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1. Introduction

1.1. General Context

This report is the result of the research been done by bachelor students at the Department of Communications at the University of Ghent, as part of the Workshop Audiovisual Media. The project has been facilitated by I. Devroe, L. De Vroey, M. Rodenburg and F. Saeys.

This research is part of a PhD thesis of I. Devroe, concerning the representation of ethnic minorities in the media. Besides that, it is part of eCLIPse, a European project in collaboration with Universities of Barcelona, Stavanger and Cologne.

The eCLIPse project intends to react at the biased representations that can be seen in the media nowadays. They often perpetuate prejudices and stereotypes related to racism, religion, gender, etc. With this project we want to encourage people (students) to change this tendency in a creative and critical manner, in order to achieve a positive image building. The eCLIPse project strongly believes in the new communication tool 'internet' to disseminate these alternative representations.

The project aims to achieve three goals:¹

- To enable young people to critically analyse media contents and to recognise biased images.
- To make sure that they can pass this critical attitude to the next generation.
- To generate a model that will empower next generations to create new and innovative material via alternative channels, like for example the internet.

¹ eCLIPse, Digital videoCLIPs for a Social Europe. Internet, (23 april 2004).

1.2. Aims and objectives

This study aims to serve two purposes. Firstly, for us, students of the Department of Communications, this is a 'learning process': an exercise in establishing and executing a research dealing with communication issues on an academically level. We can use our statistical and methodological knowledge practically. In addition, we learn to explore the different phases of researching. Above all, we learn to critically receive and analyse news messages on television.

Secondly, the research has an aim on itself. Primarily, we like to examine the representation of ethnic minorities in the media. More concretely, we want to analyse the content of the news reporting on television. This choice is based on the fact that media play a key role in society, which is the reconstruction of reality for the people that were absent at the news event.² There are still many people that are not interacting directly with ethnic minorities, for whom the mass media play a very important role. The way of representation of ethnic minorities has an impact on the acceptance or negligence of ethnic minorities.³ International studies do confirm this message. The audience has great confidence in what they receive from news messages. Often it is conceived as reality, the truth.⁴ Therefore, a balanced representation is very important.

This research does not exist in isolation. The department of Communications of the University of Ghent has a tradition of years' research concerning the representation of different groups in news bulletins. The result of these comprehensive studies tells us that ethnic cultural minorities are mainly negatively represented.⁵ It might be obvious that a multicultural society is accompanied with problems. However, the manner in which these issues are reported still needs a lot of attention. Several studies demonstrate that explicit racism does not occur anymore in the media. However, there is a continuation in the way ethnic minorities are represented: negative stereotyping, generalisations, lack of information and no recognition of the economic benefit of migration.⁶ Additionally, ethnic

² SCHLESINGER, P., *Putting 'Reality' Together*. Sage, London, 1988.

³ VAN GORP, B., *De massamedia als factor voor sociale cohesie*. In: TIMMERMAN, C., *Wanneer wordt vreemd, vreemd? De vreemde in beeldvorming, registratie en beleid*. Commissie Media (17/12/03), 2004.

⁴ MULLAN, B., *Consuming television*. Blackwell, Oxford, 1997.

⁵ D'HAENENS, L. & SAEYS, F. *Media & Multiculturalisme in Vlaanderen*. Academia Press, Gent, 1996, p. 151-155.

⁶ PEROTTI, A., *Medias-Immigration-Minorités. Une histoire qui vient de loin*. In: Cottle, S. (Ed.), *Ethnic minorities and the media*. Open University Press, Buckingham, 2000, p. 33-50.; BLOMMAERT, J. & VERSCHUEREN, J., *Debating Diversity. Analysing the discourse of tolerance*. Routledge, London, 1998.; TER WAL, J. (Ed.), *Racism and cultural diversity in the mass media. An overview of research and examples of good practise in the EU Member States 1995-2000*. EUMC, Vienna, 2002.; DEVROE, I. & SAEYS, F., *Allochtonen en aanverwante thema's in de Vlaamse pers*. Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap, 2002, jg. 30, nr. 2, p. 56-76.

minorities are hardly ever quoted, particularly when it concerns news items that are not directly related to non-native issues. If they are quoted, it is often very briefly.

From studies in the past some recommendations can be made⁷:

- Do only mention nationality, country of birth, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion or culture, if this is relevant for the message.
- Prevent unnecessary generalisations and polarisations.
- Be careful with terms, grammar of names, numbers and sources.
- Be critical with radical right-wing and racism.
- A report is not finished when it is written.

At the end of this report we will get in detail about these studies and recommendations. By analysing the content of the news bulletins we try to get an insight in the reporting about ethnic minorities in the news bulletins of the two major Flemish broadcasting companies, which are the public broadcaster TV1, facilitated by VRT (Flemish Radio and Television Broadcasting) and the private broadcaster VTM (Flemish Television Company), facilitated by VMMA (Flemish Media Company). The 7 pm news bulletin of TV1 is the main news bulletin of VRT. VTM is the only private broadcasting company that offers a more extensive news reporting. Both of them have a large audience. Therefore we can assume that the link between these news bulletins and the influence on the image of ethnic minorities within the society is a strong one.

