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**Gender and governance  
in the Pacific media:  
Media representation of women in politics  
in New Caledonia**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Philosophy in International Development at  
Massey University, Manawatū, New Zealand.

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## Abstract

The Pacific region ranks lowest in the world in terms of the proportion of female representatives in national legislative bodies. The media, amongst other factors, plays a role in women's political representation. This thesis focuses on the relationship between the media and women's political representation in the Pacific.

Research identifies the media as a key factor in the formulation of public opinion. Gender-related aspects of media political coverage can influence gender equality in the political sphere. My research contributes to the discussion on gender and politics by exploring how female politicians in New Caledonia perceive media portrayals of women in politics, and how these perceptions influence their approach to politics.

My study applies a feminist theoretical framework and uses qualitative research methods. Through semi-structured interviews I undertook a thematic analysis of the perceptions of female members of the New Caledonian Government and Congress regarding their portrayal by the media and the influence this has on them.

The findings of my research indicate that in New Caledonia women in politics lack visibility in the media. Female politicians who took part in the research observed that this poor media visibility was exacerbated by political structures which do not encourage women's access to decision-making roles. In general, the media accepts the status quo regarding gender equality in the political sphere, which results in the reinforcing of masculine dominance of the political sector through the media. The interviews further indicated that, while most female politicians recognise the potential of the media for gender equality in politics, their position on the significance of the media is not homogenous. Loyalist politicians maintained that the media is a critical element in politics, whereas pro-independence politicians downplayed its importance. Highly-ranked politicians also noted a greater degree of gender stereotyping than junior politicians.

My research concludes that political affiliation and experience are two key elements that affect the media's influence on female politicians in New Caledonia. However, generally, the media appears to have limited influence on female politicians.

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## Acronyms

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| AFP                | Agence France Presse   |
| APJC               | Asia Pacific Journalism Centre   |
| BPA                | Beijing Platform for Action  |
| CBA                | Commonwealth Broadcasting Association  |
| CEDAW              | United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of<br>Discrimination Against Women   |
| CESE               | Economic, Social and Environmental Council   |
| CID                | Council for International Development  |
| CSO                | Civil society organisation   |
| DNC                | Demain en Nouvelle-Calédonie   |
| ESCAP              | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific   |
| FLNKS              | Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front  |
| FSM                | Federated States of Micronesia   |
| GDP                | Gross domestic product   |
| GMMP               | Global Media Monitoring Project  |
| IPU                | Inter-Parliamentary Union  |
| ISEE               | Institut de la statistique et des études économiques de la Nouvelle-<br>Calédonie (New Caledonia Institute of Statistics and Economic Surveys) |
| LNC                | Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes  |
| MDG                | Millennium Development Goal  |
| MP                 | Member of Parliament   |
| NC1 <sup>ère</sup> | Nouvelle-Calédonie Première  |
| NGO                | Non-governmental Organisation  |
| PACMAS             | Pacific Media Assistance Programme   |
| PIF                | Pacific Islands Forum  |
| PIFS               | Pacific Island Forum Secretariat   |
| PIFS               | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  |
| PINA               | Pacific Islands News Association   |
| PNG                | Papua New Guinea   |
| PPA                | Pacific Platform for Action  |
| RRB                | Radio Rythme Bleu  |
| SDGs               | Sustainable Development Goals  |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| SPC    | Pacific Community  |
| SPREP  | Pacific Regional Environment Programme                           |
| SPTO   | South Pacific Tourism Organisation                               |
| TSMs   | Temporary Special Measures                                       |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Programme                             |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WAVE   | Women Advancing a Vision of Empowerment                          |

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## Glossary

A glossary of French terms and local expressions used in the thesis:

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| La brousse                     | <i>the bush</i> ; designates everywhere on the mainland north of the capital Noumea   |
| Calédonien/nne                 | <i>Caledonian</i> ; a New Caledonian-born person usually of European origin although it can also refer to the general population of New Caledonia regardless of cultural origin |
| La coutume                     | a traditional custom ceremony or customary protocol   |
| Les Evénements                 | a period of political unrest verging on civil war in the 1980s commonly translated as <i>the Troubles</i> in English  |
| La Grande Terre                | the main island of New Caledonia  |
| L'invité politique du dimanche | <i>Sunday's political guest</i> ; a television news segment on NC1 <sup>ère</sup>   |
| Kanak                          | Indigenous Melanesian from New Caledonia  |
| Popinée                        | a traditional dress worn by Kanak women   |
| Tribu                          | a Kanak community or village  |
| Tricolore                      | the tricolour French national flag  |

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Women are underrepresented in most parliaments throughout the world and particularly in the Pacific where the proportion of female parliamentarians is the lowest globally (UN Statistics Division, 2015). The media is an important factor in gender equality since it is influential in the formulation of public opinion (Anderson, Diabah, & hMensa, 2011; UN Statistics Division, 2015). In the political context, the media occupies a central position regarding power to influence the outcome of elections as it is the primary source of information on which most voters base their opinion (Bennett and Entman, 2001, as cited in Aalberg & Stromback, 2011; Kahn, 1994; Meeks, 2013). These observations demonstrate a connection between gender, politics and the media. The topic of this research examines the interconnection of these three areas.

My research focuses on the relationship between the media and women’s political representation in the Pacific. It seeks to add to the literature on media and gender in politics by exploring the role of the media in shaping women’s political representation. It also aims to contribute to discussions on the region’s poor ranking regarding women’s presence in political institutions.

I begin this chapter by explaining the choice of my research topic. I go on to state the research aim and questions, and explain why the research is important. I provide some terminology definitions then briefly introduce women’s political representation in New Caledonia before outlining the structure my thesis will take.

## 1.2 Choice of research topic

My thesis originates from both professional experience and a personal interest in the media sector as well as in gender equality. When considering a topic for my research, I decided to incorporate both areas into the sphere of my study. Hence, the thesis considers the role of the media in relation to women’s representation in politics. It explores how female politicians in New Caledonia perceive the media’s portrayal of women in politics and how this perception influences their approach to politics.

I have lived in New Caledonia for the past 18 years, arriving in 1998 just a few months after the signing of the landmark Noumea Accord, which set the country on a path towards greater political autonomy from France. On arrival, I began working as a free-lance journalist and for several years I covered the country's current affairs in which political news featured prominently. The Noumea Accord had ushered in the beginning of a dynamic era of political change and progress that saw the establishment of new political institutions, including the Government of New Caledonia and a revamped Congress. The early years of the accord also heralded the arrival of women at the forefront of the political scene. Several years later, I found myself working in communications and development for a regional agency. My communications work had a strong focus on gender equality. Amongst the areas of concern was women's political representation, an area in which the Pacific was faring particularly badly.

Combining my background in journalism and my interest in gender and development, I decided to explore what role the media plays in promoting women's political representation. Since I had followed the progress of women in politics in New Caledonia with interest, New Caledonia was the obvious choice for my case study. With significantly more women represented in its political institutions in comparison to most Pacific countries and territories, I was curious to understand how the media in New Caledonia portrays female politicians and what influence this might have on women's participation in politics.

### **1.3 Research aim and questions**

In order to investigate the role of the media in women's political representation, my research seeks to understand how media portrayals of women in politics affect female politicians. My thesis aims to consider the following question:

*How does the mainstream media's representation of women in politics influence female politicians' approach to politics in New Caledonia?*

To achieve this aim I will examine the following research questions:

1. How do female politicians perceive their portrayal by the media?
2. How do female politicians' perceptions of their portrayals in the media influence their approach to politics?
3. How do media organisations address gender equality in news gathering?

I use semi-structured interviews to gain an insight into the perceptions of female politicians, and to learn about the media's political news-gathering procedures. The most important element of the research consists of interviews with female politicians. This explores how female politicians perceive media portrayals of women in politics and what challenges or opportunities this presents to them. I also carry out a comparative analysis between Indigenous Kanak women and non-Indigenous women's responses, bearing in mind that the latter group is made up of women from diverse cultural backgrounds.

I conduct a second set of interviews with representatives from mainstream media organisations. These secondary interviews complement the findings of the interviews with politicians by exploring how media practitioners, on the other side of the fence so to speak, approach gender equality in political reporting. The media interviews investigate the level of gender consciousness in the media's reporting processes. They also reveal whether media representatives follow a structured or ad hoc approach to gender equality in political reporting. In addition to the interviews, the research relies on documentary sources.

#### **1.4 Research rationale**

Gender equality, including in politics, leads to better results in sustainable human development efforts (UNDP, 2013). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize that women's full involvement at all levels of decision making, including in political leadership, is fundamental for the goals to be achieved (United Nations, 2015b). International agreements, including the Beijing Platform for Action (United Nations, 1995), highlight the media as a tool for women's political progress. Therefore, it is important to consider the media in discussions on women's political representation. The media offers significant potential for gender equality in the political sphere because it plays an important role in influencing political outcomes. Most voters formulate political opinions based on information provided by the media (Bennett and Entman, 2011, as cited in Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 167; Kahn, 1994, p. 154; Meeks, 2013, p. 67). Political campaigns have become progressively media focused (Norris, 2000, as cited in Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 372). The media is also a significant force in the setting of political agendas through its influence on political decision-makers (Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemans, 2007, p. 831). Therefore, media coverage is critical for politicians (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 171).

Research into gender and political reporting has highlighted various challenges for female politicians. For example, gender stereotypes are prevalent in political reporting (Banwart, Bystrom, & Robertson, 2003, p. 671; Kim, 2012, p. 615; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 385). Media coverage reinforces the male dominance of the political sector in which women are confined to a limited range of traditionally feminine sectors (Anderson et al., 2011, as cited in Jaworska & Larrivéé, 2011; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 383; Rahman, Eijaz, & Ahmad, 2015, p. 337). Furthermore, the media sometimes portrays female politicians as celebrities which diminishes women's political credibility (van Acker, 2003, pp. 123-129). However, it is important not to overlook the media as a potential source of empowerment (Adcock, 2010, p. 151).

In the Pacific, there are critically low proportions of women in national parliaments (Purser, 2014, p. 17). While there has been some scholarly and practice-oriented research conducted on various aspects of gender and politics in the Pacific, such as the influence of political systems and processes on women's representation, or women's experiences in politics (Corbett & Liki, 2015; Fraenkel, 2006; Scales & Teakeni, 2006; Zetlin, 2014), very little has been written specifically on the relationship between the media and women in politics. My research takes a theoretical approach to explore the role of the media in shaping women's political opportunities. It considers the relationship between gender portrayals in the media and political representation. It fills a gap in knowledge by discussing how the perception of female politicians in New Caledonia regarding their media portrayals influences their approach to politics.

## **1.5 Definition of terms**

Definitions of some key terminology used in this thesis are given below:

### ***The mainstream media***

The mainstream media is also referred to as the news media, the mass media or the traditional media. It generally has a wide circulation or reach. In contrast, the non-mainstream media, such as community media or specialised media outlets, generally refers to smaller organisations with more restricted circulation. While mainstream media organisations may have an online presence through websites, blogs or via social media platforms, they generally do not include exclusively internet-based media outlets. The English Oxford Dictionary provides the following definition: "Traditional forms of mass

communication, such as newspapers, television, and radio (as opposed to the Internet) regarded collectively” (Oxford University Press, 2017).

### ***Gender***

Gender refers to socially constructed traits, opportunities and relationships accorded to a person’s sexual identity based on social norms and expectations. Gender norms and expectations often lead to differences and inequalities between the sexes with regard to responsibilities, activities, resource allocation and control, and decision-making (UNDP, 2008, as cited in Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012, p. 21).

### ***Gender equality***

Gender equality is concerned with people’s equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of their sex. It does not imply that women and men are the same, but rather that access to their rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not be dependent on their sex. Gender equality concerns both men and women (UNDP, 2008, as cited in Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012, p. 21).

### ***Gender equity***

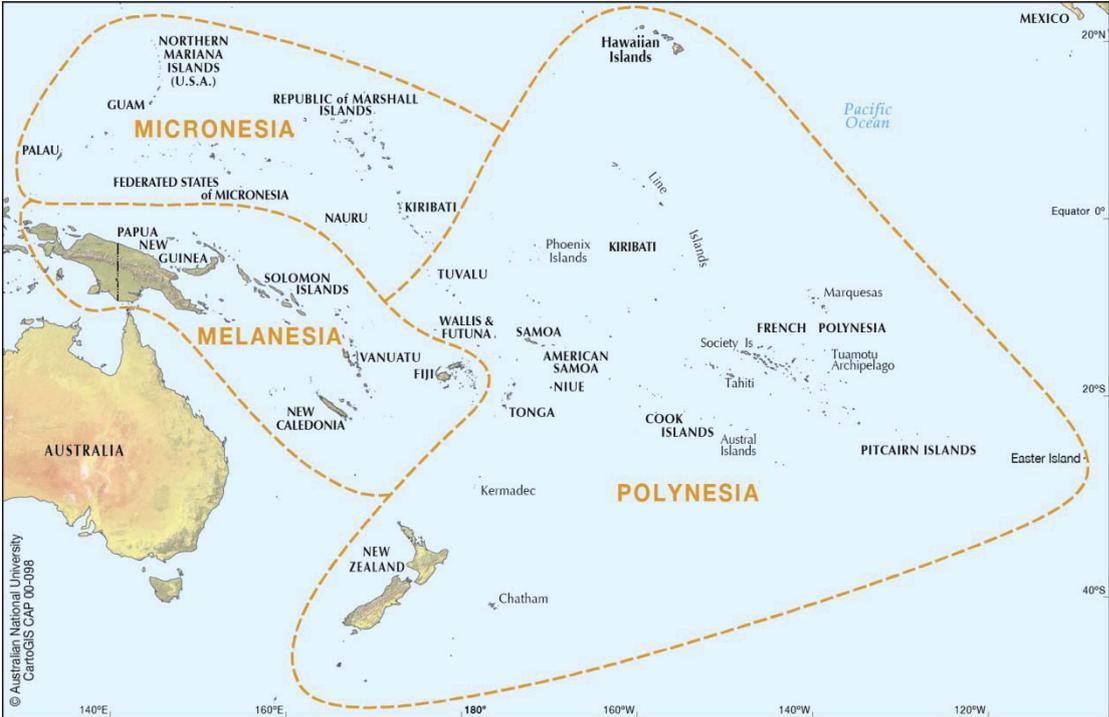
Gender equity refers to men and women gaining fair treatment in accordance with their individual requirements. This might require equal treatment or it might require different treatment which is considered equivalent to address a disadvantage so that both men and women can access or exercise the same rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (IFAD, 2016).

## **1.6 The research context**

The United Nations recommends a minimum proportion of 30 percent representation in national parliaments as a baseline in order for women’s political representation to have a meaningful impact (UN Women, 2015, Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation). Currently, the global average stands at around 23 percent. The Pacific holds the unenviable record of the region with the lowest proportion of female parliamentary representatives (IPU, 2016).

My research seeks to complement the literature regarding the relationship between women’s political representation and the media in the Pacific<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1.1). My fieldwork was undertaken in New Caledonia which is situated within the Pacific Melanesian triangle. The administrative responsibilities of governing New Caledonia, a French overseas territory, are shared between the local Congress and Government, and the French state. These responsibilities are set out in the Noumea Accord, an agreement between France and New Caledonia that was signed in 1998 (Gouvernement de la France, 1998).

**Figure 1.1 Regions and countries of the Pacific**



Source: ANU (2016)

At around 45 percent, women are well represented in the two local institutions, the Congress and the Government (ISEE, 2014). However, women have only started occupying front row seats in politics in the last 20 years or so (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013). Prior to the turn of the millennium, they were largely absent. Women’s involvement in various local associations played a central role in women’s political empowerment (Berman, 2005). Another critical factor in their increased representation in politics was the application of a law requiring equal access for men and women on political

<sup>1</sup> For my research purposes, the Pacific region encompasses the countries and territories of Melanesia (Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu), Polynesia (American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna) and Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau) also known as Oceania.

party electoral lists. Known as the political parity law, this measure was established in 2000 and resulted in a major improvement in women's representation in political institutions (Bargel, Guyon, & Rettig, 2010, p. 14).

The public in New Caledonia mainly accesses political news through the mainstream media. This includes print and broadcast media organisations which are represented by newspaper, radio and television outlets. Much of the news coverage focuses on the capital, Noumea, and politics receives substantial attention. However, a range of non-mainstream media sources: "are also changing the media landscape of the archipelago and also provide a space for critical voices from outside the mainstream media" (MacLellan, 2009, as cited in M'Bala-Ndi, 2013, p. 78). There are a number of well-established and more recent Community media publications and broadcasters. As noted by MacLellan (2009), the popularity of internet-based media options including social media platforms is increasing. However the mainstream media predominates the media landscape.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

My thesis looks at understanding the influence of the media on female politicians through the perceptions of female politicians regarding their media representations. To broaden the scope of this understanding, it also seeks the perspective of media representatives on their organisational approach to gender equality. It is divided into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 provide a literature review. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on women in politics and the media from a global perspective. It considers how the perception and role of women in politics is shaped by gender norms and expectations. It examines gender stereotyping in media institutions and in news coverage, and looks at the different ways in which media gender bias is demonstrated in political coverage. Chapter 3 elaborates on Chapter 2 by focusing on what the literature reveals about the relationship between women in politics and the media in the Pacific region. It begins with an overview of gender and politics in the Pacific including in Australia and New Zealand, then considers the link between the mainstream media and women in politics.

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative research methodology I apply in my research and explains my use of a feminist theoretical approach. It highlights ethical considerations related to my research and describes my positionality and the reflective process through

which I will endeavour to address potential bias. It also considers research tools, sampling criteria, as well as data analysis strategies.

Chapter 5 provides some background on New Caledonia to give context to my research. It gives a historical overview of politics in New Caledonia and the evolution of women in politics. It then introduces the media sector before exploring the media's role in relation to women in politics.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of my research based on data collected through my interviews with politicians and media representatives. It details the interview process and provides an overview of the questions that were used to guide the interviews. It then presents the findings of the research.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents a qualitative analysis of my fieldwork findings in relation to findings from my literature review and draws conclusions related to the research questions.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has given a brief introduction to my research which focuses on the role of the media in advancing women's political representation. The media plays an important role in politics through its power to influence public opinion. Therefore, it has significant potential to influence women's political representation. Women in New Caledonia are well represented in political institutions, and politics receives substantial news coverage. Women's arrival in politics is, however, relatively recent.

I began this first chapter by stating the reasons that led to the selection of my research topic. I then stated the aim of my research and presented the research questions that my study will answer. I provided a rationale for the thesis and defined some of the key terminology used in this study. I concluded the chapter with an outline of the structure my thesis will follow. The next two chapters will provide a review of existing research on gender, politics and the media, globally and in the Pacific.

## **Chapter 2 – Gender (in)equality in political reporting: the global context**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Women’s representation at decision-making level lags behind men’s in both the private and public sectors including in political institutions (UN Statistics Division, 2015, p. 119). The proportion of female parliamentarians globally currently only stands at 22 percent (UN Women, 2015).

My research reflects on the links between the media and the proportion of women in political office. It considers how the media’s representation of female politicians influences their approach to politics. The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a basis for my exploration of the research questions by highlighting some of the main issues with regard to gender bias in both the political sphere and in the media, and by discussing how these issues interrelate to make an impact on women’s political representation. I first examine how gender dynamics shape the perception and role of women in the political arena and how this is reflected in the proportion of elected women at the national level. My review then focuses on gender stereotyping in the media both within media institutions and in news reporting practice. Finally, I reflect on the various ways in which media gender bias manifests itself in political coverage.

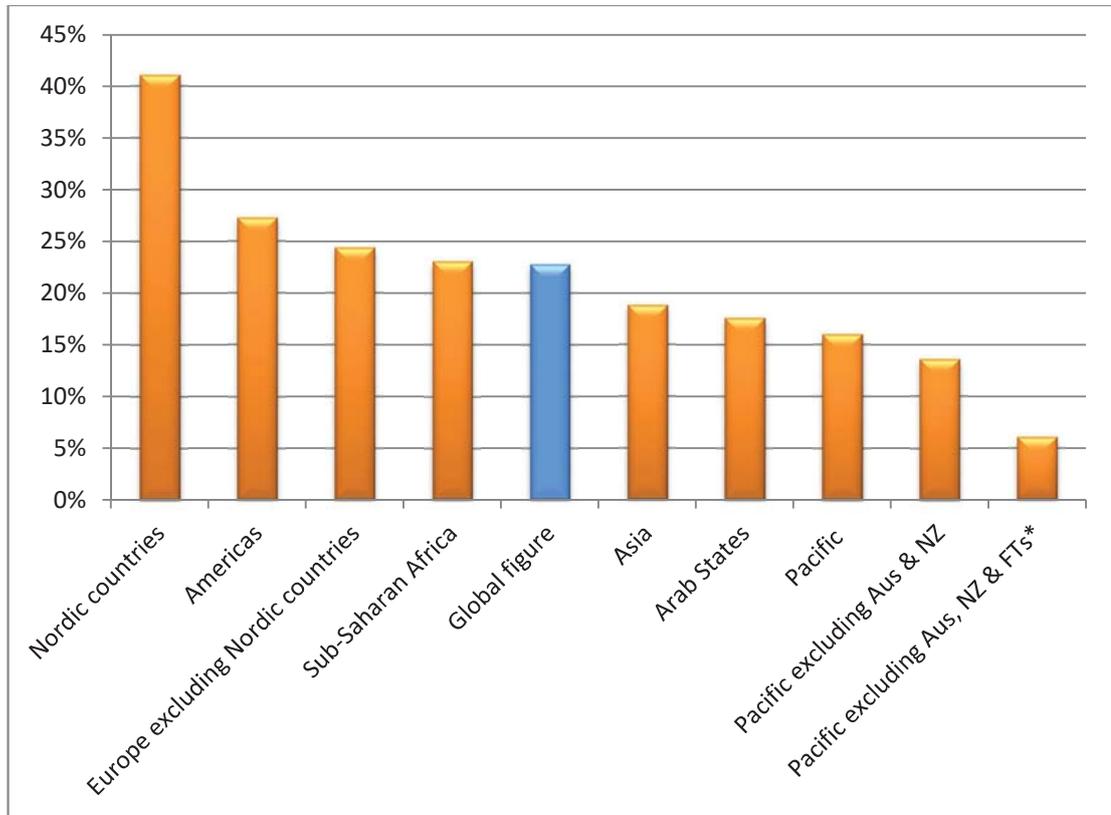
### **2.2 Overview of gender in politics**

Political gender equality is internationally recognised, through various conventions and instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), an internationally-endorsed United Nations guiding document for the achievement of women’s equality, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as an important factor of development and the exercise of human rights. CEDAW calls for governments to implement measures to ensure women exercise their rights in the political and public spheres on equal terms with men (United Nations, 1979, article 7, p.3). Supporting gender equality in politics and the public sphere is important, since evidence collected by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that increased gender equality leads to higher levels of success in sustainable human development efforts

(Chauvel, 2014, p. 22). There is evidence that women and men's political priorities differ (Phillips, 1995 as cited in Chaney, 2012, p. 441) and that, consequently, women legislate differently (Norris, 1996 and others, as cited in Bratton & Ray, 2002, p. 428). A study completed in 2008 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that: "women in parliament were more likely than men to prioritize gender and social issues such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave, pensions, reproductive rights and protection against gender-based violence" (UN Statistics Division, 2015, p. 121). They are also more likely to consider issues affecting the family and community in their policy formulation (McLeod, 2015, p. 9). Women's political representation, therefore, has beneficial policy implications for both women and society at large (Bratton & Ray, 2002, p. 428). O'Neil and Domingo (2016, p. 28) contend that in addition to changes in gender norms and expectations, in law and policy, and in other areas of women's wellbeing, the presence of female politicians can improve gender equality in a symbolic manner by influencing "discourse, and ideas, expectations and aspirations". They, nevertheless, point out that not all female politicians promote women's interests.

Gender inequality in political representation is evident in the low proportions of women legislators in parliaments around the world (Figure 2.1). While women's representation in national parliaments has almost doubled in the last two decades, this currently represents just 22 percent of parliamentarians (UN Women, 2015). There are many factors that combine to obstruct women's political participation including economic dependence; discriminatory religious and cultural practices; patriarchal societies; negative stereotyping; lack of access to education; violence against women; discriminatory institutional and political structures and practices; and media bias (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, & Gaffney, 2012, p. 561; Chauvel, 2014, p. 23). The political sphere has a masculine focus which creates a major obstacle for women's representation: "institutions like Parliament have privileged gender norms of masculinity: ways of interacting, the language and power structures are male, the building of relationships is male and men set agendas" (van Acker, 2003, p. 117).

**Figure 2.1 Proportion of women parliamentarians worldwide in 2016**



*\*Aus = Australia; NZ = New Zealand; FTs = French Territories*

*Sources: IPU (2016); Pacific Women in Politics (2016); SPC (2015)*

Many gender advocacy initiatives are guided by the concept of critical mass in recommending strategies to effectively address political gender equity such as the adoption of gender quotas (Childs & Krook, 2008, p. 734). In the context of gender equality, critical mass refers to the proportion of elected women required to effectively promote change in the political sphere including institutional and policy change (Studlar & McAllister, 2002, p. 234). The UN recommends 30 percent women’s representation as a benchmark to achieve critical mass in national parliaments (UN Women, 2015).

Critics of the critical mass theory, however, claim that it is not necessary to have a substantial percentage of elected women to generate change in favour of gender equality. Crowley (2004, p. 130) asserts that a relatively small proportion of women makes a more significant impact. Instead of focusing on numbers, Childs and Krook (2008, p. 734) recommend an approach that focuses on critical actors who could be female or male legislators who, as individuals, push for gender inclusive policy. However, Childs and Krook

note that the concept of critical mass remains a central aspect of advocacy because it has proved a successful tool for increasing the proportion of women in political institutions: "... activists are thus unlikely to give up on 'critical mass' any time soon" (Childs & Krook 2006 as cited in Childs & Krook, 2008, p. 734) .

Evans (2016) establishes a link between gender representation in the professional and political spheres. She illustrates how an increase in gender equality in traditionally masculine areas of public life helps break down gender stereotypes and facilitates women's access to the political sphere (Evans, 2016, p. 397). By demonstrating their competence in jobs perceived as masculine, women help to challenge stereotypes surrounding gender divisions of labour which in turn paves the way for their participation in other masculine dominated areas including politics (ibid.).

An important link can also be drawn between politics and the media. The media plays an influential role in politics: "Voters see the political landscape largely through the eyes of the news media" (Kahn, 1994, p. 171). The BPA highlights the media's potential for advancing gender equality through "non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced" portrayals of men and women (United Nations, 1995, p. 27).

### **2.3 Overview of gender in the media**

Research into newsroom practices indicates a gender bias in the allocation of news stories as well as in news content (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2516). News stories tend to be categorised into "hard" news and "soft" news. Studies show that male reporters dominate the hard news coverage which includes reporting on politics, business and the economy. Soft news, which typically covers health and social issues, is considered the domain of female reporters (North, 2016, p. 364). This prevents female journalists, many of whom are aware of gender bias in news practice, from tackling the issue: "With many female journalists placed in that category [soft news], it is not surprising that so few have the will to challenge the normative journalistic culture, and its gendered news allocations that in part stymies their careers" (North, 2016, p. 368).

The media, therefore, perpetuates patriarchal structures which results in a strong focus on male views and values in news production and the marginalisation of women's interests (Anderson et al., 2011; Everitt, 2005; North, 2016). Media content on female politicians

tends to be trivial focusing, for example, on their physical appearance while male politicians receive more coverage on political issues (Devitt, 2002, and Kahn, 1994, as cited in Bligh et al., 2012, p. 579). Women's opinions are often overlooked, they receive less election coverage, and they are portrayed in relation to gender stereotypes (Everitt, 2005, p. 388).

Both scholarly and advocacy-oriented research into news coverage suggests that the sex of the journalist matters. Statistics indicate that female journalists are more likely to use women as news subject and sources. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), that documents the evolution of gender in relation to media coverage in over 110 countries, reveals that "29% of news subjects in stories reported by female journalists are women compared to 26% by male reporters" (GMMP, 2015a, p. 2). The gap increases when women feature as the main focus of the news story. Women feature centrally in 14 percent of stories by female journalists while male journalists place the main focus on women nine percent of the time (GMMP, 2015a). Armstrong (2004, p. 149) finds that female journalists are more likely to feature women in their stories and male journalists are more likely to feature men. Kim and Yoon (2009) suggest that the presence of female journalists in the newsroom may improve underlying bias in reporting since female journalists, who may themselves have experienced chauvinistic newsroom practice, may covertly encourage other women and may be more motivated to produce news that is of relevance to women. This suggests that improving gender equality in the newsroom may lead to more gender equality in the news.

However, the mere presence of women in the newsroom does not necessarily result in better representation of women in the news. With reference to Van Zoonen (1998), Everbach (2006) notes that female journalists are conditioned to view male news values as the norm and have therefore been unable to change established journalistic practices: "Women have not achieved autonomy or authority to change dominant newsroom culture; therefore, male and female journalists conduct their jobs in similar ways, with an emphasis on news that can be termed masculine" (Everbach, 2006, p. 480). Other research indicates that in their determination to prove their competency, female journalists often end up simply reproducing the male-oriented journalistic norms of the newsroom (Everitt, 2005). Ross (2002, as cited in Everitt, 2005) suggests that to succeed, female journalists have to demonstrate the masculine philosophy that shapes the media sector: "... female journalists tend to use the same if not even more macho reporting styles than their male colleagues in order to prove their professional mettle" (Everitt, 2005, p. 392). The male-dominated

leadership of media organisations poses an additional challenge for female journalists' ability to change prevailing media practices, as a South African case study illustrates. Despite gender equality in the composition of South African newsrooms, Rodny-Gumede (2015, p. 216) finds that female journalists still lack the power to influence the news.

While there has been progress on the proportion and rank of female media professionals in the last 20 years, women are still largely absent from the main decision-making roles in media organisations (North, 2016, p. 359). A study conducted in nearly 60 countries, shows that 41 percent of senior reporting staff are women. However, at executive and governing board levels women only occupy around 26 percent of positions (Byerly, 2009, as cited in North, 2016, p. 359). North (2016, p. 369) maintains that female journalists' ability to attain high-ranking positions in media organisations is affected by the gendered allocation of news stories into "hard" and "soft" news.

## **2.4 Gender and political reporting**

Fiig (2010, p. 43) describes the media as a "central agent" in the construction of politics. It significantly influences political agendas (Walgrave et al., 2007, p. 831) as well as candidates' election chances : "it is crucial for politicians to be visible in the media as a prerequisite for political success" (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 171). However, female politicians are less visible in the news than their male counterparts. GMMP 2015 figures show that except for a temporary increase in 2010, there has been no increase in the number of government and politics stories featuring women as the main focus since 2000. Only seven percent of government and politics news stories feature women as a central focus (GMMP, 2015a, p. 4). In fact across the various news categories in 2015, the gender gap was widest in political reporting with women featuring in only 16 percent of political stories, three percent less than five years ago (GMMP, 2015a, p. 1).

