

**The representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* during
August and September 2009: A case study**

by

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Philosophy (Journalism) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch*

University

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Declaration

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Abstract

The representation of women in the media has been problematic in many respects. Women have often been portrayed in a limited number of roles and media reports have often unnecessarily focused on their physical appearance. In 2009, South African athlete Caster Semenya astonished the athletics world with her times in the 800 m. However, her performance was soon overshadowed by speculation about her sex. Before long, an Australian publication claimed that Semenya had male sexual organs and no womb or ovaries. The publication of this report left other media with a number of ethical dilemmas. This study examined the representation of Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport*, two Afrikaans newspapers, during the height of speculation. The aim of the study was to determine whether the specified media, in their portrayal of Semenya, adhered to journalism's ethical principle of truth-telling. Two theoretical frameworks, namely, Representation and African womanism, were used as analytical tools. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the portrayal of Semenya. The study found that the representation of Caster Semenya did not adhere to journalism's ethical principle of truth-telling in all respects.

Opsomming

Die uitbeelding van vroue in die media skiet steeds in verskeie opsigte tekort. Studies oor die onderwerp dui daarop dat vroue dikwels in 'n beperkte aantal rolle uitgebeeld word. Daar word ook gereeld onnodig na vroue se fisieke voorkoms verwys. In 2009 het die Suid-Afrikaanse atleet Caster Semenya die atletiekwêreld verras met haar uitstekende tye in die 800 m. Dié prestasie is egter gou oorskadu deur media-spekulاسie oor die atleet se geslag. 'n Australiese publikasie het kort daarna 'n berig gepubliseer wat beweer het dat Semenya manlike geslagorgane het en geen baarmoeder of ovaria nie. Die publikasie van dié berig het die media voor verskeie etiese uitdagings te staan gebring. Hierdie studie het die uitbeelding van Semenya in *Beeld* en *Rapport*, twee Afrikaanse koerante, gedurende die hoogtepunt van dié spekulاسie ondersoek. Die doel van die studie was om te bepaal of die spesifieke publikasies gehoor gegee het aan media-etiese voorskrifte met betrekking tot die weergee van die waarheid. Twee teoretiese raamwerke, naamlik *Uitbeelding en womanism* in Afrika, is in dié verband as vertrekpunt gebruik. Kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise is gebruik om die uitbeelding van Semenya te ontleed. Die studie het bevind dat die uitbeelding van Semenya nie in alle opsigte in ooreenstemming was met dié beginsel nie.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Study background

A broad spectrum of international studies about the representation of women in the media has been conducted over the past decades (Geertsema, 2009:149; Byerly, 2007:226; Fullerton, 2006:12; Krüger, 2004:141; George, Hartley & Paris, 2001:94; Rabe, 2001:9-10). The representation of women athletes falls within the scope of this study field. In general, studies centralising around the portrayal of women athletes highlight significant differences in the quantity, scope and focus of articles written on male athletes when compared to articles written on their female counterparts (Meân, 2010:67; Birrell & Cole, 1994:232-233; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994:30).

Kane and Greendorfer (1994:31) argue that studies regarding the portrayal of women athletes indicate a preference to focus on the femininity and sexuality of these athletes, rather than on their athleticism. The authors (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994:36) further note that female athletes are underrepresented in the media, but “even when sportswomen are depicted in the media, they are consistently trivialized and marginalized through the type of coverage they receive”.

Meân (2010:67) notes that although more women are taking part in international sport events, the significant increase in the participation of women in sport has not facilitated a change in the portrayal of athletes with regards to gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Meân (2010:67) further observes:

“Instead, re/presentational practices have increased the spectacularization and hyper-masculization of male sport and male bodies (e.g., enhancing speed and aggressiveness) and continued to undermine female athleticism (e.g., sexualization and feminization).”

From a media ethical perspective, these representational practices are problematic, because when the representation of women differs from reality to such an extent that

reality is distorted, stereotypical images of women could be reinforced (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:196). Such representational practices are also in contrast with “seek truth and report it”, as the media-ethical principle of truth-telling is defined (Black, Steel & Barney, 1999:28).

It was with this background in mind that this research project analysed the case of Caster Semenya, a black South African athlete who rose to prominence after international victories on the sports field. The next section will provide an overview of the circumstances.

1.2 Preliminary study

On August 19, 2009, Semenya won the 800 m finals at the World Championships which was hosted by the International Association of Athletics Federations’ (IAAF) in Germany (Kessel, 2009). By this time, the international media had already started speculating about the athlete’s muscular physique and whether her quick performance was in fact the result of her athleticism (Kessel, 2009). On September 11, 2009, *The Daily Telegraph*, an Australian publication, published a story claiming that “Caster Semenya has male sex organs and no womb or ovaries” (Hurst, 2009). The story was based on an anonymous source “closely involved with the Semenya examinations IAAF testing” and prompted numerous international articles speculating about the athlete’s sex, about the fairness of her participation against other women athletes, and her future in international athletics (Harrell, 2009; Hughes, 2009). The publication also sparked debate with regards to the ethical obligations of journalists and how such a sensitive matter should be treated by the media (Harber, 2009; Krüger, 2009).

The case of Caster Semenya is an intricate one. Not only was the athlete very young at the time, she is of African descent, a woman, and the revelations were of a very intimate personal nature.

The revelations about Semenya’s medical records that were initially published in *The Daily Telegraph* show a questionable application of general media ethical principles (Harber, 2009; Krüger, 2009). Krüger (2009) notes that the report is “overly dramatic”, further observing that “world athletics is in crisis” without any indication as to why

Semenya's medical condition would be regarded as a crisis. He (Krüger, 2009) concludes that the "professed concern for Semenya here is paper-thin" and that the "public interest in the case did not weigh sufficiently strongly to justify the invasion of privacy".

Harber (2009) notes that after the initial revelations were published other media would not be able to ignore the story in its entirety, but suggest that the revelations could present an opportunity to educate the public about the complexity of gender issues. However, the publication of the initial story also presented an "opportunity" for the international media to replicate *The Daily Telegraph's* story and incorporate the same questionable ethical application as *The Daily Telegraph*.

For the purpose of this study the researcher concentrated on representational practices within two South African Afrikaans newspapers, *Beeld* and *Rapport*. These newspapers are published by Media24, a subsidiary of Naspers, which was established in the early twentieth century as a means to promote the Afrikaner cause (Wigston, 2007:35). The Afrikaans media has historically supported Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid, although in varying levels (Wasserman, 2009:62). While Afrikaans newspapers' former racial prejudice has nowadays been replaced by a class prejudice, Afrikaans newspapers still tend to focus on the issues deemed important by the white community rather than their black counterparts (Wasserman, 2009:73). However, as will be shown in the coming chapters, the controversy surrounding Semenya was covered extensively by both *Beeld* and *Rapport*. The question then arises: If these newspapers chose to cover the issue of a black woman's sex extensively, would it be a true and fair representation from a media ethical standpoint? It is with this background in mind that this study has examined the articles published on Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport*.

Beeld, an Afrikaans daily newspaper is published in the northern part of South Africa where Semenya grew up, she attended university, and where the story would arguably have received more prominence. *Rapport*, an Afrikaans Sunday newspaper which is published nationally, will add a broader perspective. As the initial story was published in September, the analysis concentrated on articles written during August and September 2009, the two months surrounding Semenya's victory in Berlin.

1.3 Problem statement and focus

This study investigated the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* during August and September 2009. The investigation tried to determine whether the newspapers' representation was in line with media ethical principles with specific reference to truth-telling. To this end, a sample was drawn from all news reports, opinion pieces, newspaper editorials and columns written by these two newspapers during the research period.

1.4 Research question

The research question of this study is:

Was the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* in August and September 2009 in line with the media ethical principle of truth-telling?

1.5 Theoretical points of departure

When considering the background of the portrayal of women in the media as discussed in the study background, three main issues arise – *how* the media portrayed Semenya, the portrayal of an *African woman* in the media and how these practices subscribe to or are in conflict with media ethical considerations. This led to a decision to utilise African womanism in conjunction with representation theory as theoretical frameworks for the research.

1.6 Research design and methodology

A case study was chosen as the research design. Mouton (2001:149) notes that case studies are typically qualitative and “aim to provide an in-depth description of a small number (less than 50) of cases”. Punch (2005:144) explains that the underlying principle is that one case will be studied in substantial detail – as was the case with the representation of Caster Semenya.

Oosthuizen (1997:10) defines methodology as the techniques that are suitable for the applicable research. The study utilised the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research aims to “interpret and construct the qualitative aspects of communication experiences” (Du Plooy, 2009:30).

Qualitative content analysis was used as a research technique. Mouton (2001:165) defines content analysis as an analysis of the subject matter, for example news reports.

1.7 Impact of the study

There have been numerous studies regarding the representation of women athletes in the media. However, the South African study field remains limited. Studies relating to the representation of women in the media tend to concentrate on a generic group of women like a specific age group. A study regarding Caster Semenya herself was also done by international researchers and the analysis of content was applied to stories written in international publications (Amy-Chinn, 2010:312). This research project attempted to broaden this field of study by analysing the representation of an African woman (and athlete) in the specified Afrikaans press.

1.8 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 – Literature review – this chapter discusses the representation of women in the media in general and representations of black women and women athletes in particular.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical framework and approach – this chapter provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks that formed the basis of the study and the reason for choosing these particular frameworks.

Chapter 4 – Research design and methodology – this chapter provides an overview of the research design of the study and methods deemed most appropriate.

Chapter 5 – Research findings – this chapter discusses the findings of the research.

Chapter 6 – Analysis – this chapter analyses the findings presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and recommendations

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter explained what the research project entailed and the rationale for the study. It discussed the problem statement and research question and explained which theoretical frameworks were chosen as a point of departure for the study. The research design and methodology were also summarised and a chapter outline was presented.

The next chapter will present the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Mouton (2001:87) defines a literature review as a “review of the existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to see how other scholars have investigated the research problem that you are interested in”.

This chapter discussed the importance of media ethics for journalism and revisited the findings of previous studies regarding the portrayal of women in general and more specifically black women and women athletes.

As the research was conducted within the media ethics field, the next section will start by examining the importance of media ethics for journalism and the study.

2.2 Media ethics

A universal media ethics framework highlights four principles as the basis of ethical reporting – seek truth and report it, minimise harm, act independently and be accountable (Black *et al.*, 1999:28). Truth-telling, which is especially important for this research, is explained as “seek truth and report it as fully as possible” (Krüger, 2004:14). Krüger (2004:12-13) further notes that truth-telling comprises two elements, namely, accuracy and fairness and notes that “the need for accuracy is obvious, and fairness fits in here because its opposite, bias and unfairness, can badly undermine the truthfulness of a report”. Foreman (2010:89) notes that minimising harm includes having sympathy for the sources or subjects that might suffer as a result of the story.

For the purposes of studying the portrayal of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport*, truth-telling is especially important. The revelations of Semenya’s medical details were of a very intimate nature – journalists covering the story therefore had to exercise extreme caution to report and represent the story in a truthful yet fair manner. The use of particular words, phrases or photos could communicate certain stereotypes or biases.

Day (2000:387) explains the concept of stereotyping as society's inclination to use its second-hand knowledge of the world to classify certain individuals or groups, by applying the second-hand knowledge society accumulated over time. Krüger (2004:139) notes that stereotypes are problematic in a media ethical context as stereotypes misrepresent reality and strengthen certain ways of thinking that may result in detrimental exercises. Krüger (2004:140) further notes that the media is particularly susceptible to stereotypes because of the way news values – the principles whereby news is classified as important or not – dictate that the unusual is more newsworthy than a routine event.

Gallagher (2001:52) notes that FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) a governing body that focuses on bias in the news in the United States of America, has compiled a list of questions to help identify bias. These questions highlight that issues such as the use of sources, variety, narration, double standards, prejudice, presumptions, language, context and headlines should be carefully considered.

The question then arises: How can journalists report the truth “as fully as possible” (Krüger, 2004:14) in a situation where the sex of Semenya, a young, African woman who performed well in international athletics, has come into question in the international media?

In recent years, there have been arguments for the inclusion of African culture in journalism curricula (Sesanti, 2009:125) and for teaching journalism students journalism “within a humanistic African value system” (Rabe, 2005:3). Claassen (2001:10) notes that journalists are increasingly “forced to work in cultural environments where their own cultural framework of reference lacks certain absolute necessities to be able to report on news”. Claassen (2001:10) notes in this regard, that very few white South African journalists can speak an African language. Starck and Villanueva (1993:7) note that international correspondents could improve the quality of their articles (by truth-fully and empathetically portraying other cultures) if they were sensitised to the influence of culture in journalism practices. Louw (2004:156) adds that misrepresentations in journalism often occur because journalists, when writing about cultures other than their own, tend to frame issues from their own cultural viewpoint, which could lead to bias.

From these arguments it is evident that journalists, who ignore the culture of the subject they are reporting on, could easily incorporate bias or stereotypes in their reporting. The opposite then – to be informed and sensitive of the subject’s cultural heritage – could enhance the media ethical aim of truth-telling.

The next section will provide an introduction into the subject by discussing the portrayal of women in the media.

2.3 The portrayal of women in the media

Numerous research projects about the portrayal of women in the media have been conducted, and most commentators agree that the portrayal of women in the media has been problematic in many instances (Geertsema, 2009:149; Byerly, 2007:226; Fullerton, 2006:12; Krüger, 2004:141; George, Hartley & Paris, 2001:94; Rabe, 2001:9-10). Byerly (2007:226) explains how women have been painted as “the other” in the media – reducing women’s experiences and needs to lesser importance than their male counterparts and depriving women of deciding on their own destiny. Krüger (2004:141) notes that women are generally depicted as home-makers, casualties or mere ornaments. Rabe (2001:9-10) adds that the media also tend to refer to women according to their family or marital status. Examples of the portrayal of women in problematic ways include how some articles emphasise women’s performance at work while also taking care of household tasks and being a mother as well as referring to women’s bodily features when the article is about something else (Krüger, 2004:141). George *et al.* (2001:99) note that women have to conform to a specific female enactment in order to receive newspaper coverage.

In addition, the media’s understanding of gender roles in society is central to the portrayal of women in newspapers. Muzenda (2009) defines gender as “socially constructed differences between men and women, which can change over time and can vary within a given society from one generation to the next” while sex is the biological distinction between men and women. However, the distinction between sex and gender are not always as clear-cut as the definition might suggest. Geertsema (2009:162) believes that journalism in an international context should strive towards a representation model that is sensitive towards the specific history, subjugations, geography and issues of all women. How people define the concepts for themselves, is based on their own culture. Byars and

Dell (1992:191) define culture as “a process through which we circulate and struggle over the meanings of our social experience, social relations, and therefore our *selves*”. Pitout (2007:276) notes that it is important to keep in mind that culture changes over time as the environment in which society operates change. Koivula (1999:592) observes that ideas around gender and discernible variation in gender, which are used for social classification, stem from cultural portrayals. Geertsema (2009:159) notes that it is important for journalists to be cognisant of cultural differences especially in cases where they write about women from a culture that is completely unfamiliar to them.

The next section will provide an overview of the portrayal of black women in the media.

2.4 The portrayal of black women in the media

Mthala (2000:7) notes that the traditional status of black women at the rear end of the social sphere in South Africa resulted in a situation where the media find it hard to represent black women in any other way. Mthala (2000:7) believes that the situation is further exacerbated by the “gendered character of news”, and while black women do receive media coverage, the types of stories are usually about “underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, overpopulation, disasters (burning of shacks) and violence against women”. Mthala (2000:7) further notes:

“The structures and social practices of racism are starting to be challenged by the media, but journalists have the added challenge and responsibility to represent black women in all their diversity.”

Lowe Morna (2007:370) cites the findings of the Gender and Media Baseline Study conducted in 12 countries in Southern Africa in 2002. According to the study, women account for only 19% of news sources while black women, who represent 41% of the overall population, comprise only 7% of news sources.

The next section will provide an overview of the portrayal of women athletes in the media.

2.5 The portrayal of women athletes in the media

George *et al.* (2001:94) note that while women's involvement in sport goes back as far as 1000 BC, numerous factors still impede the representation of female athletes in the media. One such factor is that the public has tried to prove that sport is the "natural domains" of men as a result of born-in biological and psychological differences between men and women. Bryson (in George *et al.*, 2001:94) notes that the public is generally uncritical to the notion that men are significantly better at sport than women.

Creedon (1994:6) observes that sport coverage is similar to news coverage as far as journalistic standards and norms are concerned – objectivity, news values, source selection and work methods all frame stories in a certain way. In this sense, being an athlete deviates from women's "conventional" roles as mothers and wives and the media therefore prefer to accentuate aspects related to women's "femaleness" (Knight & Giuliano, 2001:218).

