RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA

An overview of research and
examples of good practice
in the EU Member States, 1995-2000

on behalf of the

European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna
(EUMC)

by
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on Migration and Ethnic Relations
(ERCOMER)

Edited by Jessika ter Wal

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DISCLAIMER

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PREFACE

The research interest in analysing the way mass media report on ethnic issues has increased in the Member States over the last decades. And for this reason the EUMC decided to bring together the major research reports and their findings over the last five years in this report "RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA - an overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000".

The project has been carried out by Dr Jessika ter Wal, at Ercomer, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to her for her excellent work. The report underlines the importance of media research in the area of racism and diversity.

The mass media, and especially the news media, have an unequivocal position in society when it comes to establishing and disseminating common cultural references. The mass media have an influence on people's attitudes as well as our common knowledge, but not always in the expected and desired ways.

The active democratic role of the mass media in society can be influenced by a number of factors. The way the mass media represent, focus and give voice to different actors and incidents in society could have the unintentional result of strengthening a racist discourse instead of fighting against it. Mass media reporting is especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in our society.

The mass media organisations in the Member States take different initiatives to promote cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, such as developing codes of conduct, recruiting broadcasters from the migrant and minority communities and training the personnel from multiethnic societies.

The report has already attracted a lot of interest from researchers, from journalists as well as from media organisations. I hope that the report will be of practical use to all those interested in the fight against racism and especially those working in the media.

Beate Winkler

Director of the EUMC

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Ineke van der Valk
Department of Discourse Studies, University of Amsterdam

4.10.1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since Emmerik-Levelt and Teulings (1967) first discussed the role of the press in reporting on 'guest workers' and van Dijk (1983) criticised the press for contributing to racism, the mass media have remained a focus of attention among Dutch scholars and NGO's alike. Nevertheless, more comprehensive studies are relatively rare and major gaps in knowledge still persist. The media are also targets of governmental policy making that is premised on the idea that the changing composition of the Dutch population should be reflected in the media, and visible in products and producers (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1999).[88] The Government supports NGOs and broadcasting companies in the implementation of these objectives.

The publications that form the basis of this report do not all provide an analysis of empirical data. Most only discuss the relationship between the media and migrants on the basis of existing literature and general insights. This study, however, prioritises more in-depth and empirical studies. The main topics from 1995-2000 concerned the role of TV reporting, the attitudes of journalists, media recruitment policies, the portrayal of Muslims, Islam, and inner cities, in addition to the relationship between the media and the extreme Right. Several studies focussed on issues that were related to racism, such as prejudice and stereotypes (Abdus Sattar, 1995; Huigh and van der Valk, 1995; Leurdijk, 1999; Shadid, 1995; Vergeer and Scheepers, 1998), segregation in schools (Wijnberg, 1998), and institutional discrimination in terms of unequal access to the media (Leurdijk, 1999; Witte, 1998).

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88   Some 9.4 per cent of the Dutch population is from ethnic minority background; 5 per cent of these have Dutch nationality (D'Haenens, Beentjes and Bink, 2000: 48).

4.10.2   RESEARCH OVERVIEW UNTIL 1997

An overview of the research carried out in the Netherlands from the 1970s until 1997 on the relationship between migrants and the media was published by a group of researchers at the Faculty of Communication Studies of the University of Amsterdam (Brants, Crone and Leurdijk, 1998). This study, *Media en Migranten* (Media and Migrants), was commissioned by the working group for Migrants and Media of the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ). Table 1 shows the different types of publications, indicating that scientific studies represented only a minority.

Table 1. Publications on migrants and the media in the Netherlands until 1997 by type

Type of publication	Percentage
Reports	46 %
MA-theses	28 %
Scientific articles in journals or books	13 %

Source: Brants, Crone and Leurdijk (1998)

Most of the research until 1997 was about the press, followed by the television, particularly concerning media use by migrants. Only 13 per cent of the research was about the radio. Table 2 shows the amount of studies produced on four different subjects.

