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**Perceptiveness of U.F.S. students  
towards racial messages in  
newspapers.**

by

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Thesis presented for completion of

the degree

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COMMUNICATION

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

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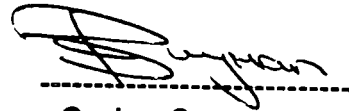
## VOORWOORD

By die indiening van hierdie verhandeling wil ek graag die volgende hoekstene bedank:

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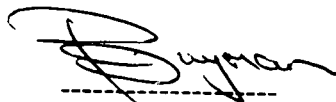
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-----  
**Carina Snyman**  
**Maart 2002**

"Ek Carina Francis Snyman verklaar dat hierdie verhandeling wat hierby vir die graad M.A. Kommunikasiekunde aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat deur my ingedien word, my selfstandige werk is en nie voorheen deur my vir 'n graad aan 'n ander Universiteit/Fakulteit ingedien is nie."

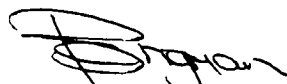
Die uwe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C.F. Snyman', written over a horizontal dashed line.

C.F. Snyman

"Ek Carina Francis Snyman verklaar dat ek hiermee outeursreg afgee van my verhandeling ten gunste van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat."

Die uwe

  
C.F. Snyman



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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIGIN OF STUDY, RESEARCH PROBLEM and METHODOLOGY

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Racism is not a term that can be completely comprehended by a dictionary definition. It is a term that is extremely controversial, especially within the South African historical context. Racism is, however, a major cause of damage to the fabric of South African society. If it is suspected to be inherent in a powerful communication medium, it can cause immense damage to the media's credibility and to society as a whole.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) attempted an identification of racism. This chapter provides an overview of the HRC inquiry and an introduction to the purpose and aims of the current study, under the following headings:

- 1.2. Origin of the HRC study
- 1.3. Details of preliminary study
- 1.4. Necessity of expansion
- 1.5. Research problem
- 1.6. Aims of research
  - 1.6.1. General aims
  - 1.6.2. Objectives
- 1.7. Identification of research area
  - 1.7.1. Media material
  - 1.7.2. Population sample
  - 1.7.3. Human Rights Commission Report
- 1.8. Research method
- 1.9. Glossary and abbreviations
- 1.10. Structure of study
- 1.11. Conclusion

## 1.2. ORIGIN OF STUDY

In 1998, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) received a request in terms of Section 7(1) of the Human Rights Commission Act, 1994, from two professional bodies, the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA), to investigate two newspapers.

The Black Lawyers Association and Association of Black Accountants of South Africa shared a perception that two newspapers were allegedly guilty of racism. The probe was undertaken in terms of Section 184(2)(a) of the Constitution, 1996 (Act no. 108 of 1996). This states that the Commission had the power to investigate and report on the observance of human rights and then take steps to secure appropriate redress where human rights have been violated (Pityana 1999: 2).

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) employed two research authorities, namely Claudia Braude (qualitative content analysis) and the Media Monitoring Project (quantitative content analysis) to investigate the allegation of racism in the media. The research was undertaken independently of the HRC and the conclusions, observations and recommendations that followed were those of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Claudia Braude.

The public was asked to submit newspaper items they considered to be racist or that contained implicit or explicit racial messages. These items were summarised and a total of twelve items featured in the Interim Report published by the HRC in November, 1999. The Commission received thirteen written submissions, which were well researched and showed a good understanding of the terms of reference (Faultlines 2000: 8)

The report compiled by the HRC, containing the recommendations of Claudia Braude and the MMP, was entitled Faultlines. The HRC decided on this name

because they sincerely believed that "racism marks the volcanic faultline in South Africa's body politic" (Faultlines 2000: 3).

After attending to the content of the two submitted reports, the HRC conducted public hearings that included submissions from the public regarding perceived racism in the media. The media were invited and later subpoenaed to attend these public hearings, as the commission were adamant that the presence of the media would be utterly important for the proceedings.

A number of newspaper editors and journalism institutes questioned the research findings of both the research bodies. According to these parties, the research was "considerably weakened by the absence of research into media consumers" (Faultlines 2000: 50). They based their arguments on the premises that the research focused primarily on the content of the respective newspapers, **and not on the interpretation of the readers/audience of the papers**. The receivers were only considered at the beginning of the research when the public could submit submissions of possible racist messages.

In the final section of the report, the HRC came to the conclusion that "the media can be characterised as racist institutions" (Faultlines 2000: 88). This finding was based on the research done by Claudia Braude, the MMP and the testimonies of the various editors who were prepared to testify before the Commission.

When considering the criticisms on the Human Rights Commission's report, a possible void in the final assessment on racism in the media was identified. The role of the interpreter (reader/audience) was never considered in the inquiry, research and findings of the HRC probe into racism in the media. Additionally, no consideration was given to the influence of media practices and functions on the composition of the media message.

### 1.3. DETAILS OF PRELIMINARY STUDY

Before the onset of the current study a thorough analysis of the Human Rights Commission's report on racism in the media was completed. This led to the discovery of and concern about the possible void in the research conducted for the assessment of racism in the media.

Various critical reports on the inquiry and findings were studied in combination with the HRC report. This illuminated the possible deficiency of research into media consumers. Being guilty of racism is a weighty allegation and must be considered from every possible angle.

In order to get to the crux of the message, as a primary component of the communication process, literature on the message as media product was heeded. It was concluded that messages are viewed in terms of the transactional nature thereof (discussed in Chapter 2). They are no longer perceived as isolated phenomena that hit and influence the individual, but rather as something the receiver subjectively selects and processes, i.e. internalise (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 142).

If messages are seen as something the receiver subjectively selects and processes, the receiver is possibly influenced by a number of factors, which might determine how he/she perceives the message. One such factor that might influence the receiver is his/her racial attitude. This could be determined by Helm's (1990) racial identity attitude scale (RIAS).

Literature on journalism theories was also investigated in order to obtain an understanding of the journalistic functions and practices. These were excluded from the initial inquiry into racism in the media, conducted by the Human Rights Commission. It was concluded that the products of the media are possibly influenced by a number of journalistic practices.

Preliminary content analysis over a period of four (4) weeks was done on the content of three (3) newspapers (*The Star, Mail & Guardian* and *The Citizen*). The same categories used by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) were used in the preliminary study. From this it was concluded that there might well be traces of racism in the media.

After considering all the information gathered during the preliminary study it appeared as if there were certain aspects in the production of media products that need to be considered before conclusions on the products could be made. These were primarily the components of the mass communication process, i.e. the communicator, the message and the receiver.

#### **1.4. NECESSITY OF EXPANSION**

Numerous criticisms regarding the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into racism in the media were voiced. The majority of criticism was focussed on the methodology of the research. Racism in the media is a very serious allegation and must be identified and addressed. The current study might expand on the research initiated by the Human Rights Commission (HRC).

As South Africa still transforms into democracy, consideration may be given to the implications of such allegations of racism, especially when it comes to a public medium such as newspapers. The HRC report had an important role to fulfill in the pursuit of a free press, which is representative of the country's people, their needs and opinions.

From the onset of the HRC inquiry there was a limitation set by the HRC on the research. The primary focus of the research was the products of the media, i.e. that which the audience received. This excluded the audience's perceptiveness of the message and also the functioning and characteristics of the media as

communicator. The preliminary study made it evident that it might be necessary to investigate how the audience perceives the mass media messages. The communication process is only viewed as complete and successful if the receiver correctly interprets the intended message, and meaning was consequently shared between the communicators.

In order to obtain a holistic view of the mass communication process all three principal participants were considered, i.e. the communicator, the message and the receiver. Each of these appeared to play an important role in the communication process and was considered individually, highlighting their functions in the communication process, at the hand of the transactional model of communication.

The research into the communicator (the media) shed light on the functions and characteristics of the media as institutions. This possibly offered an explanation of the occurrence for alleged racist messages in the media.

The messages were analysed at the hand of the same content analysis categories used by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP), in order to determine if the media contained racist messages and to be able to compare the results of the MMP with that of the current study.

Finally, the audience was asked to indicate how they perceived the messages identified by the content analysis study as containing implicit or explicit racist propositions. This was aimed at determining the extent to which the students at the University of the Free State (UFS) considered the media to be racist.

The expansion on the HRC study appeared necessary, in order to incorporate the transactional communication process into the media context. All the participants in the communication event brought unique characteristics to the event that cannot be ignored. The communication process itself appeared to be

dynamic and consequently important to consider in the study of mass communication.

### **1.5. RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The allegations that the media contained racist messages and the conclusion that the media can be classified as racist institutions (Faultlines 2000: 88) had far-reaching consequences for the South African media. Such allegations are very serious indeed and should be addressed accordingly.

Considering the criticisms the Human Rights Commission's inquiry received and the void identified during the preliminary study, the function of the audience, as a participant in the communication process, became apparent. Consequently the role and function of the three primary participants in the communication process were identified as prominent determinants in the construction of the media products.

Without the incorporation of the functions and characteristics of the media and the audience, there seemed to be a gap in the structure of an inquiry into racism in the media. It would appear as if the media and audience are actively involved in creating meaning through the message. The message can consequently not be separated from the other participants in the communication process, i.e. the media and the audience.

### **1.6. AIM OF STUDY**

#### **1.6.1 General aim**

The general aim of the study was to provide a possible understanding of racism in the media as it is perceived by students at the University of the Free State

(UFS). Racism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that manifests itself in various forms in society, such as stereotyping, undue identification, etc.

The study was aimed at investigating whether there were indeed traces of racism in the media. This was a duplication of the aim determined by the Human Rights Commission's (HRC) and was accordingly focussed on determining whether similar results could be detected between the findings of the current study and that of the HRC.

The holistic understanding of racism in the media included a comprehension of the functions and characteristics of the media. This awareness could possibly be an indication of the scope of implicit racism in the media.

The study was furthermore aimed at determining the perceptiveness of students at the University of the Free State to racist messages, i.e. their understanding of the aesthetic (discriminating) values embedded in the media message. It would also certify if the race of the respondent possibly influenced his/her interpretation of the newspaper report.

### **1.6.2. Objectives**

With regard to the aim of the research the following primary objectives were determined:

- To identify possible traces of racism in the media.
- To investigate the possible influence of media function theories on the production of media messages.
- To determine the perceptiveness of students at the University of the Free State with regard to the identified racist traces in the media.

Forthcoming from these primary objectives, the following secondary objectives were identified:

- To distinguish certain elements embedded in media functions, which possibly contribute to the construction of implicit and/or explicit racist messages.
- To identify certain similarities between the results of the current study and that of the Human Rights Commission.
- To determine whether the race of the respondents possibly might have influenced his/her mass media interpretation.
- To determine whether the perceptions of respondents were in accord with the findings of the content analysis.

## **1.7. IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH AREA**

A certain area of research was identified that pertained directly to the research problem and objectives. Within this framework the following aspects demanded attention: Mainstream media in general; the demographic characteristics of the receiver and; the findings of the Human Rights Commission.

### **1.7.1. Media material**

The media can be divided into two mainstreams, namely electronic media (radio, television, etc.), and print media (newspapers). The Human Rights Commission (HRC) concentrated on both radio and newspaper media. The Media Monitoring Project (MMP), as independent researcher, focussed essentially on newspapers.

The current study was an expansion of the HRC inquiry into racism in the media. More specifically it was an expansion of the MMP's quantitative content analysis of the media.

The media used in the current study were selected for analysis on the basis of their prominence in the MMP study. Three national mainstream newspapers, which were readily available in the Free State and used in the MMP study, were identified. These were *The Star*, *Mail & Guardian* and *The Citizen*.

The entire content of these newspapers was analysed, with the exception of the advertisements, both classified and commercial. The advertisements were omitted from the study, as their message might be more representative of the advertiser than the media itself.

#### **1.7.2. Population sample**

The receiver's interpretation of the mass media messages was a primary focal point of the research. The current research concentrated on the participants of the mass media communication process and more specifically students as participants.

The population sample was limited to students who were enrolled at the University of the Free State (UFS). This population sample included respondents from first year to post graduate students.

These respondents are possibly the future target audiences of the media. The target audience appears to have a vital function in the production of audience-centered messages. The media appeared to be goal-directed concerning the production of the mass media message, consequently writing for a specific audience and accordingly supplying in their needs. This population sample could fulfill a vital purpose in the future construction of media messages, due to the

possibility that their perceptiveness can influence the manner in which the media communicate. Based on the perceptiveness of UFS students to implicit racist messages, the study might help determine the mode of audience-centered reporting in the media.

### **1.7.3. Human Rights Commission report**

The inquiry conducted by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) relied on the research, conclusions and recommendations of the two mentioned independent researchers, namely Claudia Braude and the Media Monitoring Project.

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) was responsible for the quantitative content analysis of the media during the HRC inquiry. The current study was also a quantitative analysis of the phenomenon of racism in the media.

Although both the independent researchers' reports were discussed in the current study, the main focus remained on the MMP's methodology and conclusions. The current study was thus an expansion on the MMP's research, and the findings could consequently be compared.

## **1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The main focus of this study was a quantitative investigation into the perceptiveness of students at the University of the Free State to racist messages in newspapers. Quantitative research, according to Wimmer and Dominick (1997: 83), allows the researcher to remain objective, which is important when working with a complicated phenomenon such as racism.

The content of three national mainstream newspapers (*Mail & Guardian*, *The Citizen* and *The Star*) subjected to the HRC inquiry was analysed over a period of

nine (9) weeks. The same content analysis categories determined by the MMP research were adopted.

Newspaper items were analysed by monitoring items in which race was explicitly stated and/or implicit to the content. For every item identified accordingly the content was analysed to reveal whether the item supported or challenged any of the listed propositions. This was achieved by examining the use of language in both the headline and the body of the item.

Once the content analysis was completed, examples of specific newspaper articles, which were selected as the most appropriate for the study, were administered to the respondents. After reading the content of the newspaper items, the respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire based on the selected newspaper items.

The questionnaire aimed to determine whether the respondents considered the items to be racist or not, as well as to determine if the respondents' perceptiveness of the items were similar to that of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP).

The population from which the sample was drawn constituted of enrolled students at the University of the Free State (UFS). The sample included all ethnic race groups. The ethnic composition of the sample was essential in order to determine if the respondent's race could influence his/her interpretation of the mass media messages.

The respondents' racial identity attitude was determined by means of Helm's theory of racial identity attitude (RIAS and WRIAS). The RIAS index verifies the racial identity attitude of a Black person, while the WRIAS determines that of a White person. This, together with the demographic characteristics of the

respondents was treated as independent variables in the analysis of the completed data.

Combined with the theoretical research on the functions and characteristics of the media, the study might provide a better understanding of the mass media communication process, including the perceptiveness of the receiver.

### **1.9. GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS:**

Throughout the study reference was made to various terms and abbreviations. These terms are the following:

ABASA	Association of Black Accountants of South Africa
AMPS	All Media Product Survey
ANC	African National Congress
BLA	Black Lawyers Association
HNP	Herstigte Nationale Party
HRC	Human Rights Commission
MMP	Media Monitoring Project
RIAS	Racial Identity Attitude Scale
RIAS-B	Racial Identity Attitude Scale – Black
rsg	Radio Sonder Grense

TRC            Truth and Reconciliation Commission

WRIAS        White Racial Identity Attitude Scale

UFS            University of the Free State

**Perceptiveness:** Defined as "a feeling of understanding" and "delicate discrimination, especially of aesthetic values" (Anon 2001: 1). It is also interpreted as a "perception of that which is obscure" (Cambridge dictionary 2001: 1).

#### **1.10. STRUCTURE OF STUDY**

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of and discussion on the communication process as perceived from the perspective of the transactional communication model. This allows a general theoretical familiarisation with the communication process, as well as insight into the roles and functions of the three principle participants in mass media communication, namely the media, the message and the receiver. Certain aspects of the audience are specified, as the audience and its perceptiveness of the media message constitute a primary focus of the study.

**Chapter 3** is a continuation of the theoretical discussion of communication, but concentrates specifically on press theories. This chapter sheds light on the functions and characteristics of both the media and the audience in practice. An understanding of these theories provide a wider background against which the Human Rights Commission's inquiry can be assessed. It also provides a different dimension to the understanding of the media, especially when racism is contextualised within the media.

**Chapter 4** offers a summary of the Human Right's Commission's inquiry into racism in the media. The functions, goals and procedures of the Commission are reviewed in order to provide a general framework of the inquiry. The chapter also discusses the findings and recommendations of the Faultlines report.

In **Chapter 5** Claudia Braude's qualitative report, Cultural Bloodstains, is heeded. Her report received numerous criticisms from various parties. The methodology and textual analysis of this qualitative study are reported. This provides a setting to the findings and recommendations she arrived at and consequently how the Human Rights Commission arrived at their conclusion.

**Chapter 6** focuses on the report by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP). This report formed the basis of the current study's content analysis. For this reason the chapter includes a discussion on the methodology, findings and conclusions of the MMP study. The criticism the two independent researchers and the Human Rights Commission received are also reviewed within this chapter. This provides an indication of the manner in which the report was received.

**Chapter 7** serves at an attempt to define racism. Racism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and before striving to elucidate it, it must first be contextualised within a certain sphere, such as the media. In order to do so, certain journalistic factors that could possibly influence the message construction are considered. The Human Rights Commission's definition of racism is examined and expanded on by alternative definitions. The influence culture might have on racism is also weighed.

**Chapter 8** offers an overview of the methodology. This includes a discussion on the characteristics of all three research methods used in the study, namely content analysis, racial identity attitude scales (RIAS) and surveys. The development of the measurement instruments is also included in this chapter.

The findings of the content analysis are reported in **Chapter 9**. This discussion is divided into the types of item and subject that were analysed. This is further arranged according to the various content analysis categories as identified by the Media Monitoring Project.

**Chapter 10** renders an overview of the survey findings. These are reported according to the newspaper items evaluated by the respondents. The findings of the factor analysis and racial identity attitude are also accounted for in this chapter.

**Chapter 11** constitutes a discussion on the findings of the content analysis. These findings are compared to those of the Media Monitoring Project (as discussed in Chapter 6). Additionally, the survey results are discussed according to the different items assessed by the respondents.

**Chapter 12** embodies the conclusion of the study. This conclusion encapsulates the aspects of the media (Chapter 2 and 3), a comparison between the MMP findings (Chapter 6) and that of the study's content analysis (Chapter 9), a synopsis of the survey findings (Chapter 10) and possible further research opportunities. This drawing together of all the elements covered in the study serve as a conclusion on the possible presence of racism in newspapers.

### **1.11. CONCLUSION**

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) concluded that racism was indeed a problem in the media. A thorough content analysis of the media was done including both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Critics identified a void concerning the communication participants after the conclusion by the HRC that "the media can be classified as racist institutions" (Faultlines 2000: 88). This possible gap was the focal point of the current study.

The study provides a framework on the functions and characteristics of communication and more specifically of press theories. Combined with both content analysis and surveys the study might offer an alternative insight into the already identified problem of racism.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

A consideration of the essence of communication renders insight into the basic definitions, theories and concepts of the communication process. A fundamental understanding of the communication process might be necessary before attempting to investigate any phenomenon concerning mass communication.

This chapter concentrates on the communication process and the various participants, their roles, functions and influence on communication. The main theories concerning mass communication are discussed in Chapter 3.

The three major components of the communication process, namely the communicator, the message and the receiver, are discussed in the mass media context at the hand of the following:

- 2.2. The communication process
  - 2.2.1. Communication models
  - 2.2.2. Wood's model of transactional communication
- 2.3. The media as communicators
- 2.4. The message
  - 2.4.1. Encoding
  - 2.4.2. Denotation and connotation as decoding
  - 2.4.3. Stereotyping
- 2.5. Discourse and the audience
- 2.6. Aspects of the audience
- 2.7. Conclusion

## 2.2. THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Human communication is defined as the process whereby meaning is created between two or more people (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 6). It can also be perceived as the semiotic social process of influencing others through the generation, transmission, and attribution of messages. "Semiotic", in this instance, refers to the use of symbols to influence people. These symbols are system-bound (Thibodeaux 2000: 1).

Communication is consequently seen as a process within and between systems (Jansen & Steinberg 1991: 43). This implicates that communication consists of interrelated parts that affect one another. Communication is also influenced by larger systems within which it occurs, e.g. different cultures have distinct understandings of appropriate verbal behaviour (Wood 2001: 22).

### 2.2.1. Communication models

Shannon and Weaver created a communication model in 1949 that illustrated the basic process of communication. This was a linear model of communication and did not capture the dynamism of human communication (Wood 2001: 25). As communication situations became increasingly complicated, the models of communication became more complex (Bettinghaus & Cody 1994: 5). A model, according to Wood (2001: 25), should include the feature of time and should depict communication as varying rather than constant.

The evolution of the communication discipline has moved toward a meaning-centered view of human communication. Meanings are the significance we bestow on phenomena and are not found in experience itself (Wood 2001: 23).

There have since been numerous models which described the operations within the communication process. The linear models of communication, advanced by

Laswell (1948) and revised by Shannon and Weaver (1949), depicted communication as a one-way process (Severin & Tankard 1992: 38). The linear model implies that an individual is either a sender or a receiver, thus suggesting that the listeners passively absorb senders' messages and do not respond, (Severin & Tankard 1992: 38; Wood 2001:24). The linear views are inaccurate because, according to Gronbeck (1999), communication processes are "bi-directional...and best described not by bullets or arrows hitting their targets, but rather by congregations of voices together building the frameworks of shared meanings" (Wood 2001: 24).

Feedback was added as a new feature in the communication process, after it was realised that listeners respond to senders (Wood 2001: 24). Feedback, according to Thibodeaux (2000: 1) is a response to an earlier message. Schramm (1955) included feedback in his model of communication, but also pointed out that communicators create and interpret messages within personal fields of experience (Bettinghouse & Cody 1994: 5; Severin & Tankard 1992: 43; Wood 2001: 24;). This model was known as the interactive model of communication.

This interactive communication model was an improvement on the linear model, but it still did not capture the dynamism of human communication (Wood 2001: 25). Communication is ongoing and always in motion, and can consequently not be frozen at any one moment (Wood 2001: 22).

The transactional model of communication emphasises the extent to which two or more people create a relationship as part of their communicating (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 8). In this process the communication participants are simultaneously influenced by one another in the transaction, and consequently the participants change during the communication process (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 7).

There are certain assumptions embedded in the transactional model.

Thibodeaux (2000: 2) specifies some of these the assumptions, which include:

- People are actors who change each other through communication.
- Communication can best be looked at from a systems perspective, i.e. all parts are interrelated and affect each other; all parts are interdependent;
- Communicators are real, complex humans, not roles (e.g., sender, receiver).
- Communicators often take on both sender and receiver roles simultaneously.
- Culture (although physically placed toward the edge of the transactional model) actually pervades and permeates communication. (Thibodeaux 2000: 2).

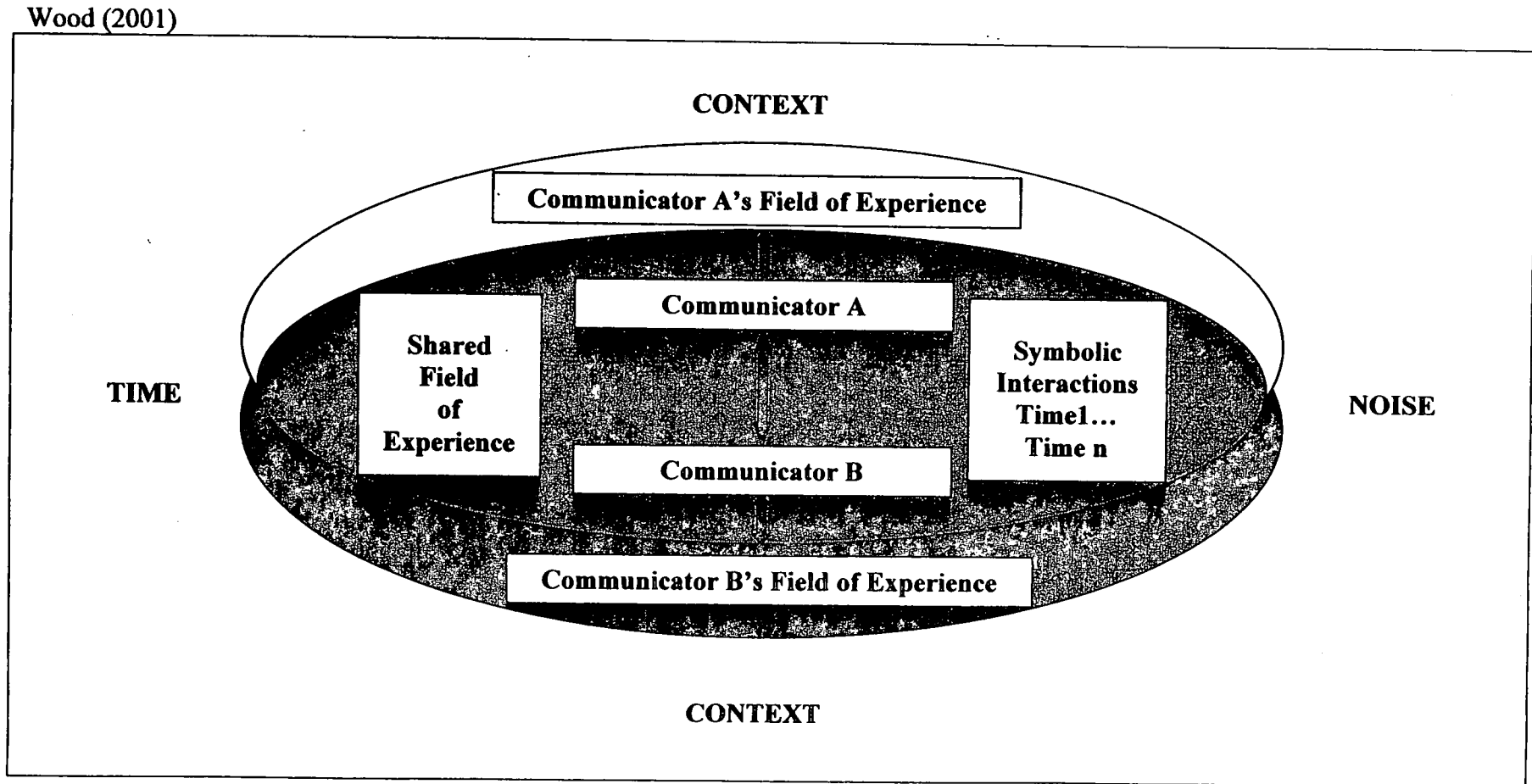
Wood (2001) designed a transactional model of communication, which encapsulates the above mentioned assumptions and represents the communication process in a certain context.

### **2.2.2. Wood's model of transactional communication**

The transactional communication model emphasises that communication is a continuous, dynamic process, which has many variations (Fyffe, 2001: 1).

Wood's model includes two communicators, who simultaneously interact in the communication process (see Figure 1, on following page).

**FIGURE 1** Wood's Model of Transactional Communication (2001)



The model does not label one participant a sender and the other a receiver. Both are defined as communicators who participate equally, and often simultaneously, in the communication process. This proposes that at any given moment in the communication process both participants are sending messages and interpreting messages (Tubbs & Moss 1994:7; Wood 2001: 25).

For the purpose of this study the two principle communicators are identified as the media (Communicator A) and the audience/receivers (Communicator B) (Figure 1). The symbolic interactions depicted in the model pertain to the mass media messages, which are encoded and decoded by the communicators respectively.

The outer lines of Wood's model emphasises that communication occurs within systems (contexts) that affect what and how people communicate, as well as the meanings they create. Those systems, or contexts, include shared systems (culture, town, etc.) and personal systems (family, religion, etc.) of each communicator. Gerbner (in McQuail & Windahl 1993: 8) stresses that any ascribed meaning depends on the assumptions and foreknowledge of the communicators and the context in which the communication takes place.

The relational context of the transactional model of communication embodies the past events of each participant (foreknowledge) and influences the current communication transaction. Cultural influences are related to each communicator's way of life (place, people, events, traditions, etc.) (Thibodeaux 2000: 2).

The model, designed by Wood (2001), also portrays each communication participant's field of experience and his/her shared fields of experience as changing over time. The communication process, according to Dance (1967), is constantly moving forward and yet is always to some degree dependent upon the past, which informs the present and future (in Tubbs & Moss 1994:14). This

incorporates the idea that as we encounter new people and grow personally, our interaction is altered (Wood 2001: 25).

Noise is an external factor that might distort communication. Noise is defined as anything which causes difficulty in effective communication, be it physical (external) or psychological (internal) noise. Internal noise is any influence internal to the communicator, which adversely affects communication (Thibodeaux 2000: 2). Wood (2001: 25) consequently defines noise as interferences inside the communicators, such as mental biases (e.g. racism) or preoccupation, which hinder effective listening. These might be influential in the decoding of the mass media message. Semantic noise is any adverse influence on communication caused by word meanings, which could also possibly affect the interpretation of newspaper reports (Thibodeaux 2000: 3).

The transactional approach to communication represents communication as an active process where meaning is neither certain nor stable and successful communication is a process of compromise (Hobson 2000: 1). Wood's model (2001) highlights that communication is a process, which changes continuously, because how people communicate varies over time (Wood 2001: 25).

In the mass communication process various role-players can be identified at the hand of Wood's transactional model of communication (2001). The three most prominent participants are the media, the message and the receiver/audience. These are subsequently discussed individually.

### **2.3. THE MEDIA AS COMMUNICATORS**

The media, as communicator, is one of the primary components of the mass communication process. Although the media might appear to be the sole communicator within the mass communication context, it is, however,

interactively linked with the audience. This interaction is maintained by feedback from the audience.

Feedback allows a communication system to make corrections in its own operation (Severin & Tankard 1992: 41). The mass media has certain forms of feedback from the one participant to the other to help correct subsequent output. In the mass communication process letters and phone calls from readers are a form of feedback, as are responses to advertisements and increase or decrease in newspaper sales (Severin & Tankard 1992: 41). Feedback in the media is, however, more limited when compared to dyadic speech events or even small groups. Additionally the audience is perceived as relatively large, heterogeneous and anonymous to the media (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 18). The recipients enjoy only limited participation in the communication process, because feedback is often difficult due to the accessibility of the media (De Wet 1991: 2).

Wood's communication model (2001) emphasises that communication occurs within systems (seen as the context in Figure 1). These systems appear to incorporate the functions and theories of the media, which in their own way shape the construction of the mass media message. The audience, who is also possibly influenced by their own personal systems, such as culture, interprets these messages. It would thus appear as if the communication process is influenced by a number of systems, which have to be incorporated when considering the impact of the mass communication process.

The model includes the aspect of time (Figure 1). Wood argues that a person's field of experience changes over time, consequently changing the communication process (Wood 2001: 25). This appears to be true for both the media and the audience as communication participants. Based on the uses and gratification theory (discussed in Chapter 3), the assumption exists that a change in the needs of the audience could result in the alteration of the media content. This is

based on the premise that the media provide information according to the needs of the audience.

The mass communication process is apparently influenced by noise factors, also included in Wood's model (2001) (Figure 1). These noise factors in the mass communication process could be connected to the mental biases and preoccupations of the receiver (Wood 2001: 25). There are possible influences, such as race and culture, which might feed these mental biases of the receivers. The possible influence of race was tested in this study.

Both the communicators in the transactional model of communication (the media and the audience) bring their own field of experience to the communication process (Figure 1). These experience fields over-lap in certain aspects to produce the "shared field of experience". Experience fields possibly relate to the schemas inherent in each communication participant, which in turn might influence the interpretation of the shared message between the communicators.

Certain areas of communication theory can be helpful in achieving the intended effect of shared meaning between the communication participants. General semantics, readability and perception of the newspaper item are all helpful in attempting to achieve the effects of attention and comprehension (Severin & Tankard 1992: 6). Some of these theories are more closely examined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7.

#### **2.4. THE MESSAGE**

The message comprises of a set of symbols that represent a communicator's state of being at a particular moment. The message can thus be perceived as the representation of the internal state that passes from one communicator to another (Samovar & Porter 1995: 29).

The concept of communication is often reduced to signify the process of expression and interpretation of messages – the process of imparting ideas – between the communicators, with the aim of arriving at a mutual understanding on certain matters (De Wet 1991: 1). The message can be seen as the intended thought of a communicator in the form of symbols, which is transmitted during communication (Thibodeaux 2000: 1).

In mass communication the communicator is usually an unknown group or organisation that has its message duplicated through powerful media (De Wet 1991: 2). What the media and the audience as communicators have in common is the message, which according to the transactional model of communication, can simultaneously be the property of both the communicators (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 133).

According to Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 142), the manner in which the communicator encodes the message is aimed at the receiver's interpretation and understanding thereof. They also believe that between the communicator and the receiver the message can be seen in its own right, open to analysis and interpretation. Messages are viewed in terms of the transactional nature thereof. They are no longer perceived as isolated phenomena that hit and influence the individual, but rather as something the receiver subjectively selects and processes, i.e. internalises (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 142).

Communicators can be criticised for attitudes and values in a message that they never intended to communicate, as the receivers have put their own interpretation on the message. Thus assessing the communication value of a message in isolation from the communicator and/or the audience is risky (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 135). Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 136) note that in order to determine the effectiveness of the message it is essential to know the intentions of the sender and the perceptions of the receiver.

Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 139) quoted Hall (1980) stating that "before a message can have an 'effect' (however defined), satisfy a 'need' or be put to a 'use', it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded". Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 139) further concluded that attention thus "turns to the process by which messages become meaningful to audiences". This might indicate that the message impact could not be determined effectively if the receiver's perception is not accounted for.

Culture, according to Van Ginneken (1998: 192), determines the codes and meanings repertoire of the communicators. This "culture" includes gender, nationality, language, class, etc. (Van Ginneken 1998: 192). Culture is one of the systems included in the context in Wood's model of transactional communication (see Figure 1). Culture, as a possible component of racism, is discussed in Chapter 7.

There are possibly various factors, which influence the receiver's interpretation of the message. Van Ginneken (1998: 192) indicate that the communicator has consciously or unconsciously encoded certain meanings in the message, which the receiver thereof may or may not interpret as such. Encoding thus appears to be a crucial point in the production of the message.

#### **2.4.1. Encoding**

Encoding, according to Severin and Tankard (1992: 72), is "the translation of purpose, intention or meaning into symbols or codes". It is a method whereby a person expresses his/her observations, meanings and thoughts into words. Tubbs and Moss (1994: 74) notes that encoding is an internal activity in which communication behaviours are selected and arranged to compose the message. Samovar and Porter (1995: 29) highlights that the process of converting feelings into words is universal, but that the words and actions selected are culturally based.

Noise, especially internal noise, might influence the encoding, as well as the decoding of a message. The choice of words can influence the receiver's perceptions of the shared meaning in the communication process. This might be problematic as the transactional nature of the communication interaction is influenced by perception (Baron 2000: 1).

A characteristic of language is that it is perceived as abstract. Severin and Tankard (1992: 74) explains that abstraction is a process of selecting some details and leaving out others. Abstraction allows a person to think in categories and thus provides the opportunity to generalise (Severin & Tankard 1992: 74). This is very useful; but also dangerous when applied to the generalisation of people. For example if a Black person is categorised, by the colour of his skin, as a criminal. The MMP identified such generalisations and constructed content analysis categories according to which the content of the media was analysed.

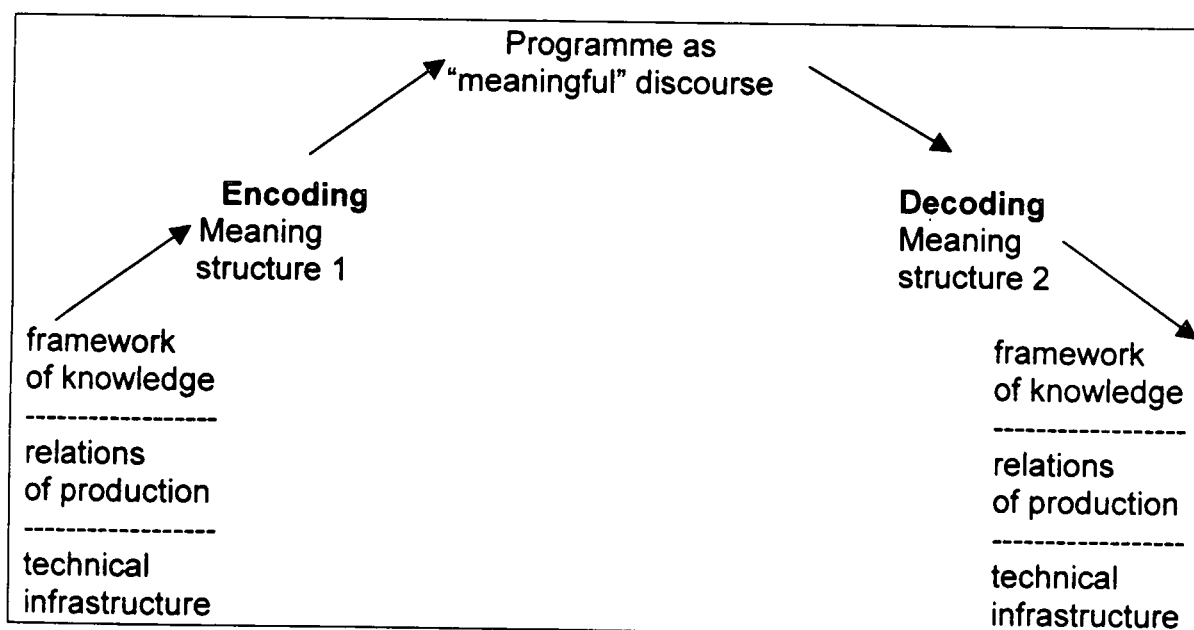
Categorisation is a possible building block of stereotypes. Flowing from this is the phenomenon of propaganda. Especially name-calling, as a technique of propaganda, holds a possible threat to successful communication. The submissions to the HRC contained examples of name-calling. These included name-calling of Muslims as "terrorists", "extremists", "fundamentalists", and "fanatics" (Pityana 1999: 10).

The misuse of language often becomes a major obstacle in the communication process. Undue identification is "the failure to see distinctions between members of a category..." (Severin & Tankard 1992: 78). Although language abstracts make interpretations of the world much easier by means of categories, these classifications must not constitute the final perception of the person. This could lead to undue identification and ultimately stereotyping.

The well-known Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that “the world is perceived differently by members of different linguistic communities and that this perception is transmitted and sustained by language” (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 78). This hypothesis gives language a dominant role in the shaping of perceptions (Berger 1995: 18). The media play a role in shaping the message they convey, and are not conduits that have no significant role (Berger 1995: 19). Critical encoding is vital and incorrect encoding might result in sloppy journalism. This in turn can cause various consequences in the decoding of the message.

Hall (1980: 130) utilised a diagram to depict the process of encoding and decoding (see Figure 2 below). From the diagram it is clear that before a message can have an effect, satisfy a need or be put to use, it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded (Hall 1980: 130).

**FIGURE 2 Hall's Encoding/Decoding Process (1980)**



At a specific moment the structure employs a code and yields a message: at another point the message, via its decodings, emerge into a structure of social

practices. The message realisation is shaped at the reception end of the chain, which permits the meanings signified in the discourse to be transported into practice or consciousness (Hall 1980: 130).

Meaning structure 1 and meaning structure 2 might thus not have the exact same meaning, due to the fact that the degrees of understanding may differ (Hall 1980: 131). The true meaning and impact of the message and communication process as a whole appears only be determined at the end of the process after the message has been decoded and internalised. This holds true for the implicit racist propositions within the media message, which can only be identified by the receiver after decoding the message.

#### **2.4.2. Denotation and connotation as decoding**

In the decoding stage of the communication process, the receiver decodes the raw energy he/she takes from the communication event and converts it into meaningful experiences (Samovar & Porter 1995: 29). Decoding allows the audience to attach meaning to the communicated message and although all individuals decode, cultural background largely determines the meaning given to the message (Samovar & Porter 1995: 29). According to Severin and Tankard (1992: 57), the decoding process involves perception.

Possible problems with decoding arise from two processes called denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal meaning, as it is found in the dictionary (Van Ginneken 1998: 146). Bettinghaus and Cody (1994: 210) explain that the dictionary meaning of a word references the definition that a language community has determined for it. Communicators often assume that receivers will use the same denotative meanings of the words as they themselves do, but words vary according to individual interpretations (Bettinghaus & Cody 1994: 210).

Van Ginneken (1998: 146) defines connotations as "the various figurative and other collateral meanings which have also been attached to [the message]". Determining the connotation given to a message becomes more difficult when the receiver as communicator makes associations. According to Van Ginneken (1998: 146) these associations may or may not be related to the original message and may be based on pure coincidences on the part of the communicators.

The meaning of a word is never simple and straightforward, but according to Williams (1983) it is always complex and layered, ambiguous and contradictory, with elements placed in and others hidden from immediate sight (in Van Ginneken 1998: 146). The communicated message can thus have various interpretations depending on the receiver's connotations. These connotations are not obvious and more often than not hidden from the surface of the message. It would appear as if there could not be assumptions made about the connotations deployed by the audience, without receiving feedback.

Whether or not the audience interprets a message as racist or not, appears to be largely determined by the various connotations they might assign to the message. These connotations, which are connected to the receiver's comprehension of the message, are also influenced by his/her social characteristics such as gender, age, education, and culture (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 143). These social characteristics form part of the context factor in Wood's model of transactional communication (see Figure 1).

### **2.4.3 Stereotyping**

Stereotypes contribute to rigid and biased perceptions, and are rooted in a person's compulsion to make in-group and out-group distinctions. This human psychological need to categorise and classify is the pervasive nature of stereotypes (Samovar & Porter, 1995: 290). A stereotype is thus a creative

mental "pigeon-hole" which serves to categorise the complications of the world. This classification is inherent to each individual and forms part of the noise factor in Wood's model of transactional communication (see Figure 1).

Category labels, according to Fowler (1991: 93), indicate a lot about the structure of the ideological world represented by a newspaper. The categorisation of people develops into the creation of phrases whereby people are classified more easily, which in turn aids to predicate attributes of a particular group (Fowler 1991: 92). Such phrases (e.g. millionaire, soldier, and police officer) are category labels that are bestowed on individuals prior to meeting them.