Research from across the world shows that gender-bias is widespread in the media's political reporting (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2510). This is demonstrated in the limited and negative coverage of female politicians, through the gender stereotyping of their roles, the scrutiny of their physical appearance, and in the minimal attention given to women's achievements (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2513; Bystrom et al., 2004, and others as cited in Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 379). While it is important to note that negative media coverage affects both male and female politicians , the impact on women is compounded by their

association with gender stereotyping (Bligh et al., 2012, p. 567). The feminine stereotyping of female politicians sets them in contrast to the masculine stereotyping associated with the political domain (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2510). For example men are portrayed as “competitive, resolute and commanding” while “non-competitiveness, vulnerability and volatility” are traits attributed to women (van Acker, 2003, p. 117).

In a study of media coverage of women politicians during elections in Britain, Adcock (2010, p. 145) identifies three main themes. Firstly, coverage of women is dependent on reporters and news organisations’ own prioritised concerns and ideological positions. Female politicians were given coverage based on whether their input met hard news values or was relevant to particular story angles. Furthermore, male media commentators marginalised women. Secondly, media reporting highlights gender differentiated language that reflects the underlying masculine cultures of the political and media spheres. By alluding to female politicians personal lives, physical appearance, their lack of femininity or on the contrary, their unmistakable femininity, female politicians were presented in contrast to the traditional masculine values associated with politics. Thirdly, women are represented as a threat to the “fraternal culture” of men in political and media spheres. Media content conveyed a sense of confusion, trivialisation and vigilance about the presence of women in a traditionally masculine sphere. Moreover, although they were operating in a sphere based on traditional masculine principles, media coverage implied female politicians were expected to conform to conventional feminine ideals (ibid.) Adcock’s findings suggest that the male-dominant structure of political reporting privileges male politicians. This view is supported by other scholars: “journalistic and political values align closely with masculine values—in that masculine behaviors, characteristics, and professional experiences are highly valued and considered the norm” (Braden, 1996, Chambers et al., 2004, and others as cited in Meeks, 2013, p. 59).

Some research concludes that there has been some improvement in gender aspects of political reporting as a result of an increase in the number of elected women as well as an increasingly professional approach by journalists (Kahn, 1996; Norris, 1997; Smith, 1997; Everitt, 2003 as cited in Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2511). But other sources maintain that, although media coverage has expanded to encompass women’s evolving roles, the emphasis on their traditional gender roles remains significant (Cotter, 2011, p. 2532). Overall, media gender bias continues to hinder women’s political ambitions and to maintain the male-dominant gender model of the political sphere (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2516).

### **2.4.1 The patriarchal structure of the media**

The masculine dominance of the political sector is reflected in media coverage which sets women within the confines of areas that are perceived to carry less political weight than those dominated by men (O'Grady, 2011, and Anderson et al., 2011 as cited in Jaworska & Larrivé, 2011, p. 2478). Subsequently, media political content represents a model based on masculine values and characteristics (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 337). But while masculine traits such as strength and determination are seen as the norm and are commended in men, these same traits when portrayed by women, are perceived negatively (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 337; van Acker, 2003, p. 117 & 120). This is compounded by the media's harsher criticism of women (Walsh, 2015, p. 1032) which places higher expectations on female politicians so that "if they fail, they are condemned more than their male counterparts" (Haines, 1992, as cited in Rahman et al., 2015, p. 338).

Further explanation for the media's reinforcement of the male-focus of the political sector relates to media reporting practices. Journalists usually approach the most important source who, in the political sector where positions of authority are mostly held by men, is generally male (Everbach, 2006, p. 478). Time constraints also result in journalists seeking practical, easily accessible sources (Armstrong, 2004, p. 149). These sources tend to be people in spokesperson roles. Since few women occupy such positions they are often bypassed by the media (*ibid.*).

### **2.4.2 Maintaining traditional gender roles**

O'Grady (2011) highlights the difficulty the media has in situating female politicians away from their traditional gender roles. Male politicians get more coverage on "male" issues such as the economy, trade and defence, while female politicians get more coverage on "female" issues such as violence against women, education and welfare (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 383). Women are more likely than their male counterparts to have their personal lives scrutinised by the media and to be portrayed for their mothering or spousal roles (Jenkins 2006 as cited in Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2512; Rahman et al., 2015; van Acker, 2003, p. 117). In addition to the excessive scrutiny of their personal lives, their physical appearance attracts unwarranted focus (Barnes & Larrivé, 2011; Bligh et al., 2012; Fiig, 2010, p. 44; Meeks, 2013; van Acker, 2003, p. 116) although in a study of coverage of U.S.

elections, Hayes, Lawless, and Baitinger (2014, p. 1195) find that reference to physical appearance only influences people when it is negative and that both women and men are affected in a similar way. Walsh (2015, p. 1029), however, contends that regardless of whether it is positive or negative, the focus on women's private lives and their appearance deflects attention from their political views and achievements.

Not only is the scrutiny of female politicians' private lives and physical appearance at odds with the masculine culture and values assigned to politics (Anderson et al., 2011), it also overshadows women's professional credentials, thus undermining their ability to move away from traditional gendered spaces. Gender itself is presented as a women's concern. The media portrays gender as an important identifying factor for female politicians but does not relate gender issues to male politicians. For example, it specifically comments on potential support for female candidates from the female electorate (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2514).

### **2.4.3 Framing politicians as celebrities**

The relatively low proportion of women in politics can create a novelty effect which sometimes results in their portrayal as a curiosity rather than as serious political players. It is not uncommon for the media to attach a celebrity status to women which not only trivialises their political calibre but is often short-lived (van Acker, 2003, pp. 123-129). In a study of news coverage of a female French presidential candidate by two British newspapers in 2007, O'Grady (2011, p. 2495) observes that, in addition to her political profile, the media depicted the female candidate as a celebrity. The newspapers also portrayed her in relation to conventional perceptions of womanhood. This distracted from her political competence. Thus, while on the one hand women politicians may suffer from a lack of media coverage, on the other hand, when the media does focus on women, it is often superficial. The extent of coverage therefore, does not indicate the quality of news content.

Female politicians may also be burdened by unrealistic expectations since, because there are so few of them, the media can provoke intense speculation about their success. Female politicians may be observed with keen anticipation in the hope that they will succeed where men have failed. The implication that they can solve all problems inevitably ends in disillusionment (van Acker, 2003, p. 119).

Gender bias is complex and what appears to be an advantage can in fact be penalising. While their novelty factor and subsequently their celebrity appeal means female politicians can gain more extensive coverage than their male counterparts, this same media attention can diminish their political calibre (O'Grady, 2011). Therefore, in considering media bias, the type of coverage rather than the amount of coverage is significant.

#### **2.4.4 The “context” of bias**

While gender bias in the media is universal, it is not necessarily homogenous. Although the focus on physical appearance is a major aspect of bias in the Western media, Anderson et al. (2011), and Rahman et al. (2015) find that there is less emphasis on this aspect in the non-Western media. In a study on media reporting on rival male and female presidential candidates in Liberia, Anderson et al. (2011, p. 2516) note that, “the African media reporters make fewer and less explicit gender-biased references than the international media”. In a Pakistani case study, although female politicians were not given serious coverage regarding political issues, Rahman et al. (2015, p. 346) note that they did not receive negative news coverage, nor did the media intrude into their private lives or discuss their appearance. Likewise in a case study on Afghanistan, female politicians received prominent coverage and were not confined to conventional gender spheres (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 389).

Gender bias, therefore, does not necessarily target female politicians in the same way, nor does it target them all. Barnes and Larrivée (2011, p. 2507) note that it is more likely to affect high profile female politicians than their male counterparts and low profile female politicians. Anderson et al.'s study on the Liberian presidential election is a case in point. The media did not focus much on the female candidate, Helen Johnson-Sirleaf's, appearance prior to her victory: “The media started paying attention to her dress style after she had been elected president, when she had become newsworthy” (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 2512). In another study looking at media coverage of primary and general elections in the U.S., Banwart et al. (2003, p. 671) note that in the general election, the media associated female candidates more with the traditionally female sphere of health and either diminished or excluded them entirely from coverage of traditionally masculine areas such as the budget. Male candidates meanwhile, received more coverage in all areas in the

general election. Hence the more successful a woman is, the more likely she is to experience media gender bias.

#### **2.4.5 The politician-media relationship**

For politicians, media coverage is essential since the media is the most significant source of information on politics (Bennett and Entman, 2001, as cited in Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 167). Therefore, politicians' attitudes to media processes and relationships with reporters play an important role in their prospects for political success. To gain media visibility, scholars suggest that politicians develop their relationship with journalists and adapt to media practices (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 171). According to Ross (2002, as cited in Everitt, 2005), "negotiation" is central to the politician-journalist relationship: "Politicians need the media to convey their messages to the public and regularly work to cultivate the media's attention. On the other hand, journalists seek to challenge politicians, but also market their stories" (Everitt, 2005, p. 394).

In their individual relations with the media, men and women's attitudes differ. Aalberg and Stromback (2011, p. 178) contend that male politicians are more accommodating of media requirements than female politicians, for example, women are more reluctant to leak information to the media. In research undertaken in Norway and Sweden, they find that male politicians have more regular contact and more personal friendships with journalists than female politicians. Men are more likely to use their relationship with journalists to their advantage, for example by seeking advice regarding their political work. They are also more likely to base their political work around stories they have heard about in the media, as well as to communicate to the media about their work (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, pp. 176-177). These different strategies employed by male and female politicians could explain in part the less prominent news coverage for female politicians.

It is also argued that journalists pay more attention to messages presented by male politicians (Kahn, 1994, p. 171). Hence in campaign coverage, news is more likely to correspond to men's campaign issues than women's. While this gives men a higher and more positive media profile, for women it can lead to a lack of familiarity amongst voters (Kahn, 1994, p. 155). Men may also be perceived as more competent since greater news coverage for male politicians may mean the public is more familiar with masculine leadership characteristics (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 386).

It is worth noting that “stereotypic gender frames do not always work against female politicians”(Kim, 2012, p. 602). Female politicians themselves often use gender stereotypes for self-promotion. This is particularly evident in their campaigning. Women may emphasise desirable male traits but also accentuate or on the contrary, downplay certain female traits depending on which are more advantageous. This could be seen as a strategy to counter existing gender bias (Banwart et al., 2003, p. 671; Kahn, 1994, p. 170; Kim, 2012, p. 615; van Acker, 2003, p. 131)

#### **2.4.6 Media potential for empowerment**

Despite the evidence presented here of the media’s generally negative impact on gender equality, it is important not to overlook the media as a potential source of empowerment (Adcock, 2010, p. 151). The BPA outlines the critical role of the media (United Nations, 1995, pp. 149-154). It identifies objectives concerning women and the media for governments, international organisations, media, NGOs and the private sector to address. The BPA emphasises the need to increase women’s participation in and access to expression and decision-making, both within the media as journalists and through it as news subjects and sources. It also highlights the promotion of a gender-balanced portrayal of women in the media.

Scholars contend that female politicians can capitalise on certain aspects of media coverage, such as the fact that they are more conspicuous than male candidates during elections, or that they gain media reputations faster than men: “... if they are good media operators and perform well, they can use the media to their advantage and develop positive images” (van Acker, 2003, p. 131). Fiig (2010) notes the contradictory nature of the media with its ability to either hinder or encourage women’s political representation. “The analytical trick is to walk a narrow line between the two understandings of media representation as both discriminatory and empowering/productive”(Fiig, 2010, p. 42).

### **2.5 Summary**

My literature review has demonstrated how the media can, overtly or covertly, undermine women’s political progress. Politics abounds with gender stereotypes which the media generally perpetuates. Both the political and media environments are built on male culture

and values and often female politicians and journalists simply continue to replicate the dominant masculine approach of these sectors. The representation and status of women in media organisations as well as the patriarchal structure of news reporting are significant disadvantages to gender equality in political news coverage. The media judges women differently and more severely than men and, generally, men receive more coverage than women. However, news content is more important than the amount of coverage as illustrated when women receive celebrity-style coverage instead of more substantive coverage.

Progress in gender equality both within media organisations and in political institutions is taking place, albeit very slowly. There are some aspects of political news reporting that benefit female politicians but, overall, media coverage presents them with many challenges that hinder their success. Nevertheless, the media is potentially important for women's representation in politics.

This chapter has provided a broad view of some of the ways in which media coverage of politics is influenced by gender. I extend my literature review in the following chapter to focus more specifically on the Pacific. Chapter 3 examines the relationship between gender equality in politics and the media from a Pacific perspective. This will enable a comparison between the broader global position that has been discussed in this chapter and the situation in the Pacific.

## **Chapter 3 – Gender, governance and the media: the Pacific context**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Around the world women face many gender-related challenges in the political sphere (UN Statistics Division, 2015). In the Pacific, like in many other regions, there is a significant gap between men and women's political representation. However, this gender gap is widest in the Pacific which has the lowest proportion of female parliamentarians in the world (IPU, 2016).

Chapter two provided a review of the literature on gender and politics in relation to the media from an international perspective. This chapter focuses specifically on reviewing the literature relevant to the Pacific region. It also examines some of the research undertaken in Australia and New Zealand. It begins with an overview of gender and politics in the Pacific before exploring its links with the mainstream media.

### **3.2 Overview of women in politics in the Pacific**

Women are critically under-represented in Pacific parliaments (Purser, 2014, p. 17). The region has long ranked among the lowest in the world in terms of the proportion of women in national legislative chambers (IPU, 2016; SPC, 2015). Progress towards gender balance has been painfully slow. The Pacific regional average for women in lower and upper houses of parliament combined has only risen by two percent in the last decade, from 14.3 percent in 2006 to 16.3 percent in 2016 (IPU, 2016). Nevertheless, Pacific governments have recognised the importance of women's representation in political institutions and have endorsed various international and regional gender agreements in support of gender equality.

#### **3.2.1 Formal commitments to gender equality**

International commitments that support gender equality and equity endorsed by Pacific countries include the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) (SPC, 2015), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015a) and the Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which has been ratified by most Pacific countries (SPC, 2015). At a regional level a number of commitments, many of which draw on international charters, also exist. The Revised Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) notes that substantial political representation of women results in more gender-balanced policies and laws (SPC, 2005, p. 22). The Framework for Pacific Regionalism which Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) leaders endorsed in 2014, highlights the importance of gender equality and equity in its fundamental values which include embracing “gender equality and commitment to just societies” as well as supporting “full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific” (PIFS, 2014, p. 3). The 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, reiterated the commitment of PIF leaders to implementing gender equality engagements in relation to several international and regional charters and specifically noted concerns regarding the region’s low numbers of women in parliament (PIFS, 2012).

A number of these formal agreements underline the importance of the media in advancing gender equality including at decision-making levels. The BPA identifies the media as crucial to the empowerment of women when it portrays a balanced and non-stereotyped image of women and men (United Nations, 1995, p. 27). The Framework for Pacific Regionalism lists the media as a key stakeholder in the Framework’s implementation (PIFS, 2014, p. 1). The Revised PPA likewise acknowledges the critical role of the media (SPC, 2005, p. 38).

While the numerous commitments to gender equality indicate the intentions of Pacific governments to improve women’s access to decision-making roles in the political sphere, they have had little effect on progress (SPC, 2015, p. 71). Implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration for example has been slow (PIFS 2014 as cited in SPC, 2015, p. 81). The Revised PPA noted that blatant inequalities in the proportion of men and women in elected office is the norm in the Pacific (SPC, 2005, p. 22). The media has also been largely overlooked by gender equality initiatives: “Since 1995 PICTs have invested little in gender and media work for national-level action” (SPC, 2015, p. 20).

The recognition of formal gender equality mechanisms is important because it shows governments’ commitment to women’s political empowerment: “International and regional instruments on gender equality set the parameters and guiding frameworks for any discussion on improving women’s lives” (Tavola, 2014, p. 2). However, as noted by the Council for International Development (CID) (2012) (as cited by the Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 11), the endorsement of formal processes alone is insufficient.

Without government financial and technical resources, which are lacking in most Pacific countries, the commitments to women's representation in politics are unlikely to be accomplished (PIFS, 2006). Also insufficient are constitutions that embrace equality (Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 10). Despite the absence of gender-discrimination constitutionally in most Pacific countries, women still struggle to gain access to political decision-making roles. Women are discouraged from taking leading roles in politics because there is a long-standing perception in the Pacific that politics is a male domain (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 100; Purser, 2014, p. 17).

### **3.2.2 Obstacles to women's political representation**

The poor representation of women in Pacific parliaments can be put down to a number of factors that directly or indirectly influence women's ability to gain admission to decision-making roles in politics. These include gender-biased structures of cultural, religious, economic and political systems (Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 13; Donald, Srachan, & Taleo, 2002; True, George, Niner, & Parashar, 2014), concerns about reputation and personal safety, and limited access to networks and resources (Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 13; True et al., 2014, p. 41). Certain campaign financing methods practised in many Pacific countries such as the distribution of "gifts" to influential (male) community members and leaders put female candidates at a disadvantage since women tend to have limited funds in comparison to men who dominate the formal economic sector, thereby gaining greater access to higher levels of income (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 62; McLeod, 2015, p. 11). McLeod (2015) argues that many of the same barriers also hold women back in the private and professional spheres which suggests the need for a holistic approach to implementing positive change for gender equality.

Factors that support women's representation include a country's greater economic development which leads to better participation in the formal economy by women (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 62). Family ties such as being related to a prominent male community or political leader also contribute to women's presence in politics (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 97; Corbett and Liki 2015 as cited by McLeod, 2015, p. 11): "Such connections may impact on women's success for two primary reasons; access to wealth (and associated benefits such as education) and access to the powerful networks required to mobilise support" (McLeod, 2015, p. 11).

The challenges for female politicians do not end with election success. Fraenkel claims that women who make it through to parliament continue to experience gender-related challenges: “Even if successful, subsequent performance of any new woman MP is often subject to particularly ruthless scrutiny as that of a ‘first woman in parliament’; scrutiny of a far more exacting type than that faced by male newcomers” (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 62).

### **3.2.3 Measures to address the underrepresentation of women**

Despite the poor statistics on women’s political representation in the Pacific, the inclusion of women in politics has become a widely discussed topic in the region’s political sphere as a result of gender equality advocacy efforts by civil, regional and international organisations, agencies and institutions including government sectors in charge of gender (True et al., 2014, p. 31). Signs of improvement include an increase in the numbers of women standing for election. Furthermore, certain governments are demonstrating an openness to consider the introduction of affirmative measures to promote women’s political representation such as gender quotas and temporary special measures (TSMs) to increase gender equality in electoral processes (True et al., 2014) (Box 3.1). The 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration recognises the need for “measures, including temporary special measures (such as legislation to establish reserved seats for women and political party reforms), to accelerate women’s full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women’s leadership in all decision making” (PIFS, 2012, p. 14).

#### **Box 3.1 Special measures for political gender equity**

Pacific countries have considered and, in some cases, adopted affirmative measures to increase women’s representation in political institutions. These measures include quotas and reserved seats for women.

##### **Quotas**

Electoral quotas aim to ensure women account for a specific proportion of members either on party lists, in parliaments or in governments (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 82). The success of quotas is largely dependent on the electoral system in place as well as the political context. Supporters of quotas argue that quotas remove barriers to create more just opportunities for women. Detractors, on the other hand, claim that quotas are undemocratic and that they can establish inefficiency since candidates are selected based on their sex rather than merit (Fraenkel, 2006).

### **Reserved seats**

Reserved seats entail the allocation of a certain number of seats exclusively to women. Where there are few political parties or a significant number of independent candidates reserved seats are likely to be more effective than quotas (Fraenkel, 2006). However, while reserved seats can address the absence of women in political institutions, they can also inadvertently limit women's representation to the number of reserved seats thereby restricting rather than advancing women's representation. A further concern is the possibility women may be perceived as less capable than men, unable to be elected on their own merit. Reserved seats can be also seen as undemocratic (Burain, 2014; Fraenkel, 2006).

A handful of Pacific countries have adopted special measures. Quotas requiring an equal number of men and women on party lists apply in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna. The autonomous government of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, and Samoa have introduced reserved seats for women (Burain, 2014; Fraenkel, 2006; SPC, 2015; Tavola, 2014, p. 4). The Solomon Islands has introduced a law requiring women to account for at least 10 percent of candidates on party lists. As an incentive, for each successful female candidate, a party can claim a special grant (Purser, 2014, p. 18; SPC, 2015, p. 73).

The electoral system also has implications for women's access to political institutions. Plurality-majority electoral systems tend to be less favourable for women, particularly when quotas are applied, than proportional representation systems. The former allocate seats to the candidates with the majority or with the highest number of votes while the latter allocate parties a proportional share of seats to the number of votes they win (Fraenkel, 2006). Therefore, despite the positive results in New Caledonia and French Polynesia following the introduction of quotas, such measures may be less favourable in other parts of the Pacific. The introduction of quotas in Wallis and Futuna for example has had limited results: "The example of Wallis and Futuna shows that, in a political system where parties have no significant role, the influence of parity law is also limited" (Bargel et al., 2010, p. 19). The electoral context is therefore relevant: "Reserved seats may be more likely to generate substantial increases in women's representation in the Pacific than the quota systems used elsewhere in the world, owing to the absence of party systems in many Pacific countries" (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 88).

### **3.3 Gender and politics in the Pacific media**

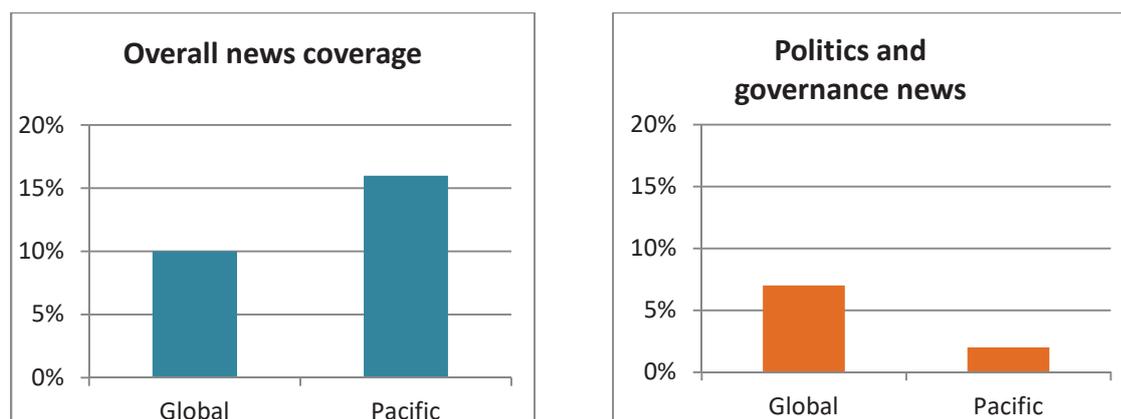
My search for sources of literature for this review leads me to conclude that there is almost a total absence of research that specifically examines the links between the media and women in politics in the Pacific. Literature on women in politics refers to the media on occasion but mostly does so in passing without pursuing a detailed discussion of the issues that would provide a deeper understanding of the media's influence on women's political success or failure. The main source of gender and media related data for the region is the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). Relevant data from the GMMP is discussed below.

#### **3.3.1 Status of women in the Pacific media**

In 2015, the GMMP undertook its fifth five-yearly analysis of gender in the news media. The report's Pacific component was made up of only four out of 21 regional Countries and Territories included in my research (see Chapter 1, footnote 1) as well as Australia and New Zealand. Although the sample is relatively small and, therefore, the results cannot claim to be representative of all regional countries, the findings nevertheless provide a general indication of gender equality or lack of it in the region's media organisations and in media content.

In 2015, women featured as main subjects in overall news in the Pacific in 16 percent of news stories. This was around five percent higher than average global figures for 2015. However, in politics and governance news, women were the main focus in only two percent of stories in the Pacific media compared to a global average of seven percent (Figure 3.2) (GMMP, 2015a, p. 4; 2015b, p. 12). There has been little improvement in news coverage of women in the last decade despite an increase in the number of female journalists. Only 16 percent of overall news coverage in the Pacific featured women as the main subjects compared to 14 percent in 2010 (GMMP, 2010, p. 12; 2015b). Female journalists are almost twice as likely as male journalists to feature women as the main subject of news stories (GMMP, 2015b, p. 12). However, although the number of female journalists has increased over the last two decades and women now make up around 50 percent of newsrooms, the GMMP report asserts that any significant influence they may have on gender equality in reporting is undermined by a lack of change in the underlying structures of media organisations (GMMP, 2015b, p. 17).

**Figure 3.1 Women as main news subjects in 2015**



Source: GMMP

In 2010, media monitoring data from six Pacific countries indicated a link between the low representation of women in decision-making roles in media organisations and the limited media coverage of women (GMMP, 2015b, p. 7). This view is corroborated by Herman and Newton Cain, 2013, (as cited by the Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 20) who observe that women are still a minority at the decision-making levels of media organisations. Therefore, improving access for women to decision-making levels in the media is critical for progress on women’s political empowerment through the media (United Nations, 1995, p. 150). Herman and Newton Cain (2013) contend that women’s positions within media organisations, as well as media practitioners’ awareness of gender equality affect media coverage of women and of issues of significance to women.

### **3.3.2 Media recognition in formal gender commitments**

The media’s conflicting portrayals of women make it a double-edged sword for women’s political empowerment. Gender equality advocates recognise the significant potential of the media to advance women’s progress while also noting its potential to hold women back (SPC, 2005, p. 38). The Pacific Community (SPC), for example, argues that gender stereotypes including “discriminatory practices in media reporting” significantly influence the portrayal of male and female candidates (SPC, 2015, p. 73). Gender equality advocates maintain that it is important to harness the media’s positive potential through partnership in order to develop a progressive image for women in politics (11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women as cited in SPC, 2015, p. 75).

Regional development actors argue that the achievement of women's equal political representation through the media is dependent on a number of factors. These include gaining a more in-depth understanding of the media in relation to women in politics through research, encouraging initiatives to enhance media coverage of women in politics, and developing guidelines on the use of and support for the media to encourage women's representation in politics (PIFS, 2006, p. ix).

### **3.3.3 Pacific media-focused gender equity initiatives**

In the Pacific there are a number of media and development actors working to promote gender equality in and through the media. The Asia Pacific Journalism Centre is a non-profit news media development organisation which provides media training and mentoring to Pacific journalists to promote gender awareness in media practice as well as to encourage female journalists' participation as news media leaders. It has a particular emphasis on business and economic reporting (APJC, 2016). The Australian funded Pacific Media Assistance Programme (PACMAS) likewise assists with training and support for female journalists and female media leaders, as well as with the production of content on gender equality (PACMAS, 2015). Fiji-based FemLINKPACIFIC, which has a strong community media focus, also promotes gender equality in and through the Pacific mainstream media through the coordination of regional media gender equality initiatives and through media monitoring and research. It is the regional coordinator for the GMMP (FemLINKPACIFIC, 2016). Several Pacific countries also have journalism training institutions which provide opportunities for media and gender training.

Media initiatives have had mixed results. In 2006, Pacific media professionals from 11 countries in collaboration with the SPC, UNESCO and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) drafted the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan (SPC, UNESCO, & CBA, 2006) to promote gender equality both within media organisations as well as through the reporting practices of journalists. However, my search for information on how the plan has been implemented did not reveal any insights. Aside from a handful of actions it would seem that the plan has not been widely followed through in media organisations as noted in the 2010 Pacific GMMP report (GMMP, 2010). Another notable regional media initiative was the creation of the Pacific Women Advancing a Vision of Empowerment (WAVE) media network in 2008. The network brought together female media practitioners and media-focused gender equality advocates to improve media literacy for women and to increase

awareness about gender equality for Pacific journalists. While it maintains the occasional online presence, the initiative is currently inactive due to a lack of funding (Lisa Lahari, WAVE Co-founder, personal communication, October 2016).

### **3.3.4 Pacific media influence on women in politics**

Media coverage is an important consideration in addressing women's political representation since the paucity of coverage received by women candidates exacerbates other existing challenges (Llanos and Nina 2011, as cited by the Centre for Democratic Institutions, 2013, p. 19). My search for literature uncovered very little scholarly research in relation to women, politics and the media in the Pacific. Occasionally, the advocacy-oriented reports and papers cite media stories that illustrate how the media can be a vehicle for the wider dissemination of women's political views. In Vanuatu, for example, Donald et al. (Donald et al., 2002, p. 50) refer to a newspaper story on women's protest against sexism in politics.

However, a small amount of research that focuses in more depth on the issue reveals some of the challenges related to gender and politics and the Pacific media. In her research into media visibility of female candidates in Fiji's 2006 elections, Usman (2013) finds that women are almost invisible. Her analysis indicates that female candidates are "crowded out" by other priorities, in this case a more prominent focus on race relations (Usman, 2013, p. 148). Usman concludes that, amongst other things, women's invisibility in the media implies that women are not as qualified as their male counterparts in the field of politics (Usman, 2013, p. 163).

Fraenkel (2006) argues that access to the media is often a fundamental part of campaigning. The media can, therefore, be a strategic focus for measures to encourage the inclusion of female candidates on party lists such as through subsidised media air-time: "Public funding or legislation aimed at balancing access to the media may provide another means of encouraging political parties to field more women candidates in winnable seats" (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 99).

In addition to providing visibility to both female and male political candidates and office holders, Fraenkel (2006) asserts that the media ought to scrutinise political systems and institutions. He cites the Pacific media's failure to hold political parties and institutions to

account over their skewed sex ratios as an obstacle to improving women's political representation. The lack of willingness by political structures to improve women's political representation is in part: "because the issue does not gain a sufficiently high and ever-present profile, for example in the media, in such a way that political parties or parliaments feel under some continuing pressure in this respect" (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 60).

### **3.3.5 Gender and politics in the Australian and New Zealand media**

While there is a shortage of literature focussing on the media and women's political representation for the wider Oceania region, a certain amount of research in this area has been carried out in Australia and New Zealand. Ross (2010, p. 288) contends that in New Zealand the influence of gender is not a significant issue in shaping differences in relationships between MPs and parliamentary press gallery journalists. Van Acker (2003) likewise notes that the Australia and New Zealand media is largely accepting of female politicians however, women: "...are generally treated differently than their male counterparts ..., with a keener focus on their private relationships, sexual lives and appearance" (van Acker, 2003, p. 116). Like van Acker, Fountaine (2002) also observes a "blurring of the public/private dichotomy" and argues that female politicians get less opportunity to speak than male politicians but are more likely to be "talked about" in the news (Fountaine, 2002, p. 277 & 110).

In its 2015 Pacific report, the GMMP notes that gender stereotyping was present in all of the political stories analysed in the four Pacific countries covered by the report including Australia and New Zealand (GMMP, 2015b). Van Acker (2003, p. 116) finds that political reporting in Australia and New Zealand frequently attaches gender stereotypes to women. This is illustrated by the varying media portrayals of female politicians depending on their style or approach. While certain styles attract neutral attention, others are heavily criticised and some attract a celebrity type of hype. Fountaine (2002, p. 110) corroborates this view finding that the New Zealand media's coverage of female politicians is more polarised while male politicians receive more neutral coverage. Van Acker (2003) concludes that the media tends to set high expectations for female politicians and is quick to criticise or trivialise them if they fail.

In their analysis of the 2008 general elections in New Zealand, Ross and Comrie (2012) find that news bias resulted in John Key, the male leader of one of the two major parties,

receiving greater coverage as well as less gender-stereotyped coverage than Helen Clark, the female leader of the other major party who was also Prime Minister at the time. Many media reports were not openly sexist but contained “a more subtle undermining of women’s political authority and capability” (Ross & Comrie, 2012, p. 980) . While Helen Clark had continuously experienced media intrusion into her personal life, the media had focused more on her government’s achievements for the second of her three terms in office. This changed towards the end of her term as prime minister when the focus once again became increasingly personal. Amongst other things the media had “tired” of her which combined with other issues including factors based on her sex and age, resulted in coverage that was disadvantageous to her (Ross & Comrie, 2012, pp. 972, 981).

