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Zimbabwe in the media : the coverage of the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government in the Mail & Guardian, 2007-2009.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Without communication the mind does not develop a true human nature, but remains in an abnormal and nondescript state neither human nor properly brutal – (Cooley, 1966: 147).

This study explores the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the 'historic' talks between Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party led by Robert Mugabe and the two MDC formations, one led by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and another led by Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M). These 'historic' negotiations were intended to negotiate an end to the partisan violence, human rights violations and create a framework for a power-sharing government between the parties, thereby marking a possible shift in the Zimbabwean body politic. The period under study is from 29 March 2007 to 11 February 2009. This period begins on the day the SADC mandated the then South African President Thabo Mbeki to 'officially' mediate between the parties and ends on the day Morgan Tsvangirai was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, marking the consummation of Zimbabwe's 'inclusive' government. By investigating the way in which the talks were reported on, this study provides a preview of how the media produce discourses which people rely on for bearings in an obscure and shifting world (Gitlin, 1980: 1).

The media plays a pivotal role in organising the images and discourses through which people make sense of the world (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 11). In fact, people obtain knowledge of the world outside their immediate experience largely from the media (Ekström, 2002: 259). According to Bourdieu (1998: 10), the media influences various areas of cultural production including science, politics, economics, law and philosophy. However, the media has not received much attention within sociology (Ekström, 2002: 259). Therefore, this research attempts to contribute to the branch of sociological inquiry that examines content, rules, routines and institutionalised procedures that are characteristic of the media as knowledge-producing and communicative institutions (Ekström, 2002: 260).

What is academically fascinating about the coverage of the negotiations is that when Thabo Mbeki was tasked to mediate, he had the six negotiators representing the three parties,

[namely, Patrick Chinamasa and Nicholas Goche (ZANU-PF), Tendai Biti and Elton Mangoma (MDC-T) and Welshman Ncube and Priscilla Misihairambwi-Mushonga (MDC-M)], sign a non-disclosure agreement whose terms obliged them to report only to the most senior officials of their respective parties or the principals, namely, Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara. While this was in the best interests of the mediation process, it created an insatiable desire for not only the media but the less senior members of the parties involved and the electorate to want to know more about what was happening with the talks. Given such a veil of 'secrecy' it is therefore interesting to explore how the *Mail & Guardian* covered the talks.

Among other newspapers, the *Mail & Guardian* was selected for this study because it is what Bourdieu (1998: 43) calls a "newspaper of opinion and analysis, which holds enough symbolic power to be an authority". The *Mail & Guardian* is an elite newspaper whose target audience includes people who have influence on the public sphere such as academics, policy makers, diplomats, lobbyists and non-governmental groups (www.mg.co.za). It mainly focuses on political analysis, investigative reporting and African news (www.mg.co.za). It breaks big stories, especially those that involve government misconduct. Although it is based in South Africa, it is also distributed in other African countries including Zimbabwe. Thus, it is often quoted locally, regionally and internationally. Undeniably, it influences international opinion on different issues hence it is a powerful newspaper. What makes the *Mail & Guardian* an even more interesting study particularly in relation to its representation of Zimbabwe is that it is largely owned by a Zimbabwean (www.mg.co.za). Given the newspaper's ownership, target audience, focus and influence, it is therefore the best choice especially if one seeks to understand how power and influence play out in the production of discourse(s).

At the core of the investigation is an attempt to explore the following related questions:

- In what ways did the *Mail & Guardian* represent the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government?
- What were the themes of the coverage?
- What were the perspectives within which the talks were framed and represented?
- How can these perspectives be explained?

This report is structured as follows: Chapter one introduces this research. It explains the relevance of this study. It also outlines the research questions underpinning this study and details the structure of this report.

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework at the bottom of this research. It shows how literature on 'representation' and 'framing', cultural studies, critical political economy of the media, theories of news production and Africa's media image relate to this research.

Chapter three outlines the methods used to gather and analyse the data for this research. It illustrates how a triangulation of content analysis and 'critical' discourse analysis made it possible to show the form and make more visible the opaque aspects of the assumptions behind the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the negotiations.

Chapter four presents the research findings. The findings include the page numbers on which the stories about the talks appear on; the type and authorship of the stories; the themes covered, namely, political, economic and humanitarian issues and the amount of coverage given to each theme and its sub-themes; the assumptions about the talks, the mediator, the principals and/or their respective political parties; and the sources accessed as well as the sex of the sources.

Chapter five is an analysis and interpretation of the research findings. It interprets the hidden assumptions behind the coverage of the talks, the protagonists and/or their respective political parties. It also interrogates the sources accessed throughout the coverage and ends with examples of issue-driven coverage.

Chapter six concludes the study. It concludes that the talks were represented as 'unavoidable', 'damned' and 'good for nothing'. It also concludes that the coverage was largely personality-driven rather than issue-driven as epitomised by only five issue-driven articles and the characterisation of Mugabe as a veritable 'Machiavelli', Tsvangirai as the 'white man's dumb poodle', Mutambara as 'insignificant' and Mbeki as 'useless'.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Discourse… is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels... – Foucault (1991: xiv).

2.1 Introduction

In order to better understand and contextualize this study and its findings, this part of the report highlights the theoretical framework within which this study is situated. This section draws on literature that focuses on similar issues and shows how the literature relates to this research. This study uses cultural studies, critical political economy of the media and theories of news production as theoretical lenses to analyse the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the talks about the 'power-sharing' government in Zimbabwe.

One of the best rationales for using cultural studies in this research is that it offers a disciplined way of exposing how communication and representation serve the interests of power and manipulation (Rojek, 2007: 4). However, McChesney (1998: 4) argues that cultural studies does not emphasize the structural factors that influence the production of media content. For this reason, this study also employs critical political economy of the media to analyze the structural factors affecting the production of stories about the Zimbabwean 'inclusive' government.

Critical political economy of the media shows how financing and organising cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses and representations in the public domain (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 11). It explains extremely well the structural factors and the labour processes in the production, distribution and consumption of news (McChesney, 1998: 3-4). Nonetheless, Davies (2008: 56) criticises critical political economy of the media for assuming much about the influences on, and behaviours of editors and journalists who are involved in cultural production. As a result, individual-level actions and cognitions are neglected. Thus, it is also essential for this study to use theories of news

production to explore the practices, cognitive processes and social interactions of professionals involved in producing stories about the Zimbabwean GNU.

For McNair (1998: 12), news is an intellectual product that reflects the technological, economic, political, social and cultural histories of the societies within which it is produced. Theories of news production thus help this study to describe the context within which news is produced and analyse the social relationships and interactions which, (1) define journalists' parameters of vision, (2) constrain their autonomy, and (3) shape – sometimes dictate – the form and content of what they write and speak about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government (McNair, 1998: 12).

Combining cultural studies, critical political economy of the media and theories of news production enables this study to consider the structural factors (internal and external) that influence the *Mail & Guardian*'s production of news and the actual content it produces about the 'inclusive' government in Zimbabwe. Given the elitist nature of the *Mail & Guardian*, this consideration provides a holistic approach in exploring the newspaper's framing and representation of the talks about the 'power-sharing' government in Zimbabwe. The following subsections discusses the concepts of 'representation' and 'framing', following which cultural studies, critical political economy of the media and theories of news production are discussed. By way of conclusion, the African media image is discussed.

2.2 Representation and framing

'Representation' and 'framing' are often used interchangeably (Chuma, 2007: 21). However, Bernstein (2002: 260) notes that 'representation' is the process by which signs and symbols are made to convey certain meanings. For Swanson (1991: 123), 'representation' refers to the way language and images actively construct meanings according to sets of conventions shared by and familiar to makers and audiences. It implies the active work of selecting, and presenting, of structuring and shaping (Hall, 1997b: 15). It implies the more active labour of making events mean something rather than merely the transmission of already existing meaning (Hall, 1997b: 15; Briggs & Cobley, 2002: 307). That is to say, 'representation' refers to how the media *re-present* events as news to their audience.

Drawing on Fiske (1991: 55), the core argument in theories of representation is that, despite appearances, the media do not *re-present* reality, but rather construct it. “Reality does not exist in the objectivity of empiricism, but is a product of discourse” (Fiske, 1991: 55-6). In the words of Carey (1992: 25), “reality is not a given”. Rather, reality is brought into existence and produced by the media through construction, apprehension and utilisation of symbolic forms (Carey, 1992: 25). Neither the television camera nor the microphone record reality, they simply encode it, and the encoding in turn produces a *sense* of reality that is ideological (Fiske, 1991: 56). Therefore, what the media *re-presents* is not reality but ideology. The effectiveness of this ideology is enhanced by the iconicity of the television or newspaper by which the medium purports to situate its truth claim in the objectivity of the real (Fiske, 1991: 56). Thus the media is able to disguise the ideology it constructs as reality (Fiske, 1991: 56).

Goffman (1986: 10-11) defines ‘frames’ as the basic frameworks of understanding available in society for making sense of events. For Gitlin (1980: 6) ‘frames’ are “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit themes about what exists, what happens and what matters”. Gitlin (1980: 6) argues that we frame ‘reality’ in order to negotiate it, manage it and comprehend it. Gitlin (1980: 7) further argues that ‘frames’ are unavoidable and journalism is organized to regulate their production. ‘Frames’ enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely. That is to say, ‘frames’ enable journalists to recognise large amounts of information as information, assign it to cognitive categories, and package it for sufficient relay to their audience (Gitlin, 1980: 7). Thus, media ‘frames’, “largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 1980: 7).

Framing theory suggests that by selecting what to include and what to exclude from a story, the media limits or defines the story’s meaning, thereby shaping people’s interpretation of that story (Hallahan, 1999: 206-209). Put differently, the media choose one aspect (selection); inflate it into the defining characteristics (magnification); and then establish it as the most easily recognisable image (reduction) (Ndela, 2005: 73). By doing this, the media are able to package a large amount of information into a story that makes ‘sense’ to their audience.

There are different frames that the media can use to cover stories. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and An and Gower (2009) investigated the prevalence of news frames identified in earlier studies on framing and framing effects. These are: *human interest*; *conflict*; *morality*; *economic consequences*; and *responsibility*. The *human interest* frame "brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 95; An & Gower, 2009: 108). The *conflict* frame emphasises conflict and disagreement among individuals, groups, or organisations as a means of capturing audience interest (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 95; An & Gower, 2009: 108). The *morality* frame puts the event, problem or issue in the context of morals, social prescriptions and religious tenets (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 96; An & Gower, 2009: 108). The *economic consequences* frame reports an event, problem or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, groups, organisations or countries (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 96; An & Gower, 2009: 108). The *responsibility* frame presents an issue or a problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 96; An & Gower, 2009: 108).

In order to understand how the media frame and represent events, Gitlin (1980: 2) notes that every day, directly or indirectly, by statement or omission, in pictures and in words, in entertainment and news and advertisement, the mass media produce fields of definition and association. In other words, day-by-day, normal organisational procedures define 'the story', identify the protagonists and issues, and suggest appropriate attitudes towards them (Gitlin, 1980: 4). What makes the world beyond direct experience look natural is a media frame (Gitlin, 1980: 6). Therefore, any media content analysis should ask questions such as; what is the frame here and why this frame and not another (Gitlin, 1980: 7)?

Drawing on the questions raised by Gitlin (1980: 7) and the media frames raised by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000: 95-6) and An (and Gower) (2009: 108), this study examines the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government. The study looks at whether the *Mail & Guardian* took a *human interest*; *conflict*; *morality*; *economic consequences*; and *responsibility* frame in its coverage of the talks. This is further made possible through cultural studies.

2.3 Cultural studies

The theme that runs across this study is ‘representation’. But Hall (1997b: 15) questions: what does ‘representation’ have to do with culture; what is the connection between them? Culture is broadly understood in terms of ‘shared meanings’ and language is the medium in which ‘meaning’ is produced and experienced (Hall, 1997a: 1; Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998: 86). By way of explanation, it is through language that humans build up a culture of shared understanding and so interpret the world in roughly the same way (Hall, 1997a: 1). Language therefore operates as a representational system through which thoughts and ideas are represented in a culture (Hall, 1997a: 1). That is to say, representation through language is central to the processes by which meaning is produced (Hall, 1997a: 1). By seeking to disseminate information that people want, need and should know, the media does not only circulate ‘meaning’ but also shape knowledge (Tuchman, 1978: 2; Talbot, 2007: 5). Having established the link between culture and representation, what then is cultural studies? What is it concerned with and how does it help the investigation of the coverage of the talks about the Zimbabwean ‘inclusive’ government?

According to Rojek (2007: 5), cultural studies proceeds on the basis that the term ‘culture’ carries dual *social* meanings having to do with forms of knowledge and power. In other words, cultural studies insists upon conceptualising culture as the intersection of force and resistance (Rojek, 2007: 6). On the one hand, cultural studies sees culture as the cultivation of mind, taste, manners, artistic accomplishments and the scientific and intellectual attainments of a particular people (Rojek, 2007: 6). On the other hand, it views culture as beliefs, myths, customs, practices, quirks and the general way of life that is characteristic of a specific population (Rojek, 2007: 6). Moreover, cultural studies submits that the content and form of culture is the means not only of controlling and manipulating people, but also of resisting inequality and domination.

Rojek (2007: 10) identifies four interrelated components of cultural studies, having to do with the observation of culture (genre), the manufacture of culture (production), the exchange of culture (consumption) and the contestation of culture (cultural politics). Genre has to do with

the patterning of cultural form and content, while production has to do with the creation of cultural meaning and the interests behind the presentation of cultural form and content (Rojek, 2007: 10). Consumption refers to the various processes of how cultural meanings are assimilated by consumers and cultural politics refers to how meaning is presented, resisted and opposed through the process of cultural exchange (Rojek, 2007: 11). Rojek (2007: 12) therefore defines cultural studies as the exploration of interrelationships between genre, production, consumption and cultural politics.

Most relevant to this study is the production component of cultural studies, which is described by Hall (1997a: 2) and Golding and Murdock (1996: 12) as concerned with the construction of meaning – how it is produced in and through particular expressive forms and how it is continually negotiated and deconstructed through practice of everyday life. It sees the media as mechanisms for ordering meaning in a particular way (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 12). It insists that the meaning of media content is variable and depends on the contexts supplied by the overall narrative (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 12). This perspective helps explain generalized images and stereotypes in the news media (Schudson, 1996: 151). It is also relevant to understanding journalists' explanation of how they know 'news' when they see it because the central categories of news-workers themselves are 'cultural' (Schudson, 1996: 152).

Drawing on Davies (2008: 56), the value of using cultural studies when investigating cultural production is that deductions about the production are inferred from assessments of what is produced. Thus, through the production component of cultural studies, this study highlights the common codes, terms, ideologies, discourses and individuals that dominate the stories on the negotiations about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government. The study shows the assumptions embedded in the framing and representation of the talks. It also shows the terms and phrases used to frame and represent the talks and it explains their symbolic meaning.

Like any other framework, cultural studies has its limitations. For Saukko (2003: 22), cultural studies has been hesitant to say much about social or economic structures, as it argues that we cannot describe those structures without the mediation of culture and language. McChesney (1998: 4) also argues that cultural studies does not emphasize the structural factors that influence the production of media content. Likewise, Golding and Murdock (1997: xviii)

argue that cultural studies is fascinated with the ephemeral, depoliticized by its own populism, internalized in its debates and focused on texts to the exclusion of social, economic and political structure. In other words, cultural studies offer an analysis for the way cultural industries work that has little to say about how they actually operate as industries, and how their economic organization impinges on the production and circulation of meaning (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 13). For these reasons, this study also uses critical political economy of the media to explore the structural factors that influence the production of stories about the Zimbabwean 'unity' talks.