A study (Fullerton, 2006:7) conducted in Britain in 2002 around the portrayal of women, girls and other minorities in the sports pages of a newspaper revealed that the sports pages are still "sexist, class-oriented, largely white and dominated by able-bodied people". Fullerton (2006:8) also found that where women appear in photographs in the newspaper, head shots were preferred instead of action shots, creating the impression that women should rather be known for their beauty than their athletic abilities and that the media are not truly interested in their participation "on the field".

Another study (George *et al.*, 2001:95) analysed newspaper coverage of female athletes in British newspapers during the 1995 World Championships. For the purpose of the study, "unfair coverage" was defined as "quantitative disparity, emphasised femininity, the trivialisation of women's achievements, sexist language, negative reporting and the focusing on the physical characteristics of female athletes". The results of the study (George *et al.*, 2001:97) seemed to support these researchers' initial hypotheses that the media represented women athletes in a biased manner. In their final recommendation, George *et al.* (2001:100) noted:

"The ability of the athlete should be the criterion by which an athlete is judged.

The gender of the athlete should not affect the quality and quantity of coverage that an athlete receives. At present the athletic capability of female athletes is under-emphasised by the media.”

A study (Koivula, 1999:589) conducted in Sweden during 1995/96 and also in 1998 examined samples of televised sport and found that the quantity as well as the type of coverage was different where men and women athletes were concerned. The study’s (Koivula, 1999:600) findings were in line with earlier findings that men and women were represented in different ways – women received much less coverage while an analysis of the language used indicated that stereotypes and inequality were present and that language was used to strengthen conventional gender limits.

Koivula (1999:591) notes that language also played a significant role in the way women were depicted in the sports pages. Remarks about women athletes often incorporate references to attractiveness or focus on the athlete’s feminine attributes or lack thereof and frequently focus on helplessness, dependency and emotion (Koivula, 1999:591). Knight and Giuliano (2001:218) assert that the media’s focus on physical appearance and grooming conveys the message that being a woman is more important than being an athlete, while male athletes are represented entirely according to their athletic abilities.

The next section will provide a brief overview of the Caster Semenya affair.

2.6 The Caster Semenya affair

On August 19, 2009, South African athlete Caster Semenya won the 800 m final at the IAAF World Championships in Berlin in a time of 1:55.45 (Kessel, 2009). At that stage, the athletic community and media already started speculating about her “masculine body shape and facial features” prompting the IAAF to request gender tests (Hart, 2009).

While the inquiry by the IAAF centered around Semenya’s sex (whether she was biologically male or female), her masculine appearance prompted the sporting community and the media to ask questions – thereby illustrating their expectations about masculinity and femininity and their stereotypical notions about how a woman ought to look. Brady (2011:5) notes that although Semenya had been living as a woman all her life, it was her

seemingly masculine looks – her face, voice, body and speed – that resulted in questions over the authenticity of her identity. She notes that the reason Semenya's sex was queried was not due to an abnormality in the “usual, and usually indisputable, markers of sex – the genitalia – but because her genderperformance was at odds with a sex already noted, verified and registered at birth”.

On September 11, 2009, *The Daily Telegraph*, an Australian publication, published an article stating that “Caster Semenya has male sex organs and no womb or ovaries” (Hurst, 2009). The article claimed that Semenya had “three times the amount of testosterone that a ‘normal’ female would have” and that the athlete had “internal testes – the male sexual organs which produce testosterone”. The story relied on an anonymous source and quoted the source saying “there certainly is evidence Semenya is a hermaphrodite” (Hurst, 2009). A hermaphrodite is medically defined as an “individual in whom both ovarian and testicular tissue is present” (Black's Medical Dictionary, 2010).

In discussing the report, Lowe Morna (2009) dismisses a claim by an Australian journalist who broke the story that after he received the information, he had no choice but to tell the story, noting that the story resulted in immense pain and that the public's right to know had to be weighed against Semenya's right to privacy, which she believes outweighs the public interest in this case. Harber (2009) agrees with this argument, adding that the invasion of an individual's privacy should only occur in exceptional circumstances. Krüger (2009) asserts that the public interest in Semenya's case was not enough to warrant the invasion of her privacy. He notes that while Semenya is a public figure, she cannot be accused of actively seeking out the limelight and can therefore claim a greater degree of privacy than other celebrities. He also emphasises that she was just 18 at the time of the incident and that her age should also have been considered. Where does that leave *Beeld* and *Rapport* in their portrayal of Caster Semenya? What happens when another publication has already invaded her privacy (probably without an overriding public interest)? Harber (2009) asserts:

“Once the information is out, however, the rest of the media would look foolish if they did not follow the story, though we can still be careful about treating the story with care and try to minimise the hurt. If journalists are going to do good as well

as harm, then they will at least use this story to increase public understanding of complex contemporary ideas of gender and sexual identity.”

With Harber’s assertion in mind, it is important to note that the invasion of a person’s privacy is not the core focus of this research, but rather what happens after it has already happened. In a British media study (Amy-Chinn, 2010:312) regarding the portrayal of Semenya in the media with specific reference to the BBC, the study revealed that several stories published in the British media were based on certain premises, which originated in the sports community “in particular that *any* evidence of maleness in a female body would confer an inherent advantage over any body that was exclusively female” were adopted by the media without analysis. The study further notes that the view was transferred from the sports community via the media into the public domain. Amy-Chinn (2010:312) summarises the BBC’s assumptions as follows:

- “Semenya’s performance on 19 August was so exceptional as to raise doubts that it could have been achieved by a ‘normal’ woman.
- An appropriate response to concerns over exceptional female performance is to require the athlete to undergo a series of tests to determine whether or not she is ‘truly’ a woman.
- That if sex testing showed that her body in any way differed from that of a ‘normal’ woman, then she would have an unfair advantage over her fellow competitors.”

Buzuvis (2010:37) adds that even before the media report on the issue, sex verification is problematic because it assumes that athletes are either male or female “and ignores the reality of gender multiplicity”. Buzuvis (2010:38) further argues that the focus on the separation of the sexes as an instrument to keep the competition fair is problematic. This is, he (Buzuvis, 2010:39) argues, because it does not allow room for the fact that if athletes were not allowed to compete if they displayed any outstanding features, often something that allows them to be professional athletes in the first place, few athletes would be allowed to compete. Amy-Chinn (2010:315) notes that even a report sympathetic of Semenya refer to a number of “masculine attributes”. The report emphasises that even her coach could not distinguish her from a boy from afar, how

developed her body was, how “crunching” her handshake was and how low her voice was.

While the IAAF denied claims that it insisted Semenya had to undergo sex verification testing because of her physical appearance but rather because of her excellent times, this argument (which the media also adopted) is also flawed (Amy-Chinn, 2010:316). The Kenyan athlete Pamela Jelimo managed to run the 800 m in 1:44 seconds less than Semenya when she was also 18, but in the nine reports the BBC News Online published between August 19 and November 19, 2009, it failed to provide this context and rather focused on Semenya breaking Zola Budd’s South African record of 2:00.09 (mentioned in five of the articles) and the fact that Semenya had beaten the defending IAAF champion Janeth Jepkoskei by almost 2.5 seconds (mentioned in all nine articles) (Amy-Chinn, 2010:316). The study also pointed out that the BBC failed to mention that while Semenya’s testosterone level was three times those normally expected in the female population, it was still much less than the “normal” male testosterone level, which would amount to around 10 times the “normal” level for a woman (Amy-Chinn, 2010:317).

The next section provides a more in-depth look at the history of the newspapers focused on by this study.

2.7 The Afrikaans press

While Naspers’s newspapers have historically been vivid advocates of the National Party, *Beeld* was not as close to the party as its Cape Town equivalent, *Die Burger*, and was considered to be more liberal (De Beer & Steyn, 1997:18). The Afrikaans media have supported Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid for the most part, although this support varied between publications (Wasserman, 2009:62). The movement to a democratic South Africa therefore meant that the Afrikaans media had to reinvent themselves ideologically and politically (Wasserman, 2009:62). Botma (2008:54) notes that the shifting political and socioeconomic conditions in South Africa since 1994 compelled Naspers to part with any racial interests, particularly interests with ties to the company’s apartheid history.

The Afrikaans daily newspaper *Beeld*, as well as the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper *Rapport*, are products of Media24, a subsidiary of Naspers. *Beeld* is the main Afrikaans

newspaper in the Gauteng region (De Beer & Steyn, 1997:18) while *Rapport* is published nationally. Naudé and Froneman (2003:85) describe *Rapport* as still largely managed and edited by white people although certain management changes at the newspaper do suggest that it is no longer an exclusively white newspaper. A significant number of its readers are Afrikaans-speaking coloured readers (Naudé & Froneman, 2003:85).

It is against this background, these two newspapers were chosen for this research.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the representation of women in the media. The chapter discussed basic media ethical principles relevant to the research and its importance. It also provided an overview of studies that have already been conducted about the portrayal of women in the media in general and also specifically about the portrayal of black women and women athletes. It also discussed the case of Caster Semenya. The last section provided an overview of the history of Naspers, who owns *Beeld* and *Rapport*.

The next chapter focuses on the theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework and Approach

3.1 Introduction

In an effort to thoroughly comprehend how the research process works, a discussion of theory is necessary. Lemon (1997:29) explains that communication, when studied from a scientific perspective, is dependent on a few primary components – theory, methodology and research activity. As explained in the previous chapter, the portrayal of women in the media has been problematic in many instances, not only with regards to women in general, but also in reference to specific groups like black women. For this reason it was decided to use two theoretical frameworks for the research – representation theory as well as African womanism. While Kolawole (2002:96) defines an African as “any person, male or female who has the legal citizenship of a nation located on the African continent”, Boisnier (2003:212) notes that literature on the subject “hint at researchers’ beliefs that the womanist identity development model is more relevant for Black women than White women”. In this regard, the narrow definition of African as a black person from Africa will be utilised. The chapter will start with a general discussion of theory and then turn to the specific theories utilised for this research project – namely “representation” and “African womanism”.

3.2 Theory

Lemon (1997:30) defines theory as a collection of interconnected suggestions and explanations with the aim of arranging certain facets of everyday life in an organised manner. Babbie, Mouton, Vorster and Prozesky (2001:648) define theory as a “systematic explanation for the observations that relate to a particular aspect of life: juvenile delinquency, for example, or perhaps social stratification of political revolution”. Alternatively, theory may also be regarded as a collection of interconnected suggestions which, by explaining the relation between the ideas, demonstrates an organised stance of manifestations (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:13). Thus, theory provides a historic explanation for a certain occurrence and can guide the researcher in her or his research process.

Lemon (1997:30) notes:

“Theory serves as a critical guide to future thought, research, and conceptualisation. It sets problems for research, identifies new subjects for investigation and directs scientific inquiry. In turn, research findings suggest new problems for theory, invite new theoretical formulations and lead to the final refinement of the theory themselves.”

Fourie (2007:104) adds that theory is not objective and does therefore not dictate an absolute truth. Rather it equips the researcher with diverse positions on the same occurrence. Fourie (2007:104) further explains that the aim of theory is to describe, explain, understand, predict, control and reform. In this specific study therefore, the chosen theories will have to describe how the media reported on a woman athlete after it emerged that she might have an intersex condition and explain why they chose to report it as they did. The description and explanation should guide the researcher in understanding why the media reported the issue in the specific way.

As this research is concerned with the portrayal of a black woman's athlete, Caster Semenya, in certain media from a media ethical perspective, with specific emphasis on truth-telling, representation and African womanism were chosen as applicable theoretical frameworks. These two theories, and why they are appropriate for this study, will be discussed in the next sections.

3.3 Representation

The media has been described as “a mirror of society” (Chomsky, 2003:212). Bennett (1982:287) notes that this comparison is problematic because it assumes that reality or society and the world of representations are two mutually exclusive concepts. It neglects to recognise that the media is an important component of society and can therefore not operate as an object unrelated to society (Bennett, 1982:287). Bennett (1982:288) further notes:

“Viewed in these terms, the media are not *apart from* social reality, passively reflecting and giving back to the world its self-image; they are *a part* of social

reality, contributing to its contours and to the logic and direction of its development via the socially articulated way in which they shape our perceptions.”

Braham (1982:270) argues that it would probably be more accurate to compare the media's actions to that of a searchlight, which highlights certain items but leaves others in the dark. Branston and Stafford (1996:125) note that representation refers to the manner in which publications portray specific phenomena or subjects repeatedly. While it may seem like a realistic repetition of an actual event or person, it is rather a “construction, a *re*-presentation, not a transparent window on to the real”. Reid (2008:199) describes this as conciliated portrayals of real life. Fourie and Karam (2001:470) add that the media cannot depict an occurrence or subject to its full magnitude but supply its audience with organised readings and windows of reality. Croteau and Hoynes (2003:196) also note that even media products that try to replicate real life, are in the end the outcome of a selection process – particular scenes will be emphasised while other information might be buried. In this respect, the authors describe all portrayals as “incomplete and narrow”.

While the theory of representation explicitly emphasises that the media's portrayal of an event does not merely passively reflect events in society, the media has frequently recreated the disparities in society with regard to sexual orientation, race and gender (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:195).

Why is the theory of representation important for the purpose of research? Croteau and Hoynes (2003:196) explain that the effect the media has on its audience can be much more meaningful if media products significantly differ from what is really going on. With specific regard to sport, media representation and the use of language can play a significant role in changing the status quo. Croteau and Hoynes (2003:216) note:

“Language is never neutral. Media coverage, in this case of sports, reflects – and helps to construct and affirm – a particular framing of the social world. When media personnel use language in a way that represents stereotypical gender roles, it helps perpetuate such roles. Conversely, when they use language self-consciously to counter stereotypes, it can be influential in changing social realities.”

Closely related to the theory of representation is that of framing. Entman (2007:164) defines framing as the “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation”. While the concept of framing was relevant to the study, representation was chosen as a theoretical point of departure because of its focus on stereotypes. The importance of stereotypes will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 Stereotypes

Since the definition of representation suggests that the media does not reflect an objective truth, the media can easily fall victim to representation practices that portray an event or individual in a stereotypical way. Hall (1997:257) defines stereotypes as a process of reducing groups to a couple of basic, important qualities, which is not the result of upbringing but rather of nature. Hall (1997:258) further notes:

“Stereotypes get hold of the few ‘simple, vivid memorable easily grasped and widely recognized’ characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them, and fix them without change or development to eternity.”

Fourie and Karam (2001:472) note that while the definition of stereotypes might seem simple, the concept is rather complex and explanations should start by analysing how audiences make sense of the world. In this regard, two approaches are used in the social sciences – Claude Lévi-Strauss’s theory of binary oppositions and Roland Barthes’ theory that people contemplate and construe the world with the help of “socially constructed meanings and values”. Lévi-Strauss suggests that the connotation of something will rely on the meaning of its opposite (Fourie & Karam, 2001:472). His logic is that the individual’s thinking is moulded by society – reasoning that deviates from the collective manner is regarded as a threat and is defined as an opposition or stereotype.

Related to this theory is Barthes’ theory of the social myth. He argues that a myth or story, as created by the media, is not the same as a lie, but rather a “socially constructed ‘truth’ with an ideological meaning, aimed at maintaining a *status quo*” (Fourie & Karam, 2001:475). Lacey (2009:156) agrees with this view and adds that stereotypes are a

reflection of the prevailing view in society and hence have a hegemonic role.

Stereotyping is also a way of dividing normal and abnormal, or acceptable from unacceptable (Hall, 1997:258). By employing this “splitting strategy” it symbolically determines limits and eliminates everything that does not fit within those boundaries (Hall, 1997:258). Macdonald (1995:13) notes that stereotypes are a simplification of a complex phenomenon to eventually portray something in a simplistic somewhat deformed manner.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003:212-213) assert that traditionally, the media have portrayed women in a similar fashion as black people. The authors note that the portrayal of women has developed significantly over the years. Men are often portrayed within the context of their jobs, are shown in more positions of control than women and camera frames will usually only show men’s faces as opposed to women’s bodies.

The next section will briefly look at the limitations of representation theory.

3.5 Critique of the theory of representation

While most commentators will agree to the constructed nature of representational practices, an assumption that all media representations are stereotyped would be unreasonable (Fourie & Karam, 2001:481). Fourie and Karam further note that such an assumption may disregard:

- the distinctive attributes and character of media products
- the genre of the media product
- the intricate connection between the real world and the portrayal thereof
- the intention of the journalist
- the character of perception and the media user

The next section will discuss the other theory that was utilised for the research, namely African womanism.

3.6 African womanism

While scholars are increasingly studying the role of African women and theoretical frameworks relating to African women, the subjects are still in need of a greater deal of research (Kolawole, 1997:3). Mangena (2003:100) notes that “one of the responses of the African woman to her continued humiliation and oppression has been to distance herself from western feminism and to consciously embrace womanism”. While feminism has developed over the years and has been explained in numerous ways, Hooks (2000:1) defines it as a “movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”. Aniagolu (1998:96) argues, however, that black women have realised that they face different challenges than white women and therefore need different solutions. In this regard, Ntiri (2001:164) notes:

“Predicated on patriarchy-based Western-orientated ideas, the basic premise of feminist ideology is rooted in historical hegemony and a separatist and non-inclusive agenda for African women.”