Fowler (1991: 93) goes on to state that associations and disassociations are the surface structure outcrops of underlying abstract paradigms of the discourse, the values and relationships that underpin a newspaper's theory of the way the world is organised. Considering this, it would appear as if the MMP's list of stereotypes, used to identify racist notions the media, could possibly be effective.

Fowler (1991: 93) states that categorisation is a discursive basis for the practice of discrimination. Discrimination is often achieved through a range of linguistic strategies that are so unobtrusive that their effect must be subliminal (Fowler 1991: 110). The HRC was confronted by the so-called "subliminal racism" in the media, but dismissed this by stating that because it is below the threshold of consciousness it cannot be accurately pinpointed. The HRC stated in this regard that the reason for their caution is that no legal document acknowledges the concept, and that a person may avoid taking responsibility for the subliminal (Faultlines 2000: 58). Fowler (1991: 110) supports this notion by noting that it should not be assumed that journalists are categorising consciously.

During the HRC probe various complaints were uttered concerning the use of numbers when referring to Black deaths (Pityana 1998: 12). According to Van Dijk (1987: 372) an even more effective and stereotypical way to emphasise

numbers are the frequently used "flood" metaphors. The negative connotations, which are ascribed to such metaphors (e.g. flood, streams, invade used when referring to immigrants) imprint a racial negativity within the public (Van Dijk 1987: 372). Language and the encoding of a message could thus influence the interpretation messages, possibly enhancing racial stereotypes.

## **2.5. DISCOURSE AND THE AUDIENCE**

The audience has been identified as an active communicator in the transactional model of communication. As a communicator, the audience simultaneously sends and receives messages in the mass communication process (cf. Figure 1).

As Fowler (1991: 41) points out, newspapers do not consciously wrap events in value-laden language, which the reader passively absorbs, ideology and all. This will result in a total power imbalance, with the newspaper having too much power and the reader too little.

According to Fowler (1991: 42) there is every reason to propose that being a reader is an active, creative practice. It is now believed that perception and understanding involve the active deployment of mental schemas and processing strategies that the reader knows before his/her encounter with the message (Fowler 1991: 42). The audience thus interprets and perceives the mass media messages according to these inherent schemas that help them organise the world more sensibly.

Schemas add to the understanding of how people process information from the mass media (Severin & Tankard 1992: 65). Schema, as defined by Graber (1988) (in Severin & Tankard 1992: 66), is a "cognitive structure consisting of organised knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from prior experiences". These schemas thus appear to form part of the fields of experience that each participant brings to the communication process, as can be

seen in the transactional model of communication (Figure 1). It would thus appear as if each individual, as an active participant in the mass media process, interprets the information differently according to his/her schema.

Research done in the social cognition area suggests that the schematic processing of news portrayals may serve to sustain racial stereotyping (Oliver 1999: 49). Peffley, Hields and Williams (1996) reported that receivers' levels of racial stereotyping played a crucial role in their evaluation of the crime (in Oliver 1999: 50). Each person's schema determines the interpretation of a message. It is a difficult, yet important factor to consider when trying to determine the impact of a particular message – difficult because it is an internal, psychological process and important because without it the message is left not interpreted.

The true meaning of a message appears to pass through a number of phases before it is interpreted and perceived. These stages start with the journalist deciding which story to report on (i.e. agenda setting and gatekeeping) (cf. Chapter 3). Once the story is selected, it is subjected to the interpretation of the journalist. It is here where the responsibility and ethics of the journalist influence the story content (cf. Chapter 7). The HRC stopped their investigation into racism in the media at this point, limiting the scope of the inquiry to the products of the media, i.e. what is published.

It can however be deduced from various theories and studies that the reader is an active part in the whole communication process. The reader selects the media which is consistent with his/her beliefs and values, and that can satisfy his/her needs (uses and gratifications model and selective exposure; Chapter 3). The message is then further perceived by means of the reader's schema, i.e. the mental connotation he/she has with the story elements. The schema will determine the actual interpretation of the message and whether or not the reader perceives it as racist or not. The receiver then becomes the communicator, by sending feedback to the initial communicator

## 2.6. ASPECTS OF THE AUDIENCE

From the onset of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) inquiry clear guidelines considering the subjects to be investigated were given. All submissions to the HRC, the research and the hearings conducted only focused on the products of the media, i.e. the message.

In certain models of communication and in the HRC inquiry the message is depicted as having an existence of its own, isolated from the communicator and the audience. This, according to Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 133), is misleading, because the message is part of the sender, who produces it, and the receiver, who internalises and reconstructs it to a greater or lesser degree. The message, the only focus point of the HRC inquiry, can simultaneously be the property of the sender and the receiver (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 133).

The word "audience" has, according to McQuail (1997: 1), been associated with the collective term for the receivers in the simple sequential model of the mass communication process. McQuail (1997: 1) states that the problems surrounding the definition of "audience" stems from the fact that a single and simple word is being applied to an increasingly diverse and complex reality.

The audience is simultaneously a product of social context (which leads to shared cultural interests, understanding and information needs) and a response to a particular pattern of media communication (McQuail 1997: 2). He (1997: 3) defines an audience in different and overlapping ways:

- By place (e.g. local media);
- By people (e.g. when medium is characterised by an appeal to a certain group – age, gender, political, etc.); and

- By the message content.

A broad theoretical issue concerning the audience pertains to the degree of activity on the part of the audience as communicator. By general definition the audience as a mass is passive, because it is incapable of collective action. Individual acts of media choice within the audience can be more or less active, in terms of motivation, attention, involvement and so forth (McQuail 1997: 22). It is commonly believed that the more active an audience is, the more resistant it will be to persuasion, influence and manipulation, and more interaction will occur between the communicators (McQuail 1997: 22).

In the transactional model of communication (Wood 2001), the audience and media are depicted as simultaneous partners in the communication process (Figure 1). The audience is thus seen as an active participant in the communication process, both receiving and sending messages that are influenced by various factors, such as schemas, culture, etc.

Society at large is divided into various sub-groups based on specific characteristics, such as race, culture, interests, etc. These sub-groups can be referred to as publics. Berger (1995: 88) argues that "publics" should replace the term "masses", as publics are groups of people who form themselves into audiences for specific media texts. These publics have different needs and orientations, which they try to satisfy by means of their selection of a certain media. In order to have a share of the mass communication pie, different media "narrowcast" (as opposed to broadcast) their messages to reach the specific audience they cater for. The audience in turn comes to the media to "consume mediated text, for a variety of reasons" (Berger 1995: 89).

In general mass communication theories have tended to downplay the significance of the various subcultures, which exist in society. The roles of age,

gender, sexual orientation, race, political values, religion, ethnicity, education and occupation have been neglected in the past (Berger 1995: 90). These roles might be important to consider when dealing with the South African media, as South Africa has an extraordinarily diverse community. In order to determine the impact of a mass message, these various factors have to be incorporated when considering the audience and their interpretation of the media messages.

## 2.7. CONCLUSION

The success of mass communication, like any other form of communication, depends on the accurate sharing of meaning between the communication participants. Various components of the communication process, such as field of experience, noise, etc. contribute to the successful meaning accord between the communicating parties.

In the transactional model of communication, the media and the audience are seen as equal active participants in the communication process, both influenced by a number of factors. This transactional model embodies the possible complexity of communication and provides an understanding of the roles that the various parties play.

Each participant has a unique and important role to fulfil in the communication process. The message, in the communication process, appears to be the property of both the communicators simultaneously. This possibly implies that the message can be perceived as a connecting bond between the two communicators, who simultaneously encode and decode the shared message.

Within the mass communication process, the two communicators involved are the media and the audience. These two participants in mass communication have certain unique characteristics that influence the sharing of meaning in this

particular communication environment. These influences and characteristics are summarised in certain mass communication theories.

An understanding of the theories of mass communication might provide a more deepened understanding of the entire communication process involving the media. These theories are subsequently discussed in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORIES ON JOURNALISM

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Theory, according to Severin and Tankard (1992: 3), is our understanding of the way things work. The greatest faith in the scientific world is placed on statements about the nature of things, that have been tested, verified and have some generality and predictive power (Severin & Tankard 1992: 4). Berger (1995: 181) defines theory as a systematic and logical attempt, expressed in language, to explain and predict phenomena, whereas models are abstract, usually graphic, and explicit about what is being studied.

Journalism, like any academic field, has numerous theories striving to explain the true nature of that specific field. Academics have investigated and researched all the elements of the sphere and have accordingly constructed the theories on which the profession is built.

The theories and models discussed in this chapter might be important to incorporate into the exploration of a controversial issue, such as racism and an attempt to analyse media content. This is done at the hand of the following:

- 3.2. Hypodermic needle theory
- 3.3. Reception theory
- 3.4. Uses and gratification theory
- 3.5. Selective exposure
- 3.6. Selective perception
- 3.7. Agenda setting
- 3.8. Gatekeepers
- 3.9. Conclusion

### **3.2. HYPODERMIC NEEDLE THEORY**

The earliest attempts at researching the influence of the media assumed that the public was a passive receiver of media fare (Oosthuizen 1996: 37). This was later connected to the hypodermic needle theory, which stated that the receiver would be influenced directly and significantly by the media messages (Oosthuizen 1996: 37; Tubbs & Moss 1994: 392). This implicated that the mass media can have an almost magical, and potentially dangerous, effect on the audience (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 392).

The hypodermic needle theory, according to Oosthuizen (1996: 38), did not touch on the differences in demographics or the different needs, belief systems and interests of the receivers. The Human Rights Commission inquiry showed possible glimpses of this press theory, as the study focussed only on the media message and did not give any attention to other factors that could possibly contribute to the production and interpretation of the message.

It is, however, now believed that a mass communication message does not have the same effect on every receiver. The message's effect appears to be dependent on a number of elements, including personal characteristics of the communicators and the context of the communication event (Severin & Tankard, 1992: 106). The hypodermic needle theory is an oversimplification of the mass communication event (Severin & Tankard, 1992: 106), and more concise media theories have since evolved.

### **3.3 RECEPTION THEORY (reader-response theory)**

The polar opposite of the hypodermic needle theory is the reader-response theory. The hypodermic needle theory, according to Berger (1995: 111) is now discredited in the mass communication research field. Mass communication

theory is concentrated on the receivers and investigating the manner in which they interpret the mass media message.

The reception theory is based on the assumption that "every reader interprets a given text on the basis of his or her background and social situation" (race, religion, socio-economic class, gender, age, etc.) (Berger 1995: 111). This implies that although there might be an amount of agreement among the members of an audience as to the meaning of a text, the interpretations thereof are still different.

The reception theory emphasises media use as a reflection of a particular socio-cultural context and as a process of giving meaning to cultural products and experiences (McQuail 1997: 18). Media use can, according to Bausinger (1984) (in McQuail 1997: 19), only be understood in relation to the particular social context and experience of a sub-cultural group. This assumption is echoed in the transactional model of communication (Figure 1; Chapter 2), which emphasises the importance of the communication context (systems) and the prior experience of the communicators with regard to successful meaning transfer, i.e. communication.

The main features of the reception tradition are summarised by McQuail (1997: 19). One feature states that the media text has to be read through the perceptions of the audience, which constructs meaning from the text. These are never fixed nor predictable. Another feature is that the process of media use and the way in which it unfolds in a particular context are central objects of interest. Media use is typically situation-specific and orientated to social tasks that evolve out of participation in "interpretative communities". Finally the reception theory never perceives the audiences as passive, nor all their members as equal, since some will be more experienced or more active (McQuail 1997: 19).

The reception theory, according to Berger (1995: 110) makes a distinction between the 'artistic' nature (created by the writer) of a text and the 'aesthetic' interpretation of the text by the receiver. This text is however full of possibilities for varying interpretations and does not come into being until it is realised by the receiver (Berger 1995: 110).

Investigating the artistic nature of the text, as done by the HRC researchers, leaves the aesthetic interpretation and the actual 'existence' of the text untouched. Perceptiveness is defined as "delicate discrimination, especially of aesthetic values" (Anon 2001: 1). It thus appears as if the true racist nature of the message lies in the eye of the beholder, i.e. his/her perceptiveness thereof. What contributes to the receiver's understanding of the text is not pinpointed, but prior experience and demographics (as systems) could possibly play a profound role in the receiver's perceptiveness of the communicated message.

### **3.4. USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY**

Early journalistic theories are centred on the idea of what the media do to their audiences, seeing the audience as passive receivers. It is, however, more accurate to say that the audience is in actual fact active participants of the media communication process. It is from this departure that the uses and gratification approach attempts to determine the functions that mass communication serve for the audience members (Severin & Tankard 1992: 269). For Katz (1979) it is about the selectivity of personal interest and how the media are impressed into the service of individual needs and values (in Blumler 1985: 49).

Severin and Tankard (1992: 272) cite two Swedish researchers who proposed that the uses and gratification model included a number of elements. The first element states that the audience is conceived of as active, that is, an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal-directed.

Another element inferred that "in the mass media process much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies within the audience" (Severin & Tankard 1992: 272). The audience thus fulfills an important function in determining the essence of the audience-centered, goal-directed newspaper messages. Ultimately the audience members decide to which newspaper content they will expose themselves, according to the gratification of their needs. In order to obtain maximum exposure, the press provides the gratification of the needs accordingly. Understanding the audience and their needs might provide assistance with the construction of the media message. The population sample of the study is students at the University of the Free State (UFS) and might consequently be considered as the audience that could govern the construction of future media messages.

Various studies have been conducted to determine the specific gratifications that the audience seeks when using the media. Blumler (1979) proposed that we have to turn to basic audience orientations to predict and explain media influence processes, rather than adding still more measures of specific gratifications (in McCombs & Weaver 1985: 101). The gratification of needs mediates a person's patterns and consequences of media use. This process could affect the individual characteristics or social, political, cultural and economic structures of society (Rubin 1994: 420).

Also important to the uses and gratification model is the assumption of an active audience with certain expectancies (Levy & Windahl 1985: 109; McCombs & Weaver 1985: 104). These expectancies guide decisions about where to locate the fulfilment of particular needs (McCombs & Weaver 1985: 104). Therefore the HNP followers know that they can turn to *Die Afrikaaner* to fulfil certain of their expectations (cf. Chapter 5; Braude's analysis of *Die Afrikaaner*). This selective exposure for example, helps the newspaper to narrow their field of reporting in order to answer the needs and expectations of a specific audience.

The needs and expectations of an audience appear to differ from individual to individual. Berger identifies the need "to see authority figures exalted or deflated" (Berger 1991: 86). Here the media has an important role to play in advising the receiver how to relate to and deal with authority figures (Berger 1991: 86). This "need" is fulfilled by critical reporting on government and is categorised by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Human Rights Commission (HRC) as an element of racism in the media.

To experience extreme emotions, such as love and hate, "the horrible and similar phenomena", is another need identified by Berger (1991: 87). Here he refers to the desire to experience powerful emotions without being carried away. The reporting on the soccer tragedies that struck Africa during April and May 2001 (the period of content analysis) and the subsequent placement of pictures allowed the audience to experience the horrible events at a "safe distance". According to the MMP, the placement of such photographs, depicting dead Black soccer supporters, is racist because it creates the idea that "Black people die in large numbers" and it intrudes on the privacy of Black victims. The respondents in the current study were asked to interpret such a photograph. Their responses are discussed in Chapter 10 and Chapter 11.

When considering the characteristics of an article it appears to be important to consider the needs of the audience. It must thus be determined whether an article answers a certain need, such as sensation or to experience extreme emotions, or whether it is merely a blatant example of racism in the media.

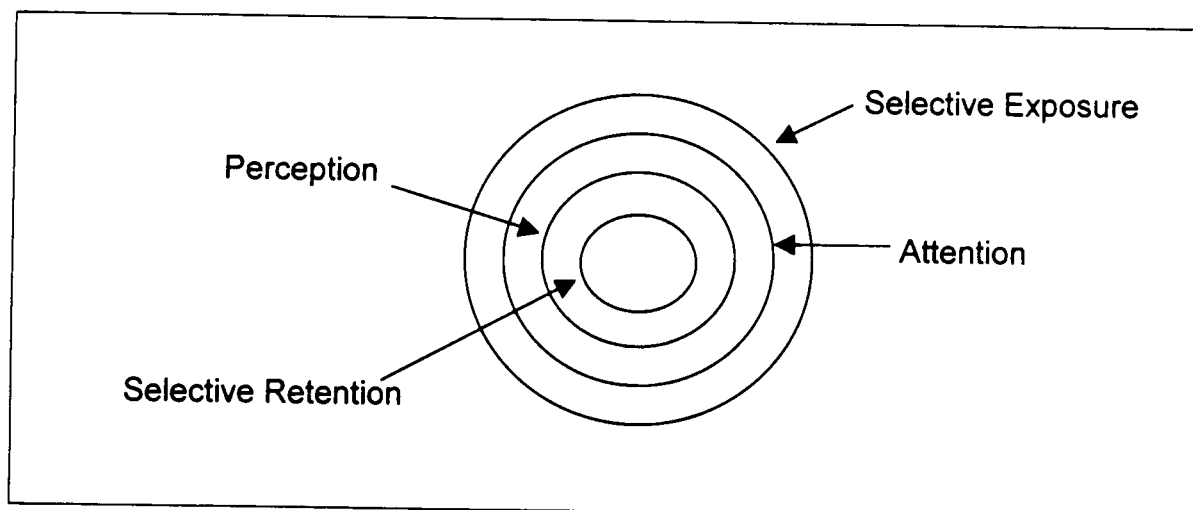
### **3.5. SELECTIVE EXPOSURE**

Selective exposure is the tendency to expose oneself to those messages that are in agreement with one's existing attitudes. The contrary is also true: people tend to avoid messages that are not in agreement with their attitudes (Severin & Tankard 1992: 64; Steward & Ward 1994: 326). According to Steward and Ward

(1994: 326) characteristics of consumers directly influence media effects. They infer that the theoretical foundation for these effects is selective exposure (Steward & Ward 1994: 326).

Early research also established the relationship between demographic characteristics and media usage (Steward & Ward 1994: 326). Gross characterisations of demographic distinctions and media usage are, according to Steward and Ward (1994: 326), anachronistic in today's heavily segmented media. The classification of people according to their characteristics go far beyond demographic elements and classify individuals by multiple factors related to a broad array of attitudes, activities and opinions (Steward & Ward 1994: 327).

**FIGURE 3 Selective Attention**



Trumbo (1995: 10) quotes Mazur as he points out that audiences apply a great deal of partial and selective attention to the news message. Considering this selective and partial attention it is important, according to Trumbo (1995: 10), to consider the level of content that the audience is actually absorbing. When considering that the public is bombarded with an array of complex issues it should be logical that what they extract from the media is highly condensed and

simplified. In these circumstances it is the quantity of reporting that has the greatest effect of public opinion rather than the quality or the content (Trumbo 1995: 10). By means of investigating the occurrence of racial messages in the media, the quantity impact of the media on the audience can be evaluated.

In her research, Braude concentrated heavily on the *Radio Pretoria* genre. This case study, together with that of *Die Afrikaner*, had a strong political point of departure. Both these case studies were examples of the HNP's (Herstigte Nasionale Party) ideologies expressed in the media (cf. Chapter 5).

With respect to the model of selective exposure and perception, the public, as mass, is situated at the outer edge of the circle (Figure 3), i.e. each individual decides whether he/she will expose him/herself to the messages of that medium. Once the individual decides to expose him/herself to the message, they go further to decide to which message they will pay attention (Selective attention). Once the message is interpreted the receiver internalises the message and makes it part of his/her perceptual framework. The inner circle is where the receiver remembers and refers back to the message, i.e. it has become part of his/her framework of reference.

The research conducted by Braude and the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) stopped at the outer circle, i.e. they only considered the message to which the receiver may or may not expose him/herself. No further attention was given to any of the other three stages of the selective process. The selective process gives an insight into the manner in which the audience chooses their exposure to mass media messages. The current study attempted to penetrate deeper into the selective circle and determine what the perceptions of the receivers were towards potential racist messages in the media.

Considering the uses and gratifications theory it appears as if the audience chooses a specific medium to which they will expose themselves, depending on

their needs and the manner in which the medium can meet these. The media will supply the information that is relevant to the needs of its audience. The audience in turn will use the media which satisfies their needs the best. This illuminates the assumption that the audience fulfils an active function in the communication process. Omitting the audience when analysing the media might cause a breach in the research.

### **3.6. SELECTIVE PERCEPTION**

Selective perception is the tendency for people's cognition to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors (Severin & Tankard 1992: 57; Tubbs & Moss 1994: 37). It is an active process whereby the audience selectively perceives, organises and interprets experiences (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 37). Selective stimuli are organised according to different schema and expectations (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 38). This boils down to the hypothesis that different individuals can react to the same message in various altered ways. Severin and Tankard (1992: 57) notes that no communicator can assume that a message will have the intended meaning for all the receivers.

Decoding a message is a process that involves perception (Severin & Tankard 1992: 57). Perception is defined by Berelson and Steiner (1964) as the "complex process by which people select, organise and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (Severin & Tankard 1992: 58). The active participant of the audience in the mass communication process is recurrent.

After stimuli are selectively perceived and organised, they are selectively interpreted, i.e. the stimuli are assigned meanings unique to the perceiver. Personal interpretations are based on the perceiver's past experiences, assumptions, needs and expectations (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 38). These are

included in the communicator's field of experience brought to the communication event (transactional model of communication).

As seen in Figure 3, selective perception is the direct outer circle of selective retention, the ultimate in internalising a message. The selective perception circle is possibly influenced by a number of factors and the current study attempts to determine the extent to which certain factors, such as race, influence the communication process.

### **3.7. AGENDA SETTING**

Agenda setting, according to Severin and Tankard (1992: 207), is one of the results that the mass media have on the public. Agenda setting is grounded in the idea that the news media, by their display of news, can determine the issues the public thinks and talks about (Severin & Tankard 1992: 207). McCombs (1994: 2) summarises the effect of agenda setting when stating that it is the media's ability to structure and organise our world for us.

Graber (in Brewer & McCombs 1996: 8) stated that the media set the agenda when they are successful in riveting attention on a problem. He further pointed out that the media builds the public agenda when they supply the context that determines how people will think about the issue and evaluate its merits (Brewer & McCombs 1996: 8).

Agenda setting appears to be the media's way of leading the audience's thoughts in a particular direction. Indirectly, telling people what to think about can have a lot to do with leading them toward certain conclusions and evaluations (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 174). Agenda setting thus has a very important function in the mass communication process, which cannot be ignored when determining the effect that the media has on the audience.

Agenda setting is one of the basic journalistic practices. In selecting and omitting items and issues for reporting, the basic social agenda is produced (Oosthuizen 1996: 42). He is of the opinion that by means of the placement and arrangement of items the relative value and importance of these items are subconsciously underlined for the receiver (1996: 42).

Some issues move more easily to the public agenda and, according to Gandy (1982: 7), the theoretical base of agenda-setting research is incapable of predicting just what the optimal lag should be, i.e. at what speed topics should move to and from the public agenda. Gandy (1982: 7), suggests that research should go beyond agenda-setting to determine who sets the media agenda. In most of the submissions to the HRC, the media was criticised for the selection of stories and the way in which they were represented (too short vs. too long) (Pityana 1999: 11-13). These criticisms could be referred to the agenda setting function, which is active within the production of the media message.

Agenda setting plays a valuable role when an issue is relatively new. It offers the receiver an explanation on particular elements absorbed in the new issue. When considering a controversial topic such as racism, the influence of agenda setting might offer clarifications that must not be neglected. According to Oosthuizen (1996: 43) the agenda setting theory found solid empirical evidence that the media do have an influence on the thinking, attitudes and opinions of their receivers. Racist stereotypes can thus have an immense impact on the receivers over an extended period of time and may even result in the acceptance of such undue identification.

Causality, the idea that the media "causes" the public to adopt a given agenda is rooted in the notion that the relationship between the public and the media is an isolated and one-way affair. According to Trumbo (1995: 8), using the agenda setting process should avoid the notion of causality and promote the idea of relationships that evolve together through time. The active role the audience

plays in the mass communication process proves to be more of an alliance, than causality, especially when considered in the context of the transactional model of communication.

Brosius and Weimann (1996: 575) found that the public is not monolithic and passive receivers of the media agenda. There are however certain individuals who are more active in identifying emerging issues and in diffusing them to the public or media agenda (Brosius & Weimann 1996: 575). If incorporated in the assessment of apparent racist messages in the media, the active role of the audience might offer a more concise explanation of the existence of such messages.

Researchers have largely ignored the role of demographics in the process of agenda setting. Miller and Wanta (1996: 914) note that demographic variables could play an important role in this process. Based on the facts that demographics have been found to have an influence on media usage patterns, it could, according to Miller and Wanta (1996: 914), indirectly influence individuals' susceptibility to agenda-setting effects. The demographic variable of race, and its possible influence on the receiver's perceptiveness of media messages, is tested in this study. The results are reported and discussed in Chapter 10 and Chapter 11 respectively.

Miller and Wanta (1996: 922) found that race appears to play a very minor role in agenda setting, but differences were found between the different cultures on some individual issues. Culture is merged as a personal system in the communication process, which influences the participation of the audience as communicators in the transactional context of communication (Cf. Chapter 2).

When assessing the media content and its influence on an individual it might be important to consider the demographic differences among the audience members as communicators in the mass communication context. Agenda setting is

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incorporated within the context (or systems) of the transactional model of communication (Figure 1; Chapter 2). As a system, this function influences the character of the mass communication event.

### 3.8. GATEKEEPERS

Human communication consists of systems coupled into chains. The coupling between two systems is a gatekeeper point (Severin & Tankard 1992: 43). They maintain that a gatekeeper determines what information is passed along and how faithfully it is reproduced. Tubbs and Moss (1994: 388) define a gatekeeper as a person who, by selecting, changing and rejecting messages, can influence the flow of information to other communicators.

Gatekeeping is a journalistic practise faced daily by reporters when confronted with a pile of stories and decisions on what will be published. The lack of "Black" reporting, as identified in the Human Rights Commission (HRC) inquiry, can originate as far back in the communication chain as the gatekeeper.

Various factors influence the gatekeeper's assessment of the news items' importance. These factors include the organisation that they work for, the media in which they work and their own socio-economic status (Berger 1995: 64). Tubbs and Moss (1994: 389) identified the following variables that possibly influence the gatekeeper's decision: legal restrictions, deadlines, ethics, competition and news values. These are all self-explanatory, but play an important role in the production of the mass message.

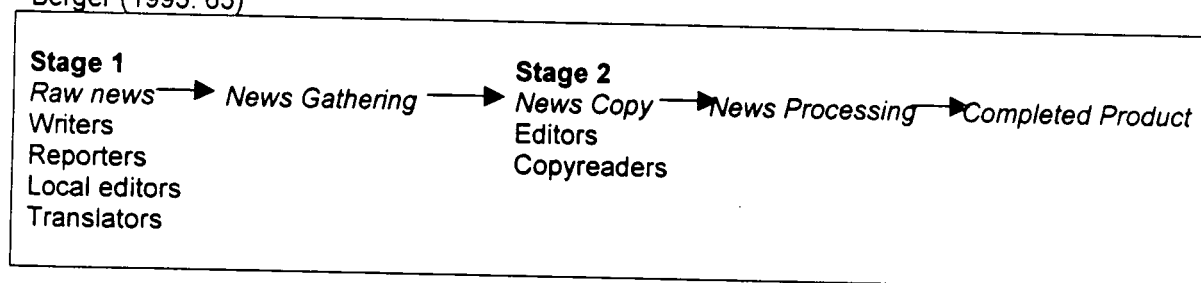
Berger (1995: 65) concludes that the selection of news is thus a subjective matter. There is a positive link between gatekeeping and agenda setting, as the information that passes through the gatekeepers become the material that sets the agenda (Berger 1995: 65).

Gatekeeping theories demonstrate that the news is someone's view of what is important or what will attract and keep the attention of the audience (Berger 1995: 65). According to Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 127) news values often influence the gatekeeper's decision on what to publish. News values are discussed in Chapter 7.

Lewin (in Berger 1995: 65) argues that the most important gatekeeping activity that occurs within the media involves two stages, namely newsgathering and news processing. This is shown in the following model (Figure 4):

**FIGURE 4 Gatekeepers Model (1995)**

Berger (1995: 65)



Between the media and audience, as communicators, is the message. The message is the vehicle of meaning, transporting meaning between the communicators. The production of this medium of meaning is influenced by numerous factors, such as gatekeeping, agenda setting and the needs of the audience, which have to be incorporated in the analysis of the message within a certain context.

### 3.9. CONCLUSION

When considering the communication process as captured by Wood's model of transactional communication (2001) (cf. Chapter 2), and examining the theories of mass communication, it appears as if the omission of research on the

producers and the receivers of the media message might leave a gap in the understanding of the mass communication process. The audience appears to play a fundamental role in the choice and construction of the media message.

The choice of media is, however, not merely dependent on the audience, but is influenced by the media system and other variables. In order to penetrate a specific market/audience, the media practitioners must consider certain demographic factors and incorporate audience needs in their conception of the media message. If a need for a specific genre in the market is identified, the media has the opportunity to gratify this need by providing the content that is desired by the audience. This appears to have a profound influence on the content of the media, as one of their primary aims would be to satisfy the needs within the audience.

Considering all the factors that contribute to media choice, which finally incorporate an individual as part of an audience, it would appear that the selection of media is not merely accidental. In order to narrowcast the audience-specific message the media must be conscious of and focus on the variables of media choice. Often this "narrowcasting" is the result of misinterpreted messages by members outside the targeted audience. Analysing *Die Afrikaner*, a mouth piece of the HNP political party and one of the main focus points of Braude's research, would demand the incorporation of the audience in the explication, since the message takes on a different meaning within its communication context.

Although earlier communication theories represented the audience as a passive mass the opposite is now more often believed. The audience makes active individual choices regarding the use of the media. These preferences categorise individuals into certain audiences, even if only for a specific period of time.

The audience member, as communicator, is influenced by a number of variables. Berger (1995: 88) indicated that there is an apparent lack of consideration concerning the influence of culture, race, religion, gender, etc. on the individual. These factors are shown as very influential in the choice of media and the interpretation of the message itself. This complicated the task of the South African media, as the country has very diverse cultures. Culture as a personal system in the transactional communication process influences the audience member and consequently the communication process (cf. Chapter 2; Figure 1). Culture and its possible relation to racism, is discussed in Chapter 7.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) inquiry was a bold step in order to certify if racism could be detected in the media. The interpretation of the message on the part of the audience was not within the research sphere of the HRC inquiry. The theoretical aspects of journalism, as illuminated in this Chapter, provide a framework on which the HRC research and report can be assessed.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HRC REPORT: HISTORY AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

After the complaints lodged by the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA), the Human Rights Commission (HRC) initiated their inquiry into racism in the media. This inquiry was received with a certain amount of controversy.

Within this chapter there is a brief synopsis of the functions of the Commission, what was set out to achieve, the submissions that were received, the procedures of the hearings and their research methodology.

This overview of the HRC report might provide a clarified comprehension how the inquiry originated, the nature of the report and the methodology followed. This basic understanding of the HRC inquiry is vital to the comprehension of the current study, as the inquiry served as a starting block for the study and certain portions of the study are directly based on the HRC research. The chapter contains the following:

- 4.2. Functions of the Commission
- 4.3. Goals of the Commission
- 4.4. Procedure of public hearings
- 4.5. Conducting the research
- 4.6. Submissions to the Human Rights Commission
- 4.7. Report on racism
  - 4.7.1. Attempting to define racism
  - 4.7.2. Observations and recommendations
- 4.8. Conclusion

## 4.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

At its plenary meeting held in November 1998, the South African Human Rights Commission (HRC) resolved to conduct an investigation into racism in the South African media. The probe was undertaken in terms of Section 184(2)(a) of the Constitution, 1996 (Act no. 108 of 1996).

The Commission believed that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated" (Pityana 1999: 1). Pityana further stated in the report that one could not deal adequately with human rights without considering them in the correct historical context. According to the Commission, racism has been the defining characteristic of South Africa from the moment European settlers set foot on its shores (Pityana 1999: 2). The Commission's definition and perspective of racism is important to incorporate in the assessment of the HRC findings.

The Commission stated repeatedly that no rights, including the right of freedom of speech, could be placed on a pedestal above other rights (Pityana 1999: 3). This statement could indicate that the right that the press has to freedom of speech is not necessarily more important than the rights of humans that can be infringed by racist messages. It would also indicate that the HRC was willing to take on such a vital pillar as freedom of speech to rid the media of racism.

Regarding the inquiry, the Commission believed that any inquiry undertaken must be approached from a *non-adversarial* position (Pityana 1999: 3). According to Pityana, the Commission believed that the media occupy a very important position in the South African society. "The media moulds ideas; fashions thinking in society and shapes public opinion. The media is a powerful medium in a democracy. It accordingly has to be exercised responsibly in an open and democratic society based on human rights, equality and freedom" (Pityana 1999: 3). The HRC recognised the function of the media in society, and stressed the

point of responsible and ethical journalism. Ethics and responsible journalism are discussed in Chapter 7.

In the interim report it was stressed that "racism is an endemic in South African society" (Pityana 1999: 3). He goes further to say that there is no reason to believe that the media are somehow insulated from prevailing racism in the South African society (Pityana 1999: 3).

Considering the above-mentioned factors, it appears as if the Commission approached this inquiry with responsibility and consideration. With these factors set out as guidelines in the Interim report, the Commission compiled the subsequent list of goals.

#### **4.3. GOALS OF THE COMMISSION**

The process of enquiring into the possible existence of racism in the media was preceded by determining what the Commission wanted to achieve. These were set out in the form of goals. These objectives have to be incorporated in the consideration of the HRC findings and assessing the impact the inquiry had on the media and society as a whole.

In the first instance the Commission hoped that this inquiry would generate debate and dialogue among South Africans about the nature, meaning and incidence of racism in South Africa (Pityana 1999: 4). Braude also adopted this goal with the onset of her research.

In addition, the Commission believed that South Africans need to be informed about racism for them to be able to address it (Pityana 1999: 4). Racism is a very complicated phenomenon to pin down in black on white. It appeared to be a very subjective perception that each individual believes in and creates for him/herself. Possible definitions of racism are considered in Chapter 7.

Thirdly, the Commission believed that the media would benefit from closer scrutiny. This in turn, will aid their understanding of how their work is perceived by South Africans, which could sharpen their capacity to be responsive to the needs of the people and reflect the true nature of society (Pityana 1999: 4). This seemed like a wholesome goal, but the receivers' perception of the message was never incorporated into the HRC research. This omission formed the basis of the current study's methodology, to include the functions of the media, as well as the perceptions of student receivers. The study's methodology is summarised in Chapter 8.

The Commission, thirdly, believed that South Africans, through dialogue, would learn, understand and have the facility to use race theory and analysis so that there need be no defensiveness. The Commission further hoped that South Africans would adopt practical and relative language, and will be sensitive to one another especially when it comes to accusations of racism (Pityana 1999: 4).

Finally the Commission believed that a probe of this nature would engage all South Africans in seeking common solutions to racism and to constructing a society free of racism (Pityana 1999: 4).

The goals set out by the HRC for the inquiry were clear and it was apparent that the aim was not to crucify the media, but rather to identify certain aspects for improvement. The inquiry received a lot of criticism from the media, but South Africans were made aware of the possible racist content in the media, especially after the HRC concluded that "the media can be characterised as racist institutions" (Faultlines 2000: 88). Of the criticisms voiced, was that the report's absence of research into media producers and consumers (audience) considerably weakened the study (Faultlines 2000: 50). The HRC did, however, have public hearings, inviting the public to submit any media item they felt had racist messages, but only thirteen (13) submissions were received.

#### **4.4 PROCEDURE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The Commission opened the procedures of the inquiry to the public and the media. Certain terms of reference were identified by the Commission. These included investigating the handling of race and possible incidences of racism in the media. If such racism may be manifested in the media it constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights as set out in the Constitution. Further to establish the underlying causes and examine the impact of racism in the media on society (Pityana 1999: 5).

Invitations for public submissions were published. Any member of the public, who felt that he/she has been offended by a media publication, could submit their grievances to the Commission. These submissions had to be in writing and had to disclose the name, address and other contact details of the deponent. Anonymous submissions were not accepted.

The thirteen (13) submissions were analysed and served as a departure for the research. Two independent researchers were commissioned to analyse the media content. These researchers were Claudia Braude (qualitative research) and the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) (quantitative research).

#### **4.5 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH**

The Commission set out to entrust independent researchers and called on Claudia Braude to conduct qualitative research on the content of the media, in order to determine whether or not racist content was present. Braude functioned as an independent researcher and the observations, conclusions and recommendations she arrived at were done so independently. The methodology used by Braude and the criticism thereof is discussed in Chapter 5.

Quantitative analysis of the media content provided a more holistic grasp of the extent of racist reporting in the media. The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) was engaged to undertake research in that regard. The research was also conducted independently and the conclusions, observations and recommendations were those of the Media Monitoring Project (Faultlines 2000: 10).

The brief given to the researchers limited the investigation to the "products of the media". This meant that only that which the public reads or encounters should be subjected to analysis (Faultlines 2000: 48).

The Commission analysed the submissions received from the in order to verify trends and any *prima facie* allegations of fundamental human rights violations. An interim report encapsulating the research, submissions and analysis of the submitted data, was made available on request. The Commission evaluated the responses and invited specific individuals, corporations or institutions to make oral submissions and give testimony at public hearings (Pityana 1999: 6).

#### **4.6 SUBMISSIONS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Pursuant to the provisions of Act 54 of 1994, a panel presided over the public hearings. All the submissions before the panel were made under oath or affirmation. The chairperson and members of the panel compiled a final report on the inquiry (Pityana 1999: 6).

Various submissions were received and analysed. The most prominent submissions were received from the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA). These associations were also initially the catalysts for the probe into racism in the media.

The BLA and ABASA submissions were centred around the assertions that the "media remains in white hands in terms of ownership and accordingly white

males by and large continue to control opinion on all current issues..." (Pityana 1999: 8). They further asserted that *Mail & Guardian*, in the mode and manner in which they deal with and expose corruption, created the idea that Black people are essentially corrupt and incompetent. They conceded the right of the media to expose corruption, but had problems with the biased way in which it was done (Pityana 1999: 8).

They further accused *Mail & Guardian* of "unfairly targeting Black professionals, civil servants, NGO sector and educational institutions" (Braude 1999: 50). Their primary concern was what they entitled as "the racial skewed nature of representation"; this included the under-reporting of Blacks in the government who are fighting corruption (Braude 1999: 50).

The BLA and ABASA alleged that *The Sunday Times* trivialised the death of Black people and reduced them to mere statistics (Pityana 1999: 8). They cited the reporting of the possible political death of three people in Kwa-Zulu Natal. According to the BLA, this tragedy was mentioned in the Sunday Notebook section and was placed next to the death of six elephants in North East India (Braude 1999: 51). The BLA felt strongly that "this racially discriminatory imaging causes great harm to the dignity and sense of self-worth of Black people, and reinforces racial stereotypes" (Braude 1999: 51).

Other submissions also served before the Commission, but as the BLA and ABASA initialised the inquiry it is important to note their primary grievances. From these submissions the traces of implicit and explicit messages, used as the basis for the construction of the research definitions, were identified. These traces were translated into the categories used in the content analysis of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and the current study.

The nature of the submissions received by the HRC served as an indication of the public's sentiment. This was the only stage in the entire inquiry that focused

on the interpretations and observations of the public. The rest of the inquiry rested on the findings of the two independent researchers. From these studies the HRC compiled their report (Faultlines) and made public the observations, findings and recommendations.

#### 4.7 REPORT ON RACISM

After considering the findings, conclusions and recommendations of Braude's report and that of the MMP the Commission compiled a report called Faultlines.

The substance of the submitted complaints fell into certain categories. These are:

- The media transformation and diversity. South Africa's media continues to be controlled by White people and caters for White interests and reflects the worldview of the White minority, and
- Racism. News reports constantly create the impression that all Blacks are corrupt and incompetent (Faultlines 2000: 4).

At the heart of every media institution lies the interests of its owners, readers and advertisers (Faultlines 2000: 47). The Commission acknowledged that newspaper editors have to be very sensitive to the fact that media institutions are first and foremost business institutions. A newspaper has to sell more copies in order to increase its AMPS ratings and consequently attract advertisement funding. The audience and their needs are thus extremely important in compiling a news story (Faultlines, 2000: 48). This was one of the few statements in the report that incorporated the operational functioning of the media.

In both Braude's report and that of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) the phenomenon of racial stereotypes were examined. According to the Faultlines

report, the stereotype paradigm was an attempt to explain the continuing production and re-production of racism, as well as its mutation and persistence (Faultlines 2000: 49).

The assumption of the Commission was that news media do not simply represent, reflect and re-produce reality, and are thus not neutral transmitters of information (Faultlines 2000: 49). The media must however strive to be objective and fair, but various factors influence the production of the mass media message. This is discussed in Chapter 7.

According to the Commission, "reality is seen through particular social, historical and cultural lenses..." (Faultlines 2000: 49). It will thus appear as if the Commission recognised that reality is subjective and dependent on the individual's perception thereof. Within the transactional model of communication (Figure 1; Chapter 2) culture is embodied as a personal system inherent in the communicators. This system exerts certain influences on the communication transaction. Racism is a phenomenon that is also perceived through social, historical and cultural lenses and consequently the perceptiveness of the mass media receivers as communicators are influenced via this.

#### **4.7.1        Attempting to define racism**

A conceptual understanding of racism can not be derived from a dictionary definition. Racism and racial stereotypes are explored by numerous independent sources in Section III of Faultlines. These definitions, as well as a number of other independent definitions of racism, are discussed in Chapter 7.

The Commission did not undertake the enquiry on the basis of a set definition of racism. They preferred that an understanding of racism should emerge from submissions and evidence from the inquiry (Faultlines 2000: 65).

