

STUDENTS OF THE PU FOR CHE'S SOURCES OF POLITICAL INFORMATION AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT

The first democratic election as well as a new political dispensation in South Africa encouraged scholars to study political communication with a renewed interest. At the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 275 students were involved in a survey to determine their future expectations and their sources of political information.

It was found that the most negative expectations, which the students identified, included the following: more unemployment and poverty, the introduction of reverse discrimination, unsafe living conditions, emigration of whites and far-reaching increases in taxation.

Positive expectations that were raised included more foreign investments, better relations with overseas countries and increased entrepreneurship. Students used primarily television, radio and newspapers as sources of political information, whilst friends and family were not as popular a source of information as was anticipated by



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Nimmo's study (1978) in the USA.

The study indicated that there was no difference in the usage of media of individuals with more positive expectations against those who inclined to have more negative expectations.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 1991 far-reaching social and political changes have taken place in South Africa.

Most South Africans were, and still are, uncertain and fearful about these changes.

At the end of 1991 the Association for Civil Servants asked the Human Sciences Research Council to investigate the expectations and fears of civil servants (Wessels, 1992:18). One of the most important findings of that research was that 63% of the respondents expected a black majority government in the country. (This was even before an election was announced.) Only 39% of the civil servants were positive about the effect of such a government on their work situation. Their biggest fear was affirmative action and a possible reduction of their pensions. From September 1991 until March 1992 their fear of losing their jobs as a result of affirmative action increased by 16%.

Since 1992 negotiations between the various political groupings about a constitutional settlement did very little to contribute to any positive changes in the expectations and fears of the general public. According to Schlemmer (1992:20) most people find the process of political negotiations very confusing and ambiguous. At one stage of the process an acceptable solution seems possible while suddenly deep and unbridgeable conflicts loom. It is therefore understandable that people have divergent perceptions and expectations about the negotiations.

In order to obtain a better

understanding of the expectations of people, a research project was launched among students of the PU for CHE to answer the following questions: (i) What are the future expectations and fears of students? (ii) What are their sources of information about political matters?

Important aspects of the investigation were the possible changes in a new dispensation and respondents' attitudes about these changes. According to Rhodie (1988:57) political perceptions are influenced by the information received by individuals. For this reason the sources of political information of the students were regarded as important. Another dimension of the study focused on the positive or negative relationship of expectations and sources of information, political beliefs and church affiliations. The political preferences of the students in different academic years also came under scrutiny.

A brief look at the nature of political communication and possible sources of political information is necessary before a discussion of expectations and fears can be attempted.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Vorster (1986:42) describes politics as the continuous defining or redefining of collective behavior within the context of mutual power relations where there are differences and conflict about the allocation of values. Nimmo (1976:6) defines politics as the *activity of people*

collectively regulating their conduct under conditions of social conflict. Without communication, politics, as most other social activities, is not possible.

Vorster (1986:42) adds to these views by stressing political communication as the exchange of messages and symbols which are influenced by the political system. On the other hand, a political system influences the amount and quality of communication.

Communication is therefore essential for the functioning of politics but is also vital to link or mediate between politics and other social systems in society. Communication is therefore necessary for the meaningful functioning of politics. The latter aspect is addressed in this article.

MEDIATED POLITICS

Only a small number of people have direct experience of politics and the rest rely on the mass media and interpersonal communication for information on political activities and political parties. For many people politics is a mediated reality through mass and interpersonal communication.

Lipmann and Park mention the assumption that the mass media create pictures in the heads of people and these pictures do not necessarily relate to reality (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989:237-239/259-264; O'Neill, 1991:3-7; Beniger, 1978:444; McLeod *et al.*, 1974:33;

Black, 1982:183). The nature of reality and people's perceptions of reality is a topic of interest for social scientists.

The most important assumptions in the theory of the social construction of reality are put forward by Gergen (1985:269) and Littlejohn (1992:191):

- * The world does not present itself objectively to the observer, but is known through human experience, which is largely influenced by language.

