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The media wars and their discourses in the South African print media

Main Research Question: What were the ideological discourses that emerged during the media wars between newspaper companies and editors of South Africa's leading news publishers in the period 2010-2015?

By Mbuyisi Mgibisa

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the degree of Masters by Research in Media Studies.

Johannesburg, 15 March, 2017

Supervisor: **Dr Glenda Daniels**

Abstract

In post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, "media wars"[1] appear to have become a strong feature. Traditionally, the news media rarely report about other media. Media wars seem to manifest themselves more when news publications subject each other to critical scrutiny. Recent media wars between newspaper companies and editors have highlighted the agonistic pluralist nature of the South African print media which is facing persistent and complex disruptions. This research asserts that a notable feature of these media fights is that they are linked to the battle to gain market share in the South Africa print media market stranglehold by big media organisations. They are often couched in ideological discourses which are constitutive of editors and media owners speaking out publicly about issues internal to the media in order to carry the freight of public attention. The foci of this study will be two-fold: Firstly, it seeks to investigate whether these media wars are related to the broader issues of transformation in the South African print media. Secondly, the study seeks to unravel how some of the country's leading news publications represent their competitors using editorial platforms and will investigate the editorial motivations behind certain representations. Despite the growing interest in media wars, South Africa is still underrepresented due to a lack of literature published in the field. The main rationale behind the study is to show how the media's 'independence' from political parties plays itself out in ideological discourses found in the tensions between newspaper companies and editors in the period between 2010 and 2015. Two examples or case studies of media fights will be critically examined in this study and a qualitative discourse analysis will be undertaken in order explore the ways in which the media war texts spoke to or problematised the main theories employed in this study, namely: Critical Political Economy (CPE) of the media and Michel Foucault's material post-structuralism blended with Bourdieu's concept of the 'media field'.

Keywords: media wars, agonistic media space, market share, ideological discourses, transformation, representations.

[1] The term *media wars* suggest media fights turned ugly in the public. It is conceived and deployed in this research to support calls for media researchers to assess more closely the media institutions' own privileged position in the distribution of social power (see Couldry, 2005).

Declaration

Student Number: **337971**

I, Mbuyisi Mgibisa (Student Number: 337971), am a student registered for a Masters by Research degree in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the academic year 2016.
I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course if my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions of referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents who despite being deprived of education during apartheid era spent their hard-earned pennies in ensuring that their children received some form of schooling.

Table of Contents

Abstract ..... (ii)

Declaration..... (iii)

Acknowledgements ..... (iv)

Dedication..... (v)

List of Figures..... (ix)

Introduction: Background and Aims 1-8

A brief outline of the publications of which media texts were selected and chosen thus follows... 5

Research Questions 6

Aims of the study 7

Rationale behind the research 7

Chapter 1 9

Critical debates surrounding the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between competing media companies and editors.....9

1.1 A brief overview of the print medias in South Africa..... 10

1.1.1 The (political) landscape of the South African print media..... 11-12

1.1.2 Changes, patterns, trends and developments or more of the same?..... 12 - 13

1.1.3 A print media industry facing disruptions and shrinking revenue sources 14-15

1.1.4 (Opinionated) media and institutional discourses and social actors ..... 15 - 17

1.1.4.1 The relations of social actors in institutions and social settings..... 17 - 19

1.1.4.2 The role of social actors in representations.....20

1.1.4.3 The persuasive and argumentative function of media discourses..... 20 - 22

1.1.5 Affiliation, institutionalism and ideology in the SA print media.....22 - 23

1.1.6 The print media ownership conundrum ..... 23 - 25

1.2 **Theoretical and Analytical Conceptual Framework..... 25**

1.2.1 A tentative argument for a theoretical turn..... 26 - 27

1.2.2 Michel Foucault's material post-structuralism: Beyond textual analysis..... 27 - 29

1.2.3 Critical Political Economy (CPE)..... 30

1.2.4 Applying Bourdieu in the South African 'media field'..... 31 - 34

1.2.5 Some useful concepts..... 35

1.2.5.1 Althusser's concept of 'ideological interpellation'..... 35 - 36

1.2.5.2 The concept of the "Representing the Other"..... 36 - 37

1.2.6 Blending CPE, post-structuralism and field theory..... 37

1.3 Methodology: Analytical Framework…… 38
1.3.1 Data Collection…… 38 - 39
1.3.1.1 Corpus Construction: South African media war texts…… 39 - 40
1.3.1.2 Participant interviews…… 40 - 41
1.3.1.3 Research Ethics…… 42
1.3.2 Data Analysis…… 42 - 43
1.3.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis …… 43 - 44
1.3.2.2 Intertextuality …… 45
1.3.2.3 Thematic Analysis …… 46
1.3.2.4 Multimodality…… 47

Chapter 2…… 49
Black, green and gold, Blue or Red: Should journalists openly declare their political affiliation in public? …… 49

2.1 Corpus Construction: Media Texts……50-51
2.2 Setting the scene: A virtual encounter between the editors…… 51
2.3 Independent journalism and political affiliation: What did the editors wrote……52-53
2.4 Editors' discourse on self-identity and cultural differences……54
2.5 Consenting and opposing voices…… 55
2.6 Institutional and ideological settings…… 55
2.7 The gaze of the editors of Mde/Brown furore…… 56 - 60
2.8 Heated radio debate on journalism ethics gets personal…… 61-62
2.8.1 Why a textual analysis of a radio podcast? …… 62
2.8.2 Forum@8 podcast: A textual analysis …… 62-66
2.8.3 Opinion discourses, argumentation and discourses of the editors…… 67-68

Chapter 3 …… 68
***Mail & Guardian* versus Independent Newspapers: The battle for market share in the SA print media stranglehold by big media …… 68**
3.1 *Mail & Guardian* versus Independent Media: the events…… 69-70
3.2 'CIA links': Ideological interpellation at work…… 71-72
3.3 How the *M&G* fought back …… 72– 73
3.4 The editors on the *M&G* and Independent media war…… 73-80
3.5 Modern capital, competition, interpellation, discourses: Reflections…… 80-82

Chapter 4 …… 83

Media discourses and the gaze of the editors …… 83

4.1 Editors on the phenomenon of media wars…… 84-86

4.2 Editors on whether media wars are linked to ideological dissonances…… 87-88

4.3 Editors on editorial considerations and motivations…… 89-90

4.4 Editors on whether media wars can harm the image of the profession…… 91-92

4.5 Media wars, ideological dissonances and editorial motivations …… 94-95

Chapter 5 …… 96

The Politics of Representation: How one media entity (mis)represented the other? 96

5.1 Collapsing the distinction between discursive and material representations …… 97 - 99

5.2 The corpus construction of media texts …… 99

5.3 The self-representation of the M&G and Independent Media ……100-106

5.4 The representations of polemic discourses……107-112

5.5 Conclusion: Discourses and representational meanings…… 113–114

Chapter 6…… 116

Conclusion: Agonistic media, Cracks, Ideological Interpellation, Othering…… 116

6.1 Agonism, post-structuralism: media as an 'agonistic space' …… 116-117

6.2 Signs of cracks and dislocations …… 117

6.3 Having it both ways: the media caught up in political ideologies …… 118- 119

6.4 *M&G* versus Indy Media: ideological interpellation at work …… 119 -120

6.5 The politics of representation and misrepresentations …… 120

6.6 Understanding media wars: the discourses of the editors …… 121-122

6.7 Contribution and directions for future research …… 123

6.8 Limitations …… 124

References…… 125- 139

Appendices…… 140

Appendix A……140 – 151

Appendix B…… 152 - 156

Appendix C…… 157 - 160

List of Figures

Description of Figures	Page
Figure 1: "Iqbal Surve and all the editors". Cartoon by Zapiro (*M&G Online*, 04 July, 2014)	**18**
Figure 2: A Facebook picture of Independent Newspapers' Group executive editor Karima Brown and editor of opinion and analysis, Vukani Mde, decked out in ANC-branded clothing. (*M&G Online*, 15 Jan 2015)	**50**
Figure 3: "The ANC's 103 Birthday Bash and the Praise Singers". A cartoon by Zapiro. (*Sunday Times*, 18 Jan 2015)	**60**
Figure 4: A photo of the publisher of the *Mail & Guardian* Trevor Ncube contained in a press release issued M&G Media. (*M&G Online*, 22 July, 2014)	**101**
Figure 5: A photo of chairman of Independent Newspapers, Dr Iqbal Surve, and Tony Howard, the Deputy Executive Chairman. (*IOL*, 24 July, 2014)	**104**
Figure 6: A photo of the publications' titles of Independent Newspapers and the M&G Media groups contained in a story published by the Business Report. (Business Report, 26 August, 2013)	**108**
Figure 7: A story published by the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper over government connections in the sale of Independent Newspapers. (*M&G Online*, 24 May, 2013)	**111**

Introduction: Background and Aims

Although media wars between newspaper companies and editors are a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa print media, they appear to have become a strong feature in the post-colonial, post-apartheid South African media era. The term 'media wars', as conceptualized for the purposes of this study, is used herein in this dissertation to denote fractious contentions between competing media houses and editors which turn ugly in the public. It is used to highlight a media phenomenon that serves as an indicator for various factors impacting on the national media environment, including market imperatives, the strain on media outlets regarding financial sustainability, and the reputational concerns of editors and media owners. (Picard: 2002, 2006) The study contends that in order to conceptually frame and theorise these media wars, it is important not to neglect the relationship between the media and the broader issues of political and social power. Therefore, it suggests that media wars ought to be linked to the political and social questions regarding power central to the media hegemony thesis. The overall contention is that the term 'media wars' is connected to the media's position in the distribution of social power.