2.4 Critical political economy of the media

The starting point for critical political economy of the media is the recognition that the media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities (Murdock & Golding, 1997: 3-4). For Tuchman (1978: 2), the media are complex organisations subject to certain inevitable processes. They are complex organisations in that they are locked into the wider economic situation through advertising, investments and shareholdings and interlocking directorships with large industrial concerns (Murdock & Golding, 1997: 4). Thus for owners, investors and managers, media products are commodities to be packaged, promoted and marketed in the same way as any other product. In the words of Murdock and Golding (1997: 25), "the crux of the system is that information is a commodity to be packed, distributed and sold in whatever guise..."

If it is about material products, then there is a political economic dimension to understanding the production, distribution, and appropriation of news (Schudson, 1996: 143). In addition to producing and distributing commodities, mass media disseminates ideas about economic and political structures (Murdock & Golding, 1997: 4). It is this second and ideological dimension of media production which gives it importance and centrality and which requires an approach in terms not only of the economic but also of politics (Murdock & Golding, 1997: 4-5).

According to Golding and Murdock (1996: 11), critical political economy of the media focuses on the interplay between the symbolic and economic dimensions of public

communications. It is critical in that it draws on a critique of the social order in which communications and cultural phenomena are being studied (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 12). That is to say, it assumes a realist conception of the phenomena it studies in that the theoretical constructs it works with exist in the real world (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 13). It is also interested in the investigation and description of late capitalism which it defines as both dynamic and problematic, as undergoing change and as substantially imperfect (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 13).

For McChesney (1998: 3), critical political economy entails two main dimensions. First, it addresses the nature of the relationship between media and communication systems to the broader structure of society (McChesney, 1998: 3). Put differently, it examines how media and communication systems and content reinforce, challenge or influence existing class and social relations (McChesney, 1998: 3). Second, it looks specifically at how ownership support mechanisms such as advertising and government policies influence media behaviour and content (McChesney, 1998: 3). It emphasises structural factors and the labour process in production and consumption of communication.

In their seminal work, *Manufacturing Consent – The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Herman and Chomsky set out the propaganda model of the media. The model describes forces that shape what the media does. It posits that, among their other functions, the media serve and propagandise on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them (Herman, 1998: 192-194; Herman & Chomsky, 2002: xi). The representatives of these interests have agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: 2). The propaganda model focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on media interests and choices (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: 2). It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the dominant interests to get their messages across to the public (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: 2).

Golding and Murdock (1997: xvi) contend that critical political economy is both holistic and historical. It is holistic in that it does not abstract the economic or the political from social relations, but it examines in full the interaction of social and cultural dynamics (Golding & Murdock, 1997: xvi). It is historical because its focus of analysis is the location of the role of

media in a capitalist and global setting, whose processes of change and evolving dynamics are at the heart of analysis (Golding & Murdock, 1997: xvi).

Studies that have used critical political economy of the media to investigate cultural production, for example, Curran (1978), Peacock (1986), Christopherson and Storper (1986), Murray (1989), Schiller (1989), Herman and McChesney (1997), Doyle (2002), Curran and Seaton (2003) and Bagdikian (2004), have not focused on the individuals who produce culture but on the structures, external factors and high-level decision makers who come to influence and shape mass-produced culture (see Davies, 2008: 54). Likewise, critical political economy of the media enables this study to consider the structural factors that affect the production of stories about the Zimbabwean 'unity' negotiations. These range from interference (or lack thereof) from the *Mail & Guardian* owners to advertising and other financial considerations.

However, Schudson (1996: 145) argues that critical political economy of the media has generally been insensitive to political and legal determinants of news production; it has been far more 'economic' than 'political'. Golding and Murdock (1997: xviii) also argue that critical political economy is unduly wedded to class divisions; insensitive to differences and divisions of other kinds and frequently downright deterministic and reductionistic. Schudson (1996: 145) takes it further noting that a critical political economy perspective has sometimes tended toward 'conspiracy theory' or simple-minded notions that a ruling directorate of the capitalist class dictates to editors and reporters what to run in their newspapers.

In addition, critical political economy of the media tends to paint news media in liberal societies in the tones of news media in authoritarian societies (Schudson, 1996: 145). If differences are at all noted, the limits placed on news media in authoritarian societies by state control are equated to the constraints placed on the press in liberal societies by market mechanisms (Schudson, 1996: 145). For Schudson (1996: 145), both state and market can limit free expression but this does not make their means or motives for doing so the same. Since critical political economy does not provide a comprehensive explanation of all communication activity as noted by McChesney (1998: 3-4), this study also uses theories of news production to discover how news workers at the Mail & Guardian decide what news is;

why they cover some items and not others; and how they decide what the audience want to know about the Zimbabwean ‘unity’ talks.

2.5 Theories of news production

Scholars including McQuail (1969), Tuchman (1978), Hawk (1992), Schudson (1996), McNair (1998), and Edwards and Cromwell (2006) contend that news is a social construction of ‘reality’. For Said (1997: 162), that is not to say that facts are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them upon interpretation. Hawk (1992: 5) further contends that ‘reality’ is a construction of perception and a misperception of ambiguous situations. To illustrate this point in relation to media representation of ‘reality’, Tuchman (1978) and Edwards and Cromwell (2006) use the window-frame metaphor. Tuchman (1978: 1) contends that news is a window on the world and through its frame we learn of ourselves and others, of our own institutions, leaders and lifestyles and those of other nations and their peoples. However, the news frame is problematic in that the view depends on whether the window is large or small, has few or many panes, is opaque or clear, faces the street or the backyard (Tuchman, 1978: 1). Thus Edwards and Cromwell (2006: 1) conclude that the media is less a window on the world and more a painting of a window on the world.

Although Lichtenberg (1991: 216-231) assumes the possibility and value of objectivity, McNair (1998: 5) contends that no story can be told and no account of events can be given without contextualisation of a set of assumptions, beliefs and values. That is why it is difficult if not impossible to explain or interpret a story correctly without the knowledge of the context within which the story is embedded. Like any other narrative, news is a product of human agency and is therefore essentially ideological (McNair, 1998: 6). The content of that ideology may be consciously and purposely articulated or it may be a loosely structured distillation of the assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and values deemed socially consensual by editors and journalists (McNair, 1998: 6).

Drawing on Curran (2000: 21), sociological theories of news production could be described as a sister-discipline to critical political economy of the media because they focus on the determinants of news production such as political pressures, professional culture, and source

tactics and strategies (McNair, 1998: 14). The beauty of theories of news production is that they enable this study to interrogate determinants of news production. Following is a discussion of these determinants, namely, political pressures, professional culture and source tactics and strategies.

2.5.1 Political pressures

McNair (1998: 12) notes that although journalists aspire to be 'independent', and most are to varying degrees, they can never be entirely 'free' from the circumstances within which their work is organised, regulated and marketed. Like most other professionals, journalists work within a political environment which contains a certain amount of regulation, control and constraint, exercised through a variety of formal and informal channels (McNair, 1998: 82). These controls and constraints are sometimes justified by the needs of good governance and social cohesion and sometimes they are a product of political self interest (McNair, 1998: 83). Tuchman (1978: ix) sums it up stating that news is an interchange between politicians and policy makers, newsmakers and their organisational superiors, and the rest of us are eavesdroppers on that ongoing conversation.

However, as 'watchdogs' the media play an important role in defining where the line is drawn. Journalists must constantly struggle against the political apparatus for their freedom to report and analyse events and be prepared to defend this role against the state's tendency to control and restrict the flow of information (McNair, 1998: 83). Even in liberal democracies, these political constrains often put journalists in the front line of political debate and conflict thereby affecting the way they report issues of a political nature.

2.5.2 Professional culture

The professional element of news production recognises that the production of culture is inseparable from the culture of production (Davies, 2008: 59). For McNair (1998: 62), the working environment of the newsroom is the starting point for the individual journalist's activity. It defines the journalist routines and limitations. The journalist does what has to be done to produce the goods, within the constraints set by deadlines and competitive pressures

(McNair, 1998: 62). As a way of explanation, the journalist is a cog in a wheel over whose speed and direction he or she may have little or no control (McNair, 1998: 62). This is supported by Schlesinger (1987)'s study which revealed that journalists adopt self-censoring practices to reduce the risk of their pieces being rejected by editors (see Davies, 2008: 60). Such self-censorship can be as significant as externally-imposed censorship.

Tuchman (1978: ix) puts it differently noting that news-workers are professionals with professional concerns; they are individuals with personal concerns and biases. Professionalism and decisions emanating from it are a result of organisational needs (Tuchman, 1978: 2). In other words, news is located, gathered and disseminated by professionals working in organisations, hence it is inevitably a product of news-workers drawing upon institutional processes and conforming to institutional practices (Tuchman, 1978: 4). Due to professional elements including 'objectivity', impartiality, balance and accuracy, news claims to be a veridical account of events in the world (Tuchman, 1978: 5). However, such concepts have complex socio-historical roots which reflect the values and ideas of the societies in which they emerged (McNair, 1998: 64). Ultimately, they render news as a story to be passed on, commented upon and recalled as individually appreciated public resources (Tuchman, 1978: 5).

2.5.3 Source tactics and strategies

Although journalists construct their narratives around their own values and beliefs, they are informed by the contributions of a wide range of information sources who thus acquire the power to become 'definers' of journalistic reality (McNair, 1998: 6). For news stories to look and sound believable and authentic, they ought to be verified by non-journalistic 'witnesses' or sources such as politicians, academics, professional specialists and other accredited sources of information and interpretation (McNair, 1998: 6). These sources lend their expert status to the text and give it authority in the eyes of the audience. The strength and power of sources can be inferred from their ability to 'make' news and to have their positions represented accurately (McNair, 1998: 7).

Studies of media-source relations reveal that journalists tend to rely primarily upon professional males as sources, particularly when 'expert' opinions are being accessed (Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998: 5). In fact, Hartley (1982: 146) argues that news is not only about and by men but it is overwhelmingly seen through men. When women are included as news sources, they tend to be defined in terms of their status against the principal, typically male, news actor in a particular story (Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998: 5). That is to say, women are routinely presented either as anonymous examples of uniformed public opinion, such as, housewives, consumers, neighbours, or mothers, sisters, wives of the men in the news, or as victims of crime, disaster or political policy (Holland, 1987: 138-9, cited in Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998: 5). Thus not only do women speak less frequently, but they tend to speak as passive reactors and witnesses to public events rather than as participants in those events (Holland, 1987: 138-9, cited in Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998: 5-6).

The gendered nature of news production is important not merely in terms of natural justice but also because it may affect the pattern of interaction between sources and journalists and the way in which news is represented (Manning, 2001: 72). A very masculine culture and atmosphere can emerge if both the routine sources of information and the journalists gathering that information are usually men (Manning, 2001: 72). This gendered division is linked, in turn, to an alignment of 'serious' news values with public-sphere events deemed to be of interest to men, whilst so called 'women's issues' are more likely to be framed in relation to the 'private' or domestic sphere (Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998: 6). Apart from the gendered nature of news production, it is equally important to note that the factors of news production examined above are not mutually exclusive. Journalists are subject to pressures from media owners, competitive demands or professional culture all at the same time (McNair, 1998: 163).

2.6 Approaches used in other studies on representation

Some of the studies that have used either cultural studies, critical political economy of the media, theories of news production or all of these combined to examine media framing and representation in Southern Africa include, Botes (2009), Marquis (2009), Wasserman and Botma (2008), Chuma (2007), Gongo (2007) and Ngoro (2003). There are however many

other scholars prior to these that have used either or all the approaches discussed above. These include Curran (1978), Peacock (1986), Christopherson and Storper (1986), Murray (1989), Schiller (1989), Herman and McChesney (1997), Doyle (2002), Curran and Seaton (2003) and Bagdikian (2004) (cited in Davies, 2008: 54). Nevertheless, this section focuses on some of the studies that have looked at media in Southern Africa as it relates to this research.

Botes (2009) used all the approaches outlined above to compare the coverage of politics, economics and HIV and AIDS in Africa in three magazines, namely, *Time*, *The Economist* and *Financial Mail*. Marquis (2009) used cultural studies to explore the representation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the *Mail & Guardian*. Wasserman and Botma (2008) used critical political economy to examine how *Die Burger*, a mouthpiece of the Nationalist government during the apartheid era, shifted its ideological positioning to fall into step with the values of a democratic South Africa. Chuma (2007) used critical political economy to explain how the Zimbabwean media covered the national elections in that country. Gongo (2007) used both cultural studies and critical political economy to unpack *City Press*' representation of "African" issues. Ngoro (2003) used cultural studies to show how *The Japan Times/Online* represented "Africa" between January and December of 2000. Interestingly, all these studies confirm what scholars such as Mudimbe (1988, 1994) and Hawk (1992) refer to as "the idea of Africa" or "Africa's media image", respectively. Africa's media image is that of a crocodile-infested dark continent where jungle life has perpetually eluded civilisation (Ebo, 1992: 15). The following section contextualises Africa's media image.

2.7 Africa's media image

In order to understand Africa's media image it is important to examine its genesis. In other words, Africa's invention and its meaning for discourses on Africa should be understood from a historical context. According to Hawk (1992: 8), Africans did not historically refer to themselves by a single term. Africans knew one another by their nations, and these nations could be recognised by their linguistic boundaries and cultural values (Hawk, 1992: 8). The European expansion outside its borders, which almost started five hundred years ago,

invented and organised Africa as we know it today (Mudimbe, 1994: 39). To be specific, the eighteenth century European expansion saw the creation of African political boundaries. These boundaries do not correspond to Africa's cultural boundaries (Hawk, 1992: 8). The political boundaries served a colonial purpose only in so far as they brought material benefits to the mother country (Williams 1967: 17-30, cited in Mudimbe 1988: 16-17).

For Mudimbe (1994: 38), the discourses on Africa were perceived, experienced and promoted as a sign of otherness. During the course of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers proposed and reified the notion of Africa as 'primitive' (Mudimbe, 1988: 17). Natural scientists also developed various models and techniques to describe the 'primitive' in accordance with the changing trends within the framework of the Western experience (Mudimbe, 1988: 17). The 'primitive' became Africa's colonial image. The colonial image in turn became Africa's media image (Said, 1997: 163). As Hawk (1992: 4) puts it, since the colonial period Africa has been viewed as a 'dark' continent by the West. Africa has been a wild adventure story and it continues to be perceived as such (Hawk, 1992: 5).

Due to the reification of 'primitive', the language employed to tell the African story by the Western media leave readers with little understanding of the continent or the politics that drive it (Hawk, 1992: 3). The language used tells readers that the African continent has a simple homogenous and monolithic culture; yet that is not the case (Hawk, 1992: 8; Ebo, 1992: 15). Such representation of Africa is limited by commercial and financial considerations of editors, the personal opinions of editors and correspondents, and press restrictions of host governments (Hawk, 1992: 4).

In the African context, Kasoma (1996: 95) argues that, "driven by selfish motives of profit maximisation or political expediency, the African press has increasingly become the accuser, the jury and the judge all rolled up in one as it pounces on one victim after another in the name of press freedom and democracy". That is to say, "the African press literarily maims and murders those it covers to fulfil its not-so-hidden agenda of self-enrichment and self-aggrandisement and refuses to be held accountable for the harm it causes to society both individually and collectively" (Kasoma, 1996: 95).

Critiquing Kasoma's 1996 seminal article, Tomaselli (2003) warns against moralistic prescriptions that deify African values. He argues that the problem with essentialistic Afrocentric approaches is that they tend to be simplistic when it comes to criticizing politicians, presidents, chiefs, the state and the paternal social assumptions that these officials are the God-given custodians and guardians of a nation's morals, and therefore, are above criticism (Tomaselli, 2003: 429). The juxtaposition of Kasoma and Tomaselli's arguments is imperative for this research in that it places the *Mail & Guardian*'s representation of the negotiations about the Zimbabwean 'inclusive' government within two opposing ideas. It allows this study to examine whether the coverage is 'nihilistic' in the name of media 'freedom' or perhaps critical of Zimbabwean politics and politicians.

