The role of the media in promoting intercultural communication in South Africa

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SUMMARY

Set *against the background of an examination of certain concepts related to culture and a revision of existing intercultural theory, the author comes to the conclusion that while we as South African academics continue to mistake stereotypes and myths as intercultural concepts; while we substitute prejudice for theory and insist on fastening upon differences rather than commonalities, we will never become part of the emergent South Africa. Some of the concepts and theoretical assumptions underlying much of South African thinking concerning intercultural communication, and which are discussed by the author, include the following: culture as achievement, culture as struggle, culture as 'the Other', culture and collective consciousness, dualisms in categories and the curse of categories.*

OPSOMMING

Teen *die agtergrond van 'n bespreking van sekere konsepte in die studie van kultuur en 'n hersiening van bestaande interkulturele teorie kom die outeur tot die gevolgtrekking dat as ons as Suid-Afrikaanse akademici voortgaan om stereotipes en mites as interkulturele konsepte te beskou; voortgaan om vooroordeel as 'n substituut vir teorie te beskou en voortgaan om verskille eerder as gemeenskaplikhede in die gesprek oor interkulturele kommunikasie te beklemtoon, sal ons nie deel word van die opkomende nuwe Suid-Afrika nie. Van die konsepte en teoretiese aannames wat Suid-Afrikaanse denke oor interkulturele kommunikasie onderlê, en wat die outeur in hierdie artikel bespreek, is die volgende: kultuur as bereiking, kultuur as stryd, kultuur as 'Die Ander', kultuur en kollektiewe bewussyn, dualismes in kategorieë en die vloek van kategorieë in ons denke oor die mens.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Most academics know me as a polemical scholar, from the even more controversial Centre for Cultural and Media Studies in Durban. The English Press thinks of scholars from this centre as some sort of destructive media vanguard for the ANC. The ANC has thus far failed to develop a coherent media policy, a lack which we have criticised severely (Louw and Tomaselli 1991a, 1991b). We have also critiqued ANC-supporting newspapers which failed to sustain the popular concepts of democracy forged during the 80s within their own newsrooms (Ntshakala and Emdon 1991). Other political parties which fundamentally misunderstand the democratic role that media should play in the modern age have also been questioned (see *CCMS Resource Document 3* 1991; Louw 1991a). Until recently, some of our conservative and liberal colleagues within the University imagined us to be unrehabilitated Stalinists. Conversely, the far left accused us of revisionism and of exhibiting counter-revolutionary tendencies.

Whereas many of our English-speaking associates ignored research done at the Afrikaans universities, my Centre tried to engage this work openly. In so doing, we risked making ourselves unpopular with those who so courageously involved us in what turned out to be an often tempestuous dialogue (see, e g De Beer 1990a) in *Ecquid Novi, Communicare* and *Communicatio*. The two articles by Eric Louw (1991b, 1990) published in *Rhodes Journalism Review* generated a similar backlash, this time from senior members of the English Press and the advertising industry (see Lascaris 1991; Sullivan 1991).

Today I am located at the centre of a web of tense and often conflictual relationships that are partly of our own making. We believe that the essence of academic work is to be found in such relationships as it is only through these that a constructive dialectic can be restored to our society (see Tomaselli et al 1988). Academics are not cheap market researchers for industry. Neither should they allow their work to legitimate repressive policies or blindly support party political ideals. Politics is brutal; state power is necessarily repressive; and the left-wing variety is often not much more democratic than

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right-wing impositions. The academic's task is to throw light on the mechanisms by which power can be tamed and harnessed in the interests of society as a whole, rather than merely the historically privileged classes within it. I therefore make no apologies for the polemics in which we have engaged in the past, or the polemics I will engage in here. In this sense, academics are dialectical nomads in search of political solutions which, while anticipating new conditions, may never be attained because of the continually changing nature of society.

What has this to do with the title of this paper? In answering this, I first need to examine some of the concepts involved.

2 CULTURE: PROMISE AND CURSE

Primary is the problematic concept of culture. For some, culture is 'doing', for example, 'going to the theeataah'. For others, it is relegated to non-political aspects of Afrikaner or Zulu Nationalism. In its *volkekunde* guise, culture was corrupted into a pseudo-scientific justification for apartheid. This is a far cry from Edward Tylor's (1924) definition on which anthropology was built: *that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.* It is in the face of these and other more pertinent definitions of the concept that the content of 'culture' is a contested terrain (Tomaselli 1987; Fourie 1990; Muller and Tomaselli 1990).