Arndt (2000:711) notes that African societies’ dissatisfaction with feminist ideas has led them to define their own alternatives to feminism. Walker (in Arndt, 2000:711) defines a womanist as “a black feminist or feminist of color [who is] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female”. Abrahams (2001:73) notes that womanism has been slammed for being developed in America. She notes, however, that this criticism neglects to recognise that the Nigerian Chikwenye Ogunyemi also defined womanism during this period deeming it a “philosophy that celebrates Black roots and the ideals of Black life, while giving a balanced presentation of Black womandom”. Abrahams (2001:73) attributes the different emphasis of these writers to a “creative tension” and notes that while Walker focuses on womanhood and questions superior ideas about what the right female demeanour entails, Ogunyemi focuses on the joint black identity and regards the “white supremacist ideological and economic structures” as the opposition. Ogunyemi (1985:72) notes that she defined the term “womanism” on her own. However, Arndt (2000:711) indicates that in her later work, she preferred the term African womanism. Arndt (2000:711) further notes:

“...Ogunyemi wishes to conceptualize an ideology that clearly demarcates and

emancipates African womanism from both white feminism and African-American womanism/feminism.”

In deviating slightly from this concept and establishing a unique theory from an African-American perspective, Clenora Hudson-Weems deems the beginning of consciousness amongst African women as the need to be responsible for their own naming – Africana womanist and Africana womanism (Kolawole, 1997:25). Hudson-Weems (1997:84) argues that the feminist value system cannot be divorced from certain racist elements during its development – one of which was fighting for a white only vote. Hudson-Weems (1997:84) further notes that it is crucial for the African woman to fight her own struggle because “when the feminist has realized all her demands, when she is at the top, the Black woman will still be Black, poor, and on the bottom” (Hudson-Weems, 1997:84).

On the issue of Africana womanism, Ogunyemi however, explains to Arndt (2000:714) that “we cannot take the African-American situation and its own peculiarities and impose it on Africa, particularly as Africa is so big and culturally diverse”. Arndt (2000:712) further notes:

“The core of Ogunyemi’s definition of African womanism is the conviction that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for African women.”

Ogunyemi (1985:64) notes that the African womanist must “recognize that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy”. Ogunyemi (1985:72) further notes:

“Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks.”

In dealing with gender, racial and class issues, Koyana (2001:65) observes that African

womanism is also concerned with the welfare of men and is thus perhaps more focused on the family than on the female, which could suggest a shift in focus from feminism. Habasonda (2002:102) argues that “African societies are largely personal with mutual positive obligations, and provide a secure place for everyone so far as the group is able” while “people are valued and not reduced to cash relationships”. Mangena (2003:100) notes that African women want their “dignity as a human being recognised, respected and protected” and therefore “the struggle of the African woman” is the “struggle for freedom, justice and equality”. Dove (1998:535) notes that African womanism “brings to the forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth”. Dove (1998:520-521) qualifies this reference to motherhood as one that is not restricted to women or mothers, but one that is concerned with caring for others in general. Dove (1998:515) further emphasises that African womanism is an Afrocentric theory, a concept that Asante (1991:6) defines as “the belief in the centrality of Africans in post modern history”.

3.7 Critique of the theory of African womanism

Sesanti (2009:215) notes that while some feminists may have been exposed as racists, the feminist movement itself cannot be accused of being racist. Sesanti (2009:215) further argues that it is also important to realise that not all black women are opposed to feminism (Sesanti, 2009:215). Mama (in Salo & Mama, 2001:59) notes that she has never felt violated when being called a feminist. She believes that “feminism remains a positive, movement-based term... it signals a refusal of oppression, and a commitment to struggling for women’s liberations...”.

In his critique of Hudson-Weems’ position, Sesanti (2009:215) notes that one should be cognisant of the fact that, while feminism has some definite limitations, it also made a definite contribution to the liberation of women and the establishment of womanism. A point to consider is that African womanism shares the latter part of its name with womanism. Womanism does not reject feminism outright as there are some definite similarities between these two movements. Hence, it would be difficult for African womanists to argue that while they share at least half their name with womanists who share certain values with feminists, they have nothing in common with feminism.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter defined the theories that formed the backbone of this research, namely representation theory and African womanism and discussed its importance for the study. The limitations of both theories were also discussed.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 4

Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to answer the following research question: Was the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* in August and September 2009 in line with the media ethical principle of truth-telling? In order to answer this question, a qualitative study was conducted by analysing news articles written within the specified period in these newspapers. This chapter will provide a background of the chosen research design and methodology, explain the rationale for the choice, highlight its benefits and limitations and explain how the study was conducted.

4.2 Research design

Following the identification of the research problem, the statement of the research question and an appraisal of already published literature on the subject, the researcher should choose an appropriate research design (Lemon, 1997:34). Mouton (2001:55) explains that a research design is a “plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research”. He notes that a research design is regularly mistaken for research methodology, but explains that the research design uses the research question as the starting block and focuses on the final product of the research project (Mouton, 2001:55-56). On the other hand the research methodology (which will be discussed in the next section) uses particular tasks like gathering data as a starting block (Mouton, 2001:56). A suitable research design would allow the researcher to gather the maximum quantity of data while utilising the minimum time and money (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983:24).

Haskins (in Wimmer & Dominick, 1983:24-25) identifies four invaluable characteristics that a research design should possess in order to deliver valid and reliable outcomes (see 4.6.1):

- The research must be performed in a naturalistic environment.
- The researcher must take care to manage all interferences with regards to independent or dependent variable relationships.

- All measurements should be done in an inconspicuous and valid way.
- The design must be realistic.

Babbie *et al.* (2001:72) note that the research design involves itself with the planning of the research – “designing a strategy for finding out something”. Two important aspects about the research design are highlighted: The researcher has to note what he or she wants to find out with great detail, and the most suitable manner in which to do it should be identified (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:72). As mentioned earlier, this research project is concerned with determining whether the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* in August and September 2009 adhered to the media ethical principle of truth-telling. With this background in mind, the researcher decided to use a case study as a research design. The next section will explain what a case study is, what it entails, discuss the rationale for choosing the case study as a research design and highlight the advantages and limitations of this research design.

4.2.1 The case study

Mouton (2001:149) notes that case studies are typically qualitative and “aim to provide an in-depth description of a small number (less than 50) of cases”. Punch (2005:144) notes:

“The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible.”

Jensen (2002:239) elaborates on the above-mentioned definitions by observing that case studies usually analyse “delimited entities” for example societies and associations. However, a case study may also focus on a single person or occurrence. He notes that a case study usually aims to give an account of a certain event and show its broader consequences for similar events. Case studies are similar to other qualitative designs in that they give in-depth attention to the case (Jensen, 2002:239). Babbie *et al.* (2001:281) note that the definitive feature of a case study is its focus on an individual unit – this unit may be a specific one person, but may also be teams or a community.

Mouton (2001:150) argues that the case study has an advantage in that it provides “high construct validity”, it leaves the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the subject and allows the researcher to institute a certain relationship with the subjects of the study. As written newspaper articles were studied during this research project, the latter strength of case studies was not applicable. Wimmer and Dominick (2006:137) add that case studies supply an immense amount of particularity and can be very helpful for researchers who are in need of proposals for additional research, although this does not limit the method to the initial discovery phases of the research project. The case study is also a handy design to suggest why a particular event took place and allows the researcher to handle a broad range of evidence (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:137). Case studies also have a number of limitations. Mouton (2001:150) argues that the results of case studies are normally not generalisable, measurement are not standardised and the process of gathering data and analysing it may be extremely time-intensive.

While the researcher took note of the criticism against case studies, the intention was not to generalise the findings of the research. With regards to standardised measurement, the researcher noted that the study would have benefited from standardised measurements; however, care was taken not to compromise the validity and reliability of the results (see 4.6.1).

Stake (1995:3-4) identifies three types of case studies:

- The intrinsic case study wants to learn about a specific case.
- The instrumental case study analyses a case primarily in order to understand a related issue.
- The collective case study utilises a number of cases to find insight into a certain broader issue.

With regards to an analysis about the representation of Caster Semenya, the intrinsic case study as well as the instrumental case study could have been used. In this instance, the researcher decided to utilise an intrinsic case study in order to learn about Caster Semenya’s case specifically.

The next section will provide an explanation of the research methodology utilised.

4.3 Research methodology

Babbie *et al.* (2001:53) explain that qualitative research studies a specific phenomenon from the “insiders’ perspective” – the objective of qualitative methodology is therefore to define and describe a certain occurrence rather than to explain or predict why people act the way they do. Berg (1989:2) notes that qualitative research is concerned with the “meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” while quantitative research uses counting and measurement.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:114) summarise the difference between qualitative and quantitative research into five main categories. The authors note that objectivity is at the heart of the quantitative research process and in essence the researcher splits herself or himself from the data while the qualitative researcher is an important part of the data. Another difference is that the design of the research with regards to quantitative research is fixed, while during the qualitative research process it develops and may be adapted (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:114). Quantitative research is also characterised by a controlled setting while trying to avoid “contamination” as opposed to qualitative research which is conducted in a natural environment. The fourth distinction stems from measurement tools – during the quantitative research process measurement could take place independent of the researcher while the researcher in the qualitative research process morphs into the instrument and cannot be replaced. Finally, quantitative research aims to test theory while during qualitative research “theory is ‘data driven’ and emerges as part of the research process” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:114).

With this background in mind, the researcher decided to utilise the qualitative paradigm for her research. As the research aimed to determine whether the applicable newspapers acted within the framework of ethical reporting, it was more concerned with “defining” and “describing” the portrayal of Caster Semenya than to explain why the articles were written in a certain way.

In order to answer the specific research question mentioned earlier, the research had to concern itself with the actual articles published during the period chosen for study. In

order to define and describe the portrayal of Caster Semenya, content analysis was chosen as the research method. The next section will define content analysis, explain what it entails, what the benefits and disadvantages of the method are and why it is suitable for the specific research question.

4.4 Content analysis

Krippendorff (2004:18) defines content analysis as follows:

“Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use. As a technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions.”

This definition highlights certain important aspects of content analysis as a research technique. Firstly, the technique should be repeatable by other researchers and their findings should be the same as the initial researcher’s findings. This will ensure that the research is reliable. Secondly, the research must produce valid results which means that the “resulting claims can be upheld in the face of independently available evidence” (Krippendorff, 2004:18). Content analysis may also be defined as a “research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form” (Berger, 1998:23). Mouton (2001:165) describes content analysis as the analysis of content within texts or documents. He defines content as “words, meanings, pictures, symbols, themes or any message that can be communicated”. Another definition that is frequently cited is that of Berelson who describe content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Krippendorff, 2004:19; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998:94; Wigston, 1997:152). Wimmer and Dominick (2006:150) draw from definitions on content analysis to highlight three distinct characteristics of content analysis – it is systematic, objective and quantitative. While classical definitions of content analysis tend to focus on it being a quantitative technique, content analysis may also be conducted in a qualitative

fashion. Priest (1996:113) notes that qualitative content analysis is desirable when a study does not lend itself to quantitative analysis. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009:1) note that qualitative content analysis takes analysis one step further – rather than counting words, qualitative content analysis studies meanings, themes and patterns that may be clearly visible within the text or that may be hidden.

With this background in mind, the researcher decided to use qualitative content analysis as a research method. The examination of the representation of Caster Semenya was mainly concerned with themes within the text rather than with the significance of statistical occurrences within the text. Smith (1975:218) suggests that it might be worth the effort to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods in a research project as “qualitative analysis deals with *forms* and *antecedent consequent* patterns of forms, while quantitative analysis deals with *duration* and *frequency* of forms”. Dey (1993:28) notes that quantitative data’s focus on numbers and qualitative data’s focus on meanings, could lead to a sense that these methods are “in opposition”. However, he notes that these concepts are in a certain sense “mutually dependent”. In this instance only qualitative content analysis was used.

Content analysis seems to be a popular research method in media research. Berg (1989:125) notes that the researcher can conduct a content analysis without invading anyone’s privacy which might be the case with interviews or questionnaires. Wigston (1997:165) adds that content analysis is “nonreactive” which bodes well for researchers as they do not want the subject to change her or his actions just because they are studied. Additionally, content analysis tends to be both time and cost effective (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:392). It might also be simpler to reproduce a certain part of the content analysis if necessary than it might be to repeat other research methods (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:393). Babbie *et al.* (2001:393) further note that content analysis allows researchers to study something over a prolonged time period. Also, content analysis has the benefit that it can study events in a rather timely fashion and that recent texts such as newspapers and magazines are usually fairly easily accessible (Berger, 1998:26).

Wigston (1997:166) notes that content analysis also considers “context and symbolic forms”. Content analysis has the added advantage in that it can be combined with other

research methods with relative ease, it is flexible and it can deal with large amounts of data (Wigston, 1997:166). Content analysis also has a number of limitations – it can only study communication in a recorded format (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:393). Berg (1989:125) adds that it is not an effective way of testing “causal relationships between variables”. Wigston (1997:166) notes that analysing hidden messages with a high degree of reliability in a text might also be difficult.

With regards to answering this specific research question, content analysis was deemed by this researcher to be a suitable research technique. The articles representing Caster Semenya were already written, and could be examined without altering the actions of the research subjects. As the research was conducted by one researcher, content analysis also seemed a good choice with regards to the time and resources available. While content analysis is deemed as ineffective in testing causal relationships between variables, the analysis of media articles on Caster Semenya was concerned with how she was represented and what the specific newspapers may learn from these representational practices. It was not the goal of this research to determine why these representational practices were utilised or what their effect was on their audience. With regards to the issue of hidden messages referred to above – the content analysis was only concerned with visible messages in the text and hence the stated limitation proved to be negligible.

The next section will explain the meaning and significance of sampling for this research project.

4.5 Sampling

Before the researcher selects a sample, her or his data will consist of a bigger population. The study population is the “aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected” (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:174). In this regard, Du Plooy (1997:49) notes:

“In communication research the term *population* does not only refer to people, but is also used to refer to the entire group or class of other variables or phenomena which we want to investigate.”

However, Babbie *et al.* (2001:164) explain that it is impossible for the researcher to study

everything, hence she or he has to decide “what to observe and what not”. This decision is called sampling. Du Plooy (1997:49) defines sampling as “following rigorous procedures when selecting individual units of analysis from a larger population”. Silverman (2010:438) defines sampling as “a statistical procedure for finding cases to study”. Krippendorff (2004:84) notes that sampling permits the researcher to manage her or his research in an economic way “by limiting observations to a manageable subset of units that is statistically or conceptually representative of the set of all possible units, the population or universe of interest”.

Gunter (2002:215) notes that a sample should be representative of the entire population under study in order to ensure that the findings with regards to the sample may also be extrapolated to the population. At a basic level sampling permits the researcher to be positive that the sample is representative (Silverman, 2010:438). Silverman (2010:139) also notes that most quantitative studies usually aim to “generalise” their results, something that is usually done by utilising statistical sampling methods. Generating a sample generally has two purposes – it allows the researcher to determine the representativeness of the sample and to generalise the findings (Silverman, 2010:139). With regards to qualitative research like the current study, these sampling methods might not be suitable. Silverman (2010:139) explains that in such cases data may be obtained from a number of cases and “it is unlikely that these cases will have been selected on a random basis”.

Two types of samples are generally used in the research process – probability samples and non-probability samples (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:89). Du Plooy (1997:54) explains that when each item in the population has the exact same chance of being chosen for use in the sample, it is called probability sampling. When every item in the population does not have the exact same chance of being chosen for use in the sample or when a subsection of the population is examined, the researcher is utilising non-probability sampling (Du Plooy, 1997:54).

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:90) observe that a researcher should consider four aspects before deciding which type of sample to use.

- The rationale for the study – if the purpose of the study is not to generalise its findings to a wider audience, a non-probability sample could be satisfactory.
- The cost of the study in terms of its value – if the cost of using probability sampling is extremely high when compared to the value of the study, a non-probability sample would suffice.
- How much time the researcher has available – a non-probability sample could help the researcher to save time when she or he has to adhere to a strict deadline.
- How much error is allowed – when the study is of a preliminary nature and error control is not one of the researcher's main considerations, a non-probability sample is usually satisfactory.

As it was not the purpose of this research to generalise the findings and cost and time constraints were also a consideration, the use of a non-probability sample proved to be a better choice with regards to the aim of the research and the theoretical frameworks chosen.

As discussed earlier, the research project examined the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* newspapers during August and September 2009. On September 11, 2009, the Australian newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* published a story stating that Semenya “has male sex organs and no womb or ovaries”. The decision to analyse the representation of Semenya during August and September 2009 was informed by the date of publication of this article. The two month time frame would thus incorporate articles written on Semenya before the story went public (although there was already some speculation about the athlete's sex in the broader media at this time) as well as articles written after the story was published. Including both periods allowed the researcher to examine a more representative picture of her portrayal.