- * The categories in language used to classify things emerge from the social interaction within a group of people at a particular time and in a particular place. Categories of understanding, then, are situational.

- * How reality is understood at a given moment is determined by the conventions of communication in force at that time. The stability of social life therefore determines how concrete our knowledge seems to be.

- * Reality is socially constructed by interconnected patterns of communication behavior. Within a social group or culture, reality is defined not so much by individual acts, but by complex and organised patterns of ongoing action.

These assumptions indicate a reality for individuals to take into account in their daily lives. On the one hand there exists an objective and natural reality with consensus among people about the nature of that reality. There is also a supernatural reality without

any consensus among people. Individuals are also able to create cognitive images to describe or express reality. In the third place there is the existence of a mediated process through which individuals form subjective meanings of reality. Fourthly people tend to mould their behaviour in accordance with this subjective interpretation of reality. In the fifth place human nature requires a set of rules for a social order. These rules limit human behavior (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989:234-247; O'Neill, 1991:7-8; McLeod, Kosiciki & Pan, 1991:246; Nimmo & Combs, 1990:4-5; Gerbner, 1991:3-5).

The general public create for themselves images of reality according to their knowledge about reality. In the sphere of politics people tend to make value judgements about political developments and also make decisions with regard to their knowledge and information about these matters. A possible implication is that the knowledge and information underlying perceptions and behaviour may be incorrect and not a true reflection of reality.

SOURCES OF POLITICAL INFORMATION

In literature there is not unanimity about the importance of different political socialization agents. Family members, friends, a school, associations, political parties and the mass media are important sources of information for most people.

Family

According to some authors (Ponton & Gill, 1986:106-108; Cord, Medeiros & Jones, 1974:185-186; Ball, 1977:64) the family is the most important socializing agent. The family is the corner stone of other interpersonal socialising agents. Parents are the major influences in the life of a child before and while the child attends school.

The child's perception of authority at home is the foundation for his or her political values, orientations and attitudes. These perceptions have a bearing on the child's future political behaviour. Political socialization at home is informal and does not normally include any deliberate attempt to influence the child's specific political orientation.

The family as a socialization agent is only part of the answer to the question of the origin of political attitudes. It is therefore not strange that different family members hold divergent political perceptions or beliefs. Adults sometimes change their political attitudes. Political socialization is a process that continues throughout a person's lifetime (Ponton & Gill, 1986:107-108).

In a broader perspective, the influence of the family is less significant in the formation of political attitudes than other factors. The family creates a favourable climate in which the child can learn about political values. Other agents such as

schools and the mass media can also contribute to the process of learning specific values. Parents can create opportunities for their children to use the mass media to learn about a variety of values.

School

A school has a twofold role in the socialization process. The content of school curricula can contribute to the formation of political attitudes and perceptions of children. All political systems make provision for some kind of instruction to maintain it. This does not entail the support for a specific political party or grouping. The school can promote certain political values such as liberal democracy (Ponton & Gill, 1986:108; Ball, 1977:66).

Cord *et al.* (1974:187-189) regard the school as one of the important socializing agents in society, especially in building a nation. The school is a mechanism through which a large number of people can be prepared to be participants in their society.

Secondly, the general school experience of getting along with a wide variety of other individuals can enhance the formation of balanced political behaviour (Cord *et al.* 1974:188-189).

Friends

Socializing at school could be enhanced by the support of socialising with friends (Cord, *et al.* 1974:188-189). From an early age

friends or members of an individual's peer group play a role in the forming of political attitudes. People in a group with similar political attitudes can act as reinforcement of those attitudes in individuals while groups with different values are engaged in socialising roles. Friends play an important socializing role during high school and university. During this period friends are more important than the family (Nimmo, 1978:318).

Mass media

Most research on the mass media postulates the assumption that the media have certain effects on society. Social scientists differ, however, on the specific effects of the mass media.

McQuail (1987:252-262) identifies three main phases in the development of media effect studies. From the turn of the century until the thirties it was generally accepted that the media had a direct bearing on society. The basic viewpoint was that the media and those who control the media have the power to control public opinion, attitudes and behavior of people. This assumption was not based on empirical research but on the perception that media such as the film and radio gained in popularity and accessibility.

