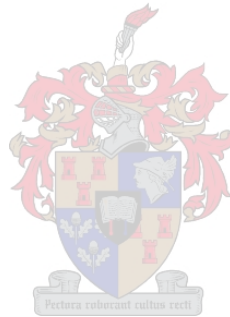


South African tabloid newspapers' representation of black celebrities: A social constructionism perspective

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**Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Journalism) at
Stellenbosch University**

**Supervisor: Josh Ogada
September 2009**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

(Emmanuel Mogoboya Matsebatlela)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people:

- My supervisor, Josh Ogada, for his expert and invaluable guidance throughout the course of my studies.
- Professor Alet Kruger for helping me with the translations.
- The University of South Africa for providing me unrestricted access to their library facilities.
- My parents, John and Paulina Matsebatlela, for their unwavering support and constant encouragement.
- My wife, Molebogeng, for her patience, motivation and support.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my late Uncles, Rangwane M'phalaborwa 'Mamodila Selemantwa' Matsebatlela and Malome Thomas Mahlo. Though their life journeys have ended, they will forever remain etched in our memories. May their souls rest in peace.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how positively or negatively as well as how subjectively or objectively the South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities. This examination was primarily conducted by using the content analysis research technique. The researcher selected a total of 85 newspapers spread across four different South African daily and weekend tabloid newspapers that were published during the period February to September 2008. The results from the data collected reveal that tabloid newspapers tend to overemphasize negativity when reporting about black celebrities. The findings also reveal a clear differential in the representation of black female celebrities vis-à-vis male celebrities. Unlike male celebrities whose roles were mainly defined in terms of political activities and personal disputes, female celebrities' roles were largely confined to relationships and sex. The language used by the four newspapers in their representation of celebrities appears to be humiliating and, in some instances, downright disparaging. There is little doubt that media representations of celebrities, whether positive or negative, serve as mirrors to how some members of society behave. To this end, there needs to be a shift from the current preoccupation with sensationalizing negative news when South African tabloid newspapers report on black celebrities. Tabloid newspapers should judiciously use their greater focus on celebrities' private lives to report on more positive personal stories that focus on the achievements of celebrities, including how some celebrities are living positively with HIV/AIDS. Since this study only focused on South African tabloid newspapers' representations of black celebrities, and only employed the content analysis method, further research is recommended on the impact of celebrities' representations on the South African society.

ABSTRAK

Hierdie studie ondersoek hoe positief of negatief, asmede subjektief of objektief, daar oor swart beroemdes in Suid-Afrikaanse ponie- of skinderkoerante verslag gedoen word. Die ondersoek is primêr met behulp van die inhoudsanaliseondersoekmetode uitgevoer. Die navorser het 85 koerante uit vier verskillende Suid-Afrikaanse dagblaaie en naweekponiekoerante gekies uit die tydperk Februarie tot September 2008. Die resultate toon 'n tendens in die poniekoerante dat oorwegend negatiewe verslagdoening oor swart beroemdes vooropgestel word. Die bevindinge toon ook 'n duidelike verskil tussen die verslagdoening oor beroemde swart vroue teenoor dié oor swart mans. In teenstelling met die mans wie se rolle hoofsaaklik ingevolge hulle politieke aktiwiteite en persoonlike dispute gedefinieer word, word beroemde swart vroue se rolle hoofsaaklik beperk tot verhoudings en seks. Die taalgebruik in die verslaggewing oor beroemdes in die vier poniekoerante blyk uiters vernederend, en in sommige gevalle, selfs degraderend en wrang te wees. Daar bestaan min twyfel dat verslaggewing oor beroemdes in die media, hetsy positief of negatief, weerspieël hoe sommige lede van die samelewing lewe. Om hierdie rede is 'n verskuiwing in die huidige beheptheid met die sensasionalisering van negatiewe nuus in die verslaggewing oor swart beroemdes nodig. Poniekoerante wat op die persoonlike lewens van beroemdes fokus behoort na meer positiewe verslagdoening oor hul prestasies te strewe, insluitend, hoe sommige beroemdes positief met MIV/Vigs lewe. Aangesien hierdie navorsing net op verslagdoening oor swart beroemdes in Suid-Afrikaanse poniekoerante kragtens die inhoudsanalisemeterde gefokus het, word verdere navorsing aanbeveel oor die impak van verslagdoening oor beroemdes op die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and background

Most people spend a considerable amount of time listening to recorded music, reading newspapers and watching films or video, which means that we are exposed to large numbers of heroes, heroines and other kinds of characters with whom we identify to varying degrees and in varying ways (Berger, 1998:46). One way in which people learn their social roles is by observing the way their role models behave and then imitate them (Berger, 1998:46). Berger (1998:46) states that these role models also help to confirm our roles and establish identity. The observation of celebrities' behaviour usually happens through media representations.

Representations involve a process whereby a pre-existing given, whether it be a physical object or philosophical abstraction, is translated so that it can be comprehended and experienced by a recipient, an observer or audience (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:262). Even the language used to describe events or people in the media plays a powerful role in framing the recipient's understanding. In media representations, as Curran and Gurevitch (2000:263) point out, there may be questions of bias, distortion, reframing and somehow the purity of the original is lost.

Newspaper representations of celebrities are not different. Various studies have shown how representations of celebrities have played a central role in shaping the public's image of celebrities. In some cases, these representations have proved to influence presidential votes. A good example is the immediate circumstances leading to the historic victory of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, in the Liberian presidential runoff election in November 2005 between Sirleaf and soccer celebrity George Weah. By framing 'qualification and experience' – Sirleaf's strength – over 'common sense and popularity' – Weah's strength, the media played an important role in influencing the presidential vote in favour of the former (Shaw, 2007:56).

This research will explore newspapers' representation of celebrities by focusing on South African tabloid newspapers' representation of black celebrities. In South Africa, tabloid newspapers were mainly introduced during the post-apartheid era and were mainly targeted at a mass black readership (Wasserman, 2005:34). There has been stiff competition among tabloid newspapers such as *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun*, published by different South African media companies. This competition has forced tabloid newspapers to constantly review and change their design and content, and even introduce separate sections and supplements in order to improve their marketability (Doyle, 2002:127).

By examining South African tabloid newspapers' representation of black celebrities, this study will be exposing the type of content South African tabloids prioritize when reporting about prominent or popular people.

1.2 Problem statement and focus

Media representation plays a crucial role in shaping a person's notion of reality because every media user can identify certain components of his or her knowledge of the social world that derive either partially or wholly from media representations, fictional or otherwise (Dines & Humez, 2003:598). It would then follow that the manner in which South African tabloid newspapers represents black celebrities will certainly have an influence on the way the South African public perceive and respond to celebrities.

The way in which South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities has been scantily explored. One of the possible reasons for this is that South African tabloid newspapers were mainly introduced after the apartheid era which ended in 1994. It would have been virtually impossible to establish tabloid newspapers targeted towards black people during the apartheid regime. The apartheid government passed legislation that tightened censorship regulations controlling what the newspapers could or could not publish. These regulations placed severe restrictions on and even banned newspapers run by or targeted at black people.

In light of the above, this study examines how positively or negatively as well as how subjectively or objectively the South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities.

The researcher chose to focus on tabloid newspapers as their readership has been rising sharply since their emergence in South Africa. Also, black people constitute a significant portion of tabloid newspapers' readership in South Africa. Because of this largely black readership, tabloid newspapers targeted towards this market predominantly focuses on black celebrities.

1.3 Research questions

- ***Grand tour question***

How do South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities?

- ***Sub-questions***

The specific research questions that were undertaken are as follows:

- How subjective are South African tabloid newspapers in their representation of black celebrities?

- How objective are South African tabloid newspapers in their representation of black celebrities?
- How negatively are black celebrities represented in South African tabloid newspapers?
- How positively are black celebrities represented in South African tabloid newspapers?
- How do South African tabloid newspapers represent black female celebrities?

1.4 Research Aims

The specific research aims that were addressed are as follows:

- To determine how subjective South African tabloid newspapers are in their representation of black celebrities.
- To determine how objective South African tabloid newspapers are in their representation of black celebrities.
- To establish how negatively black celebrities are represented in South African tabloid newspapers.
- To establish, how positively black celebrities are represented in South African tabloid newspapers.
- To determine how black female celebrities are represented in South African tabloid newspapers.

1.5 Methodology and approach

- **Population and sampling**

The population consists of South African daily and weekly tabloid newspapers. The study specifically focuses on the following four tabloid newspapers:

- Two weekend newspapers — *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World*
- Two daily newspapers — *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun*

In this research, simple random sampling is used as probability sampling technique. The researcher selected a total of 85 newspapers spread across the four different South African tabloid newspapers. The newspapers are spread as follows:

- 30 copies of *Sowetan*
- 20 copies of *Daily Sun*
- 15 copies of *Sunday World*
- 20 copies of *Sunday Sun*

The research specifically focuses on the newspapers that were published during the period February to September 2008.

1.6 Research design

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative thematic content analysis in this study. Content analysis is a method that focuses on the message which is broken down into a set of categories representative of the research problem, so that the meanings contained in these messages are discovered (Du Plooy, 1997:151). Wimmer and Dominick (2006:149) define content analysis as a method used in the study and analysis of communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner in order to measure variables.

- ***Data collection***

- *Literature review*

Literature review is the first phase of an empirical study which is essential to every research project (Mouton, 2001:86). McBurney (2001:34) advises that a literature review enables the researcher to have a good idea of what is already known. Accordingly, literature study was conducted to determine the views of various authors on media representations.

- *Quantitative and qualitative data collection*

The newspaper articles were thematically quantified for statistical analysis. The content of these thematically arranged articles was also organized and made available for qualitative content analysis.

1.7 Data analysis

The quantified newspaper articles were analysed statistically. Graphs and tables are the main statistical methods used to analyse data. The content from the articles was also qualitatively analysed.

1.8 Impact

The findings and recommendations in this study will contribute to the current debates on media representation, sensationalism, tabloidization and related topics and also shed light on the possible influence the representations of black celebrities by tabloid newspapers may have on society.

1.9 Definition of terms

Agenda setting: A process whereby the mass media shape our awareness of people and events by establishing what is important for us to think about (Wilson, 1995:386).

Blurb: Text or illustration used to draw a reader's attention to the contents of other pages (Fourie, 2001:378).

Celebrity: A quality of being well-known by the majority normally due to high, continuing and positive media attention; sometimes media prominence is a necessary condition. Celebrity status can be based on recognition of distinction in different spheres including sport, entertainment, the arts, science, politics and society (McQuail, 2005:549).

Commercialization: A process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit-seeking goals of media industries and are too much governed by market considerations (McQuail, 2005:550).

Content analysis: A research technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media texts, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for effects and making comparisons between media and over time or between content and 'reality' (McQuail, 2005:551).

Identity: Specific characterization of person, place, and so on by self or others, according to biological, social, cultural or other features. Communication is a necessary condition for forming and maintaining identity. By the same token, it can weaken or undermine it. Mass communication is only one amongst several contributory factors (McQuail, 2005:557).

Negative: Tending to consider only the bad side of a situation (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995:947)

Newspaper: Traditionally this has referred to a print media form appearing regularly (usually not less than once a week), containing (at least) reliable reports of recent or ongoing events of general interest and offered for public sale (McQuail, 2005:562).

Objectivity: A theoretically contested term used to refer to news that is based on real facts and not influenced by personal beliefs or feelings (McQuail, 2005:563).

Positive: giving cause for hope and confidence. (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995:1098)

Readership: Total number of readers of a newspaper – not the number of copies circulated (Fourie, 2001:380).

Representation: The signs and symbols that claim to stand for or represent some aspect of reality, such as objects, people, groups, places, events, social norms, cultural identities and so on. These representations may be constructed in any medium and are an essential feature of social life; they allow us to communicate and make sense of our surroundings (Newbold, Boyd-Barret & Van den Bulck, 2002:260).

Stereotype: A perceptual generalization about a group or class of people, and also applies the presumed characteristics of the group to an individual member of the group, without considering the unique characteristics of the individual member (Du Plooy-Ciliers & Olivier, 2001:52).

Sub-headline: Second headline of a story, usually in smaller print (Fourie, 2001:380).

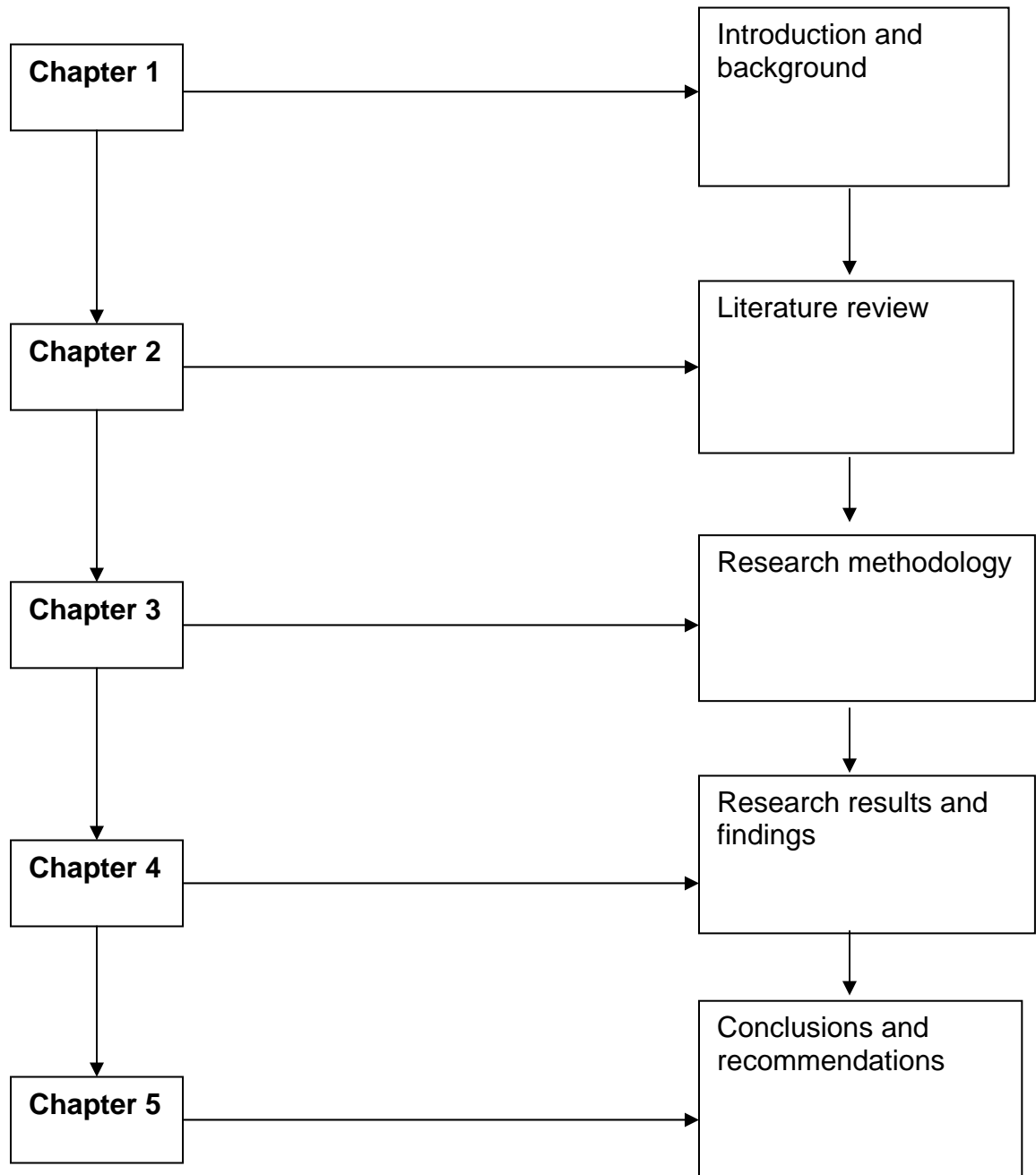
Subjective: Term used to refer to news influenced by or based on personal beliefs or feelings, rather than based on facts (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995:1451)

Tabloid: Any half-size newspaper; the term is often used to refer to sensational publications (Wilson, 1995:395).

1.10 Exposition of study

For a graphical illustration of the exposition of this study, see Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Exposition of the study



1.11 Conclusion

Chapter 1 has given us an overview by providing the background to this study and describing the research design. Definitions of the terminology commonly used in this study as well as the exposition of this study have been provided. This chapter has also alluded to the fact that media representations play a central role in the way we perceive 'reality'. This study will mainly examine the way in which four South African tabloid newspapers portray black celebrities.

It is the researcher's hope that the findings and recommendations in this study will contribute to the current debates on media representation, sensationalism, tabloidization and related topics. The study will also shed light on the possible influence the representations of celebrities by tabloid newspapers may have on society.

The next chapter will focus on the literature review about media representations.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, focus was on the formulation of the background to this research project. Important aspects of this study, such as the research questions, the objectives of this study, a short layout of research methodology, the significance of the study and the exposition of the whole research project, were provided and discussed.

Chapter 2 is a focused literature review on media representations. The chapter looks at the power of media representations on society on one hand and the power of celebrities' influence on society on the other. This chapter will also provide the background into the emergence of tabloidization in South Africa by looking at the brief history of South African newspapers. Furthermore, the theory of social constructionism will be discussed due to its particular relevance to the phenomenon of media representations.

This discussion on media representations puts into focus the continuing debate on media reports versus actual 'reality'. It is evident from this discussion that the objectivity of the media remains a hotly contested issue.

2.2 Media representation

Media representations refer to the signs and symbols that claim to stand for, or represent, some aspect of 'reality', such as objects, people, groups, places, events, social norms, cultural identities and etc. (Newbold, Boyd-Barret & Van den Bulck, 2002:260). According to Newbold *et al.* (2002:260), the assumption within media studies is that the way members of society see themselves, how they are viewed and even treated by others is determined to a large extent by the manner in which they are portrayed by the media. Media representation therefore plays an essential role in determining the picture that we have of the world and our identities are partly constructed by the images portrayed in the media.

Kivikuru (2001:35) adds that in a rapidly communicating world, where people and messages constantly move around at high speed, media play an increasingly central role in the process of identity construction. As we will see later in this chapter, the behaviour of some people is significantly influenced by media representations of their role models' behaviour.

According to Newbold *et al.* (2002:261), it is important to realise that by mediating for their audiences the 'real world', the media create a version of reality for them.

Representations are selective simply in the sense that, out of a large amount of information, the media actually present very little (Newbold *et al.*, 2002:261). In the case of radio news, for example, only very few stories are selected to become part of a given news programme, and even these items are edited down from several hours to just a few minutes. Even newspapers, which have relatively more space to report their news, have many stories that get edited down from several pages to just a few lines or do not get printed at all.

The vast majority of events are not mentioned, and as a result selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world (Fowler, 1991:11). Fowler (1991:11) notes that different newspapers report differently in both content and presentation. A tabloid newspaper such as *Sunday Sun* is more likely to report about a popular singer's poor fashion sense than *The Star* or *Sunday Times*. Similarly, an in-depth analysis of political floor-crossing by party members is more likely to be reported in *The Mail & Guardian* than *Daily Sun*. Selection, as pointed out by Fowler (1991:11), is accompanied by transformation and differential treatment in presentation according to numerous political, economic and social factors.

Bignell (2002:83) notes that news is not a fixed category which arises naturally, and is neither found nor gathered as if it were already there. Instead, it is the product of professional ways of thinking, writing and composing which are all codes of behaviour learned by news workers.