2. Research questions

Primarily this study wants to answer this question: How are ethnic minorities represented in news bulletins of the two major Flemish television companies VTM (private) and VRT (public)? Are they reporting in an ethical correct way and do they take recommendations as presented in mentioned studies in consideration? In order to be able to answer this question, we categorise four main issues.

2.1 To what extent are ethnic minorities represented in the television news?

Firstly we like to examine to what extent ethnic minorities are represented in Flemish television. In what frequency do they appear in news bulletins of VRT and VTM?

On broadcast level we deal with the following question:

⁷ Ibid., p. 151-155.

- What is the average number of items related to ethnic minorities in each broadcast?

The following questions are raised on item level:

- To what extent are the news items that are reporting on ethnic minorities part of the main news?
- What is the average length of a non-native related item?
- Which themes are these items dealing with?
- Are ethnic minorities represented in specific non-native related themes only?

2.2 Are ethnic minorities sufficiently quoted in the news bulletins?

In addition, we like to inquire whether ethnic minorities get the opportunity to speak in news bulletins that are dealing about a non-native theme. It is very much possible that there is rather spoken about them or that natives are interviewed only.

- About which subjects are ethnic minorities speaking?
- Are ethnic minorities quoted if a certain subject is related to them?

2.3 How are ethnic minorities represented?

Previous studies often encountered generalisations in their reports made by journalists. We like to inquire whether ethnic minorities appear in Flemish news bulletins as a group or as individuals.

- Are ethnic minorities treated as a group or as individuals?

We look at how a non-native person can be identified or recognised (by the monitor). This identification can include several characteristics, such as clothing, specific behavior, certain features, skin color, names, etc.

- How do we recognise a person with a non-native origin?

2.4 Are there differences between the public TV1 and commercial VTM?

Finally we compare the two broadcasting companies that has been analysed. We like to find out whether they differ in terms of the mentioned factors. VTM is a private broadcaster, whilst TV1 is a public one. Accordingly, they might have different objectives.

VTM can survive because of its income generating commercials, which are dependent on its audience. As a result they need to reach a very broad audience.

Opposed to this, VRT is subsidized by the government, which means that they are restricted by a certain 'diversity agreement' between them and the government. One of their priorities for example is to provide qualitative information. The public broadcaster contains a 'Diversity Cell'⁸ that aims to promote integration of ethnic minorities in the program planning. The commercial or private broadcaster VTM is only restricted by general guidelines, related to issues such as the prevention of racism and xenophobia in their reporting.⁹

In other words, we can assume that differences exist between the news bulletins of both broadcasters. Therefore we query the following issues:

- Do both broadcasting companies pay equally attention to ethnic minorities in their news bulletins?
- Do they both quote ethnic minorities? And to what extent?
- Is there a difference between TV1 and VT in the way they present ethnic minorities?

3. Methodological Framework

3.1 The systematic quantitative content analysis

This research primarily inquires the way ethnic minorities are represented in national reporting, including the differences between the public and private broadcasting companies.

The method used is the systematic quantitative content analysis. With this tool researchers gather a relatively large number of statistics related to many entities, making use of an observation tool or instrument that is consistently applied¹⁰.

⁸ VRT, Diversiteit & Actie. Internet, (10 mei 2004).

⁹ NEELS, L., VOORHOOF, D. MARTENS, H & CASTILLE, V. Medialex: Selectie van bronnen van de media- en informatiewetgeving. Kluwer, Diegem, 2000.

¹⁰ HÜTTNER, H., REBCKSTORF, K. & WESTER, F.. Onderzoekstypen in de communicatiewetenschap. Kluwer, Alphen aan den Rijn, 2001, p. 135.

3.2 The observation instrument

The systematical nature of the content analysis becomes clear in the well developed observation instrument¹¹. In this research coding grids are used as a tool for observation. This coding system was available, since the department of Communications at the University of Ghent has been part of a long tradition in the research about the representation of different groups in the media. This tool has been developed by I. Devroe as part of her PhD. During this study the coding system has continued to develop.

3.3 The selection

The scale of the quantitative part of the used technique is sufficient, regarding the number of material for these research questions and its preference for statistical analysis.¹²

This study has chosen several news bulletins from seven o'clock of the Flemish channels TV1 and VTM, considering their largest audience in Flanders¹³. Four constructed weeks were created (August 1 2003 till 4th of March 2004)¹⁴ in order to prevent domination of a certain event or skewed reporting. In total 56 news bulletin has been closely monitored, 28 news bulletins of TV1 and 28 of VTM. Although this number of news bulletins is still limited, it will tell us enough in order to give valid answers.

3.4 Data gathering

3.4.1 Coding training and data gathering

Before the actual monitoring could begin, the monitors received coding training. They learnt how to use the research instrument. In addition, the tool could be tested and clarified where necessary. In order to avoid differences in interpretation about the items, the news bulletins has been coded by two monitors and consequently compared. In 77,4 percent of the news bulletins they coded exactly the same, which is a relatively good outcome.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 135.