During the second phase, from the thirties until the sixties, the power of the media was in serious doubt. During this period Klapper (1960) formulated his "no effect" model. In the beginning of the seventies the

debate reopened on the issue of the power of the media. In contrast with previous assumptions about attitude changes and direct effects, long term changes in perception and the influence of intervening variables such as ideologies, values and culture were emphasized. The assumption was made that the media influenced people's experience of reality rather than their attitudes toward reality.

Chaffe, Ward and Tinton's (1970:647-651) research indicates that the media are important to obtain political knowledge. The media have limited power to persuade people to go over to specific action on matters of interest. Their research shows a tendency among people of higher education to use the media as a source of information. People with a lower level of education prefer interpersonal sources of information. In politics the media provide primarily information, and contribute little to the formation of attitudes about politics in general (e.g. Schoemaker, 1984:68).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Pilot study

Senior students in Communication Studies held discussions with fellow students to gather background information on the different aspects of their future expectations. This information was assimilated into 26 possible expectations which eventually formed the core of the measuring instrument.

Procedure

Senior Communication students distributed questionnaires in October 1993. For this study 275 completed questionnaires were used.

The Statistica package was used for the fixation and most of the processing of the data. Some processing was also done with the SAS package under the guidance of the Statistical Consultation Service of the PU for CHE.

Reliability

Huysamen (1983:32) explains Cronbach's coefficient alpha as a method to test internal reliability. The closer alpha is to 1, the more internally consequently the respondents have completed the measuring instrument.

The variables concerning future expectations, as well as students' feelings about them, which came to the fore in the pilot study, were subjected to this test. The results were as follows:

Future expectations (alpha = 0,796)

Feelings about them (alpha = 0,779)

The reliability of the questionnaire as a whole has been tested. In this case alpha=0,637. According to these results, the measuring instrument indicates relatively high internal consistency. It was therefore concluded that this measuring instrument was reliable.

Table 1: Demographic profile

		%	N
Gender:	Male	52,7	145
	Female	47,3	130
Academic year:	First year	7,5	103
	Second year	28,3	78
	Third year	20,0	55
	Fourth year	13,1	36
	Fifth year	1,1	3
Religion:	Dutch Reformed Church (NG)	52,3	144
	Reformed Church (Gereformeerd)	18,5	51
	Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormd)	10,6	29
	AFM	4,7	13
	Methodist	1,1	3
	APK	3,3	9
	None	1,5	4
	Other	8,0	22

There was no explicit preference as far as political parties' own publications were concerned: 20% never used these as a source of information. Conversely, 20% used these publications very often. The respondents further indicated that they very seldom used political meetings as a source of information: 35% never used these meetings while 34% used them very seldom.

There are no significant differences in the use of family as a source of information. A small majority (36%) used their family often while 31% used them seldom. A few respondents indicated they never (13%) or on the other hand very often (20%) used their families as source of information.

Thus: television, radio and newspapers were the main sources, family and friends came second, while political meetings and party publications were the least used as source of information.

To explore the use of information sources a bit more, cross tabulations between information sources and academic year were done, as well as source of information and political party with which the respondents themselves mostly associated. Significant differences only occurred in family as source of information.

According to academic year and family as source ($\chi^2=35.75$; $df=12$; $p=0.000$) all the fifth year students (100%) indicated that they never used their families. Most of the fourth

Research results

Sources of information

Seven questions were asked to determine the sources respondents used to get information about political parties and issues. The seven sources were newspapers, political meetings, friends, radio, political parties' own publications, television and family (see Table 2).

Most respondents often and almost always used television (84%), newspapers (70%), radio (69%), and friends (54%) as information sources. It seems that the mass media fulfil to a great extent the role as information source about political parties and their views.

