

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

European Research Centre
on Migration and Ethnic Relations
(ERCOMER)

Edited by Jessika ter Wal

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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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 11 |
| | by Jessika ter Wal | |
| 1.1 | Aims of the study | 11 |
| 1.2 | How the study was conducted | 12 |
| 1.3 | Existing international initiatives to promote good practice . | 19 |
| 1.4 | Problems related to the comparability of data | 10 |
| 1.5 | Overview | 23 |
| | Table 1. Dimensions, specific media practices, factors and related types of data | 26 |
| 2 | CONCLUSIONS | 31 |
| | by Jessika ter Wal | |
| 2.1 | AN INVENTORY OF THE EXISTING RESEARCH | 32 |
| 2.1.1 | Disparities in available research | 32 |
| 2.1.2 | Type of research and approach | 33 |
| 2.1.3 | Ideological differences | 34 |
| 2.1.4 | Coding Methods in Quantitative Research - problems of reliability | 35 |
| 2.1.5 | Limits of quantitative analyses and coding | 35 |
| 2.2 | NEGATIVE NEWS MAKING-RELATED MECHANISMS | 36 |
| 2.2.1 | Media panics and fixed repertoires | 36 |
| 2.2.2 | Media and politics | 37 |
| 2.2.3 | Different newspaper types | 39 |
| 2.2.4 | News genres selection | 40 |
| 2.2.5 | Problem of reliable information | 40 |
| 2.2.6 | Quotation/Source use | 40 |
| 2.3 | COMMON TRENDS IN PORTRAYAL | 42 |
| 2.3.1 | Crime themes | 43 |
| 2.3.2 | Description of problems related to ethnic relations | 45 |
| 2.3.3 | Description of problems related to immigration and asylum | 46 |
| 2.3.4 | Portrayal and perspective | 47 |
| 2.3.5 | Focus on special groups and boundary markers | 48 |
| 2.3.6 | Labelling | 50 |
| 2.4 | DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MORE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INSTANCES | 52 |
| 2.4.1 | Variation depending on media type and genre | 52 |
| 2.4.2 | Subtle and blatant racism | 53 |
| 2.4.3 | Different groups | 54 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 2.4.4 | Headlines | 54 |
| 2.5 | POSITIONS TOWARDS RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM | 55 |
| 2.5.1 | Right-wing extremism and populism | 57 |
| 2.5.2 | Racist crimes (violence and harassment) | 58 |
| 2.5.3 | Anti-racism | 59 |
| 2.6 | TRACING DEVELOPMENTS | 61 |
| 2.6.1 | Subtle/new racism | 62 |
| 2.6.2 | Negative developments | 63 |
| 2.6.3 | Positive developments in thematic change or media sensitivity | 63 |
| 2.6.4 | Parallel developments over longer periods of time | 66 |
| 2.6.5 | Development in reporting on specific cases or groups | 67 |
| 2.7 | MEDIA EFFECTS | 68 |
| 2.8 | POSITIVE ACTIONS TO COMBAT RACISM AND PROMOTE CULTURAL DIVERSITY | 71 |
| 2.8.1 | Codex of conduct | 71 |
| 3 | RECOMMENDATIONS by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia | 75 |
| 3.1 | GENERAL REMARKS..... | 75 |
| 3.2 | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND MONITORING | 78 |
| 3.3 | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA PROFESSIONALS | 79 |
| 3.3.1 | Source use | 79 |
| 3.3.2 | Sources and participation | 80 |
| 3.3.3 | Formats and genres | 81 |
| 3.3.4 | Groups - Portrayal | 83 |
| 3.4 | POLICIES FOR PROMOTING DIVERSITY | 84 |
| 3.5 | VIGILANCE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA | 86 |
| 3.6 | REFERENCES | 87 |
| 4 | MEMBER STATE REPORTS | 89 |
| 4.1 | BELGIUM (BE) | 90 |
| | by Frieda Saeys and Tomas Coppens | |
| 4.1.1 | Introduction | 90 |
| 4.1.2 | Representation of Ethnic Minorities in the media | 91 |
| 4.1.3 | Media discourse analysis - 'Debating Diversity' | 97 |
| 4.1.4 | Actions to combat racism and discrimination in the media . | 99 |
| 4.1.5 | Conclusions | 101 |
| 4.1.6 | References | 102 |
| 4.1.7 | Contact addresses | 104 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.2 | DENMARK (DA) | 107 |
| | by Mustafa Hussain | |
| 4.2.1 | Introduction | 107 |
| 4.2.2 | Portrayal in the mass media | 107 |
| 4.2.3 | Recognition of the problem and good practice | 117 |
| 4.2.4 | Concluding remarks | 121 |
| 4.2.5 | References | 122 |
| 4.3 | GERMANY (DE) | 125 |
| | by Joachim Trebbe and Tobias Köhler | |
| 4.3.1 | Introduction | 125 |
| 4.3.2 | General media practices | 127 |
| 4.3.3 | The reproduction of ethnic and racist prejudice | 136 |
| 4.3.4 | Initiatives to promote cultural diversity and combat racism | 138 |
| 4.3.5 | Concluding remarks | 143 |
| 4.3.6 | References | 144 |
| 4.3.7 | Internet addresses | 148 |
| 4.4 | GREECE (EL) | 149 |
| | by Anna Triandafyllidou | |
| 4.4.1 | A brief introduction to Greece and its minorities | 150 |
| 4.4.2 | Media practices in reporting on ethnic issues | 152 |
| 4.4.3 | The reproduction of ethnic and racial stereotypes | 159 |
| 4.4.4 | Media initiatives to combat racism | 164 |
| 4.4.5 | Conclusions | 165 |
| 4.4.6 | References | 166 |
| 4.4.7 | Contact addresses | 170 |
| 4.5 | SPAIN (ES) | 173 |
| | by Antonio Miguel Bañon Hernandez | |
| 4.5.1 | Researchers and research groups | 174 |
| 4.5.2 | Research by associations and NGO'S | 183 |
| 4.5.3 | Initiatives of the media | 191 |
| 4.5.4 | Government and trade unions | 194 |
| 4.5.5 | Conclusions | 198 |
| 4.5.6 | References | 199 |
| 4.6 | FRANCE (FR) | 203 |
| | by Alec G. Hargreaves | |
| 4.6.1 | Introduction | 203 |
| 4.6.2 | Media representations | 203 |
| 4.6.3 | Media effects | 209 |