To substantiate the choice of using a two-month time frame, a Google insights search was conducted. Google insights, an application of the international Google search engine, tracks the number of times certain keywords are searched in a specific time period in a certain geographical location relative to the number of overall searches and reproduce these numbers as an index of 100 index points with 100 indicating the highest possible

prevalence of the search term (Google Insights, 2012). According to Google insights, the term Caster Semenya reached the maximum 100 index points in South Africa from 16 to 22 August. This number reduced to 15 between 30 August and 5 September and increased to 71 between 6 and 12 September. In July 2009 the index reflected a 0 while in October 2009, the index declined to around 8. From this data, the researcher gathered that the time period chosen was sufficient for the research.

The researcher obtained permission from Tim du Plessis, head of Media24's Afrikaans newspaper division, to utilise the company's online and Méthode database to access all articles that were published in this period. A copy of the confirmation of this permission can be obtained from the researcher. The decision to utilise the database was informed by two considerations – accuracy and time management. Media24's online database (<http://152.111.1.251/>), which stores an exact copy of all published articles in text format, were utilised to identify all articles that were published that contained the search term Caster Semenya. With regards to *Beeld* newspaper, 172 articles were published from 1 August to 30 September 2009 while *Rapport* published 90 articles during the same period. However, some of these articles made reference to Semenya by chance, some only contained photographs and no story, some were readers' letters and SMSes and some were repetitions. After carefully going through all 262 articles, the researcher selected news reports, opinion pieces, editorials and columns that were explicitly about the Semenya saga. This resulted in 93 articles being chosen from *Beeld* and 34 from *Rapport*. These 127 articles formed the population of the study. Du Plooy (1997:54) notes that communication research usually assigns the term "units of analysis" to the single items of a population. In this research each individual article from the population of 127 articles formed the unit of analysis. News reports were defined as factual articles published on the news pages of *Beeld* and *Rapport*. While both opinion pieces and columns were defined as articles expressing the views of journalists or other writers, opinion pieces had no specific title, while columns had titles. Editorials expressed the views of the newspaper and thus made no mention of the person who wrote it.

Du Plooy (1997:61-64) identifies a number of non-probability samples – the convenience or accidental sample, the purposive sample, the volunteer sample and the snowball sample.

- The convenience or accidental sample is typically chosen from a group that is conveniently accessible.
- The purposive sample is chosen where prior information about the population and/or the purpose of the study may lead the researcher to use her or his own discretion to choose the sample.
- The volunteer sample is defined as a sample where people volunteer to take part in a study.
- The snowball sample is defined as a process of selecting participants where their participation leads to the inclusion of more participants.

For the purpose of this research, the purposive sample was chosen. The researcher knew beforehand that not all articles written during August and September 2009 that mentioned the name Caster Semenya would be about Semenya herself and decided to use her own judgement to select articles from the population that were specifically representing Semenya. This process resulted in 53 articles being chosen for the sample – 39 from *Beeld* and 14 from *Rapport*. The *Beeld* articles consisted of 25 news reports, 3 opinion pieces, 6 newspaper editorials and 5 columns while the *Rapport* articles consisted of 8 news reports, 1 opinion piece, 1 newspaper editorial and 4 columns. Portable Document format (pdf) documents of all these articles (an exact replica of the articles published) were obtained from Media24's Méthode database. At this stage it is worth noting that some of the articles displayed more than one of the themes that will be discussed in the next chapter and therefore the number of references might not add up to the above-stated numbers.

The next section will explain what the coding process entails and how it was done.

4.6 Coding

Fundamentally, content analysis is a coding process (Babbie *et al.*, 2001:388). Woodrum (1984:2) notes that the data bases of most content analyses consist of “natural language communication sets, usually in written form, known as texts”. Woodrum (1984:2) further notes that as a research method, content analysis is concerned with the generation of content categories in line with the theoretical considerations of the research project and

argues that it is important to apply coding methods consistently throughout the content analysis.

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009:2) note that qualitative content analysis is an activity whereby raw data (the articles in the sample) are summarised into themes or categories which are established through a process of “valid inference and interpretation”. The authors explain that this process follows from inductive reasoning, a method defined by Babbie *et al.* (2001:643) as “a form of reasoning where genuine supporting evidence (such as empirical data) can at best lead to highly probably conclusions (and not to conclusive inferences)”. Patton (in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009:2) however, notes that this does not mean that a qualitative content analysis should discard deductive reasoning completely. Babbie *et al.* (2001:641) defines deductive reasoning as a method where “true premises (such as a general theory or law) necessarily lead to true conclusions: the truth of the conclusions is either implicitly or explicitly contained in the truth of the premises”. With regards to this research, coding was done according to themes. A preliminary content analysis revealed three repetitive themes – race, the portrayal of women and medical references. The first two were also in line with the issues discussed in the literature review. Thus, three coding categories (themes) were chosen – race, the portrayal of women and medical references. The race theme was defined as any reference to skin colour, racial discrimination or racism. The portrayal of women theme was defined as any reference to physical appearance, performance or behaviour. Medical references included all references to sex organs, hormones, medical conditions and unfair advantage.

4.6.1 Reliability and validity

In order for the results of a qualitative study to be held in high regard, the researcher has to follow a process that is theoretically refined as well as methodologically strict (Silverman, 2010:268). Du Plooy (1997:67) explains that the data collected during research should be coded in a consistent and accurate way. Two concepts are especially important with regard to the quality of the research – reliability and validity. Halloran (1998:18) explains that reliability is concerned with the potential for repetition in the research process: Can the study be repeated with the same set of results? If the same outcome or a similar outcome is achieved when two coders code the same articles, the reliability will generally be regarded as high (Halloran, 1998:19). Babbie *et al.* (2001:122)

explain that validity “refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration”.

In this regard, Du Plooy (1997:75) notes that by stating that a measure is valid, the researcher is also claiming that the measurement is reliable. While reliability and validity are usually associated with quantitative data, they are equally important in the qualitative research process because they help the researcher to decide how credible the findings of the study are (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:120). Three aspects are important in this regard – the data should be complete, the researcher should not discard certain data because it seems to deviate from a preferred reading of the data and care should be taken not to alter the behaviour of the data subjects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:119). As content analysis was used as research method, the latter issue was not of significance as it was impossible to alter already written articles. However, care was taken to ensure that the data was complete and that the researcher analysed the data in as objective a manner as possible.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design and methodology chosen for this study. It explained the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methodology and indicated why the researcher chose to conduct her analysis within the qualitative paradigm. For this specific research, the case study was chosen as a research design. The chapter discussed the definition of a case study, its application and its strengths and limitations. As a research methodology, the qualitative content analysis method were chosen. This method was defined and its purpose and advantages and disadvantages were also discussed. Some detail about the sampling process and selection of articles for the sample were also highlighted.

The research findings of the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, arranged according to the themes of this study, namely race, the portrayal of women and medical references. These were drawn from articles written over a two month period and included news reports, opinion pieces, newspaper editorials and columns. Although all articles were originally written in Afrikaans, they were translated for reporting purposes. To provide some context, a brief background will precede the findings.

5.2 Background

By the time South African athlete Caster Semenya won the 800 m women's race at the World Championships in Germany in August 2009, speculation around her sex was already rife (Hart, 2009). On September 11, 2009, the Australian publication, *The Daily Telegraph*, published a report indicating that Semenya had "male sex organs and no womb or ovaries" (Hurst, 2009). The report revealed "evidence she is a hermaphrodite, someone with both male and female sexual characteristics" and that she had "three times the amount of testosterone that a 'normal' female would have" (Hurst, 2009).

During this time several stories were published in the media, "based on assumptions drawn from the framework established by the sports community – in particular that *any* evidence of maleness in a female body would confer an inherent advantage over any body that was exclusively female" (Amy-Chinn, 2010:312). Harber (2009) noted that while the Australian report was irresponsible, the media could not ignore the story.

Back in South Africa, the media wanted to know how this could have happened (Sindane, 2009). Leonard Chuene, president of Athletics South Africa (ASA), claimed that white racists were to blame for the storm around Semenya's sex and that the IAAF and the media were also at fault (Sapa, 2009; Sindane, 2009). The *Mail & Guardian* later reported that Chuene's claim that he was not informed about Semenya's medical situation before the championships in Berlin, was a lie (Staff Reporter, 2009).

The next sections will discuss the findings in separate sections for each of the themes – race, the portrayal of women and medical references.

5.3 Findings – Race

5.3.1 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* news reports

The newspaper highlighted two events that sparked accusations of racism – the uproar in the international media after Semenya's triumph in Berlin, and the absence of white people at the O.R. Tambo International Airport when she returned. *Beeld* (De Swardt, 2009c:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1) reported that Chuene denied there were questions about Semenya's sex before the championships and that ASA could have prevented the controversy if it had Semenya tested, but attributed the controversy to racism. Chuene's race statement was reiterated by Butana Komphela, chairman of the portfolio committee on sport and recreation (Grobbelaar, 2009c:1). Coach Bubé Pienaar noted that he had enough of ASA's lies and the organisation's use of the race card every time a mistake was made (De Swardt, 2009c:3).

Beeld also made use of some articles in the British press. *Beeld* (Korrespondent, 2009b:3) quoted from *The Independent* that “long before Semenya started with that extraordinary 800 m race, her case was hijacked by left-wing elements within the ANC who considered it a gift from heaven to stoke a few anti-white flames”. *Beeld* also quoted *The Independent* which noted that Semenya's case was perfect for Malema, who insisted that requests that Semenya should be tested, were primarily the result of her race. *Beeld* (Korrespondent, 2009b:3) quoted *The Guardian* regarding the welcoming ceremony: “Malema wanted to know where the white South Africans, who were supposed to welcome her, were.” Another *Beeld* report (Fourie & Grobbelaar, 2009:1) noted that instead of celebrating the team's victories, the celebrations turned into a “race row”.

It was also reported that the general feeling around the Semenya controversy was that ASA and the IAAF's decision makers were to blame (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1).

In an interview with *Beeld* (La Vita, 2009:11) constitutional expert, Pierre de Vos, observed that race was an overwhelming issue for South Africans:

“...we are so comfortable in our race rut, whether we are white or black, it is easy when people feel hurt, if people feel they are not heard, then often they return to race. In a way I understand it, but my personal take on it is – we cannot deny race, we cannot act as if we are suddenly living in this rainbow nation and we don’t see colour, because that is not true – we all see colour... still”.

De Vos further argued that South Africa needed to get to a place where the country could acknowledge that race was a human invention. He also noted that Semenya’s case was not about race, but about sex, gender and sexual orientation (La Vita, 2009:11).

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld*’s opinion pieces.

5.3.2 Research findings drawn from *Beeld*’s opinion pieces

Cornelissen (2009:10) noted that Chuene’s reaction to all criticism from white people, was to call them racist, but noted sarcastically that “black people cannot be racist”.

This chain of events led Du Plessis (2009:16) to assert that the short and wonderful period when most people tried extremely hard to be colour-blind and see the principles in every issue were over. Du Plessis (2009:16) noted that white people got angry because whites were incessantly blamed, “because ‘racism’ and apartheid were blamed instead of incompetence and corruption”.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld*’s editorials.

5.3.3 Research findings drawn from *Beeld*’s editorials

A number of articles emphasised that Chuene blamed racists for the uproar surrounding Semenya’s sex (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14). *Beeld* condemned the use of the race card – “that convenient trump card that gets played when your hand has no value otherwise” (*Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14).

The newspaper noted that inter-racial relationships had been damaged as a result of Chuene’s actions (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009e:16). *Beeld* Comment (2009a:12) noted that Chuene had a fair support base in the black community

early on when the debacle was “white people and the media’s fault”. The editorial noted that this support was fading as articles in “newspapers with a predominant black readership rejected ASA’s decision not to punish Chuene for his lies” (*Beeld* Comment, 2009a:12).

Beeld (*Beeld* Comment, 2009d:30) argued that the management of ASA should be blamed for the injustice to Semenya. *Beeld* (*Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) argued that ASA should have sent Semenya for tests a long time ago as there were already rumours in South African athletic circles “for months”. The editorial further noted the Chuene blamed the IAAF but he “forgot that the IAAF... should ensure that the rules are followed so that the playing-field could be levelled” (*Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14). *Beeld* (*Beeld* Comment, 2009e:16) also argued that Chuene’s criticism against the IAAF’s apology was uncalled for.

Beeld (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18) noted that Chuene should have withdrawn Semenya from the World Championships, but did not do it “because he wanted a black world champion and would have done anything to achieve that”. The “international sport scandal” could have been averted if Chuene had taken care of his duty towards Semenya (*Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14).

Beeld (*Beeld* comment, 2009d:30) noted that the “race insinuations during the world champion Caster Semenya’s welcoming to South Africa is an injustice to the country’s white people” as *Beeld*’s readers were 100% behind Semenya.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld*’s columns.

5.3.4 Research findings drawn from *Beeld*’s columns

Van Aswegen (2009:11) emphasised that Chuene blamed racists for the uproar surrounding Semenya’s sex. Van Aswegen (2009:11) believed that Chuene’s “comments on ‘racist Afrikaans media’ were particularly inappropriate”.

Geldenhuis (2009b:7) pointed out that white people got angry when politicians asked why they did not come to the airport. However, *Beeld* (Geldenhuis, 2009b:7) noted that

the response in Afrikaans newspapers did not make white people look any better and further noted that their excuse that they had to work was ill-conceived. Geldenhuys (2009b:7) noted that if it was the Springboks returning with the World Cup, white people would have taken a day from work.

Harber (2009:4) noted that although Malema criticised the absence of white people at the airport, he would probably also have had a problem had there been too many whites “as was the case when president Jacob Zuma chose his economy ministers”. Harber (2009:4) added that the media “live in fearful speculation on how to get the right balance of race representation”.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports.

5.3.5 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports

Only two news reports were written in *Rapport*, a weekly newspaper, during the two-month period with specific reference to Semenya in the context of the race theme.

Rapport (Van Wyk, 2009:4) reiterated Chuene's accusation that local racists wrote to the IAAF to complain about Semenya's “condition”.

Rapport (Joubert, 2009a:4) also reported that Helen Zille, DA leader and president Jacob Zuma, would take a firmer stand against using race as a “collective and generalisable” term in order to promote non-racialism.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* opinion piece.

5.3.6 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* opinion piece

Only one opinion piece on the issue was published during the research period. Maarman (2009:16) noted that although he rarely agreed with Malema, he had to agree with him to an extent when he accused white people of not going to the airport. He argued that the excuse that white people were at work, reminded him of white people's defence that they “did not know” about apartheid. Maarman (2009:16) argued that thousands of white South Africans went to the stadiums after the Springboks won the World Cup in 1995 and

2007.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* editorial.

5.3.7 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* editorial

Only one editorial on the issue was published during the research period. *Rapport* (*Rapport* Comment, 2009:16) noted that if Chuene's accusation that the initial complaint came from a racist South African correspondent was true, "it is a bad day for our country".

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* columns.

5.3.8 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* columns

Dexter (2009:2) noted that the way in which the ANC used Semenya's return to South Africa to their benefit was "an attempt to deprive us of our common national consciousness". He argued that hate speech complaints would have been submitted if a white politician accused black people of only welcoming Bafana Bafana (Dexter, 2009:2).

Joubert (2009b:16) noted that a previous mentor of his emphasised that "it is a weakling who cites race as a reason for behaviour". He noted that he became anxious when Chuene and Malema blamed the Semenya situation on racism. He argued that every South African should try and rise above racism (Joubert, 2009b:16).

The next section will present the findings related to the portrayal of women.

5.4 Findings – The portrayal of women

5.4.1 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* news reports

During the Semenya debacle, two issues were repeatedly emphasised in the broader society – her performance and her appearance. *Beeld* (Geldenhuys, 2009a:1) reported that the athletics world took note of Semenya when she won the 800 m in 1:56.72 in Mauritius – "at that stage the quickest time ever". After she won the World Championships in Berlin in 1:55.45, another report referred to Semenya as an "athletics sensation" (Nuusoorsig, 2009b:16). After this triumph, the international media questioned Semenya's sex

(Geldenhuis, 2009a:1).

Beeld (De Swardt, 2009b:1) reported that the IAAF “took note of Semenya after the incredible improvement in her times in the 800 m (almost 9 seconds) and the 1 500 m (25 seconds)”. Another report stated that Semenya’s performance in Mauritius was “almost” 4 seconds better than her personal best and “the quickest time for a woman this year” (De Swardt & Sapa-AP, 2009:3).

