*World Journalism Education Congress, Rhodes University, Grahamstown 5 - 7 July 2010.*

Gabriël. J. Botma

# The freedom to fail: Addressing unequal opportunities and performance in South African journalism education and training

Abstract

This paper reports on three completed phases of a longitudinal case study on the issue of access to and performance in South African journalism education and training after 15 years of democracy. Despite the drastic restructuring of the apartheid education system since 1994, black South Africans seemingly still find it difficult to gain access to and compete with their white counterparts on a tertiary level.

At the same time the journalism industry is demanding the training of more black journalists on higher levels, due to pressures caused by allegations of underperformance and government programmes and policies to speed up transformation. The extent of dissatisfaction in the journalism industry with the quality of journalism graduates has reached alarming proportions in the last few years. But the dilemma is: How do you provide better tertiary training to increasing numbers of black journalists if they are struggling to enter the leading South African universities?

This paper used Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field in a research design that comprises two stages and employs quantitative and qualitative methods. In the first stage the selection test performance of a group of BPhil applicants to the postgraduate journalism programme at the prominent Stellenbosch University (SU) in the Western Cape province was analysed in terms of variables such as language, gender, school results and "race"/culture.

The second part of the research design focused on the performance of BPhil students in classes from 1999 to 2009. By comparing the selection test results with the final results for the course the researcher was able to shed light on the reliability of the selection process at SU. The different levels of cultural capital available to the journalism industry in terms of "race"/culture and gender could also be established.

Although this project will be ongoing in order to verify trends, these findings suggest that black students are indeed lagging behind in terms of the levels of cultural capital required by leading SA university programmes. In short, black students are still disadvantaged by their habitus, particularly in the categories of frame of reference ("general knowledge" and history) and numeric literacy when their average performance is compared to that of white students. This finding is discussed in the paper with regards to the issue of cultural bias and the realistic possibility of Africanising the curriculum.

**Keywords**: apartheid, Bourdieu, cultural capital, habitus, field, journalism education and training, Stellenbosch University (SU), South Africa

*Mr Gabriël J. Botma (gbotma@sun.ac.za) is a lecturer at the Journalism Department of Stellenbosch University, 26 Crozier Street, Private Bag X1, Matieland, 7602, South Africa. Tel: 021 808-9171; Fax: 021 808-4965; Mobile: 072 215 1201.*

**Introduction**

Journalism education and training in South Africa is arguably characterised by some of the same dynamics at work in the post-apartheid education sector as a whole.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mainly black, are reportedly struggling not only to gain entrance into recognised first-class (formerly white) institutions, but once accepted, many find progress through the system difficult due to structural, financial, social and cultural constraints. Regular outbreaks of violence at some university campuses in protest against "lack of transformation" are symptomatic of the crisis (see Sapa, 2008; Thompson, 2008).

In explaining the continued underperformance of black pupils and students, experts point to the legacy of apartheid, including endemic poverty and historically inferior education facilities for black people. There is growing consensus that mismanagement of the education system by the ANC-led government since 1994 must be added to the list. The government, in turn, has criticised some formerly white universities for their inability to attract and successfully graduate increasing numbers of black students.

In the case of journalism education and training added pressure is provided by calls from both government and the journalism industry for more, better trained black journalists.

Although drastic media restructuring has occurred since 1994, especially the large commercial print media industry is still largely owned and controlled by white shareholders (MDDA, 2009). It is argued that the content of the mainstream print media is still largely reflective of middle-class and mainly white interests, and therefore often exclude the views of the majority of poor black citizens (see Hadland, 2007; Wasserman & De Beer, 2005). The dramatic popular rise of tabloid newspapers aimed at poor black communities since 2000 has arguably altered the picture somewhat, but opinion leaders in government, the ruling party alliance and the media industry are still demanding better access and more opportunities for black journalists on all levels.

It is argued that if more black students are able to gain access to journalism education and training, more might find their way into newsrooms and eventually boardrooms. Although one could state in return that demographically representative

newsrooms alone will not automatically ensure access to marginalised voices, the counter-argument is that fair representation in the media will probably be even harder in an environment characterised by a lack of staff diversity.

To complicate matters further the industry has expressed dissatisfaction with tertiary journalism education and training institutions for not producing students with skills levels that meet their requirements. Industry reports and academic research (see Claassen, 2007; Steyn & De Beer, 2002) have indicated for a number of years that newsrooms are struggling to cope due to trends such as the "juniorisation" of editorial staff and lack of basic skills (in writing and editing) and knowledge (of history, culture, science, mathematics and society in general).

In terms of key cultural studies concepts coined by Bourdieu (1991, 1989, 1984) one could argue that many journalists in South Africa suffer from a lack of "cultural capital" (knowledge and skills). Journalists are therefore unable to compete successfully for a dominant, recognised position (symbolic and social capital) and financial gain (economic capital) in the "field" of cultural production (see also Benson & Neveu, 2005).

Whatever the theoretical explanation, the practical consensus is that journalism is facing profound challenges on different levels. As a result, three of the biggest media houses, Naspers (Media24), Avusa and Independent Newspapers, announced the formation of their own training academies in the past two years. In a move seen by some academic observers as a direct insult, the focus of recruitment of these industry academies included graduates from leading post-graduate institutions who were told that they were not "ready" for the job market yet and that they needed at least another year of industry training.