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 4.6.4 | Actions to promote cultural diversity and combat racism ... | 211 |
| 4.6.5 | Conclusions | 214 |
| 4.6.6 | References | 215 |
| 4.6.7 | Contact addresses | 218 |
| 4.7 | IRELAND (IR) | 221 |
| | by Gary Quinn and Ciarán Ó Mailán | |
| 4.7.1 | A diverse Ireland | 221 |
| 4.7.2 | Legislative framework for racism and the media | 224 |
| 4.7.3 | Defining ethnic minorities in the news | 226 |
| 4.7.4 | Common trends | 229 |
| 4.7.5 | Credible sources | 232 |
| 4.7.6 | Journalism constraints and guidelines | 233 |
| 4.7.7 | Monitoring | 235 |
| 4.7.8 | Conclusions | 237 |
| 4.7.9 | References | 237 |
| 4.7.10 | Contact addresses | 238 |
| 4.8 | ITALY (IT) | 239 |
| | by Jessika ter Wal | |
| 4.8.1 | General media practices | 240 |
| 4.8.2 | Main themes and portrayal | 241 |
| 4.8.3 | Initiatives to combat racism and promote cultural diversity | 259 |
| 4.8.4 | Concluding remarks | 262 |
| 4.8.5 | References | 264 |
| 4.8.6 | Contact addresses | 270 |
| 4.9 | LUXEMBOURG (LU) | 273 |
| | by Nénad Dubajic | |
| 4.9.1 | Introduction | 273 |
| 4.9.2 | General information on media | 274 |
| 4.9.3 | Media representations | 276 |
| 4.9.4 | Initiatives to combat racism and promote cultural diversity | 278 |
| 4.9.5 | Concluding remarks | 282 |
| 4.9.6 | References | 284 |
| 4.9.7 | Contact addresses | 286 |
| 4.10 | THE NETHERLANDS (NE) | 287 |
| | by Ineke van der Valk | |
| 4.10.1 | Introduction | 287 |
| 4.10.2 | Research overview until 1997 | 288 |
| 4.10.3 | Portrayal of ethnic minorities | 290 |

| | | |
|--------|--|-----|
| 4.10.4 | Studies on media effects | 296 |
| 4.10.5 | Initiatives to promote diversity and balanced reporting | 298 |
| 4.10.6 | Concluding remarks | 302 |
| 4.10.7 | References | 304 |
| 4.10.8 | Contact addresses | 308 |
| 4.11 | AUSTRIA (OE) | 311 |
| | by Alexander Joskowicz | |
| 4.11.1 | Introduction | 311 |
| 4.11.2 | The media market and its regulations on reporting | 312 |
| 4.11.3 | Ethnic and racial stereotypes in the media | 314 |
| 4.11.4 | Initiatives to promote cultural diversity and combat racism | 322 |
| 4.11.5 | References | 324 |
| 4.12 | PORTUGAL (PO) | 327 |
| | by Anabela Franqueira | |
| 4.12.1 | Introduction | 327 |
| 4.12.2 | The representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities ... | 335 |
| 4.12.3 | Positive actions to promote cultural diversity and combat racism | 340 |
| 4.12.4 | Concluding remarks | 347 |
| 4.12.5 | References | 348 |
| 4.13 | FINLAND (SU) | 351 |
| | by Karina Horsti | |
| 4.13.1 | Introduction: Cultural diversity in Finland | 351 |
| 4.13.2 | Establishing the field of ethnic studies | 352 |
| 4.13.3 | The reproduction of ethnic stereotypes in the media | 354 |
| 4.13.4 | The role of journalistic practises and routines | 364 |
| 4.13.5 | Media use by immigrants | 366 |
| 4.13.6 | Initiatives for more balanced reporting | 367 |
| 4.13.7 | References | 369 |
| 4.14 | SWEDEN (SV) | 373 |
| | by Ylva Brune | |
| 4.14.1 | General findings on news coverage | 373 |
| 4.14.2 | News media depictions of racism and Xenophobia | 381 |
| 4.14.3 | Initiatives to promote cultural diversity in the media and to improve news reporting | 387 |
| 4.14.4 | Education and vocational training | 390 |
| 4.14.5 | Conclusions | 390 |
| 4.14.6 | References | 391 |