Table 2: The use of information sources

Information source	Never		Seldom		Often		Very often	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
a. Television	3,3	9	12,4	34	39,0	107	45,3	124
b. Newspapers	4,0	11	25,7	70	40,8	112	29,5	81
c. Radio	5,2	14	25,7	70	47,1	128	22,0	60
d. Family	13,2	36	31,3	85	36,0	96	19,5	53
e. Friends	9,2	25	37,0	101	42,5	116	11,3	31
f. Publications of political parties	19,8	54	32,6	89	27,5	75	20,1	55
g. Political meetings	35,0	96	33,9	93	20,1	55	11,0	30

year students (41%) seldom used their families, although a relatively large group (35%) often used their families as source of information. Most of the third year students (44%) used their families often, although 35% seldom used them. A larger majority of the second year students (44%) used their family very often as information source, while 29% seldom used them. The first year students were more or less equally divided between depending on families or not for information. A slight majority (56%) very often gave preference to family as their source of information.

It seems that students, as they advance with their studies, rely to a lesser degree on their families as a source for political information.

The cross tabulation between political party and family as a source of information ($\chi^2=53.43$; $df=27$; $p=0.002$) showed that most of the supporters of the African National Congress/Congress of South African Trade Unions/South African

Communist Party (ANC/SACP/ COSATU:80%), Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO:100%) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP:41%) never or seldom used their families as a source. One must realise that only 8,4% of the respondents were supporters of these parties. Most of the supporters of the Democratic Party (DP:53%), National Party (NP:41%), and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC:100%), as well as most of the respondents who supported no particular political party (39%) or those who were uncertain (42%) or supported another party (50%), indicated that they often used their families as a source of political information. On the other hand, most of the supporters of the Conservative Party/Afrikaner Freedom Front (CP/ AFF:35%), though not with a great majority, indicated that they used their families very often.

Future expectations

Twenty six possible scenarios that might be realised after the election, were put forward to the respondents.

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The respondents had to indicate whether they thought these possibilities might become reality. These results are reflected in Table 3.

According to the table, there was

more agreement between respondents about certain scenarios than about others. For example, concerning the redistribution of land and wealth, the dispossession of property (farms) and the collapse of the infrastructure (a, h, o) there was

Table 3: Future expectations after 27 April 1994

Situation	Yes %	N	No %	N	Uncertain %	N
a. Redistribution of land and wealth	37,5	103	31,2	88	31,3	86
b. Levying of apartheid taxes	24,1	66	43,8	120	32,1	88
c. Increased unemployment and poverty	54,0	148	26,3	72	19,7	54
d. Increased overseas investment	63,3	174	19,6	54	17,1	47
e. Peace between black and white people	11,3	31	60,0	165	28,7	79
f. Reversed discrimination	53,7	147	23,0	63	23,3	64
g. Government will look after everyone	19,7	54	47,5	130	32,8	90
h. Dispossession of property, such as land	36,9	101	30,7	84	32,4	89
i. More unsafe circumstances of life	45,5	125	28,0	77	26,5	73
j. Model of good race relations	27,1	74	42,5	116	30,4	83
k. Improved foreign relations	68,0	187	15,6	43	16,4	45
l. Civil war	26,6	73	23,6	65	49,8	137
m. Ensured rightful place of individuals	28,8	79	42,0	115	29,2	80
n. Nationalization of private enterprise.	41,8	115	29,1	80	29,1	80
o. Collapsing of infrastructure	31,6	87	34,6	95	33,8	93
p. Lower living standards	54,0	148	24,1	66	21,9	60
q. Increasing entrepreneurship	55,8	153	24,8	68	19,4	53
r. Large-scale emigration of whites	48,0	132	31,3	88	20,7	57
s. Communist-orientated government	35,6	98	41,8	115	22,6	62
t. Increased unity between population groups	26,9	74	49,1	135	24,0	68
u. Decreasing value of money	50,0	137	27,0	74	23,0	63
v. Disappearance of Christian character from education	50,0	137	27,7	76	22,3	61
w. Unrealistic expectations of so-called wronged groups	60,2	165	14,6	40	25,2	69
x. Radical increasing of taxes	48,0	132	21,1	58	30,9	85
y. Individual protection by the Bill of Human Rights	41,6	114	28,3	79	30,1	81
z. Disappearance of traditional Afrikaner values	40,4	111	42,9	118	16,7	45

no consensus amongst the respondents, because the responses were equally divided between the three options. Most respondents were uncertain about the possibility of a civil war. This illustrates the uncertainty about the political situation in South Africa at that stage.

