



## A study of intercultural communication and integration through the media in Namibia

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## FOREWORD

In 2003, the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) launched the Public Dialogue Centre, which aims to stimulate public debate in a non-partisan manner through carrying out research; organising public lectures and panel debates; and publishing volumes, reference books and occasional papers on a wide range of issues of national interest.

The Mentorship Programme attempts to contribute to academic capacity-building among students at Namibia's tertiary institutions. In order to also contribute to the widening of Namibia's local research base, the Programme aims at encouraging students to conduct research on contemporary social and political issues and compile reports on their findings. The research paper is then considered for publication as an issue of the NID's occasional paper series *Analyses & Views*. In cooperation with the relevant academic departments at Namibia's tertiary institutions, lecturers have been requested to supervise and oversee research projects carried out by the students. The aims and objectives of the Programme are the improvement of communication between qualified scholars, promising academic talents, and the Namibian public, and the promotion of a new generation of Namibian academics. Promising academic talents will gain experience in conducting research, compiling and publishing results, and presenting their findings to the public.

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## ABSTRACT

On 21 March 2006, Namibians celebrated their 16th Independence Day after abolishing the apartheid regime as well as its racist and separating laws and policies in 1990. Nevertheless, Namibia still faces the challenges of reconciliation and integration of different ethnic groups on a social level.

The study examines to what extent the media influences and promotes cultural diversity, integration and nation-building in Namibia, in order to understand the behaviour models that are produced by the media.

To this end, the representation of different ethnic groups were studied, as well as the ethnic roles that are displayed in two soap operas – *When you are mine* and *Generations* – shown on national television by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (nbc).

The study focused on teachers as a research population, as they are mediators between media and children. While the media might influence their own opinions, teachers have the opportunity to change and develop children's minds and opinions. Among the key findings were that teachers who watched soap operas tended to watch more local programmes and were more aware of intercultural relations, and that awareness of intercultural relations in Namibia was influenced by many different factors.



## 1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The San are assumed to have been the earliest inhabitants of Namibia, while many other ethnic groups settled in the country over time. The German Government proclaimed Lüderitz a protectorate in 1884, and soon extended their control over all of what was then South West Africa. After World War I, South Africa administered the country as a mandated territory. However, after 1945, when the mandate expired, South Africa refused to relinquish control over the territory. While the United Nations (UN) who assumed direct responsibility over the territory in 1996, renamed it Namibia in 1968, and recognised the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), South Africa continued to administer the country as South West Africa.

SWAPO started a guerrilla war for independence in 1966, but only on 21 March 1990 was political independence finally granted. Renamed the Swapo Party of Namibia, the former resistance movement won the first free elections held under UN supervision, and its leader, Sam Nujoma, became the new republic's first president ([namibianhistory.com](http://namibianhistory.com)).

Namibia is a country with a very diverse and heterogeneous population. As explained by Prah (1993), the population is comprised of different ethnic groups that speak a variety of languages and form separate ethnic communities. Within these groups are subgroupings based on culture, language and ethnicity. The integration of all these different groups is often referred to as nation-building (ibid.:18).

It is important to examine whether the media promotes the process of nation-building, as it is declared a media objective in Namibia's Information Policy (GRN 1990a) and referred to as the creation of a feeling of unity (ibid.).

The apartheid regime divided people in Namibia into different groups on the basis of race and ethnicity, and made these divisions into law (Kober 1997). As a consequence, Namibia is still dominated by racial and ethnic awareness.

The apartheid regime excluded anyone, that was not white, from having any political or economic influence, and systematically introduced segregation, justifying it as the protection of white biological and cultural supremacy (Levinson 1994). This ideological system was associated with racial separation in all spheres of life, including the restriction to certain living areas in accordance to one's racial category (Du Pre 1992). As a result, many of the suburbs in Windhoek today are still home to a predominant racial or ethnic group. Furthermore, social integration beyond one's ethnic or racial group remains a problem.

If there are limited real-life inter-ethnic relations, the media can play a vital role, as it might replace real-life experiences (Brown Graves 1999; Fujioka 1997).

Most of the research on the topic has been done in the United States. Even if the Namibian society differs from its American counterpart, they both face similar problems of integrating the different groups. Moreover, series and movies from developed



countries – especially from the United States – are taking a lot of screen time on the television (TV) service of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (nbc). This forces us to take into consideration the effect of these programmes on Namibian society, on their views on their own country, and on Namibian identity.

### 1.1 Definition of the problem

Namibia's Information Policy (GRN 1990a) declares nation-building a media objective. Moreover, Article 23 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (GRN 1990b) prohibits any racial discrimination, racial practice, or ideology of apartheid. However, different racial and ethnic groups in Namibia are still separated on a personal level and, often, they do not socialise. This research, therefore, examines if the media is really promoting intercultural relations, cultural diversity and integration – and, hence, nation-building. For that purpose it was essential to assess the representation of cultural diversity in the media, and how the media sets out to deliberately build reconciliation and a sense of nationhood.

The research focuses on Namibian media, which includes all organisations such as television, radio, and newspapers that provide information to the public (Langscheidt-Longman 1995). Research is more specifically focused on nbc TV.

At the outset, it is also important to establish the difference between race, ethnicity and culture, as they are often used synonymously.

Ethnicity and culture are closely related. Culture can be understood as

the context in which an individual lives in a society (Cull 1995), including history, language, dress, religion and way of life. Intercultural relations are described as the relations of different groups, who define themselves as different on the basis of culture (Worchel 2005). Nevertheless, Bekker (1993) states that "Colour (race) tends to become an important indicator or marker of group difference, in societies, where class differences and colour differences have come to overlap" (Bekker 1993:18).

The emotionally loaded concept of race is difficult to define and ethnicity is often used instead. According to Jan Pieterse (1995), race as a historical context is a very unstable social construct, which confirms Stuart Hall's (1995) conclusion about race being a complex, dynamic and changing construct. Race is otherwise often referred to as the perception of certain common biological traits (Herbst 1979:79). Ethnic groups share cultural and social traits as well as a common history regardless of power, 'race' or group size (Herbst 1997:79). However, due to Namibian history, ethnic groups usually share their race, and there is a racial as well as ethnic division that needs to be addressed.

Integration describes the process of accepting people in a group or society and interacting with them (Langscheidt-Longman 1995), while the researcher focuses on such interaction in respect of living 'with each other', not only 'next to each other'.

Nation-building is referred to as both the integration of different ethnic groups (Prah 1993:18) and, hence, the promotion of a feeling of unity (GRN 1990a).



In the Namibian context, intercultural relations often include ethnical aspects or differences of 'colour'.

## 1.2 Research justification and significance

The research aims at encouraging discussion about the role of the media in promoting cultural diversity in order to enhance communication between and the integration of different Namibian cultural and ethnic groups.

There have not yet been studies on the media influence on intercultural relations and nation-building in Namibia. There has, however, been a study by Kober (1997) on identity in post-independent Namibia, a study on stereotyping (LeBeau 1991), and a study on tolerance amongst the Namibian political elite (Brynjúfssdóttir 1998).

In independent Namibia it is of great importance not to lose sight of reconciliation and the integration of the diverse Namibian ethnic groups. Media and education play a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and integration, and even if scholars do not agree on the influence of the media, one can say that it plays an important role as we do spend time consuming media. Therefore, this research about the media and its influence on integration is a crucial social topic for Namibian society as it addresses cultural diversity and intercultural relations.

The research aims at facilitating dialogue amongst media practitioners, scholars and society at large, to encourage social change to benefit the future.

The researcher is convinced that this research will provide insight into the dynamics of ethnicity in the media in Namibia and will, therefore, contribute towards developing media interventions and other approaches for solutions. As Worchel (2005:755) states, "True conflict resolution is best achieved by interventions before conflict occurs".

## 1.3 Research questions

- To what extent are teachers aware of intercultural relations, and how does this influence their teaching?
- To what extent does nbc TV represent different ethnic groups, and how does that affect nation-building and integration?
- To what extent does the Namibian media promote intercultural communication?
- To what extent do soap operas on nbc represent cultural diversity?

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Impact of the media on audiences

There have been various studies using theoretical approaches that explain the influence of the media, and of TV in particular, on an audience. The researcher chose four such approaches:

- The Uses and Gratifications Theory
- The Cultivation Theory
- The Agenda-setting Theory
- Cultural approaches (cultural studies)

The Uses and Gratification Theory focuses on the uses and gratifications that the audience derives from the media, while the Cultivation Theory assumes that the media cultivates a

<sup>1</sup> The consolidation of apartheid in South Africa and the so-called final solution to the 'native problem' was the Homeland Policy of Dr HF Verwoerd, who was appointed Minister of Native Affairs in 1950. Under this policy, independent Bantu homelands (Bantustans) were introduced, corresponding to the different South African tribal groups. 'Africans' were removed from 'white' areas, namely cities, urban areas and white farms. These homelands were not only not viable: they also forced their inhabitants into migrant labour systems, causing immense social problems (Du Pre 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Although the black elite have moved to former white areas, the reverse is not true: one hardly ever finds a white Namibian living in Katutura or Khomasdal - which used to be 'black' and 'coloured' areas, respectively.





reality that might, especially for heavy viewers, be consistent with 'TV reality' (Campbell 1998; Fourie 1988).

The Agenda-setting Theory assumes that by focusing on certain programmes and topics and excluding others, the media determines the importance that the audiences attach to these topics (Campbell 1998).

Cultural approaches use interpretative methods to examine how people make meaning and understand reality through the use of cultural symbols in the media (Campbell 1998). In this approach, the media educates its audience, and media culture serves to construct identities and perceptions (Kellner 1995).

The first three approaches suggest a different intensity of media effects and different kinds of influence, whereas cultural approaches focuses on the interpretation of the meaning of the messages.

## 2.2 TV portrayal and racial attitudes

There have not yet been studies at Namibian institutions into TV content with regard to ethnicity and the effect of such content. Nevertheless, there have been a number of studies in the United States with regard to African Americans as a minority group in society, their portrayal in the media, and the effects of these portrayals.

Studies confirm that African Americans and other minority groups are portrayed in a different way from Caucasian Americans. Clawson and Kegler (2000) concluded in their study that poverty is portrayed as a 'black' problem in American college textbooks, which does not reflect reality.

Browne Graves (1999) stresses that exposure to TV content and cross-race interaction on TV has been proved to influence children's racial attitudes. Nevertheless, she finds that there has not yet been sufficient research to assess if interactions on TV influence the willingness for inter-ethnic relations in real life. She also critically discusses the establishment of many all-black series, movies and sitcoms, as they can be interpreted as the lack of power and influence of the isolated group over other elements in society.

In his study, Dubriel (2005) found a tendency that supports the notion that positive portrayals increase tolerance.

The results of a study by Fujioka (1997) suggest that the media have a stronger influence on stereotypes if direct contact is missing. This further supports the "Contact Hypothesis" proposed by Allport (1954, cited in Fujioka 1997), which suggests that direct positive contact will have a positive influence on stereotype reduction and respect towards members of other groups (ibid.; Cook 1985, cited in Fujioka 1997).

Even if the society in the United States differs in composition from Namibia's, which has a predominantly black population with internal ethnic differences (Prah 1993), the studies that have been done in the US might help to explain the effect of TV portrayals in Namibia, in the absence of research that focuses on this country.

Former research has established an effect of portrayals shown on TV on attitudes of viewers reinforced by an absence of real-life interaction (Browne Graves 1999, Fujioka 1997), which also leads to stereotyping and

<sup>3</sup> nbc is the State-owned national broadcaster, founded after Independence by an Act of Parliament.

<sup>4</sup> However, different racial and ethnic groups might also differentiate amongst themselves on the basis of culture, which would then justify speaking of intercultural communication.

<sup>5</sup> In terms of the concept of race, one would differentiate between black, white and coloured Namibians.



prejudices (Samovar & Porter 2001; Gandy & Oscar 1998). The latter research is an important aspect for the study in Namibia as in the past the social contact between different cultural as well as racial groups was condemned and might still not be considered 'normal'. This would then have an influence on the way people perceive certain groups on TV.

### 2.3 Intercultural communication

As Namibia is comprised of many different cultural groups that have to interact in some way, intercultural communication is part of everyday life and so are the obstacles to such communication.

