justice in this country, the new legislations could worsen the situation (Jacobson, 2021). The Māori party had grave concerns about the new gun orders and was prepared to oppose the legislation (Waititi, 2021, as cited in Jacobson, 2021).

Secondly, there were many unaddressed issues within the government's new package to combat gun crime. According to Gun Control NZ, firearms advertising should be banned because there were no controls over firearms advertising, with some retailers advertising firearms to children (RNZ, 2022). A second point raised by the group was regarding the 2023 national register. New Zealand has the 13th highest rate of civilian gun ownership in the world with 40 years of no register and records, and there are still no limits on the numbers of firearms owned by a licensed individual (RNZ, 2022). Despite key points raised by various organisations, the amendment of the Search and Surveillance act of 2012 has since permitted police to unlawfully confiscate firearms, with reported incidents of police unlawfully raiding the homes of elderly citizens to seize their antique gun collections (Caldwell, 2022).

Thirdly, the government's actions to restrict existing firearm licenses evoked negative feedback from firearm owners who believed they were negatively targeted simply because the Christchurch shooter had a legal firearm license and drew attention to the police's liability for failing to carefully vet the shooter prior to the attacks (Strang, 2021). Licensed firearm owners also believed they have been alienated and no longer have a good rapport with the police (Strang, 2021). However, the main issue raised by the public is the lack of impact on the rise of gun crime and violence in New Zealand despite law amendments and packages to combat gun crime. Since 2019, New Zealand has continued to see a steady rise in firearm offence rates with each year's data breaking the record (NZ Police, 2023). Amid this gun crime crisis, the death of Constable Matthew Hunt intensified the debate surrounding the resolution of gun violence and of gun law reformations.

The Matthew Hunt case

Constable Matthew Dennis Hunt was born 30 July 1991, and had served in the New Zealand police for two and a half years before he was killed on duty (1 News, 2020). On 19 June 2020, Hunt was with a colleague, Constable David Goldfinch and attempted to perform a routine traffic stop on a vehicle in Massey, when the killer Eli Epiha fired a series of bullets and fatally shot Hunt, injured Goldfinch and a civilian (RNZ, 2020). One day after the incident it was reported that the police had arrested Epiha and charged him with murder, attempted murder and dangerous driving with the hearing scheduled on 8 July 2020 (RNZ, 2020). The killer's accomplice Natalie Bracken was also immediately taken into custody to assist police with enquiries (RNZ, 2020). Following Hunt's death, officers across the country and the public gathered to mourn and pay tribute through a minute of silence, small gatherings, flying flags at half-mast and laying wreath and flowers at police stations (Earley et al., 2020). Hunt's family and relatives were forced to quarantine for 14 days before attending and holding a funeral, which received backlash and prompted ex-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to respond that "it's a double whammy of losing one and being caught up in restrictions that are there to keep people safe" (NZ Herald, 2020). It was also reported that the sky tower was lit up for Hunt's funeral at Eden Park with the funeral livestreamed to the public (Earley, 2020). A seat was also permanently dedicated to Hunt at Eden Park to honour his service to the community and his love of sports (Leask, 2020). Many parliament members also acknowledged and paid tribute to Hunt, including ex-deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters who said that "police lives matter" and that "we are all indebted to officers like Hunt for their service to New Zealand and hope to see the criminal incarcerated for the longest period of time" (Devlin, 2020).

Hunt's mother also wished a life sentence for the killer and launched a petition for the government to refuse parole for all offenders jailed for killing police officers saying that the current laws "do not adequately condemn" the killing of officers on duty and pleaded for urgent change. She referred to Harper's Law in the UK, which requires mandatory life sentences for criminals convicted of the murder of emergency workers (Leask, 2021).

When the sentencing began, various narratives surrounding the event were reported, including narratives from the perpetrator, his accomplice, witnesses, the police, a pathologist and Hunt's family and friends. On 10 December 2021, Eli Epiha was sentenced to life in prison, and was given one of the longest jail sentences in history. He has since requested to appeal his sentence

believing it was “too harsh” (Bhamidipati, 2022). Since Hunt’s death, the topic of police safety was raised, leading to a \$45 million government investment to strengthen frontline officers’ safety (Campbell, 2021). The new investment is to fund a new tactical response model, to expand the frontline skills enhancement course, and to employ an additional 78 staff and 28 intelligence analysts (Campbell, 2021). Hunt’s death also triggered a debate about whether police should be armed to combat crime. 73% of police association members and 57% of the public supported arming the police while Ardern, the police minister and police commissioner opposed the approach believing it would worsen the gun crisis (RNZ, 2021). But despite the majority of police association members supporting the general arming, a preliminary evaluation of existing reports revealed a dominance and repetition of voices by Ardern, the police minister and commissioner towards this issue, as opposed to little to no voices heard from the public and police association members. This specific finding prompted the question of whether it was true that authoritative voices dominated New Zealand news reports on controversial social issues.

New Zealand existing gun violence research

Despite the extensive influences of Hunt’s case on New Zealand society, no research was conducted on Hunt’s case at the time of this research. And aside from research about the Mosque attacks, there were no other New Zealand studies on the topic of gun violence in the media. This section will review the existing New Zealand gun violence news research on the Christchurch Mosque attacks. Research on the attacks can be classified within four categories: how and what the media broadcasted about gun violence in the attacks, coverage on islamophobia and misrepresentations of a community, and various sources and opinions on the attacks through the news, and the effects of news coverage.

As the news labelled it, the Mosque massacre was the “end of innocence” for the media and the nation (Peacock, 2019). When the Christchurch terrorist opened fire and livestreamed the massacre, Facebook reported that it had 1.5 million uploads within 24 hours with over 300,000 uploads not stopped by Facebook’s systems (Besley & Peters, 2020). When New Zealand news organisations received the information, although a few broadcasters and news websites warned the public not to view the videos, state-owned TVNZ briefly showed scenes from the livestream two times in news reports. Sky New Zealand (a subscription service of Australian-sourced content) also broadcast livestream content before it was taken down and the Newsroom also

ran images from the livestream (Peacock, 2019). This sparked the beginning of New Zealand mainstream media's non-stop coverage, which saw many national networks suspend their services (Ellis & Muller, 2020).

Newshub statistics indicated that over the 10 days following the attacks, 47 hours of news coverage were broadcasted on TV. This included 316 live TV crosses and 582 bulletins, pre-feeds and headlines (Ellis & Muller, 2020). Although the media heavily broadcasted updates on the attacks, news executives reached a unanimous decision not to feature the attacker's story but to focus on the victims instead (Ellis & Muller, 2020). However, the Press, Stuff NZ and the NZ Herald took contrasting stances on the 'manifesto', a now banned 'objectionable' document from the shooter (Besley & Peters, 2020). The NZ Herald applied for permission to keep a copy for its journalists' reference and had made several references to the banned content in subsequent articles, while The Press and Stuff NZ took a different view and fully supported the ban (Peacock, 2019).

According to the proximity filter research by Ellis and Muller (2020), the media coverage on the attacks was classified into six phases. The first phase was journalism's fundamentals of who, what, when, where and why. The second phase was the appearance of the gunman in court. The third phase was New Zealand media's tribute to the victims and their families. The fourth phase was on the political response and international recognition of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's leadership. The fifth phase was the burial and commemoration services of victims. The sixth phase was on the consequences of the attacks, including the gunman's hearing and charges. The six phases featured similar topics to the media themes found in another descriptive analysis of the attacks. Every-Palmer et al. (2021) found five dominant media frames in the news coverage of the attacks which included the theme of social media, the theme of gun control, the theme of causal attribution, the theme of victim concentration and the theme of a nameless and faceless gunman. When comparing news reports from New Zealand and Australia, Every-Palmer et al. (2021) found that 34% of New Zealand news stories were focused on the victim within the first three days of the attacks as opposed to 8% of the Australian news stories. They also found far less attention was paid to the victims' families in the Australian media and instead more featured articles on the tributes paid by the general public in Australia. Another notable difference was the political focus of the reports, with only 3% of reports with political focus from New Zealand coverage as opposed to the 16% found in Australian media (Every-Palmer et al., 2021).

In terms of the reception of the news on the attacks, a few polls were conducted days after the attacks. Research New Zealand (2019) surveyed 1344 New Zealanders and found that 79% believed that social platforms should be required to exert more control over social media contents, while 73% believed that government resources should increase to monitor extremist groups (as cited in Crothers & O'Brien, 2020). In terms of content, both TVNZ and Sky Television New Zealand received complaints from the New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority for broadcasting livestream content (Every-Palmer et al., 2021). Besley and Peters (2020) also found that the news and live footage of the attacks that circulated on social media resulted in trauma for many people.

However, the main shift in opinion was on the views on gun ownership. The Colmar Brunton phone poll (2019) found that 61% of respondents thought the gun control changes were “about right” while 19% believed the amended laws were not “far enough” (Crothers & O'Brien, 2020). These results appear justified considering the media focused on the weapon control legislation and the fear of further violence which indicated the sense of urgency to support policy changes (Every-Palmer et al., 2021). In terms of public trust in gun ownership after the attacks, Prickett and Chapple (2021) found gun owners had a higher trust in gun owners, scoring them 3.51 out of 5 as opposed to people without guns who scored them 2.65 out of 5. Overall, statistics revealed that New Zealanders had low levels of trust in gun ownership and the level of trust was closely aligned with political ideologies and gun ownership status (Prickett & Chapple, 2021). This indicated that there was a clear contrast of opinions in the community on gun ownership and laws.

In a New Zealand research paper about the Christchurch attacks, Rahman (2020) conducted an analysis of Muslim news representation after the attacks. Prior to the attacks, Rahman and Emadi (2018) had identified the tendency of Western media to negatively frame the Muslim identity as a danger to civil society, resulting in both personal and social consequences. The long history of negatively portraying Muslims in Western news media perpetuated and encouraged Islamophobia, which was identified in the Royal Commission of Inquiry as one of the key instigating factors in the Mosque attacks (Rahman, 2020). After the attacks in Christchurch, Rahman (2020) noted that narratives involving Muslims were more positive and that several media outlets such as TVNZ, Stuff NZ, Media-works, NZME and RNZ had joined in solidarity to observe a protocol to cover court proceedings on the attacks without depicting any of the signs of extremism displayed by the accused terrorist. So despite New Zealand media

previously following Western news agendas in reporting some biased portrayals of Muslims before the attacks, it was observed that the New Zealand media had shifted their narratives in presenting the Muslim perspective by showing solidarity, support and inclusion to the Muslim community (Rahman, 2020). But despite the improvement, Rahman (2020) found evidence that the female Muslim is still marginalised and targeted by systemic oppression. As demonstrated, both international and local news had the capacity to formulate biased and hate rhetoric towards a multi-cultural religious group by shaping the negative sentiments that provoked a massacre. This further illustrates the need to conduct a comprehensive study of New Zealand media narratives on social issues such as gun violence as it could majorly affect citizens' perception of the issue.

In summary, New Zealand had an ongoing gun crime crisis primarily due to the lack of controls and legislation stemming from when firearms were introduced to the country. This was one of the factors that resulted in several gun massacres in the country, with the deadliest attack happening in Christchurch back in 2019. Despite government efforts to implement new bans, legislation, tactics and recovery packages with increased funding, based on gun crime statistics it did not seem to be effective with gun crime rates continuously on the rise. The killing of Constable Hunt on the job re-instigated mass media portrayals and public discussions on gun crime in New Zealand, similar to the precedent set by the Christchurch attacks. Amid the gun violence debate, the majority of the public and the police force supported police arming, which was met with open verbal resistance from several politicians in the news. This was one of the main predicaments that was triggered by the case - whether police arming laws should be changed. Three research questions were formulated to address how these social issues of gun violence were framed in news reports of the Matthew Hunt case.