¹² HÜTTNER, H., REBCKSTORF, K. & WESTER, F., op.cit., p. 135.

¹³ During the week of 19th till 25th of April 2004, 976.166 people were viewing the 9 PM news broadcast of TV1. VTM reached an average number of 731.304 each day during its 9 o'clock newscast.

¹⁴ The four constructed weeks were as follow: 1, 9, 17, 25/08/03; 2, 10, 18, 26/09/03; 4, 12, 20, 28/10/03; 5, 13, 21, 29/11/03; 7, 15, 23, 31/12/03; 8, 16, 24/01/04; 1, 9, 17, 25/02/04; 4/03/04.

3.4.2 Problems with the gathering of the items

The main problem is the subjectivity of some variables. Whereas in the first place we decided to solve this by having group discussions, we eventually disregarded the items that were monitored differently during the analysis.

3.4.3 Problems regarding to the concept 'ethnic minorities'

An item has been selected as soon as it was dealing with one or more ethnic minorities. Therefore the news item did not necessarily have to concern a 'typical non-native theme'. It was even selected when, for example, some one of Turkish origin was interviewed about a neutral subject. The non-native did not need to be visible on the screen. The item was even selected when they just spoke about that person.

We define the term 'immigrant' or 'non-native' as: people originated from a country outside West-Europe and/or their descendents living in Belgium, disregarding permanent, illegal or legal status. Children of intercultural parents form part of this group as well. Subjectivity amongst the monitors still played a role, despite clear agreements and adjustments around this selection. Ethnic minorities were identified based on their clothing or certain behaviour, or by mentioning their name or nationality. After some discussion it was necessary to combine those characteristics.

Another aspect of the research was to inquire whether ethnic minorities are visible in a subject related to ethnic minorities specifically. We encountered some problems here as well. For example, it was not always clear whether violence did have racist causes or not.

4. Results

We analysed 56 news bulletins in total. 46 news bulletins contained one or more non-native items. A non-native item means that in one way or the other a non-native plays a role. These items (55 in total: 30 items VRT/TV1, and 25 items VTM) have been analysed.

The results of this analysis of 55 news items do not allow further generalization, thus these results are only valid for the news bulletins and news items analysed in this research.

4.1 Is there sufficient attention for ethnic minorities in news bulletins?

a. The number of non-native items per news bulletin

This study tell us that averagely each news bulletin contains 1,3 non-native items. 31 news bulletins (55,4%) brings only one topic about ethnic minorities. Ten news bulletins, which is 17,9%, do not contain any item that is related to a non-native theme. The maximum number of items that covered ethnic minorities is five. That only occurred in one news bulletin (1,8%).

b. The average length of a non-native item

The average length of a non-native item is 137,35 seconds.

c. Subjects in items correlated with ethnic minorities

When we have a look at the central subjects of the items in which ethnic minorities are represented, it is remarkable that half of them (28 items, 50,9%) deal about 'crime, regulation and control'. 16 items (29,1%) concerns 'politics, government and policy'. Ethnic minorities are almost invisible in themes related to 'human interest' (1 item), 'economics, finances and social affairs' (1 item) and 'health and welfare' (1 item).

Table 1: Central subjects in items that are related to ethnic minorities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Human interest	1	1,8	1,8	1,8
	Economical activity, finances and social welfare	1	1,8	1,8	3,6
	Education and development	2	3,6	3,6	7,3
	Politics, government and policy	16	29,1	29,1	36,4
	Crime, regulation and control	28	50,9	50,9	87,3
	Accidents and disasters	2	3,6	3,6	90,9
	Health and welfare	1	1,8	1,8	92,7

Environment, nature and mobility	2	3,6	3,6	96,4
Religion	2	3,6	3,6	100,0
Total	55	100,0	100,0	

d. Items specifically dealing about 'non native themes'

As mentioned above, a 'theme related to ethnic minorities' is an item that specifically relates to ethnic minorities, like for example asylum issues, integration or racism.

The analysis shows that 32 items (58,2%) deals with an non-native related theme. The most prevalent theme is asylum issues (10 items, 18,2%). 'Sexuality and relationships' and 'social affairs' both occur in only one item (1,8 %). 23 of the 55 selected items (41,8%) do not communicate about a particular non-native theme.

We can conclude from the figures that the television news does pay attention to ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, we can state that they are not presented in a variety of themes. 'Crime, law and control' is a too dominant subject in these items. Almost 60 % of the ethnic minorities related items deals with a specific non-native theme. We can perceive this in two ways. On the one hand it is a positive fact that essential events in the non-native community are reported in the television newsbulletin. On the other hand it would be better to link ethnic minorities with more general themes as well, like science and entertainment.

4.2 Are ethnic minorities sufficiently quoted in news items?

a. Relation ethnic minorities/natives in the newsbulletins

Generally speaking, 107 persons are quoted in the total 55 items, which are 32 non natives (29,9%) opposed to 75 natives (70,1 %).

b. Topics in which ethnic minorities are quoted

In the 55 items, 32 non natives are quoted in total. They are mostly quoted in items about asylum: 7 non-natives that are interviewed (21,9%) are speaking about this topic.

