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COMMUNITAS

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Community Communication
and Information Impact

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REDAKSIONEEL/EDITORIAL

Die waarde van volgehoue oop kommunikasie binne en tussen generasies in ‘n veranderende en transformerende Suid-Afrikaanse landskap kan nie geringskat word nie. Die generasie verskynsel is ‘n gegewe in die sin dat dit nie weggewens kan word nie, maar dit is een wat kommunikasiekundiges dikwels in hul kritiek op byvoorbeeld rassistiese gebeurde in die samelewing uit die oog verloor.

The 20th Century Spanish journalist and philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, reminds one about the potential contribution of coexisting generations in enhancing the process of change and development in communities. Of crucial importance in Ortegan generation theory is the quality of communication within each generation and between the different coexisting generations in a community.

Coexisting generations differ not only in age, but also in their relationship to the historical and social circumstances of the time. Ortega’s view is that a life-span of 75 years may be divided into five generations of 15 years each.

Suffice it to say here that it is the communicative interactions in and between the respective second and fourth generations, namely youth (from 15-30 years of age) and domination (from 45-60 years of age), that is in play with regard to racist behaviour in many of our communities. This would also apply to the smallish University of the Free State community in Bloemfontein which attracted international attention and outcry with the publication of the Reitz video earlier this year.

While the youth show an increasing awareness of themselves and their circumstances (including family bonds), they are often influenced (and have been influenced) by the fourth generation (that of domination) whose members more often than not occupy the most important positions in the family hierarchy and in all walks of life, including university life.

I am suggesting that what happens within and between each of the above-mentioned generations during a state of tensional communication relationships, whether it be at home or at university, also determines the condition of communities within society and of society as a whole.

Given a communication climate where meeting each other and opening up to each other predominates, I can imagine a community or society that does not have to deal with a Reitz video or with a President of a Youth League who declares war on those who openly oppose its first choice for the next President of South Africa in 2009.

Dit is duidelik dat dialektiese kommunikasie binne en tussen generasies in ons gemeenskappe gekoester moet word sodat die demokratiese draad nie verloor word nie. Mense moet mekaar ontmoet, al is dit op ‘n smal rif waar slegs die soeke na waarheid die balans sal hou.

Johann C. de Wet

FILM VIEWING IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2007: SOME VEXED QUESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the film-going habits and tastes of the South African public, focusing on which films generated the most income and were viewed by the largest public during 2007. It uses the data generated from cinema-going revenues and television viewership of film to engage the theoretical argument between Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the notion of cultural omnivorousness developed by Peterson and others. The article finds that elements of both Bourdieu's and Peterson's positions can be supported from the figures. In particular, the figures of channel switching among the wealthiest and highest educated viewers (indicated by the highest Living Standards Measurements or LSMs) show that this portion of the television audience shows considerable "restlessness" or range in viewing, supporting Peterson's findings that high cultural standing is often equated with cultural range rather than snobbish limitation. Yet this restlessness or lack of loyalty seems to work according to positions that accord quite well with Bourdieu's notion of habitus. In other words, higher LSMs are not equally restless with all cultural products and show a particular impatience with many South African films, to which lower LSMs are far more loyal — though it may be restricted channel choice that accounts for much of this difference. This study thus opens a methodological inquiry into film tastes and film consumption in a developing country and also offers, through an examination of channel switching, a new insight into the debate around cultural omnivores and taste.

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa, unusually for developing countries, has a set of sophisticated commercial tools for measuring cultural consumption. One great advantage of this research is that it has been conducted for many years, allowing longitudinal comparisons and examinations of how audiences and their preferences have changed and developed over time. In addition, various commercial researchers have developed innovative ways of measuring changes in audience tastes and preferences and in predicting future developments – and are usually, in this author's experience, open and generous with academic researchers.[1] Yet the academic literature in South Africa – at least in the humanities – seems largely ignorant of this data and research, meaning that academic research on cultural consumption, particularly of media, is for the most part underdeveloped and impressionistic. As I have argued in a review of one of the local collections of essays on mass media in South Africa, the cultural studies bias of most local media scholarship all too often ignores the major bodies of evidence available (Glenn 2004).

In trying to answer a very tight question suggested by the editor of this journal (What was the most popular film in South Africa in 2007?), this essay can only suggest the theoretical stakes involved in judging cultural consumption in the 21st century and in the developing world in particular, point to some of the methodological complexities in trying to answer this question, examine the industry evidence, and point to possibilities for further research.

The theoretical stakes

The most sophisticated sociological attempt to map modern cultural consumption is undoubtedly that of Pierre Bourdieu, and notably his *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984). In this work, Bourdieu examined a huge body of data, much of it dating from the 1960s in France, to claim that there were patterns of cultural consumption linked to background, gender, education and professional and economic status – the sum of ingrained influences he categorised as the *habitus*. In many ways, this analysis, which probably shares something with Lazarsfeld's concept of latent class analysis (Sintas & Álvarez 2002), gives us our most fruitful way of using local data as it suggests ways of going beyond categories such as social and economic status (conventionally measured in South Africa by LSMs or Living Standards Measurements), language, or race.

We can note some of the obvious problems in applying Bourdieu to the post-colonial situation. He was analysing a fairly homogeneous, mono-lingual society with universal literacy and a strong unitary educational system. He did not have to worry about foreign influences or cultural imperialism or multi-lingualism or globalisation or consider a media universe that was as fragmented as ours is. Though Bourdieu never, as far as I know, examined the problem of multiple fields directly, he did, in an interview he gave me shortly after the French version of *Distinction* was published, say that even in a society like post-colonial Algeria, the literary field would assemble the different traditions of the past into one united field. Insofar as the commercial analysts are concerned, this is the situation for media here and now: All media are analysed into one body of information.

Bourdieu was also dealing with a simpler media world. In his work, for example, he was able to draw a clear distinction between cinema and television viewership, showing that the former was more linked to reading novels and higher cultural status, while the latter was seen as a more typically escapist and a lower cultural status form of consumption. In a world where most films are undoubtedly seen on television screens, and where many televisions series (such as *The Sopranos* or *The West Wing* or *The Simpsons*) have a greater sophistication than most popular films, these judgments seem to come from a simpler cultural landscape. And might it also be that the French are more hierarchical and judgmental about cultural consumption than other nationalities? Can one generalise about patterns of consumption across cultures and eras?

Recent work, based on several groundbreaking articles by Richard Peterson and various co-authors, suggests that in many modern cases, it may be that the highbrow snob and cultural dichotomies of old have given way to a more modern phenomenon and figure: the cultural omnivore (Peterson & Simkus 1992; Peterson & Kern 1995; Peterson & Kern 1996). In this understanding of cultural consumption, the privileged figure expresses his or her cultural being by sampling widely across culture or cultures rather than sticking to a safe zone of cultural exclusivity. Nor does this seem to be only a North American phenomenon, as research from many cultures suggests that modern media – and, undoubtedly, technological devices like the remote control and satellite television – may be a common factor in breaking up old divisions of culture (Alderson *et al*. 2007; Chan & Goldthorpe 2007; Torche 2007; Sintas & Álvarez 2002; Sintas & Álvarez 2006).

In its simplified form, this suggests that we have two possibilities. At the extreme versions, we have quite clearly defined strata (an intellectual with high symbolic capital who goes to Cinema Nouveau, watches art movies, reads serious novels, watches little or no TV, and attends events like ballet and opera, along with the wealthy person with less symbolic capital who watches and probably plays golf, watches financial channels on DStv or mainstream Hollywood material, and those with less financial and symbolic capital who watch wrestling on e.tv, read the tabloids, and watch whatever movie is available), or we have a cheerful cultural promiscuity (almost everybody channel hopping and watching big sporting events and Chuck Norris and the latest Hollywood action movie).

While research on South African cinema viewing allows us the chance to test these models against each other, it should be clear that they are by no means mutually exclusive. It may be that, as Sintas and Álvarez found in Spain, Bourdieu's model applies more strongly to older consumers while Peterson's omnivores appear more strongly among younger consumers – particularly given the ways in which young South Africans have been much more heavily exposed to international global film culture than their elders. It should also be clear that cultural omnivorousness may simply be the result of means: One cannot sample a range of films without a television set, let alone satellite television, or a DVD player. (Some recent industry research suggests, for example, that the vast majority of SABC viewers are frustrated by their lack of choice

rather than contented with it.) And cultural omnivorousness may not tell us very much about habitual or preferred behaviour. Does it mean that omnivores sample a wide range on an ongoing basis in a kind of itchy cultural consumptive restlessness, or sample briefly before settling on a repertoire that may be quite compatible with Bourdieu's *habitus*? The South African data, which breaks film viewing on television down into 15-minute segments, allows us to draw quite complex conclusions about the relationship between cultural and social background and cultural sampling – and, thus, cultural omnivorousness.

While my own work in literary and media studies draws more strongly on Bourdieu (Glenn & Knaggs 2008; Glenn 1994), this article is methodologically pragmatic or agnostic, willing to combine the best insights from Bourdieu and Peterson. Peterson's work certainly resonates with the desire, particularly among young South Africans in the new South Africa, to experience a range of opportunities, to break out of cultural confines, to experience living in change. Yet, might this be typical only of certain groups: youth, upwardly mobile, linguistically open? The work of Burgess and Mattes suggests that something like this might be the case – that, in other words, the *habitus* of young South Africans is to be omnivorous (Burgess *et al*. 2002) While the omnivore model may suggest that we have moved to a more democratic, shared, open culture, it may be that we have exchanged one form of cultural division (linguistic, racial) for another (class and financial). But what does the evidence show?

TWO APPROACHES TO FILM POPULARITY

There seem to be two ways to measure popularity: The amount of money the film made, or how many people saw it. Neither of these is easy to gauge, for reasons that will become clear.

Show me the money

If we want to measure the most popular film of 2007, the available research suggests Hollywood's major concern: revenue. Thus the Motion Picture Producers' Association (http://www.mpaa.org/researchStatistics.asp) announced the five top grossing box office successes of 2007, where for the first time, all four top films grossed over $300 million: *Spider-Man 3, Shrek the Third, Transformers*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End,* while *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* was just below that figure. While this record figure might seem a cause for celebration, cautious observers pointed out that the record gross reflected a dollar that had lost ground against currencies like the Euro and increased prices rather than increased attendance at cinemas. The average American only sees six movies in cinemas a year and consumes about 150 times more audio-visual material at home than in the movie house.

In South Africa, figures provided by Ster-Kinekor show that the leading 2007 box office success was *Shrek the Third* with other mainstream Hollywood films some way behind.

TABLE 1: LEADING FILMS IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2007

	Release	Title	No. of prints	Life to date		Attendances
				Net	Gross	
1	29/06/2007	*Shrek the Third*	111	19 851 557	22 630 775	1 091 693
2	11/07/2007	*Harry Potter & The Order of the Phoenix*	87	12 266 849	13 984 208	620 000
3	28/12/2007	*I am Legend*	65	12 042 187	13 728 093	650 471
4	21/09/2007	*Ratatouille*	80	11 346 046	12 934 493	636 308
5	31/08/2007	*Rush Hour 3*	70	11 171 453	12 735 456	691 571

[Chart courtesy of Ster-Kinekor]

Shrek the Third made R22.6 million (including VAT) at the box office with almost 1.1 million people having seen the film – with attendance more than 50% greater than that for the other top films. Overall, the cinema industry generated R570 million in 2007 with attendances of 27.1 million. But, given a total population of over 40 million, it is clear that cinema attendance per person is far lower than the American norm and that going to cinemas is not the major way of consuming film here either. Another way of putting the comparison is that the top grossing film here made about 1% of what it made in the US, even though our population is about 15% of theirs.

What the South African list suggests is that the cinema audience here, like that in the US, is heavily driven by treats for middle-class children and by large budget special effects films. The success of *I am Legend* and *Ratatouille* suggests also that the audience for movie-going may overall be more sophisticated than the average American audience.

Another point worth making is that film success here does to some extent a self-fulfilling prophecy, as shown by the number of prints ordered. Past experience, international success, and in some cases prior research determine how many prints of a particular film local distributors commit to and this, in turn, shapes how widely the film in question is shown and, quite probably, how many people come to see it. This is not to suggest that any highly hyped film will work, but it does remind us of the huge proportion of Hollywood costs devoted to marketing, pre-release publicity, and the promotion of hit films.

In dealing with total revenue from a film, there are a host of questions. The US box office is now only about a third of total international box office, and then box office revenue is only a minority (one estimate is 20%) of the total revenue of a film. After international box office come DVD sales, both to consumers and to DVD rental agencies – both locally and internationally. After that new films would be sold to pay-TV channels, then eventually to broadcast television channels. Thus, it may be that the

final success of a film may only be known much later than the year of its release. One example is the ongoing success of films in the Bourne series in the US with new releases seeming to trigger an interest in earlier films in the series. Nor do we have any reliable figures for the amount of money made from pornographic movies, either distributed through DVDs or on the Internet, though 2007 seemed to mark a year of crisis for the DVD porn industry, along with estimates that the adult-movie industry would try to turn to the Third World for revenue, given the trend in the US for free or very cheap broadband material to replace paid for porn.

While we have reasonably reliable figures for box office in the US and internationally, and some informed figures for DVD sales in the US, little material seems available on other sales and costs and any figures would be complicated by issues such as trade confidentiality. And, once again, sales figures raise complex issues. In the US, the lavish and expensive multi-DVD BBC documentary series *Planet Earth* would have rated in the top ten grossing DVDs, but in terms of units sold, it ranked only 40th. Are certain kinds of DVDs likely to be watched by bigger audiences or more often? In South Africa, a recent complaint has been made against local DVD rental companies for using parallel imports and thus "invading" the time which should be devoted to local box office. There seems no reliable way in South Africa of aggregating income from DVD sales or rentals as there is no central body or dominant industry player able to give a clear sign of total trends. Local franchises seem to keep their own figures and so we can only guess at DVD rentals from other data that will appear later.

The major international trend now, however, will be for the whole cycle of distribution to be compressed and globalised. Already, the bulk of Hollywood films are released simultaneously across the globe to avoid piracy and the problem of legitimate local vendors and movie-house owners suffering from that. This is likely to make it much easier to calculate global appeal and trends in future than in the past, where there have been quite long delays between US and South African distribution.

Viewership of films

When we get to the question of gauging the popularity of a film by viewership, we have far more useful and sophisticated local material. Through the South Africa Advertising Research Foundation's (SAARF) AMPS profiles (All Media Products Survey), we have a strong indication of how many South Africans attend films in movie houses, or watch rented or their own DVDs, and we also have, in their television ratings or TAMS measurements of which the most popular films shown on television in South African in 2007.

Yet we face tough methodological difficulties. Do we judge a film by total attendance, or by individual viewers, discounting, for example, the legendary viewers who watched *Titanic* countless times? What are we to make of DVDs where we have some indication of how many people have watched movies during the previous week, fortnight, and month, but very little idea of how many movies they have watched? What about illegal copies of material? (In the US, there is even a website that calculates how many pirated

copies have been made, and here the figure approximates the best seller list fairly closely.) What are we to make of the measurements of television viewership which use sophisticated measurements to indicate how much of any film viewers watch? Are two people watching the first half of a movie and then turning off really equivalent to one viewer who sat through the whole thing in a movie house? More importantly, perhaps, is the question of when we judge the success or failure of a film. If many of the 2007 box office releases will only be shown on "free" television in South Africa in 2008 or 2009 or even later, might it be too early to tell what the most "popular" film of 2007 was? Are there filmic classics, whose worth has to be measured, not over the short term, but over decades – a *Tsotsi* or *Little Miss Sunshine* that will, in time, come to be seen as a *Casablanca* or *Bicycle Thief*?

Let us try to place the different kinds of viewership in relation to each other. In the US, the figures for 2007 suggest that the average American spent less than 1% of time viewing filmed material, both television and cinema, in movie houses – 13 hours per year of a massive total of nearly 2000 hours. Nor did DVD rented or owned viewership come out as a major factor, reaching only an average of 64 hours per year. The vast bulk of viewing was of cable or satellite and broadcast TV, with consumer Internet broadcasts far more significant than either movie-going or DVD viewership.

South Africans as cinema goers

The South African 2007 AMPS figures give a very clear picture of cinema attendance. Of about 31 million possible cinema goers aged 16 and over, only about 1.7 million had attended a cinema during the preceding four weeks, and 559 000 in the previous seven days. If we return to the Ster-Kinekor figures, our average annual attendance in cinema is less that one viewing per viewer over 16. Cinema attendance is strongly positively correlated with income and with youth. In LSMs 1-5, cinema attendance is negligible, under 1% of the group, till LSM 4 (1.4%), picking up to 5.1% in LSM 5 and rising sharply till, in LSM 10, some 24% of viewers had attended cinema during the past four weeks. Cinema attendance (over the past four weeks) also seems to drop steadily with age, from about 9% in the 16-24 age group to 2.4% in the 50+ age group.

We thus see that if we stick with box office as the indication of popularity in South Africa, we will have a sample that is doubly skewed: towards a wealthy, still predominantly non-African, youthful sample. It is highly likely that this group will find the dominant international media of the day attractive and follow international trends and tastes quite naturally.

South African DVD and VHS viewership of film

The AMPS 2007 figures for hired video or DVD viewership during the past four weeks came as a surprise to this author. Of 31 million potential viewers, only 3%, or fewer than a million (932 000), were estimated to have hired material or watched hired material in places like hotels – and, of course, many DVD or video hires are not of films but of television series. The figure for viewing during the past seven days, however, was higher than that for going to cinema (726 000 against 559 000). It seems, in other words, that hired video or DVD has fewer total adherents than movie-going does, but

they are watching more regularly. Given the prevalence of video hire outlets across South Africa, it seems likely that many of those watching are watching a significant number of films, but the AMPS figures do not give this detail.

The low numbers reported as hiring film material is particularly surprising given the very high number of households that report having a DVD player and/or video player. Of some 11 million households, over 5 million (46%) reported having a DVD player in the home, while over 2 million (22%) report having home theatre systems. It may be that in economically tough times, the main function of the home theatre system is to make television viewing more attractive, while the DVD player, as an increasingly affordable item, is used only occasionally, but it seems more likely that kinds of viewing are taking place that the figures are not capturing accurately.

What, then, are these people watching? The usual suspects would be bought DVDs, pirated material, and perhaps pornography. As the South African market for bought DVDs seems relatively small, it may be that the phenomenon of "ripped" DVDs of hit series like *Grey's Anatomy*¸ *Desperate Housewives,* or *Prison Break* may account for a lot of use of the DVD player. The viewing of international material pirated off the Internet and then exchanged among friends is clearly widespread among students and the IT community in South Africa – one graduate student pointed out that the international hit series *Heroes* was voted second most popular series on a local Facebook group even before the series had been shown in South Africa. This discrepancy between the potential for DVD viewing and the hiring of DVDs needs further investigation and it is a pity that the SAARF All Media Products Survey will no longer include questions about the use of DVDs.

Consumption of film through DVD and video is strongly linked, not surprisingly, to income, reaching some 10.8% of the LSM 10 group, or 208 000 as opposed to LSMs 1-4 (all under 1%). The correlation of viewership with age is not as marked as with cinema going, however, with the 25-34 age group at 3.6% of the group marginally ahead of the 16-24 and 35-49 groups, who come in at about 3%. The over 50 age group, once again, shows a drop – to 1.5% of the age cohort.

What we do not know is whether the use of DVDs and videos for young children might show some surprising trends. This, according to industry sources, is the major genre for bought DVDs, and in the US, for example, the animated comedy *Happy Feet* in 2007 outsold movies that had done better at the box office. Jan du Plessis suggests that one reason that Disney children's specials do not do better when shown on television is that so many of the potential viewers have the film available and thus are able to watch in their own time – a case of children driving the on-demand viewing phenomenon.

We do not, in other words, have any strong way of measuring viewership of films through DVDs, but it seems likely that most DVD hiring agencies take the lead from Hollywood success and buy stock accordingly. While there may be a few minority or specialist stores such as DVD Nouveau or others dealing with classics or independent film, there seems little reason to suggest that DVD viewership here will do much to alter the pecking order established by box office success.

Watching films on television

When it comes to film viewership, we face the methodological challenges mentioned earlier: How to judge partial or fragmented viewership of a film and what to do about the time lag between box office and distribution on "free" television. In addition, there are contingent problems which are central to the success of a film: the amount of publicity given to a forthcoming film; what its competition is; when it is shown.

Nonetheless, an analysis of the top 15 rated films shown on South African television in 2007 reveals some key phenomena:

TABLE 2: TOP 15 RATED FILMS ON SOUTH AFRICAN TELEVISION IN 2007

Rank	Title	Channel	Audience minute %	Audience total weight	Audience reach %	Audience total reach %	Year of release
1	*Tsotsi*	SABC 1	20.5	5,527,534	30.4%	8,203,194	2005
2	*Sarafina*	SABC 1	19.4	5,232,366	28.5%	7,668,781	1992
3	*Rush Hour*	SABC 1	15.4	4,154,529	28.2%	7,588,842	1998
4	*Mr Bones*	SABC 1	15.2	4,087,154	26.7%	7,181,459	2001
5	*Malunde*	SABC 1	14.3	3,845,325	27.4%	7,392,418	2001
6	*In Hell*	e.tv	14.2	3,825,855	24.7%	6,648,078	2003
7	*Hijack Stories*	SABC 1	13.9	3,738,134	26.4%	7,099,583	2000
8	*Like Mike*	e.tv	13.8	3,714,352	24.7%	6,659,808	2002
9	*Die another day*	e.tv	13.5	3,635,330	27.7%	7,471,703	2002
10	*Disorderlies*	SABC 1	13.3	3,583,458	24.8%	6,678,219	1987
11	*Smal Street*	SABC 1	16.5	3,184,364	21.0%	4,044,642	
12	*Noko*	SABC 1	15.0	2,893,801	20.4%	3,941,300	
13	*The Burden*	SABC 1	14.5	2,789,348	22.1%	4,265,888	
14	*Jackie Chan's First Strike*	SABC 1	13.1	2,571,447	24.8%	4,855,856	1996
15	*Baas van die Plaas*	SABC 1	13.3	2,565,166	19.5%	3,772,155	

The columns reflect the following in order: the ranking, based on weighted viewership or the AMR (Audience Minute Rating percentage shown in the 4th column), the title, the channel, the AMR as a %, the AMR as a weighted number, the total reach as a percentage, the total reach as an absolute figure, and the year of release. (The four films without release dates are all local short films for which little information is available.) The relationship between weighted audience and reach is important as it gives us key indicators about channel hopping or incomplete viewing and thus a useful proxy for cultural omnivorousness.

In the case of *Tsotsi*, for example, the ratio between weighted audience and reach is about two thirds. In the AMPS figures, over 8 million South Africans watched some of *Tsotsi*, but in weighting those figures for those who stopped early, switched channels, or came in late, the weighted figure drops to the equivalent of over 5.5 million viewers. This retention or loyalty or "stickability" factor is higher for the very short films (for obvious reasons) and the South African material than for old action movies, like *Die another day*, where the ratio between weighted and reach is less than half. (Candice Ulrich of AGB Nielsen points out that this factor is seen as increasingly important in industry calculations.)

What conclusions can we draw from this list? The first is that there are three genres that dominate: South African long films; South African short films; and action movies. (*Disorderlies*, as a comic action movie, suggests that this genre could be exploited further.) One could argue that *Sarafina* is a Hollywood rather than a local film, but as it was based on a local musical and has strong South African associations, it seems easier to treat it as a local film. The second conclusion is that the major audience for film in South Africa is the SABC 1 audience, with e.tv pushing into contention – though it should be noted that a significant portion of the viewers of SABC 1 and e.tv watch the channels through DStv. (The reach of Spike Lee's *Inside Man* on M-Net, its most successful film of 2007, was only about 10% of the reach of *Tsotsi*.) The third conclusion is that this is an audience with a hunger for South African material, as a closer examination of *Tsotsi* and *Sarafina* reveals.

In the case of *Tsotsi*, the Oscar-award winning foreign film for 2005, the SABC was, unusually, able to bid to show the film before it had gone to pay-television. They paid heavily to show the film much sooner than any public broadcaster would usually have been able to as the makers, as an independent studio, did not have to honour the usual Hollywood position that pay-TV sales take precedence over public broadcasters. Although the SABC paid a premium for the rights, Jan du Plessis argues that it did not do enough to promote the film as a premium showing in August 2007. Had it been heavily promoted, it seems likely that it might have beaten all comers quite handily. In the case of *Sarafina*, it clearly benefited from its scheduling – on 30 December in the midst of the holiday season on a Sunday night – and it showed even higher retention rates of viewers than *Tsotsi*.

We can thus probably conclude that the most watched film in South Africa in 2007 was *Tsotsi*, which is a positive note for South African cinema. (It received strong ratings in 2008 when shown on SABC 3 in March 2008, emerging as the top-rated film shown on SABC 3 in the first quarter of 2008, with a weighted rating of about half the SABC audience.) Had the short films been omitted, a film like *Yesterday* might have crept into

the top ratings as it had a weighted reach of over 13%. This suggests that there is a hunger for top quality material about South Africa, perhaps stimulated in the SABC 1 audience by hit series such as *Generations*.

CULTURAL OMNIVORES, CHANNEL SWITCHERS AND CULTURAL CROSSOVERS

But what of the theoretical debate? When we delve more deeply into the figures and the ways in which various groups move in and out of programmes, it seems that we have several overlapping demographics or indeed movie-watching classes. The figures make some trends very clear:

TABLE 3: TRENDS IN MOVIE-WATCHING CLASSES

		Adults: LSM 9-10				Adults: LSM 9-10			
	Description (grouped)	**AMR %**	**AMR**	**RCH %**	**RCH**	**AMR %**	**AMR**	**RCH %**	**RCH**
1	*Tsotsi*	3.70	146,420	13.1	515,008	15.3	642,709	30.1	1,263,521
2	*Sarafina*	2.50	102,199	8.3	333,654	15.7	632,498	25.7	1,035,965
3	*Rush Hour*	5.30	209,631	12.1	483,374	16.4	657,535	31.1	1,251,320
4	*Mr Bones*	5.50	217,605	14.7	580,335	12.1	496,285	26.0	1,068,232
5	*Malunde*	3.40	132,715	13.7	538,225	8.9	371,811	23.6	984,523
6	*In Hell*	12	477,100	21.7	861,114	16.7	684,600	29.3	1,205,237
7	*Hijack Stories*	2.00	77,150	9.1	357,704	13.8	571,995	27.2	1,125,368
8	*Like Mike*	6.50	258,127	17.8	707,550	17.3	709,550	29.2	1,200,164
9	*Die another day*	10.4	409,606	24.0	947,611	16.8	684,507	32.0	1,303,993
10	*Disorderlies*	2.40	93,243	8.9	349,883	10.2	417,662	22.1	904,960
11	*Smal Street*	3.40	125,834	5.3	196,627	11.9	415,001	18.0	631,460
12	*Noko*	2.90	106,277	5.7	210,742	13.7	482,928	19.1	674,337
13	*The Burden*	4.30	159,834	7.4	274,549	13.9	491,302	21.5	758,229
14	*First Strike*	5.10	202,287	11.8	466,960	11.7	454,596	26.7	1,042,828
15	*Baas van die Plaas*	3.00	110,735	5.9	218,221	11.0	386,494	18.2	636,513

The first point to make is that this is decidedly a mass and not an elite audience. The weighted audience for a film like *Tsotsi* among the wealthiest and best educated audience, the LSM 9-10 segment, is only 3.7%, though the reach was a hefty 13.1%. We also see that the highest LSM audience has very little taste for South African material. In the case of the longer South African films, the retention or "stickability" factor is only about 25-30%. In other words, about an equivalent of one in four high LSM viewers watches the whole film, as opposed to two out of three for all viewers. In the case of the middle of the road James Bond action thriller, *Die another day*, the weighted factor is about 43% of the total viewership, while of the longer films, the Jean-Claude van Damme prison action movie *In Hell* proved the most "stickable" with the weighted audience equalling some 55% of the total reach.

As we drop in LSMs to LSM 7-8, we see a slightly different adherence factor. A film like *Sarafina* does much better, with its weighted audience at over 60% of its total reach, while *Tsotsi* holds half its audience. The percentage holding onto *In Hell* is almost identical to the higher LSM audience, suggesting that in action movie tastes, these groups, or significant sub-groups within them, are very similar. If we drop down to the LSM 5-6, then the weighted total proportion to reach is much higher throughout, but with a difference that is most strongly marked with *Tsotsi*, where over 70% of the total reach is recorded for the film as a whole and nearly 70% for *Sarafina*. In the case of LSM 1-4, though the universe is smaller and some of the figures less reliable, the figure is roughly 75%. These differences are even more marked if we look at the figure for English speakers (mostly white and Indian South Africans) where the numbers viewing are much lower and the weighted ratio for a film like *Tsotsi* drops to almost 20% of the reach and to 15% or less for *Sarafina*. Afrikaans or both language speakers (typically white or Coloured South Africans) have higher absolute ARs and also "stickability".

We could use these figures to support both the Bourdieu and the Peterson perspectives. Clearly, wealthier viewers have more choices and are less likely to watch a film through, suggesting that cultural omnivores have remote controls and use them to travel through channels, sampling a range of material. But, at the same time, they are not equally likely to abandon all films or skip through all films on an equal basis.

It seems clear that South African material here is not seen as being as desirable by the higher LSMs, suggesting that the wealth of material at their disposal and their cultural position distances them from local productions or material seen as dealing primarily with black South Africans or even multi-cultural situations here (as in the case of *Malunde*). English-speaking South Africans seem even more distant from local material than other groups.

We could suggest that Bourdieu's original insights might still be worth exploring here. It seems clear that in many black households, viewership of television (whether of news or other programmes) is a family affair – in part because of economic and space constraints, in part because of lack of choices. In this situation, it makes much more sense that if a film is switched on, it will be watched through by all the members of a

household. In the case of a more privileged household, with other entertainment options (computer games, other television sets, Internet, books, iPods), it may be that an individual "sampling" or idle flipping through channels mode may predominate. The style of watching is thus something that would benefit from more anthropological investigation, but Bourdieu's argument that cultural capital manifests itself in a kind of aesthetic or even playful or knowing style of watching seems worth further investigation.

Second, it may be that many some black South Africans felt that they should over report or even watch South African material viewership out of cultural patriotism, particularly as *Tsotsi* had won an Oscar. But it seems more likely that this increased viewership rather than reported viewership.

Does this cultural distance in ways of viewing film suggest that we are condemned to an ongoing cultural apartheid, destined never to share the same culture, with white and/or wealthy viewers indifferent or hostile to South African material or productions? Some evidence certainly suggests that South Africans remain racially and linguistically divided, particularly in their attitudes to what we might call cultural and social politics. In Elihu Katz's terms, we have not been delivered from, but into, segmentation (Katz 1996). Even in watching the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, audiences remained divided with figures and racial divisions in some ways very similar to those watching South African films like *Tsotsi*. It may be that the local Afrikaans and African-language audiences are more loyal to local productions and that English-language material that is palpably South African or draws on other languages will benefit from this kind of loyalty, while English speakers are more likely to see South African cultural products simply as one offering among others.

Yet there is certainly evidence that South Africans share a good deal of their film culture and that this culture is one of the closest things we have to a common culture. Considerable evidence suggests that Hollywood genres, conventions and production values dominate. In their reactions to television advertising, according to local media analysts Millward Brown South Africa (formerly Impact Information), South Africans have been becoming more similar to one another.

CONCLUSION

Are there film genres or figures with a genuine appeal across racial and economic groupings? Might it be that they give us an idea of what South African films should be to reach a large local audience across racial barriers, or what kinds of foreign films or figures might offer models?

Two figures are worth considering: Leon Schuster and Chuck Norris. Schuster's film *Mr Bones* did well at box office, was shown widely on DStv, and drew large black and lower LSM audiences. What did Schuster do right? In playing a range of South African roles, perhaps Schuster makes fun of local identities in a way that people find liberating or intriguing, allowing people both to claim him as one of them yet feel unthreatened by him.

Similarly, Chuck Norris's long-running series, *Walker, Texas Ranger*, has proved more or less impervious to opposition as a late-night e.tv series, drawing a surprising number of high LSM DStv viewers. Jan du Plessis says ruefully that he has thrown everything at it (including *Dexter* and *The Tudors*), but that Walker rules. Clearly also, Chuck Norris has entered some kind of mythic status which helps drive a mix of amused and self-mocking admiration. Recently, e.tv reached the end of this series, only to announce that they would start the whole cycle all over again.

It may be that South Africans are looking for a genre which is at once strongly African, but also optimistic and a lot gentler than most local offerings. Jan du Plessis points out that when given a choice on Sunday nights, most M-Net viewers prefer romantic comedies to sterner stuff such as *Munich* or heavy dramas. If one were to predict, it seems that something like Alexander McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, soon to be a film and 13 part detective series, might be the kind of thing to unite South African viewers.

Endnotes

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THE "MODAL GRID" UNDERLYING LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, TRANSLATION AND THE LEARNING OF A NEW LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Most modern linguists emphasise the fact that, as De Saussure states it, the "bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary". Although this emphasis may prompt one to fathom that language use as such is com¬pletely arbitrary, there are diverse considerations supporting the view that language is also co-determined by an underlying, constant framework. The latter reveals the two basic dimensions of human experience, reflected within language in the presence of verbs, nouns (and property terms; attributes). Verbs and property terms are made possible by the multiple functional domains of our experience related to the how of things and not to their concrete what. These aspectual (ontic) domains actually serve as points of entry to our experience of and reflection upon things and events within reality, expressed in linguistic patterns. As constant cadres (frameworks) these points of entry make possible (co-condition) the rich variability found in different languages. De Saussure already had to concede, in an almost contradictory fashion, that there is both an element of mutability and immutability attached to language. It will be argued that the horizon of the functional conditions of language ultimately underlies meaningful communication and that acknowledging it enables a new approach both to translation and the learning of new languages. In conclusion a remark about methodology is made.

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INTRODUCTION

The metaphor of the "modal grid" employed in the title of this article aims at giving an account of indispensable *ontonomic* conditions for language and communication. Scholars within the field of the communication sciences may find the metaphor *modal grid* and the term *ontonomic* as unfamiliar.[1] We start by explaining the meaning of the term *ontonomic*. In a later context we shall give an account of the metaphor *modal grid*.

"On" is the Greek word for *what exist*, *what is* – and "nomos" is the Greek word for "law" in the broad sense of the term (not restricted to its *jural* meaning). The most familiar word derived from the root "on" is the philosophical study of what is, namely *ontology*. Whereas the term *ontology* acquired an encompassing scope applicable to whatever there is, its equivalent *cosmology* appeared to be restricted to the limited perspective of a *physical* account of the origin and genesis of the (physical) world.

Traditionally *ontology* is therefore related to "being" – intending to capture the concrete existence of whatever there may be. Since Aristotle the discipline within which ontological questions are raised bears the name *metaphysics* and a contemporary author such as Loux refers to things that are – and immediately relates them to the question what the categories are in terms of which we think about what is real, about *reality* (Loux 2002:16). The moment categories enter the scene we are confronted with the basic human ability to understand and to *conceive*, to acquire *concepts* and on that basis to be able to *classify*. The first question that will turn out to be of crucial importance for an understanding of language, communication and translation is: *What is entailed in acts of classification and categorisation?*

Think of our first experiences as human beings. As we begin to explore our self-consciousness we realise that we live within a family and that there are sleeping rooms in the house. The normal daily routine of going to bed in the evening and getting up again the next morning presupposes our cognitive ability to *identify* the bed and to *distinguish* it from other furniture in the bedroom. Without knowing what a bed is and without realising that a chair is not a bed, one may find one's pants in the bed and oneself hanging over the chair. Identifying and distinguishing this bed from the chair over there presupposes an understanding of the general (*universal*) attributes of chairs and beds, enabling us to conceptualise the categories of *chairs* and *beds*.[2] In other words, observing a bed *as* a bed rests on the concept of a bed (implying, amongst others, the property: "something to sleep on"). Likewise, noticing a chair as a chair depends on the prior concept of a chair (implying, amongst others, the property: "something to sit on"). In these minimal indications, enough is found to highlight the fact that classifying this chair and that bed into the categories of chairs and beds, requires both *similarities* and *differences*. Both chairs and beds are cultural artifacts, in our comparison captured by the anonymous reference to "something" – the moment of similarity between them, for they are *things* in an *ontic* sense. But although we are referring in both instances to "something," the two "things" are different, for the one is a chair and the other a bed.

Categorising and discerning similarities are normally reflected in language, in the *designation* of what has been subsumed under a particular category and on that basis it can be *communicated* to (shared with or even translated for) others. It seems natural to assume that things (i.e. natural and social entities) exist out there, i.e. that they have an *ontic* nature. Stones, clouds, planets, galaxies, flowers, trees, dogs, cats, human beings, artifacts, and societal collectivities are all concretely existing things displaying an ontic nature. However, conceding that there are concretely existing things (and processes) does not settle the subsequent issue: what is the *status* of these categories themselves? Are they merely inventions of the human mind, constructions of our understanding, or do they have an ontic existence too?

In the tradition of the early Greek thinker Parmenides we find categories such as *unity*, *truth*, *beauty* and *goodness* in the thought of Plato. Aristotle, in turn, commences his work *Categoriae* by postulating the existence of a primary substance that is purely individual and supposedly lies at the basis of all the accidental categories – namely *essence*, *quantity*, *quality*, *relation*, *place*, *time*, *position*, *state*, *activity* and *passivity*.[3] During the Middle Ages this Platonic and Aristotelian legacies were continued until a radical reorientation emerged since the 14th century. Descartes (1596-1650), for instance, claims that number and all universals are mere *modes of thought* (*Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, LVIII – see Descartes 1965a:187). This conviction holds that only concrete entities are real but that their properties are *human constructions*.

In spite of this switch an essential element of the classical Greek legacy remained in force. Plato started by assuming a transcendent world of *static being* populated by immutable ontic forms (*eidè*) copied in the world of becoming (*genesis*). During the early Middle Ages Neoplatonism mediated the transformation of these static *eidè* into the original designs present in the *Divine Intellect* according to which visible things were formed. With the transition to the Renaissance and the rise of modern humanism these ideas (universal forms) in the *Divine Mind* became immanent to the human mind – known as *idea innate* (innate ideas). Descartes adhered to the *apriori* nature of these innate ideas, supposedly present in human understanding prior to any experience.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION – AN APRIORI HUMAN FACULTY: CHOMSKY

The view that language represents an *apriori* human faculty derives from a revival of the notion of *idea innate* during the 20th century in the thought of the linguist Noam Chomsky. Stegmüller employs a neat comparison in order to explain Chomsky's understanding of this issue. He compares acquiring/mastering a language with the complexities involved in studying differential geometry and quantum physics.[4] Whereas it would seem to be far-fetched to believe that a two-year old boy is mastering the said disciplines, no one considers it strange to hear that such a boy is mastering his mother tongue.

The remarkable element in this story is that Chomsky advanced a number of empirical arguments supporting his conviction that learning an ordinary language cannot be accounted for merely in terms of an empirical process. What is at stake is the mastery

of a grammatical structure and linguistic rules from an apparently insufficient amount of linguistic data and to this Chomsky adds that even a child can generate more sentences than there are seconds in the life of any average person. Keeping in mind the comparison between mastering a complex scientific theory and learning a language, one should imagine that differences in intelligence would be significant in the former case, but strangely enough the same does not apply to language acquisition, for large differences in intelligence result in negligible differences in linguistic competence. Furthermore, the linguistic experience to which the child is exposed is not only limited but also largely degenerate, and notwithstanding this the child masters the principles and rules governing the formation of meaningful sentences and the interpretation of linguistic utterances. Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that language is learned during a stage in which the child is not capable of achieving anything comparable. The absence of any direct instruction and above all the fact that many children succeed in learning to speak without actively participating in talking activities ought to be mentioned as well. Besides, once the basic linguistic competency is mastered the child can creatively generate meaningful sentences never heard before – ruling out any idea that language merely emerges through acts of imitating what is heard. All-in-all these considerations are used by Chomsky in support of his claim to that an *apriori* element is inherent to the faculty of language-acquisition.

In order to appreciate this claim properly we need to investigate the idea of an ontic *apriori* dimension of human experience.

AN ONTIC APRIORI DIMENSION: THE MODAL GRID OF REALITY

De Saussure is particularly known for his view that language is an arbitrary construction and that the bond between the *signifier* and the *signified* is equally arbitrary. Consequently, according to him also the "linguistic sign is arbitrary". He holds the view that the word "symbol" is not appropriate as a designation of the "linguistic sign" because

> [O]ne characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot (De Saussure 1966:68).

In a letter to J. Gallois (by the end of 1672), Leibniz pursued the tradition of Aristotle and Boethius when he used the term "symbol" as synonymous with "nota". As an arbitrary sign, it serves as a genus concept for linguistic expressions and written signs, including mathematical signs. The epistemology of the 18th century combined this view of an arbitrary sign with the theory of *symbolical knowledge* (*cognitio symbolica*). Meier-Oeser mentions the "organon" of Lambert (1764) in which an ambivalence can be observed regarding the purely arbitrary nature of the sign on the one hand and its co-determination by relations or analogies (*sensory image* and *symbolic knowledge*) on the other. He also refers to Kant, who conceived the symbol as "a sign of signs" – although

Kant opened up another avenue by associating a symbol with *allegory* and *metaphor* (see the Meier-Oeser 1998: 718-720).[5]

Of course there are also other thinkers in the 20th century who used the term *symbol* in the sense of *freely chosen signs*. Some of them are of the opinion that language is the particular characteristic that distinguishes humankind from animals. By means of language humanity owns and utilises a consciousness of the *past* and the *future*, a consciousness including the knowledge of the individual person's limited lifespan.[6] Animal communication does not refer to the past or the future. It refers to the vital here and now. For this reason, animal signs strictly have one content only for every single sign.

Cassirer (cf. 1944) introduces the well-known distinction between *signals* and *symbols*. The former belongs to the *physical world of being* and the latter is a part of the *human world of meaning*, the world of *human culture*. Von Bertalanffy says that symbolism "if you will, is the divine spark distinguishing the most perfectly adapted animal from the poorest specimen of the human race" (Von Bertalanffy 1968: 20). In order to identify symbols, he uses three criteria:

- Symbols are representative, i.e., the symbol stands in one way or the other for th thing symbolised;
- Symbols are transmitted by tradition, i.e., by the learning processes of the individual in contrast to innate instincts; and
- Symbols are freely created (Von Bertalanffy 1968: 15; cf. 1968a: 134).

Language positions itself in-between the *grasp* of the hand and the *purview* of the eye – the eye as the "organ of making-something-immediately-present". Thus, in various respects, the hand and the eye become *dispensable* (cf. Hofer & Altner 1972: 203; Plessner 1975: 378). Animal communication, according to Plessner, does not know a "mediation through objects" (Plessner 1975: 380; cf.379). Surely, this phenomenon is particularly remarkable, since, in the domain of human sensitivity, the sense of seeing and the sense of touching dominate that of smelling (cf. Haeffner 1982: 16). Plessner also points out that animals are not interested in an object as such and likewise not in information as such (Plessner 1975: 377).

Yet in spite of the emphasis one can lay on the idea of an arbitrary sign, human language is nonetheless constantly embedded in a horizon of possibilities that provide the overall *framework* within which the relativity of arbitrary sign-creation is positioned. If language is constituted by the use of signs then it is inevitable that anyone using language ought to use signs – in other words, in order to be involved in language at all it is *necessary* (and not arbitrary) to employ signs. The element of arbitrariness only concerns the creation or choice of alternative signs. Moreover, since language embraces the multi-aspectual universe it also cannot "escape" from the functional possibilities conditioning the world. For example, every language contains words designating the multiple shapes and forms in which our (numerical) awareness of the

one and the *many* manifests itself. Every language has its own words, but none of them can ever escape from having quantitative terms. The inevitability of having numerals (number terms) is constant, what is variable is the alternative ("arbitrary") ways in which numerals are designated in different languages.

The same applies to spatial relations. Not only is there no single language that does not *signify* spatial relations, such as different kinds of extension (e.g. *distance* as one-dimensional extension, *surface* as two-dimensional extension and *volume* as three-dimensional extension), for in addition to this our spatial awareness of size (e.g. large and small) is found in the use by *diminutives* (see Jenkinson 1986).

Clearly, the numerical and spatial aspects are not the *product* of language for they underlie and make possible what language can achieve by exploring (in a lingual way) the possibilities offered by them. Similarly, every language captures the intimate connection between what is enduring and what is altered. Within the disciplines of mathematics and logic this connection is designated with the words "constants" and "variables". The reality underlying these terms concerns the issue of *constancy* and *change* – where our awareness of constancy primarily relates to the kinematic aspect of pure (uniform) motion and our awareness of change first of all concerns the operation of energy in a physical sense (when energy operates it causes changes – the source of our awareness of causality). Once again: these two aspects also *condition* – in the sense of making possible – our experience of persistence (constancy) and change (variability), an experience that is distinctly articulated by every unique language.

At this point we may pause for a moment in order to explore this issue from a different angle. Geckeler (1971: 242) points out – in connection with synonyms and antonyms – that the following question poses an unsolved problem for the discipline of linguistics: what is the reason why for certain lexical units there are contrary opposites (antonyms) immediately available – such as "old" / "young" while it is impossible for others (e.g. "book" / "?")? W.J. de Klerk (1978: 114) in addition remarks that most adjectives appear in dichotomy pairs, for example short/long, poor/rich, small/wide, ill/healthy, and so on. In a different context J. Lyons (1969: 469) holds the following view: "The existence of large numbers of antonyms and complementary terms in the vocabulary of natural languages would seem to be related to a general human tendency to 'polarize' experience and judgment – to 'think in opposites'."