Table 2. Studies on migrants and media in the Netherlands until 1997 by subject

Subject category	Number of publications (percentage)
Reporting on (and portrayal of) migrants	61 (46%)
Effects of reporting and portrayal	6 (4%)
Media use by migrants	46 (35%)
Recruitment and employment	20 (15%)
Total	133 (100%)

Source: Brants, Crone and Leurdijk (1998)

The first category of research was about reporting on migrants; representing 46 per cent of all studies published until 1997. Most of it focused on news reporting (Lubbers, 1996; Wolfs, 1996). Some projects however, also pertained to other journalistic genres, such as television talk shows (Leurdijk, 1997a). The media's portrayal of minorities was studied in relation particularly to (reporting on)

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crime, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, journalistic codes of conduct, the relation between migrant organisations and the media and the extreme Right. The main result of these studies, according to Brants et al. (1998), was that migrants were frequently portrayed negatively or in relation to problems. Moreover, these problems were highlighted either from the perspective of the majority group or from that of governmental institutions.

The surveyed studies have investigated the media representations of specific groups, including Tamils (Sri Lanka), Moluccans (Indonesia), Muslims and refugees. The latter were discursively associated with criminality and the exploitation of social provisions; the Tamils, in particular, were considered a threat to the social order. Muslims were stereotyped, often viewed as a fifth column in international conflicts (the Gulf war), and their problems were explained in terms of a homogeneous Islamic culture. Moluccans, on the contrary, were represented in ways that reinforced the positive understanding of public opinion for the militant actions they took in the 1970s and 1980s.

Research on the depiction of migrants is considered rather fragmented and its quality hard to determine. No research has been done that compares the portrayal of minorities with news on other subjects. For this reason, it is difficult to determine whether the patterns identified are specific for the portrayal of minorities, or whether these are instead related to general journalistic routines and constraints, such as the tendency to focus on negative, problematic issues.

The other three categories of research represented in Table 2 do not offer salient results. Studies about *the effects of portrayal of minorities* are considered too scarce and fragmented to allow for comprehensive conclusions. Moreover, investigations *on media use by migrants* will not be discussed here, because they go beyond the scope of the present project[89]. Finally, *employment in the media* for

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89   For a recent survey and discussion papers on media use by migrants, see Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers (2000); and van der Wal (1995:41-64).

migrants and the experience of migrants with the media was not investigated until 1997.

At the conclusion of their report, Brants et al. recommended that more research is needed on the opinions and practices of journalists, programme makers and editors; the use of journalistic codes of conduct; the role of media other than the press; the experiences of migrant journalists with the press, and experiences of journalism students with attempts by their schools to improve recruitment and support opportunities. Some of these recommendations were implemented in the following years: Leurdijk (1999) examined TV talk shows, Witte (1998) investigated attitudes of journalists and Vergeer and Scheepers (1998) examined the effects of ethnic minority portrayal on television. Their findings will be considered later on.

4.10.3   PORTRAYAL OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

The results of the studies and publications published between 1995 and 2000 suggest neither a straightforward improvement nor deterioration in reporting, but rather present a varied picture. The persistence of negative and stereotypical portrayals of ethnic minorities (Abdus Sattar, 1995; Huigh and van der Valk, 1995; Leurdijk, 1999; Meyer, 1998; Wijnberg, 1998) coexists with more diversified and positive approaches (Leurdijk, 1999).

Ethnic minorities themselves do not feel that the Dutch mainstream media represented them in a balanced way, as shown by a recent survey among Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillian/Arubian media users (D'Haenens, Beentjens and Bink, 2000)[90]. Interviewees perceived the reporting as one-sided and negative and found that positive new stories were neglected.

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90 The researchers held group interviews and in-depth interviews with 117 members of ethnic minority groups (3 age groups, 4 nationalities) with regard to their perception of the Dutch media.