The dilemma for journalism educators and trainers is thus that they must provide more and better black journalists to the industry while black students are still struggling to gain entrance into and compete with their white counterparts in top-class South African universities after 15 years of democracy. Because of the broad scope of this problem, this paper aims to focus on the limited research area of access to and performance in journalism education and training at one particular South African university – Stellenbosch University (SU) in the Western Cape. The journalism

department of SU prides itself as a top-class "vocational" training centre that has provided graduates for the industry since 1978 (Journalism department website, 2009).

Keeping in mind the general apartheid and post-apartheid education context referred to above, the following question thus arises: Why exactly are black students struggling to gain entrance to and perform well in journalism education and training at SU? One could argue that unless you have a solid grasp of specific factors/reason for exclusion and underperformance, it would be hard, if not impossible, to suggest practical institutionally-based remedies to both the selection process and the journalism education and training curriculum. By simply accepting more black candidates into the course without addressing structural and other problems, one might argue that they are heading for failure. In other words, if the benefits of democracy only mean that students are free to fail, not much has been gained in terms of journalism education and training.

SU, a traditionally Afrikaans-language institution, was considered a bastion of Afrikaner nationalism before and during apartheid. For instance, a former South African prime minister, known today as the "architect of apartheid", Hendrik F. Verwoerd, was a lecturer in sociology at SU before he launched his political career. SU also holds the dubious honour that the postgraduate journalism department was founded in the heyday of apartheid in 1978 by Piet Cillié, a staunch supporter of the ruling National Party (NP) and former editor of the newspaper *Die Burger* (the official "mouthpiece" of the NP in the Cape Province during apartheid).

Despite the fact that SU – also regarded as one of South Africa's more affluent and respected universities in terms of its facilities, programmes and the quality and quantity of graduate and research output – has accepted "transformation" as key challenge since 1994, many critics still argue that the university has experienced limited change (see Pandor, 2007).Critics of transformation at SU argue that black people are still marginalised, largely by die university's insistence on maintaining Afrikaans as medium of instruction, while English has generally been accepted as *lingua franca* for education on a tertiary level by black South Africans. SU has increased the introduction of English as a medium of instruction, especially on a postgraduate level, in order to attract more black students, but English has not (yet?) replaced Afrikaans as the dominant

medium at graduate level and in terms of the language profile of members of the teaching and administrative staff.

This leads to the question: What are the specific cultural and educational factors which influence the selection process at the journalism department of SU?

Each aspirant journalist applying to SU has to complete a written test assessing frame of reference (general knowledge), writing skills and journalism aptitude. It could be argued that performance in the selection test rates as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1989, 1984) in terms of the department's value system for determining access. In Bourdieu's view cultural capital is the result of socialisation and education and training at home and at school/university. The historical trajectory which describes a particular agent's path of cultural socialisation is called the "habitus" by Bourdieu (1991).

An individual test score can therefore be accepted as an indication of the level of cultural capital which a particular student has already achieved and incorporated (as part of the formation of the habitus) in the course of his or her training at home, school and university (bearing in mind that SU only takes in postgraduates who have successfully completed at least three years' university education). By analysing the test score results in terms of different variables (such as language, gender and "race"/ethnicity) the specific cultural and educational factors which influence the chances of black candidates to gain access to SU should become clearer.

Once a minority of black students do gain entrance into the course, the issue of underperformance comes to the fore. Is the selection test result a reliable indicator of the final result for the course? To what extent are black students underperforming in journalism education and training at SU and what are some of the variables/factors that might play a role?

In addressing these questions this paper aims to critically evaluate the selection and performance of black students at the journalism department of SU with a view to recommend possible areas of improvement to the process and curriculum.

**Background**

During democratisation after 1994 a deliberate project of "nation-building" was launched by the ANC-led government coalition to address the legacy of apartheid with regards to

the inequality of black people and their relatively low numbers on especially higher levels in the public and private sector. This led, amongst others, to government policies of "positive discrimination" such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and preferential status for black people in the job market, in areas such as education and training, and in sport (in the form of "race" quotas for teams).

The tertiary education sector was restructured (see Pandor, 2008) – mainly by combining universities and technicons – in order to break down the class, language and cultural barriers created by centuries of discrimination during British colonialism and apartheid. All tertiary institutions came under pressure to "transform" in order to reflect the demographics of the "nation" as a whole – e.g. the predominance of black people – but especially Afrikaans universities such as Stellenbosch University (SU), the University of Pretoria, the University of the Free State, the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys and the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit in Johannesburg bore the ideological brunt because of their close historic ties with Afrikaner nationalism and the ruling National Party (NP) during apartheid.

All these institutions, some of which also experienced a name change, had to increase their efforts to enrol black (and so-called coloured and Indian) students. Because of the emergence of English as *lingua franca* amongst the South African elite and media, and the negative association between Afrikaans and the oppressive mechanisms of apartheid, these traditional Afrikaans institutions also had to scale down the dominance of Afrikaans as main medium of instruction (see Pandor, 2007). Different models, from parallel medium (different classes in Afrikaans and English) to dual medium (both languages alternating in the same class), were proposed and tried out in practice at one stage or another at the traditional Afrikaans universities (although not at the traditionally English institutions, who carried on as before in terms of their main language of instruction).