Research Questions

To examine the media narratives of social issues in the case, RQ1 and RQ2 were formulated to identify dominant frames in the news coverage and make comparisons across the three media outlets.

RQ1: What were the dominant frames used in the textual coverage of the Constable Matthew Hunt case from RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?

RQ2: How do these frames vary across RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?

To examine, analyse and compare voices in the coverage, RQ3 was formulated to identify the dominant voices present in the news samples. This is to identify the dominant sources used to frame narratives and influence perceptions.

RQ3: What were the primary sources cited in the RNZ, NZ Herald and Stuff NZ samples?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of the content analysis undertaken in this study. Content analysis on news articles using elements of the framing theory is discussed in this section to establish the rationale for this method of research in the study.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative study is to use framing analysis to discover the dominant news frames in the New Zealand mainstream media's coverage of the Constable Matthew Hunt case. As reviewed in the literature section, the topic of gun violence has always been controversial and difficult to resolve in New Zealand, and Constable Matthew Hunt's murder triggered further debates on the issues of gun violence, gang crime, police safety, New Zealand laws and the many other issues that were raised during the case. The killing of a policeman escalated into continued extensive media coverage and public debate. This led to the formulation of the three research questions, and the purpose of this research is to answer the research questions and to recommend future research directions.

News Outlets Selection

The current study analysed a sample of articles from the New Zealand Herald, Stuff New Zealand and Radio New Zealand. The study selected mainstream news media articles because there is significant evidence to show that mainstream media share popular attitudes and beliefs and play an important role in determining policy and the interpretations of social issues (Kenix, 2011). These three outlets were selected due to their established nature, level of audience trust, political bias, and substantial audience size.

NZ Herald is a New Zealand legacy media first established in 1870 and is owned by New Zealand Media Entertainment (NZME, 2021). Currently, NZ Herald has an audience base of 1.7 million weekly readers and publishes both print and digital news articles. It was rated 'website and app of the year' (NZME, 2021). In terms of the political spectrum, NZ Herald was rated by the Spinoff as slightly tilted towards the right (Crawford, 2021). According to a public trust report from the Auckland University of Technology, the NZ Herald received a low

score of 5.0 out of 10 (Myllylahti & Treadwell, 2023), which was the same score Stuff NZ received.

Stuff NZ is an entirely digital news platform with the biggest collection of journalists in the country and is one of New Zealand's leading media organisations (Stuff, 2023). Stuff NZ also owns The Dominion Post in Wellington and The Press in Christchurch (Crawford, 2021). Stuff NZ also has over 1.7 million weekly readers online (Shorthand, n.d.) and was rated by the Spinoff as slightly tilted towards the left on the political spectrum (Crawford, 2021).

Radio New Zealand was reported as one of the most trusted news organisations with a score of 5.3 out of 10 (Myllylahti & Treadwell, 2023), which was likely due to their status as an independent public service multimedia organisation that also operates a non-commercial radio service on top of publishing news articles on their website (RNZ, 2023). However, despite RNZ's status as a non-commercial organisation, it is still classified as modern mainstream media as they have a widespread influence over audiences and employ professional reporters who curate articles that align with the dominant ideologies of society (Kenix, 2011). In terms of political bias, while Crawford did not rate RNZ, another independent site rated the outlet as least biased on the political spectrum, with high credibility (Media Bias Check, 2023). Although the methodology used to determine this is fairly limited considering it only involved a minimum of 10 headlines and 5 news stories, this rating could still be considered credible (Media Bias Check, 2023). Further evidence to support RNZ's unbiased stance was when there was a scandal involving an RNZ editor who altered media reports in favour of their preferred political parties, RNZ remained unbiased by reporting the incident on itself. (RNZ, 2023).

Due to the contrasting nature, origin, status, and audience reach of the three outlets, RNZ, Stuff NZ and the NZ Herald were identified as the most suitable New Zealand mainstream media outlets for a comparative study on their coverage of the Matthew Hunt case.

Method

The empirical nature of this study requires analysing selected articles using the framing theory. As the process is subjective in nature, it must be methodical and duplicatable to ensure the validity of the data, and this was a primary rationale for choosing a quantitative research approach in this study. Although qualitative methods offer valuable insights and

contextualisation within New Zealand contexts, a thematic analysis was not chosen due to the preliminary nature of the study and its uniqueness. Therefore, a quantitative approach with content categorisation and analysis of frequency was deemed as more suitable. This is because the selected method could minimise research bias and subjectivity, permit a larger sample size, and offer convenient replication by future researchers to compare and analyse results. Furthermore, based on the literature review; Blankenship (2011) stated that content analysis was considered by communication scholars as the best suited research method to examine the societal impacts of mainstream media on citizens. According to Weber (1990), “a central idea in content analysis is that words of texts are classified into fewer categories” (as cited in Drisko & Maschi, 2016). This technique was specifically selected as basic content analysis was often used to empirically record data on perceived social issues to ultimately advocate for change (Drisko & Maschi, 2016).

McMillan (2000) established five steps to conduct content analysis, which includes developing research questions, selecting and sampling data, utilising code units, coding the data, and analysing and interpreting the gathered data. This research was also influenced by two other framing research reports on the news, “A Framing Analysis of Print News Media Coverage of Terri Schiavo’s Final Days” (Blankenship, 2011) and “The Use of Frames in Newspaper Coverage of and Press Releases about Death with Dignity” (Holody, 2006). Both studies influenced the methodology in this research.

Selection and Sampling of data

As the research questions had already been formulated, the next process involved the selection and sampling of news articles. Considering this is a niche topic with no prior research, the main goal was to provide a preliminary examination of the media coverage of gun violence. After a rigorous process and careful consideration of achievability, it was determined that 12 articles would be sufficient to provide a fair comparison as this is preliminary research.

The technique of systematic sampling was selected for the study as this was the more convenient and efficient option than the random sampling technique for a sample of this size (Zhang, 2008). Newztext was utilised for this research as it contains the full collection of New Zealand news articles and is a research tool which is updated daily (The Knowledge Basket, n. d.). However, a main limitation was that the Newztext results were not filtered and displayed

properly based on the news dates, news source and key words. This led to the decision to manually code and select articles through Newztext and each of the outlet’s websites. Only the search engines on Newztext and the NZ Herald’s website permitted the option to filter the results by dates; however, the search results were still unreliable and required manual filtration and categorisation. This implied that, in addition to utilising Newztext for article searches, the procedure had to be manually replicated three times by searching through each news outlet’s website to verify that no articles were overlooked.

Based on the described procedure, the search result for the keywords ‘Matthew Hunt’ yielded the following total of articles:

Search results for the key words ‘Matthew Hunt’

	<i>Stuff NZ</i>	<i>RNZ</i>	<i>NZ Herald</i>	Total
Newztext	4908	463	942	6313
Website	2040	159	233	2432

The news articles were then manually filtered by date, the headlines, and content. To determine which were substantive articles, those that provided information directly relevant to the case were included in these statistics. The table below indicates the comparison of search results from the Newztext website by date with each of the outlet’s websites.

Story Classification by Date

Radio New Zealand Search Results

Date: 19/06/20 to 10/12/21	Newztext Results	Newztext %	RNZ Website	RNZ Website %	Total
Hunt Case Articles	39	8.42	94	59.11	94
Irrelevant	424	91.57	65	40.88	489
Total	463		159		622

New Zealand Herald Search Results

Date: 19/06/20 to 10/12/21	Newztext Results	Newztext %	<i>NZ Herald</i> Website	<i>NZ Herald</i> Website %	Total
Hunt Case Articles	40	4.24	140	60.08	140
Irrelevant	902	95.75	93	39.91	995
Total	942		233		1175

Stuff New Zealand Search Results

Date: 19/06/20 to 10/12/21	Newztext Results	Newztext %	<i>Stuff NZ</i> Website	<i>Stuff NZ</i> Website %	Total
Matthew Hunt Case Articles	62	1.26	88	4.31	88
Irrelevant	4846	98.73	1952	95.68	6798
Total	4908		2040		6948

To provide a fair comparison across the three outlets, the reports were then classified into textual reports, print articles, reports with video, reports in pictures, and reports with audio or podcast. These were then categorised by the months in which they were published, as this study is limited to digital textual reports. This meant that any article that was not a digital textual report would be excluded from the research. This step was essential for refining the selection of articles to create the optimal sample.

Story Classification by Type

Stuff NZ Reports

	Textual Articles	Reports with Video	Reports in Pictures	Total
June 2020	34	0	0	34
July 2020	11	3	1	15
August 2020	3	0	0	3
September 2020	4	0	0	4
October 2020	1	0	0	1
November 2020	1	0	0	1
December 2020	5	0	0	5
June 2021	2	0	0	2
July 2021	18	1	0	19
September 2021	1	0	0	1
December 2021	2	1	0	3
Total	82	5	1	<u>88</u>

RNZ Reports

	Textual Articles	Reports with Audio/Podcast	Reports with Video	Total
June 2020	16	9	0	25
July 2020	7	2	2	11
August 2020	4	0	0	4
December 2020	1	1	0	2
June 2021	2	0	0	2
July 2021	22	14	0	36
October 2021	2	2	0	4
December 2021	8	2	0	10
Total	62	30	2	<u>94</u>

NZ Herald Reports

	Textual Articles	Reports with Audio/Podcast	Reports with Video	Total
June 2020	32	7	2	41
July 2020	13	6	6	25
August 2020	2	1	0	3
September 2020	4	1	0	5
October 2020	0	2	0	2
November 2020	1	0	0	1
December 2020	0	1	0	1
June 2021	2	0	0	2
July 2021	30	9	1	40
August 2021	0	1	0	1
September 2021	1	0	0	1
October 2021	2	1	0	3
November 2021	1	0	0	1
December 2021	8	4	0	12
Total	96	33	9	<u>138</u>

Based on the categorisations by date from June 2020 to December 2021, there were 82 textual articles from Stuff NZ, 96 textual articles from NZ Herald and 62 textual articles from RNZ. There was a gap in the months of January to May 2021 as there were no articles on the Hunt case during this time in all of the outlets studied. To further classify the articles for a systematic sampling based on the reports in each month, they were divided into hard news, features and opinion.

According to Tuchman (1972), hard news is defined as a type of news with a high news value that demands immediate publication which is often on the topics such as politics, economics and societal affairs. Soft news is defined as news which possesses low levels of essential information and is often written for commercial purposes (Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky, 2010). An opinion article is defined as a type of article written by journalists, columnists and/or people who are independent of the news agency (The New York Times, 2005). Please also refer to Appendix B for definitions.