6 of the 32 non-native interviewees (18,75%) are speaking about religion. None of the non-natives gets to speak about 'social affairs'.

The table below (2) will give an overview of non-native interviewees in relation to subjects specifically related to ethnic minorities.

Table 2: Representation of ethnic minorities about specific subjects related to immigrants. * How many non-natives are interviewed? Cross tabulation

		Non-natives quoted	
		Frequency	Percent
<i>Representation of ethnic minorities about specific subjects related to ethnic minorities</i>	Equality, integration, etc.	3	9,38
	Development, schooling, education	2	6,25
	Sexuality and relationships	2	6,25
	Social affairs	0	0,00
	Violence by natives towards ethnic minorities	1	3,13
	Religion	6	18,75
	Ethnic minorities and labour	1	3,13
	Asylum issues	7	21,88
	Other	3	9,38
	No non-native related theme	7	21,88
Total amount of non-natives quoted		32	100,00

c. Are ethnic minorities speaking themselves when they are subject of the item?

Generally speaking, nobody has been interviewed in 14 items. Only 32 of 107 interviewees (29,9%) are non-native. When somebody is speaking, natives are speaking only in 19 of the 41 news items. Ethnic minorities are only speaking in 6 of the 41 news items in which somebody is quoted.

Table 3 shows the relation between the number of items that make use of interviews with ethnic minorities, versus interviews with natives.

Table 3: Relation non-natives versus natives quoted * tv channel Crosstabulation

		Tv channel	
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			VRT	VTM	<u>Total</u>
Relation non-native versus native speakers	Only natives quoted	Count	9	10	19
		% within tv channel	39,1%	55,6%	46,3%
	More natives than non-natives quoted	Count	4	3	7
		% within tv channel	17,4%	16,7%	17,1%
	Equally non-natives as natives quoted	Count	2	3	5
		% within tv channel	8,7%	16,7%	12,2%
	More natives than ethnic minorities quoted	Count	3	1	4
	% within tv channel	13,0%	5,6%	9,8%	
	Only non-natives speaking	Count	5	1	6
		% within tv channel	21,7%	5,6%	14,6%
Total		Count	23	18	41
		% within tvzender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

At first glance, one could say that ethnic minorities are seldom quoted. In any case, ethnic minorities are far less quoted than natives are. When we look at the population of Belgium, natives are relatively more represented than ethnic minorities. Therefore it is logical that ethnic minorities are less quoted. The problem is that their picture is very one-sided. When they are quoted, they speak about a non-native related topic (asylum, religion). It seems that they are not allowed to speak in television news bulletins about general themes, such as science or environmental issues. This study tells as well that one speaks about ethnic minorities, without giving them the chance to give their opinion, whilst natives are heard even more.

4.3 How are ethnic minorities portrayed?

- a. To what extent are ethnic minorities visible on the screen?

Ethnic minorities are visible on the screen in 32 of 55 selected items (58,2%). In 34, 5 % of the news items ethnic minorities are not visible, or the report was not using pictures at all. In other cases (19 items, 7,3%), the story came with a picture, but ethnic minorities were not clearly recognised.

b. How are ethnic minorities represented?

One can approach ethnic minorities as a group, labeling them the 'non-native', or rather approaches them on an individual level. If one approaches ethnic minorities as a group, one might possibly convey strong generalizations for a group as a whole, based on personal characteristics.

In 22 of the 55 selected items concerning ethnic minorities (41,5%), the report speaks about a group, as demonstrated in the table below. In 21 items (39,6%) one approaches ethnic minorities as one or more individuals. 7 items (13,2%) combine these two approaches.

Table 4: group or individuals

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Group	22	40,0	41,5	41,5
	One or more individuals	21	38,2	39,6	81,1
	Both	7	12,7	13,2	94,3
	Non applicable	3	5,5	5,7	100,0
	Total	53	96,4	100,0	
Missing	99	2	3,6		
Total		55	100,0		

c. Identification as a non-native

Most of the time, in 19 items (36,5%), ethnic minorities are recognized because of their skin color, face, name or knowledge beforehand of the monitor.

None of the ethnic minorities could be identified only by their clothing or specific behavior. In 14 items (26,9%) they were identified because of a combination of these categories. A number of 19 of the coded items (36,5%) contained no images of ethnic minorities or images of natives only.

We need to be careful with this: the identification of a non-native person is always dependent on the subjectivity of the one that is monitoring the items.

Ethnic minorities are presented in more than half of the non-native related items on the screen as well. This is a positive fact. Ethnic minorities are equally treated like a group as well as like individuals. Thus we can conclude that in a major part of the newsbulletins attention has been paid to the way ethnic minorities are represented. One has tried not to perpetuate the so- called them/us view.

4.4 The public (VRT) versus the private (VTM) channel

The results of the analysis mentioned above give us an overview about the representation of ethnic minorities in the news (both VRT and VTM). This part wants to inquire whether there are differences in representation of ethnic minorities between TV1 news bulletins and the private channel VTM. We need to emphasise that we are aware of the fact that 55 items is a too small number to make significant statements about the differences between the two broadcast companies. Nevertheless, these results will give us some indication.