An IAAF spokesperson told *Beeld* (De Swardt, 2009b:1) that the organisation had a right and a duty to investigate an athlete they suspected was “not completely feminine”. The spokesperson noted that it was an “acknowledged fact that certain physical qualities, like elevated testosterone levels, could benefit an athlete in women’s races” and suggested that “an average male club athlete was capable of improving women’s world records” and that the IAAF therefore had to make sure there was no unfair advantage. It was also reported that the IAAF would investigate whether Semenya was “a woman in all aspects” after her triumph in Mauritius (Nuusoorsig, 2009b:16; De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1). The IAAF noted that Semenya was “clearly a woman but maybe not 100%” (Nuusoorsig, 2009a:16). *Beeld* (2009a:3) also quoted the *AFP* news service, who reported that Pierre Weiss, general secretary of the IAAF, noted that Semenya “might benefit because she possibly is between sexes”.

Beeld (De Swardt, 2009a:3) also reported that while Semenya’s sex was making headlines, accusations about double standards were made as the IAAF did not ask the same questions about the former Czech Republic athlete Jarmila Kratochvilova who astonished the athletics community by running record times at 32.

Semenya’s appearance also became an issue of interest: “Semenya’s new glamorous appearance in a South African magazine has dazzled even the British media” (Korrespondent, 2009a:1). The report also noted that the athlete had undergone a “metamorphosis” for the new issue of *You* and *Huisgenoot* magazine, where she posed in designer dresses, jackets, a skirt and “even tight leather trousers and high heels”. The caption of the report read: “Wow, look at Caster now” (Korrespondent, 2009:1).

A number of *Beeld* news reports (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; De Swardt, 2009c:3) carried reference to Semenya's physique – Bubé Pienaar, a middle distance coach, noted that Caster's "profile does not fit that of an 18 year old girl" (De Swardt, 2009c:3). Pienaar emphasised that he did not suggest that Caster was a boy, but that she seemingly "looks, walks, talks and runs like one". She was also described as a "muscle man" (Geldenhuys, 2009a:1). *Beeld* (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1) also reported that the IAAF decided to determine whether Semenya was truly a woman after they saw photos of her in Mauritius.

In telling her childhood story, *Beeld* (Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3) reported that Semenya was a "tomboy", that she played soccer with boys and that "she never wore dresses". Another report (Louw-Carstens, 2009b:1) quoted her headmaster, Eric Modiba, saying she "was very rough" and wore long trousers to school. *Beeld* also reported that Semenya's cousin, Ernest Sekgala, "just laughs" when asked about her playing with the boys (Louw-Carstens, 2009b:1).

A number of people close to her were approached for comment. Her coach, Michael Seme, told the newspaper that petrol attendants prevented Semenya from entering the women's bathroom and said that Semenya "laughed and asked whether she should get rid of her pants to prove her womanhood" (Geldenhuys, 2009a:1). Her headmaster told the newspaper that "she is a girl, her birth certificate says so" and emphasised that her former female classmates reiterated that Semenya was a girl (Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3). Semenya's great-aunt, Martina Mpati, was reported to have said that she should know what Semenya's sex was, as she was the midwife at her birth (Fourie & Grobbelaar, 2009:1). Caster's grandma, Maputi Sekgala, also noted that there was no uncertainty – she grew up with her, so she could "teach her about womanhood" (Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3).

A number of commentators (Van der Walt, 2009a:5; Van der Walt, 2009b:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1) emphasised that women were treated differently than men.

Beeld (Van der Walt, 2009a:5) also quoted Gwen Ramokgopa, executive mayor of Tshwane, noting that "no male athlete had ever been subjected to the same tests and controversy" that Semenya had.

Beeld (Grobbelaar, 2009b:2) tried to highlight Semenya's feelings by reporting that she received trauma counselling. The report also stated that the South African athletics team's manager, Phiwe Mlangeni-Tsholetsane, noted that Semenya was an "extremely strong and determined young woman".

Beeld (Van der Walt, 2009b:3) also reported that the minister of women, youth, children and people with disabilities, Noluthando Mayende-Sibiyi (incorrectly spelled as Manyende-Sibiyi) noted that the question marks around Semenya's sex were based on the stereotypical notions of the physical characteristics and potential usually associated with women, further pointing out that "such stereotypes proves the magnitude of the patriarchal system in the international sports community".

Beeld also quotes from a *CNN* report (CNN, 2009:3) where former international athlete, Santhi Soundarajan, pleaded with society not to subject Semenya to the same trauma that she had to deal with after she failed her gender test.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld's* opinion piece.

5.4.2 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* opinion piece

Only one opinion piece was written on the subject during the research period. Cornelissen (2009:10) challenged Chuene "to bring me the parents who won't ask questions when their daughter falls in line to run against Caster".

There were no editorials published in *Beeld* on the subject during the research period.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld's* columns.

5.4.3 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* columns

Groenewald (2009:5) noted that Semenya's "appearance and performance" led people to question whether she was a woman and to her being tested because "something must be wrong". Groenewald further noted that there was something medieval around the situation as it was reminiscent of a time when male leaders examined women to determine whether they were still virgins. Groenewald further pointed out that it reminded her of a time

before society understood that one's genes could influence their appearance. She noted that Venus and Serena Williams, two African-American tennis players, were just as muscular but because they had breasts and wore earrings, they were not subjected to gender testing.

Van Heerden (2009:3) examined the way society assigned certain roles or tasks to women, and others to men in a rather stereotypical way. He noted that Semenya "played soccer with her cousins, was muscular, talked like a man and heaven help us had no breasts". Van Heerden further noted that Semenya probably never wore the "standard issue little pink dress", did not attend tea parties and did not play with Barbies. He further observed that it was therefore "no wonder she turned out this way". Van Heerden (2009:3) noted that "a real man" could tune cars and drive pick-ups.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports.

5.4.4 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports

Rapport's (Van Wyk, 2009:6) report about Semenya's win in Mauritius showed that there was a surprise element – "almost from nowhere this native from the Limpopo province... is the planet's fastest woman". *Rapport* (Van Wyk, 2009:6) reported that Semenya had improved the best woman's time that year by more than a second and moved into the top 10 women of the last 20 years. The newspaper (Van Wyk, 2009:6) reported that "almost 90% of [these] women from the 1970s and 1980s from behind the Iron Curtain were on forbidden drugs... for which the outside world could not test" and that Semenya was just over 3 seconds from the world's "most untouchable" world record – that of Kratochvilova.

Rapport (Van Wyk, 2009:6) reported that Semenya had beaten two South African records and also her personal best with "almost 4 seconds". The newspaper further reported that her times in previous months in the year were 2:03.16 and 2:06.97 and that in the previous year she "could not even survive the first round" of the junior world championships where her time was 2:11.98. *Rapport* further reported that Semenya was notably muscular for an 18-year old girl and that when the Tukkies camp was asked about this, it was attributed to "particularly high natural testosterone levels" (Van Wyk, 2009:6).

Rapport (Van Wyk, 2009:4) reported that the speculation around Semenya's sex began after she won the Africa championships tournament in July 2009. Shortly afterwards Semenya won the 800 m heat in Berlin. On August 19, 2009, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Semenya was to undergo gender tests (Van Wyk, 2009:4). Two of Semenya's competitors indicated that they did not compete against a woman.

Rapport (Van Vuuren, 2009:4) reported that Semenya had become an internet hero overnight. Former Springbok Os du Randt called Semenya a "lady" and an "excellent athlete" in a tweet while a discussion forum noted that Semenya "looks like a man, sounds like a man, has facial hair like a man and runs like man" but added that it was nasty to make a fuss about the situation "now" (Van Vuuren, 2009:4).

In an article, *Rapport's* headline indicated that "she (Semenya) is no man!" (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1). *Rapport* reported that Semenya was raised alongside her male cousins, that she participated in their soccer games and that they kicked her. The newspaper (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1) further reported that Semenya had to deal with accusations that she was a man for years.

In a report about a welcoming party in Semenya's home town, *Rapport* referred to a photograph of her and noted: "Just look at Caster's ballet dance during her arrival..." (Rampedi, 2009:6). *Rapport* (Makhasi, 2009:4) reported that Semenya's roommates knew that she was a woman. Zinhle Sinqe was quoted as saying that she knew Semenya was a woman while Vivian Rapakgadi was quoted saying that "she (Semenya) is an absolute lady and very fond of her different hairstyles" and "also an excellent cook". *Rapport* (Makhasi, 2009:4) also reported that "like most women a visit to the hair salon for the latest hairstyle and a manicure is a priority for Semenya". *Rapport* also quoted another house mate, Simphiwe Dlodlu, saying that when she met Semenya, she also mistook her for a man.

There were no opinion pieces published on the subject in *Rapport* during the research period.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* editorial.

5.4.5 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* editorial

One editorial was written on the subject during the research period. *Rapport* (*Rapport Comment*, 2009:16) noted that Semenya's "crime" was evidently that she performed well and because of that suspicions were cast because her appearance and voice were ostensibly not "feminine" enough. The newspaper (*Rapport Comment*, 2009:16) blamed the IAAF and the Australian media for the controversy surrounding Semenya's gender. The newspaper further noted that the Semenya controversy showed that many people's views on sex and race were outdated.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* columns.

5.4.6 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* columns

Booyens (2009:2) observed that hopefully one of the consequences of the controversy was that the stereotypical manner in which the media often portrayed masculinity and femininity would change. Kombuis (2009:2) conceded that when he saw Semenya for the first time he also wondered about her sex. He further noted that he wanted her to be a woman as he grew up during an era when certain women's tennis stars gained cult status and redefined femininity. However, Kombuis also noted that Semenya was definitely "a borderline case". He (Kombuis, 2009:2) pointed out that Semenya resembled a man, walked like a man and had a deep voice.

Kombuis (2009:2) further noted that Semenya, "the poor soul", had to deal with politicians scoring brownies from her sex dilemma instead of getting recognition for her athletics performance. Kombuis (2009:2) further noted that he was glad that he was not the typical sexist man, but, while looking at his wife who was cleaning the swimming pool, noted that he should persuade her to wear a shorter dress the next time she performed tasks like that. This statement indicates that although Kombuis does not consider himself to be sexist, sexism is so entrenched in societal thinking that someone often does not realise that they are sexist.

The next section will present the findings related to medical references.

5.5 Findings – Medical references

5.5.1 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* news reports

After the article on Semenya was published by *The Daily Telegraph*, *Beeld* (2009a:3) repeated the gist of the article. Quoting the *Telegraph*, *Beeld* (2009a:3) reported that Semenya had no womb or ovaries. *Beeld* further repeated the *Telegraph's* assertion that the IAAF had proof that Semenya might be a hermaphrodite.

The newspaper (Van der Walt, 2009b:3) reported that the IAAF's tests presumably established that "South Africa's world champion in the 800 m for women is hermaphroditic". In one article, *Beeld* (Grobelaar, 2009a:1) reported that the term hermaphrodite was explained as referring to someone with ovaries and testicles. Quotes are taken from Ross Tucker from the Institute for Sport Science's blog who explained that the external genitals of a hermaphrodite were usually a combination of male and female genitals. Tucker explained that if Semenya had internal testicles but no womb or ovaries she could not be a hermaphrodite (Grobelaar, 2009a:1). The scientist noted the impossibility of Semenya having external male genitals, as this would be visible to athletics' officials, and explained that Semenya "probably has ambiguous genitals, which suggest that she is a pseudohermaphrodite" (Grobelaar, 2009a:1). Robert Hamblin, chairman of Gender DynamiX, also explained to *Beeld* (Tempelhoff, 2009a:3) that it was wrong to call Semenya a hermaphrodite because of the alleged absence of a womb and presence of internal testicles and that the condition should rather be referred to as intersex.

Beeld (2009a:3) repeated *The Daily Telegraph's* assertion that Semenya might have internal testicles that produced testosterone, further noting that "Semenya allegedly has three times more testosterone than other women athletes". *Beeld* (Geldenhuys, 2009a:1) placed this issue in context by quoting from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where Susan Davis, an Australian doctor, noted that there was an extensive range of so-called "normal" testosterone levels that occur in women. *Beeld* (Pienaar, 2009a:3) quoted Tucker who said that these allegations were "only a piece of the puzzle and certainly not proof that she is a man or that she may not compete". The report (Pienaar, 2009a:3) explained that testosterone levels varied in the same person depending on the time of day and noted that it was uncertain what acceptable "normal" levels entailed. The report also revealed that there were people with Androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS) whose testosterone levels

were high, but that they did not necessarily had an unfair advantage (Pienaar, 2009a:3).

Other sources were also consulted regarding sex and gender. Hamblin explained to *Beeld* (Tempelhoff, 2009a:3) that Semenya's sex was female and that "if she therefore feels that she is a woman, we must respect her on a social level for her choice". Hamblin further explained that "sex is dictated by the body, while gender is expressed and lived by the individual person". *Beeld* (Tempelhoff, 2009a:3) quoted data from the Intersex Society of North America (Isna) that suggested that 50 out of every 100 000 South African children were born with an intersex condition. The press release from Gender DynamiX suggested that this number was 1 in 500 (which could be translated as 200 out of every 100 000). *Beeld* further reported that more than five out of every 100 000 South Africans were born with both male and female genitals, a mistake which was later rectified in a correction as it should have read 50 out of every 100 000 South Africans (Tempelhoff, 2009b:3).

Another report (Pienaar, 2009b:3) explained that the determination of a person's sex was much more complicated than taking one's pants off. The report quoted Tucker, who explained that "there is absolutely no insight into the complexity of gender testing". *Beeld* (Pienaar, 2009b:3) also spoke to Jeff Wing of the University of the Witwatersrand's medical faculty, who explained that sex was determined by genetic, developmental and psychological factors. Wing told *Beeld* (Pienaar, 2009b:3) that "it could happen that someone is born with a man's chromosomes (XY), but that something goes wrong during the development and that the necessary hormones do not help with the development of the genitals like testes" adding that "and then we don't even take the person's psychosocial development and behaviour, which is also influenced by hormones into account" (Pienaar, 2009b:3).

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld's* opinion piece.

5.5.2 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* opinion piece

One opinion piece was written on the issue during the research period. Jackson (2009:10) argued that the media should be honest when covering the issue, show empathy with Semenya and treat her opponents fairly. Jackson further noted that the media achieved the latter when Semenya withdrew from the South African cross-country event. He pointed

out that “if she had an unfair advantage over the other athletes because of her unique biological make-up, her withdrawal had to come” (Jackson, 2009:10).

No editorials were published in *Beeld* on the issue during the research period.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Beeld's* columns.

5.5.3 Research findings drawn from *Beeld's* columns

Harber (2009:4) recalled Chuene’s assertion that Semenya’s family was the only scientific source he would accept regarding her sex and noted that “we won’t win by elevating ignorance above science”. Harber further argued that Semenya was, like all great athletes, “genetically odd”. Harber added that scientific processes had revealed that there was a continuum between the sexes. It was therefore, according to Harber, undesirable to declare someone a woman because “we know she is”. In Harber’s view such arguments steered clear of an understanding of the intricate process of gender and sex determination.

Groenewald (2009:5) noted that the IAAF was implying that Semenya was born with a condition known as intersex – where a person has male and female chromosomes and/or genitals. She quoted Amanda Gouws of Stellenbosch University who explained that the condition was usually rectified by an operation after birth. Gouws explained that “gender tests were normal practice in international athletics, a sport where things like physique, age and sex determine in which category you may compete”. Gouws further explained that a problem arose because sex was a continuum.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports.

5.5.4 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports

A report in *Rapport* (Nel, 2009:6) revealed that a development defect in the early stages of pregnancy could cause a baby to be born as a hermaphrodite. In this report Thinus Kruger of Tygerberg Hospital explained that it was a “complex condition” that occur in many forms. He explained that if there were difficulties at the “end organ” where the testosterone did not help the foetus to become masculine, the baby, although having testes, would be born as a girl. The report also revealed that “just” 1 in every 500 people

was intersex.

Rapport (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1) also reported that South-Africa's "dream athlete" had undergone gender tests twice before and had passed both times.

No opinion pieces were published by *Rapport* on the subject during the research period.

No editorials were published by *Rapport* on the subject during the research period.

The next section will discuss the findings drawn from *Rapport's* column.

5.5.5 Research findings drawn from *Rapport's* column

Booyens (2009:2) noted that Semenya had been exploited over the past weeks, but "to crucify the media is futile" as the issue was newsworthy, adding that "people's curiosity was stimulated and to explain the problematic situation of an athlete that might have an unfair advantage on the athletics field ... is not unethical – it is simply news".

Booyens further noted however that the media had a duty to respect Semenya's right to privacy and to make sure that her needs were prioritised.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the research. A number of racial issues were discussed – namely that individuals from ASA attributed the fuss around Semenya to racism and that white people were absent from the airport on Semenya's return. A number of commentators emphasised that race were still a very sensitive issue in South Africa. The newspapers highlighted that Semenya's performance and physical attributes resulted in questions regarding her sex. A number of articles discussed her appearance and numerous sources claimed that they know for a fact that she is a woman. Finally, a number of experts commented on hermaphroditism, intersexual and gender issues.