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 4.15 | UNITED KINGDOM (UK) | 395 |
| | by Paul Statham | |
| 4.15.1 | Introduction - research context in Britain | 395 |
| 4.15.2 | Coverage, topics and sources | 399 |
| 4.15.3 | Themes, framing and labelling | 406 |
| 4.15.4 | Media initiatives to promote cultural diversity | 411 |
| 4.15.5 | The need for politically relevant research | 416 |
| 4.15.6 | References | 418 |
| 5 | APPENDIX | 421 |
| 5.1 | CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK | 421 |
| | by Jessika ter Wal | |
| 5.1.1 | The concept of racism | 334 |
| 5.2 | Media and racism | 423 |
| 5.2.1 | Studying media treatment of racism | 423 |
| 5.2.2 | Racism, denial and anti-racism | 424 |
| 5.2.3 | Prejudiced attitudes and social representations | 425 |
| 5.3 | MAIN THEORETICAL APPROACHES | 426 |
| 5.3.1 | Minorities and the media' approach..... | 427 |
| 5.3.2 | News-making approach | 429 |
| 5.3.3 | Social constructionist approach | 432 |
| 5.3.4 | Discourse analytical approach..... | 434 |
| 5.3.5 | News and public attitudes approach | 436 |
| 5.3.6 | Other approaches | 440 |
| 5.3.7 | Summary | 441 |
| 5.4 | METHODS FOR ANALYSIS | 441 |
| 5.4.1 | Extensive analysis and case studies | 442 |
| 5.4.2 | Content analysis | 444 |
| 5.4.3 | News-making related questions..... | 447 |
| 5.4.4 | Social construction | 447 |
| 5.4.5 | Discourse analysis..... | 448 |
| 5.4.6 | Public attitudes..... | 453 |
| 5.5 | REFERENCES | 454 |
| 5.6 | LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS – AUTHORS' ADDRESSES | 458 |

4.13 FINLAND (SU)

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Media research on ethnicity and racism is rather undeveloped in Finland, but what exists can be characterised as 'establishing the field'. The findings between 1995 and 2000 on ethnic representation paint a uniform picture. Everyday reporting has not changed considerably over the last five years. Explicit racism may be found in letters to the editor, in tabloid, and in journalism online. However, news and current affairs sections in daily newspapers as well as in television do not publish material with overtly racist attitudes. Nevertheless, most researchers criticise the media for excluding ethnic minorities in various subtle ways. Asylum seeking is exaggerated with metaphors of war and natural catastrophe. Ethnic minorities are presented mainly in a negative 'problem' context, and are not used as important sources. On the contrary, authorities speak on behalf of them.

4.13.1 INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN FINLAND

Since the mid-1980s, Finland has become increasingly culturally diverse. The number of foreign nationals remains small, only 1.7 per cent of the population, but it has quadrupled during the 1990s. The largest groups of non-EU newcomers are humanitarian refugees from various countries and return immigrants from neighbouring Russia.

Racism and prejudice have grown alongside cultural heterogeneity. A study on the Finn's attitudes towards foreigners shows that during the economic recession in the early and mid-1990s, attitudes became more hostile than in previous years (Jaakkola, 1999). However, attitudes differ according to ethnic origin: an ethnic hier-

¹¹¹ I would like to acknowledge the assistance I received from professors and researchers at the University of Tampere, University of Helsinki, and University of Jyväskylä. Moreover, I received help from various NGO's. Thank you.

archy exists in Finnish society. According to Jaakkola (1999: 83) attitudes were most negative towards 'Somalis, Arabs, Russians, Kurds, Turks, Moroccans, and 'Black Africans'. Attitudes towards these groups were approximately equally negative: 56-68 per cent of the Finns would prefer not to have them move into the country. Somalis ranked the least desirable in this hierarchy. Comparatively, only 15-23 per cent of the Finns surveyed would not welcome 'Norwegians, Ingrian Finns, English or Danish'.

The majority of foreign nationals, including refugees, reside in the capital of Helsinki or in the surrounding towns. The social division between the neighbourhoods of Helsinki has decreased since the 1960s, but Kortteinen and Vaattovara (1999) have noted that since 1993-94 unemployment has concentrated on the outskirts of the city, mainly in the north and east. This trend has not changed since the recession. Non-EU nationals tend to live in these areas where socio-economic status is lower. Though the number of foreign nationals is comparatively small, in the northern and eastern parts of Helsinki there are separate blocks of houses where one third of the residents are non-EU nationals.

4.13.2 ESTABLISHING THE FIELD OF ETHNIC STUDIES

The whole research field of ethnicity and racism is rather undeveloped in Finland. Helander (1999: 27) characterises the state of research as 'establishing the field'. And among Finnish studies relating to ethnicity there is little analysis of the media. Moreover, issues of power relations, which have a central position in social science debates in international arenas, and which are often related to the media, have not been key themes in the Finnish academic debate (Helander 1999: 15-16).

An ethnic hierarchy exists not only in the attitudes of the common person, but also in academic research. Helander (1999: 19) points

112 There are approximately 60,000-80,000 Ingrian Finns living in the area of former Soviet Union, one third lives in the area of St. Petersburg, one third in Karelia, and one third in Estonia. Quotas of Ingrian Finns have moved to Finland every year since the early 1990s.

out that studies on ethnic relations, which were conducted in 1991-1996 mainly reflect the situation of Swedish-speaking Finns, the Sami, the Finns, and the Ingrians. In contrast, the Roma, a traditional cultural minority, have been studied ten times less than the Swedish-speaking Finns.