Intercultural communication is the term used to describe communication amongst people with different cultural backgrounds (Samovar & Porter 2001). Samovar and Porter (*ibid.*) clarify that culture teaches us to perceive and then interpret the world accordingly. For any interaction to be possible it is essential that all groups feel their cultural identity is valued and protected, seeing that the tendency to view the out-group as homogenous favours conflict (Worchel 2005). Learned concepts like stereotypes, prejudice and racism further hinder intercultural communication (Samovar & Porter 2001).

To summarise, it is vital for successful intercultural or inter-group communication to recognise the diversity amongst the members of the different groups, and to generate contact amongst them (Duckitt 2001; Samovar & Porter 2001; Worchel 2005). This is an important point in relation to whether the media does in fact promote this

portrayal of diversity of different group members – or members of ethnic groups, for that matter.

### 2.4 Racism

Racism is a major hindrance for intercultural communication and relations, although there are different types of racism (Samovar & Porter 2001). There is a traditional form of racism – an old-fashioned form, and a 'new racism'.

Old-fashioned racism justifies inequalities with the biological inferiority of certain groups, as espoused by the apartheid ideology, whereas there seems to be a new kind of racism that is much more subtle (Dubriel 2005; Herbst 1997).

New racism justifies inequalities on the basis of the conviction that certain groups obstruct or threaten fundamental social values such as work ethics, and it includes the belief that discrimination does not actually exist anymore (Augoustinos & Reynolds 2001; Dubriel 2005; Herbst 1997; Samovar & Porter 2001).

Stuart Hall (1995) claims that the media functions mainly as a producer and transformer of ideologies and, therefore, that the media explains and justifies social realities like racism. Indeed, even if it is not clear as to what extent the media influences racial attitudes; it is clear that the media influences self-image or self-perception (Cashmore 1984; Gandy & Oscar 1998). According to Lindsey (1995), the contemporary American soap opera's way of dealing with racism is to avoid racial topics. Therefore, black characters in white

<sup>6</sup> Ethnic groups refer to the different 'tribes' in Namibia. The biggest ethnic group in the country are the Ovambos. Ovambo is an umbrella term for eight different tribes and languages that are closely related. Furthermore, there are Caprivians, Damaras, Hereros, Kavangos, Namas, Tswanas and others (Malan 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Under the apartheid regime, race became a social construct and was politically manipulated. The colour-based hierarchy resulted not only in a self-fulfilling prophecy as people internalised the system, but it also led to self-ranking and the construction of complex descriptions or categories of race beyond its traditional definition (Allen & O'Neal 2000). The subcategory of non-white contained various ethnic categories.





soap operas “are simply imitations of white characters, and there is no awareness of racial oppression or cultural difference” (Lindsey 1995:334).

Another way the media deals with racial attitudes is to depict black characters as funny. This actually acts as a social control, implying that minorities should be more like the majority. On the other hand, a humorous depiction could also indicate a changing situation or the changing status of a certain group in comparison with the wider society (Cashmore 1984).

Many studies about racism come from countries in which a minority group experiences racism, like African Americans in the United States. Nevertheless, the internalisation of racist images and the problem of stereotyped portrayals are applicable to Namibia as well in terms of its past and the fact that Namibians consume the media products of North and South American societies.

## 2.5 Soap operas

Soap operas as well as telenovelas are serial forms of drama that have a rather slow pace and convey most of their action through dialogue (Cantor & Pingree 1983). Both build up various intervening conflicts in the course of one sequence, and they end with a major conflict that will only be resolved in the next two sequences.

Audiences follow the story closely and can identify with the characters. It seems that serial forms of drama like telenovelas and soap operas work in all kinds of societies where broadcasting exists (Cantor & Pingree 1983), which might account for the nbc broadcasting them as well.

The euphoria of the Namibian public about the visit of two telenovela stars from *When you are mine*, Sylvia Navarro (Paloma) and Anette Michel Carillo (Barbara) in May 2006, indicates the popularity of the telenovela. Furthermore, Keulder (2006) found that 40% of Namibian students show a strong interest in soap operas.

Cantor and Pingree (1983) distinguish clearly between soap operas and telenovelas, as they insist that telenovelas like *When you are mine* are stories in serial format often adapted from novels that end after a period of time, whereas soap operas like *Generations* neither have a beginning nor an end.

Nevertheless, the Namibian media, e.g. The Namibian newspaper and nbc TV, refers to *When you are mine* as a soap opera, as do its local viewers.

In her study on *The Bold and the Beautiful* and the urban black viewer in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, Tager (1997) found that the majority of the participants related the content of the soap opera to their own life, but not in a racial context. This is an interesting finding, because *The Bold and the Beautiful*, a soap opera from the US, might be considered far from the reality of a black urban viewer in Kwazulu-Natal.

In terms of social realities, soap operas usually focus on the upper class and almost never include the struggling poor (Lindsey 1995; Soares 1978).



## 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research population

As mediators between the media and children, the research subjects were teachers.

Since the media contributes to teaching us about culture, and with it what we think about it, this can have negative consequences as it is often misinterpreted (Kellner 1995). Schools should, therefore, be the place where a critical discussion as well as an evaluation of media content should take place. On the other hand, teachers, as part of society, do not only teach but also convey their opinions and ideologies; these could also be racist ideologies. Stuart Hall (1995:19) notes the following: "Since (like gender) race appears to be 'given' by nature, racism is one of the most profoundly 'naturalized' of existing ideologies". In the case of Namibia these circumstances are intensified by the past apartheid regime, under which racism and discrimination were institutionalised and internalised.

In order to influence the youth, the future generation, it is important to map all the possibilities for critical discussion and social change. It was of great significance, therefore, to assess the teachers' awareness and opinions about intercultural relations as well as media content.

### 3.2 Data collection instruments

In this study, the survey method and content analysis were used.

To assess the teachers' opinions about ethnic representation, intercultural relations, and how soap opera

viewers judged the characters in *Generations* and *When you are mine*, two kinds of questionnaires were administered. One was for viewers that watched neither of the two chosen soap operas, while the other questionnaire was for viewers that watched either one of the soap operas, or both.

The questionnaires did not differ from each other in respect of the questions themselves, but the questionnaire for soap opera viewers had an extra section about the two selected programmes of this TV genre. All of the questions were closed and multiple-choice in nature, apart from one open-ended question.

The questionnaire was regarded as a suitable research instrument as it is easily standardised and allows an evaluation and comparison of the collected data in a time-effective way (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000). Although in-depth interviews might have produced richer results, they would not be as representative since the same sample size could not have been covered in the given time frame. Moreover, it was important to perform a content analysis of the media with regard to the ethnicities and roles portrayed. However, due to time constraints it was not possible to assess many different media or other soap operas on nbc or other channels.

Kellner (1995:8) stresses that a content analysis helps to make people sensitive and critical of "power relations and dominations that are encoded in film and TV". Consequently, it is essential to analyse the content of the representative programmes screened at a peak time on national TV (nbc), in order to be able to evaluate the effect of what Namibians are exposed to via this medium.

<sup>8</sup> That means that, with new racism, the reason for a certain group to be largely unemployed is the laziness of the group.



Namibia's Information Policy (GRN 1990a) dictates that the nbc, as a public TV station, has the responsibility to promote nation-building and development.

### 3.3 Scope and sampling

The content of *Generations and When you are mine* from 1 to 12 May 2006 was analysed.

TV was chosen as the medium to be studied, while the national broadcaster was selected as the object of study, since the nbc is obliged to address the majority of TV viewers and not only certain members of the public. Furthermore, physical differences between people are visible on TV.

Following Grabe's (2000) study, the programmes were first analysed into the prevalence of the character of the minority group by comparing the screen time of selected characters. Secondly, programme segments that featured the minority character were analysed and interpreted with regard to role portrayal and interaction with other characters.

In order to analyse role portrayals, a semiological approach (e.g. Orbe & Strother 1996) was taken, by analysing the meaning of the actions of particular characters and the overall portrayal of characters in an interpretative way.

There are two main hypotheses to be tested with regard to the TV content:

**H1:** There is a clear prevalence of the dominant ethnic group.

**H2:** The programmes constitute an example of bad intercultural relations depicting stereotypical portrayals of different ethnic groups.

For the school surveys, only Government schools were chosen. This allows some variables like salary to be controlled: teachers with the same qualifications are supposed to have the same salaries, for instance.

The questionnaires were administered to 116 teachers, which includes 16 teachers who answered a trial questionnaire.

Moreover, the schools were chosen carefully in different areas of Windhoek, so that they could represent the different ethnic groups in Namibia, as the location in town was closely linked to ethnic groups during the apartheid era (LeBeau 1991). Two schools in town, two schools in Khomasdal, five schools in Katutura, three schools in the suburbs, and one school in a rural setting were selected.

There are two main hypotheses to be tested with regard to the survey in the school:

**H3:** Teachers that do not watch either of the two soap operas on nbc have access to TV channels other than the public ones.

**H4:** Watching soap operas on nbc could be an indicator of an awareness of intercultural relations, and of being satisfied with the effort the Namibian media makes to improve intercultural relations and integration.

The basic assumption was that those teachers that did not watch soap operas watched many local programmes instead, and could, therefore, be less aware of intercultural relations and integration in Namibia, if the TV remained their major point of contact to other ethnic groups.



Furthermore, the task was to find out if there was a tendency for nbc viewers to be more content with the Namibian media as they might not be exposed to other media, at least not to the large variety of TV programmes that viewers of Digital Satellite TV (DSTV) would be.

However, the researcher is aware of the fact that watching soap operas and local programmes might not be the only factor influencing an awareness of intercultural relations in Namibia.

The assumption is based on the fact that former research has established a reinforced influence of stereotypes in the media on people that lack real-life contact with the stereotyped group (Browne Graves 1999; Duckitt 2001; Gandy & Oscar 1998; Samovar & Porter 2001; Fujioka 1997).

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Presentation of results

#### 4.1.1 The questionnaires

Eight different schools were visited, where 100 completed questionnaires were obtained. Unfortunately, not all teachers returned their questionnaires, and the response rate seemed to be closely linked to the principals' support of the study or for research at the school in general.

Between 80-90% percent of the questionnaires were returned on average, as the researcher would administer the questionnaire only to teachers that were willing to complete them.

Seeing that two different questionnaires were used, one for viewers and one for non-viewers of soap operas, the former group was compared with the latter throughout the discussion of the results.

#### (a) Soap opera viewers

##### • Distribution of soap opera viewers by school

Generally, the distribution of viewers and non-viewers of soap operas was balanced in the research population, consisting of 52 non-viewers and 48 viewers (n = 52 non-viewers, n = 48 viewers). Nevertheless, the distribution of viewers and non-viewers differed significantly from school to school.

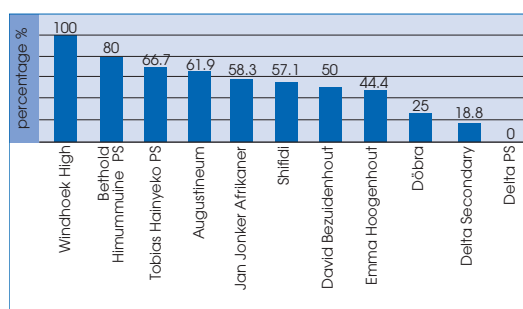


Figure 1: Distribution of soap opera viewers

There is a clear dominance of soap opera viewers in the schools in Katutura (Bethold Himummuine PS, Jan Jonker Afrikaner, Shifidi, Tobias Hainyeko PS) and Khomasdal (Augustineum, David Bezuidenhout), while the teachers at other schools in town (Delta PS) and the suburbs (Delta Secondary, Emma Hoogenhout) tended not to watch soap operas.

Furthermore, the teachers at Döbra were also predominantly non-viewers. However, the 2 questionnaires that were returned out of the 15 administered at Windhoek High School, a school in the centre of town, came from two soap opera viewers.

<sup>10</sup> Survey method: Set of questions (in this case in form of a standardised questionnaire) to enquire about opinion of a large number of people (Longman 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Content analysis is used to determine how much of a phenomenon appears in a set of texts (Stokes 2003).

<sup>12</sup> In terms of the two chosen programmes, the minority group would be those racial groups that are represented in a significantly smaller number compared with others in terms of actors.