Due to the lack of sources for the Pacific it is unclear whether similar trends would be found in the wider Pacific. It would be inaccurate to transpose the findings from Australia and New Zealand to other Pacific countries since the nature of media bias is likely to be specific to the context of each country. Van Acker (2003) for example, notes that there is a higher tendency to portray female politicians as celebrities in Australia than in New Zealand which illustrates how, even in relatively similar contexts, media attitudes to gender can differ. However, based on the existing research discussed above, it is safe to say that gender bias is prevalent in the Pacific media to greater or lesser degrees.

### **3.4 Summary**

While there is a reasonable amount of scholarly research on gender and politics in the Pacific, my review uncovered very little literature that focuses specifically on the relationship between the media and women in politics. However, brief references to the media in various studies and reports on gender and politics as well as official positions regarding international and regional charters enabled me to assemble a basic outline of the media’s role in relation to the gender dimensions of politics in the Pacific. My research therefore contributes to the gap in literature for this region.

Pacific governments as well as Pacific media organisations have officially recognised the importance of the equal participation of men and women in decision-making roles. However, the endorsement of gender equality commitments has not necessarily resulted in their implementation. There is a lack of support for media-focused initiatives that aim to improve gender equity and foster gender equality in politics in the Pacific. While the

importance of the media may be widely recognised in research and advocacy, efforts to support political gender equity largely ignore the potential offered by the media. Although gender appears to have little effect on politician-journalist relationships, news reporting is nevertheless influenced by gender bias. Challenges for gender equality in the media and in political reporting include a lack of women at decision-making level in media-organisations, media gender stereotyping, and a lack of resources for media-related gender advocacy initiatives.

This chapter adds a Pacific perspective to discussions on the role of the media in women's political representation and complements the positions outlined in the global research reviewed in Chapter 2. It has reviewed further key theory and development-oriented positions regarding gender, politics and the media. The next chapter will outline the research methodology applied to this study.

## **Chapter 4 – Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

My research examines how the portrayal of women politicians in the Pacific mainstream media influences women's political participation. The research uses New Caledonia as a case study and applies a feminist theoretical framework using qualitative research methods. This chapter begins with a summary of qualitative research and why it is an appropriate choice for this study. It goes on to elaborate on feminist theory in relation to the research and considers how the research deals with ethical issues. It reflects on my positionality and its potential influence on the research, then considers the reflective process and tools to address potential bias. It details the selection of research tools and discusses the sampling criteria before concluding with an outline of the data analysis strategies that will be adopted.

### **4.2 Feminist theory**

A feminist approach recognises that gender is key to how power relations unfold (Fenton, 1995). However, simply focusing on gender or women does not equate to feminist methodology. Research must go beyond that by adopting feminist theories and using outcomes to encourage gender equity (Beckman, 2014). In fact, feminist theory does not necessarily have to focus on women or gender-related issues. It is more concerned with how feminist principles are applied. These principles include: "inclusiveness and diversity, the importance of social and historical context, combating power and privilege, and social activism" (White et al. 2001 as cited by Beckman, 2014, p. 166). Investigating power and representation, as my research aims to do, is therefore central to feminist theory (Vanner, 2015). Thus, my research uses a feminist approach to explore women's own experiences and interpretations of how the media represents them and in what manner, if any, this influences how they approach their political roles.

### **4.3 Qualitative and quantitative research**

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are often set up in opposition. However, each method has its own potential to offer for research design. When deciding on a

methodology it is useful to consider both methods in order to identify the most appropriate (O'Leary, 2004; Scheyvens, 2014). The main difference between them is that quantitative data uses numbers to represent data through statistical analysis while qualitative data uses words to represent data through thematic analysis (O'Leary, 2004). Quantitative methods are good at generating answers to “what” questions such as: “what will happen, the magnitude of changes and the relationship between variables”; however, they are not necessarily good at explaining “why things occur” (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 55). Quantitative methods are especially useful in situations that demand precise results.

Qualitative research allows the generation of comprehensive information on an issue (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011) which enables the investigation and understanding of complex social issues (Scheyvens, 2014). It explores the how, what and why questions. It is interested in research methodology that considers the meaning and experience of human lives and aims to gain an understanding of their social world (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; 2014).

My research is interested in exploring how female politicians understand and experience media reporting (Photograph 4.1), therefore, a qualitative approach is appropriate. This will allow a more nuanced insight into attitudes to and perceptions of gender in media political reporting since qualitative research generally focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding in contrast to the broad understanding emphasised by quantitative research (Patton 2002 as cited in Palinkas et al., 2013). Moreover, my research adopts a feminist approach and therefore sits well with qualitative methods which have traditionally been considered well suited to feminist approaches (Ross, 2000).

**Photograph 4.1**      **A camerawoman records the proceedings in the Congress of New Caledonia as a politician addresses the Assembly**



Source: Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie

## **4.4 Ethics**

### **4.4.1 Research approval**

Ethics approval for the research was sought according to the official Massey University ethics procedures. Following an in-house ethics process through the university's Institute of Development Studies, application was made to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee which granted the study a low-risk ethics approval.

### **4.4.2 Participants' access to information**

The mother-tongue or main working language of all research participants is French therefore all relevant information was provided in French. This included a consent form (Appendices 1 & 2), and background information on the project in the form of an introduction letter from my supervisor (Appendix 3) and a project information sheet (Appendices 4 & 5). Likewise, interviews were conducted in French. This had no particular implications for the research process as I am fluent in French. The participants' written and verbal consent was sought prior to data collection which was through interviews.

### **4.4.3 Positionality**

Positionality questions assumptions made by the researcher based on their personal judgements that are formed by numerous influences such as values, personal beliefs, gender, social background and position (Scheyvens, 2014; Vanner, 2015). To identify potential bias I focused on my own position in relation to the research topic and to participants. As a female researcher focusing on media representations of women my propensity for bias was high. Professionally, I had spent the previous 18 years working as a journalist and development professional in the Pacific during which time I had taken a strong interest in the topic of gender equality. I was aware that my own thinking, from both my personal experience as a woman and from my professional experience as a journalist and gender equality advocate, but also as a mother, as a person of bicultural parentage and as a person with anglophone cultural values in a francophone environment, could influence my interpretation of the data and lead to misrepresentation of participants' views. To address this I adopted reflexive tools and techniques.

Likewise, I had to consider the possibility that participants would relate to me based on their own assumptions of my role which might be influenced by any number of elements in relation to my professional or personal profile. My aim was to establish a relationship based on mutual understanding. I endeavoured to achieve this by providing participants with information on my personal and professional background. Information on my professional background included my previous involvement in both journalism and gender advocacy and clarification of my current capacity as a researcher. I also aimed to ensure participants understood our interrelated roles by explaining my research objectives and informing them of their rights regarding their participation in the research including the right to ask me any questions at any time during or after the interview.

### **4.4.4 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an important aspect of feminist methodology because it helps address ethical dilemmas (Sgoutas, 2013). By revealing researcher bias and influence in the research, reflexivity enables increased transparency regarding the research process (Engward & Davis, 2015). It also allows researchers to carefully consider power dynamics in their relationship with participants (Beckman, 2014). My own reflective process involved the use

of a field journal to note observations including my personal reactions. Field journals are useful tools to encourage reflexivity and help strengthen research reliability (Grossoehme, 2014; O'Leary, 2004). I also sought clarification and approval from participants regarding the interview transcripts prior to analysis which also served to reinforce validity.

## **4.5 Methods and tools**

The research aims to explore the effects of media political reporting on women politicians. With this in mind, interviews were chosen as the main research method since interviews enable an exploration of how individuals interpret their experiences (Grossoehme, 2014; O'Leary, 2004). The interviews were designed as face-to-face semi-structured interviews. They consisted of a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions that allowed for interviewee reflection and the exploration of any relevant topics that arose during the interview in a more informal conversational manner.

The study makes use of a number of other research tools. The use of multiple data sources strengthens data credibility (Patton, 1990 & Yin, 2003 as cited by Baxter & Jack, 2008). Interview data was supplemented by a field journal which was used to record observations and aid reflexivity. Additionally, the research used documentary sources such as statistical reports and surveys.

### **4.5.1 Interviewing participants**

Interview participants included female politicians and media organisation representatives. Both political and media participants were sent a letter of introduction from my supervisor as well as an information sheet that provided background on the research. I had existing connections whom I could rely on to facilitate initial contact with some politicians' offices as well as some media representatives. The interviews were held at a time and place convenient to the participants. The interviews with representatives of media organisations were intended to complement the data collected through the politician interviews by providing a media perspective on gender dimensions of political reporting. I planned to interview either the editor or a chief reporter or other staff member nominated by the editor at the interviewee's place of work.

Participants' confidentiality was maintained by using codes instead of their real identity. However, while maintaining participants' anonymity is easier to guarantee in the wider international context, it has limitations in the local context where it may be relatively easy to identify participants regardless of anonymity. The decision to maintain participant anonymity, however, was a methodological choice to encourage participants to give their responses more freely, rather than an ethically motivated decision. I made an assumption that through their often high-profile, public-sphere roles politicians would be able to manage any exposure that their responses might raise. I also made the assumption that in their capacity as public figures or as media professionals participants would be familiar with interview processes. Therefore, I did not anticipate that the interview tool would raise any undue issues regarding power dynamics in the researcher-participant relationship.

## **4.6 Sampling**

Sampling refers to the way researchers strategically represent their research population through random or non-random selection processes. The study used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the selection of a sample based on subjective decisions about specific characteristics of a population (O'Leary, 2004; Scheyvens, 2014). The next two subsections discuss considerations regarding sample selection and sample size. Following that, I present the final outcome of my research sampling in the section on fieldwork in practice.

### **4.6.1 Sample selection**

The criteria used for sample selection were based on a specific set of characteristics that focused on participants' experience and knowledge of the subject to ensure relevant and valuable information (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Grossoehme, 2014; O'Leary, 2004). Regarding political participants, I planned to have an exclusively female sample made up of current members of the New Caledonia Congress and Government, the national legislative and executive assemblies respectively. For the media sample, I planned to select representatives of New Caledonia's four principal mainstream media organisations. In addition, since one of the angles for exploration was a comparative analysis between Indigenous Kanak women and non-Indigenous women, it was important that the sampling process considered cultural representation and included participants from both groups. The criteria for selection were not intended to be exhaustive but aimed to obtain a sample

capable of providing an in-depth rather than an extensive understanding of the issue in keeping with the main objective of qualitative research (O'Leary, 2004).

#### **4.6.2 Sample size**

In qualitative research there are no set rules regarding sample size (Tuckett, 2004). Nevertheless, the size of the sample is important since a sample that is too large or too small can compromise quality (Sandelowski 1995 as cited in Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Data saturation is a useful concept in determining purposeful sample sizes. The concept is defined as the point at which no significant additional data is emerging for a particular theme (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011; Cleary et al., 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). While it is difficult to accurately gauge the number of interviews necessary to reach saturation, Guest et al. (2006) suggest that this can be as few as six. Based on this, and as the sample was relatively homogenous, I anticipated that the number of interviews needed to reach saturation would be relatively small. There are only four principal mainstream media organisations in New Caledonia and I planned to contact the editors from all four organisations which include radio and television stations, and a newspaper office.

#### **4.7 Fieldwork in practice**

The fieldwork consisted of data collection through semi-structured interviews with female politicians and representatives of mainstream media organisations. Political participants were identified via the Government and Congress websites which contain succinct profiles of all members. I interviewed 11 politicians and four representatives of mainstream media organisations. All except one politician were members of New Caledonia's Congress and Government. Some of the politicians were also members of provincial assemblies or other political institutions. However, one politician was a member of a provincial assembly only and had no responsibilities in either the Congress or the Government. I included her comments in my research because she was present during one of my interviews with a member of Congress and she contributed to the discussion.

In an effort to obtain a representative sample that reflected the diversity and complexity of female politicians' profiles in New Caledonia, I selected participants based on a range of criteria, described below, that fall into three broad categories: ethnic identity, political affiliation and political experience. It is worth noting that when considered individually each

of these categories is distinct. Collectively, however, the categories are interrelated since each participant can be placed in each of the categories. The scope of my research did not allow for a detailed exploration of all the categories. I concentrate mainly on the first two presented below: perceptions based on Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity, and on political affiliation.

The politicians I interviewed were a mixed group of women from across New Caledonia's multi-ethnic population with a particular focus on Indigenous Kanak women's experiences. My decision to have a special focus on Kanak politicians' perspectives was based on their status as Indigenous women. Berman (2005) observes that having experienced the subordination of colonialism, Kanak women are likely to hold a different perspective from non-Indigenous people (Berman, 2005 after note 198). Moreover, both as women and as Indigenous people Kanak women can identify with dual minority categories. Gershon (2012, p. 118) notes that because of gender and racial stereotypes, minority women experience higher levels of prejudice with regard to negative media coverage and lack of coverage in comparison to non-minority women and minority men. I therefore explored whether Kanak politicians face specific challenges related to their gender and race when dealing with the media in comparison to non-Indigenous female politicians. The local term used to refer to non-Indigenous, New Caledonian-born people is Caledonian. Caledonians include people of various cultural origins including those of French, Asian and Polynesian heritage. A total of seven participants identified as Indigenous Kanaks. Three of the remaining four identified as being of European origin with one also acknowledging Kanak origins and another acknowledging a strong Indonesian cultural heritage. The fourth non-Indigenous politician identified as Caledonian of Polynesian heritage.

Political affiliation was another important selection criterion. My research takes place towards the end of the Noumea Accord period which has been a defining political era for New Caledonia. A preliminary nation-building of sorts, it has been a time of growth and development politically, economically, socially and culturally. The Noumea Accord was an agreement between New Caledonia's pro-independence and loyalist movements as well as the French state. I considered it important to incorporate politicians from both the local viewpoints as the two sides co-exist in New Caledonia's political institutions (Photographs 4.2 and 4.3). Four of my research participants were pro-independence and seven were loyalist.

**Photograph 4.2**

**Loyalist politicians attending a session of Congress**



Source: Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie

**Photograph 4.3**

**Pro-independence politicians attending a session of Congress**



Source: Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie

A further consideration for selection was political experience. Research indicates that senior female politicians are more likely to experience media gender bias than junior politicians (Barnes & Larrivée, 2011; Bligh et al., 2012). It is therefore important to understand the perceptions both of politicians who have had long political careers and occupy or have occupied senior positions as well as those who are relatively new to the job, as their experience and relationships with the media are likely to differ. Participants had a varying amount of experience as elected officials in the Congress or Government from two

years to over 15 years. Four out of the 10 in Congress and Government were serving their first five-year term in office and three more were serving their second term. Although some had only recently become elected members of Congress, most had served at least one term in a provincial assembly and a number of them had been involved in politics for many years without necessarily holding public office. Participants ranged in age from early 30s to late 60s.

I also deemed it relevant to include a geographically diverse view by approaching politicians from all three of New Caledonia's provinces. This criterion is related to the criterion on political affiliation since two of the provinces, the Northern Province and the Loyalty Islands Province, are pro-independence strongholds and the third, the Southern Province, is mainly a loyalist base. Four participants were from Noumea and seven from outside Noumea although most rural politicians are based between the capital, for professional reasons related to their political engagements in the Congress, Government or Southern Province, and their rural constituencies. However, due to the limited range of my research I do not draw any conclusions based on this criterion.

All but one interview took place face to face. The exception was a telephone interview. I noticed that I was not able to get as much depth of information from the telephone interview as I did from the face to face interviews which I put down to being unable to establish a relationship of trust through small talk prior to the interview, as well as to the inability of both the participant and myself to read each other's body language. The telephone interview was the only interview in which a participant requested the recorder be turned off for one of her answers. Another interview began face to face but was concluded over the phone after we ran out of time. The participant and I had established a good rapport when we met face to face and it was, therefore not difficult to conduct the final part of the interview by phone.

In addition to the politicians, I interviewed representatives from two radio stations, a newspaper, and a television and radio broadcaster. I met all four media representatives face-to-face. They were all forthcoming about their practices with regards to gender and political reporting.

## **4.8 Data management and analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves constant reflection and comparison of data in order to construct an increasingly in-depth understanding as data is continuously gathered and reviewed (Fossey et al., 2002). The data analysis for the study involved an ongoing process of reflection beginning in the pre-fieldwork phase with the identification of themes from the literature and continuing throughout the fieldwork and post-fieldwork stages through the ongoing organisation of data. I recorded the interviews on a digital voice recorder and transferred the recordings to my computer where I stored them in password-protected files along with transcripts which were sent to participants for approval and/or amendment prior to analysis. I reviewed the transcripts and sorted them into themes which I then analysed in light of the themes drawn from the literature review in order to identify emerging theory (O'Leary, 2004; Scheyvens, 2014).

## **4.9 Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological design of my research. By adopting qualitative research methodology the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic. It uses a feminist theoretical approach by applying feminist principles such as the exploration of power and privilege. The ethics section acknowledges my subjective position and outlines means to address how this may influence the research. I also discuss the sources of data, and the participant information and interview procedures. I detail criteria used for my purposeful sampling strategy and I summarise the fieldwork phase. The chapter ends with an account of how I manage the data.

In the next chapter I provide a New Caledonian perspective on gender and politics in relation to the media to help anchor my fieldwork. I then present the findings of my fieldwork in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 5 – Case study: Exploring gender equality in media coverage of politics in New Caledonia**

### **5.1 Introduction**

My research uses New Caledonia as a case study to explore how the mainstream media affects female politicians in their approach to politics. In chapters two and three I examined what the literature reveals about women in politics in relation to the media in the international and Pacific regional contexts. This chapter takes a close look at the New Caledonia context.

As the current political era that began with the signing of the Noumea Accord in 1998 draws to a close, with a referendum on independence expected to be held in 2018, I explore what space women's political involvement has occupied. I also discuss the evolution of women's role in politics and the influence of the media on women's political representation. I begin this chapter by providing some historical and political background to help situate my research in the context of New Caledonia. My discussion then focuses on the evolution of women in politics. Following that, I provide an introduction to the media in New Caledonia before considering the role the media has played in women's political representation.

### **5.2 Overview of New Caledonia**

New Caledonia is one of France's three Pacific overseas territories along with French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna. Although it falls under the auspices of France, New Caledonia has shared administrative responsibilities with France which gives it a certain degree of autonomy. Politically, there are two main positions: the pro-independence camp advocates in favour of New Caledonia's full sovereignty while the loyalist camp wants France to maintain the status quo. New Caledonia has two official flags: the French *tricolore* and the pro-independence flag (Photograph 5.1).

**Photograph 5.1**      **The official flags of New Caledonia**

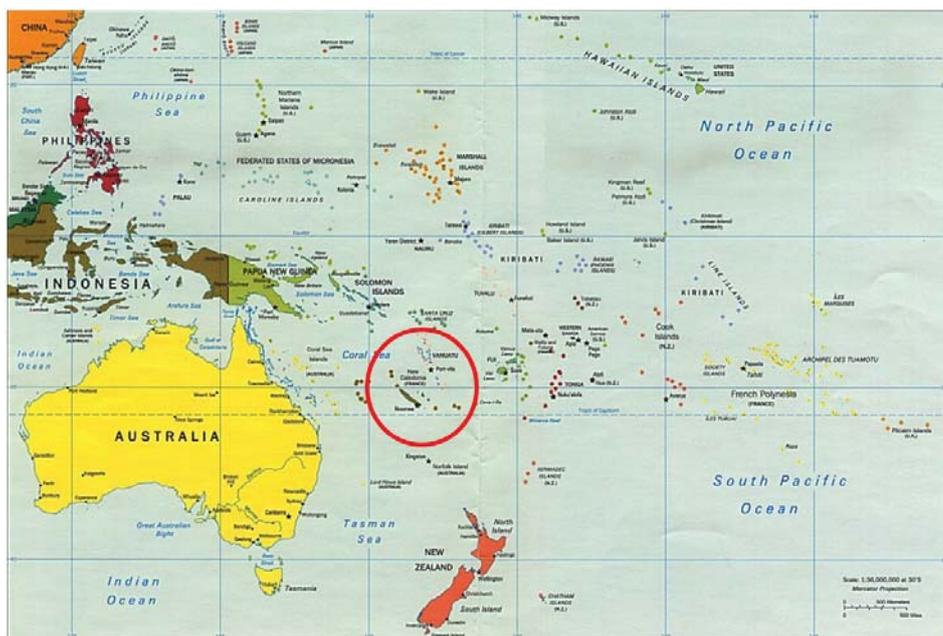


Source: Author

### 5.2.1 Geographical situation

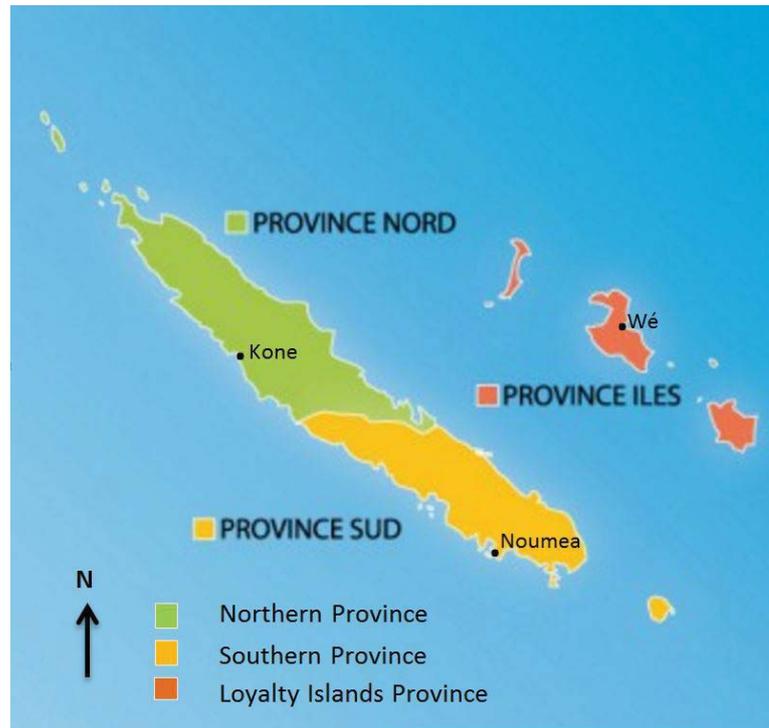
New Caledonia is situated within the Pacific Melanesian triangle 1500 kilometres east of Australia (Figure 5.1). It is made up of a main island known as *Grande Terre* and several smaller islands including the Loyalty Islands group to the east of *Grande Terre*. It is divided into three administrative regions; the Northern Province, the Southern Province and the Loyalty Islands Province (Figure 5.2). It has a surface area of 18,575 square kilometres.

**Figure 5.1**      **New Caledonia in the context of the Pacific**



Source: Vidiani.com

**Figure 5.2** Provinces of New Caledonia



Source: Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2016f) (author’s translation)

### 5.2.2 Population

The population of New Caledonia is 269,000 of which women make up 49.6 percent (ISEE, 2014). Around 19 percent of the population lives in the Northern Province, 74 percent lives in the Southern Province and 7 percent lives in the Loyalty Islands. New Caledonia has a multicultural population with Indigenous Melanesians, known as Kanaks, making up the largest group at 39 percent of the population. Europeans account for 27 percent and Polynesians from Wallis and Futuna make up 8 percent. The remainder of the population is made up of various other communities comprising mainly of people of Oceanian and Asian descent as well as people who claim mixed heritage (Table 5.1).

Most of New Caledonia’s population lives in the capital city, Noumea, situated in the south of *Grande Terre*. Noumea has a population of 100,000. The greater Noumea region which includes the capital and three surrounding satellite towns - Païta, Dumbea and Mont Dore – has a combined population of around 180,000 (ISEE, 2014).

| <b>Table 5.1 New Caledonia Facts</b>       |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Population:</b>                         | 268,767  |
| <b>Surface area:</b>                       | 18,575 sq km   |
| <b>People:</b>                             | Kanak (39.1%), European (27.1%), Wallisian & Futunian (8.2%), mixed heritage (8.6%), “Caledonian” (7.4%), Tahitian (2.1%), Indonesian (1.4%), Ni-Vanuatu (1%), Vietnamese (0.9%), other (4.2%) |
| <b>Languages:</b>                          | French (official language), 28 Kanak languages, Wallisian & Futunian, Indonesian, Vietnamese and others*   |
| <b>GDP:</b>                                | 956 billion CFP/ €8 billion (2015 estimate)  |
| <b>GDP per capita:</b>                     | 3.5 million CFP/ €29,300 (2015 estimate)   |
| Sources: ISEE; *Fizin and Angleviel (2016) |  |

### 5.2.3 Economy

A quarter of the world’s nickel reserves are concentrated in New Caledonia (Business Advantage International, 2014, p. 4) and the nickel mining and processing industry plays a major role in the local economy. New Caledonia ranks third behind Australia and New Zealand in terms of GDP per capita in the Pacific region (ISEE, 2015b) and has a relatively high level of infrastructure compared to most Pacific countries. However, it relies heavily on funding from France which contributes to 18 percent of GDP (Business Advantage International, 2014, p. 4) compared to 7.2 percent from the nickel industry (ISEE, 2015b).

### 5.2.4 Regional relations

New Caledonia is involved in Pacific regional affairs through membership of a number of forums. Previously a Pacific Islands Forum Associate Member, New Caledonia gained full membership along with French Polynesia in September 2016. It is also among the 26 members of the Pacific Community (SPC) which has its headquarters in Noumea. Other regional partners include the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2016b). In addition, the pro-independence coalition, the FLNKS, is a member of the Melanesia Spearhead Group, a sub-regional group that promotes economic development.

### 5.2.5 History

Evidence of human population in New Caledonia dates back to around 1300BC when Austronesian people known as Lapita inhabited the island (Harewood, Chinula, & Talbot, 2006; ISEE-TEC, 2011). The Lapita were ancestors of the Indigenous Melanesian population of today. European settlers arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were followed by Asian labour migrants, mainly from Indonesia and Vietnam as well as China and Japan, who arrived in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and again in the 1960s (Harewood et al., 2006, p. 201) (see Appendix 6 for a comprehensive timeline of New Caledonia’s history).

### 5.3 Politics in New Caledonia

European arrival introduced a political order that has evolved into today’s political structures. In 1774 Captain James Cook was the first European to land in New Caledonia. The landscape in the north-east of *Grande Terre* reminded him of Scotland which was called Caledonia in Roman times hence the name New Caledonia. But it was not until almost 80 years later in 1853 when France claimed official possession of New Caledonia that the country’s European-influenced political history began (Tables 5. 2 and 5.3). The introduction of this new political system had a profound impact on the Indigenous people of New Caledonia. In 1998 colonialism’s oppression of the Indigenous people was officially recognised in the preamble to the Noumea Accord: “The impact of colonisation had a long-lasting traumatic effect on the original people”<sup>2</sup>.

| Table 5.2 Political institutions in New Caledonia - key dates |   |
|---|---|
| 1853....  | France annexes New Caledonia  |
| 1885....  | the Conseil Général (General Council) is established  |
| 1957....  | the General Council becomes the Territorial Assembly  |
| 1985....  | the Territorial Assembly becomes the Territorial Congress   |
| 1999....  | the Territorial Congress becomes the Congress of New Caledonia, the country’s legislative body, and the executive Government of New Caledonia is set up |
| Source: Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie                      |   |

<sup>2</sup> « Le choc de la colonisation a constitué un traumatisme durable pour la population d'origine. » (Préambule de l'Accord de Nouméa, Gouvernement de la France, 1998). Note: English translation by the Pacific Community (SPC) translation services (informal translation).

**Table 5.3 A Timeline of New Caledonia's political history**

|   |
|---|
| ▪ 24 September 1853, France takes official possession of New Caledonia.   |
| ▪ 1864 France sets up a penal colony in New Caledonia.  |
| ▪ 1885 The Conseil Général (General Council) is established. Its powers include approving the colony's budget. Only free settlers can vote for members of the council.*   |
| ▪ 1945 French women are progressively accorded the right to vote over the next decade and a half.   |
| ▪ 1946 New Caledonia's status is changed from a French colony to a French Overseas Territory.   |
| ▪ 1946 Kanaks are progressively given the right to vote over the next decade.   |
| ▪ 1953 The Union Calédonienne, the first political party involving Kanaks, is founded.  |
| ▪ 1957 Kanak women gain the right to vote.**  |
| ▪ 1957 As the territory gains greater administrative autonomy the General Council becomes the Territorial Assembly.*  |
| ▪ 1969 The Foulards Rouges, a group of Kanak rights activists, is formed. **  |
| ▪ 1984 The beginning of a period of politically-fuelled civil unrest which culminates in political negotiations that lead to a treaty in 1988.  |
| ▪ 1985 The Territorial Assembly becomes the Territorial Congress. It is composed of representatives from four regional councils which are replaced by three provincial assemblies in 1988.*   |
| ▪ 1988 The tripartite peace agreements known as the Matignon Accords are signed by France, the loyalist movement and the pro-independence movement.   |
| ▪ 1998 The Noumea Accord is signed. It succeeds the Matignon Accords and outlines a 15 to 20 year period of gradual political and economic autonomy which will culminate in a referendum on independence.   |
| ▪ 1999 The Territorial Congress becomes the Congress of New Caledonia with powers over legislation and the Government of New Caledonia is set up as the executive institution.* An important aspect of the Government, made up of both pro-independence advocates and loyalists, is its collegiality which means a consensual decision-making process is favoured over a majority vote.** |

Sources: ISEE-TEC (2011) ; \*Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2015); \*\*Pitoiset (2013)

### **5.3.1 Recent political history**

In 1945 French women won the right to vote subject to restrictions and the following year Kanaks were also progressively given the right to vote. Caledonian women of European origin first voted in 1946. While the right to vote was accorded to Kanaks in stages from 1946, Kanak women were not allowed to vote until 1957 (CESE, 2012, p. 11). In 1953 Kanaks joined the ranks of a political party for the first time. The Union Calédonienne was

made up of Kanaks and descendants of French settlers and remained mixed until 1977 when it took a strong stand in favour of independence. In the late 1960s a group of Kanak activists formed the Foulards Rouges in protest against colonial injustice which signalled the beginning of the independence movement (Pitoiset, 2013, p. 10). By the mid-1970s the struggle for independence from France was firmly established (ibid.). In the 1980s the quest for independence resulted in violent clashes between pro-independence Kanaks and loyalist descendants of French settlers which led to *Les Evénements* (a period of political unrest verging on civil war in the 1980s, commonly translated as *the Troubles* in English) in 1984, a period of civil unrest that ended in 1988 when the Matignon Accords were signed between pro-independence advocates, loyalists and the French state. The Matignon Accords set out a ten year period of growth and development and outlined the establishment of the three provincial regions, assigning greater political and economic autonomy to the territory (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 18; Pitoiset, 2013).