4.4.1 Do both channels pay equally attention to ethnic minorities?

- a. Is there a difference between TV1 and VTM regarding the number of non-native items per news bulletin?

The results do not show a big difference between the average numbers of non-native items per news bulletin of the private or public broadcaster. News bulletins of VTM report about an average of 1,29 non-native subjects per news bulletin, opposed to 1,32 in the news bulletins of TV1.

Initially, it seems that they pay equally attention to ethnic minorities. However, the analysis of the data tells us that TV1 brings 3 news bulletins (of 28 TV1 news bulletins, which is 11 %) that do not contain a subject dealing about ethnic minorities. VTM even broadcasts 7 news bulletins (of 28 VTM news bulletins, which is 25 %) that do not relate in any aspect to ethnic minorities.

- b. Is there any difference between TV1 and VTM concerning the average duration of a non-native item?

There have been no differences regarding to non-natives items between VRT and VTM. The average duration of these items are at both broadcasters about 137 seconds.

c. Is there any difference between VRT and VTM regarding the topics that are dealt with in non-natives items?

At both broadcasting companies the category 'crime, regulation and control' is most prevalent. VTM covers 56% of the items about this issue. This differs about 9% with TV1, that reports about this issue related to ethnic minorities in 46,6 % of the cases. Another dominant theme is 'politics, government and policy'; 33 % of the selected reporting by the public broadcaster TV1 deals about this topic, opposed to VTM, that reports 9 % less about this (24%).

Table 5: Central subjects

			Tv channel		Total
			VRT	VTM	
The central topic of the news item	Human interest	Count	0	1	1
		% within tvzender	,0%	4,0%	1,8%
	Economical activity, finances and social affairs	Count	1	0	1
		% within tv channel	3,3%	,0%	1,8%
	Education and development	Count	1	1	2
		% within tv channel	3,3%	4,0%	3,6%
		% of Total			
	Politics, government and policy	Count	10	6	16
		% within tv channel	33,3%	24,0%	29,1%
	Crime, Regulation and control	Count	14	14	28
		% within tv channel	46,7%	56,0%	50,9%
	Accidents and disasters	Count	1	1	2
		% within tv channel	3,3%	4,0%	3,6%
	Health and welfare	Count	1	0	1
		% within tv channel	3,3%	,0%	1,8%
	Environment, nature and mobility	Count	1	1	2
		% within tv channel	3,3%	4,0%	3,6%
	Religion	Count	1	1	2
% within tv channel		3,3%	4,0%	3,6%	
Total		Count	30	25	55

	% within tv channel	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
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VRT and VTM usually broadcast an equal amount of non-native items, but they divide the items very differently. The way in which non-native items occur in VRT news bulletins is much better than VTM spreads these items.

Both channels have the same focus on specific subjects. They both tend to report on 'crime, regulation and control'. This confirms a tendency in television news bulletins in general: more attention to criminality.

4.4.2 Do both channels (TV1 and VTM) give ethnic minorities the opportunity to speak in their news bulletins?

According to TV1, the analysis tells us that 37,7% of the interviewees are non-natives (20 of the 53). There is almost a double amount of items that quote only natives (9 items) opposed to items that quote ethnic minorities only (5 items).

22,2% of the interviewees on VTM (12 of the 54) are ethnic minorities. No more than one item quotes ethnic minorities only, whilst for 10 of the selected items natives are speaking.

Summarizing, we can state that the news service of TV1 reports on more non-native items *as well as* makes use of interviews with more ethnic minorities compared to VTM. Especially the difference in the amount of interviews is remarkable: the public broadcaster is interviewing ethnic minorities almost twice as much as the commercials. Nevertheless, both of them still need to put effort in letting ethnic minorities speak.

4.4.3 Is there a difference between TV1 and VTM in appearance of ethnic minorities on the screen?

a. Is there a difference in the quantity of appearance of ethnic minorities?

In 17 of the 30 selected items (56,7%) of TV1 ethnic minorities appear on the screen. In 9 items (30%) ethnic minorities are invisible. In case of 4 items (13,3%), it was not clear whether ethnic minorities were visible.

15 of the 25 coded items of VTM (60%) screen ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities are invisible in 10 items (40%). Opposed to TV1, there are no items wherein there were difficulties to identify the origin of the person.

b. Is there a difference in approach towards ethnic minorities?

There is a difference between the public and private broadcaster in the portrayal on the screen of ethnic minorities. In news bulletins of VTM, ethnic minorities are merely represented as an individual (11 of the 25 items, 45,8 %), opposed to TV1 (10 of the 30 items, 34,5 %). In 14 of the 30 selected news items of TV1 (48,3%) ethnic minorities were represented as a group.

c. Is there a difference in identification of ethnic minorities in the news bulletins?

None of the items of TV1 identifies ethnic minorities on clothing or specific behavior only (category 1). In 33,3% of the items (9 of the 30 items) they could be recognized by their skin color or appearance, name or by prior knowledge of the monitor (category 2). In one third of the selected items there were no pictures presented with the news item.