Media wars are mostly typical ad hoc and interstitial. They often manifest themselves when a news publication writes and publishes a 'negative' story about another competitor publication. "Typically, the media does not write about the media. We're worried that everyone else will find our industry boring (which, for the most part, it is), and we're worried that we all live in glass houses (which we do)" as Phillip de Wet, associate editor at the *Mail & Guardian,* wrote in 2013 during his end-of-the-year article that looked back at the media year that was, titled: "Breaking news! Can someone fix it now?" (*M&G Online,* 2013). Every era has its distinctive spectacle. The media wars that occurred in the period under study here point to the intertextual and temporary intensity by which media spectacle creates, or perhaps to create "a media world" for our attention. In the same article, De Wet observed that "in 2013 the media threw all the rocks they could get their hands on – not once, not twice, but three times. It is no coincidence that all three instances were rooted in deep prior suspicions, and that all three featured colourful individuals. We do so love having our preconceptions confirmed – and having a face put to a story." (*M&G Online,* 2013)

This research is an exploratory work in an area where not much academic inquiry is known. The point is not to look at wide ranging media wars in *Parsonian* style. Rather, this dissertation attempts to do a symptomatic reading of media wars in South African media and to think about their role in the post-apartheid era. In trying to understand the frequently fractious contentions between newspaper companies and editors, this study suggests that a mere discursive analysis of media wars may be insufficient in seeking to unravel the phenomenon of media wars and in investigating the ideological discourses that emerged during these media wars. Therefore, the main suggestion put forward by this study in this introductory chapter is that media wars need to be understood and buttressed by both material and conceptual finessing. To this end, Michel Foucault's post-structural materialism, Critical Political Economy (CPE) of the media and Bourdieu's concept of the "media field" are suggested in this study as the main theories underpinning this study which will enable one to better account for this relatively new phenomenon of media wars.

This research posits that critical political economy of the media and material post-structuralism blended with the media field theory have much to gain in the scholarly field of media studies. As an example, it is quite clear in the case of South Africa that an investment in media by capital, whether the Guptas of TNA Media or Iqbal Survé *of Independent Media*, has created an "agonistic pluralist" South African print media space which has seen the fueling of tensions between media owners and editors (Mouffe, 2000:134). As in the case of South Asia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America – when business houses invest in the media, a compact emerges between capital, media and politicians. (Doyle, 2002, McChesney, 1999, Graber, 1993) This study makes a bold claim that the South African media is already headed in that direction in overt or subtle ways. Another issue to tackle and extrapolate in this introductory chapter is whether by publishing issues internal to their rival media organisations, the editors and media owners of various media houses had a sense of the "truth" that they wish to present to the (reading) public. The Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African print and online media (as effective January 1, 2016) states:

As journalists we commit ourselves to the highest standards, to maintain credibility and keep the trust of the public. This means always striving for truth, avoiding unnecessary harm, reflecting a multiplicity of voices in our coverage of events, showing a special concern for children and other vulnerable groups, exhibiting sensitivity to the cultural customs of their readers and the subjects of their reportage, and acting independently.

It is clear from the above epitaph that journalists are only 'striving' for truth and are guided by the same vision as encapsulated in the Press Code. However, to put this matter to rest, it is pertinent to bring in Karppinen (2009) who addressed this issue during his seminal work on Mouffe's concept of radical pluralist democracy: "For accepting the final 'truth' would mean the elimination of conflict and contestation." (Karppinen, 2009: 60).

Two selected and chosen examples of media fights that occurred between competing newspaper companies and editors in the period between 2010 and 2015 have been chosen as case studies for the purposes of this study and are analytically examined. They form part of the corpus of this study and will be examined and analysed accordingly in the empirical data chapters of this research. They are referred here as case studies, although not in a traditional and classical sense. They are:

- A fractious and aggressive contention which broke out in 2013 between two publishers of competing media houses, Trevor Ncube, publisher of the *Mail & Guardian*, and Dr Iqbal Survé of Sekunjalo Independent Media consortium. This is after *The Star* newspaper had published a series of reports that the *M&G* was a 'CIA-funded operative' and that its business operations were in financial trouble. Survé contended that there was something sinister about the criticism directed at Sekunjalo Investment after its R2-billion buyout of Independent Newspapers and that the scrutiny of the Group's close links to the ANC was a sign of anti-transformation. On the other hand, Ncube suggested that the negative press coverage about himself and his businesses was part of Sekunjalo's efforts to persuade him to stop the *M&G* journalists from performing 'legitimate, credible and ethical journalism' (*M&G Online*, 2014). The *Sunday Times* also entered the fray alleging that due to bad business decisions, the *Mail & Guardian* was planning to retrench 16 editorial staff and nine people from other divisions,

leaving the future of one of South Africa's influential independent newspapers hanging in the balance.

- The war of words that erupted between editors of different media outlets after Independent Newspapers' then group executive editor Karima Brown[2] and Independent's group editor of opinion and analysis, Vukani Mde apparently posted a "selfie" of themselves on social media clad in ANC regalia during the ruling party's 103rd birthday celebration in January, 2015. The furore was sparked by associate editor of the *Daily Maverick* Marianne Thamm whose opinion article in the *Daily Maverick* website titled, "True colours shining through: Should journalists be draping themselves in party political colours?" sparked a heated debate both the *Daily Maverick* and on SAfm's flagship current affairs radio program, *Forum at 8*, over the vexing question on what type of relationships should journalists have with politicians and political parties? *Mail & Guardian* former deputy editor Moshoeshoe Monare, who was one of the guests on the SAfm show along with *Beeld* editor Adriaan Basson, expressed their views about journalists who are politically affiliated, until Brown phoned-in and defended herself before things got personal.

The two above-mentioned events selected and chosen for this research have been the most charged in media fights that pitted editors of different news outlets against one another and this explains the study's rationale for choosing them.

[2] In 2017, Karima Brown is an independent political analyst at eNCA and presenter of *Talk @ Nine* at Talk Radio 702 on Sunday evenings.

A brief outline of the publications of which media texts were selected and chosen thus follows (*information extracted from the publications' websites*)**:**

The Daily Maverick is a unique blend of news, information, analysis and opinion delivered from a newsroom in Johannesburg, South Africa. *The Daily Maverick* is run by an independently owned, private company with no affiliation to any other media group (or political party or religious organisation.) It is funded entirely through advertising. (2016, *Daily Maverick*)

The *Mail & Guardian Online* is South Africa's oldest quality news source on the web and Africa's first *online* newspaper. A pan-African daily online newspaper, published all day, all week, aimed at serious and not-so-serious readers. (2016, *M&G Online*)

Independent Online, popularly known as IOL, is Independent's current digital offering, and brings millions of readers breaking news as events happen in the country and around the world. With a growing daily unique online audience, iol.co.za is one of the largest news and information websites in South Africa. (2016, *IOL*)

Research questions

The threads of investigation the study will pursue follows thus:

Media Wars' Construction

- How are media wars between South Africa's leading news publications and editors manufactured and who are the actors in these ensuing media wars?
- Are these media wars related to the politics of modern finance (capital) which necessitates a consideration of discursive practices?

Representation

- Are there any editorial motivations made by editors and journalists before they decide to write and publish a story about a competitor publication?
- What traits of discourses and representations emerged from the media texts produced by these media wars?

The main research question that necessarily follows from this investigation, and which will give this study its academic relevance, is: What ideological discourses emerged during the media wars between editors and media owners of South Africa's leading news publishers in the period 2010-2015? In order to properly answer this main research question, various key concepts, theories and methods will be employed in analytical detail and fleshed out in Chapter One.

Aims of the study

The study seeks to investigate the factors that possibly lead to media wars between newspaper companies and editors and to unravel the ideological discourses that emerged during these media wars. The study also seeks to investigate the editorial motivations at work when a news publication decides to write and publish a 'negative' story about another competitor publication. It aims to uncover whether there are different editorial considerations at play when editors and journalists decide to write and publish stories about issues internal to their competitor publications. The study also seeks to find out whether these media wars are related to fierce competition in the tough local print media facing shrinking revenue sources or whether these media wars are related to the broader issues linked to print media transformation.

Rationale behind the research

The main rationale behind this research is really how the issue of "independence" from political parties plays out in the ideological discourses during the tensions between news companies and editors. It is suggested here that the relative neglect of media wars and the lack of their analysis in research continue to be subjects of speculation. This study has deliberately deconstructed the media wars to argue that they are an important branch of scholarship which must be academically-focused into a steady rhythm within the interdisciplinary nature of the scholarly field of Media Studies. The study firmly holds a view that the discourse articulations of media wars are not inconsequential and therefore that it is pivotal for media scholars to interrogate their complexities and paradoxes and to analyse their apparently rapid evolution in post-apartheid South Africa media era. By interrogating the recent case studies of the R2-billion take-over of Independent Newspapers by Sekunjalo Independent Media and the fractious contentions between editors of different news publications over questions of media independence and political affiliation, the study seeks to break new ground in analysing the conflictual nature of the relations between competing media houses and aims to extend the existing body of academic research on contemporary media debates in post-apartheid South Africa by theorising these media wars as well.

This introductory section has outlined the background and aims of this dissertation. It has shown which media texts well be analysed by selectively focusing on two examples of media wars that happened between 2010 and 2015. The section has also explained the research questions and outlined the rationale behind the research. The following chapter will focus on most historical, critical and contemporary debates surrounding the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in the South African print media and will map out the research design for this study.

Chapter 1

Critical debates surrounding the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between competing media companies and editors

This chapter will provide the overall research design for this study. The first section will focus on the literature review of the most historical, critical and contemporary debates surrounding the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in South African print media. The second section will outline the main theories and various concepts that inform the analysis of the corpus in this study and how they can be blended effectively and successfully in order to better account for the phenomenon or subject under study. The third section will focus on the methodological framework in which this dissertation is couched upon and the methodological tools that will be used in order to carry out a detailed critical discourse analysis of the corpus in this study. Lastly, this chapter will draw conclusions from each section in an attempt to show that it is firmly grounded on solid theoretical, methodological and scholarly grounds before it precede to the empirical, data analytical chapters of this study.