News discourse is therefore an ideological representation of the world because it selects what will be reported, and set the term of what is significant (Bignell, 2002:80). Fowler (1991:11) summarises his views by making the following assertion:

The world of the press is not the real world, but a world skewed and judged...anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium (Fowler, 1991:10-11)

2.2.1 Newspapers

News is a commercial product in that newspapers are businesses that are controlled by corporations which are aimed at generating profit for their shareholders (Bignell, 2002:80). Newspapers make money through sales and need to maintain high circulation figures to remain profitable. Newspapers are produced by professional workers who select some events for reporting as news, and exclude others (Bignell, 2002:82). The pattern of inclusion-exclusion differs

from one paper to another and from one news cycle – usually one day’s news – to another. Regular newspapers or ‘qualities’ have more foreign news whereas popular tabloid newspapers carry more crime-based or personality-based news.

- **History of newspapers in South Africa**

During the apartheid period in South Africa, newspapers were required to apply for registration if they published more than 11 times a year (www.southafrica.info). Even before registration was approved, some arbitrary amounts were required. The apartheid government also passed legislation controlling what the newspapers could or could not publish, particularly regarding articles and comment on activities against the government’s performance and activities (www.southafrica.info). For example, newspapers were barred from quoting banned organisations and their spokespersons, or report on conditions inside prisons and the activities of the security forces.

During the tense period of heightened apartheid struggles in the 1980s, when two states of emergency were declared, the government tightened censorship regulations; as a result newspapers were not allowed to report on any demonstrations or activity against the apartheid government or any of its laws (www.southafrica.info). The inevitable threat of closure forced newspaper editors to apply self-censorship policy, while other papers printed blank pages or whole paragraphs blacked out as a sign of protest.

- **Newspapers in post colonial South Africa**

With democracy in 1994, South Africa’s newspapers were freed from all restriction. The country’s new constitution safeguards freedom of the media, freedom to obtain or disseminate information or idea, freedom of artistic creativity, academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. South Africa has 20 daily and 13 weekly newspapers, most of which are in English. About 14.5-million South Africans buy the urban dailies, while community newspapers have a circulation of about 5.5-million. There is also a range of general and specialised news websites which, in terms of the speed and breadth of their coverage, are on a par with the best in the world (www.southafrica.info).

Reporters Without Borders ranks South Africa’s press as the 26th most free in the world. This places the country ahead of the United Kingdom (ranked 28th), Greece (33rd), Italy and Spain (tied at 39th), and Australia (41st). South Africa’s press is the freest in Africa, and more free than any press in South America, Asia, the Middle East and Australasia (www.southafrica.info).

- **South Africa's tabloid newspapers**

The post apartheid South Africa has brought with it the media landscape that has been increasingly commercialised, with stiff competition between market players locally and globally (Wasserman, 2005:34). Wasserman (2005:34) points out that the South African media have continued to be targeted towards the predominantly white elite, while voices of the poor are being marginalised. He further states that the print media remain mainly dominated by mainstream commercial papers, with community papers mostly following a similar commercial pattern on a smaller scale. The introduction of tabloid newspapers in 2001 targeted at a mass black readership, ostensibly changed this situation (Wasserman, 2005:34). This resulted in even more stiff competition among tabloid newspapers such as *Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *Daily Voice* published by three dominant South African media companies, Nail, Naspers and Independent newspapers respectively. As far as content is concerned, Wasserman (2005:34) observes that the three tabloids focus on gossip, scandal and sex.

2.2.2 The power of media representations

When the media make representations about objects, people, groups, places, events social norms, cultural identities and so on, they play a central role in shaping public opinion, thus becoming powerful ideological institutions (Newbold, Boyd-Barret & Van den Bulck, 2002:262). The following section will explore media representations of various aspects of reality and the extent to which these representations have influenced public opinion.

- **Media representations of black people's roles in South African television advertising**

In their examination of role portrayals of black people in South African television advertising, Cassim and Monteiro (2001:106) analysed 119 commercials that included a total of 348 participants. The results of this study results revealed that:

- When compared to actual labour force figures as reported in the 1991 Census, there were significant over-representations of blacks in the professionals and semi-professional occupations in the sample and significant under representations of blacks in low-skilled occupations. However, the comparison also revealed the fact that only one participant was observed as being in a managerial/executive position. This suggests that advertisers may be attempting to reflect aspirations in a manner that would be non-threatening to whites.
- Black females were more often portrayed in the skilled professional and professional occupations. This too may be a technique to present blacks in a non-threatening manner as had been suggested by Colfax and Sternberg in their 1972 study. However, black females were also seriously under-represented in low-skilled occupations, in fact, not one domestic

- When compared to actual labour force gender distributions, females were under-represented in the professional and semi professional occupations, including sports and entertainment.
- With respect to clothing depicted, the majority of the participants were observed in high fashion clothing followed by low fashion clothing and uniforms. Traditional clothing was only observed in only 23 of the participants. This reflects the popular view that blacks are fashion-conscious.
 - Most of the participants observed were in non-speaking roles, followed by English speaking participants and participants speaking in an African vernacular. No Afrikaans-speaking participants were observed. Female participants were more often observed to be speaking in an African vernacular. In the speaking roles, the frequent use of English may refer to the use of English as the universal language of South Africa.

In their conclusion, Cassim and Monteiro (2001:121) assert that South African advertisers either have a very sensitive finger on the pulse of what is transpiring in the black market or that they are treading exceptionally cautiously in their portrayals of this market. In view of the socio-political transformation that is being experienced in South Africa, it is proposed that the latter is the case. South African advertisers and, indeed, marketers are playing safe and being 'politically correct' in their portrayals of blacks lest they suffer 'black backlash' as was the case with whites *vis- a- vis* blacks in the mid-seventies.

▪ **The media's agenda-setting role in Liberia's 2005 presidential runoff election**

In his study on the agenda-setting role of the media in the 2005 Liberian presidential Election, Shaw (2007:56-80) analysed two independent daily newspapers in Liberia, *Daily Observer* and *The Analyst*, which mainly revolved around two presidential candidates, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who would eventually become president of Liberia, and George Weah, a former soccer superstar.

Drawing on the findings of qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses, Shaw concludes that by emphasising Sirleaf's strength over that of Weah, the newspapers, and perhaps the rest of the local media, played an important part in influencing the election outcome in favour of the former. Moreover, Weah's threat against journalists which was made public on November 4, rather than cowing them to leave him alone, made them even more determined to do everything in their power to deny him the presidency, and hence survive the wrath of who they might have by then perceived to be a wounded lion (Shaw, 2007:77).

Shaw (2007:77) contends that by priming the qualification and international experience (QE) category, which was Sirleaf's strength over the common sense and grassroots popularity (CP) category, in which Weah had the upper hand, in the last four days to the runoff, the two newspapers and perhaps the rest of the media, succeeded in bringing it on top of the media agenda hierarchy which proved decisive in helping voters make up their mind in favour of Sirleaf.

While this paper recognises the saying that people believe what they see or hear more than what they read, the research is largely based on the study of the newspaper press for some obvious reasons: newspapers provide the possibility to collect, study and compare them, and also to query their authors; newspapers provide more detailed and thorough coverage and analyses of election campaigns; and given their being online and print, they are accessible to Liberians at home and overseas (Shaw, 2007:77).

Shaw (2007:77) acknowledges that it is true that the women's votes contributed in helping Sirleaf to carry the day, but he also notes that the fact that the gender problem failed to feature in a large and sustained way on the news agenda compared to the qualification and populist issues, made it a relatively less important deciding factor.

Shaw (2007:77) further argues that in this case the qualification and populist issues became primarily important to Liberians after they were defined by the media as the more important problems.

Going by this 2005 Liberian Elections case study, it can at least conservatively be concluded that the power of the media in influencing democratic change largely based on its agenda-setting role still holds sway (Shaw, 2007:77).

▪ **Media representations of crime and African Americans**

Oliver (2003:4) asserts that the media's representation of crime and the response of viewers to that representation plays a significant role in creating and reinforcing the stereotype of black men as "criminal and dangerous".

Oliver (2003:5) observes that although content analysis of fictional programming does not represent a particularly strong association between black male characters and images of violence and aggression, a very different picture is painted in the research on more realistic genres such as news and "reality" programming. Analyses of this more realistic programming reveal that black men are more likely to be depicted as criminal suspects than is suggested by actual crime statistics. The analyses also show that the manner in which African American criminal suspects are portrayed imply that they are likely to be particularly violent and threatening.

Entman's (in Oliver, 2003:6) research on local news coverage in the Chicago area, which examined both the prevalence and nature of crime representations that associate African Americans with criminal acts, points to several important aspects of news coverage of crime.

Firstly, this research indicates that news stories focusing on African Americans are more likely to revolve around crime than are news stories focusing on white people. In one week's worth of news programming, 41% of news stories that featured African Americans related to crime. Secondly, the research shows that violent crime in particular is more likely to be associated with African Americans than white people. In this regard, Entman (in Oliver, 2003:6) found that among all of the crime stories featured during the six-month sample in his analysis, 84% of all crime stories that focused on black suspects related to violent rather than nonviolent crimes, compared to 71% of crime stories that focused on white suspects. Finally, these analyses demonstrate the idea that representations of African American suspects routinely include images and innuendo that suggest that African American suspects are particularly threatening and dangerous. To illustrate this, Entman (in Oliver, 2003:6) reported that news stories that featured African American suspects were more likely to depict the suspect as being physically held and handcuffed by police officers and as being poorly dressed than news stories that featured white suspects. News stories about African American suspects were less likely to show the name of the defendant implying greater homogenization of African Americans as criminals, rather than a specific individual suspect who has been arrested.

In their analysis of two weeks' worth of local news portrayals in the Los Angeles area, Dixon and Linz (in Oliver, 2003:6) found that black people were more likely to be depicted as perpetrators than victims, whereas whites were more likely to be shown as victims than perpetrators. Dixon and Linz (in Oliver, 2003:7) further state that white people were under-represented as perpetrators of crime but over-represented as victims in comparison to arrest records whereas black people were over-represented as perpetrators.

Consistent with analyses of news reports, an examination of more "realistic" entertainment portrayals of crime also revealed a link between African Americans and criminality (Oliver, 2003:6).

- **Media representations of crime versus reality**

An analysis of the coverage of leading South African media's coverage of crime during the period of January – August 2005 (and compared to the same period in 2004) revealed that although crime statistics suggested that actual crime had decreased for most categories, media's coverage on crime had proportionally increased (Media Tenor, 2006:88).

Media Tenor (2006:88) also observed a clear line with regard to racial focus of crime when analyzing some of the leading South African publications:

- *Sowetan*, *Sunday World* and *City Press* focused predominantly on crime committed against black people (between 62% and 69% of all reports).
- *Beeld* and *Report* focused predominantly on crime committed against white people (between 54% and 55% of all reports)

Research conducted by Media Tenor's partners in Namibia, the Institute of Public Policy Research on the correlation between media coverage of corruption in Namibia and actual cases of corruption indicated that the actual number of corruption cases had decreased while the volume of coverage on corruption had actually increased. Individual corruption cases were afforded more coverage than before, which resulted in Namibians feeling that their country had become more corrupt, as was reflected in the Transparency International Corruption Survey in Namibia. The results of this correlation pose serious questions about the effects that the media's crime coverage in South Africa has on the public perception. If people base their personal assumptions on media coverage, it would not be a surprise if they show mistrust towards the crime statistics. In 2004, the findings of the survey by Institute of Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa revealed that more than half of all South Africans believed that crime had increased over the previous three years and feelings of safety had substantially declined since 1998.

▪ **South African media's representation of Pagad and Islam**

In her article which examines the representation of Islam in the South African media through an analysis of images of Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs), Baderoon (2005:85) made interesting observations. She analyses the images in one particular South African newspaper, the *Cape Times*, in one week of coverage from 5 to 12 August 1996.

In the article, Pillay (in Baderoon, 2005:88) demonstrates that the stories on Pagad were constrained by established and limited South African discourses on Islam and gangs. Pillay's review of the representation of Pagad in selected newspapers as well as in academic writings in criminology and political science reveal that many of these characterise Pagad as representative of Islam. Islam was represented as homogeneous and this portrayal of homogeneity overshadowed the fact that the group was highly distinctive in relation to Islam in South Africa. Baderoon (2005:88) observes that Pagad is extremely heterogeneous, with its members often clashing and shifting in influence internally.

Pillay (in Baderoon, 2005:89) points out that Pagad used elements from the global Islamic communities to create local meanings for its actions and also convey a sense of solidarity with the global Islamic community. Jeppie (in Baderoon, 2005:89) regards Pagad's rhetoric as reductive because, in its

combination of Islamic symbols, the complex tribal, civil, and political contradictions of Afghanistan, Palestine, south Lebanon, and Iran are reduced to a single issue. The link between the international and local elements of Islam was therefore central to the construction of Pagad's image and this gave rise to a distinctively new, local vision of Islam in the South African media. The South African media were left with the challenge of understanding this performance, and distinguishing between Muslims, Islam and Pagad. According to Pillay (in Baderoon, 2005:89), this was problematic as the South African media were schooled in a tradition of constricted reporting on Islam.

Jeppie (in Baderoon, 2005:89) notes that the media both consciously and unconsciously colluded with Pagad's strategy by providing extensive coverage to some and overlooking other actions of the group. To this end, Dodd (in Baderoon, 2005:97) notes that though women were part of Pagad's founding, membership and activities, they were absent from the media's representation of Pagad. In her analysis of media representations of Pagad, Dodd noted that:

'[w]hen the pictures hit the papers they're, more often than not, images of men. Men with scarves. Men with guns. Men talking. Men shaking their fists and holding their banners. The position of women is glaringly absent from the reports and images of Pagad.' (Dodd quoted in Baderoon, 2005:97)

Patel (1999:1) concurs with Dodd with regard to media's (mis)representation of women, particularly Muslim women. According to Patel (1999:1) newspapers, magazines and television generally portray Muslim women as being weak and submissive to a religion which seeks to dominate and oppress. She further laments that Muslim women who consciously choose to cover themselves are pitied, and perceived as victims of a patriarchal and misogynistic religion. Patel (1999:1) cites the experience of Rana Kabbani, a Muslim woman writer, who was left disappointed after an article in which she was featured was published in the magazine *Vanity Fair* after a journalist from the magazine came to her for material on an article about Islam:

"It was one more unrelieved catalogue of horrors about Islam...it ignored any of the important debate within Islam about the rights of women. It distorted every sentence I had uttered..." (Kabbani quoted in Patel, 1999:2).

Kabbani (in Patel, 1999:2) concludes that the article was 'intellectually dishonest', but that 'the whole Western debate about Muslim women is a dishonest one'.

According to Jeppie (in Baderoon, 2005:89), media attention to Pagad helped increase the sales and was sometimes characterised by sensationalist language that portrayed a more extreme picture than the actual reality. Wenger, Malone and Bero (1998:1) concur by also pointing to the media's tendencies to over-represent and under-represent some events or information. During her research on the media's portrayal of the cigar smoker in newspaper articles, Wenger *et al*

(1998:1) found that the detrimental effects of cigar smoking were rarely mentioned in newspaper articles whereas there was more focus on the portrayal of cigars as a symbol of status, power, fashion, and glamour.

Baderoon (2005:90) notes that during South Africa's transition from apartheid, the media had to also undergo its own transformation to shift from the apartheid mentality and tendencies. The post apartheid political environment was sympathetic to international investment in the South African media market that was previously insulated. Baderoon (2005:91) adds that during this time the media were experiencing the constriction of having to address an affluent audience in order to attract advertisers. Inevitably, the affluent audience was mainly comprised of whites. It stands to reason that as white editors and sub-editors and black editors and journalists, who had different world views and experiences, jostled for attention in the newspapers, there could only be one winner. According to Baderoon (2005:90) this problematic elitist factor coupled with South Africa's entry into a globalised media market and a history of the country's inadequate attention to Islam, it became easier for an international discourse on Islam to manifest itself in Pagad stories.

In line with Baderoon's observations, Patel (1999:1) notes that television, films, books, newspapers and magazines portray Islam as being a backward and barbaric religion which is oppressive and unjust. In Britain, current affairs television programmes represented Muslims as savage terrorists who kill innocent people with no remorse (Patel, 1999:1). Patel (1999:1) finds it stereotypical that a day after the Oklahoma City bombing in June 2005, a British newspaper, *Today*, carried the headline "in the name of Islam". Patel (1999:1) laments that, with no insight into Islam, journalists are quick to condemn Muslims and their culture.

▪ **Media's representations of Xenophobic attacks in South Africa**

In his letter to the editor published in *Sunday World* newspaper of 01 June 2008, Lebelo (2008:13) is puzzled by the degree of 'deceit and mudslinging' that the media resorted to in their representation of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Lebelo found it far-fetched that the media managed to establish a relationship between the xenophobic attacks and the South African government's response to the problems around the March 2008 presidential elections in Zimbabwe. Lebelo states that, although these xenophobic attacks started two years earlier in various provinces and townships in South Africa, the media decided to focus mainly on the attacks in Alexandra where there were an estimated two million of the three million Zimbabwean nationals in South Africa at the time. According to Lebelo (2008:13), this constricted representation of xenophobic violence in South Africa also provided the media with an opportunity to 'attack President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa for his handling of the Zimbabwe situation'. The chronic media attention on Alexandra including exposure of graphic pictures of people in flames after being set on fire by the

mob could amount to incitement and provocation (Lebelo, 2008:13). Matsebatlela (2008:12) concurs by stating that the constant media attention given to this issue and the media's labeling of these attacks as xenophobic could have triggered the subsequent spread of copycat attacks in other areas in South Africa. He advises the media to always be mindful of their power to shape society's opinion and to make a careful analysis of every situation before formulating headlines and news reports.

- **Media representations of young people in Britain**

The media's representation of people's attitudes may also serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In his analysis of media portrayals of young people and politics in Britain, Russel (2004:351) finds the media's use of the words such as 'apathy', 'disillusion' and 'dull' in describing the British youth's attitude towards and participation in politics as problematic. According to him, this type of description legitimizes the view that politics is not for young people and as such could be self fulfilling. By categorizing politics as dull to young people at every opportunity, the media run the risk of stigmatizing those young people who do not agree with the hegemonic view. Having being told on several occasions that normal youngsters are not interested in politics, those young people who do not find politics dull will feel that they are peculiar and curious individuals; and they may actually be viewed as such (Russel 2004:353). Russel (2004:347) advises that the use of some of the most routinely used negative phrases to describe young people's attitude to politics by the media needs to be avoided.

- **Media representations of cigar smokers**

In as much as the negative media phrases can discourage and stigmatize, positive media portrayals can sometimes pose some risks to the public. In her analysis of media portrayals of cigar smokers, Wenger *et al* (1998:1) found that cigar smoking was positively portrayed and legitimized in the media. Wenger *et al* (1998:1) analysed the content of 391 cigar-related newspaper articles from 1987 to 1997 and determined whether the articles carried a positive or a negative image of cigars and/or cigar smokers. The analysis revealed that 63 percent of the articles studied conveyed a negative image of cigars and 24 percent a neutral image. Wenger *et al* (1998:2) notes that articles with positive images focused on celebrity cigar smokers, described cigar parlors and cigar clubs as comfortable and exciting places to smoke cigars or described the posh ambiance of cigar events in fancy hotels. According to Wenger *et al* (1998:2) these positive representations of cigar smoking in the media can influence cigar use which can lead to detrimental health effects. In her research, Wenger *et al* (1998:1) noted that cigar sales were estimated to have risen by 50 percent between 1993 and 1997, and a new generation of cigar smokers emerged in the 1990s. This generation included women, celebrities, other individuals with money and power and those who appear to hope to someday acquire money and power.