RNZ Textual Articles

	Hard News	Features	Opinions	Total
June 2020	10	6	0	16
July 2020	3	4	0	7
August 2020	3	1	0	4
December 2020	0	1	0	1
June 2021	1	1	0	2
July 2021	7	15	0	22
October 2021	2	0	0	2
December 2021	5	3	0	8
Total	31	31	0	<u>62</u>

NZ Herald Textual Articles

	Hard News	Features	Opinions	Total
June 2020	9	21	2	32
July 2020	4	9	0	13
August 2020	2	0	0	2
September 2020	0	4	0	4
November 2020	0	1	0	1
June 2021	0	2	0	2
July 2021	6	17	7	30
September 2021	0	1	0	1
October 2021	0	1	1	2
November 2021	0	1	0	1
December 2021	5	2	1	8
Total	26	59	11	<u>96</u>

Stuff NZ Textual Articles

	Hard News	Features	Opinions	Total
June 2020	12	21	1	34
July 2020	5	5	1	11
August 2020	2	1	0	3
September 2020	0	4	0	4
October 2020	1	0	0	1
November 2020	1	0	0	1
December 2020	2	3	0	5
June 2021	0	2	0	2
July 2021	3	15	0	18
September 2021	1	0	0	1
December 2021	1	1	0	2
Total	28	52	2	<u>82</u>

To summarise, during the classification and categorical sampling process of the three outlets, articles were classified based on the primary story focus and based on date (from June 2020 to December 2021) and whether they were relevant or irrelevant to the case. Articles were additionally classified under hard news, features and opinion pieces and whether they were textual, visual, or audio reports. The classification process revealed 62 textual reports from Radio New Zealand, 96 textual reports from the New Zealand Herald and 82 textual reports from Stuff New Zealand that were considered suitable for the purpose of the research. These figures are expected, given that the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ hold a dominant position in the New Zealand news industry and maintain a larger network than RNZ, which primarily concentrates on podcasts and radio. The articles were then further classified into hard news, features and opinion, which revealed that Radio New Zealand had 50% ($n=31$) of hard news and 50% ($n=31$) of features, with no opinion pieces. The New Zealand Herald had 26.80% ($n=26$) of hard news, 60.82% ($n=59$) of features and 11.34% ($n=11$) of opinion pieces. Stuff New Zealand had 34.15% ($n=28$) of hard news, 63.41% ($n=52$) of features and 2.44% ($n=2$) of opinion pieces. These findings indicated that aside from Radio New Zealand, both New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand dominantly published feature articles with incorporated subjective experiences and emotions.

For the next stage of sampling articles, the study was divided into subtopics. As derived from the headlines of the reports, this can be classified into six phases. The first phase answers the fundamental questions of who, what, when, where and why. The second phase is the appearance of the gunman and his accomplice in police custody and in court. The third phase is the news reports on the tributes and narratives about Hunt's death. The fourth phase is on the funeral and commemoration of Hunt. The fifth phase is the public reaction and responses to Hunt's death, while the sixth phase relates to the consequences of the attacks, including the outcomes of the gunman's hearing and charges. Since issues surrounding Hunt's case were focused on whether police should be armed and whether the current laws were sufficient to deter such crimes, this study selected articles from phases two, three and four.

The topics from these phases include:

1. Hunt's mother petitions for tougher sentencing
2. The court hearing and trial
3. Court sentence announcement
4. The Police Commissioner's reported attitudes during the hearing

After careful consideration of all stories, a sample of 12 articles were selected in total from RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ, each of which contained articles on the same topics and similar dates to ensure validity in the comparisons of news framing between these outlets. The journalists who wrote the articles were also considered in the selection process and the sample was planned to contain articles from at least three different journalists in order to provide a fair representation of the news agency. Therefore, the sample included articles written by three different journalists within the same news agency to provide a fair comparison.

News Sample

Radio New Zealand articles:

Article 1

Headline: Mother of slain officer Matthew Hunt petitions for harsher punishments for those who murder police

Journalist: Hamish Cardwell

Date: 2 December 2020

Article 2

Headline: Massey cop shooting trial: Jury finds Eli Epiha guilty of attempted murder

Journalist: Katie Todd

Date: 27 July 2021

Article 3

Headline: Police Commissioner: No 'magic wand' against gun violence

Journalist: RNZ

Date: 28 July 2021

Article 4

Headline: Matthew Hunt shooting: Killer Eli Epiha jailed for life with minimum non-parole period of 27 years

Journalist: Katie Todd

Date: 10 December 2021

New Zealand Herald articles:

Article 1

Headline: Life for a life: Mum of slain police officer Matthew Hunt opens up about heart breaking loss ahead of petition to Parliament

Journalist: Anna Leask

Date: 2 December 2020

Article 2

Headline: Eli Epiha trial: Jurors return guilty verdicts for both defendants

Journalist: Craig Kapitan

Date: 27 July 2021

Article 3

Headline: Police commissioner says death of Auckland officer behind new frontline safety training

Journalist: Georgina Campbell

Date: 22 September 2021

Article 4

Headline: Police killer Eli Epiha sentenced to life in prison, with minimum non-parole period of 27 years

Journalist: Craig Kapitan

Date: 10 December 2021

Stuff New Zealand articles:

Article 1

Headline: Mother of shot policeman Matthew Hunt petitions Parliament for tougher sentences

Journalist: Mina Kerr-Lazenby

Date: 2 December 2020

Article 2

Headline: Auckland police shooting: Eli Epiha found guilty of attempting to murder Constable

Journalist: Catrin Owen

Date: 27 July 2021

Article 3

Headline: Police welcome sentencing for ‘cowardly’ killing of constable Matthew Hunt

Journalist: Troels Sommerville

Date: 10 December 2021

Article 4

Headline: At least 27 years in jail for Eli Epiha who murdered Constable Matthew Hunt

Journalist: Catrin Owen

Date: 10 December 2021

Operationalisation

According to Yacoub (2012), frames often rely upon emotional appeals and can be designed through stories, examples, and values to elicit specific emotional reactions. To commence coding, framing devices needed to be identified. Based on an early constructionist approach to media discourse, framing devices can be distinguished by metaphors, exemplars (i.e., historical examples from which lessons are drawn), catchphrases, depictions and visual images and other symbolic devices found to categorise the discourses, although these have shifted over time (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Reasoning devices were identified to be root or causal analyses, consequences, and appeals to principle, which is a set of moral claims (Gamson & Lasch, 1983, as cited in Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In the earlier literature review section, Every-Palmer et al. (2021), identified five dominant themes in New Zealand media reports on gun violence. Driven by those findings and during the review of the news content selection process, five generic frames were selected for this study. These are the political consequence frame, the legal process frame, the responsibility frame, the relational/conflict frame, and the societal impact frame. Also derived from the literature review on framing theory, three sets of news frame categories were then selected and applied to the five frames to provide a thorough understanding of the issues. The first category is an examination of the levels of substance. William and Kaid (2006) specified that frames

vary in levels of substance and can be classified between ambiguous, a type of frame with little to no clear information, and substantive, a type of frame that is detailed and informative. Both types of frames serve a different purpose when utilised in a news story with contrasting outcomes. The second classification is the valence of frames. Valence refers to the tone of voice when narrating a piece of information and can be classified as negative, positive, or neutral (Holody, 2006). For example, the political consequence and societal impact frame for this case may be negative in nature, but frames could be coded as positive if the article is in favour of the consequences (e.g., the article includes justification for the duration of the sentence with a narrative that it is sufficient).

The next classification of frames is episodic versus thematic frames. According to Iyengar (1991), an episodic frame focuses on individual or specific issues without any references to broader themes or backgrounds, while thematic frames involve narratives around a central subject and explores the development of a specific issue by providing background and societal context to the issue. These two frames indicate the differences in how news articles are framed, and where the focus of the article is, whether it's focused on a specific individual, or on the wider societal context of an issue. These two types of frames have various effects on an audience through the engagement, comprehension, and emotional impact aspects (Iyengar, 1991), and it is therefore important to understand whether the New Zealand mainstream media uses primarily one type of frame or a balanced mixture of both, which is regarded as the most ideal approach. The full list of the frames identified for the study is outlined in the code book (see appendix B) and the code sheet is also attached (see appendix A) with an exemplar (see appendix C). The coding process first involves categorising and sorting suitable news articles for the sample. This is followed by the coding process of news frames on the sample to look for whether the five generic frames (political consequence, legal process, responsibility, societal impact and relational/conflict) were present in each article. And each frame was then coded for substance, valence and whether the frames were episodic or thematic. The sources present in each article were also recorded and notes were made to justify the coding decisions. Please see appendix C for an example.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

In this chapter, the findings are presented through a mixture of tabular and graph formats with descriptions of the results, which are discussed and analysed in the next chapter. This study examined articles from the New Zealand Herald, Radio New Zealand, and Stuff New Zealand over the time period from 19 June 2020, the day Hunt was murdered, to 10 December 2021, the day the killer's sentencing was announced. From this time period, a total of twelve articles were selected as samples from three outlets to conduct a fair comparison of the viewpoints on the same topic. The aim was to determine 1) what were the dominant frames used in the news coverage and 2) if and how the frames used differed between the three outlets.

Firstly, the analysis involved examining each article for the prevalence of the five generic frames: political consequence, societal impact, relational/conflict, legal process and responsibility. Once the frame is determined to be present in the article, each frame is then determined for their substance (substantive vs ambiguous) and valence (positive, negative, or neutral) and whether frames were episodic or thematic. The sources in each article were also recorded and analysed to determine how they supported the dominant frames.

Frames Present

RQ1 asked which dominant frames were present in the articles published by New Zealand mainstream media and RQ2 asked for the comparison of frames across the outlets. To answer both of these questions, all three outlets were analysed for the main and generic frames, these being the political consequence frame, the legal process frame, the relational/conflict frame, the responsibility frame and the societal impact frame. The frequency of all frames present in the sample was then calculated and coded.

Analysis revealed that most articles included 2-4 frames. A total of 17 frames were identified in the New Zealand Herald articles, while 20 frames were identified in Stuff New Zealand articles and 19 frames were identified in Radio New Zealand articles. The legal process frame was present in 17.65% ($n=3$) of the New Zealand Herald articles, 20% ($n=4$) of Stuff New Zealand articles and 15.79% ($n=3$) of Radio New Zealand articles. The Relational/Conflict frame was present in 17.65% ($n=3$) of the New Zealand Herald articles, 20% ($n=4$) of Stuff

New Zealand articles and 21.05% ($n=4$) of Radio New Zealand articles. The Political Consequence frame was present in 23.53% ($n=4$) of New Zealand Herald articles, 20% ($n=4$) of Stuff New Zealand articles and 21.05% ($n=4$) of Radio New Zealand articles. The Responsibility frame was present in 17.65% ($n=3$) of the New Zealand Herald articles, 20% ($n=4$) of Stuff New Zealand articles and 21.05% ($n=4$) of Radio New Zealand articles. The Societal impact frame was present in 23.53% ($n=4$) of New Zealand Herald articles, 20% ($n=4$) of Stuff New Zealand articles and 21.05% ($n=4$) of Radio New Zealand articles.

The presence of 5 frames in the sample

<i>NZ Herald</i> Frames	<i>n</i>	<i>Stuff NZ</i> Frames	<i>n</i>	<i>RNZ</i> Frames	<i>n</i>	Total
Legal Process Frame	3	Legal Process Frame	4	Legal Process Frame	3	10
Relational/Conflict Frame	3	Relational/Conflict Frame	4	Relational/Conflict Frame	4	11
Political Consequence Frame	4	Political Consequence Frame	4	Political Consequence Frame	4	12
Responsibility Frame	3	Responsibility Frame	4	Responsibility Frame	4	11
Societal Impact Frame	4	Societal Impact Frame	4	Societal Impact Frame	4	12
Total	17		20		19	56

This table shows the number of times each generic frame was present in the sample. There is a shared prominence of the societal impact and political consequence frames across all media outlets.

Valence of Frames

To further analyse the dominance of frames in articles, the valence of the frames was examined. To determine the valence of each frame, the frequency of the number of frames that were deemed to be positive, negative, or neutral was calculated and recorded for the study. It was calculated that positive frames (36.84%, $n=7$) were the most prominent in the sample from Radio New Zealand, followed by neutral frames (31.58%, $n=6$) and negative frames (31.58%, $n=6$). Positive frames (47.06%, $n=8$) were also the most prominent in the New Zealand Herald sample, followed by negative frames (41.18%, $n=7$) and neutral frames (11.76%, $n=2$). Negative frames (45%, $n=9$) were the most prominent frame for Stuff New Zealand, followed by positive frames (35%, $n=7$), then neutral frames (20%, $n=4$). Among individual frames, although it was observed that there were variations across them, the political consequence

frame overall contained a positive valence 3 out of 4 times (75%) across all three outlets. Radio New Zealand demonstrated 1 neutral valence 1 out of 4 times (25%) while the New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand both contained 1 negative valence 1 out of 4 times (25%).