4.10.3.1   THE REPRODUCTION AND CHALLENGE OF ETHNIC PREJUDICE

The role of the media in promoting and combating ethnicprejudice, investigated empirically in the Netherlands prior to 1995 , was discussed on a more general level in Shadid (1995)[91]. The study indicated that although journalists generally have an anti-racist attitude, prejudices are reproduced in the media via a static conception of culture, the content of reporting, the actor roles attributed to ethnic minority spokespeople, and the culturalisation of minority issues.

Shadid suggests that the media should follow strategies of prevention and/or intervention in order to counter prejudices, including eschewing unnecessary details about ethnic background; incorporating second opinions to counter prejudiced arguments; avoiding the emphasis on differences between various ethnic minority groups and between minority and majority groups. Intervention strategies were only considered effective when the underlying presuppositions of prejudices are questioned. Moreover, differences between the prejudiced opinion and the opposed viewpoint should be neither too strong nor too weak, and similarities between minority and majority groups should be emphasised. Finally, authorities and the media should provide counter-information. The last point indicates the crucial role played by the media and politics, both individually and in relation to each other. Unfortunately, the media are not very critical towards policy management related to the multicultural society. Ter Horst (1995) investigated the reaction of several national newspapers to the publication of two minority policy reports, which the Dutch Government issues approximately every five years to map existing and future policies and implementation problems (1989-1995). While there was no evidence to suggest that the press whole-heartedly embraced the so-called hardening of the political climate towards minorities as reflected in the policy reports, it did not adopt a critical stance towards the proposed changes either.

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91   For example, van Dijk (1991).

4.10.3.2 THE NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF MUSLIMS AND ISLAM IN THE PRESS

The existence of stereotypical bias and negative portrayal appears most pronounced in term of ethnic minority groups of Islamic background (Abdus Sattar, 1995; Huigh and van der Valk, 1995). An investigation of the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the Dutch quality newspapers *NRC Handelsblad* and *Trouw* and a selection of articles from other dailies in 1992-1994 found strong anti-Islamic tendencies concerning content, headlines, lexical items and illustrations (Abdus Sattar, 1995):

- The stigmatisation and problematisation of Muslims. Islam is systematically associated with images of violence, blood, and undesirable behaviour;
- The tendency to generalise incidents to Islam and Muslims as a category, e.g. by blurring the distinction between religion and nationality;
- The irresponsible use of loaded negative terms, such as 'holy war' for *jihad*;
- The demonisation of the Islamic religion. Religious traditions are ridiculed. Political or social problems are explained in terms of the Islamic religion;
- The collectivisation and depersonalisation of Muslims whose individuality is denied;
- The construction of a distorted image of Islam and Muslims e.g. by making false comparisons, such as the Western ideal versus the Muslim reality or the European present versus the Muslim past.

In addition, journalists ordinarily do not admit to their lack of knowledge on the subject. Consequently, Abdus Sattar made recommendations to the media in order to ensure more careful and balanced reporting about Muslims and Islam by providing more background information, preventing stereotyping and generalisations, and presenting the news from the perspectives of Muslims themselves.

The conclusion that Muslims were predominantly portrayed in a negative way is confirmed by Huigh and van der Valk (1995), who also discuss the role of the press in the growth of anti-Islamic sentiments in the aftermath of the Gulf war. Islamic societies were often represented as backward and violent, as the following example shows: 'I believe that one may argue that Arabic countries are medieval societies.... For the time being, people there do nothing more than shoot each other to death'. (Prof. Wesseling[92] in HP/*De Tijd*, 8 March 1991, quoted in Huigh and van der Valk, 1995: 190).