Communication studies in Finland have approached questions of ethnic minorities primarily by studying news journalism, especially by analysing texts of printed news. Research includes mostly small-scale qualitative and quantitative studies such as master's theses and research reports. Two Doctoral dissertations, where the media is analysed within the frame of ethnicity and immigration, have come out for the first time this year. Both look at the issue of ethnicity from a linguistic viewpoint. Pekka Kuusisto (2000) analyses the perception and construction of the concept of ethnicity in Finnish and British newspaper reports of the former Yugoslavia. His study explicates the ways in which newspapers ethnically categorise both the 'home' society and the 'others'. Yugoslavia is presented as abnormal, ethnically unstable and lacking 'national' ethnicity. Additionally Sari Pietikäinen (2000) analyses the language of printed news in her doctoral dissertation. She concentrates on the ways in which difference between ethnic minorities and majority is discursively constructed in press news and editorials in the main newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* during 1985-1993. Her analysis supports results of previous studies on ethnic representations in newspapers. Ethnic minorities are marginalised as sources in texts concerning ethnicity and immigration issues. Moreover, the linguistic choices made in texts indicate that difference between minorities is clearly marked.

Until the late 1990s research was based mostly on the personal initiative of a handful of researchers. However, institutionally activated research has been established during the last few years. The Ministry of Labour's Migration Affairs Section's started up a monitoring project on racism and ethnic discrimination in 1999. The media is one area that is being monitored in this programme. The Journalism Research and Development Centre at the University of Tampere and the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism (CEREN) at the Swedish School of Social Science at the

University of Helsinki began to monitor the media using quantitative methods, but some qualitative case studies have also been conducted. The first research reports came out in 2000. Sandlund (2000: 11) cautions that monitoring is in its early phase. At this point results map the overall field and will be followed by more penetrating studies. In addition, the Academy of Finland opened a new research programme on marginalisation, inequality, and ethnic relations in 2000. However, it turned out that none of the accepted research projects were specifically interested in the media. These institutional initiatives will anyhow encourage researchers to study the so far patchy field of ethnicity and media.

4.13.3 THE REPRODUCTION OF ETHNIC STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA

The findings of Finnish media research between 1995 and 2000 on ethnic representation paint a uniform picture. Explicit racism can be found in letters to the editor and in online journalism. Though almost all research leaves out the analysis of the popular yellow press, some of these magazines publish overtly xenophobic material. However, news and current affairs sections in daily newspapers as well as in television programmes do not produce material with provocative or obviously racist attitudes. However, most researchers criticise the media for excluding ethnic minorities in various subtle ways. They suggest that through patterns of exclusion and marginalisation the media unintentionally create the 'other'. Ethnic minorities are rarely selected as valued sources, and themes relating to them are usually negative: crime, social problems, and asylum seeking without proper reasons. Even more typical for the media is to bypass the 'other'. Altogether, silence, not explicit racism, is the problem with the Finnish media.

Most of the researchers criticise the media for focusing on the majority of Finns, 'us', although the context would allow or demand other viewpoints as well. Rather than reporting from ethnic minorities' perspective - such as a refugee's, a Roma's, a Sami's, or an asylum seeker's perspective - the media concentrate on the Finns' reactions or the possible harmful effects the 'other' is imagined to cause. Moreover, immigrants are often asked 'what do you think of

Finland' or 'how do you survive here'; this way, the meeting with a stranger is transformed into an identity affirmation exercise of the Finns. The majority look at themselves through an ethnic mirror. For instance, the Swedish language press in Finland tend to present the Swedish language and learning it in an euphoric light (Korkman, 2000). Language is an important issue among the Swedish-speaking minority; therefore they reinforce a positive self-image by presenting the language as attractive to foreigners. The Finnish language, on the other hand, is characterised as being difficult for foreigners to learn.

4.13.3.1 DOMINANT THEMES AND FRAMES

A quantitative study of sixteen Finnish language newspapers conducted in the autumn of 1999 clearly shows the dominant themes that the media associates with ethnic minorities (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000). As Table 1 illustrates, the media make little use of ethnic minorities or migrants as authoritative sources. Rather, these groups tend to be associated with issues regarding immigration control, the Aliens Act, asylum seekers reception process, integration programmes and so forth. Instead of using ethnic minorities and foreigners as sources the media let the Finnish authorities speak on their behalf. Additionally, the majority perspective is affirmed by the media's emphasis on the attitudes of the Finns towards ethnic minorities. The majority perspective is enforced by themes of Finnish society's attitudes towards ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities themselves appear mainly in the context of 'problems'. The most common theme is entering the country, and this is usually presented in a negative light. For example, asylum seekers are usually framed as trying to fraud the social security system. Only Albanians from Kosovo have been welcomed to the country in the media.

Table 1. Dominant themes in 1999 in Finnish press

| Theme | Central theme in story | Central theme in headline |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Law or authorities actions | 294 | 187 |
| Problems/ violence caused by foreigners or ethnic minorities | 109 | 53 |
| Finnish society's relations with minority groups | 95 | 71 |
| Discrimination or violence against ethnic minorities | 82 | 46 |
| New asylum seekers entering the country | 72 | 70 |
| Tolerance/ anti-racist action | 32 | 29 |
| Ethnic minority success stories | 27 | 8 |
| Total amount of stories in research material | 907 | 906 |

Source: formulated from categories created by Raittila and Kutilainen (2000: 24).