### **5.3.2 The Noumea Accord**

In 1998, the Noumea Accord succeeded the Matignon Accords. The Noumea Accord outlines a 15 to 20 year period during which a gradual transfer of administrative responsibilities from the French State to New Caledonian political institutions was to take place. The Noumea Accord period is now nearing its end and it is expected to culminate in a referendum on independence in 2018. With the signing of the Noumea Accord, New Caledonia acquired a unique status within the French Republic which sets it apart from France's other overseas departments and territories. This is because the Noumea Accord introduced a new system that outlines a shared sovereignty between France and New Caledonia. Although still commonly referred to as a territory, New Caledonia is officially a Special Status Territorial Authority within the French Republic (a *sui generis* authority of France) (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 18). It is "more than a colonial territory, but less than a fully-independent state within a Francophone commonwealth" (M'Bala-Ndi, 2013, p. 73).

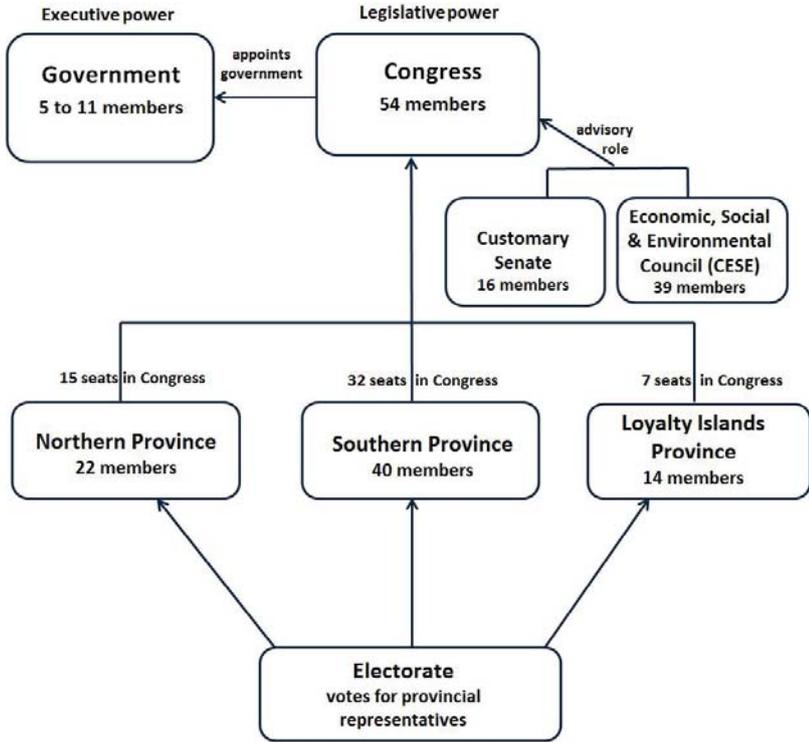
### **5.3.3 New Caledonia's political institutions**

The Noumea Accord outlines the political institutions of New Caledonia (Figure 5.3). The territory's administrative responsibilities are divided between two local institutions (the

Congress and the Government) and the French State. Three Provincial Assemblies, the Northern Province, the Southern Province and the Loyalty Islands Province, have responsibility over specific regional affairs that do not fall under the auspices of the higher institutions and each province is further divided into a number of Municipal Councils. In addition, two other smaller institutions, a Customary Senate and an Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), play an advisory role to the Congress and Government.

Each Provincial Assembly is assigned a designated number of seats in the Congress. The Northern Province has 15 seats, the Southern Province has 32 seats and the Loyalty Island Province has 7 seats. The Provincial Assemblies are formed during provincial elections in which the New Caledonian electorate votes for political parties. A List Proportional Representation system applies where each party compiles a candidate list in each of the three provinces. Voters cast a ballot for a party which is then allocated a number of seats in the respective provincial assemblies equivalent to its share of votes (Fraenkel, 2006, p. 71). The parties that make up each Provincial Assembly are subsequently allocated their share of seats in Congress proportional to their share of votes. A certain number of Provincial Assembly members, therefore, are elected to both a Provincial Assembly and the Congress. Once the Congress is formed its members nominate the Government.

**Figure 5.3 Composition of New Caledonia’s political institutions**



Sources: Adapted from Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2016a); Pitoiset (2013)

### **5.3.4 Women in politics**

For most of New Caledonia's political history women have occupied a back seat. A specific department overseeing women's issues was not set up until the end of the 1970s when an Office for Women's Affairs, linked to the Department for Women's Rights in the French Government, was established. In 1988 it was replaced by an Office for Women's Rights in each of the three Provincial Assemblies (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 12). In addition to these, a Culture, Women's Affairs and Citizenship Ministry was established when the Government was put in place in 1999.

Women's associations have played an important role in encouraging women to shake off their confinement of the domestic sphere and to claim a more public profile (Berman, 2005). Prior to the 1970s women's collective actions were mainly restricted to women's church associations with a focus on social, religious and family affairs (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 12). However, by the 1990s there was a significant increase in the role of women's associations to address in particular domestic and sexual violence (Bargel et al., 2010, p. 12). This has helped nurture women's self-confidence and has inspired them to assume active public roles including in politics (Berman, 2005, after note 55).

During the 1990s women's greater awareness of their rights saw both Indigenous and Caledonian women begin to enter previously male-dominated domains. However, there were still few women in the political sphere. Women represented a minority in Municipal Councils and were practically invisible in the Territorial Assembly, predecessor of today's Congress (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 12). The implementation of the law on political parity in 2000 was a turning point in women's political representation. In the last twenty years women have been gradually claiming more space in the political arena. Women's representation in the Congress and the Government has risen from 26 percent and 18 percent respectively in 1999 to 44 percent and 45 percent in 2016.

### **5.3.5 The law on political parity**

In 2000, the French parliament voted a law on political parity that endorses "equal access for men and women to electoral office and legislative responsibilities" (Bargel et al., 2010, p. 7). Under the law political parties are obliged to field equal numbers of men and women in alternating positions on party lists for general elections and local elections. As a French

Overseas Authority, the law is applicable in New Caledonia. The law was applied for the first time in New Caledonia in the 2001 municipal elections in Municipal Councils of more than 3500 inhabitants (Bargel et al., 2010, p. 14; Berman, 2005, after note 165 ). It was extended to Municipal Councils of fewer than 3500 inhabitants in the 2014 elections. In 2004 the law was applied in the provincial elections (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 38) and resulted in a major increase in the number of women elected to the Provincial Assemblies and subsequently to the Congress of New Caledonia (Bargel et al., 2010; Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 14). In 1999, prior to the application of the law, women’s representation in the Congress and Government was 17 percent and 18 percent respectively (Bargel et al., 2010, p. 14). After the 2004 elections, the first elections held subsequent to the application of the law, this proportion increased to 44 percent and 18 percent respectively (Table 5.4).

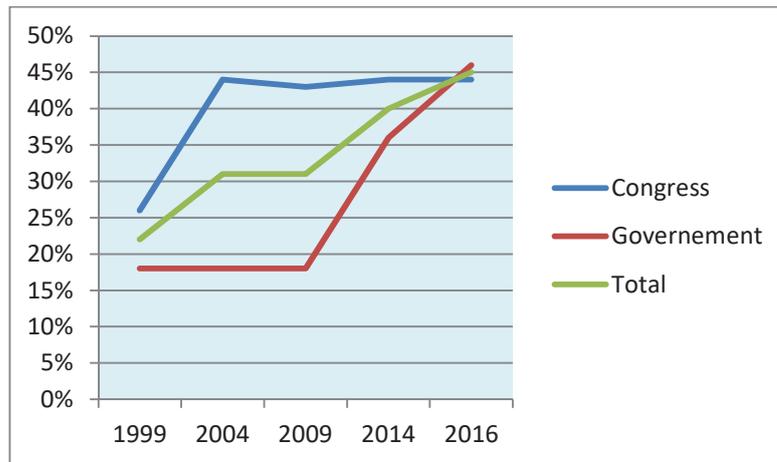
**Table 5.4 Evolution of gender parity in the Congress and Government of New Caledonia**

|                   | Congress members |       |       | Government members |       |       | TOTAL |      |       |
|-------------------|------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
|                   | 1999             | 2004  | 2016  | 1999               | 2004  | 2016  | 1999  | 2004 | 2016  |
| <b>Women</b>      | 14               | 24    | 24    | 2                  | 2     | 5     | 16    | 26   | 29    |
| <b>Men</b>        | 40               | 30    | 30    | 9                  | 9     | 6     | 49    | 39   | 36    |
| <b>Total</b>      | 54               | 54    | 54    | 11                 | 11    | 11    | 65    | 65   | 65    |
| <b>% of women</b> | 25.9%            | 44.4% | 44.4% | 18.2%              | 18.2% | 45.5% | 24.6% | 40%  | 44.6% |

Sources: Bargel et al. (2010); ISEE (2015a)

Because the Government is appointed and not elected, the law on political parity has no direct impact on the gender ratio of the Cabinet. Despite that, it is interesting to note that in 2016 the gender ratio in the government climbed to 45.5 percent (Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4 Evolution of women’s representation in the Congress and Government of New Caledonia**



Source: Author based on figures from ISEE (2015a)

The law does not have a direct implication on the composition of the executive Government because its Cabinet is designated by appointment. Consequently, until the current Cabinet of 2016 where women represent 45 percent of members (Photograph 5.2), women have only accounted for between 18 and 36 percent of Government Members (ISEE, 2015a). The law does not affect the composition of the Congress and Government’s peripheral institutions either. Figures from 2012 show that 23 percent of the 39-member Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) were women (CESE, 2012, p. 14). The 16-member Customary Senate is an exclusively male institution.

**Photograph 5.2 Members of New Caledonia’s Government in 2016**



Source: Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie

Currently, women make up 44 percent of Congress members, 45 percent of Government members and 43 percent of Provincial Assembly members (ISEE, 2015a). At the local government level 47.5 percent of Municipal Councillors are women (DIRAG, 2016). In all these institutions the proportion of women has increased dramatically since the introduction of the parity law (Table 5.5).

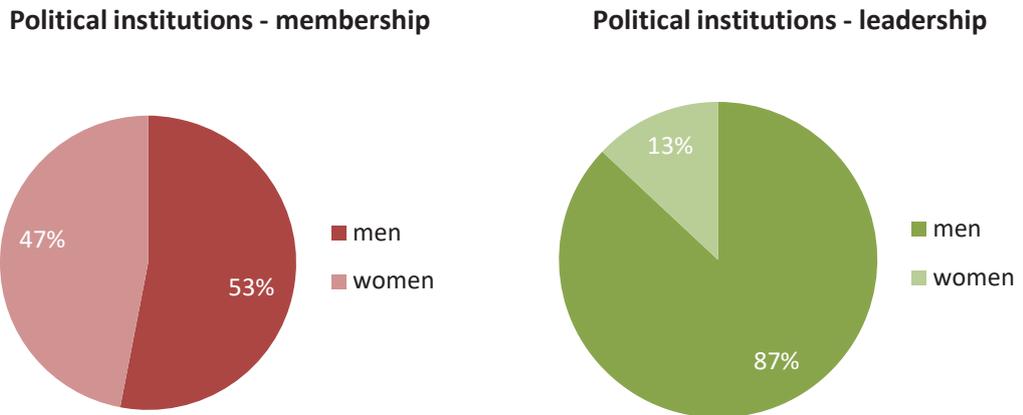
**Table 5.5 Evolution of gender parity in New Caledonia’s national, regional and local political institutions**

|                   | Congress |       | Government |       | Provinces |       | Municipalities |       | TOTAL   |       |
|-------------------|----------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                   | 1999     | 2016  | 1999       | 2016  | 2001      | 2016  | 2001           | 2016  | '99-'01 | 2016  |
| <b>Women</b>      | 14       | 24    | 2          | 5     | 14        | 33    | 73             | 361   | 103     | 423   |
| <b>Men</b>        | 40       | 30    | 9          | 6     | 62        | 43    | 630            | 399   | 741     | 478   |
| <b>Total</b>      | 54       | 54    | 11         | 11    | 76        | 76    | 703            | 760   | 844     | 901   |
| <b>% of women</b> | 25.9%    | 44.4% | 18.2%      | 45.5% | 18%       | 43.4% | 10.4%          | 47.5% | 12.2%   | 46.9% |

Sources: Bargel et al. (2010); DIRAG (2016); Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2016a); ISEE (2015a)

Despite their relatively high proportion of institutional representation, women are less represented in leadership roles (Figure 5.5). Since the creation of the Provincial Assemblies in 1988, only once (in 2012) has a woman been elected president of an assembly; and in 2012 only two political parties out of a total of about 15 were headed by women (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 40). Moreover, women’s involvement is largely confined to traditionally female sectors such as education, culture, health, and social welfare (CESE, 2012, p. 14). New Caledonia’s current political institution leadership ranks are dominated by men. The Congress, the Government and the three Provincial Assemblies are all headed by men, and only five Municipal Councils out of a total of 33 are headed by female mayors (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2016d).

**Figure 5.5 Sex ratio of elected members and leaders in New Caledonia’s political institutions 2016**



**Political institutions: sex ratio of members and leaders 2016**

| Institution           | Members |     | Head |     |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|------|-----|
|                       | F       | M   | F    | M   |
| Congress              | 24      | 30  | 0    | 1   |
| Government            | 5       | 6   | 0    | 1   |
| Provincial Assemblies | 33      | 43  | 0    | 3   |
| Municipal Councils    | 361     | 399 | 5    | 28  |
| Total                 | 423     | 478 | 5    | 33  |
| Percentage            | 47%     | 53% | 13%  | 87% |

Sources: Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2016); DIRAG (2016); Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2016e)

Nevertheless, in 2004 two women, Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, a Caledonian of European origin, and Déwé Gorodey, an Indigenous politician, were appointed to the positions of President and Vice-President of the executive Government. Berman (Berman, 2005, after note 2) suggests that this may be a sign of women’s increasing role in politics. Thémereau served as President until 2007. Gorodey was first elected Vice-President in 2002 and occupied the position until 2009. To date they are the only women who have occupied these positions for a substantial period. Two other women have both served less than six months each as President and Vice-President (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2016c). Based on overall figures showing the low proportion of women in high-ranking

roles, the CESE (CESE, 2012, p. 11) concludes that male politicians are unsupportive of women's leadership. Although there may be debate about women's position in the political hierarchy, Berman (Berman, 2005, after note 23) observes that the parity law presented a new opportunity for women to be heard not only in the political arena but also in other sectors such as within Kanak cultural structures as well as in broader societal forums such as the media.

#### **5.4 The media in New Caledonia**

The New Caledonian public relies heavily on print and broadcast media sources for news. Although online communication platforms are gradually becoming more common, particularly among young people, their use remains limited. Aside from web and social media pages of existing print or broadcast media organisations, there is no significant established online news media. An assortment of minor news blogs are run by political and social personalities although most of them maintain anonymity. A particularly popular social media platform is Facebook and many politicians and political parties have Facebook pages. Generally, though, my personal observation is that Facebook is popular as a platform for socializing with friends and family, particularly those overseas, and is not necessarily seen (yet) as an opportunity for communicating to the public. That said, online platforms are gradually becoming more common as communication tools (author's observations).

My observations are supported by Maclellan (2009) who states: "There is a way to go before the web replaces traditional media like newspapers, radio and TV as the main source of news, especially for people living in rural and outer island communities. But over the last decade, the media landscape has broadened in New Caledonia, with new media developing across the political spectrum" (Maclellan, 2009, p. 209).

I describe broadcasters and print media that have a country-wide reach as mainstream media organisations. I define other more secondary media outlets that have a more limited circulation or broadcast range as the non-mainstream media. Chapter 1 (see 1.5 Definition of terms) provides a definition of the mainstream media and the non-mainstream media.

### **5.4.1 Mainstream media organisations**

New Caledonia has a relatively small mainstream media made up of four media organisations; Nouvelle-Calédonie Première (NC1<sup>ère</sup>), Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes (LNC), Radio Rythme Bleu (RRB) and Radio Djiido (Djiido). All three broadcast organisations, NC1<sup>ère</sup>, RRB and Djiido, have a country-wide coverage and LNC is also circulated throughout the country. They all have an online presence.

NC1<sup>ère</sup> is a public television and radio broadcaster, and an affiliate of French metropolitan broadcaster France Télévision. It is the largest media organisation in New Caledonia. It broadcasts local (New Caledonian) as well as national (French) news and programmes and its online presence consists of a website and a number of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram.

Privately owned LNC is the country's only daily newspaper. Its headquarters and main news team are based in Noumea and it has a string of local correspondents based around the country. Its online presence consists of a website, a Facebook page, a Twitter account and a Youtube channel.

RRB is a privately owned radio station with a loyalist editorial stance. In addition to local news and current affairs coverage, it rebroadcasts daily segments of news, analysis and comedy from French radio station Europe 1. Its online presence consists of a website and a Facebook page.

Radio Djiido is a privately owned Kanak radio station that takes a pro-independence editorial stance. It covers local news and current affairs as well as international news. It also airs live broadcasts of events of relevance to the pro-independence movement. Its online presence consists of a website and a Facebook page.

### **5.4.2 Other media outlets**

Non-mainstream media outlets include television, radio and print publications. Gaining an increasing profile amongst media organisations is NCTV, a public owned community television station which broadcasts country-wide with an emphasis on local news, documentaries and programmes. NCTV was established in 2013 and has a particular focus on rural news and events and, unlike most media organisations in New Caledonia which are

based in Noumea, NCTV's headquarters are in Kone in the Northern Province. Its online presence consists of a website, a Facebook page, a Twitter account and a Youtube channel.

Other media outlets include *Le Chien Bleu*, a monthly satirical newspaper, *Objectif*, a privately owned monthly economic magazine, *Radio Océane*, a privately-owned radio station broadcasting in the greater Noumea region, *NRJ*, a privately-owned music radio station catering to young people in the greater Noumea region, and *Le Pays*, a general news magazine covering the Northern Province. A couple of general news publications are run by loyalist politicians or people close to them. *Demain en Nouvelle-Calédonie (DNC)* is a free weekly paper owned by anti-independence politician and member of Congress, Isabelle Lafleur. The publishers of *Actu.nc*, a weekly general news magazine, also have close ties to a loyalist party. There are a number of smaller specialist publications focusing on specific sectors including culture, gender, business, industry and tourism.

Internationally, New Caledonia gets very limited media exposure. There are a handful of correspondents based in New Caledonia who work for international media organisations. Agence France Presse (AFP) is the only international agency with an office in Noumea.

### **5.4.3 Women in the media**

The number of women working in the media both as journalists and senior editors and managers is growing. In 2013 women made up 40 percent of employees at the public television and radio broadcaster NC1ère. They constituted 24 percent of managers and 67 percent of senior managers. Women accounted for 33 percent of the organisation's supervising journalists and 39 percent of its journalists (Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2013, p. 72). Other media organisations in New Caledonia also employ women at all levels although the proportion of those occupying management and senior management roles is lower than at NC1ère (ibid.).

### **5.4.4 Media influence on female politicians in New Caledonia**

The mainstream media can provide a platform for women to voice their concerns and political messages. This is illustrated by Berman's (2005) account of the important role the media played in publicising female politicians' fight for the implementation of the parity law in New Caledonia following opposition from male politicians. In a comparison of the

implementation of the law in France and in New Caledonia, Berman (Berman, 2005, after note 4) notes that more significant media coverage about the law in New Caledonia enabled the process to be more successful than in France. The New Caledonian media widely publicised resistance to the law, mainly by customary leaders and Kanak male politicians, as well as the subsequent backlash from a united pro-independence and loyalist women's front. He puts the substantial media coverage down in part to the small population and geographical size of New Caledonia which means the volume of news material is lower than in the French media where competing headlines vie for coverage (ibid., after note 197).

On a more subtle note, the media can pose unexpected challenges such as difficulties related to balancing public and private life. Bargel et al. (2010, p. 59) note how media attention can increase pressure on politicians' personal relationships. They describe significant pressure experienced by a New Caledonian politician as a result of her husband's resentment of her increased public profile from media attention after she entered politics: "Another aspect that bothered my husband, was the fact that he now had a 'public' wife; it bothered him to see me on the television, in the newspapers" (Bargel et al., 2010). Therefore, even when media coverage is not necessarily gender biased, the media attention that politics attracts may have adverse effects on women's participation.

Generally, women receive poor visibility in the media. In a survey of three local newspapers that took place between October 2011 and March 2012, the CESE found that male politicians' media visibility exceeded female politicians by around 60 percent. On average female politicians were afforded 20 percent of press coverage compared to more than 80 percent received by male politicians (CESE, 2012, p. 12). The CESE report finds that political parties play an influential role in the lack of women's media visibility when the parties routinely appoint male spokespersons, as: "... political parties are generally represented by men who are considered the party leader or leaders"<sup>3</sup> (ibid.). The report concludes that a more prominent media presence for female politicians is essential for their continued participation in New Caledonia's political institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> « En effet, les partis politiques sont généralement représentés par des hommes, considérés comme le ou les chefs des partis. »

## 5.5 Summary

As New Caledonia stands on the brink of a new political era it is interesting to note women's increasing political involvement. New Caledonian women have only taken on a prominent role in politics in the last two decades. Women's associations played an important role in encouraging women to enter politics. The parity law was a catalyst for women's political representation and the application of the law in New Caledonia saw the number of women in the country's political institutions increase rapidly. New Caledonia currently has a significant level of women's representation in its political institutions. However, despite the high level of women's representation within political institutions very few female politicians hold leadership positions. With regard to the media, which has had both positive and negative repercussions on women's representation and participation in politics, the limited number of female political leaders leads to a lack of visibility of female politicians in the news. Although female journalists are relatively well represented in news organisations including at senior management levels, generally, female politicians do not feature prominently in the news.

This chapter has provided the context through which my research questions will be answered. The next chapter presents the findings of my research based on interviews with female politicians as well as media representatives.

## Chapter 6 – Findings

### 6.1 Introduction

New Caledonia's mainstream media is small but comprehensive, covering both print and broadcast media through newspaper, radio and television outlets. Its media organisations are well-established institutions, all having had a presence since the mid-1980s or earlier. They give prominent coverage to political news including, through political commentary, profiles on and interviews with politicians, transmission of political debates and coverage of important political events. My research uses a gender perspective to examine the diversity of this political coverage. Using the perspective of female politicians complemented by that of media representatives, it offers an insight into the gender dimension of political reporting. This helps shed light on how the media affects the position of women in politics.

In this chapter I present the findings of data collected through interviews that I conducted with politicians and media practitioners as well as observations I made in a field journal. I begin by giving an overview of the fieldwork including the factors I took into consideration for the selection of participants, the participants' profiles, the process of approaching them for interviews, and the questions used to guide the interviews. I then outline the findings of the research which are presented according to the key issues addressed through the question guide. The findings focus on the views provided by the political participants which are supplemented by the perspective of media organisation representatives.

### 6.2 Fieldwork

The presentation of my findings focuses on views imparted by the politicians with related comments by media participants inserted where relevant. Themes and issues raised by media participants are presented in a separate sub-section at the end of the chapter.

#### 6.2.1 Participant profiles

In order to obtain a sample that comprehensively represented New Caledonian female politicians, I used a range of criteria to select political participants. Based on the criteria, three categories were established: ethnic identity, political affiliation and political

experience. However, the scope of my research did not allow for a detailed exploration of all three categories. My findings mainly focus on the first two categories: ethnic identity and political affiliation.

Participants are presented anonymously in this thesis. The decision to maintain their anonymity was a methodological choice, to encourage them to give their responses more freely, rather than an ethically motivated decision. I therefore use coding to identify them. I identify the political interviewees as either Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The code IP refers to Indigenous participants and NIP refers to non-Indigenous participants (Table 6.1). Participants are numbered within the two groups in the sequence in which their interviews took place. I also strived to include both pro-independence and loyalist viewpoints. Four of the Indigenous politicians were pro-independence and three were loyalist. All four non-Indigenous politicians were loyalist. I did not manage to interview a non-Indigenous pro-independence politician. In addition to politicians, representatives from four media organisations also participated in the research (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.1 Participant codes**

| <b>Pro-independence</b> | <b>Loyalist</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| IP*1                    | IP3             |
| IP2                     | IP6             |
| IP4                     | IP7             |
| IP5                     | NIP*1           |
|                         | NIP2            |
|                         | NIP3            |
|                         | NIP4            |

\*IP = Indigenous participant; NIP = non-Indigenous participant

**6.2.2 Invitation process**

I sent 16 invitations to politicians to participate in my research and I received 10 positive responses. IP6 asked if IP7 could join us for the interview. I approached most politicians through the office of their political party group at the Congress or through their ministry at the Government. Initially I made contact by phone with an assistant before sending an email to the politician introducing myself, giving background information on my research topic and requesting an interview. Only two invitees got back to me without further

prompting on my part. With the majority of invitations, I followed up by phone and email, often making two or three further attempts before receiving an answer or deciding to give up.

I also sent invitations to three News Editors and one Director of Programmes at New Caledonia’s four mainstream media organisations (Table 6.2) - Nouvelle-Calédonie Première (NC1<sup>ère</sup>), Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes (LNC), Radio Rythme Bleu (RRB) and Radio Djiido.

**Table 6.2 Mainstream media organisations in New Caledonia**

| Media organisation                                | Code               | Profile   |
|---|--------------------|---|
| Nouvelle-Calédonie Première (NC1 <sup>ère</sup> ) | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> | Public television and radio broadcaster affiliated to French metropolitan broadcaster France Télévision. The largest media organisation in New Caledonia. |
| Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes (LNC)                 | LNC                | Privately owned newspaper. The country’s only daily paper.  |
| Radio Rythme Bleu (RRB)                           | RRB                | Privately owned radio station with a loyalist editorial stance.   |
| Radio Djiido                                      | DJI                | Privately owned Kanak radio station with a pro-independence editorial stance.   |

Source: Author

I was aware that both the politicians and media representatives had very full schedules and I am grateful to those who were able to make time for me. Organising interviews with media representatives was relatively straight forward. All four of the media representatives I contacted readily agreed to interviews. They were all interested in the topic and I felt they were open and honest in their answers. Two remarked that the experience had given them an opportunity to consider the media’s role in the political representation of women.

However, arranging interviews with politicians took considerably more time. A number of interviews had to be rescheduled when more pressing events unexpectedly occurred in participants’ schedules. One participant granted me an interview the day after I sent her my request but most appointments were set between two to six weeks following my initial contact. One participant was only able to schedule an interview date more than two

months after my invitation. As a result, the data collection period was much longer than I had initially planned. Being based in New Caledonia was an advantage in this sense as I was not limited by a tight fieldwork frame. Another factor that influenced the length of my data collection phase was my decision to extend the scope of my research from a shorter research report to a more comprehensive thesis half way through my Masters programme. This decision was based on the fact that I had collected significantly more data than originally anticipated. I had conducted seven interviews with politicians and four with media representatives when I decided to extend my research as I believed that conducting a few extra interviews would make my data more complete. My initial interviews were conducted in June and July. I was able to arrange three more interviews with politicians in August and September.

There were a number of reasons politicians were not able to give a positive response to my invitations. Two expressed interest but were unable to make time for an interview, one cancelled an interview due to unexpected priorities, and two did not get back to me. I had to turn down one politician who was only able to propose an appointment in October which was after my cut-off date for data collection.

### **6.2.3 Interview questions**

The interviews with female politicians were guided by questions (Appendices 7 & 8) covering seven areas which asked the participants to consider the following:

1. the portrayal of female politicians generally
2. the individual portrayal of the participant
3. how the media influences the participant's approach to politics
4. the participant's relationship with media practitioners
5. the relevance of media training and support for politicians
6. media advice to women beginning their political careers
7. measures to improve media representation of female politicians

An eighth question gave participants the opportunity to express their views on any issues that had not been raised during the discussion. In answer to this question many participants reiterated some of the points they had made during the interview and a few raised issues that had not already been brought up. Some members of Congress whom I interviewed had political responsibilities as members of provincial assemblies or municipal

councils in addition to their roles in the Congress. In their responses they related their impressions not only as members of Congress or Government but also as members of other political institutions.

The question guide for my interviews with media representatives (Appendices 9 & 10) focused on the following:

1. approach to gender equality in political reporting
2. organisational policy on gender
3. sex ratio of editorial team
4. considerations when choosing political interviewees
5. how priorities of women are included when few women are present
6. role of media in relation to gender equality in the political domain

As with the interviews with politicians, a final question gave media representatives the chance to raise issues not covered during the interview. The findings' section below presents themes drawn from political and media participants' answers to the interview questions.

### **6.3 Findings**

This section outlines the main issues in relation to the seven areas investigated through the interview questions (table 6.5) as well as findings based on the three categories into which the political participants fit. In addition, it presents issues highlighted through the eighth question which have either been incorporated into the seven interview question areas or which are presented under "Additional media-related issues affecting female politicians" (sub-heading 6.3.9). Findings from the interviews with media representatives are presented at the end of the section. Overall, a significant number of participants held similar views. I noted that divergent views on an issue were mostly due to factors such as different levels of political and media experience, or different priorities regarding the media based mainly on political affiliation.

#### **6.3.1 Portrayal of female politicians**

Participants perceived the portrayal of female politicians by the media in a number of different ways, with some participants having more than a single view. The overall

impression was that female politicians are largely absent in the media. The masculine dominance of news was also a frequently-cited issue. Four participants mentioned that the media perpetuates certain gender stereotypes, such as normalising certain behaviour in men while disapproving of it in women, and portraying negative images of women in general. One participant believed media coverage was neutral in the sense that female politicians received neither positive discrimination by being sought out specifically nor negative discrimination by being excluded. Only one participant initially mentioned that female politicians were portrayed positively. However, on further reflection she observed that they did not feature prominently. Nevertheless, despite the general criticism of coverage, seven of the 11 participants observed that there has been some progress, albeit limited, over the last decade or more in the media's reporting of women in politics. Some of these impressions are detailed below.

#### **6.3.1.i          *Absence of female politicians***

All the politicians interviewed concurred that there was an absence of women in political coverage. Participants noted that a select group of female politicians, mainly long-standing politicians who have a significant level of political responsibility, featured relatively regularly in the media but that newer politicians rarely received media attention. With reference to the three participant categories, this suggests that the seniority of female politicians has a more important influence on their media visibility than factors relating to their ethnic identity or their political affiliation:

NIP4: I'm under the impression that to be considered legitimate you need more than twenty or thirty years of politics behind you to be the subject of a television feature. Does a man need to be established in the political landscape for twenty or thirty years in order to have a feature done on him?<sup>4</sup>

#### **6.3.1.ii          *Male dominance***

Seven participants observed that political coverage mainly featured men. Participants commented on the fact that the leadership of political institutions in New Caledonia is

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<sup>4</sup> « J'ai l'impression que pour avoir de la légitimité il faut avoir plus de vingt, trente ans de politique pour pouvoir faire l'objet d'un reportage à la télé. Est-ce qu'un homme il a besoin d'être installé pendant vingt, trente ans dans le paysage politique pour qu'on puisse consacrer un reportage sur lui ? »

dominated by men and since the media tends to seek comment from decision makers, this results in the male leaders receiving a high level of media coverage:

IP3: If women are consulted as a matter of course or interviewed in an equal manner they will be able to take part in debates and in decision-making. The media has the power to create conversations, to create discourse<sup>5</sup>.

Participants also noted that women were approached for minor stories but that the media prefers to solicit male views on major issues. They expressed regret that the media seemed to lack the initiative to actively seek female voices:

IP1: It seems to me that the media solicits us when it doesn't have any other politicians at its disposition. It doesn't approach us as a matter of course<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, participants acknowledged the reluctance within political structures to place women in decision-making roles as a factor in the limited amount of coverage featuring female politicians:

IP7: ... the major political issues are managed by men. [It's because of] political party structures<sup>7</sup>.