- Distribution of soap opera viewers by gender

Overall, more women (69) participated in the study than men (30). Furthermore, it can be stated that, proportionally, men watch less soap operas than women: only 30% of men watch soap operas, whereas 55% of women do.

- Distribution of soap opera viewers by location

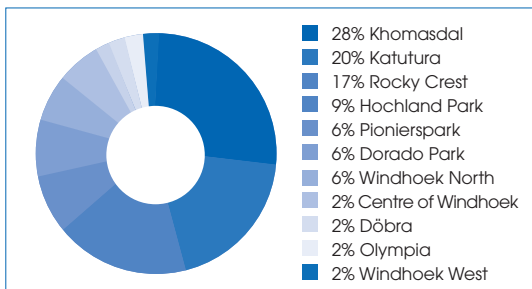


Figure 2: Viewers, by location

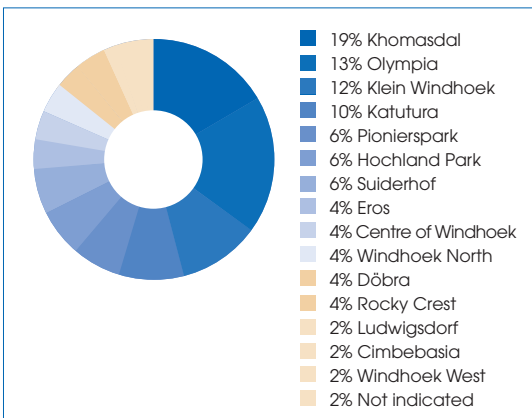


Figure 3: Non-viewers, by location

The majority of the teachers that watch soap operas live in Khomasdal (28%), Katutura (20%), and Rocky Crest (17%), whereas non-viewers mainly live in Khomasdal (19%), Olympia (13%), and Klein Windhoek (12%).

It could be deduced that soap opera viewers live in 'poorer' suburbs and might, therefore, not have 'costly' DSTV, which could be a reason for them watching nbc.

- Distribution of soap opera viewers by age

Soap opera viewers are significantly younger than non-viewers. The average soap-viewing teacher is younger than 31: 27% of them are under 25 years of age, and 25% are between 26 and 31.

The majority of non-viewers are either over 50 (25%) or between 39 and 44 (23%).

- Distribution of soap opera viewers by ethnic group

The study intended to establish participants' ethnic groups or ethnic groups they felt they belonged to. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, categories were not proposed. Instead, participants were allowed to indicate voluntarily which ethnic group they felt they belonged to. Unfortunately, this generated ethnic categories that might not exist in any other setting.

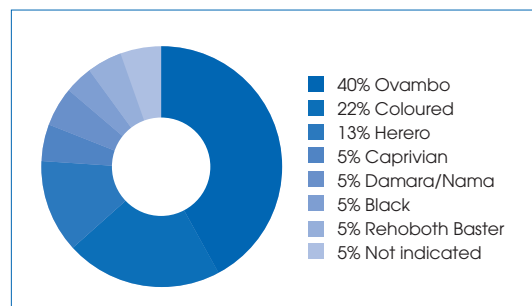


Figure 4: Viewers, by ethnic group

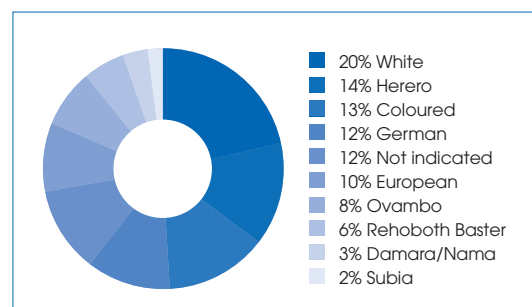


Figure 5: Non-viewers, by ethnic group



The majority of soap viewers considered themselves Ovambo (40%), Coloured (22%), or Herero (13%).

The majority of non-viewers considered themselves white (20%), Herero (14%), or German (12%), followed by European (10%). In this regard one can assume that non-viewers are 42% white, as German and European would tend to indicate that.

### (b) Religious affiliation

The mainstream of participants were Lutheran, 21% of whom were viewers of soap operas and 25% were not. The next-largest group were Catholics, 19% of whom were viewers and 12% were non-viewers. The other participants were distributed amongst 15 other religious affiliations named by viewers and 17 named by non-viewers.

### (c) Viewing habits

After obtaining some information on demographic differences, the study focused on the viewing habits of participants in order to find out whether a pattern emerged for soap opera viewers and non-viewers. The participants were asked which channels they had watched in the 24 preceding hours, in order to have a random sample that indicated which channels they usually watched.

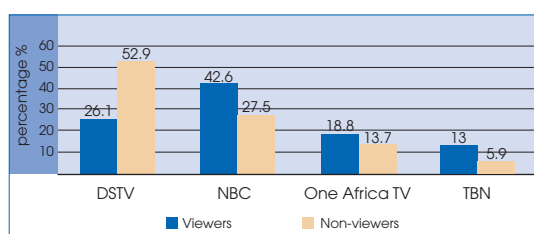


Figure 6: Viewing habits

The majority of non-viewers watched DSTV, whereas the majority of soap opera viewers watched nbc. This could be interpreted as an economic indica-

tor, as monthly subscriptions to DSTV are expensive, while nbc programmes are paid for by way of a licence fee due from each TV owner. DSTV offers a wide range of programmes and channels, which could be one of the reasons that DSTV-owners did not watch nbc soap operas.

The central question would then be whether nbc soap opera viewers would still watch nbc if they had a wider variety of channels and programmes to choose from.

### (d) Integrative programmes

Moreover, it was important to establish which particular programmes, in the participants' opinions, contributed to integration and an understanding of different Namibian cultural groups. For each programme, the participants were asked whether they watched it, and if they did, whether or not they felt the programme in question contributed to integration and an understanding of different Namibian cultural groups. The participants had to respond to the same question in respect of each programme. For this purpose, programmes that are shown on different channels – DSTV, nbc, One Africa TV and Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) – while some might overlap.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) newscasts as well as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) newscasts can be watched either on One Africa or DSTV, respectively, while the newscasts by the Central News Network (CNN) can be watched on nbc and DSTV.

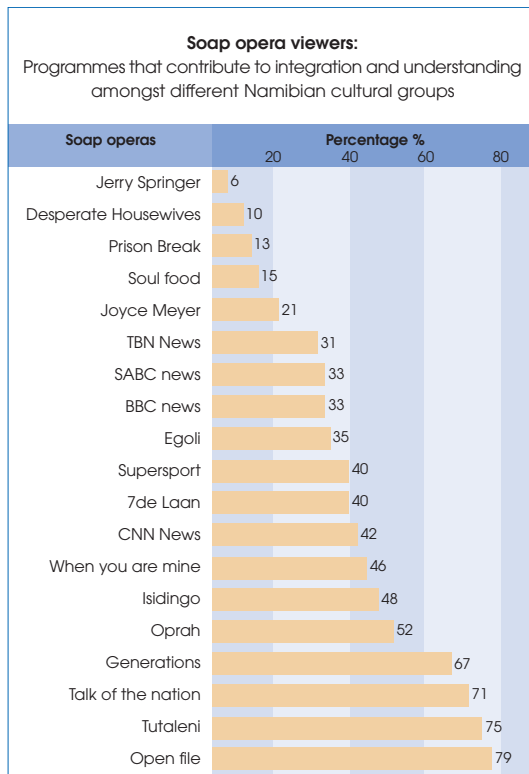
Desperate Housewives, Egoli, Jerry Springer, Prison Break, Soulfood and Supersport can be watched on DSTV only. 7de Laan, Isidingo and Oprah are



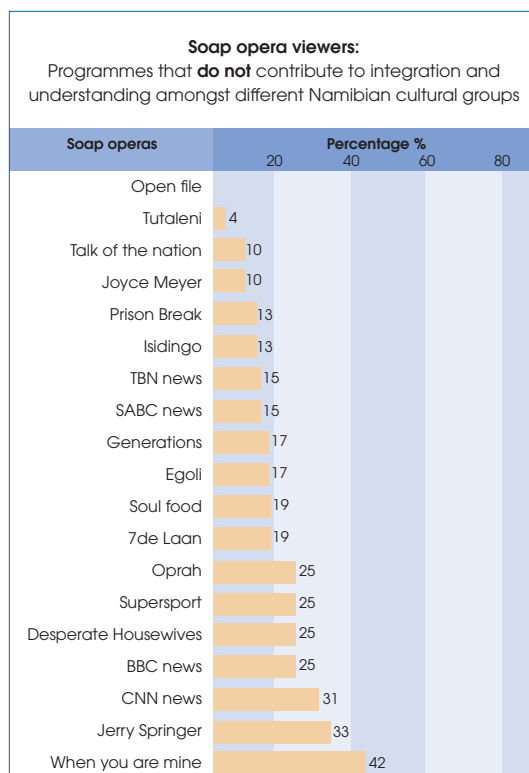


programmes shown on One Africa TV, while Generations, Open file, Talk of the nation, Tutaleni and When you are mine are programmes shown only on nbc.

Lastly, the researcher chose TBN News and Joyce Meyer, which are shown on TBN.



**Figure 7: Viewers, by integrative programmes**



**Figure 8: Viewers, by non-integrative programmes**

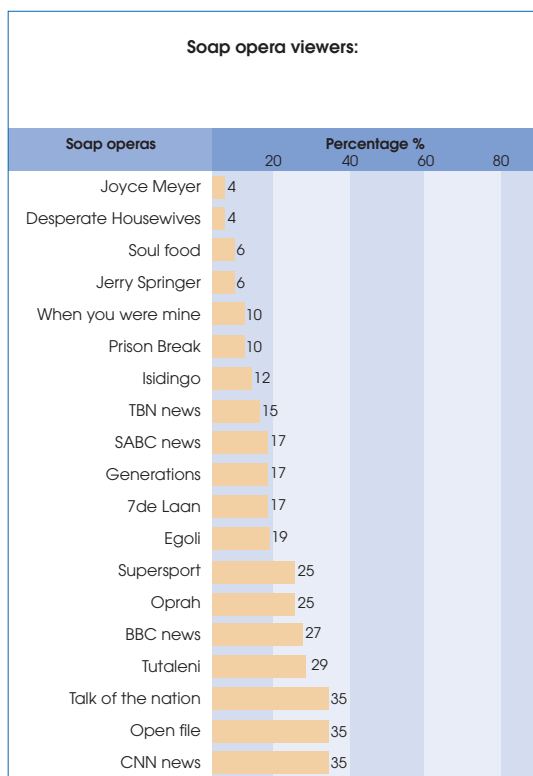
Amongst the programmes that soap opera viewing participants considered the most valuable with regard to intercultural understanding and integration, in descending order, are Open file (79%) on nbc, Tutaleni (75%) on nbc, Talk of the nation (71%) on nbc, and Generations (67%) on nbc. This is not surprising as most soap opera viewers do not have DSTV and they mostly watch nbc. On the other hand, DSTV programmes would not cover Namibian content like Talk of the nation, a local talk show.

Furthermore, 52% of the participants felt that Oprah contributed to integration and understanding amongst Namibian cultural groups.

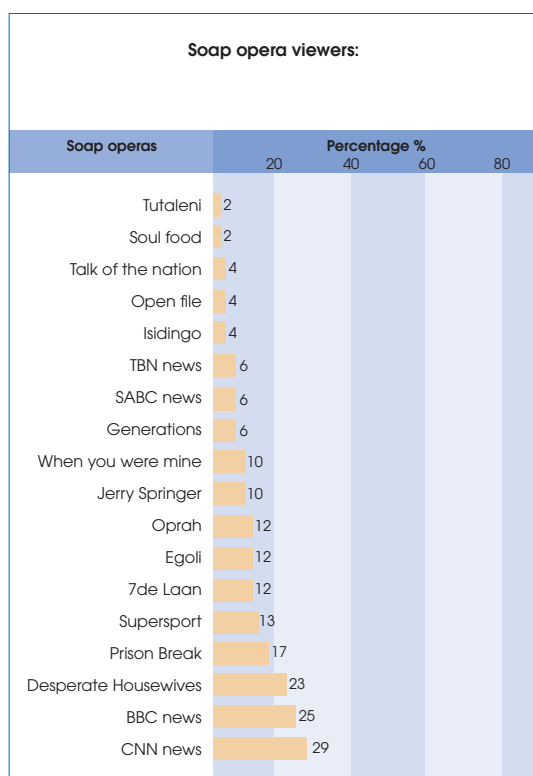
Programmes contributing the least, according to soap opera viewers, were When you are mine (42%), and Jerry Springer (33%). However, 46% of the soap opera viewers felt that When you are mine did indeed contribute to intercultural understanding and integration in Namibia; so, here, opinions are divided.