There is a paucity of literature specifically related to the phenomenon of media wars between competing newspaper and editors in the South African print media. Past research has focused on the background of the conflicts that have marked the media's relationship with government or the ruling party, the ANC, in the first two decades of the post-apartheid South Africa era (see Wasserman & De Beer, 2005; Wasserman, 2006; Steenveld, 2007 & Daniels, 2012) and on the media and public debates, and on pursuing public interest in radio debates (see Cowling, 2010 & Cowling and Hamilton, 2010). Even though little scholarly research exists to work through an understanding of these media wars in the context of the South African print media, it is at least possible to discern some of the critical debates linked to the relatively new phenomenon of media wars in the post-apartheid era. First, this section will outline a brief overview of the South African print media in terms of the recent trends and developments in order to better account for the changes that are taking place in the industry that is facing complex disruptions on all fronts. Second, this section will analyse and critique the media discourses which are constructed in the South African print media and will problematise

the self-representations and hegemonic representations processes through which the media companies project themselves in good stead and/or portray their competitors through negative representations. Third, this section will review the literature on the commercial market imperatives and ideologies involved in these media fights in order to account for the ostensibly schisms separating the views of the publishers and editors in the South African print media. Lastly, the section will foreground the contemporary and critical debates on the transformation of the print media in South Africa in relation to black ownership of the media and will delve on the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa in relation to the investment in the media by modern (black) capital, whether by The New Age (TNA) Media or Sekunjalo Independent Media. It is hoped that the literature that is extrapolated in this section will lead to a better account and understanding of the background factors underpinning these media wars between newspaper companies and editors.

1.1 **A brief overview of the print media in South Africa**

The term "print media" is employed in this study not in the traditional sense given the complex disruptions that have defined the globalised media in the recent years. This study therefore proposes, that we understand print media in accordance with French poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida (2005) who argued that in order to grasp the foundations of print, we must first appreciate the technological impacts that have long defined the print media that "… by carrying us beyond paper, the adventures of technology grant us a retrospective exploration of the past resources of paper, for its previously multimedia vectors" (Derrida, Paper Machine, 2005: 47 cited by McGill & Parker, 2016) The point is that the delineation between traditional and digital media is no longer possible or clear. Therefore, a brief overview of the South African print media that is extrapolated in this section should be understood in that context.

1.1.1 The (political) landscape of the South African print media

By exploring the notion of "war" in the term "media wars", this research asks whether media studies research can continue to talk about texts, ideology and identity without also talking about the political landscape of the print media in South Africa. The relevance of this point can be found in an article written by Phillip de Wet (2013) headlined, "South Africa's (political) media landscape", which observed that "although a number of smaller and independently-owned titles have a disproportionately large influence on news and opinion in South Africa, four major groups dominate the landscape. Until recently, three of those were considered anti-ANC – but the new owners of the Independent Group and tighter control at the SABC could shift the balance. (*M&G Online*, 30 August, 2013) According to De Wet, the positioning of the four major media groups that dominate the mainstream media landscape – Naspers/Media24, Times Media Group, Independent Media Group and SABC – have possibly shifted from the autonomous pole close to the heteronomous pole in Bourdieuian sense in a "market where the established viewpoint is considered anti-ANC". (*M&G Online*, 30 August, 2013) Daniels (2012:3) contends that the media operates to different economic and political agendas of the owners and managers. This research, therefore, asserts that it is through the prism of the (political) media landscape that we should contextualise the power relations between competing media houses in the South African print media in order to ultimately understand the (political) media landscape as a site where these media wars take place. For instance, one has seen the media fights that took place when *The New Age,* which is *"*Pro-government and pro-ANC, though less forthrightly so than had been initially expected". *M&G Online* (30 August, 2013), began to exploit its 'close' political connections to tap into the government advertising budget and the media outcry that erupted thereafter from the so-called "independent"[3] media houses over the payment of large amounts by various government departments and parastatals to sponsor *The New Age's* signature business breakfasts that broadcast live on SABC 2 and featured senior government leaders. In an article published in the *Daily Maverick* in 2010 titled, "*The New Age launches; underestimate it at your peril",* Andy Rice, a branding and

[3] The notion of the "*independence*" of the media has always been a controversial one and subject to multiple meanings. Part of the problem is that the term "independence" is broad and obscures the real relationship the media has with capital, that of profit making. Therefore, it is carefully applied herein to denote non-alignment from political affiliation. Thus, its usage in this research should be understood from that angle.

advertising expert, wrote that "it is easy to lampoon Atul Gupta's vision for a glass-half-full tabloid that would be press Prozac for South Africa's masses, but it would be horribly foolish to underestimate it…it's easy to laugh off their positive spin, but it's equally foolish to under-rate their ability to impact the market." (*Daily Maverick*, 23 July, 2010) Seven years on, *The New Age* is still churning out copies from its presses, presumably courtesy of the massive backing the newspaper gets from government advertising. It is important to elucidate this current (political) arrangement of the South African media landscape as it gives background context to the media fights between newspaper companies and editors over questions of media independence and political affiliation and the battle for shrinking revenue sources both in public (government) and private streams.

1.1.2 Changes, patterns, trends and developments or more of the same?

Previous research on the media industry landscape in South Africa has focused on the structural changes and trends. Despite these significant changes in terms of ownership patterns and the entry of new (small) players, the print media landscape in the country is still under the stranglehold of four big media houses – Caxton, Times Media Group, Naspers/Media24 and Independent Media Group. This is not to say that these structural changes and trends are not significant and therefore should not be acknowledged or researched on. Instead, this study asserts that we should pay a closer attention on whether these changes, particularly in terms of ownership patterns, are not linked to the factors possibly underpinning media wars between competing newspaper companies and editors. According to the *State of the Newsroom 2013 South Africa: Disruptions and Transitions*, research-led by Dr Glenda Daniels, "two major developments changed the print media landscape in the country in 2012 and 2013: the sale of Independent Newspapers to the local consortium Sekunjalo Independent Media (SIM) in 2013, and the buy-out of Avusa by Times Media Group (TMG) in 2012". (Daniels, 2013: 3-4) Ironically, it is the sale of Independent Media that dominated newspaper headlines and led to fractious media fights between the *Mail & Guardian* and new entrant, Sekunjalo Independent Media. Interestingly, the buy-out of Avusa by Times Media Group in 2012 did not receive similar coverage or reception in the media circles. This begs the question whether the buyout of Avusa by Times Media Group and the change of ownership at

Independent Newspaper symbolised significant shifts and changes in the print media or whether the entry of the new players (TNA Media in 2010 and Sekunjalo in 2013) symbolised an emergent compact between modern (black) capital, media and politicians. In their analysis of media industry clustering in South Africa, Dugmore and Mavhungu (2011: 306) noted that media industry in South Africa is "very concentrated both in terms of ownership and in terms of close geographical proximity". Shortly after the sale of Independent Newspapers to Sekunjalo, the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) issued a petition to the Competition Commission which raised concerns that "the company [Independent Media] has a monopoly in the English-language newspaper markets of Cape Town and Durban, as well as arguably Pretoria and Kimberley". (*Business Report*, 26 August, 2013) Again, it is worth asking whether these media wars are linked to attempts by some players in the print media industry to level the playing field that is still favourably skewed towards the four big media conglomerates. The basic thesis put forward by this study is that the tensions between media houses are sometimes manifested when a new entrant enters the media field. Reflecting on market reactions and tensions that followed after the first tabloid was introduced in the South African newspaper market in 2001, Wasserman (2005) observed that "seemingly increasing with each subsequent entrant into this burgeoning market, debates about their role, the reasons for their success, their potential, and their ethics (or lack of it) have been raging in the popular press" (Wasserman, 2005:34). For example, the media war between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media began to ferment in 2013 when the *Mail & Guardian* published as series of articles about the shareholding structure of Sekunjalo Independent Media and the involvement of two Chinese corporations and of the South African government through the Public Investment Corporation (PIC). There were no similar questions asked when the Blackstar Group took over Avusa in 2012. This seems to stress Wasserman's (2005) point that new entrants are always subjected to scrutiny by their competitors and again this begs the question whether stories about issues internal to the media are not published in order to tarnish the image of the new entrant even before it actually enters the tough print media trading market.

1.1.3 A print media industry facing disruptions and shrinking revenue sources

Over the past decade, the ongoing theme in media research on the South African print media has painted a picture of the industry that is under siege from technological disruptions and shrinking revenue sources. The opening gambit of The *State of the Newsroom 2013* gravely observed that "the newsroom of South Africa today is a ship sailing into extreme headwinds of change – from digital disruption, regulatory change and government hostility to downsized newsrooms, declining circulation and shifting revenue models. (Daniels, 2013: v) It seems that the print media in South Africa was ill-equipped to deal with the complex challenges it was facing in 2013 as the *State of the Newsroom 2014: Disruptions Accelerated* made similar remarks about the crippling state of the local print media industry. "The major transitions which disrupted newsrooms and journalists' lives, discussed in last year's State of the Newsroom report, accelerated in 2014 but in an even more disparate and uneven way… Contractions, cutbacks and consolidations in newsrooms coupled with digital first struggles characterised the 2014 media landscape in South Africa". (Daniels, 2014: vii, 1) It seems that the assault on the print media is likely to continue given the negative economic outlook and the aggressive political climate towards the print media in South Africa. In an article published in *The Media Yearbook 2016*, Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*, noted that it has been a difficult time for South African newspapers and "2016's outlook promises more of the same". (*The Media Year Book,* 2016: 41) Reflecting on the complex challenges that faced the local mainstream newspaper sector in 2015, Daniels (2016) stated:

> *The biggest issue has been trauma over job losses caused by declining circulations, loss of revenue, retrenchments and a lack of a workable business model to bring in funds through digital. These issues were dealt with in a haphazard and disparate way. Mainly, of course, companied retrenched senior staff who were not technologically savvy…These trends will probably continue for the next decade*. (Daniels, quoted in The Media Yearbook, 2016: 41)

Harber (2016) shared similar sentiments: "The biggest threat to newspapers has been the combined impact of reduced readers and advertisers. Many dealt with this with the short-sighted strategy of cutting back, putting their newspapers in a downward spiral, rather

than investing in content that will hook readers and wind them into new ways of digital delivery. (Harber, quoted in *The Media Yearbook*, 2016: 41) If anything, the year 2016 spelt more trouble for the sector that was already facing a multiplicity of complex disruptions. In the words of Ndlovu (2016): "It will be tough; the economy is in trouble" (Ndlovu, quoted in *The Media Yearbook*, 2016: 43). While it is not clear at this stage how the industry fared in 2016, according to some media analysts the print media faces heavy headwinds ahead. Author and Professor of Journalism at City University London, George Brock, caution that "anyone trying to map trends in the world's newspapers must start with a warning. In many parts of the world, print is no longer a separate sector, industry or market". (*The Media Yearbook*, 2016: 45) He continued: "Newspaper publishers now face a dilemma familiar to any industry amid disruption and continuing innovation. Their traditional revenues are squeezed by the fall in print advertising income while no substitute business model for online has appeared". (*The Media Yearbook*, 2016: 48) It should be borne in mind that some of these media fights between newspapers companies revolved around the stories some newspapers published about issues of staff retrenchments in newsrooms and financial difficulties that were faced by some rival newspapers.