4.10.3.3   *PORTRAYAL OF 'US' AND 'THEM', AND POSITIVE TRENDS IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMES*

While much of the earlier (international) research has shown that reporting on ethnic issues is one-sided and negative, studies on reporting in Dutch TV programmes give a more complex picture. Ethnic minorities were not only portrayed as problems or threats, but also as constituent members of society who enrich it. Leurdijk (1997a, 1997b, 1999) investigated television reports about the multicultural society in inner cities, especially talk shows, documentary films and 'reality' series. She examined in particular the characteristics of these TV genres and their influence on the portrayal of the multicultural society, the selection criteria that were used in reporting on the multicultural society, and the opinions of journalists about the role of the media in that society. Themes that were most frequently discussed in these TV programmes were refugees, immigration, racism and extreme Right and the problems of multicultural inner cities. Racism and anti-racism were important topics. Racism, however, was predominantly reported in relation to right-wing extremism and racist violence; anti-racism reports were mostly related to mass mobilisation, protest meetings, and demonstrations (Leurdijk, 1999). Other topics such as sports, culture, education and religion occurred only rarely.

Leurdijk identified four repertoires for reporting about ethnic issues that reflect core professional values of journalists:

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92   President of the Center for the Study of European Expansion, advisor of the Queen of the Netherlands and teacher of the Crown Prince.

- *The registration repertoire*, the main task of journalists who adhere to this repertoire is to register social reality.
- *The repertoire of information*, aiming at countering ethnic prejudice by providing information.
- *The confrontation repertoire*, aims at breaking taboos on negative reporting about ethnic minorities. This is the most dominant repertoire, often implying a one-sided emphasis on ethnic and cultural difference as the cause for current problems.
- *The integration repertoire*, based on the assumption that ethnic minority groups are part of Dutch society, suggests that differences between the minority and the majority should be de-emphasised, while similarities ought to be emphasises. Consequently, positive news is stressed in this repertoire.

The television genres that were investigated had a preference for ordinary people as source of information, instead of experts and politicians. This differs from findings concerning news production research that showed the predominant role of politicians and experts. The talk shows analysed by Leurdijk represented only the opinions of autochthonous inhabitants. Consequently, ethnic minorities were the objects rather than subjects of reporting in the analysed programs. People who represented the majority occurred 2.5 times more often than did those from ethnic minority groups. However, the latter category was featured more frequently in visual images that were used to illustrate stories about the increasing immigrant population, cultural differences and criminality. The contribution of ethnic minority people versus ethnic majority people also differed as to the topics of interviews. Ethnic minorities were not interviewed about the problems they face in their own lives; instead, they were asked about their knowledge of Dutch, their (alleged or perceived) criminal backgrounds and so forth. In sum, Dutch inhabitants were portrayed as victims, whereas ethnic minority members were seen as problems on the TV programmes considered. Two thirds of the shows examined favoured interpretations of a multicultural society in terms of polarised relations between ethnic minorities and the Dutch.

In addition, TV talk shows and reality programmes allowed equal representation of minority group members. They were represented mainly as laypersons and hardly ever in important social positions, or as experts. This concurs with findings derived from current affairs programmes. An investigation of the position of ethnic minorities in daily current affairs on Dutch television (*Netwerk*) showed that 7.6 per cent of the participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds (Crone, 1997). Of these, only a small number had important social positions; over half were portrayed as ordinary people rather than professionals. The excuse used by the editors of those programmes is that they (ethnic minority professionals) don't exist.

Although TV programme makers use comparable problem definitions and similar images of working class suburbs, different interpretative frameworks were used to explain events and processes. Two were dominant in the programmes on multicultural inner cities. According to the first, some problems experienced in neighborhoods were attributed to changing composition since the arrival of ethnic minorities; cultural differences were blamed for rising tensions. The second framework explained problems from a socio-economic viewpoint. Hence, the same neighborhood problems were seen as the logical result of a 'competition over scarce resources'; that is, the predictable outcome of disadvantaged groups living together.