It might be striking that participants believe that series without Namibian content and ethnic groups do actually promote understanding and integration in Namibia. However, this could be understood in terms of what Tager (1997) found in a study amongst urban black viewers in Kwazulu-Natal in respect of identification and interpretation in viewing *The Bold and the Beautiful*, namely, that the participants interpreted the stories and identified with the characters – but not in a racial context.

The programmes that contributed the most towards integration, according to local participants are local nbc programmes.



**Figure 9: Non-viewers, by integrative programmes**



**Figure 10: Non-viewers, by non-integrative programmes**

It is evident among non-viewers of soap operas, who also tended to be non-viewers of nbc broadcasts, that most of the programmes suggested were not watched – even if the

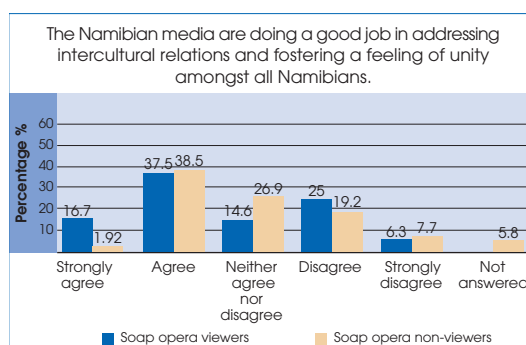
researcher tried to include programmes on DSTV channels. It is possible that they watch less television, but it would also be possible that they do not watch the suggested programmes, seeing that there is a much wider choice of DSTV programmes that were excluded.

Amongst programmes that were known by non-viewing participants, those that contributed the most to intercultural understanding and integration in their view were Open file (35%), Talk of the nation (35%), and CNN news (35%).

The programmes that contributed the least according to non-viewers were CNN news (29%), BBC news (25%), and Desperate Housewives (23%). Interestingly, CNN news was mentioned in both contexts, showing that opinions are divided.

### (e) Judging the media's efforts at nation-building

The study also looked at whether participants were content with the work the Namibian media did in terms of intercultural relations and integration, and whether they desired more effort from the media in emphasising intercultural relations.



**Figure 11: Opinion about media effort**

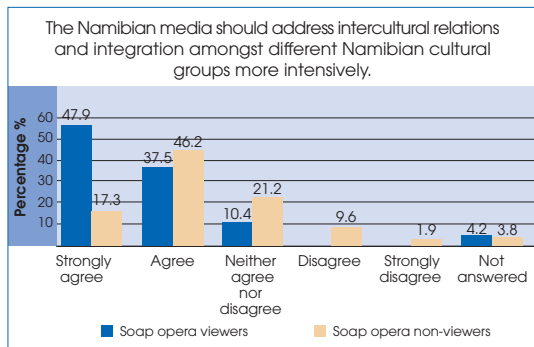


Figure 12: Need for more media effort?

One can clearly see that the majority of soap opera viewers and non-viewers are content with the Namibian media in terms of their efforts to address intercultural relations and establish a feeling of unity amongst all Namibians. Nevertheless, the respondents felt that the Namibian media should do more to address these issues.

#### (f) Intercultural relations in Namibia

Even if the above questions judging the media effort regarding intercultural relations and integration explained whether or not teachers were aware of any problems concerning intercultural relations, the researcher needed to be assured that they would not contradict the answers above.

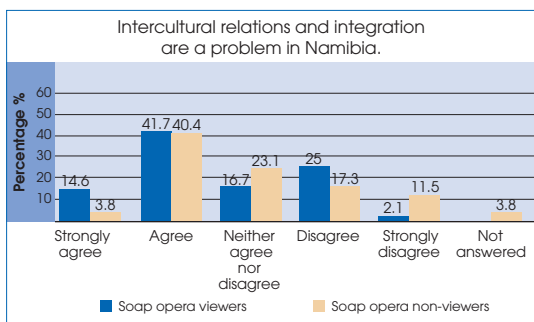


Figure 13: Awareness of intercultural relation

The majority (56.3%) of soap opera viewers as well as the greater part of non-viewers (44.2%) were aware of problems concerning intercultural relations in Namibia, while 14.6% of soap

opera viewers strongly agreed that there was a problem as regards integration and intercultural relations. It can be stated that soap opera viewers are more aware of intercultural relations and associated problems.

It is possible that soap opera viewers, who also tended to live in less economically affluent areas, were more exposed to intercultural contacts and problems. This could be attributed, for example, to their houses being built closer to each other than in other suburbs.

Nevertheless, 28% of all teachers ( $n = 100$ ) did not feel there were problems in respect of intercultural relations in Namibia, while 27.1% of soap opera viewers and 28.3% of non-viewers felt that way.

#### (g) Mixed schools

Another important point in assessing opinions about intercultural relations was to establish whether or not viewers believed learners should attend mixed schools.

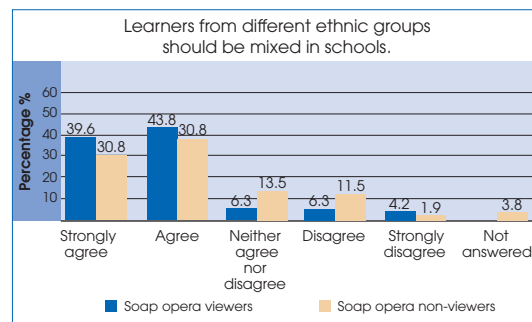


Figure 14: Mixed schools

By adding up the Strongly agree and Agree responses, it is obvious that the majority (83.4%) of teachers in the soap opera viewer group and 69.3% in the non-viewer group thought that students should attend mixed schools. However, soap opera viewers held stronger views on this than non-viewers.



This finding could be interpreted as being a result of exposure to the media in Namibia, at least in terms of TV. It would definitely indicate that soap opera viewers wished to establish contact between learners from different Namibian ethnic groups – even if it were forced.

### (h) Social network

This data has to be put into context in terms of the degree to which participants have intercultural contact. Therefore, participants were asked about their social network and working environment with regard to exposure to different cultural groups, because the media has a greater influence in the absence of contact with other ethnic groups (Browne Graves 1999; Fujioka 1997), while the absence of sufficient contact also increases stereotyping and prejudices (Duckitt 2001; Gandy & Oscar 1998; Samovar & Porter 2001; Worchel 2005).

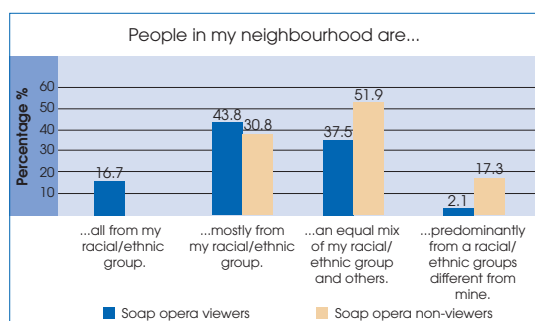


Figure 15: Social network – Neighbourhood

The majority of those who did not watch soap operas claimed to live in a mixed neighbourhood, while the majority of soap opera viewers lived in Katutura and Khomasdal, i.e. in a neighbourhood that consists predominantly of their own ethnic group.

Seeing that non-viewers often live in suburbs like Klein Windhoek and Olympia, which are former white suburbs, it would underline the assump-

tion that former white areas start to fill up with different Namibian racial and ethnic groups, while the inhabitants of areas like Katutura and Khomasdal still have neighbours from their own racial and ethnic groups.

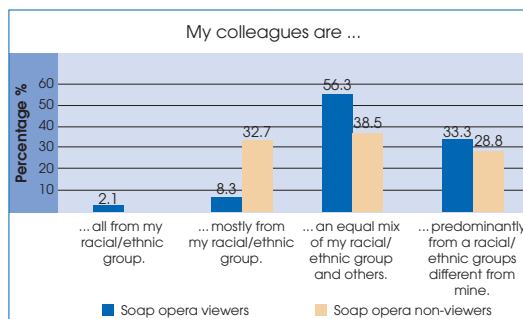


Figure 16: Social network – Colleagues

The majority (56.3%) of soap-viewing participants work in a relatively mixed environment. Some 38.5% of non-viewers work in a mixed environment, while 32.7% of teachers in the non-viewer group work with colleagues that are mostly from their own ethnic/racial groups. A considerable amount (33.3%) of teachers who view soap operas as well as those that do not view them (28.8%) work with colleagues that are mostly from an ethnic/racial group that is different from their own.

In the workplace, the soap opera viewing teacher is confronted with intercultural relations more often than his/her non-viewing counterpart.

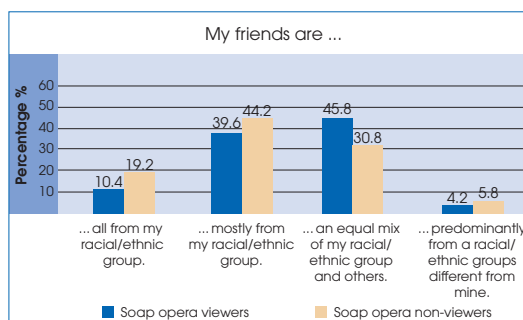


Figure 17: Social network – Friends

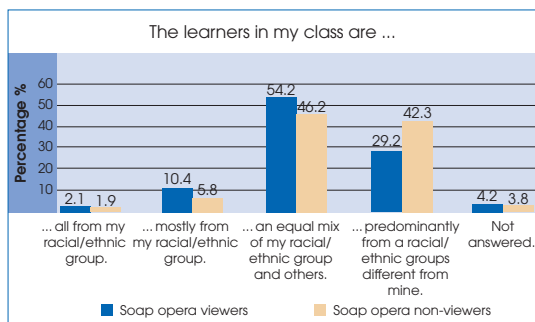


According to this survey, the majority (45.8%) of soap opera viewing teachers had friends from an equal mix of their own and other ethnic/racial groups, while 39.6% in this group had friends that were mostly from their own ethnic/racial groups.

The majority (44.2%) of teachers who did not watch soap operas claimed to have friends that were mostly from their own racial/ethnic groups, whereas 30% of the same group had friends that were an equal mix of their own and other ethnic /racial groups.

Of those that only had friends from their own racial/ethnic groups, 19.9% did not watch soap operas, in comparison with 10.4% of those that did.

It is clearly indicated that non-viewers had fewer 'mixed' friendships, meaning that they would be less exposed to intercultural relations in their private life.



**Figure 18: Social network – Learners in class**

The clear majority (54%) of soap opera viewers compared with 46% of non-viewers stated that their learners were an equal mix of their own and other ethnic/racial groups.

In addition, 42.3% of teachers that do not watch soap operas work in an environment with learners whose ethnic /racial group is generally different from

their own, while the same is true for only 29.2% of soap opera viewing teachers.

#### 4.1.2 Summary

To summarise it can be stated that the majority of teachers that did not watch the two selected soap operas on nbc also did not watch many local programmes: they enjoyed DSTV instead. This group is aware of intercultural relations, but not to the same extent as teachers that watch soap operas and other programmes on nbc. This could be explained by the fact that they are not as exposed to different cultural groups as those that watch soap operas.

The average soap opera viewer is a young black person living in Katutura or Khomasdal, while non-viewers live in suburbs like Eros, Klein Windhoek, and Pionierspark – suburbs that are predominantly white and rather impersonal, with big houses, high fences, and high walls.

On the one hand, it is possible that the viewing habits alone determine the teachers' intercultural behaviour; but on the other, it is possible that their social status – which implies their location, their social network, and so on – determines their viewing habits and their attitude towards intercultural relations.

Interestingly though, most non-viewers claimed to live in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood, while viewers live in neighbourhoods that consist of people from their own racial/ethnic group. This would underline that, in terms of the ethnic groups that live there, Katutura and Khomasdal have not changed as much since Independence as the former whites-only suburbs.