The next chapter will analyse the research findings by employing representation theory and African womanism as theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings of the research. Findings from *Beeld* and *Rapport* are presented separately as will the analysis of news reports, opinion pieces, newspaper editorials and columns. Two Theoretical Frameworks, namely, Representation and African womanism, were utilised to examine how Semenya was represented during the research period. The first part of this chapter deals exclusively with Representation theory while the second will analyse the findings from African womanism. Three themes were central to this analysis – race, the portrayal of women and medical references.

The next section will briefly summarise theoretical frameworks.

6.2.1 Theoretical frameworks: Representation

Branston and Stafford (1996:125) define representation in the context of the media as the manner in which specific events or stories are portrayed, further noting that while this portrayal may seem like a realistic picture of a person or event, it is merely a “construction, a *re*-presentation not a transparent window on to the real”. Fourie and Karam (2001:470) point out that the media can never depict an occurrence or subject fully and therefore provide its audience with organised readings and opinions of the real world. This is the outcome of a selection process – where particular parts of a story will be emphasised and other information might not be used (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:196). This “partial reflection of reality” is important, because when it differs significantly from reality, the effect it has on its audience might help to entrench certain stereotypical roles in society (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:196). Stereotypes also twist reality and are therefore contrary to the media-ethical principle of truth-telling (Krüger, 2004:139).

In studying the representation of Caster Semenya, the analysis focuses on whether the portrayal of Semenya was a mediated, partial reflection of reality and whether it differed from reality to such an extent that it may have helped to entrench stereotypes or misconceptions.

The next section will briefly discuss African womanism.

6.2.2 Theoretical frameworks: African womanism

Okonjo in Kolawole (1997:24) defined African womanism as an “ideology for African women which embraces racial, gender, class and cultural consciousness”. Kolawole (1997:36) emphasises that African women want “self-respect, an active role, dynamic participation in all areas of social development, and dignity alongside the men”.

In utilising African womanism as a theoretical framework, the analysis focuses on whether the representation of Semenya was cognisant of the needs of African women and conscious of racial, gender, class and cultural dynamics.

The next section will analyse the findings as presented in Chapter 5.

6.3 Analysis of news reports, opinion pieces, editorials and columns from *Beeld* and *Rapport*

6.3.1 *Beeld*'s news reports: Race – Representation analysis

Accusations that the storm surrounding Semenya was the result of racism, were repeatedly highlighted by *Beeld* (Fourie & Grobbelaar, 2009:1; Korrespondent, 2009b:3; De Swardt, 2009c:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1).

Braham (1982:270) notes that the media operate as a searchlight “illuminating some areas while leaving others in shadow”. *Beeld*'s decision to repeatedly highlight accusations of racism is in line with Braham's (1982:270) assertion, as it left suggestions that ASA and the IAAF were to blame (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1) as well as suggestions that the controversy around Semenya should not have been about race, but about sex, gender and sexual orientation (La Vita, 2009:11) “in the shadow”. By repeatedly highlighting accusations of racism, *Beeld* represented whites, instead of Semenya, as the aggrieved party, which could serve to enforce racial stereotypes, especially against the background of South Africa's apartheid history. By utilising this framework, *Beeld* reduced an intricate phenomenon to something rather simplistic (Macdonald, 1995:13).

The next section analyses the findings of *Beeld's* opinion pieces.

6.3.2 *Beeld's* opinion pieces: Race – Representation analysis

Two opinion pieces highlighted accusations that the controversy surrounding Semenya was the result of racism. Cornelissen (2009:10) noted that Chuene's "reaction to any criticism from a white person is to call them racist" while Du Plessis (2009:16) emphasised that "there is anger in the white community because whites are incessantly blamed".

The decision to highlight racism is in line with representation theory which suggests that only certain aspects of reality can be presented by the media (Fourie & Karam, 2001:470) and that the media will offer its audience "mediated versions of reality" (Reid, 2008:199). However, sarcastic comments like "black people cannot be racist" (Cornelissen, 2009:10) could serve to reinforce racial stereotypes, against the background of South Africa's apartheid history.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld's* editorials.

6.3.3 *Beeld's* editorials: Race – Representation analysis

A number of editorials emphasised Chuene's assertion that racists were to blame for the controversy surrounding Semenya (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14). *Beeld* (*Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14) condemned the use of the race card while others (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009e:16) noted that interracial relationships have been damaged as a result of Chuene's actions. Some editorials (*Beeld* Comment, 2009a:12; *Beeld* Comment, 2009d:30) depicted white people as the aggrieved party in the affair by highlighting the unfairness of Chuene's comments that the whole Semenya debacle was white people and the media's fault and that race insinuations is an injustice to the country's white people. Such commentary emphasised the racial issue again – in line with Braham's (1982:270) "searchlight" analogy. The decision to depict white people as the aggrieved party in the story when Semenya's intimate medical details were made public, could serve to reinforce racial stereotypes. In this regard, Lacey (2009:156) notes that stereotypes serve as a reflection of the dominant view in society and therefore has a hegemonic function.

Another theme is that of guilt and innocence – Chuene blamed white people and the media, while *Beeld* (*Beeld* Comment, 2009a:12; *Beeld* Comment 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009d:30; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) blamed Chuene and ASA for the injustice to Semenya. Highlighting guilt and innocence is also in line with representation theory which suggests that the media will highlight certain issues repeatedly (Branston & Stafford, 1996:125).

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld's* columns.

6.3.4 *Beeld's* columns: Race – Representation analysis

Although Geldenhuys (2009b:7) suggested that white people's excuse, that they did not go to the airport to congratulate Semenya because they had to work was unsatisfactory, Van Aswegen (2009:11) indicated that white people were the aggrieved party in the debacle. Van Aswegen further noted that "comments on 'racist Afrikaans media' were particularly inappropriate". Van Aswegen emphasised that Chuene blamed racists for the uproar surrounding Semenya's sex. Harber (2009:4) noted that the media "live in fearful speculation on how to get the right balance of race representation". These portrayals are in line with Croteau and Hoynes' (2003:196) assertion that media products (like *Beeld*) are the consequence of a selection process, meaning that certain aspects of the story will be emphasised while other information might not be published. In dealing with the racial theme, the newspaper chose to emphasise racial tension rather than other racial issues, such as whether Semenya was forced to undergo tests as a result of her race.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* news reports.

6.3.5 *Rapport's* news reports: Race – Representation analysis

Two news reports (Van Wyk, 2009:4; Joubert, 2009a:4) on the subject were published during the research period. *Rapport* (Van Wyk, 2009:4; Joubert, 2009a:4) reported Chuene's allegation that South African racists complained to the IAAF, and that certain political leaders planned to take a firmer stand against using race as a generalisable term. The emphasis on Semenya's case turning into a racial issue is in line with Bennett's (1982:288) discussion of representation that suggests that the media does not reflect reality passively, as it is an integral part of society itself.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* opinion piece.

6.3.6 *Rapport's* opinion piece: Race – Representation analysis

One opinion piece was written on the issue. Maarman (2009:16) argued that white people's excuse that they had to work reminded him of their defence that "they did not know" about apartheid. This argument, which represents only one view on a complex issue, is in line with representation theory which suggests that the media cannot depict all of reality (Fourie & Karam, 2001:470).

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* editorial.

6.3.7 *Rapport's* editorial: Race – Representation analysis

Only one editorial was published in *Rapport* during the research period. *Rapport* (*Rapport* Comment, 2009:16) noted that it would be a bad day for South Africa if Chuene's accusation, that the first objection came from a racist South African, was true. The decision to highlight Chuene's accusation is in line with arguments on representation by Croteau and Hoynes (2003:196) who note that media products are the result of a selection process. Braham (1982:276) adds that this selection process "pressured by deadlines and constrained by the limited amount of space available, may simply treat news and race relations in a way which fits in with this definition" [of their set of preconceptions] and further notes that "what they [the media] are doing, as they must, is to present the news which is unfamiliar by virtue of just having happened – in as familiar and easily digestible a fashion as possible".

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* columns.

6.3.8 *Rapport's* columns: Race – Representation analysis

Dexter (2009:2) argued that the way the ANC used Semenya's return to advance their own agenda deprived South Africa of a common national consciousness. Joubert (2009b:16) noted that he became anxious when Malema blamed racism for the Semenya controversy. *Rapport's* columnists chose to highlight the ANC's involvement and accusations of racism respectively, which is in line with Reid's (2008:199) explanation that "only one superficial and restricted view of events is possible". Reid (2008:199-200) further

observes that the “event is inevitably mediated and a quality of fakeness or artificiality is in some ways therefore an integral part of televised (or any other type of media) representation”.

The next section will analyse the portrayal of women still utilising the representation theory.

6.3.9 *Beeld*'s news reports: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

Semenya's performance and her appearance were repeatedly highlighted. *Beeld* (De Swardt & Sapa-AP, 2009:3; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Nuusoorisig, 2009b:16) reported that her time in Mauritius “at that stage was the quickest time ever”, was “almost” 4 seconds better than her personal best, and “the quickest time for a woman this year”. However, no context was provided about Semanya's time in Mauritius – 1:56.72 – or in Berlin (1:55.45). The world record holder in the event was Jarmila Kratochvilova who claimed the title in 1983 in 1:53.28 (Roos, 2012:1). While one report (De Swardt, 2009a:3) does mention Kratochvilova, the report asks why similar questions were not asked about Kratochvilova and not if Semanya's performance and appearance justified question marks about her sex. Similar to practices employed by the *BBC*, the newspaper made no mention of Pamela Jelimo, a Kenyan athlete who won the 800 m at the 2008 Beijing Olympics in 1:54.87 when she was a similar age as Semanya (Amy-Chinn, 2010:316). This reporting is in line with representation theory as it shows only a partial view of reality. However, the missing context could lead the reader to agree that Semanya's exceptional times warrant certain question-marks.

Korrespondent (2009a:1) noted that Semanya underwent a metamorphosis and posed in designer dresses, jackets, a skirt and “*even* [own emphasis] tight leather trousers and high heels”. Another source noted that Semanya's “profile does not fit that of an 18 year old girl” (De Swardt, 2009c:3). The IAAF explained that the organisation decided to determine if she was a woman after they saw photographs of her (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1). Sources close to Semanya noted that “she never wore dresses”, but long trousers, described her as a “tomboy” and as “very rough” (Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3; Louw-Carstens, 2009b:1). One source argued that her birth certificate proved she was a girl while her classmates, great-aunt and grandmother also confirmed her sex (Fourie &

Grobbelaar, 2009:1; Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3).

References to “womanly” clothing like dresses, high heels and “manly” clothing like trousers, as well as references to “women appropriate behaviour” and “male-appropriate behaviour” like playing rough and behaving like a tomboy, could enforce social stereotypes around women. Hall (1997:258) notes that stereotyping is also a way of dividing normal from abnormal. In repeatedly highlighting her “manly features” and “manly behaviour”, the newspaper applied this “splitting strategy” and unconsciously indicated what it believed was “normal”.

An IAAF spokesperson noted that Semenya was “obviously a woman, but maybe not 100%” and that the organisation had a “right and a duty” to investigate an athlete they suspected was “not completely feminine” (Nuusoorsig, 2009a:16; De Swardt, 2009b:1). The spokesperson also indicated that it was well known that certain physical attributes, like high testosterone levels could provide an athlete with an unfair advantage in women’s races (*Beeld*, 2009a:3). These assertions were repeated without any indication that the IAAF’s view or execution of the situation might be questionable. The IAAF itself identified six conditions that were related to gender verification of women athletes – four of these conditions were classified as intersex, but only one of them is deemed to have the possibility of an unfair advantage (Nerva, 2010:81). The absence of this information in the reporting is in line with representation theory, as it shows only a partial reflection of the reality that not all intersex conditions will result in an unfair advantage on the athletics field. However, this missing context could result in the reinforcement of misconceptions on gender issues.

Some commentators warned that men were treated differently from women (Van der Walt, 2009a:5; Van der Walt, 2009b:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1), pleaded for empathy for Semenya (CNN, 2009:3) or applauded Semenya for her achievements and determination (Van der Walt, 2009a:5; Grobbelaar, 2009b:2). These sources were either from the political community or the sports community which means that the perspectives offered were either from a political or sports point of view. No experts on gender, women’s or African issues were consulted which is in line with Croteau and Hoynes’ (2003:196) assertion about representation theory that media products come into existence as the result of a

selection process. This is also applicable to the newspaper's source selection.

The next section will analyse *Beeld's* opinion piece.

6.3.10 *Beeld's* opinion piece: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

Cornelissen (2009:10) challenged Chuene to bring him the “parents who won't ask questions when their daughter falls in line to run against Caster”. The argument suggested that this behaviour of parents – to judge their children's opposition by their appearance – was a normal human reaction. Hall (1997:258) notes that stereotyping is a method of separating normal from abnormal or acceptable from unacceptable and “excludes or expels everything which does not fit”. By suggesting that all of Semenya's competitors' parents would question her participation, Cornelissen (2009:10) exposed his notion of what is “normal” and “abnormal”.

There were no editorials published in *Beeld* on the portrayal of women during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld's* columns.

6.3.11 *Beeld's* columns: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

Groenewald (2009:5) noted that there was something old-fashioned about the fact that people questioned Semenya's sex because of how she looked and performed. Van Heerden (2009:3) gave a number of examples of how society assigned certain roles or tasks to women and others to men in a stereotypical way – as was the case with Semenya. These comparisons provided context to the issue, but were still only the views of two individuals and do not represent reality in its entirety (Fourie & Karam, 2001:470).

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* news reports.

6.3.12 *Rapport's* news reports: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

Rapport's (Van Wyk, 2009:6) initial reaction to Semenya's win in Mauritius was one of disbelief. The article mentioned that Semenya's time was just over 3 seconds from the “most untouchable” world record and that she “is particularly muscular for an 18 year old

girl” and has “particularly high natural testosterone levels” which led the reporter to ask if she had been tested for steroids (Van Wyk, 2009:6). The reasoning was similar to those of international press organisations and the sports community – excellent times added to a muscular appearance in a woman should indicate that there was something wrong (Amy-Chinn, 2010:312). A lot of this controversy around Semenya was created because the sports community and the media wanted to know if it was fair for her to compete against other females (Van Wyk, 2009:4). Buzuvis (2010:38) argued that the fact that athletics events used segregation of the sexes to establish a “level playing field” did not mean that the playing field was indeed level as “sorting athletes by sex does not necessarily sort them by physical characteristics that are considered relevant to sport”.

Semenya’s appearance and behaviour were also discussed in a number of news reports (Makhasi, 2009:4; Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1; Rampedi, 2009:6; Van Vuuren, 2009:4). Van Vuuren (2009:4) quoted a source calling Semenya a “lady” and an “excellent athlete” while another noted that she “looks like a man, sounds like a man, has facial hair like a man and runs like a man” but that she should not be deprived of her moment of glory. Mseleku and Pelsler (2009:1) reported that she was raised with her male cousins, played soccer with them and that they kicked her. Rampedi (2009:6) mentioned Semenya’s ballet dance during a party in her home town while a roommate noted that “she is very fond of her different hairstyles” and “an excellent cook” (Makhasi, 2009:4). Makhasi (2009:4) reported that “like most women” Semenya enjoys a visit to the hair salon and a manicure. These classifications of what a woman should supposedly sound like, dress like or behave like could reinforce stereotypes around women. In this regard, Levi-Strauss’ theory of binary oppositions which explains how audiences assign meaning to phenomena, notes that a person’s thinking is moulded by society – when reasoning deviate from the collective manner, it will be regarded as a threat and defined as an opposition (Fourie & Karam, 2001:472). By either emphasising Semenya’s “manliness” or exploring artificial reasons why she should be a woman, the newspaper displays its view that Semenya’s intersex condition is a threat for the status quo.

There was no opinion piece written on the subject during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport’s* editorial.

6.3.13 *Rapport's* editorial: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

There was only one editorial written on the theme during the research period. *Rapport* (*Rapport* Comment, 2009:16) noted that Semenya's excellent performance and features were apparently what caused the rumours. The editorial blamed the IAAF and the Australian media for the situation. The editorial failed to mention though what the role of the South African sports authorities and the rest of the media in this debacle was, and thus offers a limited portrayal of reality which is in line with representation theory which states that the media offers its audience "mediated versions of reality" (Reid, 2008:1999).

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* columns.

6.3.14 *Rapport's* columns: The portrayal of women – Representation analysis

Booyens (2009:2) observed that she hoped that one of the consequences of the controversy would be that the stereotypical manner in which journalists often wrote on masculinity and femininity would change. Kombuis (2009:2) admitted that he also had doubts about Semenya's sex when he first saw her – as she looked, walked and talked like a man. His column satirically unmasked his own sexism and suggested that certain stereotypes were so entrenched in people's thinking that they failed to see it themselves. Both these columnists highlighted issues of stereotypes in society. By choosing to highlight stereotypes in their columns, these columnists acted in line with Braham's (1982:270) assertion that the media acts as a "searchlight, illuminating some areas while leaving others in shadow".