Faultlines also considered the initial request from the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and Association for Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA) to incorporate "subliminal racism" in the research. The HRC however expressed hesitation about the reliance on the concept of subliminal racism. The reason for this is that there appeared to be no legal document that expresses a concept similar to this one (Faultlines 2000: 58).

In the inquiry into racism in the media the Commission examined racism in all its forms and manifestations in newspapers. More pertinent in anti-racism discourse is the use of direct and indirect racism. Indirect racism, according to the report, occurs when a course of action is taken with a desired purpose, but then has the effect of discriminating against others on the basis of their race (Faultlines 2000: 58). It is this implicit racism that was identified by means of the content analysis, in both the Media Monitoring Projects (MMP) investigation and the current study.

In Section III of Faultlines the Commission provided the various factors that must be taken into account when examining racism in the media. The most prominent factor was that at the heart of the HRC inquiry were particular forms of racism, expressed in the manner in which representations of crime, corruption and incompetence of Black people are made (Faultlines 2000: 60). These portraits are often implicit in the media message, but were identifiable by means of the content analysis categories.

The HRC was distinct about the approach their to racism, but found that a tangible definition of the phenomenon was very complex. It is important to understand the nature of the beast before trying to find and even more to analyse and understand it. In order to get a grip on the phenomenon, the MMP constructed various categories used in the content analysis to determine the impact of explicit and implicit racism. These were used as observational tools from which the findings and recommendations were concluded.

#### 4.7.2 Observations and recommendations

The observations and findings of the inquiry were stated in Section V of Faultlines. In order to provide a brief synopsis certain findings and recommendations are subsequently highlighted.

According to the report there was a consistent pattern of racist expressions in the media and considering all the submissions, the Commission concluded that "the media can be characterised as racist institutions" (Faultlines 2000: 88). The report explicitly stated that "this finding holds regardless as to whether there is conscious or unconscious racism, direct or indirect" (Faultlines 2000: 88). Considering the cumulative effect of persistent racist stereotypes and insensitive disregard of the effect of racist expressions, the Commission recommended that racism awareness training be given to journalists (Faultlines 2000: 88).

In the report on the findings, the Commission stated that they observed no evidence of blatant advocacy of racial hatred in the mainstream media. There were actually a number of condemnations of hate speech and appropriate reporting of race crimes in the country (Faultlines 2000: 89).

Amongst the findings the Commission commented on the lack of language in the print media, which limits the access by non-English and Afrikaans readers (Faultlines 2000: 92). The Commission recommended that the Media Diversity Agency must attempt to diversify the media with respect to language (Faultlines 2000: 92).

The recommendations given by the HRC reflected the goals set out at the onset of the inquiry. The recommendations, which were based on the observations, were given in order to help the media to communicate more effectively with their respective publics.

#### 4.8. CONCLUSION

The initial request by the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABSA) prompted the inquiry into racism in the media. The inquiry took various routes, some of which obtained various criticisms, in order to publish their report on racism.

One of the conclusions reached by the HRC was that the media could be classified as racist institutions (Faultlines 2000:88). This conclusion was based on the observations and findings of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Claudia Braude. Both researchers used content analysis as a research method to identify traces of implicit or explicit racist messages. This methodology received critique as the entire inquiry was confined to the products of the media, which resulted only in a partial observation of the mass communication process.

The methodology and findings of the two independent researchers are discussed separately. It is important to have this as a background for understanding the current study, as the latter is an expansion on the HRC inquiry and report.

## CHAPTER 5

### QUALITATIVE REPORT BY CLAUDIA BRAUDE: CULTURAL BLOODSTAINS

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Three reports were published, namely Cultural Bloodstains (Claudia Braude), The News in Black and White (MMP) and Faultlines (HRC report). Each of these reports rendered independent conclusions. Although Faultlines is based on the other preceding reports, it is regarded as the final report, including findings and recommendations.

This chapter provides an overview of Claudia Braude's qualitative report, Cultural Bloodstains, including the methodology, findings and recommendations. In order to understand the observations and recommendations made by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in Faultlines, it is insightful to know the premises of Braude's methodology and findings. Her report was, however, received with certain scepticism and controversy that stems as much from its methodology as its absence of research into media consumers. This chapter contains the following discussions:

- 5.2. Background on Cultural Bloodstains
- 5.3. Methodology
- 5.4. Textual analysis
  - 5.4.1. *Die Afrikaner*
  - 5.4.2. *Radio Pretoria*
  - 5.4.3. Mainstream coverage
- 5.5. Cultural Bloodstains: Findings
- 5.6. Cultural Bloodstains: Conclusion
- 5.7. Cultural Bloodstains: Recommendations
- 5.8. Conclusion

## 5.2. BACKGROUND ON CULTURAL BLOODSTAINS

Cultural Bloodstains was divided into eleven (11) sub-sections, five (5) of which concentrated on theoretical literature. This literary summary included the role of the media in democracy, professional standards, international and national regulations regarding racism, history of race in the media and the legacy of apartheid.

Following the theoretical background, Braude conducted a textual analysis of *Die Afrikaner* and *Radio Pretoria* (both renowned for their right-wing political orientation) and the racialisation of news in mainstream coverage. This textual analysis was succeeded by her recommendations to the Commission concerning racism in the media. At no point in the research did she consider the interpretation of the media audience. The research was primarily based on literary studies and qualitative content analysis.

The Commission limited the scope of the inquiry to the products of the media, that excluded the mechanics and composition of the newsroom. This in itself received a fair amount of critique, citing that this "omission hamstrung the research from the start" (Faultlines 2000: 48). Being limited and not exploring organisational issues discouraged Braude herself. She felt that missing in her report was the direct and rigorous engagement with the media industry, which in itself is an area of future investigation by the HRC (Braude 1999: 2).

During the HRC hearings, Prof. Keyan Tomaselli of the University of Natal Graduate, argued that the terms of reference used in Cultural Bloodstains were vague. This resulted in research approaches, which failed to entirely understand the nature of the media, how news is manufactured, or how theory is applied (Faultlines 2000: 48). Like Tomaselli, Professor Guy Berger felt that the absence of research into media consumers and their products is one of the fundamental

flaws in Braude's research (Faultlines 2000: 50). The criticism on the reports is discussed in the following chapter (Chapter 6).

### 5.3. METHODOLOGY

In the preface to her report, Braude (1995: 5) herself stated that this inquiry into racism went parallel with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings on the role of the media in the apartheid years. In the light of this history, the power of the media in shaping people's lives assumed added significance (Braude 1999: 5).

Braude explicitly stated that the aim of her research was to highlight this significance, with particular regard to race, which was at the heart of apartheid and White supremacist social engineering (Braude 1999: 5). For Braude an obvious starting point was that racism exists and that it starts at home. She ascribed this to the opinion that racism was the bottom-line of the then current South African condition (Braude 1999: 6).

Braude adopted two theoretical paradigms from a cultural study perspective, namely the way the media created a reality effect and symbolic order, and the way social power was maintained through racial discourse within this symbolic order. In her study she aimed at examining the politics of signification, namely the way in which certain events get recurrently signified in particular ways (Braude 1999: 15). Moving from the content to the structure of media production, her study aimed "to go deeper than the literal message (the denotation) in order to consider the overall symbolic meaning (the connotation)" (Braude 1999: 16) (cf. Chapter 2).

Braude stressed that the submissions made to the Human Rights Commission should be read "against the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's findings that deliberate campaigns had been run by agents of disinformation to discredit

prominent Black leaders in order to undermine their capacity to bring about transformation" (Braude 1999: 49). Braude noted that the media practitioners in a post-apartheid South Africa must not be surprised that their products were read with suspicion (Braude 1999: 51).

#### 5.4 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Braude conducted an analysis of *Die Afrikaaner* and *Radio Pretoria*. From these analyses she identified certain patterns in the media, which she tested at the hand of an analysis of one week's mainstream news. These analyses were the foundations of her conclusions and recommendations rendered to the Human Rights Commission (HRC).

##### 5.4.1 *Die Afrikaaner*

As an introduction to her textual analysis, Braude explained that "the submissions made to the Inquiry served as an initial entry point into the research" (Braude 1999: 56). These submissions refer to the initial responses of the public to submit any media item that offended them (cf. Chapter 4). Submissions referring to a particular body of White supremacist material were further examined. These submissions included anti-Semitism (in the form of Holocaust denial) in *Die Afrikaaner* and general racism on *Radio Pretoria*.

The denial of the Holocaust, according to Braude, is internationally considered as a key feature of White supremacist ideology (Braude 1999: 56). This perception made Braude narrow the scope of the research to a case study of Holocaust denial in *Die Afrikaaner*. Braude conducted comparative discussions of *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaaner*, which evolved into the analysis of White supremacist narrative in conservative sections of the media. Socio-political change formed the framework of this analysis (Braude 1999: 56)

The analysis of explicit White supremacist reports might seem unrelated to mainstream coverage. Braude was of the opinion that it was precisely through such analyses that the general concern of the inquiry (i.e. the question of subliminal racism in mainstream South African media products) could be addressed (Braude 1999: 57).

Braude rendered a detailed assessment of an article published in *Die Afrikaner* ("Die Jode se 'Holocaust': Die hoeksteen van die Nuwe Wêreldorde"). From this analysis she concluded that "the clear and increasing anti-Semitism expressed in *Die Afrikaner* is a central aspect of its representation of South Africa in a state of decline as a direct consequence of transition to non-racial democracy, and particularly to Black governance" (Braude 1999: 78).

The magazine's anti-Semitism cannot be separated from its racist, White supremacist ideological narrative (linked to the HNP's political agenda). This included its representation of Black degeneracy and Muslim threat (Braude 1999: 78). Braude herself confessed that the study was necessarily limited and "that none of this analysis of racism in and racialisation of the media is intended to be either comprehensive or definitive" (Braude, 1999: 79).

For the purpose of her research Braude analysed both *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaner* to establish the critical framework through which she considered the more general concerns about subliminal racism in the context of mainstream news coverage.

#### **5.4.2        *Radio Pretoria***

Thirty-four (34) pages of Cultural Bloodstains were dedicated to the analysis of *Radio Pretoria*. The assessment was based on daily news commentaries dating back to June 1997, which were found on the station's Internet site in both the original Afrikaans and English translation.

Through the analysis of the news bulletins Braude identified a number of examples of "explicit binary opposition between us/them, Black/White, Christian/Communist" (Braude 1999: 80). Based on her findings, Braude concluded "Radio Pretoria clearly divides the world into western and African parts, with the former representing light, morality, development and civilisation; and the latter, dark, evil, barbarism, primitivism and dictatorship" (Braude 1999: 81). She further noted that "*Radio Pretoria* considered the perceived divisions and differences between these groups to be essential, God-ordained and unchanging" (Braude 1999: 81).

Her analysis also brought to light that *Radio Pretoria*'s "binary narration is the belief that Whites are biologically superior to Blacks" (Braude 1999: 82). Further exploration confirmed the accusation that "*Radio Pretoria* explicitly represents African culture and people as primitive, and technologically and morally barbaric" (Braude 1999: 83).

Professor Lynette Steenveld offered the following critique of Braude's report: "The weakness in Braude's study is the extent to which her study was weighted in its extensive treatment of the *Radio Pretoria* genre of racism. Braude then used that to argue that these origins of racism are to be found in leading media, except that these are more subtle expressions of the same phenomenon" (Faultlines 2000: 50). Braude's research received various criticisms, which are discussed in Chapter 6.

Although the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Braude conducted their research independently the racist elements found by Braude were similar to those identified by the MMP. The MMP converted these findings into the categories used in the content analysis to detect implicit and explicit racist messages in the mainstream media. The MMP findings are discussed in the following chapter.

### 5.4.3 Mainstream coverage

For the purpose of her study, Braude analysed one week's mainstream news coverage (June 19-26, 1999) which was aimed to reveal "the concealed subtext operating within the material" (Braude 1999: 57). Considering the 1999 general election, she decided to start rigorous monitoring and in-depth analysis after the election on June 2, 1999. She, however, explicitly stated that "the choice of week was relatively arbitrary, and any other week could have been chosen" (Braude 1999: 57).

The choice of period was criticised by the Southern Africa Report (Louw 1998: 9) because it coincided with the general election period in 1999. Considering the principles of research, external validity is important to consider when determined to generalise the findings of the research. External validity can be affected by the interaction in an analysis of variables such as subject selection and experimental conditions (Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 131). Wimmer and Dominick (1997: 131) state that if the sampling design is faulty the results of the content analysis probably possess little validity. The validity can be tested by means of a different, more neutral sample taken in a less controversial period.

The analysis of the sample traced three aspects; namely, its narrative (what is reported), the narration (how it is reported), and the inextricable relation between these two (Braude 1999: 58). Whilst analysing the discourse included in the sample, Braude considered the way "the media creates a reality effect and a symbolic order", by means of racial discourses (Braude 1999: 58). The research sought to go deeper than the literal message and content in order to contemplate the overall symbolic coded meaning and consequently to identify the second-order meaning operating beyond the literal meaning (Braude 1999: 58). This entailed the incorporation of denotations and connotations, which were considered in Chapter 2.

## 5.5. CULTURAL BLOODSTAINS: FINDINGS

Braude analysed the mainstream media during the week of 19 - 26 June, 1999. During this period she observed the *Saturday Star* and *The Citizen's* report of Mbhazima Shilowa's, premier of the Gauteng legislature, alleged VAT evasion to the tune of sixty thousand rand, over a period of four years.

The headlines proclaimed "Warrant of arrest for Shilowa" and "Arrest warrant for Sam Shilowa". The truth behind the headlines was that the arrest was not for Shilowa himself *per se*, but this was, however, only mentioned at the end of the article, in the bottom corner of the following page (Braude 1999: 116).

According to Braude (1999: 117) at this stage, "the article had created a strong perception that Shilowa was himself under arrest". The *Saturday Star's* headline ("Warrant of arrest for Shilowa") had the same effect as *The Citizen* coverage, "creating an instantaneous impression of criminality" (Braude 1999: 117). Contrary to the information contained in the article itself, it implicitly sets the tone for the readers' receptivity to this information (Braude 1999: 117).

What makes this reporting more controversial is the fact that it occurred at precisely the moment of Shilowa becoming premier of Gauteng. Braude was of the opinion that this functioned implicitly and explicitly to associate his premiership with criminality (Braude 1999: 119). *The Citizen* article began by explicitly linking the inauguration and the warrant stating: "As Sam Mbhazima Shilowa was being inaugurated yesterday as Gauteng premier, a warrant was being authorised for his arrest in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court" (Braude 1999: 119). The *Saturday Star* reported in a similar manner.

Braude argued that although the newspapers were clearly not themselves responsible for associating Shilowa with criminal activities, "the way in which they represented the event located this association in the mind of the reader" (Braude

1999: 119). According to Braude (1999: 120) the "representation of Shilowa's installation was underpinned by uncritical perpetuation of the racial stereotype". Considering the initial complaint by the Black Lawyers Association (BLA), Braude emphasizes that uncritical representation of Shilowa as a criminal, affirmed "existing perceptions of Black politicians as essentially corrupt, a perception itself underscored by perceptions of essential Black criminality" (Braude 1999: 120).

This example of a discussion by Braude on racist messages in the media served as an indication of the extent to which she assessed the content of the media. It appears as if she made a thorough qualitative study of the media contents. Independently from the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) she arrived at similar results and categories of racist messages in the media.

## **5.6 CULTURAL BLOODSTAINS: CONCLUSION**

The narrative analysed by Braude highlighted a particular cross-section of ideas and concerns which, according to her, were not dissimilar to *Radio Pretoria's* sustained interpretation of post-apartheid South African society (Braude 1999: 139). For Braude this was highlighted by Shilowa's representation as a "criminal at precisely the moment of assuming the position of Gauteng premier and shortly before the Johannesburg budget debate" (Braude 1999: 139). Braude is convinced that the "coverage implicitly perpetuated the stereotypical perception that all Black politicians are corrupt and power-hungry" (Braude 1999: 139).

When discussing the budget, Braude (1999: 139) observed that particular attention was given to the "crisis and decline" in hospitals. This focus, according to Braude (1999: 139), suggested that "those currently running the show are incompetent, unable to run a first-world economy or city, and incapable of good administration". Coinciding with the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) complaint, Braude indicated that the nature of this coverage suggested that "political

transformation that increasingly sees Blacks in positions of authority results in the reduction of standards and performance" (Braude 1999: 139).

To conclude, Braude stated that "continuities between explicitly race-based White supremacist narratives of South Africa in transition and mainstream coverage clearly exist" (Braude 1999: 142). Braude maintained that "the dichotomy between civilised standards and powers of chaos articulated by P.W. Botha in apartheid's heyday, a conceptual dichotomy that underpinned the logic of apartheid and that continues to underpin *Radio Pretoria's* news commentaries, continues to inform daily coverage of South African society" (Braude 1999: 142). She goes on to clarify that these continuities are not immediately visible on the surface of the text (Braude 1999: 142). Braude concluded that the mainstream representation does not explicitly link 'decline' with 'Blacks'. The link, according to her, continues to "operate, politely concealed beneath the surface" (Braude 1999: 142).

## **5.7 CULTURAL BLOODSTAINS: RECOMMENDATIONS**

Braude made a number of recommendations to the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in view of two concerns. Firstly, she attempted, over a sustained period, "to counter the habitual and structural limitations that currently characterise the media industry, resulting as they do in the possibly unintended but nonetheless powerful perpetuation of racial stereotyping by, and racialisation of, the media" (Braude 1999: 146). Secondly, by dealing with an "aspect of the apartheid legacy; namely, the possible influence of former apartheid agents on the contemporary shaping of public opinion" (Braude 1999: 146). Considering this, Braude recommended that the HRC should explore the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) documents on media spies and agents, to assess whether people are continuing to use editorial positions of public influence. This influence might limit public receptivity to the development of a non-racist, human rights culture (Braude 1999: 146).

Further recommendations included (Braude 1999: 146 - 153):

- A related discussion on the role and relevance of the Fourth Estate in contemporary South Africa;
- Encourage academic institutions to fund both sociological, historical, textual and political research into apartheid media, as well assist publication and dissemination;
- Encourage relevant bodies to provide training to develop and enhance professional journalistic and ethical skills;
- Educate journalists around the media and human rights issues;
- Educate the public around codes of conduct and how to hold the media accountable; and
- Consider creating a joint, sustainable monitoring unit, focussing on human rights related issues.

## 5.8. CONCLUSION

The Commission limited the scope of the research to the products of the media, because they believed that "what happened in the newsroom could be judged by what the public read..." (Faultlines 2000: 48). Considering this and the fact that Braude's report was only based on content analysis and comparative studies, there seemed to be a void in the study, which pertain to the audience's perceptiveness of the media.

The use of *Die Afrikaner* and *Radio Pretoria* as building blocks for the content analysis of the mainstream media seemed peculiar, as both these media are

renowned for their political orientation. As discussed in Chapter 3, the audience, as active participant in the communication process, selects the media message to which they expose themselves (cf. selective exposure). This is primarily guided by the needs inherent within the audience (cf. uses and gratification; Chapter 3). Braude, non the less, discovered traces of racist material in the mainstream coverage with the aid of the categories determined by the analyses of these politically renowned media.

Braude and the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) conducted their research independently and still arrived at similar results. This might be an indication that these implicit messages are rather obvious once a person starts assessing the media accordingly.

In order to comprehend the complete structure of the Human Rights Commission inquiry it is important to know the methodology of the research conducted by the independent researchers. This chapter provided a synopsis of Cultural Bloodstains, highlighting only a few aspects of the research. The content analysis in the current study was based on that of the MMP's research and a more complete discussion on the MMP methodology thus appears essential.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT REPORT and CRITICISM

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

In order to add a quantitative research dimension to Human Rights Commission's (HRC) inquiry into racism in the media, the HRC contracted another independent research authority. The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) was entrusted to conduct a quantitative research inquiry into allegations of racism in the media.

The current study was primarily based on the MMP's content analysis methodology. This chapter offers an overview of the research and findings of the MMP. It further gives a brief summary of the criticism the HRC inquiry received.

This chapter contains the following discussions:

- 6.2. Media Monitoring Project: Methodology
- 6.3. Power and responsibility
- 6.4. MMP definition of racism
- 6.5. Media Monitoring Project: Findings
  - 6.5.1. Crime
  - 6.5.2. Government
  - 6.5.3. Dignity of Black people
  - 6.5.4. Media audiences
- 6.6. Conclusions reached by MMP
- 6.7. Criticism on reports
  - 6.7.1 Criticism on Human Rights Commission report
  - 6.7.2 Criticism on Claudia Braude's report
  - 6.7.3 Concluding criticism
- 6.8. Conclusion

## 6.2. MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT: METHODOLOGY

At the launch of the investigation regarding racism in the media, the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) framed their approach around "three distinct but interacting elements: freedom, power and responsibility" (MMP 1999: 3). The MMP was aware of and respected "the perceived threat to freedom of expression which the South African Human Rights Commission's inquiry held for sectors of the media" (MMP 1999: 3).

The MMP constructed a design, which according to them examined the content of the media and revealed the stereotypes and prejudicial representations, which in turn provided less of a threat to the media than a challenge (MMP 1999: 3). This methodology also acted to "expose to the media to the potential harm that these representations can cause" (MMP 1999: 3).

The MMP's objective in using discourse analysis as a research tool was to examine how racist ideologies in the South African society are represented in the media and what the media's relationship with race and racism is (MMP 1999: 6). The MMP explored the discourse theory by stating that it "requires linking the ideology of racism that already exists ... to its representation in the media" (MMP 1999: 6). The MMP was conscious of the criticism that contemporary discourse theory often seeks only to find that which confirms its own assumptions (MMP 1999: 6).

The MMP sought to eliminate this problem in four complimentary ways. These included (MMP 1999: 6):

- Seeking not only to examine whether the media supports racist ideologies, but also to determine where the media actively challenge racism and racist ideology.

- Secondly, their intention was to provide a constructive critique of the media and therefore the aim was not to allege racism in media content, but to demonstrate where race and racial identity were represented in a stereotyped or prejudicial way.
- Thirdly, the MMP examined the media as “an interrelated body of information rather than a set of individual mediums” (MMP 1999: 6). According to the MMP the intention was not to highlight any single medium as being racist or otherwise.
- Finally the researcher determined “measurable criteria for achievement beforehand in the form of a list of racial and racist propositions founded upon racist stereotypes which exist within our society”.

By means of a workshop conducted in association with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and studies of various authors, the MMP compiled a list of categories that served as guides to the research. The categories consisted of stereotypical statements found in society. The MMP aimed at identifying newspaper discourse that supported and discourse that challenged such stereotypes.

The MMP, unlike other studies where only items that directly related to racism were monitored, studied items in which race was explicitly stated and where race was implicit to the content of the story. This was done at the hand of language assessments, including both the headline and body of the item, and the images that accompanied it (where applicable).

Other captured considerations included the propositions, other data relating to the date and placement of the items, source (e.g. news agency), type of item (e.g. news item or interview), location of the news story and the subject or topic

of the item (MMP 1999: 9). This research conducted by the MMP was done over a six-week period (12 July – 20 August 1999).

The current study is based on the methodology of the MMP research. By means of using the same methodology (content analysis) it might be determined whether or not newspapers still produced racist messages. These identified messages served as the basis of a questionnaire handed to respondents at the University of the Free State (UFS) in order to clarify whether or not the items were perceived by the students as racist or not. More detail provided in Chapter 8.

### **6.3. POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY**

According to Elliot “[the] Media are also powerful in that they are unavoidable. Either from direct viewing or reading, or from second-hand reports, media provide the lion’s share of our knowledge and beliefs concerning life outside of our direct experience.” (in MMP 1999: 4).

The MMP voiced the assumption that with the exercise of any power an inevitable responsibility for the use of that power is carried (MMP 1999: 4). “This influence carries moral responsibilities associated with power for media practitioners. These practitioners are responsible for the impact of their work on individuals in the audience even if there was no intention on the part of the practitioner or the industry to cause harm. Individuals in the audience are necessarily vulnerable to the impact of the media in all of its social functions.” (Elliot 1996: 6; in MMP 1999: 4).

Notwithstanding the media’s moral or ethical responsibility, their accountability goes deeper to relate to the freedoms that the media enjoy (MMP 1999: 4). Freedom coexists with certain responsibilities. The media has the responsibility to provide news and information that is fair and accurate. With this framework in

mind, the MMP sought to implement a methodology, which would recognise and satisfy all three elements of power, freedom and responsibility (MMP 1999: 4).

#### **6.4. MMP DEFINITION OF RACISM**

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) stated at the onset of the investigation into racism in the media that they would not attempt to define racism, but that a concise meaning of the term would be calculated through the proceedings of the inquiry. The MMP, however, was of opinion that a definition of racism was crucial in order to conduct a meaningful discourse analysis of the media, (MMP 1999: 6).

The MMP settled on the definition that racism is "a complex societal system in which peoples of European origin dominate peoples of other origins, especially in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand." (Van Dijk; in MMP 1999:6). This definition by Van Dijk (1991) was found to be very valuable for the MMP analysis, as "it recognises racism at the group rather than the individual level, that is particularly appropriate given the heritage of society-wide, state directed racism that our country has endured" (MMP 1999: 6).

#### **6.5. MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT: FINDINGS**

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) made certain findings on which they based their conclusion and recommendations. These findings are subsequently discussed according to the various categories identified by the MMP.

##### **6.5.1. Crime**

By means of discourse analysis, the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) found that "items dealing with race issues tended to feature in crime stories, with over 200 items, while items specifically dealing with racism, as the subject, also received extensive coverage with just under 200 items" (MMP 1999: 12). The MMP also

discovered that subjects of political violence and intimidation, labour, unemployment and corruption, showed a notable tendency for racism and racial stereotypes to occur as 'bad news' stories (MMP 1999: 12).

Investigation into crime reports revealed that there were more reports on crime events, as opposed to an clarifications through analysis, feature, and comment (MMP 1999: 44). Published letters to the papers had the second highest occurrence. Most letters which were monitored were "blatantly racist" and "blamed the present government for the current crime situation" (MMP 1999: 44). Adding to the letter, editorial comments also blamed the rise in crime on government's inability to curb crime (MMP 1999: 44).

The MMP encountered racial identifiers or racial profiling in crime stories, which were used for various reasons, e.g. when the police are looking for the suspect. Stereotyping resulted if the relevance of racial profiling in a story was not clear, and the possible generalisation can cause harm to a racial group. The MMP found that there were very few instances where criminals were identified by their race. However in some instances the ethnicity of the suspect would be mentioned, and the MMP noted that it is interesting that in South Africa ethnicity was sometimes used as a racial marker (MMP 1999:46).

The monitoring of the papers revealed that the reporting on "vigilante groups and taxi violence lacked explanation and context" (MMP 1999; 47). Vigilante groups were depicted as "brutal, inhumane, and spontaneous, with very little sense of justice" (MMP 1999: 47). The explanation offered for their behaviour was simply their race. Vigilantism was never explained throughout the period of the investigation. The MMP's probe revealed that no attempts were made to incorporate issues of crowd psychology and the intricate social factors contributing to the formation of these vigilante groups (MMP 1999: 47).

Discourse analysis on the sample revealed that the reporting on crime in some instances would be linked to government inefficiency and incapability to deal with crime (MMP 1999: 48). The link between crime and the present government would be made indirectly, for example the MMP found that there would be comparisons of the crime situation with past governments and how things have got out of hand with the new government. The proposed gun control bill unleashed a debate that clearly displayed this "alleged government criminality" (MMP 1999: 48). The MMP found that "reporting on reactions to the Bill was racially polarised" (MMP 1999: 48). The general stereotype that occurred frequently was that "Whites are the legal gun owners that the government wants to disarm and Blacks are the illegal owners who use guns to further their criminal activities" (MMP 1999: 48).

#### **6.5.2. Government**

The MMP probed into the representation of the government. It set out to determine whether or not there were stereotypical examples of "incompetence of the government". The results indicated that just over 60,0% of items in *Die Burger* supported the stereotypes compiled at the onset of the probe (MMP 1999: 38). Considering the types of items, the report found that 64,3% of the items that supported the stereotypes were either letters or analyses. The MMP was surprised to find that generally, where the items were analytical, they tended to challenge the stereotypes (MMP 1999, 38).

The MMP, like Braude, found that a topic frequently associated with the government was corruption (MMP 1999:38). A quantified representation of this showed that 48,7% of all corruption items were related to the government (MMP 1999: 38). The MMP admitted that it is essential that the media report on corruption in the government, but what was disturbing to the MMP was the addition of the racial elements, which drew on stereotypes. According to the MMP this might reinforce stereotypical viewpoints (MMP 1999: 38).

### 6.5.3. Dignity of Black people

Through the discourse analysis the MMP discovered that the practice of "not respecting Black people's dignity was alarmingly high" (MMP 1999: 21). The analysis also revealed that the invasion of Black people's privacy was the second highest feature (MMP 1999: 24). This was most commonly seen in the reporting and filming of Black funerals and families in their time of grief. The MMP reported that the media went as far as filming the room with the bereaved and even took close-up shots of the mourners uncontrollably sobbing. The MMP perceived this as a reinforcement of the stereotype that Black people are emotional and out of control (MMP 1999: 24).

Considering the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) complaint that the media depersonalise the death of Black people, the MMP found this to be true in some media (MMP 1999: 22). The MMP discovered that reporting on events where Black people had died frequently tended to focus on the numbers of people who had died rather than individual deaths (MMP 1999: 24). According to the MMP (1999:24), this "consequently strips Black people's dignity away from them".

The *Guardian Unlimited* (28 February, 2000), criticised the MMP by saying that it "ties itself in knots" (McGreal 2000: 1). It went on to justify this by saying that the MMP repeatedly criticised headlines and news stories for depersonalising Black people by talking about the numbers instead of the individual deaths. The MMP later, however, complained that the South African press is more likely to intrude on the sorrow of Black people than Whites (McGreal 2000: 1). These statements and findings by the MMP appeared to be contradictory.

The MMP further detected that the use of graphic images of violence and dead bodies were more common in stories that involved Black people. In its opinion, the MMP perceived that "the accumulative effect of the constant use of pictures of Black people injured or lying in a pool of blood supports the proposition that

Blacks are used to being injured and consequently this reduces sympathy for them" (MMP 1999: 25).

#### 6.5.4. Media Audiences

The MMP touched on the audience by means of an analysis of the target-specific mediums. This investigation assisted the MMP in understanding the prevailing racial perceptions within these media and their audiences (MMP 1999: 49). The MMP analysed two audiences, namely the Black market and the Afrikaans-speaking market. *Ilanga* and *Ukhozi*, predominantly KwaZulu-Natal focussed, was found to have a racially and ethnically defined audience.

The MMP analysis indicated that *Ilanga* and *Ukhozi* reporting focussed mainly on crime, making up 35,0% of the monitored reports. These predominantly Black audience newspapers supported propositions that all Blacks are criminal, and that they are inhuman and brutal. The MMP found that *Ukhozi* raised the "issue of xenophobia, supporting the perceptions that Black foreigners are criminal and that illegal immigrants are Black" (MMP 1999: 49).

The *Sowetan*, *City Press* and *Sunday World* newspapers reported crime as a "social evil and tended to remove the racial dimension" (MMP 1999: 50). The MMP discovered that in the predominantly Black mediums over 90,0% of all stories dealing with racism as a social issue challenged a racist worldview. The papers opposed the notion that Blacks need Whites to advance and that Blacks are racist. The MMP further concluded that where racism was prevalent the mediums challenged prevailing stereotypes about Black people, but "their coverage of White people tended to support the idea that all Whites are racists" (MMP 1999: 50).

The MMP identified three Afrikaans mediums, namely *Die Burger*, *Rapport* and *rsg* (*Radio Sonder Grense*). Through monitoring these mediums the MMP found

that their "crime reporting all support the propositions that Blacks are inhuman and brutal criminals and that Blacks want revenge against innocent Whites" and that "Black lives are unimportant" (MMP 1999: 51). *Die Burger*, by means of its discourse, supported the xenophobic notions that "all Black foreigners are criminal and threaten South African society" (MMP 1999: 51).

The Afrikaans media indicated a tendency to concentrated mainly on a White conservative market, reporting on labour issues in such a way that the discourse supported the perpetuating stereotypes that "affirmative action promotes undeserving people" and is "racial discrimination against Whites" (MMP 1999: 51). *rsg* focussed 24,0% of their coverage on labour and unemployment.

*Die Burger's* coverage on government and corruption, was found to "overwhelmingly support all the propositions that reinforce Blacks as incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves, Black government as leading to crime and corruption and damaging society" (MMP 1999: 52). The MMP concluded their probe into the predominantly White media by noting that these "mediums largely reproduced racial stereotypes" (MMP 1999: 52).

Although the current study did not include *Die Burger*, *Rapport* nor *rsg*, the research conducted by the MMP on the various media audiences was the only part of their research that was dedicated to understanding the message in the context of the mass communication process.

## 6.6. CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY MMP

The research on racism in the media revealed results, which suggested certain significant patterns of reporting. The MMP concluded their six-week research by stating that "it has become clear that stereotypical representations of race are unfortunately still common in the media" (MMP 1999: 57). The monitoring and analysis, done by the researcher, have suggested that the conventional notions

of news, of Africa and the legacy of apartheid-era ideologies and discourses, all functioned to produce some harmful portrayals of both Black and White people (MMP 1999: 57).

The media "need to recognise their power, their freedom and their responsibility and to explore ways in which they can challenge the damaging effects of racism", (MMP 1999: 57). They further stated that the media needed to "fight against the narrow perceptions which are an unfortunate inheritance of colonialism and apartheid" (MMP 1999: 57). In order to rid itself of harmful stereotypes, as identified by the research, the media should, both individually and through their collective bodies, actively seek creative ways of challenging racism (MMP 1999: 57).

Unlike Braude's report, the MMP's submission was received with more compliance. The Southern Africa Report stated that the MMP report is "more balanced and less sweeping in its generalisations" (Louw 1999: 3). The MMP's methodology which included the support and challenge of racial stereotypes, reflects a quantitative differentiation which was closer to reality than the deductions made by Braude (Louw 1999: 3).

## **6.7. CRITICISM ON THE REPORTS**

The probe into racism in the South African media was met with widespread criticism. Throughout the journalistic spectrum the Human Rights Commission (HRC) received numerous negative reports on their inquiry.

### **6.7.1. Criticism on Human Rights Commission report**

When the HRC announced their intentions to conduct an inquiry into racism in the media, criticism was already directed at them. The complaint launched by the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and Association of Black Accountants of

South Africa (ABSA) against two newspapers would justify probing them, even though the cited specifics were "extremely flimsy and of little practical merit" (Louw, 1998: 9).

According to the Southern African Report, more worrying was the fact that the HRC set the inquiry period to coincide with the period leading up to the general elections in 1999. This implied that while the HRC was busy conducting hearings on alleged racism in the media and invited the views of the public, the campaigns of the political parties for the elections would have been in full swing (Louw 1998: 9).

According to *Guardian Unlimited*, even the Interim report's credibility was quickly undermined when it was shown to contain major factual errors (McGreal 1999: 1). One of the most obvious mistakes noted was the Commission's mistaken interpretation of a photograph of two birds sitting on a rubbish bin. This photograph was submitted by the BLA in their initial submission to the Commission. According to the BLA, a viewpoint also adopted by the Commission, the photograph was intended to portray Johannesburg (the bin) as decaying under Black rule and that the species of birds represented a fear of Africans flooding in. The Commission's conclusion was based on the mistaken impression that the birds were in Johannesburg. The caption of the photograph, however, stated clearly that the photograph was taken in Uganda. Peter Sullivan, editor of *The Star*, denounced the report saying that they welcome the inquiry but that "it is difficult to be polite about such obvious nonsense" (McGreal 1999: 1).

Another mistake, according to *Guardian Unlimited*, was the criticism on the *Mail & Guardian* portrayal of Pres. Thabo Mbeki as Machiavellian and power hungry (McGreal 1999: 1). The *Mail & Guardian* was apparently racist because it categorised Mbeki, as African dictators are seen. The *Mail & Guardian's* editor, Phillip van Niekerk, dismissed this criticism stating that Mbeki is "big enough to

face criticism himself" (McGreal 1999: 1). Van Niekerk went on saying that "it seems that the report is equating criticism of the ANC government with racism" and that "it confirms that such a report can have only one aim and that is to emasculate independent journalism" (McGreal 1999: 1).

#### **6.7.2. Criticism on Claudia Braude's report**

"The controversy over the Interim report, compiled largely by Claudia Braude, a BA Honours graduate in comparative literature with little experience of how newspapers work, stems as much from its methodology as its conclusions" (Louw 1999: 1). The methodology used in Braude's report was discussed in Chapter 5.

On 6 March, 2000 the HRC began five(5) days of public hearings into alleged racism in the South African media. Claudia Braude, independent researcher appointed by the Commission to investigate the charges of racism, presented her report during these hearings.

Braude told the Commission that "we have a culture, whether we like it or not, that describes people better than others in terms of race" (Swindells 2000: 1). Braude further stated that "stories claiming that Africa was ruled by dictators as well as items on corrupt Black officials, decaying urban infrastructures and affirmative action programmes for Blacks reflected subtle and indirect prejudices" (Swindells 2000: 1).

Newspaper commentators were very critical of Braude's research, which was termed by one as "psycho-babble" (Swindells 2000: 1). Another witness at the hearings, Professor Guy Berger, criticised Braude's report by adding that she "had gone in search of racism in the media and found it everywhere, much like the apartheid regime used to discover reds (Communists) under every bed" (Swindells 2000: 1).

Another witness at the hearings, John van Zyl's critique claimed that Braude "did not take the conventions of journalism into account and that the research lacked an empirical basis or sociological data" (Faultlines 2000: 50). The Commission reacted to this by noting that Braude's views were always intended to be professional and to stimulate debate. They further noted that the fact that van Zyl was anxious to equate racism with bad or sloppy journalism suggested that he either did not understand racism or he was simply wishing it away (Faultlines 2000: 51).

### **6.7.3. Concluding criticisms**

The report compiled by the HRC also contained the research of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP). The study done by the MMP "reflects a quantitative differentiation which is closer to reality than the all-embracing deductions" made by Braude (Louw 1999: 4).

Certain newspaper editors were content with the proceedings of the inquiry. Jim Jones, editor of *Business Day*, commented to the *Daily Mail and Guardian* that the report and the process the Commission set into motion, will have a positive impact on South African journalism (Barrell 2000: 1). He believed that the inquiry served to ensure all journalists remain sensitive to the racial factors at work in South Africa (Barrell 2000: 1).

As mentioned, John van Zyl claimed that Braude did not take the conventions of journalism into account whilst conducting her research. These customs of journalism are rooted in the theories of journalism. Theories are often regarded as the foundation of any sphere, on which the primary functions and orientations of the sphere are based. It would appear as if an assessment of these theories could render a relatively clarified comprehension of the elements influencing the mass media process. A number of these theories are subsequently discussed in Chapter 7.

## 6.8. CONCLUSION

The initial goal of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to make South Africans aware of racism and hence stimulate debate was apparently achieved. This became evident when considering the amount of media coverage the inquiry received. This coverage did however not come without certain critique.

Similar to the report submitted by Braude, the MMP found clear traces of racism in the media. Independent of each other, both research bodies identified similar manifestations of racism in the media. The categories that were employed by the MMP identified most traces of implicit and explicit racist messages in the media. The categories are reported in Chapter 8.

The HRC aimed at discovering the definition of racism during the research period. The MMP decided to implement the definition of racism supplied by Van Dijk (1991). It would appear as if a definition of racism is not very easy to formulate, especially when it is confined to the media. There are possibly a number of journalistic practices and theories that could influence the construction of the mass media message. These influences might contribute to a more concise assessment of racism within the media context.

## CHAPTER 7

### DEFINING RACISM

#### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

Each of the reports dedicated to the inquiry into racism in the media had their own definition of racism. The assessment of various definitions made it apparent that racism is a complex phenomenon to pin down on paper. Within this chapter the Human Rights Commission's (HRC) definitions of racism are discussed as well as alternative definitions thereof. A workable definition, deduced from the various definitions, was constructed to be used in this study.

Before attempting to define racism, journalistic practices are discussed in order to determine what makes a good reporter. These practices are incorporated in the systems (context) of the mass communication process and could consequently exert an influence on the manner in which events are reported. The chapter reviews the following:

- 7.2. Journalistic practices
  - 7.2.1 Press freedom
  - 7.2.2 News values
  - 7.2.3 Objectivity and fairness
  - 7.2.4 Ethics and responsible journalism
- 7.3. HRC definition of racism
- 7.4. Alternative definitions of racism
- 7.5. Racism and culture
  - 7.5.1 Defining culture
  - 7.5.2 Mass communication and culture
- 7.6. Racism in the media
- 7.7. Conclusion

## 7.2. JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES

The internal mechanisms of journalism are as complicated as any other professional field. The media is essentially a business. When operated independently this business must generate its own revenue, i.e. financially support itself by means of selling advertising space. This occurs in a very competitive market where numerous media products compete for the attention of the public. In order to attract the attention of the public, the media employs journalistic practices such as news values and responsible journalism to provide the news accurately and fairly while still being economically competitive within the market.

### 7.2.1 Press Freedom

The Human Rights Commission (HRC), including their independent researchers, was aware of the fears that the inquiry might affect press freedom in South Africa. Various outcries were heard claiming that the inquiry was a threat to the very fibre of press freedom (Faultlines 2000: 73).

Freedom of expression, as explained in the HRC report (Faultlines 2000: 81), is the means whereby free exchange of ideas and the spread of information in society are conducted. This gives the public the ability to make more informed decisions about the matters that affect their lives. The HRC goes on to say that freedom of expression is important because it extends the sphere of knowledge and as such contributes to the search for truth (Faultlines 2000: 81). Strauss (1994: 77) perceived freedom of speech and freedom of the press to be synonymous, as press freedom is nothing more than the concrete figuring forth of freedom of expression.

Webster (in Nel 1998: 262) is of the opinion that the freedom and independence of the media depends on certain factors, which include media regulation, the

presence of able managers and the ability to be economically viable, as well as the degree to which professionalism and responsibility are exercised.