Frame Valence: Political Consequence Frame

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Political Consequence Frame	(n =	%	(n =	%	(n =	%
Positive: Pro-ruling	3	75	3	100	3	75
Neutral: Both sides evenly represented	1	25	0		0	
Negative: Anti-ruling	0		1		1	25
Not Present (0)	0		0		0	
Total	4		4		4	

In terms of the legal process frame, it was observed that neutral valence was most dominant across all three outlets. Radio New Zealand contained 3 neutral valences out of 4 times (75%) with 1 article missing legal process frames. New Zealand Herald contained 1 positive valence (25%), 2 neutral valences (50%) and 1 not present in the 4 articles sampled. Stuff New Zealand contained 4 neutral valences out of 4.

Frame Valence: Legal Process Frame

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Legal Process Frame	(n =	%	(n =	%	(n =	%
Positive: Pro-ruling	0		1	25	0	
Neutral: Both sides evenly represented	3	75	2	50	4	100
Negative: Anti-ruling	0		0		0	
Not Present (0)	1	25	1	25	0	
Total	3		3		4	

The Relational and Conflict frame was found to contain an overall negative valence across all three outlets. Radio New Zealand had a negative valence 4 out of 4 times, while the New Zealand Herald had 3 negative valences out of 4 times with 1 not present. Stuff New Zealand also recorded 4 out of 4 negative valences for this frame.

Frame Valence: Relational/Conflict Frame

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Relational/Conflict Frame	(n =	%	(n =	%	(n =	%
Positive	0		0		0	
Neutral: Both sides evenly represented	0		0		0	
Negative (Devastated family/friends)	4	100	3	75	4	100
Not Present (0)	0		1	25	0	
Total	4		3		4	

The Responsibility frame contained an overall positive valence across all three outlets. Both Radio New Zealand and Stuff New Zealand had 4 out of 4 positive valences for the frame, while the New Zealand Herald had 3 out of 4 positive valences with 1 not present.

Frame Valence: Responsibility Frame

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Responsibility Frame	(n =	%	(n =	%	(n =	%
Positive: Pinpointing liability	4	100	3	75	4	100
Neutral: Both sides evenly represented	0		0		0	
Negative: Not admitting liability	0		0		0	
Not Present (0)	0		1	25	0	
Total	4		3		4	

The Societal impact frame contained an overall negative valence across all three outlets. Radio New Zealand had 2 out of 4 (50%) neutral valence and 2 out of 4 negative valences. The New Zealand Herald had 1 out of 4 (25%) positive valence and 3 out of 4 (75%) negative valences. Stuff New Zealand had 4 out of 4 negative valences.

Frame Valence: Societal Impact Frame

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Societal Impact Frame	(<i>n</i> =	%	(<i>n</i> =	%	(<i>n</i> =	%
Positive impact	0		1	25	0	
Neutral: Both sides evenly represented	2	50	0		0	
Negative impact	2	50	3	75	4	100
Not Present (0)	0		0		0	
Total	4		4		4	

The research question asked which dominant frames were used by specific New Zealand mainstream news media to cover the Matthew Hunt case. To answer this, the frequency of ambiguous versus substantive frames was also calculated alongside the presence and absence of frames. It was summarised that in the sample for Radio New Zealand there were 57.89% (*n*=11) substantive frames while 42.11% (*n*=8) were ambiguous. In the sample for the New Zealand Herald, there were 64.71% (*n*=11) substantive frames and 35.29% (*n*=6) ambiguous frames. In the sample for Stuff New Zealand there were 55% (*n*=11) substantive frames and 45% (*n*=9) ambiguous frames. These results showed that overall, substantive frames were more prevalent across all three outlets.

Frame Substance

Political Consequence Frame	<i>RNZ</i>	%	<i>NZ Herald</i>	%	<i>Stuff NZ</i>	%	Total
Substantive	4	100	4	100	4	100	12
Ambiguous	0		0		0		0
Total	4		4		4		12
Legal Process Frame							
Substantive	1	33.33	3	100	2	50	6
Ambiguous	2	66.66	0		2	50	4
Total	3		3		4		10
Relational/Conflict Frame							
Substantive	2	50	1	33.33	1	25	4
Ambiguous	2	50	2	66.66	3	75	7
Total	4		3		4		11
Responsibility Frame							
Substantive	3	75	2	66.66	3	75	8
Ambiguous	1	25	1	33.33	1	25	3
Total	4		3		4		11
Societal Impact Frame							
Substantive	0		1	25	1	25	2
Ambiguous	4	100	3	75	3	75	10
Total	4		4		4		12
Grand Total	19		17		20		<u>56</u>

Each frame was also analysed individually to determine if there were significant differences in terms of the substance within the frames. In the Radio New Zealand sample, the frame that was the most substantive was the political consequence frame ($n=4$) followed by the responsibility frame ($n=3$), the relational/conflict frame ($n=2$), the legal process frame ($n=1$) and the societal impact frame, which was solely ambiguous ($n=4$).

In the New Zealand Herald sample, the most substantive frame was also the political consequence frame ($n=4$), followed by the legal process frame ($n=3$), the responsibility frame ($n=2$), the relational/conflict frame ($n=1$) and the societal impact frame ($n=1$).

In the Stuff New Zealand sample, the most substantive frame was the political consequence frame ($n=4$), followed by the responsibility frame ($n=3$), the legal process frame ($n=2$), the societal impact frame ($n=1$) and the relational/conflict frame ($n=1$). The grand total revealed that for all three outlets, frames were more substantive than ambiguous, which demonstrated that all three outlets covered the issue in a prominently informative way.

Based on the results, it is evident that all three outlets reported the political consequence frame in a substantive way, which means this frame was the main focus of every report in the sample. This aligns with the presence of frames as identified earlier, where the political consequence frame and the societal impact frame were found to be the most prominent frames in the sample. However, for the societal impact frame, the majority of frames were reported in an ambiguous way with only 1 frame from NZ Herald and Stuff NZ each that reported it in a substantive way. This indicates that while the outlets made references to the societal impacts of the case, they did not specify any details. The responsibility frame was found to be the second most substantive frame in the sample, with only 1 ambiguous frame found from each of the outlets. This indicates that the main focus of the sample was on identifying the responsibility side of things, whether it was pinpointing the liability of Epiha or other societal influences. The third most substantive frame was the legal process frame, which showed a variation of context across the three outlets. RNZ reported the legal process frame in a prominently ambiguous way with 2 ambiguous frames, 1 substantive frame and 1 missing from the sample. This meant that overall, there was not a lot of emphasis on the legal proceedings of the case. The NZ Herald reported the legal process frame in a solely substantive way, which meant that the legal process of the case was one of the main focuses in the sample every time it was present. The findings for Stuff NZ indicated 2 substantive and 2 ambiguous legal process frames, which meant the way the frame covered in the sample was dependent on the context and was not always the main focus of the story. As for the relational and conflict frame, both the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ reported mainly ambiguous frames, while RNZ had an equal number of substantive and ambiguous frames. These results explain that although the relational and conflict aspects were not the main focus of the sample, they were still repeatedly mentioned in articles.

Thematic vs Episodic Frames

To provide additional context in order to answer the research question, each frame was then classified between thematic versus episodic frames. It was found that in the Radio New Zealand articles, 57.89% ($n=11$) of the frames were episodic and 42.11% ($n=8$) were thematic frames. While in New Zealand Herald articles there were 70.59% ($n=12$) of episodic frames and 29.41% ($n=5$) were thematic frames. In the Stuff New Zealand articles, it was recorded that there were 81.25% ($n=13$) of episodic frames and 18.75% ($n=3$) of thematic frames. These findings showed that while the number of frames varied, episodic frames were the most dominant and consistent across all three outlets.

Thematic Frames

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>		=
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Political Consequence Frame	2	25	2	50	1	33.33	5
Legal Process Frame	1	12.50	1		1	33.33	3
Relational/Conflict Frame	1	12.50	0		0		1
Responsibility Frame	2	25	0		0		2
Societal Impact Frame	2	25	2	50	1	33.33	5
Total	8		5		3		<u>16</u>

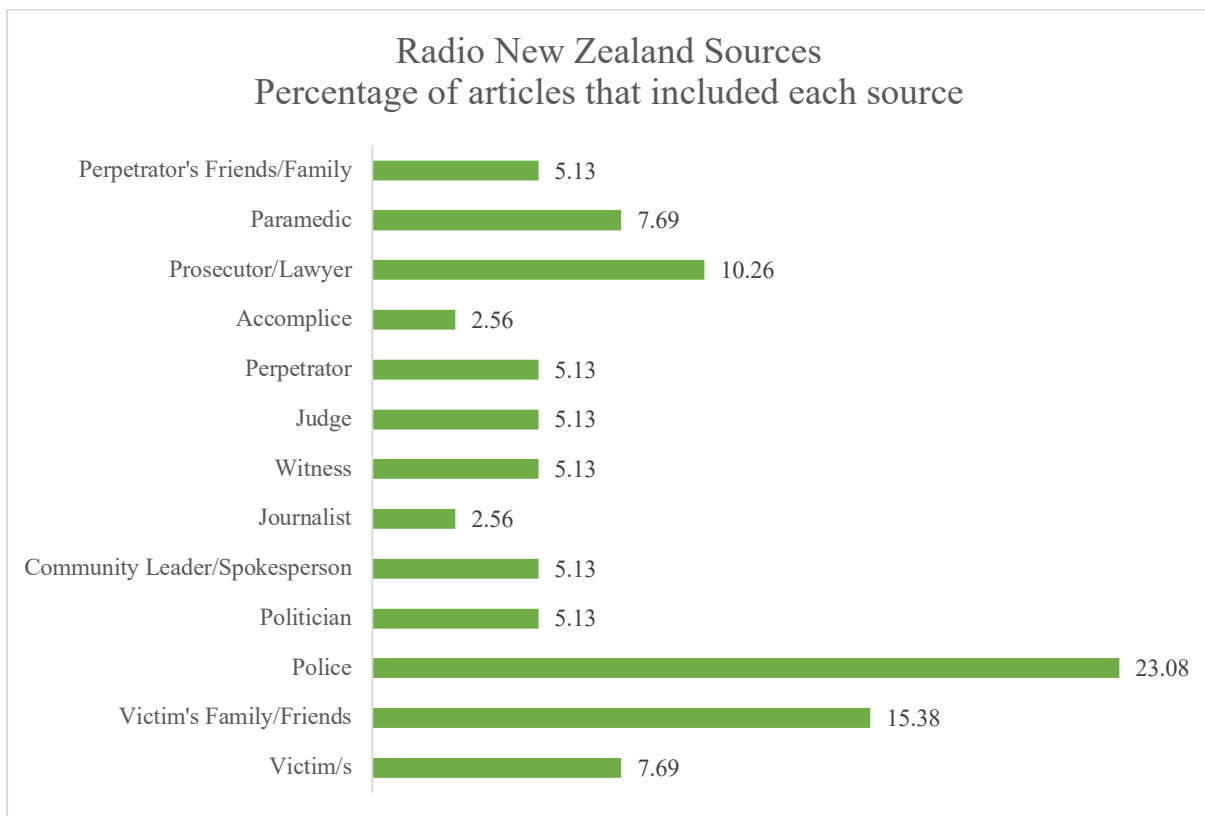
Episodic Frames

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>		=
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Political Consequence Frame	2	18.18	2	16.67	3	23.08	7
Legal Process Frame	2	18.18	2	16.67	3	23.08	7
Relational/Conflict Frame	3	27.27	3	25	4	30.77	10
Responsibility Frame	2	18.18	3	25	4	30.77	9
Societal Impact Frame	2	18.18	2	16.67	3	23.08	7
Total	11		12		17		<u>40</u>