It seems that most respondents were pessimistic about the future. The following negative expectations were held by most (Table 3): increasing unemployment and poverty, the institution of reversed discrimination, unsafe living conditions, nationalization of private organizations like banks, lowering of living standards, emigration of whites on a large scale, the devaluation of the Rand, the disappearance of the Christian character from schools and universities, unrealistic expectations of the so-called underprivileged groups and a drastic increase in income tax.

Most respondents also indicated negative expectation towards possible positive scenarios, like peace between blacks and whites, the possibility that the new government will look into the concerns of all citizens and the possibility that South Africa could be a model for good race relations. Most did not believe that the rights of each individual would be guaranteed and that greater harmony between groups would follow. A high percentage (40,4%) indicated that they expect the traditional values of the Afrikaner to disappear.

On the other hand positive expectations were articulated, like more investments from abroad, the possibility of better relations with overseas countries and an increase in entrepreneurship. A high percentage of respondents believed that the bill of human rights would protect the individual and that the future government would not be a communist one. Most respondents indicated that they didn't think an "apartheid fine" would become a reality.

To determine how the respondents, according to the above-mentioned aspects, differ from one another, various chi-square analyses were done.

According to church denomination, critical differences were found in scenarios d,h,k,l,m and s (Table 3). Significant differences appeared throughout between members of the Afrikaans Protestant Church (APC) on the one side and the other denominations on the other. One should remember though that the APC members constituted only 3,3% of the sample.

Most respondents from all denominations reacted positively to the expectations of more investments from abroad except the members of the APC and those who don't belong to any denomination: 78% members from the APC and 75% of the latter group indicated that they did not expect more investments ($\chi^2=34,56$; $df=14$; $p=0,0002$).

The same results were shown according to improved foreign relations. Most members of the other denominations predicted a positive improvement except members of the APC (67%) and those who belong to no denomination (50%), who were negative.

A sensitive issue like the possible dispossession of property like farms, showed a significant difference between the members of the APC and those of other denominations ($\chi^2=25,23$; $df=14$; $p=0,034$). The distribution between the opinions of the members of the other denominations were more or less equally divided between the three options, with no significant majorities. The members of the APC, though, indicated that 100% expected such dispossession to be realised under a new government.

The same pattern occurred on the possibility of a civil war. Most respondents from all the denominations were uncertain about this, but 89% of the APC members indicated that they expected a civil war.

Concerning a possible communist orientated government, approximately the same number of members of the Dutch Reformed Church (includes both "NG" and "Hervormd"), Reformed Church and the Apostolic Church chose the "yes" and the "no" options. Most members of the Methodist Church and the "no Church" respondents were uncertain

about the orientation of the future government. A high percentage (78%) of the APC members expected a communist orientated government. Opposed to this, many of the respondents who belong to other denominations (59%) did not expect a communist orientated government ($\chi^2=24,59$; $df=14$; $p=0,041$).

For all denominations, except for the Methodist, APC and "no church" respondents, the distribution was more or less equal between the possible options about the legitimate place of each individual in the new South Africa. Most of the Methodists (67%) and the "no church" respondents were uncertain, while 100% Of the APC members indicated that they didn't expect that each individual's legitimate place would be guaranteed ($\chi^2=24,68$; $df=14$; $p=0,04$).

** Respondents' feelings about future expectations*

The respondents were asked how they would feel if certain scenarios should realise after the election. These scenarios were the same as in Table 3. The difference between the two is that in the first case they had to indicate whether they thought the scenarios would realise, but in this case, should these realise, how they would feel about it.