The next section will analyse *Beeld's* news reports.

6.3.15 *Beeld's* news reports: Medical references – Representation analysis

Initial articles reported that Semenya might be a hermaphrodite (*Beeld*, 2009a:3; Van der Walt, 2009b:3). Grobbelaar (2009a:1) defined the term and noted that Semenya was not a hermaphrodite but possibly a pseudohermaphrodite. Tempelhoff (2009a:3) noted that if she looked like a woman but had internal male genitals, she had an intersex condition and was not a hermaphrodite. Pienaar (2009b:3) noted that the determination was much more complex than taking one's pants off. Allegations that Semenya's testosterone levels were elevated were also discussed (*Beeld*, 2009a:3; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1). Experts explained

that elevated testosterone levels were not necessarily an indication that Semenya had an unfair advantage (Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Pienaar, 2009a:3). In dealing with the term “hermaphrodite” and “testosterone levels”, the journalists also provided a reference point for the interpretation and broader context of these terms. This is in line with Bennett’s (1982:288) summary of arguments on representation theory which notes that “the media *are* agencies of mediation, that in reporting events they also propose certain frameworks for the interpretation of those events...”

Tempelhoff (2009a:3) explained the difference between sex and gender but made a mistake which created some confusion. Another mistake about the appearance of intersex conditions was also made (Tempelhoff, 2009b:3). For the latter, a correction was later published. Croteau and Hoynes (2003:197) note that “no representation can ever be totally ‘true’ or ‘real’ since it must inevitably frame an issue and choose to include and exclude certain components of a multifaceted reality”. The problem with these statements was that they were factually incorrect and thus not a representation, but a *misrepresentation*. This is contrary to media ethical considerations with regards to truth-telling which emphasises accuracy (Krüger, 2004:12).

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld’s* opinion piece.

6.3.16 *Beeld’s* opinion piece: Medical references – Representation analysis

Only one opinion piece was written on the issue during the research period. Jackson (2009:10) argued that the media should show empathy for Semenya but also treat her competitors fairly. He noted that the media achieved the latter when Semenya withdrew from the South African cross-country event. This emphasis on the media’s role is in line with Braham’s (1982:270) comparison of the media’s actions to that of a searchlight, emphasising certain issues while moving others to a subordinate position.

No editorial was written on the subject during the research period.

The next section will analyse *Beeld’s* columns.

6.3.17 *Beeld's* columns: Medical references – Representation analysis

Harber (2009:4) noted that science had blurred the line between the sexes, but in reality there was a continuum between the sexes. Groenewald (2009:5) added onto this argument by explaining what intersex conditions entailed and reiterated Harber's suggestion that sex was a continuum. In analysing these columns and comparing its content to the theory of representation, the "representations 're-present' the social world in ways that are both incomplete and narrow" because they "choose to include and exclude certain components of a multifaceted reality" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:196-197). Although the authors further note that the media usually do not try to "reflect the 'real' world", limited time and resources also constrain their ability to do so, even if they wanted to. Of importance here is the fact that only two articles on the medical issue were published.

6.3.18 *Rapport's* news reports: Medical references – Representation analysis

Rapport (Nel, 2009:6) noted that a developmental defect during pregnancy could cause someone to be born as a hermaphrodite. *Rapport* (Nel, 2009:6) further noted that one in every 500 people was intersex. *Rapport* (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1) also noted that Semenya had undergone gender tests twice before and passed. Regarding representation theory, Macdonald (1995:3) notes that "although the material characteristics of physical reality may be uncovered by persistent scientific endeavour, social reality is more elusive and more likely to be shaded by the brush of the investigator". This argument alludes to the fact that media representations often "come to life" by way of the journalist's ("the investigator") reasoning process. In this regard, *Rapport* (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1; Nel, 2009:6) focussed on arguments related to Semenya's intersex condition, thus implicitly "shaded" the issue as of importance.

There were no opinion pieces published in *Rapport* on the subject during the research period.

There were also no editorial comments published in *Rapport* on the subject during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* column.

6.3.19 *Rapport's* column: Medical references – Representation analysis

Booyens (2009:2) noted that Semenya's story had been exploited, but argued that the media should not be on trial as the issue was newsworthy because the athlete might have had an unfair advantage on the athletics' field. In alluding to the newsworthiness of the issue, Booyens (2009:2) explained how the media used news values, the framework used by the media to "select" the news (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965:65) to determine whether something will be published or not. The fact that the media cannot publish everything is in line with explanations by Fourie and Karam (2001:470) that the media cannot portray an event to its full magnitude. According to the news values framework (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965:70) events become news only "to the extent that they satisfy" certain "conditions".

The next section will analyse *Beeld* and *Rapport's* articles using African womanism as a theoretical framework.

6.3.20 *Beeld's* news reports: Race – African womanism analysis

Beeld (Fourie & Grobbelaar, 2009:1; Korrespondent, 2009b:3; De Swardt, 2009c:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1) repeatedly reported that Semenya's race became an opportunity to blame racism for the uproar surrounding her sex. One report (La Vita, 2009:11) noted that the issue was not about race while another report (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1) noted that ASA and the IAAF were to blame for the controversy. In discussing African womanism, Ogunyemi (1985:64) highlights the need to be conscious of racial considerations. On this issue, Kolawole (2002:96) notes that "we cannot gloss over history or cultural and racial specificities, nor that certain groups have been privileged or under-privileged by racial or ethnic identity". This means that *Beeld* cannot report on the issue of racist accusations without being cognisant of South Africa's apartheid past. The reports tend to focus on Chuene and ASA's accusations that racists were to blame for the uproar over Semenya's sex and also that it was rather the result of Chuene's incompetence. The newspaper is very aware of the apartheid past, but tends to resort to a duty-based approach (a moral person would unmask lies on the part of ASA), an approach that Moemeka and Kasoma (1994:42) argue is "alien to African morality" as the latter rather focuses on whether a person's actions are beneficial to the community.

The next section will analyse *Beeld's* opinion pieces.

6.3.21 *Beeld's* opinion pieces: Race – African womanism analysis

Cornelissen (2009:10) noted that Chuene reacted to criticism from white people by calling them racist. He noted sarcastically that “black people cannot be racist”. Du Plessis (2009:16) emphasised that white people were angry because whites were continually blamed, “because ‘racism’ and apartheid were blamed instead of incompetence and corruption”. In keeping with Ogunyemi’s (1985:64) observation that African womanism is conscious of the racial considerations of South Africa’s apartheid history, these two opinion pieces seem to express the view that the opinion writers were fed-up with accusations of racism. Du Plessis (2009:16) highlighted the fact that Chuene’s incompetence was the reason for the debacle rather than racism and thereby focuses the attention to the duties of someone in Chuene’s position. Moemeka and Kasoma (1994:42) argued that the duty-based approach in journalism was something that was unfamiliar to African morality, which “define a person’s actions as good only because of their good effect on the community”.

The next section will analyse *Beeld's* editorials.

6.3.22 *Beeld's* editorials: Race – African womanism analysis

Beeld (*Beeld* Comment, 2009a:12; *Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009d:30; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) emphasised that Chuene was to blame for the scandal and criticised ASA for not punishing Chuene for his lies. The editorials (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) pointed to a number of duties he had supposedly forsaken. This focus on how Chuene had forsaken his duties and the call that Semenya should have been withdrawn showed limited consciousness of the needs of Semenya as an African woman. Suggestions (*Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) that Semenya should have been tested because of rumours in the sports community suggested that these calls were to make sure that she did not have an unfair advantage.

Beeld's (*Beeld* Comment, 2009e:16; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) argument that the IAAF was only doing its job by ensuring a level playing-field for participants, and the fact that

the newspaper argued that the IAAF's testing procedures with regards to Semenya were in order, gave the impression that the newspaper did not consider that African women desired "self-respect, an active role, dynamic participation in all areas of social development, and dignity alongside men" (Kolawole, 1997:36). The newspaper's (*Beeld* Comment, 2009b:18; *Beeld* Comment, 2009c:14; *Beeld* Comment, 2009f:14) emphasis was on Chuene, his incompetence and his arguments that racists were to blame for the controversy. There was no evidence that "racial, gender, class and cultural consciousness" from an African woman's point of view were considered (Okonjo in Kolawole, 1997:24).

The next section will analyse *Beeld's* columns.

6.3.23 *Beeld's* columns: Race – African womanism analysis

Harber (2009:4) noted that it was very difficult to find the "right balance of race representation". Van Aswegen (2009:11) noted that Chuene blamed racists for the controversy surrounding Semenya's sex and that his "comments on 'racist Afrikaans media' were particularly inappropriate". Geldenhuys (2009b:7) argued that white people naturally got angry when politicians accused them of not attending the welcoming ceremony, but noted that white people's excuse that they had to work was not acceptable. Although Geldenhuys (2009b:7) argued that white people's excuse was unacceptable, both columnists' first reaction was to defend the Afrikaans media of which a significant percentage is white. The issue surrounding racist accusations is thus framed from a white perspective which is in conflict with African womanism, an Afrocentric theory which Mazama (2001:393) explains as the "organising principle that determines the perception of all reality is the centrality of the African experience for African people".

The next section will analyse *Rapport's* news reports.

6.3.24 *Rapport's* news reports: Race – African womanism analysis

Rapport (Van Wyk, 2009:4) repeated Chuene's assertion that racists complained to the IAAF about Semenya's sex. *Rapport* (Joubert, 2009a:4) noted that certain politicians would take a firmer stand against playing the race card in order to promote non-racialism. In highlighting issues of race, both writers indicate this as a central theme in their reporting. However, there is nothing to suggest that Africans are the centre in postmodern

history (Asante, 1991:6) as such an argument would mean that racism would be framed from the perspective of a black person, with specific reference to the inequalities that existed in a South African cultural and historic sense. *Rapport* framed the issue from a white perspective. This is exactly what Mazama (2001:387) warned against: “Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview”.

The next section will analyse *Rapport's* opinion piece.

6.3.25 *Rapport's* opinion piece: Race – African womanism analysis

Maarman (2009:16) noted that white people’s excuse that they did not go to the airport to congratulate Semenya because they had to work, reminded him of their excuse that they “did not know about apartheid”. He believed that white people’s absence was as a result of Semenya’s race. Maarman (2009:16) used South Africa’s history of apartheid to provide context for his argument. This is in line with Kolawole’s (2002:92) assertion that “historical and cultural contexts are fundamental” in addressing inequalities from an African womanist perspective.

The next section will analyse *Rapport's* editorial.

6.3.26 *Rapport's* editorial: Race – African womanism analysis

One editorial (*Rapport* Comment, 2009:16) emphasised that if the first complaint about Semenya did come from a racist South African correspondent as Chuene alleged, it would be a “bad day for our country”. This argument seems to take into account that with South Africa’s apartheid past and the country currently trying to recuperate from the hurt that it caused, it cannot afford setbacks like a racist complaining about Semenya. In discussing accusations of racism from this historical point of departure the newspaper acted in line with Ogunyemi’s (1985:64) premise that African womanists “will recognize that along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy”.

The next section will analyse *Rapport's* columns.

6.3.27 *Rapport's* columns: Race – African womanism analysis

Joubert (2009b:16) argued for non-racialism and asked every South African to rise above racism and to avoid contributions to racial discord. Another commentator (Dexter, 2009:2) argued that the ANC's use of Semenya's issue for personal gain was an attempt to deprive the nation of a "common national consciousness".

In specifically dealing with non-racialism from a South African perspective, Sharp (1998:243) noted that non-racialism "as an ideal of societal transformation refers to a process in which a commitment to the ending of racial discrimination is complemented by a concerted programme to provide wide-ranging redress for the disadvantages that the majority of South Africans suffered in the past". While Asante (1991:6) emphasises that Afrocentricity places Africans at the centre of post modern history, Asante (2000:54) also notes that Afrocentricity "seeks pluralism without hierarchy". In explaining this notion, Asante (2000:62) notes that "to be for one's self is not to be against others". This is also emphasised by Karenga (in Sesanti, 2011:104) who argues that human diversity should be supported and expanded. Arguments for non-racialism and a common national consciousness are thus in line with African womanism, which is an Afrocentric theory (Dove, 1998:515).

The next section will analyse the portrayal of women.

6.3.28 *Beeld's* news reports: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Beeld (De Swardt & Sapa-AP, 2009:3; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; De Swardt, 2009b:1; Nuusoorsig, 2009b:16) repeatedly emphasised Semenya's performance and improvements. The newspaper (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1; *Beeld*, 2009a:3; De Swardt, 2009a:3; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Nuusoorsig, 2009a:16; De Swardt, 2009b:1; Nuusoorsig, 2009b:16) also reported that there were questions about Semenya's sex in international athletics circles and reiterated the IAAF's explanation that they had a right and an obligation to investigate an athlete they suspected was "not completely feminine". The IAAF's and international media's reasoning that someone should be tested because her times improved significantly or because her physical appearance did not subscribe to their notion of femaleness went unquestioned. In allowing the IAAF's explanation to go unquestioned, the newspaper resorted to deontological notions of ethics – which

emphasises the duty of an ethical person (Retief, 2002:9), something Moemeka and Kasoma (1994:42) argue is not known in African morality, and notes that in “Western practice, journalists who uphold the truth, regardless of its consequences to society are said to be virtuous. It is debatable whether such virtuous journalists exist, or are even desirable, in Africa”. The same argument was valid with regards to Semenya’s appearance and behaviour – which was repeatedly compared to that of a man or boy (De Swardt & Sapa-AFP, 2009:1; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3; Louw-Carstens, 2009b:1; De Swardt, 2009c:3) or when evidence to the contrary was presented fell victim to stereotypical or artificial notions of what a woman ought to look, dress or behave like (Fourie & Grobbelaar, 2009:1; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Korrespondent, 2009a:1; Louw-Carstens, 2009a:3; De Swardt, 2009c:3).

In discussing the culture of indigenous Africans, Amadiume (1987:93) notes that women’s “beauty was not only physical, but must also be seen in her mind, good character and hard work”. From an African womanist perspective, it may thus be argued that any reference to a woman’s physical appearance would be incomplete without references to other non-physical aspects. Being a professional athlete requires extremely hard work and an emphasis on Semenya’s appearance without cognisance of her hard work would be contrary to African womanism. Certain news reports (Van der Walt, 2009a:5; Grobbelaar, 2009b:2; Van der Walt, 2009b:3; Grobbelaar, 2009c:1) did emphasise these “non-physical aspects” by expressing the hope that people should not forget about Semenya’s achievements, further noting that Semenya was an “extremely strong and determined young woman” and that stereotypical views led to the question-marks around Semenya’s sex. In one report (CNN, 2009:3) another athlete, Santhi Soundarajan, pleaded with society not to subject Semenya to the same trauma that she had to deal with.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld’s* opinion piece.

6.3.29 *Beeld’s* opinion piece: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Only one opinion piece on the issue was published during the research period. Cornelissen (2009:10) noted that all parents would ask questions about Semenya if their daughter had to run against her. This argument suggested that her appearance is sufficient reason for people to question the fairness of her participation. It showed a stereotypical

notion of what a woman should look like and no indication that he was cognisant of the fact that African women desired “self-respect, an active role, dynamic participation in all areas of social development, and dignity alongside men” (Kolawole, 1997:36).

There were no editorials written on the subject during the research period.

The next section will analyse the research findings drawn from *Beeld's* columns.

6.3.30 *Beeld's* columns: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Two columnists highlighted issues related to the portrayal of women. Van Heerden (2009:3) noted that society tended to assign certain roles to women. Groenewald (2009:5) noted that Semenya's appearance and performance resulted in her being tested. On the role of men and women in society, Amadiume (1987:93-94) notes that in traditional African communities “men and women were talked of or judged according to the roles expected of them as full social adults, that is, according to their status as fathers and mothers”. Amadiume further observes that these roles were related to provision and care respectively. This is in contrast with Van Heerden's (2009:3) and Groenewald's (2009:5) depiction of stereotypical roles of men and women which is related to physical power and beauty or softness, respectively.

The next section will analyse the research findings drawn from *Rapport's* news reports.

6.3.31 *Rapport's* news reports: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Rapport (Van Wyk, 2009:6) wrote about Semenya's improvement in athletics with disbelief and asked her club whether she had been tested for steroids before. The international media speculation around her sex was also reported (Van Wyk, 2009:4). While there were a few positive references to Semenya's womanhood (Van Vuuren, 2009:4), two reports pointed to her lack of womanly features (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1; Van Wyk, 2009:6) another to her “male” behaviour (Mseleku & Pelsler 2009:1) and another said that she was indeed a woman as she behaved as society expects of a woman (Makhasi, 2009:4; Rampedi, 2009:6). A number of members from her inner circle (her former headmaster, her cousins, great-aunt and grandma) were asked for comment on the

issue.