Various distinctions are needed in order to resolve these issues. Let us begin with that between *modes of existence* and the *multi-modal* existence of (natural and social) entities and events. From the Latin root the term *mode* designates a *functional way* of being, the manner in which something operates or functions. Distinguishing between the numerical, spatial, kinematic or physical function of entities is made possible by the fact that these facets belong to a unique dimension of reality, the dimension of (universal and constant) modal aspects. They condition the existence of concrete entities and processes in the sense that all of them have typical functions within every aspect. Whereas the dimension of modal functions relates to the *how* of reality, the

dimension of entities relates to its concrete *what*. The important point is that once an entity is identified, in response to the question *what* it is, subsequently statements can be made concerning its *how*. For example, after having identified this *book* one can continue by saying something about its weight (mass – physical manner of existence), its price (economic mode of existence), its size (spatial function), and so on. Within each modal aspect functional oppositions are natural – such as *large* or *small* within the spatial mode, *strong* or *weak* within the physical, *healthy* or *ill* within the biotic, *cheap* or *expensive* within the economic, *beautiful* or *ugly* within the aesthetic. A proper understanding of the dimension of modal functions therefore immediately resolves the problems raised by Geckeler, De Klerk and Lyons.

It seems as if logical thinking – exploring amongst other things the relation between a subject and a predicate – and language – structuring sentences on the basis of verbs/adjectives and nouns – are both *formally* determined by die dimension of modes (reflected in predicate and verbs/adjectives) and entities (reflected in the subject of a statement and in the use of nouns). The qualification *formal* accounts for the fact that modal properties may be the *subject* of a statement or utterance while entities then take on the role of a predicate, verb or adjective. It is noteworthy to refer in this connection to the fact that some languages reveal a tendency to be structured by "substantives" (e.g. Persian), whereas others (e.g. old Greek and German) tend to be governed by a verb structuring.[7]

One may use the metaphor of the *modal grid of reality* in order to capture the foundational role of the dimension of modal aspects with regard to logical thinking and the use of language. In the absence of a diversity of aspects logical analysis – identification and distinguishing – would collapse. As points of entry to reality the modal aspects enable meaning classifications, e.g. by distinguishing between different kinds of entities, such as physical things ("matter"), living entities (plants, animals and human beings), sentient creatures (animals and humans), cultural objects [differentiated in multiple categories, such as analytical objects (test tubes), lingual objects (books), social objects (furniture), economic objects (money), aesthetic objects (works of art), jural objects (jails), ethical objects (engagement rings, wedding rings), and so on].

The ultimate issue is therefore whether or not we are willing to acknowledge the foundational role of the dimensions of aspects and entities. The metaphor of the *modal grid* of reality focuses on whether or not there are, prior to any human intervention or construction, a given (ontic) multiplicity of aspects, modes or functions of reality. Furthermore, since these modal aspects co-condition the existence of concrete entities *functioning* within them, language and communication are bound to reflect this functional diversity.

The significance of this insight for an understanding of language and communication is dependent upon another important distinction, namely that between *concept* and *word*. Scholars tend to confuse or even identify concept and word (see for example Rossouw 2003:17 ff.). A concept has its (logical) *content* and a word has its (lingual) *meaning*.

Words may designate whatever there are – aspects, entities and processes and even concepts. But a word is not a concept. A concept unties a multiplicity of universal features (and it is "blind" for what is unique and individual). Consider the concept *human being* or the concept *triangle*. The universality of the features constituting a human being makes it possible to recognise (identify) a human being wherever one encounters one. Likewise, when the terms *line*, *angle*, (closed) *surface* and *three* are combined in the unity of the concept *triangle* the universality of these traits makes it possible to recognise a triangle wherever and whenever it is encountered. A concept in this sense transcends every word and every language. For that reason a concept cannot be *translated*. One understands the concept of a triangle or one does not understand it – irrespective of the lingual sign employed to designate it. The English word *triangle* can be translated into other languages, for example into Afrikaans (*driehoek*), German (*Dreieck*), and so on. There are multiple words for this concept, but the universality of the concept precludes the idea of its "translation".

A number of years ago the claim was made at an international conference in Vienna (on the comparison of Chinese medicine and Western medicine) that the Chinese do not have the concept *culture*. During discussion time I asked the speaker if the Chinese language does have translations for words such as *power*, *formation*, *control*, and *fantasy* and a phrase such as the *free formative fantasy of human beings* – to which the answer was affirmative. Yet all these words are in some respect synonymous to the English word *culture*, indicating that the Chinese do have a *concept* of culture but merely lack a translational equivalent for the English *word* culture!

The lingual ability to signify presupposes the analytical ability to identify and distinguish – and identifying something amounts to nothing but acquiring a *concept* of it. Lingual communication explores this foundational relationship in various ways, first of all through direct conceptually based interaction. Yet the inherent ambiguity of all language does not warrant a straight-forward claim to *literal* language or the simple distinction between literal and metaphorical language use. By its very nature linguistic expression is *ambiguous* and requires *interpretation*. A well-known case may illustrate this point. As an example of an allegedly *literal* sentence the following one was presented: "The cat is on the mat." The fact that this apparently "literal" sentence still required *interpretation* was underscored by the following reaction: "Oh, I know exactly what it means: The poor hippy is once again in the office of the boss!" What is striking about this example is that both sentences contain words making an appeal to familiar *concepts*. There is no doubt about what the concept *cat* or the concept *mat* is all about, just as there is no doubt about what the concept of a (military) *general* or a *lion* entails. Yet, the moment language is at stake the conceptual level is transcended, making possible an expression such as *the Lion of Western Transvaal* (General De la Rey). In a purely logical sense it is contradictory to affirm that a human being is a lion, but within the context of language it is perfectly permissible to generate expressions such as these.[8]

Within ordinary language words reflecting modal qualities (properties) are always embedded in a context where concrete things and events are discussed. To this extent all language and communication, in spite of the richness in variation owing to the operation of the free formative fantasy of human beings, is bound to the horizon of modal (aspectual) possibilities. This does not merely imply terms derived from the core (primitive) [9] meaning of particular aspects, but also interconnections between various aspects, evinced in partial similarities and partial differences (known as analogies).[10] Many composite phrases capture inter-modal analogies – such as *emotional life* (an analogy of the biotic meaning of life within the sensitive mode of feeling), *social distance* (spatial analogy within the social mode), *economic trust* (a fiduciary analogy within the economic aspect), *aesthetic integrity* (a moral analogy within the aesthetic facet), *energy constancy* (a kinematic analogy within the physical mode), and so on. What might have seemed, at first sight, to be mere *arbitrary constructions* of human language, in fact turns out to be instances of analogical linkages underlying similar composite phrases found in all languages, once more underscoring the *conditioning* role of the modal grid of reality regarding language and communication.

Let us consider a sentence chosen at random: "Does life in the United States actually show signs of moral and cultural crisis, or does a closer look reveal the continuing resilience of the world's most successful and self-renewing democracy?"[11] In terms of the *modal grid* that conditions what is said, we can identify the following words presupposing different modal aspects: *life* (the biotic mode – here taken as an analogy within human interaction – *social life*); *show* (sensitive aspect); *signs* (lingual mode); *moral* (the ethical aspect); *cultural* (the cultural-historical mode); *continuing resilience* (the equivalent of the intimate connection between *constancy* and *change* – derived from the kinematic and physical aspects); *closer* (reflecting the spatial meaning of *nearby* as opposed to *far away*); *look* (the metaphorical use of an observational term derived from the sensitive mode); *most* (derived from the quantitative meaning of *more* and *less*); *successful* (effective – figuratively derived from the physical cause-effect relation); and *self-renewing* (reflecting the interconnection between persistence and change found in thermodynamically open systems).[12] In addition there are of course entitary-directed words present in the sentence – such as "United States," "world," and "democracy" – also reflecting a distinct dimension of reality, namely the dimension of (natural and social) entities, events and processes.

The misleading impression of the *unconditioned* creative powers of language and communication is particularly enhanced by contemporary views on the nature and role of metaphors. Yet also in this case it should be pointed out that ultimately metaphors explore possibilities provided by the interconnections between the dimensions of aspects and entities (see the sketch below). They explore analogies (1) between *different entities* (E–E: "the nose of the car"); (2) between *entities* and *functional aspects* (E–A: such as the "web of belief"); and (3) between *aspects* and *entities* (A–E: a widespread example is found in evolutionary biology, where the biotic facet – with *life* as its core functional meaning – is treated as if it is an entity, for example when

biologists speak of the "origin of life" instead of the genesis of *living entities*; (another example is when we speak of the "social glue" of society).

Metaphors falling within categories 1, 2, and 3 may be replaced by totally different ones. But modal functional (inter-aspectual) analogies cannot be replaced – at most they can be *substituted* with *synonyms* (for example when *continuous extension* – the core meaning of the spatial aspect – is "synonymised" by words and phrases such as *being connected*, *coherent* or even the expression *the whole-parts relation*).

FIGURE 1: POSSIBILITIES BETWEEN THE DIMENSIONS OF ASPECTS AND ENTITIES

Analogy

There are four possibilities

1) Similarities and differences between different entities E - E	2) Similarities and differences between an entity and a model aspect E - A
3) Similarities and differences between an aspect and an entity A - E	4) Similarities and differences between different aspects A - A

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSLATION AS INTER-LINGUAL COMMUNICATION

Acknowledging the co-conditioning role of the modal grid of reality for language use and communication does have practical implications for translation and for supporting the development of a linguistic competence within another language. In order to master a new language a number of skills are needed, amongst them the required vocabulary, specifically directed to the names of the diversity of things populating the universe. But in addition to this (abstracting for a moment from the implied grammar) a working knowledge is required regarding the "point-of-entry-terms" derived from the modal grid of reality.

Suppose an English speaking person chooses to learn German. Of course there is a close link between these two languages owing to the fact that both are Germanic languages. This shared background, for example, will be particularly supportive in mastering many similar words, such as (English/German): house / Haus; school / Schule; knee / Knie; nature / Natur; philosophy / Philosophie; state / Staat; investment / Investierung. Once a sufficient number of familiar nouns (and some others not so similar) is known the possibility to talk about things is dependent upon the employment of what we have called "point-of-entry-terms," i.e. terms derived from the different modal aspects in which concrete entities function. Since every concrete entity and process in principle functions within each modal aspect,[13] knowledge of aspectual terms provides access to the possibility of speaking about all entities and processes.

Generally speaking, in learning a new language it is therefore crucial to obtain modal functional terms (and their analogies within other modes) in order to be able to master this element of a lingual competency within the language that is learned. A few examples will suffice. The *one* and the *many* (in German: *Einheit* and *Vielheit*) is found in many related quantitative terms, such as *more*, *less*, *few*, *little*, *some* and so on. Likewise the awareness of spatial continuity comes to expression in (the above mentioned) related terms such as *coherence*, *connectedness*, and the *whole-parts relation*. Furthermore, *persistence*, *on-going*, *uniformity* (uniform flow), and so on reveal the core meaning of kinematic constancy, just as *energy-operation*, *cause* and *effect* (*causality*), *functioning* and so on reveal the irreducible meaning of the physical mode of reality.

Once this is realised, namely that we need knowledge of such modal terms and the skill (linguistic competence) to employ such terms in actual speech, the task of learning a new language obtained a huge advance. Suppose I need to speak of the fact that within human life things are constantly changing, then I need to have at my disposal the required German terms for *on-going* (namely "konstant," "ständig" and "immer") – and then it is easy to employ one of them (for example by saying "das die Sachen sich ständig ändern"). The method implied by this insight, regarding the learning of a new language, is to obtain a "modal thesaurus" specifying the alternative and related modal terms found within each aspect of reality, for once they are known the learner of the new language has the freedom to employ them in a way fitting the lingual context.

Acknowledging the modal grid of reality amounts to an exploration of a new kind of thesaurus, one constituted by the original meaning of a modal aspect and other modal aspects in which we find *analogies* of the original aspect. A few examples will illustrate what is intended with such a *modal thesaurus*.

It is clear that our awareness of the *one* and the *many* brings to expression the core meaning of quantity, captured in ordinary questions about *how many*? It is *natural* to count any *multiplicity* of entities, events, thoughts or whatever is distinct. For that reason mathematicians coined the practice to refer to the numbers employed in acts of counting as the *natural numbers*. Suppose we switch to the spatial aspect. Within this aspect of reality there are multiple analogies of the original meaning of number to be found. Whereas it is clear that one can extend the succession of natural numbers (1, 2, 3, …) beyond all finite limits (there are always more to come), this "beyond limits" of the literally without-an-end (infinite) is turned *inwards* by space, for any extended spatial continuum could be divided, once again sub-divided, and so on indefinitely. This amounts to the *infinitely divisibility* of spatial continuity. Although an infinite succession is original within the numerical aspect, the spatial reality of infinite divisibility analogically reflects this original numerical meaning within the aspect of space.

Furthermore, the mere concept of spatial *distance* also reflects the coherence between space and number, because distance is always specified by a *number*. Yet the number specifying the distance (say of a line-stretch) has a spatial meaning, merely pointing

back to the original meaning of number as the *measure* of spatial extension distance (as numerical analogy) is not identical to spatial extension. For that reason a line is not the *shortest distance* between two points – it is at most the shortest *connection*. Since spatial extension embraces different dimensions (a line is an instance of one-dimensional extension, a surface of two-dimensional extension, volume three-dimensional, and so on), it is once again striking that these different *orders of extension* cannot be specified except on the basis of "borrowing" the numbers one, two, three and so on (1, 2, 3, …) from the quantitative mode. Therefore, within the aspect of space numerical analogies appear that are "coloured" by the meaning of continuous extension – such as *dimension*, distance – subdivided in specified terms such a *length* (1-dimensional extension), *surface* (2-dimensional extension), and *volume* (3-dimensional extension).

Within the next aspect of reality, the kinematic (movement) aspect we also discern numerical analogies, intimately cohering with spatial analogies. The (relative) *speed* of a moving body is expressed by a number on the basis of assessing the mutual dependence of distance and time (if one travels 100 km in two hours the average speed was 50 km per hour). Perhaps the most important instance of a numerical analogy within the kinematic aspect is highlighted in Einstein's theory of relativity where the *velocity* of light (in a vacuum) is postulated as a constant (300 000 km per second). The physical concept of *mass* (compare the amount or quantity of energy) reveals a numerical analogy within the physical aspect, while the mere concept of *organic* life entails the inter-dependent functioning of a *multiplicity* of organs, demonstrating the inevitable presence of a numerical analogy within the biotic aspect. Enough to illustrate the general point regarding a "modal thesaurus" – within every post-arithmetical aspect one encounters a different domain of numerical analogies.

That there are so many different words and languages indeed displays an element of arbitrariness, of lingual freedom in the formation of a specific language. Yet what crystallised within each particular language is always co-conditioned by the modal grid of reality and the web of interconnections found between the aspects present within this dimension of reality (analogical references). Since these conditions are constant and universal they are necessary in the sense that without them language as such becomes impossible. For that reason we have argued that the *modal grid* of reality underlies language, communication, translation and the learning of a new language (inter-lingual communication).

REMARK ON METHODOLOGY

Normally methodological considerations disregard the fact that scientific knowledge merely deepens and discloses our non-scientific experience of reality in its diversity. For that reason prior to the development of a method in service of the investigation of reality every special scientist must already have a non-scientific insight into the nature of his/her field of inquiry. The designed method could never provide or substitute this presupposed knowledge. The unique nature of whatever is investigated determines every method aimed at acquiring knowledge about it.

Neopositivism assigns to the "scientific method" a privileged status. The assumed "exactness" of this "scientific method" (observation, formulating hypotheses and testing them in order to obtain confirmed hypotheses or theories) is accredited with the capacity to serve as the *only* gateway to *all* scientific knowledge. However, as the Frankfurt school clearly realised, even the "most exact" methods may be misleading:

> To be sure, even the most rigorous methods can lead to false or meaningless results, if they are applied to problems for which they are not adequate or which they deal with in a distorting manner (Adorno & Horkheimer 1973: 122; cf. Van Niekerk 1986: 39).

The basic question is simply: Does the method determine what we want to know scientifically, or is the method itself dependent upon the nature of that what we want to know? Only a complete denial of the given orderliness in reality could give priority to scientific methods. Neeman is astutely aware of the shortcomings in the "method primacy" of positivism. According to him, the positivistic philosophy of science starts with a basic assumption analogous to the gospel of St John: "In the beginning was the method" (Neeman 1986: 70).

With reference to Popper's falsificationism as a reaction to positivism Neeman states:

The new ontology therefore was not a consequence of this method. Much rather, this method emerged in the first place as a result of new ontological assumptions (Neeman 1986: 72).

According to him, it was exactly this dogma of the primacy of method that precluded the emergence of a useful natural scientific praxis, "it led to one-sided criteria of rationality accompanied by the mistaken position of positing its own starting points as absolute while denouncing those of the opponent as irrational" (Neeman 1986: 70-71).

Instead of trying to reduce everything within reality to fit the requirements of a specific method, we first have to find out along which lines we can get to an understanding of the given order diversity within creation. This is exactly the aim of what should be designated as the *transcendental-empirical method* explored in the current article. The appeal to the *ontic status* of the various modal aspects of reality implies that one has to establish what ultimately *makes possible* our experience of numerical relationships, spatial relationships, and so on. And we argued that language, communication and translation are made possible (in the sense of being co-conditioned) by these foundational modes of experience. The word *transcendental* is employed in order to capture this underlying role of the aspects of reality. Since they make possible what we can experience within the diversity of reality, they serve as the foundation co-conditioning our *empirical* world – explaining why we designate this method as the *transcendental-empirical method.*

Scientific reflection is always confronted with the *orderliness* (or: *disorderliness*) of reality. Accepting this ontically given datum of experience, the transcendental-empirical method "retroduces" back to the presupposed order for our experience. Our

guiding theoretical hypothesis therefore conjectures an irreducible but mutually coherent multiplicity of modal aspects encompassing the functional conditions for all things, events and societal collectivities.

Endnotes

[1] It is found within certain contexts related to the discipline of theology, but the meaning here intended is completely different from those meaning-nuances.

[2] Plessner mentions that the overarching ordering found in collective names used by human beings is absent in the case of animals. This follows from the fact that animals do not dispose over the mediating medium of distance, the mediated immediacy of language to things. For that reason they lack an interest in information (Plessner 1975: 380). ["Dine im Sinne eines Sammelnamens, wie wir ihn überordnend gebrauchen, kennen sie al solche nicht. Es fehlt ihnen dazu das vermittlnde Medium der Distanz, die vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit der Sprahe zur Sache. Daher das mangelnde Interesse an Information."]

[3] See McKeon 2001: 195 (*Topics*, 103 b 21-23; see also McKeon 2001:10, i.e. *Categories*, 2 b 15-17). However, this entire scheme is embedded in the primordial and ultimate dualism between *form* and *matter* in his thought. The effect of this dualism is that he distinguishes between *accidentia* related to matter (such as *quantity*) and others related to form (such as *quality*).

[4] The explanation in the text is derived from the account given by Stegmüller (1969: 530-533).

[5] Roelofse points out that *symbolism* differs from ordinary connotative meanings as well as from myths "in that it allows only for [a] specific interpretation. … It is, one may say, totally culturally determined" (Roelofse 1982: 89).

[6] The Neodarwinian evolutionist Dobzhansky considers the awareness of death as typifying the distinctive characteristic of human beings. Some thinkers are even of the opinion that the ability to commit suicide is typical of the unique nature of being human.

[7] With multiple stipulations and derivations on the basis of their verbs (see Coseriu 1978: 43).

[8] Although everyone senses that the concept of a *square circle* is contradictory, we accept the lingual expression of a *boxing ring* (that is actually "square").

[9] The core meaning of an aspect brings to expression its *irreducibility*, which is reflected in its indefinability, explaining why it is also designated as *primitive*. Korzybski underscores that one cannot define *ad infinitum*: "We thus see that all linguistic schemes, if analysed far enough, would depend on a set of 'undefined terms'. If we enquire about the 'meaning' of a word, we find that it depends on the 'meaning' of other words used in defining it, and that the eventual new relations posited between them ultimately depend *on the … meanings of the undefined terms,* which, at a given period, cannot be elucidated any further" (Korzybski 1948:21).

[10] When the difference is shown *in* what is similar, we encounter an analogy. Language and communication explores different kinds of analogies.

[11] Quoted from Skillen (1994: 14).

[12] In the early thirties of the 20th century Ludwig Von Bertalanffy recognised the shortcomings in the prevalent physical understanding of closed systems by realising that both certain physical processes (such as a fire, glacier or an idling car) and biotic phenomena (like growth and staying alive) cannot be accounted for in terms of a theory of *closed* systems. He introduced the notion of *open systems*, designated by him with the German term *Fliessgleichgewicht* (a flowing, dynamic equilibrium, in English designated as the *steady state* – see Von Bertalanffy 1973: 165).

[13] Physical entities are subjects within the first four aspects of reality (number, space, the kinematic and the physical). Living entities are also subjects in the biotic aspect. Sentient creatures in addition have a subject function within the sensitive mode and only human beings have subject functions within the normative aspects (the logical, cultural-historical, sign mode, social, economic, aesthetic, jural, moral and certitudinal). Material things (i.e. physical entities) have object functions in all the post-physical aspects, plants in all the post-biotic aspects and animals in all the post-sensitive modes. Cultural objects also have object functions within all the normative aspects, i.e. those aspects in which accountable human beings function, either in conformity with or in violation of underlying principles.

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AN ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: MISSIONARIES, MAX-NEEF AND THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR TRANSCENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to isolate a "sufficient condition" for development communication to succeed. It juxtaposes two case studies - the 19th Century Christian missionaries as a developmental success story, and the malign influence of Soviet ideology as a developmental failure - and analyses these case studies in the light of a variety of so-called "alternative theories" of development. Human Scale Development, as articulated by Manfred Max-Neef, emerges as being the most instructive of these paradigms. Max-Neef sought to identify the key "satisfiers" which would enable true development to occur. It is argued that many of the processes and activities that typically accompanied the communication of the message of Christianity to southern African answer to the "satisfiers" that Max-Neef's schema calls for. The enquiry further argues that humankind's fundamental need for transcendence is the only need which, if satisfied, will of necessity culminate in true individual and, by extension, community development. This line of thinking ultimately draws its inspiration from the Ancient Greek concept of eros which is seen to have informed the early missionary movement's message of hope and faith.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late 1970s, a so-called "alternative" cluster of development approaches came to the fore in reaction against the then dominant paradigm of economic growth. Prominent amongst these new approaches were Human Scale Development, Participatory Development, and Populism.

This article will use these different approaches as lenses to try and solve a conceptual development puzzle that has far-reaching practical implications. This conundrum is that so much well-funded modern development effort has failed to achieve lasting results, whereas less materialistic social interventions have had major developmental impacts.

The article examines this puzzle from the perspective of two historical case studies. The first of these is the 19th Century missionary effort in southern Africa which qualifies as a development miracle spanning 150 years. The second is the Soviet economy. This was a human catastrophe that imploded after some 70 years but that still exerts a malign influence on many African states, Angola being a case in point.

These two scenarios will be explored in an effort to extract some common denominator that might serve to account for the success of the "miracle" and the failure of the "catastrophe". The emphasis will however be on the positive case study, and on the Human Scale Development approach.

As the argument unfolds, it should become clearer that what is being sought for are the "satisfiers" that will help complete Manfred Max-Neef's "Needs and Satisfiers Matrix" in respect of the crucial (and almost overlooked) fundamental need of "transcendence" (Max-Neef 1991: 32-33). The notion of "transcendence" is therefore pivotal to what follows.

During the course of the argument it will become evident that the rubric, "alternative theories of development", is a misnomer, and that these more human-centred approaches to development in fact pre-dated the so-called mainstream approaches. It will also become clear that the Human Scale Development paradigm *must* inform the core of developmental community communications and work if one is not to substitute mere mass-modernisation for genuine development.

Before proceeding however, it is necessary to fight a preliminary rearguard action against the most alternative approach of them all – post- or anti-development. For it is only by arguing the case for moral imperatives to action that we can salvage the argument for any kind of development at all. This will highlight the central argument of the paper: That "development" is an intrinsically moral endeavour, which depends fundamentally on the concept of transcendence of the human condition.

"ANTI-DEVELOPMENT" COUNTERED

There is no shortage of scholars calling for development to be abandoned. De Rivero (2001: 1-10) for instance says that, for many Third World countries, development has not worked, and it never will, because they are inherently "non-viable national

economies". Instead, he advocates a retreat into bare survival. Munck (1999: 200) approvingly quotes Esteva that "development stinks!", while Sardar (1999: 46,57) professes to find in development nothing less than the "Eurocentric colonisation of time" against which he proposes the "Islamization of knowledge" (and much else besides). Nustad (2001: 480) cites Sachs and Escobar as seeing the "past 40 years of development as a direct continuation of the colonial project". According to Tucker (1999: 2) "development is not a natural process although it has been accorded such a status in the mythology of Western beliefs". Santos (1999: 35), echoing Escobar (1995: 215), argues that instead of "looking for models of alternative development the time has come to create alternatives to development". Escobar (1995: 213) also claims that development is "an all-powerful mechanism for the production and management of the Third World in the post-1945 period". And so on.

Pieterse (1999: 73,79) perhaps gets to the heart of the problem though when he asks, rhetorically, "Who are we to intervene in other people's lives?", and speaks of "the insurmountable arrogance of intervening". This is a valid question. Who indeed do those who advocate development think they are?

Interestingly enough it was Pieterse himself (in Haines 2000: 57) who pointed out, apropos of the "anti-development" lobby, that "despite a stringent critique of developmental discourse, no coherent and viable alternatives to development are offered". This sentiment is echoed by other commentators and, while no doubt valid, has a defeatist ring about it. It seems to imply that one might as well muddle along with development, until something better crops up. But the anti-development movement's arguments can be countered in any number of ways. The following outlines but one approach.

Cooper (2002: 91-92) makes the point that "the idea that human populations could evolve and progress was a very old one – that states should intervene to shape such a process much less so". Development as a self-consciously state-driven socio-economic activity (a "project"?) only really came to the fore in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. At that time it was essentially a matter of stimulating national economic growth. Modern day development thus had its secular genesis in macro-economics.

Economics postulates a conceptual entity called "Economic Man". Economic Man is concerned with "maximising pools of net utility" which is to say that he always acts in his own enlightened, rational self-interest. All things being equal, economists' models can predict to a fair degree of accuracy what Economic Man will do in any set of circumstances. Economic Man may not, superficially, appear to be a selfish being though. This is because he is quite capable of short-term self-sacrifice with a view to maximising his long-term gains. Economics could not function without Economic Man but needless to say Economic Man, like "The Average Person", does not exist in actuality. He is no more than a useful notional construct but some scholars forget this. Economic Man answers to what is known in moral philosophy as an egoist (not to be

confused with an egotist) and is in fact a moral zombie – he would sell his own family into slavery if it furthered his ultimate purposes.

Nation states often have an unfortunate tendency to act a bit like Economic Man. This is to say that nation states, answerable to their taxpayers, tend to operate on a *quid pro quo* basis. The same holds true of commercial undertakings, answerable to their shareholders, who calculate the success of their "corporate responsibility" programmes in terms of Return on Investment (ROI). These entities cannot "give" in the true sense of the word because they are institutions who administer the assets of others in whose interests they act. Their aim is to *exact leverage*, to make strategic trade-offs, to maximise market share and power. But ultimately, at the coal face so to speak, it is human beings who "deliver" development to communities, human beings who talk to communities – not states and not economies.

Given development's strong economic underpinnings, too many critics make the mistake of conflating Economic Man with Social Man. By so doing they discount the possibility of disinterested human goodness, of doing "the right thing" for no other reason than that it is the right thing. Munck, Sardar and their ilk function within a hermeneutic (to use their jargon) of constant suspicion. "What's in it for them?" is the stock response to acts of genuine philanthropy. Regrettably, this may say more about them than it does about the benefactors' motivations.

We cannot speak of truly liberating development unless we allow for the possibility of disinterested altruism, of unconditional giving – "duties undertaken…not for power or profit but under moral and religious impulses" (Johnson 2003: 22). That we are therefore speaking of a *moral* imperative to develop is central to what follows and this will be elaborated on in the context of Max-Neef's Human Scale Development.

CASE STUDY 1: THE CHRISTIANISATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The spread of Christianity among the indigenous peoples of southern Africa began in earnest with the establishment of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the Cape in 1799. Arguably one of the most important phenomena to have occurred in South African history, its runaway success has been "almost totally ignored by scholars" (Elphick 1997: 7). What concerns us here however is not the number of souls the missionaries might claim to have been instrumental in saving. It is rather the extraordinary zeal with which Africans embraced Christianity (Elphick 1997: 4; Sanneh 2003) and the massive development which this enthusiasm brought in its wake. As will become apparent during the course of this discussion, we are looking at communication precipitating what could be deemed a developmental miracle which has, astonishingly enough, been all but swept under the carpet of history.

If development attracts the ire of scholars of an anti-Western persuasion, then it is cold distaste with which they castigate the missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa. Never can a group of persons who honestly believed they were doing good, and who achieved so much, have been subjected to such a studied campaign of vilification and

abuse by so many (cf. Prozesky 1995: 265-274). The following may serve to illustrate the point.

In 1994 the eminent expatriate South African professor, Dan Jacobson, published an article touching on the mission at Kuruman in the Northern Cape province. After presenting his credentials to express himself on the subject, he wrote of the missionaries' interest in African languages: "They barely discuss the matter… generally they write as if the linguistic problem simply did not exist" (Jacobson 1994a: 3). The insinuation is that they were too haughty and arrogant to descend to communicating via the indigenous languages. Anyone with even a shallow acquaintance with the missionary literature will know, however, that this is a gross error, if not a calculated perversion of the truth meant to cast aspersions on the integrity of the missionaries, and to belittle their labours.

The missionaries' concern with acquiring the ability to communicate in indigenous languages bordered on the obsessive, so eager were they to produce translations of the Bible and to preach in the local vernacular. Their correspondence and their journals bear ample testimony to this. Couzens (2003: 117,127) reveals that it was Paris Evangelical Society policy "that preaching was never to be done through an interpreter" and that the missionary Mabille was sufficiently fluent on his first arrival at Morija in 1861 to deliver a sermon in Sesotho. Couzens, himself an erstwhile professor of African literature, goes on to record that, were it not for the missionaries, it is doubtful whether an indigenous African literature would ever have emerged. In Natal, Harriette Colenso "achieved a marked command of the Zulu language without which she would have been much handicapped in the work she chose to do" (Nicholls 1995: 173). Such refutations of Jacobson could be multiplied *ad infinitum* (Opland 1997; Prozesky 1995: 93,114,168,184; Schoeman 1991: 39,98).

The missionaries entered into a terrain that was in the process of being devastated by the *Mfecane* (holocaust). Far from their setting out to destroy African customs, as has been alleged by a black Methodist bishop (*Mail and Guardian* 4 July 2003: 5), the missionaries' intention was frequently to assimilate with African societies as much as they could without doing violence to their Christian values (Hodgson 1997: 70; Japha, Japha, Le Grange & Todeschini 1993: 30; Prozesky 1995: 276). Those practices that they *did* condemn (many but by no means all – cf. De Kock 1996: 102; Giliomee 2003: 454) were on the grounds of them being incompatible with Christianity, and *not* because they were African *per se*.

Chief amongst the practices which elicited their displeasure were inter-tribal slavery, and the trafficking in children and "black ivory", i.e. adult human beings (Eldredge 1995: 148; Kilby 2001: 243; Prozesky 1995: 18); cannibalism (Cope 1977: 184; Prozesky 1995: 22); the feeding of human corpses to domestic dogs (Cope 1977: 306; Hodgson 1997: 76); the sometimes appalling treatment of women (Brain 1997: 198; Hodgson 1997: 74; Prozesky 1995: 20-1,26 n.23); infanticide (Prozesky 1995: 23 n.7); the ravages of the trade in firearms and Cape brandy; and so forth. In plain language

this amounted to what they considered "barbarism" and the missionaries opposed it in the face of fierce resistance from tribal chiefs, white settlers and slavers, and sometimes the colonial authorities themselves (see for example Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 274-5). This catalogue of horrors is intended to throw into sharp relief the positive good that came to be accomplished.

It must be clearly understood that the missionaries' overriding concern was the communication of the Gospel and the salvation of the indigenous people's souls (Prozesky 1995: 92,263,274) and *not* their personal development. They measured their performance by the number of converts they made. They did not come primarily to build educational complexes such as the Lovedale Institute (Shepherd 1941); to establish orphanages, and world-class hospitals such as those of Mariannhill (Brain 1997: 199); to establish extensive small scale farming, and agricultural schools (Brain 1997: 199; Simon 1959); to introduce pigs, ducks, geese, turkeys, and cats for the control of domestic vermin (Couzens 2003: 85); to establish burial societies and *stokvels* (Simon 1959: 220); to send promising black students to study at European universities (Hodgson 1997: 84); to formulate the orthographies for several indigenous languages (Opland 1997); to establish numerous newspapers and printing presses and to write the histories of the indigenous peoples, as well as to publish indigenous historians writing in their mother tongues (Opland 1997); to establish viable self-sustaining settlements that grew into towns; to advance the political rights of black people (Hodgson 1997: 84); to be instrumental in the founding of the African National Congress (Hodgson 1997: 87); to introduce the market system for produce and arts and crafts (Hodgson 1997: 80); to pioneer women's groups (Gaitskell 1997); to instil literacy (Prozesky 1995: 307-10,332), and so forth. But all this they did anyway, as an incidental extra to spreading the Gospel. And they suffered grievous hardship in the process (Kilby 2001; Schoeman 1994).

It was a remarkable achievement which reached its apex over a period of about 150 years in 1948 when the Nationalist government came to power. This government then unfortunately set out to work against what the missionaries had achieved (Japha *et al*. 1993). While the government of the day attacked the institutions, a new breed of radical historians and theologians (Cochrane 1987; Lewis 1988; Villa-Vicencio 1988) arose which set about systematically undermining the missionaries' reputation (Prozesky 1995: 265-74). In Jacobson's words the missionaries "remain guilty as charged" (1994b: 117). Guilty of *what exactly* one might ask. Guilty of helping people realise their potentials? Guilty of precipitating beneficial change? (See Prozesky 1995 for a spirited rebuttal of some of the missionaries' more hostile critics). Here lies the key to the reactionary undertone that characterises so much of the radical left's theological discourse. At heart it still harbours a romantic yearning for the feudal and the "traditional" (cf. Cochrane 1987; Lewis 1988; Sardar 1999).

What should be of especial interest to students of development communication though is how incredibly successful most of the missionary "projects" were, and how effectively they communicated their message. How did they manage this on a financial

shoestring, and in the face of state and societal hostility? What approaches to communication and development were unwittingly being given expression to in the process of the Christianisation of southern Africa?

CASE STUDY 2: THE CALAMITOUS DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET RUSSIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON AFRICA

After widespread acclamation by Western intellectuals of Stalinism (Lilla 2001: ix-xiii) it is only since the end of the Cold War in 1990, and the opening up of the Russian archives, that the true extent of the depravity of Communist Russia is beginning to come to light (see for example Werth 2007).

Communism's total suppression of religion brought in its wake parallels to all of the "barbarisms" mentioned in the foregoing section. For the *Mfecane* there were Stalin's purges. The Soviet's industrial development was grounded in forced (i.e. slave) labour. Thousands of Gulag labour camp inmates were reduced to cannibalism. Bodies were cast out to the wolves. Instead of the sniffing out of witches, Stalin's police, working on quota systems, would arbitrarily arrest citizens to stock the labour camps (Applebaum 2004; Werth 2007). As Minogue (2003: 9) puts it: "Far from forging ahead into the modern world [the Soviets] lost much of their moral and social capital and ended up with an obsolete rusting industry built over a pile of corpses." Part One of the voluminous *Black Book of Communism* (Courtois, Werth, Panné, Paczkowski, Bartosek & Margolin 1999) itemises the crimes of the Soviet regime in exhaustive detail for those who have the stomach to read it.

In a discussion of the environmental and human devastation wrought by Communist development in the Ukraine, Vovk and Prugh (2003: 14) come directly to the point: "Soviet development philosophy was suicidal." The legacy of Stalinism still disfigures virtually all aspects of everyday life in present-day Russia. For purposes of this study, there is little need to belabour the matter any further, other than perhaps to flag the calamitous impact of the Soviet's "developmental" ideology on Africa. A brief examination of the fate of Angola may suffice to illustrate just how pernicious an influence this was.

In 1950 Angola was described as being "the largest, richest and most important portion of the Portuguese Colonial Empire" (Cardoso 1950: 14). Its chief exports by value were coffee, maize, sisal and diamonds, in that order (Cardoso 1950: 130-1). The Angola Development Fund's major projects included hydro-electric installations, and the survey and construction of transport infrastructure (Cardoso 1950: 87). Angola was recognised as being a country of "immense" natural resource-based wealth and "developmental potential" but in the early 1960s the country descended into war against the colonial authorities, and by the turn of the century, 25 years after independence, "much of the infrastructure had been destroyed or had been left to decay and most sectors of the economy" were producing less than they had before independence with the signal exception of the oil industry (Hodges 2001:7).

Immediately following the withdrawal of the Portuguese army in July 1974 "the Soviet Union significantly increased its financial and military support to the MPLA faction" – many of whose cadres "had been trained in the USSR in the 1960s and were well versed in the prevailing Marxist-Leninist theories… of scientific socialism" (Santamaria 1999: 696-7).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to chronicle the brutality and chaos that Angola descended into after the MPLA came to power in 1975 and simultaneously declared a one-party state. Suffice it to say that Soviet-inspired scientific socialism "proved disastrous… causing the collapse of both industrial and agricultural production" (Meredith 2005: 602) and the effective "pauperisation of the population" (Hodges 2001: 52) all within a period of 15 years. Certainly the colonial power had left Angola ill-prepared for independence, and the destabilising effects of the war in neighbouring South West Africa (Namibia) hardly helped matters, but the new country could not have chosen a worse role model to emulate than the Soviet Union, by way of fashioning what Hodges (2001) has termed the "Afro-Stalinist" state.

STATEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEM

The preceding two scenarios give rise to many questions, some of which will be addressed in the course of the upcoming discussion. There is however an extraordinary dichotomy between the two case studies which suggests the central problem that will be dealt with here. It is this:

Why do some development projects that appear to have nothing going for them, succeed, whereas others that may even have a world power backing them, fail?

How is it that a band of indifferently educated working class people managed, during an age when "development" as we understand it had not even been conceived of yet, to achieve so much under the most unfavourable of circumstances? What did they have that we today are blind to?

From a cursory overview of the case studies, it appears that there are three key dimensions to effective development: participation, paternalism and populism. As the ensuing sections will show, participation enables empowerment; paternalism implies a sense of duty; and populism enables people to transcend the crass materialism of their surroundings. The act, and indeed the art, of communication is immanent within all three of these developmental dimensions.

One reads in the development literature of such-and-such a factor being a "necessary but not sufficient" condition for development to succeed. Could it be that development has its own "Holy Grail" – an elusive *sufficient* condition such that it – *and it alone* – might guarantee success? This study will attempt to show that there may well be a sufficient condition for development and will now proceed to try and identify that condition.

The participatory approach

That development miscarried in the Soviet Union partially due to a lack of participation by the unfortunate "beneficiaries" seems obvious. The denial of participation would readily explain what Vovk and Prugh (2003: 2) identify as "a widespread sense of powerlessness, distrust of institutions, and apathy" – and this 13 years after the end of the Cold War. Similarly in Angola "a continuing climate of fear" resulting from the "overtly totalitarian one-party system… unencumbered by any form of electoral accountability" (Hodges 2001:168) effectively annulled any nascent participatory ethos that the fact of independence might have kindled. But the example of China should prevent one jumping to conclusions. China has seen phenomenal development during the selfsame period and is hardly less of an authoritarian society (Kitching 1989: 104; Yatsko 2001).

The discrepancy between the performances of Russia and China is a complex subject that cannot be attempted here but Yatsko (2001: 128) makes an interesting observation. She comments on the complete sea-change in student attitudes since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Invidious as recourse to cultural traits may be, it seems that China's embrace of capitalism has struck an answering chord in the Chinese psyche, especially the young. Yatsko finds that Chinese youth are now so intensely ambitious, so industrious, and so full of great expectations for their future, that they have lost interest in clamouring for any form of participatory role in society. It would appear that the very real prospect of transcending their current condition is such that Chinese youth have somehow sublimated what Max-Neef (1991: 32) would term their "fundamental need for participation". Could this be explained in terms of a "satisfier" of the need for transcendence synergistically subsuming, and thereby neutralising, the need for participation? Whatever the case, it is very apparent that China has given its young people hope (visions, dreams) in a way that both Russia and Angola have failed to do. This is important for what follows.

In the context of the missionaries, Henkel and Stirrat (2001) advance the fascinating thesis that participatory practices are religious in their very essence. Hence: "'[P]articipation' has… far reaching connotations involving a specific vision of society as 'communitas' and, at times, of evangelical promises of salvation" (2001: 172). Communication constitutes the very essence of participatory practice and it goes without saying that the missions were intensely participatory institutions.

Botes (1999: 138) points out that, "Participatory development… is about processes whereby people empower *themselves* to participate continuously in improving *their own* destiny" (emphasis added). This is crucial in the current context. Central to the Christian message was that the pastors or missionaries could only help (facilitate) people to save *their own* souls. This required skilled leadership (cf. Botes 1999: 132-139) which had to transcend mere technique to the point of becoming an art form. The essence of the pastor's task was to equip people to *take responsibility for their own salvation*. The missionaries never claimed to be able to save anyone, all they could do, at best, was to activate the thirst for redemption which was assumed to be innate in

every sentient human being. And because, in the Christian universe, this salvation could only finally take place in the next world, the need for transcendence in this life was *infinite*.

The egalitarianism of the ideal participatory environment finds its echo in the Christian teaching that before Christ all are equal. The impact of this on the African psyche, which had been conditioned to a collective subordination (Prozesky 1995: 16-22), can only have been seismic. It was this realisation which gave the emergent "schools" elite amongst the Xhosa (the "schools" were the missionary-aligned Xhosa while the "reds" were those who preferred to avoid the missionary influence) the confidence to demand participation in the running of their own affairs and to organise themselves politically. It is in effect the "schools" who now run South Africa whereas the "reds" are still mired in poverty in the Transkei. According to Nelson Mandela (Kessler 1999: 228), on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the World Council of Churches: "…my generation is the product of church education. Without the missionaries and other religious organisations I would not have been here today… when I say we are the product of missionary education, I recognize that I will never have sufficient words to thank the missionaries for what they did for us."

Thus we clearly see the potency of participatory communication to effect personal change, but most especially when conducted in a context where the possibility of transcendence is being held out. If we take the transformation exemplified by the Xhosa in conjunction with the Chinese students' example, we can see the animating power of awakening the need for transcendence. It is this that participation must strive for.

In defence of paternalism

Christianity is nothing if not paternalistic. Botes (1999: 44,69) in eschewing all forms of paternalism writes that "the real experts… are community members themselves". There is some scepticism about this (cf. Henkel & Stirrat 2001: 171). Is it really so? How should we reconcile Christian paternalism with development?

It can be argued that many of the social failings one sees in South Africa today are due to a *lack* of paternalism and that, far from paternalism being undesirable, what is needed is more of it. Paternalism (as with participatory development) can be used for good or ill (Atkinson 2007: 91-6). "Good" paternalism is a responsible form of oversight that knows when it is time to "let go". It is a lack of paternalism that has cynically exposed the very poor to the pernicious effects of the state lottery. It was a lack of paternalism that allowed the extortionate micro cash loans business to flourish. The present South African government is currently (with often deleterious consequences) destroying the fabric of the paternalistic relationship that hitherto obtained between farmer and farm worker by making their relationship a purely mercenary one (Atkinson 2007: 96-9). Where paternalism is benign can there be any real objection to it? Is it not perhaps irresponsible prematurely to break down paternalistic patterns of development?

The United Nations has enthusiastically propagated the notion of a "right to development". Although one must exercise some circumspection with the rights that emanate from this body (*Economist* 24 March 2007: 12,64) let us for the sake of argument grant a right to development, seeing that it enjoys such wide acceptance.

Rights entail duties and obligations, just as much as "up" presupposes "down". It must be noted that a "right to development" is not the same as a "right to develop". The former right is expressed in the passive voice. It is a right to be a recipient of something. This instantly posits an implicit duality. We thus have a *developer* and a *developee* (for want of a better word) – an agent and a beneficiary, namely the rights bearer. The developee has a right (with associated duties); the developer has duties and obligations. These latter are intrinsically *moral* obligations because they arise out of *rights*. These moral obligations, in execution, are *essentially* paternalistic and there is simply no escaping from this, discomfiting as it might be. Thus: either we abandon "the right to development", or we allow for enlightened paternalism.