Following Leurdijk, the analysed genres may be seen as a place where a permanent interpretation process of social reality takes place without final conclusions. Media (radio, TV, Internet) vary regarding the possibilities for public feedback concerning topic choice (general or special interest), source use, impact and knowledge production (Leurdijk in Sterk, Top and Doppert, 2000: 27-42). While the press allows for critical analysis, TV's emphasis on emotion seems less adapted to provide insight into long lasting developments, underlying structures, historical analysis, and complex argumentation. Rather, television is characterised by image, emotion, action and drama: it is the medium of subjective experience. Leurdijk's study (1999) showed that this is not necessarily negative for the portrayal on ethnic minorities and the multicultural society.

4.10.3.4   PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY

A quantitative analysis of press photos depicting ethnic minorities in the first week of 2000 in the most important five national daily newspapers[93], and in the issues of 5 popular youth magazines[94] found that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in press photography (Top, 2000a). According to Top, photos of ethnic minority members were equally distributed over different news items and sections of the newspapers/magazines. Importantly, strong differences in portrayal occurred for different magazines and newspapers. Compared to the newspapers, the magazines contained more photos of mixed situations and frequently depicted minorities in entertainment roles.

Apart from some isolated initiatives, we can hardly speak about the existence of a field of multicultural photography in the Netherlands (Top, 2000b). Neither editorial teams nor vocational schools for photography have special policies in this domain. There are very few professional photographers from ethnic minorities working in the Netherlands. More qualitative studies should be done on the representation of ethnic minorities in press photography.

4.10.4   STUDIES ON MEDIA EFFECTS

This section highlights some investigated effects of media reporting, particularly in terms of the reproduction of racism and the acceptance of right-wing extremism.

4.10.4.1   EXPERIENCED ETHNIC THREAT

Based on the theory that long-term exposure to the content of specific TV shows shapes corresponding viewer attitudes, Vergeer, Rutten and Scheepers (1996) identified a relationship between TV viewing and the perception of ethnic minorities as threatening. This finding was elaborated for specific TV stations[95]. Public and commercial stations were very different as to the nature of the pro-

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93   Telegraaf, Volkskrant, NRC/Handelsblad, Algemeen Dagblad and Trouw.
94   Break Out, Tina, Flair, Yes and Viva.

grammes broadcast (Vergeer and Scheppers, 1998). Commercial stations such as RTL 4 broadcast a disproportionate number of North American programmes (75 per cent). Many of these programmes contain negative and damaging representations of ethnic minorities. The results of their study showed that exposure to fiction and entertainment led to negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Additionally, the study showed that watching one of the commercial stations known for its large proportion of programmes made in the United States also resulted in a subjective experienced threat from ethnic minorities. On the other hand, in a recently defended doctoral dissertation, Vergeer concluded on the basis of experiments that the effects of television (measured in amount of exposure) on audience attitudes are minimal. People who spent more time watching television did not feel more threatened by ethnic minorities than those who spent less time watching television (Vergeer, 2000).

4.10.4.2   THE INFLUENCE OF STYLE

Another finding from an experimental study in the media effects literature is that style in press reporting on right-wing extremism influences the attitude of the readers (Van Zwieten, 1997). A group of readers who read a negative and didactic article, turned out to be more critical towards the extreme Right, reacting in a more nuanced way in respect to negative statements about asylum seekers than the group who read more neutral or ironical articles.

4.10.4.3   EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA ON RACISM AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

On the basis of interviews with eighteen radio, TV and press journalists, and documentary analysis (of press articles, (research) reports, scholarly literature, etc.), Van Donselaar, Claus and Nelissen (1998) found that media have both restraining and stimulating effects on racism and right-wing extremism:
- the journalists interviewed agreed that their reporting may

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95   Based on interviews conducted in 1994 with 592 respondents, a representative sample of the population of a Dutch town. The TV stations were Nederland 1, 2 and 3, and RTL4 and 5.

have unintended effects in terms of stimulating racial violence. Journalists try to prevent such effects but agree that reporting is the first priority number; admittedly, effects restraining racial violence are not always consciously sought. Importantly, while journalists considered racism an important issue for the media to discuss, they did not think it was their duty to put it on the political agenda. A minority of journalists considers the struggle against racism/right extremism an important task.