This view that patriarchal political structures exacerbate the poor media coverage of female politicians was corroborated by a couple of media representatives:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: [ensuring gender equality in coverage] is not easy in the sense that in certain political parties we don't see any women. How do you ensure balance in covering an issue when there are no women? We're obliged to seek a knowledgeable person otherwise we'll be accused of seeking a woman who doesn't know anything<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> « Si les femmes sont systématiquement interrogées ou interviewées de manière équilibrée, elles vont pouvoir participer aux débats et à la prise de décisions. Les médias ont le pouvoir de faire les conversations, de faire les discours. »

<sup>6</sup> « J'ai l'impression qu'ils nous appellent quand ils n'ont pas d'autres élus à leur disposition. Ils ne font pas appel à nous systématiquement. »

<sup>7</sup> « ... les gros sujets politiques sont portés par les hommes. [C'est dû aux] structures des partis. »

<sup>8</sup> « Mais ce n'est pas évident dans le sens où dans certains partis politiques on ne voit pas de femmes. Comment équilibrer quand on parle d'un sujet quand il n'y a pas de femmes ? On est

LNC: ... very often you find women always occupying the same positions; culture, women's affairs, ...<sup>9</sup>

A number of participants mentioned the lack of female politicians featured on *l'invité politique du dimanche* ('Sunday's political guest'), a weekly prime time television segment, as an example of the media's reluctance to include female views:

IP5: Every Sunday evening there is *l'invitée politique* on the television. I'm one of the few female politicians to be invited. They're practically all men.

NIP1: ... of course there are women featured [in the news] from time to time but with regards to important [news] segments there are no women. On Sunday evenings, everyone is in front of the TV news bulletin for *l'invitée politique*, the event of the week in New Caledonia – I'm slightly exaggerating on purpose but you get the idea – and there are no women<sup>10</sup>.

IP3: I'm under the impression that in the Sunday news bulletin where they invite a political guest it's only men [who are invited]<sup>11</sup>.

My own observation confirms this view. During an eight-month period, from March to October 2016, of the 35 political guests featured on *l'invité politique du dimanche*, only 6 were women (Table 6.3). Therefore, although women make up 47 percent of representatives in New Caledonia's main political institutions (see Chapter 5, Table 5.5) only around 17 percent are featured in a prime-time news segment by New Caledonia's main media organisation.

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obligé d'aller chercher celui qui sait sinon on nous accuserait d'aller chercher la femme qui ne connaît rien. »

<sup>9</sup> « ... très souvent on retrouve les femmes toujours sur les mêmes postes ; culture, condition féminine ... »

<sup>10</sup> « ... certes il y a des femmes qui passent de temps en temps mais sur les moments importants il n'y a pas de femmes. Le dimanche soir tout le monde est devant son JT, c'est l'invité politique, c'est l'événement hebdomadaire en Nouvelle-Calédonie, j'exagère un peu volontairement mais c'est un peu l'idée quoi, et il n'y a pas de femme. »

<sup>11</sup> « On a l'impression que le journal de dimanche soir où on invite un politique, c'est que des hommes [qui sont invités]. »

**Table 6.3 Sex ratio of politicians featured on NC1ère's *l'invitée politique du dimanche* segment from March to October 2016**

|              | Sunday                  |                         |                         |                         |                         | Sex ratio       |                |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
|              | 1 <sup>st</sup><br>week | 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>week | 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>week | 4 <sup>th</sup><br>week | 5 <sup>th</sup><br>week | M*              | F*             |
| March        | M                       | M                       | M                       | M                       | /                       | 4               | 0              |
| April        | M                       | M                       | F                       | M                       | /                       | 3               | 1              |
| May          | M                       | M                       | M                       | F                       | M                       | 4               | 1              |
| June         | M                       | M                       | F                       | M                       | /                       | 3               | 1              |
| July         | M                       | M                       | M                       | M                       | F                       | 4               | 1              |
| August       | M                       | M                       | M                       | M                       | /                       | 4               | 0              |
| September    | M                       | M                       | F                       | F                       | /                       | 2               | 2              |
| October      | M                       | M                       | M                       | M                       | M                       | 5               | 0              |
| <b>Total</b> |                         |                         |                         |                         |                         | <b>29 (83%)</b> | <b>6 (17%)</b> |

\*M = male; F = female

Sources: NC1<sup>ère</sup> and author's observations

There was a sense amongst participants that male traits “sell better” and are therefore more sought after by the media. This view was shared by the media participants:

IP3: It's more interesting to sell one's [article] by featuring a man who is angry, who is aggressive ... whereas women are much more composed<sup>12</sup>.

LNC: I see that it is mostly male politicians who make sensational statements. When I think about it, I notice that small, easy to read sentences that hook readers in, it is more likely to be men ... the aggressive, slightly sensational sentence<sup>13</sup>.

There was also a perception that male politicians were taken more seriously:

<sup>12</sup> « C'est plus intéressant pour vendre son [article] de prendre un homme qui est en colère, qui est agressif alors que les femmes elles sont beaucoup plus posées. »

<sup>13</sup> « Ici en Calédonie, je vois que c'est plutôt des hommes politiques qui font des déclarations fracassantes. Moi, je vois en y réfléchissant quand je vois des petites phrases qui font lire, qui sont accrocheuses, ça sera plus facilement des hommes ... la phrase agressive un peu choc. »

NIP1: I think that the media tends to consider men as leaders. Women play a support role. (...) I think that is the image that is portrayed. I don't know if it is deliberate or unconscious ...<sup>14</sup>

Another view expressed was that the media did not question men's leadership credentials or hold them to account about their behaviour. One participant cited an extreme example of the media defending a male politician who was allegedly in violation of the law:

NIP4: ... recently there was a male politician who was accused of assaulting his wife and drink-driving, and there was an article in the newspaper that defended him<sup>15</sup>.

During the interviews I noted that many participants were inspired by other female politicians including those in opposition camps, often naming them when giving examples of role models. In the media, however, female politicians tend to be judged against strong male politicians. One participant believed she had gained more esteem in the media because she succeeded an influential male politician. NIP4 who in addition to her role in the Congress, is one of New Caledonia's few female mayors, believes the fact that she successfully took over a position from a highly regarded male leader helped her gain the media's respect:

NIP3: I think it is in my favour because I took over from a [charismatic] man. I don't waver, I don't give up, I assume my responsibilities<sup>16</sup>.

### **6.3.1.iii Gender stereotypes**

Participants observed that media gender stereotyping of women in general led to negative portrayals of female politicians. Some participants noted that although women in politics are not necessarily negatively portrayed, the negative images of women in general portrayed across all forms of media including in mainstream media, where women are

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<sup>14</sup> « Je pense que dans les médias, on a plus tendance à considérer que les leaders sont des hommes. Les femmes ont un second rôle. (...) Je pense que c'est l'image envoyée. Je ne sais pas si c'est de manière volontaire ou d'une manière inconsciente ... »

<sup>15</sup> « ... récemment, il y a un homme politique qui a été mis en cause parce que clairement il avait battu sa femme et il a conduit en état d'ivresse, et il y a eu un article dans le journal pour lui défendre. »

<sup>16</sup> « Je pense que c'est en ma faveur parce que [j'ai] pris quelque chose derrière un homme [de charisme]. Je ne flanche pas, je ne baisse pas les bras, j'assume. »

objectified and given superficial coverage, have an impact on the likelihood of female politicians being taken seriously both in the political domain and by the media:

IP1: Because a woman is always an object (...) This is always the image that is portrayed. So obviously when a woman takes the floor ... who has a position of responsibility, she won't have the weight or the strength or perhaps her words won't succeed in convincing because there are already these prejudices that exist<sup>17</sup>.

Only one participant spontaneously brought up the issue of gender bias in relation to physical representations of female politicians. When prompted through my questioning, others agreed that female politicians were more likely than male politicians to experience criticism about their appearance. For a few participants, this caused frustration but for most participants it was not an important consideration and some were oblivious to the issue:

IP1: Us Kanaks are not too concerned about that. We don't make an issue of it. When there's an interview the leader of the political group goes and does it. He/she doesn't say 'I need to present myself well in terms of ... my demeanour, I must say this or that'<sup>18</sup>.

Those who had experienced some form of criticism on their appearance, mainly through social media, simply shrugged it off. A few participants were more affected by it. However, on closer reflection they noted that it was not so much the media itself that made reference to their appearance as it was comments made by the public:

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<sup>17</sup> « Parce qu'une femme c'est toujours un objet (...) C'est toujours cette image qui est véhiculée. Donc forcément quand une femme va prendre la parole ... qui a des responsabilités, elle n'aura pas ce poids ou la force ou les mots peut-être ne vont pas réussir à convaincre. Parce qu'il y a toujours ces préjugés aussi qui sont là qui existent. »

<sup>18</sup> « Nous, on est très peu dans ça les Kanaks. On n'a pas des calculs. Quand il y a un interview, le chef du groupe il y va. Il ne dit pas qu'il faut que je m'arrange bien au niveau ... comportement, que je dis ceci ou cela. »

IP6: When people look at a woman they look at how she is dressed, how her hair is styled. Nobody really cares about a man. They focus on what he has to say whereas criticism about a woman is much more scathing<sup>19</sup>.

This observation about prejudice against women expressed by the public was also made by a media representative. He noted that criticism of female politicians' physical appearance was made as a form of attack even if their appearance was irrelevant to their actions:

LNC: What's unfortunate is that when a woman behaves like that [in a forceful, headline-grabbing manner] - you hear it in discussions outside [in public] – straight away people make comments on her physique which they would never do if it were a man. So there are still things that are not right. They are not comments by journalists but comments in the street. What interests us is what the person has to say. Tomorrow, whether it be a man or a woman who makes a sensational statement, we will publish it because for us it's a hook<sup>20</sup>.

Participants noted that comments on physical appearance are published online. The mainstream media remains reserved in its portrayal of personal appearance. This is possibly because New Caledonia is a small place which means people, including members of the media, are more careful about the consequences of their words or actions. It may also be due to the strict privacy regulations in the French media:

IP7: You see such comments on social media but in the [mainstream] media, no<sup>21</sup>.

IP6: It's mainly on social media not in [mainstream] media. In the French, European context we are not like Anglo-Saxons. You only have to look at the London tabloids to see how far they go when they cover an issue! It's

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<sup>19</sup> « Une femme quand on va la regarder, on regarde comment elle est habillée, comment elle est coiffée. Un homme on s'en fiche un peu. On va être focalisé sur ce qu'il va dire, alors qu'une femme la critique des uns et des autres elle est beaucoup plus acerbe ».

<sup>20</sup> « Ce qui est terrible c'est que quand une femme se comporte comme ça, on l'entend dans la discussion dehors, tout de suite ça va être des réflexions sur son physique, ce qu'on ne fera jamais avec un homme. Donc oui il y a encore des choses qui ne vont pas. Ce n'est pas des réflexions des journalistes mais des réflexions dans la rue. Nous ce qui nous intéresse c'est le discours. Demain que ça soit un homme ou une femme qui va sortir une phrase fracassante, on va la sortir parce que pour nous c'est accrocheur. »

<sup>21</sup> « On voit ce genres de commentaires sur les médias sociaux mais par les médias [traditionnels], non »

unimaginable in France. The individual is better protected in France. The media is subjected to privacy rules<sup>22</sup>.

### **6.3.1.iv Evolution of media representation of female politicians**

A few participants believed there had been no improvement in gender equality in political reporting in the last couple of decades but most participants saw evidence of progress. Seven of the 11 participants observed that progress, albeit limited, had happened over the last decade or more.

With reference to the arrival of women in leadership positions at local government level in the early 2000s, one participant stated that initially the women had been associated with a novelty factor in news coverage which wore off as more women became mayors. Most participants who said female politicians' media profiles had improved mentioned the significant consequence of the law on political parity in increasing women's political representation in political institutions which had a flow-on effect in the media:

IP7: It [the law] was necessary because women had to have their say as well. Because without the law they are not at the centre of the [political] stage<sup>23</sup>.

IP1: Us Kanak women are present on political party lists because of the law on parity, otherwise perhaps we wouldn't be here<sup>24</sup>.

NIP1: Before there were no women. The law on parity came in and subsequently women made their entrance in politics and in the media. There is an effort to represent women in general in the media now<sup>25</sup>.

NIP2: The biggest evolution was the application of compulsory parity since the 2004 elections. (...) Consequently, this brought in a breath of fresh air to increase

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<sup>22</sup> « C'est plutôt les réseaux sociaux, ce n'est pas les médias [traditionnels]. Nous dans le monde Français, Européen on n'est pas comme les anglo-saxons. Il y a qu'à voir les tabloïds Londoniens quand ils traitent d'un sujet ils vont super loin ! C'est unimaginable en France. L'individu est plus protégé en France. Ils sont soumis à des règles sur la vie privée des gens. »

<sup>23</sup> « Elle était nécessaire parce qu'il fallait que la femme apporte sa voix aussi. Parce que sans la loi, elles ne sont pas au-devant de la scène. »

<sup>24</sup> « Nous, on est aussi sur les listes, les femmes Kanaks, parce qu'il y a eu la parité mais sinon peut-être qu'on n'y serait pas. »

<sup>25</sup> « Avant il n'y avait pas de femmes, il y a eu la loi sur la parité qui est arrivée donc les femmes sont arrivées en politique et dans les médias. Il y a quand même maintenant une volonté de représenter les femmes de manière générale dans les médias. »

the number of women. (...) Of course there were [already] women (...) but there weren't really any women in positions of responsibility<sup>26</sup>.

NIP4: I wasn't necessarily in favour of the law on political parity but in the end, it helped. Today in the media a few more female politicians can be seen giving their opinion<sup>27</sup>.

### 6.3.2 Individual participant portrayal

Participants all knew how the media portrayed them and were candid about it. They described three different media representations – some believed they were taken seriously and were given a fair and constructive portrayal, others said they were not visible, and one participant believed she had initially been portrayed inaccurately. The citations below illustrate these views:

NIP1: My reputation is of someone direct and to the point ...<sup>28</sup>

NIP2: My reputation is of someone competent, hard-working, reliable, quite strong<sup>29</sup>.

NIP4: An image of a young woman politician who is, however, not very visible<sup>30</sup>.

IP1: A journalist from RNC [Radio Nouvelle-Calédonie, the radio section of NC1<sup>ère</sup>] told me – because I asked him why he called me – it was because I have a strong personality. And yet I don't have a lot of experience with interviews<sup>31</sup>.

IP4: A woman with a strong personality, an activist ... an intellectual<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> « La plus grosse évolution, c'est la parité obligatoire qui s'applique depuis les élections de 2004. (...) Du coup ça a fait un appel d'air important pour qu'il y ait davantage de femmes. (...) Il y avait des femmes bien entendu (...) mais il n'y avait pas vraiment des femmes dans les postes à responsabilité. »

<sup>27</sup> « Je n'étais pas forcément pour la parité mais finalement ça a aidé. Aujourd'hui dans les médias, on voit un peu plus des femmes politiques qui s'expriment. »

<sup>28</sup> « J'ai l'image de quelqu'un de synthétique et directe... »

<sup>29</sup> « J'ai la réputation d'être quelqu'un de compétent, de travailleur, de fiable, plutôt solide. »

<sup>30</sup> « Une image de jeune femme élue mais qui n'existe pas beaucoup. »

<sup>31</sup> « Un journaliste de RNC m'a dit – parce que je lui ai posé la question « pourquoi il m'a appelée » - parce que j'ai beaucoup de caractère. Et pourtant je n'ai pas beaucoup d'expérience dans les interviews. »

### **6.3.2.i Fair and accurate**

Collectively the majority of participants (10 out of 11) said female politicians got very little coverage, that the coverage they did receive tended to confine them to traditionally female domains and roles, and that they were portrayed as less politically knowledgeable and competent than men. However, from a personal perspective, many of the participants were generally satisfied with individual portrayals. Six of the 11 participants perceived their own portrayal as relatively fair and accurate albeit incomplete. The remaining five participants said they did not get sufficient media coverage to have a media profile:

TC: Do you believe that your image is accurate?

NIP1: Yes and no. It's always a bit or a caricature. (...) of course it is true, one doesn't completely change one's image. But obviously it's not one hundred percent accurate. And in spite of everything, when you are placed within a specific profile it's difficult to change it. So it's partly true<sup>33</sup>.

### **6.3.2.ii Non-existent or inaccurate**

While all three participating government ministers featured relatively regularly but not necessarily prominently in the news, this was not the case for some of the Congress members I interviewed. Two participants said they had never been interviewed in their capacity as elected members of Congress but rather in relation to their work in provincial assemblies or municipal councils. Two participants said they had no profile because, although they had received some coverage, it had been on minor issues and they were practically absent from the media.

While her image has now evolved, one participant (NIP2) believed that certain comments initially made about her by the media portrayed her inaccurately and were influenced by her gender. She believed they would not have been made had she been a man. She noted that initially, when she broke through a glass ceiling to assume a provincial assembly

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<sup>32</sup> « La femme de caractère, militante ... intellectuelle. »

<sup>33</sup> TC : Vous trouvez que votre image vous correspond ?

NIP1 : « Oui et non. C'est toujours un peu caricatural. (...) ça correspond bien évidemment, on ne change pas complètement son image. Mais ce n'est forcément pas à cent pourcents ça. Et malgré tout quand on est casé dans un profil particulier, c'est difficile d'en changer. Donc c'est partiellement vrai. »

leadership position that had hitherto been occupied by male politicians, journalists over-emphasised her ambition:

NIP2: My image has evolved. Initially, in articles that mentioned me because I had recently acquired responsibility, I was spoken of as an ambitious woman who was hasty and who was pushing ahead like a steam roller.

TC: And was that accurate in your opinion?

NIP2: No I don't think so. Would they have said of a man that he was ambitious and in a hurry if he had become president of the Southern Province after 10 years in elected office? I had been in elected office for eight years. I become president of the Province and "Oh my God it's a hasty woman!". (...) The extremely ambitious etc. part I found somewhat exaggerated. And having said that, ambition ... yes of course because if you don't have ambition you don't do this job. But I found that a bit sexist because I believe that it would not have been said of a man<sup>34</sup>.

However, this was short-lived and relatively quickly the media portrayed her for her capacity as a leader.

### 6.3.3 Media influence on participants

There were two main reactions to participants' perception of media influence. Some said they were circumspect about their actions or reactions but the majority, seven of the 11, said the media had no influence on them which was in part because many of them rarely featured in the media.

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<sup>34</sup> NIP2 : « Mon image a évolué. Dans les premiers articles où on parlait de moi, parce que j'avais pris des responsabilités, on parlait plutôt d'une femme ambitieuse, pressée et qui avançait version rouleau compresseur. »

TC : « Et d'après vous c'était juste ? »

NIP2 : « Non, je ne trouve pas. Est-ce qu'on aurait dit d'un homme qu'il était ambitieux et pressé s'il était devenu président de la province Sud après dix ans de mandat électif ? Moi ça faisait huit ans que j'étais élue, je deviens Présidente de la province et « ah mon dieu ! C'est une femme pressée ! ». (...) Le coté extrêmement ambitieuse etc. je trouvais que c'était un peu exagéré. Et cela dit, de l'ambition oui bien sûr, parce que si on n'a pas d'ambition on ne fait pas ce job. Mais je trouvais ça un peu sexiste parce que je considère qu'on n'aura pas dit ça d'un homme. »

### **6.3.3.i Isolation, conformity and concerted action**

Participants who were affected by media pressure said they were influenced in different ways. Reactions ranged from concerted efforts to counter negative portrayals, to cooperation with journalists, to resignation. One participant said she found that the masculine dominance of both the political sector and news coverage was discouraging and created a sense of isolation. She added that the male focus of political reporting leads female politicians to unconsciously conform to the idea of male dominance by remaining in the background for example. The participant herself observes that she has become more docile:

IP3: I feel that I used to be more defiant before entering politics. Because it's a man's world, sometimes it's a lonely world.<sup>35</sup>

Another participant however, conceded that her increased vigilance with the media was a result of her increased political involvement which had created greater pressure to stay on side of the official party line. It was not necessarily caused by the media itself:

IP7: I used to speak freely before. Now that I'm in politics I am part of a structure, I'm obliged to weigh my words carefully. You need to observe a minimum amount of reserve. Before, nothing could stop me<sup>36</sup>.

Participants indicated that the media did not influence their political decisions but it sometimes created a public persona that they were not comfortable with. One participant (NIP2), who describes herself as warm and personable, noted that initially she came across in the media as a cold person. Since she perceives the warmth of her personality as an important aspect of her identity, it was important for her to rectify this "inaccurate" image:

NIP2: It was an extremely blunt image. No one ever questioned my credentials, my strong work ethic, my reliability ... but the image was somewhat dehumanised and that's not me. When I realised that this image was beginning to stick I worked on it with care. (...) My collaborators and I talked it over ... and we tried to show

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<sup>35</sup> « Je trouve que j'étais beaucoup plus combative avant d'entrer en politique. Comme c'est un monde d'hommes, des fois on se retrouve seule ».

<sup>36</sup> « Avant, je parlais librement. Maintenant qu'on est en politique, on est dans un cadre, on est obligée de peser les mots. Il y a un minimum à respecter. Avant il n'y avait rien qui me retenait. »

that behind the president [of the Southern Province] there was a woman. In that sense, the media helped me evolve. In spite of everything, I think that the image the media gave me forced me to question myself and to work on the image that I wanted portrayed. So on my image it had a significant influence but not on my convictions<sup>37</sup>.

Another participant alluded to pressure women experienced in their relationship with the media that meant female politicians had to be more subtle than male politicians with regards to criticism directed at the media. She mentioned the fine line female politicians had to tread if they disagreed with the media because disagreement was seen as authoritative in men but tiresome in women:

NIP1: [A man] will be seen as a leader ... someone who stands up for himself. A woman will be seen as troublesome<sup>38</sup>.

NIP1's remarks were confirmed by the editor of LNC who noted that men were more vocal about perceived negative media coverage:

LNC: Male politicians are much more communicative. They also call much more easily to complain when they are unhappy about [coverage]<sup>39</sup>.

This suggests that women may self-censor themselves out of concern that voicing their disagreement may damage their relationship with reporters and subsequently diminish their chances of media coverage.

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<sup>37</sup> « C'était une image extrêmement sèche, personne n'a jamais remis en doute mes compétences, mon côté travailleur, sérieux ... mais un peu déshumanisé et ça ce n'est pas moi. Quand je me suis rendue compte que cette image était en train de s'installer, j'ai travaillé là-dessus en faisant attention. (...) Avec mes collaborateurs on a réfléchi ... et on a essayé de montrer que derrière la présidente, il y avait une femme. Les médias m'ont aidée à évoluer de ce côté-là. Malgré tout, je pense que cette image qu'ils m'ont donnée m'a obligé à me remettre en question et à travailler sur qu'est que je veux qu'on voie de moi. Donc sur mon image ça a eu une importance mais pas sur mes convictions »

<sup>38</sup> « ... il va passer pour un leader ... quelqu'un qui ne se laisse pas faire, une femme elle va passer pour une emmerdeuse. »

<sup>39</sup> « Les politiques hommes sont beaucoup plus communicants. Ils appellent plus facilement pour râler aussi quand ça ne leur plait pas. »

### **6.3.3.ii No influence**

Some participants believed the media was not indispensable. This view was held particularly by those who featured very little in the media. But even some politicians who have a high media profile do not necessarily succumb to pressure. IP5 claimed she was not influenced by the media but was aware of its power to influence and was thus careful to maintain control of what she said during media interviews:

IP5: I am not influenced by the media. I carefully structure what I am going to say to the media and I don't tell the media everything because I need to preserve myself as I know what the media is capable of when it wants to destroy you<sup>40</sup>.

IP6 mentioned that she, like a number of other politicians whose family name is well known in trade union, customary or political circles, already has a certain level of public recognition and does not have to rely so heavily on the media to build a reputation for herself.

The size of the country was an important aspect in relation to the media for many loyalist participants who said the smallness of New Caledonia meant the media was indispensable:

NIP1: It's [the media] who calls the shots. In New Caledonia where we have a single television station, a single daily newspaper, and relatively few radio stations, one shouldn't get on the wrong side of the media. (...) it's a small country with few media organisations so they're the ones who make or break one's political image. We work the field, we meet people but a TV news broadcast [reaches] 90,000 people all at once. For us, it's a matter of life or death<sup>41</sup>.

Interestingly, many pro-independence participants had the opposite view. They claimed that the size of the country meant that it was easy enough to get political messages across to the public without using the media:

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<sup>40</sup> « Je ne suis pas influencée par les médias. Je cadre bien ce que j'ai à aller dire aux médias et je ne leur dis pas tout parce que j'ai besoin de me préserver parce que je sais de quoi ils sont capables les médias quand ils veulent vous descendre. »

<sup>41</sup> « c'est eux qui font la loi. En Nouvelle-Calédonie où on a une seul télé, un seul journal écrit quotidien et assez peu de radio, il ne faut pas se fâcher avec eux. (...) c'est un petit pays avec très peu de médias et donc c'est eux qui font et défont l'image politique. On fait du terrain, on voit les gens mais un JT c'est 90 000 personnes d'un coup. Pour nous, c'est la vie ou la mort. »

IP1: Because the country is very small the position that we adopt in Congress or elsewhere will be known in any case. We don't need to focus on communications all the time. Even the opposition already knows our position on issues. We don't have to say it over and over like they do. (...) that is not to say that we reject [the media]. We wait. If the media comes looking for us we respond but if they don't come we don't go looking for them either<sup>42</sup>.

### 6.3.4 Relationship with and perception of the media

During the interviews, I noted that political participants criticised the newspaper and television station more than the three radio stations. One explanation for this could be that the visual nature of television and print media makes stereotyping more obvious. The media's visual representations therefore seem to have a more significant impact than its audio portrayals. Another explanation in the New Caledonian context is that two of the radio stations are overtly positioned with regards to political leanings. Thus, politicians may listen to the station that represents their political perspective and may scrutinise it less including with regards to gender bias.

Some rural-based (outside Noumea) politicians also criticised the mainstream media's tendency to focus on news in the capital, Noumea, at the expense of newsworthy events outside of Noumea. NIP3 noted that important events "*en brousse*" (in the bush i.e. outside Noumea) were rarely covered by the media. This is possibly due to the fact that all the mainstream media organisations are based in Noumea.

There was some criticism of journalists' professionalism in relation to bias or inaccurate reporting across all three participant categories. Some participants were concerned at the lack of depth in reporting which they believed led to misinformation. For a couple of newer Congress members this created a lack of trust in the media:

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<sup>42</sup> « Comme le pays est très petit, notre position qu'on prend au Congrès ou par ailleurs elle se saura de toute façon. On n'a pas besoin de faire de la comm. tout le temps. Des positionnements sur des sujets même ceux d'en face le connaissent déjà. On n'a pas besoin de le dire et le redire comme eux ils le font. (...) ça ne veut pas dire qu'on le rejette. On attend. Si les médias viennent nous chercher on y va, mais s'ils ne viennent pas on va pas les chercher non plus. »

NIP3: Unfortunately, the press often misconstrues the sense of what is said. (...) [news stories are] too superficial<sup>43</sup>.

IP2: The media is important as long as it broadcasts accurate information<sup>44</sup>.

Despite such concerns however, the consensus was that overall, journalists had a professional and ethical approach. Participants, particularly those with significant media experience, believed that they were generally well informed and prepared for interviews, and were respectful of their interviewees:

IP6: There is a mutual respect. Each of us is doing our job. We are not here to be liked. We, like the media, have a mission to accomplish each at their own level<sup>45</sup>.

NIP2: [a journalist] is simply someone doing their job. I know them all, we get on well together but they are not my friends. Neither are they my foes but they are people whose job is to inform and my job is to get a message across<sup>46</sup>.

Participants' relationship with the media fell into two broad categories. It was either constructive or non-existent. Participants with a reasonable amount of political experience observed that the higher up they rose in the political ranks, the more significant their relationship with the media became. Lower-ranking Congress members noted that they had more contact with the media for their role at community level in municipal council or provincial assembly roles, but they have minimal media contact for their role in the Congress.

NIP1: You have very few direct relations with the media when you are a junior politician (...) the media goes in search of political leaders. Whereas you have daily relations when you are a political leader.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> « Malheureusement la presse écrite déforme souvent le sens de ce qu'on dit. (...) [les reportages sont] trop superficiels. »

<sup>44</sup> « Les médias sont importants à partir du moment où ils diffusent les bonnes informations. »

<sup>45</sup> « Il y a un respect mutuel. On est chacun dans notre rôle. On n'est pas là pour être aimée. Nous, comme les médias, on a une mission chacun à notre niveau. »

<sup>46</sup> « C'est quelqu'un qui fait son job, c'est tout. Moi je les connais tous, on s'apprécie bien mais ce ne sont pas mes amies. Ce ne sont pas mes ennemies non plus mais c'est les gens dont le job est d'informer et moi mon job c'est de faire passer le message. »

<sup>47</sup> « On a très peu de relations directes avec les médias quand on est élu de base (...) ils vont chercher les leaders. Alors qu'on a des relations quotidiennes quand on est responsable politique (...) »

While some participants said they always waited to be approached by the media, others were more active:

IP5: I have created a [media] space for myself because I believe that to be here I need to open my mouth and not simply shut up<sup>48</sup>.

With regards to the evolution of relationships with the media, participants who had media experience prior to entering politics, for example through roles in associations, trade unions, and the professional sphere, observed that the relationship had become more complicated since they entered politics. At the same time, participants noted that while the relationship with the media may seem challenging to begin with, in time it becomes easier. NIP2 noted that politicians' temperaments can, to a certain extent, influence their perception of and relationship with the media:

NIP2: I think that you're treated differently depending on your own behaviour, your own personality and not because you're a man or a woman<sup>49</sup>.

Participants with a significant amount of media experience were keen to strengthen their relationships with journalists, while those with little or no media experience tended to be more reserved about building a relationship with the media. All participants expressed a need to be vigilant when dealing with the media in their capacity as politicians.

#### **6.3.4.i Sex of journalist**

Media editors noted that while the ratio changes from time to time, the male to female proportion of journalists is relatively balanced and does not vary vastly. Female journalists are well represented including in political reporting and at management level. Of the four principal mainstream media organisations, two have female news editors, including the public television and radio broadcaster NC1<sup>ère</sup> (Table 6.4). Based on observations by female politicians and media representatives, as well as on the proportion of female politicians interviewed by the media (17 percent in *l'invité politique du dimanche*, a weekly primetime

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<sup>48</sup> « Je me suis fait une place parce que j'ai considéré que pour être ici il faut ouvrir sa bouche et ne pas se taire. »

<sup>49</sup> « Je crois qu'on est traitée différemment selon notre propre comportement, notre propre personnalité et pas parce qu'on est un homme ou une femme. »

television segment), this gender equality in newsrooms does not appear to have any significant effect on the media's representation of female politicians.