2.8 Conclusion

All the three approaches reviewed above greatly advance our understanding of the media by focusing on the specific institutions and the specific processes in those institutions responsible for creating the cultural product we call 'news' (Schudson, 1996: 156). Although the approaches tend to approach communications with rather different interests and reference points, they all work within a broadly neo-Marxist view of society (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 12). They take distance from liberal pluralist tradition of analysis with its broad acceptance of the central workings of advanced capitalist societies (Curran, 1990: 139, cited in Golding & Murdock, 1996: 12). They are concerned with the way mass media operates ideologically to sustain and support prevailing relations of domination (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 13). Using all three approaches is essential in that where one does not provide an adequate analysis, the other does. Over and above, given the centrality of the *Mail & Guardian* as a source of political and cultural pedagogy not only locally but regionally and internationally, it is logical to use all three approaches as theoretical lenses to explore the newspaper's coverage of the talks about the 'unity' government.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

Research methodologies are never 'objective' but always located, informed by particular social positions and historical moments and their agendas – (Saukko, 2003: 3).

3.1 Introduction

This section details how data for this research was collected through the Sabinet SA media electronic database and in-depth interviews. It also details how the data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, namely, content analysis and 'critical' discourse analysis. These analytical tools made it possible to show the form of the coverage and make more visible the opaque aspects of the assumptions behind the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government.

3.2 Quantitative and qualitative research combined

Quantitative and qualitative research are different paradigms through which to study the social world (Brannen, 2004: 312). Quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables while qualitative approaches seek to answer questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 8; Bauer, Gaskell & Allum, 2000: 7; Lindolf & Taylor, 2002: 18; Gunter, 2000: 23; Creswell, 2003: 179-183). The choice between quantitative and qualitative research should be made in terms of their appropriateness in answering particular research questions (Denzin & Lincon, 1998: 3-4; Bryman, 1988: 10). Although Weiss (1995: 13) argues that much of the important work that has contributed in fundamental ways to our understanding of society has been based on qualitative approaches, Bryman (1988: 5) and Brannen (2004: 314) contend that quantitative and qualitative research are capable of being integrated. The combination of multiple methods or triangulation in a single study is a strategy that adds rigor, breadth and depth to the investigation (Flick, 1992: 194, cited in Denzin & Lincon, 1998: 4; Brannen, 2004: 313).

Since this study aims to analyze and therefore contribute to an understanding of how the media manufacture, construct or make news rather than report on the facts and nothing but the facts, it employs elements from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyse the *Mail & Guardian*'s representation of the negotiations about the Zimbabwean 'inclusive' government. The combination of quantitative and qualitative elements is appropriate for this study because the study does not only seek to show the form of the coverage but to richly 'explore' and 'describe' (Forcese & Richer, 1973: 79; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 11) the portrayal of the talks. That is to say, triangulation allows for delineating the form(s), kind(s) or type(s) of the coverage as well as documenting in loving detail the hidden assumptions in the coverage (Lofland, 1971: 13).

3.3 Specific methods of data collection

The first stage was the selection of the *Mail & Guardian* articles published between 29 March 2007 and 11 February 2009. The articles were located through the Sabinet SA Media electronic database. The search terms used included words such as 'Zimbabwe', 'Zimbabwean', 'power-sharing', 'global political agreement', 'inclusive government' and 'unity government'. The search generated 399 articles. These included letters to the editor, opinion polls, advertisements and film/book reviews which amounted to 38 articles. These 38 articles were then excluded as they may not necessarily reflect the views of the newspaper. Following this, the remaining 361 articles were individually read and articles which simply mentioned the talks in passing were also excluded. This selection strategy generated 78 relevant news reports, features, editorials, opinion pieces, interviews and cartoons.

The inclusion of opinion pieces was based on the fact that the *Mail & Guardian*'s selection criteria gives the editorial team a large discretion in choosing the articles that eventually see the light of day. According to the *Mail & Guardian*'s selection criteria, the opinion piece must be 'gobsmackingly brilliant', 'provocative and persuasive', 'stylish and witty', among other things (*Mail & Guardian*, 2008: 36). These terms are by and large ambiguous hence the editorial team chooses which meaning to attach to the terms.

The second stage involved in-depth interviews with the *Mail & Guardian* circulation and distribution managers, editors, sub-editors and reporters who write on Zimbabwe. In total, 7 interviews were completed, mostly lasting half an hour to an hour. These in-depth interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. To protect against any risks, interview questions were sent to the *Mail & Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe via the editors in Johannesburg. The responses were in turn forwarded via the editors. An interview with the *Mail & Guardian* owner, Trevor Ncube, was sought. However, after a number of emails and phone calls the interview could not be conducted due to Trevor Ncube's "extensive travel diary" and "pressing issues".

3.4 Specific techniques of data analysis

Having gathered the data, content analysis and 'critical' discourse analysis were used to analysis the coverage of the talks.

3.4.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is a scientific method that is used in all the social sciences. Kaplan (1943: 230) defines it as the statistical semantics of political discourse while Walizer and Wienir (1978: 343) define it as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information. For Berelson (1952: 18) and Kerlinger (1986: 477), content analysis is a research technique for the 'objective', systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Krippendorff (1980: 21) and Weber (1990: 9) define it as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.

What comes out of the definitions outlined above is that content analysis is systematic, 'objective' and quantitative. It is systematic in that content is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules. It is 'objective' in that the researcher's personal idiosyncrasies and biases ought not to enter into the findings. It is quantitative in that it is the accurate representation of a body of messages. Thus, content analysis is scientific in that data can be researched in a valid, reliable, replicable way. While most classical content analyses culminate in numerical descriptions of some features of the text corpus, considerable thought

is given to the ‘kinds’, ‘qualities’ and ‘distinctions’ in the text before any quantification takes place (Bauer, 2000: 132). This allows content analysis to bridge statistical formalism and the qualitative analysis of materials as epitomized by Henderson & Kitzinger (1999)’s research on media representations of inherited breast cancer.

In terms of analysis, the 78 relevant articles were coded to allow for systematic quantitative analysis. Every article was indexed by the page on which it appeared in the publication, the type of the story (for instance, news story, editorial, feature or opinion) and the authorship of the story (for example, journalist or guest write). Where possible the sex of the author(s) was identified and noted. The page number, type and authorship of the story allowed this study to determine the importance and commitment given to covering stories on Zimbabwe by the *Mail & Guardian*.

The main focus of each article was thematically coded according to three broad areas, namely; political, economic, and humanitarian issues. Each article was further coded according to sub-themes within each of the three broad themes mentioned above. This categorisation made it possible for the study to show the most and least covered themes. Given the lengthy nature of the *Mail & Guardian* articles these themes were rather difficult to distinguish. However, extracts from the articles were selected on the basis of a systematically applied coding scheme that assigned instances of data to categories according to consistent definitional rules. In addition, category assignment was also checked by my peers in an attempt to produce a reliable and valid foundation for analysis.

Explicit assumptions (‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’) about the talks, the mediator, the principals and/or their respective political parties were noted and counted. This allowed the study to identify the major assumptions underpinning the *Mail & Guardian*’s coverage of the negotiations. Additional information such as the sources accessed in each article were recorded using categories including; experts, politicians, civil society movements and citizens. Where possible, the source’s sex was distinguished. Through examining the sources and their sex, the study revealed gendered nature of the newspaper’s coverage of the talks.

Since the findings of a particular content analysis are limited to the framework of the categories and the definitions used in that analysis (see Berelson, 1966: 264-65), ‘critical’

discourse analysis was used to explore the hidden assumptions behind the coverage of the talks. 'Critical' discourse analysis is essential in exploring hidden meanings because as Van Dijk (1997a: 9) argues, content analysis has less to do with meaning than with the more observable aspects of discourse, mostly words. But first, what is 'critical' discourse analysis?

3.4.2 'Critical' discourse analysis

'Critical' discourse analysis is the name given to a variety of different approaches to the study of texts that have emerged from different theoretical traditions and diverse disciplines (Gill, 2000: 172; Hepburn & Potter, 2004: 180-181). What the different perspectives of discourse analysis share is a rejection of the notion that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world and a conviction in the importance of discourse in constructing social life (see Stubbs, 1983: 12; Halliday, 1985: 101; Fairclough, 1989: 41; Van Dijk, 1997b: 2; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258; Gill, 2000: 172; Van Dijk, 2009: 67; Van Leeuwen, 2009:148; Wodak & Meyer 2009: 6; Fairclough, 2009: 164). This study uses one approach to discourse analysis used in fields as diverse as sociology, media studies, social psychology and policy studies.

The term 'critical' is used in the special sense of aiming to show connections which may be hidden from people (Fairclough, 1989: 5). The term 'discourse' is used to refer to all forms of talk and texts, whether be it naturally occurring conversations, interview material or written texts of any kind (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 7; Gill, 2000: 174). 'Critical' discourse analysis is therefore interested in the content, organisation and function of text. That is to say, discourse analysis deals with talk or text in context (Van Leeuwen, 2009: 144; Renkema, 1993: 1). From a sociological standpoint, there are three levels of analysis of discourse, namely, textual, contextual and interpretive (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009: para 10-11). The textual level allows for the characterisation of discourse while the contextual level allows for understanding discourse and the interpretive level allows for the interpretation and explanation of discourse (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009: para 10-11). These three levels of analysis place emphasis on the sub-textual rather than the surface meaning of texts.

As Potter and Wetherell (1987: 168) propose, the discourse analyst is concerned with the detail of passages of discourse, however fragmented and contradictory, and with what is actually said or written, not some general idea that seems to be intended. 'Critical' discourse analysis therefore allows this study to move from the observable quantitative aspects shown through content analysis to showing the meanings through carefully and closely reading between text and context. It affords this research to ask and answer questions such as, what features of the text produce this reading; and how is it organised to make it persuasive?

Articles and interview transcripts with similar topics and similar arguments were clustered and analysed sequentially using the theoretical framework upon which this research is based, namely, cultural studies, political economy of the media and theories of news production. Extensive interpretation was made while returning to the research questions and to the problem under investigation. While discourse analysis was used to critically examine the representation of the talks, one may argue that the study's analysis also constitutes discourse. However, as Gill (2000: 188) contends, this does not undermine the discourse analytic case in any way. It merely serves to highlight the inescapable fact of language as constructed and constructive.

3.5 Conclusion

Through content analysis and 'critical' discourse analysis this study shows the form the *Mail & Guardian* representations of the talks took and the perspectives within which the talks were covered. In other words, through this triangulation of methods, this study shows the observable levels of expression and the deeper levels of form, order and meaning of the *Mail & Guardian* coverage. The study is able to ask and answer questions such as; what information is conveyed by the reports, what do the reports focus on and what do they not, what do the reports refer to, what do the reports mean, and what do the reports assume readers already know? Answers to these and other questions are discussed more fully in the Analysis and Interpretation section, which follows after the Research Findings section.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This section provides the findings for this research. It is presented as follows: First, the importance and commitment given to reporting on Zimbabwe by the *Mail & Guardian* is examined through the amount of stories the newspaper published on Zimbabwe, the page numbers on which the stories about the talks appear on, the type and authorship of these stories. Second, themes covered about the talks are broken down into categories, namely, political, economic and humanitarian issues and the amount of coverage given to each theme and its sub-themes is recorded. Third, assumptions about the talks, the mediator, the principals and/or their respective political parties are recorded. Finally, the sources accessed and their sex composition are distinguished and noted. These findings set ground for analysis and interpretation in Chapter Five.

4.2 Importance of the coverage

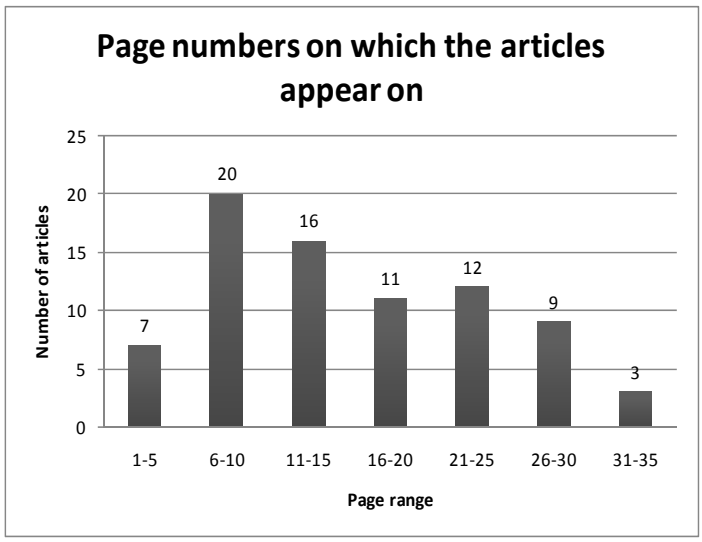
During the period under study (29 March 2007 to 11 February 2009), the *Mail & Guardian* published 399 articles or stories on Zimbabwe. These articles are equivalent to an average of 4 articles per publication. Excluding letters, advertorials, opinion polls and film/book reviews the articles amount to 361. Of these 361 articles, 78 articles, that is, 22 percent are specifically on the talks about the 'inclusive' government. Although the majority of the 361 stories are not necessarily about the negotiations, the amount of the total stories on Zimbabwe speaks volumes to the importance and commitment given to reporting on Zimbabwe by the *Mail & Guardian*.

4.2.1 Page numbers

The page on which an article appears on in a newspaper does not only indicate the importance of the issue being covered but also indicates the newspaper's commitment to the issue. Hence, front page stories indicate greater commitment. To give some background information on the structure of the *Mail & Guardian*, although it varies from edition to edition depending on the amount of news, more generally, local news is usually placed in the news section which is found on pages 1 through 18. Africa news is usually placed on pages 19 to 21 and international/world news is placed on pages 22 to 26. The health section usually appears on pages 27 to 30. The early 30s are reserved for comment and analysis, including editorials and opinion pieces. Business, education, advertorials and sports usually occupy the late 30s through the 40s and sometimes 50s.

The following graph indicates the pages on which the articles published on the talks about the Zimbabwean 'inclusive' government appear on in the *Mail & Guardian*. The page numbers are distinguished by a set page range against the number of articles in that page range.

Graph 1: Page numbers on which the articles appear on (n=78)



Graph 1 above shows that 7 articles appear on pages 1 to 5; 20 articles on pages 6 to 10; 16 articles on pages 11 to 15; 11 articles on pages 16 to 20; 12 articles on pages 21 to 25; 9 articles on pages 26 to 30; and 3 articles on pages 31 to 35.

4.2.2 Type of stories

The type of story also indicates a newspaper's commitment to an issue as a feature or an editorial reflects greater commitment than a news story. It also reflects the quality and depth of issue coverage as a feature tends to be more analytical while a news story is often descriptive and largely not analytical. The categories used to distinguish the type of stories are described as follows:

- **News stories** are 'objective' stories about an event, situation or happening. They are often bad news, in-context and largely factual. They are generally written by journalists.

- **Cartoons** are humorous or satirical drawings. They often appear on the editorial page, depicting important issues, public figures or recent events.

- **Editorials** are articles written by senior editorial staff of the newspaper. They reflect the views of the publication on important current issues.

- **Opinion pieces** are articles often written by experts or specialists. They mainly reflect the opinion of the author. They are typically about a topical issue or are a comment on an issue in the news.

- **Features** are pieces that discuss, analyse or interpret an issue, subject or trend. They are usually fairly long and tend to be written by one of the newspaper's own journalists or an expert.

- **Interviews** usually take the form of question and answer sessions with a celebrity, politician or other high profile person. They are often in a Question and Answer format.

The table below shows the type of stories against the number of stories published on the talks about the 'inclusive' government during the period under study.