We have now returned, via an indirect route, to the "moral imperative" argument advanced against the anti-development cohort earlier and, given the right to development, the way is clear for the missionaries' Christian paternalism. The parallels with the Christian cosmology of Christ descending to earth to redeem a fallen mankind loom very large indeed. On reflection then, we should be able to grant that *enlightened* paternalism (as opposed to a totalitarian subjugating or suffocating variety) is not necessarily incompatible with the participatory approach when understood as a *process* with an end point (i.e. an exit strategy from the familial nest).

The (neo)populist approach

There is something deeply appealing to human nature in the cluster of ruggedly self-reliant values that attaches itself to the populist vision. Populism, broadly speaking, arose in reaction to depersonalising industrialisation and holds out for "an alternative of small scale individual enterprise" (Kitching 1989: 19). It focuses on "the retention of a peasant agriculture and of non-agricultural petty commodity production, and on a world of villages and small towns rather than large industrial cities" (Kitching in Hulme & Truter 1990: 58). This vision is underpinned by notions of simplicity, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It is in fact precisely what De Rivero (2001) recommends for most of the undeveloped world, and what climate change activists are increasingly urging upon the developed world.

The missionaries were fundamentally populist, and their settlements would have served admirably as prototypes for the kinds of utopian community envisaged by the early French social theorists (Prozesky 1995; Wilson 1991: 119-130). As Cooper (2002: 16) says, "mission lobbies favoured a form of empire that gave space to Christian conversion and to encouraging Africans to become self-reliant small-scale producers".

Hundreds of small utopian village communities sprang up in America from the 1830s on. These arose out of a direct rejection of industrialisation and urbanisation and "were formed according to various idealistic blueprints for social and economic harmony"

(Kolodny 1983: xii). Although none of these communities lasted more than a few decades it is an ideal that lives on and is periodically revived (most notably in the 1960s and then again in the 1990s).

In the 19th century, populist-inspired settlements were much more of a viable proposition than might be the case today in our highly integrated and specialised world. Although the populist vision is hopelessly romantic and unrealistic, as an economic proposition *at scale* for today's world, that is not to say that its ideals and values should be cast aside. There is no reason why individuals should not cultivate a populist mind-set of intelligent self-reliance even if they never opt for a rural plot or for small town living. Populism as an aspiration will endure for as long as there exist dehumanising cities and institutions, in contradistinction to which it can define itself. This is as it should be, for such ideals may be the very stuff of transcendence.

HUMAN SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Manfred Max-Neef (1991: 15) in advancing the desirability of a "*trans*disciplinary", over against an "*inter*disciplinary", approach to development, lays the foundations for his stress upon the need for "personal involvement" in development. This is an important preliminary to rescuing development from sterile academia and situating it squarely within the ambit of communication with warm, flesh and blood human beings. He goes on (1991: 16-19) to establish three "postulates" underpinning Human Scale Development, namely:

- Development is about people and not about objects;
- Fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable; and
- These needs are the same in all cultures and in all historical periods. What changes are the means by which the needs are satisfied.

Are these postulates valid? Are they an adequate reflection of an objective reality?

The first point amounts to the assertion that development is *for* people. This is virtually axiomatic and enjoys wide acceptance. It would be an odd definition of development that left people out of the equation, thus the first postulate is as good as true by definition.

It has been a commonplace of moral philosophy ever since Aristotle that human wants are many, whereas human needs are few. Max-Neef (1991: 16), perhaps unwittingly, reveals his origins as an economist by claiming that "it is traditionally believed that human needs tend to be infinite". That may hold true for the discipline of economics but certainly not for other disciplines that have focussed on human needs. He appears to be confounding "needs" with the economists' conception of "demand" which incorporates both needs and wants. The second postulate is therefore unremarkable and can be taken as given.

It is in the third postulate that the real interest of Max-Neef's philosophy lies. If he is right that fundamental human needs are not culturally determined, but apply across the

board so to speak, this is not *trivially* true – it is *critically* true. The implications are enormous. For one thing it would give the lie to arguments that development is essentially a Western undertaking with no legitimacy outside of that context (cf. Tucker's assertion cited earlier that development "is not a natural process").

The needs Max-Neef (1991: 32-3) advances as being universal are: Subsistence; Protection; Affection; Understanding; Participation; Idleness; Creation; Identity; and Freedom.

The importance of Max-Neef's schema of fundamental human needs, and their "satisfiers", for an understanding of development is profound. It owes much to Aristotle's conceptual distinction between *instrumental* worth and *intrinsic* worth and it goes to the core of any development project. Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics* argues that what all human beings ultimately *want* is happiness, but what they *need* is a life of *arete*, i.e. virtue or excellence. The saying that "virtue is its own reward" derives from this.

The distinction between the instrumental and the intrinsic is well illustrated by the fact that people will often, when asked what they need, unreflectingly reply, "More money". But people cannot eat banknotes. The response, "Money for what?" sets in motion a chain of enquiry of great value – one which makes manifest those assumptions and motivations which are unconscious or latent in people's lives.

The real value of Max-Neef's schema lies in its *suggestiveness* (using its *form* as a point of departure) much more than in its more prescriptive particularities, the details of which could be argued into perpetuity. One could for example object that the fundamental need for struggle and challenge, or the need for hope, has been overlooked. One might quibble with "participation" being expressed as a "fundamental" need. Is participation really sought as an end in itself, or is it more usually instrumental (i.e. a satisfier) in the meeting of some yet more fundamental need? But these finer details are not ultimately that important, in and of themselves. It is the instrumental *process* in the course of which individuals and communities uncover their own intrinsic *meanings* that is so vital.

Max-Neef's third postulate also suggests that the fundamental needs apply in all historical periods, although he does say that this cannot be claimed with "absolute certainty" (1991: 27). To cater for this uncertainty he goes on to suggest that fundamental human needs develop as the species evolves. Given that the species evolves so slowly, perhaps he should have substituted this with "as society evolves". Whatever the case, there is a second crucial distinction that any analysis of needs must take into account (and which Max-Neef does not appear to). This is the difference between *felt* needs and *ascribed* needs. As Ignatieff (1984: 11) says:

> It is also notorious how self-deceiving we are about our needs. By definition, a person must know that he desires something. It is quite possible, on the other hand, to be in need of something and not know that one is. Just as we often desire what we do not need, so we often need what we do not consciously desire.

There is a certain utilitarian sterility to Max-Neef's nine fundamental needs considered *in toto*. Let us imagine a fully self-realised individual who has attained to a situation of perfect satisfaction and equipoise as regards all nine needs – a happy medium of neither too much nor too little. What then? Where to next, if not sublime boredom? Is there not something missing? Indeed there is. Ironically it is Max-Neef's (1991: 27) tenth "afterthought" need of transcendence which is the "glue" which holds his entire edifice together.

TRANSCENDENCE – THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL NEED

It is strange that Max-Neef (1991: 27) does not consider the need for transcendence to be universally applicable when one considers that the pyramids of Egypt, built by what was arguably one of the most mythopoeic societies ever to have existed, still stand for all to see. Max-Neef says, "… it is likely that in the future the need for Transcendence, which is not included in our proposal as we do not consider it universal, will become as universal as the other needs". Max-Neef (1991: 17) posits "subsistence, that is, to remain alive" as being *the* fundamental need in what is (*pace* Maslow's hierarchy of needs) an otherwise non-hierarchical structure. But is it?

If subsistence were primary how might we account for self-sacrifice? How to explain the millions who have given their lives in wars for what they believed to be a just cause? The parents who consciously lay down their lives that their children might live? The current Islamist suicide bombers? The Christian martyrs? One can think of endless such examples and in fact there must be very few people who, in extremity, would not sacrifice their lives for some or other transcendent reason. Max-Neef has *Economic Man* in mind when he says subsistence is our most deeply rooted need. Many scholars coming from other disciplines (theology, philosophy or psychology to name but three) might unhesitatingly opt for the need for transcendence as being yet more basic than the need for brute survival.

It was the *ascribed* need for transcendence in southern Africa's indigenous peoples that the missionaries, after having first activated it, then satisfied so successfully. The extraordinary thing about transcendence, and what makes it the most potent of all the needs, is that it is the one need that is indeed *infinite* – it can *never* be fully satisfied in this life. Thus there is never any question of "is this all there is to life?" in the supposedly fully developed individual because the infinite need for transcendence dictates that no state of affairs whatsoever can possibly exhaust its potential for being met.

By pitching their labours at satisfying transcendence over against subsistence, the missionaries were unwittingly employing the most supremely synergistic satisfier imaginable. In one fell swoop they met, by default, all of Max-Neef's original nine needs *including* subsistence. This is because they communicated to their communities *a reason to live* – not houses, clothing, food, health, work or transport (although these came naturally in due course), but *meaning and hope* (Prozesky 1995: 308-10). They helped them, greatly assisted by literacy it must be added, to envisage themselves as people with potential, they gave them a vision *of what they could become*.

It takes a real effort of imagination for Westerners, raised with a solid sense of identity and in a society in which the primacy of the "I" is taken as given, to appreciate the transformative impact on the aboriginal mind of the missionary message. This message was, "To God *you* are unique. *You* are special. *You* are central. *You* are loved. *You* are wanted. *You* can be immortal." This is the beginning of development with a heart. If this approach is not human-centred and human-scale then it is hard to conceive of what is. It is also hard to think of anything *less* like the Soviet communist model which treated people as dispensable and irrelevant units or ciphers in its brutal collective machinations. The missionaries by contrast might die satisfied if they had saved just *one* soul for God (Prozesky 1995: 92).

What then was the miraculously synergistic satisfier that the missionaries applied to meet the fundamental need for transcendence? Surely if we could harness the intensely human, hands-on energy of this elusive satisfier, this sufficient condition, in development work we could even leave the state and the macro-economy to go their own ways? For, as Korten (1990: 124) points out, "The surest way to kill a [developmental] movement is to smother it with money." How did a handful of people (there were never more than 2000 missionaries in the field in South Africa at any one time) manage to inculcate an exotic system of values that is now, implicitly at least, subscribed to by at least 36 million South Africans if one includes the so-called Zionist or Independent African churches (Hexham 1994; Kritzinger 1986)?

EROS – THE ULTIMATE SATISFIER

It is not too radical a conceptual leap to equate development with transcendence. This is to say that development *is* transcendence insofar as we engage in it not for some greater good but as an end worth pursuing in its own right. If we look at the empirical case study offered by the missionary effort we could say that development is the actualisation of the *universal* (i.e. *not* Eurocentric) human urge towards transcendence – it is transcendence in action, transcendence as process, transcendence as actualised by inter-personal communication.

Ul Haq (1999: 16) and Van Zyl (1995: 1) are correct in not denying the efficacy of economic growth. There is no need to "throw the baby out with the bathwater". Development studies as a discipline should itself develop and outgrow the simplistic adversarial "either/or" approach that wants to jettison everything that has gone before in favour of the latest trend. As Dichter (2003: 63) points out, development practice is, in effect, always incrementalist. It is about what is found to work, and there is no place for a rejection of the role of the state, or the economy, on the grounds of ideological prejudice. Pragmatism dictates that one adopts what is good and discards what is bad. The macro-economy is however essentially *a*moral while state interventions are invariably *im*moral, in the strict sense outlined in the earlier discussion of egoism. This is because the state generally looks for some kind of short-term payback. In advancing development the state does so for instrumental considerations, not for its intrinsic good. It would be a rare government that would countenance development if this might result

in its losing power, and conversely, governments are often committed to development only insofar as *not* "delivering" might get them voted out of power. This is not cynicism – it is how politics functions.

Human Scale Development, however, provides for a *moral* imperative to develop. What characterises it? From the missionaries' example can we infer that the synergistic satisfier we are seeking is the Christianisation of the world? Or can we broaden that to say some or other form of religiosity must be present? In this secular world we would not get very far with such an approach, and in any event there are too many exceptions (China, Japan) which disprove it one way or the other. It must be admitted that the panacea is hard to pinpoint.

But perhaps if we look at what the missionary movement amounted to (i.e. what range of transcendence satisfiers it delivered) we can detect some underlying factor. For a start, the missionaries, in the very act of facilitating the spiritual transcendence of others, were giving living expression to, and communicating, their *own* personal need for transcendence. Thus we see the extraordinarily productive, synergistic power of their work – the need and that need in turn actuating its own fulfilment. That they were committed to their task goes without saying (they frequently gave their lives for the cause). They were "in it for the long haul" – they had no illusions about quick fixes. They identified themselves absolutely with the poor and the oppressed, and they had an unwavering faith in activating the essential goodness of humanity. Theirs was an overriding *concern*. They harboured no doubts about the rightness of their cause. They persevered in the face of sometimes impossible obstacles. And they "embedded" themselves within the communities. They prayed together, they worked together, and they sang hymns together. Most importantly they gave the indigenous people a voice that went beyond the merely audible, and a means to commit their cultures and their histories to print.

If an individual were to embody all of these qualities we might say they were "Christ-like" or saintly and if we turn to history for the impact such individuals can make, without the resources of state or economy, we would uncover names such as Henrietta Stockdale, Emily Hobhouse, Mother Theresa, Florence Nightingale (not to mention Jesus Christ) all of whom made a *positive difference* often in excess of anything any state has achieved. What was it that set them apart?

Following Beukes (1992: 3) "development cannot be delivered or provided to people. It is *something positive* that happens…" (own emphasis). But what *makes* it happen? What is the catalyst? Perhaps Lilla (2001: 208) gets closest:

> That force is love, eros. For Plato, to be human is to be a striving creature, one who does not live simply to meet his most basic needs but is somehow driven to expand and sometimes elevate those needs, which then become new objects of striving. Why do humans 'stretch' themselves in this way? For Plato this is a deep psychological question, one to which the characters in his dialogues offer many

> different answers. Perhaps the loveliest is that given by Diotima… that 'all men are pregnant in respect to both body and soul'.

CONCLUSION

What are the practical implications of the foregoing argument for community development practitioners in South Africa? For the development problem posed earlier? Can we seriously advocate *eros* (the productive capacity of love to effect transformation) as part of an alternative approach to practical development problems in South Africa? Aristotle thought we could. As per Veatch (1974: 120):

> Most of us nowadays are inclined to assume that the purpose and function of the state is to make available to us various so-called external goods, hopefully in ever increasing amounts, and so to provide us with an ever higher standard of living. But not so Aristotle, for his constant message is that the aim of the state is not so much to provide men with goods, as to make them good men. And by 'good' Aristotle means 'morally good'.

If that is the task of the state then how much more so must it apply to individual moral agents (such as ourselves) actually to be good, to do good, and to communicate that good? As Veatch remarks, "this is a theme that may sound strange to modern ears". But Aristotle is quite correct. The universally synergistic satisfier, the sufficient condition, we have been trying to find, such that development projects will not fail, *cannot* fail, boils down in the end to those who give expression to *eros*, in other words "good people." It is that simple and that difficult. As Ul Haq (1999: 3) says, "The most difficult thing in life is to discover the obvious."

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A MICROHISTORICAL RECORD OF "MICROMEDIA": A COMMUNITY MEDIA JOURNALIST AND HER MEDIUM

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ABSTRACT

*This article applies the notion of microhistory in recording the development of a community media journalist (Heather Brenner) and her publication (*Tabletalk*). Community media, in essence, is the ideal subject to be analysed within the tenets of microhistory, as community media is in essence "micromedia", recording a distinctive persona, time and place — the microhistory — of an era. This article briefly reflects on the origin of community media, and then records the history of a "micromedia" journalist. Drawing on in-depth interviews with the subject and her former colleagues, this study attempts to explore the essence of a good community media journalist. Although the bulk of this study considers the reasons for her success, it also questions whether her career as a journalist was restricted because she was a woman in a male-dominated world. She never sought recognition for herself, and thus she remains an unheard voice of journalism outside her paper's distribution area — almost a textbook example of a subject for microhistory.*

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INTRODUCTION

The study field of microhistory is not well-known in South Africa, although some projects carry all the elements of this branch of historiography. A simplistic definition of microhistory is that it is a branch of the study of history. First developed in the 1970s, microhistory is the study of the past on a very small scale. The most common type of microhistory is the study of a small town or village. Other common studies include looking at individuals of minor importance. [….] Microhistory is an important component of the "new history" that has emerged since the 1960s. It is usually done in close collaboration with the social sciences, such as anthropology of sociology[1] (Wikipedia 2007).

Some well-known exponents of microhistory are Ginzburg, Hunt and Magnusson, the latter being the chair of the chair of the Centre for Microhistorical Research at the Reykjavik Academy in Iceland. Microhistory is described as one of the "most interesting and innovative" (Magnusson, s.a.) approaches to history, especially cultural and social history. Magnusson writes that microhistory came about, according to the German-US historian Georg G. Iggers in his summary of the development of modern historical practice, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*,

> not because the microhistorians considered that the traditional methodology of the social sciences "is not possible or desirable but that social scientists have made generalisations that do not hold up when tested against the concrete reality of the small-scale life they claim to explain".

Microhistory can thus be used as a means of typically recording the life and times of someone such as the topic of this article: the person behind a hugely successful community newspaper, within the contexts of the development of media in our country.

Historians are unavoidably influenced by personal background and social experiences, and mainstream history was until recently "the fragile expressions of the limited perspectives of white, male historians" (Sochen, in Van der Vyver 1985:35). There is thus a need to rewrite history, also, as it has been phrased: to rewrite history and write "herstory". Microhistory therefore is useful in recording the contribution in various fields by those who are "other" than male or white. Microhistory, in other words, can unlock the plethora of "herstories" that still need to be recorded.

South African media started out as community or local media when the first attempt at a sustainable – and free – press was made in colonial times. It seems our media's history is mainly the legacy of British colonialism (Wigston 2001: 34-37). The Cape saw the first publication of what can be called a newspaper in 1800 (Diederichs & De Beer 1998: 87), after 150 years of no press freedom. This was followed by an expansion of local media, thanks to the 1820 settlers, who brought with them both technology and expertise (Diederichs & De Beer 1998: 90), as by the end of the nineteenth century "there was hardly a town of any size without its own newspaper, the proprietor and editor often being one and the same person".

Today, one can distinguish between commercial community newspapers that have a cover price and that belong to major media companies, knock 'n drops or freebies, also called VFD (verified free distribution) papers, the majority also belonging to major media companies, and grassroots community newspapers, also known as start-ups, some financed through the newly established MDDA [2]. According to one source, there are 340 newspapers in South Africa targeting local communities. Those in urban areas tend to be VFD, with bigger circulations, while those in rural areas have a cover price and smaller circulations (SA Media Facts 2006).

The subject of this study, Heather Brenner, founded one of Cape Town's largest urban community papers 21 years ago. It became so successful that it is today the property of the international Independent Newspaper Group, published by its Cape Community Newspapers division, from Newspaper House in Cape Town.

Table Talk [3] was founded in February 1987, and its success led to Unicorn Publishing buying it barely one year later in June 1988, and amalgamating *Table Talk* with *Milnerton Mail*. The combined title was called *Table Talk & Mail*. In 1991, Unicorn was bought by the Argus Group[4]. In the mid-1990s, the newspaper reverted to its original name of *Tabletalk* (now written as one word). The Unicorn community newspapers, serving "white" suburbs, moved into the Argus Building (now Newspaper House) in St George's Mall in 1996, having amalgamated with the Argus community newspapers, serving "coloured" suburbs, to become Cape Community Newspapers (CCN) (Brenner 2006).

Shortly thereafter, Independent Newspapers bought out the Argus Group. David Hill took over as editor of CCN in February 1997, retiring at the end of 2007. Brenner remained the newspaper's sole journalist from the first edition in May 1987 until the end of December 2005, when she retired at the age of 66 to become a politician.

Tabletalk, a VFD newspaper, was originally published monthly and later fortnightly. *Tabletalk*'s current circulation is 50 920 (Vale 2006). The free distribution newspaper is delivered every Wednesday to homes in Cape Town's ever-burgeoning and diverse West Coast suburbs. *Tabletalk* is one of CCN's biggest titles in terms of distribution figures (Vale 2006), surpassed only by *Athlone News* (55 120), *Vukani* in Khayelitsha (75 000) and *Plainsman* in Mitchells Plain (80 000).

It was not possible to establish the paper's current advertising revenue (Young 2006) [5], but it is a telling fact that the newspaper's advertising rates are of the highest of the 14 titles in the group (Vale 2006). In addition, *Tabletalk* is one of the biggest community newspapers due to its advertising pull – it often reaches 40 pages at the end of the month (Holmes 2006). *Tabletalk* has long been a major contributor to CCN's revenue, thus playing an important role in sustaining Independent Newspapers Cape – a far cry from Brenner's little eight-page monthly publication in 1987.

This study examines the reasons for the growth and success of Brenner's newspaper. It also considers the question of what makes a successful community journalist.

HEATHER BRENNER, THE PERSONA

By rights, Brenner should not have become a reporter. All the odds were stacked against this unemployed 46-year-old widow who did not even know how to type. But Brenner believed that she could do anything she wanted to do. Coupled with this attitude was the fact that she had never been trained in journalism – and thus never exposed to the hierarchy of the South African journalism world. And so, not realising (or caring) that only men were "investigative reporters" at that stage, she went out and became one herself – after single-handedly starting a newspaper (Brenner 2006).

Although Brenner is a legend in *Tabletalk*'s distribution area [6], hardly anyone outside this region has heard of her. Beyond the greater Blaauwberg area of the Cape West Coast, she is an unheard voice. Sadly, this lack of recognition is often the case with community journalists. Yet for all 20 years of *Tabletalk*'s existence, Brenner was *Tabletalk*. This is the story of her life, and, simultaneously, that of *Tabletalk*.

When the first author of this article joined CCN in 2000, she was told of Brenner's reputation for being fearless. Soon afterwards, Brenner became annoyed with her medical aid scheme, so she decided to occupy the medical aid's offices. Brenner sat down on the floor in the middle of their office space and refused to move. Eventually the medical aid gave in and paid her the claim. This tenacity is Brenner personified.

Today, Brenner is nearly 69 years old. She left *Tabletalk* in December 2005 and joined a political party, which she represents as councillor for her area. She notes that she is doing exactly the same thing she was doing when she was a journalist, only now she's not writing about it (Brenner 2006).

TABLETALK: THE EARLY YEARS

The story of *Tabletalk* is the story of Brenner's life. She was born in Birmingham, England, in 1939 and spent her formative years there. In 1952, the family settled in South Africa, in what was then known as the Transvaal, and in 1961 she moved to Cape Town to help open a dance studio. There she met and married her late husband, and the couple settled in Milnerton. She admits that it was not a happy marriage (Brenner 2006), but she kept herself busy looking after their two small children, giving ballroom dancing classes, coaching drum majorettes, organising fêtes and directing plays and church pantomimes. She had never had what her father would have called a "proper job": "I never 'trained' in anything except dancing. If I enjoy the prospect of something, I just go ahead and do it" (Brenner 2006).

In the early 1980s, Table View was a "Cinderella suburb" without many municipal services – the roads were not surfaced and sewage disposal was dependent on septic tanks. Brenner's best friend was Isobel Hutchinson, chairperson of the Table View Ratepayers' Association, which was fighting for services for the area. Hutchinson believed a "real" newspaper would be a catalyst for improvements, as opposed to the little quarterly bulletin (put out by the association) that came and went in fits and starts (Brenner 2006). Brenner remembers Hutchinson asking: "Why don't you start a

newspaper? You don't have anything better to do!" But Brenner retorted that she knew nothing of newspapers and couldn't even type.

In 1984, Brenner's husband died. Three years went by, and out of the blue, one morning in February 1987, Brenner woke up and thought: "Oh, what the hell, I'm going to start that newspaper for Isobel!" (Brenner 2006)

Brenner knew that she would need advertising, so she walked around Table View, creating a map that listed the names of all the businesses in the area. Most pledged their "undying support" and everyone was wildly enthusiastic (Brenner 2006). She then approached a printer who explained what she would need to do. The printer (operating from his garage) gave her a mock-up of the paper – a four-page black and white tabloid with a spot of colour – "a little bit of blue" – on the front and back pages. Armed with this, she set out to sell advertising and once again went footslogging through Table View. Brenner (2006) recalls her immediate success:

> By lunchtime that day, I had R1 500 worth of advertising. The owner of Seeff Properties in Table View wanted to be on the front page permanently. So I took a lunch break and said to myself: "I'm going to be a tycoon!"

She never became a tycoon, but three months from the date when she decided to start the newspaper, she published the first edition of *Tabletalk* on 25 May 1987. The initial outlay had cost her absolutely nothing as she raised enough advertising revenue to cover the costs of the printer, photo lithographer and typesetter for the first edition, and they only billed her after 30 days. A number of dignitaries attended the launch of the newspaper. Brenner (2006) was amazed at her success:

> I couldn't believe it was all happening. It was fun and I didn't take it seriously. Not many people enter journalism at the age of 46. I was the oldest cub reporter ever!

Brenner started an editorial column with a "friendly photograph" of herself. The tone of her column was relaxed, as if writing for friends and family. And she did indeed know many of the people for whom she was writing. As time went by, her column became funnier and funnier as she made herself the object of laughter. Her former colleague, Cathy Stagg (now assistant editor at CCN), remembers with delight a column Brenner wrote about looking for a suitable bathing costume (Stagg 2006).

Table View was small and insular and thus the paper was initially largely "parish pump" (Stagg 2006). An example of a lead story in 1988 was the anticipated return of a young Table View man who had been doing national service in the army (*Table Talk* 1988-06-14:1). Brenner believed that if her readers saw her as an "aunty", they would send her their news. She wanted people to relate to her (Brenner 2006).

In the beginning, Brenner did almost everything – and everything was hands-on. She would write all her articles by hand and have them typed by a company which also designed her advertisements. They would provide her with the stories typed into columns and ready for plates to be made. Brenner would cut and paste the copies of the adverts and the stories onto a page grid. This would go to a backyard photo lithographer, who would cut and paste the originals professionally according to Brenner's proofs. He would also add her photographs (which he had processed). From these he made the plates, which Brenner would take to the printer.

Besides writing the editorial, booking the advertising and taking the material to the printer, Brenner also went door to door, delivering many copies of *Table Talk* personally. Around 5 000 copies of the newspaper were published monthly, with 4 000 copies being delivered to homes by a distribution company. Brenner (2006) remembers how she distributed many of the remaining 1000 copies by hand to approximately 200 businesses, as well as municipalities and libraries:

> I walked around Table View, with the newspapers under my arm. When I delivered them, the businesses would pay for their adverts in cash and immediately book their adverts for the next edition. […] In retrospect, my advertising costs were far too low. But I commandeered all the available advertising spend in Table View. I knew every business owner, their granny and their children.

Avril Dumont, a long distance runner from Table View, hand delivered the papers to the nearby industrial area of Montague Gardens (Brenner 2006).

In the early days, *Table Talk* had about 60 regular advertisers, with a ratio of 65% advertising and 35% editorial. Within half a year, Geila Wills, the advertising representative for the adjacent suburb's *Milnerton Mail*, began to struggle to get advertising because everyone was advertising in *Table Talk* instead (Brenner 2006). Meanwhile, Brenner was unaware that she was making inroads into their advertising. After a year, she received a phone call from the owner of Unicorn Publishing (and *Milnerton Mail)*. He invited her to lunch, admitting that she had them with their backs against the wall – they couldn't even get "a sniff of advertising" (Brenner 2006). He offered to buy *Table Talk,* but Brenner hesitated. She knew nothing about business and did not want to give up her "child". However, Brenner's then life partner, Andy MacPherson, encouraged her to do a deal in which Unicorn would buy her as part of the package (Brenner 2006).

When Brenner went to sign the deal, the editorial director of Unicorn put a computer in her hands and she "nearly fainted with shock" (Brenner 2006). MacPherson assured her that "any fool could type", saying that she could dictate her stories and he would type them. Because of his bad spelling, Brenner had to work on the articles afterwards, correcting the spelling and thereby learning to type (Brenner 2006).

Brenner negotiated her contract to work from home and take her work in once a fortnight for typesetting and pasting up (Brenner 2006):

> The Unicorn office was typical of a newspaper workplace: crowded, desks piled high with newspaper junk and heaps of newspapers lying over the floor. There was no place for me to work from. After a few weeks, Geila Wills (my former competitor on the advertising beat) generously offered to share her rather large desk with me. […] Just sitting across from [her] I learned a lot about keeping things and keeping them accurately filed. I did a bit of leaning over the shoulder of Unicorn's editor of Southern Suburbs Tatler, Trish Bam, who was generous with her advice and friendly […]. Everyone at Unicorn seemed so experienced and educated in journalism. I always felt a bit of an outcast, but I wasn't going to let it get me down.

Everything had been hands-on when Brenner was running a one-woman show, but now she was part of the Unicorn structures in Protea House, Adderley Street, Cape Town, which included typesetters and experts who oversaw the page make-up. Around 18 000 copies of *Table Talk & Mail* were distributed twice a month.

It was just after the merger that Unicorn employed Lynn Holmes, a Table View resident who had been selling advertising for *Cape Times*. Brenner and Holmes soon became a winning team, working very closely together. Holmes still sells advertising for *Tabletalk* 20 years later.

In the final edition of her eight-page *Table Talk* before it was bought out, Brenner wrote in her editor's letter (1988-06-14:2):

> A great thing has happened to *Table Talk,* and likewise to me. We have amalgamated with *Milnerton Mail,* which is part of Unicorn Publications, to give you a bigger, better, more frequent updating of news and views […]. The new paper will be called *Table Talk & Mail* and I will remain as editor. [….] I'm sure in time we will both settle down to the original basic concept of *Table Talk* – that of service to the community.

A detailed reading of this edition reveals a paper that was still largely "light" in both subject matter and approach, but there are indications that Brenner was beginning to explore more serious issues. On one hand, there was a column by Brenner's friend, Isobel Hutchinson of the Table View Ratepayers' Association, and an article on drug abuse, but, on the other hand, much of the paper was filled with news of schools, clubs, theatre and sport.

An examination of the first edition of the 16-page *Table Talk & Mail* (1988-07-07) reveals smooth continuity, with Brenner's style and approach very much in evidence. The paper was a little bit more colourful – yet still restricted to a few red, yellow and blue adverts. (Colour photographs were only introduced in the mid-1990s.) With her customary informal, chatty tone, Brenner introduced herself to her new readers in her editor's letter (*Table Talk & Mail,* 1988-07-07:2). The lead story in this inaugural edition was about the Lions Club of Milnerton ("Pride of Lions", *Table Talk & Mail,* 1988-07-07:1). Other articles included the history of Table View, legal advice, schools news and a wedding photo. Sports news, including tennis, canoeing and surfing, was

scattered throughout the paper and there were no separate sports pages. There were also columns by the ratepayers' associations from the various areas.

Despite the soft family flavour and the lack of substantial "hard news" in this one-year-old newspaper, the presence of ratepayers' issues in the newspaper was an early sign that Brenner was soon to start tackling meatier topics. In addition, Brenner's statement in "Table View ratepayers first to announce candidates" (*Table Talk & Mail*, 1988-07-07:5) that councillors "are answerable to no-one but you the people" is also indicative of this.

Perhaps it was Brenner's growing confidence in her own writing, perhaps it was the backing of Unicorn Publishing which meant that she no longer had to spend time selling advertising and hand delivering the newspaper, or perhaps it was the fact that the merged paper brought her a new and more complex readership with more varying and challenging issues. Whatever the reasons, Brenner entered a new phase of local investigative journalism. The newspaper grew in size and she increasingly filled it with issues of greater and wider significance, particularly relating to service delivery and the community's plight in what was then frontier territory in Cape Town.

Yet Brenner never forgot the importance of local news. She found space for all sorts of news – from the toughest matters involving local government down to little girls performing in their first ballet concerts. She understood her readership and was not afraid to take on the big issues, but she was equally unafraid to include stories that might seem insignificant to those outside the area. It was a winning combination and the newspaper continued to grow. As time went by, Brenner grew in stature and so did the paper (Stagg 2006).

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR BRENNER'S SUCCESS

At the outset, it is crucial to define community journalists. They are generally multi-talented and multi-skilled individuals who are required to report on all aspects of community life – and take photographs. This is in contrast to reporters at daily papers, who are given well-defined beats to cover.[7] Thus community journalists quickly develop in-depth knowledge about everything that happens in their area. Because they tend to live in the community they write about, they have to be fearless in reporting. Indeed, they know they will often encounter the subjects of their articles when they visit the local shops. Community journalism gives a voice to people whose concerns and situations are largely ignored by daily newspapers and various authorities. From experience, many community journalists see their work as the purest form of journalism.

Brenner's success as a journalist is hardly known or recognised outside her own community. Even in the journalism world, she is generally unknown outside Independent Newspapers' Cape Town office. This could well be because she consistently refused to enter community press awards, despite the pleadings of her editor and colleagues, who were convinced that she would have won many categories.

Yet Brenner (2006) neither needed nor desired awards, praise or recognition.

From interviews with Brenner and her colleagues, six reasons for Brenner's success as a community journalist were identified:

- a positive attitude;
- a passion for the community;
- fearless investigation;
- the ability to be adaptable;
- knowledge in many spheres; and
- teamwork with advertising representatives.

These reasons will be expounded in the section that follows.

Positive attitude

Brenner has experienced a great deal of tragedy in her life. After a "terribly insecure and unhappy marriage" (Brenner 2006), she was widowed with two children at the age of 43. She experienced more heartache when her son passed away in 2002. Despite this, Brenner (2006) remains positive:

> People are often thrown off balance by dramatic change. Every time my situation changed, my positive attitude was most important. I look forward to each change in my life as another chance to start over.

Her marriage taught her how important it is for women to take control. Her approach of being optimistic and in control naturally extends to her professional life. Brenner believes it is important for women to have careers and interests because this enables them to be independent (Brenner 2006).

When she was bought out by Unicorn, she saw that many of the other community newspapers' reporters were experienced, young, "with-it" women. They laughed when Brenner told them that she would make *Tabletalk* the flagship of Unicorn (Brenner 2006):

> It took me 10 years, but I did it. By its 10th birthday, Tabletalk had the biggest distribution of all the Unicorn papers. […] And it had the biggest pagination. It was a revelation to me that I could do this from nothing.

Brenner's non-judgmental attitude towards gender, race, age and disability made a huge impression on Stagg (2006), who notes that although one of Brenner's hands was deformed from birth, she speaks about it openly, doesn't try to hide it and doesn't let it affect her writing or photographic work. Stagg (2006) also notes how Brenner was able to do things differently and break the rules of reporting because she had never been trained in journalism. For example, Brenner wrote about her medical aid sit-in in *Tabletalk*, despite the journalistic rule that reporters should not place themselves in the news.

Passion for her community

Brenner was always "in tune" with the inhabitants of the *Tabletalk* area (Stagg 2006). Brenner laughed with her readers and she cried with them. She lived in the area, her children went to school there and she was on the Milnerton Players' executive for 40 years, directing and acting in plays. She taught ballroom dancing, coached drum majorettes and organised fêtes.

When Brenner knew she would be retiring, she started searching for a person whom she felt would look after her "baby" and serve the community as she had done. Brenner (2006) notes that she handpicked and trained her successor, Pam Fourie, who took over in January 2006. It is significant that Brenner handed over her newspaper when it was 18 years old, much as an 18-year-old child comes of age and goes out into the world.

Fearless investigator

Brenner really came into her own as a fearless investigator when David Hill was appointed as editor of CCN in 1997. For the first time, she had the total support of her editor and this gave her the freedom and confidence to write without fear of repercussions. Hill notes how the growth of the paper coincided with tremendous growth in the area and he is full of praise for Brenner (2006).

Although Hill's support was indeed crucial, Brenner's penchant for investigative reporting had developed before she started working with him. She had long been a crusading journalist with a strong sense of right and wrong (Stagg 2006). Brian Josselowitz (2006), who was Brenner's news editor at CCN, describes her as tenacious and someone who wouldn't take no for an answer. Stagg (2006) recalls how secure Brenner was in herself and how this aided her in her investigative reporting.

What made Brenner stand out as a white community journalist, particularly in the 1980s, was the fact that she went into the townships and reported on the black community's issues. For example, Brenner was the first person to investigate the lives of the black grooms from the Milnerton Race Course who were not allowed to have their wives and children living with them (Stagg 2006):

> The grooms and their families were eventually allowed to settle in what have now become the large townships of Dunoon and Joe Slovo Park in Milnerton. Heather has known people there for 20 years and they have relationships of friendship and trust.

Tabletalk's advertising representative, Holmes (2006), was also always struck by Brenner's passion for the underprivileged and Fourie (2006), new to *Tabletalk*, is well aware of Brenner's reputation for covering news across race and language barriers. Although many people encountered Brenner's tough side, she cared deeply about people and it was this dual nature that made her a successful community journalist. Brenner "saw people and not just stories" (Stagg 2006).

Adaptability

Despite being the oldest journalist in the newsroom, Brenner always relished change and moved with the times, whether it was mastering e-mail, adapting to the style of a new publishing group or getting to know a community that had been added to *Tabletalk*'s distribution area. Whenever she encountered change, she realised she was very lucky to have another chance to do something different (Brenner 2006).

Stagg (2006) was always struck by the extent to which Brenner embraced change and was flexible. Few women enter journalism at the age of 46 – although MER, the first professional Afrikaans female reporter, was appointed as *Die Burger*'s "women's editor" at the age of 46 in 1922 (Rabe 2001). Even fewer women enter politics at the age of 66. (There are a number of interesting similarities between Brenner and MER, who, as a social worker, also changed careers and moved into serving her community after her stint in journalism. She was also an independent woman, who divorced her husband in 1905, when she was 30, and raised her son and daughter as a single mother at a time when divorce was frowned upon.)

Extensive knowledge

Stagg (2006) is not surprised that Brenner went into politics because she has such a vast amount of knowledge about her area and local government:

> She didn't just write stories – she also fixed things. She liked networking and putting people in touch with each other. People would phone her to ask for advice. It was like a free citizens' advice bureau – she knew who to phone to get things done.

Fourie (2006) concurs that Brenner has enormous knowledge of how the city and its sub-councils work:

> She had insights into local government, municipalities, developments and even the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station. She would investigate every angle of a story and her articles were never one-sided. They were always well-planned and well-structured.

Although she did not have any tertiary education, Brenner had been at the "university of life" for 46 years when she entered journalism (Brenner 2006):

> For a long time, I felt subordinate to anyone with journalism training. I felt out of my depth when writing because I had no training. Then I did various courses and it was a revelation to me that I didn't need them! I enjoyed them, but I learnt nothing from them in the main. I had been doing the right things all along – operating from sheer gut feeling.

Brenner (2006) says she learnt that life skills and experience matter most in community journalism. She is saddened when, for example, young journalists who have never had a bond or paid rates are expected to write intelligent pieces on these topics.

Teamwork

Journalists and advertising representatives often completely ignore one another. This situation mostly stems from the journalists' idealistic belief that news should be free from the influence of business, advertising and money. Brenner, who had no journalism training and was four years away from 50 when she ventured into the journalism world, was not constrained by this attitude. She managed to maintain her editorial integrity and simultaneously work closely and harmoniously with her advertising representative, Holmes, who joined *Tabletalk* in 1988 and is still there today.

The success of *Tabletalk* came from the fact that both the journalist and the advertising representative lived in the area and cared deeply about their own community. In addition, they understood where the other was coming from and communicated very closely (Holmes 2006). Stagg (2006) tells how Brenner had very strong and definite views about the controversial advertising versus editorial debate:

> The "what's on" notices were for churches, charities, non-profit organisations and service clubs. Each was allowed only one notice per month. Businesses tried to get in, but she made them advertise. Heather's partner, Andy, has a son who owns a garden centre. The local bonsai club meets at this centre – and Heather refused to name the centre when she advertised the bonsai club! She went to extreme lengths – but I admired that about her. She had a strong sense of ethics.

Stagg (2006) acknowledges that part of the reason *Tabletalk* grew to become the biggest and most profitable newspaper in CCN's northern group was Brenner's very workable relationship with Holmes.

A MATTER OF MARGINALISATION?

Brenner entered journalism at a time when men still dominated South African newsrooms and when many a young female journalist was intimidated by overbearing male editors, as is clear from numerous studies on media and gender (cf. Goga 2000; Lowe Morna 2001; GMBS 2003, Sanef Glass Ceiling Audit 2006). It certainly helped that Brenner was already 47 when her newspaper was bought out by Unicorn Publishing and she went from having a one-woman show to working with a team and male editors. But it was especially her confident approach that saw her withstand sexist attitudes.

It is, of course, unfair to look at male/female dynamics in the 1980s from a 21st century perspective and it must be borne in mind that even Brenner was, to a certain extent, inevitably part of the social gender constructs of the time. Indeed, in her article entitled "Drama Drama" (*Table Talk*, 1988-06-14:6), she refers to the mayor of Milnerton and his wife as "Mr and Mrs Geo Mellett" and the ex-mayor of Bellville and his wife as "Mr and Mrs Tinus Meyer". At the time, this was fully acceptable language.

It is, however, clear that Brenner believed in equality. Stagg (2006) notes that at a time when it was not socially acceptable for a woman to cross-examine (for example) the male chairperson of the local council, Brenner did so fearlessly.

Yet despite Brenner's attitude that enabled her to become an influential woman in her community, it must be questioned whether she was marginalised in the male-dominated world of journalism. Despite her success over the course of 18 years in journalism, Brenner says she did not receive a single promotion or job offer from another newspaper over the years (2006). Could this have been because she was a woman, and an older woman at that?

One cannot assume that sexism was at the heart of the matter, because Brenner (2006) openly admits that she is territorial and loves her community. And it is certain that she rightly believed that her community newspaper was better than *Argus* and *Cape Times*. However, it is significant that, when asked to provide advice for young reporters, Brenner (2006) says that they should see CCN as an excellent stepping-stone and nursery, as well as a place for journalists who are at the end of their careers and not going anywhere. Perhaps this is an indication that Brenner would have liked to work at a large national newspaper if she had entered journalism 25 years earlier than she did, although that would have been at a time when female reporters faced far greater challenges.

Yet somehow it is impossible to imagine Brenner at a newspaper other than *Tabletalk*. Despite this, Brenner would have made an excellent editor, particularly because of her incisive judgment, her organisational skills and her ability to mentor her fellow journalists. Brenner, meanwhile, says she never experienced outright sexism because she never regarded herself as inferior, and she simply never allowed people to be sexist towards her (Brenner 2006).

DISCUSSION

Brenner went against the grain in many ways, both as a journalist and as a woman. For example, many of the pioneering female journalists would have been tempted to buy into the [male] journalistic culture of heavy drinking, but not Brenner (2006). She came up against much opposition (both overt and subtle) and perhaps even marginalisation over the years, although she never termed it sexism. There is no doubt that it was her strong character that enabled her to succeed as a pioneering female journalist in an ever-changing community (and country) and in male-dominated newsrooms.

She boldly broke the rules and redefined the boundaries for female community reporters. She never saw herself as a victim of anything – she just went out and did the job without any fuss or fanfare. She investigated, found the truth and wrote about it, not caring about the inevitable criticism.

Brenner's readers often saw her as a fearless journalist, yet this is not strictly true. She did indeed have fears, but she bravely faced and fought these fears, often on behalf of her readers. In so doing, she became a strong and successful role model, inspiring and encouraging CCN's female journalists.

Brenner recalls her favourite book as a child was about a Scottish girl who lived in the Gorbals, a poor part of Glasgow (2006). The little girl went on an outing to the countryside and wandered into a field, coming face to face with a huge cow. She was terrified, but remembered that someone had told her to always face up to things and look them in the eye. "There are a lot of fearful things in journalism, but you have to get on with it, have a bash and do your best" (Brenner 2006).

Outside the broader Blaauwberg area, Brenner is an unheard voice. For her *Tabletalk* readers, she remains a legend – and in terms of microhistory, a worthy subject for a more extensive study as part of ongoing microhistorical projects on community media.

Having researched the (micro)history and growth of Brenner's *Tabletalk*, it has become clear that there are certain attributes and characteristics which excellent community journalists should have. The passion for one's community should exclude any favouritism. In order to understand what is locally relevant, and to grasp the history and issues of an area, one should ideally live in the paper's distribution area. This is not without its difficulties, as one is often required to withstand the pressure of particular groups and their agendas. Natural curiosity and the resultant in-depth knowledge about all aspects of community life, particularly local government, are essential, as this enables reporters to write about what really matters to their readers.

Good community reporters should remain true to the tenets of journalism, namely to be fearless seekers of the truth. They should work as a team with advertising representatives, while at the same time not compromising on editorial integrity and independence. They should also be hard-working, embracing technology, welcoming change and always aiming to improve their skills. Being well-organised, self-motivated and flexible is crucial, as is having a "can do" attitude and intentionally acquiring vital life skills. Community reporters should be multi-talented and multi-skilled – both in terms of their field of work (writing/photography/editing/layout) and in terms of their beats (anything and everything).

RECOMMENDATIONS

A study of this nature is not exhaustive enough to do justice to the subject matter. As an explorative study in terms of microhistory and its subject, this article serves as an example for other such studies. There are many other community newspapers that would benefit greatly from an in-depth analysis of their content, growth and reporters. Indeed, the writers of media history often sideline community journalism.

It would be particularly fitting if media conglomerates were to provide funding and support for research into community titles in order to promote critical self-examination and introspection.

History is soon forgotten if it is not written down. Microhistory is a vehicle through which the "historians in a hurry" – as journalists have been called – of our community media can be recorded as contributors and participants in the "first draft of history" – as journalism has been described. Since community journalists are often women, it

would be essential for female voices to number prominently among those who are tasked with writing these collective microhistories, adding "herstories" to history.