Discussing African morality, Kasoma (1994:27) points out that a person “is important only in so far as he or she is part of the family, clan or community”. Koyana (2001:65) notes that African womanism is more “family-centred” than it is “female-centred”. Alluding to this point, Dove (1998:520) notes that in Africa, a “family-member or friend who has been kind and caring can be said to be one’s mother” and thus “the role of motherhood or mothering is not confined to mothers or women”. In using people close to Semenya as sources, the newspaper utilised an approach in line with African womanism’s emphasis on family-centeredness.

There were no opinion pieces written on the issue during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport’s* editorial.

6.3.32 *Rapport’s* editorial: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Rapport Comment (2009:16) noted that Semenya’s “crime” was her excellent performance and lack of feminine attributes and blamed the IAAF and Australian media for the issue. This argument did advocate “dynamic participation” and “dignity alongside men” (Kolawole, 1997:36), and also campaigned for “the creation of opportunity itself” (Johnson-Odim in Koyana, 2001:65) for African women.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport’s* columns.

6.3.33 *Rapport’s* columns: The portrayal of women – African womanism analysis

Booyens (2009:2) expressed the hope that the controversy would lead to changes in stereotypical reporting. Kombuis (2009:2) however noted that certain stereotypes were so entrenched that people might not even be aware of it. While the arguments were conscious of the shortcomings in reporting on women, it was specific to women in general and not to African women specifically. From an African womanist perspective, Kolawole (2002:97) asserts, that the “ideal is not to merge all women under an unrealistic canopy of sisterhood, but to recognise and respect specificities, diversities and difference”. Aniagolu (1998:97) adds that African womanism’s realisation is specifically that feminism’s

limitations “are its generalisation of women’s problems and solutions”. Specific references to the stereotypes African women are subjected to would bring the columns in line with African womanism.

The next section will discuss medical references.

6.3.34 *Beeld’s* news reports: Medical references – African womanism analysis

Beeld (*Beeld*, 2009a:3; Van der Walt, 2009b:3) reported assertions that Semenya might be a hermaphrodite. A medical expert noted that her condition was probably rather pseudohermaphroditism while a gender activist noted that the condition should rather be referred to as intersex (Grobbelaar, 2009a:1; Tempelhoff, 2009a:3). *Beeld* (Tempelhoff, 2009b:3) also reported that more than five in 100 000 children are born with an intersex condition, a mistake which was later rectified to read 50 in every 100 000 children are born with an intersex condition. What this condition entailed from an African womanism perspective was unclear from the reporting. Writing for the *Independent News Online*, Tromp, Mtshali, Gerretsen, Mbanjwa and Sapa (2009) quoted a Sepedi expert from Wits University who noted that the Sepedi word for hermaphrodite is “setabane” which is an offensive term in Sepedi culture. Lekota (2009) in the *Sowetan Online* argues that the Sepedi word for hermaphrodite is not “setabane” but “sekgeramatona” but agrees that its use is derogatory and demeaning. In this regard, *Beeld’s* reporting showed a lack of consciousness with regards to African culture. Sesanti (2009:212) argues that when “dealing with the history of a people or their culture, the task becomes incomplete without making reference to the language of the people whose culture is being discussed”.

The issue of Semenya’s testosterone levels were also reported (*Beeld*, 2009a:3; Geldenhuys, 2009a:1; Pienaar, 2009a:3) while the complexities of gender and sex (Tempelhoff, 2009a:3; Pienaar, 2009b:3) were also noted. The reporters utilised the knowledge of medical and gender experts regarding the issue, yet no experts on African cultural or women’s issues were consulted.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld’s* opinion piece.

6.3.35 *Beeld's* opinion piece: Medical references – African womanism analysis

Only one opinion piece was written on the subject during the research period. Jackson (2009:10) noted that the media should be honest and show empathy with Semenya but should also treat her opponents fairly. This observation shows similarities with Mangena's (2003:100) assertion that an African woman wants "to have her dignity as a human being recognised, respected and protected" and that African women "struggle for freedom, justice and equality". However, this consciousness of African womanist ideals that their dignity should be "recognised, respected and protected" is immediately reversed when Jackson (2009:10) notes that Semenya's withdrawal was probably the result of an unfair advantage on the athletics field. As this was not yet determined at that stage, Semenya was not on "equal" footing with other athletes.

No editorials were published during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Beeld's* columns.

6.3.36 *Beeld's* columns: Medical references – African womanism analysis

Harber (2009:4) noted that there was a continuum between the two sexes and it was undesirable to note that someone is a woman "because we know she is". Groenewald (2009:5) added to this argument by noting that things like physique, age and sex were important for classification purposes in sport, although there were a "wide range of points on the line of gender and sexuality where individuals find themselves". These arguments both use science as a point of departure for their arguments. In discussing womanhood from a scientific perspective, the question arises: What are African womanists' perspectives on this issue?

Amadiume (1987:69) note that in Africa, women are seen as producers "be it in the management of subsistence production or in biological production". Amadiume further notes that "since women were basically seen as producers, the principles of control and protection applied to them throughout their productive period, whether as daughters, wives or mothers".

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* news reports.

6.3.37 *Rapport's* news reports: Medical references – African womanism analysis

Rapport (Mseleku & Pelsler, 2009:1) noted that Semenya had previously been subjected to gender tests, while Nel (2009:6) explained why someone may be born as a hermaphrodite. As mentioned earlier, the term hermaphrodite was regarded as a derogatory term in African culture (Lekota, 2009; Tromp *et al.*, 2009). A later reference used the more acceptable term for the condition – intersex (Nel, 2009:6). In discussing African culture, Sesanti (2009:212) argues that the importance of language within that culture should also be considered. It would thus be contrary to African womanist perspectives to discuss the term “hermaphrodite” without being cognisant of its meaning within Semenya’s Sepedi culture.

No opinion pieces were published on the subject during the research period.

No editorials were published on the subject during the research period.

The next section will analyse the findings of *Rapport's* column.

6.3.38 *Rapport's* column: Medical references – African womanism analysis

Booyens (2009:2) noted that Semenya had been exploited, but argued that the issue was newsworthy (“people’s curiosity was stimulated”). While African values tend to favour the welfare of the community over that of the individual (Moemeka, 1997:174), the welfare of the general public whose “curiosity was stimulated” was not at stake during this period. The emphasis that African culture placed on the community, also did not discard individual rights (Kasoma, 1994:27). From an African womanism perspective, Semenya would have received priority over the “curiosity” of the community.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter analysed articles written by *Beeld* and *Rapport* on Caster Semenya with specific reference to race, the portrayal of women and medical references. As theoretical points of departure, representation theory and African womanism were utilised to analyse the articles.

The next chapter will conclude this research.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This study examined the representation of Caster Semenya in *Beeld* and *Rapport* during August and September 2009. This followed the leak of sensitive information about the athlete's medical condition to the Australian media (Hurst, 2009).

An article published on *The Daily Telegraph's* website, claimed that Semenya had "male sex organs and no womb or ovaries" (Hurst, 2009). This revelation left the rest of the media with a number of ethical dilemmas (Harber, 2009; Krüger, 2009). The study investigated how *Beeld* and *Rapport* responded to these dilemmas and whether this was in line with media ethical considerations with specific reference to truth-telling. The representation of Semenya was studied according to three themes – race, the portrayal of women and medical references.

As the Australian article was published on September 11, 2009, August and September were chosen as the period of study. News reports, opinion pieces, newspaper editorials and columns that were written on Semenya during this time frame were analysed.

The next section will provide an overview of the literature review.

7.2 Literature review

The literature review indicated that the representation of women in the media have been problematic as women have often been under-represented and stereotyped (Byerly, 2007:226; Krüger, 2004:141) while black women were often represented as victims (Mthala, 2000:7). With regards to women's athletes, the review showed that women were treated differently than their male counterparts and where male athleticism were often emphasised by the media, in the case of women, it was often physical appearance (George *et al.*, 2001:97; Koivula, 1999:600).

In analysing the BBC's coverage of Caster Semenya during the time, Amy-Chinn

(2010:312) noted that the broadcaster “perceived” that there was clarity that the athlete’s performance was so exceptional that the doubts over her being a “normal” woman were warranted, that it was appropriate that Semenya was asked to undergo tests because of this and that if these tests showed that she was different to “normal women”, she would have an unfair advantage.

With this background in mind, the representation of Semenya was studied.

7.3 Theoretical frameworks

Representation theory and African womanism were used as theoretical frameworks for this study. From a representational point of view, the research aimed to determine if the newspapers’ reporting was in line with the theory of representation, whether or not it presented only a partial reflection of reality (Fourie & Karam, 2001:470). In studying the newspapers adherence to the media ethical principle of truth-telling, the research also analysed whether this representation deviated from reality to such an extent that it might reinforce stereotypes (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:196).

From an African womanism perspective, the study investigated whether or not the representation of Semenya as an African woman celebrated “black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom” (Ogunyemi, 1985:72) and whether it brought “to the forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth” (Dove, 1998:535), where “mothers” mean caretakers.

7.4 Research methodology

The study was conducted within the qualitative research methodology paradigm and utilised content analysis as a research technique.

7.5 Conclusion on the representation of Caster Semenya

This section summarises the conclusion of the research with regards to the representation of Semenya. The themes involved were race, the portrayal of women and medical references.

7.5.1 Race

From a representation theory perspective, the research concludes that *Beeld* as well as *Rapport* repeatedly emphasised a certain theme – namely accusations of racism against white people. This finding is in line with the theory in suggesting that the media highlights certain issues repeatedly (Branston & Stafford, 1996:125). Some instances of stereotypical representations by *Beeld* were specifically noted, which resulted in breaches in truth-telling.

With regards to African womanism, the study concludes that *Beeld* was conscious of race from a historical perspective with specific regards to apartheid. However, the issue was framed from a deontological viewpoint and thus not from the perspective of an African woman. *Rapport's* reporting showed examples of racial consciousness from a historical perspective (Ogunyemi, 1985:64) but also showed certain reports that were contrary to the Afrocentric belief that Africans should be central in post-modern history (Asante, 1991:6).

7.5.2 The portrayal of women

From a representation theory point of view, this research concludes that *Beeld* and *Rapport* repeatedly highlighted Semenya's performance and her appearance and failed to question whether these characteristics were sufficient "evidence" to warrant a gender test. While instances of support and compliments were found, both newspapers reported repeated references to "womanly" tasks and preferences, features and behaviour, which could reinforce stereotypical depictions of women. This was also contrary to media ethics' emphasis on truth-telling.

With regards to African womanism, both newspapers displayed instances of reporting in line with the theory by including members of her "family" as sources (Koyana, 2001:65) and by highlighting aspects of her physical appearance while also referring to her non-physical appearance (Amadiume, 1987:93). In using African women as sources, the newspapers also fulfilled the African womanist notion that "if you begin to name your own activity yourself, there is power in that naming" (Arndt, 2000:717).

7.5.3 Medical references

With reference to representation theory, the newspapers repeatedly noted that Semenya

might be a hermaphrodite, explained what this condition entailed and why it should rather be referred to as intersex. *Beeld* added context to the issue by noting that Semenya's abnormal testosterone levels did not necessarily mean that she had an unfair advantage. While intersex conditions were discussed, in most cases by *Beeld*, both newspapers failed to mention that the IAAF's own classification of intersex conditions, noted that of the four intersex conditions classified in women athletes, only one has the possibility to give the athlete an unfair advantage (Nerva, 2010:81). The representation of Semenya in this regard did not reflect reality but only provided a piece of the puzzle – in line with representation theory. However, the missing context could prove to be problematic with regards to the media ethical principle of truth-telling as it hides the real complexity of the concept “unfair advantage” in athletics.

No examples of medical terminology and its meaning within the African culture were discussed. From an African womanist perspective the research found no examples of a specific consciousness of medical references from an African paradigm.

7.6 Concluding arguments

The case of Caster Semenya provided the media with an extremely difficult case to report on with regards to media ethical considerations, specifically truth-telling. Semenya was young, black, a woman, fairly new to international athletics and was suddenly thrust into the spotlight because of her excellent performance and seemingly “uncommon” physique. To complicate the problem, a source close to the IAAF leaked what were supposedly the results of Semenya's medical tests (Hurst, 2009; Krüger, 2009).

Truth-telling is the backbone of the media's credibility and therefore universally important. In dealing with an intricate issue like the representation of Semenya, which has already been dealt with rather poorly on the international front, it is thus important that journalists should make sure that their facts are presented in an accurate and fair manner. That includes the necessity to restrain from the enforcement of stereotypes and to represent this issue within a contextual space that would maximise the journalist's goal of truth-telling.

In the post-apartheid years, the Afrikaans media had to redefine their ideological and

political role (Wasserman, 2009:62). In reporting on the racial theme with regards to Semenya, *Beeld* and *Rapport* both repeatedly emphasised that Chuene's accusations that white racists were to blame for the Semenya debacle was uncalled for and tried to expose his wrong-doing, thereby acting from a duty-based approach, something Moemeka *et al.* (1994:43) argue is "alien to African morality". From an African womanist perspective thus, caring for others (Dove, 1998:521), in this case Semenya, would have received precedence over the exposure of liars. Such an approach would have been more in line with utilitarian views favoured by Africans (Moemeka & Kasoma, 1994:43). While both newspapers showed cognisance of South Africa's apartheid history, the representation of white people as the "aggrieved party" seemed to try to protect the interests of whites rather than view the issue from the "centrality of Africans in post modern history" (Asante, 1991:6).

Representing Semenya as a woman also proved somewhat problematic. It has already been argued that the situation was handled poorly internationally. The question then arises if it would be, from a media-ethical perspective, the best approach to repeat their reports without introducing any context or a critical, alternative view. In many instances the newspapers reported what international reports said, what the IAAF said and even what local magazines said without any indication that these views might be wrong, stereotypical, skewed, without context or from an ideological or cultural perspective that would be ignorant of African practices. Krüger (2004:139) notes that stereotypes misrepresent reality and strengthen "habits of mind that lead to harmful practices of various kinds". The selection of sources complicated this issue – passive source selection (the Australian media, the IAAF and press releases) proved to be much less helpful in aiding to avoid stereotypical reporting than sources that were consulted with the specific premise of explaining complicated issues.

Source selection also proved to be problematic with regards to the portrayal of women, as many of the stereotypical references that were made about women, were made by people close to Semenya (her friends, family or coach) or by individuals within the sports community. In this regard, Krüger (2004:139) argues that journalists "have a duty to challenge stereotypes when they come up, not just report them". Gqola (2001:15) adds that the "task of representing Blackwomen in postcolonial ways is challenging since it

demands from us that we create and refashion forms of representation which continue to break new ground”.

Although certain articles mentioned that Semenya’s elevated testosterone levels did not necessarily mean she had an unfair advantage, most of the articles seemed to support the view that her excellent performance and muscular physique warranted a gender test which indicated the existence of an unfair advantage. This is also a stereotypical view as the IAAF’s own sources indicate that of four intersex conditions associated with women athletes only one has the *possibility* of resulting in an unfair advantage (Nerva, 2010:81). As was the case with the *BBC* research (Amy-Chinn, 2010:312), this view was adopted from the international sports and media community without due consideration.

A number of articles raised the issue of hermaphroditism. While a medical expert noted that Semenya was possibly not a hermaphrodite but rather a pseudohermaphrodite and a gender activist noted that the more acceptable term was intersex, the term hermaphroditism seems to be given preference. The term hermaphrodite is also never discussed from a Sepedi language point of view, something that would be necessary according to the African womanism theory (Sesanti, 2009:212).

While it would be inaccurate to state outright that the newspapers’ reporting was in breach of the media-ethical principle of truth-telling, certain instances of stereotypes were identified. In this regard Krüger (2004:139) notes that stereotypes distort reality. With regards to African womanism’s contribution to providing the contextual basis for truth-telling, both newspapers showed certain examples of reporting that supported the celebration of “Black roots, the ideals of Black life, while giving a balanced presentation of Black womandom” (Ogunyemi in Abrahams, 2001:73) although it was beyond the scope of this research to determine whether this was intended or accidental.

7.7 Recommendation for further study

7.7.1 Increased study period

Since the initial reports on Semenya’s gender tests, the athlete has been given permission to compete internationally. Semenya just won a silver medal at the London Olympics. The researcher recommends that this study be repeated using a longer time frame as to

determine how Semenya was represented after the dust over her medical condition had settled.

7.8 Recommendations for similar cases

While this study was narrowly focused on Semenya as a case study, the findings could provide certain guidelines for journalists covering similar issues.

- The historical background and culture of a subject is significant in providing the necessary context for reporting. In this regard, journalists should continuously question their own viewpoints of a certain issue.
- Journalists should be cautious not to use stereotypes when writing on unfamiliar or uncommon occurrences.
- In cases like this where the issue was first reported on by other media, South African media should resist the urge to merely repeat what was said, without evaluating existing articles and introduce a critical or alternative view.
- Sources should be chosen with care. In certain respects, sources close to Semenya exacerbated the problem by supplying their own stereotypical notions of womanhood.

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