Table 1: Type of stories

Type of story	Number of stories	Percentage
Features	37	47%
News stories	16	21%
Opinion pieces	12	15%
Editorials	9	12%
Interviews	3	4%
Cartoons	1	1%
Total	**78**	**100%**

Table 1 above reveals that features constitute 47 percent of the total coverage followed by news stories at 21 percent and opinion pieces at 15 percent. Editorials, interviews and cartoons form the bottom three with 12 percent, 4 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Combined, features, editorials and opinion pieces constitute 74 percent of the total stories. Since features are usually pre-planned, more resources and effort are needed on the part of the newspaper in order to produce them. While editorials are generally reserved for important current issues, the more they are, the more the newspaper is committed to covering an issue. Although opinion pieces largely reflect the opinion of the author, as mentioned earlier, it is the editorial team's prerogative for an opinion piece to see the light of day hence opinion pieces may reflect the editorial team's commitment to an issue.

4.2.3 Authorship of stories

Authorship shows how much a newspaper is willing to expend its resources on covering an issue. This commitment is particularly illustrated if a newspaper commits its own journalists to cover a matter than if it uses freelancers for example. The following table illustrates the authorship of the articles on the talks.

Table 2: Authorship of stories

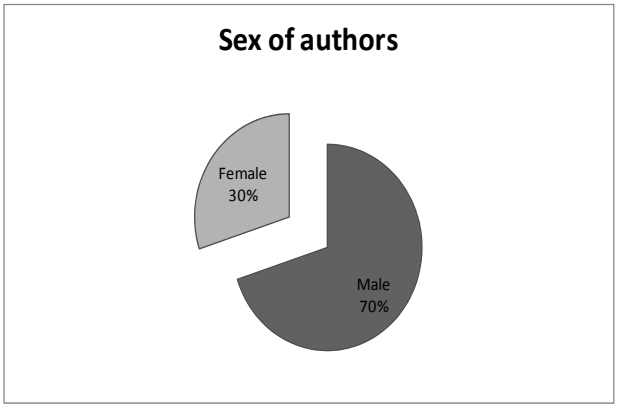
Author	Number of stories	Percentage
Journalists	66	85%
Guest writers	12	15%
Total	**78**	**100%**

As can be seen in Table 2 above 85 percent of the stories are written by journalists while 15 percent are authored by guest writers.

4.2.3.1 Sex of authors

The sex of authors indicate gender biases in terms of issue coverage. Women, for instance, often get stereotypical assignments which relegate them to covering marginal areas (Van Zoonen, 1998: 37) such as 'soft' news like celebrities and arts while men are likely to be found in 'hard' news stories about politics and the economy. The chart below shows the sex of the authors who write on the stories about the talks.

Chart 1: Sex of authors (n=70)



Of the authors whose gender could be determined, Chart 1 above makes known that 30 percent are female and 70 percent are male. However, given that the *Mail & Guardian* has a small team and also that the very same authors write on Zimbabwe every week, the finding on the sex of the authors may not necessarily speak to the perception that female journalists are often relegated to covering 'soft' news while male journalists cover 'hard' news. Besides, Tuchman (1997: 176) argues that often, it is difficult to draw a line between 'hard' and 'soft' news because news-workers themselves distinguish the former as 'important' matters and the latter as 'interesting' matters. These distinctions often overlap and clearly stories on the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government could be 'important' and/or 'interesting'.

4.3 Theme coverage

In terms of theme coverage, it is imperative to note that no article discusses an issue or theme in isolation of other issues. In this context, a theme is defined as a pervading or recurring subject in an article. The articles are categorised into three broad themes, namely, political, economic and humanitarian issues. The distinction between these broad themes is as follows:

- **Political issues:** This theme includes articles that deal with the progress of the talks; effectiveness of the mediator; the composition of the 'unity' government; and constitutional and electoral reforms. Also incorporated under the political theme are articles that relate to the position of SADC and AU; the commitment of the negotiating parties to the talks; the strategies used by the negotiating parties as leverage; and the analysis of the GPA.

- **Economic issues:** Under this theme are articles that relate to the restoration of economic stability and economic growth. Also included are articles that deal with the lifting and/or reinforcement of various sanctions and measures imposed on 'Zimbabwe'.

- **Humanitarian issues:** Articles under this theme relate to the welfare of the people such as the revival of health and education systems as well as issues of food security. They also include issues regarding reparations for victims of political violence and displacement.

The following table indicates the number of articles that fall within the three broad themes discussed above.

Table 3: Theme coverage

Theme	Number of articles	Percentage
Political issues	67	86%
Economic issues	6	8%
Humanitarian issues	5	6%
Total	**78**	**100%**

Table 3 above shows that 86 percent of the coverage is dedicated to political issues while 8 percent is dedicated to economic issues and 6 percent to humanitarian issues.

The following sub-sections present the results of the coverage given to the sub-themes under each of the three broad themes raised above.

4.3.1 Breakdown of political issues

In order to capture the coverage of political issues, the following political sub-themes are further distinguished.

- **Progress of the talks:** Articles under this sub-category discuss the progression of the negotiations. They report on the stalling of the negotiations and also highlight the positive strides made during the negotiations. They also discuss the factors affecting the pace at which the negotiations progress.

- **Effectiveness of the mediator:** Articles that fall into this sub-category inquire into the effectiveness of Thabo Mbeki as the mediator. The articles analyse his methods of handling the negotiations and pronounce on the appropriateness (or lack thereof) of the methods to the situation.

- **Analysis of the talks and/or the GPA:** These articles analyse the negotiations. They discuss what the negotiating parties would gain or lose from the talks. They also discuss whether the talks would bring out the desired outcome. They also discuss the GPA and explain what it means. They also talk about what the talks are about or what they ought to be about.

- **Composition of the 'unity' government:** The main focus of the articles in this sub-category is the allocation of key positions in government, including ministerial positions and the position of the Reserve Bank governor. They also speculate on how the posts would be allocated.

- **Position of SADC and AU:** These articles talk about the attitude of SADC and AU and the positions these regional bodies took towards the negotiations. They also discuss positions taken by other African countries on the 'power-sharing' negotiations.

- **Strategies used by the negotiating parties as leverage:** These articles highlight the strategies that were employed by the negotiating parties as a means of gaining concessions from each other.

- **Commitment of the negotiating parties to the talks:** The main focus of the articles in this sub-category is the commitment (or lack thereof) of the negotiating parties to the talks. That is to say, they examine the capacity and commitment of the principals and/or their respective parties to the talks.

- **Constitutional and electoral reforms:** These articles deal with constitutional matters and the rule of law. They also deal with electoral laws that govern the administration of elections such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Act. They also deal with issues relating to conditions necessary for electoral canvassing. They also focus on issues regarding repressive media legislation, including, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Order and Security Act, the Broadcasting Services Act and the Interception of Communications Act.

The table below illustrates the number of stories dedicated to each of the political sub-themes explained above.

Table 4: Breakdown of political sub-theme coverage

Political sub-theme	Number of stories	Percentage
Progress of the talks	27	40%
Effectiveness of the mediator	11	16%
Analysis of the talks and/or the GPA	8	12%
Composition of the 'unity' government	6	9%
Position of SADC and AU	5	7%
Strategies used by the negotiating parties as leverage	5	7%
Commitment of the negotiating parties to talks	3	4%
Constitutional and electoral reforms	2	3%
Total	**67**	**100%**

Table 4 above shows that of the 67 articles whose focus is on political issues, 40 percent are on the progress of the talks, 16 percent on the effectiveness of the mediator and 12 percent are an analysis of the talks and/or the GPA. The composition of the 'unity' government constitutes 9 percent and the position of SADC and AU constitute 7 percent. The strategies employed by the negotiating parties as leverage make up 7 percent and the articles that focus on the commitment of the negotiating parties to the talks constitute 4 percent. Articles that deal with constitutional and electoral reforms make up 3 percent.

4.3.2 Breakdown of economic issues

The sub-themes for economic issues are categorised as follows:

- **Lifting and/or reinforcement of sanctions:** These articles discuss the implications of the talks on the lifting and/or reinforcement of all forms of sanctions against 'Zimbabwe'.

- **Restoration of economic stability:** Articles in this sub-category deal with the talks in relation to the restoration of economic stability. In other words, they talk about what the talks mean for the restoration of the Zimbabwean economy.

The following table shows the number of stories that focus on the economic sub-themes described above.

Table 5: Breakdown of economic sub-theme coverage

Economic sub-theme	Number of stories	Percentage
Lifting and/or reinforcement of sanctions	4	67%
Restoration of economic stability	2	33%
Total	**6**	**100%**

As illustrated in Table 5 above, 67 percent of the articles on economic issues focus on the lifting and/or reinforcement of all forms of sanctions and measures against 'Zimbabwe' and 33 percent focus on the restoration of the Zimbabwean economy.

4.3.3 Breakdown of humanitarian issues

The sub-themes for humanitarian issues are distinguished as follows:

- **Welfare of the people:** These articles talk about what the negotiations should mean for the people. In other words, they focus on how the negotiations may or may not solve the problems faced by the Zimbabwean people.

- **Reparations for victims of violence:** Articles in this sub-category focus on how the talks may or may not ensure justice and reparations for victims of political violence and displacement.

The table below reveals the number of stories that focus on the humanitarian sub-themes described above.

Table 6: Breakdown of humanitarian sub-theme coverage

Humanitarian sub-theme	Number of stories	Percentage
Welfare of the people	3	60%
Reparations for victims of violence	2	40%
Total	**5**	**100%**

Table 6 above reveals that 60 percent of the articles on humanitarian coverage are on the welfare of the people while 40 percent are on the reparations for victims of political violence and displacement.

4.4 Assumptions

According to McCombs and Shaw (1972: 184), news media have a point of view. As such, major assumptions about the talks, the mediator, the principals and/or their respective political parties are identified and counted. The following sub-sections reveal the assumptions from the *Mail & Guardian* coverage of the talks. The term 'assumption' is used here loosely to refer to messages or stereotypes that come out of the articles. These assumptions (positive, negative or neutral) are either put forward directly or indirectly by the authors or the sources accessed.

4.4.1 Assumptions about the talks

The following table illustrates the assumptions about the talks and the number of times assumptions appear in the articles.

Table 7: Assumptions about the talks

Assumption	Number of times
Talks are not the panacea to the Zimbabwean crisis	12
Talks are the panacea to the Zimbabwean crisis	4

Table 7 above makes clear that the assumption; 'talks are not the panacea to the Zimbabwean crisis' appears 12 times. The assumption; 'talks are the panacea to the Zimbabwean crisis' appears 4 times.

4.4.2 Assumptions about the mediator

The table below indicates the assumptions about the mediator and the number of times the assumptions appear in the articles.

Table 8: Assumptions about the mediator

Assumption	Number of times
Mbeki needs help with mediation	2
Mbeki is Mugabe's defender-in-chief	1
Mbeki is not an honest broker	1
Mbeki does not trust the MDC	1

Table 8 above indicates that the assumption; 'Mbeki needs help with mediation' appears twice. The assumptions; 'Mbeki is Mugabe's defender-in-chief', 'Mbeki is not an honest broker' and 'Mbeki does not trust the MDC' appear once each.

4.4.3 Assumptions about the principals

The following table reveals the assumptions about the principals and the number of times the assumptions appear in the articles.

Table 9: Assumptions about the principals

Assumption	Number of times
Robert Mugabe is not committed to the talks	10
Robert Mugabe is a dictator/despot/tyrant	5
Morgan Tsvangirai is committed to the talks	3
Morgan Tsvangirai is vindictive	1
Morgan Tsvangirai is not a tool of the 'West'	1

As shown in Table 9 above the assumption about Robert Mugabe's lack of commitment to the talks appears 10 times. The assumption about his dictatorial tendencies and lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law appears 5 times. On the contrary, Morgan Tsvangirai's commitment to the talks appears 3 times. In addition, the assumption about

Morgan Tsvangirai's vindictiveness and lack of wisdom and restraint appears once as well as the assumption about him not being a stooge of the 'West'.

4.4.4 Assumptions about political parties

The table below shows the assumptions about the political parties and the number of times the assumptions appear in the articles.

Table 10: Assumptions about the political parties

Assumption	Number of times
ZANU-PF's attitude to the talks is negative	4
MDC is a victim of ZANU-PF's underhanded tactics	3
MDC formations are committed to the talks	1
MDC does not have the interests of the people at heart	1
MDC formations' commitment to the talks is less than total	1
MDC has the interest of the people at heart	1
MDC is a victim of SADC's impartiality	1
MDC is not a tool of the 'West'	1
ZANU-PF has no respect for human rights	1
ZANU-PF does not have the interests of the people at heart	1

Table 10 above makes clear that the assumption about ZANU-PF's negative attitude towards the talks appears 4 times. The assumption about ZANU-PF's underhanded tactics in its dealings with the MDC appears 3 times. The rest of the assumptions including messages about the MDC's commitment (or lack thereof) to the talks and ZANU-PF's lack of respect for human rights appear once.

4.5 Sources

Sources give a critical indication of whose voices are amplified or silenced in the media. For the purposes of this study, sources are defined as people, 'organisations' or reports directly or indirectly quoted in the newspaper articles. Given the veil of 'secrecy' under which the talks about the Zimbabwean 'inclusive' government were undertaken it is imperative to note the

number of sources whose identities were revealed or concealed before providing the findings on the actual sources accessed.

4.5.1 Identity of sources accessed

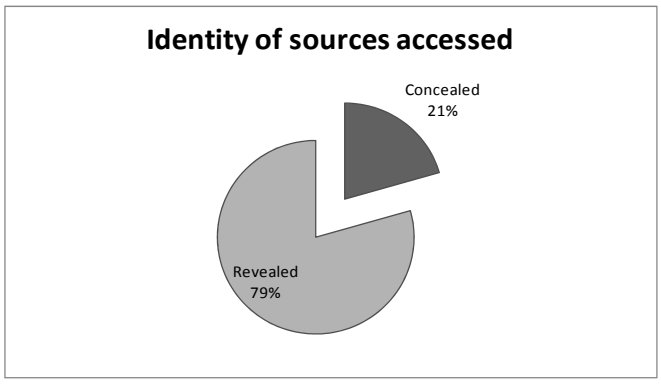
Ideally, identifying or naming a source adds 'authenticity' to a story. In other words, a story with identifiable sources is more likely to be perceived credible and reliable than one without sources or with unidentifiable sources. For the purposes of this research, the distinction between revealed and concealed sources is as follows:

- **Revealed:** All sources, including people, 'organisations' and reports whose names are provided such that they can be identified and authenticated. For instance, sources like 'Nelson Chamisa the MDC-T spokesperson' or 'a government report titled *Opposition forces in Zimbabwe: A trail of violence*'.

- **Concealed:** All sources, including people, 'organisations' and reports whose names are not provided or provided in a way that makes it difficult if not impossible to identity and authenticate. For example, 'a source close to the talks' or 'a confidential document'.

The following chart illustrates the percentages of sources whose identity is revealed against those whose identity is concealed.

Chart 2: Identity of sources accessed (n=258)



As shown in Chart 2 above 79 percent of the sources have their identities revealed while 21 percent have their identities concealed.

4.5.2 Sources accessed

The following categories are used to distinguish the sources accessed:

- **Zimbabwean politicians:** Political party officials as well as former ZANU-PF ministers.

- **Foreign politicians:** Politicians, including, presidents, ministers and diplomats of countries other than Zimbabwe.

- **Experts:** People with specialised knowledge such as academics, political analysts, economists, lawyers and accountants.

- **Documents:** Leaked reports, political party documents and position papers, media reports and reports produced by national and international organisations.

- **Activists:** Civil rights activists and media freedom activists.

- **Regional and international bodies:** Regional organisations such as SADC and international organisations such as the IMF.

- **Civil servants:** People employed in branches of the Zimbabwean state administration.

- **Citizens:** People who do not hold political office and business positions.

- **News-workers:** Media publishers, editors and journalists.

- **Business people:** People occupying business positions.

The categories described above were differentiated taking into consideration the fact that people often have more than one function, for instance, a civil servant is still a citizen. As such, the sources are categorised according to the context or the capacity within which each source was accessed.

The chart below shows the percentages of the sources accessed for each category described above.