Endnotes

[1] A definition from Wikipedia. Although the authors realise that this online encyclopedia is generally regarded with suspicion, and not recommended for use in the social sciences, the authors deemed this definition as succinct and useful as it describes microhistory in a nutshell, and can stand the test if verified against other sources such as Iggers (1997), Ginzburg (1993) and Magnusson (s.a.), who will not be dealt with here because of space constraints.

[2] Media Development and Diversity Agency, established to support, amongst others, grassroots media.

[3] The first author of this article read the *Tabletalk* (part of Cape Community Newspapers and owned by Independent Newspapers) every week while she was a sub-editor at Cape Community Newspapers from April 2000 to April 2004. In addition, she was closely involved as sports editor for *Tabletalk* and Cape Community Newspapers' other titles from May 2004 to February 2005.

[4] When referring to a specific time in *Tabletalk*'s history, it is referred to it by its name at that time, in other words, *Table Talk*, *Table Talk & Mail* or *Tabletalk*. When making generic references to the publication, it will be referred to by its current title, *Tabletalk*.

[5] CCN's retail area manager, Pat Young (2006), did not want to divulge *Tabletalk's* advertising revenue.

[6] Experience of the first author of this article, Gillian Turner, as a community journalist working for CCN.

[7] Definition as per own experience of the authors of this article.

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ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR HIV AND AIDS REPORTING: THE INTEREST-GROUP FACTOR

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ABSTRACT

HIV and Aids is a complex developmental issue. Cognisance should therefore be taken of the socio-cultural, socio-economic and epidemiological factors impacting on the syndrome. To deal with HIV and Aids in such a comprehensive manner, a multi-sectoral approach is required in which government, civil society, the media and NGOs take hands. In this regard criticism about media coverage on HIV and Aids has resulted in constructive suggestions, mainly from interest groups, through which they performed a potentially powerful agenda-setting function. This article extracts a number of guidelines from the suggestions to formulate an ethical framework for HIV and Aids reporting in view of the lack of guidelines in professional ethical codes (e.g. the Code of the Press Council of South Africa) as well as institutional codes (i.e. that of individual media institutions). The proposed interest group guidelines are directed at journalism practice, but also address ethical issues, e.g. that the media consider the rights of people with HIV and Aids, respect their right to confidentiality and portray them in a dignified manner.

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INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that HIV/Aids is more than a medical problem, but the full complexity of the issue within a developing society is less often stated. In recent literature arguments emerged that HIV and Aids should be viewed as a developmental matter and all factors influencing development should therefore be taken into account (cf. Swanepoel, Fourie & Steyn 2007; Tsafack Temah 2004: 3; Somavia 2004: V). Socio-cultural and epidemiological factors are generally present in a developed society. It is, however, the socio-economic factors such as income inequality, gender discrimination, low income levels, a mobile population, low education levels and in certain instances bad governance (the priority government gives HIV and Aids as a *health* issue) that are unique to developing regions. The complexity of the problem in these regions thus requires a unique solution.

In this regard a multi-sectoral approach where government, NGOs (non-governmental organisations), community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and the corporate sector take hands in the fight against HIV and Aids has become popular (cf. Chen & Liao 2005; Gómez-Jáuregui 2004). Moreover, it is evident that the media play an important role in addressing problems relating to HIV and Aids. In this context the media have a distinct agenda-setting function (Panos Institute 2003:13). However, given the unique interrelated conditions that need to be taken into account when addressing (and thus also reporting on) HIV and Aids issues in a developing environment such as South Africa, it is not surprising that interest groups in the field often criticise the media.

There are a number of professional codes in South Africa to guide media professionals, including the Code of the Press Council of South Africa (voluntarily implemented by the print media industry, and generally referred to as the Press Code), the SAUJ code (applicable to members of the now defunct South African Union of Journalists) and the code of the Broadcast Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA, which is implemented in terms of the Broadcast Act). Institutional codes include those of the SABC, *The Star* and *Die Burger*.

With one exception, these codes make no specific reference to HIV and Aids reporting. This is an important gap, as HIV and Aids is a specialist field and one of the most complex journalistic challenges of our time – not only due to the level of scientific understanding and background knowledge it demands, but also due to a host of relevant ethical issues such as the conflict between the public interest and the rights of the individual (cf. Cullinan 2001; Delate 2003a: 9; Smith 2003).

In a multi-sectoral approach it could be useful for the media to turn to the other partners for guidelines. While civil society does not necessarily have the ability to formulate and implement policy in the long run, research (Seckinelgin 2004; 2005) has indicated it is best equipped to identify needs, HIV and Aids contexts and complexities at grassroots level. Government on the other hand, is focused on policy formation, making a partnership essential.

Against this background this article aims to identify guidelines enabling journalists to be more sensitive to the development context surrounding HIV and Aids reporting. This will be done by studying different critiques and comments from interest groups (both from government and civil society) regarding reporting within the field.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative study literature investigation and document analysis were predominantly used to analyse the critiques of different interest groups regarding HIV and Aids reporting.

The interest groups referred to include government departments such as the National Department of Health (DOH); activist groups such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the Aids Consortium and the Aids Law Project (ALP) seated in the Wits Centre for Applied Legal Studies; NGOs including NAPWA (the National Association for People Living with Aids); and world bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the different agencies of the United Nations. Organisations that have been particularly active in promoting HIV and Aids reporting are the Centre for Aids Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE); the SAfAIDS Media Unit; and the Africa Women's Media Centre (AWMC).

In co-operation with the ALP, Journ-AIDS compiled ethical guidelines on HIV and Aids reporting for the South African media (Delate 2003a). These and other proposed interest group guidelines for acceptable ethical reporting on the epidemic mainly focus on the rights of people living with HIV and Aids (PWAs), the rights of infected and affected children, and the roles and responsibilities of media practitioners when covering the epidemic (CADRE 2004).

The critiques were categorised into four main categories:

- Category 1: Genres and sub-themes are points in question that the media write about including grassroots social issues and activities, critical and in-depth journalism, and positive and constructive coverage;
- Category 2: Presentation focuses on guidelines ruling how news on HIV and Aids should be presented;
- Category 3: Language, issues such as stigmatisation, discrimination and sensationalism; and
- Category 4: Accuracy. Guidelines on the use of sources, contextualisation, statistics and claims are analysed.

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL HIV AND AIDS REPORTING

Genres and sub-themes

Many studies worldwide have analysed the content of news items on HIV and Aids and certain trends have emerged, including sensationalism, alarmism, inaccuracy, disinformation and blame (Parker & Kelly 2001: 2). Galloway (2001) concludes that

the lack of authoritative reporting on the epidemic can cause harm because many South Africans did not study science and biology at school. Furthermore, newspapers should spend more time planning sustainable HIV and Aids coverage rather than concentrating on event-driven news related to the epidemic.

Critical and in-depth journalism

Well-informed citizens need true facts, analysis and interpretation to be able to make informed decisions – "otherwise, they will be like the blind men who touched only one part of the elephant and falsely interpreted it as the whole" (Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn 1991: 445; cf. Sheridan Burns 2002: 149).

Although there is a lot of criticism against interpretive journalism (Nel 1999: 284-285), it is important that the facts have meaning, which they will only have within the correct context – including the necessary (ethical) interpretation to clarify the facts. Well-informed, critical and ethical editorial comment on HIV and Aids is particularly important, if not to persuade, then to further the debate and keep it on the agenda (cf. Hiebert *et al*. 1991: 446; Leiter, Harriss & Johnson 2000: 393).

Parker and Kelly (2001: 3,6) found that although the media often focuses on issues related to HIV and Aids, analysis is sorely lacking, stories are not followed through or developed beyond the obvious. In this regard, we submit that very little analysis of the critical cost implications of mother to child transmission therapy could be found. Furthermore, little attention was paid to the prevention of further HIV infection and the care of mother and child (cf. Beamish 2002: ch-4696; Parker & Kelly 2001: 3,6).

Responsible journalism expects of its practitioners to be informed writers. An uninformed person cannot be critical. However, it would be unfair to expect of journalists other than regular HIV and Aids reporters to be fully informed about all aspects of the epidemic. What one *can* and *should* expect of any journalist, however, is to double-check facts and comments when he or she is working in an unfamiliar field; and within the usual time constraints gather as much background information as possible to enable him/her to finish the task at hand in an ethically acceptable manner.

News themes

Galloway (2001: 2) says the subject (HIV and Aids) offers many challenges for the science or health journalist who acts as mediator between the experts and the public who need to understand the information in order to change their lifestyle and protect them against infection. This holds that newspaper editors undertake to regularly allocate space to the subject – not only when hard news breaks, new statistics are made public or in lieu of World Aids Day on December 1.

Beamish (2002: cd-4690) describes the topic of HIV and Aids as "political, economic, social and cultural. It is local, national and global. It is about individuals, communities, regions, nations and the world." If a journalist keeps this in mind, he/she will never want for ideas (Beamish 2002: ch-4696). HIV and Aids subjects include:

- Action, i.e. stories on counselling and care; politics and policy – rape, MTCT (mother to child transmission of HIV), issues in the workplace, awareness and prevention, risk, conflict and politics;
- Impact, i.e. statistics, economic impact, social issues such as poverty and HIV and Aids orphans, and legal issues;
- Research, scientific and social; and
- Treatment, i.e. new drugs, clinical trials, so-called "cures" and vaccines.

The most effective HIV and Aids journalism integrates three elements, namely the perspectives of PWAs (the human-interest element); the bigger cultural, economic and political context of the epidemic; and the science of HIV and Aids (Stein 2001: 7,11; cf. Delate 2003b, Parker & Kelly 2001: 3).

Finlay (2003) holds that conflict has shaped South Africans' perception and understanding of HIV and Aids since the mid 1990s. In 1994, there was the furore about the government's HIV and Aids plan; in 1996, the *Sarafina II* scandal emerged; in the late 1990s the focus shifted to activists' plea for MTCT treatment; in 2000, President Thabo Mbeki and "his" dissidents held the media's attention for months regarding their stance on the causal aspects of the syndrome. At the end of 2003, the pressure started building for the provision of antiretroviral treatment (ART) in the state sector. In 2004 the debate centred on the prevalence of HIV among economically active South Africans. News coverage again mainly focused on political issues, such as statements by the Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang at the XVth International Aids Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2004.

Towards the end of 2004 a donor blood debacle at the South African National Blood Service once again placed the spotlight on HIV and Aids (De Lange 2004). But at the time Mbeki refrained from referring to the syndrome at all, preferring to concentrate on racism issues following the SANBS's decision to test the blood of black donors for HIV infection.

In 2005 the media concentrated on the corrupt relationship between Schabir Shaik and former deputy president Jacob Zuma (Basson 2005), leading up to the rape charge Zuma would face in March 2006 after an incident at his home in November 2005. His testimony in court that he had a shower after having had intercourse with an HIV positive woman (he knew of her status) again made headlines all over the country. The court proceedings stayed in the public eye for many months. Zuma's shower became food for continuous ridicule.

At the XVIth International Aids Conference in Toronto, Canada, in 2006, the Health Minister emphasised nutrition and the use of traditional remedies as alternative therapies to antiretroviral treatment. Her references to lemons, beetroot, garlic and potatoes were ridiculed in the local press. These foodstuffs were prominently displayed at South Africa's exhibition stall in Toronto.

Thus, conflict, key personalities and the government's stance on the issue still influence news priorities when it comes to HIV and Aids – in line with traditional news themes (Finlay 2003), but at the expense of even more important issues, such as those in the social context (cf. De Wet 2004: 105, 110).

The media has also struggled to give the epidemic a "human face". According to Beamish (2002: ch-4690) the *human-interest* element provides this "face". People infected and affected with whom readers can relate, should illustrate the statistics, politics and economics of HIV and Aids. These include teachers, married couples, pioneers in the field of HIV and Aids, and Aids orphans. Key personalities are also included. After all, big names are news (Leiter *et al*. 2000: 34). However, people are getting tired of seeing the same faces repeatedly. Using the same faces too often could lead to people perceiving the epidemic as no wider than, for instance, young Nkosi Johnson (who died on 1 June 2001 of an Aids related disease), former president Nelson Mandela, the activist Zackie Achmat and Judge Edwin Cameron.

The South African media focuses on government policy rather than showing readers that one can live productively with HIV and Aids; women are portrayed as victims or as the responsible party in the spread of the epidemic (Qakisa 2003: 46). In developing countries, information on the illness should be comprehensive, including issues such as health care, housing, treatment for drug abuse, education and training, and legal services (Qakisa 2003: 61).

The Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study (2002: 102) recommends that the news media pay more attention to topics of research, myths and misconceptions, and strengthen the relationships with service organisations on grassroots level. The media should also take steps to offer basic information according to the needs of the specific audience.

Positive and constructive reporting

The message of hope is sorely lacking in HIV and Aids reporting. But how, especially in the light that the media is punch-drunk to the point that several editors of financial publications have in recent years barred any reporting on the epidemic without clear economic reference, according to the journalist and Aids activist Charlene Smith (2003). She says there is still too much focus on HIV and Aids as a "disaster". Although the media cannot ignore the negative aspects, these should be balanced by also focusing on the fact that many people carry on with their lives despite HIV and Aids.

Presentation

The way the media presents the news package does not happen by chance. It requires thorough planning and careful selection of news and graphic material. The way HIV and Aids and in particular PWAs are portrayed in the media is a strong point of criticism. This dimension of ethical HIV and Aids journalism can therefore be addressed with reference to news frames, prominence, stereotyping and sensationalism.

News frames

Through the information it provides and omits, and the news angle chosen, the media promotes a specific reality (Tuchman 1978: ix, 1-12; Entman 1993: 54). Interest groups

are particularly sensitive about news coverage that portrays the epidemic as a disaster or as an image of war. However, the news frame that is created is often influenced by how interest groups themselves portray the epidemic (cf. Delate 2003b).

The frame within which news is presented, influences the way in which people will interpret, evaluate and remember an issue. With reference to HIV and Aids, this places a huge responsibility on the media. At the same time, it creates an opportunity for closer working relations in the fight against the syndrome as a huge social problem (Pickle, Crouse & Brown 2002: 441).

Prominence

The manner in which a news item is presented in a newspaper offers the reader an indication of how important the publication regards this item to be. In contrast to sensational reporting where the tendency is to present an item much more prominently than it deserves, many role players in the HIV and Aids field believe that news on the epidemic is often not used prominently enough. Readers quickly learn that an item with a bold heading at the top of a page is more important than one placed in a small corner at the bottom of the page (cf. Fourie 2001: 452-453).

Journalism ethics does not just apply to newspaper content, but also to presentation or layout (Garcia 1993: 36). Responsible journalism entails that info graphics are accurate and that care is taken when photographs and graphics are selected. It further holds that an item is not presented in a sensationalist way. Editors should keep in mind that graphics often speak louder than words. Photographs can either send a message that is in line with what the journalist meant to say, or the complete opposite (Woods 1999).

The manner in which PWAs are portrayed in photographs could perpetuate the myths that these people are thin and helpless, that Africa is a "sick, backwards and dying continent", and add to stigmatisation and discrimination. In contrast, the positive portrayal of PWAs could create role models for other HIV positive individuals. This is a far more accurate portrayal of the reality of the world we live in (Delate 2003b: 3).

Smith (2003) calls the way the international media portrays HIV and Aids in Africa "Aids pornography". They seek out so-called "stick people", people who are clearly miserable and not coping. This is misleading, and adds to stereotyping.

Stereotyping and sensationalism

These issues are rife within the HIV and Aids sphere, i.e. that it is portrayed as a "black" or "gay" disease, and that all PWAs (especially Africans) are emaciated and helpless. Women are often stereotyped. For example, HIV and Aids discourses on women mainly focus on the normative understanding of sexuality: prostitutes are portrayed as "indiscriminate in their sexuality and dangerous and polluting to men" (Sacks 1996: 70).

To avoid perpetuating stereotypes, journalists should write about people to whom the audience can relate (Beamish 2002: ch-4693), i.e. a middle class married mom or community leader. However, responsible journalists should take care to protect the

privacy of PWAs, not to use sensitive and confidential information, and to avoid blame and stereotyping by portraying people in a sensitive way. Asking how a person was infected could create the impression that someone is to blame. It also shows that the journalist is biased and insensitive (Beamish 2002: ch-4693).

PWAs should not be depicted as irresponsible, because it is often not true. In reality, there are PWAs in all lifestyles and all professions. They live productive lives and can stay healthy for many years. Journalists should therefore also scrutinise their own feelings and biases on the subject (Retief 2001: 481; cf. Stally 2001).

Sensationalism can perpetuate stereotypes. Sensational publications concentrate on trivialities and present serious topics in a superficial, often frivolous manner. Journalists can also create sensationalism by exaggerating. This could lead to twisted facts, which has an influence on the credibility of the news item and the journalist. However, sensation is not necessarily created, nor is it always unethical. Sometimes the facts themselves are sensational because they are so out of the ordinary or shocking. HIV and Aids is a sensational subject, but publications should take care to report on the epidemic and related issues in an ethically accountable manner by being accurate, balanced and placing the facts in the correct context (cf. Froneman 2002: 103). Nel (1999: 285) says news should be presented in a "respectable manner that does not offend people's sense of good taste". Due to the explicit nature of HIV and Aids information, it can easily offend. Journalists should keep this in mind.

Language

The media influences the language of HIV and Aids (Beamish 2002: 4682). A media that is sensitive towards the environment it operates in, issues of gender and race, and social matters, should also be sensitive when it comes to language.

Interest groups feel that to implement guidelines that promote the ethical use of language (i.e. language that does not stigmatise, discriminate or sensationalise) could have a positive influence on the media. Woods (1999) argues that the content of a publication, the news sources chosen, and the news angles create a specific image of that publication. When news coverage portrays a community in its totality – including all races, classes, religious and gender groups, and people of all sexual and political orientations – there is a bigger chance that all groups will feel included and will respect the publication.

Good language is direct and strong. It avoids descriptions that one group/person can use against another, and also avoids hyperbole and euphemism. A journalist should further avoid words that have negative emotional value (cf. Rossouw 2003: 18). In the HIV and Aids context these include "suffering", "sufferer", "carrier", "war", "scourge", "plague", "victim", "shame", "blame", "curse" and "punishment" (Stally 2001). To write that someone "allegedly" has HIV and Aids or that someone "admitted" to being infected perpetuates stigmatisation (Soul City 2001).

Good language is also accurate. In the context of HIV and Aids, the words a journalist chooses could very well distort the facts. For example, one cannot die of Aids. Aids is a syndrome – a group of illnesses – due to diminished immunity. Aids is caused by the HI-virus, which exposes the body to opportunistic infections that take advantage of the weak immune system. One therefore cannot die because of HIV and Aids, but rather because of one or more of the opportunistic diseases (cf. Beamish 2002: ch-4694; Delate 2003a: 27).

Although interest groups have made solid suggestions regarding the use of language in HIV and Aids reporting, there are proposals that do not hold water in a journalistic context. Delate (2003b: 17) quotes a suggestion from a NAPWA official who has a problem with the word "Aids". This person feels the word implies that PWAs are helpless and is therefore not acceptable. He suggests the use of "advanced HIV disease". However, this would only cause more confusion as people generally have a problem distinguishing between HIV infection and the syndrome, Aids.

Likewise, the United Nations Development Programme prefers the description "men who have sex with men" (MSM) to "gays" or "homosexuals", which are seen as Western terms (Delate 2003a: 18). This, however, could add to stereotyping and could describe men according to the manner in which they have sex rather than according to their gender orientation. In South Africa, most organisations use the term "same sex". In the Afrikaans media the terms "gay" and "homoseksueel" are commonly used.

Stigma and discrimination

In South Africa, PWAs feel judged and discriminated against (Fourie 2001: 498). They are stigmatised because others think they will infect them, and that they "deserve" HIV and Aids because of their own promiscuity. This perception is perpetuated by the media due to the emphasis placed on promiscuity as a cause of the epidemic. In South Africa, HIV and Aids is further portrayed as a "black disease" or a disease that only affects white homosexual men. Soul City (2001: 27) argues that the stereotypes more often perpetuate because of the images used in the media and the profile of PWAs who are willing to talk openly about their status.

Smith (2003) alleges that mainly service providers cause stigma. Interest groups create stigma, e.g. by focusing on the pitfalls of being open about your status or an incident such as rape, instead of focusing on the benefits.

Beamish (2002: ch-4694) highlights that language should be appropriate for the audience in question. The use of language should not only be an issue of whether one should use a local dialect, but also about the actual words you choose to describe a concept. To be able to choose the most appropriate language, a journalist should understand his/her audience and should have extensive knowledge about HIV and Aids terminology. The syndrome has a highly technical vocabulary which should be "translated" accurately. Proper HIV and Aids reporting also uses neutral, gender sensitive language.

Sensationalism

Because HIV and Aids is about sex and death, the media are often tempted to sensationalise (Soul City 2001: 21; cf. Delate 2003a), creating the perception that death is unavoidable. Consequently, little attention is paid to PWAs. Sensationalism further holds that people are portrayed as "good" or "bad", is aided by emotions, and offers a very superficial view on real points in question (Soul City 2001: 21).

Sensation does not analyse, nor does it evaluate or inform readers. To accurately and ethically report on the issue, a journalist should understand the essence of the problem. He/she should also keep in mind that HIV and Aids and its contexts are not entertainment (Beamish 2002: cd-4696). Equally, interest groups should not use sensation to "sell" their stories. In this regard, Delate (2003b) refers to a press release sent out by die World Food Programme using the words "vanishing population of Africa".

Media reports on the death of Nkosi Johnson on 1 June 2001 were mainly sensational (Cullinan 2001). For six months prior to the young activist's death, the media predicted that he could die "at any moment". Local and international media literally lived on the doorstep of his adoptive mother's home in Melville, Johannesburg. Politicians used the "opportunity" to get favourable publicity. The media described the boy's physical and emotional state in detail to pad stories with no substance (cf. Jara 2001; Pan African News Agency 2001; Sapa 2001).

One has to accept that the facts of HIV and Aids are already sensational. However, the media should take care not to *create* (further) sensation using inappropriate language, flashy headlines and insensitive graphic material as it could cause false hope, or perpetuate stigma and discrimination (Delate 2003a).

The final decision about language lies with the sub-editors, not the journalists. This group, however, is never targeted in relation to training on HIV and Aids reporting, according to Delate (2003a). It certainly is a serious deficiency.

Accuracy

The final category addressed here is accuracy, a basic element of news reporting included in most international and local journalistic codes of ethics (Retief 2002: 238-240).

As a matter of course, accurate reporting is thorough and precise, but the term also relates to credibility. Although accuracy *implies* that all facts, names, quotes, statistics, dates and places are correct, errors often occur. In the process the journalist's credibility and the media's reputation are affected, and the value of the story diminishes. Accuracy also implies the correct and careful use of words to avoid putting words into someone's mouth – a common problem in Africa according to Nel (1999: 281-282). One could at this point add that an inaccurate journalist also does not care about context, balance, appropriate sources or sensitive writing. Therefore, these aspects should resort under the definition of accuracy (cf. Froneman & De Beer 1998: 308-309.)

For the purpose of this article, the term accuracy therefore implies not only factual accuracy and acceptable language usage, but also fairness, balance, truth, context, comprehensiveness and focus.

Factual accuracy

To say that someone has Aids when he/she is in fact HIV positive, adds to stigmatisation. Sceptics may very well argue that to say someone is tested for HIV and not for Aids, is a matter of splitting hairs. However, it is not scientifically correct and such a report would be inaccurate. In addition, knowledge about HIV and Aids multiplies continuously as scientists discover new facts. A journalist should therefore make sure she/he stays abreast of developments to ensure accurate reporting (Soul City 2001: 20).

To omit vital information is also inaccurate. Very seldom does one find a media report on ART that clearly states that not all South Africans who are HIV positive need ART, only those who have Aids. This has a marked impact on the issue whether the country can afford ART, and should be brought to a reader's attention.

Readability and clarity

One of the biggest challenges of HIV and Aids reporting is to report the technical terminology, medical jargon, scientific concepts and research findings in a clear, understandable and concise manner. Unfortunately many journalists are not precise enough to recognise the delicate shades of difference in semantics (cf. Mencher 1997: 159-162). On the other hand, well-grounded HIV and Aids journalists should guard against losing the ability to report clearly and understandably due to their superior knowledge.

Focus and context

The best stories are those with a clear focus. Reports on HIV and Aids could become long and complex, therefore journalists should guard against including too much information in a single story. Good journalism further relies on contextualisation (perspective and background) (cf. Nel 1999: 281-282), which is related to focus.

News sources

It is often said that a journalist is as good as his/her sources. This is particularly relevant in the context of HIV and Aids where a lot of unsubstantiated information is circulated. A journalist should not solely rely on expert sources relevant to his/her field of reporting. It is necessary to include the opinion of several sources to ensure balanced and fair reporting. At the same time new insights generate new ideas (cf. Greer 1999: 50). A regular HIV and Aids reporter quickly builds up a comprehensive list of trustworthy, expert sources. The problem lies with journalists who do not report on the subject regularly. To play it safe, the same sources are quoted repeatedly.

Shepperson (2000: 12) found that most news items were the result of press releases or press conferences, press statements by individuals or copy distributed by news agencies. More distressing is that journalists apparently do not take the trouble to

develop a solid list of credible sources (Parker & Kelly 2001: 2, 6). Furthermore, although women are a particularly vulnerable group in the context of the HIV and Aids epidemic, they are not seen as important news sources. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) found that only 17% of all news sources in the region are women (IRIN News 2003).

There is definitely no shortage of appropriate HIV and Aids sources. However, as Beamish (2002: cd-4695) rightly remarks, it is not always easy to find them. Potential sources, in particular PWAs who add the human interest element to HIV and Aids reporting and give the epidemic a face, might be scared to talk to the media, especially in an environment where stigma, fear of rejection and violence still prevail (Delate 2003a: 2; cf. Anon 2005). On the other hand, the media in South Africa largely ignores the opinion of PWAs (Cullinan 2003). Stally (2001) suggests that journalists form relationships with organisations such as NAPWA to ensure access to the latest HIV and Aids information as well as access to PWAs as news sources.

Another source of concern related to news sources is that journalists who do not regularly report on the epidemic, often too easily accept someone as an expert without questioning their authority and level of knowledge in the field (Smith 2003). Journalists' best sources are those who have proved their knowledge and skills as accurate observers and interpreters (Mencher 1997: 306-307).

Balance

The traditional way to ensure balanced reporting is to convey all perspectives on the issue. However, two sides of an argument do not always carry equal weight and news coverage should reflect this. To present two perspectives as equally important when in fact one deserves far less attention, is misleading and inaccurate (Beamish 2002: ch-4684).

Beamish (2002: ch-4684) argues that a journalist can maintain balance and "objectivity" by staying neutral. However, "objective" journalism is not possible and journalism can never be a neutral activity. On the other hand, HIV and Aids is a subject that can tempt a journalist to become an advocate for the cause. Journalists should be aware of this danger, because it could cloud their judgement. This is exactly the problem critics of advocacy journalism have with this particular style of reporting where balance and fairness do not always come into play. Advocacy journalism is not widely practised in South Africa, and while some interest groups encourage the media to play a bigger advocacy role, others are vehemently against the notion (cf. Stally 2001; Beamish 2002: cd-4684).

Howa's (s.a.) approach is most acceptable in this regard. She holds that it is more appropriate to recognise that "a diversity of viewpoints exists; that there are solutions along with problems; that there is good with the bad. We should worry less about balance and more about reflecting a sense of fairness and wholeness."

Truth, fairness and completeness

To seek the truth and report on it as accurately and as fairly as possible is, according to Claassen (2004), the single most important function of a journalist. Nevertheless, to identify the truth – or the "provable truth" (Hausman 1990:29) – is a problem in journalism. News sources with a vested interest might be less likely to tell the whole truth (Hausman 1990:32). That is why it is so important that journalists seek out appropriate, knowledgeable sources as far as possible, and verify information. This is particularly important when reporting on claims about "cures" or treatment for HIV and Aids.

Fairness in journalism is closely related to balance. "Maximum truth, minimum harm" is a principle Retief (2002: 84) holds as the most basic ethical consideration in journalism. Fairness also comes into play when choosing words through which to portray reality – within the proper context.

Completeness relates to *which* information is included in a news report, and not to *how much* information is used (Leiter *et al*. 2000: 159). This raises a few difficult questions. When does a journalist know that he/she has gathered enough information and at which point can a journalist honestly say he/she has covered an issue properly?

Statistics and claims

There are recurrent examples of inaccuracy and the perpetuated use of incorrect data, and the incorrect interpretation of data in HIV and Aids reporting (Parker & Kelly 2001: 6-7). It is clear that the media in general lacks proper understanding of research matters. Furthermore the media is inclined to present careful deductions as fact, thereby creating a wrong impression. Journalists should portray the experimental nature of research findings and refrain from presenting it as final proof (Beamish 2002: ch-4684). More importantly, journalists should make very sure that they understand statistics before they report on it. They should also confirm the validity of the data.

On the other hand, science is not always clear and the HIV and Aids epidemic is particularly difficult to measure (Schwartz & Murray 1996). Even the most authoritative predictions on the number of HIV and Aids cases and Aids deaths are merely guesswork. Where claims are concerned, interest groups suggest that journalists remain sceptic, especially where "cures", clinical trials and vaccines are concerned (cf. Cohen 1997). Journalists should also distinguish between treatment for Aids and treatment of opportunistic infections, as inaccurate reporting in this regard can create false expectations (Soul City 2001: 23).

The media has to be open to criticism about inaccurate and sensational journalism. The eventual aim should be to uphold the rights of PWAs, and to respect their right to be portrayed accurately and with dignity. Several publications, i.e. *Sunday Times* and *Die Burger*, have accuracy tests to ascertain whether their reporting is accurate. This includes questions about whether the credibility of the facts and the sources were checked, and that the facts reflect the truth (cf. Claassen 2002). Journalists at *Sunday Times* also have to indicate whether the report could have any legal implications,

whether they can provide the documents in question and whether they have objections to their sources being contacted (*Sunday Times* 2004).

CONCLUSION

Retief (2002: 37-45) highlights several tangent points in the Press Code, the Code of the SAUJ, that of the BCCSA, and the codes of *The Star*, *Sowetan*, and *Sunday Times* – points that largely correspond with the suggested HIV and Aids reporting guidelines. These include accuracy in text and context; balanced, fair and unprejudiced reporting; the protection of news sources; and respect for the privacy of individuals. Other points are that conflict of interest and stereotyping should be avoided, and that journalists should report responsibly on issues such as violence, blasphemy and sex.

In summary, journalists should understand that HIV/Aids is a scientific, social, economic, health, education and labour issue, among others. This holds that they have knowledge *beyond* mere awareness about HIV/Aids. However, seeing that despite the general guidelines available in ethical codes the media in South Africa often still reports on HIV and Aids in an unacceptable manner, guidelines reiterating responsibilities *within the specific context* should be either included in professional codes or in institutional codes. The above-mentioned codes were thus supplemented with guidelines extracted from critiques and comments from interest groups concerned with the issues of HIV and Aids. It is further recommended that the following compilation of guidelines be published as a quick reference guide, not just in professional and institutional codes, but also in resources directed at journalists in the field:

- Avoid sensational reporting through language, content and presentation;
- Avoid stereotyping and discrimination;
- Use sensitive, non-discriminatory, simple and understandable language;
- Reporting should be accurate, i.e. fair, balanced, correct, true, in context, focused and comprehensive/complete;
- Use at least two trustworthy and credible sources, including PWAs;
- Practise critical and in-depth journalism;
- Use statistics with care and date data;
- Find fresh news angles, and also pay attention to social issues and activities at grassroots level;
- Be sceptical about claims, especially those involving a cure, clinical trials and HIV and Aids vaccines; and
- Also focus on positive and constructive news.

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COMMUNICATING TO ADOLESCENTS ABOUT HIV AND AIDS THROUGH CAMPUS RADIO: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Education is currently reputed to be a vaccine against HIV/Aids. Many Aids campaigns use the cognitive behaviour model according to which behavioural change is the result of rational, individual decision-making based on acquired knowledge. Undoubtedly, mass media has a profound influence on the education and empowerment of individuals. The role of the media specifically in combating HIV/Aids was emphasised when national surveys conducted in the US revealed that 72% of Americans had identified television, radio and newspapers — and not family, friends or doctors — as their primary source of information about HIV/Aids. A particularly alarming fact is the extreme vulnerability of the youth — by the age of 23, one South African youth in five is HIV positive. A prominent section of the youth is present on the many university campuses. In this context, campus radio stations constitute one possible vehicle for communicating important health-related messages to this target group. This article aims to make recommendations for successful health communication through campus radio. The article first describes the role of campus radio by interrogating its social and civic role, and its active and participatory role. It goes on to identify specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then makes suggestions on how to meet such challenges head-on.

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INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

> Broadcast media have tremendous reach and influence, particularly with young people, who represent the future and who are the key to any successful fight against HIV/Aids. We must seek to engage these powerful organizations as full partners in the fight to halt HIV/Aids through awareness, prevention, and education. – Kofi Annan, Former United Nations Secretary General

Education is currently reputed to be a vaccine against HIV/Aids (Vandemoortele & Delamonica 2007). Many Aids campaigns are based on the cognitive behaviour model according to which behavioural change is the result of rational, individual decision-making based on acquired knowledge (Francis & Rimensberger 2005: 87). Analyses of prevention interventions have consistently found that such programmes reduce the frequency of sexual risk behaviour. Behavioural change programmes typically include basic information about the virus, counselling and skills development, e.g. negotiating safe sex (UNAids 2006). Undoubtedly, mass media has enormous influence in educating and empowering individuals and numerous examples can be cited of media interventions that have effected positive changes in society. In one such instance, an Indian village rejected the dowry system after listening communally to a radio soap opera broadcast (UNAids 2004).

In January 2004, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, first called upon media companies to join the global effort against HIV and Aids on the occasion of a special meeting of media leaders at the UN headquarters in New York. Here the Global Media Aids Initiative (GMAI) was established. The role of the media specifically in combating HIV and Aids was emphasised when national surveys conducted in the US revealed that 72% of Americans had identified television, radio and newspapers – not family, friends and doctors – as their primary sources of information about HIV and Aids (UNAids 2004). In response to the GMAI, the African Broadcast Media Partnership against HIV/Aids (ABMP) was launched in 2006. At this meeting it was concluded that "the broadcast media in Africa is pivotal to the effort to stem the tide of the HIV/Aids epidemic on the continent". The aim of this initiative was thus to increase substantially the amount of HIV/Aids-related programming by African broadcasters.

This research was initially sparked by a tagline on an ACT UP [2] poster (1990) that read: *Aids is everybody's business*. The research was further sparked by alarming statistics about the pandemic. According to the South Africa Survey 2004/2005 (Kane-Berman & Tempest 2006), deaths from causes other than HIV and Aids increase in accordance with increases in population size, and are predicted to increase by 3.6% between 2000 and 2010. Conversely, deaths as a result of HIV and Aids are predicted to increase by 150.3%. A particularly alarming fact is the extreme vulnerability of the youth: whereas the estimated prevalence among the general population is about 11%, the prevalence in the population aged between 15 and 49 is estimated at about 19%. Another source (Ndaki 2004), states that, by the age of 23, one South African youth in five is HIV

positive. In lieu of the above, there is consensus that young people need expanded information, skills, and services concerning sexual and reproductive health.

Some would argue that successful communication can only take place by means of interpersonal, face-to-face communication, preferably in the context of the home. However, the fact is that parents do not communicate with their children about sexuality, let alone HIV and Aids, hence necessitating the identification of other means of communicating about HIV and Aids. Effective communication strategies for addressing sexual health issues can be provided by the media whose role it is to open channels of communication and to foster discussion. Yet, according to Singhal (2003: 7), "the world has underestimated the role communication can play in reducing HIV infection in developing countries".

RADIO AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

It is a long-established fact that television and radio campaigns have generated interest in the use of the popular media as channels for dealing with both social and personal problems, including sexual health and relationships (Bentley, Blank & Van Haveren 2001: 186). In developing countries beset by social problems such as the HIV and Aids pandemic, addressing such issues has become a key function of the popular media (Vaughan, Rogers & Singhal 2000: 82). And even though social change is not always brought about through mass media campaigns, the latter can lead to broader discourses on development and health.

Radio in particular is regarded to be an effective tool. It can play many different roles and is considered to be a good agent of development (McKinley & Jensen 2003: 182). As radio is a low-cost medium with broad coverage, it has the ability to exert influence on lifestyles; it entertains, informs, empowers, socialises and befriends (MacFarland 1997: 32). All of these make it a gratifying and useful medium.

The post 1994 broadcasting environment in South Africa gave rise to a continuously evolving and somewhat varied community radio sector. Van Zyl (2003: 11, 20, 29-30) identifies the following reasons why community radio, especially, has been very successful in education programming:

- It generates high levels of audience loyalty;
- It fosters trust in the presenters and in the station;
- The accessibility of the station makes it easy to phone in or even walk in if more information is needed;
- It is possible to adopt programming to local needs and language requirements;
- It provides opportunities for enriching learning though linkages with other programmes and campaigns;

- It encourages dialogue in the community and between communities;
- It can build citizens by encouraging individuals in various communities to debate the true nature of a good society, and to discuss the kind of world in which they would like to live; and
- It can create an atmosphere of tolerance by removing the restrictions brought about by stereotypes.

Yet it is also important to note the drawbacks of using radio to communicate about health issues. Because radio is a transitory medium, information is not always retained by listeners who cannot ask for clarification; radio is a one-way medium offering no immediate opportunity for interaction; not all people have access to electricity, and batteries can be expensive; radio can be used for the wrong reasons (communicating divergent messages) and can heighten people's fears and prejudices; some also believe that radio on its own cannot have an educational impact (Adam & Harford 1998: 4), while others suggest a multimedia approach to health education (Storey, Boulay, Karki, Heckert & Karmacharya 1999: 288).

According to Mody (1991: 24), the focus of attention should, however, not be on what media to employ, but on how to incorporate audience research into message design so as to enhance effective communication and educational impact through a locally available, low-cost medium that is accessible to the majority.

A prominent section of the youth is present on the many university campuses throughout the country. In this context campus radio stations constitute one possible vehicle for communicating important health-related messages to this target group. On some university campuses in South Africa there are licensed community radio stations catering for the specific yet varied needs of the student communities they serve. These stations are granted a special-interest community broadcasting licence by The Independent Broadcasting Authority of South Africa (ICASA 2005).

Campus radio targets a diverse audience of both school and university students, thereby providing a direct link to this, the most vulnerable of groups in respect of HIV and Aids. Specific characteristics of campus radio make it an effective medium for HIV and Aids communication:

- Information is communicated by peers;
- The programming reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus, and is made up of talk (25-40%) and music (60-75%). It includes features such as traffic reports, weather reports, etc.;
- It has a youthful character and is entertaining, which lends itself to employing an education-entertainment strategy in respect of HIV and Aids education;

- Anonymous participation is possible;
- Though ownership is not in the community, these stations are managed by the student community. Campus radio is therefore produced by the students for the students; and
- Campus radio, being on a university campus, provides distinct opportunities for research partnerships and programme development opportunities with academic staff.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

Against this background, this article aims to make recommendations for successful health communication through campus radio. The article first describes the role of campus radio by means of various station managers' perceptions. It goes on to identify specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then makes suggestions for dealing with such challenges. These recommendations and suggestions for meeting the day-to-day challenges head-on could empower campus stations to join more aggressively and more effectively in the fight against HIV/Aids.

Apart from a literature review of the topic, which informed the identification of challenges and suggestions to overcome the challenges, it was also necessary to gain insight into the perceptions of selected station managers of campus radio stations regarding their role in general, and, more specifically, in communicating to their listeners (aged 16-28) about HIV and Aids. The OneWorld Radio/Exchange brainstorming meeting in June 2004 emphasised the importance of "opening up opportunities for broadcasters themselves to get into dialogue about the practice of HIV/Aids broadcasting" (Exchange 2004).

Geographical constraints guided the selection of electronic open-ended questionnaires to gather the data from campus radio stations. The questionnaires were completed by the station managers of Tuksfm (University of Pretoria), MFM (University of Stellenbosch) and Kovsie FM (University of the Free State). These stations were chosen on the basis of experience in years (five to nine) of the managers. Other factors influencing the selection process were the stations' diverse geographical locations and the fact that all target diverse audience groups.

A PROFILE OF THE RADIO STATIONS

The following table provides a comparison of the three campus radios in terms of a number of characteristics.

TABLE 1: A COMPARISON OF THREE CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS[3]

	Tuksfm	Kovsie FM	MFM
Locality	At 107.2 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the University of Pretoria	At 97 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the University of the Free State	At 92.6 MHz FM Stereo from studios on the campus of the Stellenbosch University

	Tuksfm	Kovsie FM	MFM
Area served	Most of Pretoria and environs	Bloemfontein and environs, up to a radius of 30km	Areas, e.g. Goodwood, Greater Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Somerset West, Simon's Town and Durbanville
Programming	Reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus Comprises talk (40%) and music (60%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc.	Reflects the culture and aspirations of student life on the campus Comprises talk (25%) and music (75%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc. Broadcasts in English (50%), Afrikaans (40%) and Sesotho (10%)	Comprises talk (40%) and music (60%) Includes features such as traffic and weather reports, etc. Features are geared to entertain, educate and inform
Target audience characteristics	Mostly Afrikaans-speaking listeners, 16-29 LSM group 6-10, with an average income of R4000 per month	Listeners 16–28 LSM group 6–10, with an income upwards of R2500 per month	Listeners 16–29 LSM group 1–5 with an average income of R1700 per month.
Frequency of broadcasting and audience numbers	7 days per week audience of 52 000 listeners	7 days per week audience of 7 000 listeners	7 days per week audience of 35 000 listeners[4]

(The Media Connection 2005)

From the above table it is clear that apart from the specific area served, the stations have much in common, e.g. the programming content. What does vary in this respect is the time allocation in respect of talk and music, with Kovsie FM – in contrast to the other two – devoting much more time to music than to talking. Another significant difference is in respect of the LSM group targeted, with MFM's target group being significantly lower than either of the other two stations. However, what is noteworthy about Kovsie FM is the fact that it broadcasts in three of the most important languages of the region, though only a scant 10% is devoted to Sesotho broadcasting.

THE ROLE OF CAMPUS RADIO: STATION MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS

More than a decade after the advent of democracy in South Africa, the debate is still on regarding the role of the media in South Africa as a developing country. This trend is echoed in respect of the role of community radio vis-à-vis education and development. According to Van Zyl (2005: 8-9), the necessary work of establishing a community radio sector has been accomplished. The next goal is to develop a new function for community radio, which should include:

- A social and civic role: a positive, post-liberation role that originates from the original mandate;
- An active and participatory role: where community radio acts in strengthening civil society structures; and
- A guiding and reflecting role: where, as one of its important functions, community radio reflects the opinions of the citizens of its community.

When asked about the role of community radio and campus radio in particular, the three station managers all agreed that campus radio should act as a vehicle for students to obtain knowledge of broadcasting and actual broadcasting skills in the industry. One respondent even regarded the in-service training function of campus radio to be the primary role of this form of community media.

A second important function highlighted by the respondents was that of fulfilling the role of an information and entertainment medium for the learners and students of the community served. More specifically, certain sub-functions of campus radio were identified by the respondents. The first couple of functions are generic and general, and they correlate with one of the new functions for community radio as explicated by Van Zyl (2005: 8-9), namely the social and civic role:

- Presenting its target audience with a high-quality, professional radio service;
- Supporting the development of music and musicians from within the immediate community and also those from other areas of South Africa;
- Providing an impartial, fair and immediate local, national and international news service, with a marked emphasis on local coverage; and
- Raising funds to ensure the continued successful functioning of the station.

A last sub-function to be identified by the respondents, namely that of "developing a culture of critical thinking and constructive debate and ensuring that all sectors of the community have the opportunity to state their views or concerns on air", is in agreement with the guiding and reflective role identified by Van Zyl (2005: 8-9).

Respondents also agreed that the role of campus radio does not really differ from that of other community radio stations, except in the sense that all community stations cater for their specific communities and for the needs of their specific communities.

The social and civic role: serving the community's needs

Tuksfm attempts to address the listeners' needs "through effective, intelligent programming". The station manager identified the needs of his listeners as being financial-, entertainment- and social responsibility-orientated. He selected two social issues – employment and HIV/Aids – as being important social issues with Tuksfm listeners.

The Kovsie FM station manager perceived his listeners' needs to be "entertainment, arts and culture and factual, educational programmes". The station attempts to address these needs by providing entertainment through music and presenters. Five times a day it provides community and events news coverage on cultural and community activities. In conjunction with the Department of Communication and Information Studies at the University of the Free State, the station also produces programmes dealing with factual, educational issues.

The MFM station manager described the listeners of this campus radio station as being young, upwardly mobile, socially conscious and dynamic. According to him the needs of the listeners boil down to entertainment, information and education. MFM tries to include these facets in the programming, the music, the planning and the projects. Social issues considered to be important to the listeners are HIV/Aids, sexual issues, education and career planning, and crime and security. MFM has established certain partnerships to ensure that the listeners' needs are met.