At Stellenbosch University (SU), situated in the picturesque winelands of the Western Cape, the issue of language of instruction caused bitter debates internally and in the media, which eventually led to the resignation of the rector at the time, Prof Chris Brink (see Williams, 2006). But even then conflict continued at SU and in the media because some proponents of Afrikaans – pointing to trends in other sectors of education –

argued that “transformation” policies will inevitably lead to the demise of Afrikaans in the long run. In turn, those in favour of “inclusivity” and a change in the “institutional culture” of SU through the introduction of more black people as members of staff, administrative personnel and students, argue that Afrikaans is being used as a tool of racist exclusion by “reactionary Afrikaner right-wingers” (see Pandor, 2007).

As part of the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the postgraduate journalism department at SU employs a policy of dual-medium instruction (Journalism department website, 2008) in order to include non-Afrikaans speakers, especially black South Africans, into its vocational BPhil (honours level) journalism education and training classes of on average 25 students per annum. Due to its high standing in the industry and the field of journalism education and training (the SU journalism department was rated as one of 12 “potential centres of excellence” in Africa in 2006 by UNESCO – see Berger, 2007) – the BPhil course draws about 150 applications from across South Africa each year (L. Rabe, personal communication, 31 October 2008). These applications include a number of black students in a direct response to bursary opportunities (exclusively aimed at disadvantaged black candidates). Bursaries to so-called coloured students are also offered annually from the Afrikaans-language print media, hoping to attract young journalists in order to improve their “diversity rating” in terms of government policies such as BEE (D. Els, personal communication, 6 June 2008).

In practice non-white students at the journalism department of SU can be divided into two categories – ethnic black students studying in English (which is most often not their mother tongue) and “coloured” students studying in Afrikaans (which is often their mother tongue). The majority of the BPhil journalism class at SU each year is still comprised of white students – either Afrikaans or English first-language speakers (L. Rabe, personal communication, 31 October 2008).

As was already indicated in the Introduction above, aspirant students have to complete a written test assessing their general knowledge, writing skills and journalism aptitude as part of the selection process for the BPhil course at SU (more about this in the discussion of the methodology below). As a general norm candidates achieving at least 50 percent (100/200) are invited for face-to-face interviews, but the head of department and programme director reserve the right to adjust the selection criteria for strategic

and/or practical reasons – such as the achievement of "transformation targets", i.e. the inclusion of a number of non-white students (L. Rabe, personal communication, 31 October 2008).

**Theoretical framework**

Bourdieu (1984) argued that cultural capital is one of the tools of "distinction" used by the powerful elite to maintain the hierarchical structure of society. As I indicated above, Bourdieu (1991) viewed cultural capital as the result of socialisation and education and training at home and at school/university. The historical trajectory which describes a particular agent's path of cultural socialisation is called the "habitus" by Bourdieu (1991).

Although this hierarchical description of society implies a structural rigidity to Bourdieu's social analysis (which he has denied – see Bourdieu [1990] and Robbins [2005]) – Botma (2008) argued that the concept of cultural capital can be useful to describe phases of transitions in "post-liberation" societies such as South Africa. In this context cultural capital then refers to the dominant culture maintaining apartheid hegemony, its lingering legacy in the new democratic dispensation, and oppositional/alternative culture during apartheid, which then became part of the dominant culture after liberation.

The argument then is that black South Africans were disadvantaged in terms of cultural capital during apartheid. Therefore the fight against apartheid was also waged on a cultural level (see Botma, 2008), and the defeat of apartheid was also a process by which the nature of the perceived Eurocentric, Afrikaner-dominated official and public cultural capital was challenged and subjected to strategies of change.

At universities like SU, however, one could argue that some of the remainders of apartheid cultural capital are still operational because of the dominance of institutional Afrikaans/Afrikaner habitus. In theory, thus, black and English South Africans might still lack the required cultural capital to gain access to the institution. This paper aims to analyse and describe the cultural capital and habitus of black students to test Bourdieu's theoretical proposition in practice.

Bourdieu (1991) describes the relationship between culture, especially language, and power. In short: According to Bourdieu different speakers compete on a particular language market ("field") for the best positions and the rewards on offer ("capital" in various forms) in terms of the specific logic of that field. The central point in this argument is that the ability to compete in a specific field is acquired over time through a process of socialisation and education and is incorporated by individual agents as their "habitus" – a constructed mode of being at a particular time in a particular space.

In terms of language this would mean that an agent competing in his second or even third language – like some black applicants at South African universities – would be at a structural disadvantage against competitors who are able to use their first language. Furthermore, the process through which one language is elevated above others as the "currency" of a particular language market, is described by Bourdieu (1991) as symbolic power, and the negative effects of that type of power he names symbolic violence (see also Bourdieu, 1998).