Chart 3: Sources accessed (n=258)

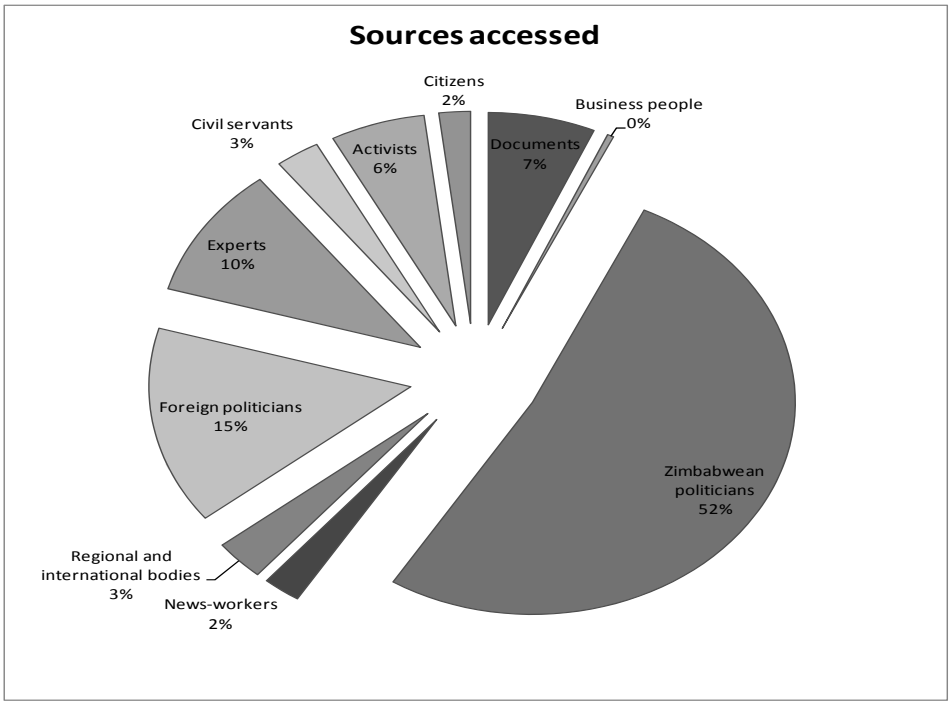
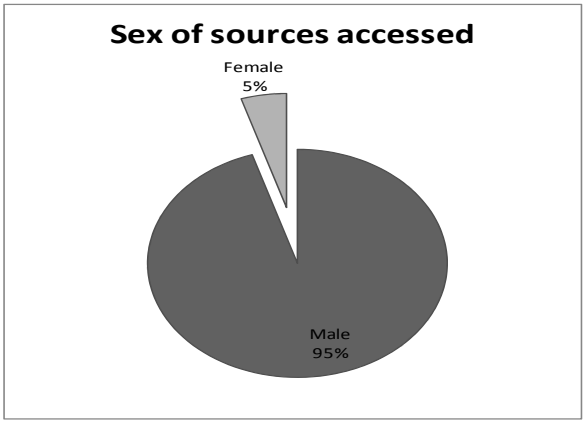


Chart 3 above shows that the majority of sources are Zimbabwean politicians at 52 percent followed by foreign politicians at 15 percent and experts at 10 percent. These are followed by documents at 7 percent and activists at 6 percent. Regional and international bodies are at 3 percent and civil servants are also at 3 percent. At 2 percent each are citizens and news-workers. At the bottom are business people whose insignificant figure constitutes 0 percent of the total sources accessed. Before presenting the number of sources accessed within each of the categories provided in Chart 3, it is critical to note the sex composition of the sources in overall.

4.5.2.1 Sex of sources accessed

As highlighted earlier, the sex of sources reflects the voices amplified or silenced by the media according to gender. The following chart reveals the sex composition of the sources whose gender could be determined.

Chart 4: Sex of sources accessed (n=184)



As indicated in Chart 4 above only 5 percent of the sources are female while 95 percent are male.

Having provided the results for the sources accessed and the sex composition of the sources, the following sections present the number of sources accessed in each of the categories provided in Chart 3 as well as the sex composition of the sources for each category.

4.5.3 Voices of Zimbabwean politicians

This category includes political officials from the three political parties involved in the talks, namely, ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M. The officials include party leaders, secretary generals, spokespersons, advisors and negotiators. Also included are former ZANU-PF ministers who are not affiliated to neither of the MDC formations nor ZANU-PF.

As shown in Chart 3 Zimbabwean politicians constitute 52 percent of the total sources accessed. The table below shows the breakdown of the Zimbabwean politicians accessed.

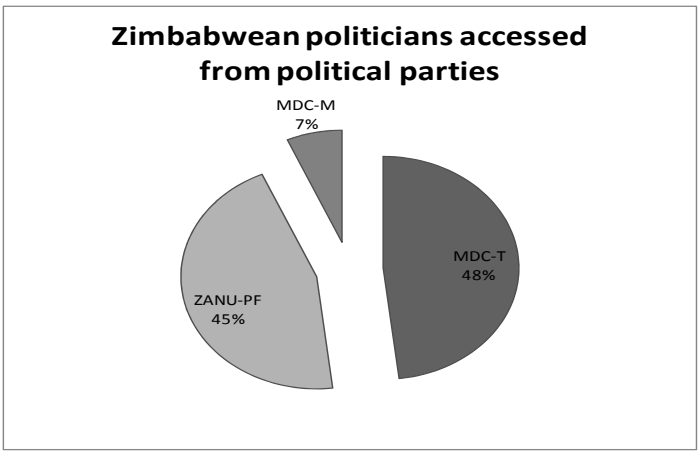
Table 11: Breakdown of Zimbabwean politicians accessed

Zimbabwean politicians	Number of sources	Percentage
MDC-T officials	51	38%
ZANU-PF officials	48	36%
MDC officials	12	9%
Former ZANU-PF ministers	9	7%
MDC-M officials	7	5%
Other	7	5%
Total	**134**	**100%**

Table 11 above shows that 38 percent of the total Zimbabwean politicians accessed are MDC-T officials while 36 percent are ZANU-PF officials. Interestingly, 9 percent of the Zimbabwean politicians are not accessed as MDC-T officials or MDC-M officials but just MDC officials. Former ZANU-PF ministers make up 7 percent of the total politicians accessed while MDC-M officials constitute 5 percent. The 5 percent for the category 'other' represent the officials whose political affiliation could not be ascertained as they are just mentioned for example as 'an official close to the talks'.

In order to determine which party is accessed the most, all the sources from the political parties are clustered according to the party they belong. This includes sources whose identities were concealed such as 'a senior ZANU-PF official' or 'a senior Tsvangirai advisor'. The following chart shows the percentages of sources from each political party.

Chart 5: Breakdown of Zimbabwean politicians accessed from different political parties (n=106)

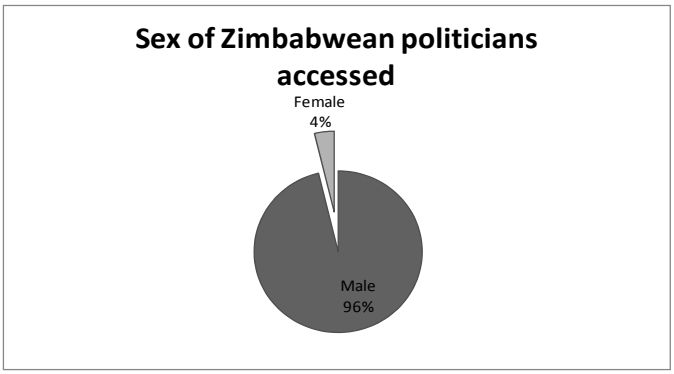


As illustrated in Chart 5 above 48 percent of the Zimbabwean politicians accessed are MDC-T officials, followed by ZANU-PF officials at 45 percent and MDC-M officials at 7 percent.

4.5.3.1 Sex of Zimbabwean politicians accessed

The chart below shows the sex composition of the Zimbabwean politicians accessed.

Chart 6: Sex of Zimbabwean politicians accessed (n=106)



Of the Zimbabwean politicians whose sex could be determined, Chart 6 above reveals that only 4 percent are female while 96 percent are male. Put differently, only 4 out of the 106 politicians are female.

4.5.4 Voices of foreign politicians

This category includes politicians from countries other than Zimbabwe. The politicians include presidents, former presidents, ministers, deputy ministers, secretaries of state, ambassadors and opposition leaders. This category make up 15 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The following table shows the number of foreign politicians accessed per country.

Table 12: Breakdown of foreign politicians accessed

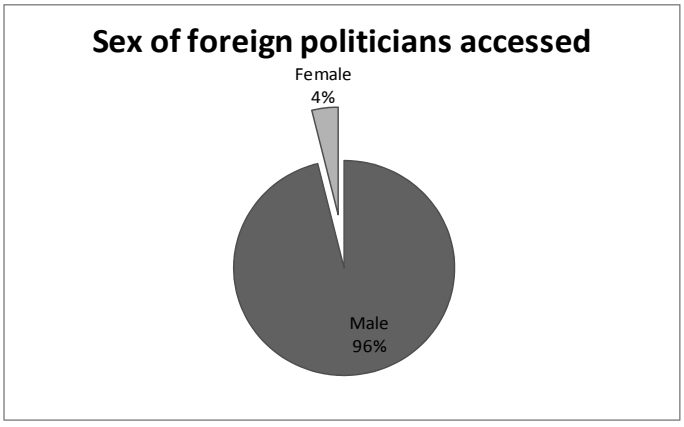
Foreign politicians	Number of sources	Percentage
South Africa	18	46%
Other	7	18%
Zambia	6	15%
Britain	3	8%
Angola	1	3%
Botswana	1	3%
France	1	3%
Senegal	1	3%
United States of America	1	3%
Total	**39**	**100%**

Table 12 above indicates that 46 percent of the total foreign politicians accessed are from South Africa. At 18 percent are foreign politicians whose countries are not specifically identified such as 'Africa' or 'EU'. Following at 15 percent and 8 percent are Zambia and Britain, respectively. Angola, Botswana, France, Senegal and the United States of America are at 3 percent each.

4.5.4.1 Sex of foreign politicians accessed

The chart below illustrates the sex composition of the foreign politicians accessed.

Chart 7: Sex of foreign politicians accessed (n=26)



Of the foreign politicians whose sex could be determined, Chart 7 above reveals that only 4 percent are female and 96 percent are male. In other words, only 1 out of the 26 sources is female.

4.5.5 Voices of experts

This category includes economists, lawyers, political analysts, academics, accountants and researchers. Experts constitute 10 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The following table shows the number of experts accessed.

Table 13: Breakdown of experts accessed

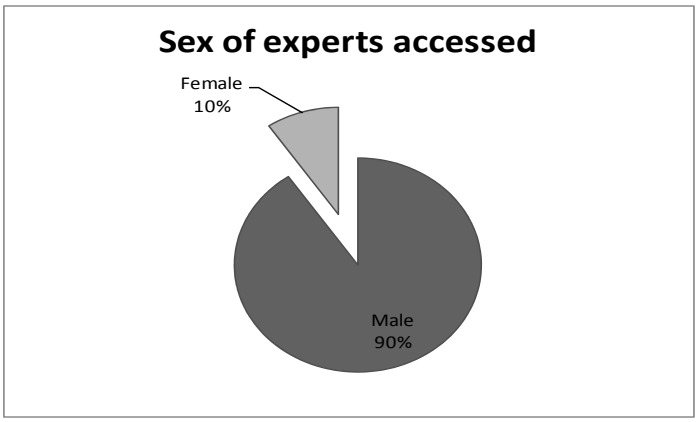
Experts	Number of sources	Percentage
Political analysts	8	31%
Academics	7	27%
Researchers	5	19%
Lawyers	4	15%
Accountants	1	4%
Economists	1	4%
Total	**26**	**100%**

As indicated in Table 13 above the most accessed experts are political analysts at 31 percent. These are followed by academics at 27 percent. At 19 percent are researchers, followed by lawyers at 15 percent. Accountants and economists make up 4 percent each.

4.5.5.1 Sex of experts accessed

The chart below shows the sex composition of the experts accessed on the talks.

Chart 8: Sex of experts accessed (n=21)



Of the experts whose sex could be determined, Chart 8 above shows that 10 percent are female and 90 percent are male. That is to say, 2 out of the 21 sources are female.

4.5.6 Documents accessed

The documents accessed include ZANU-PF position papers and reports, Zimbabwean government reports, regional and international reports, Zimbabwean newspaper reports, the GPA and other leaked memos. Documents amount to 7 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The following table reveals the breakdown of the documents accessed on the talks.

Table 14: Breakdown of documents accessed

Documents	Number of documents	Percentage
Newspaper reports	6	35%
Leaked reports	5	29%
Party reports/position papers	2	12%
GPA	2	12%
Government reports	1	6%
International reports	1	6%
Total	**17**	**100%**

Table 14 above makes known that Zimbabwean newspaper reports, particularly state media reports, are the most accessed reports at 35 percent. Following newspaper reports are leaked

documents including Zimbabwean police memos and SADC summit reports at 29 percent. ZANU-PF reports and position papers make up 12 percent of the total documents accessed. The GPA was accessed twice thus also making up 12 percent of the total documents accessed. Government and international reports make up 6 percent each.

4.5.7 Voices of activists

This category comprises of civil rights and media freedom activists. Activists make up 6 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The table below illustrates the number of activists accessed about the talks.

Table 15: Breakdown of activists accessed

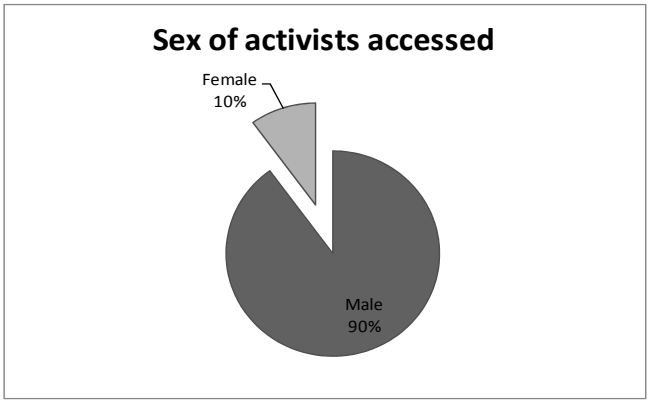
Activists	Number of sources	Percentage
Civil rights activists	13	87%
Media freedom activists	1	7%
Other	1	7%
Total	**15**	**100%**

As revealed in Table 15 above civil rights activists constitute the bulk of the activists accessed at 87 percent. Media freedom activists make up 7 percent. Other activists whose names and organisations are concealed also form 7 percent of the total activists accessed.

4.5.7.1 Sex of activists accessed

The following chart shows the sex composition of the activists accessed on the talks.

Chart 9: Sex of activists accessed (n=10)



Of the activists whose sex could be determined, Chart 9 above indicates that only 10 percent are female and 90 percent are male. In other words, 1 in 10 activists is female.

4.5.8 Voices from regional and international bodies

The regional and international bodies include SADC, AU, IMF and UNICEF. Regional and international bodies make up 3 percent of the total sourced accessed (see Chart 3). The table below shows the number of sources accessed from these bodies.

Table 16: Breakdown of sources accessed from regional and international bodies

Regional and international bodies	Number of sources	Percentage
SADC	4	50%
AU	2	25%
IMF	1	13%
UNICEF	1	13%
Total	**8**	**100%**

Table 16 above confirms that 50 percent of the sources accessed from regional and international bodies are from SADC, 25 percent from AU, 13 percent from IMF and another 13 percent from UNICEF.

4.5.8.1 Sex of sources accessed from regional and international bodies

Of the 6 sources accessed from regional and international bodies whose sex could be determined, none is female.

4.5.9 Voices of civil servants

The civil servants accessed include people employed in branches of state administration in Zimbabwe, namely, government officials as well as police officers. Like sources accessed from regional and international bodies, civil servants make up 3 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The following table discloses the number of civil servants accessed on the talks.