- **Media representations of suicide**

In the same way, media's representations of suicide can also encourage the commission of suicide. Booth (2008:1) reports that specialists from Oxford University's department of psychiatry found that there was compelling evidence of an increased prevalence of suicidal behaviour after media portrayals of suicide in news reports, fictional drama presentations on television and suicide manuals. Studies found an increase in the prevalence of suicides after a picture is used of the victim or the location and where the story is sensationalised, is prominent in the newspaper and is repeated (Booth, 2008:1). Hawton and Williams (2002:1374) support these studies by asserting that reporting and portrayal of suicidal behaviour in the media may facilitate suicidal acts by those exposed to such information. The researchers at Oxford also found that media reports that provide descriptions of the suicide method used and romanticize the deceased by describing the attention they receive in the form of condolences and online obituaries tend to trigger other suicides. Booth (2008:1) is particularly concerned about the coverage of celebrities who take their own lives as many young people identify with these celebrities. Hawton and Williams (2002:1374) concur with Booth by stating that the media's impact on suicidal behaviour seems to be most likely when the story is presented in detail, with photographs of the deceased and also when suicides of celebrities are reported. The media also have a tendency to oversimplify the causes of suicide by attributing the commission of suicide to single factors such as financial difficulties, relationship problems or failure in examinations, which make suicide seem like a simple response to a single event (Hawton & Williams, 2002:1374). Booth further states that portraying celebrities dealing with emotional distress in constructive ways can play an important role in promoting life and hope. Such presentations of hope reflect the reality that most people who consider suicide never act upon their feelings, but find ways to solve their problems.

- **Media representation of Africa**

According to Qunta (2008:14) the media's representation of Africa is unbalanced. She argues that major Western television networks such as CNN, the BBC and SKY, make one believe that the only thing that ever happens in Africa are wars and political instability, and that all the people on the continent are living in dire poverty. These negative media representations, as Qunta (2008:14) observes, are in sharp contrast to the way SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) Africa and SABC News International report on Africa. She further points out that there are plenty of good news stories on Africa that the media have access to. For example, the Africa Development Indicators for 2007 reveals that the continent has enjoyed a decade of growth above 4,5%, which matches the global rate. The annual African Development Indicators, published by the world bank, show for 2006 that literacy has improved, the HIV/AIDS prevalence and child mortality rates have started to fall, and productivity in Africa's best performing firms is on par with Asia (Qunta, 2008:14).

- **Media representations of HIV/AIDS**

Clarke (2006:317-330) provides a critical discourse analysis of the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in the 20 highest circulating mass print magazines in Canada in the years 1991, 1996 and 2001. In the analysis Clarke (2006:326) observed an imbalance in the representation of heterosexual people versus homosexual men. He points out the print media's portrayal of a highly popular US-based basket ball player Ervin 'Magic' Johnson who was diagnosed with HIV in 1991. Even after his HIV diagnosis and his frequently portrayed promiscuity, Johnson was valorized and treated as an American hero as he is used to tell the new story of HIV/AIDS as a tale of heterosexuality. Clarke (2006:326) notes that heterosexuals were regarded as innocent victims of HIV/AIDS and were described in warmly, sympathetic and heroic terms. Homosexuals, on the other hand, were regarded as guilty and immoral victims and were subtly disparaged (Clarke, 2006:326).

In the analysis, the use of celebrities in the media representation of HIV/AIDS was also found to be problematic. Celebrity, according to Clarke, can be read as having paradoxical meanings. On the one hand, Magic Johnson was depicted as an intimate member of the American families, thus bringing the disease home to ordinary people. On the other hand he was portrayed as larger than life. He is much taller, much richer, and is a much better athlete. His easy access to sex with scores of different women is depicted as unusual and possibly one of the perks that come along with being a famous professional athlete. Ironically, the message implicit in such a mixed portrayal seems to be that HIV/AIDS could not happen to most readers, as most are not that tall, that athletic, that rich nor that celebrated.

Swanepoel, Fourie and Froneman (2007:74-91) conducted a content analysis of HIV/AIDS reporting in three South African weekly newspapers: *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Sun* and *Rapport*. With regard to genres and subthemes, Swanepoel *et al* (2007:79) found that although it seemed that there was extensive coverage of HIV/AIDS issues, critical in-depth reporting was lacking, particularly in the *Sunday Sun*. There was too much focus on HIV/AIDS politics, particularly in *Rapport*, and too little attention on scientific and social issues relevant to the issue. The analysis also revealed that there was not enough emphasis on positive and constructive news, especially in *Rapport*. There was a tendency for the three newspapers to over-emphasize the "victim image" of the epidemic, according to the researchers. Again, *Rapport* does not pay enough attention to the HIV/AIDS issue. This is consistent with the findings of Media Tenor's survey (Kok, 2003:1). Kok (2003:1) notes that the Afrikaans media, such as *Rapport*, pay much less attention to HIV/AIDS than their English counterparts. *Rapport* gave precedence to the political side of HIV/AIDS as most items in the publication dealt with the issue of treatment within the context of government policy. According to Swanepoel *et al* (2007:79), because *Rapport* creates the

impression that it is indifferent about aspects of HIV/AIDS, this negative attitude will inevitably rub off on its predominantly white readers.

Whereas *Rapport* is mainly concerned with the political side of HIV/AIDS, the *Sunday Sun* creates the impression that only sensational reporting on celebrities infected warrants attention within the HIV/AIDS framework (Swanepoel *et al*, 2007:79). Swanepoel *et al*. (2007:80) also note that, although the *Sunday Times* generally provided a balanced portrayal of HIV/AIDS and related issues, the epidemic mainly received coverage through political conflict and issues of policy as primary theme.

Ridgard and Spurr (2005:57) concur by stating that the media in South Africa do not seem to have the ability to sustain meaningful coverage on HIV/AIDS and the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) outside of key news events or to engage with public or policy agendas without mainly relying on conflict between government and civil society. Ridgard and Spurr (2005:56) further point out that in 2004 the Media Project found that the frequency of coverage on HIV/AIDS drops in the absence of key conflict events or key celebrities infected or affected. They cite as examples the chairperson of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) Zackie Achmat and the Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang. The differences in the coverage of HIV/AIDS and related issues among the three newspapers is partly due to their focus on different readerships with varying needs, as perceived and interpreted by the editors.

Khunyeli (2005:53) asserts that the South African media's coverage of Aids seems to be lacking when considering the diabolical proportions that the effects of the pandemic have reached. Instead of focusing on the numbers and HIV/AIDS statistics, Khunyeli (2005:53) advocates the writing of narrative journalism stories as they are able to get beyond the numbers and focus on individuals who can communicate to people's souls. This view is supported by Ridgard and Spurr (2005:56) who point to a lack of personal stories about HIV/AIDS and PMTCT in the media coverage of the issues. Reporting on real life stories and not just vague numbers is what differentiates narrative reporting on HIV/AIDS from Aids-related, hard-news stories in newspapers (Khunyeli, 2005:54). According to Khunyeli (2005:54) although the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO) say there are currently over 60 million people infected with HIV worldwide, focusing on just two out of the 60 million can have a greater impact on people than a simple overview of the issue. Khunyeli (2005:54) further states that narrative writing, by its very nature, engages with the reader, and a complex issue like HIV/AIDS lends itself to being made more digestible in narrative form.

- **Media's representation of child abuse**

It is generally acknowledged that the media's representation of child abuse can potentially be beneficial or harmful (Collings, 2002:2). Regarding the positive effects, media representation has been found to:

- Be associated with an increase in reporting of maltreatment of children;
- Play an important role in increasing public awareness of the problem;
- Be influential in the restructuring of, and allocation of increased resources to child; and protection services.
- Play an instrumental role in policy development.

On the negative side, several studies have found distortions in media portrayals of child abuse, which may, in Franklin and Horwath's (1996:310) words "constitute an abusive activity".

With regard to media portrayals of child sexual abuse, empirical research reveals that South African media reports tend to typify child sexual abuse in terms of abuse related myths and stereotypes (Collings, 2002:4). According to Collings (2002:4), such restrictive stereotyping needs to be understood not just as a distortion of professional understandings of the problem but also as a practice which can potentially minimize social perceptions of offender blame. Collings (2002:4) further states that mitigating offender blame is a potentially harmful process that can create: (a) a reduced likelihood of sexual offenders being punished for their actions, and (b) an environment which can be generally non-supportive of abuse victims.

In a comparative study between child sexual abuse reports in the South African English-language press and the reports in the South African Zulu-language press, Collings (2002:4) conducted an analysis based on:

- a) 25 Zulu-language articles, and
- b) A total sample of 697 English-language reports that were published by Independent Newspapers during the period from 1994 to 1999.

The comparative study revealed that with regard to the extent of reporting of child abuse, while the English-language press provide a relatively comprehensive coverage of child abuse incidents (approximately 10 articles per month), there is only a limited coverage of the problem provided by the Zulu-language press (approximately one article every three months) (Collings, 2002:4). In the six year period reviewed the Zulu-language press carried an average of 2.7 child sexual abuse reports per 100 publications, with the comparative figure for the English-language press being 18.6 reports per 100 publications. Collings (2002:4) advises that there is clearly a need for the Zulu-language press to increase their level of coverage if Zulu-language publications hope to: (a) play a meaningful

role in raising public awareness of the problem, and (b) participate effectively as part of a multisectorial response to the problem of child abuse.

According to the study (Collings, 2002:4) the Zulu-language publications were also:

- Significantly more likely to limit their reporting on child sexual abuse to incidents involving more extreme or intrusive forms of sexual contact (100% of reports in the Zulu-language press involved rape or attempted rape, with the comparative percentage for the English-language press being 72%)
- Significantly more likely to represent the perpetrator in a positive light (40% of articles in the Zulu-language press reflected a positive image of the perpetrator compared to 8% of articles in the English-language press).
- Less likely to use the language of consensual sexual activity to describe the abuse (none of the articles in the Zulu-language press described the abuse using consensual language, compared to 9% of the articles in the English language articles).

These findings, according to Collings (2002:5), strongly call for media education programmes designed to achieve more objective and more comprehensive representation of child sexual abuse in the South African context.

This worrisome representation of child abuse could be alleviated if all journalists strictly adhered to the stipulations of South African Press Code of Professional Practice (updated August 2006).

The South African Press Code of Professional Practice (www.presscouncil.org.za) stipulates that:

- Due care and responsibility shall be exercised by the press with regard to the presentation of brutality, violence and atrocities.
- News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without an intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:
 - distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;
 - material omissions; or
 - summarisation.
- The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.

- The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter.

Adherence to the South African Press Code of Professional Practice could help align this rather skewed representation of child abuse.

- **Representation of race in the South African media**

The apartheid government controlled the South African media, and television was effectively a state monopoly (Durrheim, Quayle, Whitehead & Kriel 2005:168). According to Braude (1999:43), the apartheid media not only furthered the government's racist agenda, but also engaged in racist practices themselves. She cites the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report which describes how black employees of the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) were subjected to 'sjambokking [whipping] as a disciplinary procedure, separate training classes, being given older machines to work with, lower budgets' (Braude, 1999:43). As a result of all this, the public received the information that was fraught with racial stereotypes which justified the apartheid regime (Durrheim *et al*, 2005:169). According to Durrheim *et al* (2005:169), this is evidenced by the SABC's representations of township violence in the 1980s. The white South African public, which was the primary intended audience, was regularly presented with images of flames, stone throwing and close-up pictures of black crowds, including verbal descriptions such as 'security forces were forced to make use of rifles and shotguns to disperse rioting crowds'(Durrheim *et al*, 2005:169). Durrheim *et al* (2005:169) further states that the apartheid media justified state violence by representing black protesters as primitive and mindless stone-throwing mobs, which implied that black people are dominated by their emotions rather than reason. The apartheid media also represented lives and experiences of black people not as newsworthy. Durrheim *et al*. (2005:184) cite an example of a journalist in *The Star* (23 November 1999) who contrasts a 'busload' of blacks with a 'bus carrying' white tourists. This, according to Durrheim *et al*, categorizes and dehumanises black people as a load – similar to a load of cargo – whereas white people retain their individuality.

Despite political transformation in South Africa exerting a substantial impact on the media, more than five years into the new democracy, two prominent black professional organizations – the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA) – laid charges of racism against two historically liberal newspapers, claiming that the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian* engaged in racially biased reporting and editorial comment (Durrheim *et al*., 2005:169). According to Durrheim *et al*. (2005:170) the two organizations specifically charged that:

- The media remain largely white-owned, and white males continue by and large to control public opinion.
- The *Mail & Guardian* exposed corruption in a way that creates the impression that black people are essentially corrupt and incompetent.
- The *Mail & Guardian* treated instances of plagiarism by a black and a white journalist differently.
- The *Mail & Guardian* refused to carry letters from black people, responding to articles in which they were criticized.
- The *Sunday Times* trivialized deaths of black people by reducing them to mere statistics, while covering deaths of white people in detail.
- The *Sunday Times* printed hate speech in which a columnist suggested that African Americans 'realize that they would probably be living in shacks with no running water if their ancestors hadn't been abducted by slave traders'.

In her subsequent qualitative investigation into racism in the South African media, Braude found that 'classic racist and white supremacist representations of blacks as, *inter alia*, inferior, incompetent and criminal continue to be perpetuated' (Braude, 1999:142).

More recently, Qunta (2008:14) argues that in a society that is still unequal and where economic opportunities are hardly accessible not only to poor and working class black people but also to black professionals despite their education and experience, South Africa needs the existence of organizations such as the Forum for Black Journalists (FBJ) to continue 'a proud tradition of black journalists fighting apartheid in the broader society and racism in the newsroom'. Qunta's argument is in tandem with one of the charges laid by BLA and ABASA against the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian*, which stated that the media remain largely white-owned and white males continue by and large to control public opinion. It is implicit in Qunta's assertion that South African media continue to be biased in their racial representation because white people still control public opinion as was the case during the apartheid era. In the same token, Qwelane (2008:14) accuses the media of being prejudiced in their reporting on the case between Judge-president John Hlophe and the Constitutional Court judges. According to Qwelane (2008:14), the 'pseudo-liberal racists' and their media are the major transgressors in finding Judge Hlophe guilty before he has even been formally charged with anything. Qwelane's assertion implies that media serve the interests of these 'racists' and are therefore subjective and biased in their representation. The BLA has, as Qwelane (2008:14) points out, maintained quite correctly that Judge Hlophe's constitutional rights to dignity and presumption of innocence have been deliberately trampled underfoot by pseudo liberal racists and their rightwing fellow travelers.

2.2.3 The power of celebrities' influence on society

The proliferation of entertainment media worldwide in recent decades has made celebrities powerful agents of social change and has expanded their influence across socio-economic, political, and cultural boundaries (Brown & Fraser cited in Singhal, Cody, Rogers & Sabido, 2003:97). Singhal *et al* (2003:97-98) cite the following examples of celebrity influence:

- In one episode of the American television series *Happy Days*, the very popular Fonzi, played by Henry Winkler, decides to get a library card. During the several days that followed the program, libraries across the United States were flooded with requests for library cards from children and teenagers who followed Fonzi's example.
- In Nigeria, two of the nation's most famous singers, King Sunny Ade and Onyeka Onwenu, released two hit songs and accompanying music videos, "Choices" and "Wait for Me", to promote sexual responsibility. The use of contraceptives increased from 16% to 26% among the target audience (aged 15 to 35) during the music campaign.

These two examples illustrate the tremendous influence that celebrities can have on people's behaviour. We will now highlight the power of celebrities' influence on society by focusing on the influence of music stars on identity construction, the impact of film stars on their fans' behaviour, and the influential power of celebrity endorsements

▪ The influence of music stars on identity construction

In the construction of social identities among youth, celebrities arising from the popular music industry figure prominently and exert the most influence (Marshall, 1997:173-174). These celebrities are thus positioned by both the industry and the audience to represent aspects of difference and differentiation.

Marshall (1997:174) points out that the popular music group New Kids on the Block, much like other groups, established a close rapport with their audience through differentiation with other performers. They made their public identities valuable social markers for their audience. The fans of New Kids on the Block then constructed a series of codes based on these celebrity figures that resembled the structures of meaning of a subculture, and expressed their loyalty to the group by, *inter alia*, attending the group's concerts, knowing the words to all of their songs and defending their music and its integrity from attackers (Marshall, 1997:174). It stands to reason that the fans of New Kids on the Block will also develop a desire to emulate the behaviour of the group's members.

- **The impact of film stars on their fans' behaviour**

Not only do fans worship their favourite film celebrities by “religiously” attending their films, they believe in these stars, idolize them, try to live like them and accept their ways as the “right” ones (Barbas, 2002:187). One woman living in a rural area thanked the movies for keeping her “in touch with the right fashions” (Barbas, 2002:176). The use of the word ‘right’ is an indication of the extent to which society idolizes celebrities.

Because of a desire to emulate another person, an individual may adopt that other person's behaviour (MacDougall, 2005:1). The Elvis impersonator is the classic example of a person trying to be like his (or sometimes her) role model. Thus, people selectively integrate the perceived values and behaviours they see in celebrities they admire, and adopt them into their own lives. Fans adopt their perceived attributes, resulting in a transformation of personal values and changed social and personal lives (MacDougall, 2005:1).

- **The influential power of celebrity endorsements**

Celebrity endorsements have emerged as an effective political strategy for engaging younger voters and getting them to the polls, according to a newly published study by researchers at Washington State University (Austin, 2009:1). They conducted a survey which found that get-out-the-vote pitches by celebrities in the 2004 election cycle helped create an 11 percent increase in voting by people between the ages of 18 and 24, compared to the 2000 election.

Austin (2009:1) asserts that the celebrities' presence and support of political involvement continue to be prominent in our society today, especially during the 2008 Presidential election. Overall, celebrities have the power to motivate civic engagement regardless of their own grasp of the issues at hand (Austin, 2009:1)

2.3 Social constructionism

Social construction refers to the process by which events, persons, values and ideas are first defined or interpreted in a certain way and accorded value and priority, mainly by mass media, leading to the personal construction of larger pictures of reality (McQuail, 2005:101). The unthinking, but unceasing promotion by media of nationalism, patriotism, social conformity and religion are all possible examples of social construction (McQuail, 2005:101). With regard to news, there seems to be a consensus amongst media scholars that the picture of reality that news claims to provide is, to a greater extent, a selective construct made up of fragments of factual information and observation that are bound together and given meaning by a particular frame, angle of vision or perspective.

McQuail (2005:102) points out the following assumptions of social constructionism:

- Society is a construct rather than a fixed reality.
- Materials for reality construction are provided by the media.
- Media offers meanings, but those meanings can be negotiated or rejected.
- Certain meanings are selectively reproduced by the media.
- Media cannot objectively report on social reality as all facts are interpretations.

According to McQuail (2005:378), one of the most important aspects of social constructionism is framing. Entman (cited in McQuail, 2005:378) points out that framing involves selection and salience. Frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies (Entman cited in McQuail, 2005:378). A wide range of textual devices can be used to perform these activities; they include using certain contextual words, making certain contextual references, choosing certain pictures or film, giving examples as typical and referring to certain sources.

McQuail (2005:379) states that framing is a way of giving some overall interpretation to isolated items of fact. He further asserts that it is virtually inevitable for journalists to do this and in so doing to depart from pure objectivity and to introduce some (unintended) bias. When sources supply information to news media, the information arrives with a built in frame that suits the purpose of the source and is unlikely to be purely objective.