Almost 50% of the viewers stay in Khomasdal and Katutura. For this group, soap operas might satisfy the need to escape reality and everyday life (Cantor & Pingree 1983; Fourie 1988): soap operas – including *When you are mine* and *Generations* - do not generally represent any struggling poor in a lower-income environment (Lindsey 1995; Soares 1978), which a suburb like Katutura could be described as.

Nevertheless, teachers in both the soap opera viewer and non-viewer groups have to deal with intercultural relations, as their learners are mostly mixed.

#### 4.1.3 Questions for consideration

These findings lead to some questions:

- Why do soap opera viewers that do not live in a mixed neighbourhood more often have mixed friends?
- Would viewers of nbc soap operas still watch them if they had access to or could afford DSTV, or did they watch local programmes despite the fact that they had DSTV?
- Is it possible that the overall household income of teachers, although they supposedly earn the same salary at Government schools, is still distributed along an ethnic/racial line?
- Or does the popularity of DSTV amongst non-viewers of soap operas indicate a hierarchy according to which disposable income is expended by teachers in the same income bracket?

These questions cannot be dealt with in the scope of this paper, but could certainly serve as a foundation for future research.

#### 4.1.4 Open-ended question

Lastly, the teachers were asked to explain, in an essay-style question, what the media should do in order to improve intercultural relations. The response rate for non-viewers was 63%, while 77% of soap opera viewers answered the question.

The answers were sorted into different categories. The following graphs illustrate the findings in detail, starting with the soap opera viewing participants.

##### (a) Soap opera viewers

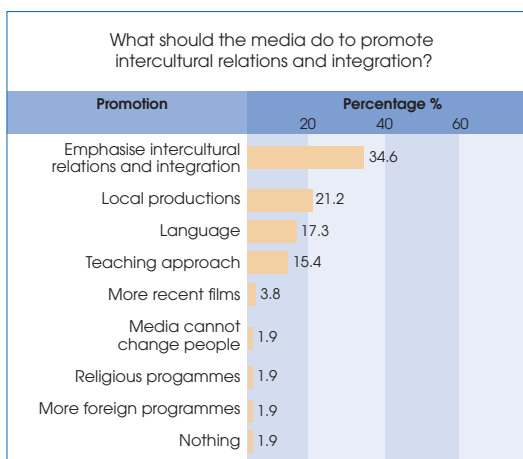
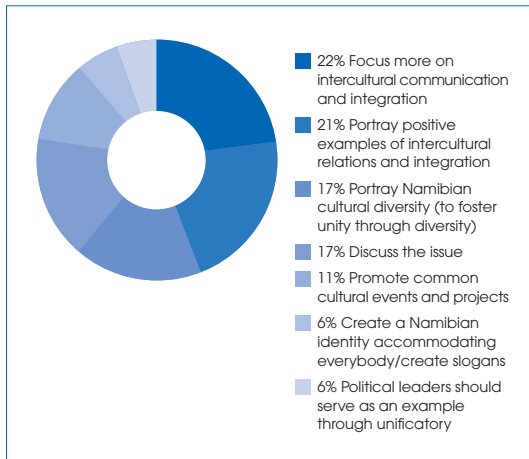


Figure 19: Viewers' suggestions for the Namibian media

The majority (34.6%) of participants that watched soap operas felt that the media should emphasise intercultural relations and integration. There was also a large group (21.2%) that felt there should be more local productions, while 17.3% felt that language-related issues were key to enhancing or detracting from good intercultural relations.

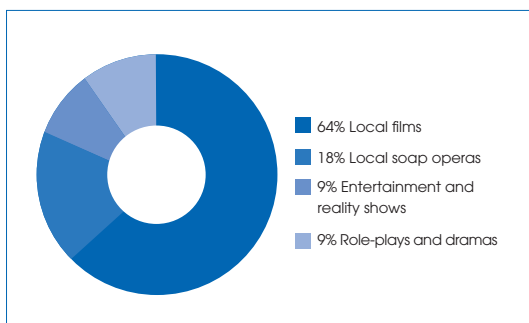
In order to understand these comments, the researcher analysed the answers to see whether any patterns emerged from the responses.





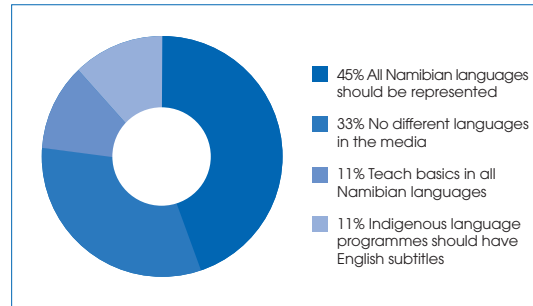
**Figure 20: Suggestion 1 – Intercultural relations and integration**

Of the 18 participants that felt the media should emphasise intercultural relations and integration four main suggestions emerged, the majority (28.1%) felt all media should intensify their focus on this issue, whereas the second largest group with 21% felt that the media should portray more positive examples of intercultural relations and integration. Some 17% felt portraying Namibian cultural diversity was a way of fostering unity through diversity, while another 17% believed intercultural relations and integration should be discussed in the media.



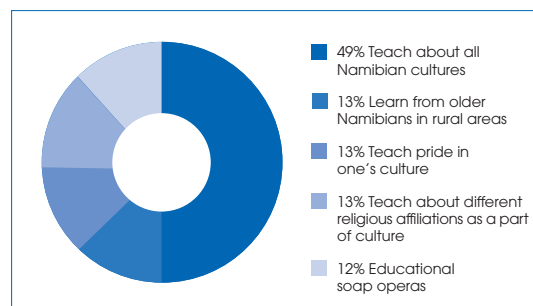
**Figure 21: Suggestion 2 – Local productions**

The majority (64%) of the soap opera viewing participants felt there should be more local productions to solve the problem of poor intercultural relations and integration, and considered local films the best format for fostering intercultural relations and integration through the media.



**Figure 22: Suggestion 3 – Language**

A large part (45%) of soap opera viewing participants believed that language held the key to better intercultural relations and integration in Namibia, and wanted all Namibian languages to be represented, e.g. the news should be in Afrikaans too. Some 33% felt that no programme should be exclusively in one language because this separated people from each other.

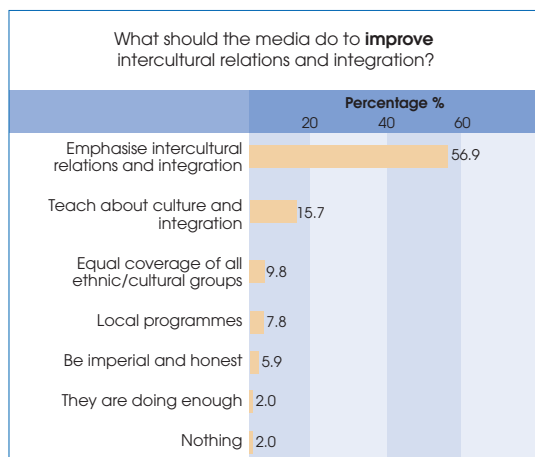


**Figure 23: Suggestion 4 – Teaching approach**

Almost half (49%) of the participants that considered a teaching approach was best for improving intercultural relations through the media thought that all Namibians should learn about different cultural and ethnic groups through the media to promote an understanding of each other.

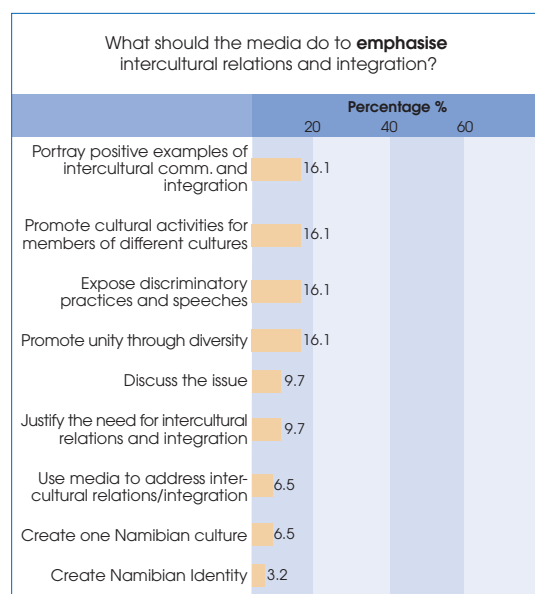
#### (b) Non-soap opera viewers

The following graph illustrates the answers of participants that did not watch soap operas in respect of what the Namibian media should do to improve intercultural relations and integration in the country.



**Figure 24: Non-viewers' suggestions for the Namibian media**

The majority (56.9%) of non-soap opera viewing participants felt the media should emphasise intercultural relations. Since this group made up the largest part of the responses, those that were given in the item Emphasise intercultural relations and integrations were analysed further.



**Figure 25: Detailed suggestions**

Some 16% thought the media should portray positive images of intercultural relations and integration, while another 16% felt that cultural activities should not only be promoted, but also made accessible and attractive to members of other Namibian cultural groups.

The same percentage of respondents felt that discriminatory action and speeches, especially by political leaders and other public figures, needed to be exposed in the media in order to denounce negative intercultural relations. Furthermore, another 16% believed that the idea of unity through diversity needed to be promoted in the media.

Many participants complained about the programmes that were shown on nbc, saying they were too often dated and of rather poor quality. This could be one of the reasons that people who have access to other channels and new programmes do not watch nbc: the nbc cannot compete with the variety, actuality and quality of programmes offered by DSTV, for example. However, it has to be taken into account that DSTV is completely privately owned, and has a much larger budget to purchase new programmes and movies.

There were only a small number of teachers that did not want the media to do anything in terms of promoting intercultural relations and integration, as they did not believe enforced integration worked. One person felt that one should "respect different cultural groups but not try to mix".

Two participants also made suggestions regarding the school curriculum, which they thought should be balanced in terms of including Namibia's various cultures.

Another participant suggested that exchange programmes should be organised so that students from all kinds of social, financial and cultural backgrounds would get a chance to communicate with others in an organised manner. It was also recommended that they visit each



other's schools and be involved in some sort of projects together.

#### 4.1.5 Summary

In general, participants felt that the media did not cover all ethnic groups equally. Even if this view does not reflect the actual representation of ethnic groups by the media, it is important to find out why people do not feel represented.

As this notion would have to be regarded as 'real' for the participants, it would hinder intercultural communication, since it is vital that people recognise the diversity of the members of other cultural groups (Duckitt 2001; Samovar & Porter 2001; Worchel 2005). If real life, intercultural contact is missing; and, as is the case indicated in this research, TV might have to offer the opportunity of virtual intercultural contact.

Furthermore, feelings associated with being represented or not by the media might influence the viewers' sense of belonging.

Participants also felt that different language services, e.g. for the news, separated people from each other if programmes were not translated into English as well. The respondents also repeatedly demanded local productions that would create a positive Namibian cultural identity, as well as more programmes that dealt with intercultural relations critically, and provided positive examples of how to integrate all the different cultural groups

## 4.2 Presentation of findings

### 4.2.1 *The soap opera*

The following sections present the findings of the content analysis, as well

as the findings of the soap opera section of the questionnaires for soap opera viewing teachers.

#### (a) Generations

Set in the heart of Johannesburg, the plot of *Generations* entails the success of black South Africans who are in competing media empires and whose destiny is bound up with love, intrigue and romance.

The passionate *Generations* viewer can go to the programme's website ([www.generation.co.za](http://www.generation.co.za)) to get an update on different sequences, the characters, and actors, and can read magazines that give previews of different South African soap operas, e.g. *Drum*, *Bona* and *People*.

Since its launch in South Africa in 1993 as a weekly soap opera, *Generations* has had airplay. It was eventually turned into a daily soap opera in 2004 due to its major success. It is the brainchild of South African Mfundu Michael Scott Vundla. In 2003, *Generations* was redirected towards a younger audience, which included introducing new actors and new storylines.

In *Generations*, six characters are investigated. They are Anne, Bradley, Jack, Karabo, Queen, and Tau. The focus is on Anne, the only white character, as described on the *Generations* website.