Although Rekola (1996: 41) uses different categories in his study of 9 newspapers in February and March 1995¹¹³, his findings do not differ significantly from those of Raittila and Kutilainen (2000). Rekola (1996: 41) lists the main themes as reproduced in Table 2.

Table 2. Main themes or topics in headlines and leads in 1995¹¹⁴

| Theme or topic | Amount |
|---|------------|
| Crime, threat, accident, problem, conflict of interests | 40 |
| Treatment of minorities, policy discussion | 29 |
| Religion, culture, way of life | 23 |
| Personal experiences of minorities in Finland | 21 |
| Reports of calls for tolerance, acts of charity | 19 |
| Minority celebrities or public figures | 11 |
| Minority members in social or political action | 8 |
| More refugees coming to Finland/ to town | 6 |
| Total amount of stories | 157 |

Source: Rekola (1996: 41).

When looking at Tables 1 and 2, one should be aware that specific events during the research period have markedly affected Raittila and Kutilainen's findings. During that time, an EU meeting took

113 In a random selection of seven days.

113 Rekola has both Swedish and Finnish language media in his sample.

place in Finland. European immigrant and refugee policies were then being discussed in public. Moreover, a comparatively large number of asylum seekers arrived from Slovakia during that period. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the main themes that are associated with ethnic minorities are the authoritative context and the problem context (minorities are either causing problems or they are presented as problems). This situation has not changed between 1995 and 2000.

At the same time in autumn 1999 a similar quantitative analysis was conducted among the Swedish-language minority press in Finland (Meurman, 2000). The Swedish-language press tends to emphasise slightly different themes (see Table 3). While law and actions by authorities are also main themes, stories on tolerance and everyday life of ethnic minorities are published more often in the Swedish-language press than in the Finnish language press. Furthermore, problems - that is, crime against minorities as well as crime committed by them - receive less attention in the Swedish language press. However, there is an important difference between the two studies; Meurman includes all Swedish-language newspapers in Finland, while Raittila and Kutilainen excluded most of the local papers, targeting major national, regional, and political newspapers only.

Table 3. Main themes in Swedish-language press in 1999

| Theme | Central theme in story | Central theme in headline |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Law or authorities actions | 123 | 97 |
| Problems/ violence caused by foreigners or ethnic minorities | 44 | 14 |
| Finnish society's relations with minority groups | 25 | 20 |
| Discrimination or violence against ethnic minorities | 47 | 28 |
| New asylum seekers entering the country | 38 | 43 |
| Tolerance/ anti-racist action | 55 | 38 |
| Every day life of minorities | 39 | 18 |
| Total amount of stories in research material | 484 | 484 |

Source: Adapted from Meurman (2000: 28-30).

4.13.3.2 ETHNIC ORIGIN AND TYPICAL CONTEXT

The quantitative survey of Raittila and Kutilainen (2000: 33-43) illustrate how certain themes have been assigned to certain migrants and minorities. When a specific ethnic origin is continuously associated with the same theme, there is a danger that the group will become stereotyped and stigmatised. Ordinarily, a specific news item or story could not, on its own, be characterised as racist, and yet certain thematic patterns, routinely reproduced, may ultimately result in discriminatory labelling of some groups.

The Finnish media routinely emphasise Russian and Estonian origins and nationalities when reporting on crime (see Table 4). For instance, out of 103 stories that report crime or ethnic minority disturbances among the majority population, almost 50 per cent present Russians or Estonians as the main minority actors (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 38-39). Moreover, the media tend to use words that refer to organised crime, such as the Russian mafia or the Estonian drug gang (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 20).

These patterns of reporting should be understood in a larger context. In 1996 Russians committed more crimes than any other nationality, 4,529 out of a total of 8,965 crimes committed by foreigners. However, in only 188 of the crimes did the offender have a residence in Finland. This is the case with other crimes as well. Only 13 per cent of all crimes committed by foreigners are carried out by those who have a Finnish residence (Streng, 1998: 50).

Moreover, it is important to note what is left out of reporting. People with Russian or Estonian backgrounds form the largest groups of foreign nationals who live permanently in Finland: at present, there are more than 16,000 Russians and more than 10,000 Estonians living in Finland (the total number of foreigners being approximately 80,000 people) (Population Register Center, 1999). Still, the Finnish media hardly cover anything related to their presence except for crime. And in reality, crime is more often related to *visiting* Russians and Estonians than to the family living next door.

Another noteworthy element illustrated in Table 4 is that foreigners and ethnic minorities are often lumped together into one group. This characterises the authoritative framework: when authorities are discussing the Finns' relations to or crimes against ethnic minorities, they do so from an abstract viewpoint. Thus, when society debates something that might reflect badly itself it tends to discuss it in abstract terms, without individual stories or specific faces.

Table 4. Migrants and minorities and typical themes in 1999

| Theme | Typical migrants and minorities associated with the theme |
|---|---|
| Finns' relations with minorities as a whole | Foreigners/ ethnic minorities as a whole |
| Conflicts/ crime by foreigners/ ethnic minorities | Foreigners/ ethnic minorities as a whole Russians Estonians |
| Crime against foreigners/ ethnic minorities | Foreigners/ ethnic minorities as a whole |

Source: Adopted from Raittila and Kutilainen (2000: 33-43).