Occurrences of Sources Cited

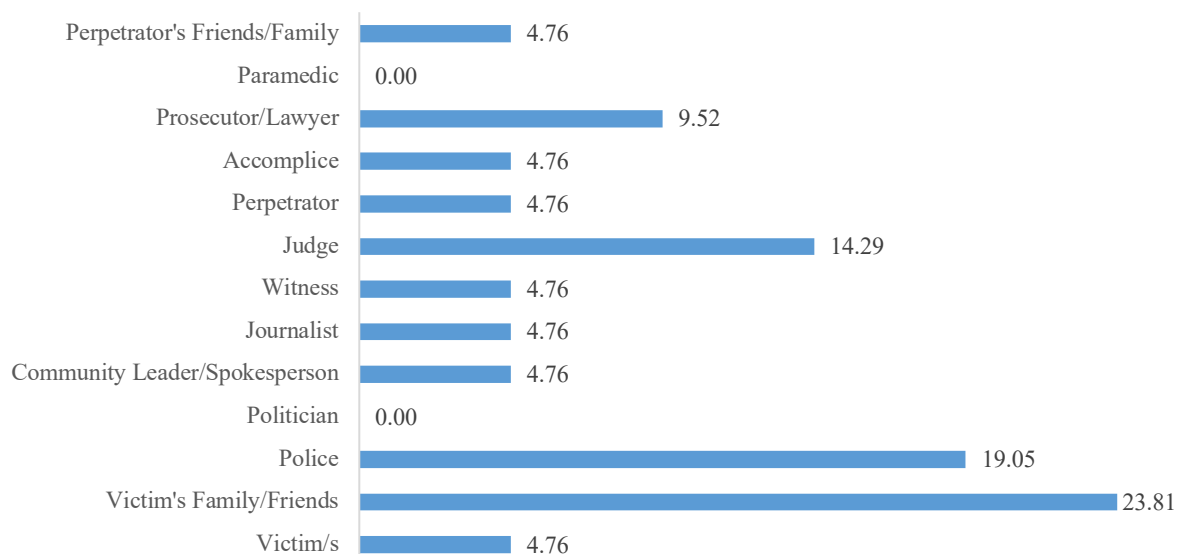
Along with identifying and analysing frames, the sources were also identified and collected from articles to determine how these contributed to media framing and to answer RQ3. In the Radio New Zealand sample, 13 variety of sources were found in total, while in the New Zealand

Herald sample, 11 variety of sources were found and only 7 variety of sources were found in the Stuff New Zealand samples. Results revealed that the sources that were present the most with the highest percentage in Radio New Zealand articles were from the police (23.08%, $n=9$), from the victim's friends and family (15.38%, $n=6$), and from the case's prosecutor or lawyer (10.26%, $n=4$).



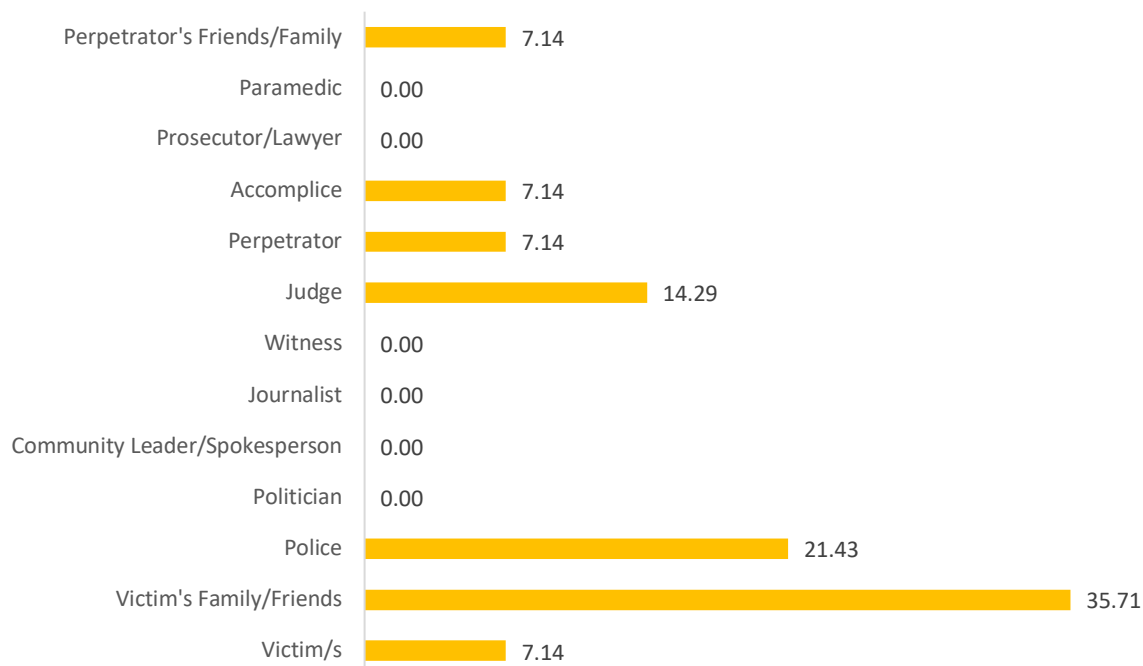
The sources with the highest percentage that were the most cited in New Zealand Herald articles were from the victim's family and friends (23.81%, $n=5$), from the police (19.05%, $n=4$), and from the judge of the case (14.29%, $n=3$).

New Zealand Herald Sources Percentage of articles that included each source



Results in the Stuff New Zealand articles showed that the most frequently cited sources were from the victim's family and friends (35.71%, $n=5$), from the police (21.43%, $n=3$), and from the judge (14.29%, $n=2$).

Stuff New Zealand Sources Percentage of articles that included each source



The sources with the lowest percentage in the Radio New Zealand’s articles were from the journalist and the accomplice in the case while in the New Zealand Herald articles, there were no sources present from any politicians or paramedics who were involved in the case. This was unlike Radio New Zealand articles, which had the highest number of sources for politicians and paramedics among the three outlets. Stuff New Zealand had the least number and variety of sources overall and did not include any sources from prosecutors, lawyers, paramedics, witnesses, journalists, community leaders or politicians.

Occurrences of Sources Cited

	<i>RNZ</i>		<i>NZ Herald</i>		<i>Stuff NZ</i>	
Sources	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Victim/s	3	7.69	1	4.76	1	7.14
Victim's Family/Friends	6	15.38	5	23.81	5	35.71
Police	9	23.08	4	19.05	3	21.43
Politician	2	5.13	0	0.00	0	0.00
Community Leader/Spokesperson	2	5.13	1	4.76	0	0.00
Journalist	1	2.56	1	4.76	0	0.00
Witness	2	5.13	1	4.76	0	0.00
Judge	2	5.13	3	14.29	2	14.29
Perpetrator	2	5.13	1	4.76	1	7.14
Accomplice	1	2.56	1	4.76	1	7.14
Prosecutor/Lawyer	4	10.26	2	9.52	0	0.00
Paramedic	3	7.69	0	0.00	0	0.00
Perpetrator's Friends/Family	2	5.13	1	4.76	1	7.14
Total	<u>39</u>		<u>21</u>		<u>14</u>	

The table indicated that the Police, the victim’s family and friends were the most reported on in the article, followed by the judge and the prosecutor of the case. Although the top two sources were the same across all three outlets, the occurrences of sources were different across all three outlets, with RNZ including much more variety and number of sources than the other two outlets combined. This is a significant finding, considering that earlier in the article filtration process, it was found that RNZ had 35.42% less textual articles than NZ Herald and 24.39% less textual articles than Stuff NZ within the sampling timeline, yet the derived sample findings

indicated that RNZ had the most variety of sources. However, based on the table, it is clear that there was a dominance of authoritative voices, with sources such as the police, the judge, and the prosecutor being some of the highest occurring in the sample of the four articles from each outlet.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to answer the three research questions. Research question one asked “What were the dominant frames used in the textual coverage of the Constable Matthew Hunt case from RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?”. Research question two asked “How do these frames vary across RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?”. To answer these two questions, all of the news reports on the Hunt case from the three outlets were examined and the news reports were categorically sampled to provide a fair comparison of the 3 different news outlets on the same reported topic or any subsequent events within a similar timeframe. The sample was then thoroughly analysed, based on the five generic frames for the case, which were the Political Consequence frame, the Legal Process frame, the Relational and Conflict frame, the Responsibility frame, and the Societal Impact frame. Within these five generic frames, each individual frame was analysed as to whether the specific frame was present or absent, substantive or ambiguous, and whether the valence of the frames was positive, neutral, or negative. Another factor was whether the frames were episodic or thematic. To answer research question three, which was “what were the primary sources cited in the news sample from RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ?”, the sources in the reports were analysed. This is because the literature review revealed the potential correlation of source usage in framing, and the dominance of authoritative voices in the media. An examination of the sources in the sample showed the origin of the information on the topics covered in the reports and the frequency of their occurrence. The content analysis of three mainstream New Zealand news reports revealed that the Matthew Hunt case was worthy of exploration for research and that by answering the research questions it could provide additional perspectives on the New Zealand mainstream media and how the news framed escalating social issues about gun violence. By examining and analysing the differences between the frames from each outlet, the implications are significant, as the framing concept has an influence on the way an audience views specific issues and how they construct reality.

Dominant Frames

All twelve articles from the sample were analysed for the five frames and it was found that not all frames were present in each newspaper. The societal impact frame and the political consequence frame were found to be present in all of the articles, while the legal process frame was the least present ($n=10$) in the sample. In the sample, every article mentioned the societal

impact of the case, particularly on the Police force and the community, with multiple statements made by spokespeople about the “outpouring of shock and grief around the country” (Todd, 2021). With regard to the political consequence frame, every report in the sample either mentioned the trial and the outcome for the perpetrator or the amendments to the law and police policies as a result of the case. The findings additionally revealed that all five frames were present and equally dominant in the Stuff New Zealand sample. However, only the relational/conflict frame, the political consequence frame, the responsibility frame, and the societal impact frame were dominant in the Radio New Zealand sample. In the New Zealand Herald sample, the political consequence frame and the societal impact frame were found to be the most dominant.

Frame Valence

To further provide details to answer RQ2, which was “How do these frames vary across RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ”, the valence of the frames was explored. Previous research by de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006), concluded that frames typically possess a variation of positive, negative, and neutral valence. Valence is of significance to the research when considering that the Hunt case was significantly debated by the public in regard to New Zealand laws, police policies, and the sentencing of the killer. Therefore, the valence of the frames would clarify the difference in tone between the three outlets regarding the five frames. Previous studies have indicated that valence in the news media has the ability to influence an audience’s perceptions and may provide support with regard to controversial and political issues of national interests (Blankenship, 2011). These findings support studying the valence of frames in the Hunt case to understand which frames are the most dominant and to what extent, and to also explain the variations of frames across the three outlets.

Based on the findings of the sample, positive frames were the most prominent in the Radio New Zealand and New Zealand Herald samples and negative frames were the most prominent in the Stuff New Zealand sample. What these findings indicated was that while different outlets used similar levels of substance and similar versions of the frames, the valence of the frames varied between all three outlets.