- racist organisations depend heavily on media coverage for publicity (Van Donselaar et al., 1998); moreover, negative publicity in particular has a strong stigmatising effect and may actually help to retard the development of such organisations. Stimulating effects do occur where strategies are responded by counter strategies of the extreme Right to get more publicity. Election campaigns have a strong impact on negative reporting of right-wing extremist and racist organisations.
- compared to their counterparts in other countries, Dutch right-wing extremist parties or organisations have few websites. More importantly, racism may be fuelled by the easy access to international hate sites that the Internet provides. Repression, self-regulation and education are considered major strategies to counter racism on the Internet.

4.10.5   INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND BALANCED REPORTING

4.10.5.1   JOURNALISTS' ATTITUDES AND RECRUITMENT POLICIES

The role of journalists in a multicultural society is part of a broader ongoing research project about journalists at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR). First results of a survey among journalists, published in the magazine *De Journalist* (Deuze, 2000) showed that only two per cent of Dutch journalists are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Of these, over half were employed by the national public broadcasting companies. Ethnic minority journalists are often more knowledgeable about issues

surrounding multiculturalism than their colleagues, who hold that the public is not very interested in these issues. More results of the research will be published in 2001 (van Lenkveld and Deuze, 2001). Journalistic constraints are found to prevent the implementation of principles that relate to a more balanced presentation of minority perspectives and equality of access of members of ethnic minority groups (Deuze, 2000; Leurdijk, 1999; Vasterman, 2000; Witte, 1998).

Witte (1998) interviewed nine editors and journalists about their attitudes concerning the influence of the multicultural society in reporting and recruitment policies[96]. The journalists consulted considered the issue of a multicultural society like other topics that they report on, not as a frame of reference that implies policy consequences regarding the content of reporting and recruitment policies. They believed that the absence of ethnic minority members in editorial teams is due to a lack of qualified applicants. The news workers interviewed did not favour special training programmes aimed at reporting on the multicultural society. They were also reluctant to accept compulsory policies, aimed at the employment of ethnic minorities. Some of the interviewees acknowledged the importance of balanced personnel policies, but warned against what they called 'reverse discrimination'. The majority, however, emphasised that ethnic background is not considered a criterion in the hiring process, which is (ideally!) based on individual merit alone. To explain the absence of ethnic minority journalists, they pointed to a lack of mobility, to the high level of competition, to the lack of experienced ethnic minority journalists, to problems in the educational system, and to the lack of language abilities among ethnic minority journalists. The journalists interviewed were not positive about a project of the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) to ensure that more people of ethnic minority backgrounds are included in editorial teams.

In general, journalists were reluctant to accept guidelines and codes of conduct as tools to promote more balanced reporting and

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96   The journalists interviewed were from three large national newspapers (Volkskrant, Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad) and three regional dailies (De Gelderlander, De Limburger, Utrechts Nieuwsblad).

equal access of ethnic minorities to the media (Crone, 1996; Evers, 2000; Lahaise, 1998; Leurdijk, 1999; Witte, 1998). In addition, the unwritten rule that ethnic background should only be mentioned when functional and relevant is subject to changing norms (Witte, 1998). Journalists seem to be more inclined to mention ethnic background than previously. On the other hand, the reluctance to identify violence as racist violence seems to have increased, not only among news workers, but also among public authorities. For example, Vasterman (2000) analysed different cases of so-called 'senseless violence' that occurred in 1997-98, in which different people of Dutch and ethnic minority backgrounds were killed. The author asked why the cases of Dutch people received so much media and public attention, while those involving the two victims from ethnic minority backgrounds remained relatively unnoticed. Vasterman concluded that the nature and seriousness of the incidents played an important role, but that the most determining factor was the interpretative framework used by official authorities (such as the police) to explain the occurrence. The study suggests that when a broader interpretative social framework was used - preferably one containing controversial issues - more media and public attention was generated. However, in the two cases involving the murders of ethnic minority members, the police labelled these as accidental and explicitly rejected a framework incorporating racism into the explanation (Vasterman, 2000: 81).