Table 17: Breakdown of civil servants accessed

Civil servants	Number of sources	Percentage
Police officers	3	43%
Elections administrators	2	29%
Government officials	2	29%
Total	**7**	**100%**

As indicated in Table 17 above police officers make up 43 percent of the civil servants accessed. At 29 percent each are elections administrators and government officials.

4.5.9.1 Sex of civil servants accessed

Of the total number of civil servants accessed and whose sex could be determined, none is female.

4.5.10 Voices of citizens

The citizens accessed include children and victims and relatives of victims of abductions, arrests and/or police brutality. Citizens constitute 2 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The table below shows the number of citizens accessed.

Table 18: Breakdown of citizens accessed

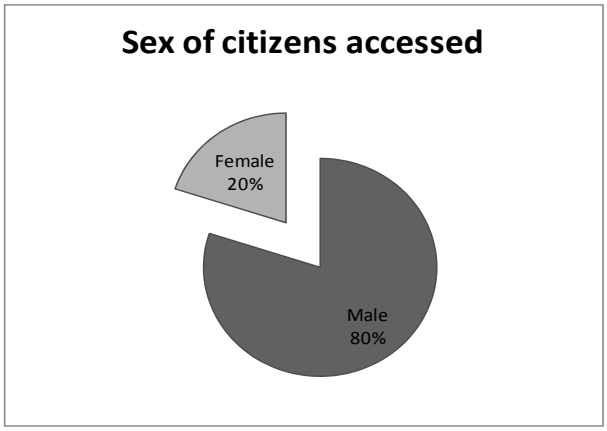
Citizens	Number of sources	Percentage
Children	1	20%
Victims of police brutality	1	20%
Relatives of victims of police brutality	1	20%
Other	2	40%
Total	**5**	**100%**

Table 18 above shows that children, victims, and relatives of victims of police brutality constitute 20 percent each and thus making up 60 percent of the total citizens accessed. Other citizens not classified in the above-mentioned categories constitute 40 percent of the total citizens accessed.

4.5.10.1 Sex of citizens accessed

The following chart reveals the sex composition of the citizens accessed.

Chart 10: Sex of citizens accessed (n=5)



As revealed in Chart 10 above, 20 percent of the citizens accessed are female and 80 percent are male. In other words, of the 5 citizens accessed, only 1 is female.

4.5.11 Voices of news-workers

News-workers accessed are journalists and publishers. Like citizens, news-workers constitute 2 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). The table below shows the number of news-workers accessed.

Table 19: Breakdown of news-workers accessed

News-workers	Number of sources	Percentage
Journalists	5	83%
Media publishers	1	17%
Total	**6**	**100%**

Table 19 above shows that journalists make up 83 percent of the news-workers accessed and media publishers make up 17 percent.

4.5.11.1 Sex of news-workers accessed

In terms of sex, none of the 6 news-workers accessed is female.

4.5.12 Voices of business people

The voices of business people are so insignificant such that the category is apportioned 0 percent of the total sources accessed (see Chart 3). This is because only one business person is accessed and that person happens to be male.

4.5.13 The most accessed individuals

The most sourced individuals reflect the voices most heard about the talks. The table below shows the most accessed individuals on the talks.

Table 20: The most accessed individuals

Source	Capacity	Number of times accessed
Morgan Tsvangirai	MDC-T leader	15
Tendai Biti	MDC-T secretary general/lead negotiator	12
Robert Mugabe	President of Zimbabwe	10
Nelson Chamisa	MDC-T spokesperson	9
George Charamba	Robert Mugabe's spokesperson	7
Eldred Masunungure	Political analyst/political science lecturer	5
Patrick Chinamasa	Justice minister/ZANU-PF lead negotiator	5
Eddie Cross	MDC-T economic advisor	4
Sikhanyiso Ndlovu	Information minister	4
Thabo Mbeki	SADC mediator	4

As shown in Table 20 above, Morgan Tsvangirai is accessed 15 times which makes him the most accessed individual followed by Tendai Biti who is accessed 12 times and then Robert Mugabe who is accessed 10 times. Nelson Chamisa is accessed 9 times making him the top fourth person accessed. George Charamba is the fifth most accessed person who is accessed 7 times. Following are Eldred Masunungure and Patrick Chinamasa who are both accessed 5 times. These are followed by Eddie Cross, Sikhanyiso Ndlovu and Thabo Mbeki who are each accessed 4 times.

4.6 Conclusion

In a nutshell, these findings reveal: (1) the amount of coverage given to Zimbabwe by the *Mail & Guardian*; (2) that political issues related to the talks received more coverage followed by economic issues and then humanitarian issues; (3) that Robert Mugabe and/or ZANU-PF are represented as being uncommitted to the talks while Morgan Tsvangirai and/or MDC-M are represented as being committed to the talks; (4) that Zimbabwean politicians make up the bulk of the sources accessed with more sources coming from MDC-T followed

by ZANU-PF and then MDC-M; (5) that South African politicians make the bulk of foreign politicians accessed about the talks; and (6) that only 5 percent of all the sources accessed are female. These findings are explored and explained individually with reference to empirical examples and the theoretical framework underpinning this research in the Analysis and Interpretation chapter which follow.

Chapter Five

Analysis and Interpretation

Every interpreter is a reader, there is no such thing as a neutral or value-free reader. Every reader, in other words, is both a private ego and a member of a society, with affiliations of every sort linking him or her to that society… [As such], there is never interpretation, understanding and then knowledge where there is no interest... However, as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975: 238) has written…the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings – (Said, 1997: 164-166).

5.1 Introduction

Edward W. Said's sentiments outlined above calls attention to something obvious and yet relevant to this section of the report. This section reveals how media processes construct and privilege certain definitions, meanings and processes by which certain interests, norms, values and opinions receive attention over others. It is a dialogue with media theories, journalistic approaches and theoretical debates (Cramerotti, 2009:17). It interprets and analyses the findings of this research in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning this study as well as existing literature on media representation and framing (see Chapters Two and Three). Using examples, this section examines the importance of reporting on Zimbabwe to the *Mail & Guardian*, following which the hidden assumptions of the coverage and the sources accessed in the coverage are explored. It concludes with examples of issue-driven coverage of the talks.

5.2 Zimbabwe in the spotlight

News does not thrive in a vacuum. In fact, news inhabits the social realm specific to a particular society at a particular time (McNair, 1998: 3; Cramerotti, 2009: 9). In choosing and displaying news, editors, news staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality (McCombs & Shaw, 1972: 176). Although the media may not necessarily tell

readers what to think, Lang and Lang (1966: 468) argues that it tells readers what to think about, know about and have feelings about. Hence, readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (McCombs & Shaw, 1972: 176).

As indicated in the Research Findings section, the *Mail & Guardian* carried an average of 4 stories on Zimbabwe per publication. This figure reflects the importance given to covering stories on Zimbabwe by the newspaper. The importance and commitment to covering Zimbabwe is further confirmed by one of the newspaper's sub-editors who when asked how important reporting on Zimbabwe is to the *Mail & Guardian* had this to say:

> "...it's always been very important to the *Mail & Guardian* for the two reasons... one is that... South Africans are very interested in what's going on there...and...the two countries are...closely intertwined; economies are closely intertwined...the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy and in particular the massive exodus of Zimbabweans...which in turn probably fuelled...the xenophobic violence we had...in 2008...ha[d] a very real impact on us and South Africa is very interested in what's going on there...than any other country in the region! So we made a point of...following events there very closely and it's the only country where have a correspondent in the region. In fact, it's the only country outside South Africa, we have a correspondent... We take it very seriously and we continue to take it very seriously...the only country that comes near it in terms of interest in South Africa is Swaziland and maybe Mozambique, but there is much...more of interest from not just our readers but just South Africans generally about what's going on there" (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor, interview 2010).

The quotation above corroborates previous research which reveals that when news-workers construct news, they have the audience in mind (Ekström, 2002: 260). But what is more interesting about the quotation above is the homogenisation of the concept of the reader. According to Cohen (1966: 133), special interests of the readers are substantially lost in the adaptation of a newspaper to the interests, standards, and pastimes of a mass public. Thus it would seem that the interests of the *Mail & Guardian* news-workers are perceived as the interests of all.

Although the *Mail & Guardian* news-workers may understand that readers have mixed feelings and split attitudes towards Zimbabwe, whether in constructing news, they have in mind an audience which consists of sentient individuals with conflicting experiences,

ideologies and prejudices may be another story. In other words, whether the *Mail & Guardian* editors, sub-editors or journalists 'know their audience' and to what extent the images of that audience shape what they write may be another issue. Nonetheless, previous research has shown that although journalists have a vague image of their audience, they pay little attention to it and instead write for their superiors and for themselves assuming that what interests them would interest their audience (Ettema, Whitney & Wackman, 1997: 40).

The perception that not only the *Mail & Guardian* readers but South Africans more generally are interested in what is going on in Zimbabwe is further reflected in the positioning of stories on Zimbabwe in the newspaper. As revealed in the Research Findings section, of the 78 stories on the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government 52 stories (about 67 percent) appeared on pages 1 through 18. Given that local news generally appear on these pages, this finding reveals that perhaps the *Mail & Guardian* presents stories on Zimbabwe as if what happens in Zimbabwe is of great concern and interest not only in South Africa but the region and the world at large. This is enunciated by the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editor who added:

> "...sometimes we carry two Zim[babwe] stories upfront either in the News section or the Africa section or both and then in addition from time to time there are stories we get...from...the foreign and international affairs feed from the [British] *Guardian*... In any case they will run a Zim[babwe] story that we haven't got... So there are three sources of information from Zim[babwe] and,...as I said we carry at least a story every week, often more" (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor interview, 2010).

According to McManus (1997: 287), a newspaper deploys its resources where it expects to find what it considers newsworthy. This is expressed by the *Mail & Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe who, when asked what was interesting about reporting on the talks from Zimbabwe echoed:

> "What made it interesting was the knowledge that we were reporting on a historic event. It is every journalist's wish to be involved where history is being made. It was also a fast moving story, and also one that had many angles from which to report the story on. There was great interest in the story from around the world, and involvement of leaders from Zimbabwe's neighbouring countries, which also made for interesting reporting" (*Mail & Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe interview, 2010).

Apart from having a correspondent based in Zimbabwe, the finding that 74 percent of the total stories on Zimbabwe are features, editorials and opinions pieces (see Chapter four) testifies to the *Mail & Guardian*'s commitment to reporting on Zimbabwe. In addition, the *Mail & Guardian*'s commitment to reporting on Zimbabwe is reflected through the authorship of stories on Zimbabwe as 85 percent of the authors who write on Zimbabwe are the newspaper's own journalists.

Following a critical political economy perspective of the media, McManus (1997: 287), Murdock and Golding (1997: 25) and Schudson (1996: 143) argue that if news is a commodity, then the production of news narratives ought to follow market logic. That is to say, like the political or economic fields, the journalistic field is permanently subject to trial by the market, whether through advertisers or indirectly through audience ratings (Murdock & Golding, 1997: 4). As a newspaper, the *Mail & Guardian* is no exception. This is evidenced by one of its reporters who had this to say when asked why the newspaper had so many stories on Zimbabwe: "it is a very...important strategic country for South Africa, it is a very strategic country in the region...We have a very important readership in Zimbabwe so we need to cater for them" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter interview, 2010). Due to the growing commercial pressure on the media as a result of rapidly developing global capitalism, news tends to be packaged in entertaining formats. As such, the strict separation between information and opinion has become increasingly blurred. For Cramerotti (2009: 13), 'objective' investigative reporting has lost more and more ground to a processing of news that tends toward 'infotainment'. If this is indeed the case, then the question as to what reality is and how it can be conveyed and/or represented becomes crucial.

5.3 Hidden assumptions

As highlighted earlier, no story can be told and no account of events can be given without contextualisation around a set of assumptions, beliefs and values (McNair, 1998: 5). Like fables, news stories contain hidden morals (Soloski, 1997: 144). Previous research confirms that reporters decide early on what they want the story to say and then set about gathering evidence to support that message (see Ekström, 2002: 272). The *Mail & Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe related how they generate stories on Zimbabwe:

> "At the start of each week, the reporter agrees with the News Editor on which story to cover. If it is a running story, such as the talks, they both agree on which angle to run on the story. Once that is agreed, the reporter then gathers information from whichever sources are suitable for the story. Special emphasis is placed on gathering information from a wide base of sources, so as to provide balanced and more in-depth views, in line with the *Mail & Guardian*'s policy. The reporter remains in constant touch with the News Editor, providing updates on any new developments that might have a bearing on the story's development. Once the report is written, it is submitted to the News Editor, who may instruct the reporter on any further work that may be required" (*Mail & Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe interview, 2010).

Journalists therefore search selectively and focus on statements that support the point they want to make. Stories often include several people's testimony in support of the point but may exclude others whose statements might blur the issue or raise doubts. Hence, the point to be made not only guides the choice of people to be accessed but also the nature of the questions to be asked.

Although journalists may claim to report 'objectively', Bourdieu (1998: 47) argues that the journalistic field is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion. There is no event that does not have to face the trial of journalistic selection in order to catch the public eye. Due to the invisible structures that organise perception and determine what we see and do not see, journalists retain things capable of interesting them and keeping their attention, which means things that fit their categories and mental grid. They reject as insignificant or remain indifferent to symbolic expressions that ought to reach the population as a whole. Journalists are interested in the exception, which means whatever is exceptional for them (Bourdieu, 1998: 20). Something that might be perfectly ordinary for someone else can be as extraordinary for them and vice versa.

The findings on the themes covered reveal that of the 78 the articles about the talks, 68 are on political issues, 6 are on economic issues and 5 are on humanitarian issues. The following sub-sections unpack some of the assumptions hidden in the coverage of these themes.

5.3.1 The 'unavoidable' negotiations

A close reading of the coverage of the talks about the Zimbabwean unity government reveals that the negotiations were represented as 'unavoidable'. One of the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editors states:

> "...I didn't think that they [MDC] made a mistake by going to negotiations... If your question is why did you, in your editorials...support the idea of the talks when the whole idea of a unity government has been such a failure, I think the answer is: what was the alternative?... We couldn't see any and there was a hope that maybe, maybe just possibly that a 'unity' government might be the kind of avenue for change" (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor interview, 2010).

The sub-editor's sentiments are echoed throughout the coverage of the talks. This is epitomised by statements like: "In truth, however, they have no real option. Neither Mugabe nor Tsvangirai can rule successfully without coming to some sort of agreement" (Moyo, Zvomuya & Kaseke, 2008: 14); "The MDC has few options, if any. It has no choice but to participate under protest, in the larger interest of the nation..." (Moyo, 2008b: 17); and "Sharing power remains a hugely unpopular option for both sides, but some hope that the absence of any real alternative from either side will force them into a partnership" (Moyo, 2009a: 11). These sentiments reflect the portrayal of the talks as 'unavoidable'.

5.3.2 The 'damned' negotiations

Apart from being depicted as 'unavoidable', the talks are represented as 'damned'. Analysing the entire coverage of the talks, one gets the impression that the talks were damned right from the beginning. The coverage is fraught with quotes such as: "The secret talks in progress between Morgan Tsvangirai and Robert Mugabe are not a 'new dawn' for Zimbabwe, as some South African media seem to imagine" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008a: 24); "We knew these talks were never going to succeed..." (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007a: 9); "Even if a deal is reached, doubts...remain whether the new government will last" (Moyo, 2009a: 11); and "The euphoria that accompanied the signing of the [power-sharing] deal last month has disappeared and few ordinary Zimbabweans still have faith that an agreement will

hold, even if one is eventually reached" (Moyo, 2008a: 14). Such statements from the editorial as well as sources portray the talks as 'doomed'.