Economical factors depend on the ownership of the paper, but more importantly on the audience numbers. The recurrent question of audience needs and the gratification thereof is tabled (cf. Chapter 3). Responsible journalism is possibly based on the consciousness of the effects that the message might have on the reader. The audience thus appears to play a vital role in the mass communication message. Their interpretation of the message and the effect that it has on the individual reader is the crux of responsible and ethical reporting, but it is also one of the factors on which the freedom and independence of the media depend (Webster; in Nel 1998: 262).

### **7.2.2 News Values**

Readers, according to Randall (2000: 18), are the ones for whom stories and subjects are chosen, written, re-written and presented. Of all the role-players in the communication process (the source, the journalist, the editors and the readers) the readers are the only ones who are not actually present in the creation of the story and thus their tastes have to be anticipated (Randall 2000: 18). This prediction of what the audience "looks" like and what their tastes are, is done through intensive research.

News values have to be considered when assessing news (Nel 1998: 21). When determining the value of news, the interests of the audience play a central role (Faultlines 2000: 34). The flood of information the editors and journalists are faced with daily are analysed according to their compliance with a set of common criteria or news values presumed to represent the desires and preferences of the news-consuming public (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 174).

Media institutions are first and foremost business institutions (Faultlines 2000: 34). Nel (1998: 20) cites commercial value as one of the top three considerations when determining news value. Readers, according to Nel (1998: 20), buy newspapers because they want news and the editors give the readers what they want. It is a simple business tactic; give them what they want and they will come back for more. When analysing a newspaper and its audience, it is important to bear in mind that the newspaper is writing for a specific audience, in order to ensure its survival.

The audience itself is a news value that is considered when compiling a newspaper message (Nel 1998: 21). Knowledge of the readers should be used to inform judgements in general and not to influence them incessantly in a detailed way (Randall 2000: 26). The major guideline to determining what the readers want, is a proper readership profile. This guides the editor in deciding which items are newsworthy and which approach to take with the story (Nel 1998: 21). Considering this, it appears as if different newspapers would report differently on the same incident. Not only the style and information appear to be determined by the readership profile, but more importantly also the contents of the newspaper. For example, if the readers of a newspaper don't find any interest in scuba diving, the newspaper would try to avoid reporting on the sport and rather concentrate on sports that interest its audience.

Another news value that is considered when reporting, is proximity, particularly for local as opposed to national media (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 179). Most events, according to Nel (1998: 22), become more newsworthy the closer the action occurs to the audience. Once again the audience is perceived as an active component in the mass communication process. Depersonalising Black people by talking about the numbers of the dead instead of individual identities, was one of the premises on which the MMP found the media to be racist. They used the example of a headline in a South African paper that read: "Thirty die in Nigerian

unrest" (MMP 1999: 54). The proximity of the event, as a news value, might have influenced the way in which the headline was written.

Randall (2000: 24 - 28) identified certain factors employed by journalist to assess the importance of a news story. These, in short, include the following:

- Subject – the broad category that the story falls under (crime, environment, health, government, etc.). The rough value of each of the categories is based on its rarity in a given society or area.
- News fashion – subjects which swim into the news consciousness and are for a time very prominent.

Additional news values (Nel 1998: 21-23; Price & Tewksbury 1997: 174) include:

- Consequence, as news value, becomes important when the reader is affected by the news (Nel 1998: 22), e.g. when fraud in the government affects the tax payers money and the well being of the country.
- Peculiarity, centres on capturing the imagination of the reader by means of the unusual and unexpected (Nel 1998: 22)
- Prominence, as news value, focuses on prominent personalities, such as politicians, celebrities, etc. (Nel 1998: 23). If an event involves a prominent person, such as the president, there appears to be more news value added to the story.
- Conflict, is closely related to news, especially news about politics (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 177). Journalists tend to pit candidates against each other in a contest of votes. The criticism rendered by the South African Report

(Louw 1998: 9) was centred on this tendency and the possibly influence the election might have on the research HRC results (cf. Chapter 6).

- Topicality constitutes the topics that are on the mind of the audience at a specific time (Nel 1998: 23). E.g. the repeated occurrence of soccer-related tragedies during April and May 2001.
- Time is possibly one of the most consequential news value in shaping news (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 179). The news is transmitted at great speed and leads the media to emphasise the latest breaking developments in a very competitive market (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 179).
- Visual appeal aids a story to become more prominent, i.e. strong pictures will determine whether an image appears on the front page of a newspaper (Nel 1998: 24). A photograph could possibly enhance the message of a newspaper report. This might be the news value attached to images of dying soccer fans at a soccer tragedy. The receiver's perceptiveness to such images is tested in the study and the reaction of the respondents are reported in Chapter 10.
- Personal angle involves providing a "face" or personality to a specific event. There might be natural degrees of interest in stories of fires, wrecks and other catastrophes, "but when individuals are mentioned in unfortunate situations, there is also sympathetic interest" (MacDougall; in Price & Tewksbury 1997: 178). This might be the news value in practice that results in taking photographs and reporting on victims of tragedies, such as the soccer tragedies in April and May 2001.

Journalists commonly employ these values to determine the angle of the reporting, which elements to emphasise and how the story should be organised (Price & Tewksbury 1997: 174).

News values are however neither natural nor neutral, but clearly man-made values (Hartley 1982: 80). According to Hartley (1982: 80), news values form an ideological code, which sees the world in a very particular way. These values appear to play an important role in ultimately determining whether a story will make the media agenda and how it will be represented.

The media as institutions were not submitted to the inquiry, but merely the products of the media. News values were consequently a possible void in the inquiry, especially when the impact of news values on the media content (product) is considered.

### **7.2.3. Objectivity and Fairness**

According to Randall (2000: 23), there is no escaping subjectivity in judging news stories as it pervades the whole process of journalism. This can largely be attributed to the fact that it is difficult to completely suppress personal prejudices. Consciousness about subjectivity, however, offers some protection against its worst excesses (Randall 2000: 24). Greer (1999: 19) supports this notion by stating that it is difficult to be objective, unbiased and without personal prejudice, because the truth is not always easily identifiable. In order to side-step this, the journalist can interpret events for the reader and give as much background information as possible, without mixing news and opinion (Greer 1999: 19).

An objective media is an unrealistic notion, because subjective editors who base their decisions on the subjective interpretations of the reporter ultimately make news choices (Nel, 1998: 32). Objectivity, according to Greer (1999: 39), means detached, fair, impersonal, impartial, unbiased and unprejudiced reporting. Events are not only seen from different angles, but each person brings a lifetime of personal experience with every event. This is what makes objectivity so difficult to achieve (Greer 1999: 40). This possibly implicates that the field of experience brought to the communication process by each communicator

influences the objectivity of the message (cf. Chapter 2; Transactional model of communication).

Fairness in journalism, according to Greer (1999: 18), implicates reporting impartially (not favouring any person or group), reporting completely so that no aspect is left out and striving for balance so that different viewpoints are expressed. Media workers should acknowledge their own biases and actively work to be fair (Nel 1998: 33).

#### **7.2.4. Ethics and responsible journalism**

Media ethics concerns the principles, values and virtues that guide the morality of journalistic actions (Nel, 1998: 265). During the HRC hearings there were allegations that the traces of racism found in the media can be ascribed to bad or sloppy journalism (Faultlines 2000: 51). The HRC disregarded this assumption by saying that this indicated that there was a misunderstanding about the term racism and that these parties want to wish racism away (Faultlines 2000: 51).

Nel (1998: 281) lists certain elements of ethical news writing. These include accuracy, fairness (giving all the sides of a story, treating your subject fairly) and avoidance of obscenity (Nel 1998: 281 – 285).

In his study on the public's perceptions of the journalists' ethical motivations, Voakes (1997: 23) found that the audience's perceptions are important components of media credibility. He (1997: 34) concludes that an appropriate goal for the media practitioner would be to increase awareness of ethical issues so that when they do arise, the practitioner's motivations will be better understood. In cases where ethics were breached (e.g. publishing racist messages), the media managers should be able to use their understanding of audience values and perceptions to fully comprehend the objections and

consequently frame a response in terms that make sense to the audience (Voakes 1997: 35).

Racism and the handling thereof are unmistakably ethical issues. These ethical issues arise within the audience and are often grounded in a misconception of the initial intention of the message. It is, according to Voakes (1997: 35), the responsibility of the practitioner to educate the audience with respect to media usage.

Responsible journalism, according to Professor Francis Kasoma (in Nel 1998: 264) boils down to reporters being conscious of, or caring about the ethical problems that arise between them on the one hand and the public on the other. The elements of a story and the manner in which it is told appear to determine the effects it might have on the reader. A responsible journalist thus seems to be aware of the possible effects of a story.

If the media succeeds in contributing the above to the message, the true essence of journalism appears. When drawing a parallel between these contributions and the categories created by the MMP and the HRC to investigate racism in the media, strong contradictions appear. The HRC considered reporting on the government and corruption within the government as racist, creating racial stereotypes that the government is incompetent, corrupt and incapable. Reporting on the government would, however, seem to be desirable in a democracy and the government of the day, be it Black or White, would have to be submitted to the scrutiny of the media.

An investigation into racism in the media is relatively complex. Not only is racism a very subjective proposition, but it cannot be defined without placing it into context. Within the context of the media, it would appear as if various media influences (news values, objectivity and press freedom) affect the encoding of a message. Without considering certain factors at play within the construction of

the media message, the message can possibly not be analysed completely and correctly.

### 7.3. HRC DEFINITION OF RACISM

The HRC realised from the start of the investigation that a definition of racism is hard to find. The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) decided on a definition by Van Dijk (1991), which defined racism as "a complex societal system in which peoples of European origin dominate peoples of other origins, especially in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand" (Van Dijk; in MMP 2000: 6). This definition, as mentioned previously, was of importance to the MMP due to its recognition of the group level at which racism functions.

When considering the phenomenon of racism, three factors become apparent, namely race, racialism and racism. According to Appiah (1992) "race is an illusion" (in Faultlines 2000: 52). Although it is a neutral concept, it is also a social construct because it is often a factor in social relations. The HRC concludes that race is "ephemeral" (Faultlines 2000: 52).

Racialism is the means whereby 'race' becomes the basis on differentiation (Faultlines 2000: 52). Racialism goes out from the understanding that certain groups of people have common inheritable characteristics that distinguish them from others. As soon as race becomes elementary and it is presumed that moral values are inherent only in particular groups, racialism becomes offensive (Faultlines 2000: 52).

The definition given by Appiah was taken deeper by the HRC. They stated that "racism is a belief system, a philosophy of life" (Faultlines 2000: 53). This belief system's purpose or effect diminish the value and self-esteem of another on the basis of race, colour or characteristics associated with race, language, culture, religion or place (Faultlines 2000: 53).

Racism, according to the HRC, *results* (HRC emphasis) in racial stereotypes and racial discrimination (Faulstich 2000: 57). It would thus appear as if the HRC concluded that racism was the cause and not the outcome of stereotypes and discrimination.

#### 7.4. ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS OF RACISM

Various sources have tried to define racism. There have been numerous attempts to pin down the essence of this phenomenon.

The Canadian government placed their "Say NO to Racism" campaign on the Internet in order to involve the general public in combating racism. On the web-site ([www.gov.nb.ca](http://www.gov.nb.ca)) the following definition of racism is given: "Racism is the mistreatment of a group of people on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, place of origin or ancestry. The term racism may also denote a blind and unreasoning hatred, envy or prejudice" (Say NO to Racism 2000: 3).

Fowler (1991: 92) explained that people make sense of the world by categorising phenomena, including people. After establishing that a person is an example of a specific "type", the relationship with that person is simplified by thinking of that person in terms of the qualities, which are attributed to the pre-existing category. This category can later develop into a stereotype and possibly later into discrimination. Category labels tell a great deal about the structure of the ideological world represented by a newspaper. These labels provide a list of preoccupations of the newspaper (Fowler 1991: 93).

The power of discourse in facilitating and maintaining discrimination against 'members' of groups is tremendous (Fowler 1991: 94). Language possibly provides names for categories, and in doing so help to set their boundaries and relationships (Fowler 1991: 94).

Samovar and Porter (1995: 291) explore symbolic racism by stating that it finds its "expression when members of a culture or co-culture have adverse feelings about another culture because they believe it is endangering their group". Once again the phenomenon of groups come to light. People appear to shape their lives and worldviews according to these preconceived groups.

Miller (1988: 137) notes that the word "racism" ought to be as complex as the tangled thing which it denotes. For Miller the word is all too often used as a blunt instrument, making people circumspect. The term "racism", according to Miller, is a reduction of the whole range and history of interracial struggle and it is as abstract as it is one-sided. What is considered 'racist' nowadays is not the mistreatment of one race by another, but the mere acknowledgement of differences between Blacks and Whites - different histories and cultures (Miller 1988: 137).

It can be deduced from the various definitions that racism is the explicit or implicit ascribing of racial characteristics, which result in various categories into which people are categorised. These characteristics are mainly abstract and one-sided deriving from a cultural legacy. The qualities construct a belief system whereby an abstract hierarchy of races develops. This definition will be utilised when analyzing and interpreting the results of the survey research.

## **7.5. RACISM AND CULTURE**

An element of racism is that it appears to allow different race groups to acknowledge differences between them. Each group does however have a specific, often unique culture. Culture is defined as "socially acquired knowledge" (Yule 1996: 246). This knowledge influences the communication process as depicted by the transactional model of communication (cf. Chapter 2). Culture is a personal system, which affect each communication participant.

### 7.5.1 Defining Culture

Culture, like racism and communication, is multi-dimensional and various definitions have been given to define the true nature of culture. According to Samovar and Porter (1995: 47) culture is "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning".

Culture apparently includes everything from "rites of passage to concepts of the soul" (Samovar & Porter 1995: 48). Every individual is possibly influenced by his/her culture to such an extent that every action and interaction is submitted to cultural references and influences. This can be observed when individuals are confronted with members of another culture, i.e. intercultural interaction.

Different cultural frames of reference seem to recall elements of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (cf. Chapter 2). Linguistic traditions help shape thought processes, but for members of different cultures traditions can be a barrier (Tubbs & Moss 1994: 88).

One of the elements that influence intercultural communication is perception. Perception, according to Singer (1987: 9), is an internal process whereby people convert the physical energies of the world into meaningful internal experiences. The meanings attached to perceptions are directly influenced by beliefs, values, attitudes, worldviews and social organisation (Samovar & Porter 1995: 67; Singer 1987: 10).

The first three elements are self-explanatory, but worldviews help the individual locate his/her place and social rank in the universe (Samovar & Porter 1995:68). The study of world cultures made apparent that different groups not only have different languages, they have different worldviews (Yule1996: 146).

The dramatic turn-around in the country's racial orientation at the beginning of the 90's may have caused cultural identity problems, so much so that the individual is not certain of where he/she is located in the social ranks. This might ultimately lead to a breakdown in communication, especially concerning mass communication where numerous cultures are addressed by the same message.

### 7.5.2. Mass media and Culture

Good journalism relies on a journalist's "nose" for a story, an instinct partly innate and partly trained for distinguishing the important from the unimportant (Curran, Morley & Walkerdine 1996: 120). Professional journalists check the accuracy of what is reported and are neutral in the way in which they balance contending opinion (Curran *et al* 1996: 120). This, according to Curran *et al* (1996: 120), is however not entirely true to reality.

The journalist's personal viewpoints and subjective interpretation of an event appear to often influence the final message. Curran *et al* (1996: 120), however, state that the conventions of professionalism constrain the way in which personal biases and subjective experiences shape news output. He went on to substantiate this by adding that people with different views can produce surprisingly similar news reports, provided they work within the same news conventions (Curran *et al* 1996: 120)

News, according to Curran *et al* (1996: 120), draws upon assumptions and premises, images and chains of association, that are embedded in cultural traditions. The news is structured by the formats and genre conventions of news reporting, which vary in different societies and is consequently the product of the society's culture in which it is processed (Curran *et al* 1996: 120). The diversity of South African cultures could possibly make the production of culture-sensitive messages very difficult. One message can have various meanings and may offend certain individuals, while not affecting another. It would appear as if the

interpretation of a mass medium message is subjected to the cultural interpretation thereof.

Curran *et al* (1996: 152) concludes that there are no fixed meanings in media texts and that these are created through the interplay of text and audience. The cultural background of the audience influences this interplay, and the interpretation of the text will depend on this (Curran *et al* 1996: 152). This interplay is encapsulated in the transactional model of communication (cf. Chapter 2).

People of different backgrounds share an overlapping culture, which is influenced by the media. This results in a tendency for certain groups to insist that they are at least symbolically distinct (Fitzgerald 1992: 114). This process of emerging ethnicity has been coined as *ethnogenesis*, the development and public presentation of a self-conscious ethnic group (Fitzgerald 1992: 114).

Ethnogenesis causes various cultures to seek their cultural identity by differentiating themselves from other cultural groups. This is done by placing emphasis on tradition and reinterpretations of past history (Fitzgerald 1992: 114). Within the South African culture this emphasis might create possible problems with the encoding and decoding of mass media messages. The journalist reporting on the facts of an event can use his/her personal interpretation, which is decoded by another culture as offensive, e.g. the reporting on mourners is an intrusion in certain cultures, while it personalises grief in another.

## **7.6. RACISM IN THE MEDIA**

Hartmann and Husband (1997) (in Van Dijk 1987: 42) identified certain major themes newspapers tend to report on. These included White hostility, Black hostility, discrimination, police, crime and cultural differences. With the immigration of Commonwealth subjects from East Africa into Britain they found

that the press did address the conflict, tension and resentment against the new citizens, but hardly discussed the underlying causes and consequences of this resentment, such as ethnic prejudice and racism (Van Dijk 1987: 42). This was echoed in the observation of the MMP that reporting on "vigilante groups and taxi violence lacked explanation and context" (MMP 1999: 47) (cf. Chapter 6).

A more recent study conducted by Romer, Jamieson and de Coteau (1998: 289) revealed that persons of colour are featured to a greater extent in the crime-news category than in the rest of the news. They further discovered that crime stories on coloured people as perpetrators were more common than stories which featured them as bystanders, experts or other participants.

Whites on the other hand were shown as the victims of crime where non-white perpetrators were depicted. Additional results showed that the overrepresentation of Whites as the victims is not representative of the findings of the criminal justice system (Romer *et al* 1998: 299 – 300).

Van Dijk (1987: 44) concluded that a number of racial media problems persist throughout the world. These include:

- Ethnic events are consistently described from a White point of view.
- Topics that are relevant for the ordinary daily life of ethnic groups are hardly discussed in the press, unless they lead to "problems" of society as a whole.
- Racism is systematically underreported, reduced to incidents of individual discrimination.

These problems are echoed by the HRC study and captured in the content analysis categories used by the MMP and the current study.

People not only defend ethnic prejudice with reference to the media, but they also learn about negative opinions of others through the media, whether they agree with them or not (Van Dijk 1987: 360). The media appears to play an intricate part with reference to daily racial relations. Many people, who are not in contact with a certain race, assign certain attributes to that race based on information they received via the media.

## 7.7. CONCLUSION

Racism is not a concept that can be studied and discussed in isolation. Various factors might influence the perception and interpretation of a message with potential racist elements. From all the definitions discussed one element appeared prominent, namely that racism is essentially a personal perception of an event or person. In layman's terms racism might thus be perceived as existing within the "eye of the beholder".

Culture appears to play an important role in South Africa and can consequently not be ignored. Culture and racism are often confused and this can cause immense problems in the encoding and decoding of messages.

The perceptiveness of the audience to racist messages ultimately lies within the receiver. There are various important factors that influence this perceptiveness, which cannot be ignored. Certain research methods might shed more light on the possible racist message and the interpretation thereof.

## CHAPTER 8

### METHODOLOGY

#### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

This study is divided into three stages. The first consisted of a content analysis of three (3) mainstream newspapers (*The Star, Mail & Guardian* and *The Citizen*) over a period of nine (9) weeks (20 March 2001 to 18 May 2001).

The second phase formed part of the racial identity attitude assessment of 305 respondents at the University of the Free State (146 Black and 159 White) based on Helms' theory of racial identity attitude (1990).

The third phase comprised of the evaluation of four newspaper items by the respondents. This chapter provides the following overview of the methodology:

- 8.2. Content Analysis
  - 8.2.1 Defining Content Analysis
  - 8.2.2 Categories
- 8.3. Pilot Study
- 8.4. Racial Identity Theory
  - 8.4.1. Review of Racial Identity Theory
  - 8.4.2. Stages of Black racial identity development
  - 8.4.3. White Racial Identity Scale (WRIAS)
  - 8.4.4. Method of measuring
- 8.5. Survey research
  - 8.5.1. Development of the measurement instrument
  - 8.5.2. Population and sampling
  - 8.5.3. Data capturing
  - 8.5.4. Data analysis
- 8.6. Conclusion

## 8.2. CONTENT ANALYSIS

The research done by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the respective independent researchers were based on content analysis, which served as the primary pillar of the research. The conclusion of the HRC research was that the media could be classified as racist institutions (Faultlines 2000: 88). By using the same categories used in the Media Monitoring Project's (MMP) content analysis, this study aimed at determining whether the media can be classified as racist if the exact same methodology was used. If so, this would then lead to the analysis of the material by the students and consequently determine whether the media message is perceived by the students to be racist.

### 8.2.1. Defining Content Analysis

Content analysis, according to Weber (1990: 5), classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data. It is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text (Weber 1990: 9). Krippendorff (in Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 112) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context.

Content analysis can be used for many purposes, such as to compare media or levels of communication, to describe trends (such as racism) in the communication content and to reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions or societies (Weber 1990: 9). As these purposes have direct bearing on the current study and the MMP concentrated their entire study on the content analysis of the media, this research therefore centred on the content of three mainstream newspapers, namely *The Star*, *The Citizen* and *Mail & Guardian*.

Content analysis, as any other research method, has advantages and difficulties. Berger (1991: 92) lists the advantages as being inexpensive, relatively easy to

get material, unobtrusive, quantifiable data and dealing with current and past events. These advantages were at play in the content analysis conducted for this study. What made the content analysis even more effective was that the categories were pre-determined by the MMP study.

The disadvantages listed by Berger (1991: 92) include that it is hard to be certain the sample study is representative, it is hard to obtain a good working definition of a topic and it isn't possible to prove that the inferences made are correct.

The period, over which the three mainstream newspapers in the study were analysed, was rather long (nine weeks). The choice of the papers was based on the papers used by the MMP. The period of sampling was random, any period could have been chosen. Various definitions of racism were examined and a workable definition was determined (cf. Chapter 7). The analysis was guided by this definition and using the categories identified by the MMP the content of the papers was analysed and categorised. The findings of the MMP analysis are discussed in Chapter 6 and are compared to the findings of the current study in Chapter 11.

When conducting a content analysis the many words of a text must be classified into fewer content categories. Each of these categories may consist of one or more words, each presumed to have similar meanings. The similarity may be based on the precise meaning of the words, or may be based on words sharing similar connotations. Valid inferences rely primarily on the reliability of the classification procedure, i.e. different people should code the same text in the same way (Weber 1990: 12).

The categories used in this study were replicated from those used by the MMP. This possibly eliminated any obvious deviations from the original study and attempted to determine the possible existence of racist content in the similar manner. This will aid the comparison between the findings of the content

analysis and the perceptiveness of the students, as it will possibly indicate whether the respondents perceived the message similar to the MMP's interpretations.

Berger (1991: 92) states that the basic assumption implicit in content analysis is that an investigation of messages and communication gives insight into the people who receive these messages. Content analysis can, however, not serve as a basis for making statements about the *effects* of the content on the audience (Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 114). Content analysis was not explanatory enough for the purpose of this study and further investigations into the receivers' racial identity (as classified by Helm's theory of racial identity) and the interpretation of the text by the receivers, were launched.

### **8.2.2. Categories**

The newspapers that were analysed, were among those identified by the HRC and the MMP whilst conducting their inquiry and included *The Star*, *The Citizen* and *Mail & Guardian*, all of which are readily available in the Free State. These papers were analysed over a period of nine (9) weeks, from Monday 20 March, 2001 to Friday 18 May, 2001. The period of the research was randomly chosen, with the caution of any obvious external influence

The HRC inquiry and more specifically the research of Claudia Braude fell prey to criticism on the research period used during their inquiry (Louw 1998: 9). The period of research used in the HRC inquiry coincided with the general election of 1999. This raised the question of whether the research might have been influenced by the external factors imposed by the election. The current study employed a similar research method to investigate possible racism in the media. The research was, however, conducted in a less controversial period. The results rendered by the different time periods might determine whether or not the HRC

inquiry was in any way affected by the controversial political period at the time of the 1999 election.

The aim of the analysis was not to determine whether a certain newspaper reported in a racist manner, but to investigate the message brought across by the media in general.

The same categories for analysis were used as the ones identified by the MMP and the HRC. These categories were determined by the previous researchers in order to capture both explicit and implicit racial references. The categories were as follow:

➤ **Category 1      Blacks are criminal**

- *Whites are moral*
- *Crimes committed by whites require an explanation*

- 1A    It is normal for blacks to commit crime
- 1B    Black criminals are brutal and inhuman
- 1C    Blacks want revenge against innocent Whites
- 1D    Serious crime occurs primarily in White areas

➤ **Category 2      Blacks are stupid**

- *Whites are superior*
- *Whites are more talented/intelligent*
- *Whites are more kind*
- *Whites work harder*
- *Whites are victims*

- 2A    Blacks lower standards

➤ **Category 3      Blacks are irrational**

➤ **Category 4      African society is primitive**

- 4A      African traditions are barbaric
- 4B      Blacks are simple
- 4C      Blacks are lazy
- 4D      Blacks act on instinct
- 4E      Black women breed
- 4F      Blacks need whites to advance
- 4G      African history is primitive
- 4H      Africa doesn't contribute to world civilisation
- 4I      Africa is ridden with disaster, disease and violence
- 4J      There can be no African renaissance
- 4K      Blacks are child-like
- 4L      Only Blacks can be African

➤ **Category 5      Blacks are dirty**

- 5A      Blacks live in squalor
- 5B      Blacks cause disease
- 5C      Black men cannot control their sexuality
- 5D      AIDS is an African disease

➤ **Category 6      Black women are ugly**

*White women determine what is beautiful*

➤ **Category 7      Black lives are unimportant**

*White lives are important*

*White victims are personified*

7A Blacks are used to being injured or killed

7B Blacks don't need privacy

7C Blacks die in large numbers

7D Black victims wait to be helped

➤ **Category 8      Black foreigners threaten South African society**

8A Black foreigners are criminals

8B Nigerians are drug dealers

8C Zimbabweans are gangster

8D Black foreigners bring disease

8E Black foreigners steal jobs from South Africans

8F Illegal immigrants are Black

➤ **Category 9      Western society is civilised and modern**

*European/White/Western events are more important*

➤ **Category 10      Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves**

- *Whites are hardworking*

10A Black government leads to crime and corruption

10B Black government leads to anarchy and the breakdown of social order

10C Black government, like Communism, damages society

10D Black government fails

- 10E Blacks are undemocratic
- 10F Blacks are power hungry
- 10G Black parliamentarians are inefficient and lazy

➤ **Category 11 Affirmative action promotes undeserving people**

- 11A Affirmative action is racial discrimination against Whites
- 11B Blacks are racist
- 11C Black empowerment fails

➤ **Category 12 People act according to their ethnic identity**

*- "Ethnic shorthand explains behaviour"*

- 12A Jews lie and are manipulative
- 12B Jews control the economy and the media
- 12C Indians are corrupt
- 12D Coloureds are degenerate and gangsters
- 12E Afrikaners are bigots
- 12F White farmers are cruel and exploitative
- 12G Muslims support terrorism.

➤ **Category 13 Item supports a racist worldview**

*Item validates racist differences*

➤ **Category 14 All Whites are racists**

For every item identified as having explicit or implicit racial connotations, the content of that item was analysed to reveal whether the item strongly supported or challenged any of the above-mentioned categories. A total of 848 items were

identified in this manner. If an item fell into a certain category but did neither strongly support nor challenge it, it was coded as being neutral.

The main categories (e.g. category 12, "People act according to their ethnic identity") were defined by its own the subcategories (e.g. subcategory 12A, "Jews lie and are manipulative"). Although each subcategory was a measurable item by itself, they served to describe and define the main category in more detail. Each identified subcategory item was counted as an identified item and description of the main category.

The items that were identified were sorted under the specific type (genre) of article (picture, news, letter, feature, editorial, cartoon or analysis). The respondents were presented with four types of articles; the two genres that rendered the most identified racist messages and the two that rendered the least, based on the content analysis findings. The perceptiveness of the respondents regarding the different types of items could consequently be determined. The items were further categorised according to the subject covered (health, arts and culture, sport, human rights, media, gender, housing and land affairs, crime, labour, political violence, disaster, racism, diplomacy, international, economics, corruption or government).

### **8.3. PILOT STUDY**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997: 150), the most effective way to determine whether a research instrument is adequately designed is to pre-test it. This process involves a "mini-study with a small sample to determine whether the study approach is correct and to help refine the questions" (Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 150).

Observing people fill out the questionnaire provides valuable information about question problems (Fowler 1995: 131). The respondents involved in the pre-test

able to indicate whether a question is unclear or if the measurement instrument is too complicated.

In order to avoid having the pilot study respondents in the final respondent group the pilot study respondents were recruited from classes that were not targeted to complete the final survey. The pilot study respondents were demographically speaking identical to the final respondent group (i.e. students at the University of the Free State), but their responses were not duplicated in the final study.

The research instruments administered to the respondents in the pilot study were identical to the instruments given to the final response group. The seven (7) pilot respondents completed the index, RIAS-B (3 Black) and the WRIAS (4 White), as well as the second questionnaire containing the evaluation of the four items identified in the content analysis.

During the evaluation of the pilot study elements identified by Babbie (1973: 214 - 218) and Converse and Presser (1986: 51 - 75) were considered. These include the failure to answer, multiple answers, direct comments and question formats. Only one respondent desired to provide multiple answers where only one was required.

Converse and Presser (1986: 51 - 75) concentrate on testing questions with regard to variation, meaning, task difficulty and respondent interest and attention. It was noted that the respondents became irritated towards the end of the survey, due to the length thereof. All the respondents finished both instruments within 25 minutes. There were no immediate problems with the questionnaire and it was consequently administered to the 305 respondents in the final group.

## **8.4. RACIAL IDENTITY THEORY**

The racial identity of each respondent was determined by means of the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS). This was to be used as an independent variable in the analysis of the survey data in order to determine whether or not the respondents' racial identity attitude influenced his/her perception of the newspaper item.

### **8.4.1 Review of Racial Identity Theory**

The term "racial identity" refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he/she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group (Helms 1990: 3). The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) determines the impact that a sense of belonging has on one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behaviour (Pope 2000: 302). This identity and its associated behaviour and perceptions might possibly determine how the individual interprets, perceives and internalises messages in the media.

Racial identity development occurs through the evolution of successive racial identity statuses, which are the dynamic cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes that govern a person's interpretation of racial information (Behrens 1997: 3; Helms & Parham 1985: 431). The statuses develop sequentially, but are expressed according to a level of dominance within the individual's personality structure (Behrens 1997: 3).

Racial identity stages or statuses refer to that portion of a person's worldview that is shaped by society's manner of attributing value to a person's socially ascribed racial/ethnic group (Helms 1986: 62). Statuses, according to Behrens (1997: 3), produce schemas, which are behavioural manifestations of underlying statuses (cf. Chapter 2). In a racial event, such as racist messages in the media, the individual's ego selects the dominant status to help the person interpret the

material, and the schema then respond in ways that are consistent with the dictates of the status.

These statuses are measured by Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B) and the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and are presumed to develop in stages. Although the development of racial identity is a process (hence, the stages), the respondents in the current study were asked to interpret the newspaper material at a specific point in time. The respondent was thus at that moment in a specific stage of his/her racial identity development and will be treated as a component of a category, rather than an evolving phase or stage.

Three theoretical assumptions are implicit in the racial identity developmental models. The assumptions are (Helms 1990: 37).

- Racial identity development occurs via a statuses that can be assessed,
- Racial identity is bi-dimensional such that a Black person incorporates attitudes about Blacks as well as Whites into her/his identity, and
- Racial identity is relatively stable (though not necessarily permanent)

The assumption that racial identity is relatively stable means that a person's racial identity attitudes are enduring personality characteristics that influence the person's interactions within various environments (Helms 1990: 41). Racial identity development reflects a cognitive worldview ranging from less mature (Simplistic, inaccurate and externally defined) to more mature (complex, accurate and internally driven) (Pope 2000: 302).

The dominant level of racial identity acts as a cognitive lens or worldview with its own collection of feelings, attitudes and behaviours, which influence how the Black person views him/herself, others and the world around him/her (Pope

1998: 274). These characteristics could possibly influence the individual's interaction with the media, i.e. how he/she interprets the media messages.

#### **8.4.2 Stages of Black racial identity development**

The Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B) was developed using a diverse sample of university students (Helms 1990: 44). RIAS-B can thus be appropriately used to assess the racial identity of Black students, as is the case in this study.

A minimum criterion for using the scale is that it possesses internal consistency, that is, the subscales of the inventory assess different types of attitudes consistently (Helms 1990: 40). Furthermore, the scale predicts characteristics that should be related to racial identity according to theory (e.g. self-esteem, affective states), but does not predict those that should not be related (e.g. social class) (Helms 1990: 45).

Black racial identity development is presented by a four-stage model of racial identity development in which each stage is characterised by self-concept issues concerning race as well as parallel attitudes about Blacks and Whites as reference groups. Each stage has different implications for a person's feelings, thoughts and behaviours and ultimately his/her worldview (Helms 1990: 19). According to Helms (1990:19), this "worldview" implicates cognitive templates that people use to organise information about themselves, other people and institutions. These stages could possibly be helpful in determining the manner in which a receiver interprets a mass media message. The stages in Black racial identity development are Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion and Internalisation.

- **Pre-encounter** stage is dominated by the theme of idealisation of the dominant traditional White worldviews and, consequently, denigration of a

Black worldview (Helms 1990: 20). In modern society the dominant White worldview implicates that Whiteness and White culture is superior to Blackness and Black culture. Race and African culture at this stage have low salience for the individual who has little understanding regarding the socio-political implications of race in society (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997: 288).

The Pre-encounter person comes to perceive that he/she does not really fit into neither Black nor White group unconditionally. The conscious acknowledgement of this devaluation of the person's self, accompanied by feelings of alienation, initiates her/his movement into the next stage, i.e. Encounter (Helms 1990: 24).

- **Encounter** stage comprises of a mixture of feelings including confusion, hopelessness, anxiety, depression and eventually anger and euphoria. The abandonment of previous worldviews leaves the person "identity-less". This motivates a search for Black identity (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson 1997: 288).

A person needs a cognitive framework for making sense of one's emotions, the world and one's place in it. Consequently, the person begins an active search related to a religious rebirth (Helms 1990: 26). When the person realises that a positive Black identity must be developed and not merely found he/she is ready to enter the next stage, i.e. Immersion/Emersion (Helms 1990: 26).

- **Immersion** stage sees the person as he/she withdraws psychologically into Blackness and a Black world (Helms 1990: 26). The person thinks, feels and acts the way he/she believes "authentic" Blacks are supposed to. The person further judges and evaluates other Blacks on the basis of their conformance

to these "idealistic" racial standards. The person thus often acts Black in a very stereotypical way (Helms 1990: 27).

Emersion is a possible escape from Immersion. Entry into Emersion requires the opportunity to withdraw into Black community and to engage in catharsis within a supportive environment (Helms 1990: 28). Total acceptance of Blackness, as defined by others, is no longer necessary for the person to feel self-worth, and he/she begins to sort out the strengths and weaknesses of Black culture and being Black. As the person begins to feel greater control over him/herself, he/she moves into the Internalisation stage (Helms 1990: 28).

- **Internalisation** is dominated by the theme of internalising a positive personal relevant Black identity, i.e. a blend of personal identity with a Black ascribed identity. Black become the primary reference group to which one belongs, and the quality of one's belonging is no longer determined externally (Helms 1990: 28).

The Internalisation person rejects racism and he/she is able to re-establish relationships with individual Whites who merits such relations and analyse Whiteness and White culture for its strengths and weaknesses. The individual who tries to make sense of media experiences from an Internalising perspective risks misinterpretation and rejection by individuals who do not, cannot or will not understand the Internalising person's frame of reference (Helms 1990:29).

These stages are proposed to differ in emotional, behavioural and cognitive expression. Within each stage personal identity, reference group orientation and ascribed identity are thought to vary (Helms 1990: 31). The process is perceived as life long and recursive as individuals recycle through previous periods depending on life experiences and personal readiness (Betz & Fitzgerald 1993:

363). As the individual in each stage perceives the world differently, the stages could possibly influence the individual's perceptiveness of newspaper messages.

The stages into which a Black person can sort were calculated by the RIAS-B. This index is composed of 30 statements, each to be evaluated by a five-point Likert scale. The RIAS-B is the most widely used available scale to study Black racial identity development (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson 1997: 289). Helms (1990) constructed the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS), which is aimed at determining the racial identity development of a White person.

#### **8.4.3 White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS)**

One of the most influential models in racial research has been Helms' model of White racial identity (Sheets & Hollins 1999: 50). Helms identified a variety of ways in which White people may choose to identify with other Whites and develop racial cultural identities and realise the political implications resulting from their racial group membership (Sheets & Hollins 1999: 50).

In order to develop a healthy White identity, defined by Helms (1990: 50) in part as a nonracist identity, virtually every White person must overcome one or more aspects of racism. Additionally, Helms (1990: 50) adds, he/she must accept his/her own Whiteness, cultural implications of being White, and define a view of self as a racial being that does not depend on the perceived superiority of one racial group over another.

The evolution of a positive White racial identity comprises of two processes, namely the abandonment of racism and the development of a nonracist White identity (Helms 1990: 49). There is a proposed linear process of attitudinal development in which the White person potentially progress through a series of stages differing in the extent to which they involve the acknowledgement of racism (Helms 1990: 53). The highest stage in the development process

involves an awareness of personal responsibility for racism, consistent acknowledgement of one's Whiteness and abandonment of racism in any of its forms as a defining aspect of one's personality (Helms 1990: 53).

White racial identity development occurs via a five-stage process, each involving attitudes, emotions and behaviours in which Whites as well as Blacks are referents (Helms 1990: 55). The five stages are: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independent and Autonomy. These stages are rarely stepwise but, according to Sheets and Hollins (1999: 239), more like a spiral staircase where you might stop to look down and see where you were, but the vantagepoint has changed. As people move between stages their perspective on previously held ideas is inevitably altered (Sheets & Hollins 1999: 239).

- **Contact** stage occurs as soon as a person encounters the idea or actuality of Black people and is generally oblivious to racial issues (Helms 1990: 55). Once in the Contact stage, if one exhibits individual racism, it is probably exhibited in a weak and unsophisticated form since the person is just beginning to try his/her racial wings. The stage puts the individual into a situation where he/she automatically benefits from institutional and cultural racism without necessarily being aware of it. Although a contact person evaluates Blacks according to White criteria, he/she does so automatically without awareness that other criteria are possible (Helms 1990: 57)
- **Disintegration** entry signifies a conscious, though conflicted acknowledgement of one's Whiteness (Helms 1990: 58). This entry triggers the recognition of moral dilemmas with being White. Accompanying this conflict is a questioning of the racial realities the person has been taught to believe. The stage is thus characterised by increasing awareness of the ways in which their lives have been affected by race and the ways in which others have been negatively impacted and this leads to discomfort (Sheets & Hollins 1999: 240). In order to reduce discomfort the content of the person's belief

system will change and as this reshaping of his/her cognition occur, he/she enters the Reintegration stage (Helms 1990: 59-60).

- **Reintegration** stage embodies the person's conscious acknowledgement of a White identity (Helms 1990: 60). In the absence of contradictory experiences, to be White is to believe that one is superior to people of colour. Any residual feelings of guilt and anxiety are transformed into fear and anger towards Black people. Once the person begins to question his/her previous definition of Whiteness and the justifiability of racism in any of its forms, then he/she begins to move into the Pseudo-Independent stage (Helms 1990: 60-61).
- **Pseudo-Independent** is the first stage of redefining a positive White identity (Helms 1990: 61). The individual begins actively to question the proposition that Blacks are innately inferior to Whites and begins to acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism and to see how he/she wittingly and unwittingly perpetuates racism. The individual attempts to distance themselves from earlier stages that are now seen as problematic by moving away from earlier relationships and seeking to establish new ones with people of another colour (Sheets & Hollins 1999: 241).

Through a form of intellectual acceptance and curiosity about Blacks, the person starts to redefine his/her racial identity. The person may still behave in ways that unwittingly perpetuate his/her belief system. The person starts to feel marginal where race and racial issues are concerned, due to feeling uncomfortable with his/her White identity and over-identifying with Blacks. The quest for better definition of Whiteness signals his/her entry into the next stage (Helms 1990: 61-62).

- **Autonomy** signifies internalising, nurturing and applying the new definition of Whiteness evolved in the earlier stages (Helms 1990: 62). The person now no longer feels a need to oppress, idealise or denigrate on the basis of group

membership characteristics such as race. Reaching the Autonomy stage does not necessarily mean that the person is perfect with respect to all aspects of his/her identity (Helms 1990: 62-63).

The WRIAS has proved to be increasingly popular as the accepted instrument for quantifying White identity (Behrens 1997: 4). As one's racial identity appears to determine the manner in which you perceive the world around you, including the media, it might be important to determine where you are on the spiral staircase of racial identity.

#### **8.4.4 Method of measuring**

The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B) is a 30-item scale that was developed to measure attitudes associated with the various stages of Black identity development. Of the total of 305 respondent in this study, 146 completed the RIAS-B.

Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to indicate the extent to which each item was descriptive of them. The score for each of the four sub-scales (Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalisation) were obtained by adding the responses to the items indicated by a particular sub-scale and dividing by the number of items in the sub-scale to maintain the scale metric. Scores of each of the sub-scales could thus range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of a given attitude. Helms and Parham (1981: 252) reported the following internal consistency reliability coefficients for the four sub-scales: Pre-encounter, 0,67; Encounter, 0,72; Immersion/Emersion, 0,66; and Internalisation, 0,71.