In the field of South African education one could argue that various indigenous languages have been the victims of symbolic violence during colonisation and apartheid, while English and Afrikaans were privileged. Since Afrikaans lost its direct political protection when the NP was defeated in 1994, this language has now also felt the impact of symbolic violence as it was relegated to a lower position on the educational language market. But, as was argued above, although English has gained ground, Afrikaans is still very much entrenched at SU and is arguably a strong currency for the conversion of cultural capital into power (the ability to gain entrance and pass the course). By the same token, because of the dual medium language policy of the journalism department at SU, English first-language speakers can harness the same power on the language market to gain entrance. It then also follows that second-language students in both Afrikaans and English – mainly black and so-called coloured students – could be at a disadvantage. The aim of this paper, in part, is to find out whether language as a cultural/ethnic factor plays a role in disadvantaging black students at the journalism department of SU.

Although linguistic ability enables agents to compete in specific language markets for the capital on offer there, language proficiency alone might not ensure success in the field of education, where linguistic skills form only part of the required cultural capital.

In this study "habitus" variables such as gender, "race", and school and academic record will therefore be added to get a more complete picture.

In terms of access to SU, it was already argued above that the content of the selection test, which all applicants must complete in either Afrikaans or English, represents a form of cultural capital – a benchmark set by the department itself. It was therefore decided to use individual test scores as an indication of the level of cultural capital which applicants have amassed during their education and training at home, in school and during at least three years at university as undergraduates.

**Research aims, questions and methods**

*Selection Test*

The standard BPhil selection test comprises two sections, Frame of Reference and Journalism Aptitude, each of which is marked out of 100. Students get three hours to complete the test.

The section on Frame of Reference involves a variety of general knowledge and history questions. These include:

- a list of the names of prominent South African and international "people and places in the news", both past and present, and students are then required to describe each in one or two sentences. This list could vary from Kevin Pietersen (controversial South African-born cricket player, later England captain) and Pius Langa (President of the South African Constitutional Court) to Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Nobel Prize-winning Russian author who passed away in August 2008 at age 89) and Kilimanjaro (highest mountain in Africa);
- identification of pictures of politicians and celebrities;
- identification of specific places on regional and world maps;
- identification of specific dates (e.g. "16 June 1976" and "9/11") and places (e.g. "Checkpoint Charlie" and "Qunu, Transkei");
- the names of five South African news institutions, and students must then provide the names of their editors;

- a list of at least ten well-known South African and local works of literature, from *On the Origin of Species* to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and students must then provide the names of the respective writers;
- a numeric literacy section, in which students must solve five practical problems involving numerical calculations.

As may be clear from the examples given, some care is probably deliberately taken to minimise the "Western" or "Eurocentric" bias in the test (confirmed by L. Rabe, personal communication, 31 October 2008). But, because the tests thus far have been compiled by white and Afrikaans-speaking members of staff, they are most probably still biased against ethnic Africans in terms of the nature of the cultural capital required. In light of the theoretical framework of this paper it is accepted that candidates with a habitus different from that of the institution that they seek to access, will probably be at a disadvantage in relation to the required level of cultural capital.

This paper aims to test this theory locally and will therefore seek to establish whether patterns of exclusion and inclusion are revealed in terms of the cultural, language, racial and educational profiles of applicants (their particular habitus) at SU.

The section on Journalism Aptitude include the following:

- a brief description of five important news events of a particular calendar year;
- an assignment to pose five interview questions to a certain person in the news selected from a list;
- a motivated ethical response to a practical newsroom dilemma, such as a choice between two visually disturbing news photographs;
- questions on the candidate's view of the responsibilities of young journalists;
- a spelling test;
- an assignment to compile a complete news report from fragments of information provided.

Against the background of this paper's theoretical framework, one could predict that results in this section will most probably be the ones most influenced by the linguistic ability of applicants. As was already described above, the applicants are required to complete the test in Afrikaans or English. This would immediately entail a disadvantage for second-language users and would then be reflected by the final result (the overall

level of cultural capital). But, by comparing this mark to the one obtained in the previous section (Frame of Reference) one could unpack the different "components" of the cultural capital of a specific individual and/or the group he or she belongs to. It would thus be possible to see whether language ability is the primary or secondary contributor to the overall level of cultural capital (the selection test result). In this way not only the nature of the cultural capital of second-language applicants (theoretically the group in which most of the exclusions will occur) can be established, but another aim of this paper will also be addressed – to analyse the nature and level of cultural capital of the different identified groups of applicants for the BPhil course at SU.

Finally, aiding in the research process is the biographical section of the Selection Test. Apart from the two test sections already mentioned, students must also provide biographical information, such as:

- name,
- date of birth,
- contact details,
- highest academic qualification and at which institution it was obtained,
- majors,
- level of computer literacy,
- journalism experience (if any),
- their particular interest in journalism,
- whether they applied for financial assistance,
- and why.

By using the Bourdieudian keywords of cultural capital, habitus and field, and applying them to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the selection test results, academic record and biographical profiles of students selected for the BPhil journalism programme at SU, this paper firstly aims to evaluate the reliability of the selection test score in predicting the final course mark of selected students. The second aim is to describe some of the structural factors which influence the chances of black candidates to be successfully selected at what is commonly regarded as one of South Africa's leading institutions. The following research question will thus be addresses in the overall

qualitative analysis:

1) Is the selection test result a reliable indicator of the final result for the course?
2) To what extent are black students underperforming in accessing journalism education and training at SU and what are some of the variables/factors that might play a role?