4.13.3.3 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

The role of language in the reproduction of ethnic stereotypes and marginal positions has been emphasised in most studies. For instance, Nylund (2000) analyses what was selected for the headline and how the headline related to the main text. Headlining is an important media routine through which events are recontextualised. Some things are emphasised while other aspects are left out. Moreover, headlines direct the way the main text is understood.

Nylund (2000: 61-65) found three main textual strategies the media use in headlining stories with an ethnic dimension. Firstly, by simplifying events, the media overlooks complexities. For example: 'No prejudices in Kronoby' (according to one person), and 'Russians dislike Finnish clothes design' (this aspect was selected, though the main text confirms that the Russians prefer Finnish quality).

Secondly, the media 'factualise' events in headlines that in reality may be far from certain. For instance, a headline claims that 'Many Roma families from Dalsbruk are on their way home'. The main text

is more ambiguous, however: 'Gypsy families are thinking about returning home'. Furthermore, the journalist presents as a fact that the Roma have a "home" (a safe homely place) to which to return to. Thirdly, the media generalise. This is especially true in stories about ethnic minorities, since the media tend to present nationalities or whole groups of asylum seekers, refugees or foreigners as one uniform group (see also Meurman, 2000: 32; Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 13). An example of this routine could be the headline: 'We (the Finnish Roma) are tired of being exotic'.

Headlines can also differ so much from the main text that they actually paint a contradictory picture of the event. Ylönen (2000, 18-19) presents a case where the national news agency STT (7 October 1999) reported 'A Somali fight turned out to be expensive - for tax payers'. Many newspapers throughout the country, not only tabloid papers, but qualitative media, adopted this headline as well. However, in the main news text the reader notices that what actually happened was that a group of 40-50 young Finnish men attacked a group of 20 Somali men who were playing football. The state had to pay all legal expenses since both parties turned out to be indigent. In some other stories it was pointed out that the young men were skinheads. As Ylönen suggests, a more accurate headline would have been: 'A Skinhead attack turned out to be expensive - for tax payers'.

The concept of discourse and a discourse analytical perspective have been central in the Finnish academic discussion on media and ethnicity. A majority of researchers have approached these issues using discourse analysis. Since reporting is not overtly provocative, this method has been crucial. Researchers have found more subtle forms of discrimination hidden in media texts. These results would have been more difficult to discern in quantitative studies.

Language not only expresses what is happening, it also signifies events. Besides being shaped by society, language itself shapes society. Therefore, the kind of words, sentence structures, and narrative constructions the journalist chooses for each story is crucial. The language is constructed from various parts, all of which have

been chosen from a variety of alternatives. Therefore, there is always something that has been left out.

Blomqvist (1996: 133) points out that the media continuously repeated metaphors referring to natural catastrophe and war when they reported on Somali asylum seekers in early 1990's. These metaphors are still in use when unwanted asylum seekers are present in the public sphere. For instance, Horsti (2000) notes that the same metaphors were used in the coverage of Slovakian Roma asylum seekers in the summer of 1999. By emphasising metaphors like 'wave', 'stream', 'invasion', and 'flood', ideas and values related to natural catastrophes and wars are transferred to the public discussion on refugee issues.

Herkman (1996) emphasises the context in which the news story is being published. He illustrates his argument with a case from 1995 when a Somali man killed a Finnish teenage girl. The front page of the local (quality) newspaper featured the following headline in large lettering, 'A young Somali arrested for the Aitovuori killing,' along with a photograph of the victim's family in mourning. Herkman argues that the newspaper provoked racist attitudes in the town, firstly, because it normally did not present occasional crime and violence on the front page. Secondly, by identifying 'Somali' in the headline, accompanied by the picture of the victim's family, increased the likelihood that emotions of sorrow, anger, and blame would be vented on Somalis as a group. Thirdly, the word "Somali" is not neutral in connotation (as for instance, American, Swedish, or Dutch is). On the contrary, Herkman claims that the word 'Somali' represents much more than a nationality; it is used as a symbol for undesirable refugee.

4.13.3.4 CATEGORISING OR DENOMINATING TERMS

If ethnic origin is not central to the story, but the journalist wants to mention that the person does not belong to the majority of Finns, the journalist often uses coded expressions. This practice tends to be used in small crime reports. Most of these expressions characterise either the ability to speak the Finnish language or physical appearance, namely skin colour (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 14-

20). For instance, newspapers routinely use expressions such as 'a man who speaks bad Finnish', 'speaks with a foreign accent', 'darkish men - who speak Finnish' (referring to the Roma minority), 'coloured men', and 'black men'. Interestingly the traditional Roma minority is no longer addressed as the 'gypsy', except when a 'positive' context is used, such as when 'modern gypsy' appeared in the media in 1999 (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 18-19).

Indeed, there is a contradiction in the language used in news pages and in letters to the editor pages. Two codes of practises exist side-by-side in the media. While blatant racist language is curbed in regular news items, more xenophobic terms are tolerated in opinion columns, letters to the editor, and online journalism, a new feature of the Finnish media landscape (Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000: 17-18).