3 CULTURE AS ACHIEVEMENT

Literary scholars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries like Matthew Arnold, F R Leavis and T S Eliot responded to the political turbulence, moral disorder and social anarchy of the British underclasses by attributing this 'disorder' to the breakdown of cultural values – 'the best that has been thought and done'. South Africa of the 1990s stands at a similar moment of social and political crisis as that addressed by the above literary scholars – rapid change threatens to breach what cultural continuities remain (Mulhern 1979: 36). How to protect what is of value from whichever heritage (Afrikaner, English, African, Indian, etc), and how to incorporate the new democratic values arising out of decades of struggle is the task facing those attempting to contribute to social reconstruction.

Subsequent generations of literati cleansed Arnold and Leavis' once *new* political/cultural concern and objectified culture as a commodified object (Arnold 1966). The educational institution is itself responsible for this ranking of 'culture' as something that has no accountability towards, or connection to, what is pejoratively known as the 'masses'. Once elitist discourses legitimised by the academy enter the popular imagination, it is very difficult to dislodge them. Thus, both the elite and the masses come to assume that culture has something to do with 'improving the mind' during leisure time, that is, paradoxically, mainly the privilege of the ruling classes. What began with Arnold and others as a project to rescue society from its descent into barbarism, became an elitist imperative protected by institutions of higher learning, my own included (see Vaughan 1984).

4 CULTURE AS STRUGGLE

In South Africa, during the 80s, the 'masses' understanding of 'culture' came to mean something very different. 'Culture' was infused with the imperative of struggle, and became a weapon to oppose apartheid. In this context, 'culture' returned to the academy as part of a new intellectual/proletarian alliance which opposed both 'mass' and elitist culture. Both forms were seen to be part of the ruling hegemony's arsenal to induce consent to racial capitalism. Culture, in this paradigm, then, has to do with making and contesting meanings, making sense of material conditions, and offering ways of coping with and overcoming oppression (Tomaselli 1989). Raymond Williams's (1977) critique of elite cultural theory, for example, charged a stereotypical view of the 'masses':

> *There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses.*[1]

The idea of 'mass media' stems from this way of seeing people as passive, compliant consumers, as marketing segments best fed a diet of *Dallas* and *Trucking, Cosmopolitan's* pseudo-feminism, and the contrived banalities of *Personality.* We all know that the woman with a Standard 6 education on the Turfontein Bus is the Johannesburg English Press's vision of its readers. In other cities, the destination is different, but the Press's patronising construction of its average reader is the same.

This is not to suggest that more democratic constituencies have escaped these kinds of 'mass' attributive nouns. 'The People' and 'the Community' are similarly misleading terms of the South African Left. The assumption here is also one of (left-wing) homogeneity, concealing the very real cultural, political and ideological schisms that exist amongst the Left-wing forces. Very often, those claiming to represent the 'People' are the new class of aspirant *apparichiks* who are jockeying for political positions under a new constitution. Their practices, however, are often no less self-empowering and collectively divisive than those whom they think they will be replacing.

My sense, therefore, is that *mass* media (privately or state-owned) can do little to promote *intercultural* communication. They can, and do, however, promote homogeneity, consumption, sex, fashion and style. Capitalist myths – e g class mobility, freedom, individual choice – are the basic messages of these media. Some, like the *Sowetan's* Nation-Building exercise, and the English Press's columns on successful 'Buppies' (black upwardly mobile professionals), do not cancel out the supposed cultural separations manifested in the continuing Group Areas marketing mentality manifest-

ed in the distribution patterns of its Extra editions aimed at people of colour.

5 CULTURE AS 'THE OTHER'

Categories and concepts developed to explain social dynamism and cultural interchange can also be inverted by those who see the world in terms of more or less closed static systems of cultural and social difference in which interaction might even be impossible.