The active and participatory role: serving listeners' HIV and Aids needs

In an illuminating article on the role of education in combating the Aids pandemic, Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2007) state that research has shown that the more educated, mobile and affluent members of society seem to be the most vulnerable to HIV infection during its initial stages. Conversely, with increased information, knowledge and awareness this group's behaviour to reduce the risk of contracting HIV changes faster than that of illiterate and poor people. This emphasises the importance of communicating the necessary information to the youth as the most vulnerable group. Yet in many countries open and frank communication about HIV transmission does not occur at home, in school or in public. According to these authors, "a wall of silence … surrounds the disease". They identify four so-called allies that make HIV so prevalent in many developing countries, namely silence, shame, stigma and superstition. These four allies thrive in "a climate of ignorance and illiteracy. Education is key to defeating this deadly alliance."

Pinpointing the precise role of campus radio in communicating about HIV and Aids is challenging. Several factors complicate the production of radio about HIV and Aids, such as the nature and severity of the illness, its broad impact, and various cultural sensitivities about discussing human sexuality (McLellan 2006). Ideally, it should comprise awareness raising, educating the public about the disease, changing a person's or group's attitudes about the disease, changing individual behaviour to prevent or control a disease, and creating social norms that favour healthy living. Broadcasters

must further bear in mind that the link between public health issues and significant behaviour change is not yet fully understood (Adam & Harford 1999: 4).

The station manager of Tuksfm was clear about the role that campus radio should play in respect of HIV and Aids, and maintained that campus radio stations should "provide information about the pandemic". This information should "communicate the message of complete abstinence or safe[r] sex and provide information on what causes HIV and how HIV is transmitted".

Tuksfm has only one programme focusing on HIV/Aids, and this is usually requested and produced by a community-based organisation. The station has sponsorship for the programme and the university is not involved. Student involvement is generated via telephone, SMS and e-mail. Tuksfm is not involved in any other HIV/Aids-related projects or campaigns, but does run public service announcements. Its efforts are not evaluated.

Kovsie FM's station manager likewise recognised the need for radio stations to "create awareness about the dangers of HIV/Aids, as well as to address all issues related to the virus". He took a stronger position in stating that more than just running public service announcements, campus radio stations should be actively involved in both HIV/Aids campaigns and with the work of NGOs.

Kovsie FM runs various HIV/Aids-focused programmes. The programming amounts to a total of 90 minutes a week. Interviews, mini-dramas and a live show that answers listeners' questions are part of the campaign. Two of the programmes are sponsored by the Department of Communication and Information Studies, and another by the university's Life Skills and Wellness Centre.

The station manager of MFM felt that campus radio stations should primarily play a preventive role, while its secondary role should be one of building tolerance and acceptance. This station does not have specific HIV/Aids-related programmes, but includes the issue in some of its mainstream shows. This will happen anything from twice to five times a month. Partnerships exist with Stellenbosch Aids Action, the university's Aids coordinator and its Department of Communications. In the manager's opinion, people living with HIV/Aids had to be made part of producing and presenting HIV/Aids-related programmes. He suggested incorporating the human element to raise awareness.

The following can be deduced from the station managers' responses: Although respondents had definite ideas about their respective stations' roles in the fight against HIV/Aids, they had little or no HIV/Aids-related communication campaigns. However, some partnerships had been formed. Their comments regarding their role in general seemed almost forced, sounding somewhat like applications to ICASA for a licence. The impression gained was that they were going through the motions, that they thought that it was expected of them to make some attempt at HIV/Aids communication, but that they themselves were not sure as to how this was to be approached.

According to the respondents, the biggest challenge to be faced in respect of HIV/Aids programming was that of maintaining the level of audience interest. Kovsie FM's station manager recommended that interviews should last no longer than seven minutes so as to contain only the gist of a message.

They also feared that the topic would be too serious and that they would consequently either alienate or lose their audiences. This is a real concern in a media-saturated society in which people are continuously bombarded with messages about what and what not to do. While behavioural change programmes aimed at informing high-risk groups are among the most cost-effective prevention interventions available (UNAids 2006), some studies have found that the incidence of high-risk behaviour did not change much, despite the fact that people had a reasonably accurate knowledge of HIV and Aids, and of prevention measures. Not only does this cast some doubt on the efficacy of the cognitive behaviour model, but it also points to fatigue in respect of the topic as a consequence of having been exposed to much information in this regard (Francis & Rimensberger 2005). Herein lies the challenge, according to Solly Mokoetle, Chair of the African Broadcast Media Partnership Against HIV/Aids (ABMP), namely to turn the awareness about the disease into sustained behaviour change that would then result in reduced HIV/Aids rates (Kaiser Family Foundation 2006).

A further challenge pointed out by the respondents was the difficulty of persuading people living with HIV or Aids to be interviewed, for fear of having their anonymity compromised.

In general there is a lack of formal research on audience needs and on the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of communication initiatives. In the past, the approach to HIV communication was often rather haphazard. This provides the rationale for exploring ways of achieving successful health communication specifically through campus radio. The second part of this article is devoted to identifying the specific challenges of HIV/Aids broadcasting pertaining to campus radio stations, and then ways of meeting such challenges head-on are suggested.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HIV/AIDS

According to Bernhardt (2004: 2052), public health communication is "the scientific development, strategic dissemination, and critical evaluation of relevant, accurate, accessible, and understandable health information communicated to and from intended audiences to advance the health of the public". Freimuth, Linnan and Potter (2000: 11) argue that the essential elements of the communication process – audience, message, source and channel – must be taken into account when disseminating health information. In order for campus radio stations to develop and/or disseminate and/or evaluate HIV/Aids information, these elements of the communication process need to be considered and addressed.

The audience

An understanding of the intended audience is very important. Part of understanding the audience is using audience segmentation. The criteria for segmentation include demographics, behaviour and psychographic characteristics. Yet when it comes to communicating about HIV/Aids, it might be more appropriate to group the audience according to the precise nature of their sexual activity. According to Hughes and McCauley (1998: 240), three groupings of people emerge:

- Group 1: Adolescents who have not yet begun having intercourse;
- Group 2: Adolescents who have engaged in intercourse and have experienced no unhealthy consequences; and
- Group 3: Adolescents who have engaged in intercourse and have experienced unhealthy consequences.

In order to communicate about HIV/Aids, some knowledge regarding the status of adolescent sexuality must be acquired: their knowledge, perceptions and behaviour concerning HIV/Aids; their misconceptions and fears; the current societal taboos and prejudices in respect of HIV/Aids; adolescents' perceptions of personal risk; the nature of sexual practice among adolescents; the reasons for indulging in high-risk sex; the attitudes of adolescents towards adolescent sexuality; youths living with HIV/Aids; and adolescents' preferred sources of information on HIV/Aids (Hughes & McCauley 1998: 240). Broadcasters would thus do well to consult the South African National HIV prevalence, HIV Incidence, Behaviour and Communication survey, 2005.[5]

The audience's knowledge about HIV/Aids can be determined by asking four basic questions:

- What do you think are the causes of HIV/Aids?
- How do you know if you have HIV?
- How do you/can you prevent HIV?
- How would you relate to a person with HIV?

Here radio stations can partner with their universities' research centres or academic departments to develop and disseminate a questionnaire to students. Alternatively, an online survey can be made available on the official website of the radio station.

The message

Mody (1991: 147-148) cautions the broadcaster to develop audience-responsive content. Content choices should thus be guided by the demarcated audience, e.g. the three groups mentioned above demarcated according to the nature of their sexual activity. However, campus radio stations' ability to do this is questionable, given their perceived functions as discussed earlier. In general, though, broadcasters could run with certain topics as part of the HIV/Aids communication. Care should be taken that

broadcasts adhere to the following overarching criteria for communicating health information, namely that the content must be useful, timely, appropriate and simple and not contain too much technical information (McLellan 2005; Mody 1991: 147-148).

The following topics are adapted from a list provided by Adam and Harford (1999: 35-36):

- How people contract HIV;
- The connection between HIV and Aids;
- HIV prevention;
- The experience of living with HIV/Aids;
- The marked vulnerability of young women to HIV infection;
- The rights of women to negotiate safer sex, and the nature of safer sex;
- HIV/Aids support groups – how people living with HIV/Aids are working to address their own problems; and
- Aids treatment, and the costs involved.

McLellan (2005) maintains that merely providing information about HIV/Aids is not enough. The broadcaster needs to be conscious of the problems closely related to the Aids epidemic in Africa, ranging from those problems closely associated with high levels of poverty, low-level educational attainment, apathy, myths and misconceptions about HIV/Aids, to those linked with emotional/behavioural and human factors (Umerah-Udezulu & Williams 2001: 35). In light of understanding the broader context of HIV/Aids, the role that broadcasters can play is thus not limited to the dissemination of prevention messages but they can also play a role with regard to advocacy and mobilisation.

Adam and Harford (1998: 30) stress the important proviso that messages must provide alternative narratives – more than just doom and gloom. As a result of the circumstances in which many people live, they have a limited ability to imagine either other circumstances or options. The message that one can indeed live positively with HIV can be included in the key messages when communicating about HIV/Aids.

In order to adhere to these criteria, special care must be taken with regard to language.[6] Language usage must be straightforward and non-judgmental. Adam and Harford (1991: 26) make some useful suggestions. Try to say: HIV positive, to have Aids, to be living with Aids, to become infected with HIV/Aids. Try not to say: Aids sufferers, Aids victims/innocent victims, catching Aids, and, to die from Aids.

Message design can be complicated – especially when one takes into account that broadcasters must communicate on the individual, interpersonal or community level. McLellan (2005) suggests consulting copies of socio-behavioural studies. Gaining insights on what is actually going on regarding risky sexual behaviour among the youth helps towards ensuring that the broadcast reflects what actually transpires. Deciding what the key messages are should be based on discussions with the specialists and asking the people to whom you are broadcasting.

Source

Finding a person who will be a credible bearer/carrier of the message is an important aspect of the process. Kreuter and McClure (2004: 443) identify two primary dimensions of credibility: expertise and trustworthiness. Credibility might possibly also be enhanced by being regarded as socially attractive, especially when the channel is video or audio, or when the message being communicated is unpleasant. Highly technical messages should be communicated by expert sources, while a message advocating behaviour change necessitates trustworthiness (Freimuth 1995: 84).

Local voices are just as important as local programming. Local voices not only heighten the identification with listeners, but also reaffirm the identities of the people listening so that they can see themselves reflected in the programme. McLellan (2005) suggests including people living with HIV/Aids in the broadcast – wherever possible – and even getting them to present the programmes.

The channel

If the message does not reach the intended audience, the attempt at communication will fail. The channel, or means by which the message is sent, is as important as the message. It is advised that channels be combined. "Mass media channels are most effective for increasing awareness and knowledge, but interpersonal channels work better in changing attitudes and behaviour" (Rogers as quoted by Freimuth *et al*. 2000: 4). Storey *et al*. (1999: 287) concur that HIV communication through more than one medium increases the breadth and sustainability of the impact.

Mass media channels: radio programming

Adam and Harford (1999: 39-48) have identified some of the most successful formats for health programmes, namely spots, mini-dialogues, mini-dramas, songs, interviews, slogans, magazine, stories, oral testimony, phone-ins and soap operas. However, not all of these are either applicable or feasible for campus radio. The following table gives the broadcaster an indication of the positive and negative aspects of some of the applicable programme formats.

TABLE 2: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SELECTED RADIO PROGRAMME FORMATS

Programme formats	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Radio variety shows	These are entertaining and include music[7] short stories, short interviews, jokes, etc.	A lot of material is condensed into one programme and the material thus lacks in-depth coverage.
Radio soap operas and drama[8]	Interesting stories that capture the experiences of the youth and their families. Entertainment-education stimulates peer communication about HIV prevention.	The youth could sympathise and identify with the negative characters and feel that they are being treated unfairly.
Radio Spots	These are effective in emphasising the message. Using young people to communicate is very effective in reaching the youth and facilitating the process of normalising specific patterns of behaviour.	Partnerships need to be established to finance these initiatives.
Radio discussions and interviews	Allow for in-depth discussions of issues. Give accurate information and advice.	These are more appropriate for older adolescents.

(Adapted from Nduati & Kiai 197: 85-86; Singhal & Rogers 2003: 382)

Appropriate scheduling is equally important to ensure that messages are heard by the target audience. The broadcaster must remember that the message that unsafe sex can be extremely dangerous is not always a welcome one. The programmes must moreover be entertaining yet sensitive. Adam and Harford (1999: 69) suggest that key messages need also to be repeated in different programme formats so as not to bore the audience. Broadcasters must be sure to vary the times of day, and days of the week when airing radio spots.

Interpersonal channels

Galavotti and Pappas-Deluca (2001: 1602-1608) support the idea that the use of media to communicate about HIV/Aids must be combined with interpersonal reinforcement through community-level support. These authors suggest "the involvement of the credible members of the affected community and mobilising them to endorse and support behaviour changes among members of their own peer, family and social networks".

The following are possible means of ensuring interpersonal reinforcement of the broadcaster's message:

Support groups and partnerships with the student counselling services and offices dealing specifically with HIV and Aids;

Road shows, thereby taking the shows out of the studio to focus on the issues a community considers important; and

Selecting community promoters able to establish listening groups to discuss issues pertaining to the broadcast (McKinley & Jensen 2003: 192).

Applying these guidelines for HIV/Aids communication might sound simple enough, yet applying them in practice is an altogether different matter. I thus want to take the exercise a step further by also identifying challenges in respect of HIV/Aids communication and then making some suggestions for dealing with such challenges.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HIV AND AIDS:

IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The main challenges in communicating about HIV and Aids pertain to resources, content and implementation. Due to space constraints the challenges and suggestions to overcome these challenges will be summarised in table 3 below.

TABLE 3: OVERVIEW OF HIV AND AIDS COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Elements	Solutions
Resources		
	Human Financial Knowledge	Form sustainable partnerships Link with broader communication strategies around HIV/Aids Tap into existing projects & networks Assess staff development needs and react Investigate possibility of appointing additional staff – such as special community liaison officer
Programme content/message		
	Ethical and liability issues	Liability: Read a disclaimer and also post on your website Phone-ins: keep information factual and general, not offering specific recommendations

Programme content/message		
		Ethics: Adopt a socially responsible approach: normalise rather than marginalise the issue, cover the economic and social implications, include both those infected and affected by HIV, and include simple prevention messages
	Nature of the programme: Entertainment + education	Take into account social dimensions of radio listening Programming must be lively Address great number of major appeals through programming: conflict/competition, comedy, sex appeal/personality, information and human interest Conduct audience surveys to understand your audiences' programming needs and preferences Use a variety of radio formats
	Selecting the appropriate message Risks: (a) too much information is included, (b) the information is too general, while also not giving practical advice, and (c) the information is not well organised	Broadcasters must examine their understanding of HIV/Aids Assess the needs of your audience Consult the experts Always try to pre-test the message If a generic message is used adapt it to the local context and local idiom to ensure relevance
Implementation		
	Audience concerns	Try to anticipate concerns Set up focus groups and select promoters through whom discussions can take place and concerns aired Ensure buy-in from relevant stakeholders e.g. university management
	Evaluation through audience feedback	Design processes, strategies and appropriate channels to ensure effective use of audience feedback

Implementation		
		Identify the impact of intervention, how it is received by listeners and determine how changes can be made and tested Evaluations must determine the target audience's recall of a specific programme Ask the following questions during feedback sessions: Have you heard of Aids? Where did you hear about it? Do you believe it exists? How do you feel about Aids? Why? How do you feel about persons with Aids? Why? How can you best learn more about Aids? What do you want to know?
	Sustainability	Creatively advertise programming Facilitate community and audience participation Editorial control must be representative of the community as a whole Form research partnerships

(Adapted from Bentley, Blank & Van Haveren 2001: 186; Adam and Harford 1998: 23-28, 29, 33, 55-56, 94, 104; Howard, Kievman & Moore 1994: 171-172; MacFarland 1997: 59; Exchange 2004; McKinley & Jensen 2003: 182-183)

CONCLUSION

Communicating to adolescents is challenging, and even more so when it comes to a sensitive and potentially controversial issue such as HIV/Aids. Alarming statistics regarding HIV/Aids-related deaths and infection rates, especially among the youth in South Africa, call for an aggressive communication campaign.

This study has proposed the use of campus radio to reach the youth. The perceptions of Tuksfm, MFM and Kovsie FM regarding their role in communicating to their listeners about HIV/Aids were assessed. Although their community licence requirements do not stipulate the role campus radio should play in communicating about HIV/Aids, the managements of these stations do feel that they have a part to play. The three stations are attempting to fulfil both their listeners' needs and their own specific developmental needs. There does however seem to be a lack of initial research, of the resources required to sustain HIV/Aids communication, and of audience participation. There seem to be both ignorance and apathy on the part of management. Existing HIV/Aids communication might also be done for the wrong reasons, e.g. to obtain sponsorships, to acquire broadcasting licences, or to please stakeholders and community partners.

Four elements of the communication process – audience, message, source and channel – need to be taken into account when communicating about HIV/Aids. An understanding of the audience for which the message is intended is very important. In order to communicate about HIV/Aids, some knowledge regarding the nature of adolescent sexuality must be acquired by the broadcaster. The message must be useful, timely, appropriate and simple. It is crucial that the information be transmitted by a credible source. Selecting the appropriate channel, or in this context, the appropriate programme format needs careful deliberation. Both the talk and the music format seem to be equally appropriate for HIV/Aids communication. Researchers agree that combining interpersonal and mass-media channels to communicate about HIV/Aids is a good idea. Interpersonal reinforcement of a broadcaster's message can be effected through support groups and partnerships with the student counselling services.

Campus radio stations face some daunting challenges when it comes to HIV/Aids communication. These include challenges in respect of resources and content, and other challenges related to community and audience participation and involvement, and the evaluation of programming. These challenges can be overcome, inter alia, by investigating every avenue for possible partnerships, by assessing staff development needs, by selecting the appropriate message, and by keeping programming entertaining and professional.

Campus radio management must start thinking about HIV/Aids communication. They must be aware of the fact that their listeners are in some way affected by the disease. They must be open to discussing it among themselves and with their audience. They must not include public service announcements simply to please stakeholders, but be diligent in evaluating the messages by using the criteria as discussed in this article. They must start thinking creatively about including HIV/Aids communication in their broadcasts. They can, for example, ask a local artist to write an HIV/Aids song for World Aids Day, or set up a panel to debate the effectiveness of the LoveLife campaign. They can also see to it that the HIV/Aids-related information makes their news agenda.

Endnotes

[1] The author would like to thank Engela Pretorius for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[2] Aids Coalition to Unleash Power

[3] Note that the data presented in the table relates to 2005 when the then station managers completed the questionnaire.

[4] Station's own survey of audience numbers.

[5] Full report available at http://www.hsrcpress.co.za/advanced_search_results.asp

[6] See EU-India media on HIV/Aids, 2007 http://www.Aidsandmedia.net/manual07.htm#english

[7] See http://www.Aidsandmedia.net/music.htm to download songs that have been developed by the Thomson Foundation on issues related to HIV/Aids.

[8] See Rogers, E.M., Vaughan, P.W., Swalehe, R.M.A., Rao, N., Svenkerud, P. & Sood, A. 1999. Effects of entertainment-education soap opera on family-planning behaviour in Tanzania. *Studies in Family Planning* 30(3). Where a university has a drama department, creative collaborations can be made, e.g. providing a platform for the creative work of such students and obtaining sponsors to support such programmes.

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VCT: VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING OR VERITABLE COMMUNICATION TRAGEDY?

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the communication factors and the prevailing socio-cultural context which underlies the lack of VCT uptake amongst male construction workers in South Africa. The article is based on focus group discussions carried out with a group of African construction workers in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal. Lack of understanding of the term "VCT", lack of information on topics such as antiretroviral therapy and rapid-testing facilities, and lack of constructive interpersonal verbal communication on the topic were found to impact on VCT uptake. Socio-cultural factors such as high levels of stigma and discrimination of HIV positive persons, norms surrounding childcare, as well as notions of masculinity contributed to lack of VCT uptake amongst males. It was also noted that the perceived susceptibility of the males was high as a result of misunderstandings and irrational fears of the means of transmission of the HI virus. Suggested means of improving communication on VCT include re-branding VCT for certain populations, capitalising on the trust placed in radio, and implementing peer-led education programmes to promote dialogical discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

The effects of HIV/Aids have been seen to be highly problematic worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as the region most adversely affected by HIV/Aids, with an estimated 24.5 million HIV positive people at the end of 2005 (Fredriksson & Kanabus 2006). The level of HIV prevalence in South Africa, currently estimated to be at 10.8 percent of the population, is a pressing issue which clearly demands an aggressive strategy to curb it (Shisana *et al*. 2005). One of the most effective ways, proven to assist in this process, is through "Voluntary Counselling and Testing" (VCT) for HIV, teamed with the provision of antiretroviral therapy (Thom 2005).

VCT has become more desirable for use since the advent of rapid-testing (Fredrikkson & Kanabus 2006). Results are available in between five and thirty minutes, allowing for both pre-test and post-test counselling, which accompanies the test, to be carried out in one visit (Cichocki 2006). Depending on the results of the test, personally tailored advice, referrals and avenues for support are offered to the patient (Thom 2005). These include advice on the consistent use of condoms and where necessary, tests for CD4 counts, contacts for support groups, and as of 2003, in South Africa, access to free antiretroviral therapy (Swanepoel 2005). Access to VCT is thus seen to be important, as it has been shown that counselling, being aware of one's status and receiving advice can positively impact on increasing health-promoting behaviour (Nogogo 2005).

Pooled European research has shown that antiretroviral therapy decreases one's risk of dying within ten years of contracting HIV by 64% (Mocroft *et al*. 2000, in Kippax 2006). However, these medications are not without side effects, often visible, amongst them "lipodystrophy" – the redistribution of body fat from the limbs and face to the abdomen (Fallon 2003).

VCT uptake in South Africa

Despite being successful in countries such as Uganda, Brazil and Kenya (Thom 2005), VCT uptake in South Africa has been surprisingly low. The availability of antiretroviral treatment in the public health sector was hoped to assist in diminishing the stigma surrounding HIV/Aids (by presenting it as a manageable, chronic illness) and thus increasing VCT uptake (IRIN Plus News 2006a). However, research carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa in 2005 indicated that VCT uptake is estimated to be at a level of 30.3% of the population (Shisana *et al*. 2005).

Within this one-third of the South African population, other researchers have estimated that the ratio of male to female testees is 21% to 79% (IRIN Plus News 2006b). This ties in with research which details the phenomenon of women attending public health clinics significantly more frequently than men, due to the demands of childcare (Tollman *et al*. 1999, in Pronyk *et al*. 2002).

Other patterns could be seen to be indicative of various underlying factors. These include structural, socio-cultural and communication factors. This study aims to uncover these factors and identify ways in which more culturally relevant and thus effective communication on the topic of VCT, especially targeting males, can be designed and implemented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication, both interpersonal and impersonal, has been identified as being an important barrier to accessing the VCT service in South Africa (Policy Project 2003a). Whilst in countries such as Uganda, HIV/Aids communication has focused on morality and personal responsibility, in South Africa different needs have been identified as being important. These are identified by Simelea (2002, in Cullinan 2002) as being the challenging of stigma, discrimination and denial surrounding the disease. These identified foci are underscored by research which has shown that amongst other factors, fear of rejection and violence, as a direct result of stigma and discrimination, are barriers to accessing VCT services (Riasa 2005).

Mistrust of health professionals, problems relating to accessing health services, as well as a lack of belief in one's ability to cope with the emotional turmoil of testing, have also been identified as reasons behind a lack of VCT uptake in South Africa (Van Dyk & Van Dyk 2003). A study on VCT uptake carried out by Hutchinson and Mahlalela (2006) in the Eastern Cape confirmed many of these factors, as well as identifying misperceptions of risk and a shortage of testing and treatment facilities. The probability of being tested was noted to be linked to psycho-social factors, such as "the absence of stigma" or "knowing someone with HIV/Aids" (Hutchinson & Mahlalela 2006).

Other more general factors which have been identified through studies in the US as being catalysts of the process of deciding to undergo VCT, include marriages, new relationships, the death of a partner, distrust of a partner, illness, weight loss and sexually transmitted diseases (Shuter *et al*. 1997, in Fako 2006).

Socio-cultural factors

Culture and health

Culture is defined by the collective consciousness of community of people, which is seen to be shaped by a "shared history, language and psychology" (Airhihenbuwa *et al*. 2000: 106). The inclusion of a focus on culture has been deemed highly important in determining the success of health communication programmes in collectivist cultures. This is due to the fact that "culture is a central feature in health behaviour and decisions, particularly in the context of behaviours that predispose people to HIV/Aids" (Airhihenbuwa *et al*. 1992, in Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 2000: 6).

Each community can be seen to maintain health, prevent disease, respond to symptoms and treat the ill in a specific, well-established manner (Gilbert *et al*. 1996). "Health–seeking behaviour" follows the realisation of illness and, in many circumstances, includes consulting family members, friends and family (Gilbert *et al*. 1996: 49). The course of action, be it visiting a modern health care practitioner or traditional healer, is often the result of the advice given by the network of persons consulted (Gilbert *et al*. 1996).

Power relations and masculinity

There are many contextual factors, identified by Parker (2004), which contribute to the spread of HIV/Aids. Amongst these, gender power relations are identified as being unequal and weighted towards decision-making by males (Parker 2004). Linked to such issues of power are those of masculinity, which Campbell (2004) identifies as furthering the spread of HIV/Aids. In research conducted by Van Dyk and Van Dyk (2003) it was found that the main reasons behind men not wanting to disclose their HIV positive status were due to fear of losing their sexuality and sex appeal.

It is asserted that VCT programmes should take into account the intricate issues of male sexuality and psychological barriers which are encountered in this process. Couple-focused VCT is recommended as a means by which to empower men to take responsibility for sexual choices, rather than denying their status or refusing to present for VCT (Van Dyk & Van Dyk 2003).

Stigma and discrimination

Stigma is referred to as prejudice and discrimination against people, and the treatment of people in a negative manner.

The stigma often attached to Aids has been identified as a barrier to the humane treatment of people worldwide (Singhal & Rogers 2003). Many studies have shown that people often understand how HIV is transmitted, yet do not have a suitable understanding of the ways in which it is not transmitted (London & Robles 2000, in Dias *et al*. 2006). A large proportion of respondents in a US study were shown to overestimate the risk of infection that casual contact with HIV positive persons poses (MMWR 2000, in Dias *et al*. 2006). It is asserted that this fear of contracting HIV through casual contact increases stigma through an increase in fear that people have of associating themselves with HIV positive persons (Dias *et al*. 2006). Parker and Aggleton (2003, in Dias *et al*. 2006) argue that HIV/Aids campaigns have not addressed this misunderstanding of the ways in which HIV is transmitted, as well as the ways in which it is not.

Strategies to increase VCT uptake

Recommendations of Shisana *et al*. (2005) include the need to refocus the communication strategy by addressing, amongst other factors, gender-related vulnerability, age-related vulnerability and vulnerability as a result of migration and mobility. More specifically, it is suggested that low levels of personal susceptibility be addressed, with specific emphasis placed on the need for persons to present themselves for VCT, as well as to disclose their status to their partners. The risk of contracting HIV/Aids during pregnancy and the suggestion that testing of both partners before planning to conceive should also be highlighted. This would thus incorporate the need for the periodic testing of men and women in stable relationships.

It is suggested by Parker (2004) that with regard to the response to HIV/Aids in South Africa, national level (vertical) communication campaigns should serve as a useful backdrop to local, related (participatory) activities. The combination of the use of both is vital for the purpose of increasing general knowledge and awareness.

The participatory communication which is referred to could be seen to be present in the practice of "peer-led education". This is best described as "dialogic interpersonal communication and group learning processes" (Mason *et al.* s.a.: 3). This process allows for alternative behavioural norms and practices to be identified and evaluated in a language with which the participants are comfortable and in relation to certain issues which are most personally relevant (Campbell 2003).

Moving beyond the realm of peer-led education, it is asserted by Mason *et al.* (s.a.: 3) that in order to maximise behaviour change strategies, these should involve individuals, families and communities. Such extended "dialogic interpersonal communication and group learning processes" can be maximised by the use of "micromedia" – carefully and specifically created media for use with small, clearly defined groups of people which promote discussion and learning.

THEORIES OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE MODELS

This study was guided by three theories, namely Health Belief Model, Social Learning Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These theories fall into three categories which indicate the level at which they operate, namely the "individual" level, the "interpersonal" level and the "community" level (Glanz & Rimer 1995: 40).

The Health Belief Model is a rational-cognitive model, attributed to Becker (1974), which seeks to explain the reasoning behind the lack of uptake in programmes designed to assist in disease prevention and detection. The main focus falls on understanding the personal perceptions of issues surrounding the programme or disease (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 2000). This model is comprised of five components (Glanz & Rimer 1995): perceived susceptibility; perceived severity; perceived benefits; perceived barriers; and cues to action. A further component, according to Glanz and Rimer (1995: 19), is that of self-efficacy, which refers to the confidence which a person has in his/her ability to carry out a particular behaviour.

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura in 1986, focuses mainly on the way in which modelling of behaviour and vicarious or observational learning has an effect on increasing levels of self-efficacy and individual behaviour change (Slater & Rouner 2002). Particular concepts are included in this theory and highlighted by Glanz and Rimer (1995: 23-24). The first of these is *reciprocal determinism*, which refers to the triadic nature of the theory and the way in which the behaviour of the individual, the environment and the cognitive processes of the individual have the ability to impact on each other in reciprocal manners. *Behavioural capability* refers to the assertion that in order for a person to carry out a specific behaviour, it is necessary that the person is

aware of the specific details surrounding the behaviour and how it can be achieved. The third concept is that of *outcome expectations* and refers to the results that a person anticipates will occur due to following a specific action.

The fourth concept is that of *self-efficacy*. *Observational learning* or "modelling" is also included and refers to the way in which people are able to learn through the experience of others. The process of socialisation is possible through the act of modelling.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, devised by Rogers in 1983, focuses on the ways in which "….new ideas, products and social practices spread within a society…" (National Cancer Institute 2001: 226). There are five characteristics of innovations which have been identified as being important: relative advantage; compatibility; complexity; trialability; and observability (Glanz & Rimer 1995: 28). Another important component of the theory includes the communication processes which are involved in the spread of a new idea – in terms of both knowledge and its application (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 2000). This is viewed as a two-way process in which message receivers are active agents, as opposed to passive receivers (Glanz & Rimer 1995). The two-step flow of communication, which is incorporated in the theory, highlights the way in which opinion leaders are able to mediate messages (Glanz & Rimer 1995).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Content analysis, which refers to the quantitative research technique that objectively and systematically describes the manifest content of communication (Berelson 1952, in Deacon *et al*. 1999), was carried out. Posters and pamphlets from the Howick clinic, as well as television advertisements, radio content and local billboards formed the basis for this analysis.

The main method of primary research carried out was that of focus group discussions, of which two were carried out in isiZulu and seSotho, each with six male participants, all of whom being construction workers in the Howick area.

Area of study

The Howick Clinic is a municipal clinic situated in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. The clinic serves the surrounding population through the provision of primary health care. Amongst the many services offered is voluntary couselling and testing. Patients who are identified as being HIV positive and requiring ART are referred to the nearby Communicable Diseases Clinic (Van Niekerk 2006). As a result of this clinic being non-governmentally run, patients presenting at this clinic are referred to the government-run Grey's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg, a distance of approximately 30 km from Howick (Cheek 2006).

Other organisations – such as New Start Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre – are also in existence, and work in conjunction with the Department of Health. This organisation, based in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg (New Start Voluntary

Counselling and Testing Centre 2006), makes use of mobile VCT, where members of the organisation travel to certain areas and offer VCT in rural areas, places of employment, at colleges and at universities (Mtshali 2006). During these mobile VCT events, the usual testing fee is waived in an attempt to attract higher levels of uptake. Couple's VCT is a concept promoted by New Start, where a price discount is offered to those testing as a couple. This option has not yet proven very popular, although it is noted that different communities produce different patterns in testing practices, both with regard to VCT for couples, as well as the male to female ratio of testees (Mtshali 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

General health tests

Health tests for diseases which were identified by both Group 1 (isiZulu speakers) and Group 2 (seSotho speakers) included cancer, asthma, arthritis, blood pressure and HIV/Aids. Differing points of view existed with regard to the importance of these tests, but the majority of the views were in line with the assertion by one group member that health checks are important as they allow one to know one's health status with regard to illnesses, thus allowing one the opportunity to access treatment early. Such attitudes could be seen to be indicative of the findings of the research of Day *et al*. (2003), where a lack of belief in the value of health tests was not seen to be the main factor preventing uptake of VCT, but rather social barriers, such as stigma.

Very critical views of clinics, including a general mistrust of staff, a preference for doctors in private practice and the perception that "….things don't go well if I go to the clinic" (Sotho male B) were aired. One member in Group 2 asserted that white doctors were attempting to reduce the numbers of black people, that medicines offered at clinics generally did not tend to alleviate problems and that traditional herbs had to be used as well as prescribed medication. Such comments and practices were seen to be in line with the assertion that most Africans tend to believe that traditional healers are more skilled at treating ailments than modern doctors, despite such modern doctors often being visited (Green 1994, in IRIN Plus News 2001).

Awareness and understanding of HIV/Aids

None of the 12 men in the discussions indicated that they had heard of the term "VCT", although one member of Group 1 later stated that he had, but did not know what was being referred to.

In order to facilitate further discussion, a brief explanation of the term, indicating the inclusion of HIV testing, was given.

Group 2 members did not offer any suggestions as to how long the process of VCT was believed to take, whilst a member of Group 1 indicated that one has to return for the result of the test after a few weeks. The misperceptions surrounding the time taken for VCT indicated that the availability of rapid-testing did not appear to be well known. This is an important factor, as the results of research carried out with mineworkers by

Day *et al*. (2003) indicated that the implementation of same-day testing services had increased willingness to undergo testing in a group of 105 males by a significant 25%.

A lack of awareness of the intricacies of these services could impact on the *outcome expectations* and *behavioural capability* components of the Social Learning Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995), thereby negatively impacting on the *self-efficacy* of the person with regard to presenting for VCT. With regard to the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995), the understanding of the *complexity* of the VCT service could also be negatively affected, potentially decreasing one's inclination to test.

Reasons offered for people choosing to undergo VCT included feeling unwell, being persuaded by family members to test, as well as by female partners who had undergone testing during pregnancy. This insistence by family members for testing to take place, could be seen to be indicative the collectivist culture prevalent in Africa (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 2000). Later in the discussion, the point of view was raised that "people should stop seeking VCT when they are too ill, but HIV testing should become a habit" (Zulu male A). Statements such as these could be seen to link to the possibility of "opt-out" testing for HIV/Aids, where routine testing for HIV/Aids is carried out as a component of normal medical treatment, unless expressly refused by the patient (IRIN Plus news 2006c), being viewed favourably amongst some sectors of South African society.

Sources of information

Some participants indicated that sources of information on HIV testing included elderly persons at home, one's place of work, hospital and the radio. In one focus group it was indicated that VCT had been mentioned on the television series *Soul City*, but it was not understood exactly what was being referred to. The fact that this series was identified as an information source, highlights the *observational learning* component of Social Learning Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995: 23) and the effects that watching others carrying out a certain task can have on the knowledge of the person observing. It can also be seen to link to the *observability* component of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995: 28), which allows the person a better understanding of the service. However, it should be noted that in both cases, this observational learning and observability components were not fully realised due to the actual process of VCT not being depicted.

It was interesting that most of the sources involved mainly verbal communication. In Group 1, Ukhozi FM, an isiZulu radio station, was specifically identified as a source information on HIV testing. The frequency with which HIV/Aids-related messages are broadcast on radio was highlighted by Group 2 members. This is in line with information obtained from the programme manager of Ukhozi FM, who indicated that a strong focus was placed on empowerment and the provision of knowledge building information (Msane 2006). It was claimed that HIV/Aids content was included in programmes in one or another manner, ranging from phone-in discussions to promotions, interviews and advertisements an average of five or six times per day (Msane 2006).

Whilst television and radio were noted to be regarded highly in terms of credibility, points of view regarding the need for "live" persons allowing for two-way communication were also raised. Such comments could be seen to indicate desire for the dialogical nature of interpersonal communication, as well as the opportunity to engage with opinion leaders, a component of Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995).

With regard to the amount of discussion which occurs on the topic of HIV/Aids and VCT, it was indicated that whilst discussion on the topic of HIV/Aids was common, especially amongst men, the VCT experience itself was not commonly discussed, except in the event of a negative test result. This was identified as being as a result of fearing stigmatisation and abandonment. This lack of discussion on the topic of the VCT process could impact on the *trialability*, a component of Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995), of the service, whereby a lack of exposure to knowing what the process entails and thus a lack of ability to contemplate undergoing VCT could prevent uptake.

The fact that interpersonal communication on the topic of HIV/Aids exists, ties into the assertion that oral communication is viewed as highly valuable in traditional societies, despite often being overlooked (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 1996). It also disproves the assertion by Lau and Muula (2004) that HIV/Aids is often considered a taboo subject, resulting in hindering diagnoses, treatment and prevention. Perhaps one could assert that it is not the fact that HIV/Aids is a taboo subject that causes these hindrances, but rather the lack of direction in talking openly about such topics in a non-judgmental, guided and constructive manner.

Perceptions of severity

HIV/Aids was perceived to be a great problem amongst members of both groups, with examples given of the experiences of attending funerals weekly and seeing others in the community suffering and dying from Aids-related illnesses. It was highlighted that persons with HIV/Aids often became very dark in complexion, lost weight and became too weak to walk unaided. It was also stated that overweight women were deemed to be HIV positive, but perceived to be on antiretroviral treatment, known to cause weight gain.

This could be seen to link to the *observational learning* component of Social Learning Theory, (Glanz & Rimer 1995) in the sense that persons who were noted to be HIV positive were able to be identified by certain "markers" (Singhal & Rogers 2003). It was interesting to note the way in which the perceptions of HIV positive persons have changed, and this could be noted as an indication of the way in which the HIV/Aids pandemic has rapidly changed (Parker 2004). Such perceptions could be seen to increase the amount of stigma and discrimination, even with those uninfected with HIV/Aids, due to the markers of the disease having shifted. Factors such as these should be addressed in health communication.

When asked which group of people were believed to be most affected by HIV/Aids, Group 1 indicated that the youth, adults and infants were most at risk. Group 2 members indicated that females were most at risk as a result of being sex workers and being generally promiscuous. Women were identified by both groups as being those who most often undergo VCT. The reasons behind this included "because the diseases starts with them" (Sotho male C, Group 2), and "because they care for their children, and they often go to clinics for prevention" (Zulu male B, Group 1).

The first of these views could be seen to be in line with the findings of studies conducted worldwide, which identified women as being blamed by men for "bringing Aids into the family" (Fleischman 2005, in De Bruyn 2005: 10).

Group 2 members were asked for their perceptions on VCT for couples and it was indicated that this was thought to be a beneficial practice. This was indicated by a group member who claimed that when presenting for testing without one's partner, enquiries were made as to the whereabouts of the partner. When asked whether VCT for couples was thought to take place commonly, it was claimed that it is often the case. The VCT counsellor at the Howick Clinic, however, indicated that couples presenting for VCT were uncommon (Xulu 2006). The fact that recent Department of Health Khomanani and LoveLife television advertisements were noted to focus on encouraging testing by couples, especially before planning a family, indicated a positive move towards pursuing this topic within communication.

Perceptions of susceptibility

Both groups indicated that persons within their community were at risk of contracting HIV/Aids. This was noted in the comment "people in my community are at risk as much as people in the cities" (Sotho male B, Group 2). With regard to information on the transmission of HIV/Aids, Group 1 indicated that HIV/Aids was spread by unprotected sexual activity, contact with infected blood and from mother to infant.

Personal susceptibility was not directly included in the discussions due to the sensitive nature of the topic. However, to a degree this was able to be gauged by responses to the questions relating to communal susceptibility. Interestingly, the comments made by the group members throughout the conversation highlighted the fact that a great deal of personal susceptibility existed. High levels of perceived susceptibility, based on irrational fears of being infected by HIV/Aids as a result of having talked to, touched or worked with an HIV positive individual were noted. This could be seen to disprove the popular assertion surrounding HIV/Aids that perceived severity of the disease is often higher than perceived personal susceptibility to the disease (Govender & Petersen 2004), resulting in a misappraisal of risk and thus a lack of behaviour change. The findings of this paper could be seen to indicate that in some cases, the levels of perceived susceptibility may in fact be equal to or greater than levels of perceived severity of the disease, as a result of irrational fears.

It is exactly these irrational fears which could have incapacitated persons and prevented the accessing of such services, increasing stigmatisation of and discrimination against HIV positive persons.

This is seen by the response which was recorded when the focus group members were asked whether HIV positive people were seen to be different from ordinary people. This was answered in the negative, with the fear of being infected highlighted as the only reason for avoiding such persons.

Perceived barriers to VCT uptake

The first reason for people not undergoing VCT which was identified by both groups as that of fear, both of a positive result and of being judged by others. HIV positive persons were believed to be ill-treated and made to sit apart from others, including family members, for fear of transmitting the virus. Some group members avoided verbal and casual contact with HIV positive persons for fear of being infected. It was also detailed by one member that he felt uneasy having to work with the same construction tools as those who were possibly HIV positive. It was indicated that if a person suspected of being HIV positive was to bleed on such tools, he would refuse to use these. He also indicated that he would not venture too close to the open coffin of a person whom he suspected of having died as a result of HIV/Aids, for fear of being infected.

It was highlighted that very few families were willing to care for those who became ill and that often such people were completely abandoned by the family. There appeared to be fear of rejection, abandonment, dependency and a lack of care at one's home. This linked to the research findings of Hutchinson and Mahlalela (2006) where the availability of home-based palliative care was identified as being an important factor, and was noted to improve the likelihood of testing amongst males.

Besides stigma and discrimination, other barriers which were seen to prevent men from presenting for VCT included a lack of access to clinics due to hours of employment and sheer stubbornness. This stubbornness, as well as the fear of dependency, could be seen to be linked to the assertion by Campbell (2004) that traditional notions of the constitution of masculinity could be seen to negatively impact on the prevention of HIV/Aids.

Asked what factors were felt to motivate people to undergo VCT, both groups mentioned having a friend who had undergone VCT. Additionally, Group 1 members mentioned a fear of dying (fear appeared to play both an encouraging and inhibitory role), often brought on by watching someone else dying; suggestions by friends; a distrust of one's sexual partners; having access to a clinic away from one's community; and television and radio. Such factors could be seen to link to the *cues to action*, a component of Social Learning Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995).

The fact that members in both groups indicated that having a friend who had undergone the process of VCT would be an encouragement, tied in with research carried out by

Haupt *et al*. (2004). Two-thirds of the 300 construction workers included in their survey claimed to have approached fellow workers on their own accord to discuss HIV/Aids and issues that were not understood. Haupt *et al*. (2004) asserted that such findings indicated that use of peer-educators in such settings appeared to be a vital tool in transmitting relevant information.

Perceived benefits of VCT

At the end of the discussion, all members in both groups felt that VCT was a beneficial process to undergo. With regard to the perceived benefits obtained from VCT by HIV positive persons, only one member of Group 2 indicated that he felt that HIV positive persons could not be helped in any way.

Benefits which were identified by others included knowing one's status, receiving care and emotional support, receiving medication, receiving condoms and letters for social grants were mentioned in both groups. These could be seen to form the *relative advantage* component of Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Glanz & Rimer 1995: 23).

When asked whether those who were found to be HIV negative benefited from the process, Group 2 members first indicated that such persons were unable to helped in any way. Following probing by the facilitator, HIV negative persons were described as only being able to help themselves by being honest with their partner. Group one members indicated that HIV negative persons and their families benefited psychologically from VCT by obtaining relief. It was interesting to note that mention was not made of further prevention which could be offered to such persons. This could perhaps be seen to be indicative of the assertion that VCT is an effective means of "secondary prevention", but does not appear to offer an effective primary prevention strategy to HIV negative individuals (Weinhardt *et al*. 1999, in Van Dyk & Van Dyk 2003: 119).

When asked about antiretroviral therapy, Group 1 members indicated that they had heard of Nevirapine. Group 2 members indicated that they had not, but this was noted to be as a result of a lack of understanding of the word. Zulu male C (Group 1) indicated that the reason behind taking such tablets was "to lower HIV in their bodies so that HIV will not make them die faster". An opposing view was heard when it was stated that "they finish off people who are very sick" (Sotho male A, Group 2). Overall, it was also claimed that although side effects occured as a result of the medication, they did not cause death and were deemed to be helpful. Misperceptions were seen to exist with regard to the cost of antiretroviral therapy, which could possibly impact on levels of VCT uptake.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, certain changes with regard to communication strategies targeting HIV/Aids and VCT are recommended. These are discussed below.

The trust placed in radio should be capitalised on by maintaining and increasing the level of HIV/Aids content in ethnic languages, especially content in the form of

discussions with phone-in options that allow for a degree of two-way conversation. The inclusion in these discussions of HIV positive persons who are well-known in certain communities and who are able to openly refer to issues would improve the success of such programmes. Such issues would include discussion on the actual process of VCT, the personal effects of HIV/Aids and stigma, and the fact that a great deal of discrimination and fear is unnecessary due to HIV not spread by touch.

It is recommended that communication on the topic of how HIV/Aids is transmitted and, more importantly, not transmitted be given higher importance, as this appears to contribute to increased levels of irrational fear regarding infection and thus increased stigma and discrimination against those whoe are HIV positive. One possible means of addressing these issues would be to create a short, ongoing educational and informative television programme which is broadcast after 20:00. This could provide an SMS facility, whereby questions could be asked and answers could be researched and given.