1.1.4 (Opinionated) media and institutional discourses and social actors

These media wars between newspaper companies and editors tended to play themselves out in the editorial pages of news publications through opinion articles, news articles and press releases. For instance, comment or opinion articles of the editors that were published in the *Daily Maverick* (See Appendix 1) presented interesting features for the pragmatic study of argumentation. Thus, it is astonishing that their language has been the object of little research in spite of Van Dijk's (1996) scholarly work which exposed how editorials contain implicit and implied opinions.

> *Comment articles are public, mass communicated types of opinion discourse which play a definitive role in the formation and altering of public opinion, promote social interaction among journalists, readers and the rest of the participants in the language event, and influence social debate, decision making and other forms of social and political action.* (Van Dijk 1996; Le 2004; Murphy 2005 in Belmonte 2007: 2)

Comment articles reflect the views of the authors and are markedly different from newspaper editorials which elaborate the opinion of a particular newspaper in a given issue. Briggs and Bauman (1992) state that although comment articles are usually organised by a conventional news schema like headlines, but as a genre, they "engender a number of possible objections when presented as an analytical tool for the study of speech." (Briggs and Bauman, 1992: 1-2) In her article titled "Opinion Discourse: Investigating the Paradoxical Nature of the Text and Talk of Opinions", which explored some of the complexities in treating opinions discursively, Xu (2000) contended that the discourse of opinion is inextricably linked to other several contradictory kinds of discourse:

> *Through contextual, cultural, and cross-situational analysis, it is seen that a subjective opinion can be offered as objective fact, that a personal opinion can be interconnected with different kinds of the social other, and that a private opinion can be reflexively managed by a public self.* (Xu, 2000:263)

She further posited that by "making transparent the seamless union between opinions and facts in discourse, for instance, not only accentuates the s*ociosuasive* nature of opinions but also highlights the dubious nature of the opinionated objectivity". (Xu, 2000: 265) (emphasis my own) Quoting Connor (1996: 143), Belmonte (2007: 3) state that opinion articles are genuine examples of written argumentation since "perhaps more than any other type of writing, reflect national styles regarding modes of persuasion". Belmonte (2007: 2) observed that although persuasive in nature, these texts (opinion articles) do not demand very explicit presence of participants of the language in the text.

These media wars between competing newspaper companies and editors also played out in the form of news articles written by journalists and unnamed staff reporters about issues internal to a rival newspaper. One of the central themes running throughout in chapter four is whether there are different editorial considerations editors and journalists make when they decide to write and publish a story about issues to a competitor publication. Machin and van Leeuwen (2007: 7) saliently observed that "many of us tend to think of news as a natural phenomenon – a straightforward and self-evident process where professional journalists inform members of their societies about important issues". While this may be true at times, this is not always the case as Machin

and van Leeuwen (2007) pointed out: "… what we call 'news' is quite an odd set of institutional practices that must be understood in terms of its social and historical development." It was important for this study to focus on the genre of media discourses that emerged during these media wars since different genres assume different discourse functions.

1.1.4.1 The relations of social actors in institutions and social settings

The editors and media owners were not only the most vocal in the raging media wars, but also took the initiative in the verbal encounters or public discourses, set the 'tone' or style of text or talk, determined its topics, and decided who will be recipient of their discourses – the newspaper or publications' readers. It is not surprising, then, why the editors were the most vocal and vociferous in the ensuing media wars because the agency to speak is "not random, nor is power equally distributed amongst the occupants of different organisational [newsroom] positions. Rather, power and control are structured along the lines of the organisational hierarchy" (Curran et al., 2005: 12 – 13). At the level of role playing, this study will show how editors as social actors become the *agents*, par excellence, of media institutions they work for. As Foucault (2005: 356) puts it: "individual actions can only be understood by grasping individuals' different structural positions in and historical trajectories across social space." One key marker of such a notion of agency is the degree to which, upon entering the media institution, editors are compelled to occupy or resist a role placed upon them by publishers within a confusing web of values, norms and ideologies that constitute that media institution in what Hall (2003:225) calls "the struggle of positionalities". A recent pertinent example has been the massive departure of mostly white senior editorial staff[4] at the *Cape Times* following the sale of Independent Newspapers and an apparent strong affirmation of the new editorial posture adopted by the new owners, Sekunjalo Independent Media (SIM), mostly by the black senior editorial staff. This elucidates the oddity that 22 years after the attainment of South Africa's democracy, there seems to be no agreement still among professional journalists on the role of the media in post-colonial, post-apartheid South

[4] According to author and award-winning reporter, Ed Herbst, about 11 white journalists and columnists left the Cape Times shortly after the takeover of Independent Newspaper by Sekunjalo. (Ed Herbst, *PoliticsWeb*, 30 September 2015)

Africa. Clearly, as this study argues, once journalists assume the role of agency, their identities become inevitably embedded with those of the media institutions they work for.



Figure 1: "Iqbal Surve and all the editors". Cartoon by Zapiro (M&G Online, 04 July, 2014)

As Foucault (2005) pointed out, "there is a natural fit between people's actions and the contexts in which they act". (Foucault, 2005: 356) It can be argued, therefore, that editors (and journalists alike) are mere examples of what Bourdieu (1977) refer to as 'symbolic elites' who exercise the production mode of articulation (through text and talk) using 'symbolic capital' to decide about the discourse genres, topics, style or presentation of discourse. Indeed, the editors were participants or social actors in these raging media wars. For Fairclough (2003), the relations between the social actors are the key determinant of discourses and their representations:

> *I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world - the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘‘mental world’’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth and, the social world . . . different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world.”* (Fairclough, 2003: 124)

According to Van Dijk (1989), the “voice of the elite is often the voice of the corporate or institutional master. The interests and ideologies of the elites are usually not fundamentally different from those who pay or support them.” (Van Dijk, 1989: 23)
The central and key questions for Van Dijk (2008) are: “Who can say or write what to whom in what situations? Who has access to the various forms or genres of discourse or to the means of its reproduction?” It would be tempting to provide a straight-forward answer to the above questions until you interrogate the question also posed by Foucault (1994: 318): ‘‘How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations”? It can be argued that editors are the integral part of the more powerful groups in society since they have access to a wide and varied range of discourse roles, genres, occasions, and styles afforded to them by the mass media. This may explain why they have used their editorial platforms during these media wars as the battleground in the production of various media discourses and positioned themselves as social actors who exercise or submit to power relations.

> *‘the journalist’, like the ‘the subject’, is created by discourse and operates within its conceptual parameters. Yet, to be a journalist, or other news producer, is to be powerful, with the institutional apparatuses and techniques of the media intimately intertwined in the complicated embrace of power/knowledge. Indeed, more so than the human sciences, it is the discursive practices of the journalist which have the power to ‘make true’ particular regimes of truth, that see the journalist participating (although perhaps unwittingly) in the ‘government’ of modern society.* (Hobbs, 2008: 12)

1.1.4.2 The role of social actors in representations

This study employs the 'social actor' analysis (van Leeuwen, 1996, 2000a) to discuss how the main parties involved in the conflict are represented – the editors, media owners and media houses. Hall (1997:3) argues that "we give things meanings by how we represent them – the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce". Media representations, therefore, are tied to questions of ideology and power and are inextricably linked to notions of under-representations, overrepresentations and marginal representations. Phelan (2008) contends that in journalistic discourse, there is seemingly a desire to silence or lampoon each other's voices and this is achieved through how identities are sometimes represented 'fantasmically'. Phelan (2008) uses the term 'fantasmatic' (Glynos and Howarth (2007, cited in Phelan, 2008: 163) following Žižek (1989), as "a logic of ideological fantasy" (Phelan, 2008: 163) and "as the affective force that 'grips' a subject's identification with a particular discourse". (Phelan, 2008: 163) It can also be argued that in the ensuing media wars some media houses used 'fantasmic' representations to grip the identification of the subjects in their stories with a particular staple of discourse. This point, however, will be elaborated more in chapter five, which deals with how the media represented each other using their editorial platforms.

1.1.4.3 The persuasive and argumentative function of media discourses

In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of work undertaken within the field of media studies on research analysing media texts in talk radio or current affairs radio programmes. (Cowling and Hamilton 2010; Cowling 2010) At an enunciation level, chapter two of this study, in part, focuses on the opinion discourses of the editors and their argumentativeness by conducting a textual analysis of the opinion articles written by editors in the *Daily Maverick* (see Appendix 4) and the analysis of a recorded radio podcasts featuring editors of different newspapers.

Generally, opinion articles are argumentative in nature. In her paper which looked at argumentative newspaper discourses, Smirnova (2009) stated that mass media discourse in general and newspaper discourse, as one of its varieties, have two main functions: to inform and to persuade the reader.

> *Newspaper discourses with prevailing persuasion function are aimed at regulation of the addressee's behaviour and thinking and are thus argumentative by their nature. Another characteristic feature of such newspaper discourses is their multi-dimensional dialogic nature. Alongside the dialogue between the text of the article and the reader, the former is also a reflection of dialogues existing in another 'real' communicative space. This reflection is formally expressed by inserting into the text the utterances of other people in the form of reported speech. By reported speech we understand incorporation of another person's words into the author's discourse. The result of this incorporation is a (syntactic) structure with reported speech.* (Sminorva, 2009: 79)

Daniel O'Keefe (1977, cited in Rees, 2007: 1455) states that one must have in mind the distinction between *having* an argument, and *giving* an argument since argumentation theory deals with the latter. (emphasis original) Rees (2007: 1455) explains that argumentation theory deals with "one specific verbal activity, the production of arguments in support of a standpoint". Most argumentation scholars aim not just to describe and analyse, but also to evaluate argumentation. However, it is not the concern and focus of this study to evaluate the soundness of the standpoints or arguments made by editors in their opinion discourses on issues of media independence and political affiliation, except to apply the descriptive and analysis functions of the argumentation theory. This descriptive analysis involves a "recognition of the fact that standpoints and arguments are often produced in an implicit or indirect fashion, and also of the fact that arguments are produced and understood within the context of practical activities and situated speech acts. It also implies detailed attention to the precise way in which argumentative moves are expressed and signaled". (Rees, 2007: 1456)

1.1.5 Affiliation, institutionalism and ideology in the SA print media

No matter how nuanced the forms of ownership and control of mass media, it may still, as Curran et al. (2005) argue, very much matter how media institutions interact with the prevailing socio-political environments.