The WRIAS was completed by 159 respondents (White, Coloured and Asian) who were enrolled at the University of the Free State. Due to the nature of the statements in both the WRIAS and RIAS-B it was decided to include the

Coloured and Asian respondents in the WRIAS survey. The WRIAS is a rationally derived scale based on Helms' model of White racial identity development. Each of the five sub-scales is measured by 10 items, each of which had a minimum item-total sub-scale correlation with its own scale of 0,30 in the original pilot study of the measure (Helms 1990: 68).

For each of the statements on the WRIAS index respondents were instructed to use a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to describe themselves. Scores are calculated by adding the point values of the responses marked by the respondents for each of the sub-scales. Each sub-scale sum was divided by 10 to maintain the scale metric. The higher the score, the more descriptive of the respondents is the sub-scale (Helms 1990: 69).

Coefficient reliabilities are reported not lower than 0,53 (Contact), 0,75 (Disintegration), 0,75 (Reintegration), 0,65 (Pseudo-Independence) and 0,65 (Autonomy) (Newswanger 1996: 538).

Validity information of the WRIAS indicates content, construct, as well as criterion validity (Helms 1990: 69-70). Construct validity concerns the adequacy of the scale in measuring the hypothetical construct of White racial identity.

Criterion validity shows a pattern of correlations in the direction hypothesised by the identity theory. Contact attitudes appear to be related to interpersonal receptivity as long as the person does not have to initiate the interaction (Helms 1990: 74). Disintegration attitudes were related to several attitudinal statements designed to assess symbolic racism. Higher disintegration attitudes were related to the beliefs that "government and news media respect Blacks too much" (Helms 1990: 74). Reintegration attitudes were found to be related to a number of symbolic racism attitudes that reflect three themes: (a) beliefs about Black's character; (b) attitudes toward interracial intimacy, and (c) beliefs about social-political policy (Helms 1990: 74). Pseudo-Independent attitudes were found to relate to liberal attitudes with regard to racial issues. According to Helms (1990:

75), autonomy attitudes were related to the belief that Blacks are not more likely than Whites to be involved in crime, one of the categories employed by the MMP.

Both RIAS and WRIAS respondents were asked to provide their gender, ethnic background, academic year and indicate where they received the majority of their secondary education (be it in a city or in a rural town). They were reassured that the information they provided was treated confidentially, that their identities remained secret and that they should consequently be as honest as possible. The word "racism" was avoided as far as possible, in order to eliminate possible respondent bias. The respondents were encouraged to discuss the RIAS-B and/or WRIAS index with the researcher after completing it. This was deemed necessary considering the sensitive nature of the index and to decrease any negativity towards the study. See Appendix E for introductory instructions.

As each stage of racial identity is characterised by different worldviews, it would appear as if the racial identity attitude of the respondent could influence his/her perceptiveness of racist messages in the media. This racial identity attitude was treated as an independent variable in the interpretation of the respondents' evaluation of the newspaper items, administered during the completion of the questionnaire.

## **8.5. SURVEY RESEARCH**

Surveys are in general comprehensive, customised, versatile, flexible and efficient (Alreck & Settle 1985: 6 - 7). Wimmer and Dominick (1997: 137) list a number of advantages, which include the fact that a large amount of data can be collected with relative ease from a variety of people. This allows the research to examine many variables and to use multivariate statistics to analyse the data (Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 138). In the current study a data base was compiled from 305 questionnaires (146 Black and 159 White) completed by students at the University of the Free State (UFS).

### 8.5.1. Development of the measurement instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions, 4 of which were demographic, 18 were Likert-scale statements and 3 were multiple choice questions (see Appendix G).

The demographic information was used to determine the possible influence of the independent demographic variables on the respondent's evaluation of newspaper items. The respondents were asked to indicate their gender, ethnic background (race), academic year at the University and if they received their secondary education in the city or a rural town.

The questionnaire was divided into four types of newspaper items, namely photograph, letter, article and cartoon. These types represented the two primary types of newspaper items that were identified as having the highest frequency of racist messages (i.e. article and letter) and the two that had the lowest frequency (i.e. cartoon and photograph). It was by means of the content analysis that the four items were identified. All the items contained implicit racist message, and represented a number of categories used in the content analysis.

Items that were relatively short were used in the study, as long items could lead to respondent fatigue. The four items are attached to the study as Appendix A, B, C and D respectively.

While formulating the questions certain criteria were considered. These include the difficulty of answering and avoiding leading questions, long questions and too sensitive questions (Hoinville & Jowell 1977: 31). Racism in itself is a sensitive issue and exposing the respondents to questions with such relative sensitive word might influence the results of the study. These words were consequently avoided.

As this study was of a quantitative nature the questionnaire contained only closed questions, which made the data easier to quantify. The response categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The questionnaire was tested in the pilot study in order to determine any possible interpretation problems the respondents may have.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the newspaper items by means of a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). According to Babbie and Mouton (1998: 153) the particular value of the Likert scale is the "unambiguous ordinality of response categories". This method uses a question format to determine the relative intensity of different items (Babbie & Mouton 1998: 154). The majority of statements used in the Likert scale were directly deduced from the categories used in the content analysis. The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the statement represents the message conveyed by the newspaper item.

For the remaining questions, not measured by the Likert scale respondents, after studying the item, were asked to indicate whether they perceived the item as objective, unethical, insensitive or racist.

#### **8.5.2. Population and sampling**

For the purpose of this study, the population was defined as all students attending the University of the Free State (UFS). A non-probability convenience sample was used, as the respondents were all students attending class in certain subjects at the University of the Free State and were thus readily available respondents who sort into the determined population of the study. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and the previously discussed WRIAS and RIAS-B indexes. The respondents were pre-graduate and

post-graduate students and completed the indexes voluntarily, i.e. no extra course credit was given for completing the survey.

A total of 305 questionnaires were completed. The group consisted of 146 Black, 146 White, 7 Coloured and 6 Asian respondents. The Coloured and Asian respondents completed the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and were consequently included in the White response group based on the nature of the statements used in both the RIAS and WRAIS. The final composition of each race group was thus 146 Black respondents and 159 White respondents.

### **8.5.3. Data capturing**

The data was captured during scheduled lectures for which arrangements were made in advance.

In order to avoid bias the respondents were told that the RIAS-B and WRIAS measured their "social and political attitudes". The word "racism" was avoided as far as possible as it is a potential emotionally loaded word, especially in present day South Africa. See Appendix E for introduction to RIAS and WRIAS indexes.

The respondents first completed the RIAS-B or the WRIAS (depending on their ethnic background) before the questionnaire was administered to them. Two Black students indicated that they were uncomfortable with certain statements in the RIAS-B index. These respondents were invited to discuss the index with the researcher in order to avoid respondent bias. Their objections stemmed from the sensitive nature of the statements used in the RIAS-B, such as "Blacks are untrustworthy". There were no complaints from the White students regarding the WRIAS.

Each respondent was given a respondent code on the index, which they had to copy onto the questionnaire. This code served only to connect the completed

RIAS-B and WRIAS to the respondent's response to the second questionnaire, in order to connect the RIAS-B and WRIAS results to the respondent's second questionnaire. Ultimately this connection determined whether the respondent's racial identity attitude influenced his/her interpretation of the media messages.

Before completing the second questionnaire the respondents were again reassured that the information they supplied remained confidential and that their identities were kept secret. The demographic questions completed on the RIAS-B or WRIAS were repeated on the second questionnaire in order to have a positive connection between the first and the second completed items. The respondents were again encouraged to discuss the index and questionnaire with the researcher after completing it, due to the sensitive nature thereof. See Appendix F for the introductory instructions.

The questionnaire contained the four newspaper items, which the respondents were asked to evaluate. No complaints were received from the respondents regarding the potential racist messages in the newspaper items. The demographic variables obtained via the second questionnaire were treated as independent variables to determine correlations or statistical significant differences among the various demographic groups.

#### **8.5.4. Data analysis**

The data was first submitted for frequency distributions. Apart from the holistic picture the data frequency tables provide, it also identifies possible errors and omissions in responses and scoring. These were then corrected before the data was further analysed. On certain variables there were relatively high non-responses and these were recoded to "other" and not reported as "missing" data. This was done in order to avoid the loss of data. These are pointed out when discussing the applicable variable.

A cross-tabulation indicates the relationship between two categorical variables (Alreck & Settle 1985: 304). Cross-tabulations were done for Black and White respondents separately. The objective of the cross-tabulation was to determine whether or not the distributions of one variable differ significantly for each value of the other variable, i.e. did the responses of the White group differ from that of the Black group. The statistic used to assess significance between variables is the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value (Alreck & Settle 1985: 344).

Chi-square is a frequently used test of significance and it is based on the null hypothesis: the assumption that there is no relationship between two variables in the total population (Babbie & Mouton 1998: 481). Given the observed distribution of values on two separate variables, chi-square is computed by the conjoint distribution that would be expected if there was no relationship between two variables (Babbie & Mouton 1998: 481). This expected distribution is then compared with the distribution of cases actually found in the sample data, and then the probability that the discovered discrepancy could have resulted from sampling error alone, is determined (Babbie & Mouton 1998: 481).

In order to determine the statistical significance of the observed relationship between two variables, a standard set of chi-square values must be used. This is done by computing the degrees of freedom (df), "which refers to the possibilities for variation within a statistical model" (Babbie & Mouton 1998: 483).

Next to chi-square and correlation, analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures are frequently used in data analysis (Aiken 1997: 135). ANOVA procedures allow the analysis of the main effects of between-groups and within-groups differences. The effects of the simple and higher-order interactions between two or more independent variables on one or multiple dependent variables can also be analysed (Aiken 1997: 138).

Alreck and Settle (1985: 311) state that ANOVA is a technique used to measure the statistical significance of differences between means. This will generate an F-ratio and an indication of the degrees of freedom (df) (Alreck & Settle 1985: 312). If one of the groups used in the ANOVA procedure is significantly different from the other groups (i.e. the F-ratio is statistically different), it will be shown by the multiple-comparison (or Scheffé) test.

A factor analysis of all the variables was done in order to determine patterns amongst the variations in values of the various variables. A main component factor analysis was done through the generalisation of artificial dimensions (factors) that correlate highly with several of the real variables and that are independent of one another. The data was analysed according to the two criteria given by Babbie and Mouton (1998: 473), namely that "a factor must explain a relatively large portion of the variance found in the study variable" and "every factor must be more or less independent of every other factor".

Six factors were extracted and then rotated by means of the Oblimin method, in order to attempt a subjective interpretation of the factors that have been obtained (Williams 1986: 183). A further factor analysis was done for the Black and White response groups individually. This served to determine whether there were different factors identified by Black and White respondents regarding the perceptiveness of the newspaper items.

The results are reported in Chapter 10 and discussed Chapter 11.

## **8.6. CONCLUSION**

There are various research tools that can be used in order to accurately observe certain trends in society. Content analysis is an effective method to break discourse into understandable and quantifiable bits of data. This helps to identify implicit messages in the discourse that cannot be seen on the surface. As

mentioned earlier in the discussion, the categories used for this were replicated from those used by the MMP.

The perceptiveness of a mass media message receiver can be influenced by a number of factors. Racism was identified as a possible factor that could influence such perceptiveness. The racial identity attitude scale (RIAS and WRIAS) developed by Helms (1990), could possibly help in the identification of each respondent's racial attitude, in the theory this attitude was shown to be influential in the worldview of the respondent. A person's racial identity attitude influences the way in which he/she perceives the world around him/her, and this possibly include his/her perception of media content.

The questionnaire was the continuation of the MMP content analysis and the possible consecutive step omitted in the HRC inquiry.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

#### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter centres on the findings of the first of the three stages in this study, i.e. the content analysis. The content of three major newspapers (*Mail & Guardian*, *The Star* and *The Citizen*) was analysed over a period of nine (9) weeks (20 March 2001 to 18 May 2001). The categories used in the content analysis were replicated from those used in by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) whilst compiling the report on racism in the media. The findings of the MMP were discussed in Chapter 6.

The findings of the current study are discussed according to these categories employed to analyse the content of the newspapers:

- 9.2. Type of item
- 9.3. Subject of item
- 9.4. Category findings
  - 9.4.1. Blacks are criminals (Category 1)
  - 9.4.2. African society is primitive (Category 4)
  - 9.4.3. Black lives are unimportant (Category 7)
  - 9.4.4. Blacks are incompetent and incapable (Category 10)
  - 9.4.5. People act according to their ethnic identity (Category 12)
- 9.5. Conclusion

## 9.2. TYPE OF ITEM

A total of 848 items were identified, which contained either implicit or explicit racist content. These were considered according to the type of item, subject cover by the item and whether or not the item supported or opposed the proposition in the message, or whether it was coded as being neutral. These considerations are subsequently discussed individually.

The results of the type of each item (e.g. editorials, news items, cartoons, etc.) which indicated either implicit or explicit racial content are represented in Chart 1 (following page).

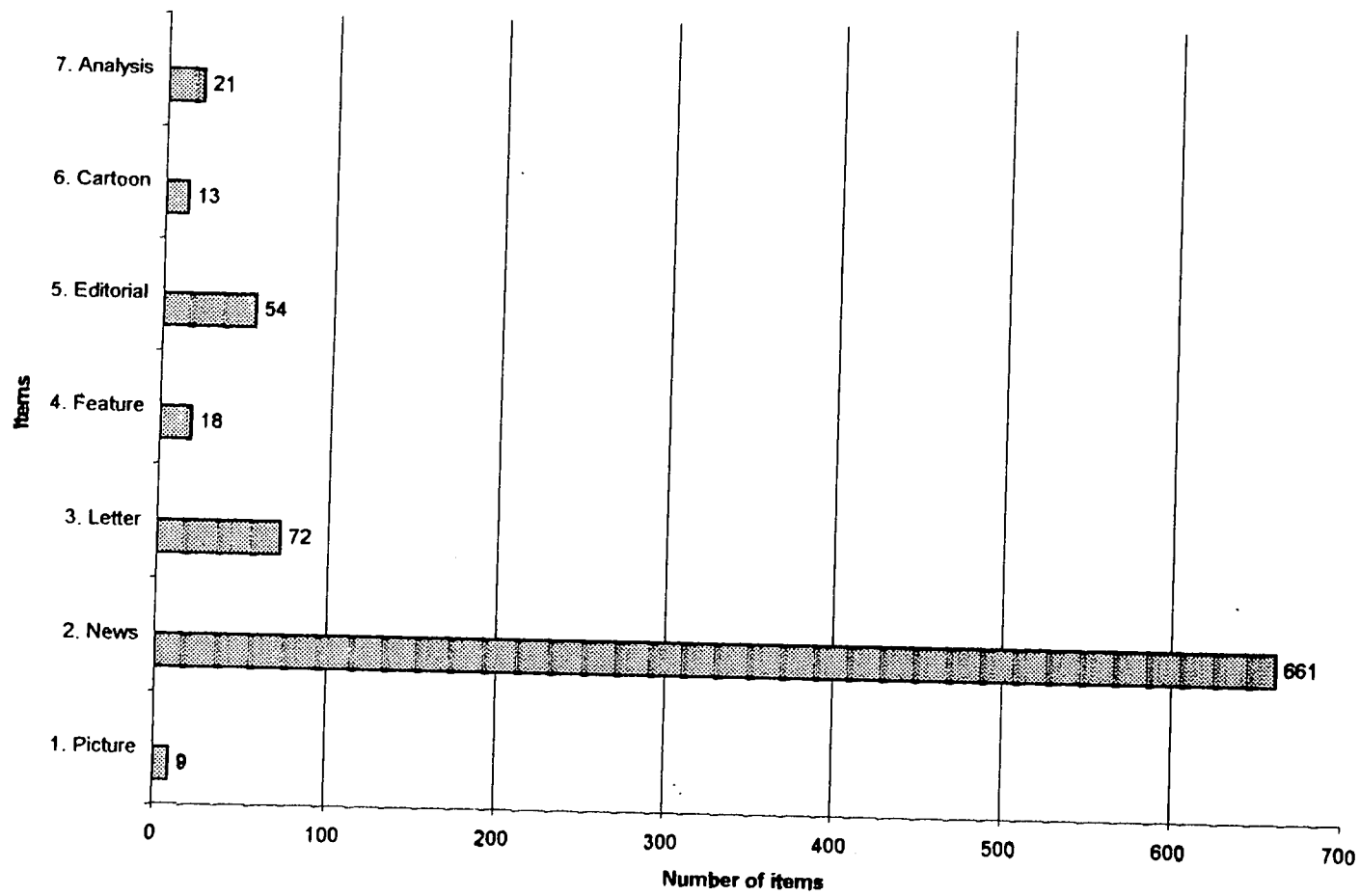
From Chart 1 it is clear that news dominated the other types of items (661 items). This is not surprising as a major part of a newspaper consists of news items. More letters contained racial undertones than editorials, even though editorials are often conceived as being very critical and sometimes even blatantly offensive, irrespective of the topic. The following figure (Figure 5) provides a summary of particular newspaper headlines and articles that were identified.

**FIGURE 5 Examples of type of newspaper reports**

Heading	Publication
Plunging a nation into distress	<i>The Star</i> , Editorial; 30 April, 2001
Will black journo's please stop generalising when white bashing	<i>The Star</i> , Letter; 2 April, 2001.
United we stand, divided we die	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , Editorial; 11 May 2001.
Adopting the tactics of the oppressors.	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , Letter; 11 May 2001.
Flight of nurses no surprise.	<i>The Star</i> , Letter; 3 April 2001

Items that were categorised as being analytical tended to focus on individual struggles, be it racial or social. These were played against a broader background

**CHART 1 Type of Item**



which indicated the influence that race and history had on certain individuals. Of the 21 identified analytical items, 13 were concentrated on the African historical backdrop (see Figure 6). These items more often than not opposed the categories identified in this study. Sixteen (16) of the 21 items opposed the racist propositions inherent in analytical items, 4 were neutral and only 1 of the 21 items supported the categories.

**FIGURE 6** Examples of newspaper reports focussed on Africa

Heading	Publication
African history is linked to Egypt	<i>The Star</i> , Monday 2 April, 2001
The black world was initiator of civilisation	<i>The Star</i> , Monday 2 April, 2001

Fashion and beauty features in newspapers tended to have a racial undertone (18 items; Chart 1). Beauty features published mainly hints aimed at the White female reader and fashion inserts primarily focused on White models, possibly supporting the category that "Black women are ugly". A total of 18 identified items rendered only 2 that were coded as neutral, leaving 16 items supporting the premises that White women are more beautiful. Other features (including horoscopes, entertainment, cooking and travel) in the respective papers did not present any possible implicit or explicit racist messages.

Cartoon strips were mainly aimed at the government and other political situations. A prominent topic for cartoon humour was the scandal surrounding Tony Yengeni's purchase of a new motor vehicle with alleged state money. Further cartoon interests concerned the claims that President Mbeki's life was under threat. Of the 13 cartoons, which contained potential racist messages, 9 supported the categories under investigation. Three of the remaining cartoons were coded as being neutral and only 1 opposed the categories.

In the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) inquiry it was often found that pictures of dead Black bodies would be published. According to the MMP this implicated that "Blacks die in large numbers" and consequently that "Black lives are unimportant" (MMP 1999: 23, 25). During the time of analysis the Ellis Park Soccer tragedy occurred, in which 43 people were killed in a stampede. Pictures of the deceased were showed in the media. According to the MMP "the accumulative effect of the constant use of pictures depicting Black people injured or lying in a pool of blood supports the proposition that Blacks are used to being injured and consequently this reduces sympathy for them" (MMP 1999: 23). The use of pictures was accompanied by repeated reference of the number of people that were killed, rather than individual deaths. Using the MMP criteria for analysis this would be classified as being racist reporting.

Of the 9 identified pictures, 4 focused on the Ellis Park Tragedy, including the mourning of the relatives. The MMP indicated that intrusion on the grieving of Black people creates the idea that Blacks are "very emotional and out of control" (MMP 1999: 24). Examples of reports on the soccer tragedies are summarised in Figure 7, on the following page.

Of the remaining 5 photograph items, 2 items opposed the proposition that "Black lives are unimportant" and that serious crime primarily occurs in White areas. They depicted the ecstatic happiness of a Black father after his toddler was returned safely to him ("The unlikely heroes who brought Lebo back home, *The Star*, 2 April, 2001: 8). A political violence stereotype was identified in 1 photograph, where Black Cosas supporters were shown vandalising a street market (*The Star*, 7 May, 2001: 7). Two photographs depicting Black children suffering from illness were identified as stereotypes of Black suffering, living in deteriorating conditions and spreading decease (*Mail & Guardian*, 4 May 2001:34; *Mail & Guardian*, 11 May 2001:10).

**FIGURE 7 Examples of newspaper reports on soccer tragedies**

Heading	Publication
Ghana stampede leaves 130 fans dead	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 15 May, 2001.
Tragedy won't affect World Cup in Africa	<i>The Star</i> , 10 May, 2001.
Scores die in Africa's worst football disaster	<i>The Star</i> , 11 May, 2001.

The type of item appeared to play a role in the reporting of an event, i.e. a cartoon is suppose to be light-hearted but can have a strong racist message. In order to determine if there are differences in the manner in which the readers perceive the messages brought across by the various types of items, the respondents of this study were presented with four different types of items. The results of the survey are discussed in the following Chapter.

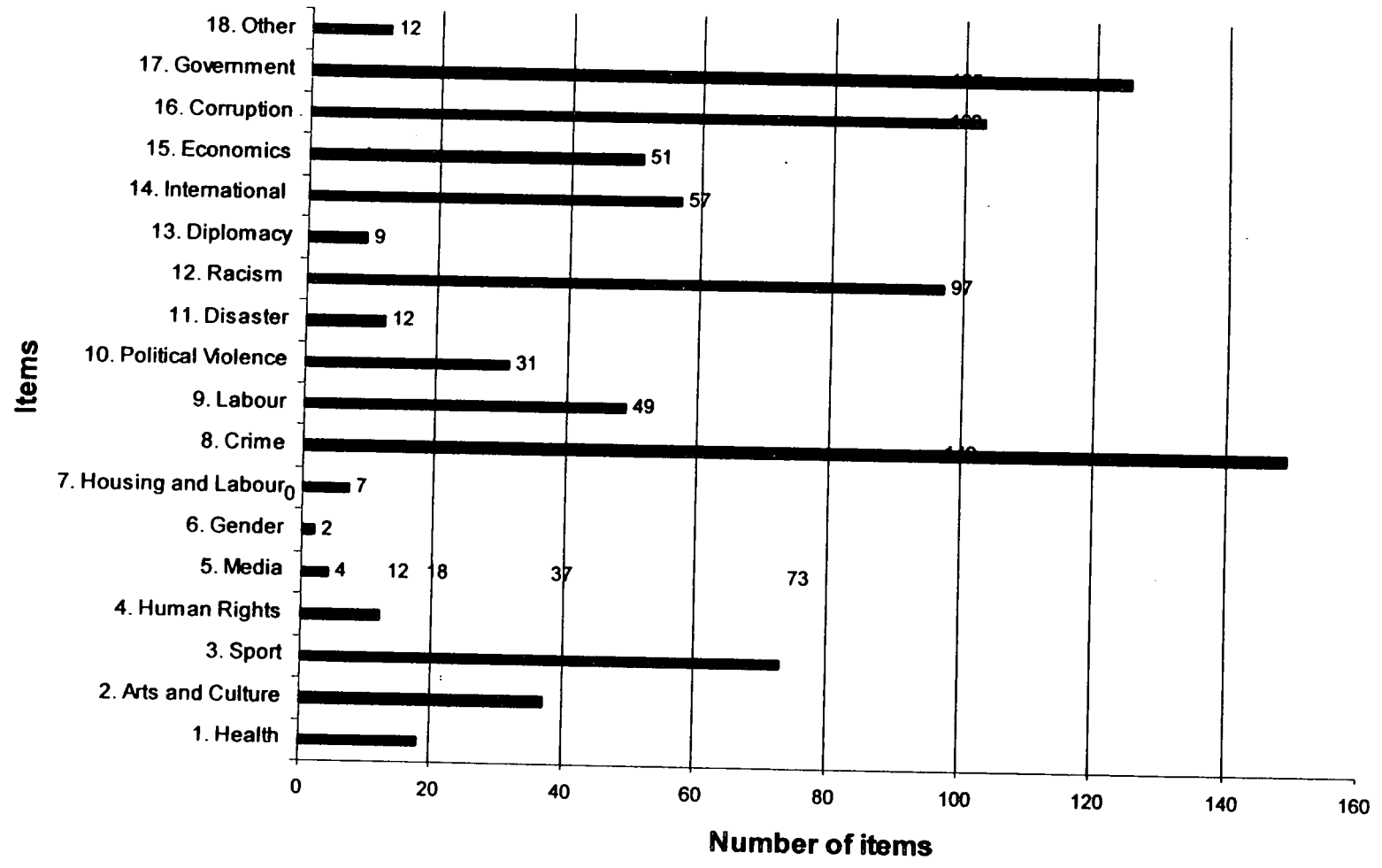
### 9.3. SUBJECT OF ITEM

The contents of the newspapers were further categorised according to the subjects that were covered. These subjects included health, arts and culture, sport, human rights, media, gender, housing and land affairs, crime, labour, political violence, disaster, racism, diplomacy, international, economics, corruption and government. These are summarised in Chart 2 on the following page.

**FIGURE 8 Examples of crime reports**

Heading	Publication
Igesund ill after assault	<i>The Citizen</i> , 28 April, 2001 (whole report – celebrity)
Man fights off hijackers	<i>The Citizen</i> , 28 April, 2001 (paragraph mention)
Rapists strike in Pta street	<i>The Citizen</i> , 28 April, 2001 (paragraph mention)
Nurse found guilty of raping boy	<i>The Star</i> , 11 May, 2001 (paragraph mention)

**CHART 2 Subject of items**



The South African society is rife with crime. This is possibly reflected by the repetitive reporting on crime incidents (149 items; Chart 2). Due to this frequency in the media and society as a whole, crime reports are reduced to one-paragraph items (see Figure 8). These reports were merely mentioned in a column dedicated to crime (e.g. Newscheck, The Citizen; Crime Count and Crimebusters, The Star). When a crime is more high profile, e.g. when a minister is involved or a celebrity is a victim, the report received more attention (see Figure 8 for such examples).

Government received extensive coverage, especially with the alleged threat to President Mbeki's life and the Yengeni probe (see Figure 9). Other topics, which were also prominent, were the investigation into the government's arms deal and Patricia de Lill's accusations concerning the arms deal.

**FIGURE 9 Examples of government reports**

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Publication</b>
MEC quits, blames ANC for crisis	<i>The Star</i> , 30 April, 2001
Committee to decide on Yengeni probe	<i>The Star</i> , 9 May, 2001
Net closes on Phosa	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 17 May, 2001.
Dissident supports plot against Mbeki	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 18 May, 2001
Mbeki urges conciliation	<i>The Citizen</i> , 28 April, 2001

The resignation of the MEC for health in the Eastern Cape, Dr. Trudy Thomas and her accusations of the ANC government's failure also received extensive coverage. The Government remained a controversial subject in the media, and any irregularities within the government were immediately addressed (Figure 9).

Another subject that received prominence was corruption (Chart 2, on previous page). Certain elements of the controversial arms deal pointed to dishonesty.

This resulted in a prominent feature of the subject in the press (103 items; Chart 2). Further corruption was illuminated by Tony Yengeni's expensive motor vehicle, which he allegedly bought with state funds. The press reported every move the government and Yengeni made in the whole debacle.

Items, which sorted under the subject of racism, mainly opposed the proposition. Human Rights' Day prompted various outcries against racism and the apparent influence it still had on the South African society. This event also resulted on the 12 items identified under the subject of human rights, all of which opposed racist positions (Chart 2).

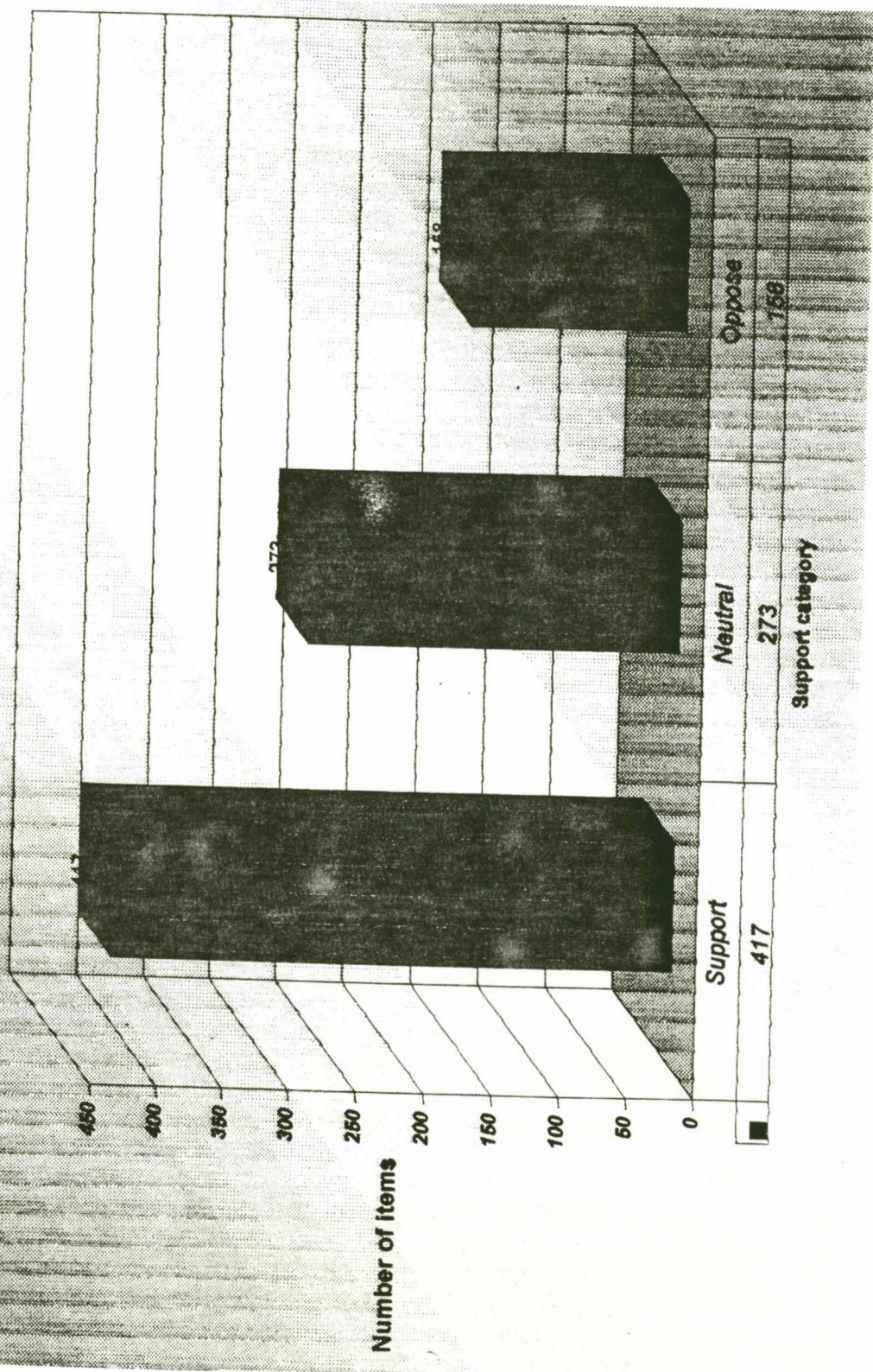
Sport, economics and labour issues were regular features in the press. Within these categories the prominence of White expertise was clear. White males did a prominent portion of the comments and analysis in these reports. The previously mentioned soccer tragedy also contributed to the high prominence of sport items.

#### 9.4 CATEGORY FINDINGS

All the identified items were analysed according to whether or not their content supported or opposed racist propositions or if it could be coded as being neutral. As can be seen in Chart 3 (following page), 417 items (49,2%) of the identified items supported one or more of the categories, 273 items (32,2%) were coded as being neutral and a total of 158 (18,6%) opposed the propositions.

Although most of the categories were not directly observed on the surface of the message, the mere implication of their presence was derived from the text. The propositions within the categories were formulated to capture the implicit or explicit racist propositions that arise either on or concealed under the surface of the message.

CHART 3 Nature of Support



The obvious prominence of items that supported the racist propositions of the categories, possibly indicated that a major portion of media reporting contained racist undertones. Of the 848 items that were identified, a total of 417 items supported racist propositions (Chart 3).

Of the categories investigated, 8 of the 14 indicated a support of 50% or more. These include items that support a racist worldview (54,8%), implicate that Blacks are criminal (61,8%), Blacks are irrational (70,0%), African society is primitive (60,0%), Blacks are dirty (63,2%), western society is civilised and modern (50,5%), Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves (54,2%), and all Whites are racists (62,5%) (Table 1).

Category 3 showed a 70,0% support of the propositions that "Blacks are irrational" (see Table 1). There was however only 10 items identified in the category, of which 7 were in support of the statement, the other three were coded as being neutral.

**TABLE 1 Categories with over 50% support**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
9 - Western society is civilised and modern	50,0%
10 - Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves	54,2%
13 - Item supports a racist worldview	54,8%
4 - African society is primitive	60,0%
1 - Blacks are criminal	61,8%
14 - All whites are racists	62,5%
5 - Blacks are dirty	63,2%
3 - Blacks are irrational	70,0%

Category 5 (Blacks are dirty) showed a support of 63,2%, i.e. of the 38 identified items, 24 supported the proposition that "Blacks are dirty". The sub-category, "Blacks live in squalor" (5A), accounted for 12 of the 24 items. Reports on the deteriorating circumstances in Black residential areas and financial problems in Black social areas constituted the majority of items that supported this sub-

category ("Govt kickstarts development strategy", *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001:16; "No resting place for the dead", *Mail & Guardian*, 11 May, 2001:4)

Category 4 concentrated on African society. A total of 60,0% (45 of the 75 identified items) supported the proposition that "African society is primitive" (see Table 4). A major portion of the support for this was in sub-category 4(l) (Africa is ridden with disaster, disease and violence). This can be attributed to the two soccer tragedies that struck Africa during the analysis period. These were interpreted as violent, leading to the death of over a hundred people, mainly Black (*The Star*, 12 April, 2001; *Mail & Guardian*, 20 April, 2001). Other examples include the association of Black people with the financial problems affecting the SA Red Cross (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 May, 2001); the depicting of Black children affected by poisoned peanut butter (*Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001).

The category with the most identified items was category 10 (blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything themselves) (see Table 1). A total of 271 items were captured, indicating a 54,2% support of the proposition (Table 2). The current ANC government was frequently in the spotlight, even more so with the alleged fraudulent arms deal and the corruption scandal surrounding Tony Yengeni's new motor vehicle. Consequently, 37 items of support were identified for sub-category 10A (Black government leads to crime and corruption) (see Table 2).

The previously mentioned resignation of ANC parliamentarian, Dr. Trudy Thomas, contributed to the high support of category 10G (Black parliamentarians are inefficient and lazy) (see Table 2). The press reported extensively on the subject, spelling out Thomas's decision in great detail and in the process attacking the government (*The Star*, 30 April, 2001; *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001).

The various reports on the high crime rate and the deteriorating circumstances of certain areas constituted a high number of items that were identified under category 10D (see Table 1). The government received sharp criticism on this, e.g. "No justice for rape survivors", *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001), "Yengeni has little to far from the law" (*Mail & Guardian*, 30 March, 2001), "Waiting for the pennies to drop" (*Mail & Guardian*, 30 March, 2001), "Cosas has lost it, out of control" (*The Star*, 7 May, 2001).

Only five of the categories will be discussed in detail in order to demonstrate their findings.

**TABLE 2 Category 10 (Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Support (N)</u>	<u>Neutral (N)</u>	<u>Oppose (N)</u>	<u>Total (N)(%)</u>
10A - Black government leads to crime and corruption	37	12	6	55 (20,1%)
10B - Black government leads to anarchy and the breakdown of social order	12	7	4	23 (8,5%)
10C - Black government, like Communism, damages society	14	9	4	27 (9,9%)
10D - Black government fails	22	18	10	50 (18,4%)
10E - Blacks are undemocratic	17	7	3	27 (9,9%)
10F - Blacks are power hungry	8	13	4	25 (9,2%)
10G - Black parliamentarians are inefficient and lazy	32	21	11	64 (23,6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>271</b>

#### 9.4.1. Blacks are criminal (Category 1)

A total of 68 items were identified under this category. A total of 42 of the 68 items supported the category, whereas only 14 challenged it (Table 3). Crime reporting constituted a considerable part of the content in the media. During the analysis 848 items were identified, 149 of which concentrated on crime (Chart 2),

i.e. 17,6% of the total content of the newspapers was concentrated on crime, excluding corruption and political violence.

**TABLE 3 Category 1 (Blacks are criminal)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Support</u> (N)	<u>Neutral</u> (N)	<u>Oppose</u> (N)	<u>Total</u> (N)(%)
<b>1A</b> - It is normal for Blacks to commit crime	9	0	1	10 (14,7%)
<b>1B</b> - Black criminals are brutal and inhuman	20	5	2	27 (39,7%)
<b>1C</b> - Blacks want revenge against innocent whites	4	0	1	5 (7,3%)
<b>1D</b> - Serious crime occurs primarily in white areas	9	7	10	26 (38,2%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	42	12	14	68

An overwhelming support of sub-category 1(B) can be attributed to the manner in which crime was reported (see Table 3). Most of the previously mentioned one-paragraph crime reports indicated that the crime is committed in Black areas, to Blacks by Blacks.

Category 1(D) was found to have more items opposing the proposition than having support (see Table 3). Although serious crime did occur in the primarily White areas, criminal activity within the primarily Black communities received similar coverage.

#### **9.4.2 African society is primitive (Category 4)**

The press spotlight often highlighted Africa and the political conditions on the continent. On Human Rights' Day various articles were placed in the press concerning Africa's contribution and position with regard to first world countries, such as America and Europe. African history that was included in these features

highlighted the importance of Africa in the history of the world and the influence it had on other countries, thus opposing the proposition that "African history is primitive". A heated topic in *The Star* was the origin of the Egyptians, questioning whether the Egyptians were Black or not ("Whoever built pyramids did so at great human cost – do we want the credit", *The Star*, 2 May, 2001; "Doesn't matter what race built Africa's jewels", *The Star*, 4 May, 2001).

The land occupation of the Zimbabwean war veterans created the impression that "African traditions are barbaric". The occupation of farms was described in such a way that the war veterans appeared barbaric and irrational. The use of traditional weapons and that constant reference to the traditions honoured by the war veterans created the idea that "African traditions generally were barbaric".

**TABLE 4 Category 4 (African society is primitive)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Support</u> (N)	<u>Neutral</u> (N)	<u>Oppose</u> (N)	<u>Total</u> (N)(%)
4A - African traditions are barbaric	7	2	0	9 (12,0%)
4B - Blacks are simple	3	0	1	4 (5,3%)
4C - Blacks are lazy	2	1	1	4 (5,3%)
4D - Blacks act on instinct	4	0	0	4 (5,3%)
4E - Black women breed	0	0	1	1 (1,3%)
4F - Blacks need whites to advance	2	1	2	5 (6,6%)
4G - African history is primitive	1	0	3	4 (5,3%)
4H - Africa doesn't contribute to world civilisation	10	7	2	19 (25,3%)
4I - Africa is ridden with disaster, disease and violence	12	4	2	18 (24,0%)
4J - There can be no African renaissance	1	1	2	4 (5,3%)
4K - Blacks are child-like	1	0	0	1 (1,3%)
4L - Only Blacks can be African	2	0	0	2 (2,6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>75</b>

As mentioned earlier, the soccer disasters that happened in Africa during the period of analysis contributed to the high support of sub-category 4(I) (Africa is

ridden with disaster, disease and violence) (see Table 4). These disasters received widespread coverage, depicting the incidents as violent and mainly affecting Black soccer supporters (*The Star* 13 April, 2001; *Mail & Guardian*, 11 May, 2001).

#### 9.4.3 Black lives are unimportant (Category 7)

A total of 119 items were identified within this category. This can be attributed to the dominant presence of crime reporting, as most of the sub-categories are centred on this element (following table).

**TABLE 5 Category 7 (Black lives are unimportant)**

Category	<u>Support</u> (N)	<u>Neutral</u> (N)	<u>Oppose</u> (N)	<u>Total (N)</u> (%)
7A – Blacks are used to being injured/killed	7	13	22	42 (35,3%)
7B – Blacks don't need privacy	3	4	11	18 (15,1%)
7C – Blacks die in large numbers	10	15	5	30 (25,2%)
7D – Black victims wait to be helped	10	13	6	29 (24,4%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>119</b>

Within this category there was an apparent lack of support for the propositions (see Table 5). Only 30 of the 119 identified items (i.e. 25,2%) supported the proposition that "Black lives are unimportant" (Table 5). A major portion of the items (45 items; 37,8%) was coded as being neutral and thus contained no definite racial implication.

Sub-category 7(A) received the most opposition (22 items; Table 5). One of the prominent subjects in the media was identified as crime (Chart 2). Victims, irrespective of their race, received media attention. Where children were involved there was a definite increase in the coverage that the incident received. The agony of a Black father when his toddler was abducted and his joy when he

was found, received intensive media coverage ("The unlikely heroes who brought Lebo back home", *The Star*, 2 April, 2001). There were no distinction made between this incident involving a Black child and a previous abduction involving a White child. Both received the same media coverage and the suffering and joy of the families were equally presented.

The MMP report assigned the intrusion on Black mourners to the category stating that "Blacks don't need privacy". The only items found in support of this were the reporting on the families of the victims of the Ellis Park soccer tragedy. Mourners were shown at Ellis Park during a memorial service held for the victims (*The Citizen*, 18 April, 2001) The death of Tim Modise's wife in a car accident received media attention, but no intrusion was made on the family's mourning nor their personal lives.