**Anne**, who grew up poor, had a baby with a coloured man when she was 16. The baby, Bradley, was raised by his father's family because Anne's family forced her to put the baby up for adoption.

Anne tried to become an actress, but ended up as a prostitute who



soon turned into a profitable business woman as the madam of a luxury brothel. After the police disrupt her business, with much intrigue and manipulation she gets a management position at the media empire, New Horizons.

**Bradley** grew up with an emotionally cold father after his mother left. He dropped out of school prematurely due to dyslexia, which his father confused with stupidity and laziness. He works as a barman and does not trust his mother, Anne, because she has lied to him too many times.

**Jack** is an evil character. He tried to kill his rivals and enemies by sending them poisoned cards. As his past catches up with him, he is severely beaten up and ends up losing his memory, which gives viewers a chance to sympathise with him.

**Karabo** is the extremely ambitious and successful young manager of New Horizons, who cares enough to share her house with her friends.

**Queen**, the curious receptionist at New Horizons, loves to get involved in other people's lives and problems, while her own main goal in life is to find a rich, good-looking husband.

**Tau** has made many character changes over the years: from a cold manipulative businessman into a caring and loving father, who is still a major player in the business world.

#### (b) When you are mine

When you are mine is a telenovela with a clear focus on two main characters (Cantor & Pingree 1983). The two are Diego and Paloma, who are in love with each other and are trying

to overcome all the difficulties and hindrances that keep them apart.

Diego and Paloma fall in love and spend the night together when the Sanchez Serrano family comes together at the Casablanca hacienda, where Paloma works as a coffee collector. The meeting is in honour of Lorenzo Sanchez Serrano, a powerful coffee baron who died. Diego is busy studying in London, and plans to return to the hacienda when he finishes his studies.

When Paloma finds out that she has fallen pregnant with Diego's baby, he has already returned to Europe. They agree to meet after a year to get married, but cannot, due to unfortunate circumstances, and intrigues and betrayals by Diego's family. His family will not allow the baby, born to the daughter of a coffee collector, to be their only heir, so they tell Diego that Paloma has left to become a prostitute in Europe. At the same time, Paloma is searching for him in Europe and barely manages to escape some dubious human traffickers. She loses her baby in the process and, when she returns at the agreed time to meet Diego, he has gotten married to a woman that he does not love.

Paloma leaves the hacienda and, thanks to her ambition, soon becomes the Assistant Manager of El Cafetalero, a company owned by the Sanchez Serrano family, and run by Diego's cousin, Fabien.

Six characters were examined, namely Barbara, Diego, Fabien, Herold, Miguel, and Paloma. The focus is on Herold, the only black character.



**Barbara** is the wife of Fabien Sanchez Serrano. She is jealous and constantly betrayed by her husband. She is trying to fall pregnant in order to produce an heir to the families coffee empire and she persistently tries to destroy her enemy: Paloma.

**Diego** is a coffee producer, and manager of El Cafetalero. He is also the grandson of the deceased coffee baron, Lorenzo Sanchez Serrano and has two younger sisters Diana and Daniela. He is very jealous and impulsive, and is desperately in love with Paloma.

**Fabien** is Diego's manipulative cousin, who is determined to become the next Mexican coffee baron. He is willing to get rid of anybody and anything that gets in his way.

**Herold** is the boyfriend of Diego's younger sister, Daniela. He is an artist. Even though the family finds him annoying, they do not consider him a threat.

**Miguel** is the lazy husband of Diego's other sister. He has an affair with Diego's wife, Berenise, and is the biological father of the son that Diego believes to be his own. Diego and the family only discover this fact later.

**Paloma** grew up as the child of a coffee collector and fought her way to the top. She is now the Assistant Manager of the Public Relations Department of the Mexican Coffee Council. She is ambitious, passionate and impulsive.

### (c) Findings – Soap operas

The following section presents the findings of the soap opera section of the 48 participants that watched either *When you are mine* or *Generations* or both.

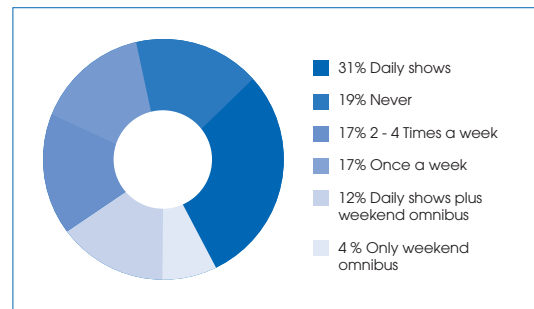


Figure 26: How often do you watch *Generations*?

The majority (31%) of participants watched *Generations* daily, though there was a considerable amount of participants that watched irregularly, like once a week or 2–4 times a week. Some 12% watched it daily as well as over weekends (the omnibus).

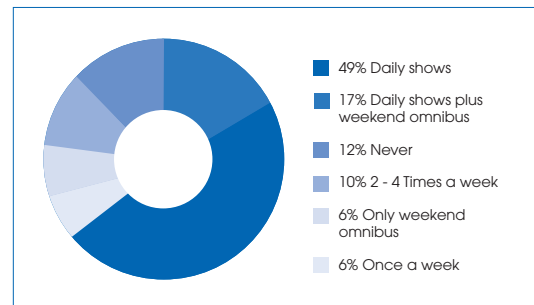


Figure 27: How often do you watch *When you are mine*?

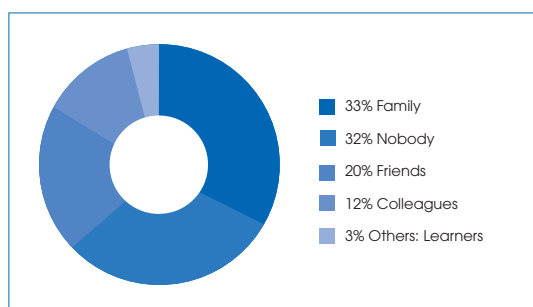
Almost half (49%) of the participants watched *When you are mine* daily, while 17% watched it over the weekend as well.

In total, 39 (81%) soap opera viewers watched *Generations*, while 42 (88%) participants watched *When you are mine*. Thus, 68% of the participants watched both *Generations* and *When you are mine*, while 13% watched only *Generations* and 19% watched only *When you are mine*.

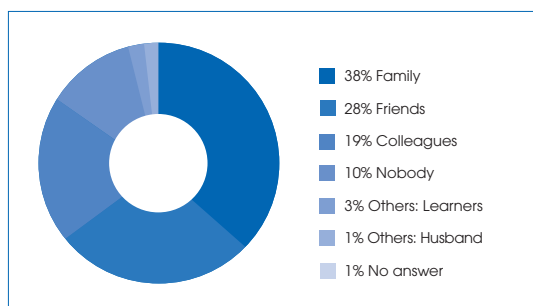
As found by other researchers, soap operas satisfy a social need (Cantor & Pingree 1983; Tager 1997). For this reason it was important to determine the social context in which participants watch the soap opera, interpret it and

make use of it to socialise and to identify with it.

Some 60% of all *Generations* viewers and 69% of *When you are mine* viewers watched the soap opera with their families, making it a part of a daily family life and culture, which would support Tager's (1997) research findings on *The Bold and the Beautiful* watched by urban black viewers in Kwazulu-Natal.



**Figure 28: With whom do you talk about *Generations*?**



**Figure 29: With whom do you talk about *When you are mine*?**

Overall, 53% of the *Generations* viewers and 66% of the *When you are mine* viewers talked about the soap operas with their families and friends, while 12% of the *Generations* viewers and 19% of the *When you are mine* viewers talked about the programme with their colleagues.

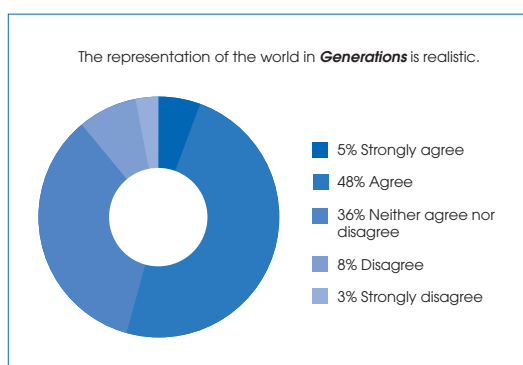
In such cases, soap operas can help with socialising and can initiate many conversations.

Some 3% of viewers of both soap operas talked about the programmes with their learners, while one person

specified that he used soap opera content as examples the learners could identify with in his teaching, e.g. in business studies. Teachers who discussed these soap operas in class did so because they felt many learners might watch them as well.

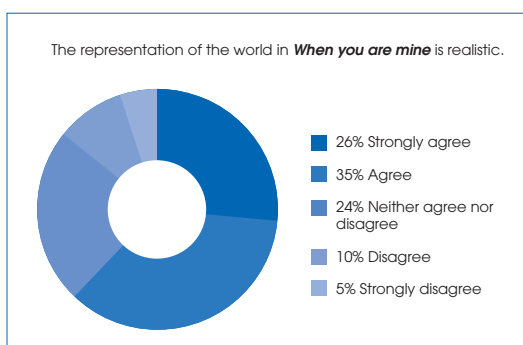
This would again confirm that soap operas developed into a part of one's social and cultural framework (Tager 1997).

The study also tried to ascertain whether participants believed in the authenticity of the 'soap world', in other words, whether or not they felt the representation of that world was realistic.



**Figure 30: Authenticity of the *Generations* world**

The majority (53%) of *Generations* viewers felt the representation of the world in this soap opera was realistic, while 5% felt strongly that this was so. Some 36% expressed indifference as regards the authenticity of the *Generations* world.



**Figure 31: Authenticity of the *When you are mine* world**





A total of 61% of When you are mine viewers felt the soap opera world was realistic, while 26% felt strongly that this was so. It is possible that When you are mine viewers were referring to the authenticity of the emotional aspects of the soap opera because it is a dramatic love story.

Generally, one notes a tendency amongst soap opera viewing participants to regard the representation of the world in the programme as realistic. This is a crucial finding with regard to estimating the influence of the content of the soap opera and the way in which different groups are portrayed.

#### 4.2.2 Coding the white character in Generations

Regarding the different characters, the study attempted to determine how the participants felt about certain characters in Generations, while focusing on Anne, the only white character.

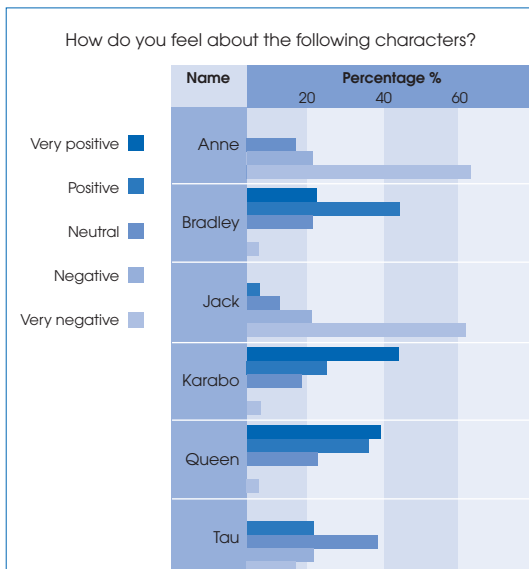


Figure 32: Character rating - Generations

Some 67% of the Generations viewers felt very negative about Anne; approximately 20% felt negative about her and 13% felt neutral about her, while no one regarded her as positive.

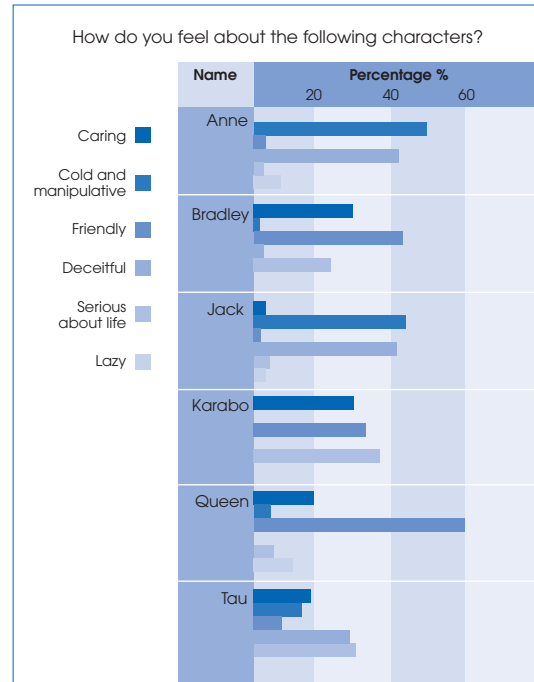


Figure 33: Character traits - Generations

Anne was considered cold (48%), deceitful (42%) and lazy (8%), while 2% of the participants saw her as being serious about life.