VTM provides us with a different picture. Where ethnic minorities were identified mainly based on category 2 (10 of the 25 items, 40%); not more than 20% (5 of the 25 items) recognized ethnic minorities by a combination of category of 1 and 2. As well as with TV1, ethnic minorities were never identified by their clothing or specific behavior. 10 of the 25 items (40%) lack any picture or ethnic minorities were even invisible on the screen.

Ethnic minorities are more visible in news bulletins of VTM. The private broadcasting company approaches ethnic minorities more often as an individual and they can be seen more frequently on the screen as well. Nevertheless, we should be cautious with drawing these conclusions, whilst in 13,3 % of the items at TV1 ethnic minorities are not clearly recognisable on television. This might result in a skewed picture of the representation of ethnic minorities in the news. On the one hand one could regard this positively. This might mean that the report was not intentionally representing a non-native differently than it would represent a native person. On the other hand it could have had a very different reason for making unclear distinctions.

5. Illustrations

In order to illustrate our content analysis, we selected a few news items from the 7 o'clock pm news bulletin of TV1 as well as from VTM. These examples intend to illustrate our findings.

The selection is based on a group discussion with the monitors. The text below will give a brief summary of this. The group discussion was accompanied by a qualitative analysis based on the questionnaire by Mira Media.¹⁵ (see for qualitative analysis: chapter 8, I)

We chose to select four items: (1) a compilation of items where ethnic minorities are associated with crime, (2) an item concerning around illegal migration issues, (3) an item about a Moroccan immigrant that is portrayed in a very stereotypical way and finally, (4) a positive item about one of the most important feasts in the Islam, the sacrificial feast.

5.1 Fragment 1: a compilation about crime (TV1/VTM)¹⁶

It is remarkable that items around ethnic minorities are often correlated with crime. Ethnic minorities are portrayed as the offender, referring to their nationality, without any background information. Our first example is a compilation of this reporting.

A descent, objective reporting prescribes that nationality only needs to be mentioned if this is relevant information. It is hard to define relevance; referring to nationality can complement useful background information, or can be a matter of secondary importance. We recommend that, if nationality is mentioned, it should be complemented with background information.

5.2 Fragment 2: illegals in Zeebrugge (TV1: 05/11/03)

Analysis shows that reporting about a non-native related theme, often deals about asylum issues. TV1 broadcasted an item concerning refugees that try to escape to Britain

¹⁵ Mira Media is an independent co-operative body founded in 1986 by the major national migrant organisations in the Netherlands. Mira Media's main goal is to achieve more diversity and 'ethnic' pluralism by supporting the participation of ethnic minorities in radio, television and the interactive media. Mira Media has no broadcasting time but closely co-operates with Dutch national and local (public and commercial) broadcasters (www.miramedia.nl).

¹⁶ Fragments: VRT /TV1 (21/11/03), VTM (21/11/03, 26/09/03, 16/01/04)

via Belgium. Authorities want to arrest the refugees and give them shelter in a closed asylum centre.

This news bulletin confirms the fact that often ethnic minorities do not speak for themselves, but are spoken about. On the contrary, natives get a lot of opportunities to communicate their message. Language could be a barrier in this case. In addition, ethnic minorities that do speak have been asked too simple questions. Noteworthy; in this case they are portrayed as a homogeneous group, instead of on an individual basis. Above all, no background information is given, despite the fact that this could be very valuable with such a complex issue.

5.3 Fragment 3: 40 years of migration (TV1: 17/02/04)

One of the news bulletins of TV1 recalls on a migration agreement between Morocco and Belgium. The item presents a Moroccan man that migrated to Belgium 40 years ago. This could have been a positive example, notwithstanding the fact that it continues to perpetuate stereotypes. The man is portrayed as a passive person that makes tea and speaks faulty Dutch. Despite the fact that we see an individual, this man tends to represent 'the non-native' as a homogenous group. The labeling is completed when the man is examined about the name of the Belgium prime minister.

5.4 Fragment 4: the sacrificial feast (VTM: 01/02/04)

Although news bulletins do not pay attention to Christian feasts that often; this item brings the sacrificial feast of the Muslim community extensively. Nevertheless, we consider this as a positive fact. In our society ethnic minorities are often regarded as 'the other'. In order to promote integration in our multicultural community, it would be interesting to inform natives about the Islam, under the condition that they are not presented in a negative fashion.

This item reports about the ritual sacrificial feast. Cities provide the Muslim community to slaughter their sheep in a certain hall, since slaughtering at home is forbidden. We could label this item as integration, equality, etc. It tells us about the differences between cultures and the problems around it.

Ethnic minorities do have the opportunity to speak in this report. It is exceptional that the items reports about a compromise between cultures, instead of emphasizing on the conflicts that are often arising.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study intended to answer certain questions around the representation of ethnic minorities in the news bulletins of VRT and VTM. Some significant findings will be summarized below.