> *Questions concerning the interaction between media professionals and their 'sources' in political and state institutions appear to be crucial for understanding the production process in the media…Questions about the power of media institutions are, therefore, less likely to be resolved empirically, than to generate further theoretical and ideological argument".* (Curran et al., 2005: 15)

In their paper titled, "Having it both ways: balancing market and political interests at a South African daily newspaper", Wasserman and Botma (2008) argued that the process of democratic transition in South Africa has "brought many changes to the national political economic context within which media companies operate. These changes have also brought challenges for South African media companies to reposition themselves ideologically, with their political-economic interests in mind" (Wasserman & Botma, 2008: 1). For example, the furore that emanated between editors of different news publication after Vukani Mde, group opinion and analysis editor at Independent Media and Karima Brown, former group executive editor at Independent Media and in 2017 freelance political analyst at eNCA and host of *Talk @ Nine* on Talk Radio 702 on Sundays, had posted a "selfie" of themselves on social media clad in ANC regalia during the ruling party's 103rd birthday celebrations, raised issues of media independence and political affiliation. It also highlighted the ongoing conundrum faced by local journalists in meaning-making about the role journalists in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa. Media wars between newspaper companies and editors in South Africa have become more like a "'key terrain where consent is won or lost', they are also in other formulations conceived of as signifying a crisis which has already occurred, both in economic and political terms". (Hall et al., 1978 in Curran et al., 2005: 23)

Centrally to Couldry's (2005) contention for scholars to "assess more clearly media institutions' own privileged position in the distribution of social power", Curran et al. (2005) posit that there are four strands of interest discernible in the literature which must be foregrounded in respect of the following research areas:

- Institutional structures and role relationships;
- The political economy of media institutions;
- Professional ideologies and work practices;
- Interaction of media institutions with the socio-political environment (Curran et al., 2005: 12 in Curran et al., 2005).

The two case studies (see Chapter Two and Chapter Three) foregrounded in this research encapsulate almost all the elements described in the four strands mentioned above by Curran et al. (2005) in one way or another. Curran et al. (2005) further posit that studies of the political economy of media organisations must be supplemented by the professional ideologies and practices found in media organisations. The "discursive authority" of these professional ideologies and practices needs to be understood in Gramscian hegemonic terms as "predominance for a social order or social formation over a configuration of people and places". (Latham, 2000: 13) The public fights between the editors over the questions of journalism and political affiliation can be seen ideologically as "modes of peer and of superior-subordinate relationships which regulate the interaction between incumbents in different roles". (Curran et al., 2005: 12) The media is constitutive of interactions between newspaper companies and editors that often become fractious in the public domain.

1.1.6 The print media ownership conundrum

The analysis of the structures of ownership and control in the context of the South African print media cannot take place without raising pertinent questions about black ownership of the media. In his introduction to the research report conducted by Intellidex (Pty) Ltd in 2016 titled, "*Who Owns The News Media? A study of the shareholding of South Africa's news companies*", Stuart Theobald, says because of South Africa's history, "arguably the most important aspect of ownership is racial transformation. Ownership typically confers two benefits to owners: control and economic participation. In my view, true black ownership and control of any company can only be reliably determined where the share register is fully visible and researchers can examine the funding commitments of those shareholders". (Who Owns The News Media? A study of the shareholding of South Africa's news companies, Research Report, 2016: 6) The report seems to support the some of the discourses of the editors interviewed in this

study that the complex web of shareholding in South African media makes it difficult to untangle. Theobald said the question of who owns the media is important is important because "it speaks to the kind of control that is exercised over our media companies, and thereby whether the media can properly fulfil the crucial role it must play in a democracy." (Research Report, 2016: 5) He further noted that recently been significant change in the ownership of a few large media companies, "leaving previous assessments out of date. As it is, few systematic studies of media ownership in South Africa have been undertaken, with most public comments on media ownership highly speculative". (Research Report, 2016: 5) Indeed, the ownership and control of print media is a highly contentious issue and this can be explained partly because "the contents of the media and the meanings carried by their messages are … primarily determined by the economic base of the organisations in which they are produced" while "those media institutions whose revenues are controlled by the dominant political institutions or by the state gravitate towards a middle ground, or towards the heartland of the prevailing consensus" (Elliott, 1977 cited in Curran et al., 2005: 13). Issues of shareholders' agreements are a secretive domain and when questions are asked about the identity of private shareholders in media companies, this may result in media fights as we have seen in the case of Independent Media and the *Mail & Guardian*.

In this section, this study has provided an overview of the relevant literature related to the media wars and their discourses in the South African media. It has provided an overview of the (political) media landscape and located it with the context of media wars between newspaper companies and editors and has foregrounded the complex and multiplicity of disruptions and challenges facing the local print media. It has highlighted the argumentative and persuasive nature of media and opinion discourses and has shown how editors and media become social actors or participants in the media wars that raged between 2010 and 2015. This section has also demonstrated how market forces and ideological are possibly the factors underpinning these media wars. Lastly, this issue has provided a background picture why the transformation of the print media in South Africa will always be on the agenda since this study also asks whether the media wars are related to the broader issues of media transformation. The next section that follows will then provide a discussion on the theories and concepts that will be deployed in this study in order to inform the analysis of media war texts from a theoretical perspective or point

of view.

1.2 Theoretical and Analytical Conceptual Framework

> *It is here in our choice of theoretical tools that some difficult choices must be made when we consider the entanglement of today's media forms with power*. (Couldry, 2008:161)

This section will outline the various theories and conceptual tools which inform this study and the analysis of its corpus. The study engages several theories and concepts using a case study qualitative discourse approach in order to apply a cogent and thorough-going analysis of media texts. The theoretical concepts of Michel Foucault's material poststructuralism, Critical Political Economy of the media and Bourdieu's concept of the 'media field' and other useful concepts will be discussed in detail in order to better account for the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in the South African print media. First, this section will propose a theoretical frame that acknowledges the real nature of media frontiers and the fights entailed between rival media houses and editors instead of couching these media wars under the liberal-pluralist banner that puts media wars in the seamless narrative of media debates or fractious spats. Second, the section will discuss in detail some of the nuanced historical and contemporary debates advanced by various scholars on material poststructuralism, CPE and field theory and will explain how these theories and other useful concepts will be employed in this research in order to speak to or problematise the main research questions that underpin this dissertation. Lastly, this section will demonstrate how Foucault's material poststructuralism, CPE and Bourdieu's concept of the media field can be successfully blended together and effectively applied in the scholarly field of media studies.

1.2.1 A tentative argument for a theoretical turn?

This dissertation builds on a vast body of scholarship by African scholars and researchers on South African print media post-apartheid media debates. Several scholars (Tomaselli 2000; Jacobs, Timmermans & Mgoqi 2001; Bennetts 2004; Duncan 2003; Steenveld, 2004; and Berger, 2004) have argued that despite the significant changes in mainstream print media post-1994, the media continues to function according to the dictates of commercial profiteering. Other scholars (Tomaselli, 2002; Berger, 2002) have foregrounded media ownership and democratisation. Questions on the pertinent issue of print media transformation have also been raised (Berger, 1999; Duncan; 2000; Teer-Tomaselli & Tomaselli; 2001' Steenveld, 2002, 2004, Tomaselli, 2004). The entry of the new entrants into the print media market and the reaction of the established players towards them has also been foregrounded (Wasserman, 2005; Strelitz and Steenveld, 2005; Wasserman & du Bois, 2006). It can be argued past research in the media studies in South Africa has generally taken a marked liberal-pluralist orientation. The argument of this dissertation is that in order to better theorise media wars between newspaper companies and editors one needs to gaze at the media as an "agonistic space" Daniels (2012) and to understand that "the world of media itself is undecided, open, split, lacking a unified identity". (Daniels, 2012: 216) Therefore, Mouffe's concept of "agonistic pluralism" (Mouffe, 2000:139 in Daniels, 2012:113) is at the core of the agonistic approach that is proposed herein in this research for theorising media wars. Daniels (2012: 30) states that Mouffe explained in her work, *Challenge of Carl Schmidt*, that an agonistic approach acknowledges the real nature of democracy's frontiers and the forms of exclusion involved, instead of trying to disguise them under the veil of rationality and morality. Similarly, this study proposes an agonistic approach to the study of media that acknowledges the real nature of the fractious contentions between competing newspaper companies and editors, instead of disguises them under the veil of media debates or public spats. The media wars between newspaper companies and editors have centred on issues internal to the media that entered the public domain because of the media's ability to affect and extend 'agonistic' publics. Therefore, it can be argued that the media spaces are "places for the expression of dissensus, for bringing to the floor what forces attempt to keep concealed". (Mouffe (2006) quoted in Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006: 973-4) In essence, this study is theorised within a radical media politics framework and is turning to a hailing made by Zielinski (2006: 13), who proposed the concept of a "deep

time for the media" which open-up spaces for imagination in media research. Mouffe's concept of agonistic pluralism is slowly gaining significance within critical perspectives in media studies. In his paper that discusses the radical-pluralist, or agonistic, theories of democracy, and their potential significance in the context of media studies, Karppinen (2006: 3) state that the agonistic model of democracy can be a "possible theoretical basis for bringing the 'ethos of pluralisation' to bear on the level of media structures and politics". Karppinen (2006), however, warns against naïve pluralism in media politics. He has strongly criticised the way radical pluralist ideas have been appropriated in media and cultural studies. Karppinen (2006) posits that for Mouffe, the key task for radical-pluralist democratic politics is to make the relations of power visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation. In the same way, the key task for radical-pluralist media politics is to make the relations of power between competing newspaper companies and editors visible in the public so that they can not only enter the terrain of contestation but also afford the public an opportunity to scrutinise the media and hold it to account in the same way it holds accountable aspects of society.