Radio New Zealand’s findings indicated a small percentage of differences between the positive, neutral, and negative frames, while both the New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand

results showed a wide and distinctive differences between the positive, negative, and neutral frames. These findings signified that RNZ appeared to be the most consistent news outlet out of the three because it was able to evenly distribute the frame valences. Previous studies have suggested that the emotional tone of frames could significantly influence the way audiences comprehend information (Yacoub, 2012). When a particular frame valence is clearly present, it has the potential to evoke a specific response from the audience.

Political Consequence Frame

The frame valence for the political consequence frame was found to be dependent on how the three news outlets framed articles regarding the outcomes of the case, such as the killer's sentencing or law and policy changes. If the articles consisted only of sources supporting the sentence or law changes with justification, it was deemed as positive, and if the articles consisted only of sources speaking against the sentence or law changes, it was deemed as negative. Articles with a mixture of sources from both sides were deemed as neutral. It was found that both the New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand possessed one negative frame valence out of 4 times, while Radio New Zealand was found to have one neutral frame valence out of 4 times. Positive valence however, was the most dominant in all three outlets as it was recorded 3 out of 4 times. These findings demonstrate that positive valence was the most dominant across all three news outlets when it came to the political consequence frames in the Hunt case. The only negative valence observed in the sample was regarding Hunt's mother's petition for stricter laws for police killers. It was deemed as negative, as the article suggested the need for stricter laws, while the positive valences indicated justifications for the killer's sentencing as sufficient and justified. Considering the New Zealand media council's principles of accuracy, balance and fairness, which must be followed by outlets (Media Council, 2024), the results of the valence for the political consequence frame complied with the principles, being a mixture of negative, positive and neutral narratives about the political consequences of the case, which were reported within reasonable parameters.

Legal Process Frame

The frame valence for the legal process was dependent on how the three news outlets framed articles regarding the trial of Hunt's killer, Eli Epiha. If the articles consisted only of sources justifying the charges on Epiha, it was deemed as positive, and if the articles consisted only of sources against the charges of Epiha, it was deemed as negative. Articles with a mixture of sources from both sides were deemed as neutral. Based on the findings, it was found that Radio New Zealand had 3 neutral valences out of the 3 times it occurred in the sample. The New Zealand Herald had 2 neutral and 1 positive valence out of the 3 times it occurred in the sample, and Stuff New Zealand possessed 4 neutral valences out of the 4 times it occurred in the sample. These findings indicated that when it came to the legal process frame and the reporting on the trial, the most dominant valence was neutral across all three outlets. These findings, given a similar tone of voice across all three outlets were deemed as reasonable, as they demonstrated that all three had followed ethical guidelines with an objective and unbiased tone of voice whilst reporting on the legal process of the case.

Relational/Conflict Frame

The valence for the relational and conflict frame was dependent on how the three news outlets framed articles about the relational aspect and conflicts in the Hunt case. Depending on the context and focus, frames were deemed as positive, neutral, or negative. All three outlets were deemed to have a negative valence 100% of the times the frames were present in the articles. This indicated that in response to the relational and conflict aspects, the most dominant valence was negative across all three outlets. These findings aligned with the occurrence of sources in the sample as one of the most cited examples were the victim's friends and family, which meant the outlets consisted of negative and emotive narratives. An explanation for this prominence is because the victim's mother had been very outspoken in the media as she petitioned for stricter laws for police killers. It was noted that the other surviving victims were barely reported in the sample, while narratives from the family and friends of the deceased victim were widely reported. It suggests that the outlets have attempted to use these narratives to evoke emotions and attention from their audience.

Responsibility Frame

The frame valence for the responsibility frame was dependent on how the three news outlets pinpointed liability in the sample. If the articles consisted only of sources pinpointing liability on to an individual or a party, it was deemed as positive. If the articles consisted of sources denying liability, it was deemed as negative, and if there was a mixture of both sides evenly distributed, it was deemed as neutral. Findings indicated that all three outlets possessed a positive valence 100% of the time that the frame was present. This indicated that in response to pinpointing liability in the Hunt case, the most dominant valence was positive across all three outlets. This again illustrates that all three outlets were following ethical guidelines to present a standardised result and that they reported liabilities associated with the case with justification.

Societal Impact Frame

The frame valence for the societal impact frame was dependent on the context and focus of the sample and were deemed as positive, neutral, or negative. Based on the Radio New Zealand findings, the sample consisted of 2 negative and 2 neutral valences out of the 4 times it was present. The New Zealand Herald sample consisted of 1 positive and 3 negative valences out of the 4 times it was present. Stuff New Zealand results consisted of 4 out of 4 negative valences out of the 4 times it was present. These findings indicate distinctive differences across all three outlets and find that overall, negative valences were the most dominant, indicating that all three outlets focused on the negative societal impact in the sample. The NZ Herald and RNZ had a mixture of valences, suggesting that these two outlets created reports that contained a variety of narratives on the societal impact of the case. This aligns with the ethical conduct of reporting fairly through having balanced opinions. In particular, the case was able to bring some benefit to the community such as prompting the police force and government to re-think tactical trainings and reschedule police funding (Campbell, 2021), but these were not mentioned in the Stuff NZ and NZ Herald samples, which led to the dominantly negative valence result. This indicates that the societal impact frame had missing narratives and points in the samples from Stuff NZ and the NZ Herald.

Frame Substance

Frame substance refers to the prominence of the five generic frames that were present in the sample. Research Question 1 asked for the most dominant frames utilised by mainstream media in the Matthew Hunt case. Substantive frames were slightly more extensive than ambiguous frames in the Radio New Zealand sample. In the New Zealand Herald sample, substantive frames were more dominant than ambiguous frames. Substantive frames were also more dominant than ambiguous frames in the Stuff New Zealand sample. Previous research by Holody (2006), defined substantive frames detailed, while ambiguous frames were vague, and this use of frames structured a path for readers.

As substantive frames contain far more details and clearer information, past studies have indicated that the exposure to an abundance of information was far more likely to influence public perceptions and the retention of knowledge (Moldoff, 2007). Therefore, if mainstream media were to publish dominantly ambiguous frames, the effects of it on audience would be noticeably lesser.

As indicated by the findings, all three outlets had more substantive than ambiguous frames overall. This meant that all three news outlets had successfully covered the case in a prominently informative and detailed way. Although RNZ and Stuff NZ also had high numbers of ambiguous frames, it is reasonable to expect ambiguous frames depending on the story's focus and context.

Thematic vs Episodic Frames

To answer the second research question, the five generic frames were delved into further and classified between thematic and episodic frames. Iyengar (2011) defined thematic frames as those that contain wider background knowledge of an issue, while episodic frames tend to be focused on an individual. This is believed by Springer and Harwood (2014) to be used with persuasive intent. In terms of framing effects on public attitudes, research has suggested that episodic frames are more engaging than thematic frames as a result of public interest in individual stories as opposed to generic information around a social issue (Gross, 2008).

In the Hunt case sample, each frame was analysed individually to determine whether they were focused on the individual's issue or were connected to the wider background information of a social issue. It was found that the majority of frames were episodic in the sample for all three news outlets. Both the New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand samples consisted of a vast difference between episodic and thematic frames, while the Radio New Zealand sample possessed a small difference of 15.78% between frames. These findings indicate that while there was a difference in the precise numbers, episodic frames were the most dominant and consistent throughout all three outlets, and this also aligns with Iyengar's (1991) findings from earlier. These findings indicate that while the three outlets had reported on some wider societal context of specific issues in the case, the main focus was on the individual case. There was a distribution of both types of frames, indicating that all three outlets had followed the ethical guidelines of being fair and accurate. Reports from RNZ were shown to be the most unbiased with an almost even distribution of the two types of frames. This is significant as over-reporting or under-reporting episodic or thematic frames can significantly influence audience perceptions, policy implications and public discussions. Therefore, a balanced mixture of both types of frames is considered to be the best practice for news framing.

Political Consequence Frame

In both the Radio New Zealand and the New Zealand Herald samples, there were equal numbers of episodic and thematic frames within the political consequence frame. But Stuff New Zealand had 75% ($n=3$) of episodic frames and 25% ($n=1$) of thematic frames. The episodic results indicated the media's sole concentration on the sentencing outcome of the individual/the killer, while the thematic results indicated the correlation of the case to wider political consequences, including police policy and tactical changes. This is reflected through a quote by Commissioner Coster, "The tools are there now. You can no longer buy the kind of firearm which killed Hunt and the police are working hard on tackling firearm offences with new strategies" (RNZ, 2021).

Legal Process Frame

For the legal process frame, findings indicated a dominance of 7 episodic frames against 3 thematic frames in the total sample. The episodic results indicated the media's sole concentration on the trial of the killer, while the thematic results indicated the correlation of the trial to wider implications. The majority of articles provided detailed recounts of events in the Hunt case and the various perspectives heard during the hearing. However, the articles on Hunt's mother's petition in the sample from all three outlets linked the trial of the killer to wider social issues, such as the proposition to modify the Sentencing and Parole Act of 2002 (Kerr-Lazenby, 2020). There were further references to Australian laws, which banned parole for police killers as seen in the New Zealand Herald article (Leask, 2020). These findings indicate that while most of the articles framed the legal process of the case neutrally, and focused on this case alone, there was one report from each of the outlets that focused on the social concerns around the parole eligibility of police killers. This indicates that all three outlets had added depths to the story and brought attention to an area of interest of public concern.

Relational/Conflict Frame

In terms of the relational/conflict frame, findings indicated a dominance of 10 episodic frames against 1 thematic frame in the total sample. While the majority of the episodic frames indicated the media's focus on the relational and conflict of the individuals directly involved in the case, one report from Radio New Zealand linked the case to the social issue of rising crime rates due to New Zealand's systematic problems of conflict, emphasising that while Epiha was responsible for the tragedy, many other social factors in the community equally played a role, including his upbringing (RNZ, 2021). Unlike the other two outlets, RNZ was the only outlet in the sample which framed the relational and conflict frame in a thematic way. This indicates that RNZ covered the case in a more comprehensive way by providing a wider societal context towards the killer, and stated several social factors that played a role in causing the tragedy to happen.

Responsibility Frame

With regard to the responsibility frame, it was found that episodic frames dominated overall with 9 such frames over 2 thematic frames in the total sample. Only episodic frames were found in the New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand samples, however, in the Radio New

Zealand sample, 2 thematic frames were identified. The episodic results indicate the media's sole focus on blaming the individual, which was Epiha in this case. While the thematic results indicated blame on the individual, there are wider implications for the community and the government, such as the lack of tools available for police (Cardwell, 2020), and the ongoing crimes committed by gangs and the 501 deportees from Australia (RNZ, 2021). RNZ is different from the other two outlets for reporting from a wider perspective on the social contexts of the case. This demonstrated that RNZ reports noticeably contained more frame variations in their narrative of the case. They commented on social issues beyond the case, which can be considered as being more informative, inclusive of other factors and fairer compared to the other two outlets.

Societal Impact Frame

With the societal impact frame, a mixture of 7 episodic frames and 5 thematic frames were identified in the total sample. The Radio New Zealand and New Zealand Herald samples consisted of an equal number of episodic and thematic frames, while the Stuff New Zealand sample contained 1 thematic frame and 3 episodic frames. In summary, the episodic results of the frame indicated the media's sole focus on the impact the case had on those who were directly impacted, such as the victim's friends, family and community. The thematic results of the frame indicate the media's correlation of the case to wider societal debates on police safety and tactical strategies to enhance police safety (Campbell, 2021). The almost equal results show that all three outlets had similar contents, indicating that the information is likely to be accurate, unbiased and within the media council's guidelines.