**Table 6.4 Sex ratio in newsrooms**

| Female to male ratio            | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> | LNC | RRB  | DJI |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----|------|-----|
| <b>News editors</b>             | F*                 | M*  | F    | M   |
| <b>Political journalists</b>    | F/m*               | M   | F/m  | F/M |
| <b>All newsroom journalists</b> | F/m                | F/M | f/M* | F/M |

\*F = female; M = male; F/m = mainly female; f/M = mainly male

Source: Author based on fieldwork interviews

While most participants conceded that the presence of female journalists was important for a number of reasons, including that female journalists brought different angles to a story and because, as a matter of principle, gender equality was important in all institutions including in the media, all participants but one believed that the sex of the journalist was irrelevant. Two participants explained that this was because editorial decisions were dictated at management level. A couple of participants also believed that female journalists were generally more aware of gender bias issues. One of them, NIP1, said although she worked well with male journalists she would prefer to work with female journalists because they were aware of the bias against female politicians:

NIP1: Because I feel that it [gender bias] weighs on them too. They also disagree with the fact that there are so many men<sup>50</sup>.

NIP1 added that she was trying to get herself interviewed on *l'invitée politique du dimanche*, with the support of a female journalist.

When I interviewed the female Director of Programmes from NC1ère, she expressed similar sentiments to those of NIP1 relating to the concern of female journalists regarding gender bias. I observed that she felt strongly about the scarcity of women in political reporting and in particular with regards to the station's *l'invitée politique du dimanche* segment:

<sup>50</sup> « Parce que je sens que ça les pèse elles aussi. C'est-à-dire qu'elles aussi, elles ne sont pas d'accord avec le fait qu'il y a autant d'hommes. »

NC1ère: It is not right. I believe there is a casting error. Each year we have to complete our diversity declaration documents [in relation to organisational policy] and for this particular segment we will be unable to explain why we had [practically] only men<sup>51</sup>.

She also observed that female journalists had a specific role to play because male journalists alone were unlikely to significantly change gender inequalities in society, as they do not experience gender bias in the same way as female journalists:

NC1ère: We need to tell ourselves, as women we can experience these same things [gender bias] and to be aware of the fact that we make up half of society and we must represent it as such<sup>52</sup>.

Interestingly, participants who said they didn't mind whether they were interviewed by a male or female journalist then went on to say that they felt they were able to build a better rapport with female journalists. However, none could elaborate on this beyond implying that it was a subtle impression:

IP6: [Concerning certain issues] we are more inclined to share with a female journalist even if it's a misconception perhaps because that's how we're programmed. But the perception of a person who is going to interview us on such issues is important<sup>53</sup>.

#### **6.3.4.ii      *The role of the media***

Participants viewed the media's role as two-fold. Firstly, it has a broad role to play in informing the public about politics in general. Secondly, it has a more specific role to play in promoting women in politics. Although participants had a mediocre impression of the New Caledonian media's representation of women in politics, they all believed that the media

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<sup>51</sup> « Ce n'est pas normal. Je trouve que là, il y a une erreur de casting. Chaque année nous devons remplir nos documents de déclaration de diversité et dans cette émission là on ne pourra pas expliquer pourquoi on a eu [pratiquement] que des hommes ».

<sup>52</sup> « C'est de se dire qu'en tant que femme on peut subir ces mêmes choses et d'être sensible au fait que nous sommes la moitié de la société et nous devons représenter la société telle quelle. »

<sup>53</sup> « [Sur certains sujets] on a plus envie de partager avec une journaliste femme même si c'est des fausses idées peut-être parce qu'on est formatée comme ça. Mais le regard de la personne qui va nous interviewer sur ces sujets bien précis sera important. »

was a potentially important instrument in promoting women in politics. Participants did not shy away from the media's investigative role. On the contrary, there was criticism about the lack of media analysis indicating a wish for the media to be more critical in its approach:

NIP2: I believe [reporting] remains on a superficial level and not enough perspective is provided. I understand that this is a small territory and as soon as a political analysis is given it implies a political stand one way or another, but perhaps without getting into the finer details, at least if news were briefly deciphered so that news is not simply thrown at people like that<sup>54</sup>.

The difficulty of providing media analysis without compromising political neutrality in the context of a small country was also raised by the editor of LNC:

LNC: We're the only newspaper on the island. We have a monopoly. I'm not much in favour of a newspaper that gives its opinion too much. I discourage the journalists from commenting too much. I think we are here to relate the facts, to show the opinions of relevant people including politicians, but I don't really like giving our own opinion<sup>55</sup>.

### **6.3.5 Media training and support**

Media training is not systematic but is offered from time to time by political parties or institutions. Only half of the participants had received some form of media training – generally a short workshop. None of the participants were aware of media guidelines for politicians in any of the institutions they represented. There was consensus amongst both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants that media training was important with nine of the 11 participants observing that it helped politicians understand the rules of the game. The remaining two participants conceded that media training could be useful but it was not essential. These two participants were an Indigenous pro-independence politician and a

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<sup>54</sup> « Je trouve qu'on reste en surface et qu'il n'y a pas de mise en perspective. Je comprends qu'on est dans un petit territoire et dès qu'on fait une analyse politique du coup on s'engage dans un sens ou dans l'autre mais peut-être sans aller jusqu'à une analyse fine au moins faire un petit décryptage que les informations ne soient pas balancées juste comme ça. »

<sup>55</sup> « On est un journal qui est tout seul sur l'île. On est un monopole. Je ne suis pas trop pour un journal qui donne trop son avis. J'évite que les journalistes commentent trop. Je pense qu'on est là pour relater les faits, donner les avis des personnes qualifiées notamment des politiques, mais je n'aime pas trop qu'on donne notre avis. »

non-Indigenous loyalist politician. The responses relating to media training suggest that neither culture nor political affiliation influence perceptions. I also observed that while pro-independence participants did not perceive the media as essential to their communication strategies, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, most, like their loyalist counterparts, saw media training as important:

IP4: It's very important. When you arrive from a different sector and you find yourself before the assembly, you discover the political sphere, having to speak in public ... In the beginning I found it difficult to express myself even though I had plenty of ideas. It was very important for my work as well as to address the media<sup>56</sup>.

IP5: I believe that training is necessary to build media relations to familiarise young people and women with this work. They need to break their silence because that's the only way they can achieve progress. They shouldn't simply get elected, come to the institution and stay open-mouthed. It's not just women. There are plenty of male politicians who don't say anything<sup>57</sup>.

NIP1: Yes [it's important]. Because for me it's a job and when you hold a press conference that lasts half an hour and then you are given 25 seconds on television, you have to be able to construct 25 seconds from 30 minutes. It's not an easy exercise to know which words you can use or not use, and how to get a message across<sup>58</sup>.

It was especially felt that media training was important to avoid being caught out by difficult interview questions. While some participants said that they had learnt how to handle the media and were unfazed by this, others mentioned that such questions created

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<sup>56</sup> « C'était très important. Quand tu arrives d'un autre secteur et tu te trouves devant l'Assemblée, tu découvres le monde politique, le fait de parler en public ... Au début j'avais du mal à m'exprimer pourtant j'avais des idées. C'était très important pour mon travail et pour parler aux médias aussi. »

<sup>57</sup> « Je pense que ça passe par la formation des relations avec les médias pour habituer des jeunes et des femmes à ce travail. Il faut sortir de silence parce que c'est que comme ça qu'ils peuvent faire avancer des choses. Il ne faut pas être élu, venir dans l'institution et rester bouche bée. Il n'y a pas que des femmes. Il y a plein d'élus qui ne disent rien. »

<sup>58</sup> « Oui. Parce que pour moi c'est un métier et quand on fait une conférence de presse qui dure une demi-heure et qu'ensuite on a 25 secondes à la télé, il faut être capable de construire 25 secondes sur 30 minutes. C'est un exercice qui n'est pas facile de savoir aussi quels sont les mots qu'on peut employer ne pas employer, comment faire passer un message. »

a challenge especially for politicians who did not have much media experience. This appeared to create a wariness of the media:

IP1: Sometimes [journalists] ask questions that are irrelevant or that could be considered trick questions. So you have to know how to deflect the questions that are asked. It can be disconcerting<sup>59</sup>.

IP2: You need to be in control with regards to your political position before speaking to the media. That way there are no trick questions<sup>60</sup>.

IP5: Yes because it isn't easy for us [Kanak] to reply, to express ourselves and it isn't easy either not to be trapped by the media if you don't know the rules<sup>61</sup>.

### 6.3.6 Advice to new female politicians

Participants' advice to female politicians who are new to politics or not familiar with speaking to the media exhibits a fair amount of media savviness. They identified six main elements of advice for female politicians: preparation, control, confidence, professionalism, training, and exploring other media sources. They put the strongest emphasis on preparation prior to media interventions in order to master the message. They also advised politicians to maintain control of the relationship with journalists as well as the message they wanted to convey, and to be confident and convincing:

IP4: It's not just the media's fault that it doesn't approach us. Us women need to be responsible and go and bang on the table to say 'I also have something to say'<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> « Quelque fois, ils posent des questions qui n'ont rien à voir ou des questions qu'on pourrait dire pièges. Après il faut savoir rebondir sur les questions qui sont posées. Ça peut déstabiliser. »

<sup>60</sup> « Il faut d'abord maîtriser sa position politique avant de prendre la parole dans les médias. Comme ça il n'y a pas de questions pièges. »

<sup>61</sup> « Oui parce que ce n'est pas évident de répondre, de s'exprimer chez nous [les Kanaks] et ce n'est pas évident non plus de ne pas se faire piéger par les médias si on ne connaît pas les règles. »

<sup>62</sup> « Ce n'est pas que de la faute des médias de ne pas venir vers nous. Il faut que nous les femmes on soit responsables et qu'on va aussi pour taper sur la table et dire moi aussi j'ai quelque chose à dire. »

NIP2: Try and meet the most influential journalists [in your field] simply to introduce yourself, to meet them, so that if an opportunity presents itself they'll think of you<sup>63</sup>.

Participants suggested politicians be selective about doing interviews and not feel pressured. They warned female politicians against becoming overly familiar with journalists and urged them to be professional at all times in their dealings with journalists.

One participant noted that having to juggle commitments on many levels resulted in women running out of time and missing out on media opportunities. She encouraged women not to let private commitments get in the way of media opportunities and encouraged politicians to take advantage of media training opportunities. She also recommended that female politicians familiarise themselves with new media platforms and adapt to the communication methods of social media:

IP3: ... since in addition to their political life, women also have their family life, if they aren't organised enough or self-disciplined enough to make time for training regarding the media and unless they have a plan, they short-change themselves unlike men<sup>64</sup>.

### **6.3.7 Improving media representation of female politicians**

Participants identified three areas to target for an improved media portrayal of female politicians: the media, political structures and female politicians themselves.

#### **6.3.7.i Improvements concerning the media**

Participants suggested that certain measures needed to be taken within the media sector to address gender bias including the provision of gender training and awareness for journalists, a more active focus on female perspectives in politics, and better coverage of women in general, not just in politics:

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<sup>63</sup> « Essayer de rencontrer les journalistes les plus importants [spécialisés dans votre domaine] ne serait-ce que pour se présenter, de faire leur connaissance pour qu'à l'occasion ils pensent à vous. »

<sup>64</sup> « ... les femmes, comme elles ont en plus de leur vie politique leur vie familiale, si elles ne s'organisent pas, ne s'autodisciplinent pas pour avoir ce temps de formation vis-à-vis des médias et d'avoir un plan, elles se font avoir contrairement aux hommes. »

IP2: It would be good if the media approached women and featured them throughout their careers, whether it be in politics or in business, to promote the work women do so that there is a profile of women in management roles<sup>65</sup>.

They also believed that journalists needed to take a more active approach to newsgathering by specifically and systematically seeking female politicians' views rather than simply serving up what was presented to them:

IP7: The media here doesn't shake things up. It simply follows along with what people do. It is a reflection of what's happening<sup>66</sup>.

However, not all media representatives agreed:

RRB: It's more the problem of political parties rather than the media to ensure this equality. We are here simply to translate it. (...) We are in charge of relaying the reality<sup>67</sup>.

One participant was concerned that the mainstream media's reluctance to develop a strong online presence resulted in social media outlets with less ethical standards going unchecked and thus being likely to publish information in a more reckless manner:

NIP2: I'd like the mainstream media to take up more of a presence on the internet because for the time being, since they've left the space empty, [social] media has filled the space and it's a lot more complicated especially as [social media platforms] mostly operate anonymously or using pseudonyms which has nothing to do with journalistic practice. And in the long run, that is dangerous for freedom of expression<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> « Ça serait bien que les médias vont à la rencontre des femmes et qu'ils suivent des femmes tout au long de leurs carrières que ce soit en politique ou dans les entreprises pour valoriser le travail des femmes pour qu'on ait une image de femmes responsables. »

<sup>66</sup> « Ici les médias ne bousculent pas les choses. Ils se collent plutôt à ce que font les gens. C'est le reflet de ce qui se passe. »

<sup>67</sup> « C'est plus le problème des partis politiques plutôt que des médias d'assurer cette représentativité. Nous on est là que pour la traduire. (...) On est nous chargé de retransmettre la réalité. »

<sup>68</sup> « J'aimerais que les medias traditionnels prennent le virage du ligne du net parce que pour l'instant, comme ils ont laissé la place libre, ce sont des médias parallèles [sociaux] qui ont pris la place et c'est beaucoup plus compliqué surtout que ça se fait souvent sous couvert de l'anonymat ou

### **6.3.7.ii      *Improvements to political structures***

Participants indicated that political parties and institutions had a vital role to play in increasing female politicians' representation in the media and suggested measures to achieve this. These measures included: creating more space for women in political structures including by promoting women to leadership roles; rotating spokesperson responsibilities in political groups and institutions to allow female politicians as well as lower-ranking male politicians to gain media experience and visibility; passing legislation on gender equity and equality in politics.

IP4: Perhaps next time when the party lists are drawn, they should place women at the top of the lists. That way we'll hear women more<sup>69</sup>.

### **6.3.7.iii      *Improvements concerning female politicians***

Participants believed female politicians needed to overcome social conditioning relating to humility and respect which prevented them from taking advantage of media opportunities and needed to be more confident. They emphasised that it was important to understand that seeking media exposure was not simply a self-promotional exercise, but was part of their political obligation to represent and inform their constituents:

IP4: It's not to show off, no. It's part of your job to take care of the needs of the population, to share your ideas on how to build the country, the future<sup>70</sup>.

NIP3: It's up to us women to do what's necessary. (...) We rarely promote ourselves because we work for the public interest. It's very feminine. I rarely say 'I'. I'm told I should say it more often<sup>71</sup>.

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les pseudos et on n'est pas du tout dans un travail de journalisme. Et ça doit être dangereux pour la liberté de l'expression à terme. »

<sup>69</sup> « Peut-être la prochaine fois pour tirer les listes, il faut mettre les femmes à la tête des listes. Comme ça on va plus entendre des femmes. »

<sup>70</sup> « Ce n'est pas pour se montrer, non, c'est dans le travail que tu mènes pour subvenir aux besoins de la population, pour partager tes idées de constructions du pays, de l'avenir. »

<sup>71</sup> « C'est à nous les femmes à faire ce qu'il faut. (...) C'est rare qu'on [les femmes] se mette en avant parce qu'on travaille pour l'intérêt général. C'est très féminin. C'est rare que je dise « je ». On me dit il faudrait que je le dise plus. »

Participants also advised female politicians to be confident with regards to the media by building constructive relationships with journalists and seizing opportunities for interviews. At the same time, they highlighted the need to pursue alternative means of communication offered by social media and other non-mainstream media:

IP4: If you want to be known you'll need to get closer to the media. Hillary Clinton represented the Democrats so why not us [laughs]. Us women need to have confidence in ourselves<sup>72</sup>.

NIP2: ... there's also needs to be an effort to adapt to new means of communications, in particular new media [social media]<sup>73</sup>.

**Table 6.5 Key issues and findings**

| Issue  | Findings  | Number of Participants |
|--|---|------------------------|
| <b>1. Portrayal of female politicians</b>    | Female politicians have low media profiles  | 10                     |
|  | Media spreads image of masculine dominance  | 7                      |
|  | Gender stereotyping leads to negative portrayals of female politicians  | 4                      |
|  | Evolution:<br>i. Some improvement in media coverage<br>ii. No improvement in media coverage                           | 8<br>2                 |
| <b>2. Individual participant's portrayal</b> | Generally fair and accurate coverage  | 7                      |
|  | Participant is rarely or never featured in the media  | 4                      |
| <b>3. Media influence on participant</b>     | Participant perceives some influence e.g. she exerts caution in her actions and/or speech                             | 4                      |
|  | Participant perceives no influence as she has no or little media presence or does not perceive the media as essential | 7                      |

<sup>72</sup> « Si tu veux te faire connaître, il faut que tu t'approches aussi des médias. « Il y a Hillary Clinton qui représente le parti Démocrate, alors pourquoi pas nous [rires]. Il faut que nous les femmes on ait confiance en nous. »

<sup>73</sup> « ... il y aura aussi un travail à faire pour l'adaptation aux nouveaux moyens de communication et notamment aux nouveaux médias [médias sociaux]. »

| Issue  | Findings   | Number of Participants |
|--|--|------------------------|
| <b>4. Relationship with the media</b>                          | Participant has a positive relationship with journalists                             | 7                      |
|  | Participant has a weak relationship with the media or is indifferent towards it      | 4                      |
|  | Prefers dealing with female journalists  | 1                      |
|  | Has no preference regarding the sex of the journalist                                | 10                     |
| <b>5. Media training and support</b>                           | Enables female politicians to take advantage more effectively of media opportunities | 9                      |
|  | It is useful but not essential   | 2                      |
| <b>6. Advice to newly elected female politicians</b>           | i. Preparation is essential  | 7                      |
|  | ii. Maintain control of your message and your relationship with the media            | 4                      |
|  | iii. Have confidence and be convincing   | 3                      |
|  | iv. Be professional at all times in your dealings with journalists                   | 3                      |
|  | v. Undertake training in media relations   | 3                      |
|  | vi. Take advantage of alternative media/ social media                                | 3                      |
| <b>7. Improving media representation of female politicians</b> | Media:   |                        |
|  | i. Formalise gender equality obligations in organisational processes                 | 2                      |
|  | ii. Actively focus on female perspectives in political reporting                     | 3                      |
|  | iii. Improve coverage of women generally   | 2                      |
|  | Political structures:  |                        |
|  | i. promote women's leadership  | 3                      |
|  | iii. take legislative action to promote gender equality                              | 1                      |
| Female politicians:  |  |                        |
| i. Be more confident   | 3  |                        |

| Issue | Findings   | Number of Participants |
|-------|--|------------------------|
|       | ii. Build relationships with journalists                       | 2                      |
|       | iii. Explore alternative media channels including social media | 2                      |

Source: Author based on research findings

### 6.3.8 Findings based on participant categories

In the sub-sections above I have presented my findings in order of the interview questions. In the following sub-sections I present further findings with specific attention to the three categories based on the criteria identified through the sampling process (Table 6.6).

#### 6.3.8.i *Ethnic origin*

A special focus of my research was to explore whether Indigenous politicians experienced specific issues relating to the media differently from non-Indigenous politicians. Most participants indicated that while cultural origin or political affiliation was likely to result in different political experiences, overall female politicians were confronted by similar issues (table 6.6):

NIP2: ... what unites us is first and foremost that we are women involved in politics and that is an important denominator. (...) The path travelled has been different depending on whether our origins are European or Kanak or Oceanian etc. And there is also another difference which is political. The path travelled is different depending on whether you belong to the pro-independence world or the loyalist world. And the difference is no doubt more important on this level than with regards to our ethnicity<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> « ... ce qui nous rassemble, c'est d'abord qu'on soit les femmes engagées en politique et c'est un dénominateur très important. (...) Le chemin à parcourir a été différent selon qu'on est issu de milieu européen ou de milieu Kanak ou océanien etc. Et il y a aussi une autre différence qui est celle-ci plus politique. Le chemin à parcourir est différent selon si on est dans le monde indépendantiste ou dans le monde loyaliste. Et la différence est sans doute plus importante à ce niveau-là qu'au niveau de notre ethnie. »

Only one participant was critical of the media's approach on this subject because she believed that the media categorised Kanak women within a confined space. She showed frustration at the media's tendency to insinuate that as an Indigenous woman she might have different priorities to non-Indigenous women:

IP3: (...) with regards to issues facing women [the media] is always asking me the question 'as a Kanak woman ...'. Sometimes I feel like being rude to the journalist by saying 'when you are a European woman do you look at things differently?' [laughs]. It's first and foremost as women that we face challenges<sup>75</sup>.

In her opinion, challenges faced by women were common to all female politicians regardless of cultural origin or political affiliation:

IP3: [Female politicians] have exactly the same problems whether they are pro-independence or anti-independence. They have to carve out a niche for themselves. (...) I'm just like anyone else. It's 2016, people work, they have qualifications, they have children. Only, some go to the pool at the week end, I go to the *tribu*. You get what I'm saying? [laughs]. These are stupid questions. Your Kanak cultural identity or not is not the point. It's your political actions that matter. (...) when you are not confined, you impact the listener or the [television] viewer and that's how you help mentalities evolve<sup>76</sup>.

The view of pro-independence participants was that the media was just one of a number of factors that contribute to change:

IP5: What I say to women who have a certain number of demands to make and who talk about it here in Noumea, I tell them that 'what you are saying here, you

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<sup>75</sup> « (...) sur la problématique des femmes [les médias] vont toujours me poser la question [en disant] « en tant que femme Kanak ... » Parfois j'ai envie d'être malpoli au journaliste en disant quand vous êtes une femme européenne vous avez un regard qui est différent ? [rires] C'est d'abord en tant que femme qu'il y a des défis. »

<sup>76</sup> « [Les femmes politiques] elles ont exactement les mêmes problèmes que l'on soit chez les indépendantistes ou chez les non-indépendantistes, il faut se faire sa place. (...) Je suis comme tout le monde, on est en 2016, vous travaillez, vous avez des diplômes, vous avez des enfants. Après certains vont à la piscine le week-end, moi j'y vais à la tribu, enfin vous voyez ce que je veux dire [rires]. Ce sont des questions stupides. Votre identité culturelle Kanak ou pas ce n'est pas ça le sujet. C'est votre action politique qui importe. [...] quand on ne vous enferme pas, vous impactez l'auditeur ou le téléspectateur et c'est comme ça qu'on fait évoluer les mentalités. »

need to go and say it back there as well in the conservative customary structures, to your brothers etc. Because you need to have this discussion with those with whom you need to change society. You can say all you like here in the media but it is them [customary leaders] who have leverage<sup>77</sup>.

Because of the masculine dominance in Kanak leadership structures and customary institutions – the customary senate for example, is made up exclusively of men (see Chapter 5) – it could be expected that Indigenous female politicians may experience cultural related challenges in their political roles. However, while it presented some challenges such as speaking in public (see 6.3.9.ii below), Kanak culture did not appear to create particular obstacles to Indigenous women’s involvement in politics. Indigenous political and media participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the distinctions between the customary and the political sphere:

IP4: Us Kanak women are modern. But you need to be able to make distinctions. When I go to take part in *la coutume* [a traditional custom ceremony] in my home community I know where my place is. Just because I’m in politics doesn’t mean I’ll take the floor. When we are in the *tribu* [Indigenous community] we wear the *popinée* [traditional Kanak dress] of the *tribu* but when we’re in politics we wear a modern *popinée*<sup>78</sup>.

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: Kanak men are transposing what we live in the *tribu* but the problem is that we are not in the context of customary life here. In the *tribu* everyone has their role. In politics we are elected by the people therefore we cannot be imposed upon by men<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> « Ce que je dis aux femmes qui ont un certain nombre de revendications et qui le montrent ici à Nouméa, je leur dis que ce que vous dites là, il faut aller le dire là-bas aussi dans les structures coutumières conservatrices, à vos frères etc. Parce qu’il faut avoir cette discussion-là avec ceux avec qui il faut changer la société. Vous pouvez dire tout ce que vous voulez ici dans les médias mais ce sont eux qui ont les leviers. »

<sup>78</sup> « Nous les femmes Kanak, on est modernes. Mais il faut bien faire la part des choses. Quand je vais faire la coutume chez moi je sais où est ma place. Ce n’est pas parce que je suis dans la politique que je vais prendre la parole. Quand on est dans la tribu on porte la popinée de la tribu, mais quand on est dans la politique on porte la popinée moderne. »

<sup>79</sup> « Les hommes Kanaks retraduisent ce qu’on vit nous en tribu, mais le problème c’est qu’on n’est pas dans la vie coutumière là. A la tribu chacun à sa position. En politique, nous sommes élues par un peuple donc on ne nous impose pas des hommes. »

DJI: A lot of women in our culture recognize that they have their part to play within *la coutume*. But when you leave the customary [context] you shouldn't transpose it to other contexts in public or elsewhere<sup>80</sup>.

### **6.3.8.ii Political affiliation**

Pro-independence politicians were more likely than loyalists to downplay the importance of media coverage. They tended to attribute a high degree of importance to strong community- or party-based communications networks. They viewed the efficiency of these networks as more dependable than the mainstream media. One participant offered an explanation for the nonchalance of pro-independence parties regarding the media. In addition to historical reasons, her comments alluded to the inter-dependence of the politics-media relationship:

IP5: It's what we're always being told; 'you need to communicate, you need to communicate'. But historically, we [pro-independence activists] didn't exist in the eyes of the media organisations that were present at the time. But gradually, they began approaching us when the contention became significant, when we became indispensable on the political scene, firstly with *les Événements* ['the Troubles'] and afterwards with the accords with the French State. We noticed the change in the media towards us so we don't chase after the media for that. We understand that the media goes wherever the news is<sup>81</sup>.

Loyalists on the other hand, placed a high level of importance on mainstream media coverage. Since mainstream media is generally harder for female politicians to attract in comparison to male politicians, participants also recognised the importance of other media platforms including community media broadcasters and social media:

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<sup>80</sup> « Beaucoup de femmes chez nous reconnaissent qu'elles ont leur part quand elles sont dans la coutume. Mais quand tu quittes le [contexte] coutumier il ne faut pas transposer cela sur d'autres contextes devant le public ou ailleurs »

<sup>81</sup> « C'est ce qu'on nous dit : « il faut communiquer, il faut communiquer ». Mais nous [les indépendantistes] historiquement on n'existait pas pour les médias qui étaient là. Mais petit à petit, ils sont venus nous voir quand la contestation elle est devenue importante, « quand on est devenu incontournable sur la scène politique, d'abord avec les événements et après les accords avec l'état français. On a bien vu le changement des médias à notre égard donc on ne court pas après pour ça. On sait bien qu'ils vont là où les dirige l'actualité. »

NIP4: ... now with social networks luckily it's a plus for both male and female politicians who don't necessarily have a profile on the radio or TV<sup>82</sup>:

IP6: I think that NCTV has a role to play to open up [our culture] to other communities. There are many topics relating to Kanak society in general that are very interesting and also different views of what Kanak society is that are not necessarily visible on the other national [TV] channels. It could be an aspect to consider [in order to advance]<sup>83</sup>.

### 6.3.8.iii Political experience

The rank of a politician is also relevant. Low-ranking politicians receive more limited coverage than their higher-ranking counterparts. Although low-ranking politicians may perceive the mainstream media as an essential outlet for political messages, they put more emphasis on using alternative media sources such as social media. IP6 for example, remarked that while she receives practically no coverage in the mainstream media, she is very visible on Facebook: "I'm told, 'you are always everywhere.'"<sup>84</sup>

**Table 6.6 Findings drawn from the participant categories**

| Category                     | Finding  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Ethnic origin</b>         | Gender bias appears to be a problem common to all female politicians. Regardless of their ethnic origin participants noted that the media did not differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. Participants of all cultural origins faced obstacles related to gender bias in the political sphere and in the media. |
| <b>Political affiliation</b> | Pro-independence politicians were more likely than loyalists to downplay the importance of media coverage.   |
| <b>Political experience</b>  | Low-ranking politicians received more limited coverage than their higher-ranking counterparts.   |

Source: Author based on research findings

<sup>82</sup> « ... maintenant avec les réseaux sociaux heureusement c'est un plus pour nous également hommes ou femmes politiques qui n'avons pas forcément une image à la radio ou à la télé. »

<sup>83</sup> « Je pense que NCTV [TV communautaire] a une carte à jouer pour nous [cf les Kanak] ouvrir aux autres communautés. Il y a beaucoup de sujets concernant la société Kanak en générale qui sont très intéressants et même d'autre visions de ce que peut-être la société Kanak qui ne sont pas forcément visibles sur les autres chaînes nationales. Ça pourrait être un aspect [pour faire évoluer les choses]. »

<sup>84</sup> « On me dit : « tu es tout le temps partout ».

### 6.3.9 Additional media-related issues affecting female politicians

This section presents findings drawn from the final interview question in which I asked participants if they had any further issues to highlight (Table 6.7).

#### 6.3.9.i *Higher demands made on women*

Another common issue to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous female politicians was the challenge posed by women's greater workload in comparison to men. This is articulated in the following quotes by Indigenous participants but similar observations were also made by non-Indigenous participants:

IP3: In a political organisation the question "what is the role of men in all activities whether in the political, family, cultural, or associative sphere" is never asked. Yet this is bound to have an impact. Freedom or availability is far less for women than for men. A man's only commitment is to [politics]<sup>85</sup>.

IP4: In today's modern professional world, I think that women are equal to men. But for us Kanaks in our society, clan or family ... women have more responsibility in comparison to men. Before [women] come to a Congress committee we first prepare for the committee, the day's work, there's the cooking to do, there's all the house work, and if there is a customary ceremony we need to participate in that. We [are in charge of] multiple activities. It's a lot to organise<sup>86</sup>.

Some participants both of Indigenous and non-Indigenous origin told me they had entered politics once they were freed of family obligations relating to parenting. Younger politicians told me that they received significant support from parents or siblings to help with their children when they had to attend to political commitments. Some also mentioned that

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<sup>85</sup> « Dans une organisation politique on ne va pas se poser la question « quelle est la place des hommes dans toute activité qu'elle soit politique, familiale, culturelle, associative ». Hors ça a forcément un impact. Les libertés ou les disponibilités, elles sont beaucoup moins fortes chez une femme que chez un homme. L'homme n'a que ça à se consacrer. »

<sup>86</sup> « Dans le monde professionnel moderne, je pense que la femme est au même niveau que l'homme. Mais chez nous les Kanak au niveau société, clan, famille ... la femme par rapport à l'homme a plus de responsabilités. Nous [les femmes] avant de venir en commission [du Congrès] on prépare d'abord la commission, le travail de la journée, il y a la cuisine à faire, il y a tout le travail de la maison et s'il y a la coutume il faut qu'on participe aussi à la coutume. On [s'occupe] des multi activités. C'est toute une organisation. »

having supportive husbands who enabled them to be involved in politics at a high level was critical.

### **6.3.9.ii        *Speaking in public***

My findings indicate that cultural protocol regarding speaking in public, an issue that politicians of Oceanian origin including Kanaks grapple with, creates a greater challenge for non-European (those of Oceanian and Asian origin) politicians in their ability to attract media attention. In New Caledonia, European and Oceanian<sup>87</sup> cultures have distinct approaches to speaking in public. The Oceanian way of communicating puts as much emphasis on listening as it does on speaking. New Caledonians of European origin tend to speak spontaneously while New Caledonians of non-European cultural origins are more accustomed to “wait their turn”:

NIP3: When I attend meetings where there are several people from several [cultural] communities, when us Oceanians arrive we don't address the meeting immediately. We wait a while. But Westerners don't. They don't have this perspective regarding speech. They start speaking straight away<sup>88</sup>.