One of the enduring failures of humanity is the inability of individuals and groups to understand others as they claim they do of themselves. Consequently, all societies, and groups within them, develop ways of defining 'others'. 'Others' are groups and societies which do not conform to the norms, material development and ideology of the observers or dominant interests. The social and cultural categories devised by observers (and indeed, the observed) draw attention to 'difference': the 'differences' between the observers and those they are observing. Differences are usually measured in terms of physiology, lifestyles, accent, speech and language, wealth, culture and modes of production. An MA thesis on SABC-TV and ethnicity, for example, evidences a common problem in South African intercultural research (Mersham 1985). This has to do with the circularity of key conceptual and operational definitions, most particularly of culture, which Mersham identifies as *differences* between cultural groups. He does not define culture, but rather lists 'ethnic' attributes, like language, which set groups apart. That which sets people apart does *not* necessarily define them. This concept of irreconcilable difference is one of the assumptions underlying the idea of apartheid.

Mersham's MA thesis is peppered with the most extraordinary assumptions. One of these is that *"the very concept of ethnicity is anathema among scholars of the liberal persuasion"* (1985: 2).[2] Ethnicity itself is not anathema. The way the concept has been used by repressive hegemonic forces in South Africa to suppress those deemed 'ethnic' (i e people of colour) in political discourse, was what was anathema. Another astonishing revelation, obtained by Mersham (1985: 5) from Groenewald (1982: 265), is that Britain and America evidence "relatively culturally homogeneous" societies. Groenewald (1982) states that language is but one of the common symbol systems of these countries, and that "participants know what to expect from one another and how to interpret different facets of behaviour". This supreme generalisation forgets the diverse nature of both societies, and the fact that the American melting pot idea proffered by the mass society theorists in the 50s was thoroughly discredited by the 80s. Certainly, people in America owe allegiance to the abstract but loose concept of the 'nation', and more particularly, to capitalism, but they retain their very different cultural formations and sub-cultural groupings, languages, accents, behaviour patterns and ways of making sense of the world. In the big cities, these can vary dramatically within a few blocks of each other. Despite these cultural differences, however, neither country was tempted to impose apartheid-type political solutions during the 20th century.

Discourses of difference project social categories and collective nouns onto 'the Other'. These have the effect of freezing 'difference' in discourse, so that in the minds of the observers, these frozen categories themselves become 'real' – the way things are and have always been. So, in Africa, for example, black *societies* are known as 'tribes' (see Wiley 1981). This categorisation sweeps into this term three centuries of ideological baggage of the European gaze at Africa – primitive, backward peoples with no sense of God, morality or history (see Van Zyl 1980). That black groups understood their social relations in terms of lineage rather than 'tribe' was either not understood, or simply suppressed by social scientists. This occurred because this concept of lineage contradicted their European-derived category of 'tribe'. To accept the observeds' perspective would have been a negation of 'science' and a questioning of the 'superior' intellect of the scientists. After all, scientists are educated, and pursue a something called 'Truth'. And what, at the end of the day, do natives really know about truth?

The observed, the 'Other', however, through centuries of colonialism and neo-colonialism, began to conduct themselves within the categories imposed on them by their colonisers and academic observers, thus spuriously validating *a priori* assumptions on the part of the scientists who imposed the categories in the first place. This kind of semantic logic legitimated South Africa's bantustan system and the tribal languages/'nations' promoted by apartheid, to some blacks and most whites (Louw 1989a; see also Kotze 1990: 50). Science was fully implicated in this process of racist legitimation.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century moral philosophers held that non-Western societies represented earlier stages of human progress, frozen in time, while the European world inexorably advanced. A linear economic maturation through savagery, barbarism and civilisation paralleled economic advance from hunting through pastoralism to commerce (Curtin 1964). Such categories do not necessarily assume social stasis. But they do tend towards ahistoricity, and an almost genetic inability, exacerbated by environmental factors, on the part of certain of those categorised, to attain the 'superior' consciousness of the white observers or 'scientists'. Much South African intercultural research is located at the centre of this racist theoretical incestuousness.

As academic discourses mature, so dissidents within them critique their imperialist and pejorative assumptions, discriminatory categories and ask new questions. Thus 'race' was substituted with 'ethnicity' to escape the negative connotations that had attached themselves to the former term. 'Ethnicity' shifted the category of 'race' away from a

purely biological categorisation, drawing in elements of culture, language, style, and lifestyle. The still conservative discourse of 'cultural difference' began to permeate South African state policies during the Botha reformist era after 1980 as the state moved to incorporate 'Asians' and 'coloureds' into an alliance with the ruling hegemony.