Unwritten codes for journalists exist in reporting on racist incidents and right-wing extremist, racist organisations (van Donselaar, 1998). This is because these types of organisations, and their link to violence, are considered social issues that should be handled carefully in order to prevent them from profiting by the 'free publicity' they might draw from media exposure, and to reduce the possibility of fuelling people's fears.

4.10.5.2   INITIATIVES OF (NON-)GOVERNMENTAL, AND MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

Policy measures stimulating equal access, treatment and participation in the media are an important focus in the existing literature, in particular in publications of NGO's. Leurdijk (1999) provides a

description of different initiatives introduced by media (organisations) to promote the monitoring of media reporting along with the recruitment and representation of minorities in the media.

Many initiatives have been taken during the period 1995-2000 to promote cultural diversity. Some of them are discussed in this section (see for other initiatives, van der Wal, 1995). Different organisations and institutions are active in promoting interculturalisation. For example, the NVJ, the Dutch Association of Journalists, is particularly well known for its national and international activities to promote cultural diversity. It organises special training courses and discussion meetings for news workers in the press. The Association also recently published an anthology by Sterk et al. (2000), which gives an overview of initiatives oriented towards the enhancement of ethnic minority participation in the media and some practical suggestions. The NVJ has also distributed a brochure with recommendations for balanced reporting on ethnic minorities (Doppert and Top, 1993). Moreover, it cooperates with the University of Nijmegen and the *Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers* (the Press Foundation) in the production of a CD-Rom on media and minorities.[97]

The *Stichting Omroep Allochtonen* (STOA, Foundation Broadcasting for Allochthonous) especially promotes the fair portrayal of ethnic minorities by broadcasting companies and the participation of ethnic minority members in the audio-visual media. STOA cooperates with organisations such as the Public Broadcasting Companies (NPS), the Employment Office, and the Media Academy. An example is the project *More Colour in the Media*, which aims to promote the development of policies aimed at diversity. STOA and NVJ together have published an Ethnic Minority Expert Guide, containing names of ethnic minority members and their professional expertise for consultation by journalists. Broadcasting companies themselves, such as the public broadcasting company NPS, have also developed policies in this field. The NPS is legally obliged to dedicate 15 per cent of its programming time to ethnic minority groups.

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97   See http://www.socsci.kun.nl/maw/cw/emm

In 1995 a conference was held on the responsibility of broadcasting organisations to achieve wider representation of minorities and minority perspectives in their programmes and among staff. The published report contains articles on the following issues:

- The history of specific minority programmes on radio and TV: their role and problems;
- The effects of minority programmes on the integration of ethnic minority groups;
- The representation of ethnic minority groups in professional roles and recruitment policies.

The NPS cooperated with the Landelijk Bureau Racismebestrijding (LBR) (National Office to Combat Racism) in the organisation of an international conference 'The Era of Coloured Television' at the occasion of the presentation of the European Media Award, the Prix Iris 1999. An annual event organised by the LBR is the presentation of the Dutch media award, which is granted to those professional media productions that highlight the Dutch multicultural society in a critical, creative and inspiring way.

Finally, as was mentioned previously, the Dutch government also develops policies aimed at promoting multiculturalism in the media (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1999; Sterk et al., 2000). Governmental policies are oriented towards enhancing the quality and diversity of media products, a balanced representation of ethnic minorities, and their equal participation in media production and consumption. The Council of Journalists handles, among others things, complaints about portrayals of minority groups in the media (Evers, 2000).