1.2.2 Michel Foucault's material post-structuralism: Beyond textual analysis

Reflections on Michel Foucault's contribution to the study of the mass media, Hobbs (2008) noted that scholars from a variety of disciplines continue to employ a 'Foucauldian paradigm' to different social settings, yet despite his 'far-reaching influence', Foucault's work has had 'little impact' on the field of media-related inquiry. This study reluctantly employs a 'Foucauldian paradigm' because "most of the theory we use did not come out of Africa, that much of it has ambiguous histories of alliance with colonial power, and that we are always bending it – even if a little – to suit our own uses and situations". (Garman, 2015: 170) Garman (2015), who, herself, "used Foucault to explain confessional writings in South Africa and … read an enormous amount of Foucault and … puzzle and think about Foucault's ideas a lot" (Garman, 2015: 170), observes:

> *As researchers of this continent we have perhaps become too accustomed to this process of refracting theory made in other places with the thought that our location does not quite fit the parameters of theory, or even with considerations that the local, carefully*

> *observed, extends the good theory. But we might also, by using Northern theory in this way, be contributing to a situation that continues to view our locations as objects of research only, and not generative sites of new theory.* (Garman, 2015: 170)

Nonetheless, Foucault's material poststructuralism is employed in this research because of its ability to untangle not only text arrangements, but also how discourse works and how it is shaped to conceal and mystify. The term "Foucault material poststructuralism" is used in this dissertation because "Foucault's work is…neither truly structuralist or post-structuralist (at least according to the most common definitions of these terms)" (Hobbs, 2008: 3) since his "ideas are said to offer both radical epistemological 'decenterings' of knowledge and truth (Harrison, 1992:84 in Hobbs, 2008: 3), while offering a *somewhat* structuralist account of the effects of discourse, knowledge, and power on society and the subject". (Hobbs, 2008: 3) (emphasis original) In an article that chronicles Foucault's distinctive commitment to 'post-structuralism' through tracing the affinities and departures from structuralism, Olssen (2003), co-editor of *Critical Theory: Founders in Praxis*, contends that Foucault application of post-structuralism "does not offer just offer textual analysis, nor just a critique of the forms of discourse, but an account how discourse is shaped, and how discourse shapes everyday life" (Olssen, 2003: 195). For Olssen (2003: 194), the post-structuralism of Foucault is, thus, not concerned with language, but with "politics". Similarly, this study of the media wars and their discourses in the South African print media is not concerned solely with the emergent ideologies that are discursively produced by these media wars, but is also interested in examining the "politics" at play when a news media outlet reports 'negatively' about another media. To help explicate the "politics" inherent in media discourses, Olsen (2003: 196) suggests the following approaches to be applied in aiding discourse analysis:

- at the level at which the discursive and the material are inextricably linked together (as apparatuses), as in the development of institutional forms;
- at the level where institutional-discursive apparatuses conflict;
- at the level of the discursive as historically constituted material and ideological forces, rendered comprehensible via genealogy (Olssen, 2003: 196)

Foucault's formulation of power is also important here. In his historic analysis of the various discursive technique of power by which subjects are ordered along specific hierarchies of knowledgeability, Foucault (1976: 44) contended:

> *The machinery of power that focus on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but to give it an analytical, visible and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into principle of classification and intelligibility.*

In tandem with this study's theoretical frame of the media as an "agonistic space" (Daniels, 2012), Foucault "progressively develops a conception of discourse as a purely historical category that resists all reference to transcendental principles of unity – whether of substance or form – but sees the emergence of discursive frameworks as precarious and contested assemblages characterised by indeterminacy, complexity, openness, uncertainty and contingency" (Olssen, 2003: 1) Although it is alleged that a post-structural focus on identity, subjectivity and representation often distracts us from the important questions about truth in the context of material structures, "it is no longer to be assumed that *underneath* discursive representation a deeper truth is to be discovered, or that *underneath* ideology the real motivation of actors can be detected". (Goede, 2006: 7)

This contextualised critique of the media wars in the South African print media will be conducted herein in this study within the current historical, (geo) political and current juncture in South Africa and is shot through a poststructuralist lens in order to better grasp this relatively new phenomenon. As pointed out by Foucault (1988):

> *A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest… We must free ourselves from the sacralization of the social as the only reality and stop regarding as superfluous something so essential in human life and human relations as thought.* (Foucault, 1988: 155)

1.2.3 Critical Political Economy (CPE)

This study will deploy critical theory in order to account for the materialistic struggles faced by newspaper companies in a print media industry facing shrinking revenue streams. However, this research has opted to deliberatively shy away from the traditional critical political economy approach of the media that seeks to explain the behaviour of the news media by sole reference to capitalist ownership and control. After all, media companies are businesses which are trading with information in the media market to advance their profit-driven motives. Fuchs (2009) argues that critical theory is "materialistic in the sense that it addresses phenomena and problems not in terms of absolute ideas and predetermined societal development, but in terms of resource distribution and social struggles".

> *Critical theory is interested in why there is a difference between actuality and potentiality, existence and essence, and aims at finding ways of bridging this difference. It aims at the establishment of a cooperative, participatory society and asks 'basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good'* (Murdock and Golding, 2005: 61)

In analysing media wars, this study acknowledges and appreciates the struggles of resource distribution in the print media dominated by big media accompanies. Given that the print media has been shot through 'multimedia vectors', this study will rely on the critical political economy from a new media perspective in contrast to the pluralist analysis of old print media. Mansell et al. (2002) and Melody (1994) state that "a political economy of new media insists on examination of circumstances that give rise to any given distribution of power and of the consequences for consumers and citizens" (Mansell et al., 2002; Melody, 1994)

1.2.4 Applying Bourdieu in the South African 'media field'

How can Bourdieu help us grasp media wars in South Africa today? How can the concept of the 'field' originally coined for analysing relations within states, provide an understanding of the emerging patterns of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in the South African print media? The analysis of the media field in this study is influenced by *The Field of Cultural Production* by Pierre Bourdieu (1993). The 'field' of print media in South Africa has been the most visible and significant battleground for media wars between competing media organisations and editors. This study posits that since the establishment of the Gupta-owned newspaper, *The New Age*, in 2010 and the R2-billion buyout of Independent Newspaper by Sekunjalo Independent Media, there have been marked shifts within the South African print 'media field' depending on how close a media outlet or individual journalists are to either the autonomous or heteronomous poles in the Bourdieuian sense.

> *A field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actor struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies.* (Bourdieu, 1998: 40–41)

Bourdieu's (1993) field theory and his concept of the 'media field' have been applied in this research to explore a complex set of conflictual relations between editors and newspaper companies. Couldry (2007: 210) asks: "Where better to apply it [field theory] than in relation to the institutions that specialise in universalizing discourse about the social – the media?" He contends that the field theory is more than an insistence on relationality: "When applied to me, it encourages us to explore a formidably complex set of dynamic relations behind the newspaper or television news." (Ibid, 2007: 210) Couldry (2007) questions whether the field theory is "quite total or unambiguous answer to media researcher's explanatory problems" (2007: 10) especially given the fact that Bourdieu never produced a major work on journalism. However, Neveu (2007) argues that the most useful readings from Bourdieu for journalism studies are to be found more

in his sociologies of culture and education rather than in his "short (and rare) texts on journalism". (Ibid, 2007: 341) He further argues that the field approach is "highly relational and invites us to think not of "Journalism" but of a profession and practice structured and split by complex cleavages". Neveu (2007: 337) Quoting Bourdieu, Desaut and Riverre (2002: 76) state that "the liberating power of journalism" lies "not to Journalism, but to the struggles inside the journalistic field…" This study looks at the struggles inside the journalism field between newspaper companies and editors. In the South African media context, these struggles between competing media companies became a strong feature in media discourse with the entry in the media scene of TNA Media in 2010 and the arrival of new the owners of Independent Newspapers, Sekunjalo Independent Media, in 2013. This transformation of the South African journalism field need to be understood in as far as it renegotiates and reconfigures the existing set of rules and norms within the field. For instance, in 2010 till to date, *The New Age* has defied the long-held tradition for mainstream newspapers to be listed on Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) and in 2016 the Independent Media resigned from the Press Council, an industry's self-regulatory body, and said it will establish its own ombudsman. In their forthcoming paper, "Capital or Critique? When Journalism Education Seeks to Influence the Field", Boshoff and Garman explain the behaviour of new entrants into the field and the seismic shifts that are happening beneath the surface:

> *A new arrival within the field is not merely new: it interrupts, modifies or transforms the relations of power that exist and which constitute the space of possibilities within the field, even to the extent of making obsolete or outmoded the dominant genres that have till then characterised the field. The competition to "make one's mark" implies an attempt to create a new position ahead of those already occupied; and thus each writer, or institution or work which "makes its mark" has the potential to displace all the others. Transformations in the field, in effect, transform the identities of the members of the field.* (Boshoff and Garman, Forthcoming)

According to Benson (1998), the first step toward understanding how and why journalism functions as it does is to locate it vis-a-vis other fields. He talked of the field theory's two-fold analysis – "of the shifting relation between heteronomous and autonomous power and of the changing demographics of the new entrants into the journalism field (Benson, 1998: 469)

> *Like the literary field or the artistic field, then, the journalistic field is the site of a specific, and specifically cultural, model that is imposed on journalists through a system of overlapping constraints and controls that each of these brings to bear on the others. Each field is structured around the opposition between the ``heteronomous'' pole representing economic and political capital (forces external to the field) and the ``autonomous'' pole representing the special capital unique to that field (e.g., artistic or scientific or other species of cultural capital).* Bourdieu (1998: 70–71)

Benson (1999) states that in addition to the division between heteronomy and autonomy, the field of journalism (as with all other fields) is structured around the opposition between the "old"' and the "new". He further argues that media researchers must take note both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of demographic change in a field are crucial. A rapid influx of new agents into the field can serve both as a force for transformation and for conservation. At the managerial or organisational level, new agents can only establish themselves by marking their differences with those already in the field and thus they have the greatest incentive to found a new kind of press outlet or adopt a distinctive editorial voice. In terms of the quantitative demographic profile, the South African print media is still largely in the monopoly of four big media companies, Caxton, Naspers (Media24), Times Media Group and Independent Media. This is despite the entry *The New Age*[5] into the market. The qualitative demographic profile regarding the identities of media owners has slightly changed with the arrival of modern (black) capital symbolised by the purchase of Independent Media by black investors.