6.1 To what extent are ethnic minorities represented in the news?

Firstly we wanted to inquire whether ethnic minorities were sufficiently represented in Flemish news television broadcasts. Regarding to this thesis, we can conclude as follow:

- Ethnic minorities are not disregarded in the news. Every news bulletins brings an average of 1,3 non-native items.
- So called non-native items are comparable in length with other news items. Thus, they are not treated differently as such.
- An important finding is that half of the non-native themes about 'crime, regulation and control'. A second important category is 'politics, government and policy' (29,1 %). With regard to 'human interest', 'economics', finances and social affairs' and health and welfare' ethnic minorities are seldom heard.
- When we look at items that relate to ethnic minorities, we find out that almost 60 % reports about themes related to ethnic minorities, with an emphasis on asylum issues.
- Almost 60 % of the items that present on or more ethnic minorities are not part of the main news.

6.2 Are ethnic minorities satisfactorily quoted in news bulletins?

Furthermore, we wanted to look at the extent to which ethnic minorities get the opportunity to speak in news items about non-native issues.

- Ethnic minorities can speak mostly if the news bulletin reports specific themes related to ethnic minorities, like for example asylum issues.
- Not more than 29,9% of all interviewees are non-native (32 of the 107 interviewees). It frequently happens that natives are quoted, even if the issue relates to ethnic minorities.

6.3 How are ethnic minorities portrayed in the news bulletins?

Thirdly, we asked the question in what way ethnic minorities come to the fore, either as a group or as an individual. We liked to know as well on what grounds ethnic minorities could be identified.

- Ethnic minorities are represented as much as a group as an individual. We cannot state that there is a generalization as such.
- If there are images of ethnic minorities, they mostly can be recognised by their skin color, appearance, and name or knowledge beforehand, possibly in combination with their clothing and specific behavior.

6.4 Are there any differences between the public (TV1) and commercial (VTM) broadcasting companies?

Finally, we searched for differences of note between the commercial (VTM) and the public (TV1) broadcasting companies regarding to the way they are represented in the news bulletins. Again, we need to point out the fact that this study does not intend to draw further conclusions from this, since a limited number of items has been analysed.

- There is no substantial difference between VT1 and VTM in the average number of items related to ethnic minorities. Yet, the items are better proportioned within TV1 than within VTM.
- VRT and VTM do not differ in relation to the themes of the news items that present ethnic minorities. Both channels focus on 'crime, regulation and control'.
- TV1 interviews considerably more ethnic minorities than VTM does.

- VTM approaches ethnic minorities quite more often as individuals, whereas VRT regards ethnic minorities mostly as a group.

6.5 Research context and recommendations

As mentioned above: this study does not exist in isolation. Since the nineties the department of Communications of the University of Ghent systematically researched the representation of ethnic minorities in the media¹⁷.

Below we incorporate some results of our research in the context of earlier conclusions and findings. We do not restrict ourselves to television news, but will explore as well to what extent certain tendencies can be seen in print media.

For methodological reasons the results of the consequent studies are not always comparable. Still, we come across some remarkable tendencies: not only within one medium, but across different media as well.

Like studies of the past showed us, we currently do not encounter apparent racism in television reporting.¹⁸ However, can we conclude that nothing is wrong in the representation of ethnic minorities in the Flemish television news? Only when we analyse the message in a more systematic, detailed way, we can make statements about the current state the representation and its evolution.

D'Haenens analyses in 1996 the 'multicultural society in the Flemish television news bulletin' and concludes that crime is a prominent subject¹⁹. In addition we need to bring across that nowadays, in 2004; 'crime, regulation and control' seems to correlate closely with ethnic minorities. Since d'Haenens includes foreign news as well, we can not make statements about a possible evolution. Nevertheless, this is part of a certain tendency: the regular reporting about crime and law (cfr. Dutroux)²⁰. In Flemish print media ethnic minorities are often related to criminality as well²¹.

¹⁷ DEVROE, I. & SAEYS, F., Allochtonen en aanverwante thema's in de Vlaamse pers. Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap, jg. 30, nr. 2, 2002, p. 56-76.; D'HAENENS, L. & SAEYS, F. (ed), Media & Multiculturalisme in Vlaanderen. Academia Press, Gent, 1996.

¹⁸ CROMBEZ, B., Media en allochtonen: een literatuurstudie. In: D'HAENENS, L. & SAEYS, F. (ed), Media & Multiculturalisme in Vlaanderen. Academia Press, Gent, 1996, p. 10.

¹⁹ D'HAENENS, L., De multiculturele samenleving in het televisiejournaal. In: D'HAENENS, L. & SAEYS, F., op.cit., p. 121.

²⁰ DE SWERT, K., Tabloïdisering van het televisienieuws in Vlaanderen tussen 1993 en 2000. ongepubliceerde working-paper, Universiteit Antwerpen, 2003.

²¹ DEVROE, I. & SAEYS, F., op.cit., p. 72.

Opposed to print media, ethnic minorities do hardly appear in the television news when it concerns less serious subjects, like human interest and entertainment²². If television news aims to show a more balanced image of the multicultural society, journalists would report about non natives as the 'ordinary person in the street' as well. In other words, they would not portray them as a criminal or non-native, but as a visitor of the *Film festival of Ghent* or a concert of *Britney Spears*.