4.10.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following conclusions may be drawn about (research on) racism and cultural diversity in the media in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2000. Although the nature of the representation of ethnic minorities in the media tends to be secondary as a research focus, the research examined suggests a persistence of negative minority portrayals, especially in the press, but also to a

lesser extent on television. Yet these negative depictions coexist with more balanced and positive approaches, especially in TV broadcasts. Muslims in particular seem targets of negative stereotyping. However, representations are not static, but change dynamically over time. They tend to reflect the surrounding and changing political landscape and public discourse on ethnic minorities while, at the same time, influencing them.

Over the last decade, the general climate of the public debate on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands was dominated by the widely experienced need to 'break the taboo on negative expressions on ethnic minorities'. This feature of a more general, conservative cultural climate may partly help to explain the persistence of negative portrayal, the defensive attitudes that were found among news workers, and their reluctance to implement more inclusive policy measures to achieve balance.

As Cottle (2000b) argues, however, it is evidently far too simplistic and inaccurate to attribute negative portrayals exclusively to the prejudices of news workers. In fact, international research shows that instead of merely registering the nature of representations in the media, more attention should be paid to their informing determinants, i.e. 'the more complex processes at work at the level of structures, contexts and dynamics in processes of media production' such as the impact of journalist training and that of news conventions and news values that privilege 'conflict, drama, controversy, violence and deviance' (Cottle, 2000b: 37) and the influence of wider cultural discourses.

Although the impact of more general processes of media production have incidentally been the object of Dutch media research in 1995-2000, more efforts are needed to achieve a better understanding of all processes involved. Although more comprehensive and long-term strategies are needed, the amount of initiatives that are undertaken to promote equal participation and balanced reporting on ethnic minorities in the Dutch media is encouraging.

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4.10.8 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Consulted Websites:

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www.omroep.nl/nos/rtv/voorlichting/hsumm
www.multicultural.net
www.multicultureelplein.nl
www.magenta.nl
www.presswise.org.uk/ethics.htm

Consulted Organisations, Documentation Centres and Libraries

Anne Frank Foundation
P.O. Box: 730
1000 AS Amsterdam
Tel: 0031-20-556 71 00, Fax: 0031-20-620 79 99
Website: www.annefrank.nl

Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers (Press Foundation)
Prinsessegracht 19
2514 AP Den Haag
Tel: 0031-70-361 71 11, Fax: 0031-70-361 71 08
Email: secr@bedrijfsfondspers.nl

Faculty of Communication Studies of the University of Amsterdam:
Oude Hoogstraat 24

1012 CE Amsterdam
Tel: 0031-20-525 39 89
Email: communication-science@pscw.uva.nl

FORUM, Institute for Multicultural Development:
Kanaalweg 86
3533 HG Utrecht
Tel: 0031-30-297 43 21, Fax: 0031-30-296 00 30
Website: www.forum.nl

Landelijk Bureau Racismebestrijding (LBR, National Office to Combat Racism)
Schaatsbaan 51
3013 AR Rotterdam
Tel.: 0031-10-201 02 01, Fax: 0031-10-201 02 22
Email: info@lbr.nl
Website: www.lbr.nl

Nederlandse Vereniging Journalisten (NVJ) -working group Media and Migrants:
Joh. Vermeerstraat 22
1070 AZ Amsterdam
Tel.: 0031-20-676 67 71, Fax: 0031-20-662 49 01
Email: vereniging@nvj.nl
Website: www.villamedia.nl

Stichting Omroep Allochtonen (Foundation Broadcasting Allochtonous) (STOA):
Mariaplaats 3
3500 BE Utrecht
Tel.: 0031-30-230 22 40, Fax: 0031-30-230 29 75
Email: stoa@stoa.nl
Website: www.stoa.nl