[5] Currently, *The New Age* does not publish circulation figures, and its publication figures are not audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa, as most other South African newspapers are. So it is not clear what is its status compared with other newspapers in the market. (Sarah Evans, Lionel Faull, *M&G Online*, 25 Jan 2013)

Neveu (2007) explains the value of field analysis in media research:

> *It invites us to pay attention to the mapping and balance of power of the sub-universes of cultural and intellectual producers. And journalists are connected to these social worlds by their training, myths, by the fact that they compete and co-operate with intellectuals as sources and interpreters of the world. They can never completely escape the aforementioned field effects. Field analysis also allows for selecting a broader focus and questioning the system of relationships between the journalistic field and other major fields.* (Ibid, 2007: 241)

Finally, this research makes a bold claim that Bourdieu's concept of the "media field" should be understood in the context of the field being a site in which these media wars are being constituted and where an actor "maximises his or her capital to succeed in that field or the situated body by and through which a particular habitus is acquired and sustained". (Foucault, 2005: 357) From this perspective, it is clear that the notions of agency and habitus are neither created out of "free will,' nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time" (Temelkova, 2014: 2). Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005: 316, cited in Navarro 2006: 16).

1.2.5 Some useful concepts

The study will deploy Althusser's concept of 'ideological interpellation' to account for ideologies in discourses through the performative act of naming or labelling. It will also use the concept of 'Othering' to explicate how the media houses represented each other in their editorial pages during these media wars.

1.2.5.1 Althusser's concept of 'ideological interpellation'

Originally coined within post-colonial theory, the concept of the "*Other*" is widely used in the broad scholarly field of social sciences and humanities mostly on how identities are constructed and how representations are conferred to different groups within any given society. The media power at the disposal of editors and media owners is not only symbolic but has a performative function of interpellation through naming or labelling. Thus, this study will deploy Althusser's concept of 'ideological interpellation' to investigate whether the actors (editors and media owners) in their discourses used interpellation or labelling in their fights to mask the real issues being posed.

According to Curran et al. (2005: 19), Althusser viewed ideology as:

> *"a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals with the real conditions of their existence…inscribed within an apparatus and its practices. Ideology operates here to interpellate individuals as subjects, 'hailing' individuals through the apparently obvious and normal rituals of everyday living. Ideology, rather than being imposed from above and being, therefore, implicitly dispensable, is the medium through which all people experience the world"* (Curran et al., 2005: 19).

Quoting Althusser, Hall (2005) argues that ideology provide sets of representations and discourses through which we lived out, 'in an imaginary way, our relation to our real conditions of existence' (Althusser, 1969: 233 in Hall, 2005: 78).

> *If ideologies are structures…then they are not 'images' nor 'concepts' (we can say, they are not contents) but are sets of rules which determine an organisation and the functioning of images and concepts…. Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages…in this way, ideology becomes autonomous in relation to the consciousness or intention of its agents: these may be conscious of their points of view about social forms but not of the semantic conditions (rules and categories or codification) which make possible these points of view…. From this point of view, then, an 'ideology' may be defined as a system of semantic rules to generate messages…it is one of the many levels of organization of messages, from the viewpoint of their semantic properties…* (Veron, 1971: 68)

Curran et al. (2005) posit within an Althusserian-structuralist framework, the media "operates predominantly through ideology: they are ideological state apparatuses as opposed to more classically repressive state apparatuses. Thus the effectivity of the media lies not in an imposed false consciousness, nor in changing attitudes, but in the unconscious categories through which conditions are represented and experienced". (Curran et al., 2005: 19)

1.2.5.2 The concept of the "Representing the Other"

The cultural studies concept of '*Representing the Other'* which is widely used in the broad field of social sciences is helpful as a model for text and media critique. Therefore, it will be used in this dissertation to analytical examine how the media represented each other in their editorial pages during the ensuing media wars. In his paper that looked at how global journalists represent the 'Other' and the critical assessment of the cultural studies concept for media practice, Ffursich (2002: 57) state that 'representations of the other' refers to "a whole range of theoretical writings and studies about how 'our' identities is shaped by distancing ourselves from some perceived or assumed Other"

> *We need to distinguish 'construction' from 'construe', which social constructivists do not: we may textually construe (represent, imagine, etc) the social world in particular ways, but whether our representations or construals have the effect of changing its constructions depends upon various contextual factors – including the way social is constructed, who is constructing it and so forth.* (Fairclough, 2003: 89)

Newspapers or news products constitute and carve out their own identities in their quest to differentiate themselves from their competitors in a saturated media market. The

constitution and politics of identity are often predicated by distinction. As Hall (1991:21) puts it: "Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through narrow eye of the negative, It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it constructs itself." Hall (2005: 447) contends that "representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time". Brantlinger (1990: 3 in Ffursich (2002: 57) argues that "in order to understand ourselves, the discourses of "the Other" – of all the others – is at which we most urgently need to hear".

> *Thus strategies of media representations must be continuously questioned because cultural practices are also constantly changing. It is up to critics to show if media elude, avoid or suppress certain elements (because of advertising pressure, institutional constraints, governmental pressure, technical shortcomings, hindered access or hegemonic thought systems such as in the case of lingering colonial representation).* (Ffursich, 2002: 72)

Given that the media is a representational sphere, it seems incumbent to deploy the concept of representing the other to find out how the media publications represent a competitor or rival media organisation using their editorial platforms.

1.2.6 Blending CPE, post-structuralism and field theory

This study attempts to show how CPE, poststructuralism and field theory and other useful concepts employed in this study can be blended fruitfully together in order to decipher the complex phenomenon of media wars. Poststructuralism brings to the fore the importance of discourse and representation. On the interrelatedness of poststructuralism and the representation of the "Other", Ffursich (2002: 72) suggest that "on a more abstract and discursive level, poststructuralism builds a connection between formation of discourse and "othering" or marginalization". Similarly, Goerde (2006: 6-7) posits that the "questions of how certain meanings are fixed at the expense of others, how certain representations dominate alternatives, how the limits of political [media]discourse are constituted, go to the heart of post structural [media] politics".

1.3 Methodology: Analytical Framework

> *...methodology is nothing more than an inevitable offshoot of theory, that the two are part of the same structure two inextricably linked aspects of a single discourse. Perhaps because methodology is seen as banal and intellectually unchallenging (all perspiration and no inspiration) this unsophisticated theoretical determinism has survived an era notable for the unravelling of totalising structures.* (Lewis, 1997: 84 cited in Fursich, 2009: 239)

This section provides a methodological analytical framework for this study. It will outline some of the general principles underpinning critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the analysis of media texts and corpus. Firstly, this section will provide a detailed explanation on how the process of data collection was conducted, including an outline of the processes that were followed in the selection of media texts and interview participants. Then, it will outline the ethical research considerations made by the investigator of this study before, during and after the interview process. Lastly, this section will explicate the analytical tools or methods to be used in the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data in the corpus and will explain their methodological subtleties.

1.3.1 Data Collection

The data collection for this research took place in two phases. The first phase constituted of the selection and collection of media texts relating to the two examples or case studies of the media wars as outlined earlier in the introductory chapter. This process of data collection took place simultaneously with the process of the initial review of relevant literature to the study in order to permit a "creative interplay among the process of data collection, literature review and researcher introspection." (Patton, 1990: 163) It was important for the author of this study to familiarise himself with the relevant literature to the study 'early-on' during the data collection first phase in order to enhance his awareness to "subtle nuances in data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 49). Likewise, Meyer and Wodak (2001) suggest that data collection is "not considered to be a specific phase that must be completed before analysis begins: after the first collection exercise it is a matter of carrying out the first analyses, finding indicators for particular concepts,

expanding concepts into categories and, on the basis of these results, collecting further data (*theoretical sampling*)". (Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 23-24) (emphasis mine)

The corpus of texts in the first phase of data collection was comprised of online media articles (texts and images) extracted from the following news outlets: *Independent Online (IOL), Mail & Guardian Online, and Daily Maverick.* These media texts were separated thematically according to the respective events or case studies and converted to PDF format, and filed electronically on the author's personal computer and external data storage device. This phase of the data collection took place at the computer labs of the University of Witwatersrand from May to June 2016.

The second phase of data collection comprised of face-to-face participant interviews with editors from English-language media publications in South Africa and media activists from media-related organisations. "Interview talk is by nature a cultural and collective phenomenon". (Wetherell & Potter, 1988: 169) The interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, were then incorporated as part of the corpus and were analysed thematically and are thus treated as empirical data in this research.

1.3.1.1 Corpus Construction: South African media war texts

The corpus of media texts imbricated in this study comprises of opinion articles, press statements, news articles and recorded radio podcasts as well as interview data. These were treated by the study as equivalent texts, and as part of the complete body of text material for analysis. The interweaving process of the texts in this study was essential for creating an overall perspective and acquiring integrated text material for thorough data analysis. The media texts chosen for this study are diverse but are by no means comprehensive and exhaustive. According to Janks (1997), "texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and that the process of production and reception are socially constrained." (1997: 329). These media texts were thematically organised and analysed intertextually in order to highlight the systematic way in which certain media discourses between competing newspaper companies and editors are foregrounded in various news publications and across the online media landscape generally. These texts were chosen because of the significant discourses of political affiliation, independence of the media, sustainability, competition and representations.

The author of this dissertation was satisfied that these media texts will serve as a springboard from which a cogent and thorough-going discussion and analysis of the relatively new phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors could take place. The author was also content that these media wars were capable of illuminating how and why some news publications conferred certain representations to other competitor publications. This study asserts that these media texts are within the scope of this study in so far as they contribute to an understanding of the relatively new phenomenon of media wars and their discourses in the South African print media. It is hoped that these media texts will aid critical discourse analysis in providing empirical evidence of the ideological discourses that emerged during these media and so pervasive within the media discourses.