The respondents reacted as predicted. The negative scenarios (Table 3: a,b,c,f,h,i,l,n,o,p,r,s,u,v,w,x, z) evoked negative feelings, while the positive scenarios evoked positive

feelings (Table 3: d,e,g,j,k,m,q,t,y).

In comparison with the other expected scenarios it is interesting to notice that 14,7% indicated that they would be pleased if there would be an "apartheid fine". The nationalisation of private organisations like banks evoked positive feelings from 21% of the respondents.

*** The relation between future expectations and information sources used.**

To determine if there were any significant differences among respondents who used different information sources and their positive or negative future expectations, further analyses were conducted. The future expectations (see Table 3) were classified according to positive (d, e, g, j, k, m, q, t, y) and negative expectations (a, b, c, f, h, i, l, n, o, p, r, s, u, v, w, x, z) and totaled into two variables: positive expectations (yes, no, uncertain) and negative expectations (yes, no, uncertain). Each of these variables was cross-tabled with the seven different information sources. A further chi-square analysis was conducted on each of these different information sources (Steyn & Engelbrecht, 1990).

In all cases the p-values were statistically highly significant. However, further analyses were conducted to determine whether these chi-square results were of any practical significance. As a result, the w-values were also included in Table

4.

With regard to Table 4, no significant w-values occurred between positive expectations and information sources. The only practical significant w-values occurred at three of the cross tabulations between negative expectations and information sources. These information sources were the family, political meetings and the publications of political parties.

With regard to information sources it seems that all three groups (those who cherished certain negative expectations, those who did not share these expectations, and those who were uncertain about these expectations) very often or mostly used their family as information source. The respondents who indicated that they did not think these negative situations would become a reality after the election, mostly used the family as information source (58%).

With regard to political meetings as information source, it was indicated that those who were uncertain about these expectations differed from the rest of the sample. Although all three groups of respondents, as mentioned above, once again agreed with regard to the fact that few or none used this information source, it was the uncertain respondents who constituted the biggest percentage (75%).

Table 4: The relation between sources of information and future expectations

Negative expectations	X2	p	w	Effect
1. Newspapers	21,296	0,002*	0,310*	Medium effect
2. Political meetings	68,202	0,000**	1,000**	Large effect
3. Friends	15,515	0,017*	0,220	Little effect
4. Radio	20,700	0,002	0,300*	Medium effect
5. Publications of political parties	41,685	0,000**	0,610**	Large effect
6. Television	17,529	0,008*	0,250	Little effect
7. Family	38,396	0,000**	0,560**	Large effect

Positive expectations	X2	p	w	Effect
1. Newspapers	27,777	0,000**	0,110	Little effect
2. Political meetings	45,458	0,000**	0,140	Little effect
3. Friends	32,165	0,000**	0,110	Little effect
4. Radio	10,916	0,091	0,070	Little effect
5. Publications of political parties	16,082	0,013*	0,080	Little effect
6. Television	14,746	0,022*	0,080	Little effect
7. Family	11,095	0,085	0,070	Little effect

*: p = significant (> 0,001 and < or = 0,05); w = medium effect

** : p = highly significant (< or = 0,001); w = large effect

Nota bene: the associated degrees of freedom of each X2 = 6.

The same pattern occurred with publications of political parties as a source of information. Once again, most of the respondents from all three groups indicated that they seldom or never used this source of information. The respondents who were uncertain about the negative expectations, once again indicated with the highest percentage (59%) that they seldom or never made use of this source of information.

As result of the above-mentioned, it appears that different future

expectations cannot be related to a specific source of information.

Political preference

To determine to what extent respondents associated themselves with different political parties, a question was included on seven different political parties or political groupings. The respondents had to react to these questions on a four-point scale.

High percentages of respondents indicated that they could not

associate themselves with the ANC/ COSATU/SACP (75,7%), AZAPO (87,8%) and the PAC (86,8%). It is conspicuous that none of the parties with similar high percentages in the table above, is supported overwhelmingly. The party which most respondents associated with, was the NP (60,4%): high and very high. It appears that 39,6% and 40% of the respondents associated strongly and very strongly with the CP/AFF and the IFP respectively.