*Stages of quantitative research*

During a pilot research phase during 2008 and 2009 (see Botma 2009a & b) two preliminary results became salient. The first was that the selection test result might be a reliable indicator of the performance of selected students in the BPhil course (in terms of their final mark). The second preliminary finding was that the grade 12 final results of applicants might be a reliable indicator of their performance in the selection test (and thus their changes to gain access to SU). Flowing from this, two hypotheses were investigated with the help of multiple regression analysis.

Phase One of this paper deals with the first hypothesis, which speculates that the major (and only) significant predictor of students' year-end mark for the BPhil course in journalism will be their performance in the selection test for the course.

Phase Two of this paper deals with the influences on applicants selection test score. It hypothesizes that, in the absence of their previous university performance, their school symbol will predict their selection test score the best.

Flowing from this, Phase Three of this paper considered the common variable that explains the largest percentage of unique variation in the selection test score (when the effects of all other predictors in the model are held constant). The purpose was to determine in which section of the selection test students struggled the most. In Bourdieu's terms, the nature and composition of the cultural capital on offer from applicants were analysed in more detail.

*Quantitative methods*

In order to complete the quantitative analysis an expert in statistical analysis (Johnnie E. Tolken) was employed at this stage of the study. Tolken made use of computer software

to provide the statistical results presented in this research paper (Tolken, 2009a, 2009b & 2010a & 2010b). The statistical data formed the basis of a qualitative analysis and discussion in order to answer the research questions outlined above.

The two hypotheses described above, as well as common variable in Phase Three, were investigated with the help of multiple regression analysis. According to Tolken (2010a):

"Regression is a statistical technique used to predict one variable from the values of another variable (simple regression) or a few other variables (multiple regression). In its essence, it represents fitting a model to data and using it to predict values of the dependent variable (outcome) from one or many independent variables (predictors). It does this by firstly assuming a linear relationship between the outcome and the predictor(s), and then calculating the straight line that best fits and explains the outcome in terms of certain predictor variables. This line is then evaluated in terms of the percentage of variance it explains in the outcome variable.

In hierarchical multiple regression, theory (past research) or the researchers' suspicions of the importance of predictors, dictates the order in which variables are entered into the analysis. As a general guideline, the most important predictors are usually entered first, followed by the less important predictors. Predictors are added in separate steps, for each consecutive step, the effect on the outcome of the previous variables already entered into the analysis is controlled. Therefore, each new step reflects the unique contribution of the predictors in that step to the explanation of variance in the outcome."

**Phase One**

A pilot phase of research indicated that the performance of students in the selection test might be a reliable indicator of their final results. The following hypothesis was this formulated:

*When students' performance in the BPhil selection test is controlled, no other variables will contribute statistically significantly to the prediction of students final year mark for the BPhil course.*

This hypothesis follows from the notion that the selection test is designed to test students' readiness to partake in the BPhil course, and should therefore predict successful applicants' actual performance very well, even in the presence of other predictors.

Only students that were selected for the Bphil course were included in the current analysis. This includes students from the academic years of 1999 to 2009 (n = 245). A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed between the dependent variable (outcome) average year mark and the following independent variables (predictors): application test percentage, final grade 12 school symbol, race, gender, university previous language orientation, field of study, selection test completion language (study language) and previous university applicants attended.

*Results and discussion*

Investigation revealed that when application test percentage, school symbol, race and gender were controlled, university previous language orientation, field of study, test completion language and university did not make a further statistically significant contribution to the predictive power of the model. In total, application test percentage, school symbol, race and gender explains 58% of the variance, were as university previous language orientation, field of study, test completion language and university only explains a further 3% of the variance in year mark.

The hypothesis that *when students' performance in the BPhil selection test is controlled, no other variables will contribute statistically significantly to the prediction of students final year mark for the BPhil course*, can thus be rejected. Even after students' performance in the selection test was controlled for, the remaining predictors still contributed to a further explanation of 32% of the variation in the final year mark of the PBhil in Journalism course.

It becomes evident that race plays the largest role (unique variation explained: white vs. black = 15%; white vs. coloured = 5%) in the prediction of year mark. Furthermore, school symbol plays the second largest role (unique variation explained: A vs. B = 4%; A vs. C = 3%). Surprisingly, when the effects of all other predictors on year mark is held constant, students performance in the selection test only plays the third most important role in the prediction of year mark (unique variation explained = 4%). In short,

the approximate increase of 6% in their selection test score, students will do 1% better in their average year mark. Lastly, in the current model, gender is the worst predictor (unique variation explained = 2%).

The following picture thus emerges: compared to white students, coloured students will tend to perform 5% worse in their average year mark. In comparison, black students will tend to do 10% worse than white students in terms of their average year mark. Those that received B's rather than A's in grade 12 is expected to perform 4% worse in their Bphil year-end mark on average. Furthermore, those that received C's (or lower) rather than A's will also tend to do 4% worse. On average females will tend to do 2% better than males in their Bphil in journalism year-end mark.

Thus the variable of race emerges as the dominant predictor of the performance of selected BPhil students at SU. It is noticeable that performance at school is the second most important factor, followed by the selection test score. Interestingly enough, language orientation does not feature as a factor here. These trends will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion below.