The portrayal of the talks as 'damned' is also entrenched by reports on the initial reactions of the negotiating parties to the possibility of negotiations. In one report, "[Mugabe] is said to have resisted initially and blown his top, exclaiming: We are sovereign and should not negotiate!" (Rossouw, Zvomuya & Moyo, 2008: 2). In another report, it is stated that "Mugabe has been forced to the negotiating table by Zimbabwe's visibly disintegrating economy and his growing isolation in Africa and the region... If he saw any way of avoiding negotiations, he would surely have gone for it" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008a: 24). Regarding the MDC's initial reactions, one report contends that "the MDC initially refused to negotiate unless the violence ceases and political prisoners are freed" (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008a: 10). Another report reads: "What is clear is that there is no agreement among MDC leadership about how to approach the talks – or whether they should talk to Robert Mugabe at all" (Moyo, Zvomuya & Kaseke, 2008: 14). These quotations imply that right from the beginning the parties involved initially did not want to talk – a reason that perhaps explains why the talks are depicted as being 'damned' from the onset.

Although the talks are denoted as 'unavoidable' and 'doomed', there are three instances where the talks are signified in a positive way. In the first instance, it is reported that, "Entering the talks this week, both parties expressed confidence, with Mugabe saying "we are not born to be pessimists" (Moyo, 2008c: 10). In the second instance, a Zimbabwean government official is quoted as saying "…the talks have in fact gone on a lot smoother and faster than initially envisaged" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007b: 21). In the third instance, it is noted that "…these first fruits of political negotiations should be welcomed, for without them, Zimbabwe risks becoming a failed state" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2007: 32).

Interestingly, in all the three instances raised above, there is a qualification. In the first scenario the qualification is: "But Mugabe showed less patience on Tuesday..." (Moyo, 2008c: 10). In the second scenario the qualification reads: "But there is some work to be done yet" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007b: 21). In the third scenario the qualification is: "…but there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that this is not another false dawn" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2007: 32).

5.3.3 The 'good for nothing' negotiations

The talks are also represented as 'good for nothing'. In an opinion piece, Chung (2008: 29) argues that "the so-called talks seem unable to solve the problems faced by Zimbabwe". In one editorial, the talks are described "as far from ideal" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008b: 22). "There ought not to have been a need for such a process..." the editorial continues. In another editorial, the Zimbabwean talks are compared to the Israeli-Palestinian parleys which "will not necessarily bring a meaningful settlement" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008a: 24). The editorial further contends that "power-sharing on its own will solve nothing..." The talks are also compared to the ZANU-ZAPU talks that resulted in ZANU-PF swallowing up ZAPU after the 1987 agreement (Moyo & Rossouw, 2008a: 6). Another article also clearly states that "we need to disabuse ourselves of the notion that talks between the MDC and ZANU-PF will solve Zimbabwe's problems" (Ncube, 2007: 30). In one article Moyo (2008d: 12) writes that "he [Morgan Tsvangirai] now did not believe a unity government would be the solution to the Zimbabwe crisis". Another editorial concludes: "Forget about negotiations – they will solve nothing!" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008c: 20). Clearly, these sentiments show that negotiations were not reported on as a solution to the Zimbabwe crisis. If negotiations were not the solution, what then would be the solution?

The answer to that question is quite clear. According to the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008a: 24), the solution is to "strip him [Mugabe] and his securocrats of executive power and place management of the economy in different hands". Another editorial reads: "...Mugabe himself cannot be part of a unity government. No progress can be made until he is forced off the body politic he has clung to, like a blood-sucking parasite, for so many years" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008d: 26). But how were Mugabe and his ruling clique going to be forced off the body politic? Well, according to another editorial, this was going to be done through "radical measures by the region, spearheaded by South Africa – the imposition of smart sanctions against the ruling clique, of the kind already applied by the EU and the USA; the suspension and exclusion of Zimbabwe from SADC and its consultations; and blocking Zimbabwe's exports and cutting off fuel and electricity supplies" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008c: 20).

5.3.4 The 'power-transfer' versus 'power-sharing' debate

The coverage of the talks was also riddled with the debate about 'power-transfer' versus 'power-sharing'. On the one hand, 'power-transfer' means the transferring of all presidential executive powers to Morgan Tsvangirai as the head of government while Robert Mugabe remains a ceremonial head of state, relegated to representing the state at international fora. On the other hand, 'power-sharing' means the 'equal' sharing of executive powers between Mugabe and Tsvangirai. Although neither ZANU-PF nor the MDC were reported as willing to share 'equal' power as evidenced by Rossouw and Moyo (2008b: 8)'s contention that "...neither side wants equal power", ZANU-PF was represented as favouring 'power-sharing' while the MDC was represented as favouring 'power-transfer'.

In an interview, the spokesperson for Robert Mugabe, George Charamba, is quoted saying, "they (the people) don't want power to be transferred, it must be shared (Rossouw, 2008: 23). Patrick Chinamasa is also quoted saying "there is no basis whatsoever to justify Tsvangirai's demands. He wants President Mugabe to become (former titular president Canaan) Banana… What he is asking for is a transfer of power, not sharing of power" (Moyo & Rossouw, 2008a: 6). A source close to the talks is also reported to have observed that "it was difficult to envisage an arrangement in which Mugabe would accept a role as a titular president" (Moyo, Zvomuya & Kaseke, 2008: 14). Another ZANU-PF official is also quoted as saying "Mugabe is not going to be the ceremonial queen of Zimbabwe" (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008a: 10).

From the MDC side, Biti (2008: 33) writes in an opinion piece arguing that "in the new government everyone should be a stakeholder. Yet the MDC draws the line with Mugabe. He is not part of the future and consequently he cannot be part of a settlement in Zimbabwe." An MDC insider is also sourced saying, "Mugabe can be a ceremonial president if he wants, but we want full power" (Moyo & Rossouw, 2008c: 6). Morgan Tsvangirai is also accessed saying, "We wish to state that the Kenyan model of a government of national unity is not an option because here the people have clearly spoken and our circumstances are different. The people's choice must be respected" (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008c: 8). In addition, Moyo and Rossouw (2008b: 8) contend that "in the MDC circles it is accepted that Mugabe will be the titular president, representing Zimbabwe in international forums such as African Union summits, but will have little real influence on government".

5.3.5 The protagonists

The coverage of the talks was also focussed on characters, namely, Robert Mugabe and/or ZANU-PF, Morgan Tsvangirai and/or MDC-M, Arthur Mutambara and/or MDC-M, and Thabo Mbeki as the SADC mediator. The following sub-sections reveal how each of these characters is depicted in the coverage of the talks.

5.3.5.1 A veritable 'Machiavelli'

Robert Mugabe is represented as a veritable 'Machiavelli'. Generally, the term 'Machiavelli' is used to define a person who is characterized by cunning, duplicity, or bad faith in his or her attempts to gain or hold political power. It is derived primarily from Niccoló Machiavelli's work, especially, *The Prince*, in which he presents an amoral theory of governing (see Machiavelli, 1961). Machiavelli's autocrat must not be thought of as an irresponsible tyrant but a despot who respects his subjects' susceptibilities, being ready for cruelty only because, in the long run, it is often kinder to be cruel than weak (Machiavelli, 1961: 21). As such, in an opinion piece, Nyathi (2007: 3) writes:

> "There is no question that Mugabe is an astute political schemer in his own right, never more so than when confronted with the current challenges to his hold on power. He is a veritable Machiavelli...Mugabe played his cards well, pretending that he was interested in holding talks with the opposition to address deepening economic crisis and the issue of his own legitimacy...Once the temperature had cooled, he felt secure enough to abandon the charade of negotiations".

Similar views are echoed by the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008a: 24) as follows: "given Mugabe's addiction to power, his aim is almost certainly to incorporate opposition elements into a government he continues to dominate, as a ploy to buy legitimacy and economic aid".

In one article, a Zimbabwean journalist based in London describes Mugabe as "naturally...a volcanic, sabre-rattling and quarrelsome loner with a frosty inner weather, more ready to fight and 'crush' than to chatter a discourse" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007a: 9). MDC officials are reported as saying Mugabe is indifferent to the state of the economy and solely preoccupied with retaining power (Moyo & Rossouw, 2008a: 6). An 'observer' is also

reported saying, “to some extent [Morgan Tsvangirai] is underestimating Mugabe’s stubbornness – Mugabe can live with a country that is falling apart” (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008d: 8). Some terms used to depict Mugabe include:

- Criminal;
- Despot;
- Destroyer;
- Dictator;
- Murderer;
- Power-addict;
- Torturer; and
- Tyrant.

The characterisation of Mugabe as a criminal, a despot, a dictator, a murderer, a torturer and a tyrant runs through the entire coverage of the talks.

Apart from being represented as a monster, Mugabe and/or ZANU-PF are represented as uncommitted to the negotiations. Statements such as, “Mugabe is negotiating in bad faith” (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008a: 10), “[Mugabe] is now firmly opposed to implementing his agreement with the MDC...” (Moyo, 2009b: 3), “there are no visible signs that Mugabe has cooperated as much as SADC and Mbeki had hoped” (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007c: 16), “Mugabe is not interested in the talks and is not willing to make huge concessions” (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, 2007d: 15), “ZANU-PF is not keen to push the talks along as everybody else appears to be”, and “ZANU-PF has agreed to the talks not because they may be key to ending the crisis, but because the party does not want to be rude to Mbeki and other regional leaders (*Mail & Guardian* Reporter, 2007f: 15) testify to that effect.

According to one of the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editors, “Mugabe may have been described by our foreign affairs and international relations minister as a ‘crazy old man’, [but] I think he is a very clever guy, he is a very ruthless clear strategist” (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor interview, 2010). A *Mail & Guardian* reporter also added, “I am sure you know there is a side of Mugabe which is extremely literate, extremely intelligent, extremely shrewd right!” (*Mail & Guardian* reporter interview, 2010). Although the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editor and reporter acknowledge Mugabe’s ‘human’ side, the coverage of the talks magnifies Mugabe’s monster side while silencing his ‘human’ side.

5.3.5.2 The white man's dumb poodle?

Morgan Tsvangirai is portrayed as "the white man's dumb poodle" (Moyo, 2008e: 6). This depiction comes out mostly in quotations from Robert Mugabe. The *Mail & Guardian* reporter (2007a: 9) writes, "Marking independence celebrations on Wednesday, Mugabe returned to his vitriolic style, accusing the opposition of being 'shameless local puppets' used by the Western powers to 'effect regime change' and 'criminal elements' spreading anarchy". Moyo (2008e: 6) also quotes Mugabe insisting that the talks would only succeed if "we call off...all influences on ourselves from Europe and the United States, so we think for ourselves". While Mugabe paints Tsvangirai as a stooge of the 'West' because of Tsvangirai's links with Western countries, the *Mail & Guardian* envisages and depicts Tsvangirai's relationship with the Western countries as his strongest bargaining chip. Moyo and Rossouw (2008a: 6) contend that "Tsvangirai's strongest bargaining chip is that...he holds the key to the international economic aid the country desperately needs".

In one article, Eddie Cross, a senior Tsvangirai adviser is quoted saying, "There is absolutely no point in negotiating a deal that is not acceptable to people with money" to which Moyo & Rossouw (2008c: 6) adds, "The MDC knows that any agreement must be acceptable to Britain, the US and other Western countries, which want Mugabe to go". In another article, Moyo (2009c: 11) writes, "In meetings with senior MDC officials this week Western diplomats put further pressure on Tsvangirai saying they will not back any government that includes Mugabe".

Unlike Robert Mugabe and/or ZANU-PF, Morgan Tsvangirai and/or the MDC are represented as committed to the talks. The *Mail & Guardian* reporter (2007e: 19) writes, "Tsvangirai recently told the local press that he remains committed to the talks despite what his party sees as government's growing arrogance". Rossouw and Moyo (2008c: 8) also scribe, "MDC secretary general Tendai Biti told the *M&G* (Mail & Guardian) that the party remains open to any mediation that will help ease the suffering of the Zimbabwean people". In an interview, Tendai Biti also tells Zvomuya (2007: 15) that "from the MDC side we, as the negotiators, are fully cognisant that if these negotiations are to fail they will not fail because of us".

5.3.5.3 The ‘insignificant’ Arthur

The interesting finding about the coverage of the talks is that Arthur Mutambara and his MDC-M faction seem to be dead silent in the negotiation matrix. There is one time an official is sourced saying, “The Mutambara faction’s main goal is Cabinet representation in the new government. The faction also hopes to use the talks to mark our own territory and drive home the fact that we cannot be ignored” (Rossouw & Moyo, 2008a: 10). The other instance where reference is made to Arthur Mutambara and/or MDC-M is in relation to the MDC split and how it will affect the mediation process to which the secretary general Paul Themba Nyathi retorts, “The MDC has one delegation negotiating with ZANU-PF” (Zvomuya, 2007: 15). The fact that Arthur Mutambara is so silent in the coverage is also epitomised by the fact that neither himself nor anyone else from his political party make it into the top 10 sourced individuals (see Chapter four). Thus he earns the depiction: ‘the insignificant Arthur’.

5.3.5.4 The ‘fallen’ Mbeki

Although the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008e: 24) starts by saying “This is not, we stress, a middle-finger salute to former South African president Thabo Mbeki’s mediation efforts”, the newspaper’s depiction of Mbeki’s mediation efforts is tantamount to a middle-finger salutation. Raftopoulos (2008: 2) argues that the SADC’s 2007 mandate to South Africa to broker an agreement between ZANU-PF and the MDC was viewed as an extension of the ‘quiet diplomacy’ that had been the hallmark of the South African and SADC approach to the Zimbabwe crisis since 2000. However, the *Mail & Guardian*’s middle-finger salutation is amplified after Mbeki’s ‘fall from grace’, when he was recalled by the ANC from the position of South African president in September of 2008. After Mbeki’s ‘fall’, the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008e: 24) called for a new mediator to “be appointed to drive the process quickly to its conclusion”.

The reasons the *Mail & Guardian* was calling for another mediator are: (1) The fact that Mbeki “was no longer the head of state of the most important country in the region and that he no longer had the support from the ANC” meant that he lacked clout (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008e: 24); (2) From the onset, Mbeki “should have spoken out about Mugabe’s

abuses and distanced South Africa from events across our northern border, as Angola, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, and now Kenya had done". Instead, "South Africa has been a worse offender than China in the weapon trade to Zimbabwe, allowing both state-owned Armscor and private dealers to strengthen the vicious and corrupt Zimbabwean military and fuel repression by selling everything from small arms to helicopters and missiles" (*Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008f: 28); and (3) Mbeki failed to appreciate that a legitimate negotiation required a reasonably level playing field – he was not an 'honest broker', he was Mugabe's 'defender-in-chief', he did not 'trust' the MDC – perhaps because of his discomfort with trade unionist opposition at home or maybe he believed, as Mugabe claims, that the MDC is a tool of the 'West' (Calland, 2008: 30; *Mail & Guardian* editorial, 2008e: 24; Moyo & Rossouw, 2008c: 6).

According to the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008f: 28):

> "What this suggests is that Mbeki fully appreciates the nastiness of Mugabe's totalitarian order but has managed to delude himself for so many years that the Zimbabwean dictator and his clique are amenable to reason... It also suggests his deep stubbornness and difficulties in admitting that he is wrong. He has continued pandering to Mugabe and looking the other way as the attacks on democratic norms, economic idiocy and 'regional contagion' he warned against in 2001 have steadily worsened"

Hence, the *Mail & Guardian* editorial (2008e: 24) concludes, "With conditions worsening in Zimbabwe there is no time to spare Mbeki's feelings. Motlanthe and ANC president Jacob Zuma must use their influence to push the negotiations forward. Mbeki must make way for others who can finish the job". Although, the *Mail & Guardian* may have wanted Mbeki to make way for others to finish the mediation process and portrayed it as such, the SADC wanted Mbeki to stay on as mediator. Moyo (2008f: 14) even quotes an African diplomat after Mbeki's 'fall' who argues that there is no obvious alternative candidate in the region "with the kind of stature needed to engage (Robert) Mugabe. Mbeki has the institutional memory and clout to move this forward".