The idea of frame in relation to news has been widely and loosely used in place of terms such as 'frame of reference', 'context', 'theme' or even 'news angle'(McQuail, 2005:378). McQuail (2005:378) further states that within a journalistic framework, stories are given meaning by reference to some particular 'news value' that connects one event with other similar ones

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter covered the literature study on media representations by focusing on the power of media representations as well as the power of celebrities' influence on society. By citing examples of the way black people were portrayed on TV, this study aims to also provide a general background of the representation of black people in various media. This background will hopefully help to explain the representation of black celebrities by South African tabloid newspapers. The chapter has highlighted the influence that the media representations have on shaping people's opinions. It is also evident from this literature study that celebrities have a powerful effect on people's behaviour.

Journalists' and editors' background, beliefs as well as the newspaper or TV station's target market, play an important role in the manner in which 'reality' will be portrayed. All these have a bearing on the objectivity and subjectivity of the media. We have also learned in this chapter that newspapers are selective in their representation of reality. As Bignell (2002:80) observes, news discourse is therefore an ideological representation of the world because it selects what will be reported, and set the term of what is significant.

The revelations in this chapter drive the researcher to be even more determined to establish the manner in which South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities. The researcher's enthusiasm and determination are fuelled by tabloid newspapers' particular focus on celebrities' private lives and their apparent scandal-mongering, which seem to provoke the public's interest. The growing interest in South African tabloid newspapers is reflected in their constantly increasing sales figures. For example, a few years after its launch by Media24, *Daily Sun* became the largest daily newspaper in South Africa.

This increasing popularity of South African tabloid newspapers suggests that they have a great power to influence societal behaviour. That is why the researcher is curious to find out how these tabloid newspapers represent celebrities as this will provide a hint as to the nature of influence that South African tabloid newspapers exert on their readers.

In chapter 3, the description of various research methods and techniques used in this study will be presented.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, focus was on various views that different authors have on media representations as well as the power of celebrities' influence on society. This chapter clarifies the methodology used to conduct this research. The main aim of this chapter is to outline the research methods and provide the rationale behind the methods used. Chapter 3 outlines how this study was conducted and what strategies were utilised to ensure validity of the data gathered. In describing the research design, the following will be discussed: population and sampling, quantitative sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

The researcher primarily used the content analysis research technique in this study. What follows is a discussion of the research methods and techniques and how the researcher used them in this study.

3.2 Research design

According to Charles and Mertler (2002:384), research design refers to the overall, detailed plan that shows how a researcher intends to obtain, analyse, and interpret data.

Research design, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:73), is governed by the notion of fitness of purpose, and the purpose of the research determines the methodology and research design. In essence, research design involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among what population with what research methods for what purpose (Babbie, 1998:112).

3.2.1 Population and Sampling

- **Population**

Anderson and Arsenaut (1998:254) define population as the whole group of people or set of objects, including those not in the research study. A population, according to Charles and Mertler (2002:45), includes all the individuals within certain descriptive parameters, such as those of location, age or sex. When defining the population, a researcher specifies the section being sampled, the geographical location, and the temporal boundaries of the population (Neuman, 2003:216). Neuman (2003:216) adds that a researcher's target population is a particular pool of individuals or cases that he or she wants to study.

Many studies have been conducted on media representations in different countries the world over. These studies have focused on the representations of various phenomena, ranging from events to people. This research on representations has been conducted across various media such as TV, radio, electronic and print.

However, the representation of celebrities by South African media, particularly tabloid newspapers, has not been sufficiently explored. This could be owing to the fact that South African tabloid newspapers mainly emerged during the post apartheid era. This was because during the apartheid era government passed legislation that tightened censorship regulations controlling what the newspapers could or could not publish. These regulations, which were largely based on racial discrimination, placed severe restrictions on and even banned newspapers run by or targeted at black people.

As has been noted in Chapter 2, the manner in which celebrities are portrayed by the newspapers has a bearing on the way the public perceives and even stereotype these celebrities. These perceptions can in turn influence society's behaviour.

It is for these reasons that the researcher finds it necessary to examine media representations of celebrities by specifically focusing on the South African tabloid newspapers.

The population, in this study, consists of South African daily and weekly tabloid newspapers. The research specifically focuses on the following four tabloid newspapers:

- Two daily newspapers – *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan*
- Two weekend newspapers – *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World*

Daily Sun, which was established in 2002, is the first South African tabloid newspaper aimed at the black working class. Initially met with disdain by the established press, its huge sales - and the fact that it has made new newspaper readers out of millions of South Africans - have earned it some respect. In the few years since its launch by Media24, *Daily Sun* has become the largest daily newspaper in South Africa (www.southafrica.info).

Sowetan is *Daily Sun's* main competition, also aimed at an English-literate black readership. Initially distributed as a weekly free sheet in Soweto, the paper was transformed into a daily in 1981 to fill the void left by *The Post*, which was de-registered by the apartheid government (www.southafrica.info).

Established at the beginning of 2002 and aimed at black readers, *Sunday Sun* is the fastest growing newspaper in the country. Its content is largely of a tabloid

nature, and much of its audience first-time newspaper readers. Owned by Media24 and published by RCP Media, Sunday Sun is sold countrywide as well as in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (www.southafrica.info).

The *Sunday World*, launched in 1999, is a tabloid aimed mainly at black readers. It is distributed in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West Provinces in South Africa (www.southafrica.info).

The primary reason for conducting the study on the four South African tabloid newspapers was that they were all targeted at the racial group whose participation in media activities was severely limited by the tight censorship regulations of the apartheid government. The researcher's interest in the four South African tabloid newspapers was fuelled by the fact that all four tabloids enjoy high readership among black people and also that these newspapers all have black editors.

- **Sampling**

Bailey (1994:83) defines a sample as a segment of the entire population. It is essential for the sample to always be viewed as an approximation of the whole and not as a whole in itself. Sampling, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:111), refers to a process in which a researcher selects individuals to participate in a research study.

According to Cohen *et al* (2000:92), the quality of a research study does not only rely on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation, but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that the researcher has adopted.

3.2.2 Quantitative sampling

Neuman (2000:195) states that quantitative researchers often use probability sampling. Bailey (1994:89) points out that in probability sampling, the likelihood of selecting each respondent is known. The main advantage of probability sampling is that it enables researchers to indicate the probability with which sample results deviate in differing degrees from the corresponding population values (Welman & Kruger, 2001:47).

In this study, the researcher used simple random sampling as a probability sampling technique. In simple random sampling, all members of the research population have an equal chance of being selected, and the likelihood of a member of the population being selected is not at all affected by the selection of other members of the population (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:92). McBurney (2001:249) advises that simple random sampling should be used when a researcher believes that the population is relatively homogeneous with regard to the questions of interest.

In this research, the researcher selected a total of 85 newspapers spread over the four different South African tabloid newspapers. The newspapers are spread as follows:

- 30 copies of *Sowetan*
- 20 copies of *Daily Sun*
- 15 copies of *Sunday World*
- 20 copies of *Sunday Sun*

The research specifically focuses on the newspapers that were published during the period February to September 2008. By analyzing a total of 85 South African tabloid newspapers over a period of eight months in 2008, the study tracks more objective and current reporting patterns on the representations of celebrities by South African tabloid newspapers.

3.2.3 Data collection

a) Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data collection involves gathering information in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2003:542). In this study, content analysis was used to collect data from the four tabloid newspapers.

b) Content analysis

According to Berelson (in Du Plooy, 1997:152):

“Content analysis is a research method for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”

Berger’s (1998:23) definition of content analysis is as follows:

“Content analysis may be defined as a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken, or published communication by systematic, objective and quantitative analysis”

The two definitions involve three concepts – systematic, objective and quantitative and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Content analysis is a means of trying to learn something about people by examining what they write, produce on television, or make movies about. Content analysts assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect the behaviours, attitudes, and values of the people who create the material (Berger, 1998:23).

Berger (1998:24) asserts that content analysis is an indirect way of making inferences about people. Instead of asking them questions, we examine what they read or watch and then work backward, assuming that what people read and watch are good reflections of their attitudes, values, and so on.

The three concepts involved in content analysis – systematic, objective and quantitative – will now be discussed below.

- **Content analysis is systematic**

This means that the organisation of the study follows precise rules and a set of procedures and is applied to the sample being analysed (Du Plooy (1995:152). The content that will be analysed is selected in accordance with rules that are explicitly and consistently applied. This means that sample selection needs to be in line with proper procedure, and each item must stand an equal chance of inclusion in the analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:151).

The evaluation process must be essentially systematic in that all content that is being considered for analysis needs to be treated in exactly the same manner. Wimmer and Dominick (2006:151) add that the coding and analysis procedures as well as the length of time coders are exposed to the material must be uniform. Systematic analysis essentially means that there should be only one set of guidelines that is followed in the analysis of content throughout the study.

- **Content analysis and objectivity**

Each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures (Baker, 1999:269). The researchers have to ensure that their predispositions and prejudices do not taint the findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:151).

Du Plooy (1997:152) asserts that for objectivity to be achieved, a researcher must define the methodology so precisely that another researcher can apply it to the same content and get the same results. The researcher also needs to establish a clear set of criteria and procedures that fully explain the sampling and categorization methods in order to meet the requirements of objectivity and reliability. Wimmer and Dominick (2006:151) concede that content analysis does not often attain perfect objectivity. In content analysis, it is inevitable that individual researchers will exercise subjectivity in the specification of the unit of analysis and the precise makeup and definition of relevant categories.

- **Content analysis is quantitative.**

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:151) assert that the primary goal of content analysis is to represent a body of messages accurately. Quantification achieves this objective by helping researchers to achieve more precision. Quantification also allows researchers to summarize their results and report them concisely.

Another advantage of quantification is that it provides researchers with additional statistical rules that can be used in interpretation and analysis. According to Du Plooy (1997:152), quantitative data are always either numerical values or frequencies.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:151) warn that quantification should not block researchers from considering other ways of evaluating the potential impact or effects of the content. The most frequently occurring element in a body of content is not necessarily the most important. For example, a content analysis of the newspaper coverage of crime in South Africa in 2007 might reveal that 65% showed non-violent crimes. Yet, the other 35% that contained violent crimes might have been so powerful and so sensational that their impact on the audience was far greater than the non-violent coverage.

Holsti, cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006:150), substitutes the concept of generality for quantitative. He asserts that the term quantitative is too restrictive as a definition of the method.

According to Holsti cited in Du Plooy (1997:153), even though quantification offers a research project a degree of precision, statistics on their own do not mean anything. In order for content analysis to have generality, it is essential that the information revealed by statistics be interpreted so that its meaning can become clear (Holsti in Du Plooy, 1995:153).

Quantitative content analysis does have its limitations, and may need to be combined with qualitative approaches such as framing analysis, thematic analysis, etc.

- **Advantages of content analysis**

One of the main advantages of content analysis is that it is an inexpensive method of getting information about people (Berger, 1998:26). Using printed materials is much less expensive and relatively easy to do. This is because magazines, newspapers, and other print media are available in libraries and on microfilm.

Another advantage of content analysis is that it allows researchers to deal with subjects that are very current (Berger, 1998:26). Researchers can use the latest magazines or comic strips and compare them with earlier ones. This means that

researchers can study phenomena such as fads, fashions, crazes and social movements as they develop.

One of the problems of conducting research is that the presence of researchers influences the responses of the people being observed, thus impacting the findings. Content analysis, however, is an unobtrusive method as it avoids the problem of researcher influence on individuals under study (Berger, 1998:26).

Content analysis is based on counting and measuring, and the findings are provided in numerical form; others can replicate the research and see whether or not their findings come to the same numbers. If a content analysis is conducted correctly and produces accurate figures, replicated studies should produce the same numbers (Berger, 1998:26).

- **Uses of content analysis**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006:153) studies that use content analysis are usually conducted for describing communication content, testing hypotheses of message characteristics, comparing media content to the real world, assessing the image of particular groups in society, and establishing a starting point for studies of media effects.

- **Describing communication content**

Content analysis can be used in the traditional descriptive manner to identify what exists. One of the advantages of content analysis is its potential to identify developments over a long period of time (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:153). According to Du Plooy (1997:154), as a descriptive method, content analysis is a starting point for establishing the effects of a particular set of messages. These descriptive studies can also be used to study societal change. For example, changing public opinion on various contentious issues could be established with a longitudinal study of readers' letters to the newspaper editor or newspaper editorials.

- **Testing hypotheses of message characteristics**

Content analysis can attempt to relate certain characteristics of the source of a given body of message content to the characteristics of the messages that are produced.

- **Comparing media content to the real world**

Content analysis may serve as reality check in which the portrayal of a certain group, phenomenon, trait or characteristic is evaluated against a standard derived from real life. The similarities between media representation and the actual situation are discussed.

- **Assessing the image of particular groups in society**

An increasing number of content analyses have explored the media portrayal of certain minority and even more notable groups. In this study, content analysis will be used to explore media representations of black celebrities in four South African tabloid newspapers.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006:153), in most cases, such studies are conducted to evaluate changes in media policy towards the targeted groups, to draw inferences about the responsiveness of the media to demands for better coverage, or to document social trends.

- **Establishing a starting point for studies of media effects**

Although content analysis can be used as a starting point for subsequent studies, this is relatively new. The more prevalent is cultivation analysis, in which the dominant message and themes in media content are documented by systematic procedures and a separate study of the audience is conducted in order to establish whether these media messages are fostering similar attitudes among those using the media heavily.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:153) point out that content analysis can also be used in a study of agenda setting. In Chapter 2, the literature review touched upon the agenda-setting role of the media in the 2005 Liberian presidential Election.

In order to determine the importance of news topics, an analysis of pertinent media content is necessary. This will be followed by audience research that focuses on the correspondence between the media's agenda and the audience's agenda.

- **Limitations of content analysis**

Content analysis cannot serve as the sole basis for making claims about the effects of media content on an audience (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:154). Wimmer and Dominick (2006:154) further state that the findings of a particular content analysis are only applicable to the framework of the categories and the definitions used in that analysis.

Different researchers are likely to use varying definitions and category systems for measuring a single concept. Wimmer and Dominick (2006:154) assert that researchers who make use of varying measurement tools naturally arrive at different conclusions.

A lack of media messages relevant to the research is another potential limitation of content analysis. This is because many topics or characters receive very

limited exposure in the mass media. For example, if South African heterosexual women are rarely seen in the South African media, then a study of how South African heterosexual women are portrayed in the South African media would be difficult.

Content analysis is often time consuming and costly. The process and actual task of examining and categorizing large volumes of content is often arduous and tedious. Some researchers prefer to videotape programmes for analysis, but this requires access to one or more video recorders and large supplies of videotape, which may not be affordable to some researchers.

- **Steps in content analysis**

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:154) state that content analysis comprises a number of distinct stages. These steps do not need to follow a specific order; in fact researchers can easily combine the initial stages of content analysis.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:154) list the following steps that can be used in content analysis:

- Step 1 - Formulation of the research question or hypothesis.
- Step 2 - Definition of the population in question.
- Step 3 - Selection of the appropriate sample from the population.
- Step 4 - Selection and definition of a unit of analysis.
- Step 5 - Construction of categories of content to be analysed.
- Step 6 - Establishment of a quantification system.
- Step 7 - Training of codes and conducting a pilot study
- Step 8 - Coding of the content according to established definitions.
- Step 9 - Analyzing the collected data.
- Step 10 - Drawing of conclusions and searching for indications.

- **Content analysis and the internet**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006:171), the Internet can present both opportunities and challenges in content analysis. Regarding opportunities, the Internet provides a variety of new areas of content that can be studied. These include banner or pop-up advertisements, chat room discussions, personal web pages, email, home pages of commercial media political campaign websites, online news coverage, and message boards.

The internet also makes it possible for content to be searched quickly and efficiently by making use of search engines and electronic archives. Electronic archives can be particularly useful when searching previously published and older newspaper content (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:171). If a newspaper has an online archive of past editions, a search for a research term such as “celebrities” can be done in seconds.

Because the content exists in cyberspace and not on paper, researchers do not have to physically obtain, store and maintain hard copies of the material.

One of the challenges of conducting internet research is that sampling can be problematic as sample frames for many topics may not exist (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:171). If, for example, a researcher wanted to do a content analysis of engineering websites, it may not be possible to get a comprehensive list of engineering websites. Trying to find an adequate sampling frame for such a study could be a daunting task. It is, however, possible that a researcher may be lucky enough to find an acceptable listing.

Another challenge is with regard to the fluid nature of the Internet; new sites are constantly added while other sites cease to exist and the content of existing sites is constantly changing (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:172). As a result, a content analysis done in June might not find the same results as the one done in August.

- **Content analysis: the main research method of choice for this study**

Content analysis was chosen as the main research methodology for this study as it is the best methodology for analyzing print media. Since one of the uses of content analysis is to describe and compare media content, the researcher decided to use content analysis as it would be the most appropriate research method to describe and also compare the content of the four South African tabloid newspapers in this study.

Another reason for choosing content analysis is that the method deals with subjects that are very current. The researcher was therefore able to use newspapers that were published during the first eight months of this study. Since the researcher wanted to quantify data collected from the four newspapers and represent it in numerical values used, content analysis was used as it is based on counting and measuring, and the findings are provided in numerical form.

The researcher also wanted to avoid a situation where a researcher influences the subjects being studied. And, as content analysis is an unobtrusive research method, it appeared to be the perfect choice.

Conducting content analysis on both daily and weekend newspapers allows the researcher to examine the phenomenon of black celebrities' representation in South African tabloids more thoroughly.

c) Literature review

Neuman (2003:96) asserts that literature review about a research question is an important early step in the research process, regardless of the approach a researcher adopts. According to Huysamen (2001:191), it is essential for

researchers to be up to speed with research reported on their specific topics until at least the time that the research report is concluded.

A literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that people learn from and build on the existing knowledge generated by others (Neuman, 2003:96).

In a literature review, a researcher essentially sets up a conversation with the literature and plays the host, letting speakers enter the conversation, changing the topic, keeping it lively and critical, and so on (Henning, 2004:27).

Neuman (2003:96) identifies the following four goals of a literature review:

- To learn from others and also stimulate new ideas.
- Helps researchers to integrate and summarize what is known in an area.
- It shows that the researcher is familiar with a body of knowledge and also establishes credibility.
- It shows the path of earlier research and how a current project is linked to it.

In this study, literature studies were done to explore the power of media representations as well as the power of celebrities' influence on society.

3.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis, according to Creswell (1994:153), requires the researcher to be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts. In this study, the researcher mainly used quantitative data analysis.

- **Quantitative data analysis**

Neuman (2003:331) states that, in quantitative data analysis, a researcher provides the charts, graphs, and tables to give readers a condensed picture of the data. The charts and tables allow the readers to see the evidence gathered by the researcher and learn for themselves what is in it.

In this study, the main statistical method which was used to analyse data from the four South African tabloid newspapers were charts, graphs and tables.

3.2.5 Establishing trustworthiness

- **Quantitative data**

Trustworthiness in quantitative inquiry can be established by ensuring validity and reliability.

- **Validity**

According to Cohen *et al* (2000:105), validity in quantitative data might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data. In this study, the researcher ensured validity through the following:

- Ensuring that there were adequate resources for the required research to be conducted.
- Selecting appropriate methodology for answering the research questions.
- Selecting appropriate instrumentation for collecting the type of data required.
- Using an appropriate sample.