Peer-led education campaigns to promote dialogue, perhaps with targeted micro-media, should also be considered. The way in which Group 2 engaged keenly in the focus group discussion could be seen to indicate a need to discuss such issues in an open but constructive manner. Such peer-led education campaigns could be implemented among colleagues at places of work, or within small communities at communal meeting places and persons educated in this way would be encouraged to share knowledge and the micro-media with other peers and family members, thus increasing constructive discussion on the topic of HIV/Aids and VCT, and allowing for diffusion of knowledge, increased community participation and thus community mobilisation.

It is advised that the availability of rapid testing and same-day results be publicised, as this was not known by the group members and, as previously mentioned, research has shown that the availability of rapid-testing has been proved to be a very important factor in determining VCT uptake amongst males. Entertainment-education television programmes should include depictions of persons undergoing the various stages in the VCT process: pre-test counselling, rapid-testing, post-test counselling and benefits such as support groups and antiretroviral therapy.

Focus should also be placed on the argument that people should not wait until they are ill to find out their HIV status, but should rather take the initiative to test early and often for HIV/Aids. A communication campaign which focuses on disclosure, particularly amongst men, thus increasing acceptability of the disease, would also prove beneficial.

Awareness of antiretroviral therapy should be promoted, as should clear statements regarding the benefits and the potential side effects of undergoing ART, which should be clearly identified and explained. It should also be highlighted that these are available free of charge at government hospitals, but that various tests have to be carried out to determine whether the person is at the correct stage of the disease to begin treatment.

Whilst “VCT” may be a suitable English phrase to use when referring to the process surrounding HIV testing, it is suggested that ethnic language communication should not make use of this acronym as it is not understood by those who are non-English

speaking. It is felt that it would be more beneficial to simply refer to HIV testing in the way in which it is referred to by the ethnic language speakers, for example "Ukuhlolela isifo sengculazi" in isiZulu and "Liteko tsa koatsi ea bosolla hlapi" in seSotho. It should be noted, however, that these descriptions refer only to the HIV testing itself, thus care must be taken to include the fact that counselling is included in the process, as well as the fact that it is a voluntary process, both of which appear to be fairly common knowledge but which should not be overlooked.

It is asserted that the focus which has been placed on VCT for couples be increased and that males are increasingly depicted in advertisements as being affected by HIV/Aids, and conscientised as to their role in the spread and prevention of HIV/Aids. The process of testing should be depicted as being manly, normal and expected, in an attempt to shift perceptions surrounding the constitution of masculinity.

Communication campaigns targeted at health care workers, which highlight the fears, understanding and beliefs of patients, especially male patients, including tips on how to best deal with male patients, could do well to improve service received by allowing for a more holistic approach to the treatment of the patient.

An increase in the availability of mobile VCT is also recommended, with mobile units visiting communities on weekends, in communal areas which are accessible and visible. This would hopefully increase the perception of the acceptability of VCT and allow for males (and females) to have access to the service which they may not have during working hours.

Further research into the possibility of opt-out testing being introduced in South Africa is recommended, as this could prove helpful in allowing for the disease to be seen as normalised and seen as manageable and chronic, as opposed to shameful and deadly.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to answer three questions with regard to which communication factors are seen to prevent the uptake of VCT, how these are linked to wider social and cultural factors and what changes could be made to current communication strategies to increase VCT uptake, in particular amongst African males.

Factors identified in literature and previous studies as being associated with a lack of VCT uptake, including interpersonal and impersonal communication (Policy Project 2003a), as well as fear of rejection, violence and stigma (Riasa 2005). A mistrust of health professionals, problems relating to accessing health services, a lack of belief in one's ability to cope with the emotional demands of testing (Van Dyk & Van Dyk 2003). Misperceptions surrounding risk and a shortage of testing and treatment facilities (Hutchinson & Mahlalela 2006) were also noted.

The article has identified and supported many of the above-mentioned factors which function as barriers to VCT uptake. Barriers associated specifically with males which this article has identified, included low levels of clinic access due to long working hours and not having the need to visit the clinic regularly in the way that females do, as well

as male stubbornness. Factors impacting more generally on VCT uptake levels included a lack of understanding of the term "VCT"; a lack of awareness of the availability of rapid-testing for HIV/Aids; a lack of opportunity to discuss HIV/Aids and VCT in a supportive and constructive environment; the minority belief that antiretroviral therapy can be harmful, as well as expensive to purchase; the fairly common belief that females are to blame for the spread of HIV/Aids; and the belief that casual contact with an HIV positive person places one at great risk of contracting the virus.

Further research in this field could include focusing on the perceptions surrounding peer-led education, identifying the best locations for this to take place and the best means of identifying suitable opinion leaders for training. Perceptions surrounding opt-out testing could also be investigated, determining the views of persons with regard to the potential acceptability aspect of such testing and how the introduction of this in South Africa could impact on levels of stigma and discrimination.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the communication factors which have been identified as impacting on and preventing the uptake of VCT be addressed as a matter of urgency. Without attention, an avoidable worsening of the HIV/Aids pandemic could emerge, as a result of this "veritable communication tragedy".

Endnotes

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EXCO MEETS THE PEOPLE IN THE FREE STATE: A WINDOW DRESSING EXERCISE?

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ABSTRACT

The new democratic political dispensation has posed numerous challenges and opportunities to both the government communication system and government communicators specifically. The democratic breakthrough of 1994 signaled, among other matters, an ANC government commitment to create space for members of the public to participate in building the new democratic South African state. Communication has thus been viewed as a strategic element of service delivery. Government has created a number of opportunities and structures to pursue the commitment that this accountability and interaction takes place. These include the Presidential Izimbizo and Exco Meets the People (sometimes referred to as the Provincial Izimbizo). For the purpose of this article, the concept of Exco Meets the People is used interchangeably as meaning a communication method by the Free State ANC government as well as referring to a provincial gathering organised by the Directorate of Policy Unit in the Office of the Premier. The article uses field research as the main historical research methodology. This method was helpful to ascertain the impact of Exco Meets the People to the targeted communities, and to determine the views of such communities with regard to this communication method.

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INTRODUCTION

The current context of government communication takes cue from the constitutional imperative of freedom of information founded on the objectives to make a visible shift from the apartheid state to a democratic state. The free flow of information, open dialogue, openness and accountability and media freedom are all fundamental tenets of a thriving democracy. This compels government to ensure that it maintains a continued interaction with the citizenry. This communication guarantees an informed and appropriate response to people's needs in order to enable all South Africans to become active and conscious participants in the process of social transformation. It also ensures that government is sensitive to the needs of the people.

In the Free State, when the ANC-led government came into power in 1994, political leaders in the province expressed concern that government achievements were receiving limited media coverage. The leaders alleged that, although there was media coverage, it was viewed as inadequate as it mainly concentrated on the existing factionalism, which was dubbed the "North" and the "South" divide of the ruling party in the Free State. They argued that misunderstanding between these two groups was given media coverage at the expense of service delivery that was taking place in the province. In 1998, the provincial government implemented *Exco Meets the People* (Executive Council meets the people) as a method to advance its course of communicating with citizens on the planning, implementation and successes of its programmes. Although it was pioneered by the ANC-led government, one would have expected this communication method to be apolitical. However, it is evident in this article that it turned out to be more political rather than consultative as it was made to appear.

Exco Meets the People was introduced in view of the reality that, since the Free State is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, a large group of its inhabitants could not access the limited government information through mass media forms such as radio and television. One is of an opinion that it is from this adage that the Free State government decided on the implementation of this method of communication.

The article attempts to analyse the impact the *Exco Meets the People* communication method had on the livelihood of the Free State communities. The author argues that although the initial attempt of implementing *Exco Meets the People* was welcomed by the Free State communities, it is clear that it is a controversial issue in the province. *Exco Meets the People* is not only used to provide a platform for the provincial government's senior officials to consult their communities on difficult issues and to jointly make proposals on how to resolve them, but also for other political motives such as to mobilise followers for political objectives and to justify political actions of the ruling party. The article further argues that, if this method was effective in the province, violent protests in the townships like Intabazwe (Harrismith), Ezenzeleni (Warden), Thembalihle (Vrede), and Petsana (Reitz) could have been avoided. This is an indication that there is a communication gap between government agencies and communities with regard to the dissemination of information about the activities of the

government. This communication enables the pressure groups in the above-mentioned townships to organise, publicise and mobilise more effectively against the leadership of the ANC government in the province.

THE PRESIDENTIAL IZIMBIZO vs EXCO MEETS THE PEOPLE

Imbizo (plural *izimbizo*) is a Zulu concept for a traditional community gathering held to solve pertinent community issues. Jeffrey Mabelebele of the University of Limpopo argues that the word *imbizo* has variants in many African languages, such as *pitso* in Sepedi and *kgotla* in Setswana and Sesotho (Mabelebele 2006: 104). In indigenous African communities, the practice of *imbizo* is used to resolve pertinent community challenges through honest engagement between the communities and leadership. *Imbizo* can be interpreted as an indigenous folk medium, which allows people to use theatrical forms of communication to express their views on development plans, something which radio, film, television and print have not yet effectively achieved (Mabelebele 2005: 1).

Ngaike Blakenberg, a graduate of Carleton University, argues that in traditional African village structures, the concerns, ideas and opinions of all the people are able to occupy real space in any public discussion. For effective participation to occur there must be a commitment to freedom of expression. People must be free to speak out and represent their own interests, without fear of repercussions even if their voices are dissenting (Blakenberg 1999: 44-46). Blakenberg's sentiments were echoed by Pieter Duvenage in his article *Habermas, the public sphere and beyond* that the public sphere plays and important role in advancing forward the interests of the communities (Duvenage 2005: 3-7).

Imbizo, in its traditional form, has constituted an important aspect of the African political system for many centuries, including South Africa. It was only during the presidential term of Thabo Mbeki that the concept was revived to a position of importance in the contemporary lexicon and formal governance setting. As a result, in October 2001, Cabinet decided that – following the president's State of the Nation address – it will engage in the *izimbizo* as a communication method, using the same approach as in traditional *izimbizo*. As a folk medium, *imbizo* is rooted within the cultural milieu of the people who participate in it. Netshitomboni argues in his thesis, *Managing participatory development communication: The case for the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)*, that this traditional approach was adopted by the ANC government because it was viewed as the best practice regarding consultative governance (Netshitomboni 2007: 126).

Long before the introduction and implementation of the *Presidential Izimbizo*, the Free State provincial government had embarked on the *Exco Meets the People* communication method – as early as 1998. The main aim of *Exco Meets the People* was to provide a platform for communities to raise their problems and concerns with senior government officials like the premier, mayors, and the members of the executive council (MECs). Different provinces adopted different names for such a

communication method with the communities – in the Northern Cape this communication method is known as *The Cabinet Meets the People* (*Diamond Fields Advertiser* 2003: 16). In the Eastern Cape, it is known as *Masithethisane* (come, let's talk together).

Exco Meets the People as a method of communication became the forerunner of the *Presidential Izimbizo* based on the same principles. *Izimbizo* are conducted on two levels, namely the *Presidential Izimbizo* and the *National Izimbizo*. The *Presidential Izimbizo* are designed to allow the president of the country to interact with communities. On the other hand, the *National Izimbizo* allow ministers, premiers, MECs and local councillors to listen and respond to the problems raised by the communities.

Unlike *izimbizo*, *Exco Meets the People* is a forum spearheaded by the premier to enhance dialogue and interaction between senior provincial government executives and communities. Interaction through this method provides an opportunity for the provincial government to communicate its action programme and the progress being made directly to the people. Both the *Presidential Izimbizo* and *Exco Meets the People* communication methods require planning that involves extensive communication with the people in the area to be visited. In the Free State province, this communication method was initiated towards the end of Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri's term in office (1998), but was only fully deployed during the period of Winkie Direko's term as premier (1999-2004). To date, *Exco Meets the People* is still used in the Free State province.

NECESSITY OF USING *EXCO MEETS THE PEOPLE*

While the Constitution of South Africa amply provides for the right to access information, and the related Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000 is recognised as among the best in the world, there are drawbacks that negatively affect access. Firstly, the difficult procedure in accessing information and the prescribed fees certainly hinder access to poor people. Secondly, the exemption in the Act which hinges upon national security becomes a convenient loophole for the government to exploit when it does not want to release information which may have nothing or little to do with government security. Thirdly, the blanket exclusion of all Cabinet records is a reprehensible exemption and seriously undermines public openness, transparency and access. Section 40 of the Act inappropriately allows the government to be secretive about details in the policy-making process. This is the most contradictory aspect of the Act because it restricts access to what is arguably the most important area of government transparency and accountability to the public. Arguments such as these provided the impetus for the Free State provincial government to introduce the *Exco Meets the People* to interact with the communities.

Although interaction with the communities was deemed important, *Exco Meets the People* required, inter alia, that the ANC provincial government firmly entrench its hegemony in all sectors of the provincial community. It had to maintain close contact with the community members who in the majority voted it into power. This was echoed

by De Villiers (2003:1), quoting Joel Netshitenzhe, Head of the Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS): "The participation of citizens in formulating decisions that affect them is most desirable. It is desirable to bring government to the man in the street." However, the realisation of this goal would depend on the success of the communication methods used.

In the Free State, for example, *Exco Meets the People* Focus Weeks are held whereby the premier, mayors, MECs, and local councillors interact directly with communities at grassroots level. One of the key objectives of the premier's visits is to see for himself/herself some of the challenges that ordinary citizens are grappling with, including the conditions under which ordinary people live. According to Alec Moemi, Chief Director in the Office of the Premier, there are five core issues of importance of *Exco Meets the People*, namely to highlight the following: government programme of action; achievements and progress being made by government; challenges facing government; clarifying government's position on various transverse matters; and highlighting government expectations on envisaged partnerships with communities in development work (Personal interview with M.E. Moemi,16 August 2007). Such a forum gives communities an opportunity to raise their concerns and suggestions directly with the premier in the presence of MECs, mayors and others. In this way, ordinary people are able to hold the three spheres of government accountable and to a certain extent influence governance and service delivery. *Exco meets the people* gatherings are held regularly in order to ensure that community problems are addressed as they emerge.

While still serving as Premier of the Free State, Winkie Direko started off with formally explaining the importance of developing the participatory character of communication within the provincial government. According to Direko, the provincial government had to speed up a method of communicating with the communities face to face. She argued that this would highlight the need for active participation and critical assessment of service delivery by communities within a democratic framework (Personal interview with I.W. Direko, 5 June 2003). Strom, in research conducted by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), later echoed the same sentiments by stating that: "When democracy is conceived too narrowly, as simply the work of government, citizens become marginalised and democracy seems to revolve around politicians. When citizens are placed at the centre, everything looks different" (Strom 2004: 1).

Addressing the community of Luckhoff and Bethulie in the Xhariep district from 10-11 October 2002, Direko had the following to say about the *Exco Meets the People*:

> Driven by strong principles of interactive governance and the resolve to take government to the people, my Executive Council took the decision to engage in an intensive programme to interact with the different communities of the Free State. Our President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, has encouraged us to work towards effective, transparent and cooperative government that is inclusive and that ensures efficient service delivery. The Exco Meets the People campaign has taken us across the five

> districts of our province. We have been able to visit different towns in these districts. The comments, questions and concerns that we have received through this campaign have enabled us to be more considerate and strategic when planning on socio-economic development issues (Direko 2002: 1).

It is clear from this statement that the provincial government wanted to achieve popular control over decision-makers that would ultimately end poverty, minimize unemployment and homelessness, and restore human dignity to the Free State communities.

Exco Meets the People makes it possible to create a distinction between four levels of information, generated at the community engagements. The first includes issues of a more general nature relating to provincial and national policy issues, for example the question of unemployment where opinions expressed forms part of the general policy conversation. The second level of information relates to individual issues such as an individual's experience with reporting crime, or problems surrounding access to social grants. The third level of information involves the status policy implementation such as the rate at which houses are built, or access to basic needs like clean water. The fourth level of information is feedback and evaluation on whether government initiatives are achieving what the communities expect. From the above description of the programme setting, as well as the actual event, it is clear that participation by various levels of government, including community members, becomes a central activity to which many can contribute and listen.

One may argue that at face value, *Exco Meets the People* is presented by the Free State provincial government as a communication method to deepen participatory democracy and public participation, especially for the poor. It is clear from this campaign that the ANC-led provincial government is able to popularise and give practical meaning to its long-held ideological positions. Direko argued that, through the use of this communication method, the ANC government intended to keep its ideologies alive in the consciousness of the communities in the province (Direko 2003).

This author argues that although this communication method plays a significant role in promoting communication between government structures and the communities, in the Free State this method goes far beyond being a mere method of communication. It also entails gathering a rich body of information that can be used to inform future policy decision-making processes and to improve the management of implementation. One notable fact is that it appears that this method is used to strengthen the ideological positions of government and the ruling party amongst the masses. This however qualifies as a rapid and cost effective way of policy evaluation that could potentially lead to policy change, cancellation thereof or even the introduction of new items on the policy agenda. It has all the potential to qualify as effective method for instilling people-centred governance and making people understand how a democratic government works.

In the Free State, the success of this communication method contributed towards the drafting of the Free State Development Plan (FSDP). This three-year plan identifies five key areas that the provincial government focuses on in order to better the lives of all Free State citizens. These areas include: economic development and job creation; providing sustainable infrastructure development; investing in people development; ensuring a safe and secure environment; and effective co-operative governance. Through *Exco Meets the People*, the FSDP was promoted amongst the communities. Communities were encouraged to become involved in the implementation of this plan through various projects and programmes outlined in it (*Free State Government News* 2002: 4).

Another notable factor about this communication method is that the actual day on which the *Exco meets the people* takes place is usually regarded as a day of large scale community interaction with the premier. This could be anything from visiting schools for educational purposes, to attending events such as empowerment projects. During the official *Exco Meets the People* gathering, the premier, as well as MECs and preferably also councillors of specific local governments, are present to assist resolving issues raised by community members and following up on undertakings given during the meeting. These arrangements facilitate communication across language barriers and assist in giving confidence to any member of the public to pose questions in his/her home language to the government officials, or explain issues that they deem to be important.

One advantage of using this communication method is that it is not orchestrated, and that any local community member present is free to take part. After a set of questions have been asked or comments have been made, the premier requests the MECs to assist or comment on specific cases. If issues cannot be dealt with, they are taken up after the meeting on a formal basis by the Office of the Premier. Issues which require attention are therefore dealt with, and followed up. Relevant individuals and/or affiliated stakeholders are contacted afterwards in order to clarify or understand the specified issue. Another important factor is that, during these gatherings, neither the premier nor the MECs make formal political speeches (Personal interview with Oupa Khoabane, 9 July 2007).

Netshitomboni argues that language usage is one of the determining factors for the success or failure of a particular communication project or campaign. In pre-1994 South Africa, government communication was largely conducted in either English or Afrikaans, at the expense of other African languages. The dawn of democracy necessitated a paradigm shift from the exclusive use of English and Afrikaans to the recognition and use African languages (Netshitomboni 2007: 166). Although the South African Constitution recognizes the previously marginalised African languages there is still a bias towards the use of English in government communication.

This author has noted that, in many of the *Exco Meets the People* campaigns held around the Free State, African languages were predominantly used, except at business

gatherings, which are mostly held in the evenings with the business communities. It is against this background that the use of language in government communication methods like the *Exco Meets the People* should take into consideration the fact that languages carry with it the pride of its speakers because they are able to best articulate their feelings and needs in their own languages. It is important therefore to note that, in order to reach all people, it is necessary to communicate with them using the language they understand. The importance and the preference of the language used is illustrated by the fact that, during Direko's premiership in the Free State, in most of the *Exco Meets the People* she attended, she would spread the HIV/Aids awareness campaign to the communities through her popular warning to girls that: "Banana le seke la iketsa dimatras" (*City Press* 2003: 2). With this slogan, Direko warned girls not to engage in sexual activities and she likened such girls to mattresses.

Through the use of the *Exco Meets the People* campaigns, the provincial government is able to uncover corruption and listen to some of the problems affecting people. During one such gathering held in Memel in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district in 2003, Direko discovered that some councillors and teachers were living in RDP houses. Some people had even managed to secure more than one RDP house. It was through such a gathering that she also discovered that people in Memel were still grappling with the bucket system and a shortage of water, despite these services having been budgeted for by the provincial government (*City Press* 2003: 2).

CHALLENGES POSED BY *EXCO MEETS THE PEOPLE*

Following the local government elections in December 2005, the ANC government acknowledged the weaknesses in local government, which were addressed through the implementation of Project Consolidate, Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and the Provincial Growth and Development Plans (PGDPs). In most municipalities there were communication gaps between councillors and the community, which often resulted in public discourse expressing mass dissatisfaction about non-delivery of services. This situation led to political instability in the approach to local service delivery. This had a detrimental effect on public confidence in local government with regard to capacity to deliver, thus posing the following challenges: dealing with negative perceptions of local government; increasing the profile around the objectives of Project Consolidate; projecting all spheres and programmes of government in an integrated manner; and positively profiling municipalities which are facing service delivery challenges, and those that are performing better. The implementation of a communication method such as *Exco Meets the People* therefore provided the provincial government with an opportunity to meet the people and listen to them.

In view of the fact that this method was initially intended to open communication channels between government and the communities, it is important to note that political developments have affected the functioning of *Exco Meets the People* and its role in community engagement in the Free State. In some parts of the province where traditional leadership is still in existence, the emergence of the elected local

government leaders is seen as a threat amongst other traditional leaders – hence, in some instances this method is perceived as an ANC provincial rally by such leaders (Personal interview with E. Tsebela, 22 September 2007). It is therefore imperative for this communication campaign to take into consideration the cultural paradigms of a community within which such a gathering is to take place. Although a needs analysis is conducted through pre-visits, this analysis focuses only on the political needs of the people without taking their cultural background into account. Such a needs analysis would help to prevent situations in which irrelevant solutions are provided to a particular community, or solutions are provided where a community does not have any serious problems.

It is sometimes through gatherings of this nature that certain members hold the ANC government ransom by threatening not to vote for the ANC if their demands are not met. This dissatisfaction in the province led to the mushrooming of the so-called "concerned groups" who accused the provincial government of not providing adequate services to their communities. These "concerned groups" voiced their dissatisfaction through a series of violent protests in some of the province's townships.

This author is of an opinion that only black communities are targeted by *Exco Meets the People*. This was disputed by Oupa Khoabane, Deputy Director in the Office of the Premier, when he indicated during an interview that all the community members in the target area are invited, irrespective of racial classification. He further argued that *Exco Meets the People* gatherings are usually preceded by road-shows to schools and project site visits before heading to the venue. In most cases, huge tents are erected to accommodate members of the community (Khoabane 2007).

Although one acknowledges the importance of having pre-visits before that actual *Exco Meets the People* gathering takes place, this allows a subtle power play and domination by the ruling party in shaping consensus and consent in the target group. In most cases, the government officials come to such gatherings with pre-conceived ideas of the expectations of the communities. Therefore the initial aim of interaction between the provincial government officials and the communities targeted disappears, reducing this communication method to one-way communication rather that an intended interaction. This approach therefore creates the impression that this communication method is not about the partnership between the provincial government and the communities, but about government and what it wants to communicate. Consequently, some people have claimed that the *Exco Meets the People* communication method is nothing but a "window dressing exercise" by the provincial government.

Mabelebele (2006: 9) argues that, just like *izimbizo*, the *Exco Meets the People* is also time-bound. It takes the form of a one-time event during which all the participants exchange views and perspectives on issues affecting them as a community. Secondly, it is based on an agreed programme and rules of engagement. Thirdly, it has a defined place and occasion for delivery and regularity (Mabelebele 2006: 9). Another visible shortcoming of using this communication method is the problem of effective

management. Sometimes coordinators become biased when setting the agenda in the *Exco Meets the People* planning phase. At some point, these gatherings are then reduced to platforms for demands and complaints to government officials. This was evident during the *Exco Meets the People* gathering held in the Thembalihle township at Vrede in 2003, during which community members held placards reading: "We need water and houses"; "We don't need any more meetings".

Another aspect that frustrated the attendees of such gatherings was the responses given by provincial government officials when asked questions by the public. In Thembalihle, for example, one student from the local high school asked the MEC for Education about the lack of Learning Support Materials (LSMs) in schools. Instead of addressing that problem, the MEC humiliated that student by telling him that during the apartheid era they were not complaining about learning materials, and that students are taking advantage of the ANC government. He further stated that the purpose of learners to attend school is to get educated, rather than to complain. Such a response is an indication that, although the intention of *Exco Meets the People* is to interact with the communities, sometimes this interaction is compromised by the same government officials who initiated it (Personal interview with M. Ncongwane, 9 December 2006).

The problem with *Exco Meets the People* is that the decisions on the intended outcomes of this communication method are taken with little or no input from the beneficiaries. This is largely because what is finally communicated is informed by government's national communication strategy. Although this communication method implies that senior provincial government officials are expected to obtain first-hand information about the lives of the people they lead, collate the findings during the visits to the communities and thereafter devise forms of intervention to address the problems that they have identified, this is not happening in reality.

Another noted problem of *Exco Meets the People* in the Free State is limited time provided for question and answer sessions. This compromises the ability of those in attendance to thoroughly discuss the issues that they may want to raise with the premier or MECs. This could be because the communication messages are finalised long before the actual *Exco Meets the People* takes place. This strategy leaves no room for issues that are beyond the designated scope to be considered. However, this was disputed by M.E. Mosala, former Deputy Director in the Office of the Premier. Mosala stated that the fact-finding missions were carried out in order to brief the premier and other senior provincial government officials regarding the needs issues of the community targeted for the gathering. The intention was to inform these officials so that they could prepare themselves thoroughly and each provincial department could have a representative present to answer the community members' questions on behalf of his department. Fact-finding missions were conducted along these lines. Sometimes government departments consider the magnitude of an issue and make relevant referrals. This means that delays with regard to such referrals and a lack of commitment from other departments are perceived as incompetence on the part of the Premier's Office in addressing the problems (Interview with M.E. Mosala, 8 June 2007).

One would expect that, after a fact-finding mission has been completed, this should be reflected in the communication strategy of the provincial government. It could be argued that most communication between the representatives of the government and the communities should take place once the fact-finding mission has been completed. The purpose of this communication would be to inform the people of what would be done about the issues discussed with senior government officials during the *Exco Meets the People* gathering. Extensive publicity-generating communication currently takes place before the *Exco Meets the People* gathering, but not much is communicated with regard to the issues identified as requiring attention from the provincial government. Even if little or no progress is made with the issues raised during the *Exco Meets the People* gatherings, it is still important to communicate the situation to the communities, as this could help to build a culture of trust. Otherwise, this reduces *Exco Meets the People* to a top-down communication approach.

Although the purpose of *Exco Meets the People* is to provide an opportunity for the majority of the people to speak, the venues arranged for these gatherings are often not large enough to accommodate the people. Sometimes these venues are filled by the youth section of the population. This may be attributable to the fact that older people are at work when such meetings are held. In most cases, such meetings are held during the day. The fact that the venues are too small to accommodate a large group makes it practically difficult to thoroughly elaborate on some issues raised, and for the government representatives to adequately respond to such issues. Sometimes people with genuine community concerns cannot be accommodated inside these venues due to the inadequate size. In some cases, questions posed to the government officials are not fully addressed due to time constraints. This shortcoming is sometimes interpreted by the community as an attempt by the government to play a cat and mouse game. This author has witnessed community members asking questions dragging on endlessly, so that they are actually making speeches instead of asking questions. Some people who are asking questions tend to elaborate on personal issues that are often of no concern to the community.

One community leader interviewed at Thembalihle acknowledged the commitment of the MECs in solving their problems, but lamented the fact that no time-frames were set in that regard: "Having the *Exco Meets the People* campaigns is a marvelous thing, but we keep on getting promises after the campaigns and nothing is done about the issues raised. It seems as if the government is willing to assist, but it does not have the necessary tools on how to assist. I think there should be time-frames set on the resolution of the issues raised. That will help the community not to engage in violent activities, as we saw in 2005. Most people in our township think that these gatherings are just 'window dressing' activities from the government. Although there are recordings done on the issues raised, it is clear to us that nobody cares to make a follow-up thereafter" (Personal interview with M.D. Tsotetsi, 9 December 2006).

One tends to agree with the observation made above by Tsotetsi that a speedy response from government in addressing issues requiring urgent attention could erase the

perceptions of communities about the *Exco Meets the People* communication method, namely that it is just a public relations exercise. The lives of members of a targeted community should improve after an *Exco Meets the People* gathering. It is ironic that the so-called "concerned groups" who lamented the lack of services started in the townships where such gatherings were held. Although the visit achieved the broad objective of the *Exco Meets the People*, at Thembalihle it had many dimensions. As some residents noted, there were disappointments when the tight programme did not allow the premier to meet all who wanted to do so, to feast with them and to enjoy their performances. This is due to the fact that the campaign can be taxing to the politicians, who have to travel vast distances to meet the people.

During her Budget Speech in June 2004, the premier of the Free State, Beatrice Marshoff, called for the intensification of the *Exco Meets the People* campaign. In her speech she indicated the following:

> The Executive Council has endorsed the Governance and Administration Cluster's Programme of Action for the current financial year. One of the key result areas that is envisaged includes a review of the Exco Meets the People campaign, including the name, as well as the integration of national izimbizo with provincial izimbizo. The technical cluster will be further charged with the responsibility to re-organize the campaign in such a way that research is undertaken on a variety of government services prior to campaigns. The research must cover areas such as housing, payout points, social grants, hospitals and other government centres where services are rendered. EXCO Meets the People campaigns must have mechanisms in place to determine the impact of dialogue with communities (Marshoff 2004).

This statement by Marshoff shows that there was a need to put into perspective what the government wanted to achieve with the *Exco Meets the People*.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the communication method of *Exco Meets the People* is a noble idea if the end product could be properly monitored. Participation at community level should be necessitated by the fact that there is a need to consolidate democracy. In order to build and consolidate democracy at both national and provincial government level, it is important for the communities to engage in communication methods such as *Exco Meets the People*. Looking at this method as adopted by the Free State provincial government, it is evident that the communities are generally not involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation thereof to allow a certain measure of improvement. This lack of effective public participation compromises the democratic principles that underlie democracy. One may argue that, in order to sustain democracy, communities should understand the nature of their participation and how they should participate.

This author's observation is that, at many of the *Exco Meets the People* gatherings, the issues raised are predictable. Unemployment, poverty, roads, land and housing are but

a few of them. If the issues are known, why is the provincial government embarking on such campaigns? As indicated in this article, it can be argued that holding such gatherings helps the provincial government meet the people and hear their concerns. It can also be argued that this is in line with government accountability and participatory democracy. It is well and good for political leaders to account to the people, but it remains to be seen if these gatherings are helping the people who need service delivery more than merely providing a sympathetic ear. One needs to establish whether *Exco Meets the People* gatherings are not actually ANC rallies in disguise.

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DOES THE PATIENT PACKAGE INSERT (PPI) IN SOUTH AFRICA SERVE THE PURPOSE OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to reflect on the usefulness and efficacy of the patient package insert (PPI) from the perspective of health communication. From the literature it is clear that American and European PPIs suffer a host of communication problems. What is the standing of the South African PPI with regard to its communication efficacy? Up till now there has been no published research on this aspect. The South African PPI is investigated for communication barriers, keeping the profile of a developing country in mind. The present research has indicated that PPIs in South African medication packages do not fulfil their communication aim, due to barriers that can be traced mainly to document and reader variables, rendering the communication contained in the document less efficient. Additionally, in the case of the PPI, health communication efficacy is influenced by, amongst others, cultural competence and understandability; factors that have been neglected in the South African PPI. Finally this article proposes improvements in order to enhance the value of the PPI as a means of effective health communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Medication information, as a manifestation of health communication, is no new concept in South Africa. During the 19th century, amidst a host of epidemics and diseases such as leprosy, smallpox, cholera, syphilis and typhoid fever, pharmacists were expected to "educate an ignorant public in health matters" (Ryan 1986: 2). As a result of the isolation of the people living on farms and in small villages, a "Huis Apotheek" was their closest contact with medical care. This "apotheek" was normally a tin container which contained medicines like *Versterk Droppels*, *Witte Dulcis*, *Rhubarber poeder* and *Jalappen poeder.* Although there was an instruction book on usage and dosages included in the medication container, many people were illiterate and/or ignorant, and rather used the medication according to a longstanding family tradition, and not according to the included written instructions (Ryan 1986: 2-3).

Nowadays, all medication (scheduled or over-the-counter (OTC)) includes a patient package insert (PPI) with important information, vital to the well-being and safety of the patient. Yet this vital document is hardly ever read and/or understood by patients taking the specific medication, as indicated in the literature (Doak, Doak, Friedell & Meade, as cited in Rudd & Colton 1998: 23; Rudd, Moeykens & Colton 1999: 10; McGinnis 2000: 5). Why has this not changed lately, given that standards of education have presumably improved and information is nowadays readily available everywhere? The problem may not be situated in the availability of the information, but rather in the accessibility of the information, amongst other complicating factors.

Although limited counselling is normally given by a health care provider when prescription medication is dispensed, it is not often the case with OTC medication, as certain OTC drugs are also available in supermarkets and chain stores. Given the socio-economic situation in South Africa, many people rely on over-the-counter medication, which is normally cheaper than prescription medication. (In 2005, 68% of the South African population could be classified in the Living Standards Measure (LSM) 2 – 6 grouping, having an average monthly household income of between R1 093 and R4 207 (SAARF, online)). Seen from this perspective, this document should contain information that is easily accessible and readable, otherwise it may have a negative impact on understanding of the message and this may ultimately negatively affect health outcomes.

The PPI within the context of health communication

Health communication can be seen as "the dissemination and interpretation of health-related messages" (Rensburg 1997: 212). Finnigan and Viswanath (in Freimuth, Edgar & Fitzpatrick 1993: 510) defined health communication as "the core of health promotion affecting individuals' decisions or antecedent social and cultural conditions or public policy to make community environments supportive of healthier behaviours" (1993: 510), while Suggs stated it as follows: "Health communication efforts often are designed to improve lifestyle behaviors, reduce risk factors for disease, increase compliance with a medication or treatment plan, better self-manage a condition,

provide social support, or provide help with making decisions about health" (2006: 62). From the above-mentioned definitions, it is clear that health communication has a serious responsibility, namely empowering patients with relevant health/medication knowledge to make informed decisions about their health behaviour. The PPI, through its health communication message, is especially indicated to increase medication compliance, empower self-management of medical conditions through self-medication, and to enlighten patients regarding health decisions where medication is involved.

However, the environment in which health communication functions, changes constantly with new technological advances, such as CD-ROM technology and Internet options, an increasingly great variety of health issues, as well as a consumer's demand for high quality health communication information (*Medical Facilitation: A Communication-centred Healthcare Model* s.a.: online). It is thus clear that in such an ever-changing health communication environment, the patient/client would naturally select information purposefully to which he/she will pay attention, based on personal interests and preferences. Thus, the PPI has to meet the informational needs of patients in order to be an efficient health communication tool, as has been found through American research which indicated that the approach to health communication should reflect an audience-centred perspective, as well as the preferred channels, contexts and formats of the patients/clients *(Healthy people 2010* s.a.: online), if it is to achieve its aim.

Thus, if the PPI is to be a successful health communication tool, it is important to pay specific attention to the encoding of the health communication message, taking the message recipient and his/her needs and profile into consideration. However, not only formal relationships are included in the health communication contexts, but also the realities of everyday lifestyles, attitudes and beliefs, as expressed through the profile of the health communication audience: gender, age, education and income levels, ethnicity, cultural beliefs, primary language, physical and mental functioning, experience with the health care system, attitude and willingness towards different types of health communication (*Healthy people 2010* s.a.: online). In this regard, Murray-Johnson and Witte emphasised that a person's motivation is central to the way a health message is processed and whether any action will result from the processed message (2003: 477). This emphasises once again the importance of accommodating patient needs in the health communication message and format.

Street also indicated the importance of linguistic resources in both the health care provider (be it the doctor/nurse/pharmacist, etc.) and patient/client as important factors to the success of health communication (2003: 65). However, the efficacy of health communication in a text is not only influenced by personal variables (age, psychological state, etc.), but also by variables intrinsic to the text (accuracy, balance, etc.) and the way that the message is conveyed (cultural competency, reach, repetition, etc.) (*Healthy people 2010* s.a.: online). From this it is clear that message presentation is as important as human factors at work in the health communication context.

THE PPI: ORIGIN, CONTENTS AND PRESENTATION

The PPI basically originated in the early 1960s, after the thalidomide tragedy in Belgium because it was realised that patients need full medication information to make an informed decision about benefits-to-risks of the medication. The PPIs (between 1963 and 1988) were no more than technical documents, laden with medical jargon and basically incomprehensible to the lay person, but distributed in the medication package and hence available to the patient (Vander Stichele 2004: 31). Gradually, over the years of its development, the document became more complete and scientific, yet also more difficult to be understood by the general public (Gosselinckx 1989: 49 - 50). Manufactured PPIs were first mentioned in European legislation in 1975. However, in the US, patient package inserts as a means of health communication, gradually came into existence from 1968 onwards. In 1979 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed patient package inserts for 10 drug classes (375 medications) (McGinnis 2000: 5). According to Basara and Juergens, an increasing demand for PPIs was sparked in the US at that time by the following factors:

- a growing interest by consumers in health information and self-medication;
- more direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs; and
- laws requiring pharmacists to counsel patients (1994: 48).

Nowadays, PPIs are widely used throughout Europe (in the EU countries) for OTC and prescription drugs dispensed in their original packs (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 52).

Basara and Juergens defined a PPI as follows: "a PPI is any document that describes the characteristics, dosing methods, and adverse effects of a specific prescription medication, is consistent with prescription drug labelling standards, and is written in consumer-oriented lay language" (1994: 48). According to Amery and Van Winkel, a PPI should be seen as a memory aid and should supplement information given by the health consultant (1995: 52), while Jones considered the PPI to be a small link between a huge body of drug information and the patient, where the function of the PPI depends on the specific uses ascribed to it by the users (1989: 185). The quality of the PPI is determined by the quality of the scientific data sheet, the communication skills of the responsible person in the pharmaceutical company (or other manufacturing body) and the national regulatory policies, rendering the PPI a document that has regulatory, legal and educational functions (Vander Stichele 2004: 31). According to Joossens, not only have patients the right to have a PPI, but it should provide information in clear language that is comprehensible to everyone, in an attempt to reduce the gap between health professionals and patients in order to promote drug compliance, and as a first step towards greater consumer participation in health care systems (1989: 20).

Contents of a PPI

Patients want to know what they are taking and what possible effects the medication could have, and prefer this information in a written format (McMahon, Clark & Bailie 1987: 356). From studies it was established that, first of all, patients want to know the

name of the medication, what it is used for, common risks of normal use, risks of overdose and the risk of taking too little (Maes & Scholten 1989: 164). Other information seems to be superfluous, or at least not part of the patient's immediate communication needs. Vander Stichele pointed out that background information, such as medication composition and pharmacological action is not really wanted by patients (2004: 31-33).

Initially, drug manufacturers were obliged to list all actual and potential adverse drug reactions as part of "full disclosure" to patients. The implication is that the document became long and a skewed profile of benefits-to-risks resulted (Morris 1977: 424). Yet sub-minimum information is as dangerous (Williams-Deane & Potter 1992: 114) and a recommendation to include the most frequently experienced effects was made (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 53). The recommendation included the following guideline for the contents of a PPI: it should be scientifically based, relevant and simply written, and based on a summary of the product characteristics, but without any pharmacological or technical information (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 53). This applies also to OTC medication, where ethical pharmaceutical companies ought to provide patients with suitable and comprehensible information (Gruber *et al.* 1995: 248).

Presentation of the PPI

Research has indicated that PPIs in the US were prepared by private corporations, consumer groups, professional associations, governmental agencies and the pharmaceutical industry and therefore the content, style, level of readability and intended audience varied widely (Dolinsky & Sogol 1989: 29-30; Basara & Juergens 1994: 49). This resulted in a plea for standardisation of format and graphical style (Herxheimer 1989: 74) in order to enhance communication efficacy. Carter remarked that audiences have various linguistic, intellectual and educational backgrounds and these factors, together with the context in which the material is to be used, should be considered as preconditions for effective text design (1985: 148-149). In this regard, acceptance of the importance of the patient profile for text design of this health communication tool is realised. A logical structure to the presentation of information with clear headings was suggested by Fitzmaurice and Adams (2000: 260) to enhance communication efficacy. In 2004, Vander Stichele remarked that the lack of consistency in length, content and structure between PPIs of the same medicinal class was a technical weak spot of PPIs (2004: 131).

THE PPI: PROBLEMS

Readability of the PPI

It was found in research done in the US that patients' comprehension of their medication information was not satisfactory and that the readability of the PPI was a primary problem (Smith 2002: 1). A readability assessment of 63 nationally distributed PPIs in the US indicated that the readability of the texts was of the 8th to the 9th grade difficulty. The PPIs were written at a level that is above the average user's level of reading ability (which is the 5th to the 6th grade) (Basara & Juergens 1994: 49-51). In

their readability assessment of PPIs designed for oral contraceptives, Williams-Deane and Potter referred to legibility as the ease with which the written information could be read and comprehended (1992: 114), a clear prerequisite for communication efficacy. Although Amery and Van Winkel suggested short sentences to improve readability (1995: 54), contrary results were obtained by other researchers: Riche *et al*. stated that the use of shorter sentences in order to make material more readable, often has the opposite effect, because meaningfulness might be sacrificed by such style condensation (1991: 288-290). These authors also found that shortening sentences does not improve readability and that people actually read at a lower level than their educational level (1991: 328). Similar results were obtained by Vander Stichele in a study about Belgian PPIs in which patients considered shorter sentences less interesting and childlike (2004: 124).

Riche *et al*. found that technical words, the use of passive voice and rare phraseology were confusing and negatively impacted on the readability of material. These researchers also found that readers preferred more meaningful words to less meaningful words, seen from the perspective of the patient; for example, they preferred "ongoing" to "chronic" (1991: 288-289). Similar results were obtained by Reid *et al*., who have also found that technical words in PPIs caused comprehension problems and that people do not reread the PPI if at first they had not understood the terminology (1994: 332).

According to Arndt and Janney, style is characterised by the choice of words and the arrangement of these words in a sentence (1987: 147) and these two elements have an impact on the accessibility and comprehensibility of the message. Amery and Van Winkel were of the opinion that personalisation of the text, through the use of personal pronouns, would enhance the relevance to the patient (1995: 54). This was also the viewpoint of Fitzmaurice and Adams, who suggested that the writing style used in PPIs should be personalised, unbiased and everyday; verbs should be in the active voice rather than passive voice and scientific jargon should be avoided in order to enhance readability (2000: 260).

The primary concern about communication effectiveness in PPIs, therefore, lies with text difficulty, expressed through style and word choice. Already in 1980 Morris, Myers and Thilman indicated that patient information should be "written for audience acceptance, rather than for favourable reading scores" (1980: 1504). Features other than word and sentence lengths also have an influence on reading ease, like sentence structure and the organisation of the information into logical units – perceived as the style of the document (Stevens 2000: online) – but also the physical aspects of the document, like style, layout, design and the use of graphics. All these factors should contribute to reading ease which also has an implication for communication efficiency and information comprehension.

Design factors

Design factors, like the manifestation of layout, typeface, style and size, use of white

space, primary key information and active vs. passive voice have been studied by Rudd and Colton (1998: 23), and found to have, in some cases, negatively affected the accessibility of information presented in the PPIs. The design factors are, however, subject to the amount of information that has to be presented in the PPI, which has to be of such a format that it fits into the medication package (Basara & Juergens 1994: 52), a factor which could complicate design.

The following were quoted as important design factors that could inhibit the use of PPIs: a type size that is too small, paper that is too thin, or words that are too tightly spaced. Technical design variables, included in a study undertaken by Basara and Juergens, were pictograms/graphics, colour, type size, paper quality and white space; the research results indicated that the use of only one colour print, no pictograms/graphics, average use of white space, small print and paper of average quality did not enhance the use of the PPI as a source of health information (1994: 50-51).

The minimum font size required by the European consumer lobby is eight points (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 56). When a PPI the length of one A4 page was tested, it was found to be too long. It was also found that comprehension of the information and willingness to take the drug were inversely related to the length of the provided text in the PPI and that itemised or summarised information aids comprehension (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 54-55). From these findings the question can be raised whether all relevant information can be accommodated in a design that provides an easily readable text in a concise format.

Although PPIs are fairly standard regarding design factors, visual appeal of the PPI can be improved by using columns, itemising information, using headings and (sometimes) pictographs or graphics. Bullets, italics and bold print are useful decoration techniques (Amery & Van Winkel 1995: 52), while they also guide the reader through a text. A picture or illustration may activate background knowledge and may aid predictability of what to expect in the text (Fulcher 1997: 509). However, since pictograms have no universally agreed-on meaning, Amery and Van Winkel recommended their use simply as a guide through the text and not as an aid to vital information (1995: 54).

Already in 1985, Orna suggested the following presentation style to increase accessibility of information in the PPIs: clear signposting of headings, short sentences, lists, simple tables, codes to identify different types of information, and the standardisation of information elements and the sequence of information (1985: 30-31).