Occurrences of Sources Cited

Research Question 3 asked "What were the primary sources cited in the RNZ, the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ samples?". To answer this, all of the sources in the sample were collected and analysed. Information sourcing is a highly important aspect of framing because audiences are highly receptive to messages based on their source (Chaiken, 1980). As found in research on social issues, the media relied on citing from authoritative figures to mitigate the risks of distrust from audiences (Kott & Limaye, 2016). This aligns with the findings of this study.

The findings indicate that the police ($n=16$) and the victim's friends and family ($n=16$) were the most cited source in the total sample, followed by the judge in the case ($n=7$). While the victims in the case were police officers, they were classified separately under different sources. Nevertheless, authoritative voices were shown to be the most dominant in the sample. Nelson et al. (1997) stated that the media's reliance on elite sources permits individuals to communicate specific narratives in a more understanding way. Because of the media's preference of source selection, the public is only presented with what was already successfully chosen, further emphasising that the media possesses tremendous power over its audiences in this way (Ryan et al., 2001).

As for the victim's friends and family being another highly cited source, past research has identified victim voices as increasingly heard in the media and were found to be highly influential when it came to policy debates (Walklate et al., 2018). The concept of victimology applies to this phenomenon. As proven by past social movements, when victims speak out against being unfairly targeted or affected by policies, they could generate support from people who have had similar experiences and it helps to advocate and influence policy and law changes (Walklate et al., 2018). This exactly aligned with the Hunt case, where one of the focuses was on Hunt's mother who was outspoken and petitioned for changes to the Sentencing and Parole Act of 2002 to ban parole eligibility for all police killers (Kerr-Lazenby, 2020). The same concept could be applied to the frequent use of police sources, considering this case was a tragic random attack by a gang affiliate on two officers, and was not fuelled by a personal vendetta. This meant that the prominence of police narratives in the sample was not only related to the use of authoritative voices but also representative of the police as victims since the killer intended to kill a "police officer" and not specifically Hunt. Therefore, the frequent use of police narratives in the media could also be interpreted as using victim's voices to create an impact on the audience's perception of policy debates and changes in the Matthew Hunt case.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This section will cover the implications and limitations of this study as well as present some suggestions for future research, and recommendations for the New Zealand media when reporting on gun violence, then conclude on the contributions of this study.

Implications

As evidenced by Baillie (1996), mainstream newspapers possess an influence over public attitudes, shape beliefs and play a role in governing policies. Framing theory states that frames have the ability to persuade public opinion and how issues can be understood. This is why communication research often dissects media framing due to its fluid nature and applicability across different districts of research. Alternatively, framing helps to steer discussions of social issues and guide attention, allowing media agencies to cast specific issues in a more positive or negative light.

The Radio New Zealand, New Zealand Herald and Stuff New Zealand samples revealed that five different generic frames were present at different levels of valence and substance. A variety of sources were found to support the dominant frames in the sample. The main debate that arose in the media's portrayal of the Hunt case was whether police should be armed when on the frontline, whether changes should be made to existing laws and policies, and whether the killer's sentence was sufficient and justifiable.

The findings of the political consequence frame indicate a strong result for positive valence. This suggests a notable inclination from all three news outlets towards favouring the sentencing of the perpetrator and the outcomes. The legal process frame results showed a highly neutral tone from all three outlets, indicating that all three outlets maintained an unbiased and objective stance in their reportage of the trial. The relational and conflict frame was found to contain an overall negative valence throughout all three outlets, which is justifiable and understandable considering the nature of the case and because the victim's family and friends were very outspoken in the media about the sentencing of the killer and New Zealand's existing laws. The responsibility frame results indicated a strong positive valence across all three outlets, which showed that the liability of the case was very clearly focused on the killer, with some suggesting that responsibility should also be levelled at the community and the government. As for the

societal impact frame, a mixture of results was found across the three outlets. The Stuff New Zealand sample possessed only a negative valence for societal impact, while the New Zealand Herald sample possessed a mainly negative valence with a small percentage of positive valence. The Radio New Zealand sample possessed an equal mixture of both neutral and negative valence. These findings show the differences in tone from all three outlets on the societal impacts of the case. Hence, regardless of whether mainstream media acknowledges it, frames inherently favour specific interpretations of issues and prioritise specific perceptions of reality over others. This study has been able to distinguish the measurable biased frames in the media and the existence of it at all implies that the New Zealand mainstream media has the ability to significantly affect audiences' perceptions on issues and policies. Based on the findings, this study has identified several areas in which outlets could improve.

Recommendations

This section reviews significant findings and suggests recommendations for news outlets in terms of news framing when covering escalating social issues. Based on the table of sources, it was evident that RNZ included a wide variety of frames in their narratives about the case, which was a positive outcome as it meant RNZ reports were informative and unbiased. The NZ Herald and Stuff NZ also included various narratives on the case, but these were significantly less than RNZ. Nevertheless, all outlets showed that the victim's friends, family and the police were the most cited sources in the sample, which meant that the reports were likely to be highly influential on audiences when it comes to policy changes because of their status as victims and authoritative figures. Given that the case is about a police officer's death, it is reasonable that the police were one of the most cited sources. However, news outlets should attempt to diversify and provide a wider variety of narratives about the case, as RNZ did, and not over-report from the same sources, as evident in the samples. For one, outlets could actively engage with the community to understand concerns, perspectives and provide a public forum with feedback opportunities on escalating social issues to understand diverse needs and audience views. Rather than solely reporting from authoritative voices, outlets should aim to provide a forum for the public to be heard and report on this, which would align with journalistic principles to serve the people.

As for the episodic and thematic frames recorded in the sample, only RNZ did well by diversifying the framing approaches on the case. Only RNZ had a close number of episodic

and thematic frames, which meant that the case was covered in a comprehensive way by incorporating two types of coverages. Offering a mix of frames also helps to accommodate diverse audience preferences as different audiences will respond differently to variations in the frames. By offering information in various ways, it also means that it may enhance information retention because through episodic frames, audiences may resonate emotionally because of their personal narratives, while thematic frames contribute to deeper understandings of the issue (Iyengar, 1992). Furthermore, offering a balanced level of news frames also means that outlets have been meeting journalistic standards of reporting accurate, fair, and complete articles by adding personal narratives through episodic frames and by adding depth to the story through thematic frames. While both the NZ Herald and Stuff NZ, reported using two types of frames, the number of thematic frames were significantly less than episodic frames in the samples. In summary, while outlets may have their own reasons for framing decisions, a fair distribution of episodic and thematic frames in both the Stuff NZ and the NZ Herald articles would have contributed to a more inclusive and comprehensive coverage of this case.

In terms of the substance of frames, all three outlets possessed more substantive than ambiguous frames. This was a positive finding as it meant that all three outlets attempted to cover the case in a detailed manner, which aligns with the journalism ethics of providing detailed and factual information. This is noteworthy as it supports the idea of ethical journalism in the New Zealand media, and all outlets would do well to maintain this practice.

In terms of frame valence, frame presence indicated that the most present frames in the sample were the societal impact and political consequence frames. This meant that these two frames were the main frames of interest for all of the news outlets. The political consequence frame had a similar valence across all three outlets, which indicated that all three outlets had primarily favoured the results of the case, but still had alternative narratives towards the outcome. This is positive as the mix of results meant the case was covered through multiple narratives and could be seen as unbiased. The societal impact frame also consisted of a variety of valences that indicated a variety of narratives in the sample, except for Stuff NZ, which only consisted of negative valences. The recommendation is for all three outlets to present reports with a mixture of valences, or neutral valences to indicate efforts to be unbiased. In some instances, it may be justifiable for one type of valence to be present, such as reports on Hunt's funeral, which was expected to be framed with solely negative valences out of respect for Hunt, his

family and friends. Generally, the mixture of valences in the recorded sample meant that the outlets had attempted to remain unbiased.

In summary, as the collected statistics have demonstrated, RNZ had the best coverage on the case through reports that diversified framing narratives and sources. These results align with RNZ's previously mentioned media bias rating and therefore aligns with RNZ's stance as the most trusted news source in New Zealand. This study was able to reinforce RNZ's reputation for being factual, unbiased, and informative, based on these findings.

Limitations and Future Research

This section will explain the limitations in this research and suggest future research directions. Due to the scope of the research as a master's thesis, the research was formulated to a size that was manageable and still provided enough information on the research questions. In the literature review, Yacoub (2012) asserted that merely incorporating emotional words at a high intensity was inadequate for manipulating emotional reactions. Other factors such as values, narratives, symbolism, and imagery were deemed as far more affective. However, this study did not explore all of the factors that could affect audience perception, instead focusing exclusively on the various types of narratives present in the news samples and how they can affect audiences. For future research, other factors such as cultural values, symbolism and imagery could be explored further to understand the effects on an audience. Also, since there has not been any research done on how news frames affect audiences within a New Zealand cultural context, future researchers could explore how New Zealand culture shapes the emotional response towards news frames and the emotional sensitiveness of New Zealanders towards those frames. The audience variability, their differences in cognitive and emotional processing, cultural differences and the complexity of issues all merit additional scholarly attention.

Another limitation concerns the validity and representativeness of the sample from each of the outlets and the lack of qualitative content analysis. The methodology section attempted to minimise this by repeating the process of searching and then manually filtering articles on both Newztext and each of the outlet's websites. The articles were collected and coded individually based on their relevance to the research. A sample was then carefully selected based on date, relevance, topic, journalist, and content to ensure the best sample was chosen for the research

as the most representative from the outlet. The limited sample size meant this study was only able to derive information from highlighted topics in the case and in a specific timeframe. While this still permitted a sufficient data set, for future research it could be worthwhile to explore all topics present in the case, including any follow up reports since the time of the research. This could involve incorporating broader terms, such as more recent news coverage of gun violence in the community, additional reports on the changing landscape of gun policies, strategies and the reported outcomes of changes. As for the content's analysis, the study could be enhanced by a deeper exploration of themes surrounding the sentiment and the tone within the content. This could have been achieved by providing textual extracts as illustrative examples. However, qualitative methods were considered unsuitable for the research as it is inherently subjective and could induce bias and affect the reliability and validity of findings. Qualitative research would also mean a smaller sample size and make it challenging for future scholars to replicate. Considering that this research is one of the first of its kind, structuring the research in a quantitative way would minimise research bias and permit an efficient and accurate replication of the study for future scholars to compare findings.

As Goffman (1974) stated, the interpretation of messages is subjective by nature, and this is another limitation in the research, as only one person coded the sample. However, to minimise these risks, the coding process of each sample was repeated multiple times to ensure the fairness of the recorded results. A code book, code sheet and exemplar (please see Appendix A, B and C) were also formulated to demonstrate the process of coding, and this made the process easy to comprehend and duplicate for the next researcher. A note was also written beside selections in the exemplar to justify the decisions and demonstrate that efforts were made to minimise personal bias when coding the sample.

Cultural context is undoubtedly another limitation of framing. Goffman (1974) identified framing as culturally determined and this in turn limits framing because the complexity and variety of cultures means framing is not universally applicable or comprehensible. What is perceived in one cultural context is unable to be clearly communicated to another. This limitation means there could be misinterpretations of cultural nuances. In the case of news portrayals, ethnocentrism and structural racism could be part of the media's bias when formulating news frames (Rahman, 2020) and in turn, what is perceived from the researcher's point of view is limited to one cultural perspective. Although this limitation was unable to be mitigated through having multiple cultural perspectives in the research as only one researcher

was involved, the risk of cultural misunderstanding was minimised as the researcher had a deep understanding and familiarity with New Zealand culture so was able to effectively comprehend news contexts.