To the question which party the respondents associated with most, the distribution amongst the different parties was as follows (Table 5).

This table indicates that the NP (though not with a very high percentage) and the CP/AFF have

Table 5: Political preference

Political party	%	N
ANC/COSATU/SACP	1,8	5
CP/AFF	25,1	69
DP	6,2	17
AZAPO	0,4	1
NP	43,2	119
PAC	0,4	1
Inkatha	6,2	17
None	10,2	28
Uncertain	4,3	12
Other	2,2	6

the biggest support amongst the respondents. It is also conspicuous that as many as 10% of the respondents support no political party at all.

The respondents were also asked which party they thought would win the election. The results are given in Table 6.

On examining this table it is conspicuous that the majority of respondents were convinced that the

Table 6: Winner of the elections

Party	%	N
ANC/COSATU/SACP	65,8	181
CP/AFF	0,7	2
DP	0,4	1
NP	8,0	22
Inkatha	2,2	6
Uncertain	20,4	56
Other	2,5	7

ANC/COSATU/SACP alliance would win the election. A relatively high percentage was uncertain about this issue. On a question whether the respondents, if practically possible, would consider leaving the country, only 15% confirmed positively. Although 10% of the respondents were uncertain about this, 75% indicated that they would not consider leaving the country.

To explore the political preferences of the respondents further, it was necessary to conduct a further chi-square analysis. According to this analysis, it was found that there is a significant difference ($\chi^2=52,85$; $df=36$; $p=0,038$) amongst the various academic year groups and their political preference. The ANC/ COSATU/SACP support consists for example of first year (80%) and second year students (20%). The

supporters of the CP/AFF also consist mainly of first year (35%) and second year students (41%). Only 17% of the CP/AFF support came from third year and 7,2% from fourth year students. No fifth year student supported the CP/AFF.

The support of the DP came mainly from first year students (35%) and third year students (41%). It is interesting to note that the NP support was also highest amongst the first year students (45%), but that the support declined with each consecutive year group: second year: 24%, third year: 15%, fourth year: 14% and fifth year students: 1,7%. The support of the Inkatha party appeared relatively proportional over the year groups, except that it drew no support from the fifth year group. 18% of the Inkatha support came from the first year, 24% from the second year, 29% from third year and 29% from the fourth year students. It is also interesting to note that the respondents who were uncertain about their political preference were mostly third year students (50%).

A further chi-square cultivation indicated that a statistical significant difference ($\chi^2=65,00$; $df=45$; $p=0,031$) occurred between political preference and the respective provinces from which the respondents came. (The five provinces that were indicated on the questionnaire included Northern Transvaal, the PWV region (Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vereeniging), Eastern Transvaal, Western Transvaal and

the Orange Free State.)

Most of the respondents who were uncertain about their political preference came from the Western Transvaal (50%), whilst most of the respondents who did not support any political party came from the PWV area (36%). Most of Inkatha (64%) and the NP (69%) supporters came from the PWV and Western Transvaal. In contrast to this, DP supporters appeared relatively proportional over the different provinces, with the highest percentage (29%) from the Orange Free State. The CP/AFF supporters came mainly from the Western Transvaal and PWV (63% in total). The same holds for the supporters of the ANC/COSATU/SACP alliance. The supporters of the PAC came from the provinces "other" than the five that were included in the questionnaire, whilst the AZAPO supporters hailed from the Orange Free State.

The computation of the chi-square with regard to political preferences and future expectations indicated numerous statistically significant differences. Only the most significant cases are discussed ($p<0,001$).

With regard to the possibility of unemployment and poverty, 36% of the respondents who answered positively came from the CP/AFF and 30% from the NP supporters. As opposed to this, 65% of the respondents who did not share this expectation were NP supporters

($\chi^2=47,2$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$).