Communication barriers in PPIs

It is therefore clear that readability difficulty, design and message presentation problems can contribute to communication barriers in the health message.

Since noise is any stimulus that interferes either with the process of message transmission, or reception of a message (Hybels & Weaver 1992: 9; Lowe 1995: 52; Steinberg 1997: 16), it may limit or adversely affect communication efficacy. Usually

noise exerts its influence on the communication message in one of the following ways: the message is affected in the transmission channel, through incomplete encoding, encoding ambiguity, by contextual ambiguity or often by a combination of these factors (Ritchie 1991: 57). Communication barriers can be classified as either of external, internal or semantic origin (Hybels & Weaver 1992: 9; Steinberg 1997: 16), and as such are situated either in the message sender, the message itself, the receiver, the channel or in a combination of these elements.

Especially relevant to PPIs, is the influence of semantic barriers. Meanings reside in people and not in words (Wood 2004: 79), as "language is a system of signs that express ideas" (Cobley 2005: 45). Therefore, to have mutual understanding of a concept implies that meanings between communication partners should overlap, otherwise "language becomes a barrier to effective communication" (Steinberg 1997: 49). Although language is an arbitrary code, depending on shared definitions, no two persons share exactly the same meaning for a given word (Hahn 2005: online). In order to identify communication barriers in patient package inserts, the technical quality of the document, as well as the contained message should be considered. Consumer organisations (in the US and Europe) had previously voiced concern about the standard of the PPI relating to the quality, availability and usefulness of PPIs, especially because medication non-compliance could lead to increased health care costs. Morris, as quoted in Williams-Deane and Potter (1992: 111), stated that in the evaluation of PPIs there are two matters of primary concern, the first being effective communication and the second, behavioural outcome. Communication efficacy refers to whether the PPI is readable and the message comprehensible, while the behavioural outcome is an indirect result of the communication efficacy of the PPI.

Research findings by Schaafsma regarding the information in PPIs indicated that: "Much of the information given on medicines is regarded by patients as too difficult, especially written information" (2003: online; Vander Stichele 1989: 4). Already in 1986 the difficulty in comprehending the contents of the PPI was recognised in Belgium and a second leaflet was dispatched with the PPI, in order to transpose technical language to the colloquial and to aid the patient to understand the instructions better (Laekeman & Geerts 1986: 93).

Patients make judgements on the content of messages, or evaluative inferences based on informativeness and coherence of a message. Informativeness is generally determined by only a small percentage of the available information. Concerning the coherence aspect of a message, Kellermann and Lim stated that coherence refers to the degree that the message meets message expectations. If the expectations about the message are met, the message will be judged as coherent (1989: 104-119).

Schaafsma pointed out that, due to low literacy and second or third language proficiency, users do not fully understand the information (2003: online). Vander Stichele identified the following further communication difficulties in medical information: the information is too complex, too extensive, not extensive enough,

difficult to read, difficult to understand, difficult to remember, causing fear and/or causing confusion (2004: 124). The process of product registration is often complicating the process of message design in a PPI. The pressure to launch a new product on the market is huge, and few pharmaceutical companies can afford to lose time while discussing the wording of a PPI with the appropriate regulatory authority in Belgium (Vander Stichele 2004: 49). This often results in the launch of a product without any review of the PPI and in so doing, communication effectiveness is compromised.

Comprehensibility

Readability of the text is the first step to the comprehension of the information contained in the PPI. Eaton and Holloway concluded that comprehension depends on reading skill and that comprehensibility can be improved by adjusting the readability level of PPIs (1980: 242). Patients' literacy levels also influence their ability to comprehend information. However, readability assessments do not give an indication of the patient's familiarity with medical terminology, or previous experience with similar documents (Rudd, Moeykens & Colton 1999: online), and as such are not clear indicators of the comprehensibility of the information.

According to Reid *et al*. factors affecting the text are meaningfulness, organisation and syntax, and these factors are not evaluated by means of readability assessments. Reader characteristics can also influence message comprehension (1994: 328). Studies conducted by Fleckenstein *et al*., Liguori, Benson *et al*. and Morris *et al*. indicated that the reading ability of the patient on its own, as well as the readability of the material on its own, had an influence on the patient's perception of how comprehensible the material was (Eaton & Holloway 1980: 240). It was further found that incomprehensibility of the information affected health status, service utilisation and behaviour of the patients (Basara & Juergens 1994: 49; Rudd, Moeykens & Colton 1999: 10). Comprehension is therefore the result of the process of interaction between the reader and the text. Based on their research findings, Riche *et al*. concluded that reader variables, such as interest, prior knowledge of the topic and reading proficiency, also play an important part in the comprehension of patient literature (1991: 287-288).

Since communication interactions take place in a complex field of forces, which include contextual, psychological, social and cultural forces, social and cultural beliefs or values and individual feelings can create an atmosphere in which there is a prospective uncertainty about the outcome of a given communicative interaction, not less so in health communication (*Medical Facilitation: A Communication-centred Healthcare Model* s.a.: online). Hahn felt that differences in background could be one of the most difficult communication barriers to overcome. Under "background" is included: age, education level, gender, social status, economic position, cultural background, temperament, health status, political and religious orientation (2005: online). Jones named the following influencing factors on comprehension of the message: demographic variables, education level (also recognised by Reid *et al*. 1994: 333), and the state of wellness or illness of the patient (1989: 186).

It has already been seen that human variables and interest factors are important in the accessibility of health information. Health literacy is defined as the ability to read, understand and act on health information (*What is health literacy* s.a.: online). This implies that the comprehension of health information is necessary to lead to behaviour modification. According to McCray, the problem lies in the difference between the basic literacy level of the patient and the readability of the health-related materials that the patient is expected to read, and the frequent mismatch between the two (2005: online). Yet a patient's reading ability does not always reflect accurately how well the material is understood (Estey, Musseau & Keehn 1991: 166-168). The result of low health literacy is normally lower rates of adherence to recommended treatments, more medication errors and poor health outcomes (Quyen Ngo-Metzger *et al*. 2006: online). Herxheimer and Davies stated that the fact that a PPI contains full information does not imply that the patient will be able to assimilate and use it, since effective transmission relies on both the transmitter and the recipient (1982: 94; Gibbs, Waters & George 1987: 24).

The patient has to understand the purpose of the message in order to benefit from it and to facilitate comprehension (Herxheimer & Davies 1982: 94-95). This viewpoint was confirmed by research done by Amery and Van Winkel, who found that the right information presented in the right way could improve comprehension, and therefore health outcomes (1995: 53). Yet not only is comprehension of the purpose of the message important, but also the level of complexity of the information (Pyrczak & Roth, as quoted in Spadaro, Robinson & Smith (1980: 215).

The pure reduction of the readability level of health material, as expressed by readability assessments, is not an appropriate solution for comprehensibility, as this benefits those with higher health literacy skills more than those at the lower end of health literacy, since the information becomes even more accessible to them (Rudd, Moeykens & Colton 1999: online). In order to enhance health literacy, it would be beneficial to write in a conversational style and adapt the content to be culturally relevant.

From the above-mentioned literature it is clear that the PPI (in Europe and America) may not be fulfilling its potential as health communication tool, due to various communication barriers originating in text design and/or message presentation. What is the situation in South Africa?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

Already in 1978 Hermann, Herxheimer and Lionel suggested that each country should produce its own sets of minimum information for patients, as the extent of information needs may vary (1978: 1135). Yet, according to Amery and Van Winkel, it is time to ask whether the Western approach is also applicable to Third World countries and it was suggested to identify specific problems with the use of PPIs in these countries (1995: 57).

The effectiveness of PPIs as a source of health communication is negatively affected by medication distribution problems in the Third World. The reasons supplied by Amery and Van Winkel include: availability of medicine on the "black market", where no PPI is available, as well as the illegal dispensing of scheduled drugs without any prescription. Additional factors include counterfeiting of medicines and importing from manufacturers who do not uphold World Health Organisation (WHO) standards, and therefore also do not pay attention to the supply of applicable health information to the patient (1995: 59). At a Drug Information Association (DIA) meeting in 1999, hosted in Gauteng, it was stated that less expensive drugs are being used without adequate patient information (Barnes *et al*. 2001: online).

A complicating factor to the distribution and standards of drug information is the fact that in a country like South Africa there are 11 official languages, which would have to be taken into account when composing and designing PPIs. This could imply huge financial and practical implications for drug manufacturers, should they decide to accommodate linguistic diversity. Linked to the problem of multiple languages, is the problem of literacy and reading skills. From demographic and English language proficiency studies undertaken in the US, it was found that patients with poor reading skills included, amongst others, the poor, minorities, the unemployed, patients older than 60 years and those who had not completed their high school education (Jackson *et al*. 1991: 1172). In developing countries, of which South Africa is partially an example, unemployment and limited schooling are also problems that often reflect in language proficiency. Thus socio-economic factors play a role in language proficiency, and by implication, in access to and comprehensibility of health messages.

Linked to language barriers are cultural differences (attitudes, norms and values), which affect health beliefs, including the utilisation of health information. Cultural factors may cause problems with the interpretation of pictographs and as Twyman warned: "If cultures are different, then picture conventions are also likely to be different; and if picture conventions are different, then so too will be the ways in which people interpret them" (1985: 301). Schaafsma expressed the problem as follows: "... so simply translating information in a 'technical manner' does not account for such differences in beliefs and attitudes. If no 'cultural' translation is done, the information is not tailored to the patient." "Cultural" translation in this sense refers to adapting the message to the profile of the message recipient. In a country like South Africa, with its diverse cultural component, it is especially important to adapt texts culturally to accommodate the socio-economic and educational variations in an effort to increase comprehensibility. Other intercultural translation problems may also occur, for example, some words do not exist or have different meanings in other languages (Schaafsma, Raynor & De Jong-van den Berg 2003: online). Added to the problem is the presence of culture-specific language and medical bias (Schaafsma, Raynor & De Jong-van den Berg 2003: online) aspects of which the South African context is not free of.

In South Africa, package inserts, produced by the pharmaceutical industry, have texts in English and Afrikaans. In April 2005 the South African Medicines Control Council (MCC) published a set of guidelines which should be followed for these inserts. In these guidelines, exact instructions are outlined about headings, subheadings and the type of information that has to be presented under each heading or subheading. A proposed chronological order of information is also given, starting with scheduling status, followed by scientific pharmacological information. Only under heading number 11 will the patient read about the dosage which means that he/she has to search in the document for relevant (wanted) information (MCC 2005: online). It is notable that in this outline provided by the MCC, product information enjoys higher priority than patient-preferred sections. Yet, as indicated by several European studies, if the PPI is to fulfil its health communication goals, it should be written with the patient's needs in mind. It is certainly important that full and objective information is presented, also to exempt the pharmaceutical companies from legal responsibility in the case of an adverse event, but it must also be kept in mind that the public receiving the PPI varies widely regarding educational, intellectual and socio-economic factors and therefore have varied medication information needs.

Concerning the translation of texts, Schaafsma was of the opinion that translation is not a solution if the translation is done in another language than the patient's first language, as this will not enhance comprehensibility of the message (2003: online). This has to be seen against the background of South African patients who often only have a basic knowledge of either English or Afrikaans. In addition to language proficiency, education levels have a real impact on accessibility of health communication in the South African context. It was found from research done on health communication by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, as cited in Freimuth, Edgar and Fitzpatrick (1993: 513), that patients with higher education levels acquire knowledge faster than those with relatively less education, resulting in even bigger disparities between groups of higher education and those with less education. This disparity will reflect in the ability to access health information, as well as the comprehension of the information contained in a PPI.

According to Rudd, Moeykens and Colton (1999: online), socio-economic status is expressed by education, occupation and income, and these factors are strongly correlate with health. In diverse socio-economic and educational circumstances, health communication has an added responsibility to ensure that health communication messages are accessible and that communication barriers are limited, in order to improve the state of health awareness of the patient. The DIA, at their meeting in 1999, expressed it as follows: "Although it is generally accepted that a medicine comprises a drug and drug information, limited provision is made to ensure adequacy of patient information. High levels of illiteracy, confusing package inserts and labels, and limited availability of patient information leaflets and other appropriate patient information are widespread problems in Africa" (Barnes *et al.* 2001: online).

From the above-mentioned it is clear that, although the package insert has a responsibility to communicate effectively with a diverse health audience, there are barriers to this aim, as has also been noted in the literature. Up to the present, in order to accommodate the low literate patient/client, there has not been an expert decision on whether health information should be written at such a level that will accommodate the low health literate, or whether there should be two versions of the material – one for the health literate and one for the low health literate (Bernhardt & Cameron 2003: 595). In the South African context, this could have huge financial implications, as it would mean that all PPIs have to be produced in 11 languages, and possibly in two versions, in order to accommodate diverse health literacy levels. Not only will this cause logistical problems, but it could lead to more intolerance towards the PPI, as an element of exclusiveness might arise regarding the more "difficult" of the two texts.

The South African MMC has in its concept document (MCC 2005: online) standardised the information elements and sequence of information in the South African PPI, yet other design factors have not been dealt with in the document. The print size and the layout certainly influence the accessibility of the information. No recommendation is given in the official guideline of the South African Medicines Control Council (MCC 2005: online) regarding font size.

Communication efficiency of the South African PPI

An empirical study was recently undertaken to investigate communication barriers in the South African PPI, making use of readability assessments (quantitative) and sample testing through interviews and focus groups (qualitative). Sixty PPIs (30 from over the counter (OTC) medication and 30 from prescription medication) were subjected to a readability assessment. These PPIs represent most regularly used medication (five drug classes, respectively). Next, in-depth interviews were conducted and the constructs identified from these interviews were tested in focus group discussions. Sample selection for the focus groups was done according to the following criteria: language preference (Afrikaans or English), age group (younger that 40 years and older than 40 years) and LSM classification (according to the Universal LSM classification determined in November 2006 by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF)) (SAARF online). The LSM grouping was done as follows: LSM 1 – 4 (basic lifestyles), LSM 5 – 7 (average lifestyles) and LSM 8 – 10 (above-average lifestyles). As a measure of triangulation, structured interviews were also conducted with pharmacists. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any moment without penalty, of the confidentiality of their identities and responses and they were debriefed after the interview sessions.

The results obtained from this study indicated that, based on semantic variables, the readability of the PPI texts of some English and Afrikaans examples could be considered "very difficult" or "difficult", causing communication impediments. None were considered to be "easy". From unstructured interviews it became clear that the communication barriers in the PPIs are contained in aspects related to the PPI itself, the information contained in the PPI, and the use of language in the PPI. These aspects

were confirmed by focus group results, selected according to language preference, age and LSM classification. Sub-group analyses were also performed on these three classifications: LSM groupings, language preference (English or Afrikaans, since the texts are only available in these two languages) and age grouping.

The study results indicated that, in addition to technical aspects and information overload, the biggest problem was situated in language usage and style. It was stated that:

- the included terminology hampered comprehension;
- a very formal style is unfriendly and not accessible to all;
- there was a want for laymen's terms and simplified language usage;
- long sentences and "big words" excluded readers with little schooling; and
- there is a demand to supply the PPI in more indigenous languages.

From structured interviews with pharmacists it was confirmed that the value of the PPI in improving health literacy depends upon reading and understanding of the document, criteria not met by the present format, information and language usage in the PPI.

This study further indicated that:

- PPIs in South African medication packages do not fulfil their communication aim, due to barriers that can be traced mainly to document and reader variables, rendering the communication contained in the document less efficient; and
- Health communication efficacy is influenced by, amongst others, cultural competence and understandability; factors that have been neglected in the present PPI.

CONCLUSIONS

In diverse socio-economic, cultural and educational circumstances, health communication has an increased responsibility to disseminate linguistically accessible and comprehensible health information messages to facilitate an informed health decision. At present, the PPI included in the medication packet is subjected to various communication barriers, as has been from research findings. These barriers are of text and/or reader variable origin, which reflect negatively on the readability of the document and therefore, on medication information access via the package insert. Reader variables complicate text wording and design – a fact that was emphasised by Gillam and Levenson, who said that "effective communication in health care relies on a common language, but also on culture, class, beliefs, trust, and many other factors" (1999: online). It is therefore necessary that adaptation of the message should take these reader-based variables into consideration.

There is a definite need for a PPI as was indicated by research findings in 1987, which showed that between 55% and 69% more information is given and between 62% and

68% of patients' informational needs are being met by means of written information (Ascione *et al*. 1987: 59). A study conducted in 1996 by the World Health Organisation has indicated that "there is a well evidenced and compelling need for public education in the appropriate use of drugs, with potential benefits for the individual, the community and the policymakers" (Vander Stichele 2004: 135). Although new technologies allow for the delivery of health communication messages by means of telephone, video and other electronic means (Suggs 2006: 62), the educational role of written patient information should not be overlooked, especially in the South African context where there are many people without access to electronic resources. This is mainly where an insert into the medication package should fulfil an important health communication role, provided that it communicates its message clearly (*Patient education* s.a.: online).

Health communication efficacy is influenced by accuracy, availability, balance, consistency and cultural competence; it should be evidence-based and it should reach the target population repeatedly and timely in a format and text that is comprehensible (*Healthy people 2010* s.a.: online). It seems that especially the latter is at present a problem in the South African PPI. The above-mentioned South African research study has indicated that, in addition to readability difficulty, reader variables (including perceptions) contribute to barriers in South African PPIs. It is necessary to realise that "effective communication in health care relies on a common language, but also on culture, class, beliefs, trust, and many other factors" (Gillam & Levenson 1999: online). From the above-mentioned results it is therefore apparent that adaptation of the message should take these variables into consideration.

The two most neglected aspects in the PPI at present are *cultural competency* and *understandability*. *Understandability* refers to the reading and language levels which should be fitting to the audience, while *cultural competency* refers to allowing for various population groups, language preference and linguistic and educational levels. It seems therefore that all the problems identified in the European and American PPIs are also present in the South African equivalents. It is therefore also time for a re-thinking of the South African PPI, as it is at present not meeting its aim and not satisfying patients' needs.

Thus, a document that will render effective medication information will have to satisfy document technical demands, as well as informational and linguistic demands. The document should be about the size of an A5 page, printed in letters of at least a 10-point print size. Headings should be distinct and sufficient white space should separate different text sections. More than one colour printing will enhance the look and layout of the document, a method that can also be used to indicate more important sections, e.g. "Warnings". Where possible, use should be made of pictograms/diagrams that are culturally sensitive. This will also accommodate readers of low literacy. The desired (reduced) informational sections should be presented in the preferred patient order, in order to enhance readability and perceived utility of the document. The information should be presented in everyday language without any scientific terminology or jargon.

Texts should also be produced in various indigenous languages to accommodate readers not fluent in either English or Afrikaans. Yet, as appropriate translations from the present English or Afrikaans terminology to the indigenous languages may not exist, this objective might be fairly difficult to attain, apart from the other logistical and financial implications of such translations. It is, however, imperative if cultural competence of the document is to be attained.

The PPI, in its aim to disseminate comprehensible health communication messages, should aim at fulfilling all the communication efficacy demands to prove itself a valuable health communication tool, accessible to all. Through achieving this aim, the health literacy of even the least educated members of society will be improved and in so-doing, it will render an incontestable health communication service to the South African patient.

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A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COMMUNICATION AND CORPORATE CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has a somewhat unique environment within which businesses have to function. The fact that South Africa has eleven official languages and a mosaic of cultures are only some of the factors that contribute towards the complexity of the South African organisational environment. Cultural awareness is vital for effective communication, because different cultures communicate in different ways. While the universal objectives of marketing communication are to inform and more specifically to persuade, the way in which ethnic groups come in contact with information and are persuaded to act on information, varies widely. This article addresses the above-mentioned issues, but its overall aim is to provide a conceptual model for integrating communication and corporate culture in order to enhance an organisation's efficacy in multicultural societies. The Mitroff model for problem solving in systems thinking is used as a guideline.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies in many parts of the world are increasingly characterised by a multicultural population composition. This could potentially affect the quality of communication (and organisational communication) as communication is, in many respects, linked to culture. In order to address integrated communication (IC) (and subsequently organisational communication) quality and effectiveness, one needs to analyse and give prominence to the important role that culture plays in these processes.

The South African landscape is regarded as a heterogeneous and complex composition of individuals. Communicating effectively in such an environment could be a daunting challenge. However, Werner (2007) is of the opinion that it is essential for organisations to move away from perceiving diversity as a process of managing numbers, to a process where diversity is recognised and utilised as a competitive advantage. The aim of this article is to formulate a model to establish an internal organisational culture conducive and complementary to implementing IC.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The grand theory of this study is that of *systems theory* driven by *systems thinking*. Systems theory represents the organisation as a complex set of interdependent parts that interact to a constantly changing environment in order to achieve its goals, suggests Kreps (1990: 94). A logical application of systems thinking, according to Kreps (1990), is in describing the development, structure, and maintenance of human organisations. This argument highlights this theory's relevance to this study. Systems thinking enables a dynamic, holistic examination of an organisation and is regarded as the application of the systems theory within the organisational context.

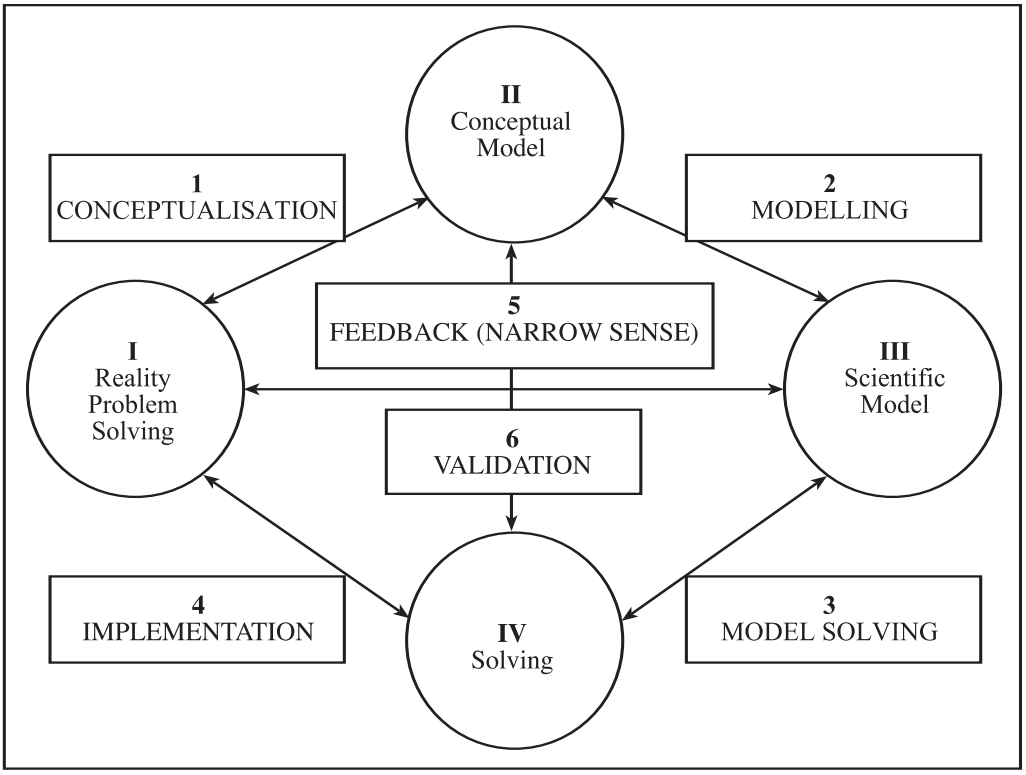
To address the goal of this study, the Mitroff model for problem solving in systems thinking (Mitroff, Betz, Pondi & Sagasti 1974) was used. This model guides the researcher through the process of studying a phenomenon in science from a holistic or systems point of view. The Mitroff model is relevant in studies were problem solving and the formulation of a model applies. It defines the scope of the research, provides guidance in structuring the research and identifies the processes and stages to follow. As the grand theory of this study is the systems theory, this further informed the choice of the Mitroff model, as this model is based on the systems perspective. Mitroff *et al*. (1974: 46) argue that certain aspects of science can only be studied from a whole systems perspective and that anything less than a holistic view of science will fail to pick up certain of science's most essential characteristics.

The graphic illustration in figure 1 represents Mitroff's whole systems view of the activity of problem solving. The model consists of four elements and six paths. In the figure the four circles represents the four elements (I, II, III, IV) and essence of the model. These elements are "Reality Problem Solving", "Conceptual Model", "Scientific Model", and "Solving". Closely related to these elements are the six paths. The paths or activities are conceptualisation, modelling, model solving, implementation, feedback and validation. Viewed from a systems perspective, there is

no simple "starting" or "ending" points in this model. The process can begin at any point in the diagram. Mitroff *et al*. (1974: 47) state that the arrow or path from the circle labelled "Conceptual Model" is meant to indicate that the "first phase" of problem solving consists of formulating a conceptual model of the problem situation. The conceptual model set up the definition of the problem that has to be solved. The field variables that are used to define the nature of the problem are specified, as well as the level at which the variables are treated.

According to the Mitroff model the second phase entails the formulation of a scientific model (circle III). The third phase concerns the performance of activity 3 to derive a solution from the scientific model. Niemann (2005: 15) argues that the aim of social science is to provide a solution to a specified problem. The implementation or utilisation of the solution to the problem area in practice (activity 4) gives feedback of the solution to the original problem stated and entails activity 5 in the model. Validation is the last phase. Here the degree of correspondence between reality and the developed scientific model is evaluated. The comparison between the scientific model and reality may take place repeatedly until the scientific model is refined to reflect the necessary aspects of reality (Mitroff *et al*. 1974: 51; Niemann 2005: 16).

FIGURE 1: MITROFF'S SYSTEMS VIEW OF PROBLEM SOLVING



(Mitroff *et al*. 1974:47, adapted by Niemann 2005:14)

As the Mitroff model implies that legitimate research need not address all the activities and elements in the model (Niemann 2005: 16), the scope of this study will only cover the first two circles of the model (Reality Problem Solving & Conceptual Model) and the path (Conceptualisation) that connects it. Circle I include phases 1 (literature review of corporate culture) and phase 2 (a review of the conceptual analysis of definitions of IC) of the research methodology of this study. Phase 3, namely the integration of key components of an excellent or strong corporate culture with the basic IC principles, materialises in Circle II. From this, an integrated communication model, submerged with elements of an excellent corporate culture, which is conducive to multi-cultural interactions, emerges. Within the scope of this article, the developed model will be conceptual in nature and will not have been validated in order to resume to circle III (scientific model). The highlights from phase 1, the review on the literature on corporate culture, follow in the next section.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARENESS

Culture gives an individual identity and is the code of conduct that a person lives by. It influences the very existence of an individual. Jandt (2004) describes intercultural communication as fundamentally about individuals communicating with other individuals with whom past experiences have not been shared. Moulder (1992: 19) supports this notion and adds to this description by highlighting five claims about culture. These claims are firstly that everyone's culture has been created for them, and largely by people who are older than they are and who began to shape their behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and values from the moment that they were born. Secondly, everyone's culture is always changing, because they are always adapting to new groups of people and to new social, political and economic situations. Thirdly, none of the members of a cultural group is totally homogeneous; that is why new groups are always coming into existence and going out of existence. Fourthly, no cultural group is totally unique; this is why some individuals from extremely different backgrounds and with extremely different life experiences manage to form alliances and to co-operate with each other. Finally, it is difficult to change the culture that one inherits because it has taught one how to behave, as well as what to believe, to feel and to value. To this Saee (2005) adds the fact that culture is ethnocentric, an obstacle to intercultural communication as it reflects a tendency for one group of people to regard their culture as superior to others. For all these reasons, it is obvious why it is not easy to communicate effectively in a multi-cultural environment.

Marketers have to take cognisance of the impact culture can have on their success. The study of culture as it relates to business has emerged as a distinct field of study (Frey-Ridgway 1997). Marketing, communication and marketing communication endeavours that were successful ten years ago will not necessarily have the same successful impact today. Cultural sensitivity has to be central to organisational operations (Gudykunst 1983). A management study of successful Australian national and multinational organisations revealed the centrality of intercultural communication (Saee 1998). To

manage a culturally diverse organisation effectively, each individual has to be encouraged to reach his/her full potential in pursuit of the organisation's objectives (Jenner 1994, in Saee 2005). According to this author, that means developing a corporate culture that fundamentally fosters and values cultural diversity. When considering De Wet's (2005: 54) view of culture as the values, activities and products of a relatively large human group through which it responds to its conditions of existence, the corporate culture of an organisation could be an effective vehicle to address multi-culturism in an organisation. Van der Wal and Ramotsehoa (2001) are in favour of this argument and state that diversity in organisations can only be managed effectively when the organisational culture is appreciative of diversity.

CORPORATE / ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE DEFINED

Corporate or organisational cultures are unique and provide a stimulus for employees behaving in ways unique to the organisation. Werner (2007: 2) states that most definitions of organisational culture agree that it refers to a system of shared assumptions held by members, which distinguishes one organisation from others. According to De Chernatony (2001) organisational culture acts as the "glue" uniting staff in different locations to act in a similar manner. Informally it is referred to as "the way we do things around here" (Jandt 2004: 419). Jandt (2004) also describes it as the set of values, goals, and priorities that is encouraged through the policies and procedures of the organisation. Saee (2005: 274) supports this notion and adds that managers should take responsibility for institutionalising cultural diversity as the main ethos and guiding principles within their organisation so that organisational processes, policies and practices reflect cultural diversity in every conceivable way. Two theories that address these three factors are Peters and Waterman's "excellent culture" theory (1982), and Deal and Kennedy's "strong theory". Peters and Waterman's (1982) "excellent culture" theory highlights several themes (reflecting organisational processes) related to excellent organisations. These themes are:

Excellent organisations gear decisions and actions to the needs of customers. The importance of people, e.g. "a close relationship with the customer" and "productivity through people" are important themes;

- Excellent organisations react quickly and do not spend excess time planning and analysing;
- Excellent organisations encourage employees to take risks in the development of new ideas;
- Excellent organisations encourage positive and respectful relationships among management and employees;
- Excellent organisations have employees and managers who share the same core value of productivity and performance;
- Excellent organisations stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification;

- Excellent organisations avoid complex structures and divisions of labour; and
- Excellent organisations exhibit both unity of purpose and the diversity necessary for innovation.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) focus more on the policies and practices of organisational culture. They argue that a "strong" culture enhances organisational success. These authors are of the opinion that if an organisation has the components of a strong culture, it will be a better place for individuals to work and will improve both individual and organisational performance. Deal and Kennedy (1982) identify four key components of a strong culture, namely values, heroes, rites and rituals and cultural network, which refers to the communication system through which cultural values are instituted and reinforced. The more deeply entrenched an organisational culture, the more difficult it is to change it. Deeply entrenched cultures are referred to as strong culture (Werner 2007: 27). In such an organisational culture the group members share the same values, beliefs and attitudes. They can easily communicate with each other and can depend on one another in meeting individual needs. According the strong theory of culture formulated by Deal and Kennedy (1982), an organisation with a strong culture is being described as having:

- A strong, unifying corporate philosophy and mission;
- Trusted and trusting leaders;
- Open communication channels and access to top management;
- An emphasis on the importance of people and productivity relationship;
- A general sense of accomplishment and belonging by all;
- Commonly shared rites, rituals, and ceremonies;
- An uplifting general feeing about employees' work, the place, and the future; and
- Satisfaction with rewards, performance and efforts (Saee 2005: 142).

Saee (2005:140) is in communion with the above points of view. He suggests that corporate culture reflects shared values, beliefs, norms, expectations, and assumptions that bind people and systems together. This author suggests that, like an iceberg, corporate culture has both visible and invisible elements. The observable aspects include the physical setting, language, stories, legends, myths, heroes and heroines, ceremonies, behaviours and dress. The visible aspects are indicative of the underlying dimensions, that is, the values, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of members as well as unwritten rules about the environment, time space, relationships, and activities (Weiss in Saee 2005: 140; Werner 2007: 4).

There are some common characteristics in the various ways organisational culture is seen. Organisational culture defines a boundary in creating distinctions between one organisation and another. In other words, each organisation projects its uniqueness in terms of who it is and what it stands for (Saee 2005: 141). Organisational culture

conveys a sense of identity for organisational members. Organisational culture facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than interest in one's self (Mead, in Saee 2005: 141). Organisational culture provides the necessary standard that an employee recognises and is willing to honour. It is the organisational ethos. Management relies on its organisational culture (or ethos) as the driving force behind the successful operation of an organisation rather than the formal, traditional structures of control (Peters & Waterman 1982; Ivancevich, Olekans & Matteson 1997).

Against this background, it is clear that an organisation's culture creates a corporate identity that distinguishes one organisation from another. As a result, it also gives members of the organisation an identity. Subsequently, identifying with the organisation creates greater commitment to organisational goals and objectives (Werner 2007: 1).

BACKGROUND ON ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES

One of the most renowned researchers in the field of culture and cultural differences is Hofstede (1980; 1997; 2001). Hofstede identified five "value" dimensions that explain differences in culture. *Collectivism vs. individualism* is the first dimension. People in collective societies learn to place a high value on solidarity, cooperation, and concern for others. They prefer to work in groups (Werner 2007). In these cultures a person's identity is closely tied to her/her membership in important referent groups. Their communication tends to be guided and constrained by concerns about hurting the other person's feelings, minimising impositions placed on the other person, and avoiding negative evaluations of the other person. In contrast, individualistic people learn to value competition and independence from other people or groups. According to Werner (2007) individualistic people prefer to make their own decisions and stay emotionally independent of others. Conrad and Poole (2005) suggest that these people like communication that is clear, efficient, and effective, and they adapt their own communication to correspond to those guidelines.

Power distance, the second dimension, indicates how power is distributed in an organisation. It refers to the amount of power supervisors can acceptably exercise over their subordinates (Conrad & Poole 2005). Werner (2007) suggests that a high power distance is reflected in more levels of hierarchy, a narrow span of control and centralised decision making. Employees are expected to submit to authority and demonstrate respect. Low power distance is reflected in organisations that emphasise networking and collaboration. In this cultural type employees would probably call managers by their first names and freely communicate with them.

Male/female orientation refers to the extent to which the culture values the stereotypically masculine traits of assertiveness, competitiveness and materialism (Werner 2007), or the stereotypically feminine attributes of cooperativeness, nurturing, quality of relationships, supportiveness and interdependence (Conrad & Poole 2005; Werner 2007). The degree to which people are uncomfortable with ambiguity and risk, and prefer to work with long-term acquaintances or friends rather than with strangers,

is seen as *uncertainty avoidance* (Conrad & Poole 2005). Organisations with high uncertainty avoidance rely on formal rules and procedures to control events and create security. Such organisations avoid taking risks (Werner 2007). Those cultures high on uncertainty avoidance tend to show their emotions more freely than members of cultures on the opposite avoidance extreme (Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger 2007). *Confucian dynamism* differentiates cultures in which people learn to take a short-term orientation (low Confucian) from cultures where a long-term one is preferred (Conrad & Poole 2005).

Hall (in Conrad & Poole 2005: 388) added the *low/high culture dimension* to the already developed culture types identified by Hofstede. In low-context cultures, people focus their attention on the explicit content of a message. In high-context cultures, much of the meaning is extracted from the context in which the message is uttered, and the message itself is much more ambiguous (Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger 2007). According to Conrad and Poole (2005:388) the result is that the messages constructed by people from low-context cultures seem to be blunt and excessively detailed to people from high-context cultures; messages from high-context cultures seem to be excessively vague, confusing, or noncommittal to people from low-context cultures.

However, most authors on organisational culture agree that it is impossible to characterise an organisation as having a single culture. Organisations are seen by these scholars as a multitude of subcultures that "co-exist in harmony, conflict or indifference to each other" (Miller 2005: 102). These sub-cultures exist at different sites in the organisation. Louis (in Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg & Martin 1985) identified "vertical slice", "horizontal slice", or a specific work group as different sites. Each sub-group could have its own culture. Other aspects of organisational culture worth mentioning are that it is not unitary and often ambiguous. Martin (in Miller 2005) state that there is not always a clear picture of the organisation's culture. There may be various manifestations of culture, which make it difficult to interpret. This phenomenon is known as the fragmentation perspective of culture.

The preceding discussion demonstrates the complexity of organisational culture. Apart from being a highly complex phenomenon (Miller 2006), organisational culture is also emergent. Interaction between organisational members creates culture. This idea is central to a communication perspective on culture in which culture is not merely transmitted through communication, but in which communication is "constitutive of culture" (Eisenberg & Riley, in Miller 2005: 101). Putman (in Miller 2005: 101) argues that, "social reality is a symbolic process created through ongoing actions and inter-subjective meanings attributed to those actions". The communication process, which creates culture, is seen as very important in the emergence thereof.

THE CORE COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION (IC)

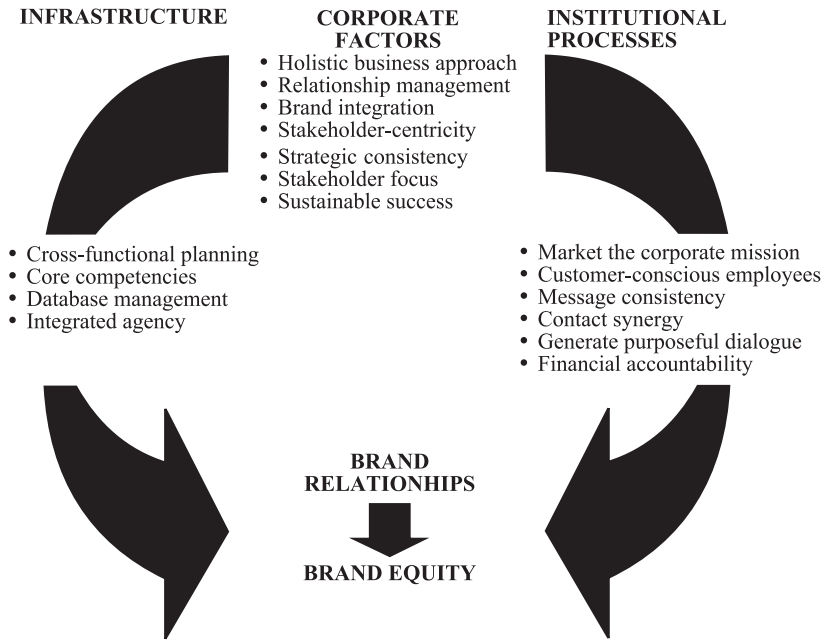
Niemann (2005:99) defines integrated communication (IC) as "the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and

encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders". According to Mulder (2007) the scrutinising of a theoretical sample of IMC and IC definitions found between 1989 and 2006 through conceptual analysis resulted in the emerging of the primary values and philosophy of the IC phenomenon. It is important to note that the position taken in this article is that IC emerged from IMC (Niemann 2005; Mulder 2007). The values or basic principles of IC identified by Mulder (2007) are:

- Holistic business approach;
- Brand integration;
- Stakeholder-centric;
- Stakeholder-conscious employees;
- Contact synergy;
- Message consistency;
- Use of technology;
- Financial accountability;
- Stakeholder segmentation; and
- Sustainable success

In 1997 Duncan and Moriarty identified criteria that successful companies use to integrate their marketing communication activities. The criteria proposed by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offered a valuable theoretical framework consisting of ten drivers. Mulder (2007) elaborated on this model and included the above-mentioned principles to offer a more inclusive approach to the integration of communication into an organisation's activities. In this model each one of the drivers (as Duncan and Moriarty called them) or principles falls into one of three integration categories. The first category, corporate focus, includes seven drivers: (1) *holistic business approach,* (2) *relationship management,* (3) *brand integration,* (4) *stakeholder centricity,* (5) *the maintenance of strategic consistency,* (6) *stakeholder focus, and* (7) *sustainable success*. The second category, institutional processes, includes six drivers: (1) *marketing the corporate mission,* (2) *customer-conscious employees,* (3) *message consistency,* (4) *contact synergy,* (5) *generation of purposeful dialogue, and* (6) *financial accountability.* The third category, infrastructure, includes four drivers: (1) *cross-functional planning;* (2) *the development of core competencies;* (3) *database management;* and (4) *the use of an integrated agency.* (Each one of the categories will be discussed in detail later in the article.) Figure 2 illustrates this model.

FIGURE 2: ELABORATED IC DRIVER MODEL



(Mulder 2007, adapted from Duncan & Moriarty 1997)

This elaborated IC driver model (Mulder 2007) underwrites the strategic approach that should be followed, the operational process that must be employed and the infrastructure that should be available to facilitate effective IC practices in an organisation. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) the integration that results from the implementation of these drivers includes customer retention; interactional, ongoing communication; the expansion of marketing beyond the marketing department to the whole organisation; and improved brand equity.

The elaborated IC model highlights several aspects and principles that can contribute towards the implementation of more effective integrated communication strategies. Still, this model only addresses the basic integrated communication applications. As almost all marketing and communication in the South African environment, and across the world, takes place within a multi-cultural setting, it is essential to take notice of this dimension. Not doing so is courting failure. The next section incorporates corporate culture components (that reflect excellence) with the identified principles of integrated communication (Mulder 2007) in an attempt to address this shortcoming.

MERGING CORPORATE CULTURE AND IC PRINCIPLES

Table 1 presents a comparison between the basic principles of IC and the organisational culture components discussed earlier. It is of note that the majority of corporate culture components and IC principles show significant resemblance. The additional principles (no. 7, 9, 10, 12 & 13) and components (no. 17) are also listed and will be conversed on in the discussion following the table.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN IC PRINCIPLES AND CORPORATE CULTURE COMPONENTS (CCC)

	Basic principles of IC	**Corporate culture components**
1	Holistic business approach (Strategic driven)	Employees and managers share the same core value of productivity and performance
		Organisation culture provides the necessary standard that an employee recognises and is willing to honour (ethos)
		Organisational culture (ethos) as the driving force behind the successful operations of the organisation
		Organisational culture facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than interest in oneself
2	Relationship management	Encourage positive and respectful relationships among management and employees, and between employees and other stakeholder groups
3	Brand integration	A strong corporate culture creates a distinction between one organisation and another; projects the organisation's uniqueness
4	Stakeholder-centricity	Close relationships with all stakeholders are essential
5	Strategic consistency	Exhibits both unity of purpose and the diversity necessary for innovation
6	Stakeholder focus and segmentation	Excellent organisations gear decisions and actions to the needs of customers, people are seen as important
7	Sustainable success	
8	Corporate mission	Demonstrates a strong, unifying corporate philosophy and mission
9	Stakeholder conscious employees	
10	Message consistency	
11	Contact synergy	A strong corporate culture creates a distinction between one organisation and another; projects the organisation's uniqueness
12	Purposive dialogue	
13	Financial accountability	

	Basic principles of IC	Corporate culture components
14	Cross-functional planning	Avoid complex structures and divisions of labour
15	Core competencies	Stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification
16	Database management	An excellent organisation reacts quickly and does not spend excess time planning and analysing
17		Encourages employees to take risks in the development of new ideas

Table 1 illustrates a comparison between the IC principles and key components of an excellent corporate culture. In the following discussion, the three categories in the model (figure 2) are elaborated on, and the position of the corporate culture components (CCC) is reflected on to illustrate the task it performs in IC.

A STRONG AND EXCELLENT CORPORATE CULTURE TO LODGE IC

Organisational structures are formal systems created to enable organisational members to achieve organisational goals. The corporate focus level entails approaches, processes and activities that aim to create an environment in which an organisation can develop to maximise its long-run ability to create value (Jones & George 2003). The second category consists of institutional processes implemented to take advantage of opportunities and compete effectively in the marketplace. The principle responsibility on this level is to establish processes and procedures to execute the strategies of the organisation by developing annual objectives and short-term strategies. The infrastructure category suggests the different resources and means necessary to support the processes level activities to reach the corporate level focus.

Category one: Corporate focus

Viewing IC as a holistic business approach or "business process", as suggested by Schultz and Schultz (1998), means communication is no longer a peripheral function. It focuses on integrated business strategies that promote organisational growth (Wiscombe 2005). Niemann (2005) opines that the strategic intent of the organisation as a whole should drive all the communication of the organisation. If IC is not part of the core decision making processes of a company, the true value thereof cannot be realised and it will not be able to make a real contribution to an organisation's bottom-line (Kitchen 2005; Hutton & Mulhern 2002). An important CCC that underscores this approach is that corporate culture (ethos) is the driving force behind the successful operations of the organisation. Within this context, brand communication is more than a name, term, sign, symbol, or any other feature. A brand is the promise of an experience (Moriarty *et al*. 1995). According to Schultz and Barnes (1999: 44) "the brand has become a part of the relationship management process between the organisation and the stakeholders". A powerful brand enhances awareness,

differentiates the organisation and commands a premium in today's highly competitive marketplace, just as a strong corporate culture projects an organisation's uniqueness and differentiates it from other organisations. The brand should be entrenched in all organisational activities and strategic consistency and ethos should be maintained.

Satisfied stakeholders are the ultimate determinant of product or company success. Stakeholder-centricity therefore also forms part of this category. The concept of integrated communication begins with the people impacting on the organisation (Schultz 1998; Burnett & Moriarty 1998; Shimp 2000; Hansted & Hemanth 1999/2000). Stakeholders are increasingly viewed as assets, with tangible equity (Blattberg & Deighton 1996) and lifetime value (Pitt, Ewing & Berthon 2000). A strong corporate culture recognises that close relationships with the stakeholders are essential. A stakeholder-centric approach in IC necessitates the mention of two closely related and important aspects, namely dialogue or two-way communication, and the consequent building of long-term relationships. In IC all stakeholder contacts take on the role of communicating the brand's marketing message to them. According to Harbison (1997) stakeholder intimacy is one of the key components of IC, and involves the managing of all stakeholder moments. Positive and respectful relationships are encouraged.