#### 9.4.4. Blacks are incompetent and incapable (Category 10)

This category primarily focused on the government. The government as subject received the second highest coverage of all the identified subjects (125 items) (Chart 2). During the period of analysis parliament was in session. This could have had an influence on the amount of the coverage government received.

**FIGURE 10** Examples of government corruption reports

Heading	Publication
Arms deal kingpin helped Jacob Zuma...	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 30 March, 2001.
Benz man won arms bid	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 30 March, 2001.
Mbeki urges conciliation	<i>The Citizen</i> , 28 April, 2001
Mbeki accused of betraying chiefs	<i>The Star</i> , 30 April, 2001.
Winnie teased over rare appearance in Assembly	<i>The Star</i> , 9 May, 2001.
Bad-mouthing of minerals bill could back-fire	<i>The Star</i> , 9 May, 2001.
Committee vote saves Yengeni...for now	<i>Mail &amp; Guardian</i> , 11 May, 2001.

Sub-category 10 (A) received a tremendous support (see table below). The press focussed intensely on the Tony Yengeni saga, as well as the alleged fraudulent arms deal and the alleged plot to oust President Mbeki (see Figure 10). These incidents had an unmistakable influence in the number of items that supported the category.

Another sub-category influenced by the above-mentioned sagas, is sub-category 10(G) (Black parliamentarians are inefficient and lazy) (see Table 6). This category was also influenced by reports on breakdowns within certain governmental departments. These criticisms mainly originated from parliamentary discussions, and issues that were raised by opposition parties. The resignation of Dr. Trudy Thomas, MEC for health in the Eastern Cape contributed to the items that supported this proposition. Where the parliamentary discussions were clearly indicated, the item was coded as being neutral in order to differentiate between the reporter's interpretation and the actual happenings in parliament.

**TABLE 6 Category 10 (Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything themselves)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Support</u> (N)	<u>Neutral</u> (N)	<u>Oppose</u> (N)	<u>Total</u> (N)(%)
10A - Black government leads to crime and corruption	37	12	6	55 (20,3%)
10B - Black government leads to anarchy and the breakdown of social order	12	7	4	23 (8,5%)
10C - Black government, like communism, damages society	14	9	4	27 (9,9%)
10D - Black government fails	22	18	10	50 (18,5%)
10E - Blacks are undemocratic	17	7	3	27 (9,9%)
10F - Blacks are power hungry	13	8	4	25 (9,2%)
10G - Black parliamentarians are inefficient and lazy	32	21	11	64 (23,6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	147	82	42	<b>271</b>

#### 9.4.5. People act according to their ethnic identity (Category 12)

Although ethnic identity is often not directly mentioned, the inference exists that certain ethnic groups act in predetermined ways. As can be seen in sub-category 12(G) (Muslims support terrorism). Muslims were often represented as terrorists. Reports surrounding terrorism contain references to Muslims in 10 of the 16 identified items (Table 7).

**TABLE 7 Category 12 (People act according to their ethnic identity)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Support</u> (N)	<u>Neutral</u> (N)	<u>Oppose</u> (N)	<u>Total</u> (N)(%)
12A - Jews lie and are manipulative	2	7	0	9 (8,3%)
12B - Jews control the economy and the media	4	3	1	8 (7,4%)
12C - Indians are corrupt	5	2	0	7 (6,5%)
12D - Coloureds are degenerate and gangsters	8	5	2	15 (13,8%)
12E - Afrikaners are bigot	11	24	2	37 (34,3%)
12F - White farmers are cruel and exploitative	9	7	0	16 (14,8%)
12G - Muslims support terrorism.	10	4	2	16 (14,8%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>108</b>

Items involving Afrikaners tended to be more neutral, slanting to support of the category stating that "Afrikaners are bigot" (Table 7). As with category 12(F) (White farmers are cruel and exploitative) and category 14 (All whites are racists), generalisations concerning the Afrikaner and the farmer were interwoven into the text and not directly observable. The White farmers in Zimbabwe and South Africa, from whom farms were taken, were shown as being cruel and bigot. The reporting on the incidents tend to portray the farmer as the cruel and exploitative party.

## 9.5. CONCLUSION

The results yielded by the content analysis indicate that the media was still rife with racism. This racism was more implied than direct, but by using the categories identified by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) these implied messages became clear.

The content analysis in the current study was, however, done on the same principles and categories as implemented by the MMP. Similar to the MMP report, this study identified an overwhelming support of racist messages in the media. Similar results were obtained, with crime reporting rising above the other types of reports, closely followed by government reports. The similarity in results possibly indicated that the categories created by the MMP could be considered reliable. The results of this study will be discussed in detail with reference to the findings of the MMP inquiry in Chapter 11.

Content analysis cannot on its own serve as a basis for making statements about the effects of the content on an audience (Wimmer & Dominick 1997: 115). As discussed earlier, the audience is a complicated phenomenon, which consists of a number of individuals, each with their own needs, viewpoints and culture (cf. Chapter 2). It might be concluded from the theory that content analysis can not predict the interpretation of the media message as it is perceived in numerous ways, which implicates that meaning only comes to life when it is internalised by the receiver.

## CHAPTER 10

### SURVEY FINDINGS

#### 10.1. INTRODUCTION

Succeeding the content analysis of the three newspapers, four items were identified as being racist, judging by the standards of the Media Monitoring Project's (MMP) content analysis categories. These newspaper items were administered to 305 respondents (146 Black students and 159 White students). All the respondents were current students at the University of the Free State (UFS), ranging from first year to master degree students.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the items at the hand of statements directly deduced from the MMP content analysis categories. The four items were representative of the two newspaper item types that recorded the highest frequency for having racist content (news article and letter) and the two that rendered the lowest frequency (picture and cartoon) (Chart 1).

The findings of the survey are discussed in this chapter under the following headings:

- 10.2 Evaluation of photograph
- 10.3 Evaluation of letter
- 10.4 Evaluation of article
- 10.5 Evaluation of cartoon
- 10.6 Factor analysis
- 10.7 RIAS – B and WRIAS results
- 10.8 Conclusion

## 10.2. EVALUATION OF PHOTOGRAPH (Item 1)

The respondents were asked to evaluate a photograph taken after a soccer tragedy in Ghana (*The Star*, 11 May 2001: 6) (see Appendix A). After studying the photograph they had to indicate whether they perceived the photograph as insensitive, unethical, objective or racist. Non response items were coded as other, and not interpreted as missing values.

This information was used to subdivide the respondents into the categories mentioned above, which they indicated best described their perception of the photograph. These perception categories were then used to determine whether there were differences between these various categories, i.e. if the respondent indicated that he/she perceived the photograph as insensitive, did his/her interpretation differ from the respondents that perceived it as racist?

The categories used in the content analysis were converted into statements pertaining to this specific photograph. The respondents used these statements to evaluate the photograph, and they were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Table 8, on the following page, summarises the frequency of the respondents' answers.

The categories used in the content analysis indicated that the perceptions created by the image in the photograph could be interpreted as implicit racist messages. These categories included statements that the photograph created the idea that "Black lives are not important", "Blacks' privacy is invaded" and that "Blacks die in large numbers". All three these categories were contained within the statements that the respondents had to evaluate on the Likert scale. The results indicated a 67,9%, 68,8% and 53,4% disagreement with the statements respectively (Table 8). Each statement and its findings are discussed individually.

**TABLE 8** Frequency of photograph evaluation

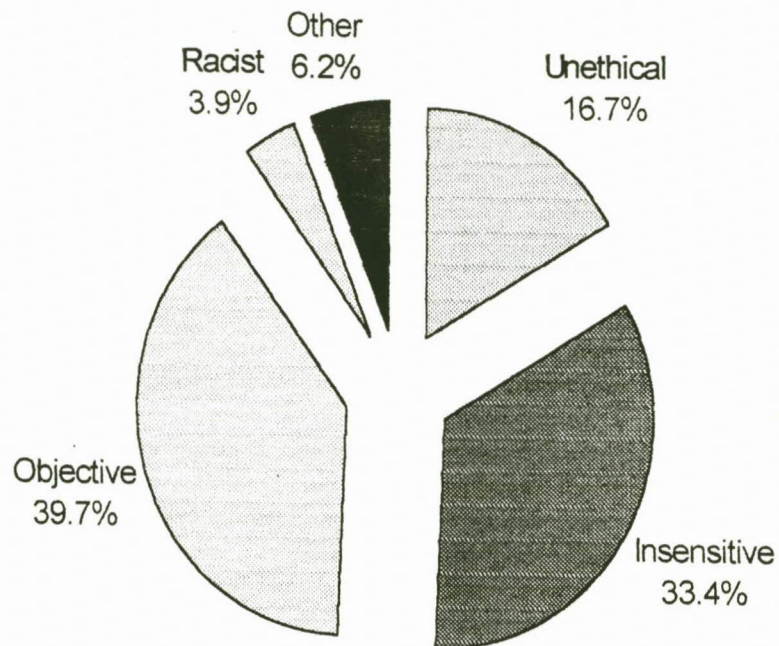
Variable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims.	52.1%	13.4%	34.4%
The photo creates the idea that Black lives are not important	67.9%	12.1%	20.0%
Photo illustrates that Blacks' privacy is invaded by the media	68.8%	8.6%	22.7%
Photo implies that Blacks die in large numbers	53.4%	10.8%	35.7%
Photo underlines tragedy of the soccer event	10.2%	6.9%	82.9%

### 10.2.1. Perception regarding photograph

Each respondent had to indicate whether he/she perceived the photograph as insensitive, unethical, objective or racist. 39,7% of the respondents indicated that they perceived the photograph as an objective representation of the tragedy (Chart 4 on following page).

Although the photograph was recorded as an item in support of racism during the content analysis, only 3,9% of the respondents perceived it as racist (Chart 4). This might be an indication that the respondents perceived this photograph as an objective newspaper item, which did not contain explicit or implicit racist messages.

Using the demographic variable of ethnic background (race) a cross-tabulation was done with each of the statements dealing with the photograph of the dead soccer fans. For both race groups the category with the highest percentage was the objective category (Black 39,0%; White 40,3%) (Table 9 on following page). There was no statistical significant difference between the race groups regarding the perception of the photograph.

**CHART 4 Perception regarding photograph****TABLE 9 Black and White perception of photograph**

	<b>Insensitive</b>	<b>Unethical</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Racist</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Black</b>	30.8%	15.8%	39.0%	6.2%	8.2%
<b>White</b>	35.8%	17.6%	40.3%	1.9%	4.4%

### 10.2.2. Statement 1: "It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims"

This statement was not one of the content analysis categories, but was administered to the respondents in order to determine whether they could identify the ethical issue with regard to journalistic practices, as discussed by Voakes (1997: 35) (cf. Chapter 7).

Regarding this statement (it is unethical ... to take photographs of dead victims), an ANOVA revealed that there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the perception categories (i.e. those respondents that indicated that they perceived the photograph as objective, insensitive, unethical or racist) ( $F = 52,2$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

A Scheffé test indicated that the significant differences were between the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective and those who indicated that it was unethical and insensitive. This could indicate that the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective might incorporate different norms and schemas to interpret the photograph than the respondents that perceived the photograph as unethical and insensitive (cf. Chapter 2).

The results of a Chi-square analysis, indicated that there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the two race groups regarding the statement: "It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims" ( $\chi^2 = 15,2$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,004$ ).

A major portion of both race groups (Black 56,2%; White 48,4%) disagreed with the statement, thus implicating that in their perception the taking of the photograph was ethical (Table 9). There was, however, a larger number of White respondents (42,7%) that agreed with the statement about the ethical issues, than Black respondents (25,3%) (Table 10).

**TABLE 10 Black and White response to statement regarding unethical photo taking**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Black	56.2%	18.5%	25.3%
White	48.4%	8.9%	42.7%

**10.2.3. Statement 2: "The photo creates the idea that Black lives are not important"**

The second statement that the respondents evaluated was a reproduction of the categories used in the content analysis. According to the MMP, photographs, such as the one evaluated by the respondents, depicting Black victims depersonalises the person and creates the idea that "Black lives are not important". According to the MMP, this consequently decreases sympathy for the victims (MMP 1999: 24). A major portion of both race groups disagreed with the statement (following table).

**TABLE 11 Black and White response to statement that "Black lives as unimportant"**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Black	57.5%	14.4%	28.1%
White	77.4%	10.0%	12.6%

There was, however, a statistical significant difference between the responses of the Black and the White group ( $\chi^2 = 16,7$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,002$ ) on this statement. Although a significant number of both race groups disagreed with the statement, a larger group of Black respondents (28,1%) agreed with the statement than White respondents (12,6%) (Table 11). This might be ascribed to the field of

experience the Black respondents brought to the communication event (cf. Chapter 2; transactional model of communication).

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that there was a statistical significant differences ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the perception categories (objective, insensitive, unethical or racist) and their responses to this statement ( $F = 28,8$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

A Scheffé test indicated that the significant differences were between the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective and those who indicated that it was unethical and insensitive. These differences were similar to those identified for the statement: "It is unethical to take photos of dead victims". This might be an indication that if the photograph was perceived as objective it was seen as isolated from implicit racist messages that might be insensitive and unethical, and perceived as merely a conveyer of reality.

#### 10.2.4. Statement 3: "The photo illustrates that Blacks' privacy is invaded by the media"

This statement was used as a category in the content analysis. The statement is representative of an implicit racist message that the media invades Black's privacy and it can be perceived as such by the receivers of the photograph. The highest number of respondents, however, indicated that they disagree with the statement (see Table 12).

**TABLE 12 Black and White response to statement regarding Blacks' invasion of privacy**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	62.7%	8.3%	29.0%
<b>White</b>	74.2%	8.9%	16.9%

There was a statistical significant difference between the responses of the Black and White respondents ( $\chi^2 = 11,4$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,02$ ) to this statement. Although the highest percentage of both race groups disagreed with the statement, a larger number of Blacks (29,0%) agreed with the statement than Whites (16,9%) (Table 12).

According to the MMP (1999: 25), photographs of victims are invasions of their privacy. The majority of respondents (68,8%) disagreed with the statement that the specific photograph of victims at the soccer tragedy in Ghana is an invasion on the privacy of the victims (Table 8).

A larger portion of Black respondents indicated that they agree that the photograph is an invasion and consequently implicated that they perceived the photograph and statement in a similar manner as the MMP, i.e. as racist. This is opposed by the indication that only 6,2% of Black respondents perceived the photograph as racist (Table 9).

Statistical significant differences ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) were calculated between the perception categories (objective, insensitive, unethical or racist) and their responses to this particular statement ( $F = 38,8$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

A Scheffé test indicated that significant differences were between the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective and those who indicated that it was unethical, insensitive and racist. There were thus differences between the objective perception category and all the other perception categories. Similar differences regarding perception groups were calculated for the two statements already discussed. A possible explanation might be that if the receiver perceives a photograph as objective, he/she might make use of different schemas and norms to interpret the photograph (cf. Chapter 2).

**10.2.5. Statement 4: "From the photo one can conclude that Blacks die in large numbers"**

Race was an important variable in the respondents' interpretation of this statement. The highest percentage of Black respondents (51,4%) agreed with the statement, opposed to the disagreement by the greatest number of Whites (66,7%) (next table). This was calculated as a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the two race groups ( $\chi^2 = 36,6$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ) and their responses to this statement.

**TABLE 13 Black and White response to statement regarding "Blacks die in large numbers"**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	39.1%	9.5%	<b>51.4%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	11.9%	21.4%

The statement was reproduced from the category used in the content analysis that stated that photographs such as the one under discussion, implicates that "Blacks die in large numbers". This implication was perceived as racist by the MMP. The Black response group had a larger number of respondents (51,4%) who agreed with this statement, than the Whites (21,4%) (Table 13). The possibility exists that the Black respondents who were more inclined to agree with the statement may consequently also agree with the MMP that the photograph is racist. Only 6,2% Blacks, however, indicated that they perceived the photograph as racist (Table 9).

Furthermore, the ANOVA revealed that there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the perception categories (objective, insensitive,

unethical or racist) and their responses to this particular statement ( $F = 18,3$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ).

A Scheffé test indicated that the significant difference was between the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective and those who indicated that it was unethical. This difference might implicate that the respondents who perceived the photograph as unethical identified different elements within the photograph than the group that perceived the photograph as objective.

**10.2.6. Statement 5: "The photo underlines the tragedy of African soccer fans dying at a sport event"**

This statement was not one of the content analysis categories, but was included in the questionnaire to determine if the respondents could identify elements of the tragedy that were reflected in the photograph. One of the functions of the media is to satisfy a need to experience strong emotions (Berger 1991: 87; cf. Chapter 3), such as the strong emotions of sadness and sympathy associated with dying people at the soccer tragedy in Ghana.

When considering the frequency table (Table 8) it seemed that the only statement that the highest percentage of respondents agreed on was the statement that "the photo underlines the tragedy of the event". Of the entire response group 82,9% indicated that they agree with the statement, while only 10,2% disagree with it (Table 8).

The majority of both race groups indicated that they agreed with the statement (Black 78,7%; White 86,8%) (Table 14). It would appear as if most of the respondents agreed that the possible purpose of the photograph was to highlight the tragedy of the event.

A larger group of Black respondents (12,3%) showed a disagreement with the statement than Whites (8,2%) (Table 14). This disagreement might indicate a skepticism on behalf of the Black respondents with regard to the implicit message underlining the tragedy. A statistical significant difference between the responses of the Black and the White group ( $\chi^2 = 11,6$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,02$ ) were calculated.

**TABLE 14 Black and White response to statement regarding emphasis of tragedy**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	12.3%	9.0%	<b>78.7%</b>
<b>White</b>	8.2%	5.0%	<b>86.8%</b>

An ANOVA revealed no statistical significant differences ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the perception categories and their responses to this statement ( $F = 2,8$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,46$ ). This was the only statement where no statistical significant difference among the perception categories could be calculated and may indicate that all the perception categories perceived the photograph in much the same way, such as an instrument to enhance the reporting of the tragedy.

#### **10.2.7. Conclusion of photograph findings**

A statistical significant difference was calculated between the responses of the Black and White respondents on all the statements regarding the photograph. This might be an indication that Black and White students perceived photographs that depict injured or dead Black people differently. A possible reason for this is discussed in Chapter 11.

It would also appear as if respondents that perceived the photograph as objective interpreted the implicit messages differently from those that perceived it as

insensitive, unethical or even racist. There were no statistical differences calculated among any of the other perception groups, i.e. among the insensitive, unethical or racist groups. Speculations on possible reasons for this is offered in Chapter 11.

### 10.3. EVALUATION OF LETTER

The content analysis results indicated that 72 letter items contained implicit or explicit racial messages (Chart 1; Chapter 9). This was the highest frequency of newspaper items that contained racist messages, next to the news items. The respondents were given a letter (*Mail & Guardian*, 4 May 2001: 28; Appendix B) that, according to the content analysis findings, contained implicit and explicit racist messages.

The implicit racist messages that could be perceived by the reader of the letter implied that "the ANC government is corrupt", "the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order", "the ANC government fails", "ANC parliamentarians are inefficient" and that "the ANC government is incompetent". All these statements were sub-categories of the category stating that "Blacks are incompetent and incapable of running anything by themselves".

**TABLE 15** Frequency of letter evaluation

Variable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Letter creates the idea that ANC government is corrupt	26.9%	23.6%	<b>49.5%</b>
Letter implies that ANC government leads to social breakdown	24.9%	23.9%	<b>51.2%</b>
Letter implies that ANC government fails	26.3%	22.0%	<b>51.7%</b>
Letter creates idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient	21.1%	15.7%	<b>63.2%</b>
The letter implies that ANC government is incompetent	22.7%	23.4%	<b>53.9%</b>

These implicit messages mentioned on the previous page were content analysis categories and were converted into statements for the purpose of the research. The respondents were asked to evaluate these statements by means of a 5-point Likert scale (see Table 15). The results on these statements are discussed individually.

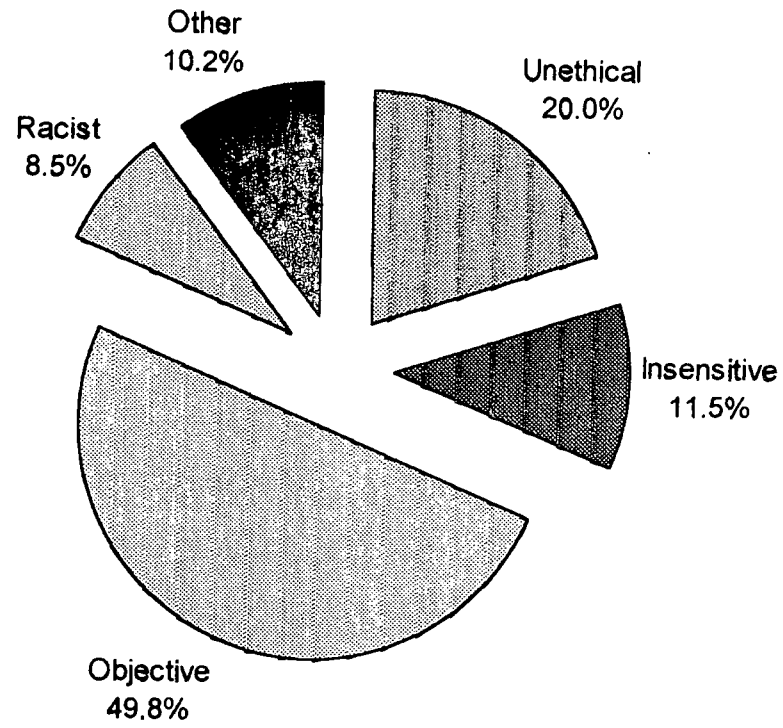
The respondents had to indicate whether they perceived the letter as objective, unethical, insensitive or racist. Non-responses were coded as other. The highest percentage of respondents (49,8%) indicated that they perceived the letter as objective, while only 8,5% indicated that the letter had racist content. See Chart 5 on the following page for summary of the responses.

Nearly half of the respondents (49,8%) perceived the letter as objective (Chart 5). This might be an indication that, despite implicit racist messages, the highest percentage of respondents still perceived either the letter as an objective newspaper item or the criticism on the government was not seen as racist.

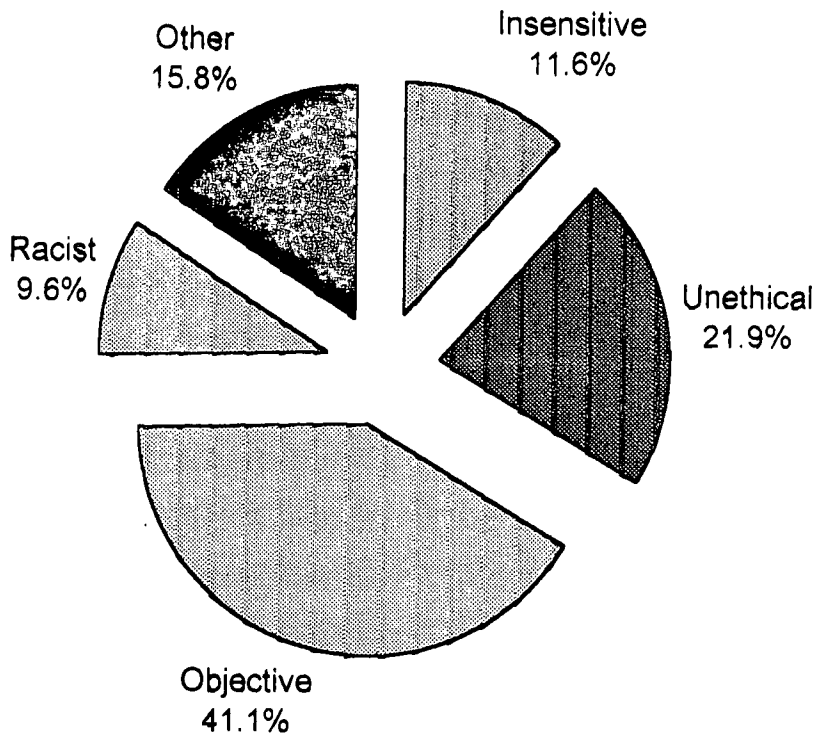
A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was calculated between the responses of the White and Black groups ( $\chi^2 = 13,8$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ) regarding their perceptiveness of the letter. Some 41,1% of Black respondents perceived the letter as objective, while 57,9% of the Whites perceived the letter as such. Only 9,6% of Black and 7,5% of White respondents indicated that they perceived the letter as racist. Chart 6 and Chart 7, following Chart 5, summarise the responses of the Black and the White group respectively.

As in the previous analysis of the photograph, the responses classified according to the perception categories were used to determine if the respondent's perception influenced his/her interpretation of the letter. This was determined with regard to the statements used in the Likert scale, i.e. if the respondent indicated that he/she perceived the letter as insensitive, did his/her interpretation differ from the respondents that perceived it as racist?

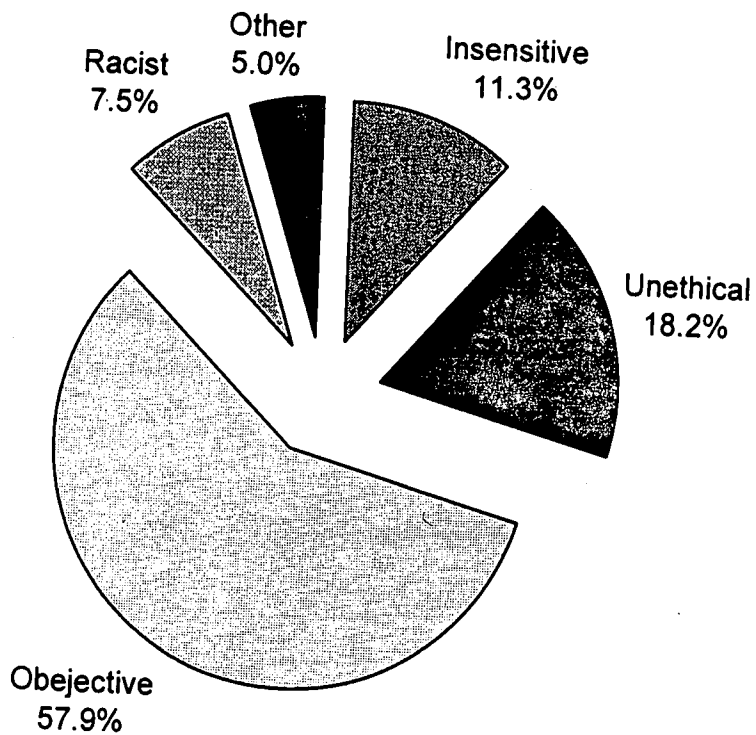
**CHART 5 Perception regarding letter**



**CHART 6 Perception regarding letter (Black)**



**CHART 7 Perception regarding letter (White)**



**10.3.1. Statement 1: "From the letter the impression is created that the ANC government is corrupt"**

From the frequency table (Table 15) it would appear as if a fair percentage of respondents (49,5%) agreed with the statement: "The letter creates the impression that the ANC government is corrupt".

Although a relatively large portion of respondents seemed to agree with the statement, there was a difference between the responses of the Black and the White groups (see Table 16). Some 40,4% of Black respondents disagreed with the statement, while 58,5% of White respondents agreed with the statement. A statistical significant difference was calculated between the two groups ( $\chi^2 = 31,6$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

**TABLE 16 Black and White response to statement that "the ANC government is corrupt"**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	40.4%	19.9%	39.7%
<b>White</b>	14.4%	27.1%	58.5%

Only a small difference (0,7%) was evident between the Blacks agreeing (39,7%) with the statement and those disagreeing (40,4%) (Table 16). There was thus no prominent agreement or disagreement regarding the statement within the Black group.

This statement was a reproduction of a MMP category used in the content analysis, which stated that the letter implies that the ANC government is corrupt. Although the majority of Whites (58,5%) indicated that they agreed with the statement (Table 16), 57,9% of them perceived the letter as objective, while only

7,5% perceived the letter as racist (Chart 7). It would thus appear that the majority White respondents agreed with the statement that the letter implies that the ANC government is corrupt, but only 7,5% of the Whites perceived the letter as racist.

The respondents were divided into the groups they indicated best described their perception of the letter (i.e. insensitive, unethical, objective or racist). An ANOVA was done on these groups' responses on the statement: "The letter implies that the ANC government is corrupt". There was no statistical significant difference between the perception groups ( $F = 2,95$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,518$ ) and their responses to the statement. It thus seemed as if the perception of the letter might not have influenced the respondents' ability to identify the implicit racist message.

#### **10.3.2. Statement 2: "The letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order"**

The majority of respondents (51,2%) indicated that they agreed with the statement: "The letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order" (Table 15). This statement was a replication of the category used in the content analysis.

Blacks (41,1%) and Whites (60,4%) agreed with the statement (Table 17). Only 9,6% of the Blacks and 7,5% of the Whites, however, perceived the letter as racist, while 41,1% (Black) and 57,9% (White) indicated, that in their opinion, the letter was objective (Chart 6 and Chart 7).

There was a larger group of Black respondents (33,6%) that disagreed with the statement, than White respondents (17,0%) (see Table 17). The results of a chi-square analysis indicated a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the two racial groups ( $\chi^2 = 18,9$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ) and their response to this statement.

**TABLE 17 Black and White response to statement that “ANC breaks down social order”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	33.6%	25.3%	<b>41.1%</b>
<b>White</b>	17.0%	22.6%	<b>60.4%</b>

The respondents were grouped on the perception they had of the letter (i.e. insensitive, unethical, objective or racist). An ANOVA revealed no statistical significant difference between the perception groups ( $F = 1,28$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,742$ ) and their responses to this statement. It would thus appear as if the four perception groups interpreted this statement in much the same way.

**10.3.3. Statement 3: “The letter implies that the ANC government fails”**

The majority of all respondents (51,7%;  $N = 305$ ) agreed with the statement: “The letter implies that the ANC government fails” (Table 15).

Some 44,1% Blacks and 58,5% Whites agreed with the statement (Table 18). The MMP classified letters, such as this one, as racist, due to the presence of implicit racist messages. Concluding from the agreement of the groups with the statement, it would appear as if the respondents perceived the letter as racist. This is, however, opposed with the finding that only 9,6% of Blacks and 7,5% of Whites perceived the letter as racist (Chart 6 & Chart 7).

**TABLE 18 Black and White response to statement that “the ANC government fails”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	35.2%	20.7%	<b>44.1%</b>
<b>White</b>	18.3%	23.2%	<b>58.5%</b>

There was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the two race groups ( $\chi^2 = 23,1$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ) and their responses to this statement. There was not a great difference between the Black group that agreed (44,1%) and the Black group that disagreed (35,2%). There was, however, a greater difference between the White group that agreed (58,5%) and the White group that disagreed (18,3%). It seemed as if more Whites tended to agree with the statement, than Blacks.

The respondents were grouped according to their perception of the letter (i.e. insensitive, unethical, objective or racist). An ANOVA was subsequently done to determine if there were significant differences ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) on their responses to the statement and no statistical significant difference could be calculated among the groups ( $F = 5,45$   $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,198$ ). The four groups' perception of the statement appeared to be not much different in one or the other way.

#### **10.3.4. Statement 4: "The letter creates the idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient"**

This statement was based in the category used in the content analysis of the letter. This analysis revealed that the letter contained the implicit message that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient. A high percentage of all respondents (63,2%;  $N = 305$ ) agreed with the statement (see Table 15).

High percentages of both race groups agreed with statement (Black 52,4%; White 72,9%) (see Table 19). As mentioned earlier, a relatively small group of respondents indicated that they perceived the letter as racist (Black 9,6%; White 7,5%) while 41,1% Blacks and 57,9% Whites perceived the letter as objective (Chart 6 & Chart 7). This is a possible indication that although the respondents agreed with the statement, they did not perceive the media as racist.

A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) existed between the responses of the two groups ( $\chi^2 = 22,7$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ). A larger group of Black respondents (26,9%) disagreed with the statement, than White respondents (15,7%) (next table). Although both groups agreed with the statement, more Whites agreed with it than Blacks. More Whites (57,9%) perceived the letter as objective than Blacks (41,1%) (Chart 6 & Chart 7). It would appear as if more Whites agreed with the statement, but if they could still perceived the media to be objective.

**TABLE 19 Black and White response to statement that "ANC parliamentarians are inefficient"**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	26.9%	20.7%	<b>52.4%</b>
<b>White</b>	15.7%	11.4%	<b>72.9%</b>

An ANOVA was done on the perception groups and their responses to the statement: "The letter implies that the ANC parliamentarians are inefficient". No statistical significant difference among the perception groups ( $F = 8,07$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,076$ ) and their responses on this statement could be calculated. This calculation is almost similar to the three letter statements previously discussed, which also focussed on the government. This possibly indicates that the perception groups utilise similar schemas and prior experiences to interpret issues regarding the government (cf. Chapter 2).

#### 10.3.5. Statement 5: "The letter implies that the ANC government is incompetent"

The content analysis indicated that the message carried within the letter contained implicit racist connotations. One of the possible insinuations was that the ANC government is incompetent. This implicit racist message was evolved into a statement. The highest percentage of all the respondents (53,9%;  $N =$

305) agreed with the statement that “the letter implied that the ANC government is incompetent” (see Table 15).

Some 40,5% Blacks and 59,7% Whites indicated that they agreed with the statement (next table). Similar to the previously discussed statements pertaining to the letter, the respondents indicated that they agreed with the statements, but only 9,6% Blacks and 7,5% Whites perceived the letter as racist (Chart 6 & Chart 7).

There was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) in the manner of response by the two race groups ( $\chi^2 = 13,9$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ), as a larger group of Black respondents (29,0%) disagreed with the statement, than White respondents (17,0%) (Table 20).

**TABLE 20 Black and White response to statement that “the ANC government is incompetent”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	29.0%	23.5%	<b>40.5%</b>
<b>White</b>	17.0%	23.3%	<b>59.7%</b>

An ANOVA revealed that there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the perception categories (objective, insensitive, unethical or racist) and their responses to the statement ( $F = 14,14$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ).

A Scheffé test indicated significant differences between the respondents who perceived the letter as racist and those who indicated that it was objective or insensitive. The difference in interpretation might be that the racist perception group utilised schemas and prior experiences, which made them more aware of possible implicit racist message (cf. Chapter 2).

### 10.3.6. Conclusion of letter findings

With every statement regarding the letter there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the interpretation of the two race groups. More White respondents agreed with the statements than Blacks.

There was a difference between the perception categories (unethical, insensitive, objective and racist) with only one statement ("...ANC government is incompetent"). It would appear that the respondents that perceived the letter as racist interpreted this statement differently than those who perceived it as objective or insensitive. This might be ascribed to the schemas and norms used by the racist group to interpret this statement and the field of experience brought to the communication process by this group.

There was a positive correlation between all the statements regarding the letter ( $p = 0,001$  for all the correlation coefficients). All the statements concentrated on the government. This might be a possible indication that the respondents interpreted government related issues similarly. There was a fair percentage of respondents that agreed with every government related statement (see Table 15), but still 49,8% of respondents ( $N = 305$ ) perceived the letter as objective (Chart 5). Further findings are discussed in Chapter 11.

## 10.4 EVALUATION OF ARTICLE

News items or articles received the highest frequency of all newspaper items containing implicit or explicit racist propositions in the content analysis (661 items) (Chart 1; Chapter 9). The respondents were given an article, which appeared in *The Star* (30 April, 2001:2), entitled "MEC quits, blames ANC for crisis" (see Appendix C). This article contained implicit racist messages, which implied that "the ANC government damages society", it "leads to social breakdown" and it "fails".

These implicit racist messages that could be perceived by the reader, were converted into statements the respondents used to evaluate the article on a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale was used to determine to what extent the respondents agreed or disagreed with these statements.

As can be seen from Table 21, the majority of respondents agreed with the first four statements regarding the article. Only with the last statement ("The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution") did the majority disagree (56,7%; N = 305). The results of the responses on each of the statements will be discussed individually.

**TABLE 21 Frequency of article evaluation**

Variable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Article implies that ANC government leads to social breakdown	19.2%	21.5%	<b>59.3%</b>
Article implies that ANC government fails	21.2%	23.0%	<b>55.8%</b>
Article implies that ANC government damages society	23.5%	14.5%	<b>63.0%</b>
Article implies that MEC had reason to resign	11.6%	21.2%	<b>67.2%</b>
Article creates idea that media is a racist institution	<b>56.7%</b>	20.9%	22.4%

#### **10.4.1 Statement 1: "The article implies that the government leads to breakdown in social order"**

The article's content analysis indicated that the message contained the implicit racist category that "the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order". This category was transformed into a statement, which the respondents used to evaluate the article. The majority of respondents (59,3%; N = 305) agreed with the statement (see Table 21).

A total of 49,7% Blacks and 67,9% Whites agreed with the statement (next table). Considering the conclusion reached by the MMP, namely that an article such as this one can be classified as racist, the high agreement percentages by the respondents on this statement may imply that they also perceived the media as racist.

**TABLE 22 Black and White response to statement that “the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	23.8%	26.5%	<b>49.7%</b>
<b>White</b>	15.1%	17.0%	<b>67.9%</b>

The results of the chi-square analysis indicated a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the responses of the two groups ( $\chi^2 = 14,2$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ). Although a fair number of both groups agreed with the statement, a larger group of Blacks (23,8%) disagreed, than Whites (15,1%) (Table 22). A total of 8,7% more Blacks than Whites did not agree with the statement. This might be an indication that more Whites interpreted the message as racist, if judged by the MMP conclusion on implicit racist messages.

**10.4.2. Statement 2: “The article creates the idea that the ANC government fails”**

A high percentage of all respondents (63,0%;  $N = 305$ ) indicated that they agree with the statement that “the article implies that the ANC government fails” (Table 21). This statement was replicated from a category used in the content analysis (cf. Chapter 8).

The majority of both race groups agreed with the statement (Black 50,7%; White 74,2%) (Table 23). It might be deducted from this that the respondents also perceived the media to be racist institutions.

**TABLE 23 Black and White response to statement that “the ANC government fails”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	30.5%	18.8%	<b>50.7%</b>
<b>White</b>	15.1%	10.7%	<b>74.2%</b>

A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was calculated between the responses of the Black and the White groups ( $\chi^2 = 24,5$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ). A larger portion of Blacks (30,5%) disagreed with the statement, than Whites (15,1%) (Table 23).

#### **10.4.3. Statement 3: “The article implies that the ANC government damages society”**

A category used in the content analysis of the article was converted into the statement: “The article implies that the ANC government damages society”. The majority of respondents (55,8%;  $N = 305$ ) agreed with the statement (Table 21).

From the categories used in the content analysis the MMP concluded that the media could be classified as racist. Some 43,8% Blacks and 66,6% Whites agreed with the statement regarding the damaging of society (Table 24). This is thus an indication that a fair percentage of both race groups also possibly perceived the media to racist.

**TABLE 24 Black and White response to statement that “the ANC government damages society”**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
<b>Black</b>	28.5%	27.7%	<b>43.8%</b>
<b>White</b>	14.5%	18.9%	<b>66.6%</b>

Nearly twice as many Black respondents (28,5%) disagreed with the statement, than White respondents (14,5%) (Table 24). A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the responses of the groups ( $\chi^2 = 28,3$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ) was calculated.

**10.4.4. Statement 4: “The article implies that the MEC had reasons to resign”**

The statement that “the article implies that the MEC had reasons to resign from legislature” was not one of the categories used in the MMP and this study’s content analysis. This statement was based on the function of the media to provide the receiver of the mass message with the accurate, objective truth and answering the “Why” question in reporting (cf. Chapter 7).

Of the Black response group 60,2% agreed with the statement, while 73,6% Whites agreed (Table 25 on the following page), i.e. a large percentage of the both groups understood the reasons reported on by the media. The results of the chi-square analysis indicated that there was a significant difference between the responses of the two race groups ( $\chi^2 = 15,3$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ).

The majority agreement with this statement might indicate that even though the biggest group of respondents agreed with the previous statements, they still agreed that a message the article conveyed was that the MEC had certain reasons to resign.

**TABLE 25 Black and White response to statement regarding the MEC's reasons to resign**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
<b>Black</b>	16.8%	23.0%	<b>60.2%</b>
<b>White</b>	7.0%	19.4%	<b>73.6%</b>

**10.4.5. Statement 5: "The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution"**

After being confronted with the statements representing possible implicit racist messages, the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed with the statement: "The article creates the impression that the media is a racist institution". This statement was not one of the categories used in the content analysis, but was used in order to determine whether or not the respondents perceived the media as racist.

There was an overall disagreement (Blacks 45,2%; Whites 67,3%) with the statement (see Table 26 on the following page). Some 29,2% Blacks agreed that the article created the impression that the media is a racist institution, while only 16,4% Whites agreed. It thus seemed as if more Black respondents perceived the media to be racist than White respondents. With regard to the previously discussed statements, it appeared as if a smaller group of Blacks than Whites agreed with the statements representing implicit racist messages, yet a larger group of Blacks perceived the media as racist. This possibly implies that the Blacks identified other traces of racism in the message that was not contained within the categories of the content analysis.

The majority of White respondents agreed with the preceding statements (i.e. statements 1 to 4) pertaining to the implicit racist messages in the article. Although they indicated agreement with the categories used by the content

analysis, the majority of Whites still did not perceive the media as racist. This might indicate that the White respondents did not perceive the categories as indicators of racism.

**TABLE 26 Black and White response to statement that the media is a racist institution**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Black	45.2%	25.6%	29.2%
White	67.3%	16.3%	16.4%

#### 10.4.6. Conclusion of article findings

A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was calculated between the responses of the two race groups with regard to every statement pertaining to the article. This might indicate that the Black respondents perceived the article and its messages differently than the White respondents.

A significant correlation was calculated between all the statements based on the content analysis categories, i.e. statement 1 to 3 ( $p = 0,001$  in all correlations). All three statements were focussed on the government. This might implicate the respondents reacted similarly to government related issues.