Regarding to this, D'Haenens describes it as a mere 'scenic element': they are on the screen, but hardly ever as an individual with an own opinion²³. In that sense, the equal relation that we stated between items that present ethnic minorities as a group and items that present them as an individual, might be a positive sign.

To bring this to an end, we like to refer to certain recommendations from previous research²⁴. These has been formulated in dialogue with the *Algemene Vereniging van de Beroepsjournalisten in België* (AVBB), (the union of journalists in Belgium) and the *Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding* (Centre for Equality and against Racism) ;

- 1 Nationality, country of birth, ethnic origins, skin color, religion or culture should only be allowed to be mentioned if this information is relevant to the report.

We can not make any statements about the relevance of mentioning these characteristics in the current television news. From focus groups with monitors becomes clear that nationality, origin or religion (e.g. Muslim terrorism) is still mentioned without context or background information. This recommendation is in the meanwhile included in the *Stylebook* of the VRT-television newsroom that prescribes guidelines for journalism practice.

- 2 Irresponsible generalisations and polarisations should be avoided.

Ethnic minorities are evenly presented as individuals as like a group. Thus we can not state that there occurs a continuous, irresponsible generalizations. Nevertheless, journalists should be constantly aware and treat ethnic minorities as much as possible as individuals.

²² Ibid., p. 64.

²³ D'HAENENS, L., op.cit., p. 121.

²⁴ D'HAENENS, L. & SAEYS, F. (ed), op.cit., p. 151-155.

3 A report is not finished when it is written.

It is advisable that journalists continue to be critical towards their own reporting. Obviously the representation of ethnic minorities is not completely dependent of the attitude of the individual journalist. Daily practice has an impact on the reporting as well.²⁵ The tight deadline for example and the existing work pressure does not allow much self reflection. Additionally, the pronunciation of ethnic minorities sometimes forces the journalist to make use of native speakers in the studio.

4 Mainstreaming of ethnic minorities in daily reports

Finally, news editors should aim to integrate ethnic minorities in daily reporting, that is not part of being non-native. In other words, one should aim to mainstream non-native topics in the news. The 'Vademecum', published by 'Forum voor Etnische Minderheden', a forum for ethnic minorities, can be useful. The forum intends to encourage journalists to use other sources and experts and interview non-native experts instead.

²⁵ VAN DEN BERG, H., Geciteerd in: CROMBEZ, B., op.cit., p. 12.

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8. Monitoring tool

This research can be used as an advocacy tool for a better representation of ethnic minorities or non-natives in the media. This research has been extensive but not exhaustive. Media practitioners are changing; news values are changing; media landscape is changing and consequently the reflection of the ongoing developing society itself. Therefore one should be aware of what we consume and communicate.

The research done by the students of audiovisual media, department Communications of University of Ghent, has a quantitative approach. In addition, the selection of the items in chapter 5 wanted to illustrate the findings. These illustrations could be used as examples as well as a tool to screen the representation of ethnic minorities in the media, using a qualitative approach. Below one can find both tools, quantitative as well as qualitative. They are meant to be a starting point and can be adjusted to the particular situation in each country and to the specific research purposes. It serves as a guideline and can be extended. In general, the quantitative method used in this research, focuses on four levels: within the news bulletin (what are the topics), within the news item (how are these topics presented), about whom they are dealing (how are they represented and what are the difference between reporting when ethnic minorities play a role), and who is speaking or interviewed in the items.

Using a quantitative approach has its advantages. Having these results enables us to generalize. We do not only make statements about the sample as such, about the material we analysed, but the sample even represents more of a whole. It would be suitable with fundamental academic research as well as in research focused on policy or action. In the context of fundamental research one would use systematic-quantitative content analyses in order to describe a situation and to make an overview, based on existing theories or to assess hypotheses that have been developed in an exploring stage. With regard to policy- or action driven research it is often very important to execute quantitative research on a large scale when one wants to draw attention to a problem, especially in order to argue against the comments that one might have received that the examples have been used when it suited its results.

The qualitative or interpretative way has its advantages as well; it can even be the most appropriate in certain circumstances. In the first place, obviously when there has been hardly any research or theory available. In that case we should make use of a qualitative approach in order to discover the concepts that are noteworthy to explore any further. Nevertheless, it is interesting as well to use a qualitative method that is complementing

the systematic quantitative research. To look into certain aspects, so that one is able to ask questions about how and why, make statements about causes and context, able to make nuances. ²⁶

These monitoring tools want to offer both possibilities. To monitor the representation of ethnic minorities in the media critically, will give us a strong tool to advocate for visibility of ethnic minorities and higher quality of journalism.

The quantitative and qualitative monitoring guides, which can be found in the appendix, can be adjusted to the context and needs of the specific countries.

²⁶ Speech during the eCLIPSe Media Forum by Prof. Dr. F. Saeys, Barcelona, May 2004.

Appendix

I Quantitative: monitoring guide

II Qualitative: topics/questions