3.2.6 Pilot study

Huysamen (2001:97) asserts that it is important for a researcher to conduct a pilot study on a limited number of participants from the research population. The pilot study, according to Huysamen (2001:97), helps the researcher to investigate the feasibility of the proposed research study and to detect possible flaws in the measurement procedures, such as ambiguous instructions and inadequate time limits.

In this pilot study, the researcher conducted a content analysis on four South African tabloid newspapers.

The population consisted of South African daily and weekend tabloid newspapers. The study specifically focused on the following four tabloid newspapers:

- Two weekend newspapers — *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World*
- Two daily newspapers — *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun*

In the pilot study, simple random sampling was used as probability sampling technique. The researcher selected a total of 24 newspapers spread across the four different South African tabloid newspapers.

The newspapers were spread as follows:

- 6 copies of *Sowetan*
- 6 copies of *Daily Sun*
- 6 copies of *Sunday World*
- 6 copies of *Sunday Sun*

The research focused on the newspapers that were published during the period February to March 2008.

The pilot study afforded the researcher the opportunity get into grips with how much time it takes to conduct content analysis on newspapers, enabling the researcher to plan the data collection and analysis more effectively.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methods and techniques and how the researcher used them in this study. The population was defined, sampling techniques outlined, and data collection and analysis methods discussed.

As we have seen, content analysis plays an important role in research about media representations.

We have also learnt that quantitative research forms an integral part of content analysis and has the advantage of providing researchers with additional statistical rules that can be used in interpretation and analysis. Content analysis has been found to be an inexpensive method of getting information about people and also allows researchers to deal with subjects that are very current. However, one of the major limitations of content analysis is that it is often time consuming and costly as the process and actual task of examining and categorizing large volumes of content is often arduous and tedious.

By examining the representation of black celebrities by South African tabloid newspapers, the researcher hopes to shed more light on the reporting angles taken by these newspapers when reporting about black celebrities. This will further enlighten media scholars, journalists, and the public about current trends in the representation of celebrities by tabloid newspapers in general and South African tabloids in particular. This awareness will then solicit necessary interventions.

The next chapter will discuss the major findings and results of content analysis.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focuses on the results and findings arrived at after conducting the content analysis on the four tabloid newspapers. The chapter will present the findings by specifically concentrating on the appearance of celebrities in front page headlines and other key pages of newspapers, the language usage in the newspapers and the accuracy and sensationalism of headlines and actual articles. Furthermore, this chapter will look at the representation of black female celebrities by juxtaposing role portrayals of black female celebrities with those of male celebrities in the newspapers and examining front page headlines about black female celebrities and the main message in their articles.

The results and findings in this chapter will shed light on the representation of black celebrities by South African tabloid newspapers and also enable us to formulate conclusions and recommendations.

4.2 The appearance of celebrities in front page headlines and other key pages of newspapers.

In this section focus is on the appearance of celebrities in the front page headlines of 30 copies of *Sowetan*, 20 copies of *Daily Sun*, 20 copies of *Sunday Sun* and 15 copies of *Sunday World*, which were published during the period February to September 2008.

The researcher found it necessary to select more copies of *Sowetan* than the other three newspapers because:

- Unlike *Daily Sun*, *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World* which only emerged from 1999, *Sowetan* was established in 1981.
- *Sowetan* was not established as a tabloid newspaper but as a newspaper aimed at the black readership. The newspaper was mainly introduced to fill the void left by the *Post*, which was de-registered by the apartheid government.
- It was only with the emergence of these three other newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World*) that *Sowetan* started to have some stronger tabloid aspects.
- Although it is largely classified as a tabloid newspaper, many people still do not consider *Sowetan* a full tabloid.

It is for these reasons that the researcher saw it fit to conduct an analysis on more copies of *Sowetan*.

The study focused on the newspapers published in the same year and within the same time period as this is more likely to result in authentic comparisons.

Figure 4.1: The appearance of celebrities in front page headlines.

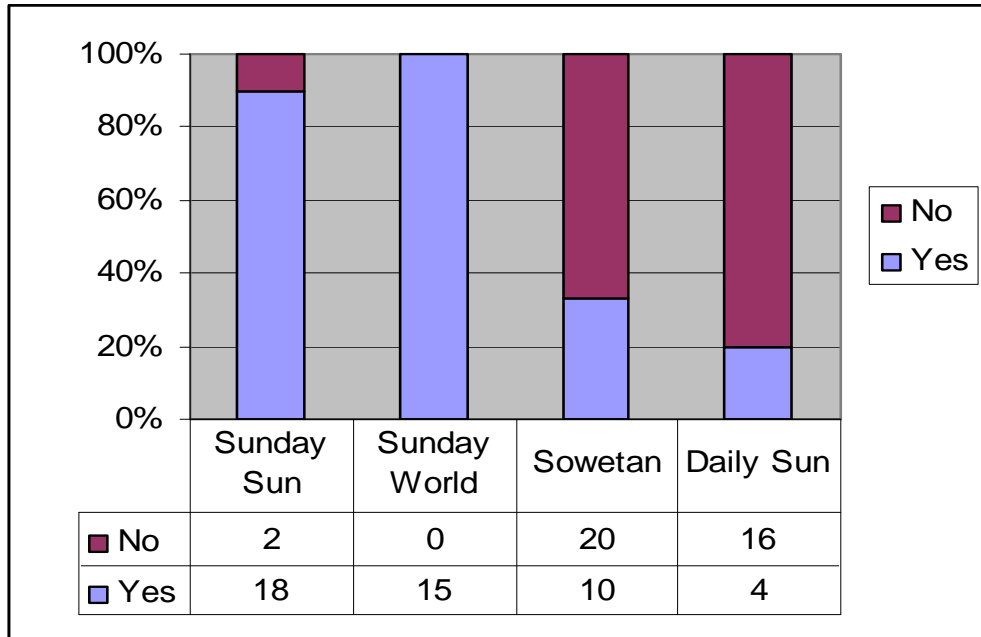
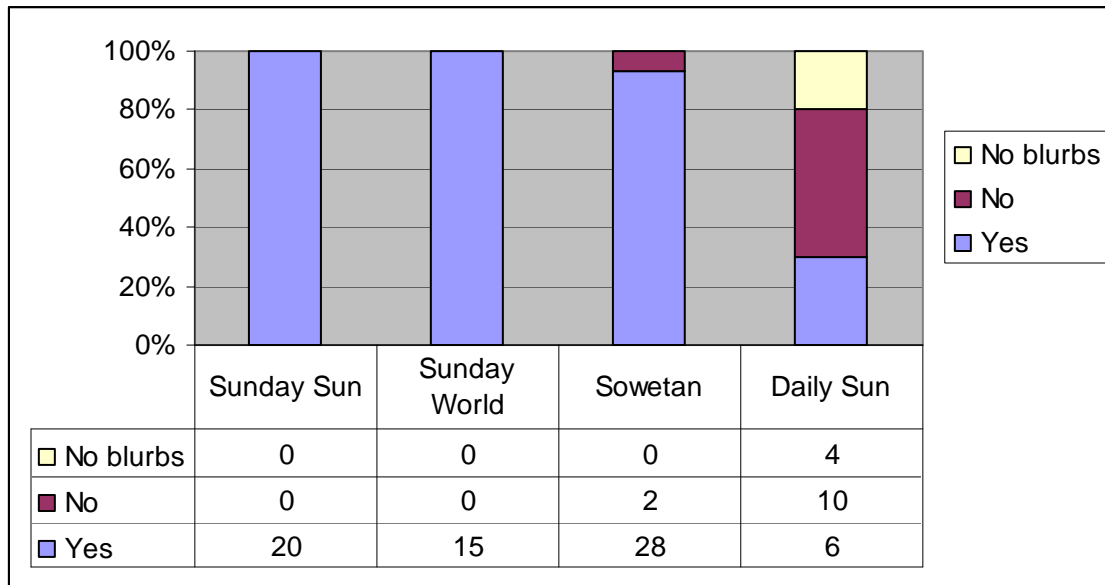


Table 4.1 above illustrates the appearance of celebrities on the front page headlines of the four newspapers. It is evident from the bar graph that the two weekend tabloids had an overwhelming number of front page headlines that featured black celebrities. Ninety percent of the *Sunday Sun* newspapers that were studied featured black celebrities in their front page headlines and all the *Sunday World* newspapers featured black celebrities in their front page headlines.

The two daily newspapers, however, were not as liberal with their front page headlines as the weekend tabloids. Approximately 33% of *Sowetan* newspapers featured black celebrities in their front page headlines, whereas *Daily Sun* featured only 20%.

Figure 4.2 below shows the appearance of black celebrities in front page blurbs. *Sowetan*, *Sunday Sun* and *Sunday World* all featured black celebrities prominently in their front page blurbs with the weekend tabloids – *Sunday World* and *Sunday Sun* – always featuring black celebrities on the front page blurbs and *Sowetan* doing it more than 90% of the time. *Daily Sun* featured black celebrities in only 30% of their front page blurbs, 50% did not feature them, and 20% of their publications did not have any front page blurbs but only front page headlines.

Figure 4.2: Appearance of celebrities in the front page blurbs



Page 3 is often the most important page on the inside pages of a newspaper as the reader often sees it first after turning over the front page of the newspaper. It is interesting to note that there was a significant difference in the use of page 3 across the four newspapers as depicted on Figure 4.3.

Sunday World and *Sowetan* always featured celebrities on page 3, and in some of these newspapers' editions celebrities were prominently featured on this page. For example, 93% of *Sowetan* newspapers dedicated their entire page 3 to celebrity coverage, of which 46% of these exclusively covered news on black South African celebrities. In all the *Sunday World* newspapers under study, 100% dedicated their entire page 3 to coverage on celebrity news, of which approximately 67% solely reported on news about black South African celebrities.

In contrast, *Sunday Sun* and *Daily Sun* featured very few celebrity stories on their third page. Twenty five percent of *Sunday Sun* newspapers featured celebrities in page 3 of the newspapers that were studied, whereas *Daily Sun* did so in 5% of their publications. In fact, *Sunday Sun* hardly ever featured celebrity news on this page, preferring instead to feature a section called 'Sun Babe', in which young female readers are invited to submit their best swimsuit photos and the best photo for the week is published every Sunday on this page and the featured lady receives a predetermined monthly prize.

All *Sunday Sun* newspapers dedicated their Page 5 to celebrity news. Like its weekend sister newspaper, *Daily Sun* also barely covered celebrity news on its page 3. In fact, none of the *Daily Sun* newspapers under study dedicated entire

pages to celebrity news. Only one of the 20 *Daily Sun* newspapers included some celebrity news coverage on their page 3.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the appearance of celebrities on page 3 of the four newspapers.

Figure 4.3: Appearance of celebrities on page 3 of the newspapers

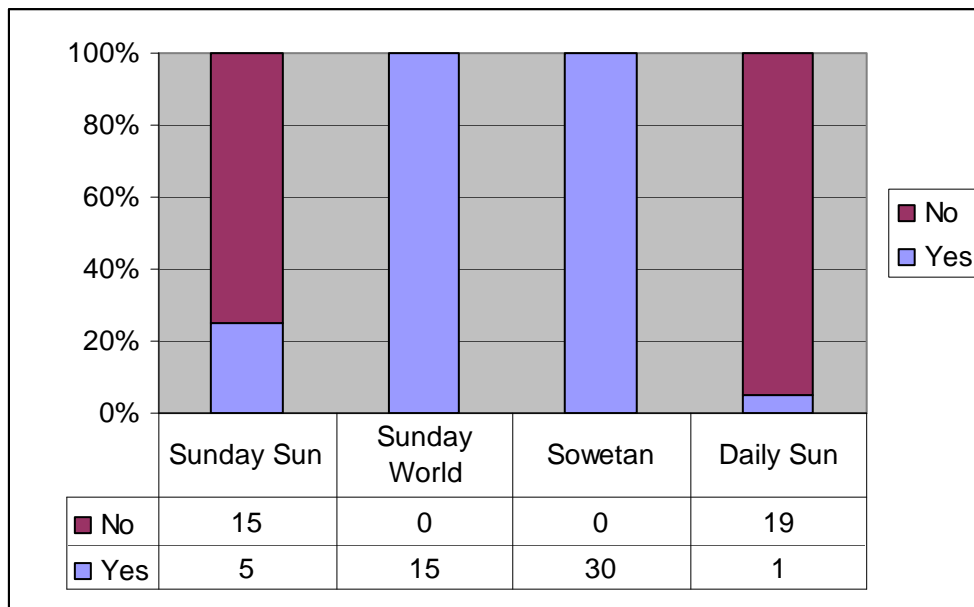
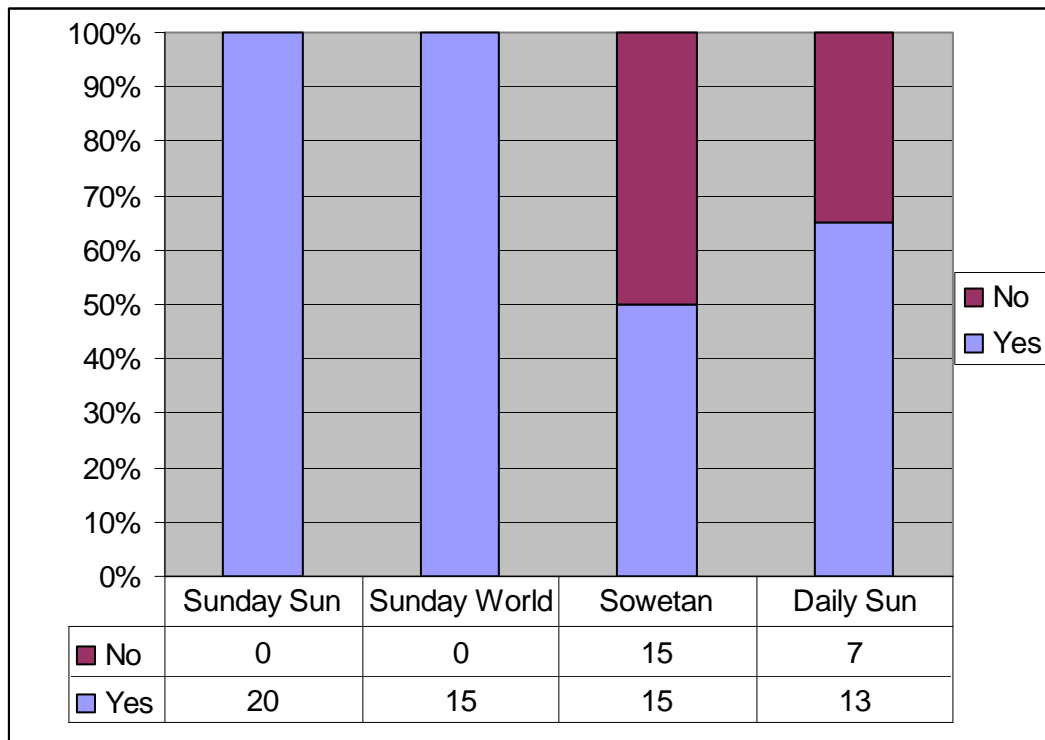


Figure 4.4 demonstrates the frequency at which celebrities were featured on page 4 of the newspapers. The two weekend newspapers always covered celebrities on this page. Of the two dailies, *Sowetan* covered celebrities 50% of the time, whereas *Daily Sun* did so in 65% of their publications.

Figure 4.4: Appearance of celebrities on page 4 of the newspapers



The four newspapers' portrayal of celebrities on the front page headlines appears to be largely negative, as illustrated on Figure 4.5. The newspaper with the highest negative portrayal of celebrities on the front page headline was *Sunday World* with 100%, followed by *Sunday Sun* with 80%.

The only reason *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* appear to have lower negative portrayals is that most of their front page headlines – 80% and 67% for *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* respectively – were not about celebrities, as shown on Figure 4.5. It is important to note that all the front page headlines that featured celebrities in the two newspapers were negative in their portrayals of black celebrities.

The only two positive front page headlines that appeared in *Sunday Sun* were, in essence, sad stories. The two positive headlines, 'R3m to save Vuyo's life' and 'How Jabu healed us', involved terminal illness and death of the two celebrities who were the main subjects of the headlines respectively.

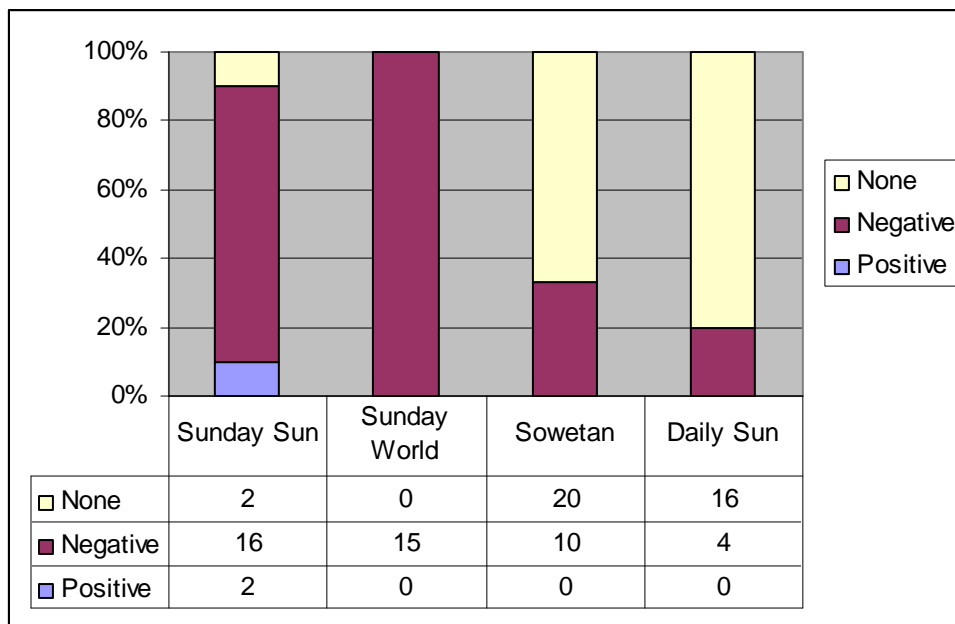
The headline 'R3m to save Vuyo's life' is about a popular South African gospel singer, Vuyo Mokoena, whose health condition, caused by a brain tumour, had worsened and he was re-admitted to hospital in a critical condition. The actual story in the inside pages reads: 'Musos rally to help Vuyo'; the subheading 'Music body slammed for sitting on funds needed for operation' takes a negative twist. Somewhere in the article, several prominent South African musicians are angry with the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) for cancelling a

scheme in which artists could apply for advances and loans from their royalties. This unsavoury twist taints what could have been a great goodwill story.

Even though the headline ‘How Jabu healed us’ is about the healing effect that South African musician Jabu Ndaba’s voice had on two elderly women, the comments by the two women were made on the day of his funeral. The story is particularly sad as it revolves around the weeping elderly women who are reported to have suffered great loss as a result of Ndaba’s death.

Figure 4.5 below demonstrates the portrayal of celebrities in front page headlines.