Today in Finland media have an additional Internet site where they present summaries of their main material as well as material made specifically for the Internet site. Consequently, new journalistic genres appear on the Internet along with the older ones. One feature is that the sites use more interactive genres, for instance, opinion polls and opportunities for reader feedback. Horsti (2000: 16-17) argues that the standard of ethics is lower on such websites than in the main media. For example, the largest tabloid paper in the country publishes readers' comments on its site, which would not appear in its newspaper. Inflammatory remarks can find expression, such as 'I suggest that all foreigners would be taken to an underground gas chamber and would be killed with gas there and that they would be left there! I hate foreigners'.

4.13.3.5 SWEDISH LANGUAGE MEDIA VS. FINNISH LANGUAGE MEDIA

Finland as an officially bilingual state has both Swedish and Finnish daily and weekly media. There has not been any systematic comparison between the two, but differences have been noted in some studies. The monitoring project (Meurman, 2000; Raittila and Kutilainen, 2000) has observed that ethnic minority groups appear in the Finnish and Swedish language media equally often. However,

as Table 5 illustrates, it seems that the Swedish media present somewhat more stories on anti-racist projects and tolerance, as well as everyday stories. Comparatively, the Finnish media report more often about the majority's attitudes towards foreigners, and about problems and crimes caused by ethnic minorities. However, these differences were negligible, but are tendencies that ought to be looked at more closely in future.

Table 5. Comparison of themes in Finnish and Swedish language media

| Theme | Finnish language media % | Swedish language media % |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Law or authorities actions | 32 (of total research material) | 25 |
| Problems/ violence caused by foreigners or ethnic minorities | 12 | 9 |
| Finnish society's relations with minority groups | 10 | 5 |
| Discrimination or violence against ethnic minorities | 9 | 10 |
| New asylum seekers entering the country | 8 | 8 |
| Tolerance/ anti-racist action | 3,5 | 11 |

Source: Adapted from Raittila and Kutilainen (2000) and Meurman (2000).

A qualitative analysis of the coverage of Slovakian Roma asylum seekers (Horsti, 2000) shows that the Swedish language national media (newspaper Hufvudstadsbladet and television news Nytt) present authorities' 'fortress talk', that is, demands for visa requirements for Slovaks and for a tighter Aliens Act, in a more problematised way than the Finnish media. The Swedish media use more alternative sources, such as intellectuals and non-governmental organisations, as well; they also interviewed the Roma more than the Finnish media. However, it has to be noted that the Swedish media did not venture far from its own elite; members of the Swedish national party were the only ones in the government who voted against toughening up the Aliens Act.

4.13.3.6 *ANTI-RACIST ACTION IN THE MEDIA*

Coverage of anti-racist action has not been studied specifically in Finland, but the issue has been lightly touched upon in some research. As Raittila and Kutilainen's study (2000) and Rekola's study (1996) illustrate (see Tables 1 and 2) anti-racist projects have been a continuous subject in the public sphere. It has to be noted, however, that these news stories on actions for tolerance usually present the Finns as primary actors. Ethnic minorities are usually absent as sources or as actors in these stories.

Karina Horsti's (1997) comparison of two news events illustrates how context significantly influences strategies that the media choose in the coverage of anti-racism. In one case, the whole community was worried about racism, because skinheads in town had attacked an African-American basketball player. The local newspaper reported in great detail projects against xenophobia. However, in this case, racism was only identified with a marginal group within the community, the skinheads. No other type of racism was dealt with. In another case, everyday racism emerged in a town after a Somali man was accused of killing a teenage girl. The local newspaper reported very cautiously on an anti-racist demonstration. The paper obviously overlooked and undermined everyday racism. However, in this case, the local newspaper's mainstream readership was accused of being xenophobic rather than just a fringe group as in the previous case. In addition, anti-racism was presented more as an opinion of a certain group of people, not as a common community initiative. In sum, the first case presented racism as the community's problem, whereas the second placed the problem squarely on ethnic minorities to solve themselves.

4.13.4 **THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTIC PRACTISES AND ROUTINES**

Finnish researchers have focused on journalistic practises and routines when they discuss the reasons behind biased coverage. There is an obvious bias in the selection of sources. Finnish authorities are the main actors and sources, which tend to speak on behalf of the minorities. This pattern has not changed between the early 1990's

and 2000. Pietikäinen (1995) points out that between 1985 and 1993, the main newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* quoted members of the majority in almost every news item, whereas minority groups were quoted only in every fifth news item. Furthermore, majority groups were quoted on topics such as laws governing asylum seeking and the Finnish aliens policy, that is, in important and 'hard' news areas, whereas minority groups were quoted on topics such as culture and living in Finland - 'soft' human-interest topics.

Rekola (1996) discovered similar results. In his sample, authorities were quoted as a major source in 48 per cent of the reports, while minority sources were quoted mainly on topics dealing with their own culture or personal experiences in Finland. However, Rekola (1996: 32) points out that not all foreigners are dealt with in the same manner. He concludes that immigrants originating from Europe or the USA are more often active agents than those coming from the so-called Third World.