There appeared to be a general agreement among the respondents regarding the statements that were based on the content analysis categories (Table 21). This agreement possibly indicated that a major portion of the respondents agreed with the categories used by the content analysis. Although they agreed with the categories, the majority of respondents (56,7%;  $N = 305$ ) indicated that this article did not create the idea that the media is racist, as would be concluded by

MMP interpretation. A further discussion on the findings of the article evaluation is done in Chapter 11.

### 10.5. EVALUATION OF CARTOON

Cartoons, as a newspaper item type, only had 13 identified items in the content analysis (Chart 1; Chapter 9). A cartoon depicting President Clinton advising President Mbeki on handling the alleged plot against him, was given to the respondents (*The Star*, 4 May, 2001: 11) (Appendix D). The content analysis indicated that the cartoon contained the implicit racist message that "the ANC government is incompetent".

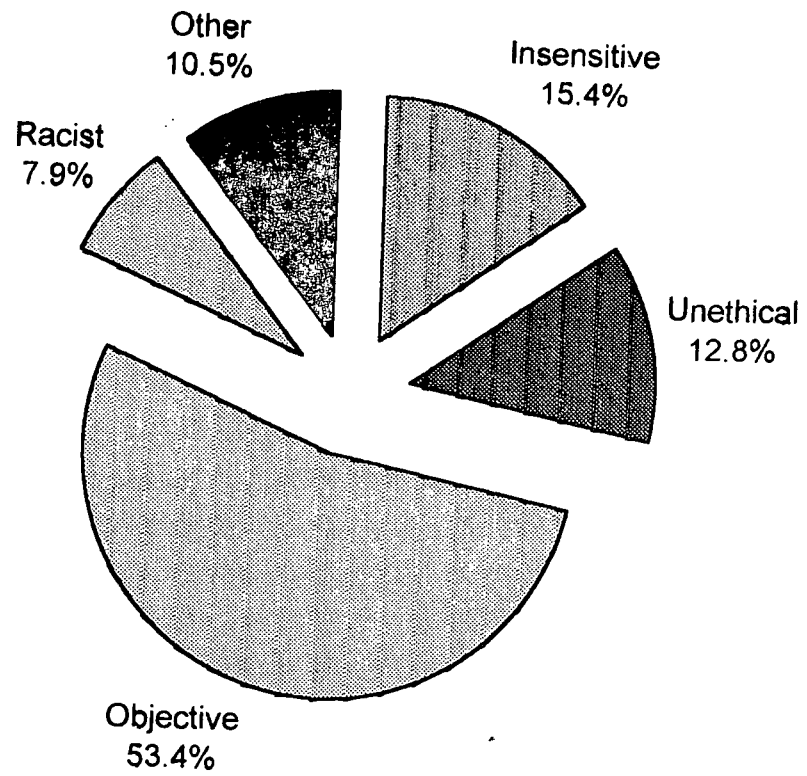
This implicit message was converted into a statement, which the respondents were asked to evaluate on a five-point Likert scale. Two other statements were included to determine whether or not the respondents perceived the cartoon as a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki and if they perceived it as light-hearted. See Table 27 for summary of the responses. Each of the statements is discussed individually.

**TABLE 27** Frequency of cartoon evaluation

Variable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The cartoon shows that ANC government is incompetent	39.4%	17.9%	42.7%
The cartoon is a racist attack on President Mbeki	62.0%	16.9%	21.1%
It is a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously	21.5%	14.4%	64.1%

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they perceived the cartoon as insensitive, unethical, objective or racist.

**CHART 8 Perception regarding cartoon**



As can be seen in Chart 8 on the previous page, the highest percentage of respondents perceived the cartoon as objective. Although the cartoon was identified during the content analysis to have an implicit racist message, only 7,9% of all respondents perceived the cartoon as racist (Chart 8).

The respondents were subdivided into the categories, which they indicated best described their perception of the cartoon. These perception categories were used to determine whether there were differences among these categories, i.e. if the respondent indicated that he/she perceived the cartoon as insensitive, did his/her interpretation differ from the respondents that perceived it as racist?

**TABLE 28 Black and White perception of cartoon**

	<b>Insensitive</b>	<b>Unethical</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Racist</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Black</b>	13.0%	16.4%	<b>47.3%</b>	8.2%	15.1%
<b>White</b>	17.6%	9.4%	<b>59.1%</b>	7.5%	6.5%

There was a statistical significant difference between the perceptions of the Black and the White respondents ( $\chi^2 = 11,6$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,02$ ) regarding the cartoon. Some 16,5% Black respondents indicated that the cartoon was unethical, while 17,6% of White respondents perceived the cartoon as insensitive (Table 28). A high percentage of both groups perceived the cartoon as objective.

**10.5.1. Statement 1: "The cartoon shows the incompetence of the government"**

A total of 42,7% respondents agreed with the statement that "the cartoon shows that the ANC government is incompetent" (Table 27). This could have implicated that the respondents perceived the cartoon as racist, thus in a similar manner as

the MMP, but only 7,9% respondents, however, perceived the cartoon as racist (Chart 8).

A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was calculated between the responses of the Blacks and the Whites ( $\chi^2 = 20,4$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ). The majority of White respondents (51,2%) agreed with the statement, indicating that they agree with the content analysis category that the cartoon shows the incompetence of government. Some 47,2% Black respondents disagreed with the statement, possibly indicating that they did not agree with the category. Only 33,4% of the Black respondents agreed with the statement (Table 29).

**TABLE 29 Black and White response to statement that “the cartoon shows the incompetence of government”**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Black</b>	47.2%	19.4%	33.4%
<b>White</b>	32.2%	16.6%	51.2%

The statement that “the cartoon showed the incompetence of the ANC government” correlated positively with all the other statements regarding the government in the letter and article ( $p = 0,001$  for all correlations). This possibly implicates that the respondents perceived issues relating to government in a similar manner. It would appear as if the respondents were inclined to agree with the statements revolving around the government.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant difference between the perception groups (i.e. insensitive, unethical, objective, and racist) and the response given to this statement ( $F = 1,96$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,68$ ). It would seem as if all the perception groups interpreted this statement in a similar manner.

### 10.5.2. Statement 2: "The cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki"

This statement was not one of the categories used in the content analysis, but was included in the questionnaire to investigate if the cartoon was perceived as a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki. The majority of respondents (62,0%; N = 305) indicated that they disagreed with the statement (Table 27). The two race groups both disagreed with the statement (Black 52,8%; White 70,5%) (Table 30).

**TABLE 30 Black and White response to statement that "the cartoon is an attack on Pres. Mbeki"**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Black	52.8%	20.8%	26.4%
White	70.5%	13.2%	16.3%

There existed a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the responses of the race groups ( $\chi^2 = 13,39$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,01$ ). A larger group of Blacks (26,4%) than Whites (16,3%) indicated that they agree with the statement (Table 30). This may imply that the Black respondents were more sceptical of the intent of the cartoon.

An ANOVA was done on the perception groups (insensitive, unethical, objective and racist) with regard to this statement. A statistical significant difference was calculated among the groups ( $F = 54,6$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

A Scheffé test revealed that the difference was between the objective group and the unethical and racist groups. Another difference was identified between the racist and the insensitive group. The group that indicated that they perceived the cartoon as racist appeared to have interpreted the statement differently than the objective and insensitive. The racist group, however, did not differ from the

unethical group in their response. This might be ascribed to the nature of the statement that might fall into the perception framework of the racist and unethical groups.

There was a significant correlation ( $p = 0,01$ ) between the responses to the statement that "the cartoon is a racist attack" and the statement that "the cartoon showed the incompetence of the ANC government". This possible indicated that the respondents that perceived the cartoon as a racist attack also identified the implicit racist message, and visa versa. There was a negative correlation ( $p = -0,01$ ) between statements that "the cartoon is a racist attack" and that "the cartoon is only light-hearted". This possibly suggested that the respondents that perceived the cartoon as light-hearted disagreed with the statement that the cartoon was a racist attack.

### **10.5.3. Statement 3: "It is only a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously"**

The last statement based on the cartoon was included in the questionnaire to determine if the cartoon was perceived as merely light-hearted and mostly harmless. In Table 31 (on the following page) it can be seen that the majority of both response groups agreed that the cartoon should not be taken seriously (Black 50,7%; White 76,1%).

A statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was, however, calculated between the responses of the Blacks and the Whites ( $\chi^2 = 30,72$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ). There was a greater disagreement with the statement within the Black response group (Black 29,9%; White 13,9%) (see Table 31). This might be an indication that a larger portion of Black respondents was more sceptical of the message conveyed by the cartoon, not perceiving it as only light-hearted.

**TABLE 31 Black and White response to statement that “the cartoon is merely light-hearted”**

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
<b>Black</b>	29.9%	19.4%	<b>50.7%</b>
<b>White</b>	13.9%	10.0%	<b>76.1%</b>

The ANOVA indicated that there was a difference among the perception groups (insensitive, unethical, objective and racist) and their responses, with regard to this statement ( $F = 29,1$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ).

The Scheffé test revealed that the difference was between the objective group and the racist and unethical groups. It might be that the objective perception group used different schemas and norms to the other perception groups interpret the cartoon (cf. Chapter 2). The calculation that the racist and unethical groups did not differ in their responses to this statement might indicate that both groups read the same implicit messages in the content of the cartoon. It might be possible that the objective group perceived the cartoon as merely light-hearted and did consequently not identify anything racist or unethical.

#### **10.5.4 Conclusion of cartoon findings**

There was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the two race groups and their responses to every statements pertaining to the cartoon. This might indicate that the Black respondents perceived this cartoon differently from the White respondents.

From the ANOVA results it would appear as if there was a difference between the responses of the various perception groups (insensitive, unethical, objective and racist) to the statements that the cartoon was a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki and that it was only light-hearted.

The first statement ("The cartoon shows the incompetence of government") was based on the content analysis category identified within the context of the cartoon. There was a no difference observed between the perception groups, possibly indicating that the respective groups did not employ different schema of fields of experience to interpret the statement.

This statement also correlated with all the statements regarding the government ( $p = 0,001$  for all correlations). This could indicate that the respondents regarded statements pertaining to the government in a similar manner.

#### **10.6. FACTOR ANALYSIS**

The survey data was submitted to a factor analysis. This was done in order to determine patterns among the variations in values of the various variables. A main component factor analysis was used to extract six factors from the database of the entire group's responses and then rotated by means of the Oblimin method (see Table 32 on following page).

The first extracted factor was named "Letter responses". The second factor was labeled "Cartoon evaluation" and the third factor "Perceptions of the items". The fourth factor was entitled "Photograph evaluation" and the fifth was "Article evaluation". The sixth and last factor had only one significant loading and that was on the statement that "the photo underlines the tragedy of the event". It was thus labeled as "Enhancement of tragedy" (see Table 32).

These extracted factors might indicate that the respondents tended to evaluate the various items individually, i.e. the major factor influencing their interpretation was the item that was to be evaluated. The respondents seem to have concentrated on the item at hand, and evaluated each item as an independent clipping.

**TABLE 32 Factor analysis matrix**

Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
<b>Photograph</b>						
Perception of photograph			.679			
It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims				.858		
The photo creates the idea that Black lives are not important				.692		
The photo illustrates that Black people's lives are invaded by the media				.749		
From the photo one can conclude that Blacks die in large numbers		.593				
This photo underlines the tragedy of the event						.820
<b>Letter</b>						
The letter creates the impression that the ANC government is corrupt	.765					
The letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order	.614					
The letter implies that the ANC government fails	.801					
The letter creates the idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient	.782					
The letter implies that the ANC government is incompetent	.729					
Perception of the letter			.775			
<b>Article</b>						
The article implies that the government leads to breakdown in social order					.775	
The article creates the idea that the ANC government fails					.675	
The article creates the impression the ANC government damages society					.824	
The article implies that the MEC had reason to resign from legislature					.565	
The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution		.563				
<b>Cartoon</b>						
Perception of cartoon			.731			
The cartoon shows the incompetence of the government		.383				
The cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki		.716				
It is only a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously		.532				

The factor correlation matrix indicated that there was a positive correlation ( $r = 0,45$ ) between factor 1 (Letter evaluation) and factor 5 (Article evaluation). The common relationship between these two factors could be the nature of the evaluation statements. The contents of both the article and the letter rested heavily on statements criticising the government.

The six factors extracted from the data constituted 61,4% of the total variance. This was a possible indication that 61,4% of the variance pertaining to racism in the media were contained within these six extracted factors. Factor 1 (Letter evaluation) and factor 5 (Article evaluation) as mentioned rested heavily on government related statements and when combined they constitute 29,3% of the total variance of the independent variable.

#### **10.6.1. Factor analysis: Black respondents**

A further factor analysis was done after the response group was split into the two race groups. A main component factor analysis extracted three factors and was then rotated by means of the Oblimin method. This was done in order to determine patterns among the variations in values of the various variables in the database of the Black response group.

The first factor extracted from the data focussed on the government, as all the statements which loaded high on this factor dealt with the government, including the letter and article as newspaper items (see Table 33 on following page). This first factor was consequently named "Government".

The second factor carried high factor loadings on statements pertaining to the photograph as a newspaper item (see Table 33) and was named "Photograph evaluation".

**TABLE 33 Factor analysis matrix (Black)**

Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
<b>Photograph</b>						
Perception of photograph			.703		.633	
It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims		.881				
The photo creates the idea that Black lives are not important		.728				
The photo illustrates that Black people's lives are invaded by the media		.783				
From the photo one can conclude that Blacks die in large numbers				.523		
This photo underlines the tragedy of the event					.778	
<b>Letter</b>						
The letter creates the impression that the ANC government is corrupt	.448					
The letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order	.645					
The letter implies that the ANC government fails.	.715					
The letter creates the idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient	.719					
The letter implies that the ANC government is incompetent	.180					
Perception of the letter			.775			
<b>Article</b>						
The article implies that the government leads to breakdown in social order	.838					
The article creates the idea that the ANC government fails	.823					
The article creates the impression the ANC government damages society	.822					
The article implies that the MEC had reason to resign from legislature	.478					
The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution				.765		
<b>Cartoon</b>						
Perception of cartoon			.745			
The cartoon shows the incompetence of the government	.504					
The cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki				.765		
It is only a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously						.883

The variables requesting a choice amongst the perceptions of the items, i.e. unethical, insensitive, objective and racist, was extracted as the third factor with the Black response group (see Table 33). This factor was labelled as "Item perception".

The first three extracted factors constituted 47,9% of the total variance (Factor 1 = 27,5%; Factor 2 = 12,5%; Factor 3 = 7,9%) of the independent variable.

#### **10.6.2. Factor analysis: White respondents**

After the response group was split into two race groups, a main component factor analysis extracted three factors, which was then rotated these by means of the Oblimin method.

The most prominent factor extracted from the White response group data carried high factor loadings on the variables pertaining to the letter, as a newspaper item (see Table 34 on following page). The first factor was named "Letter evaluation".

The second factor that was extracted from the data indicated factor loadings on the statements connected with the photograph as newspaper item (see Table 34) and labelled "Photograph evaluation".

The third extracted factor carried high factor loadings on variables connected to the article as newspaper item (see Table 34). This third factor was named "Article evaluation".

The first three factors extracted from the White response data constituted 39,2% of the total variance (Factor 1 = 17,7%; Factor 2 = 13,3%; Factor 3 = 8,2%) of the independent variable.

**TABLE 34 Factor analysis matrix (White)**

Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
<b>Photograph</b>						
Perception of photograph					.633	
It is unethical of the media to take photos of dead victims		.793				
The photo creates the idea that Black lives are not important		.692				
The photo illustrates that Black people's lives are invaded by the media		.757				
From the photo one can conclude that Blacks die in large numbers				.441		
This photo underlines the tragedy of the event				.576		
<b>Letter</b>						
The letter creates the impression that the ANC government is corrupt	.650					
The letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order	.468					
The letter implies that the ANC government fails.	.793					
The letter creates the idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient	.808					
The letter implies that the ANC government is incompetent	.806					
Perception of the letter					.716	
<b>Article</b>						
The article implies that the government leads to breakdown in social order			.769			
The article creates the idea that the ANC government fails			.674			
The article creates the impression the ANC government damages society			.713			
The article implies that the MEC had reason to resign from legislature				.735		
The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution				.598		
<b>Cartoon</b>						
Perception of cartoon					.718	
The cartoon shows the incompetence of the government						.673
The cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki						.629
It is only a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously						.650

### **10.6.3. Conclusion of factor analysis findings**

The respondents appeared to have considered each newspaper item individually. This might explain the factor loadings on the statements pertaining to each newspaper item. It would also appear as if there were some differences between the factors of the Black and White response groups.

The Black response group's data revealed factor loadings on the government as a repetitive theme, while the White response data indicated factor loadings on the individual newspaper items. This might indicate that the White respondents interpreted each individual newspaper item (i.e. the photograph, the letter and the article) separately, without drawing perceptions of themes across the categories.

### **10.7. RIAS-B AND WRIAS RESULTS**

The data collected by means of the indexes (RIAS-B and WRIAS) was calculated by means of the method specified by Helms (1981 & 1990) and discussed in Chapter 8. This calculation determined the various racial development stages into which the respondents would be categorised.

The largest percentage of White respondents was categorised as being in the Pseudo-Independent stage of their racial identity attitude development (Chart 9 on the following page). While the largest percentage of Black respondents were categorised in the Immersion stage of their racial identity attitude development (Chart 10 on the following page).

The skewness in the category distribution could not have been predicted, as the respondents' racial identity was only known after the indexes were complete. The racial development stages were treated as independent variables in the analysis of the response data.

CHART 9 WRIAS distribution

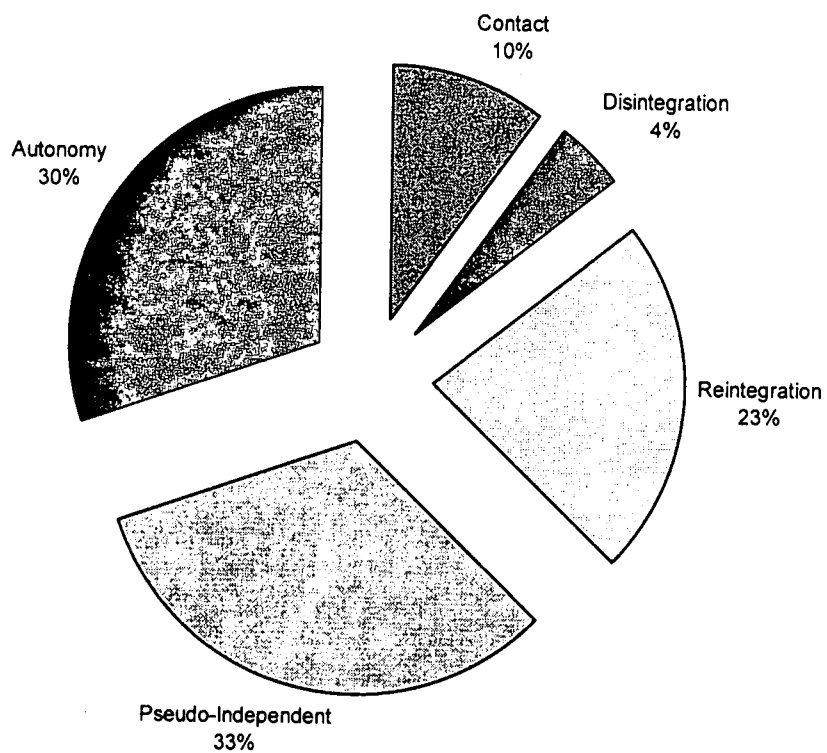
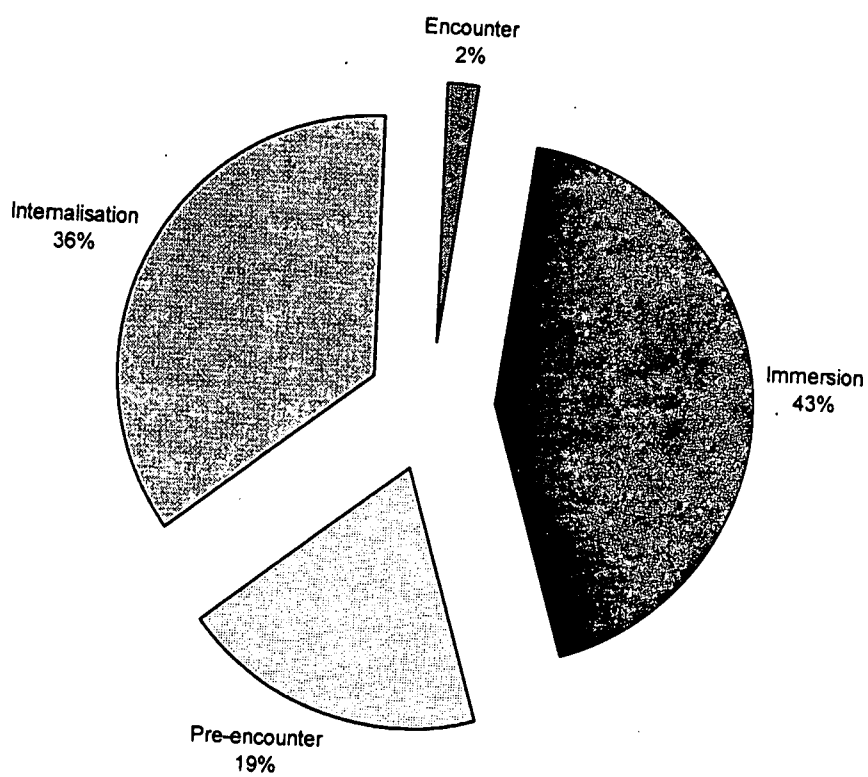


CHART 10 RIAS distribution



### **10.7.1. Data analysis**

Frequency tabulations were done on the data to determine if there were any mistakes in the capturing of the data and to rectify this before further analysis was done. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for all the variables, in order to determine if there were any correlations between some of the variables.

ANOVA and Scheffé tests were done between the different RIAS and WRIAS groups' responses on the statements in the questionnaire. No significant difference at the 0,05 level could be calculated for responses on any of the statements. There was thus no difference in the manner in which the various individual racial identity groups interpreted the newspaper items.

The RIAS-B and the WRIAS indexes comprise of a number of statements. Each statement holds reference to a specific identity attitude category. Different statements are combined to constitute the specific characteristics that are embedded in each racial identity attitude category. These statements are consequently expected to correlate, as they are measuring the characteristics of the same racial identity attitude. The Pearson correlation coefficients of the responses in the current study indicated that the variables that were suppose to correlate in order to compose the various racial identity attitude development categories, did not show a clear and significant correlation.

### **10.7.2. Factor analysis of RIAS-B**

After observing that the variables composing the various categories did not correlate significantly, it was decided to conduct a factor analysis. Four factors were extracted from the Black response data (RIAS-B) and then rotated by means of the Oblimin method. The criteria for factor extraction was set at four

factors, as there were four racial identity attitude development stages (cf. Chapter 8).

The first factor carried high factor loadings on the statements concerned with being comfortable with and positive about one's racial identity (see Table 35 on following page). The factor was named "Positive identity".

The second factor extracted from the data indicated high factor loadings on the statements concerned with emotions of being ashamed about one's Black racial identity and idealising Whites (see Table 35) and was consequently named "White superiority".

The third extracted factor revealed high factor loadings on the statements pertaining to a withdrawal into the Black world and perceptions of Blacks (see Table 34). This factor was labeled as "Withdrawal into Black world".

The last factor extracted from the data of the RIAS-B index carried high factor loadings on statements concerning the respondent's ability to distance him/herself from the stereotypes bestowed upon Black people (see Table 35). This factor was named "Racial distance".

These above mentioned four factors, extracted from the RIAS-B index data, explained 36,5% of the total variance of the independent variables. These four factors, however, cannot be directly associated with the four racial identity attitude development stages, as identified by Helms (1990). There were, however, some elements of the factors contained in the definitions of the various racial identity stages present.

Factor 1 (Positive identity) might have a connotation with the racial identity attitude development stage, known as Internalisation. This stage in the racial identity attitude development is characterised by a positive, realistic commitment

**TABLE 35 Factor analysis matrix (RIAS-B)**

STATEMENT	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
I believe that being Black is a positive experience	.581			
I know through experience what being Black in South Africa means	.501			
I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences, and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences			.636	
I believe that large number of Blacks are untrustworthy		.501		
I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people	.546			
I involve myself in causes that will help all oppressed people	.550			
I feel comfortable wherever I am	.333			
I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Black people		.558		
I feel uncomfortable around Black people		.388		
I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities	.537			
I often find myself referring to White people as "devils", "pigs", etc.			.416	
I believe that being Black is not necessarily good				.389
I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, others do not.				.645
I frequently confront the system and the man	.602			
I constantly involve myself in Black political and social activities (art shows, political meetings, etc.)			.461	
I involve myself in social action and political groups even if there are no other Blacks involved				.571
I believe Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways that are similar to White people		.680		
I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective			.630	
I have changed my style of life to fit my beliefs about Black people			.615	
I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings	.552			
I believe that Black people came from a strange, dark and uncivilised history		.539		
People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations	.344			
I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black			.515	
I feel guilty and/or anxious about some things I believe Black people do		.347		
I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon to solving problems is to become a part of the White 's	.404			
I speak my mind regardless of the consequences (e.g. being kicked out of school, imprisoned)	.227			
I believe that everything Black is good, and consequently I limit myself to Black activities			.498	
I am determined to find my Black identity	.518			
I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks		.674		
I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths	.491			

to one's own racial group (Helms & Parham 1984: 6). There were factor loadings on 7 of the 13 statements in this factor, these 7 statements also constituted some of the statements that were used to identify the Internalisation stage (see Table 35).

The second factor (White superiority) might contain elements of the Pre-encounter racial identity stage. This stage in the development of the individual's racial identity attitude is characterised by internalising traditional White beliefs about race and racism. This results in an idealisation of that which is perceived to be other than Black (Helms & Parham 1984: 6). Of all 7 statements with factor loadings, 6 statements served to identify the Pre-encounter stage in the racial identity development process (see Table 35).

The Immersion/Emersion stage of racial identity attitude development is characterised as a physiological withdrawal into Black society and culture, idealising everything Black and the denigration of everything White (Helms & Parham 1984: 6). The third factor (Withdrawal into Black world) might be contained within this definition of the Immersion/Emersion stage. There were 7 statements with prominent factor loadings, 4 of which were statements that were used by the racial identity attitude scale to determine the Immersion/Emersion stage (see Table 35).

There were few elements of the Encounter stage in the fourth factor (Racial distance) (cf. Table 35). The encounter stage is characterised by a "disorientation and confusion about one's own identity" (Helms & Parham 1984: 6).

It would appear as if there were elements of the racial identity attitude scale statements in all of the extracted factors. These elements were, however, not prominent enough to use as tools to accurately determine the respondents' racial identity attitude stages.

This might be an indication that the RIAS-B index is not completely compatible with South African society. There were elements of the index categories in the factor analysis, but these were not sufficient and statistically significant to use in order to determine a respondent's racial identity attitude.

### **10.7.3. Factor analysis of WRIAS**

In addition, the data of the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) was also submitted to a factor analysis. Five factors were extracted and then rotated by means of the Oblimin method. The five factors were extracted to determine whether they would correspond with the five categories of the WRIAS.

The first factor that was extracted indicated highest factor loadings on statements that describe how the respondents were intrigued by the differences between the races, but preferred to observe them from a distance, i.e. won't experience the differences personally (see Table 36 on following page). The factor was named "Distant interest".

The second factor carried high factor loadings on the statements dealing with the respondent's confidence in certain racial situations (see Table 36), and was consequently named "Confidence".

The third factor had high factor loadings on the statements which have a certain racial tension in common (see Table 36). This factor was labeled "Racial tension".

The fourth factor indicated high factor loadings on statements that concern the respondent's naivete to racial issues (see Table 36). This factor was named "Racial Naivete".

**TABLE 36 Factor analysis matrix (WRIAS)**

STATEMENT	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
I hardly think about what race I am				.534	
I do not understand what Blacks want from Whites				.545	
I get angry when I think about how Whites have been treated by Blacks			.522		
I feel as comfortable around Blacks as I do around Whites		.525			
I involve myself in causes regardless of the race of the people involved in them		.429			
I find myself watching Black people to see what they are like					.587
I feel depressed after I have been around Black people	.521				
There is nothing that I want to learn from Blacks	.600				
I seek out new experiences even if I know that a number of Blacks will be involved in them		.576			
I enjoy watching the ways that Blacks and Whites approach life	.679				
I wish I had a Black friend	.635				
I do not feel the I have the social skills to interact with Black people efficiently		.654			
A Black person who tries to get close to you is usually after something	.525				
When a Black person holds an opinion with which I disagree, I'm too afraid to express myself					.569
Sometimes jokes based in Black people's experiences are funny			.505		
I think it is exciting to discover the little ways in which Black people and White people are different.	.514				
I used to believe in racial integration, but now I have my doubts.			.453		
I'd rather socialise with Whites only	.448				
In many ways Blacks and Whites are similar, but they are also different in some important ways	.612				
Blacks and Whites have a lot to learn from each other	.771				
For the most of my life I did not think about racial issues				.693	
I have come to believe that Black and White people are very different			.595		
White people have bent over backwards trying to make up for the past, now it is time to stop			.489		
It is possible for Blacks and Whites to have meaningful relationships with each other	.570				
There are some valuable things that Whites can learn from Blacks that they can't learn from other Whites	.664				
I am curious to learn in what ways Blacks and Whites differ from each other	.696				
I limit myself to White activities	.325				
Society may have been unjust to Blacks, but it has also been unjust to Whites			.677		
I am knowledgeable about which values Blacks and Whites share					.474
I am comfortable wherever I am.		.666			

The last rotated factor had high factor loadings on the statements that indicate that the respondents were uncertain and to an extent scared of Blacks (see Table 36). This factor was titled "Racial uncertainty".

The five above-mentioned factors explained 46,8% of the total variance of the independent variable.

Considering the characteristics of the five stages of White racial identity attitude development, as described by Helms (1990) and discussed in Chapter 8, there appears to be little significant correlation between the extracted factors and the different categories. This could possibly indicate that the WRIAS index is not completely compatible with the South African social environment.

#### **10.7.4. Conclusion of RIAS-B and WRIAS findings**

Racial identity is defined as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he/she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms 1990: 3; cf. Chapter 8). This perception acts as a cognitive worldview with its own collection of feelings, attitudes and behaviours, which influences how the individual views him/herself, others and the world around them (Pope 1998: 274). It would appear as if one's racial identity could play a definite role when interpreting media messages. It was on this premise that all the respondents were asked to complete either the RIAS-B or WRIAS index, depending on their race.

After completing one of the indexes, each respondent was assigned to the development stage he/she sorted under at that specific time in their racial identity development. The category the individual was assigned to was used as an independent variable in the analysis of the response to the newspaper items.

The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B) and the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) contain a number of statements, each of which combine with other statements to constitute a measurement of the various stages of racial identity development. This combination of statements to measure a certain attitude might implicate that the statements pertaining to one specific development stage must correlate significantly, i.e. the respondents might interpret the statements similarly because his/her racial identity determine the interpretation of the statement.

It would appear as if the statements in the RIAS-B and the WRIAS that were used to determine the specific racial identity attitudes do not indicate a significant correlation ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). This might be an indication that the respondents perceived the statements differently, and thus not according to the tested racial identity stage.

The racial identity of the respondents could not be used as a variable in the analysis of the survey data. The decision not to use the categories of racial identity in the analysis of the data was based on the results of the correlation coefficients and the factor analysis. There were differences between the results of the factors calculated in this study and the factors that were suppose to constitute the RIAS-B and the WRIAS.

The RIAS and WRIAS factors extracted by the factor analysis contained few possible elements of the RIAS category definitions by Helms (cf. Chapter 8), but these elements were not substantial enough to use for the purpose of this study. It was apparently for this reason that an ANOVA between the RIAS categories and the statements in the questionnaire, as mentioned earlier, indicated no significant difference between the RIAS categories.

Although racial identity could sway the perceptiveness of mass media receivers it could not be determined by the current study. Consequently the racial identity of the respondents could not be used as an independent variable in the study.

## 10.8 CONCLUSION

There appeared to be a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the White and the Black response group with regard to each statement on the four newspaper items in the questionnaire. This difference might be an indication that the Black students at the University of the Free State (UFS) perceived media messages differently than the White students.

Most of the statements were replicated from the categories used by the content analysis. More White students appeared to agree with the statements than Black students. There were, however, a smaller group of White respondents that perceived the media as racist than Black students. This possibly indicates that the White respondents did not perceive the media as racist, regardless of their agreement with the statements.

More Black students indicated that they perceived the media to be racist, than White students. This might be an indication that the Black students identified other implicit racist messages in the media that were not captured by the content analysis categories.

If there were statistical significant differences identified between the perception groups (insensitive, unethical, objective or racist) the differences were primarily between the respondents that perceived the item as objective and the rest of the response group. It would thus appear as if the schema and norms used by the objective group influenced the manner in which the newspaper items were perceived. From the data findings a number of dimensions became apparent. These will subsequently be discussed in Chapter 11.

## CHAPTER 11

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 11.1. INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Commission (HRC) launched a probe into racism in the media. Two research authorities were employed to conduct the research. The methodology followed by these researchers was severely criticised, as discussed in Chapter 6. The current study attempted to expand on the research of the HRC and consequently avoid the critiques of the previous research.

After conducting a content analysis of three mainstream newspapers, the respondents were asked to evaluate four newspaper items. Their responses illuminated certain dimensions of the nature of racism in the media.

This chapter focuses on a discussion of the content analysis and survey findings of the study, and contains the following:

- 11.2. Content analysis findings vs. MMP findings
  - 11.2.1. Crime, Racism and Corruption
  - 11.2.2. Black lives are not important
  - 11.2.3. Incompetence of government
  - 11.2.4. Conclusion of content analysis
- 11.3. Survey findings
  - 11.3.1. Photograph findings
  - 11.3.2. Letter findings
  - 11.3.3. Article findings
  - 11.3.4. Cartoon findings
- 11.4. Conclusion

## 11.2. CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS vs. MMP FINDINGS

This study used exactly the same categories of analysis as the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) in their study for the Human Rights Commission (HRC). The current study analysed three mainstream newspapers and although the results were more or less similar, other dimensions became apparent.

The results of the current study indicated that 848 items contained implicit or explicit racist messages. Of this a total of 417 items showed a support of racism, i.e. 49,2% of all items contained some sort of support for racist elements, while 32,2% were coded as being neutral and 19,6% opposed racism (see Chart 3; Chapter 9).

### 11.2.1 Crime, Racism and Corruption

During their content analysis the MMP found that "items dealing with race issues tended to feature in crime stories, with over 200 items..."(MMP 1999: 12). The current study also found that a major portion of identified items focused on crime (149 items) (Chart 2). Race, as an element in the crime report, must be treated selectively, i.e. if the race of the person is of great importance to the report, it can be mentioned. Although this can be seen as comprehensive reporting, it can also reinforce racial stereotypes.

The MMP commented that an investigation into crime reports revealed that there were more reports on crime events, rather than explanation through analysis, feature, and comment (MMP 1999: 44). In the current study it was found that crime reports were reduced to merely one or two paragraphs in a column of crime incidents. Higher profile crimes did however receive more detail and consequently more newspaper space (e.g. "Igesund ill after assault", *The Citizen*, 28 April, 2001: 2). It is a possible reflection on society that the rape and murder

of a schoolteacher only received coverage on the second page of a newspaper ("Teacher found dead in canefield", *The Star*, 7 May, 2001: 2).

In the same column as the previously mentioned report, 17 other similar items were published on 7 May, 2001 in *The Star*. Considering the limited space available in a newspaper it is understandable that not all 18 items could get a full analysis and comment as desired by the MMP. This was a possible reflection of the impact of crime on society and consequently the mass media.

The MMP found that "items specifically dealing with racism, as the subject, also received extensive coverage with just under 200 items" (MMP 1999: 12).

Specific racism items did not feature that prominently in the current study, but was still under the five most popular subjects (97 identified items) (Chart 2). It was found that the items that focused on racism were opposed to it and thus reports mainly condemned the institution of racism. This could be attributed to the fact that Human Rights' Day fell into the period demarcated for the content analysis. This caused a number of outcries against racism and the consequent endangerment of human rights. It will thus appear that when racism is directly addressed, i.e. explicitly mentioned, it is condemned by the media.

Subjects of political violence and intimidation, labour, unemployment and corruption, showed a notable tendency for racism and racial stereotypes to occur as 'bad news' stories (MMP 1999: 12). This was also found in the current study, especially with reference to photographs, e.g. Black Cosas supporters vandalising a street market (*The Star*, 7 May, 2001: 7). The tendency to associate Blacks with issues such as political violence, unemployment, etc. might create implicit racial messages and ultimately racial stereotypes.

As far as corruption is concerned, the current study identified 103 items dealing with corruption, containing implicit or explicit racist messages (Chart 2). This was the third highest item frequency (103 identified items) in the content analysis.

This can be attributed to the high profile given to the alleged corruption surrounding the arms deal and Tony Yengeni's alleged fraud concerning his expensive car. These two events received a lot of media attention and accounted for a major portion of items identified under the category labelled as "corruption".

### **11.2.2. Black lives are not important**

The MMP observed that the practice of not respecting Black people's dignity was alarmingly high (MMP 1999: 21). The monitoring also revealed that the invasion of Black people's privacy was relatively high (MMP 1999: 24). This was most commonly seen in the reporting and filming of Black funerals and in people's time of grief.

The same phenomenon was found in the current content analysis, especially with regard to the soccer tragedies that occurred during the period of analysis, but it was not as high as found in the MMP study. There were five photographs that showed victims and their families grieving over the tragedy. According to the MMP content analysis these photographs might reinforce the stereotype that "Black people are emotional and out of control" (MMP 1999: 24).

Other stereotypes that were identified in the current content analysis included the association made between illnesses, such as AIDS, and Black people. This could be seen with photographs accompanying articles on the subject (e.g. *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001: 24; article on health care with photograph of sick Black child).

One of the complaints lodged by the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) was that the media depersonalise the death of Black people. The MMP found this to be true in some media reports (MMP 1999: 22). They also discovered that reporting on events where Black people had died, such as the soccer tragedies, frequently

tended to focus on the numbers of people who had died rather than individual deaths (MMP 1999: 24). According to the MMP, this "consequently strips Black people's dignity away from them" (MMP, 1999: 24). The current study found the practice of focussing on numbers to be true. Various reports focussed on the number of people that have died, e.g. "Ghana stampede leaves 130 fans dead" (*Mail & Guardian*, 11 May, 2001: 11).

The "number reporting" might strip the people's dignity away, but in another sense it deepens the impact of the event. Number reporting was counterbalanced by reporting on individuals that were affected by the tragedy, e.g. reports on family members affected by the event. The reporting on affected individuals was also interpreted by the MMP as an invasion of privacy.

Adding a 'face' to a tragedy, by focussing on a victim of the event, is a news value identified by (MacDougall; in Price & Tewksbury 1997: 178) and is known as "Personal angle" (cf. Chapter 7). This allows the receiver of the message to relate to the victims and hence to increase sympathy and even empathy. This seemed to be especially true when the tragedy under question involved a large number of people.

Another need, in addition to "personal angle", is to experience extreme emotions, such as love and hate, the horrible and similar phenomena (Berger 1991: 87). It might be said that photographs of victims allowed the receiver to perceive the true impact of the tragedy and see the devastation of the event allowing a deepened understanding.

### **11.2.3. Incompetence of Government**

The MMP set out to determine whether or not there were stereotypical examples of "incompetence of the government" in the reporting of government issues. In the current content analysis the government, as a subject of newspaper

reporting, had the second highest frequency of all subjects (125 items) (cf. Chart 2; Chapter 9).

The MMP was concerned that the addition of racial elements in government related messages might draw on stereotypes and consequently reinforce stereotypical viewpoints (MMP 1999: 38). There was a definite tendency of the media to associate corruption with the political party of the person, e.g. most of the articles on Tony Yengeni included the phrase "ANC chief whip...". This marked a direct association between the alleged offender and the government, enforcing the stereotypes that the government is corrupt and parliamentarians are inefficient.

A similar result was found in the current study that reporting on crime in some instances would be linked to government inefficiency and incapability to deal with crime (MMP 1999: 48). The current study identified items that focussed on criticism the government received for not dealing appropriately with crime (e.g. "No justice for rape survivors", *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May, 2001; "Yengeni has little to fear from law", *Mail & Guardian*, 30 March, 2001).

A topic frequently associated with the government was corruption (MMP 1999: 38). Content analysis results in the current study showed this to be true. As mentioned earlier, the media was rife with reports on the alleged fraudulent arms deal and Tony Yengeni's car debacle. The MMP admitted that it is essential that the media report on corruption in the government (MMP 1999: 38).

A journalist must question society, and by doing so inform, and subsequently empower, voters. Scrutinising the action and inaction of government, can accomplish this (Randall 2000: 3) (cf. Chapter 7). This function of the media appeared to possibly contribute to the racial stereotypes identified in the media, as the current South African government consists predominantly of Black leaders.

#### 11.2.4. Conclusion of content analysis

It appears as if the current study rendered similar results to that of the MMP inquiry, with only a few differences.

Both studies found a prominent presence of items containing implicit or explicit racist content that focussed on the government (125 items; 14,7%) (Chart 2). The government seemed to be a subject that could easily contain racist connotations. The racist connotation might be inconsistent, as the government will always be a focus point in a liberated press, having the opportunity and duty to report on irregularities within the government irrespective of the government's race compilation.

Corruption was often associated with government issues, mainly focussing on the apparent fraudulent arms deal and the Yengeni saga. Corruption was also prominent in the MMP inquiry, which might indicate that corruption, as a subject, tended to have implicit or explicit racist connotations.

Crime, political violence and letter items were found to feature regularly in both content analyses. The MMP did however find more items sorting under racism than the current study.

It can be concluded that, based on the similar results yielded by the two independent studies, the content analysis indicated unerring traces of racism, and more specific racial stereotypes that may arise from the content of the media.