A number of Indigenous politicians as well as the participants of Asian and Polynesian cultural heritage raised the issue of speaking in public as a factor that holds them or other non-European female politicians back from taking the floor in political meetings. This disadvantages them in relation to the media because, as observed by a couple of participants, addressing political meetings or speaking in Congress sessions helps bring politicians to the attention of the media.

From my interviews with Oceanian participants, including two of the media representatives, I gathered that in Kanak and other Oceanian cultures everyone, both men and women, have to wait their turn to speak. However, the issue is exacerbated for Kanak women who, although not strictly forbidden from speaking in public, are not generally invited to do so by the male elders who authorise who can speak. Some of the urban

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<sup>87</sup> “Oceanian” refers to people originating from the island countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean.

<sup>88</sup> « Quand j'assiste à une réunion où il y a plusieurs personnes de plusieurs communautés chez les Océaniens quand on arrive on ne prend pas la parole tout de suite. On attend d'abord. Mais pas chez les occidentaux. Il n'y a pas ce recul par rapport à la parole. Ils prennent la parole tout de suite. »

(Noumea-based) Indigenous politicians indicated that this factor was not important as they felt less pressure to adhere strictly to such protocols and would give their opinion on an important matter in a customary setting regardless of whether they had permission. However, rural-based politicians appeared to be more mindful. One participant summed up the challenge that balancing opposing expectations, etiquette and norms based on two very different cultural systems raised for Kanak women in the political sector:

IP7: When we [women] take the floor [in a customary context] most of the time it's not looked upon well because we are not given permission to speak and give our opinion. And now I find myself in a totally different world where you are solicited to take the floor<sup>89</sup>.

In addition to etiquette related to speaking in public, responses from a couple of Indigenous participants also suggested that some Kanak politicians may be hesitant to seek or accept interviews because of anticipated difficulties with language. Although neither of the participants who highlighted this experienced such difficulties, they were aware that the issue posed a challenge for some male and female Kanak politicians:

IP1: For a start, we [Kanaks] don't speak French well. (...) It's difficult to understand the questions that [journalists] ask sometimes. We could give an answer that is unconnected [to the question]<sup>90</sup>.

IP5: There are problems with comprehension but I think that the [main] problem is expressing themselves in this particular language that isn't their mother tongue. They think they don't master it but there are some who have a good command of the language but who don't have the confidence to approach [the media] or even to speak in public. I was like that myself in the beginning when I was a young activist. It was the boys who spoke because in our culture women don't speak in public<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> « Quand on prend la parole [dans le contexte coutumier] la plupart du temps c'est mal vu parce qu'on ne nous donne pas la parole pour donner notre opinion. Et puis maintenant je retourne dans un autre monde où on te sollicite pour prendre la parole »

<sup>90</sup> « Nous déjà le français on ne le parle pas bien. (...) C'est difficile de saisir quelque fois la question qu'ils posent. On peut répondre à côté. »

<sup>91</sup> « Il y a des problèmes de compréhension mais je pense que le problème c'est de pouvoir s'exprimer dans cette langue-là qui n'est pas la langue maternelle. Elles pensent qu'elles ne maîtrisent pas mais il y en a qui maîtrisent très bien la langue mais qui n'osent pas aller [vers les

**Table 6.7 Further media-related challenges for female politicians**

| Issue                     | Finding  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Women's greater workload  | <b>The impact of multiple commitments</b>  |
|                           | Higher demands on women's time in the social context (family/ customary obligations) diminish their ability to take advantage of media opportunities.  |
| Cultural norms & protocol | <b>Speaking in public</b>  |
|                           | Different cultural protocol in Western political and non-Western customary contexts regarding speaking in public results in politicians of Oceanian origin including Kanaks having to contend with conflicting etiquette in customary, political and media settings. |

Source: Author based on research findings

## 6.4 Media approach to gender in political reporting

This section outlines the key findings from my interviews with media representatives regarding various aspects of their approach to gender in political reporting (Table 6.8). The views of the media representatives add context and depth to the findings drawn from the interviews with female politicians. The findings highlight a number of issues including formal measures for gender equality in media organisations, sex ratio in media teams, priority-setting in news coverage, and factors that influence coverage. The findings also raise concerns regarding cultural representations and explore informal measures for ensuring gender equality.

### 6.4.1 Approach to gender equality in political reporting

With the exception of NC1<sup>ère</sup> whose political coverage in theory takes gender considerations into account through policy, media organisations appear to take a passive approach to gender equality in political reporting, approaching news gathering without necessarily questioning the implications of the sex of their news sources or subjects:

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médias] ou même parler en public. J'étais comme ça au tout début quand j'étais jeune militante (ok). C'étaient les garçons qui parlaient parce que chez nous ce n'est pas les femmes qui parlent en public. »

DJI: When we go to cover a story if it's a woman who is at the forefront we will let her speak and if it's a man who is at the forefront we will let him speak<sup>92</sup>.

LNC: We approach the person in charge of the sector. Whether it's a man or a woman is of no consequence. And this person decides for themselves either to get back to us or to send us a colleague. There is no choice or calculation made about that<sup>93</sup>.

Three of the organisations did not have a formal strategy to ensure gender equality in reporting. They appear simply to not differentiate between the sexes regardless of whether one sex has more visibility than the other. The representative of Radio Djiido remarked that he saw no reason not to take female politicians as seriously as men particularly as women could add just as much weight to the political debate as men:

DJI: ... at Djiido we have never differentiated between men and women. We are a radio station that is campaigning for independence so all possible means, ... all people are good for a political fight. I hadn't considered [the difference between men and women] because a female politician, when she is good at her job, she's a comrade right!<sup>94</sup>

Aside from the editor of RRB who felt that there were sufficient female politicians available to interview, the other editors highlighted that the shortage of women leaders was a challenge in efforts to increase women's representation in news coverage:

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<sup>92</sup> « Quand on va faire un reportage, si c'est une femme qui est devant, on la fera parler comme si c'est un homme qui est devant on lui fera parler. »

<sup>93</sup> « On va vers la personne qui est en charge du secteur. Que ça soit un homme ou une femme ça ne change rien. Et cette personne décide elle-même soit de nous répondre soit de nous envoyer vers un collaborateur. Il n'y a pas de choix ou de calcul qui est fait par rapport à ça. »

<sup>94</sup> « ... nous à Radio Djiido on n'a jamais fait de différence entre les hommes et les femmes. Nous sommes une radio qui se bat pour l'indépendance donc tous les moyens, ... les personnes sont bons pour un combat politique. Je n'ai pas fait attention sur ça [la différence homme-femme] parce qu'une femme politique, quand elle est bien, c'est une camarade quoi ! »

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: It's not at all easy because the fact that there is parity in the Government means we know that in a particular sector it's a woman so we can approach them but in other sectors there are no women<sup>95</sup>.

LNC: Very often you find women occupying the same positions; culture, women's affairs ... I would like for there to be more men who manage women's affairs and see women in other sectors [such as] the budget ...<sup>96</sup>

#### 6.4.2 Organisational policy on gender

Of the four organisations, NC1<sup>ère</sup> was the only one in which gender was addressed through formal policy. Gender equality is incorporated into the organisation's policy on diversity:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: In all our coverage it's an obligation for us to address diversity requirements. It's a France Télévision (the NC1<sup>ère</sup> parent company) policy. It's an obligation to respect all the criteria that define diversity and one of the criteria is gender<sup>97</sup>.

However, comments by the organisation's Director of Programmes about the implementation of the policy are evidence that simply having policies in place is not sufficient to address gender equality. Her comments also indicate that change happens gradually. The Director of Programmes admitted that despite the policy, which has annual reporting requirements, there were challenges related to enforcing it including the reticence of some journalists to address gender in their reporting:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: We must keep repeating it. It's a daily struggle because some colleagues simply have no awareness of it. There are some colleagues who have assimilated

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<sup>95</sup> « Ce n'est pas évident du tout parce que le fait qu'il y ait parité au gouvernement nous permet de dire que tel dossier c'est une femme donc on les prend mais dans d'autres domaines les femmes n'y sont pas. »

<sup>96</sup> « Très souvent on retrouve les femmes toujours sur les mêmes postes ; culture, condition féminine ... Moi j'aimerais bien qu'il y ait un homme qui s'occupe de la condition féminine et voir des femmes plus sur des secteurs budget ... »

<sup>97</sup> « Pour tous les reportages, c'est une obligation pour nous de répondre aux exigences de la diversité. C'est une politique de France Télévision (la maison mère de NC1<sup>ère</sup>). C'est une obligation de respecter tous ces critères qui définissent la diversité et un des critères c'est homme-femme. »

it and there are others who have not. [As editors] our obligation is to constantly repeat it<sup>98</sup>.

The scarcity of female political news sources was another obstacle to implementing the policy:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: ... for us the difficulty is that what women in politics undergo is reproduced in the media. Important issues are managed by men. It's unusual to see women in charge regarding issues such as mining ... and in all the news dealing with tension, [for example] when talking about strikes, it's often men in charge<sup>99</sup>.

Although certain media representatives said they did not necessarily see the need for formal measures to ensure gender equality in their news reporting, I noted that they nevertheless took informal steps to ensure some balance. The RRB Editor, for example, mentioned that she always tried to send a male reporter to cover events on International Women's Day (IWD) and in any studio debates or discussions on IWD she made a point of inviting male speakers. She did not mention whether she does the same for male-dominated events or debates. However, her comments are evidence that as a news editor she has a certain awareness of the need for more balanced gender representation in a situation where there is a visible absence of one sex. Having said that, over a number of months following my interview with her I observed that in a weekly 40-minute news analysis segment entitled *Club Politique* that she hosts, the panel of four guest commentators invited to decipher the news is generally the same group of men.

### 6.4.3 Sex ratio of editorial team

There is a relatively balanced female to male ratio in news teams within organisations while the sex ratio at editorial management level is mixed with some media organisations having female editors and others having male editors. NC1<sup>ère</sup> has mainly female news editors, RRB

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<sup>98</sup> « C'est une répétition. C'est un combat de tous les jours parce que ce n'est pas même dans la conception des collaborateurs. Il y'a des collaborateurs qui l'ont intégré et il y'en a qui ne l'ont pas intégré. Nous [les rédactrices en chefs] notre obligation c'est de le répéter tout le temps ».

<sup>99</sup> « Après, la difficulté pour nous c'est que ce que subissent les femmes en politique, ça ressort au niveau des médias. Les sujets très importants sont traités par les hommes. Rares sont les femmes qui sont devant pour tout ce qui est mine ... et tous les sujets d'actualité où c'est tendu, [par exemple] quand on parle des grèves, souvent ce sont les hommes. »

has a female editor and LNC and Djiido each have a male editor. Female journalists are therefore, well represented in media organisations including at management level. For more detail on the sex ratio of news teams refer to 6.3.4.i above.

Some media representatives believed that female journalists had a positive influence on female politicians' representation in the media and in politics. During my interview with the male News Editor at Radio Djiido I observed that he had an open-minded attitude to gender equality in news coverage which I believe can be attributed in part to the influence female journalists can have on a newsroom environment. The Djiido Editor mentioned that he had been preceded by three female editors, a couple of whom had mentored him as a young journalist. For him there was nothing unusual about including women's voices whether in journalism, politics or other professional fields. The legitimacy of female voices and values was evidently so natural to him that he sometimes seemed puzzled by my questions:

DJI: When I started out in radio I discovered "big sisters"<sup>100</sup> in the newsroom and I've worked with "big sisters" for years and they've always respected me as I am. That's why sometimes in your questioning I don't understand why you're asking the question<sup>101</sup>.

The LNC editor noted a masculine competitiveness in the relationship between journalists and politicians which suggests that the sex of the journalist has an impact on the tone, if not the content of political reporting:

LNC: Perhaps women [politicians] are less bellicose, less warrior-like, because there is a kind of *virile* [author's emphasis] rapport in the politician-media relationship. A woman will be more subtle in her approach<sup>102</sup>.

In observing that political reporting was no longer an exclusively male domain, the RRB Editor made an interesting comment on the nature of the relationship between female

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<sup>100</sup> In Kanak culture "big sister" is a respectful manner of referring to a more senior woman in age or office. It shows both respect and affinity.

<sup>101</sup> « Moi quand j'ai débarqué à la radio j'ai découvert des grandes sœurs à la rédaction et depuis des années je travaille avec des grandes sœurs et elles m'ont toujours respectée en tant que telle. C'est pour ça parfois dans vos questions je ne comprends pas pourquoi vous posez cette question. »

<sup>102</sup> « Peut-être que les femmes sont moins belliqueuses, moins guerrières, parce qu'il y a quand même ce rapport un peu viril dans la relation politique-média. Une femme sera plus fine dans son approche. »

journalists and politicians. She observed that female journalists were less contentious than male journalists which seems to support the observation of the LNC editor regarding the masculine nature of the journalist-politician relationship:

RRB: Perhaps the relationship is easier, more personalised when it's a woman [journalist] whether with female or male politicians. Perhaps it's less confrontational<sup>103</sup>.

Although she believed that the sex of the journalist was not relevant to reporting, the NC1<sup>ère</sup> representative noted that female journalists could influence perceptions in subtle ways. She observed that the presence of female political reporters, for example, was proof that women were competent in the political sector which she believed could encourage the success of women in politics:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: ... if [female] journalists can handle these topics, on the other side women can do it too in politics<sup>104</sup>.

#### **6.4.4 Criteria for selecting political interviewees**

Participants indicated that gender considerations are not generally given priority in news coverage. For example, gender is not a criterion for consideration when choosing political interviewees. Achieving balance in political viewpoints i.e. pro-independence and loyalist views, as well as the political hierarchy of the interviewee are considered more important:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: [We seek] the person who has the required expertise in the sector<sup>105</sup>.

LNC: We approach the person who is responsible for the sector<sup>106</sup>.

DJI: It depends on their level of responsibility<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> « Peut-être que les rapports sont plus faciles, plus personnalisés quand c'est une femme aussi bien avec les femmes qu'avec les hommes politiques. Peut-être moins polémiques. »

<sup>104</sup> « ... si les journalistes peuvent gérer ces dossiers, de l'autre côté les femmes peuvent le faire aussi en politique. »

<sup>105</sup> « [On cherche] la personne qui a la compétence dans le secteur. »

<sup>106</sup> « On va vers la personne qui est en charge du secteur. »

<sup>107</sup> « C'est en fonction de leur responsabilité. »

RRB: The balance we try to find is a political balance between parties and in particular, a pro-independence-anti-independence balance. The gender of our interviewee is not a consideration<sup>108</sup>.

Both political and media participants also noted that the media is driven by criteria associated with masculine traits and values. For example, the media prioritises statements of a sensational nature which tend to be made by male politicians. Participants also observed that female politicians are more reserved than male politicians in their relationship with the media. Therefore, since gender inclusiveness in reporting is not generally a consideration, male politicians feature more prominently in the news.

#### **6.4.5 Considerations for gender inclusive reporting**

Question 5 of the media representatives' interview guide asked how journalists incorporated women's views in news coverage in situations where women were barely visible or absent altogether. The Radio Djiido News Editor mentioned that his organisation specifically instructed reporters to seek out female voices at events, including political events, where it was expected that there would be a monopoly of male voices:

DJI: When we believe that women are more qualified to speak about particular issues we choose female interviewees. If the editorial team notes that women do not speak much, we decide to give them the opportunity to speak. It's a choice<sup>109</sup>.

Likewise the NC1<sup>ère</sup> Director of Programmes said that when women were a minority, journalists should make a point of seeking female voices:

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: ... in interviews we have a responsibility to ensure that if there's a woman in a particular party we need to go and find her<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> « Nous, l'équilibre qu'on essaye de faire, c'est plus un équilibre politique entre les partis et notamment un équilibre indépendantiste - non-indépendantiste. Le genre de notre interlocuteur ne rentre pas en ligne de compte. »

<sup>109</sup> « Quand on sent que les femmes sont plus aptes à parler sur certaines problématiques, on choisit plutôt les interlocutrices. Si la rédaction constate que les femmes ne parlent pas trop, on décide de les faire parler. C'est un choix. »

<sup>110</sup> « .... dans les interviews, nous on a une responsabilité, c'est de se dire s'il y a une femme dans ce parti-là il faut aller la chercher. »

However the Editor at RRB said they selected interviewees based on eloquence above all:

RRB: If I must choose I prefer a man who is articulate to a woman who doesn't speak well or who explains her thing badly and vice versa. We choose the person who expresses themselves best and who will be better at getting the idea across<sup>111</sup>.

The Djiido Editor mentioned that sometimes women were unexpectedly given centre stage by political parties. He remarked that during elections, although most party lists were headed by male candidates, this did not necessarily preclude women from publicly representing the party since political parties often accentuated the presence of their female candidates if they thought it was likely to be beneficial to the party:

DJI: Sometimes it isn't our choice but it's the parties that tell us that we must let women speak. It's a communication strategy for the party lists. Often women's roles are also emphasised to win. Even when they are in the second, third or fourth position it's often the women who speak to promote the party list<sup>112</sup>.

In addition to gender concerns, participants highlighted cultural issues that influence news reporting more broadly but also in relation to politics. The editor of LNC acknowledged that Kanak cultural representation was weak in the newspaper's editorial team. He noted that journalists' cultural backgrounds and knowledge of Indigenous culture potentially influenced the scope of coverage. In my interviews with politicians, two of Indigenous politicians also voiced similar views.

#### **6.4.6 Role of the media in influencing gender equality in politics**

All four media participants agreed that the media had a role to play in enabling social change, including empowering women in politics:

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<sup>111</sup> « Si je dois choisir, je préfère prendre un homme qui parle bien à une femme qui parle mal ou qui explique mal son truc et inversement. On choisit celui que s'exprime mieux et qui fera mieux passer l'idée. »

<sup>112</sup> « Parfois ce n'est pas notre choix mais ce sont les listes politiques qui nous disent qu'il faut faire parler les femmes. C'est une stratégie de communication des listes politiques. Souvent la place de la femme est aussi mise en avant pour gagner. Et même quand elles sont en deuxième, troisième ou quatrième position, c'est souvent les femmes qui parlent pour défendre la liste. »

NC1<sup>ère</sup>: I think that the media has a big responsibility to uphold gender parity and to make women present in this world [of politics] because they exist ... but to make them visible<sup>113</sup>.

RRB: ... it has a role in the evolution of mentalities and the evolution of society<sup>114</sup>.

DJI: From the perspective of a country seeking emancipation, I think the media needs to play a role, that it has a role to play in the participation of women in politics. Because the media can enable women to have a greater presence, to be more confident in politics<sup>115</sup>.

However, in practice, this posed a challenge since in three of the four media organisations, there was no formal articulation around gender in organisational policy. As a result, there are no official requirements to address gender in reporting or in organisational structure within these organisations. The consequence is, journalists and editors take an ad-hoc approach to gender balance in political reporting.

**Table 6.8 Media organisations' approach to gender in political reporting**

| Issue   | Response           |                   | Observations   |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|--|
|   | Yes                | No                |  |
| <b>1. Gender equality is a consideration in political reporting</b> | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> | LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI | Although it is a consideration, NC1 <sup>ère</sup> faces challenges to achieve gender equality e.g. lack of female politicians in some sectors |
| <b>2. Media organisation has a policy on gender</b>                 | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> | LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI | Gender equality is incorporated into NC1 <sup>ère</sup> policy on diversity.   |
| <b>3. Media organisation has roughly equal sex ratio in:</b>        |                    |                   |  |

<sup>113</sup> « Je pense que les médias ont une grande responsabilité dans le respect de la parité homme-femme de travailler pour faire apparaître les femmes dans ce monde-là parce qu'elles existent ... mais de les rendre visibles. »

<sup>114</sup> « ... ils ont un rôle dans l'évolution des mentalités et dans l'évolution de la société. »

<sup>115</sup> « Dans la perspective d'un pays à émanciper, je pense qu'il faut que les médias jouent un rôle, qu'ils aient un rôle dans la participation des femmes en politique. Parce que les médias peuvent amener les femmes à être plus présentes, à avoir plus d'assurance dans la politique. »

| Issue  | Response                                |   | Observations  |
|--|---|---|---|
|  | Yes                                     | No                                      |   |
| <b>Newsroom team</b>   | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI |   |   |
| <b>Political journalists</b>   | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>RRB<br>DJI        | LNC                                     | The main political journalists at LNC are male  |
| <b>News editors</b>  |   | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> has mainly female news editors<br>RRB has a female news editor<br>LNC & DJI both have a male news editor |
| <b>4. Sex is a consideration when choosing political interviewees</b>                        | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>DJI               | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> & DJI generally do not consider sex of interviewee but sometimes do.                                     |
| <b>5. Media organisation takes steps to represent women's concerns when women are absent</b> | NC1 <sup>ère</sup>                      |   | NC1 <sup>ère</sup> (in theory) purposely seeks women's voices if possible when they are not present                         |
| <b>Sometimes</b>   | LNC<br>DJI                              |   |   |
| <b>Not necessarily</b>   |   | LNC<br>RRB                              | LNC said it sometimes but not necessarily endeavours to find female voices  |
| <b>6. The media has a role to play in promoting women in politics</b>                        | NC1 <sup>ère</sup><br>LNC<br>RRB<br>DJI |   | Participants agreed the media had a role in enabling social change in general including women's political representation    |

Source: Author based on research findings

## 6.5 Summary

In presenting the findings of my research, this chapter has shed some light on how female politicians in New Caledonia perceive their portrayal in the mainstream media and how this influences the manner in which they pursue their political ambitions and responsibilities. The main issue female politicians evoked was a lack of visibility in the media where the general image of the political sector is one of masculine dominance. In addition, female politicians as a group were seen to experience certain forms of gender stereotyping. Individually however, gender stereotyping was more likely to apply to high-ranking female politicians. Participants maintained that their own individual portrayals by the media were mostly fair and accurate. Those who dealt with the media relatively frequently all had constructive relationships with journalists. However, almost half of participants claimed to have no or very little association with the media. As well as media influence on female politicians in general, my research examined whether there were any significant issues specifically related to Indigenous politicians. On this point, my findings revealed that, overall, challenges faced by Indigenous politicians were the same as those faced by non-Indigenous politicians. Media-specific issues experienced by female politicians were more marked by political affiliation and politicians' rank than by ethnicity.

Participants noted that there was some evidence of improvement in gender equality in political reporting but not to the extent of significantly diminishing the gender gap in political coverage. The law on political parity played a pivotal role, not just in increasing the proportion of women in political institutions, but in raising their media profile. Despite this, however, sixteen years since the law came into effect, male politicians continue to dominate both political leadership roles and political media coverage. The consensus amongst research participants was that the media plays or has the potential to play an important role in women's political representation. However, currently its influence on female politicians does not appear to be very significant. The media was more likely to influence high-ranking female politicians from loyalist parties. Their pro-independence counterparts generally attributed less importance to the role of the media.

In the next chapter I will discuss the findings presented in this chapter in relation to the relevant concepts and theories discussed in my literature review chapters. This will enable me to answer my research questions and provide some recommendations.



## Chapter 7 – Analysis and discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

Research asserts that the media has significant power to shape political agendas (Walgrave et al., 2007, p. 831). It is considered a leading source of information on politics by the public (Bennett and Entman, 2011, as cited in Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 167) and during elections it plays a central role in determining politician's chances (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 171). It is therefore pertinent to consider the media in discussions on women's political representation.

My thesis has sought to understand the media's role in shaping the presence of women in political office. The aim of my research was to consider how the mainstream media's representation of women in politics influenced female politicians' approach to politics in New Caledonia. In order to explore this I examined the following questions:

1. How do female politicians perceive their portrayal by the media?
2. How do female politicians' perceptions of their portrayals in the media influence their approach to politics?
3. How do media organisations address gender equality in news gathering?

These questions were investigated through semi-structured interviews with female politicians and media representatives. I sought to understand the issue by drawing on female politicians' own perceptions of the media's portrayal of women in politics. The interviews with media representatives regarding their approach to gender in political reporting provided additional perspective to my research.

In this chapter I give a qualitative analysis of my fieldwork findings in relation to findings highlighted in my literature reviews in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. I structure my analysis around the key themes identified in the literature review. I then answer my research questions and state the impact of my research.

## 7.2 Discussion

My literature review discussed women's representation in politics generally as well as the connection between women in politics and the media. In Chapter 2 I examined the issue within the international sphere. My review highlighted how the perception of women in politics is based on unequal gender assumptions which lead to women being poorly represented in national level political institutions. The literature also highlighted the ways in which gender bias is present both in the structure of media organisations and through news coverage, and asserted that this disadvantaged both female journalists and politicians. It described the various ways in which media gender bias is demonstrated in political coverage and noted that media reporting can overtly or covertly undermine women's political representation. While the media presents potential opportunities for women in politics (Adcock, 2010, p. 151), and although female politicians benefit from certain aspects of media coverage, generally political reporting hinders the success of female politicians (Anderson et al., 2011).

I continued my literature review in Chapter 3 which focused on both scholarly and advocacy research for the Pacific region. The chapter began with an overview of gender and politics in the Pacific before exploring the connections between gender, politics and the mainstream media. My overview of gender and politics in the region revealed that while the importance of gender equality across all sectors had been acknowledged through formal commitments, both by Pacific governments as well as media organisations, these commitments had not necessarily been implemented (SPC, 2015, p. 71). A study by SPC (2015, p. 20) indicated that gender equality initiatives in relation to politics did not take advantage of opportunities available through the media. Additionally, gender equality efforts by the media were confronted by a lack of support (GMMP, 2010). Scholarly research contended that, although gender did not necessarily influence the rapport between journalists and politicians, political reporting was nevertheless affected by gender bias (Ross, 2010, p. 288). My review also considered gender equality within media structures. A media monitoring study on the Pacific revealed that within media organisations, women were poorly represented in decision-making positions (GMMP, 2015b, p. 7).

My research findings support the literature on certain aspects but contradict it on others, confirming that context is an important factor in media representations of female

politicians (Barnes & Larrivée, 2011, p. 2507; Rahman et al., 2015) (Table 7.1). My overall finding concurs with what has been argued in the literature: gender stereotyping is prevalent in political reporting (Bligh et al., 2012; Kahn, 1994). Research demonstrates that masculine stereotyping is considered the norm and this promotes the credibility of male politicians. In contrast, feminine stereotyping undermines women's participation in politics (Anderson et al., 2011). Other connections between my findings and the findings from my literature review are presented below.

### **7.2.1 Patriarchal structure of the media**

The media is based on a patriarchal structure as demonstrated by Anderson et al. (2011, p. 2510) and O'Grady (2011), who observe that media political content is based on masculine values and traits that disadvantage women. Values such as conflict and aggression are perceived as newsworthy. However, when female politicians display these traits they are criticised for them (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 337; van Acker, 2003, p. 117 & 120). My research reached a similar conclusion, noting that confrontational, aggressive behaviour makes headlines, whereas composure, which is generally exhibited by female politicians, does not. My findings showed that the media does not challenge the male-dominant leadership context of politics. It simply reflects the situation presented by the political sphere and does not actively seek female voices.

Another example of the media's patriarchal structure is highlighted by Walsh (2015, p. 1032) and others who claim that female politicians receive harsher criticism than male politicians. However, female politicians whom I interviewed contested this view. They believed that the manner in which interviews with male and female politicians were conducted was the same and that the content of coverage was not affected by gender.

### **7.2.2 Traditional gender roles**

The literature review indicated that the media maintains traditional gender roles. For example, it confines female politicians to specific domains O'Grady (2011). It also scrutinises women's personal lives (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 117; van Acker, 2003) and physical appearance (Barnes & Larrivée, 2011; Bligh et al., 2012; Fiig, 2010, p. 44) while ignoring their professional credentials. My findings counter these conclusions. Female politicians who participated in my research claimed that while there was some focus on

women's physical appearance on social media platforms, the mainstream media refrained from commentary based on physical appearance. Neither did the media intrude into politicians' personal lives.

Traditional gender roles are also enforced through media gender stereotyping. While this generally disadvantages women (O'Grady, 2011), female politicians themselves sometimes turn stereotypes to their advantage (Kim, 2012, p. 602). However, I found no evidence in my research that female politicians in New Caledonia take advantage of gender stereotyping.

### **7.2.3 Superficial coverage of women**

The content of media coverage on female politicians is often superficial. The poor representation of women in politics often leads to female politicians being perceived as a novelty which results in a type of celebrity portrayal (van Acker, 2003). Therefore, the type of coverage female politicians get is more important than the amount since, as O'Grady (2011) notes, if it is superficial it diminishes their political calibre. Interestingly, one participant in my research mentioned that prior to women taking a more prominent role in politics, there was a certain degree of superficiality in media coverage. However, the increased presence of female politicians has changed this and my findings show that female politicians, like their male counterparts, are portrayed for their political capabilities.

### **7.2.4 The context of bias**

Scholarly research suggests that gender bias is dependent on context. For example, Barnes and Larrivée (2011, p. 2507) and others observe that high profile female politicians are more likely to experience bias than more junior female politicians. Hence, the more successful a woman is, the more likely she is to experience media gender bias. My findings concur with this view. Senior politicians in my interviews experienced more gender bias than their junior counterparts. My findings also support conclusions drawn by Anderson et al. (2011, p. 2516) and Rahman et al. (2015, p. 346) who find that the non-Western media puts less emphasis on female politicians' physical appearance and private lives. In my interviews, the issue of scrutiny of physical appearance was discussed in relation to social media commentary, as well as views expressed by the public. However, there was no

evidence amongst the politicians whom I interviewed of such a focus by the mainstream media.

### **7.2.5 Politician-media relationships**

My literature review revealed that women and men's approach to the media differed (Kahn, 1994). Male politicians were likely to have less formal and more spontaneous relationships with the media, while female politicians maintained a certain distance (Aalberg & Stromback, 2011, p. 178). My findings revealed a similar trend. Female politicians were more reserved than male politicians in their relationship with media professionals. One media participant observed that male politicians were more likely than female politicians to initiate contact with the media.

### **7.2.6 Influence of female media managers**

North (2016, p. 359) and others observe that women are largely absent from decision-making roles in media organisations. This suggests that, rather than the proportion of female journalists, it is their rank that is relevant to increased gender equality in news coverage. Likewise, Rodny-Gumede (2015) concludes that a substantial presence of women in media management positions will result in gender equality in reporting. My findings support the argument that the sex of journalists appears to be of little consequence to the representation of women in the news since, despite the relatively balanced male to female proportion of journalists in New Caledonian newsrooms, female politicians do not feature prominently in the news. However, in contrast to conclusions drawn by North and Rodny-Gumede who contend that a substantial presence of women in media management positions will improve media coverage of women in politics, my findings suggest that the position of women in media organisations appears to have little influence in media coverage. Despite the significant presence of women in management positions in the New Caledonia media, female politicians continue to receive limited news coverage. Nevertheless, some research indicates that the gender-balanced cadre of media organisations presents an opportunity with regard to addressing the underlying bias of political reporting, since female journalists may covertly encourage other women (Kim & Yoon, 2009). My findings drew partially similar conclusions. In my interview with the female NC1<sup>ère</sup> Director of Programmes, she stated that she felt strongly about addressing gender bias in the news. However, when I interviewed the female News Editor of RRB, she

maintained that it was up to political parties and not the media to address female subordination in politics and that the media’s role was restricted to relating the “reality” on the ground.