Similar arguments were repeated in the following studies. Raittila and Kutilainen (2000: 59) showed how authorities are main voices in more than half of the media stories dealing with ethnicity in autumn 1999. The main body of this group is the police and law officials. Conversely, minority groups were usually objects of speech. Furthermore, when their voices are present, they are often mediated through a majority source. In that case the quote is framed not only by the journalist but also by the main authoritative source. For instance, in the following fragment the quoted police officer frames an alleged statement by Slovakian Roma asylum seekers in a manner which puts their need for asylum in a negative light: 'The applicants have said that in Slovakia they are being taunted in shops, with shouts such as "go back to India". They believe that on such inadequate grounds, anybody can ask for asylum' stated a member of the Foreigner Unit of the Helsinki police (*Helsingin Sanomat* 23 June 1999, quoted in Horsti 2000c).

The use of authority sources is a routine of journalism for other topics as well. Journalists tend to use established sources that are easily available during office hours. Journalism, of course, can be criticised because of this, but the fast tempo of the profession demands

quick and easy decisions. One possibility would be that the minority groups would offer the media what it wants: organised sources. Contact persons and office phone numbers, as well as accessible and regular contacts with the media might help the media to build new kinds of routines for sources (see Horsti, 1997: 103-104.)

4.13.5 MEDIA USE BY IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants' use of media, whether Finnish language or other, has not been extensively studied in Finland. Neither has audience research been conducted among ethnic minorities. A group of graduate students at the University of Helsinki (Levo-Henriksson et al., 2000) conducted a survey by interviewing minorities, authorities, and media personnel. They looked at the issue of communication from the viewpoint of Russian and Vietnamese immigrants. The use of Finnish or Swedish language media depends on the ability to speak these languages. Immigrants tend to rely on the oral information of officials and, to a great extent, on their relatives and friends when beginning their lives in a new country. Moreover, television is preferred in the beginning because of its visual elements. Gradually, Russian and Vietnamese immigrants begin to read newspapers and magazines. Especially popular are the freely distributed newspapers, which give daily news in a short form. Accessing paid and ordered media seems not to be considered worthwhile until later on.

Russian immigrants criticised the Finnish media for giving an unbalanced image of Russia and Russians. This argument seems to be reasonable according to research (see Table 4). Interestingly, however, though they do not rely on the Finnish reporting about Russia, Russians rank the Finnish media high in reliability on other themes. Russian immigrants kept up with both Finnish media and Russian media, which they critically compared.

The Vietnamese, on the other hand, do not hear much about Vietnam in the Finnish media. Therefore, they rely on international Vietnamese media and Vietnamese media regarding information about their country of origin. The Internet is especially important for both groups.

4.13.6 INITIATIVES FOR MORE BALANCED REPORTING

Bias in both representation and in selection of sources has been recognised by Finnish researchers and journalists for the last ten years. In 'normal' reporting the situation has not changed though issues of bias have been raised among journalists. Asylum seeking is exaggerated with metaphors of war and natural catastrophe, and ethnic minorities are presented mainly in a negative 'problem' context. They are not used as important sources; on the contrary, authorities speak on their behalf.

However, the media have made some attempts to balance the bias. The National Broadcasting Company, YLE, runs a weekly television programme *Bazaar* that deals with ethnic issues, and uses journalists with foreign backgrounds. The main problem with it, however, is that it is aired at a bad time in the early afternoon. The second largest daily paper, *Aamulehti*, publishes an immigrant page; people with foreign backgrounds appear as writers. Moreover, local radio stations give airtime for ethnic minorities to make their own programmes.

The Ministry of Labour targets official minorities with its own magazine, which deals with ethnic issues, but mainly from an authoritative perspective. In addition, there are some non-governmental organisations, which discuss issues of ethnicity in their publications, such as the Service Centre for Development Cooperation. These media, however, have a marginal audience.

These media initiatives have not been studied. However, findings of related media studies can shed some critical light on these initiatives. In his study of an unemployed people's page Pertti Vehkalahti (2000) argues that although the page was intended to empower the unemployed, it actually reinforced their marginal position. He found that the viewpoint of the unemployed was consciously separated from the perspective of officials and politicians, and that the two parties were not encouraged to meet and discuss in the public forum. Rather, authorities remained the primary actors and sources in 'hard' news and other main news genres when the unemployed were segregated into their own separate category of the 'page of

the unemployed'. This could be the danger of the media's initiatives, which focus on separate programmes and pages for ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities have some media of their own as well, although, these are marginal in size and audience, and tend to be local or limited to certain religious or non-governmental groups. For example, the Roma have a religious charity paper and an official magazine published by the Ministry of Education. The Russian minority has local papers and radio programmes as well as a few commercially motivated magazines for business personnel.

The Finnish Union for Journalists has codes of journalism ethics, which state: 'Human dignity and honour of all people is to be protected. Skin colour, nationality, background, conviction, gender, or other personal characteristics should not be presented in an irrelevant or degrading manner' (see Ethic Net for more details on Finnish and European codes of journalism ethics). In 1996, the Union produced a booklet, *Ethnic minorities - immigrants - foreigners- How to report?* which was delivered to all members. The booklet refers to European and Finnish research findings on ethnic issues and presents some journalist commentaries. The Union recommends the following:

1. Ethnic minorities should not be addressed as an exotic colour, because this produces a distance between 'us' and 'them'.
2. Do not make generalisations. There are different individuals among foreigners and asylum seekers as well as among traditional minorities of the Roma and Sami.
3. Is it necessary to mention ethnic origin or skin colour? Would you write in the same way if the person was Finnish?
4. Ethnic issues should be reported routinely. Not only if a case breaks out.
5. Think about word choice carefully. If you are not sure how to address someone, ask him/ her.

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