Another limitation in this research is the lack of analysis on social media and visual framing devices. Although scholars have attempted to review framing theory in political communications after the shift of communications on to social media platforms, the impacts of social media, algorithms and artificial intelligence on framing research have still yet to be addressed (López-Rabadán, 2022). López-Rabadán also noted great potential in researching visual frames as it requires advanced methodological approaches to delve into understanding the power of visual frames when combined with texts (2022). While acknowledging these gaps in the knowledge, this study's scope is considered to be too limited to address such concerns, and the research was formulated to suit what was manageable for the researcher.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the presence, valences, substances, and variety of frames demonstrate the key differences between the three outlets and pinpointed some areas which could be improved. Overall, there was found to be a prominence of authoritative voices in New Zealand mainstream media. RNZ stood out as the outlet with the best practice on covering this case. Findings supported their status as being unbiased, with a wide mixture of narratives and sources in the sample. Meanwhile Stuff NZ and the NZ Herald could further diversify their frames and the variety of sources they used to provide an even more in-depth coverage with alternative narratives and contexts around the case. All three outlets could further provide opportunities for the public to voice opinions rather than provide a platform solely for authoritative figures, especially when it comes to topics on policy changes and debates. This would support their journalistic principles about serving the public. Considering this research is the first of its kind on gun violence reportage in New Zealand, this framing analysis contributes to the understanding of media reports on this escalating social issue. This study demonstrates the differences in the choice of frames utilised by media outlets and reaffirms their efforts to abide by ethical journalism practice.

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Appendix A Code Sheet

Section 1: News Sample Selection

Explanation: The first section of the code sheet was used in the news sample selection process to determine which news reports were relevant and suitable for the purpose of the study. Please refer to Appendix B for definitions. Please refer to Appendix C to see an example of the code sheet for this research. Please note the code sheet and code book for this research were modified from another framing research paper (Blankenship, 2011).

Article Number

Article Headline

Story Date

Indicate the original date the story was published within the formats of (Day/Month/Year).

Publication

- Radio New Zealand*
- New Zealand Herald*
- Stuff New Zealand*

Primary Story Focus

- Relevant
- Irrelevant

Story Classification

- Hard News
- Features
- Opinions

Article Type (Only Textual is accepted)

- Textual

- Audio/Podcast
- Video Report
- Report in pictures
- Print article

Is the article suitable for the research?

- Yes
- No

Section 2: Identifying Frames in the Sample

Explanation: This section of the code sheet was used to identify the frames present in the sample and to code each frame for its substance, valence, whether it was episodic or thematic, and to record the occurrences of the sources cited.

Article Number

Article Headline

Story Date

Indicate the original date the story was published within the formats of (Day/Month/Year).

Publication

- Radio New Zealand*
- New Zealand Herald*
- Stuff New Zealand*

Political Consequence Frame

Prevalence of frames:

- Present
- Absent

Substance of frames:

- Substantive
- Ambiguous

Valence of frames:

- Positive – Pro-ruling/killer’s sentence
- Neutral – Both sides evenly represented
- Negative – Anti-ruling/killer’s sentence

Is it episodic or thematic?

- Episodic
- Thematic

Legal Process Frame

Prevalence of frames:

- Present
- Absent

Substance of frames:

- Substantive
- Ambiguous

Valence of frames:

- Positive – Pro-ruling/killer’s sentence
- Neutral – Both sides evenly represented
- Negative – Anti-ruling/killer’s sentence

Is it episodic or thematic?

- Episodic
- Thematic

Relational/Conflict Frame

Prevalence of frames:

- Present
- Absent

Substance of frames:

- Substantive
- Ambiguous

Valence of frames:

- Positive – Pro-ruling/killer’s sentence
- Neutral – Both sides evenly represented
- Negative – Anti-ruling/killer’s sentence

Is it episodic or thematic?

- Episodic
- Thematic

Responsibility Frame

Prevalence of frames:

- Present
- Absent

Substance of frames:

- Substantive
- Ambiguous

Valence of frames:

- Positive – Pro-ruling/killer’s sentence

- Neutral – Both sides evenly represented
- Negative – Anti-ruling/killer’s sentence

Is it episodic or thematic?

- Episodic
- Thematic

Societal Impact Frame

Prevalence of frames:

- Present
- Absent

Substance of frames:

- Substantive
- Ambiguous

Valence of frames:

- Positive – Pro-ruling/killer’s sentence
- Neutral – Both sides evenly represented
- Negative – Anti-ruling/killer’s sentence

Is it episodic or thematic?

- Episodic
- Thematic

Occurrences of Sources:

Notes:

Appendix B Codebook

Story Number

Input numbers to identify the story. (e.g: RNZ01)

Story Date

Indicate the original date the story was published within the formats of (Day/Month/Year).

Story Headline

Provide the exact headline for each story, subheadings are not required.

Original Publication

- New Zealand Herald*
- Radio New Zealand*
- Stuff New Zealand*

Story Classification

Answers must be one of the following:

- Hard News - This is defined as an article that is most likely to appear on the main page or in a hard news section of a media outlet. The main content of this kind of news should be facts and pertinent information.
- Features – This is defined as an article that is most likely to appear in a soft news area of a media outlet, such the entertainment or feature pages. This type of news should primarily consist of various narratives and any information of interest.
- Opinion pieces – This is defined as narratives that include the viewpoints of those working for the media company, such as opinion pieces written by columnists or journalists.

Primary Story Focus

- Relevant
- Irrelevant

'Relevant' articles are determined by the news coverage and whether the primary focus was on the Hunt case. The coverage should primarily consist of information on the progress, recount of events or impacts of the case. Articles consisting of other information is acceptable as long as the primary focus is on the case itself. Articles that did not feature an extensive coverage of the case were deemed as 'irrelevant' by the coder.

Frames:

A media frame is a "broad organising theme for selecting, emphasising, and linking the elements of a story, such as the scenes, characters, actions and supporting documentation" (Bennet, 2002, p. 42, as cited in Brockhaus et al., 2011).

The Five Frames

- Political Consequence Frame -This is defined as a focus on any short or long-term political consequence that would come from the Hunt case. This could involve current or potential incarceration or policy/law changes as a result of the case.
- Legal Process Frame -This is defined as a focus on the legal aspects of the case, in terms of laws that were broken and how the killer was treated during the trial.
- Relational/Conflict Frame -This is defined as a focus on the relational aspects of the case, such as Hunt's connections to family and co-workers and the conflicts present in the stories/case.
- Responsibility Frame -This is defined as a focus on who or what is to be blamed for this case.
- Societal Impact -This is defined as a focus on the societal impacts of the case and how it has affected the nation or the community.

Answers must be constrained to one of the following, per frame out of the 5 listed above.

Section one: Presence versus absence

- Present – This is to indicate whether the 5 frames are present despite their prominence.
- Absent – This is to indicate that the frame in question is not present in the coverage.

Section two: Substance of frames

- Substantive – The frame being coded for its prominence here. Although this frame may or may not be the sole focus of the story, the frame is repeated many times in the article.
- Ambiguous – The frame is being coded for negligible to moderate prominence here. Although the frame is mentioned in the article, the main focus is elsewhere.

Section three: Valence frames

This part refers to the overall tone of the frame if it's being portrayed as one of the following.

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Section four: Episodic versus thematic

- Episodic – This refers to the way the storytelling emphasises an individual's experience or a specific event to illustrate the issue.
- Thematic – This refers to the whether the storytelling emphasises a broader trend or the social background on a topic to that illustrates the issue.

The last section involves identifying the sources in the news coverage, which could be any of the following types of sources.

Sources may include:

1. Victim/s
2. Victim's Family/Friends
3. Police
4. Politician
5. Community Leader/Spokesperson
6. Journalist
7. Witness
8. Judge
9. Perpetrator
10. Accomplice
11. Prosecutor/Lawyer
12. Paramedic
13. Perpetrator's Friends/Family
14. All other sources

Appendix C Example of Code Sheet

Section A: News Sampling Process

Article Number: RNZ29

Article Headline: Mother of slain officer Matthew Hunt petitions for harsher punishments for those who murder police.

Story Date: 02/12/2020

Publication

- Radio New Zealand
- New Zealand Herald
- Stuff New Zealand

Primary Story Focus

- Relevant
- Irrelevant

Story Classification

- Hard News
- Features
- Opinion

Article Type (Only Textual is accepted)

- Textual
- Audio/Podcast
- Video Report
- Report in pictures
- Print article

Is the article suitable for the research?

Yes

No

Section 2: Identifying Frames in the Sample

Article Number: Sample RNZ01

Article Headline: Mother of slain officer Matthew Hunt petitions for harsher punishments for those who murder police.

Story Date: 02/12/2020

Publication

Radio New Zealand

New Zealand Herald

Stuff New Zealand

Political Consequence Frame

Prevalence of frames

Present

Absent

Substance of frames

Substantive

Ambiguous

Valence of frames

Positive

Neutral (Note: Both sides of the story were equally reported e.g: for & against law changes)

Negative

Is it episodic or thematic?

Episodic

Thematic (Note: This is on the issue of crimes committed against the police force which means a wider societal context beyond just the killer/case)

Legal Process Frame

Prevalence of frames

Present

Absent

Substance of frames

Substantive

Ambiguous (Note: The legal process of the case was not mentioned but it briefly mentioned the legal process of the people who attacked the first responders)

Valence of frames

Positive

Neutral (Note: Both sides of the story were evenly distributed)

Negative

Is it episodic or thematic?

Episodic

Thematic (Note: This is on the issue of crimes committed against police and therefore sparked debate towards police killer's legal process and not limited to the individual's (Epiha) legal sentencing)

Relational/Conflict Frame

Prevalence of frames

Present

Absent

Substance of frames

Substantive

Ambiguous (Note: Article mentioned grieving mother, but this is not the main point of the report)

Valence of frames

Positive

Neutral

Negative (Notes: Devastated mother, one sided report on the victim's family)

Is it episodic or thematic?

Episodic

Thematic

Responsibility Frame

Prevalence of frames

Present

Absent

Substance of frames

Substantive

Ambiguous (Note: Epiha's responsibility is not the main point but rather all police killers)

Valence of frames

Positive (Notes: Blame is accurately identified on the perpetrator and wants NZ law system to provide harsher punishment for all police killers)

Neutral

Negative

Is it episodic or thematic?

Episodic

Thematic (Note: Beyond blame and responsibility of the killer, it is believed there is a wider societal context of responsibility which lies within the community)

Societal Impact Frame

Prevalence of frames

Present

Absent

Substance of frames

Substantive

Ambiguous

Valence of frames

Positive

Neutral (Both sides represented)

Negative

Is it episodic or thematic?

Episodic

Thematic (Note: The societal impact frame of the case is determined as thematic as the impact will affect all police killers in the future and not just Epiha)

Occurrences of Sources:

Victim's Family x1

Police x1

Politician x2

Community Leader/Spokesperson x2

Journalist x1

Witness x1

Judge x1

Notes from sources:

- Hunt's mother presents a petition with 40,000 signatures for a mandatory life sentence for police killers to parliament.
- Police Minister Williams states that the petition will undergo the usual select committee scrutiny, refrains from committing to enact changes, and emphasises the government's existing efforts to reduce gun crime through current legislation work.
- The National Party Spokesperson pledges support for frontline police but does not endorse arming them.
- A National MP argues that arming the police is necessary to address the current gun crime rate.
- Law lecturer Quince contends that police killings are rare, and the police in NZ are relatively safe. Quince opposes changing legislation after extreme cases like Hunt's, suggesting it may result in flawed laws. Quince also asserts that Hunt's petition may disproportionately affect Māori and Pasifika people.
- The director of Just Speak asserts that prisons as a default response to crime contribute to increased harm in the community. Restorative models are believed to yield better outcomes, supporting well-being, and fostering safer communities. The director criticises the current justice approach in NZ, emphasising the need to cease investing in resources for a failing system and seek alternative outcomes.