

https://dspace.org/

Othering and the media: a critical discourse analysis of articles about African migrants and health issues in two South African daily newspapers (from April 2008 to August 2015)

Buker, Linda

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28323

Buker, Linda Maria (2018) Othering and the media :a critical discourse analysis of articles about African migrants and health issues in two South African daily newspapers (from April 2008 to August 2015), University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28323>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Othering and the media.
A Critical Discourse Analysis of articles about African migrants and health issues in two South African daily newspapers (from April 2008 to August 2015)

Research report Master of Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Diversity Studies at University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Abstract

Background: South-Africa has a long standing history of migration. Yet in 2008 the country experienced unprecedented waves of xenophobic violence against foreigners in a number of townships around the province of Gauteng. In the aftermath negative sentiments seemed to have developed against foreign nationals. The media is a power tool in the creation of such sentiments. Through images, language, voices and representation of individuals and groups media outlets may have significant impact on the perception of its audiences on their realities. This research aimed to investigate in what ways two South-African newspapers have depicted African migrants in relation to their health and healthcare services. In resource scare settings such as South-Africa, a competition for limited services in combination with an increase of users may have contributed to a xenophobic environment. To examine this hypothesis, articles were investigated for their language use and underpinning discourses.

Methods: For the analysis two Gauteng English-speaking newspapers were selected (The Star, The Sowetan). Data were retrieved from the online archive of Wits University library and selected through inclusion and exclusion criteria. Using a Jäger's structural and fine analysis approaches, a form of critical discourse analysis, articles were analyzed according to their use of rhetoric, metaphors, subjects, voices, power relations and institutional forms of power. Furthermore, authors were investigated and all articles summarized as well as examined for their tone and atmosphere. Moreover, articles' data were checked for their accuracy.

Results and Discussion: Publications in the two newspapers on the subject of health and migration were infrequent with 38 articles between 2008 and 2015. The overall impressions of articles varied but the majority did not frame migrants negatively. Information on the authors was not readily available. Metaphors were framed around the supposedly high numbers of migrants entering the country (waves, masses, etc.). A significant word choice was the word illegal which was often used to imply a criminal act. However, many articles conveyed equally empathic views on the difficult positions of migrants. Moreover, othering through the creation of inside and outside groups were a recurrent form of presenting migrants. Several terms around foreign nationals were used interchangeably to speak about migrants irrespective of their legal status. The majority of migrants articles referred to were Zimbabweans (68%) which was often associated with a negative image. Data use in articles was difficult to confirm or

reject as accurate data were not easily accessible. Both newspapers allowed various voices to be heard. There was no evidence for misuse of institutional forms of power. Overall, the main discourses in the articles were around cross-border migration and health risks, the poor management of migration, the use of resources by migrants and the health status of migrants living in South-Africa.

Results are limited by the researcher's bias based on her gender, nationality and social background which also limited the choice of data sources to English speaking newspapers. As a non-native English speaker, linguistic nuances may have gone unnoticed. Moreover, certain information was not available, including data on the authors or the layout of the articles. Lastly, this research limited itself to xenophobia against cross-border migrants and not internally displaced people or xenophobia between ethnic groups.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Both newspapers fail to account for the different stories behind cross-border movements. Neither of the newspapers gave particular space to the subject itself.