**Phase Two**

A pilot phase of the project seemed to confirm that the legacy of apartheid in education was visible in the selection process at SU. It indicated that the final high school symbol of applicant to the course might be a reliable indicator of the selection test score of applicants. Flowing from this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*If students' performance in their final year of high school is controlled, no other variables will contribute statistically significantly to the prediction of students selection test score.*

All students that completed the selection test from the year 2008 to 2010 were included in the analysis (n = 323). A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed between application test score (outcome) and the following predictors: school symbol, race, gender, university's previous language orientation, field of study, test completion language and university. Consequently, significant levels and semi-partial correlations were investigated to determine which variables play the most significant and unique role in the prediction of the journalism aptitude score.

*Results and discussion*

The only variables that significantly predicted students application test score was school symbol, race, test completion language, and gender. Together, they explain 31% of the variance in journalism aptitude score. Students' grade 12 school symbol explains 13% of the variation in selection test scores. Compared to students who received an A in grade 12, those who received a B will tend to do 5% worse. Moreover, those who received a C or lower will on average perform 8% worse than white A-candidates.

When race is added to the model it explains an additional 7.3% of the variation in selection test scores. Compared to white students, black students will on average score 15% less in their selection test. Furthermore, coloured applicants will tend to do 6% worse than white applicants.

Thirdly, after test completion language was entered into the model, it explained a further 9% of the variation in the outcome. Compared to students who completed the selection test in Afrikaans, English students will tend to score 8% higher if all other predictors in the model are held constant.

Lastly, gender is added to the model and explains and additional 2% of the variation in the selection test scores. Female applicants compared to male applicants will tend to score 4% less in their selection test. (Interestingly enough, Phase One above indicated a counter trend – once selected, female student will do better in the course than male students.)

Looking at the final model in this phase overall, the predictor that contributes the most to the explanation of unique variance in the model is "white vs. black" (15%). In addition, "white vs. coloured" contributes another 2% to the explanation of unique variance. Test completion language has the second largest proportion of unique variation it explains (8%). Lastly, school symbol contributes substantially (A vs. C or lower = 4%, A vs. B = 3%), followed by gender (2%).

Thus, although school symbol initially explains a large portion of the variation in selection test scores, namely 13%, the inclusion of race, selection test completion language and gender explains an additional 18% of variation. Furthermore, subsequent analysis revealed that race (to a large extent) and test completion language (to a lesser

extent) explains larger portions of unique variation in the selection test score than school symbol.

It would therefore seem that the following hypothesis can be rejected: *If students' performance in their final year of high school is controlled, no other variables will contribute statistically significantly to the prediction of students selection test score.* It was established that in fact, especially race still remain a significant factor. Of course, even after 15 years, race is also still tied to access to a good school education in South Africa (which might add to the significant influence of the school symbol on the selection test score).

Thus the following picture emerges: a black student will score 15 % less than a white student in the selection test. A black student with a grade 12 symbol of a C or lower will score 8 % less that a white candidate with an A-average. Coloured applicants will tend to do 6% worse than white applicants.

It is interesting that compared to students who completed the selection test in Afrikaans, English students will tend to score 8% higher if all other predictors in the model are held constant. Along with the race factor the situation, in short, is that students who are white and English will perform better than others groups in the selection test. These issues will be addressed in more detail in the conclusion below.