Stakeholder segmentation is a very important concept in IC (Reich 1998). In essence, stakeholder segmentation entails the identification and formulation of meaningful and profitable niches and includes all stakeholders of the organisations. Kliatchko (2005) describes IC as audience-focused. The use of the term audience rather than consumer is deliberate as it gives prominence to the fact that IC programmes are not directed solely to consumers, but to all relevant publics of an organisation (Kliatchko 2005: 26). To be audience- or stakeholder-focused means IC programmes are directed at the multiple markets that have a direct or indirect impact on the business of an organisation (Moore & Thorson 1996), internal as well as external (Kliatchko 2005; Burnett & Moriarty 1998). The main idea behind this criterion is that gaining the support of key stakeholders in the short term generates greater long-term profits for investors. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) underline that brand equity is determined by the number and quality of relationships that a company has, not only with customers, but with all its stakeholders. An excellent corporate culture acknowledges that people are important.

In the IC paradigm communication is goal directed because of the stressed importance of efficiency (Burnett & Moriarty 1998), financial accountability (Rensburg & Cant 2003), and ultimately sustainable success. The communication strategy must have an objective that can be interpreted as the achievement of a substantive goal. The ultimate goal of the integrated communication strategy is to help sell the product or service to keep the company in business (Burnett & Moriarty 1998). A CCC that links up with this viewpoint is that employees and managers share the same core value of productivity and performance.

Category two: Institutional processes

It is suggested that a company with a strong and excellent corporate culture demonstrates a strong and unifying philosophy and mission. Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) proposed mission marketing relates to this and links up with sustainable success in the corporate focus category. A mission creates an integrity platform and helps define a company. One of the benefits thereof is that it keeps employees focused on the company's fundamental objective of growing profitable relationships. Mission marketing is a long-term corporate activity that requires companywide buy-in. An aspect that goes hand in hand with the changes in the internal environment is the growing importance of employees. The internal marketing process in IC is of the utmost importance to establish an effective base from which a company can operate, i.e. a strong corporate culture. The experience each customer has when buying and using a company's product or service and interfacing with its employees is an integral part of his/her perceived value. Brand equity starts with attracting employees who have an affinity for the product and are themselves satisfied and loyal (Robinette & Brand 2000). Studies show that employee satisfaction correlates with customer satisfaction (Feig 1997; Freemantle 1998; Maddock & Fulton 1996). This indicates the importance of an integrated internal communication programme in any organisation that wants to be successful (McGoon 1998/99) and fosters stakeholder-conscious employees. They should enhance the brand experience and include purposeful dialogue.

The importance of internal marketing is also reflected in the discussion on contact synergy. An organisation should strive to direct each contact point between the organisation and its stakeholders. The significance of this concept is the notion that every contact between a company and the stakeholders should be managed in such a manner that synergy is created (Egan 2007). From a corporate culture perspective, this will enhance the distinction between organisations. The bottom line of contact synergy is that many marketing and communication techniques should be combined to present a unified and consistent message with a feedback mechanism built into the process to make the communication a two-way flow of information. The more the brand's position is strategically integrated into all the brand messages, the more consistent and distinct the company's identity and reputation will be (Duncan & Moriarty 1997). These areas demonstrate corporate integrity and provide a platform for integrated communication.

One of the biggest problems facing marketing and communication managers is the fact that they are under more and more pressure to be accountable for the money they spend (Duncan, Caywood & Newsom 1993; Thornson & Moore 1996; Shimp 2000). A simple argument for IC is that "there are financial, competitive and effectiveness benefits to be achieved through the synergy afforded by the process of integration" (Pickton & Hartley 1998:458). IC should be results driven, suggests Kliatchko (2005). This author considers financial measurement as a pillar of IC. In the initial Duncan and Moriarty (1997) model it became apparent that zero-based planning addresses the financial approach and management aspect in IC. However, to allow for a broader application of financial planning, zero-based planning was replaced with financial accountability in the process domain.

Category three: Infrastructure

According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) core competencies are another important IC driver. As CCC it encourages employees to stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification. This criterion supports the notion that marketing and communication managers must have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the major marketing communication functions or techniques. They must objectively evaluate and respect these strengths and weaknesses and apply them in a mix that maximises the cost-effectiveness of each function (Duncan & Moriarty 1997). A cross-functional management system should be in place in an organisation to coordinate all efforts (Duncan 2002). In an organisation with a strong corporate culture, complex structures and division of labour are avoided.

Technology has a profound impact on the marketplace (McGoon 1998/99; Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Kitchen 2005; Dewhirst & Davis 2005). As Reich (1998: 28) suggests, "a multi-faceted relational database-driven approach packs a far more potent wallop than any single advertising component in terms of positioning, brand building/product awareness, and cementing that all important bond – customer loyalty". However, this same author maintains that a mix of traditional marketing communication techniques and interactive programmes should blend to yield a more powerful IC programme. The infrastructure category accommodates database management. The essence of the arguments presented on the use of technology is captured in this concept. It also encapsulates the importance of being able to react quickly and not spend excess time on planning and analysing.

CONCLUSION

All customer touch points affect the brand and brand equity of an organisation. When the individuals touched by the company are from different cultures, their experiences of the touch will vary – making it very difficult for the organisation to manage these experiences and perceptions effectively. The challenge each organisation face, is to gain cultural competency by developing an understanding of how individuals perceive and react to their different cultural rules. It is important to acknowledge that differences are not deficiencies, state Conrad and Poole (2005). The examined literature point towards the fact that an organisational culture that is sensitive to cultural diversity could contribute towards the organisation's cultural competence. An organisation should have a strong and excellent corporate culture, which implies among other things that the organisation will foster sensitivity towards diversity and the competitive edge it can provide. This article recognises the growing importance of cultivating an organisational culture that is accommodating to diversity.

Most modern organisations in South Africa and around the world are faced by cultural diversity. Through integrating the basic principles of integrated communication and the intercultural communication competence indicators, guidelines are provided to use as practical tools to address aspects of integrated communication in a multi-cultural marketplace. Although these guidelines do not presume to be a quick fix to intercultural challenges, it will create an awareness of the importance thereof to deal with intercultural aspects.

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SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION: MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN AND STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) CHALLENGES FOR PR PRACTITIONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade a number of countries have embarked upon dramatic socio-political transitions. A common denominator has always been a highly divided society filled with trauma. One such country is South Africa. A short overview is provide regarding the transition from the apartheid context to the new democratic dispensation and the huge challenges that the post 1994 South Africa has to deal with, in particular in the corporate context. The South African Reconciliation Barometer's surveys have been used to provide empirical data regarding the state of the nation with reference to particular selected areas. These statistics show a deeply divided society with high levels of mistrust. The public relations practitioner needs to negotiate these contexts in their efforts to practice integrated strategic public relations. Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) serves as meta-theoretical framework. This article explores potential conceptual challenges for strategic public relations practitioners in their challenges to manage integrated public relations and the lessons to be learned from such traumatised societies. The extrapolation is the corporate context with the focus on integrated public relations challenges for the practitioners of public relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade or more a number of countries have embarked upon dramatic socio-political transitions – mostly from an authoritarian repressive regime to a democratically-oriented society. A common denominator has always been a highly divided society filled with trauma. One such country is South Africa which had its first democratic elections in 1994 after more than 300 years of colonialism and apartheid. A society deeply divided not only along the lines of race, ethnicity and class, but also deeply divided in terms of economic prosperity and access to opportunities.

The context of this article poses that this kind of history and the new transformational challenges have profound consequences for the practice of integrated public relations in corporations situated in such societies. In particular, it poses serious challenges to the public relations practitioner as key player in the repositioning of their organisations. The public relations practitioner construct in this article deals with the strategic part of the practice of the profession and not with the technical application per se.

Furthermore, this article is focused on the analyses of some aspects of the state of the South African nation in transition as being reflected by the South African Reconciliation Barometer Report (Hofmeyr 2006) and its potential consequences for the practice of integrated public relations. The extrapolation will be contextualised in the corporate context with the focus on integrated public relations and the challenges faced by the practitioners of public relations. This will be discussed and presented in the context of the meta-theoretical framework of Adler's multi-cultural-man (1985).

In turn, this background should be linked to Rensburg and Cant's (2003: 39) reference to the evolution of public relations by identifying four trends that have been instrumental in its growth, namely the expansion of large corporations, the nature of change and conflict internationally and locally, the challenges of information technologies and the increased importance of public opinion in the 21st century for positive democratic means. See also Huang and Kleiner (2005) concerning the challenges for multi-nationals in an ever increasing globalisation context.

Having said that, strategically integrated public relations is viewed as the integration of an organisation's new and continuing relationships with stakeholders, internally and externally, through managing the total communication activity initiated or received by such an organisation with the view to protecting the brand and reputation of the organisation in an ethical way.

This context challenges the public relations practitioner profoundly. It is furthermore important to state that strategically integrated public relations in this article focuses on the conceptual challenges of relationship integration, stakeholder relationship integration, management integration, corporate structure integration and societal integration (Caywood 1997).

This article's following two aims are:

- To discuss and to extrapolate the potential of Adler's "multi-cultural-man" as metaphor (1977, 1985) and meta-theoretical framework in terms of its

conceptual application to the corporate context and the potential conceptual challenges practitioners have to face. It is not an attempt to position the "self against the other" but to emphasise the complexity of a divided past and hence the challenges for integrated public relations practitioners to work towards sound stakeholder relationships.

- To make some suggestions regarding the conceptual and strategic challenges for integrated public relations practitioners who function in such corporate contexts, fraught with histories of division, mistrust and humiliation.

Having stated the above, it is important to indicate that this article is thus not about the application of public relations practices and techniques.

The first democratic election of 1994 has placed South Africa on a different route toward individual and collective futures. But the country cannot escape so easily from its divisive history, "the pictures in the minds" as Walter Lippman would say. Traumatic pictures, or in the Lacanian framework, a trauma located in the master discourse of a social mechanism (Lacan 1977) as manifested in the socio-political past of the country.

Against this background manifests a very complex set of communication-driven processes that are contributing to the shaping of the South African society on its way to a new and intricate identity. Some would say *sets of identities*. These communication processes are formal and informal in nature. There is a natural process of co-evolution as well as strategically-infused strategic communication processes being managed, in particular in the corporate context.

From a communication, and thus for the purposes of this article, a strategic public relations perspective, the question remains: What is the role of the public relations practitioner in corporate South Africa regarding negotiating these challenges that are being posed in terms of stakeholder relationships as a key function of integrated public relations against this background of division?

The meta-theoretical discussion focuses on Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1977, 1985) which for the purposes of this article would be juxtaposed in the South African historical and thus socio-political past as well as in the context of the present stakeholder relationship challenges faced by the public relations practitioner through integrated public relations practices. Although the original concept was developed by Adler (1977) with reference to white Western males' multicultural experiences (Sparrow 2000), in this article the focus is on the heuristic and metaphorical value of the multi-cultural-man construct in the integrated public relations context.

Given this orientation, the aims of this article will be discussed in the context of the following aspects:

- The political context and identity formation: The apartheid and democracy eras;
- The multi-cultural-man and identity: Challenges for strategic public relations;
- Reconciliation Barometer and multi-cultural-man: Significance for strategic public relations; and
- Communication and the multi-cultural-man and the implications for strategic public relations.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND IDENTITY FORMATION: THE APARTHEID ERA

To discuss identity as a collective national phenomenon, to discuss the historical contours or artifacts that contributed to identity construction, and to restrict this discussion to the institutional apartheid era for obvious reasons will do an injustice to the debate on identity and relationship dynamics. It is important to note early on that a discussion on globalisation does not form part of the parameters of the article, though the complexity of the globalisation context should constantly be kept in mind.

Identity discourse in the South African context is inextricably linked to historical eras that stretch way beyond the geographical boarders of South Africa and the African continent (Zegeye, Liebenberg & Houston 2000). Stevens (2003) is of the opinion that these roots could be found in historical materialism with the emphasis on racism and colonialism.

One of the fundamental corner stones of the apartheid era, some would say the most fundamental and devastating piece of legislation, was the legislation contained in the Population Registration Act of 1950. The South African population was classified into four racial groups, namely white, black, Indian and Coloured. Some of the categories even had sub-categories (Muthien, Khosa & Magubane 2000).

The result of the legislation was that through institutional processes a very decisive part of individual, group, community and corporate identities were determined along racial lines. The South African society was administered and managed according to this ideology. The hierarchical arrangement was white privileged people at the top, followed by the rest. The ensuing process of humiliation, the destruction of dignity and identity and the resistance ended in civil war that ensued and lasted for many decades.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND IDENTITY FORMATION: THE DEMOCRACY ERA

After 1994 the democratic state became a prime communicator of identity messages and thus of relationship and stakeholder building. Corporate South Africa has joined in this process. Simplistically stated, the South African Bill of Rights is the counter pole of the 1950 Population Registration Act. The Bill of Rights is viewed as the cornerstone of democracy and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. These values manifest in a range of activities including freedom of

expression, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of association and privacy, freedom of movement, access to health and education and the right to own private property, just to mention a few. All off which contribute towards the restoration of individual and collective identities in a free non-racial non-sexist democratic society.

These intricate processes manifest inter alia in economic transformation with the aim of promoting growth and development through the redistribution of wealth and the creation of opportunity, especially for the previously disadvantaged (Muthien 2000; Magubane 2000). Corporate South Africa is at the centre of these initiatives. A massive re-branding and stakeholder relationship process after a negotiated settlement is taking place. This process cries out for strategic public relations at every level of society.

The enormity of the transformation process and the complexities that accompany such an undertaking are evident. The transformation process is much more than a legalistic mechanistic exercise. It cuts to the proverbial bone of the very being of the South African society in all its intricacies. In the corporate context the question as public relations practitioner remains: "How does this context impact on my company's strategic positioning, and secondly, what role must be played by the practitioner?"

Another, yet crucially important subtext to the macro framework of transformation is the need for reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be achieved without social justice, including the redress and the material well-being of the marginalised. Redress in this context goes far beyond the material only. There is also a need to come to grips with the injustices and dehumanisation of the South African society. Social justice carries with it the roots of identity construction and deconstruction.

But a note of caution seems appropriate as Adam (1994) puts it: "The legacy of past political systems lives on in everyday racial and ethnic consciousness. Racism as the everyday false consciousness of socially constructed differences has not disappeared with the repeal of racial legislation."

It is the accepted position that social identity in the South African society is complex in nature. The complexity is not only informed by the hegemony of the past, but by the day-to-day realities of a society traumatised in very different and varied ways (Duncan 2003).

The point of departure regarding identity, multi-culturalism and communication, including the practice of strategic public relations, is not to position the "self" against the "other". This is not an attempt to deny a racialised past, nor to argue that a clean slate approach should nullify the past (Zegeye *et al*. 2000).

A myriad of perspectives exists regarding stakeholder relationship development and the management thereof and thus identity deconstruction and identity construction, all leaning very heavily on the ubiquitous communication processes. See Gordon (1995), Berbrier (2004) and Taylor (2006: 217-237) on the emotional contradictions of identity politics, for example.

The perspective supported is that stakeholder relationships and identities, through strategic public relations practices, can be seen as open ended, fluid and constantly in a process of being deconstructed and constructed with varied timelines and outcomes. From an integrated public relations perspective, this activity remains a continually strategically managed process of which stakeholder relationships form the cornerstone of the activity.

Stevens (2003) in the post-modernist context warns however by saying there is a lot of support for the argument of varied experiences of social life with diffused sets of identities, but the point is that such an approach could perpetuate racism in the context of identity politics. Of importance here are the qualities of fluidity and context-dependence because conflicting racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexual, religious and national identities are a reality in the historical complexity of the South African society (Zegeye *et al*. 2000). This is equally true for corporate South Africa.

These complexities must be factored into strategic public relationship plans and practices in a quest to form new relationships with stakeholders internally and externally.

MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN AND IDENTITY: CHALLENGES FOR STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

The above context provides the synergy for the complexities that confront public relations practitioners. The situation classifies itself way beyond a "crisis situation". It is an existential and fundamental challenge of the being. The concept of "multi-cultural-man" has been described and discussed over centuries in many forms and contexts. Zeno 294 BC refers to "cosmopolitan man". Lipton (1961) refers to "Protean Man" and Milhouse, Asante and Nwosu (2001) refer to "trans-cultural person" while McGill (2004) refers to the "global citizen". Adler (1977: 38, in Sparrow 2000) refers to a new kind of man "embodying the attributes and characteristics that prepare him so serve as facilitator and catalyst for contacts between cultures".

The concept has traditionally been viewed as a person that moves about in multi-cultural environments or persons who emigrate to a culturally foreign country having to deal with the challenges to transcend narrow loyalties with the view to adjust and to start the process of acculturation and assimilation. Kim (2001) says that unlike the original identity, the emerging identity is one that develops out of many challenging and often painful experiences of self-reorganisation under the demands of the new experience or conditions. Through trial and error an expanded identity that is more than the original identity or the identity of the new encounter, starts to emerge.

Again, adopting this concept to the South African public relations context seems to be important without claiming that there exists a collective approach to public relations in South Africa. The fact remains that public relations practices in South Africa are being planned, executed and evaluated in the context of a multi-cultural world within particular divisive socio-political histories.

Given the South African history of division and statutory racism and the progress that has been made over the past 13 years regarding cultural tolerance and integration, such a multi-cultural-man approach seems to be fitting to critique the development of new stakeholder relationships and thus individual and collective identities in particular with reference to the corporate world.

The South African corporate quest is an inland expedition, an exploratory journey towards one another across mostly unfamiliar and divisive terrain. This interplay poses particular challenges in order to transcend the potential impact of very complex histories as determinant of content and form of public relations practices.

In South Africa, communication and cultural exchange are the pre-eminent conditions for a prosperous and a collective existence. The focus is on the ability to transcend the own, made up of a myriad of personal, collective, social, emotional, political and educational experiences. The ideal goal is to get to a stage where the essential identity is inclusive, yet selective of life patterns different from his or her own at the deepest levels of existence (Adler 1985, in Samovar & Porter 1985).

Such an individual is grounded in both the universality and the diversity of cultural forms. Multi-cultural-man is intellectually and emotionally committed to the unity of human beings but also shows a deep awareness of the differences that need to be overcome. The focus is strongly on communalities as the fundamental orientation. In public relations terms this represents an integrated communication focus. These communalities are instrumental to creating through communication an inter-subjectivity of mutual understanding and a common future.

In this context, the fluidity of stakeholder relationships and identity as well as the role of communication are central processes. This requires that the sense of belonging should assist the parties concerned to negotiate the ever new formations of reality. The process of living on the boundaries is a real and existential process (Bennett 1993: 59). Tension and uncertainty are two components that accompany this complex interactive process of moving back and forth in and between cultures/experiences, no matter where the encounters occur. In this regard is it important to indicate that history has a peculiar relationship with memory and the tension in terms of the interpretations of history. Traumatised experiences are very difficult to deal with, especially where relationship dynamics are involved, because it manifests itself with very destructive consequences (Van der Walt, Franchi & Stevens 2003).

In the South African context the meeting of people as equal entities in all contexts of society is indeed a fairly new occurrence. Adam and Adam (2000) warn however that in order to talk about collective identity and collective memory in the South African society these terms should only be used in a loose metaphorical sense.

This meeting process in itself is not a simplistic process such as the making of friends. Adler (1985) says that cultural identity is the symbol of one's essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the world view, value system, attitudes, and beliefs of a group with whom such elements are shared.

Today, in the South African corporate environment, legislation forces companies through for example the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the policy of affirmative action to become more representative of the South African society. This process of unity does not come automatically. The challenges facing public relations practitioners are enormous in terms of the needs for affection, acceptance, recognition, affiliation, status, belonging and interaction with other beings as focus areas of identity and identity formation.

Adler (1985) states that the multi-cultural-man is radically different form the ordinary human being:

- Such a person (public relations practitioner) is psycho-culturally adaptive;
- Such a person (public relations practitioner) does not judge one situation by the terms of another and is therefore an ever evolving new system of evaluations that are relative to the context and situation;
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is propelled from identity to identity through processes of cultural learning and cultural un-learning. A new identity is always being newly created;
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) maintains indefinite boundaries of the self. The parameters of the identity are neither fixed nor predictable. Berger and Berger (1973, cited by Adler 1985) call it the homeless mind. A condition that allows for nothing permanent and unchanging; and
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is able to look at his/her own culture from an outsider's perspective. This allows for a critical analysis of ideologies, systems and practices.

In this process the symbolic recreation of the individual or corporation is important. This goes far beyond the experience of intercultural contact. The multi-cultural-man undergoes shifts in his/her psycho-cultural posture, religion, personality, behaviour, nationality, outlook, political persuasion and values. These aspects may be totally or in part reformulated in the context of their experiences, as the boundaries of contact move and change. Where this process of change occurs it could take years to manifest. No two experiences are the same either. It remains unique. Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasises the point of mindful or deliberate communication as a process that underpins these identity negotiations where shared meanings are achieved through active involvement.

The enormity of such a process in traumatised societies, and in particular in the South African context, speaks for itself. To idealise or romanticise this would assist in no way. The conditioning through political, cultural and educational systems over centuries lay very heavily on the collective minds of all. The stresses and strains that accompany this are enormous. In considering the extrapolation of the multi-cultural-man metaphor, the following aspects must be kept in mind:

- The multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is vulnerable. In maintaining no clear boundary and form or sense of stability, the multi-cultural-man is susceptible to confusing the profound and the insignificant, the important and the unimportant, the visionary and the reactionary. It will take time to "settle down".
- Multi-cultural-man can become a diffused identity (Erikson 1964, cited by Adler 1985). In communication situations which are confusing, contradictory, or overwhelming, the individual is thrown back and in a subjective way must sort out what to make of situations. Messages, images and symbols which are not organised coherently cannot be translated into the individual's sense-making world. This can have serious consequences for the individual's stability.
- Thirdly, multi-cultural-man can suffer from a loss of sense of his/her own authenticity. The danger is that such a person can easily disintegrate into a fragmented splinter.
- The fourth challenge is that such an entity can move from identity to identity experience without any commitment to real life situations. Such experiences can be viewed as superficial fads. This is especially true in situations where instant gratification seems at the order of the day.
- In the process of challenging boundaries the individual or the corporation may hide behind a screen of apathy and cynicism which harbours insecurity.

Of importance is to understand that the concept of multi-cultural-man goes far beyond situations of cultural adoption and cultural shock. It is much more fundamental. The multi-cultural style of identity is premised on a fluid, dynamic movement of the self, an ability to move in and out of contexts, and the ability to maintain some inner coherence through varieties of situations (Adler 1985).

It is not a simplistic calculation or comparative choice between assimilation and integration. It is the ability to continually modify his or her frame of reference and the ability to become aware of the structures and functions of groups that need to be negotiated whilst at the same time maintaining a clear understanding of the own personal, ethnic, and cultural identifications that would enable the multi-cultural-man to function optimally in a multi-cultural context (Berry 1970, cited by Adler 1985). Tillich (1966: 111, cited by Sparrow 2000: 176) suggests that in future one should live with tension and movement. The aim is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.

It is clear that strategic public relations cannot be practised in isolation from the complexities of societies. Challenges that individual public relations practitioners face in situations of change and transformation are equally real in the corporate context of the South African society. Once again the belief is that communication as strategic public relations practice performs a key facilitating role in the repositioning of companies in a democratic South Africa.

RELATIONS BAROMETER AND MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN

In the context of the above discussion the following empirical evidence makes it extremely important to contextualise the integrated public relations challenges faced by public relations practitioners.

Methodology and background

The analysis in this section is based on the results of four national surveys, which were conducted since April 2003. The standard sample size of this national syndicate survey is 3 500 South Africans, aged 16 years and older, from both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The results of the survey can be projected onto the South African population as a mirror image of trends in attitudes and perceptions in general. Geographical area was factored into this process, and distinct sampling procedures were employed for metro areas and non-metro areas (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

All settlements with a population that exceeds 250 000 had been categorised as metro areas. Multistage area-probability sampling was used in these areas. The sampling included all persons of 16 years and older, living in multi-member households. Enumeration areas were drawn from the 2001 Population Census and sampling points were allocated to sub-places in each of the metros. Within each of the sub-places a street was randomly selected using the Geographical Information System (GIS) and four to six houses were then selected using a random walk procedure.

Non-metropolitan areas were divided into the five following sub-categories:

- Cities: 100 000 – 249 999: Large towns: 40 000 – 99 999: Small towns: 8 000 – 39 999
- Villages: 500 – 7 999: Rural: Fewer than 500 inhabitants

Multistage probability sampling was also employed in non-metropolitan areas, with all citizens of 16 years and older being targeted. Enumeration areas (EAs) were drawn from the 2001 Population Census and sampling points were allocated to sub-places in each of South Africa's nine provinces, based on community size. Within each of the sub-places a street was randomly selected using GIS and four to six houses were then selected using a random walk procedure. In areas where there were no streets in the selected EAs, interviewers were required to count the number of dwellings and work out a skip, based on the number of interviews and the size of the EA and then select every n^{th} dwelling (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

All survey results are weighted back to the population figures. This is done to address sample skews that might affect the proper representation within the universe. Data are weighted back to the population. The expected margin of error is estimated at 1.66% under the worst possible scenario (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

The surveys provided snapshots in terms of the state of the nation. Obviously the complexity of the South African situation should not be underestimated by focusing on these findings only, but from a strategic public relations planning perspective it remains very important. The Barometer covered a spectrum of topics dealing inter alia with:

- Economic matters;
- Human security;
- The legitimacy of the new dispensation;
- Cross-cutting political relationships;
- Dialogue with one another as South Africans; and
- Historical confrontation and race relations.

From a strategic public relations perspective these aspects are vitally important in the process of transformation and identity formation because it deals with the very fabric of the South African society. The surveys provided a wealth of very important moments, expectations, perceptions and reality interpretations of the collective psyche of the South African society. For the purposes of this article the following categories have been selected for discussion purposes because they represent some of the most critical relationship dynamics which in turn are crucial for the practice of integrated public relations.

This is even more relevant in the corporate context:

- One united South Africa;
- Historical view on apartheid;
- Race relations;
- Cultural matters; and
- Media as instrument of bridging the gap

It must be stated that the use of racial categories and terminologies should be viewed in the context of the socio-political history of South Africa. No ideological position is attached to the terminology.

TABLE 1: ONE UNITED SOUTH AFRICA

	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
All	72.8%	76.2%	77.6%	76.2%
Black	76.3%	79.9%	80.4%	78.3%
White	57.3%	56.5%	66.4%	67.6%
Coloured	76%.3	82.9%	78.9%	76.2%
Indian	82%.8	76.5%	80.4%	79.9%

In Table 1, a marked increase in optimism from 72.8% to 76.2% since 2003 of all South Africans has been recorded. White people seem constantly to be the least optimistic, followed by Coloured and Indian people. Political power, and the loss and the gaining

of power by respectively the white and the black electorate could be at the root of differences of opinion. As far as the white group is concerned a slightly more than 10% increase since 2003 has been detected which could indicate a greater sense of optimism and acceptance for a united South Africa.

TABLE 2: HISTORICAL VIEW ON APARTHEID AS CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY: PERCENTAGE AGREEMENT

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	86.4%	84.8%	89.9%	87.7%
Black	89.6%	88.6%	89.5%	89.4%
White	69.3%	54.3%	68.6%	76.3%
Coloured	93.4%	94.3%	88.6%	93.3%
Indian	90.0%	89.8%	89.8%	91%

An interesting observation in Table 2 is that all groups, only with marginal differences, view the apartheid system as a crime against humanity. Even white people as the rulers and beneficiaries of the old system reject apartheid as evil. It is no surprise that all the other groups view apartheid very strongly or overwhelmingly so as a crime against humanity. There seems unanimity regarding the rejection of the past political dispensation in the most convincing way across all groups.

TABLE 3: RACE RELATIONS: THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE OTHER GROUP

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	38.3%	39.6%	41.5%	39.6%
Black	42.7%	47.2%	46%	44.9%
White	24.2%	28%	19.3%	22.2%
Coloured	17.4%	9.7%	36%	12.5%
Indian	20.0%	17.7%	21.6%	17.2%

In Table 3, almost 40% of the respondents indicated that they do not trust one another. Black people show the least trust in other people, almost 45% of the respondents. White, Coloured and Indian respondents show a significant decrease of their levels of trust. However, very significant percentages of uncertainty dominate the question of trust in one another. In an SABC/Markinor opinion poll (2005), the optimism about a common future among all South Africans stood at 60%. This trend was up from 56% the previous year.

TABLE 4: CULTURAL MATTERS: I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMS AND WAYS OF THE OTHER

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	58.7%	59.6%	60.7%	61.8%
Black	64.9%	66.1%	63.5%	66.5%
White	39.8%	42.1%	35.7%	38.3%
Coloured	42.7%	29%	47.1%	36%
Indian	35.9%	35.4%	27.2%	42%

Not much has changed over the past three years. The Coloured, Indian and white groups have registered significant lower levels of understanding of one another's customs. The overall picture in Table 4 reveals that almost 62% of the respondents have difficulty in understanding the customs and cultural ways of the other groups. Black people in particular, almost 67%, in 2006 indicated the highest level of not being in a position to understand cultural customs and ways of other people.

TABLE 5: MEDIA AS INSTRUMENT OF BRIDGING THE GAP: USING RADIO AND TV SHOWS WHERE SOUTH AFRICANS CAN TALK TO EACH OTHER ABOUT TRANSFORMATION

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	78.4%	81.4%	83.8%	85.6%
Black	83.6%	86.1%	87%	82.8%
White	47.8%	53.3%	59%	60.4%
Coloured	88.7%	87.8%	81.6%	86.8%
Indian	82.3%	81.4%	87%	86.2%

In Table 5, the overall opinion is rather positive, namely, that radio and TV should be used as platforms to discuss issues regarding transformation. It is rather surprising that white people seem to express very strong negative views about the use of these media as discussion forums. However, there has been a significant change since 2003. An increase of 12.6% towards openness has been recorded. All the other groups express very favourable views. More than 85% of the respondents were in support of the use of these media for transformation discussions. Adam and Adam (2000) refer to the white respondents' position as collective amnesia as a strategy for dealing with unpleasantness of the past, especially a past that is highly embarrassing.

DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

The overwhelming picture that emerges from these findings is one of a deeply divided opinion and expectation of one another as South Africans. Encouraging is the almost

unanimous rejection of the past and the hope for reconciliation albeit in the context of mistrust and uncertainty.

It seems evident that South Africans try not to make too much contact across the boundaries. In a related study a total of 46% of all South Africans indicated that they have never socialised across the colourline, while 23% almost never socialise across the colourline (Willemse 2004). In total almost 70% of all South Africans do not have significant contact with one another in social situations.

Of significance in this regard is the potential role of communication and thus strategic integrated public relations in the corporate context where the different groups are interacting more and more as equals and as subordinates as the transformation of corporate South Africa is progressing. The fact that white people in particular seem not to be ready to talk openly about reconciliation/transformation in a public forum is a serious matter of concern. Is it because transformation or reconciliation could be viewed as a private matter? Is this opinion an expression of a collective guilt that should rather be dealt with in private and in one's own close-knit circle?

The same question could be extended to the corporate context that is still mainly in white hands. Less than 3% of all Johannesburg Stock Exchange listings belong to black owned companies. The white population comprises less than 10% of the total South African population (Hofmeyr 2005).

In short, there seems to be common ground about the rejection of the past, but the question is how to move forward in the new context is one of uncertainty. A lack of mutual trust and difficulties to identify with one another's way of life, are key variables that need to be carefully managed in an integrated public relationship context. People live and work in corporations with varying backgrounds, values and expectations. This is even more challenging in societies that are emerging from a history of humiliation and strife.

Is it possible to cross the boundaries of the uncertainty in such a way that a new sense of security, belonging and identity could start to develop? In this regard, the concept of a multi-cultural-man should be explored and extrapolated to the corporate context. The opinion supported is that strategic public relations can play a significant role in the shaping of the multi-cultural-man identity metaphor as well as the development and management of stakeholder relationships as an extrapolation of the multi-cultural-man metaphor.

Such a position is even more relevant when strategic integrated public relations is viewed as the integration of an organisation's new and continuing relationships with stakeholders, internally and externally, through managing the total communication activity initiated or received by such an organisation with the view of protecting the brand and reputation of the organisation in an ethical way.

Strategic integrated public relations challenges and multi-cultural-man

The public relations premise supported in this article deals with the need to converge as strangers in the context of being stakeholders, internally and externally in the

company. According to Barker and Angelopulo (2006: 40) it is the cross-functional process of creating and nourishing strategically determined relationships with stakeholders and engaging in purposeful dialogue. It is a meeting point not to transfer information and meaning, but to jointly create meaning in an interactive and ongoing context. In a different sense, the multi-cultural-man metaphor and Paulo Freire's (1970) dialogical approach to communication supplements one another. Freire (1970) refers to a dialogical context where human beings are constantly learning from one another as equals. This is in particular applicable in situations where historically speaking an unequal and dehumanising system used to be ordering society's ways and means.

In the South African corporate context, the convergence or integrated strategic role of public relations should play in significant ways the role of addressing the divisiveness of stakeholder histories. Communication, and in this context integrated public relations, play an increasingly important role in the overall integration of the organisation and in stakeholder relations (Barker & Angelopulo 2006: 43). In order to advance the argument of stakeholder relationship building, it is proposed that strategic public relations as communication process can enhance this process further by addressing these challenges in a well-planned and integrated way not only by focusing on messages and their content but in all aspects of relationship manifestation. Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) propels a range of highly significant conditions that need to be taken into account by the public relations practitioner in the practise of integrated public relations.

These aspects are:

- The ability to transcend narrow loyalties in a changing and uncertain context, internally and externally to the organisation;
- The ability to institute a process of self-reorganisation aided by the outsider's perspective;
- The inevitable expanded identity challenges that come with such repositioning;
- The social convergence at micro and macro levels, internally and externally;
- The ability to recognise the universal and particular, and the ability to merge and diverge in the interest of all concerned;
- A nurturing of belonging and the recognition of the humanity of people;
- Not only be able to tactically reposition internally and externally, but also to integrate the ability to be adaptive at the psycho-cultural level; and
- The ability to manage in an integrated way the challenges of indefinite boundaries and the dangers of fluidity regarding corporate identity.

Considering Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) seems to be important. Practitioners of integrated public relations should factor the following dimensions into their planning:

- Vulnerability. Situations of repositioning, the bringing into the corporation of people with such traumatic histories can leave everybody and thus the organisation and its functioning very vulnerable;
- Being extremely accommodative leaves people and the organisation diffused and at a loss in terms of purpose and identity with a serious challenge to its authenticity; and
- Such a situation can be experienced and perceived as a superficial fad underscored by apathy and a cynical view of belonging and commitment.

Having stated the above, Newson, Turk and Kruckberg (2007: 218) emphasise that the premise of relationship construction is underpinned inter alia by the degree to which parties have the right to exert influence over others; trust in the sense of being willing to be open; satisfaction with what they do and experience; commitment, emotionally and as well as in terms of tasks; and lastly, communal relationships, meaning the authentic concern for the welfare of one another. In deeply divisive societies these are serious challenges to be overcome and to be strategically managed.

Communication is expected to be an integrating catalyst in all of these activities (Caywood 1997; Gonring 1997; Gronstedt 1997). The metaphorical extrapolation of multi-cultural-man's qualities as discussed above in the context of corporate South African's repositioning must be integrated with the following challenges faced by public relations practitioners as identified by Caywood (1997: xi-xiv):

Relationship integration: Broadly speaking two levels of integration can be identified, namely the internal processes of management philosophies, policies, practices, structures and stakeholders – all focusing on the integration of relationships – and secondly, the external processes of society integration. However, these levels are intertwined and should be regarded as mutually supported processes.

As far as stakeholder relationship integration is concerned the focus is broader than marketing target groups because the wider context of micro and macro implications regarding the successes and failures of the corporation have much wider consequences for societies and communities in which these corporations operate. To retrench workers in other words has wider societal and corporate implications than solely for the specific stakeholder group.

The management integration function recognises the premise that communication represents a total package in terms of the whole spectrum of management functions such as it manifests in human resources, financing, accounting, general management, etc. The successes and failures of these managers have profound consequences for all concerned, internally and externally, to the corporation. Integrated communication is essential for total alignment in terms of the mission, vision and values of the corporation. It becomes more than a management practice. It becomes a way of life, a corporate management lifestyle built on the premise of sound professional relationships.

Equally important is a firm understanding for the need of corporate structure integration. Managerial practices are supported by well integrated systems and structures throughout the corporation. Environmental practices as well as internal decisions have consequences for structural arrangements. Pressure to become more transparent or democratic in terms of managerial processes, as well as to react to technological developments such as electronic communication systems result in flatter managerial structures with a greater sense of executive powers and functions. An investment in trust underpins the viability of a diverse set of business units operating in an integrated way.

As discussed in earlier sections, one of the most challenging aspects of public relations as integrated practice is to succeed with societal integration. Corporate values that underpin and reflect the values promoted throughout societies are key aspects to the continuous process of relationship integration. No longer do corporations exist as employers only. Partnerships – quite often beyond the technical definition of publics and stakeholders – transcend the parochial definitions of these entities. The philosophy of integration militates against technical definitions of stakeholders as a short term interest group. The dynamics of society are far too complex for such an approach. This is even more so in the globalisation context of the world.

CONCLUSION

The limited snapshot provided in this article is testimony to a very complex society in transition. The changing environment has contributed profoundly towards integrated public relations challenges.

Meta-level dynamics which play a central role in the rethink of integrated public relations practices could be viewed as lessons to be learned. These include the following:

- Extrapolating the multi-cultural-man metaphor to the corporate context might be seen as stretching the limits of its application beyond the intended context of Adler's premise. This might be the case, but in terms of its heuristic value it does offer interesting conceptual and research possibilities for practitioners.
- The meta and micro levels of democracy in South Africa provide the parameters for communication convergence and interconnectivity in all spheres of society. The potential in spite of the legacy of the past to explore the multi-cultural-man metaphor forms part of the intricacies of the South African society. This may also be the case for other traumatised societies as well.
- The significance of the dialogical approach in building trust and commitment, also at the emotional levels, seems to be a key aspect in integrated public relations.
- Stakeholder relations construction and de-construction without inter alia trust, commitment and a sense of belonging can only lead to polarisation and power struggles which would render authentic stakeholder relations impossible.

- The manifestation of stakeholder relations and the construction of new identities through strategic integrated public relations could be a life-long process – more so in the South African case with a history which hardly has any shared symbols and common destiny among the different groups. In this case, corporations have to operate on and across boundaries to work towards new identities; they find themselves under enormous pressure to establish and maintain a brand that is stable.
- South Africans need to share a vision where the multi-cultural-man metaphor acts as the driving energy for the prosperity and dignity of everybody in a non-racial, non–sexist democratic society. The application of integrated strategic public relations in the corporate context can play a very significant role in transforming large sections of the life worlds of ordinary South Africans.

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- MEO IUDICIO -

LEARNING TO LEAD WITHOUT BLINKERS

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In the first half of 2008, two catastrophic events highlighted the need for all South Africans to remove our blinkers and face up to our collective denial about racism, sexism, xenophobia and intolerance. The events are of course the racist Reitz video and the brutal xenophobic attacks on African immigrants that erupted in the Alexandra township and elsewhere.

After the anger and horror of the images we witnessed have subsided, we need to engage incisively about the real meaning of these events if we are going to have an impact on the nature and quality of the post-apartheid society we are trying to build. This is especially true for the higher education sector, not only because one of the incidents took place at a university (the University of the Free State), but because we always claim as a sector to be shaping the future leaders of the country.

At the University of the Free State the impact of the video was devastating and continues to reverberate throughout the institution. It shows how such an incident has divided us: because we understand racism differently, and have experienced racism differently. But despite this polarisation, there was a heartening sign of an emerging white and black solidarity against racism on the campus of the UFS with white and black staff protesting against the incident. This is clearly something to build on in future – a true coalition for change.

On the other hand though, there were also completely unacceptable signs of racist behaviour in reaction to the video, particularly from some black students, who targeted white staff and students with threats and intimidation. Quite correctly, the UFS also condemned these actions, as it condemned the racist and sexist actions of the four white students who made the video.

One should also point out that, just a week before the Reitz video exploded onto the scene, some black and white students vandalised the university in a highly co-ordinated overnight raid. This was done in protest against what they regarded as management's intransigence. Ironically, there may be an emerging white and black solidarity here too among student ranks, though misguided in my view (misguided because one of the student demands was that management back down on its human rights approach).

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But the fundamental questions posed by the video remain: Is this a microcosm of the challenges still being faced by higher education and South African society? What has happened to the rainbow nation? Did it ever exist? What is the state of race relations 14 years after apartheid? Did we get the balance right between reconciliation and transformation? What is happening at our universities – are they transforming? What kind of young leaders are we producing as a country? How do we really free white and black from the legacy of colonialism and apartheid that still pervades our society?

But then it got worse. In mid-May of 2008, South Africa and the whole world were horrified by the brutal xenophobic attacks on immigrants from African countries in ghettoes like Alexandra. This time the images were bloody and murderous. A man being set alight and engulfed in flames, surrounded by a cheering crowd; mobs armed with all manner of weapons going from house to house evicting the inhabitants and looting property.

What made the situation even worse was the government's lack of firm and decisive leadership and action. Furthermore, it seemed as if no one could explain (least of all government ministers) why this was happening. So many reasons were proposed: from criminal elements, to tribalism, to corruption, to unmet expectations, poverty and unemployment, and of course the so-called third force. But once again we were forced to admit that as a society we are failing to deal with our prejudices, our intolerance: this time towards our fellow Africans.

So what does Reitz really have to do with Alexandra? Why is it so tempting – almost unavoidable – to link them? Precisely because they show that we South Africans are in the grip of a leadership vacuum at all levels of our society and affecting so many institutions. Furthermore the two incidents show that a new concept of leadership needs to be developed which is truly rooted in our African condition, and which can become our national ethos. In other words all South Africans still have much to learn and unlearn about:

- valuing difference and diversity;
- how to deal with conflict;
- the futility of violence;
- finding solutions;
- the rule of law;
- owning up to our past;
- believing in the future;
- taking responsibility for our actions;
- our self-worth as individuals;

- the need for community; and
- co-existence.

This is what the Reitz video and the xenophobic attacks have exposed about South Africans – the need to learn new values, attitudes and behaviours and the need to unlearn the old ones, and in this way beginning to develop a new leadership concept and cadre.

This is precisely where the University of the Free State and other universities in South Africa must play their role as places of learning and unlearning, places that can begin to develop a new kind of young leader who can provide hope and vision at the UFS, in Alex, in South Africa.

The young students who enter our campuses must learn tolerance and unlearn racism; they must learn respect and unlearn hatred; they must learn to embrace peace and unlearn violence. These are rather deep-seated values, attitudes and behaviours that must change (and I am mentioning only a few). The interventions that are required to change them don't just revolve around respecting difference or diversity – they go way beyond that – they imply a rewiring of the individual and of the national psyche.

Universities are well-placed for such leadership development. They provide a platform for academic debate and intellectual inquiry in the classroom. They can create an environment where the search for knowledge becomes a shared experience for white and black. They can support research and publish findings on these matters of individual attitudes and macro-social trends (although this is something universities have been criticised for not doing enough of). Universities can draw on international networks and resources. They can work in partnership with other organisations, whether from the public or private sector, or from civil society. This is a critical feature which is absolutely necessary if we also want to extend this programme to rewire our communities. After all, well-considered community interventions are going to be decisive to overcome the damage that has been done in Alexandra and elsewhere and to prevent such episodes in future.

At the University of the Free State, the proposal for some kind of institute for diversity and transformation leadership is to be welcomed. Such an institute can help to co-ordinate, energise and give impetus to developing a new generation of leader, who can espouse a new style of leadership as well.

But not only universities should seek to produce this new cadre of critical citizen. All institutions in our country (government, the private sector, civil society) must help to develop this new leadership – we need a national effort to turn our country into a leadership academy – that is the scale of the challenge we face. Other institutions, especially the faith-based institutions, have a vital role to play. In the past decades, they produced hundreds if not thousands of young leaders who were recruited into other spheres of leadership, including the anti-apartheid struggle. Wherever we can, we must create an environment where this new leadership can flourish.

Some say our society is leaderless and rudderless. Some say we are ungovernable and ungoverned. Clearly there has been a huge failure of the conventional political leadership that used to give direction to black communities in South Africa, pre-Polokwane and post-Polokwane. But other communities and institutions have been sailing blindly too, leaderless and rudderless, happy with the status quo and not realising the pressures that were building up from so many different quarters for real transformation. To move beyond this rather bleak scenario will require a new cadre of critical citizen with vision and imagination.

We need people with imagination who can re-imagine a future for the country, because the post 1994 "new South Africa" is not so new anymore and not so attractive – not to its own inhabitants and least of all to African immigrants right now. For sure, the rainbow nation is dead. Perhaps it died a long time ago – and what we have witnessed so far in 2008 is not its death, but the traumatic and bloody birth of something that will take its place. The pessimists are saying that it is the birth of a new age of barbarism. But perhaps we should hope for something more beautiful. That is the beauty we have to re-imagine.