Some even began to question the idea of racial differences, arguing that the category of race was itself a political imposition made to look scientific to exonerate domination of blacks by whites. Language, ideology and politics, thus, are pre-eminent determiners of categories, including scientific categories. Categories of any kind are thus products of language, analysis and even prejudice rather than materially pre-existing natural differences. In this way, 'scientific' language and categories develop alongside ideological perspectives and political policies and are made to seem universal. Science thus often lends itself to legitimating prejudices in society. It is this point that Arrie de Beer (1990a), for example, failed to grasp in his critique of my work on media and media analysis.[3]

Obviously, this paper also reflects my own categories, perhaps even my own construction of Others. However, unlike De Beer (1990a), I don't claim that my categories are universal or that they lie outside power relations or that science offers the Truth. I identify the popular social interests they serve as well as the revolutionary ideology which proposes these categories.

6 CULTURE AND COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

De Beer (1990a) demands evidence manipulated in terms of *his* categories which he misunderstands as universal ones. He does not see these 'universals' as privileging the often violent interests of the Afrikaner Nationalist hegemony and capital over those of social justice and popular democracy. The collective categories developed by the United Democratic Front, progressive media workers or the ANC have no scientific validity in his paradigm because they don't follow the rules of an all-encompassing positivist-functionalist 'science'.

One 'scientific' article that breaks through the reductionist and opaque vision of scientific reasoning is provided by Boet Kotze (1990: 50) who is quite clear on the limitations of objective science:

> *Collective consciousness would appear to be incomprehensible if interpreted with the intellectual tools [i e scientific; numerical; positivist; dualistic logic] formed by individualistic consciousness.*

Kotze explains how the "self-contained logic" of objective scientific discourse, *which is a mere technical attribute of reasoning,* characteristic of the individualistic world view, could not possibly explain the behaviour of collective cultures. The example through which he argues the chilling inadequacy of science arose out of a socially traumatising 'necklacing' incident that occurred in Queenstown in 1985. The experiential, subjective analysis offered by Kotze, rejects Bureau of Information-type statistics which reached their most absurd in 'measurements' of 'unrest' in terms of fractions of dead. Apart from concealing subjective causation, this kind of fascist positivism echoes Joseph Stalin's cynical logic that 'one death is a tragedy; ten thousand is a statistic'. Similarly, mass media reports about 'rampaging mobs' of blacks create moral panic amongst whites who are totally ignorant of the kinds of complicated societal processes which govern this kind of seemingly anarchic collective behaviour. Discrete news categories, sadly, tend to suppress explanatory reporting in terms of the nuances and subtleties of collective consciousness and of so called 'mob' encounters with civil society. The word mob, as I was told by a Durban editor in 1985, is a convenient three letter word that offers an eye-grabbing headline. He wasn't interested in what the word concealed, but in how many readers would see it. Besides, he said, if my description of the internal relations and intentions shaping 'mob' behaviour was valid, then the situation was a lot worse than he thought. In this instance, this editor is being 'spoken' by his position and his ideology. This kind of response on the part of the media becomes, then, part of the problem facing scholars of intercultural communication who naively think that the mass media can become part of the solution to South Africa's communication problems.

7 DUALISMS IN CATEGORIES

Categories change. Following the unbanning of the ANC in February in 1990, the new alliance that emerged resulted in the National Party sanitising its discourse to expunge its racial terms and to claim the non-racial space simultaneously evacuated by the ANC. The ANC's use of the term 'non-racial' increasingly slipped into meaning mainly 'black', as the Congress tried to consolidate its potential black constituency under the extreme conditions in which it found itself.