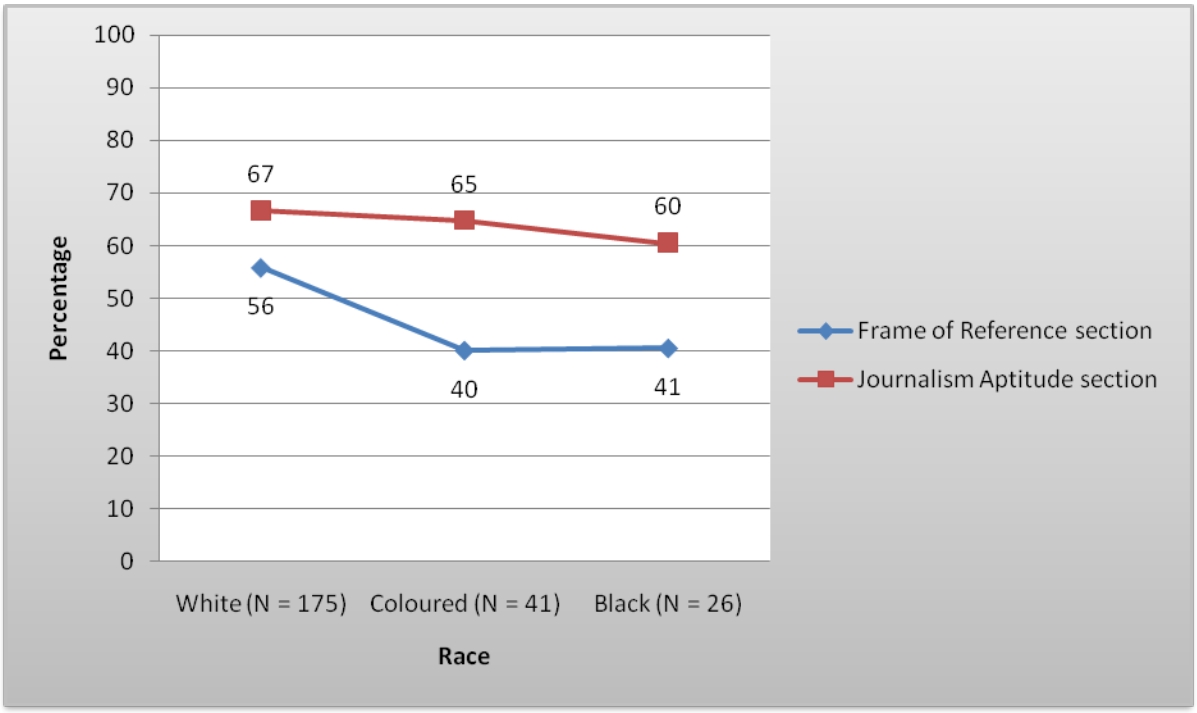
**Phase Three**

Flowing from Phase Two, "race" was identified as the variable that explains the largest percentage of unique variation in the selection test score (when the effects of all other predictors in the model are held constant). The purpose in this third phase was to determine in which section of the selection test students struggle the most in terms of their racial profile. Subsequently, the first part of the analysis investigated differences between "races" in terms of both the frame of reference score and the journalism aptitude score. Furthermore, the second part of the analysis looked at the differences between the mean journalism aptitude score and the mean frame of reference score for each "race". The overall aim was to look at the composition of the cultural capital on offer from students from different racial backgrounds.

*Results and discussion*

In support of the regression analysis, there was a statistically significant relationship between race and the journalism aptitude score. However, the magnitude of the effect is small. A further investigation of the post-hoc test of multiple comparisons revealed that a significant difference only exists between white and black students and not between white and coloured students, and coloured and black students. As can be seen in Figure 1 (red line), the mean scores for the different races lie within seven marks of one another. White and coloured students means are almost equal, whereas black students did significantly worse than white students.

**Figure 1: Mean plots for the frame of reference and journalism aptitude scores by race**




In addition, there was also statistically significant relationship between race and frame of reference score. However, the effect of race on the frame of reference score was substantive with a medium to large effects size. Post-hoc multiple comparisons revealed that white students' performance in the frame of reference section differs statistically significantly from that of coloured and black students. However, the difference between coloured and black students was not significant, as can be seen in Figure 1 (blue line).

As can be observed (Figure 1), in comparison with the journalism aptitude section, students overall tend to do worse in the frame of reference section of the selection test. On average white, coloured and black students performed statistically significantly worse in the frame of reference section than the journalism aptitude section. Although the before mentioned is true for white students as well, the magnitude of the difference between journalism aptitude score and frame of reference score for coloured and black students is much larger (see column labeled 'effect size' in Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for journalism aptitude and frame of reference section scores by race**

| Race | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean difference | Sig. | Effect size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | Journalism aptitude score | 175 | 67 | 11 | 11 | .000 | .52 |
| | Frame of reference score | 175 | 56 | 14 | | | |
| Coloured | Journalism aptitude score | 41 | 65 | 11 | 25 | .000 | .84 |
| | Frame of reference score | 41 | 40 | 13 | | | |
| Black | Journalism aptitude score | 26 | 60 | 10 | 20 | .000 | .85 |
| | Frame of reference score | 26 | 41 | 14 | | | |

The results also show that race plays a larger role in students' performance in the frame of reference section if compared to their performance in the journalism aptitude section, pointing to a larger need for improvement in black and coloured student's frame of reference "abilities". Or, as the disscussion below will indicate, it could also illustrate the cultural bias of the selection test.

**General conclusion**

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and habitus can be applied to explain the very real crisis in post-apartheid journalism and training at a prominent South African university. In this section the specific research questions outlined above will be finally addressed.

In terms the reliability of the selection test as indicator of final performance it would seem that variables such as race and school symbol might be an even stronger indicator in the end. Taken all together, a strong indicator arguably emerges.

Secondly, black and coloured students clearly still find it more difficult than white students to access and complete postgraduate journalism at SU because of their

disadvantaged habitus – even 15 years after democratisation – while it seems that in terms of cultural capital black (including coloured) students are most lacking in general frame of reference (including numeric literacy) when compared to white applicants to the BPhil course at Stellenbosch University. Black and coloured students that are selected for the course also perform worse than their white counterparts in terms of final results. It would, however, seems that in terms of journalism aptitude, including spelling, the differences between the "races" are smaller. Thus, interestingly enough, and contrary to what Bourdieu's field theory on the relationship between language and power would seem to suggest, the language policy of SU – or more precisely at the Journalism Department - does not seem to disadvantage black applicants or play a major role in the performance of selected students in the course. In fact, it would seem that students writing in English generally do better in the selection test.

As was discussed above, the English-language group in this sample included both first- and second/third-language users from different "race"/ethnic backgrounds. According to this result, this "handicapped" English group still managed to outperform their Afrikaans counterparts, who used only their first/home language. One must, however, be cautious to generalise because black applicants to SU may already be a part of a small group of top performing students with more than average cultural and financial capital. It is possible that they went to good English-language schools before completing three years of graduate studies in that language.

Another factor may be that the general performance of white English applicants is of such a high standard that it cancels out some of the negative effects of the performance of black students writing in English. As a group, black students still perform badly.