It is significant to find out how important the character is in terms of time allocated to him/her in the sample format of "hour : minutes : seconds". Karabo appeared most frequently in the two-week period, whereas Anne appeared half as often.

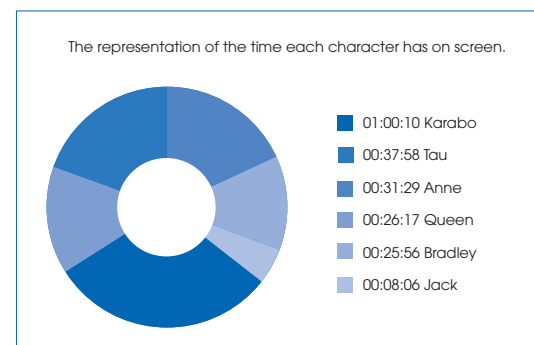


Figure 34: Screen time per character - Generations

In the two weeks Anne was constantly busy trying to control Busi by hypnotising her in order to get her into signing over some shares of the New Horizons Media Company as well moving into a posh place on Busi's account.



Anne, the only white character, is manipulative and outwits everyone – irrespective of whether they trust her or not. She fosters relations with people because she wants something from them.

The ones that trust her and like her in the beginning soon find out that they are being deceived. The only possible relationship with her is a business one, and even then one should never trust her entirely.

One could argue that Anne's light skin is coded as being her coldness and opportunism. Nevertheless, the other characters never link their arguments about her bad personality to her colour or culture.

All kinds of intercultural relations, in the sense of relations between the only white character and the others, fail because the white character is not really able to have sincere relationships without abusing them.

There were no other white characters as part of the main crew during the time of research, apart from some rare extras in the background at the bar, for instance. There is no positive interaction between the successful black South Africans and white South Africans on a personal level in the soap opera. Instead of empowering viewers, this could also be interpreted as the absence of influence of black South Africans on other elements of society, meaning white South Africans (Brown Graves 1999).

In this regard one has to remember that 53% of participants that watch *Generations* felt that the representation of the world in the soap opera was realistic.

Furthermore, the media can be understood as the means by which to explain social realities (Hall 1995). This indicates that viewers would also feel it is realistic that relations between white and black people are condemned to fail due to the coldness and manipulateness of whites, and that one should never trust them, which makes a sincere interaction on a personal level impossible.

Based on the data, the researcher suggests that *Generations* constitutes a bad example of intercultural relations. The programme appears to strengthen the idea that intercultural relations are very difficult if they are possible at all.

Worchel (2005) explains that, in order to create group identity, conflict is created; group members will then punish contact between members of different groups. In the case of *Generations*, punishment for contact with the white female character is rather abstract. Although some people try to warn others about Anne's evil nature, those that do not listen are punished by the negative consequences they face by becoming involved with her.

In this case intercultural relations do not only fail: they also have serious and negative consequences. An example is when Busi loses her shares in the company to Anne.



### 4.2.3 Coding the black character in *When you are mine*

The only black character in the soap opera is Herold.

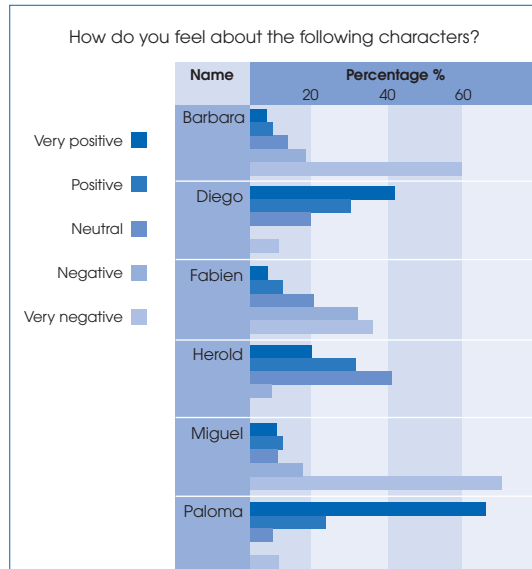


Figure 35: Character rating - When you are mine

Some 52% of the participants felt positive about Herold, while 19% felt Very positive about him. A further 43% of the participants had neutral feelings towards Herold, while only 5% felt negatively towards him.

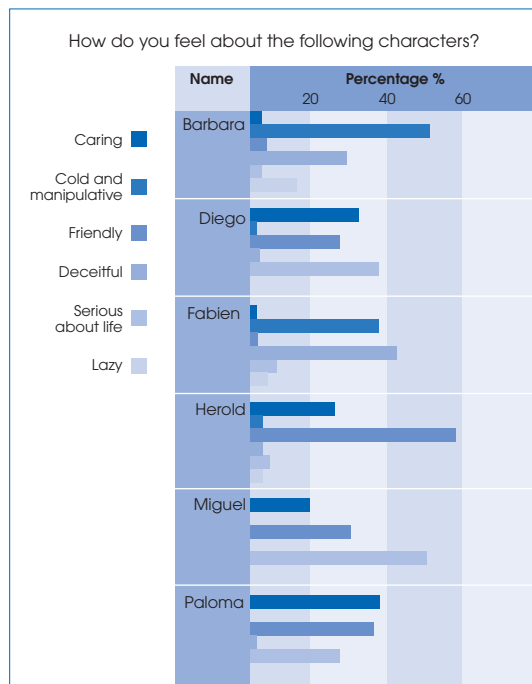


Figure 36: Character traits - When you are mine

In terms of friendliness, Herold was given the highest rating among the characters, with 57% of the participants finding him friendly. Some 25% felt he was caring, although he was also attributed 4% each of the negative attributes (cold, manipulative, deceitful, lazy).

In terms of the importance of the character, the content analysis indicated the following using the "hours : minutes : seconds" format:

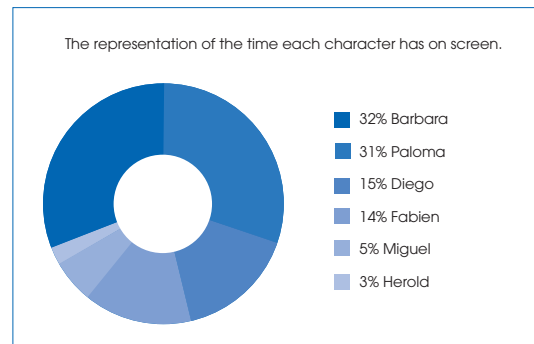


Figure 37: Screen time per character (in percentages) - When you are mine

During the two weeks focused on in the study, the antagonists Paloma and Barbara get the most screen time.

Herold gets the least time, which indicates his relative unimportance in respect of the plot. Apart from this, he is the boyfriend of Daniela, the youngest Sanchez Serrano family member (excluding Diego's baby). Daniela calls Herold "my little chocolate", while he calls her his "lovely white chocolate".

In the two weeks of sampling time, Herold always annoys all the other members of the family with his tactlessness and his way of making fun about almost everything. For example, while the family is having a big fight and everybody is quiet, he starts telling them some funny stories about his grandmother's food until someone tells him to "shut up". Indeed, he does



not seem to constitute a real threat to the family as he does not compete with them on any level. They treat him rather like an annoying child.

In another case, Daniela calls the doctor who allegedly did the artificial insemination for Diego's wife. She pretends that she needs information about artificial insemination in order to prove that Diego's baby was not actually a result of artificial insemination. Her brother-in-law overhears the conversation and informs his wife that Daniela wants a baby "with that black guy, that Herold guy" and that she should tell the grandmother to talk Daniela out of being impregnated by "that Herold".

Thus, the other characters – including his girlfriend – refer to Herold on the basis of his skin colour. He equally refers to himself on the basis of his skin colour being different from the others by making jokes about it. He also refers to his girlfriend's skin colour.

The question that should be asked here is whether blackness in this case is being treated as a humorous issue or in a deprecatory way. Being the only black character in the soap opera, Herold is the 'clown', the kind of person that treats the other characters' discrimination by joking about it. His relationships with others are possible because he ignores their refusal to accept him on their level, be it in respect of education, conversation, ambition, or power. He does not seem to be interested in these things, so they do not take him seriously. However, he also does not actually have any power, nor does he strive to get any – unlike the others.

Even if 52% of the participants felt positive about Herold and 57% attributed friendliness to his character, When you are mine does not constitute a positive coding of blackness and intercultural relations.

If we exaggerate the situation and transfer it to intercultural relations in society, then one could state that acceptance of the other is possible if the other is at a lower level to that of the powerful majority, if the other does not constitute a threat because s/he does not strive for real equality – including economic and intellectual equality.

In this case, the black character does not have a good social position, nor does he have money or power because of his personality. This would be in line with the so-called new racism. With new racism, inequalities are justified by the threat that certain groups constitute to fundamental social values such as the work ethic, and it includes the belief that discrimination does not actually exist (Augoustinos & Reynolds 2001; Dubriel 2005; Herbst 1997; Samovar & Porter 2001).

In a way one could state that Herold threatens the other characters' values because he does not identify with them or live by them, and the overt discrimination is not dealt with seriously.

Blackness – and also just 'being different' – would then be acceptable if discrimination is accepted, and if it does not turn into a serious personal relationship.

Apart from Herold there are international black coffee buyers in a party of the Mexican Coffee Council, but



their involvement should be interpreted as a clear business relationship.

The effect of the bad interpersonal relationships between Herold and other characters apart from his girlfriend, and the portrayal of business relations with black buyers instead of positive personal relations have to be evaluated against the background that 61% of When you are mine viewers felt the world in When you are mine was realistic, while 26% felt strongly about this point. Hence, it appears logical to assume an influence on the perception of soap opera viewers' social realities. However, the media might not only influence the way viewers perceive reality, but also the way they perceive themselves. Former research has shown that the media might indeed influence the self-image and self-perception (Cashmore 1984; Gandy & Oscar 1998), which would in this case devalue a darker skin colour.

Nevertheless, the portrayal of Herold might not always be perceived in an entirely negative and racist way by When you are mine viewers if one bears in mind that most participants felt positively about Herold. The research by Michele Tager (1997), for instance, showed that viewers identified with story lines and characters irrespective of their ethnicity, colour, etc.

### **4.3 Discussion of research questions**

#### **4.3.1 *To what extent are teachers aware of intercultural relations, and how does this influence their teaching?***

Half of all teachers were aware of intercultural relations. One might suggest that, irrespective of whether or not they were aware of intercultural rela-

tions, their attitude would affect their teaching. However, this study cannot make general statements about the influence of this awareness or its absence on their teaching, as it was not possible to observe the teachers in their working environment over a longer period of time due to the time frame of the study.

Nevertheless, this would constitute an interesting discussion for future studies.

#### **4.3.2 *To what extent does nbc TV represent different ethnic groups, and how does that affect nation-building and integration?***

The study focused on a certain medium and on two specific programmes. These particular programmes did not represent Namibian cultural groups.

Considering the opinion of the 100 teachers, they felt the media was doing a good job in fostering a feeling of unity, even if they claimed repeatedly, for instance, that they did not feel all cultural groups were equally represented in the Namibian media.

Nonetheless, the researcher discovered a pattern amongst participants that watched local programmes. These subjects tended to have more intercultural relationships and saw a greater need to address related issues more intensively. This could mean that the media influences nation-building and integration, and hence, the willingness or desire to address intercultural relations and integration. However, the influence of the media is difficult to assess, seeing that the participants do not live in a vacuum and there might be other factors

that influence their attitudes and viewing behaviour. One would, for instance, have to consider the interrelation of their personal intercultural experiences and their perception of the media.

#### **4.3.3 To what extent does the Namibian media promote intercultural communication?**

Namibian media content does not exclude programmes that are produced internationally, even if there is obviously a difference in relevance with regard to the promotion of cultural diversity if the programme does not come from Namibia.