**7.2.7 Potential for women’s political empowerment**

The media’s potential for women’s political empowerment is widely recognised in conceptual research. Internationally acknowledged agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action identify the media as a key instrument for achieving women’s political empowerment (United Nations, 1995). Likewise, some scholarly research asserts that the media offers opportunity for female politicians (Fiig, 2010; van Acker, 2003). Similarly, my findings conclude that the media is an important platform for political communication and identify a number of opportunities for women’s political representation through the media in New Caledonia. It is argued that significant representation of female journalists (Kim & Yoon, 2009), as well as type of coverage (van Acker, 2003), are relevant to the proportion of elected women. The high representation of female journalists in New Caledonia, as well as the substantive coverage that female politicians receive, are favourable factors for women’s political representation.

**Table 7.1 Comparison of New Caledonia (NC) findings with the literature**

| NC   | Literature review themes  |
|------|---|
| Y    | <b>Overall finding: Gender stereotyping is prevalent in political reporting</b>                                 |
| Y/N* | <b>1. The media has a patriarchal structure</b>   |
| Y    | – perpetuates gender stereotypes present in political spheres   |
| Y    | – upholds masculine values (e.g. conflict, aggression = newsworthy)   |
| N    | – criticises women politicians more harshly   |
| Y/N  | <b>2. The media maintains traditional gender roles</b>  |
| Y    | – confines female politicians to specific domains   |
| N    | – scrutinises women’s private roles and physical appearance over their professional credentials                 |
| N    | – female politicians take advantage of gender stereotyping  |
| N    | <b>3. The media reports superficially on women</b>  |
| N    | – superficial coverage vs substantial coverage = <i>female politicians portrayed as celebrities/curiosities</i> |

| NC  | Literature review themes  |
|-----|---|
| Y/N | <b>4. The type of bias is not necessarily universal but depends on context</b>                                  |
| N   | – scrutiny of women’s private lives is universal  |
| Y   | – non-Western media puts less emphasis on physical appearance   |
| Y   | – media gender bias is relative to seniority of politician  |
| Y/N | <b>5. There are gender related differences in politician-media relationships</b>                                |
| Y   | – women and men’s approach to the media differs (men more proactive)  |
| N   | <b>6. Substantial presence of women in media management positions will result in gender equity in reporting</b> |
| Y   | <b>7. The media offers potential for women’s political empowerment</b>  |
| Y   | – it is an important means of communication for politicians   |

\*Y = yes; N = no

Source: Author based on research findings

### 7.2.8 Alternative media opportunities

With the exception of social or other online forms of media, most research does not consider opportunities offered through alternative sources to mainstream media. In the context of a small country like New Caledonia, these could counter challenges faced by female politicians such as the inaccessibility of the mainstream media by providing significant options for the promotion of gender equality in politics. Maclellan (2009) (as cited in M’Bala-Ndi, 2013, p. 77) observes that New Caledonia’s non-mainstream media such as more localised political, cultural and satirical newspapers and magazines, offer an alternative means of expression to mainstream media. My findings support this observation. New Caledonia has a number of non-mainstream media outlets. One alternative media source that was cited by a number of politicians during my interviews with them was the relatively recent community television channel NCTV.

### 7.3 Answering the research questions

My research aimed to consider how the mainstream media’s representation of women in politics influenced female politicians’ approach to politics in New Caledonia. In this section I address the three research questions that helped investigate this aim.

## Research question 1

*How do female politicians perceive their portrayal by the media?*

Female politicians are well represented in New Caledonia's political institutions. They make up about 45 percent of representatives in New Caledonia's Congress and Government, respectively the legislative and executive institutions. This proportion increases to 47 percent when the provincial assemblies and municipal councils, regional and local body institutions respectively, are included. However, women are relatively absent in institutional leadership positions. At the national and regional levels there are currently no female leaders. At municipal level, women account for 15 percent of mayors. Overall, this represents just 13 percent of the top decision makers (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.5) (Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2016; DIRAG, 2016; Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2016e).

My main finding contends that female politicians perceived themselves as largely absent in the media. My interviews with research participants as well as my own observations indicate that very few female politicians are featured in political news coverage which is dominated by male politicians. In an analysis of political interviewees featured in a prominent weekly television news segment, I found that approximately only 17 percent of interviewees were women (see Chapter 6, Table 6.3). Research participants noted that media coverage featuring women mainly focused on a minority of long-standing female politicians. Participants asserted that the media consulted male politicians on "major" issues while female politicians tended to feature in "minor" news stories. Their lack of visibility and their relegation to "minor" news stories gave the impression that female politicians were subordinate to their male counterparts.

Female politicians did not exclusively blame the media. They acknowledged that political structures contributed to the low media profile of female politicians through their reluctance to let women occupy leadership roles. Participants perceived the dominance of male politicians in the news as an indication of the approach taken by the media in which journalists sought people in decision-making roles. Since such positions were mostly occupied by men, women remained invisible.

Collectively, the female politicians I interviewed were critical of media coverage of women in politics. However, on an individual level those who featured more frequently were generally satisfied with the way they were portrayed. Although those who featured

occasionally were critical of the lack of media interest in their work, they too, observed that when they did feature in the news, they were portrayed seriously and within the professional context of their political responsibilities.

The politicians I interviewed stated that there had been some evolution in the media's coverage of female politicians in the last 20 years. Women feature more frequently in political news and there is no longer a novelty factor associated with their media presence. However, participants emphasised that this evolution was minimal.

### **Research question 2**

*How do female politicians' perceptions of their portrayals in the media influence their approach to politics?*

Overall, female politicians indicated that the media had very little influence on them. I contend that this could be due to two factors: political affiliation and media visibility (or invisibility). In relation to political affiliation, my findings indicate that pro-independence politicians have strong communication networks away from the mainstream media. This makes them less reliant on media coverage. This group of participants was less likely than their loyalist counterparts to emphasise the importance of the mainstream media.

With regard to politicians who received limited media coverage, although some expressed frustration, they mainly implied that they were resigned, or perhaps indifferent, to the fact. They highlighted opportunities available through alternative media platforms such as community media and social media.

However, some of the participants observed that they experienced a certain degree of media influence. This view was mainly expressed by senior loyalist politicians. Some examples of this influence include:

- Politicians avoided conflict with the media by limiting their criticism of coverage out of concern that this would affect their media portrayals and/or coverage.
- Politicians made a conscious effort to change their media portrayals.
- Politicians conformed to media portrayals of female politicians albeit unwillingly.

### **Research question 3**

*How do media organisations address gender equality in news gathering?*

To understand how the media takes gender considerations into account in its newsgathering, I interviewed representatives from New Caledonia's four principal media organisations. Gender equality is formally recognised by only one of the organisations where gender is incorporated into the organisation's diversity policy. However, the organisation experienced challenges associated with implementing the policy. The shortage of female politicians in decision-making positions was a significant challenge as it meant that reporters struggled to identify legitimate female sources. Some journalists also appeared uninterested in the policy requirements.

No official measures regarding gender equality were in place at the other three organisations where news editors and reporters adopted an ad hoc approach to gender. However, all three of the editors whom I interviewed from these organisations demonstrated some awareness of considerations regarding gender in reporting. For example, they described certain initiatives to promote a level of gender balance, on occasion, in news gathering.

#### **7.4 Research conclusions**

The three research questions explored above helped investigate the aim of my research. In light of the answers to these questions, I draw the conclusions below in connection to the aim of the research which asked:

*How does the mainstream media's representation of women in politics influence female politicians' approach to politics in New Caledonia?*

The main concern of female politicians who participated in my research was that the media did not actively or routinely seek female voices. With one exception, this was confirmed in the interviews with media representatives. This resulted in a lack of visibility for female politicians and a significant absence of women's views and priorities in the media. Moreover, participants maintained that the prominence of male politicians in the news diminished the significance of female politicians' contribution to the political agenda.

I argue that while the media in New Caledonia does not necessarily support women's participation in politics, neither does it impede their participation. Therefore, the media plays a limited role in the representation of women in politics in New Caledonia. I assert that it is the media's compliant approach to political reporting, reinforcing stereotypes

present in the political sphere, which helps maintain the status quo regarding women's political representation.

The New Caledonian media's poor coverage of women in politics did not discourage women from pursuing political agendas, although, many female politicians found the lack of news coverage frustrating. Female politicians' response towards the lack of media coverage of women in politics can be summed up in three ways: a few are determined to obtain greater coverage, some are ambivalent about the media, and some are indifferent towards the media. I conclude that the media has limited influence on female politicians' approach to politics in New Caledonia.

## **7.5 Impact of my research**

My research contributes to the literature on gender, politics and the media by exploring the role of the media in shaping women's political representation. It fills a gap in the literature on gender, politics and the media in the Pacific. My findings revealed that the absence of women in political reporting resulted in a certain level of indifference amongst female politicians with regard to the media. This suggests that poor media coverage may result in a detachment which leads to the premise that a higher media profile might generate more interest in the media from female politicians. Greater media coverage might encourage female politicians to take advantage of media opportunities for women's political representation.

Scheyvens (2014) maintains that ultimately development research should focus on creating beneficial outcomes for people especially for underrepresented groups. Therefore, research should lead to improvements in development including through "policy change" and "improved programmes" (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 257). My research identifies three targets for addressing women's political representation through the media: female politicians, political parties and institutions, and the media. Based on my findings, I suggest that in order to take advantage of media opportunities, both media practitioners and female politicians increase their awareness of the media's role in building gender-inclusive political structures. Likewise, my research encourages political actors to engage in efforts to change the male-dominant structure of politics that hinders the participation of women and deprives parties of the full potential of their political talent.

As a condition of a grant that I was awarded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade I submitted a policy note including recommendations for improving media coverage of women in politics. These recommendations (below) were drawn from my research findings:

***Recommendations regarding female politicians***

My findings demonstrate that enhancing female politicians' knowledge of media relations together with building their confidence are important factors in improving media coverage.

- Provide training in media relations to female politicians to enable them to maximise on media opportunities.
- Support networking and mentoring initiatives by female politicians.

***Recommendations regarding political structures***

My findings maintain that equity measures such as quotas foster gender equality in the political sphere.

- Support parliamentary measures to achieve gender equity in politics including through legislative drafting.

***Recommendations regarding the media:***

My findings suggest that a more structured approach to newsgathering with regards to gender equality could help address gender considerations in a more systematic and efficient manner.

- Formalise processes for ensuring gender balance in political reporting in media organisations, including by formulating and implementing official policy on gender.
- Provide guidelines and training on gender inclusiveness to journalists.

## **7.6 Limitations of the research**

The main limitation of my research is its omission of the views of male politicians. Furthermore, with regard to gender equality in politics it does not consider the influence of non-mainstream forms of media such as community media or publications and broadcasters with a relatively small circulation. The influence of social media on women's representation in politics is not explored either.

## **7.7 Further research**

Further research on the influence of the media on gender and politics could consider the following:

- a comparative analysis of the perceptions of urban and rural-based female politicians to gain a better understanding of media-related issues specific to female politicians from rural areas which generally receive little news focus.
- an examination of the masculine perspective regarding political reporting to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of gender bias that female and male politicians experience.
- an investigation into the role of social media as an alternative to mainstream media in advancing women in politics to gain an understanding of the dynamics of the combined influence of internet-based and traditional media platforms on women's political representation.

## **7.8 Summary and conclusion**

My research fills a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the media and women's political representation in the Pacific by exploring how the mainstream media's portrayal of women in politics influences female politicians' approach to politics in New Caledonia. A key issue highlighted by female politicians who participated in the research was the limited amount of media coverage of women in politics. The media's role in women's political representation is shaped by a patriarchal structure which leads to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes present in the political sphere and results in the media's preference for masculine values over feminine ones. Political news is a domain dominated by masculine views where women are largely absent. Some female politicians perceived their relative absence in political news coverage with frustration. Others expressed a certain level of indifference.

My findings reveal that the media appears to have little influence on female politicians in New Caledonia. Most female politicians acknowledged the media as an important platform for political communication. However, although they recognised the media's potential for gender equality in politics, they maintained that the media did not influence them or that it had very little influence over them.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Participant Consent Form: ENGLISH



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

*Gender and governance in the Pacific media:  
Media representation of women in politics in New Caledonia*

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name - printed .....

## Appendix 2 – Participant Consent Form: FRENCH



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

*Le genre et la gouvernance dans les Médias du Pacifique:  
La représentation des femmes en politique dans les médias en Nouvelle-Calédonie*

### FICHE INDIVIDUELLE DE CONSENTEMENT POUR LES PARTICIPANTS

J'ai lu la fiche d'information et on m'a expliqué les détails de l'étude. Je suis satisfait de la réponse donnée à mes questions et je comprends que j'ai le droit de poser d'autres questions à n'importe quel moment.

J'autorise/ je n'autorise pas que l'interview soit enregistrée sur un appareil audio.

J'accepte de participer à cette étude sous les conditions décrites dans la fiche d'information.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Prénom et Nom  
(en capital)

.....

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ki Pūrehuroa

School of People, Environment and Planning  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 extn 83623 F 06 355 7965 <http://massey.ac.nz>

## Appendix 3 –Introduction Letter from Supervisor: FRENCH



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Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
T 64 6 350 5799  
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[www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

Palmerston North, le 07 avril 2016

Attestation de travaux dans le cadre d'un Master en Développement Internationale

Madame, Monsieur,

J'atteste par la présente que Madame Tione CHINULA est actuellement inscrite à l'Université de Massey en Nouvelle-Zélande où elle effectue son diplôme de Master en Développement Internationale. Au cours de ses études elle sera amenée à réaliser une étude pour évaluer l'influence des médias dans la représentation des femmes en politique en Nouvelle Calédonie.

Je suis son directeur de thèse et supervise les travaux menés par Madame Tione CHINULA. Je reste à votre disposition pour tout complément d'informations.

Veillez recevoir, Madame, Monsieur, mes salutations distinguées.

Dr Gerard Prinsen,  
Senior Lecturer in Development Studies,  
School of People, Environment and Planning,  
Massey University.

[G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz](mailto:G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix 4 – Project Information Sheet: ENGLISH



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

*Gender and governance in the Pacific media:  
Media representation of women in politics in New Caledonia*

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### Researcher Introduction

My name is Tione Chinula and I am a student at Massey University in New Zealand where I am currently enrolled in a Master of Philosophy degree in International Development. As part of my study I am undertaking research in the area of gender, governance and the media.

I have been based in New Caledonia since 1998 and, among other activities, I have worked as a freelance journalist. The purpose of this project however, is academic research and it is in the capacity of a researcher and not a media professional that I am conducting this research. The information collected during this research will be used for the purposes of compiling a Master's thesis and for possible publication in appropriate publications such as academic journals or development-related publications.

#### Project Description

The Pacific region ranks lowest in the world regarding the proportion of women representatives in national legislative bodies. My research aims to contribute to discussions on addressing this issue by exploring the role played by the mainstream media in advancing and/or impeding women's political participation. The research will analyse how political coverage regarding women politicians by the media in New Caledonia influences the political strategies that the women politicians adopt. It will investigate how women members of the New Caledonian government and Congress perceive their portrayal by the media and subsequently how this affects their approach to politics. It will also look at how members of the media approach political reporting on women and men.

The research will comprise interviews with women politicians and representatives of media organisations. These interviews will be recorded on an audio recorder. Participants will not be named to maintain confidentiality.

#### Invitation to politicians to participate in the research

I invite you to participate in this research to share your experience regarding your interaction with the media in your engagement of politics. The interview will be conducted between May and June 2016 at a place of your choice. Interviews will take between one and one-and-a-half hours and will be recorded on an audio recorder. At the end of the project I will provide all participants with a summary in French of the findings.

#### Invitation to representatives of media organisations to participate in the research

I invite you to participate in this research to share information regarding your organisation's approach to political reporting. The interview will be conducted between June and July 2016 at your place of work. Interviews will take approximately half an hour and will be recorded on an audio recorder. At the end of the project I will provide all participants with a summary in French of the findings.



## MASSEY UNIVERSITY

### Data Management

Following the interview, I will review the content and identify sections for use in the project which will be transcribed. A copy of this transcript will be sent to you for amendment if necessary and approval. The information will then be analysed for the project. The information gathered through the interviews will be kept confidential until you have had the opportunity to amend or correct it. During the research period the interview recordings will be stored in electronic format in password-protected files to which only I will have access.

### Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the interview at any time
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

### Project Contacts

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at any time if you have any questions about the project. Please find our contact details below:

#### Researcher's contact details

Ms Tione Chinula  
BP 13345  
98803 Noumea  
New Caledonia  
Phone: +687 91 71 26  
Email: chinula@canl.nc

#### Supervisor's contact details

Dr Gerard Prinsen  
Senior Lecturer  
School of People, Environment and  
Planning  
Massey University, Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83636  
Email: G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz

### Ethics evaluation statement

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix 5 – Project Information Sheet: FRENCH



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

*Le genre et la gouvernance dans les Médias du Pacifique:  
La représentation des femmes en politique dans les médias en Nouvelle-Calédonie*

### FICHE D'INFORMATION

#### Présentation de la chercheuse

Je m'appelle Tione Chinula. Je suis étudiante à l'Université de Massey en Nouvelle-Zélande où j'effectue actuellement un Master en Développement International. Dans le cadre de ce diplôme, j'ai choisi d'orienter ma recherche dans les domaines du genre, de la politique et des médias.

Je suis basée en Nouvelle-Calédonie depuis 1998 où j'ai - entre autre - travaillé comme journaliste indépendante. Cependant, le but du projet actuel est la recherche académique et c'est en tant que chercheuse et non pas journaliste que j'effectue ces recherches. Les informations collectées durant ces recherches seront utilisées dans la rédaction d'un mémoire de Master. Elles pourront aussi servir dans les publications appropriées telles les revues scientifiques et journaux académiques ou les publications spécialisées dans le domaine du développement.

#### Description du projet

À l'échelle mondiale, la région du Pacifique se trouve au dernier rang en termes de proportion des élus féminins dans les organismes législatifs nationaux. Le but de ma recherche est de contribuer aux discussions qui visent à améliorer cette problématique en examinant le rôle que les médias traditionnels jouent dans l'avancement ou au contraire comme frein à la participation des femmes à la politique. La recherche s'attache à analyser dans quelle mesure les reportages politiques réalisés par les médias calédoniens concernant les femmes élues influencent les stratégies politiques adoptées par ces femmes. L'étude examinera comment les membres féminin du Gouvernement et du Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie perçoivent l'image que les médias leur attribuent et comment cela influence leur approche de la politique. L'étude examinera aussi comment les journalistes abordent les reportages politiques sur les hommes et les femmes.

L'étude comportera les interviews avec les femmes élues et les représentants des organismes médiatiques. Pour maintenir la confidentialité les participants ne seront pas nommés dans les résultats d'analyses.

#### L'invitation aux élus politiques à participer à l'étude

Je vous invite à participer à cette étude pour partager votre expérience concernant votre relation avec les médias dans votre engagement politique. L'interview se déroulera durant le mois de juin 2016 dans un lieu de votre choix. L'interview durera entre une heure et une heure et demie. L'interview sera enregistrée. A la fin du projet, j'enverrai un bilan des résultats de l'étude à toutes les participantes.

#### L'invitation aux représentants des organismes médiatiques à participer à l'étude

Je vous invite à participer à cette étude pour partager des informations concernant l'approche adoptée par votre organisme pour traiter les reportages en politique. L'interview se déroulera entre juin et juillet 2016 dans vos bureaux. A la fin du projet j'enverrai un bilan des résultats de l'étude à tous les participants.

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## MASSEY UNIVERSITY

### L'organisation des données

Suite à l'interview, je ferai le point sur le contenu pour identifier les parties que j'utiliserai dans l'étude. Celles-ci seront transcrites et je vous enverrai une copie de la transcription afin que vous puissiez la corriger si nécessaire et donner votre approbation sur son contenu. Les informations obtenues par le biais de ces interviews seront confidentielles jusqu'à ce que vous ayez eu l'occasion de les réviser ou les corriger. Les informations seront ensuite analysées pour l'étude. Durant la période des recherches, les enregistrements des interviews seront stockés en format électronique/numérique dans des fichiers protégés par mot de passe auxquels je serai la seule à avoir accès.

### Les droits des participants

Vous n'êtes en aucun cas obligés d'accepter cette invitation. Si vous acceptez de participer vous aurez droits aux conditions décrites ci-dessous :

- vous pouvez refuser de répondre à certaines questions ;
- vous pouvez arrêter de participer à l'interview à n'importe quel moment ;
- vous pouvez poser des questions sur l'étude à n'importe quel moment durant l'interview ;
- votre nom et prénom ne seront pas divulgués, vous garderez ainsi l'anonymat dans les informations que vous fournirez ;
- vous pouvez demander que le magnétophone soit arrêté à n'importe quel moment durant l'interview ;
- vous auriez droit à un bilan des résultats de l'étude une fois celle-ci terminée.

### Coordonnées des responsables de l'étude

Mon directeur de mémoire et moi-même nous tenons à votre disponibilité pour tout complément d'information sur cette étude. Je vous prie de trouver nos coordonnées ci-dessous :

#### Coordonnées de la chercheuse

Mme Tione Chinula  
BP 13345  
98803 Nouméa  
Nouvelle-Calédonie  
Tél : +687 91 71 26  
E-mail : chinula@canl.nc

#### Coordonnées du directeur de mémoire

Dr Gerard Prinsen  
Senior Lecturer  
School of People, Environment and  
Planning  
Massey University, Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
Tél : +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83636  
E-mail : G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz

### Déclaration de l'évaluation éthique

Cette étude a été évaluée par révision des collègues et a été jugée à risque faible. En conséquence, elle n'a pas été évaluée par la Comité d'éthiques humains de l'Université de Massey. Les chercheurs mentionnés ci-dessus sont responsables du déroulement éthique de cette étude.

Si vous souhaitez mentionner certains problèmes concernant le déroulement de cette étude à une personne autre que les chercheurs cités ci-dessus, je vous remercie de vous adresser au Dr Brian Finch, Directeur, Ethiques des Recherches, téléphone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

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## Appendix 6 – a comprehensive timeline of the history of New Caledonia

| A comprehensive timeline of the history of New Caledonia  |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1300BC New Caledonia is populated by Lapita people, ancestors of today's Melanesian population.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 September 1774 the first European, Captain James Cook, lands and names the country New Caledonia.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early 1840s protestant missionaries followed by Catholic missionaries establish themselves in New Caledonia</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 September 1853 France takes official possession of New Caledonia</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1864 France sets up a penal colony in New Caledonia. Convicts from France continue to be sent to the colony until 1897 after which existing convicts continued to serve their time until the convict penitentiary finally closed in 1928.**</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1867 nickel is discovered **</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1874 nickel extraction begins which attracts new arrivals from France**</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1878 a Kanak uprising results from the arrival of increasing numbers of French settlers following the discovery of nickel which creates pressure on land as new settlers take over traditional land**</li> </ul>                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1885 the Conseil Général (General Council) is established. Its powers include approving the colony's budget. Only free settlers can vote for members of the council.*</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1914 With the outbreak of WWI New Caledonians of European descent and Kanaks are sent to the war front.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1917 A Kanak uprising takes place in the north of New Caledonia.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1942 American WWII military base comprising 40,000 US troops is established in New Caledonia. This has a major influence on the local society which is introduced to a new world view.**</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1945 French women are progressively accorded the right to vote over the next two decades.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1946 New Caledonia's status is changed from a French colony to a French Overseas Territory</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1946 Kanaks are progressively given the right to vote over the next decade</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1953 founding of Union Calédonienne, the first political party involving Kanaks</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1957 as the territory gains greater administrative autonomy the General Council becomes the Territorial Assembly (congrès website 130 ans)*</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1969 Foulards Rouges, a group of Kanak rights political activists, is formed</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1960s to 70s nickel boom sees a sharp increase in the arrival of Oceanian and</li> </ul>   |

## A comprehensive timeline of the history of New Caledonia

French immigrants

- 1984 the beginning of a period of politically fuelled civil unrest which culminates in political negotiations that lead to a treaty in 1988
- 1985 the Territorial Assembly becomes the Territorial Congress. It is composed of representatives from four regional councils which are replaced by three provincial assemblies in 1988\*
- 1988 the Ouvéa crisis – pro-independence Kanaks on the island of Ouvéa abduct a number of French gendarmes killing 4 in the process.\*\* The military hostage liberation action that follows ends in the death of 19 Kanaks and 2 gendarmes\*\*\*
- 1988 the tripartite peace agreements known as the Matignon Accords, are signed by France, the loyalist movement and the anti-independence movement.
- 1989 Pro-independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, one of the main instigators of the Matignon Accords, is assassinated by a fellow pro-independence supporter who sees his action in signing the Accords as disloyal.\*\*
- 1998 the Noumea Accord is signed. It succeeds the Matignon Accords and outlines a 15 to 20 year period of gradual political and economic autonomy which will culminate on a referendum on independence.
- 1999 the Territorial Congress becomes the Congress of New Caledonia with powers over legislation and the Government of New Caledonia is set up as the executive institution.\* An important aspect of the Government, made up of both pro-independence advocates and loyalists, is its collegiality which means a consensual decision-making process is favoured over a majority vote.

Sources: ISEE-TEC (2011); \*Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (2015); \*\*Harewood, Chinula & Talbot (2006); \*\*\*Pitoiset (2013)

## **Appendix 7 – Political Participants Interview Question Guide: ENGLISH**

### **Preliminary Questions**

- a. When did you enter politics?
- b. How long have you been in elected office (in Congress or Government)?
- c. What motivated you to enter politics?
- d. Prior to entering politics were you involved in an “organising” activity (e.g. an association, trade union etc)?

### **Main interview questions**

#### **1. The portrayal of women politicians in the New Caledonian media**

- In your opinion, what is the portrayal of female politicians in the New Caledonian media (their media profiles etc)?
- Are there any specific challenges that women face in dealing with the media?
- How has media coverage of female politicians evolved in the last 20 years?

#### **2. Your individual portrayal in the media**

- Can you describe how you are portrayed by the media? Do you have a particular reputation in the media?

#### **3. The media’s influence on your approach to politics**

- How has the media affected your approach to politics (the methods you employ)?

#### **4. Your relationship with the media**

- What is your relationship with journalists like?
- How often are you approached by the media? For what reasons?
- Is there any aspect that is difficult to manage in your relationship with the media or in news stories involving you?
- Do you have a preference regarding being interviewed by a male or a female journalist?
- What do you think of journalists’ professionalism/attitude?
- Has your relationship with the media evolved since your arrival in politics?
- What is the importance of the media to you (in your political work)?

#### **5. Information, training, support, guidelines for dealing with the media**

- What media experience did you have prior to being elected?
- At the beginning of your term in office did you have access to training opportunities regarding media relations? If you did, did you take advantage of them? Why/ why not?
- Have you received mentoring or support in dealing with the media?
- Are media guidelines available for politicians?

#### **6. What advice regarding the media would you give to women starting out in their political careers?**

**7. In your opinion, how could the representation of female politicians in the media be improved?**

**8. Are there any other issues that you would like to mention?**

## Appendix 8 – Political Participants Interview Question Guide: FRENCH

### Questions préliminaires

- a. Quand avez-vous débuté en politique?
- b. Depuis quand êtes-vous élue ?
- c. Qu'est-ce qui vous a motivée pour prendre un rôle actif en politique ?
- d. Avant de vous lancer en politique, étiez-vous impliquée dans une activité collective (association, syndicat ...) ?

### Questions principales

#### 1. Le profil des élues dans les médias Calédoniens

- D'après vous, quelle est l'image donnée aux femmes élues dans les médias Calédoniens ? (leur portrait dans les médias ...)
- Y a-t-il des défis spécifiques que les femmes rencontrent dans leurs échanges avec les médias ?
- De quelle manière les reportages sur les femmes élues ont-t-ils évolué depuis les 20 dernières années ?

#### 2. Votre propre profil dans les médias

- Pourriez-vous me décrire comment vous êtes représentée par les médias ? Avez-vous une réputation précise dans les médias ?

#### 3. Influence des médias sur votre approche à la politique (stratégies politiques)

- Quels impacts ont eu les médias sur votre approche à la politique (les méthodes que vous employez) ?

#### 4. Votre relation avec les médias.

- Comment se passe votre relation avec les journalistes ?
- A quelle fréquence êtes-vous sollicitée par les médias ? Pour quels motifs ?
- Y a-t-il un aspect qui est assez difficile à gérer dans votre relation avec les médias ou dans les reportages vous concernant ?
- Avez-vous une préférence que les reportages vous concernant soient réalisés par un journaliste homme ou femme ?
- Que pensez-vous du professionnalisme/de l'attitude des journalistes ?
- Votre relation avec les médias a-t-elle évolué depuis votre arrivée en politique ?
- Quelle est l'importance des médias pour vous (dans votre travail politique) ?

#### 5. L'information, la formation, le soutien, les directives pour traiter avec les médias

- Quelle était votre expérience avec les médias avant d'être élue ?
- Au début de votre mandat, y avait-t-il la possibilité de suivre une formation concernant la relation avec les médias ? Si oui, avez-vous profité de cela, pourquoi/pas ?

- Avez-vous bénéficié de soutien pour savoir gérer les attentes de la presse ou avez-vous trouvé des gens pour vous conseiller ?
- Existe-t-il des directives médias pour les élus ?

**6. Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux femmes qui viennent de débiter leur carrière politique vis-à-vis des médias ?**

**7. D'après vous, comment faire évoluer l'image des élues dans les médias ?**

**8. Y a-t-il d'autres questions importantes sur ce thème que vous souhaitez évoquer ?**

## Appendix 9 – Media Interview Question Guide: ENGLISH

1. How do you approach the issue of gender equality in your political reporting?
2. Does your organisation's policy include issues related to gender or do you have a specific policy on gender?
3. What is the sex ratio in your organisation's editorial team ? How do you think this could affect the content/angle of coverage?
4. What considerations do you take into account when choosing your political interviewees?
5. How do you ensure that your political coverage takes into account the priorities of women when there are very few women available to interview or when women are absent?
6. Do you think that the media plays a role or has a role to play in gender equality in the political domain?
7. Are there any other important issues you would like to mention?

## Appendix 10 – Media Interview Question Guide: FRENCH

1. Comment abordez-vous le sujet d'égalité homme-femme dans vos reportages politiques ?
2. Les questions spécifiques au genre [à la question d'égalité homme-femme dans le reportage] sont-elles incluses dans la politique de votre organisation ou peut-être existe-t-il une politique spécifique au genre ?
3. Quelle est la représentativité homme-femme parmi votre équipe de rédaction (les journalistes) ? D'après vous, comment cela pourrait jouer sur le contenu/ l'angle des reportages ?
4. Quelles considérations prenez-vous en compte pour choisir vos interlocuteurs (ou interlocutrices) politiques/ les personnes que vous allez interviewer ?
5. Comment vous assurez-vous que vos reportages politiques prennent en compte les priorités des femmes quand il y a très peu de femmes à interviewer voire lorsqu'elles sont absentes ?
6. Pensez-vous que les médias jouent un rôle ou qu'ils ont un rôle à jouer en ce qui concerne la question d'égalité homme-femme dans le domaine politique ?
7. Y a-t-il d'autres questions importantes que vous souhaitez évoquer ?