One of the first attempts to anticipate a conservative non-racial language to occupy the space towards which the NP was moving in the mid-80s, was provided by Hennie Groenewald et al (1988). However, mapping out the new language required new concepts which could provide a bridge between racist terminology and a new, at that point, still conceptually indeterminate future state. The key was found in Edward Hall's (1976) theory of high and low context cultures. However, Groenewald et al misconstrued Hall's theory by manipulating it into a matrix of race and cultural classification for which it was never intended. Hall explains how understanding between individuals from different cultures could be brought about. Groenewald and his colleagues instead used it to sanitise their reformist neo-apartheid ideology, and generated new terms and categories. But no matter their intention, they could not fully escape the NP's old racist

conceptions. Groenewald et al identify 'whites', 'coloureds' and 'Asians' with low context culture (characterised by highly specific, individualistic, linear narrow contexts), while blacks are said to be high context (they share rather than privatise, and work together in lateral relationships rather than engaging in conflictual hierarchical relations). Through urbanisation and personal characteristics, states Groenewald, they could move toward a low context culture, however.[4]

In Hall's theory, high and low cultures overlap in different interpersonal situational contexts depending on exactly what messages or interactions are being transacted. In other words, Hall does not assume a linear progression between two kinds of contexts. The one is not necessarily 'urban', the other rural, the one 'white' (incorporating 'coloureds' or 'Asians'), the other 'black'. Thus, whether the interacting groups are urbanised or not, or have different colour skins, or are of different nationalities, is not really the issue. This theory was not intended by Hall to be applied to whole 'nations', 'cultures', 'groups' or 'races'. However, the problem with Hall's theory as a whole is that it ignores economic processes and ties its explanation of social and interpersonal misunderstandings to manifestations of cultural difference only. Class, exploitation, power relations, domination and resistance, politics and other factors tend to be outside his theoretical frame. Simple transference of overseas theories into the local context as done by Groenewald et al cannot occur without rigorous reconstitution in terms of the historical factors of both the countries of genesis and application.

8 THE CURSE OF CATEGORIES

If humans can only make sense of their worlds through categories, then it is the categories which have to change before perceptions can shift. This is also true for science. If the categories are static and ahistorical, then those who hold them will not change. This is the problem facing whites who support the extreme right-wing. For them, racial and certain cultural categories are determining and can never be substituted by anything else. These people are 'spoken by' their language – they are imprisoned within their language and the categories they have developed to legitimise their own racism to themselves. In contrast, the National Party has, since De Klerk became President, exhibited flexibility with regard to language and the categories. As international opposition to apartheid grew, so the Party tried to re-name apartheid, to shift its racial, ethnic and cultural categories in terms of tricameralism, itself a response to shifting material processes (Tomaselli et al 1990), and since early September 1991, in terms of the 'new' constitutional proposals.

Misnaming, refusal to name, and categories which exclude, or conceal, relations, lead to miscalculations, errors in judgement, and further misunderstanding.[5] This is what bedevils Groenewald et al's analysis. They refuse to name apartheid as the pre-eminent source of conflict. Sensing that racist categories and language are no longer in vogue, they rename 'blacks' and 'whites' in terms of 'high' and 'low context' cultures, just as politicians, businessmen and apartheid apologists use 'Third World' to categorise blacks and 'First World' to categorise whites in South Africa.[6] These categorisations then absolve those doing the naming of complicity in repression and exploitation. The nature of struggle then becomes a category of high/Third or low/First cultural attributes – something considered endemic to certain cultures and 'population groups', but not others (see e g Du Preez 1987). The inter-relations between the two categories are thus exnominated as far as both whites and blacks are concerned. This problem was managed in a much more sophisticated way by Kotze (1990). While also refusing to name apartheid as the source of the problem,[7] he nevertheless provided more useful concepts by which to bring an understanding of individualistic and collective cultures closer into the academic enterprise. Groenewald et al, in contrast, trapped themselves within an apartheid framework into which they inappropriately inserted a theoretical import ill designed for the job to which it was now applied.

9 GNOSIS AND THE INVENTION OF AFRICA[8]

Categories and language mutate and change depending on political dynamics. New terms substitute for earlier ones, now discredited, as 'difference' becomes a question of 'civilised' versus 'civilising' cultures. This essential dualism continues to motivate much academic research. The result is that a ranking procedure determined by the dominant political and economic entities elevates certain kinds of activity and thought as more worthwhile than others. In orthodox South African communication studies, for example, numerical methods, positivism and scientific neutrality are ranked over questions of epistemology, ideology and praxis. Numbers are equated with Truth. What the numbers leave out is sometimes pejoratively referred to as 'qualitative' research, usually conducted by 'radical' scholars with an ideological axe to grind. Conversely, explicit and honest ideologically-based argument towards praxis is associated with deviance.