Although more specific research is needed into this area, this result could be another worrying sign regarding the standard of Afrikaans on a tertiary level. Taking into consideration that Afrikaans is the first language of the compilers and markers of the test, it would not be surprising if there was a language bias in favour of Afrikaans. It could, however, be a case of "reverse discrimination", in that those marking the test might arguably be more knowledgeable about Afrikaans, and might therefore be stricter when evaluating the language ability of Afrikaans applicants.

The issue is also complicated by the fact that Afrikaans and coloured first-language speakers increasingly prefer English as study language and therefore complete the selection test in English. Code switching between Afrikaans and English has also become common for these students, even between different sections in the same selection test. All this make it even more difficult to get a clear picture of the influence of the department's language policy on selection test results.

This statistical finding that black students do not struggle at Stellenbosch because of language should thus be taken with a grain of salt. It because it does not include the greater socio-political context of language at SU, such as, for instance, the fact that black applicants to and participants in the course are always by far in the minority (at most about a third of the population). There is also the often-expressed perception that SU is still not welcoming of non-Afrikaans (and non-white) students. This question should be addressed in future research.

What this study does suggest is that the selection test may still display a profound cultural bias in terms of frame of reference. However, the question arises whether an effort to further "Africanise" the selection test and the curriculum will necessarily contribute to the preparation of aspirant journalists for the current South African media industry, which is thoroughly incorporated in the globalised political economy.

After completing three phases of this project it becomes clear that a longitudinal study of the cultural capital and habitus of applicants as well as selected students to the postgraduate journalism programme at SU has much to offer. The scope of the research could be broadened to include more biographical data (e.g. more information about the backgrounds of students – such as home language and undergraduate performance) in order to clarify the relationship between language and power at South African universities.

**References**

Benson, R. & Neveu, E. 2005. Introduction. In *Bourdieu and the journalistic field.* Cambridge: Polity. Pp. 1-25.

Berger, G. 2007. In search of journalism education excellence in Africa: Summary of the 2006 Unesco project. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 28(1&2):149-155.

Botma, G.J. 2009a. Where theory meets practice: Addressing unequal access in South African journalism education and training. Paper delivered at conference Journalism Research in the Public Interest, Winterthur/Zurich, Switzerland, 19 to 21 November.

Botma, G.J. 2009b. Future tense: The presence of a troubled past in South African journalism education and training. Paper delivered at SACOMM annual conference, Potchefstroom, 16-18 September.

Botma, G.J. 2008. Poles apart: Mapping the field of arts journalism in South Africa. *Critical Arts*, 22(1):83-100.

Bourdieu, P.1998. *On television* (P. Parkhurst Ferguson, Trans.). New York: The New Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard.

Bourdieu, P. 1990. *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology* (Matthew Adamson, Trans). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1989. *Opstellen over smaak, habitus en het veldbegrip*. (Dick Pels, Trans.) Amsterdam: Van Gennep.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.

Claassen, G. 2007. Journalism and cultural literacy: An exploration towards a model for training journalism students. Unisa website, 25 April. Available at http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=7135 Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Hadland, A. 2007. The South African print media, 1994-2004: An application and critique of comparative media systems theory. Unpublished thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town.

Journalism department website, 2008. Language policy. Available at http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departemente1/Joernalistiek/Homepage/Study%20with%20us/Language%20Policy Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA). 2009.Trends of ownership and control of media in South Africa. Johannesburg: Z-Coms.

Pandor, N. 2007. Inauguration of Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University Professor R Botman. *Polity.org.za* website, 11 April. Available at http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a_id=107281 Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Pandor, N. 2008. SA: Pandor: Education Dept Budget Vote 2008/09. *Polity.org.za* website, 15 May. Available at http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a_id=133483 Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Robbins, D. 2005.The origins, early development and status of Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (1):13-30.

Sapa, 2008. More campus violence in Durban. *The Citizen* website, 6 March. Available at http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=59816,1,22 Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Scholtz, L. 2007. Die debat oor die posisie van Afrikaans aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch: 'n Ontleding [The debate about the position of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University: An analysis]. Internet article, May. Available at http://www.ufs.ac.za/faculties/documents/10/483/News/DF_Malherbelesing_2007_Leopold_Scholtz_Mei_2007.pdf Accessed on 31 October 2008.

Steyn, E. & De Beer, A.S. 2002. Sanef's 2002 South African National Journalism Skills Audit. An introduction. *Ecquid Novi*, 23(2):11-86.

Thompson, C. 2008. More violence on NW campus. *The Citizen* website, 22 September. Available at http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=78471,1,22 Accessed on 30 October 2008.

Tolken, J. 2009a. Journalism Report (1).Results of statistical analysis prepared on request by author.

Tolken, J. 2009b. Journalism Report (2). Results of statistical analysis prepared on request by author.

Tolken, J. 2010a. Journalism Report (3). Results of statistical analysis prepared on request by author.

Tolken, J. 2010b. Journalism Report (4). Results of statistical analysis prepared on request by author.

Wasserman, H. & De Beer, A. 2005. Whose public? Whose interest? The South African media and its role during the first ten years of democracy. *Critical Arts*, 19(1&2):36-51.

Williams, M. 2006. Stellenbosch rector for top UK position. *The Argus online* website, 5 July. Available at http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=49&fArticleId=3324900 Accessed on 30 October 2008.