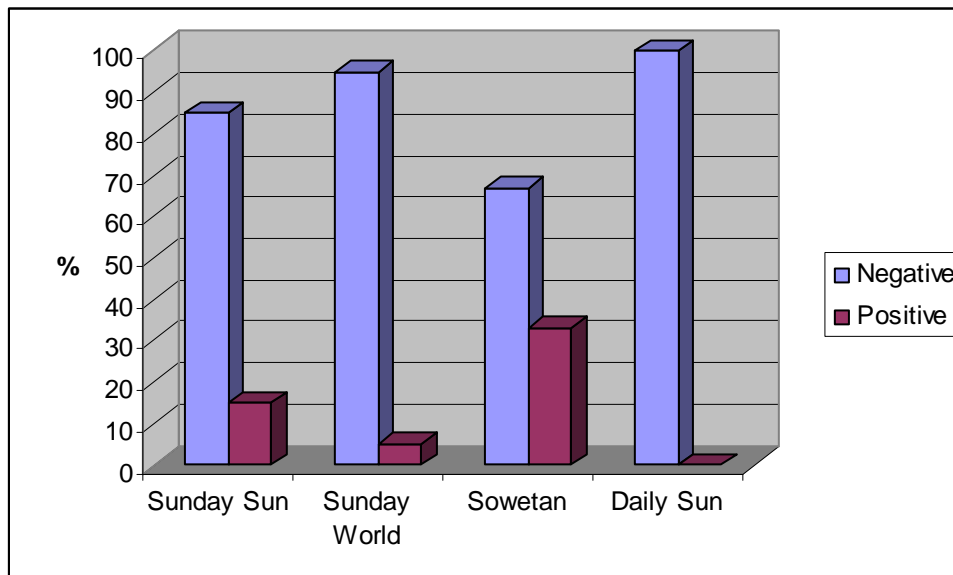
Figure 4.5: Portrayal of celebrities in front page headlines



The front page blurbs portrayed celebrities predominantly in the negative light. Figure 4.6 shows the portrayal of black celebrities in the front page blurbs of the four tabloid newspapers. Of the 20 *Daily Sun* newspapers that were analysed, only six featured black celebrities in one of their front page blurbs, and all the six front page blurbs portrayed them in the negative light. This was followed closely by *Sunday World* with 95% of its front page blurbs representing black celebrities negatively. Approximately 15% of front page blurbs about celebrities in the *Sunday Sun* carried positive news and in *Sowetan* there were 33% of such positive representations and approximately 67% were negative portrayals.

Figure 4.6 below shows the portrayal of celebrities in front page blurbs.

Figure 4.6: Portrayal of celebrities in front page blurbs



4.3 Language usage in the front page headlines

The language used by the four newspapers in their front page headlines appears to be brutally direct and, in some instances, downright disparaging. The headline 'Prosper moered' used by *Sunday World* when referring to the incident in which music promoter Prosper Mkwaiwa was beaten by a female bank employee, seems to be intended to portray him in a humiliating light. The word 'moered' is a derivative of Afrikaans which not only means he was beaten, but that he was given a thorough whack and was in no position to fight back. This suggests to the reader that Mkwaiwa is so weak that women beat him up without much fight-back from him.

Compared to *Sunday Sun*, however, *Sunday World* and *Sowetan* are mild in their usage of disparaging language. *Sunday Sun*'s language usage in its front page headlines borders on denigrating and offensive language. Headlines such as 'I f**k men and women' and 'What a lucky bitch' used in *Sunday Sun* front page headlines are clearly distasteful as the words 'f**k' and 'bitch' are downright vulgar.

Another headline in the *Sunday Sun*, 'Nestum lives on chicken dust', is certainly demeaning to the singer Nestum as it appears to suggest that the singer feeds on garbage for survival – a suggestion that smacks of human degradation, more so for a celebrity who was once believed to earn large sums of money.

Table 4.1 below shows the headlines featuring black celebrities as the main subjects in the front page headlines of the four tabloid newspapers.

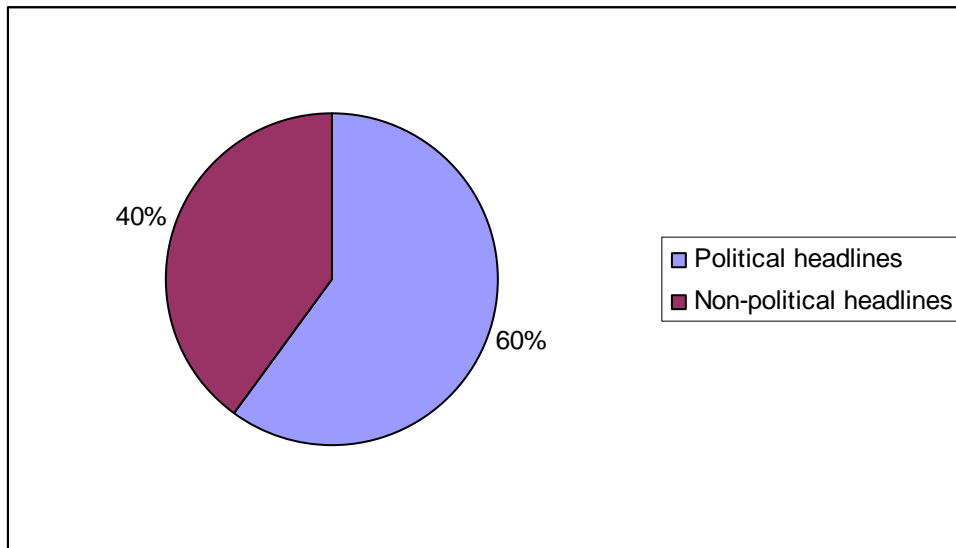
Table 4.1: The front page headlines from the four tabloids

Daily Sun	Sunday World	Sunday Sun	Sowetan
'Sangoma's warning came true' (30 June 2008)	'Kabelo sues Gurash' (17 August 2008)	'I'll get you' (8 June 2008)	'Snuked' (7 May 2008)
'Cops bust Zola' (19 June 2008)	'TV star beaten up' (23 March 2008)	'Hawk quits Rhema' (2 March 2008)	'Wife beats up top coach' (12 August 2008)
'Mugabe's Tsunami' (17 April 2008)	'Hands off my son, Khoza' (24 August 2008)	'I f**k men and women' (23 March 2008)	'Eish- Zuma bid to escape justice fails' (1 August 2008)
First Tiny, then my uncle (11 June 2008)	'Prosper moered' (20 July 2008)	'A liar and a cheat' (16 March 2008)	'Zuma must stop the war talk' (23 June 2008)
	'TKZee star beaten' (3 August 2008)	'What a lucky bitch' (9 March 2008)	'Zuma not innocent' (5 August 2008)
	'Queen evicts cheats' (6 July 2008)	'Pay up coach' (6 April 2008)	'I'm not scared of jail – Zuma' (6 August 2008)
	'Mandoza in fatal crash' (2 March 2008)	'I want paggeld' (15 June 2008)	'Pay dispute rocks Muvhango' (5 September 2008)
	'I fear for my life' (16 March 2008)	'S'thembu sucks' (22 June 2008)	'Fire him' (4 August 2008)
	'Zola beds enemy' (15 June 2008)	'Nestum lives on chicken dust' (4 May 2008)	'Mystery woman in Mandoza's crash' (3 March 2008)
	'Mandoza's big lie' (4 May 2008)	'Cheeky Charity' (10 August 2008)	'Cheat' (30 June 2008)
	'Pro'n Kelly split' (29 June 2008)	'Hard times hit Madame Gigi' (17 August 2008)	
	'Yizo star rape rap' (18 May 2008)	'Brikz: My habit 'from hell' (13 July 2008)	

	'Vuyo fights for life' (9 March 2008)	'War over Modise's millions' (27 July 2008)	
	'Get out' (8 June 2008)	'I'm not 16v's girl' (25 May 2008)	
	Zombo's last hours' (24 February 2008)	'My muthi helped KB to win' (3 August 2008)	
		'I won't give up' (11 May 2008)	
		'How Jabu healed us' (20 July 2008)	
		'R3M to save Vuyo's life' (18 May 2008)	

It is interesting to note that, unlike the three other tabloid newspapers, most of *Sowetan's* front page headlines were about political issues as shown in figure 4.7 below.

Figure 4.7: Political versus non-political front page headlines of Sowetan



As shown in Figure 4.7 above, 60% of the front page headlines of *Sowetan* focused on political issues. Perhaps this is because *Sowetan* was not originally a tabloid newspaper when it was launched as a daily in 1981, whereas the other three newspapers were originally launched as tabloids. The reason for *Sowetan* to pay more attention to political news in its front page headlines and relatively less focus non-political issues could be that the newspaper does not want to be

seen as being particularly focused on the tabloid aspect but as a newspaper that reports on serious or 'hard' news and also has a tabloid element.

4.4 The accuracy and sensationalism of front page headlines

Sensationalism, according to McQuail (2005:567), is an everyday word that refers to all aspects of media content with the likelihood to attract attention, excite or inflame emotions. It entails distinctive presentation forms that are designed to gain audience attention by making use of large headlines, photographic illustrations, much film material, sound and dramatic music, etc. (McQuail, 1992:233). McQuail (2005:567) believes that in this sense, the word is related to commercialisation and tabloidisation.

Commercialisation is a process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit seeking goals of media industries and are, to a greater extent, influenced by market considerations (McQuail, 2005:550). Perhaps South African actress Khanyisile Mbau captures the essence of commercialisation when she said the following about her reality show that was in the process of being launched:

"It will be a chance for people to see what's really going on in my life, not the lies the tabloids dish up every day about me to sell more newspapers".
(De Matos, 2009:1)

Mbau's comment provides a hint as to what some people think of tabloid newspapers. It is mainly believed that sensationalism was caused by commercialisation and intense competition for readers. Sensationalism is often the result of a high degree of personalisation, emotionalism and dramatisation in content (McQuail, 1992:233). McQuail (2005:568) laments that tabloidisation has affected the quality of news and raised alarm at the decline in journalistic standards, the rise in public ignorance and the risk of confusion between fiction and reality.

The term tabloidisation is derived from the common tabloid format for gossip and scandal-mongering newspapers and refers to the alleged process of 'dumbing down' or going down market of the more serious press in many countries (McQuail, 2005:568).

The four newspapers appear to have used personalisation, emotionalism and dramatisation in their reporting, particularly in the formulation of front page headlines. The following are examples of the front page headlines and a short description of what they were about:

- 'I f**k men and women' (referring to gospel singer Lundi Tyamara's admission that he is bisexual)
- 'I want paggeld' (referring to poet and singer Mzwake Mbuli's application for maintenance against his former wife)
- 'What a lucky bitch' (referring to a TV actress who, after being impregnated by her married boyfriend, was accepted by the man's wife as his mistress)
- A more dramatic 'Fire him' which was referring to the comments made by the South African Communist Party (SACP) and African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) calling for former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, to be removed from his position as president of South Africa.

Some headlines do not provide an accurate indication of the actual story in the article they were referring to and somewhat mislead the reader. The following are examples of such headlines:

- 'Mandoza in fatal crash'

At first glance the reader will be inclined to think that South African musician, Mandoza, was killed in a car accident. The article, however, is about a car accident in which Mandoza sustained minor injuries and the occupants of the car that collided with his were killed.

- 'Nestum lives on chicken dust'

After reading this headline the reader is likely to be immediately horrified to think that that a once famous and ostensibly wealthy person would eat chicken dust. The actual story, however, is different. The article the headline refers to is about a radio presenter and musician, Nestum Nyakale, who had opened a small business in which she cooks and sells chicken feet among other things. The newspaper chose the word 'dust' instead of 'chicken feet' probably because chicken feet are in constant contact with the ground which is full of dust and dirty. The phrase 'lives on' also carries connotations that Nestum eats dust to survive.

4.5 The sub-headlines of the front page headlines in the four tabloids

Although the front page headlines appear to be harsh in their representation of celebrities, their sub-headlines seem to be even more scathing. As can be seen in Table 4.2 below, the phrases and words used in some of the sub-headlines are really belittling of the celebrities they refer to. For example, the sub-headline for the headline 'A liar and a cheat' is 'Pam has steamy sex with French Pilot, and the one for 'Hard times hit Madame Gigi' is 'Car's gone, big house is going, gigs drying up!'

It is evident that the sub-headlines did virtually nothing to mitigate the harshness of the main headlines; instead they rubbed salt to injury. An additional example of this is the sub-headline: 'Female bank manager kicks Kelly's ex in the privates' which follows the headline 'Prosper moered'.

Table 4.2: The front page headlines and sub-headlines from the four tabloid newspapers

Daily Sun	Sunday World	Sunday Sun	Sowetan
'Sangoma's warning came true' (<i>Radio man killed in car crash – as predicted</i>)	'Kabelo sues Gurash' (<i>Muso demands R250 000 from old friend</i>)	'I'll get you' (<i>Heist kingpin sends Lebo M and lover Angela a chilling warning from jail</i>)	'Snuked' (<i>TV news boss Snuki Zikalala blown out by Mpofu</i>)
'Cops bust Zola' (<i>After assault charge shock!</i>)	'TV star beaten up' (<i>weather reporter escapes rape</i>)	'Hawk quits Rhema'	'Wife beats up top coach' (<i>Jacob Sakala's spouse arrested after whipping him on Women's Day</i>)
'Mugabe's Tsunami' (<i>Yes, it is a crisis</i>)	'Hands off my son, Khoza' (<i>Siphelele Mthembu's mom wants him at Kaizer Chiefs</i>)	'I f**k men and women' (<i>Sex is sex, no matter how you do it – Lundi</i>)	'Eish' (<i>Zuma bid to escape justice fails</i>)
First Tiny, then my uncle (<i>Mzwakhe's double pain</i>)	'Prosper moered' (<i>Female bank manager 'kicks Kelly's ex in the privates</i>)	'A liar and a cheat' (<i>Pam has steamy sex with French Pilot</i>)	'Zuma must stop the war talk' (<i>Alliance heavyweights Vavi and Nzimande join Malema's ready to kill madness</i>)
	'TKZee star beaten' (<i>Zwai Bala assaulted in restaurant tip row</i>)	'What a lucky bitch' (<i>Socialite's wife accepts pregnant ex-Muvhango star as a mistress</i>)	'Zuma not innocent' (<i>State lawyers oppose ANC president Jacob Zuma's bid to have his corruption trial scrapped...</i>)
	'Queen evicts cheats' (<i>Orphan made sexual moves on star's man</i>)	'Pay up coach' (<i>Ertugral's German love child demands paggeld</i>)	'I'm not scared of jail – Zuma' (<i>Zuma lashes his detractors after judgment put on hold</i>)
	'Mandoza in fatal crash' (<i>Two killed as star ducks wife to return to awards after</i>)	'I want paggeld' (<i>...but Mzwakhe's ex-wife Nomisa says that's not African</i>)	'Pay dispute rocks Muvhango' (<i>Soapie cast up in arms over unpaid</i>)

	<i>party)</i>	<i>culture)</i>	<i>August salaries)</i>
	'I fear for my life' (Menzi gets death threats after Mzansi win)	'S'thembu sucks' (My 15 years of polygamy hell with Mbongeni)	'Fire him' (ANC youth want Thabo Mbeki removed as president of South Africa)
	'Zola beds enemy' (She wanted to charge him with rape...now she's expecting his second baby)	'Nestum lives on chicken dust' (Singer and radio host hits rock bottom)	'Mystery woman in Mandoza's crash' (She phoned kwaito star's wife and paramedics after accident then disappeared)
	'Mandoza's big lie' (No record that he did time in jail)	'Cheeky Charity' (TV star who fled to UK turns into the house guest from hell)	'Cheat' (Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe comfortably wins presidential race in a poll boycotted by thousands of angry voters)
	'Pro'n Kelly split' (Diva's fairy-tale engagement hits the rocks)	'Hard times hit Madame Gigi' (Car's gone, big house is going, gigs drying up!)	
	'Yizo star rape rap' (He made me pregnant at 13. Cops refuse to arrest 'Gunman')	'Brikz: My habit 'from hell' (Help me get off drugs, pleads kwaito star)	
	'Vuyo fights for life' (Grief as gospel icon battles with cancer)	'War over Modise's millions' (Bishop's kids go to court for share of his fortune)	
	'Get out' (Musu's ex-lover told. 'I don't think Vuyo is happy where he is)	'I'm not 16v's girl'	
	Zombo's last hours' (Star's sister tells of his suicide attempt)	'My muthi helped KB to win' (SAMA star owes me R3 000, says sangoma!)	
		'I won't give up' (Bassie's stalker still insists the beauty	

		<i>queen belongs to him)</i>	
		<i>'How Jabu healed us' (On the day he is laid to rest, two gogos are crying special tears)</i>	
		<i>'R3M to save Vuyo's life' (Musos rally to help as they rush against time)</i>	

It is evident that newspapers select and highlight certain parts of a story to create sensation and make the headlines more attention grabbing as newspapers are constantly competing for readers. This view is supported by Croteau and Hoynes (2003:96) who assert that media representations result from processes of selection that invariably mean there are certain aspects of reality that are highlighted whereas others are not. This selection could be informed by a particular newspaper's ideology.

According to McQuail (2005:558), ideology generally refers to a certain set of values or an organised belief system that is disseminated and reinforced by communication. Fourie (2007:308) adds that ideology explains how a society is able to maintain itself by reproducing its institutions, social relations, and various things needed for people to exist, such as resources used to produce food and material goods and the amount of labour force needed to keep the economy operating.

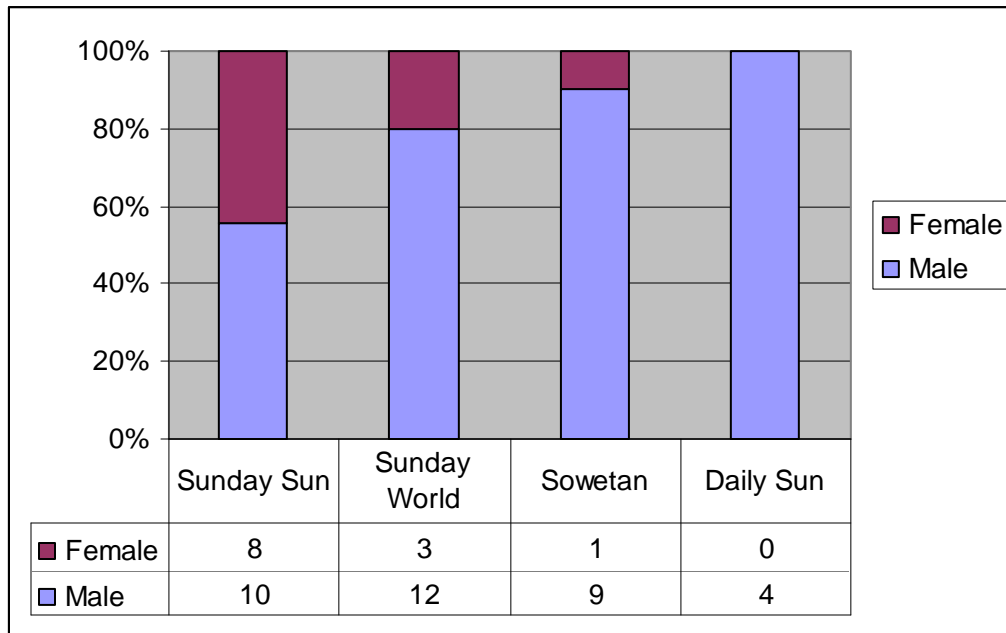
Fourie (2007:308) goes on to say that ideology has the power to produce people with attitudes and beliefs that enable them to take their given positions in society. Mass communication does not intentionally set out to spread ideology; however, in practice most media content does so implicitly by being selective about emphasizing certain values and norms (McQuail, 2005:558).