5.3.6 Personalities versus issues

Asked why the coverage on the talks was largely on personalities as evidenced by portrayal of Mugabe, Tsvangirai, Mutambara and Mbeki, a *Mail & Guardian* reporter had this to say:

> "History is made by people. It's made by personalities! World War II, who do you remember? Do you remember...what exactly was the process at Versailles? Of course not! You remember the fact that...Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill – all those guys were involved, not in Versailles... So...history is made by people and those are the ones who are remembered, people's heroism, bravery as well as people's weakness and when they fall flat, that's the stuff that's remembered!" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter, interview 2010).

In response to the same question, the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editor said:

> "Well..., that whole process was driven by the principals... It was about personalities and it's still about personalities! Politics in that country is still overwhelmingly driven by this [86]-year-old guy. It's amazing to me that he still has such extra ordinary authority. I suppose it's because he has backing from the military and the police and the intelligence service, but I mean if there was a focus on personalities it's because those personalities are fairly central...to the whole process" (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor interview, 2010).

The personality-driven coverage by the media is eloquently observed by Bourdieu (1998: 2-4):

> "In a world ruled by the fear of being boring and anxiety about being amusing at all costs, politics is bound to be boring and unappealing... Because they're so afraid of being boring, they [journalists] opt for confrontations over debates, prefer polemics over rigorous argument, and in general, do whatever they can to promote conflict. They prefer to confront individuals (politicians in particular) instead of confronting their arguments, that is, what's really at stake in the debate, whether the budget deficit, taxes or the balance of trade... They direct attention to the game and its players rather than to what is at stake, because these are the sources of their interest and expertise."

Bourdieu's observations are augmented by a *Mail & Guardian* reporter, who, when asked what she thought was interesting about stories on the Zimbabwean talks had this to say:

> "...a story needs to have a few things, ... One is; it needs to have something original, something different, something people have never seen before, okay! Two, it had personalities, you had...Robert Mugabe portrayed...as some crazy person or whatever; you had Morgan Tsvangirai portrayed as someone who is...stupid and doesn't know what's going on; ...eventually you had Arthur Mutambara, who, ...also had a certain persona so each of these people individually were interesting to write about...and of course their influence on the political process was essential" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter interview, 2010).

In light of the *Mail and Guardian*'s focus on personalities and the quotation above, it would seem as if the *Mail and Guardian* took a *conflict* frame in covering the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government. As highlighted earlier, the *conflict* frame is one of the five media frames raised by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000: 95-6) and An and Gower (2009: 108). It emphasises conflict and disagreement among individuals, groups or organisations as a means of capturing audience interest. In addition, what is interesting about the explanations provided by the *Mail & Guardian* news-workers and as identified by Bourdieu is that while the coverage of the talks is personality-driven, it falls short of explaining to the reader what the Zimbabwean negotiations were really about or ought to have been about. In and of itself focussing on political figures is not 'bad'. What is perhaps 'bad' is focussing too much on political figures to the detriment of their arguments and what is at stake. One may ask, but what is at stake? Well, what is at stake are the needs, hopes and expectations of the Zimbabwean people whose future is placed in the hands of politicians. Politics ought to be about the people who give politicians the mandate to rule them through the ballot (of course, assuming that Zimbabwe is a 'democratic' society)!

5.4 What about the sources accessed?

The media provides access to expression through those who are used as sources in the media's coverage of issues. These sources offer their views and perspectives on the news events and issues either as 'specialists', as 'subjects' or as among those greatly affected by the events or issues. In other words, journalists rely on sources to provide them with facts about events and issues (Soloski, 1997). According to Ekström (2002: 270), reporters make use of an established network of sources who deliver information that is assumed, a priori, to be justified.

5.4.1 'Politicians' and 'experts' versus 'activists' and 'citizens'

As indicated earlier, believable, 'true' journalism requires authentication and verification by non-journalistic witnesses such as politicians, academics, professional specialists and other accredited sources of information and interpretation who lend their expert status to the text and give it authority in the eyes of the audience (McNair, 1998: 6). This means that often powerful elites are used and often over-used as sources of information thereby marginalising the voices of the less powerful. Given the fact that the talks were being conducted under the veil of 'secrecy' and also the country's political conditions it is understandable that 21 of all the sources accessed about the talks had their identities concealed (see Chapter four). However, of all the sources whose identities are revealed, the majority are 'politicians', constituting 67 percent (see Chapter four). If combined with 'experts', the figure rises to 77 percent of the total sources accessed.

The fact that 'activists' and 'citizens' constitute 6 percent and 2 percent of the total sources accessed, respectively, while 'politicians' and 'experts' combined make up 77 percent of the total sources accessed, reveals that the talks were mainly represented from the point of view of the powerful 'politicians' and 'experts' to the detriment of the less powerful. This finding corroborates existing literature which shows that news sources are drawn from the existing power structure, and therefore news tends to support the status quo (see Soloski, 1997: 144). As the *Mail & Guardian* reporter says in relation to the talks about the Zimbabwean unity government:

> "...what those leaders did was they became so involved with...leadership issues like...who can appoint governors, who can appoint the cabinet, who is going to be the president, who is going to be the prime minister...and stuff like that and did not in my view come back to their people and just say, look, this is what we are going to do, do you think this is good..., do you think this is bad, how do you feel, etc?" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter interview, 2010).

The quotation above implies that instead of taking the position of the citizen and taking the politicians to task about the implications of the talks on the lives of people on the ground, the *Mail & Guardian* ran with the leadership issues. They mostly reported on the political power struggles. In this case, it is the politicians who set the agenda and not the *Mail & Guardian*!

5.4.2 The 'invisible' women

The findings on the sex of sources reveal the gendered nature of journalism. According to Van Zoonen (1998: 35), the masculine character of news is recognised in the choice of sources who are overwhelmingly male, despite the growing number of female politicians, public officials and other professionals. In fact, the choice of sources is seen as reflecting the personal networks of male journalists rather than as a representation of the actual gender divisions among sources (Van Zoonen, 1998: 35-6). In this study, of all the sources whose gender could be distinguished only 5 percent are women. It is therefore not surprising that not even one woman make it in to the top 10 list of sourced individuals (see Chapter four). It is also not surprising that only 10 percent of the 'experts' accessed are women although there are often many qualified women who can give an expert opinion and who may also give a different perspective.

As a matter of fact, for each source category distinguished in Chapter four, including, 'activists', 'civil servants', 'citizens' and 'news-workers', women constitute at most 20 percent of the total sources accessed. Interestingly, this figure is similar the world over. According to Gallagher (2005: 17), females only make up 21 percent of all the sources accessed in the media across the world. Furthermore, men's voices dominate on issues such as politics and economics, and in instances where women are sourced they are often limited to expressing personal experience or popular opinion (Gallagher, 2005). In other words, women's views and voices are marginalised in the world's news media.

Although both women and men live in the societies reported on by the media and both have views on the events or issues reported on, women's voices are made 'invisible' by the media's omission of their voices. As mentioned earlier, when women do appear in the media, they are often portrayed as sex or beauty objects, as homemakers, as victims of violence, poverty, war and conflict. According to Holland (1998), it is likely that the under-representation of women in formal politics and their under-representation in the political media are mutually reinforcing patterns. In other words, the under-representation of women probably reflects patterns of male dominance more generally in politics as well as in areas associated with the production and distribution of news. But even where more women hold political positions and where attempts are made by editors and journalists to mainstream

women's voices and to use women as sources, women are sometimes reluctant to speak publicly for reasons ranging from lack of confidence to a lack of trust or experience with the media.

5.5 Issue-driven coverage

Throughout the entire coverage of the talks, the *Mail & Guardian* carried five articles that are worth mentioning because they are issue-driven. These articles are issue-driven in that they cover the talks in relation to the implications of the talks on the lives of Zimbabweans. One such article is by Gappah (2008: 26). She starts by noting that the mantra that is being used to push forward the talks is that "the people of Zimbabwe have suffered long enough". She then describes the Zimbabwean people's level of suffering including hyperinflation figures, unemployment rate and starvation, after which she argues that "There is no doubt that even if the MDC pushed for these issues to be at the forefront of the negotiations, ZANU-PF would not welcome any demands for justice, for truth and reconciliation, even at the very basic level of a public airing of the atrocities". She laments that "the most disturbing element of these talks is that, as with ZANU-ZAPU talks, and the Lancaster House talks before them, they are yet again the exclusive preserve of politicians". She then argues that "if there is something Zimbabweans should have learned by now, it is that the fate of the country should not be entrusted to politicians".

Gappah concludes that "the real expansion in the mediation should have been the inclusion of civil society, because people who truly need watching over are not the mediators but the politicians. The exclusion of civil society means that matters of justice, however broadly defined, may never be addressed... [It also] means that Zimbabweans, just like Kenyans, will be held hostage to a political compromise". Gappah's sentiments are also shared by Naidoo (2007: 32), who encourages the South African government through its mediation process to also engage the people of Zimbabwe through NGOs, trade unions and religious groups. He argues that "we must look beyond politics and listen to the voices of the people of Zimbabwe".

Another article is by Zvomuya (2008: 8), which accesses Zimbabweans talking about their expectations after ZANU-PF and the two MDC formations signed the GPA. Some of the expectations raised are:

- Increased foreign investors and foreign tourists;
- Opening up of international lines of credit;
- Return of Zimbabwean skilled workers in the diaspora;
- A process of national healing;
- An end to corruption and bribery;
- An end to the abuse of power;
- Transformation of the state broadcaster to a public broadcaster;
- Suspension of all repressive legislation;
- An end to arrest, harassment and torture of journalists; and
- Revitalisation of agriculture.

The other article is by Chung (2008: 29). Chung begins from the premise that the reason the so-called talks seem unable to solve the problems faced by Zimbabwe is that "we are doing the wrong thing: we are trying to share power between two intransigent groups, each interested in a monopoly of power, neither interested in the welfare of the poor of Zimbabwe". She blames the MDC for focusing on Mugabe, the personality which was characterised earlier as tyrant, dictator, torturer, murderer, etc. Hence she adds that "it is not surprising with such a single-minded analysis they cannot come to an agreement with an individual whom they definitely do not trust". She argues that the negotiations are posing the wrong questions thus they are bound to come up with wrong answers. Instead, for her, the negotiations should be about:

- Stopping the use of hate speech;
- An end to all torture, beatings and killings by any political party;
- An end to the increase of money supply by more than 15 percent per annum;
- Making clean water available to all;
- Provision of farming inputs such as seeds;
- Boosting industrial productivity;
- Free education for all;
- Provision of medication in hospitals; and

- Reconstruction of basic infrastructure, roads, sewage pipes, etc.

She thus concludes that under the present negotiations, it appears the parties are busy sharing posts and privileges while neglecting their fundamental duties.

Last but not least, is an article by Win (2008: 26), which brings a gender dimension to the negotiations. Win addresses the article to the principals, namely, Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara. She praises them for raising the Zimbabwean people's hopes by agreeing to talk and urges them to stop posturing and to get down to real business. She then tells the principals that she wants to see three black Zimbabwean feminist women at the negotiating table. She writes:

> "Surely you can't tell me that you have no women with functioning brains and mouths in your parties? Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? ... The only one with a woman on his team is Arthur Mutambara. That is just unacceptable. Both of you [Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai] have vice-female presidents, what is their role? Just goes to show you wanted them only to get the votes, right?"

She then moves on to discuss what the negotiations ought to be about, including:

- Revival of the education system;
- Provision of ARVs to young women;
- Provision of sanitary towels to young girls;
- Redistribution of land to poor black women;
- Constitutional reforms; and
- Media reforms.

She concludes by noting that:

> "None of this is a tall order. With enough political will all of these things can be delivered. These negotiations are not about you all accommodating one another. Your biggest role as the principals is to keep reminding yourselves and those (men) around you that Zimbabwe is bigger than each one of you".

Clearly the *Mail & Guardian* editors found the articles discussed above "gobsmackingly brilliant", "provocative and persuasive", "stylish and witty" (see *Mail & Guardian*, 2008:

36), hence they carried them in their coverage of the talks. Interestingly, three of these issue-driven articles are written by women. This finding needs to be looked at in media studies as it ostensibly feeds into the stereotype that women are more 'caring' than men hence they are better at and more interested in 'human interest' stories (Van Zoonen, 1998: 36). Convincingly, some of the issues (if not all of them) raised in the articles discussed above were the issues the Zimbabwean talks sought to address, apart from 'sharing power'. If the *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the Zimbabwean negotiations largely focussed on these issues, questioning political figures on their positions on these issues, perhaps readers would have been 'adequately' informed about the talks.

5.6 Conclusion

This analysis and interpretation shows that reporting on Zimbabwe is important to the *Mail & Guardian*. It also shows that the *Mail & Guardian* represented the talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government as 'unavoidable', 'damned' and 'good for nothing'. It also shows that the coverage was largely personality-driven as evidenced by the characterisation of Mugabe as a veritable 'Machiavelli', Tsvangirai as the 'white man's dumb poodle', Mutambara as 'insignificant' and Mbeki as 'useless'. The analysis also reveals that there are only five articles that covered the talks in relation to the implications of the talks on the lives of Zimbabweans.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This study established that the *Mail & Guardian* is committed to reporting on Zimbabwe as exemplified by the number of articles it published on Zimbabwe during the period under study. The newspaper's commitment is also epitomised by the type of stories and the authorship of stories on Zimbabwe. The fact that Zimbabwe is the only country it has a correspondent also testifies to the newspaper's commitment to covering Zimbabwe. Given that one of the first journalists to be chased out of Zimbabwe by the ruling ZANU-PF party between 2000 and 2002 was attached to the *Mail & Guardian*, it is not surprising that the Zimbabwe correspondent writes under a pseudonym.

Perhaps the *Mail & Guardian*'s commitment to covering Zimbabwe could be explained from a market perspective as well as an ownership perspective. As one of the *Mail & Guardian* reporters puts it referring to talks about the Zimbabwean 'unity' government: "This...was clearly the biggest story in Zim[babwe] in a long time and... also for a certain period of time it certainly was the biggest story in sub-Saharan Africa so we needed to pay proper attention to it" (*Mail & Guardian* reporter interview, 2010). Newspapers are ready to do almost anything to be the first to see and present something. If Zimbabwe was certainly the biggest story in sub-Saharan Africa, then perhaps the *Mail & Guardian*'s commitment to covering it was more of a business decision than sentimental value.

In relation to the coverage of the talks, the study found that the talks were represented as 'unavoidable', 'damned' and 'good for nothing'. Unavoidable in that there was 'no alternative' to effect change in Zimbabwe other than through dialogue, as observed by one of the *Mail & Guardian* sub-editors, who echoed "We couldn't see any [alternative] and there was a hope that maybe, maybe just possibly that a unity government might be the kind of avenue for change" (*Mail & Guardian* sub-editor interview, 2010). The talks were represented as damned because the parties were largely seen as miles apart all the time. The talks were perceived as going nowhere slowly. The talks were depicted as good for nothing because they were not seen as a panacea to the Zimbabwean problems.

The study also revealed that the coverage of the talks mainly focussed on political figures and their struggles for power as evidenced by the power-transfer versus power-sharing debate and the characterisation of Mugabe as a veritable 'Machiavelli', Tsvangirai as the 'white man's dumb poodle', Mutambara as 'insignificant' and Mbeki as 'useless'. This meant that the coverage was primarily driven by politicians as they set the agenda upon which the *Mail & Guardian* followed and reported on. The focus on political figures amplified the voices of politicians as reflected by the large numbers of politician sources accessed. This was detrimental to the voices of the citizens including women who, in overall, only make up 5 percent of the total sources accessed.

This research also confirmed that there were only five articles that took politicians to task about the implications of the talks on the lives of men, women and children. These articles articulated some of the issues the *Mail & Guardian* could have grappled with more other than mainly reporting on the power struggles of the principals. Perhaps, if the *Mail & Guardian* had set the agenda in its coverage of the talks, readers may have been more informed about the talks.

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