These findings were dependent on the categories used in the content analysis, which were identified by the MMP and excluded the perceptiveness of the mass media receivers. The findings of the receivers' responses will subsequently be

discussed. This might possibly indicate whether the media was perceived as racist by the other participant in the mass communication process, namely the audience (cf. transactional model of communication; Chapter2).

### **11.3. SURVEY FINDINGS**

The questionnaire administered to 305 respondents contained four different genres of newspaper items, namely a photograph, an article, a letter and a cartoon (see Appendixes A, B, C and D). These items were identified as having implicit or explicit racist messages. The items were evaluated by respondents on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The statements used in the Likert scale were directly derived from the categories used in the content analysis.

#### **11.3.1. Photograph findings**

Photographs, as a type of newspaper item, recorded nine (9) items, which had implicit or explicit racist content (Chart 1; Chapter 9). Abiding by the categories determined by the MMP, one photograph was identified which represented a number of categories (see Appendix A). This photograph was administered to the respondents in order to determine how they perceived the message conveyed by the photograph.

In the responses to all the statements referring to the photograph there was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the White and the Black response groups. The statements were replicated from the categories used in the content analysis. More Black students were inclined to agree with the statements than White students. It will thus appear as if Black students perceived the photograph differently than White students. This difference in interpretation might be ascribed to the connotations that the Black group might have with regard to photographs such as the one under question. These connotations, which are

connected to the receiver's comprehension of the message conveyed by the photograph, are influenced by his/her social characteristics such as gender, age, education, and culture (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 143) (cf. Chapter 2).

The difference between the two race groups might also be embedded in their dissimilar cultures. Culture is a part of the context in which communication occurs and consequently influences the communication process (cf. Chapter 2; transactional model of communication). The modern mass communication culture has tended to downplay the significance of the various subcultures, which exists in society. The roles of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, political values, religion, ethnicity, education and occupation of the communicators in mass communication, have been neglected in the past (Berger 1995: 90) (cf. Chapter 2).

There was also a significant difference, on four of the five statements, regarding the interpretation of the perception groups. The major differences was between the group that perceived the photograph as objective and those that perceived it as unethical, insensitive and racist. It will appear that if the respondents who perceived the photograph as objective interpreted the implicit messages differently from all the other respondents. A small minority of respondents perceived the photograph as racist, while the content analysis of the photograph indicated that the content is racist.

This difference might be attributed to different norms and schemas used by the objective group in the interpretation of the photograph. Schema, as defined by Graber (1988) (in Severin & Tankard 1992: 66), are "cognitive structures consisting of organised knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from prior experiences" (cf. Chapter 2). It might thus be that the unethical, insensitive and racist groups have abstracted different elements based on their organised knowledge of newspaper photographs. These elements might have made them more cautious of the implicit messages of newspaper

photographs and consequently do not necessarily perceive photographs as objective.

Objectivity can also imply isolation from implicit racist messages. This isolation might enforce the receiver's perception of the photograph as an objective newspaper item, free of implicit messages. This might also be the crux of the difference between the perception groups.

Considering only the frequency of responses, the highest percentage of respondents agreed only with the statement that the photograph underlined the tragedy of the event, while disagreeing with all the other statements based on the content analysis categories. This might indicate that a fair number of respondents perceived the photograph as an enhancement of sympathy. This enhancement of sympathy is a media function identified by Berger (1991: 87) (cf. Chapter 3).

### **11.3.2. Letter findings**

A high percentage of respondents agreed with the statements which referred to the content of the letter. Although the majority of both race groups agreed with the statements, there were fundamental differences between the two groups.

Generally more Black respondents disagreed with the statements, than did White respondents.

49,8% of all respondents perceived the letter as objective and only 8,5% perceived it as racist (Chart 5; Chapter 10). A minority of respondents thus perceived the letter to be racist, while the content analysis of the letter indicated that the content is racist.

All the statements regarding the letter were focussed on the government. The apparent incapability of the respondents to classify the letter as racist might suggest that the respondents did not perceive the statements regarding the government as racist. This reflects the need "to see authority figures exalted or deflated", which is addressed by the media (Berger 1991: 86) (cf. Chapter 3).

### 11.3.3. Discussion on article findings

Respondents were asked to evaluate an article focussing on the resignation of the MEC for health in the Eastern Cape (*The Star*, 30 April, 2001: 2; Appendix C). The article contained various propositions regarding the ANC government, which were coded as implicit racist content. These propositions were used as content analysis categories, which in turn were reproduced as statements, which respondents used to evaluate the article.

A high percentage indicated that they agree with all the statements. These racist propositions focussed primarily on the government. The respondents showed a more than 50% agreement with the statements, measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

The majority (56,7%; N = 503) of respondents still did not perceive the media as racist (Table 20). This assumption rests on the function of the media to scrutinise the actions of government (Randall 2000: 3) (cf. Chapter 7).

Only 16,4% of White respondents agreed with the statement that the article creates the idea that the media is racist, while 29,2% of the Blacks agreed. In spite of the fact that the Black group appeared to disagree more with the statements, a larger number of Black respondents agreed that the media is racist. There might thus be other implicit messages in the article that led the Black respondents to believe that the article created the idea that the media is racist.

The White group indicated that they disagree with the statement that the article created the idea that the media is racist. This might either indicate that the respondents are not aware of the impact of these implicit messages and that they possibly cause racism in the media, or that they are aware of the implicit messages and just don't perceive them as racist. The latter statement is more likely to be true, as a major portion of respondents indicated that they agree with the statements, but still did not deduce that the media is racist.

All the statements regarding the government in the article showed a significant correlation ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) with all the statements in the letter regarding the government. It seems as if the propositions regarding the government were all related. The respondents thus showed an inclination to regard all statements related to the government in a similar manner.

#### **11.3.4. Discussion on cartoon findings**

A major portion of respondents perceived the cartoon as objective, just as they perceived the photograph and letter items as objective. As with the other items, the least support was found for the proposition that the cartoon is a racist item, despite the findings of the content analysis that the cartoon contained implicit racist messages.

With regard to all the statements pertaining to the cartoon there was a significant difference between the responses of Black and the White groups. It appeared as if Black and White students at the UFS interpreted the cartoon, as newspaper item, differently. One possible reason for this could be the role that race plays in the interpretation of newspaper messages (cf. Chapter 2)

It was the difference between the Black (29,9%) and White (13,9%) groups that disagreed with the statement that the cartoon is light-hearted, that indicated that

the Black respondents were more inclined to be more skeptical of the light-heartedness of the cartoon than the White respondents. This might be ascribed to the different schemas that may be used by the two different race groups.

Another possible reason could be the difference in humour, as this is primarily based in the culture of the individual. It could thus be that culture influenced the respondent's perceptiveness of the cartoon.

Concluding from the factor analysis, it would appear as if the respondents evaluated each newspaper item type as an independent item, each with its own implicit meanings. There were differences among the items on the basis of the respondents' perception of them.

With the letter, article as well as the cartoon the White respondents had a tendency to agree with the statements, but did not necessarily perceive the media as racist. The Black respondents, on the other hand, were less inclined to agree with the statements, but they were more prone to perceive the media as racist.

It would appear as if there was a significant difference between the perceptiveness of the Black and White respondents regarding their interpretation of the newspaper items. Their perceptiveness also seemed to differ with regard to the various newspaper item types. This might indicate that the mass media message, as an independent part of the communication process, has different meanings and interpretations for the two race groups. This might be ascribed to the different fields of experience the two race groups bring to the mass communication process (cf. transactional model of communication; Chapter 2)

#### **11.4 CONCLUSION**

The methodology followed in the study allowed a more comprehensive evaluation of the apparent phenomenon of racism in the media. By means of incorporating

the functions of the mass communication process, a new dimension of the phenomenon was possibly offered.

The research conducted by the Human Rights Commission and its two independent researchers was limited to the products of the media. If the current study was also limited to only the products of the media, the study would have concentrated only on the content analysis of the mainstream media. The continuation beyond the content analysis, by investigating the characteristics and functions of the media and the audience, might have incorporated a new dimension of the inquiry into racism in the media.

The content analysis results indicated that the media contained racist messages. The further study into the perceptiveness of the receiver revealed that the implicit racist messages are not necessarily interpreted as racist.

There was a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between the responses by Black and White respondents on all of the variables. This was a possible indication that the race of the receiver might influence his/her interpretation of the media message.

After considering certain aspects of the mass communication process, possible conclusions might be made about the perceptiveness of the mass media receivers. Judging from the discussion on the research findings, certain dimensions and conclusions become evident. These are subsequently discussed in Chapter 12.

## CHAPTER 12

### RESEARCH CONCLUSION

#### 12.1. INTRODUCTION

The media are very powerful communication channels. Accusations that the media is racist might have enormous implications for the media itself and society on the whole.

Various factors might play a role in the construction of the message and the interpretation thereof. The accusations, the findings of the Human Rights Commission (HRC), the functions of the media, the aspects of the audience and the research of the current study are discussed in the concluding chapter of the study. This Chapter concentrates on the following:

- 12.2.           Research Problem
- 12.3.           Aim and objectives of study
- 12.4.           Possibly traces of racism
  - 12.4.1.               Similarities between HRC and current study
  - 12.4.2.               Conclusion of racist traces
- 12.5.           Media functions and practices
  - 12.5.1.               Media elements contributing to racist messages
  - 12.5.2.               Conclusion on media functions and elements
- 12.6.           Perceptiveness of UFS students
  - 12.6.1.               Photograph conclusion
  - 12.6.2.               Letter conclusion
  - 12.6.3.               Article conclusion
  - 12.6.4.               Cartoon conclusion
- 12.7.           Synopsis and future research

## 12.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) undertook an apparently difficult venture to identify racism in the media. This venture appeared to be crucial, as racism was a serious accusation, especially when it was expected to be inherent in a powerful communication medium such as the media.

The HRC published their findings in a report, entitled Faultlines. The HRC concluded this report by stating that "the media can be characterised as racist institutions" (Faultlines, 2000:88).

Faultlines was received with a certain amount of criticism. The main criticism focussed on the apparent lack of research into media practices and the media consumers, as the research was limited to the products of the media.

It was this apparent void in the HRC study that led to the research problem of the current study, namely:

*"The perceptiveness of UFS students to racial messages in newspapers".*

## 12.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The study attempted to provide a relatively complete understanding of racism in the media. Racism proved to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon that not only manifests itself in various forms in society, but also appeared to be subjected to each individual's perception of racism.

The HRC and its independent researchers identified certain prominent traces of racism in the media. The current study investigated whether similar traces of racism could be identified in the media, by means of a content analysis.

The criticisms the HRC received concentrated on the apparent absence of research into media practices and the mass media consumers. As an additional aim of the study, consideration was given to the characteristics and functions of the media.

The aim of the study was to determine the perceptiveness of students at the University of the Free State to racist messages. This incorporated their perception of certain media messages, which contained implicit or explicit racist messages.

The aim of the research was achieved by means the following primary objectives:

- To identify possible traces of racism in the media.
- To investigate the possible influence of media function theories on the production of media messages.
- To determine the perceptiveness of students at the University of the Free State with regard to the identified racist traces in the media.

Forthcoming from these primary objectives, the following secondary objectives were identified:

- To distinguish certain elements embedded in media functions, which possibly contribute to the construction of implicit and/or explicit racist messages.
- To identify certain similarities between the results of the current study and that of the Human Rights Commission.
- To determine whether the race of the respondents possibly influenced his/her mass media interpretation.

- To determine whether the perceptions of respondents were in accord with the findings of the content analysis

Providing a reliable and scientific conclusion on all the results regarding the objectives might implicate a repetition of most of the results already discussed within the research document. Consequently, only certain aspects pertaining to the objectives are discussed for the sake of clarity.

#### **12.4. OBJECTIVE 1: POSSIBLE TRACES OF RACISM**

By means of using the same content analysis categories as Media Monitoring Project (MMP), the current study arrived at almost similar results as the MMP, that the media contained stereotypical representations of race. These implicit messages might contribute to the formation of stereotypes, which are harmful portrayals of racial groups and can cause a subliminal barrier between races.

The media's critical reporting on government was interpreted by the MMP as racist, often creating the idea that Black politicians are "incapable, corrupt and inefficient" (cf. Content analysis categories; Chapter 8). Critical reporting on the government issues constituted 14,7% of all the items identified by the content analysis (Chart 2). Judging by the MMP criteria governmental reports possibly created racial stereotypes and consequently implicating that the media was racist.

With issues like the government careful consideration must, however, be given to the function of the media as a watchdog. Randall (2000: 3) stated that responsible journalism includes scrutinising the actions of the government (cf. Chapter 7). Certain issues that concern the taxpayer must be brought under the attention of the public and the mere fact that the majority of the government is Black, was possibly no foundation to assume that the media was racist.

Crime reporting was also identified as a subject that contained numerous implicit racist messages (149 items; Chart 2). This kind of reporting mainly reduced crime related stories to mere one-paragraph reports, except when the incident involved a child or a prominent person in society.

From the content analysis of the current study it could be deduced that there were still traces of racism inherent in the content of the media. Racism appeared to be a very difficult multi-dimensional phenomenon that could not be completely pinpointed, as every person had his/her own interpretation of it.

#### **12.4.1. Similarities between HRC and current study**

Both the MMP research and the current study identified prominent traces of racist reporting regarding the government. Most of the government reports were focussed on the corruption within the ANC and government.

There was a definite tendency of the media to associate corruption with the political party of the person. This marked a direct association between the alleged offender and the government, enforcing the stereotypes that the government is corrupt and parliamentarians are inefficient.

In both the MMP research and this study, crime reports constituted the highest frequency of all the subjects of reporting. Strong criticisms of the government for not dealing appropriately with crime were identified.

Numerous other similarities between the findings of the MMP and this study were observed. These were discussed in Chapter 11.

#### **12.4.2 Conclusion of racist traces**

There were prominent traces of racism identified in the media by the content analysis. Consequently, the media would also have been classified as racist in the current study if the research only focussed on the content of the media, i.e. the products of the media.

The content analysis served as a source of comparison between the MMP research and that of the current study. Similar traces of racism were found in both the studies.

Criticism on the period of research chosen by the HRC indicated that the results of the HRC study might have been influenced by the general elections of 1999 (cf. Chapter 6). The similar results obtained by the different studies imply that the HRC study was not influenced by the elections. This might be an indication that the HRC study was reliable, i.e. similar results were obtained when the study was duplicated.

#### **12.5. OBJECTIVE 2: MEDIA FUNCTIONS AND PRACTICES**

The Human Rights Commission (HRC), and more specifically Claudia Braude, received criticism that their report on racism did not consider the institutions and functions of the media (cf. Chapter 6). The principle of mass communication rests on the success of the communication process, which includes the active participation of the communicators, i.e. the media and the audience. This process can only be successful if the message that was intended and constructed by the one communicator was correctly received and interpreted by the other. This process was shown to be influenced by a number of factors.

It became apparent that the message cannot be isolated from the communicators, as the message is the property of both the communication

participants, i.e. the media and the audience. The media encodes the message, which is then decoded and interpreted by the audience. Isolating the message from this process is risky and might result in an obscure perception of the intended message (cf. Chapter 2).

Within the transactional model of communication the audience appears to play an active part in the mass communication process and is an equal participant in the event. If the audience were passive receivers of the value-laden media language there would be a power imbalance. This power that the media possesses was a concern for the MMP, but if the audience is seen as an active participant in the communication event this power is not so influential.

It became apparent that the media is primarily a business, aimed at obtaining as many receivers as possible. This recruitment of receivers is done through knowing the needs of the audience (cf. uses and gratification theory; Chapter 3), and supplying the news accordingly. The production of the mass media message thus appears to be influenced by a number of media functions that have to be considered when an attempt is made to analyse the message content.

### **12.5.1. Media elements contributing to racist messages**

#### **12.5.1.1 Uses and Gratification Theory**

The uses and gratification theory of the media implies that mass communication serves certain functions for the audience. It centres on the selectivity of personal interest and how the media are impressed into the service of individual needs and values (Blumler 1985: 49). This theory is based on the premises that the audience is active and part of mass media use is assumed to be goal-directed.

The needs and expectations of each receiver differ. Various audience needs, which are addressed by the media, were identified (cf. Chapter 3). These needs

appeared to be gratified by means of reports specifically focussed on the expectations of the audience. A need, such as the desire to see authority figures deflated, can be misinterpreted as an undue attack on authority figures, such as the government. It is this kind of reporting that led the MMP and HRC to believe that when the authority figures are deflated it constituted racist attacks.

Scrutinising the action and inaction of the government allows the media to gratify the needs within the audience. If not seen as a fulfillment of an audience need the message might be perceived as racist.

#### 12.5.1.2. Selective Exposure

Selective exposure was identified as the tendency of a person to expose himself or herself to those messages that are in agreement with the person's existing attitudes. The contrary was also found to be true, people tend to avoid messages which are not in agreement with their attitudes. For this reason the media is able to "narrowcast" their messages for a specific audience (cf. Chapter 3).

The qualitative research conducted by Braude concentrated heavily on the *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaner* genre. Both these case studies were examples of the HNP's (Herstigte Nasionale Party) ideologies expressed in the media. The theory of selective exposure possibly explains the content of *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaner*. The media's audiences have selected these media on the basis of existing attitudes within the audience. This is a niche market and the messages aimed at this market were possibly not meant for general public consumption.

The needs, attitudes, opinions and activities of these media's audiences appeared to be specialised and concentrated. The audience apparently chooses the medium to which they will expose themselves depending on their different needs and the manner in which the medium can satisfy them. The media will

supply the information that is relevant to the needs of its audience, ultimately influencing the composition of the mass media message.

A comprehensive grasp of a media message must include the context in which it was published. This appears to be significant when considering the audience, their needs and the construction of the media message.

#### 12.5.1.3. News Values

News values were found to play an important role when determining what is news (Nel, 1998: 21). News values appeared to influence the production of mass media messages in certain ways (cf. Chapter 7).

Various news values were identified and found to influence the compilation of the newspaper message. One such value was the proximity of an event to the readers as appeared to be one of the news values that influenced the production of news.

News values such as consequence, peculiarity, prominence, conflict, topicality, time and visual appeal appeared to have an influence on the emphasis and production of the message. If the news value of a message was not considered, it is possible that the message might be misinterpreted as racist as was the case with the MMP study. In order to obtain a holistic grasp of the media message, news values must be considered before assumptions about the text can be made.

#### 12.5.2. Conclusion of media functions and elements

It would appear as if there were various elements in the media that might affect the production of the mass media message. The audience appeared to be one

of the major contributors to the production of the message when they are perceived as active participants in the communication process (cf. Chapter 2).

The production of the message also appeared to be influenced by media theories such as uses and gratification, selective exposure and elements such as news values. Most of these theories were found to be based on the perception that the audience plays an active role in the communication process.

## **12.6. OBEJECTIVE 3: PERCEPTIVENESS OF UFS STUDENTS**

The perceptiveness of UFS students to racist messages in the media was determined by means of a questionnaire (see Appendix G). The respondents were asked to evaluate four types of newspaper items, namely a photograph, a letter, an article and a cartoon. These four items were identified by means of the content analysis and all contained implicit racist messages. Each of the items and the conclusions reached by each one, are discussed individually.

### **12.6.1. Photograph conclusion**

The photograph depicted dead victims of the soccer tragedy in Ghana (see Appendix A). The photograph contained elements of implicit racism identified by its content analysis. These implicit messages were reconstructed into statements, which the respondents used to evaluate the photograph. The highest percentage of respondents disagreed with these statements.

A high percentage of respondents (82,9%) indicated that they agree with the statement that the photograph underlined the tragedy of the event (Table 8). This statement was based on Berger's assertion that one of the audience needs is to experience extreme emotions (Berger 1991: 87) (cf. Chapter 3). It would have seemed as if a major portion of the respondents perceived the photograph as an objective source to enhance sympathy with the victims.

A significant difference between the interpretation of the Black and the White response group was observed with every statement regarding the photograph. A receiver's comprehension was in the theory found to be influenced by his/her race (Windahl & Signitzer 1992: 143; Berger 1995: 90) (cf. Chapter 2).

Although the photograph was coded as a racist item in the content analysis, the highest percentage of respondents (39,7%) perceived the photo as objective, while only 3,9% indicated that they perceived the photo as racist (Chart 4). This might have indicated that the respondents perceived this photograph as an objective newspaper item and not necessarily a carrier of racist messages, even though the photograph was classified as racist at the hand of its content analysis.

#### **12.6.2. Letter conclusion**

The letter was classified as racist by means of its content analysis. A high percentage of respondents agreed with the statements, which were replicated from the content analysis categories used in the study. Only 8,5% of respondents, however, perceived the letter as racist (Chart 5).

The respondents did possibly not perceive the statements as indicators of racism. All the statements pertained to the government. This commonality might be grounded in the identified function of the media to scrutinise the actions and inaction of government (cf. Chapter 7), implicating that the respondents perceived the letter not as racist, but possibly as part of the function of the media to report on government activities.

There were significant differences between the interpretations of the Black response group and that of the White group with regard to every statement based on the content of the letter. The White response group had a smaller percentage

that disagreed with the statements, than the Black response group (cf. Chapter 10).

All five statements were related to government issues. On four of the five statements there were no significant difference calculated between the perception categories. It would thus appear as the perception groups employed similar schema and were not influenced by alternative systems when interpreting government issues.

### **12.6.3. Article conclusion**

The findings of the article indicated that a high percentage of respondents agreed with four of the five statements regarding the article. Three of these were reconstructed from the content analysis categories used in the study. These statements referred to implicit racist messages regarding the ANC government.

The correlation between the statements regarding the government in both the article and the letter possibly indicates that the respondents perceived issues regarding the government in a similar manner. It appeared as if there was a tendency to agree with the statements, but also not to perceive the media as racist. This might indicate that the respondents did not perceive reporting on the government as racist.

There was a significant difference between the Black and the White response groups with regard to the interpretation of the article. In general, a larger group of Black respondents disagreed with the statements, than White respondents.

Although the more White response group agreed with the statements, the majority of Whites (67,3%) indicated that they could not deduce from the article that the media is racist (Table 26). It would thus appear as if the White

respondents could not perceive the media as racist, even though the highest percentage of them agreed with the statements.

A larger portion of Black respondents (29,2%) indicated that they agreed with the statement that the article creates the idea that the media is racist. The Black response group was more reluctant to agree with the other statements. This might be an indication that the Black response group identified other implicit messages that made them conclude that the media is racist.

#### **12.6.4 Cartoon conclusion**

A high percentage of respondents agreed with the statement that the cartoon shows the incompetence of the government, but also disagreed that the cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki. The majority (64,1%) did however indicate that the cartoon is only light-hearted and should not be taken seriously (Table 27).

There was a significant difference identified between the interpretation of the Black and the White response groups on every statement regarding the cartoon. A larger portion of the White respondents agreed with the statement that the cartoon showed the incompetence of the government, than Black respondents.

It appeared as if the Black respondents were more sceptical of the light-heartedness of the cartoon, which might refer back to their field of experience they brought to the communication process (cf. Chapter 2; transactional model of communication). The influence of culture, as a personal system in the transactional model of communication, on the individual could also influence his/her humour, and consequently his/her perceptiveness of the cartoon.

## 12.7. SYNOPSIS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Racism appeared to be a very complex and evasive phenomenon to research. It seemed to be a concept that could not be kept in isolation, i.e. it had to be contextualised. The media functions and the entire communication process were found to play important roles in the construction of media products. These functions appeared to influence the production and interpretation of a message with potential racist elements. If the functions and characteristics of the media were ignored when studying racism in the media, a major dimension of the phenomenon might have been omitted.

Certain media practices control the construction of the message. These form part of the systems in which the mass communication process functions. The systems shape and influence the communication process, and consequently must be incorporated in an assessment of mass communication. The HRC identified specific elements in newspaper reporting that contribute to the classification of the media as racist. Incorporating the functions of the media into the investigation of racism in the media illuminates certain vital aspects eluded by the HRC.

One of the identified functions of the media is to scrutinise the actions of the government. The HRC regarded the scrutinising of the government as racist. The study found that there were significant correlations ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) between all the statements pertaining to the government. It appeared as if the respondents agreed with the statements, but did not perceive the reporting on the government as racist.

With regard to every statement in the questionnaire a statistical significant difference ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) was calculated between the responses of the Black and White groups. From this it could be concluded that the race of the respondent influenced his/her interpretation of the newspaper message. Various possible

reasons for this could exist, but seen within the transactional model of communication, it would appear as if race is a system within the communication context that plays an important role in the mass communication process.

Although a fair number of respondents agreed with the statements, which were based on the content analysis categories used in the study, the largest percentage did not perceive the individual items as racist.

The interpretation of the respondents appeared to be guided by their perceptions of the media item. These perceptions are embedded in the fields of experience each respondent brings to the mass communication process (cf. transactional model of communication). This is further influenced by factors such as culture, schema and connotations.

It would appear as if new categories for the identification of racist content can be drawn up for future content analyses. This would implicate that the audience must first be analysed in order to obtain the categories perceived by the audience as measures of racism. This would have to be done with two distinct groups, Black and White, as there has proved to be significant differences between the two groups.

While conducting the theoretical research it became apparent that there is a lack of scientific literature and research on racism in the media. There are thus numerous opportunities to assess the impact of racism in the media.

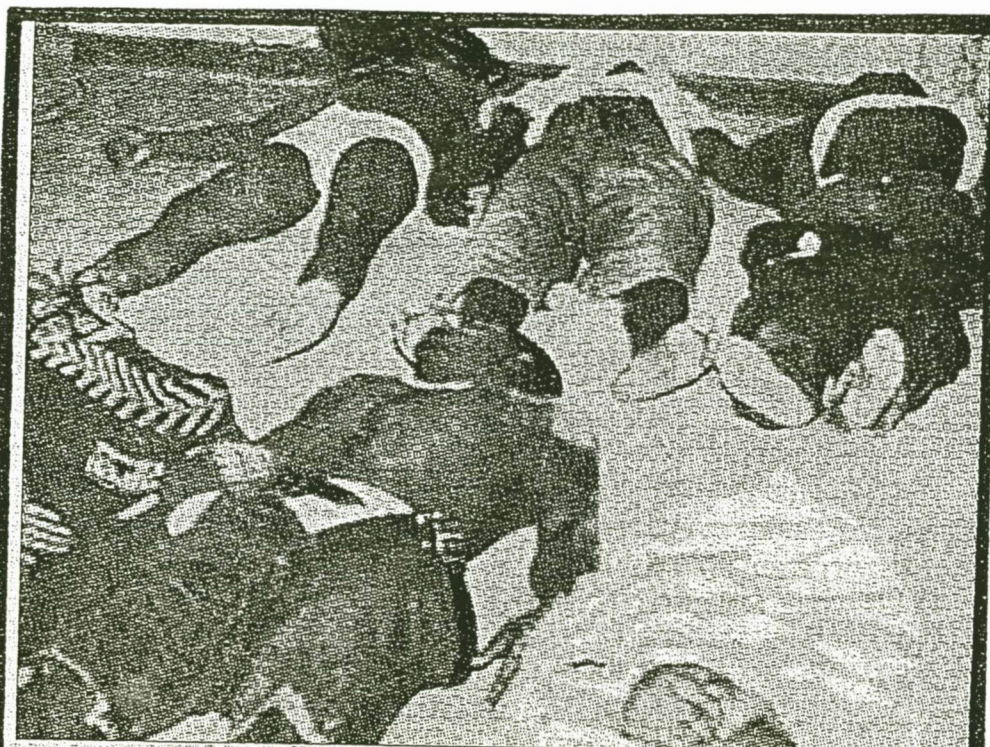
Possible future research might initially concentrate on the perceptions of the media audiences and determine how the audience perceives racism. This can be done separately for a Black audience and a White audience as they possibly interpret the media messages differently. From this analysis of the audience new content analysis categories can be determined and used to analyse the content of the mainstream media.

The racial identity attitude scale (RIAS) designed by Helms could not be incorporated into the analysis of the respondents' perceptiveness of racial messages in newspapers. Various scientific calculations revealed that the scale could not adequately measure the racial identity of the respondents. This could possibly be ascribed to the unique and complex social conditions in South Africa with regard to race relations. This allows for further research within the mass communication sphere, as the racial identity of the media receiver could possibly influence his/her perceptiveness of media messages.

The respondents, representative of the students at the University of the Free State (UFS), demonstrated a marked difference in their perceptiveness of the racist messages on the basis of their race. From the data it would appear as if the UFS students – the interpreters of racial messages in the media - did not perceive the media as racist institutions.

## APPENDIX A

### Photograph



Victims ... bodies are laid out on a mortuary floor for identification following the stampede.

*(The Star, 11 May, 2001)*

## APPENDIX B

### Letter

#### It's priorities, not sleaze

The arms deals (latest figure R51-billion and rising) is a gross misdirection of our very scarce resources, especially considering the fact that South Africa faces no military threat. HIV/Aids, unemployment, crime, to name but a few, are far more likely to destabilise this country than any foreign invasion. The prioritisation of arms purchases over these and other pressing social issues needs to be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Yes, very strong allegations of corruption around these multibillion-rand deals have surfaced but this should not be the main reason for calling for a cancellation of the deals.

I have strong reasons to believe that the government does not see the allegations in a serious light. President Thabo Mbeki has on quite a few occasions mentioned that there is no *prima facie* evidence to prove any wrongdoing. I doubt the investigators will want to discredit the president's view on this issue by proving him wrong.

There is therefore a likelihood that the probe will come up with nothing that may warrant a cancellation of the deals. Campaigners against the arms deals therefore need to focus more attention on government's failure to get its priorities right. — Percy M Ngonyama, *Coali-*

(Mail & Guardian, 4 May, 2001)

## APPENDIX C

### Article

#### MEC quits, blames ANC for crisis

Grahamstown – Former Eastern Cape health MEC Dr Trudy Thomas, who has resigned from the ANC, yesterday blamed the party's fiscal policies for the collapse of social and health services in the province.

Thomas, who served the party for about a decade, cited the complete breakdown of health services in the province for her resignation.

She said rural hospitals and clinics were trying to deal with outbreaks of serious diseases

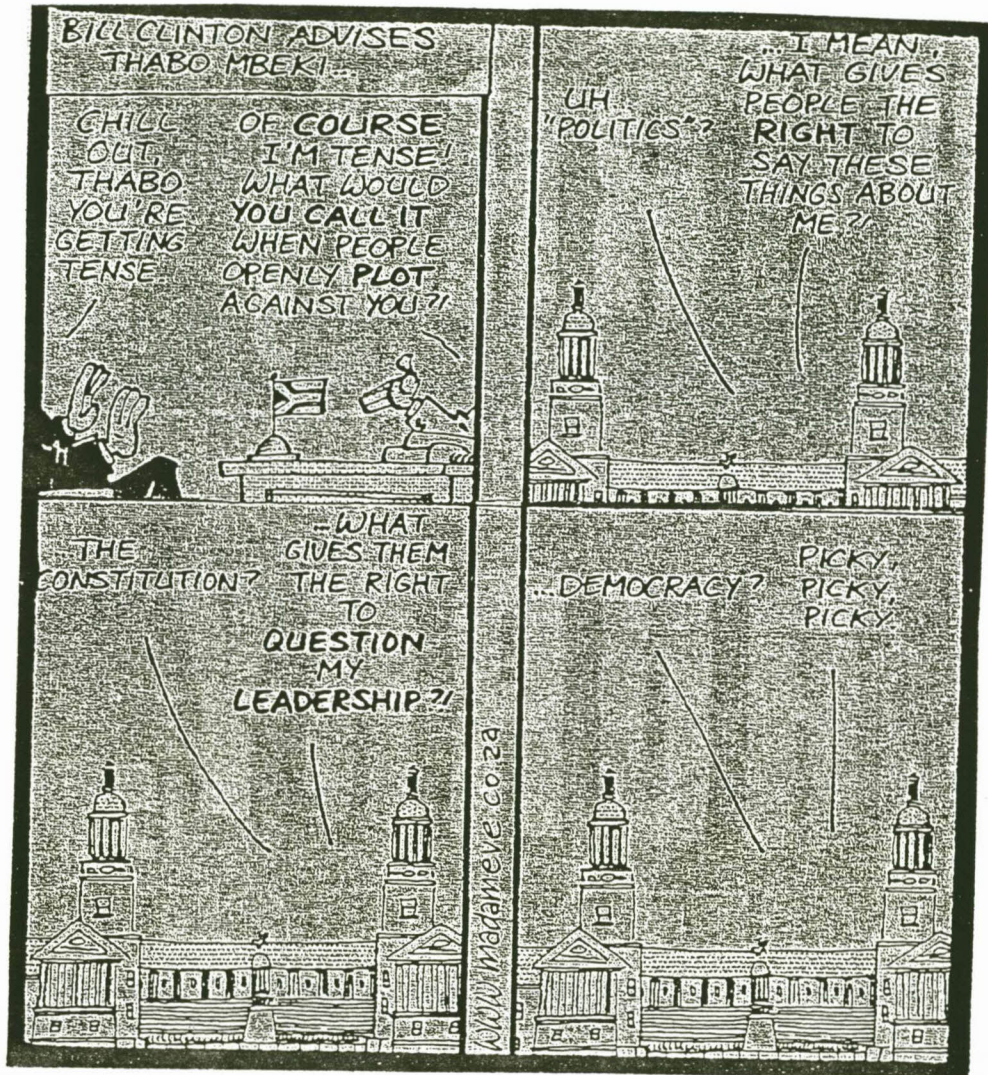
while understaffed, under-resourced and with no laboratory equipment. The institutions also lacked adequate medicine and food supplies.

"It is this steady, visible and measurable deterioration in social services, development and the economy due, in my view, to the finance and budgeting policies and practices of the Eastern Cape government since 1997 that decided me to resign first from the legislature and now from the ANC" – Sapa

(The Star, 30 April, 2001)

# APPENDIX D

## Cartoon



(The Star, 4 May, 2001)

## APPENDIX E

### Introduction to index

#### INTRODUCTION TO RIAS-B AND WRIAS

Thank you for helping us, your input is very important to the success of this study. You will be given two questionnaires.

Please remember your respondent code. You must rewrite this code on the second questionnaire. Remember these are random numbers and only serve to connect the two questionnaires.

Your identity is totally secret, so please be as honest as possible.

At question 5, please indicate where you received the majority of your school education, i.e. if you went to school on the platteland or in a city.

The first is an index, i.e. a predetermined set of questions designed for a specific purpose. This index was created by Jeannette E Helms and is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes.

There are no right or wrong answers. On the questionnaire there are 30 statements. By means of encircling the number indicate how you feel about the statement, i.e. do you strongly agree/disagree etc. Please complete the front and back section of the questionnaire.

The purpose of the research and the two different questionnaires will be explained to you after the questionnaires are completed. The reason for this will also be given to you after you have completed the questionnaires.

## APPENDIX F

### Introduction to and closing of questionnaire

#### INTRODUCTION TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Please remember your respondent code (#1) given to you on your first questionnaire. Rewrite that code on your second questionnaire. Remember your identity will not be revealed by this code, so please be honest.

Please complete questions 1-5 as you completed it on questionnaire A.

There are four newspaper clippings. Study each of the clippings and then answer the questions by circling the number of your answer. Once again, there are no right and no wrong answers, so please be honest.

#### CLOSING

Thank you once again for your help.

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptiveness of students to messages in the media, especially messages with a possible racist undertone. The study will thus show whether the HRC inquiry into racism in the media held any water.

Determining your social and political attitude (what we did in questionnaire A) will help with the interpretation of Questionnaire B. We will be able to see if political attitude influences the way in which a reader interprets a mass media message. We did not want to influence your response to Questionnaire B by telling you this beforehand.

APPENDIX G

Questionnaire

**QUESTIONNAIRE B**

1. Respondent Code: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Male  1 Female  2
3. Academical year: 1<sup>st</sup> year  2<sup>nd</sup> year  3<sup>rd</sup> year  4<sup>th</sup> year
4. Ethnic background: Black  1  
Coloured  3 White  2  
Other  4
5. Educational Background: Rural  1 City  2

**NEWSPAPER CLIPPING 1  
SOCCER TRAGEDY**

Study the photograph of a soccer tragedy attached to the questionnaire (Appendix A). This photo was taken after one of the soccer tragedies. Answer questions 6 - 7 by encircling only ONE answer at each question.

6. Any photograph awakens feelings in the reader. Which of the following best describe the feeling that the image in this photograph awoke in you, e.g. after viewing the photo and you should feel that the photo is unethical, then circle 2. Circle only ONE applicable number next to the word that best describes the feeling the photo awoke in you.

Insensitive	1
Unethical	2
Objective	3
Racist	4

7. Each of the following statements is based on the photograph of the soccer tragedy (Appendix A). Read each statement carefully and then circle the number directly above the scale that best describes how you feel about the statement, i.e. if you strongly disagree with the statement circle 1, if you agree with the statement circle 4, etc.
- 7.1. It is unethical of the media to take photo's of dead victims, such as this photo
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
  - 7.2. The photo creates the idea that black lives are not important.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree

- 7.3. This photo illustrates that black people's privacy is invaded by the media.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
- 7.4. From this photo, one can conclude that black people die in large numbers.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
- 7.5. This photo underlines the tragedy of African soccer fans dying at a sporting event.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree

**NEWSPAPER CLIPPING 2  
LETTER**

Read the letter (*It's priorities, not slaeze*) attached to the questionnaire (Appendix B) and then answer questions 8 - 9 by encircling the number next to your answer. Only ONE answer per question.

8. Each of the following statements is based on the letter (Appendix B). Read each statement carefully and then circle the number directly above the scale that best describes how you feel about the statement, i.e. if you strongly disagree with the statement circle 1, if you agree with the statement then circle 4, etc.
- 8.1. From the letter the impression is created that the ANC government is corrupt.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
  - 8.2. This letter implies that the ANC government leads to breakdown in social order.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
  - 8.3. Through the letter it is implied that the ANC government fails.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
  - 8.4. This letter creates the idea that ANC parliamentarians are inefficient.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree
  - 8.5. The content of this letter implies that the ANC government is incompetent.
 

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree

9. The content of the letter awakens feelings in the reader. Which of the following best describe the feeling that the content of this letter awoke in you, e.g. after reading the letter and you should feel that the letter is unethical, then circle 2. Circle only ONE applicable number next to the word that best describes the feeling this letter awoke in you.

Insensitive	1
Unethical	2
Objective	3
Racist	4

**NEWSPAPER CLIPPING 3**  
**MEC RESIGNATION**

Read the newspaper article attached to the questionnaire on the resignation of the MEC for health (Appendix C) carefully and answer question 10 by circling your answer. Only ONE answer per question.

10. Each of the following statements is based on the article focussing on the resignation of the MEC for health (Appendix C). Read each statement carefully and then circle the number directly above the scale that best describes how you feel about the statement, i.e. if you strongly disagree with the statement circle 1, if you agree with the statement circle 4, etc.

- 10.1. The article implies that the government leads to breakdown in social order
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 10.2. This article creates the idea that the ANC government fails.
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 10.3. Through the article the impression is created that the ANC government damages society.
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 10.4. The article implies that the MEC had reasons to resign from legislature.
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 10.5. The article creates the idea that the media is a racist institution.
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |

**NEWSPAPER CLIPPING 4**  
**PRES. MBEKI CARTOON**

Read the cartoon of Pres. Clinton's advice to Pres. Mbeki, attached to the questionnaire (Appendix D) and answer the questions that follow. Choose only ONE answer per question. Keep in mind that this cartoon was published in the period when there was an alleged plot against President Mbeki.

11. Any cartoon awakens feelings in the reader. Which of the following best describe the feeling that this cartoon awoke in you, e.g. after reading the cartoon and you should feel that it is unethical, then circle 2. Circle only ONE number next to the word that best describes the feeling this cartoon awoke in you.

Insensitive	1
Unethical	2
Objective	3
Racist	4

12. Each of the following statements is based on the Mbeki cartoon (Appendix D). Read each statement carefully and then circle the number directly above the scale that best describes how you feel about the statement, i.e. if you strongly disagree with the statement circle 1, if you agree with the statement circle 4, etc.

- 12.1. The cartoon shows the incompetence of the government
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 12.2. The cartoon is a racist attack on Pres. Mbeki
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |
- 12.3. It is only a light-hearted cartoon and should not be taken seriously
- |                   |          |           |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3         | 4     | 5              |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |

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## ABSTRACT

In 1998, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) received a request from two professional bodies, The Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA), to investigate two newspapers. The BLA and ABASA claimed that *The Star* and *The Mail & Guardian* were allegedly guilty of racism.

The HRC consequently appointed two research authorities, Claudia Braude (qualitative content analysis) and The Media Monitoring Project (quantitative content analysis), to investigate these allegations.

Several newspaper editors and journalism institutes questioned these findings. According to them, the research was "considerably weakened by the absence of research into media consumers" (HRC report, 1999). They based their arguments on the premises that the research focused primarily on the content of the respective newspapers, **and not on the interpretation of the readers/audience of the papers**. In the final section of the report, the HRC concluded that "the media can be characterised as racist institutions" (HRC report, 1999).

By not considering the opinion of the media receivers, the HRC report failed to make a credible and valid impact. An investigation on the audience's interpretation of these racist messages was called for.

The population sample of the study was drawn from students between the ages of 18 and 25; the future readers and interpreters of newspaper messages. The sample included a variety of nationalities in order to determine to what extent race plays a role in the interpretation of the mass media messages.

The content of three newspapers (*Mail & Guardian*, *The Citizen* and *The Star*) was analyzed over a period of a nine weeks based on the same guidelines determined by the MMP report (i.e. quantitative content analysis categories). Newspaper items were analyzed by monitoring items in which race was explicitly stated and implicit to the content.

Once the content analysis was completed, examples of specific newspaper articles, which have been selected on their racist content, were supplied to the respondents. After reading the items, the respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire based on the selected newspaper articles.

An exploration of the media as an institution and the interpretation of the respondents on the other side of the spectrum provided a relative holistic encapsulation of racism in the media

The data gathered from the survey indicated a statistical significant difference between the responses of the White and the Black respondents. Although all the items presented to the respondents contained implicit or explicit racist messages, the respondents did not perceive these newspaper items as racist.

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