4.6 Representation of black male and female celebrities

Of the front page headlines that were about black celebrities, very few have featured black female celebrities as illustrated on Figure 4.8 below. The paper that appears to have given somewhat of a balanced coverage of male and female celebrities is *Sunday Sun* with 44% of all the front page headlines featuring female celebrities and 56% featuring male celebrities. *Sunday World* featured female celebrities in only 20% of their front page headlines that were about celebrities, followed by *Sowetan* with 10% and *Daily Sun* with no front

page headlines featuring female celebrities. It should be noted, however, that only 20% (4 out of 20) of *Daily Sun* newspapers featured celebrities in their front page headlines.

Figure 4.8: Appearance of female celebrities versus male celebrities in front page headlines



4.6.1 Role portrayals of black female celebrities in front page headlines

When women appeared in the front page headlines, their roles were, for the most part, limited to relationships and sex. Headlines such as ‘What a lucky bitch’ and ‘Pro’n Kelly split’ are clear examples.

Table 4.3 shows all the front page headlines that featured black female celebrities in the four tabloid newspapers.

Table 4.3: Front page headlines that featured black female celebrities

Daily Sun	Sunday World	Sunday Sun	Sowetan
	‘TV star beaten up’	‘A liar and a cheat’	‘Pay dispute rocks Muvhango’
	‘Queen evicts cheats’	‘What a lucky bitch’	
	‘Pro’n Kelly split’	‘S’thembu sucks’	
		‘Nestum lives on’	

		chicken dust'	
		'Cheeky Charity'	
		'I'm not 16v's girl'	
		'My muthi helped KB to win'	
		'I won't give up'	

There are only two front page headlines that did not portray female celebrities in terms of sex or relationships - 'My muthi helped KB to win' and 'Nestum lives on chicken dust'. The headline 'My muthi helped KB to win' is about a traditional healer or sangoma who claimed that a popular singer Keabetswe "KB" Motsilanyane had consulted him to help her win a prestigious South African Music Award (SAMA) but the singer failed to pay him.

Although the story is ostensibly about the payment issues between the sangoma and Motsilanyane, a large part of the article is centred around Motsilanyane's former boyfriend. In fact, the article alleges that Motsilanyane's former boyfriend is the one who introduced her to the exasperated sangoma. In the article, the sangoma also says that the ex-boyfriend had returned to confide in him that he and Motsilanyane were no longer in a relationship, but hoped the sangoma could help get them back together.

The article also mentions that the sangoma alleged that Motsilanyane even wanted protection from her ex-husband. The sangoma further states that the previous year Motsilanyane had walked out of her marital home amid allegations that her ex-husband and business partner was abusing drugs and alcohol.

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that the article the headline 'Nestum lives on chicken dust' refers to is about a radio presenter and musician, Nestum Nyakale, who had opened a small business in which, among other things, she cooks and sells chicken feet. The main picture in the actual article, which appears in the inside pages of the *Sunday Sun* newspaper, shows Nyakale and her husband holding each other. The caption at the bottom of the picture reads: "In happier times...Nestum and hubby Bilal Peterson". The article further states that Nyakale's husband is the one who cooks the chicken feet and also runs a car wash business.

Table 4.4 below shows the other front page headlines about black female celebrities and the main message in their articles

Table 4.4-: Front page headlines about black female celebrities and the main message in their articles

Newspaper headline	Main message in the article
'A liar and a cheat'	The article is about singer and actress Pam Andrews who breaks up with and cancels marriage plans with her long-time boyfriend after confessing to him that she had cheated on him with a French pilot. The article goes on to mention how much she enjoys sex with the pilot.
'S'thembu sucks'	The article is about actress Leleti Khumalo who, after being in a polygamous marriage for 15 years, denounces polygamy and says she is happy the marriage is over.
'Cheeky Charity'	The article is about actress Charity Sehlohole who visited her friend in England, but was later kicked out after using her friend's house to have sex with different men.
'I'm not 16v's girl'	The article is about a model and actress who denies allegations that she was the mystery woman in a car accident which involved a former soccer star. Further in the article, the distressed model and actress admits that she received telephone calls from strangers accusing her of being in a relationship with a married man, as the soccer star is married.
'Queen evicts cheats'	This article is about actress Sophie Ndaba who feels betrayed by a woman whom she says claimed to be an orphan. She took the woman to her home to stay with her. However, she found out later that the woman tried to make sexual advances on her husband.
'Pro'n Kelly split'	The article is about singer Kelly Khumalo and music promoter Prosper Mkwaiwa ending their relationships after allegations about Mkwaiwa's infidelity.
'TV star beaten up'	The article is about TV presenter, Tshidi Diphoko, who was beaten, stripped of her clothes and almost raped during a robbery
'I won't give up'	The article is about business woman and former Miss South Africa, Basetsana Khumalo, who is being haunted by a stalker. The stalker, who has already served a jail term for stalking her, insists that Khumalo is his wife, and is raising funds to marry her. The article further states that the stalker

	expects Khumalo and her husband to divorce.
'Pay dispute rocks Muvhango'	The article is about actors in a TV soap opera who were not paid their salaries for August 2008 and were threatening not to turn up for work until they were paid.

4.6.2 Role portrayals of black male celebrities in front page headlines

Compared to female celebrities, male celebrities' roles in the front page headlines are not particularly restricted to relationships and sex. Their roles are quite diverse. Male celebrities' roles in the front page headlines range from those of political leaders to victims of a terminal illness. Table 4.5 below shows the headlines featuring black male celebrities.

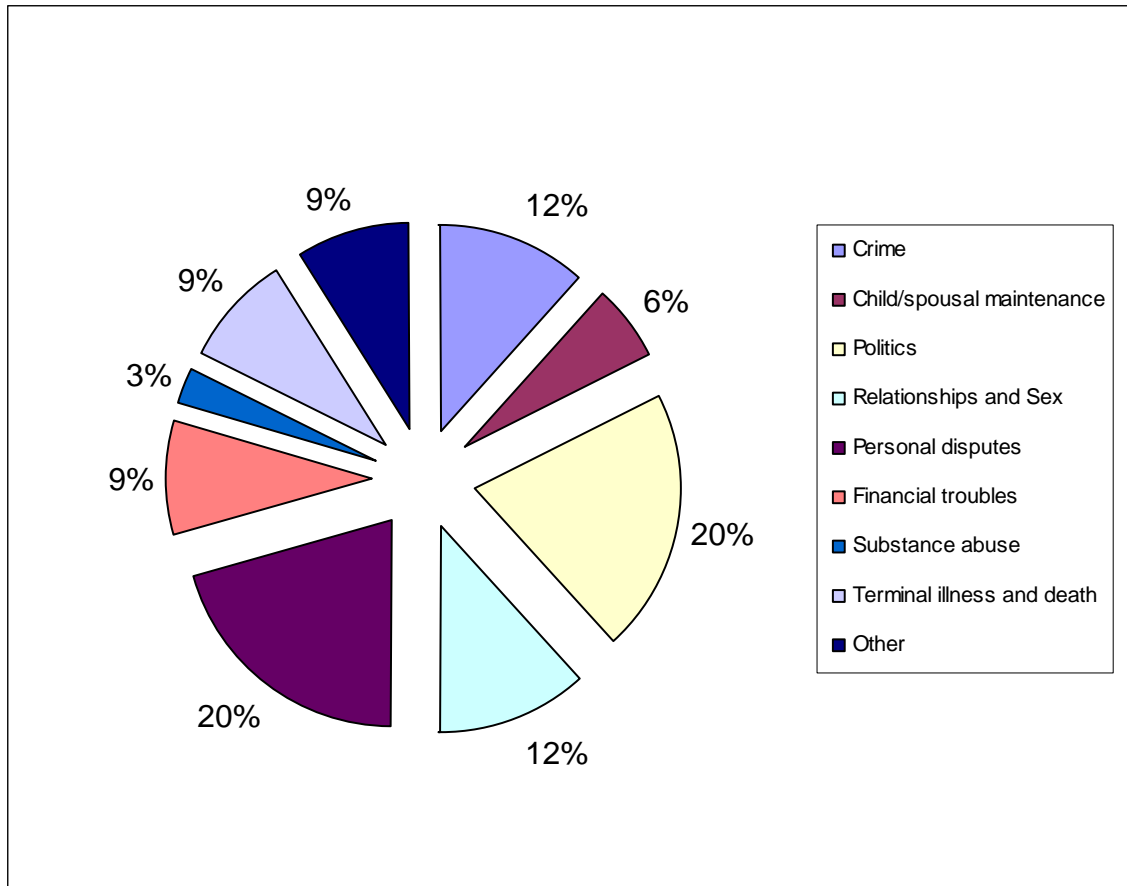
Table 4.5: Front page headlines that featured black male celebrities

Daily Sun	Sunday World	Sunday Sun	Sowetan
'Sangoma's warning came true'	'Kabelo sues Gurash'	'I'll get you'	'Snuked'
'Cops bust Zola'	'Hands off my son, Khoza'	'Hawk quits Rhema'	'Wife beats up top coach'
'Mugabe's Tsunami'	'Prosper moered'	'I f**k men and women'	'Eish- Zuma bid to escape justice fails'
'First Tiny, then my uncle'	'TKee star beaten'	'Pay up coach'	'Zuma must stop the war talk'
	'Mandoza in fatal crash'	'I want paggeld'	'Zuma not innocent'
	'I fear for my life'	'Hard times hit Madame Gigi'	'I'm not scared of jail – Zuma'
	'Zola beds enemy'	'Brikz: My habit 'from hell'	'Pay dispute rocks Muvhango'
	'Mandoza's big lie'	'War over Modise's millions'	'Fire him'
	'Yizo star rape rap'	'How Jabu healed us'	'Mystery woman in Mandoza's crash'
	'Vuyo fights for life'	'R3M to save Vuyo's life'	'Cheat'
	'Get out'		
	'Zombo's last hours'		

Figure 4.9 illustrates a percentage breakdown of the various role portrayals of male celebrities in the front page headlines of the four tabloid newspapers.

According to Figure 4.9, 40% of the front page headlines regarding male celebrities in the four tabloid newspapers were about politics and personal disputes. This was followed by 24% of the headlines centred around crime, relationships and sex. Personal dispute mainly refers to fights or disagreements between celebrities and friends, family or colleagues. Examples of headlines involving personal dispute are: 'Kabelo sues Gurash', 'War over Modise's millions', 'Wife beats up top coach' and 'TKee star beaten'.

Figure 4.9: A percentage breakdown of the various role portrayals of male celebrities



Eighteen percent of the front page headlines exposed male celebrities' financial troubles, terminal illness and death. Stories about male celebrities' child or spousal maintenance and substance abuse appeared in 6% and 3% of the headlines respectively. Examples of front page headlines about celebrities' financial troubles are: 'Hard times hit Madame Gigi' and 'Pay dispute rocks Muvhango'. Some of the headlines that revolved around male celebrities' terminal illness and death are 'Vuyo fights for life' and 'Zombo's last hours'.

4.7 Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter black celebrities are, for the most part, portrayed negatively in the four tabloid newspapers. There is also a clear differential in the representation of male and female celebrities. Female celebrities are, in the main, portrayed in terms of relationships and sex. Male celebrities, on the other hand, are mainly portrayed in terms of their political roles and personal disputes.

The language used by the newspapers in their headlines and articles involving celebrities is largely disparaging and, in some cases, stripping them of human dignity.

The next chapter will focus on conclusions and recommendations based on the results and findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on conclusions and recommendations which are based on the results and findings presented in Chapter 4. In presenting these conclusions and recommendations, the chapter will look at the following topics

- Objectivity and subjectivity of celebrities' representation in the four tabloid newspapers,
- Positivity and negativity of celebrities' representation in the four tabloid newspapers,
- The effect of negative media representation of celebrities on society,
- Representation of female celebrities in the four tabloid newspapers,
- Language usage in the four tabloid newspapers,
- Exaggeration of negativity and inaccuracy in tabloid headlines
- Media representations as stereotypes,
- Effects of representations on celebrities' own behaviour, and
- The overall effects of media representations on society

The chapter will also provide recommendations for further research. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter will provide an interpretation of the results and findings presented in Chapter 4.

5.2 Objectivity and subjectivity of celebrities' representation in the four tabloid newspapers

According to the theory of social constructionism, media cannot objectively report on social reality as all facts are interpretations and certain meanings are selectively reproduced by the media (McQuail, 2005:102). The findings in Chapter 4 strongly support this assertion. The four tabloid newspapers were highly subjective in their representation of celebrities. This is because they were particularly selective in their representation. In some cases, the media chose to ignore achievements by celebrities but rather selected an event or incident related to that achievement that creates more controversy and sensation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the four newspapers sensationalised news about celebrities by using personalisation, emotionalism and dramatisation in their reporting. This sensational reporting is given fuel by commercialisation and fierce competition for readers. This need for tabloid newspapers to attract more readers and increase sales, however, does not absolve them of their responsibility to report objectively and responsibly.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, celebrities have a powerful influence on society's behaviour and identity construction. The behaviour of many people, particularly young people, is greatly influenced by the way they perceive their celebrity role models' behaviour. It has been mentioned in Chapter 2 that young people idolize their icons, try to live like them and accept their ways as the 'right' ones. The creation of these 'right' ways is, for the most part, a function of media representations. This is because the media control what the society knows about celebrities. Fans adopt their celebrities' perceived attributes, resulting in a transformation of personal values and changed social and personal lives. This further affirms one of the main assumptions of social constructionism which states that society is a construct rather than a fixed reality. And, in this case, society would, at least to some extent, be a construct of media representations.

In lieu of the influence that media representations can have on society, it is recommended that newspapers, especially tabloid newspapers, strive to report objectively on celebrities. Although there is a constant temptation to sensationalise news events and blow them out of proportion with the hope of luring more readers, newspapers must embrace their crucial responsibility in social development by reporting on celebrities in a responsible and controlled manner. The newspapers can do this by limiting exposure of aspects of news on celebrities that may have an undesirable effect of people's identity construction and reconstruction.

5.3 Positivity and negativity of celebrities' representation in the four tabloid newspapers

More than 95% of front page headlines about celebrities in the four tabloid newspapers portrayed them in the negative light. It is unfathomable to imagine that an overwhelming majority of celebrities are more involved in negative activities than positive ones. These negative representations of celebrities are largely a result of selective reporting by the newspapers. The overwhelming negative portrayals of celebrities by the four tabloid newspapers tend to suggest that tabloid newspapers regard celebrities' positive deeds as less newsworthy and virtually unworthy of making the front page headlines.

Chapter 4 has revealed that even those front page headlines that were ostensibly positive in their portrayal of celebrities were essentially revolving around the celebrities' unfortunate situations. Of the two front page headlines that appeared to be positive in their representations of celebrities, one was based on the death of a celebrity (with the headline 'How Jabu healed us - *On the day he is laid to rest, two gogos are crying special tears*') and the other was about a celebrity who

was dying of a terminal illness (with the headline ‘R3M to save Vuyo’s life - Musos rally to help as they rush against time’)

Wasserman (2005:34) observes that most South African tabloid newspapers mainly focus on gossip, scandal and sex. And indeed, the four South African tabloid newspapers in this study affirmed Wasserman’s observations, as evident in the following front page headlines: ‘TKee star beaten’, ‘What a lucky bitch’, ‘Zola beds enemy’, ‘Cheeky Charity’, ‘A liar and a cheat’, ‘Mandoza’s big lie’, and ‘Hard times hit Madame Gigi’, to mention but a few.

The callousness of these headlines highlights tabloid newspapers’ single-mindedness in their quest for more copy sales. This alludes to a sad state about the degenerating conditions in newspaper reporting. Perhaps this desperation and humiliation of celebrities can be attributed, at least in part, to the derivation of the term tabloidization. As McQuail (2005:568) points out, the term tabloidization is derived from the common tabloid format for gossip and scandal-mongering newspapers and refers to the alleged process of ‘dumbing down’ or going ‘down market’ of the more serious press in many countries. McQuail (2005:568) goes on to lament that tabloidization has affected the quality of news and he further raises alarm at the decline in journalistic standards, the rise in public ignorance and the risk of confusion between fiction and reality.

In order to sell more copies, newspapers constantly attempt to cater for their readers’ preferences. To this end, the manner in which South African tabloid newspapers represent celebrities could also be a result of the growing voyeuristic tendencies of their readership. Therefore, it is perhaps one sided to blame it all on tabloid newspapers.

The prevalence of these negative representations is so bad that in some of the newspapers the combination of front page headlines and blurbs paint a bleak picture of South African celebrities. For example, Table 5.1 shows all the front page headlines featuring celebrities in the *Sunday Sun* of 11 May 2008.

Table 5.1: The front page headlines featuring celebrities in the *Sunday Sun* of 11 May 2008.

Front page headline	‘I won’t give up’
Sub-headline	‘Bassie’s stalker still insists the beauty queen belongs to him’
Front page blurbs	‘Jabu Pule steals alcohol’ ‘Row over TK’s child’ ‘Tsotsi star bonks another man’s wife’

Yet, in the same newspaper (*Sunday Sun*, 11 May 2008) there were some positive stories about celebrities on the inside pages, none of which were hinted about on the front page. The headlines of some of these positive articles about celebrities were:

- 'Going strong' (this is about famous celebrity couple and musicians whose love is reportedly still going strong)
- 'Hot Mr Staff is real deal' (refers to musician Zolani Staff's great music album)
- 'Sama kings' (about the gospel music group, Ncandweni Christ Ambassadors, winning a South African Music Award (Sama))

It is worrying to observe that this *Sunday Sun* edition could not find space on its front page for any of the positive news about celebrities. Instead, all positive articles about celebrities were placed deep into the inside pages, close to the middle pages of the newspaper.

In all the four tabloid newspapers, front page headlines and blurbs mainly feature negative news about celebrities. The few positive news about celebrities that are published are placed, or perhaps hidden, on the inside pages. Even when these positive stories are published, the articles are often shorter than those that focus on negativity. For example the article about the headline 'Proper moered' was published on the entire page 2 of *Sunday World* (20 July 2008), whereas in the same newspaper the positive story about a concert involving prominent South African musicians paying tribute to South African music heroes was allotted less than quarter of a page. Still in the same newspaper articles about a presenter for a prominent radio station being suspended for an on-air heated argument with his producer, and musician Yvonne Chaka Chaka's hijack ordeal were assigned the entire third page.

Tabloid priorities are seen to have a devastating influence on public life (Butsch, 2007:84). This prioritization of negative news about celebrities is likely to have adverse effects on society, as it is somewhat glorifying those negative behaviors. For example, by prominently featuring negative behaviour of celebrities, such as drug abuse and sexual promiscuity, tabloid newspapers may be inadvertently promoting these behaviours. MacDougall (2005:1) observes that because of a desire to emulate a celebrity, an individual may adopt the celebrity's behaviour (MacDougall, 2005:1). And, even negative behaviours of celebrities may be adopted. Celebrities' bad behaviour may be blindly adopted by their fans because, as Barbas (2002:187) points out, fans try to live like their favourite celebrities and accept their ways as the "right" ones.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the persistent negative portrayals of celebrities by tabloid newspapers are partly a result of commercialization. According to McQuail (2005:550), commercialized media content is believed to be in varying degrees lacking in independence, inauthentic, standardised and stereotypical,

given to sensationalism and personalization. Commercialisation promotes materialism and consumerism (McQuail, 2005:550)

We have seen in the previous chapter that media representations result from processes of selection as certain aspects of reality are highlighted whereas others are not (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003:196). To this end, it is highly unlikely that the four newspapers could hardly find positive stories about celebrities to include in their publications' front page headlines. The newspapers' journalists and editors are more likely to have used the process of selection to focus on negative stories about celebrities. This dubious selection was in line with the newspapers' ideology.