Generally, capital shapes the ranking of certain kinds of gnosis and science over other ways of knowing. In Africa, for example, the new social relations caused by proletarianisation largely replaced kinship in emergent capitalist societies as the principle regulating production and circulation (Muller 1989). Coercion into certain kinds of manual labour by the colonising powers forced a separation between popular cultural production and leisure-time activity. Increasingly, capital commoditised leisure time and further separated people (identified as 'markets') from their organic, family-

orientated cultural activities. Apartheid extended this process through influx control and the single-sex hostel system.

In South Africa, the state developed white 'taste cultures' (see Gans 1974) in terms of high culture – ballet, classical music, opera and theatre (Louw, 1989b). These forms of leisure were initially restricted to whites, while urban black forms of expression emerged out of the melting pots of the townships: *marabi, mapantsula* dancing, the *amalaita* whistle and drum bands, the penny whistlers, gumboot dancing, *isicathimiya,* etc. Other expressions, like mine dancing are overt forms of social control. Though *Ipi Tombi* and Mango Groove are incorporated into apartheid discourse, they paradoxically emerge as more culturally central texts than does Volksdrama or opera at the Nico Malan Theatre.[9] However, the popular activities of resistance culture were suppressed and marginalised by the state which saw them as indications of deviance, as uncivilised cultures impinging on the refined ears and clean spaces of civilised whites. Thus, what organically emerged as a truly South African popular culture, like *Marabi,* was alternatively smashed through the bulldozing of Sophiatown or restricted to specific spaces in which only blacks were permitted to participate (see Coplan 1985). This illustrates the way in which culture and power relationships are intertwined. In this way, the state's policy of separation was enforced, and two distinctly different sets of rankings emerged in two sections of South African society – the one considered high/elite/superior white culture – the other, deviant or low black culture. In Gans's prescriptive terms, then, black South Africans were prevented from any form of taste mobility.

What the 1950s American mass culture theories and conventional structural-functionalist sociology (Jacobs 1968) could not account for were cultural expressions outside the dominant consensus. Such cultural forms were often empowering of oppressed minorities or, in South Africa, majorities. Empowerment occurred through, for example, Black Consciousness building self-dignity and social confidence during the 1960s. In fact, South Africa's most important intercultural theorist, Steve Biko, may have risen out of this moment. But Biko's teachings were labelled 'subversive' and categorised as 'deviant' and banned and he was tortured and murdered by the Security Police. Similarly, other forms of resistance to dominant social categories, like the mods and the rockers in England during the 60s, and later, the punk and rasta subcultures, are conventionally studied as transgressors of social norms, rather than as forms of resistance (and self-empowerment) to class and political oppression (Cohen 1980; Hebdige 1987; 1988; Coetzee 1990). Categorising them as 'outsiders' thus absolves the host society of its role and complicity in the emergence of these disaffected subcultures in the first place. Cultural studies considers such subcultures as "cultural innovator(s) and critics(s)" (Cohen 1980). As such, they are understood in terms of their location in the repertoire of class-based negotiations. The South African progressive presses, for example, would be better understood in this light, rather than as part of some sort of globally violent Marxist-Leninist conspiracy (De Beer 1989, 1990a, 1990b; Pepler nd).[10]

My argument thus far is that *dualism* is the central motor of dominant theories of culture. This approach separates rather than connects relationships, and assumes difference, the one legitimate, the other separate or deviant. These dualisms find expression in a variety of discourses, ranging from culture and media to the economic and political. Such oppositions are themselves embedded in broader social discourses of difference which interconnect across the world. This dualism was the nemesis of orthodox South African intercultural theory, delaying for nearly a whole century, the achievement of appropriate paradigms to enable the emergence of the 'new' South Africa.

10 THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATION

A social science which insists on categories determined by minority/sectional politico-economic interests and used as a means of domination should be resisted both within and outside the academy. In South Africa, this resistance occurred in the 80s through the idea of 'culture-as-struggle', a form of popular culture defined in opposition to dominant capitalist culture. The progressive presses emerged out of this dynamic. If we as academics fail to recognise these processes as legitimate cultures and revise our anachronistic ideas on intercultural theory and objective science, then there is little hope for progress in real and effective intercultural communication.