The possibility of more investment from foreign countries pointed out the differences between the NP and CP/AFF supporters. Respondents who cherished this expectation, consisted mainly of NP supporters (56%), whilst a relatively small percentage of the other parties' supporters shared this optimism. The CP/AFF supporters did not share this optimism. The CP/AFF supporters again contributed to the largest proportion (48%) which did not share this expectation ($\chi^2=75,25$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$). The possibility that overseas relations could improve also showed significant differences ($\chi^2=73,16$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$). The majority of all the respondents (68%) were optimistic about improved relations. Of these respondents 53% came from the NP. As opposed to this, 56% of the CP supporters did not share the same expectations with regard to better relations. This figure contributed to 16% of the total negative response.

With regard to the possibility that the government will care for all, most of the respondents reacted negatively. A significant difference came to light in the sense that the minority of the 20% optimists were mainly NP supporters (67%; $\chi^2=44,7$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$). The same pattern appeared at the possibility that each individual's legitimate place be ensured ($\chi^2=61,88$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$). NP supporters were again the majority (61%) of the 29% of the respondents

who were totally positive in this regard. Of the 42% who reacted negatively, 45% were CP supporters. A further interesting phenomenon is the fact that the majority (51%) of the respondents who were uncertain about this expectation, were NP supporters.

With regard to a possible civil war after the elections, most of the respondents were uncertain. The CP/AFF supporters (48%) indicated that they expected a civil war. Of the 24% who did not think that a civil war would become a reality, 54% came from NP ranks ($\chi^2=48,95$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$).

The pattern that can be deduced from the above differences repeated itself, in the sense that the CP supporters contributed to the largest percentage of the respondents with negative future expectations and the NP supporters contributed to the largest portion of respondents who had positive future expectations. It occurred time and again that the NP supporters formed the largest percentage of the respondents who were uncertain about the expectations. Expectations where the pattern indicated a significant difference between the parties, were the following:

Communist orientated government ($\chi^2=72,16$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$)

Large-scale immigration of Europeans ($\chi^2=42,46$; $df=18$; $p=0,001$)

Degradation of standard of living ($\chi^2=54,92$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$)

The decrease of the value of money ($\chi^2=55,49$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$)

Protection of the individual by means of the Bill of Rights ($\chi^2=47,44$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$)

Harmony amongst population groups ($\chi^2=47,49$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$)

Increasing entrepreneurship ($\chi^2=45,60$; $df=18$; $p=0,000$).

CONCLUSIONS

The study indicates that the respondents' strongest negative future expectations include the following: increased unemployment and poverty, the introduction of reverse discrimination, unsafe living circumstances, nationalisation of private enterprise, drop in the standard of living, the immigration of Europeans, decrease in the value of money, the diminishing Christian character of schools and universities, unrealistic expectations of the so-called "unjust" groups and drastic hikes in taxes. Above-mentioned negative future expectations are mostly maintained by members of the APC and respondents who associate themselves with the CP. The strongest positive expectations about the future include the following: more foreign investment, improved relations with foreign countries and an increase in entrepreneurship.

With regard to sources of information, the mass media like

television, radio and newspapers enjoy the highest priority. This finding corresponds to a recent study conducted with students of the University of Potchefstroom (see Beeld, 1994/02/25:9). The second most important source of information is family and friends, whilst political publications and political gatherings are the information source which respondents use the least.

In contrast with Nimmo's (1978) assumption that friends as information sources are more important than family during university education, the present study finds that there is no significant difference in the priority which these two information sources enjoy. This could probably be ascribed to the fact that Nimmo's study was conducted in the USA, whilst students from rural areas in South Africa are more family bound.

The present study indicates that there is no definite correlation between information sources used and positive or negative future expectations. The information source is thus not the decisive factor in the formation of diverse future expectations or political perceptions. It remains an open question and further research should be conducted to determine the exact course which gives rise to the formation of different political perceptions or expectations.

A possible explanation could be that respondents perceive selectively, and therefore use the same information

sources but interpret the information according to their own personal political beliefs or affiliations.

As indicated earlier, Gergen (1985) indicates that reality is socially constructed through interrelated patterns of communication. From this investigation it can be deduced that the construction of reality is a complex communication process which is constantly influenced by a variety of information sources.

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