There are a number of TV programmes that the participants regard as contributing positively to intercultural communication and integration amongst different cultural groups, and which might also promote cultural diversity. Nevertheless, some participants expressed their concern about exclusivity in the media, e.g. services in certain languages or coverage of certain cultural groups only – thus promoting cultural diversity but not the integration of different cultural groups. The respondents proposed an approach that promotes unity through diversity. They remarked that diversity could otherwise hinder integration and intercultural communication.

It is important to understand the other cultural groups as diverse and to establish contact amongst the members of different groups in order to support successful intercultural or intergroup communication and, consequently, integration (Duckitt 2001; Gandy & Oscar 1998; Samovar & Porter 2001; Worchel 2005). This is in line with the participants' suggestions, as they were asking for more coverage

of the different cultural groups to promote understanding and show intercultural contact – and, thus, solutions, and to make cultural events more accessible to members of other cultural groups. Both soap operas constitute a bad example for intercultural communication.

#### **4.3.4 To what extent do soap operas on nbc represent cultural diversity?**

Regarding the two soap operas that have been the focus of this research, they do not feature Namibian cultural groups since they are not Namibian. Therefore, it can only be stated that the participants felt TV content did not sufficiently address cultural diversity and intercultural relations. In order to make any general statement it would be necessary to examine more TV programmes with Namibian content and evaluate them with regard to cultural diversity.

According to the participants, however, it would be useful to introduce Namibian soap operas that address intercultural communication and integration as well as intercultural conflict, so that one could learn how to solve integration problems.

### **4.4 Discussion of hypotheses**

#### **4.4.1 Analysis of the soap opera**

##### **(a) H1: There is a clear prevalence of the dominant ethnic group.**

This hypothesis can be regarded as true. The content analyses of the screen time granted to characters that belong to different ethnic groups clearly shows that, in both soap operas, the dominant ethnic group prevails. This result is seen more significantly in *When you are mine*.





**(b) H2: The TV programmes constitute an example of bad intercultural relations depicting stereotypical portrayals of different ethnic groups.**

This hypothesis can be regarded as true, as both soap operas explore a limited range of intercultural relations, and the characters constituting the minority ethnic group are depicted stereotypically. All the other characters are not really stereotyped as they allow a variety of different characters with different personality traits, both negative and positive.

In *Generations* there are no positive examples of intercultural relations as far as the only white character at the time of the study is concerned.

In *When you are mine*, one could argue that there are intercultural relations – at least insofar as that between the black character and his girlfriend, even if he is portrayed as ridiculous.

On the other hand, this portrayal of the minority ethnic group character can also indicate that the minority should try to be more like the majority (Cashmore 1984) because their current position and attitude are 'laughable'.

Interestingly, the character of Anne is not depicted in a humorous way; so the audience takes her seriously.

#### **4.4.2 Analysis of the questionnaires**

**(a) H3: Teachers that do not watch nbc soap operas have access to TV channels other than the public ones.**

This hypothesis has proven to be true as most of the teachers that did not watch soap operas watched considerably more DSTV channels. Further-

more, these teachers did not watch many local programmes either.

**(b) H4: Watching soap operas on nbc could be an indicator of awareness of intercultural relations and of satisfaction with the effort the Namibian media make to improve intercultural relations and integration.**

This hypothesis has only partially proved true. Soap opera viewers, who seem to be viewers of other local programmes as well, are indeed more aware of intercultural relations than non-viewers.

Teachers that did not watch soap operas seem to be less exposed to different cultural groups, since the majority of their friends, for instance, are from their racial/ethnic groups. However, both viewers and non-viewers have to deal with intercultural relations equally, as their learners are mostly mixed.

The majority of soap opera viewers and non-viewers were satisfied with the Namibian media in terms of their efforts to address intercultural relations and to establish a feeling of unity amongst all Namibians. However, as expected, soap opera viewers were more satisfied (54%) than non-viewers (40%). Yet both parties felt that the Namibian media should do more to address these issues, while 85% of soap opera viewers felt more strongly about this than non-viewers – 63% of whom felt that way.

This would not really confirm the expectation that soap opera viewers would be more content with nbc: although soap opera viewers might be more satisfied, they are also the ones that felt the media needed to do more – which would limit the state-

ment that they are more content with what the media is doing so far.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Interaction of media and intercultural communication and integration

The study linked intercultural communication and integration to the media, or rather to popular programmes – namely soap operas.

It is difficult to estimate the degree of influence that soap operas have on nation-building in Namibia for many reasons. Those that watch soap operas and those that do not might have different characteristics like viewing habits, age, and perhaps even their level of household income. Thus, whether characteristics like one's level of income determine viewing habits and intercultural relations or vice versa still needs to be investigated.

Why particular people watch local programmes and others do not could be explained by their sense of belonging as Namibians, which would make them want to watch Namibian news, for instance; but this remains an assumption.

On the other hand, we have to consider that people with DSTV might not watch nbc because they have a greater variety of programmes to choose from and, as stated by the study participants, nbc programmes might be outdated and of poorer quality than those on DSTV. However, it would be up to further studies to investigate the influence that a sense of belonging or national identity has on the perception of the media, and one's

willingness to consume local media.

It also needs to be investigated which other media – like radio, newspapers or the Internet – that people use in order to get updated on Namibian issues if they do not watch nbc.

Finally, more Namibian media content would need to be examined with regard to cultural diversity as well as intercultural relations in order to make a statement about the importance that society might attach to these issues. According to the Agenda-setting Theory, "Mass media might not so much tell us what to think but rather what to think about" (Campbell 1989:425).

### 5.2 Cultural diversity and misrepresentation

The researcher noted that many participants felt the Namibian media did not represent the various Namibian ethnic groups equally, which might also be a reason for not watching local programmes. Whether or not there is an unequal representation of different Namibian ethnic groups in the media in reality, the perceived misrepresentation can negatively influence their sense of belonging to the nation and, thus, their willingness to improve their position.

For that reason, this notion should be taken seriously and requires crucial further investigation.

### 5.3 A chance for the media

Those that watch soap operas on nbc as well as other local programmes desire a reinforced focus on intercultural relations and integration in the Namibian media.





In order to establish whether viewing soap operas and local programmes was indeed an indicator of the willingness to improve intercultural relations and integration, we need to determine whether or not soap opera viewing actually improves intercultural relations.

The content analysis of the two selected soap operas has shown that, for the short period of the examination at least, they constituted a rather negative example of intercultural relations and integration. However, soap opera viewing teachers were more aware of intercultural relations. This would again underline that there are other factors that make teachers more aware of intercultural relations; the fact that they watch more local programmes in general could be one of those factors. If this should prove to be the case, then the media – and especially TV – should explore the opportunity and create more programmes that improve and address intercultural relations, e.g. in locally produced films, as the participants suggested.

#### **5.4 Influence of stereotypes in the media**

The research supports the notion that stereotypes in the media have a greater influence on people that lack real-life contact with the stereotyped group. That would explain why, even if soap opera viewing teachers were exposed to examples of poor intercultural relations, this did not have a great deal of negative influence on them because they had real-life contact with different ethnic and racial groups on a personal level. In this regard, 45.8% of soap opera viewers claimed to have mixed friendships.

Conversely, teachers who watched soap operas felt that the representation of the world in such programmes

– which, according to the research conducted, constituted a bad example of intercultural communication and integration – was realistic. In this regard the content and, thus, the stereotypes might influence soap opera viewers as such elements could affect the way they experience or explain social realities like intercultural relations. This proposition is crucial if the media really does cultivate a certain reality and culture that might contribute to identity formation – as established by cultivation theorists and other cultural approaches (Campbell 1998; Kellner 1995). It would then be important to examine more media content in terms of whether or not it contributes to intercultural relations, integration, and – on a larger scale – nation-building, and to assess simultaneously the way in which Namibian media consumers interpret these programmes, articles in print, and other media content. It would also be important to monitor such content, as it would have a greater influence on those that did not have much contact with different cultural groups.

Yet again, it would be useful to create programmes that portrayed positive examples of intercultural relations in an effort to find a way of tackling the issue without devaluing cultural identity in Namibia, but rather by strengthening that identity instead.

Overall, it depends on how much influence one attributes to the media.

#### **5.5 Platform for intercultural communication and interaction**

This study indicates that intercultural contact seems to play a role in the degree of awareness about intercultural communication and relations and, perhaps in the end, in nation-



building. That is why it is essential to create a platform for intercultural contact. One channel could be schools and other educational institutions, as suggested by some participants. Another could operate through the media, which should support interaction between different Namibian cultural groups.

Even if the media cannot force intercultural relations, it can surely show positive examples of such relations as well as solutions for intercultural conflict.

### 5.6 Teachers and intercultural relations

This study might help to create a platform for further research, because one of our research priorities should be to critically examine society with regard to integration and intercultural relation in order to support nation-building.

The researcher chose teachers as a research population as they are in direct contact with children, the future of this country. Indeed, being places where young Namibians are educated, schools form part of the process of nation-building and should play an essential role. It would, therefore, be important to further investigate how much integration takes place in schools, which includes finding out how the teachers' and children's stereotypes or conflicts in respect of intercultural relations influence the everyday procedures at school and how they are dealt with.

Since many teachers work in an intercultural environment, they should be given the opportunity to share their experiences of positive and negative intercultural relations with each other and maybe with the rest of the public, as they deal with intercultural

situations every day: they all have 'mixed' learners.

In fact, teachers not only have to be made aware of the dynamics of intercultural relations, but they should also get assistance in developing approaches to address conflict adequately in order to improve nation-building and the integration of different cultural groups.

This should be a main concern for all schools in the nation, and it needs to be dealt with.



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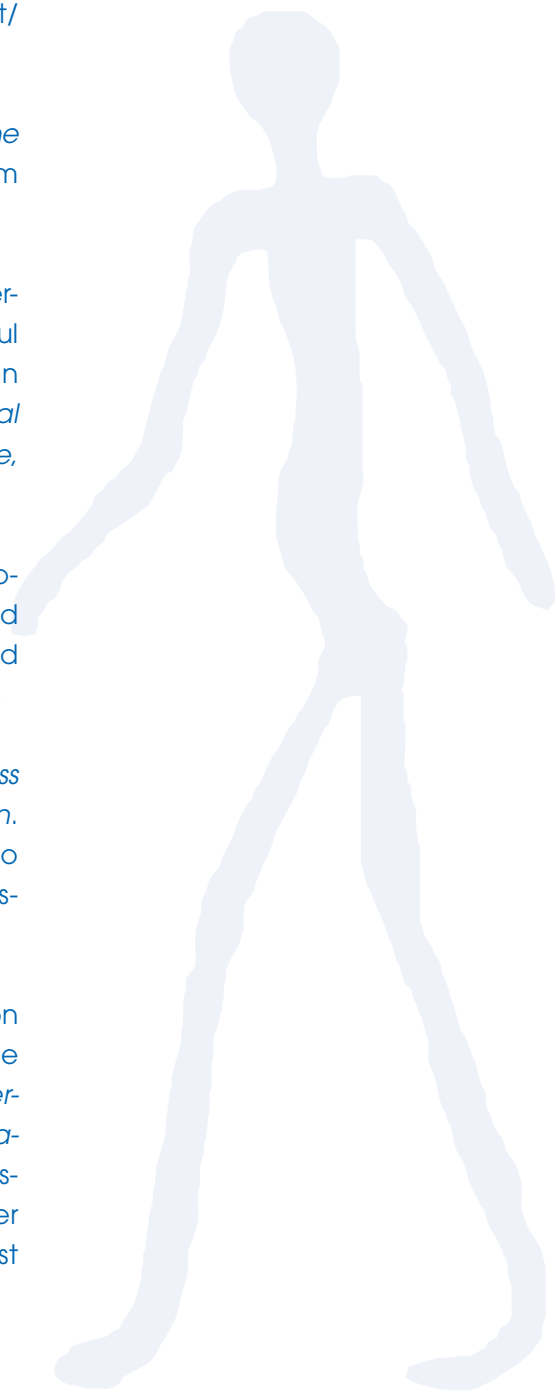
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**ABBREVIATIONS**

nbc	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NID	Namibia Institute for Democracy
TV	Television
UN	United Nations

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