The terms 'community' and 'communication' share a common etymological root. Communication is that matrix of signification that has in common the practices whereby community is achieved in reality (Traber 1984). The mass media, and the dominant communication theories applied in South African universities and technikons, however, assume the Shannon and Weaver (1948) Communicator-Medium-Response (C-M-R) model derived from a background of wartime cryptoanalysis and telecommunications modelling. In the West, this one-way, top-down communication method cannot conceive of receivers as anything other than consumers. Soviet Bloc communication practices were even more rigid. This pattern of commanderist communication so distanced the Communist Party from 'the People' that it totally lost touch with popular sentiment. Communication in the C-M-R model thus assumes little more than stimulus-response interactions, no matter where or how applied. The 'new' South Africa cannot, therefore, be built solely from the very narrow state, commanderist and business models of media and communication which contributed to the crises admitted by De Klerk in 1990.

The impending deregulation of the airwaves will both strengthen as well as impede intercultural and communication developments. The commercially-driven mass media will marginalise any activity or group that cannot be commoditised while simultaneously claiming to be offering more 'choice'. In so doing, they will try to commercialise the popular culture which itself arose out of an anti-capitalist imperative. It is unlikely, therefore, that this co-option will work unless broadcasters reorientate themselves in terms of the needs of the 'new' (black) communities they are trying to entice. I am not calling here for the demise of marketing, but for a way of negotiating a relationship where popular culture is not inexorably co-opted or excluded by commerce. In other words, the idea of popular culture as opposition to 'mass' culture should ideally be replaced by a more fruitful dialectic. Were a future democratic South Africa to fully enter the global information economy (Louw 1991a), it would be eventually possible to harness this dialectic through the new computer technologies to build a post-Fordist society in which producers are able to more flexibly respond to consumer needs and to phase out rigid and alienating mass production methods. Fordist production methods are part of the behaviourist grand narrative, whereas the post-Fordist era is related to the post-modernist deconstruction of grand narratives. South African intercultural communication theory has yet to escape the interrelated grand narratives of apartheid and Fordism.[11]

11 WHERETO THE FUTURE?

The question is how to devise and fund a media system which will facilitate the reintegration of 'community' with 'communication' through which groups and constituencies can regain the original empowering and networking promises of print and electronic media. Through this we then need to build a series of interlocking public spheres from the neighbourhood through local, regional to the national. Media need to become a source of social exploration and empowerment within, and through which, all constituencies within South Africa can speak to, and hear, each other (Louw 1991a, 1991c).

Substituted community and mobile radio stations may open up new areas and opportunities where communities excluded under apartheid could speak to themselves and, through telecommunication links, communicate with other communities (see Louw 1990). A nation-wide network of media resource centres could activate local public spheres interconnecting those presently excluded from the national media grid with the state and business which presently own and control it (Louw 1991b, 1991c). These ideas were being fleshed out and negotiated in a variety of popular and academic forums (Tomaselli 1989; *FAWO News* 1990; 1991; Pinnock 1990; Louw 1991d), but received rather a rough ride from capital, as seen in the two ill-thought out responses to Louw by Sullivan and Lascaris, and De Beer's (1990) "voorlopige antwoord" to my and Louw's (1990) initial suggestions for a subsidy for media aimed at providing seed investment for then socially, politically and economically excluded audiences and constituencies. In reporting on Lascaris's reactive ad-speak to Louw (1990), a correspondent in the *Natal Mercury* of 24 September 1991 intimated that Louw had developed a Leninist-socialist model for subsidising media developments for communities excluded from the national media grid under racial capitalism. Louw had, in fact, discussed the failures of both the capitalist and Leninist models, and developed a *social-democrat* solution which cannot be seriously categorised as Leninist. This confusion of categories by these respondents, including the way Louw's ideas were parodied by the Press, underline my argument about the problems of language in the political and cultural terrains.

12 CONCLUSION

This article may be thought to be unduly pessimistic. Nor have I really answered the title given. This is not because I can't answer it, but because I know that whatever solutions I offered could only become successful once the above theoretical impediments erected by academics, and reservations by capital of the need for an initially subsidised media, have ceased to be stumbling blocs. I would thus prefer to consider my article as a revision of existing intercultural theory and as a pointer to what we academics especially have to do within our own environments to facilitate the potential promised by the title. While our academic community continues to mistake stereotypes and myths as intercultural concepts; while it substitutes prejudice for theory and insists on fastening upon differences rather than communalities, we will never become part of the emergent South Africa.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Gary Mersham (1985: 94) totally misunderstands Williams, citing him as an elitist theorist. This kind of distortion bedevils much communication research in South Africa.