In view of the above observations, it is recommended that tabloid newspapers not only report about celebrities' negative stories but increase the number of positive headlines and news stories about celebrities. There needs to be somewhat of a shift from the current preoccupation with negative news reporting on celebrities. More positive stories that focus on the achievements of celebrities – be they educational, career or personal – as well as their contribution towards social upliftment should feature prominently the tabloid newspapers' headlines.

The positive stories should also be moved from the hidden inside pages to the more conspicuous front pages and third pages of tabloid newspapers. Negative news articles should be shorter and some positive news articles about celebrities should be allocated full pages.

Journalists must shift from the unfortunate mentality that only negative stories that humiliate and discredit celebrities are newsworthy. This mentality lays the seeds for a crop of journalists which no longer searches for and report on worthwhile news events, but only focuses on negative news.

5.4 The effect of negative media representation of celebrities on society

The tabloid newspapers' obsession with negative representation of celebrities is a matter of great concern. This one-sided representation unfairly vilifies celebrities by portraying them as bad people. Many people, particularly young people, idolize their celebrity role models so much that they would behave and even dress like their idols. To this end, even when their role model behaves badly, people still emulate the celebrities. Barbas (2002:187) observes that fans do not only worship their favourite celebrities by "religiously" attending their films, they believe in these stars and idolize them.

Chances are that even when their celebrities engage in negative behaviour, fans will accept and adopt these behaviours nonetheless. When celebrities do drugs, abuse alcohol, engage in unprotected sex, have multiple sexual partners and engage in other negative behaviours, their followers tend to take it that their idols are endorsing the behaviours. It then appears right to engage in those 'endorsed' negative behaviours. Media serves as the window through which people see their celebrities' behaviours and lifestyles. This is due to the fact that it is primarily through the media representations that fans get exposed to news about their favourite celebrities. This means that the way the media portrays certain celebrities has an influence on how fans of those celebrities behave.

The media, therefore, occupy a central position in establishing and even changing behaviours in the way it chooses to portray celebrities. If, for example, newspapers publish more stories about the hard work and tenacity that contributed towards the celebrity's success, this is likely to inculcate a culture of hard work and perseverance in many people. On the other hand, by constantly exposing a celebrity's promiscuity, newspapers may be unwittingly promoting promiscuity as some people will find it acceptable as their favourite celebrity does it. Newspapers, like all other media types, have a moral responsibility to publish stories that will contribute towards the upliftment of society.

In view of the power that the media holds in influencing society's behaviour, it is recommended that the four tabloid newspapers publish more positive news about celebrities in their front page headlines. Negative stories about celebrities should be marginalized and relegated to small sections in the inside sections of the newspapers. It stands to reason that when people are constantly bombarded with positive stories on their favourite celebrities, they will be filled with positive energy and even watch out for more such stories.

5.5 Representation of female celebrities in the four tabloid newspapers

It is evident from the results depicted in Figure 4.7 in the previous chapter that female celebrities received much less coverage in the four tabloid newspapers than male celebrities. Zegeye and Harris (2003:19) concur by stating that media, particularly in Africa, gives little coverage of women. This viewpoint is further accentuated by Valdivia (1995:108) who asserts that news, in all of its various forms, has historically underrepresented women. This under-representation of women exposes an imbalance in media gender representations and raises great concern.

Even when they received media coverage, female celebrities were portrayed in less meaningful roles. As has been revealed in Chapter 4, the roles of women in the four newspapers' front page headlines mainly centered around relationships and sex.

Through the late 1970s, world news routinely ignored women's problems and accomplishments as subjects for serious coverage in most countries (Valdivia, 1995:108). Developmental news, which comprises news concerned with economic, political, and social change and with historical and other factors bringing those about, has also ignored women through the years (Valdivia, 1995:108).

South African media has not been an exception to this scant representation of women. Le Roux in Zegeye and Harris (2003:19) reveals that the important role of women in both the struggle against apartheid and in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country is seldom reflected in the print media within South Africa. This means that when the media focus on social conflict which is the typical media angle for looking at developing countries, especially in Africa, there is little coverage of how women are affected by or are part of the conflict, or of the measures they can take to become an integral part of the peace-making process (Zegeye and Harris, 2003:19). Thus, when it comes to peace and other high level negotiations, there is a tendency for the media to marginalize women and generally render their efforts invisible.

According to Le Roux quoted in Zegeye and Harris (2003:19), women receive little attention in newspapers and are portrayed in a limited range of roles, which are often stereotyped or represented in a prejudiced manner. Le Roux argues that this practice limits people's perceptions of the roles available to women, and also serves to reinforce the stereotypes of their existing roles, thus restricting women's civil and political status.

The cross-cultural survey conducted by Mohanty quoted in Valdivia (1995:109) found that prevailing news values still define most women and their problem as un-newsworthy and, when women are included, their portrayals are predictably sexual or confined to the private sphere of home. According to Van Zoonen (1994:87), a core element of western patriarchal culture is the display of women as spectacle to be looked at, subjected to the gaze of the male audience.

Le Roux quoted in Zegeye and Harris (2003:19) asserts that women are regularly depicted in the print and broadcast media as sex objects, and even the violent context of the Truth and Reconciliation commission (TRC) hearings in South Africa could not prevent the media from reflecting this in their news coverage.

Williamson cited in Baehr and Gray (1996:24) supports Le Roux's assertion by pointing out that the media tend to represent women as standing for the side of life that seems to be outside history – for personal relationships, love and sex.

One of the most important aspects of femininity in the media is not what they reveal, but what they conceal about women. If a 'woman' means home, love and sex, what 'woman' does not mean, in a general sense, is work, class and politics (Williamson in Baehr and Gray, 1996:24-25).

Given the fact that a large number of women were subjected to sexual abuses during the apartheid era, and that violence against women is an ongoing problem in South Africa, Le Roux quoted in Zegeye and Harris (2003:19) finds it worrying that the media have not highlighted the problem or focused on finding a solution to it; instead they have reflected the sensationalism of the stories and objectified women in the process.

In a country such as South Africa where there are shocking statistics on violence against women, it is of critical importance that the media play a responsible role in changing people's perceptions of women and their roles in society, rather than simply reflecting old prejudices and old ways of life Le Roux in Zegeye and Harris (2003:20). Le Roux further states that it is extremely important for the media in South Africa to recognize the role of women in the struggle against apartheid, the peace and reconciliation process and in the continuing struggle against many of the country's social problems such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and sexual violence.

This one sided and limited media representation of women in terms of relationships, sex and home, somewhat limits younger women's aspirations and sense of achievement. This is because many of them will most likely constrain their ambitions and goals to sex, relationships and home, ostensibly following their role models' lead – the lead which is largely given by the media.

Tuchman quoted in Baehr and Gray (1996:11) points out that the content of the media distorts the status of women in the social world and that the media do not present women who are viable role models. The media's deleterious role models, when internalized particularly by the female consumers of the media, prevent and impede female accomplishments. The presentation of these ruinous role models also encourages both men and women to define women in terms of men – as sex objects – or in the context of the family – as wives and mothers.

Female journalists have been in a potentially central position to contribute to gender advancement by including women's perspectives and achievements in news stories (Valdivia,1995:110). Female journalists should therefore play a pivotal role in reversing this skewed and unsavoury representation of women. It is therefore recommended that female journalists, as well as all other women who hold key positions in the media, play an active role in bringing about change in the media's representations of female celebrities. This change will result in more viable and positive role models for women.

One of the main assumptions of social constructionism, as pointed out by McQuail (2005:102), is that materials for reality construction are provided by the

media. Female journalists should play the crucial role of providing more meaningful materials for the public's construction of women's roles. They can provide these materials by portraying women in influential and leadership positions as community leaders, politicians, business leaders, intellectuals and so on.

5.6 Language usage in the tabloid newspaper

Language makes it possible for us to understand and make sense of the world by providing us with words and meanings to name things and interpret the world, and to represent it to our mind (Fourie, 2001:106). In the production of text, a journalist makes choices and selects words and grammatical constructions and each choice affects the meaning communicated by presenting a different perspective of the world.

Fourie (2001:114) points out that a journalist can present an action or an event in writing from various perspectives by using transitive or intransitive verbs or using the active voice or passive voice and each choice transforms the meanings and presents a different perspective that usually reflects an ideological opinion.

In the four tabloid newspapers in this study, journalists make clever use of both active and passive voice in formulating headlines in order to emphasise a certain message. For the most part, this emphasis accentuates negative portrayals of celebrities. For example, consider the following headlines:

- 'Prosper moered'
- 'Hard times hit Madame Gigi'

The first headline is about a well-known South African music producer, Prosper Mkwaiwa, who was beaten by a female bank employee, and the second headline is about a famous dancer and actor, Somizi Mhlongo, who experiences financial difficulties ('Madame Gigi is his alter ego on his TV show'). Since the first headline is about a female bank employee beating a male celebrity, the headline could have been written in the active voice with the female bank employee as the subject. Instead, the newspaper decided to write the headline in the passive voice so that the male celebrity is the subject - the subject of a beating from a woman, which is meant to disgrace him. The second headline uses the active voice to focus attention on the financial troubles suffered by the celebrity. In the headline, financial difficulties are the subject which inflicts suffering on the celebrity, who is made the object.

The four newspapers also use offensive language in some of their articles and headlines. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the newspapers use words such as 'bitch', 'f**k', 'moered' (a slang word derived from Afrikaans, used to refer to being

thoroughly beaten), and 'whipping', among others. The use of these words not only portrays celebrities in the negative light, but also humiliates them in the extreme.

By using such offensive words in their front page headlines, newspapers are virtually endorsing the use of such words by society. And, young people are likely to embrace these endorsements and regard them as 'fashionable'. Through media exposure, American rap musicians such as Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg have promoted the use of the offensive word 'bitch' to refer to a woman. Many young people who follow rap music, including those in South Africa, use the word to refer to women, with little or no intention to offend. But, whether or not the word 'bitch' or any other offensive word is used with the intention to offend, the bottom line remains that it is basically a swear word, which makes it inappropriate to use to refer to women .

Marris and Thornham (1996:309) point out that any media text makes its own small contribution to shaping the following aspects of society and culture:

- Social identities,
- Social relations, and
- Systems of knowledge and belief

In certain cases, one of the above three aspects might appear to be more important than the others, but it is a sensible working assumption that all three are always going on to some degree (Marris & Thornham, 1996:309).

It is therefore essential for the newspapers to always be mindful of the role their texts play in shaping society and culture.

If the media had denounced or simply given little attention to the use of the word 'bitch' by rap musicians, the word is likely to have been ignored by rap music fans and would not have been as popular. Newspapers should therefore use less humiliating and highly subjective language and present negative celebrity news factually and more objectively. It is also recommended that newspapers pay the least attention to offensive language used by celebrities by not using direct speech and not printing profanities and vulgar utterances verbatim. Instead, they should use reported speech to represent celebrities' offensive utterances. This will limit the public's use of offensive language.

5.7 Exaggeration of negativity and inaccuracy in tabloid headlines

The four newspapers tend to have a penchant for overemphasis on negativity when reporting about celebrities. As a result, the situation in some articles is exaggerated to appear worse than it actually is. For example, the headline 'War over Modise's millions' is used to refer to two factions within the family of Modise (the late founder and leader of International Pentecostal Church), which are taking each other to court over Modise's estate. The newspaper's use of the word 'war' is overboard, as a legal wrangle between family members can hardly ever pass as war, unless the family members go all out to physically attack each other. In this case, however, there is no physical attack reported, other than the exchange of words.

Some front page headlines mislead readers by inaccurately representing the actual story. For example, at face value, the headline 'Zuma must stop the war talk' implies that South African President Jacob Zuma launched a verbal attack in which he uttered some confrontational or hostile words. In actual fact, however, the headline refers to a call from South African political and religious leaders urging Zuma to stop ANC Youth League President, Julius Malema, and South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) leaders from continuing to say that they are prepared to 'kill for Zuma'.

5.8 Media representations as stereotypes

A stereotype is a perceptual generalisation about a group or class of people, and also applies the presumed characteristics of the group to an individual member of the group, without considering the unique characteristics of the individual member (Du Plooy-Ciliers & Olivier, 2001:52). For example, if newspapers mostly expose celebrities who are abusing drugs, this may create the stereotype that celebrities, even those not abusing drugs, are drug abusers.

In some cases, even if the media publishes stories about repeated drug abuse by the same few celebrities who were reported about before, the public tends to think that the number of celebrities abusing drugs is increasing, when in fact it is only the number of reports that have increased while the number of culprits is still the same. These stories about repeat celebrity drug abuse ostensibly vindicate the prevailing stereotype about celebrities as drug abusers. Owing to its portrayal of various individuals and groups, the media play a central role in creating and combating stereotypes.

The media provide pictures of people, descriptions of different social groups and of their social identities, and if someone has never seen any member of a particular group, then it is likely that what they think of that group of people will be the result of what they have seen, heard or read about them in the media (Grossberg *et al*, 2006:235). Stereotypes can define some people's expectations of how, for example, coloured women from Western Cape in South Africa or other groups in society are supposed to behave.

Grossberg *et al* (2006:235) point out that stereotypes are a psychological means of dealing with the diversity of the world by categorizing the world into types and learning how to respond to types rather than how to respond to each individual. By providing media images of celebrities, tabloid newspapers create stereotypes about celebrities. These stereotypes are likely to elicit certain expectations about how celebrities act (Grossberg *et al*, 2006:235).

When newspapers repeatedly portray celebrities as promiscuous, self destructive and uncouth people, they are inadvertently stereotyping them as such. The newspapers' readers are likely to think of celebrities as promiscuous, uncouth and self destructive. Since the four tabloid newspapers in this study represent celebrities negatively, the public will think of celebrities as bad people.

These negative images of celebrities are likely to influence the public's behaviour as some of the people who idolize these celebrities will adopt the celebrities' behaviours as 'right'. The resultant negative self image of the negatively portrayed celebrities could lead to a self fulfilling prophecy. A self fulfilling prophecy occurs when a person expects other people to behave or respond towards him in a certain way, and his expectation and his own corresponding behaviour leads to the fulfillment and confirmation of his expectation, reinforcing it for similar encounters (Du Plooy-Ciliers & Olivier, 2001:38).

The negative self fulfilling prophecy will further help to reinforce the prevalence of negative role models, and these will have adverse effects on members of the South African society, particularly young people, as they are the most vulnerable to celebrities' influence.

In view of the central role that newspapers have in helping create and endorse stereotypes, it is recommended that newspapers report in a way that curbs stereotypes. According to Du Plooy-Ciliers and Olivier (2001:62-65), newspapers can help curb stereotypes by:

- being objective,
- avoiding generalizations,
- focusing on the positive, and
- clarifying the context

If newspapers observe the above four pointers in their representations of celebrities, the readers will increasingly realize that each celebrity is unique and that what some celebrities do does not necessarily reflect on all other celebrities. This realization will enable members of the public to recognize the fallibility of their perceptions, take each context into account and even review old perceptions.

5.9 Effects of representations on celebrities' own behaviour

It is important for the newspapers to provide a more accurate representation to those being represented because it affects how they see themselves and limits their own sense of possibilities (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:368). The way celebrities are portrayed could influence the way they perceive themselves. For example, if there are frequent newspaper reports about celebrities taking drugs before performing on stage, this may perpetuate the belief among celebrities that taking drugs prior to a stage performance is the norm in the music industry. This disturbing belief will increase the likelihood of more musicians, particularly younger musicians, taking drugs prior to performing on stage.

If, however, celebrities are constantly prominently depicted as hard workers and good-hearted people who help their communities and perform other social development functions, this is likely to prompt other celebrities to work harder and also be helpful to their communities. This positive portrayal of celebrities would have served as somewhat of a guide on how celebrities should behave.

To this end, newspapers can play a crucial role in shaping the way celebrities perceive themselves and also how they subsequently behave. Consequently, this could have a positive impact on the public's behaviour.

5.10 The overall effects of media representations on society

Media portrayals exert a strong influence on society. Strong evidence from survey research consistently shows that heavy viewers of television violence are more likely to behave aggressively than light viewers (Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney & Wise, 2006:318). Grossberg *et al* (2006:319) add that viewing television violence may cultivate or shape positive attitudes towards violence and may even activate other aggressive thoughts.

Aitchison and Lewis (2003:146) assert that media celebrities serve both as a reflection of sociolinguistic patterns and as potential role models for their audiences. Media celebrities also provide examples of ways of speaking and interacting, which supplement the face-to-face contacts of our individual daily worlds. So, when newspaper readers read about celebrities hurling insults at each other, some are likely to find these expletives amusing and follow their celebrities' lead.

The reported consequences of exposure to media portrayals of violence include a tendency for viewers to become 'disinhibited' about engaging in violence themselves, a tendency for some direct imitation, and a tendency to become desensitized to violent materials, to fail to feel revulsion from them (Marris & Thornham, 1996:421). It would follow from Marris and Thornham's observation that if tabloid newspaper readers constantly read about celebrities' drug abuse, there are increased chances that some readers would emulate these celebrities by engaging in drug abuse themselves.

Marris and Thornham (1996:421) further cite Hans Eysenck who advocates the judicious employment of censorship to prevent the ill-effects of the portrayal of violence and some kind of sexual conduct in the media. In the same token, newspapers, particularly tabloid newspapers, can alleviate the effects of media portrayals on society's behaviour by limiting the coverage of celebrities' bad behaviour and focusing more on positive and inspirational news about celebrities.

Representation performs the representative function of showing what a particular group is like to others and therefore has a public function (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:368). To this end, newspapers can play an important role in shaping the public's perception of celebrities in their representations

5.11 Recommendations for further research

This study mainly focused on the representations of black celebrities by South African tabloid newspapers, using content analysis. The study attempts to provoke further debate on media representations of celebrities, particularly newspaper portrayals of celebrities. Since this study only focused on South African tabloid newspapers' representations of black celebrities, and only employed the content analysis method, further research is recommended on the representations of celebrities by various types of media such as television, radio and internet as well as the impact of celebrities' representations on South Africans.

5.12 Final conclusion

It is evident from the results of content analysis that the manner in which South African tabloid newspapers portray celebrities leaves a lot to be desired. The results clearly indicate that South African tabloids have a penchant for representing celebrities negatively.

In his column which appeared in the *Sunday Times* (23 August 2009) Mac Maharaj observes that many journalists went overboard in the way they reported about the soon-to-be president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma.

As we have seen in this study, this negative representation is likely to have negative consequences on the South African society's behaviour. Any media text plays an important role in shaping aspects of society and culture such as social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief (Marris & Thornham, 1996:309).

There is little doubt that media representations of celebrities, whether positive or negative, serve as mirrors to how some members of society behave. When newspapers pay more attention to reckless and self destructive behaviour of celebrities, they are virtually promoting those behaviours to the public. To this end, South African newspapers need to acknowledge the power their representations of celebrities have on society.

Tabloid newspapers should judiciously use their greater focus on celebrities' private lives to report on more positive personal stories that focus on the achievements of celebrities, including how some celebrities are living positively with HIV/AIDS.

By exposing more positive aspects of celebrities, South African newspapers will be providing the South African society with the much needed positive role models to look up to. As some people emulate their favourite celebrities' behaviour, these positive portrayals of celebrities will positively shape the South African society's behaviour.

Journalists need to take a moment and reflect on their own conduct to ensure that they learn from their previous manner of reporting and mistakes committed so that they can subsequently make the necessary adjustments (Maharaj, 2009:7).

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