2 The other major problem is that in purporting to lay the basis for the justification of apartheid in TV, Mersham fails to select an appropriate research method. If his interest is in showing the importance of serving different audiences (i e cultures, ethnic groups ... whatever) then it behooves him to study audience effects and audience reception. By selecting qualitative content analysis as his primary mode of inquiry and data source, Mersham cuts himself off

analytically from his main unit of study: audiences for ethnic TV. (I am indebted to Prof James Zaffiro for these observations).

3 De Beer (1990a, 1990b), citing Kockott (1991), Mazwai (1991) and Konigkramer (1991), has accused me of turning a blind eye to the violence perpetrated by alleged ANC supporters agains staffers on *The Sowetan* and *Ulanga*. De Beer misses an important point, namely that such individual violence is itself a result of both institutional and structural violence (Tomaselli 1991: 26). In fact, those whose privileged class positions benefit from this form of hidden violence often fail to understand it as violence. Rather, they sanitise it under the discourses of 'law and order', 'stability', 'civilised values' and 'authority'. This is precisely why De Beer sees the violence perpetrated by uncontrolled and brutalised delinquents claiming ANC affiliation as 'organised', conspiratorial and centrally controlled 'terror', when, in fact, all the evidence of a centrally controlled conspiracy points to the state and sections of its police and military.

4 Hall himself commented on the paper as follows:

> Frankly, I don't know what you do with matters of this sort. It seems as though any discovery or idea regardless of field can be used for both good and evil. I certainly never intended that anything I produced would be used in any way except to improve relations between human beings. The work is there for people to make the most use of. Unfortunately, there are those who go to any length to make a point ... The paradigm developed by Groenewald is so complex and inter-reticulated that it would take a lawyer to untangle it (Letter September 28, 1990).

5 Exceptions are Kotze (1990) and Malan (1991). The latter is an extraordinary document submitted to the Department of National Education. Many of its authors, e g those of Martin Botha and Adri van Aswegen, reach similar conclusions to this paper. The document is equally engaged in breaking down old conceptions in trying to reorientate the state agency that has been most implicated in categorisation, separation, oppression and indoctrination during apartheid.

6 This unfortunate categorisation is not limited to conservatives alone. Roger B Beck, "South Africa: First or Third World", *TransAfrica Forum,* 7(2), 1990, 67–84, uses the same discourse, without realising its pejorative connotations in the South African context.

7 Kotze deliberately took a low political profile when appearing as a witness in court. He had to address a conservative audience: "I know from experience that if one hammers the point of apartheid, they reject everything one says on the grounds of 'political bias' " (letter to author, October 21, 1991).

8 I deliberately use V Y Mudimbe's (1988) phrase here. Gnosis is the possibility for the existence of discourse, a secret knowledge, something that precedes the idea of a linguistic structure within which particular discourses occur.

9 I am indebted to Roy Williams for this point.

10 Elizabeth Pepler, nd, for example, totally misunderstands ALL the left-wing theorists she sources in her MA Thesis: "Alternatiewe Media in Suid-Afrika met Verwysing na Plakkate", Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg. So much so, that a Supreme Court judge dismissed an affidavit obtained from her by the Minister of Defence. The affidavit was based on Chapter 6 of her thesis, " 'n Ontleding van ECC-Plakkate". It was solicited by the SADF to defend the Minister against an application brought against him by the End Conscription Campaign, about whom one of her chapters was written. See Tomaselli, K G and Louw, P E 1991: Dirty Tricks and The SADF's Theory of War", *Social Justice,* Vol 18 Nos 1 & 2.

11 Du Preez (1987), for example links a paternal neo-existentialism to grand narrative of Fordism in terms of using intercultural communication theory to control black labour. Another example is the State Theatre in Pretoria which is an excellent example of the two integrated narratives. The building is a huge central city modernist monolith within which culture has been industrialised according to the state's cultural plan. (I am indebted to Eric Louw for this insight.)

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