1.3.1.2 Participant interviews

> *Most qualitative research probably is based on interviews. There are good reasons for this. By using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes. The interview is also a very convenient way of overcoming distances both in space and in time; past events or far away experiences can be studied by interviewing people who took part in them.* (Peräkylä, 2005: 869)

The opening gambit in this sub-section elucidates the importance of the interview method in qualitative research. As stated earlier, the second phase of data collection consisted of mostly face-to-face interviews with various editors and former editors of English-language newspapers and media activists. Interviews with the editors and media activists were conducted using open- ended questions related to the topic of media wars in the South African print media. Because this research is exploratory in nature, a convenience sample of interview participants was selected on the basis that these editors were not directly involved in these media wars as actors or participants, but have perceptive insights into the phenomenon under study. In her article which proposed a discourse analytical method for analysing qualitative interview data, Talja (1999) observed that "participants' interpretations are much more context-dependent and variable than normally recognized, and that this has important implications for the use of interview data." (1999: 1). The interviews with the various editors sought to elucidate

not only the factors that may possibly lead to these media wars, but also what dimension of the institutional structure or status quo they challenge or help hold in place.

The participants with whom the face-to-face interviews were successfully conducted with are:

- Ray Hartley, editor of Business Live and former editor of the *Sunday Times*
- Kevin Ritchie, Regional Executive Editor: Gauteng & Northern Cape at Independent Newspapers and former editor of *The Star*
- Verashni Pillay, editor-in-chief of Huffington Post South Africa and former editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian*
- Mpumelelo Mkhabela, Power FM station manager and former editor of the *Sowetan*, former chairperson of the South African National Editors Forum (Sanef)
- Micah Reddy, national co-ordinator for media freedom and diversity at the *Right2Know* Campaign

An interview with Glenda Nevill, editor of The Media Online, was conducted through emailed questions. Email questionnaires have become the standard data collection method in the 21st century. The editors interviewed in this study were "more a participant in meaning making than a conduit from which information is retrieved." (DiCiccio, 2006: 314). The interviews also provided this study with a "rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences, how they describe those experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012 in Castillo-Montoya, 2016: 811).

1.3.1.3 Research Ethics

The interview participants were given sufficient time to agree to take part in the study and fully informed consent was achieved before the interviews could take place. The participants were also duly informed about the purpose of the study. They were made aware that the interviews would be recorded in order to ensure that their views were properly represented and a fully informed consent was also achieved in this regard. The interviews were recorded by means of a dictaphone and were stored in a password-protected personal computer and storage device of the author. All the interviews were then transcribed before they were analysed thereafter. (See Appendices D)

The transcribed data has been incorporated in this study as part of the corpus, including the recorded podcasts and multimodal texts such as images. The author is satisfied that the ethical considerations as per the regulations of the Wits University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) were taken into account and met. All the participants were offered anonymity if they wished to remain anonymous. However, all the participants have agreed to be named in this study given the fact that, as editors, they are public figures. There were no conflicts of interest throughout the data collection phase aided by the fact that the author who conducted the study is not presently practising as a journalist. Up to this point, we have set out the how the data was collected and circumscribed the empirical data to be analysed. It is important, then, to decide how the data is going to be examined and analysed in order to speak to or problematise the research questions that underpin this study.

1.3.2 Data Analysis

The data in this qualitative study consists of media texts extracted from online news articles, images and a radio podcast, including transcripts from in-depth interviews with editors of various news publications. Paton (1990: 163, quoted in Janks, 1997: 330) posits that data analysis is an "iterative" process, although it is not always a "tidily linear." Wetherell (2001) argues that "the process of [data] analysis is always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint". (Ibid, 2001: 384) Elo and Kyngas (2008) suggest

that the actual implementation of the methods and understanding their "subtleties" in the data analysis process that should receive greater attention from qualitative researchers. This study has used a multifaceted analysis of media texts with the aim of unravelling the various overarching discourses which emerged during these media wars. The following are the methodological and analytical tools will be used to guide the analytical chapters for this study in the context of both the spoken and written discourse:

1.3.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This research has deployed critical discourse analysis (CDA) throughout the empirical data and analytical chapters of this study in order understand the ideological discourses or workings underpinning these media wars. Critical discourse analysis is an analytical tool that regards discourse as "a form as social practice." (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258) CDA provides for a detailed investigation and interpretation of the relationship of language to other social processes and how language is produced and distributed within power structures through relations. According to Wodak (1995), the theoretical and methodological impetus of the CDA lies in its ability to analyse "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language." (Wodak, 1995: 204) Although this research is theoretically shot through a Foucauldian and poststructuralism framework, it does not adopt purely a 'Foucauldianistic' stance reticence to declare a method. Frohman (1994) observed that that Foucault-influenced discourse analysis does not study the rules and conventions of mundane talk; rather it examines "serious speech acts", institutionalised talk or practices, although this does not necessarily mean that the actors or speakers should be "institutionally privileged" (Frohman, 1994:120). This study has opted to adopt a multi-pronged Faircloughian integrative methodological strategy in order to provide a richer understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon of media wars.

Fairclough (1992a) offers a three-dimensional framework for conceiving and analysing discourse:

- *discourse-as-text;*

  Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) argue that paying attention to concrete textual features (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, text structure) distinguishes CDA from germane approaches such as that of Michel Foucault.

- *discourse-as-discursive-practice;*

  Approaching discourse as discursive practice means giving attention to speech acts, coherence and intertextuality – three aspects that link a text to its contexts (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 448, 449)

- *discourse-as-social-practice;*

  "The way in which discourse is being represented, respoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of the new orders of discourse, struggle over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against the regimes of power" (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 449)

In her analysis of CDA as a research method Janks (1997) suggests that it is the questions pertaining to interests that relate discourse to relations of power that are central in making CDA an effective method of qualitative discourse: "How is the text positioned or positioning? Whose interests are served by this positioning? Whose interests are negated? What are the consequences of this positioning?" (Janks, 1997: 329) The methodological and analytical tools that follow thus will be useful in carrying out a textual analysis of media texts in this study.

1.3.2.2 Intertextuality

The poststructuralist concept of intertextuality will be deployed in this study as an interpretive analytical tool. It will be operationalised in the empirical data chapters in order to conduct textual analysis of discursive texts such as interviews, podcast conversations and online articles. Intertextuality was dialectically conceived by Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) and is widely believed to have been coined by Julia Kristeva on the basis of Bakhtin's work. Kristeva (1981) situated any given text in the nexus of "…permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one other". (Kristeva, 1981: 36)

Like in journalism writing, intertextuality refers to a situation whereby texts rely on other texts. "Media texts also depend on intertextual relations with many other genres, diachronically or synchronically. Texts relate to other texts, represented by the media, through quotes or indirect references, thus already adding particular meanings or decontextualizing and recontextualizing meanings." (Wodak and Busch, 2004: 106) Although, there is no single approach to analysing the complex phenomenon of intertextuality in writing, production and interpretation, Fairclough (1992) stresses the importance of intertextuality in analysing discursive events. He argues that intertextuality serves as a springboard into the "complexity of discursive events (realised in the heterogeneity of texts, in meaning, form, and style)". (Fairclough, 1992) Fairclough (1992) pointed out that it was crucial to pay attention to how texts may "'re-accentuate' genres, how genres (discourses, narratives, registers) may be mixed in texts" (Ibid, 1992). Reflecting on intertextuality as an interpretive method in qualitative research, Elkad-Lehman and Greensfeld (2011) state that intertextuality can be used as a tool in the "hermeneutic process" – the art of interpreting. Therefore, Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework for analysing intertextuality in media discourse will be used in this study, namely: 'discourse representation', 'discourse type' and "interpretive activity' in order to examine and analyse intertextual relations of media texts the locus of contestations between competing newspaper companies and editors.

1.3.2.3 Thematic Analysis

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. (Ibid, 2006: 79) Braun and Clarke (2013) emphasised the theoretical flexibility of thematic analysis and identified it as just an analytic method, rather than a methodology itself. "We view TA [thematic analysis] as theoretically flexible because the search for, and examination of, patterning across language does not require adherence to any particular theory of language, or explanatory meaning framework for human beings, experiences or practices." (Braun and Clarke, 2013) The process of thematic analysis involves identifying themes that capture something important about the data in relation to the research questions and seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text. Rice and Ezzy (1999) suggest that thematic analysis involves the process of the identification of themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data". (Ibid, 1999: 258) Steeped in tradition of hermeneutic analysis (the art of interpreting), Braun and Clarke (2013) state that thematic analysis is suited to a wide range of research interests and theoretical perspectives, and is useful as a 'basic' method because:

> *it works with a wide range of research questions, from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts; it can be used to analyse different types of data, from secondary sources such as media to transcripts of focus groups or interviews; it works with large or small data-sets; and it can be applied to produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses.* (Braun and Clarke, 2013)

By using a thematic method, this study will pin down the key themes emanating from interviews with the editors of news publications in order a picture of presuppositions, suppositions and meanings that constitute a media world of which the textual material is a specimen.

1.3.2.4 Multimodality

This study will use multimodal analysis to analyse multimodal online texts and images. Multimodal analysis refers to the way of looking at texts and of identifying and singling out apparently new kinds of texts. "Many everyday texts are now 'multimodal' combining words with moving images, sound, colour and a range of photographic, drawn or digitally created visuals." (Bearne and Wolstonecroft, 2007: 1 quoted in Bazalgette and Buckingham, 2013: 96) Luke (2003) contended that multimodality has "shifted from the serial cognitive processing of linear print text to parallel processing of multimodal text-image information sources" (2003: 399) as more texts become available in digital form. He further argues that multimodality has brought a new dimension in the way we analyse texts and conjure up meanings: "Text and meaning are no longer embedded exclusively in a linear sequence of alphabetic characters combined in a logical sequence of phrase, sentence, paragraph, and narrative units dictated by author intent or formatting demands of a page or book." (Luke, 2003: 399) Bezemer and Kress (2008) state that still (as well as moving) images are increasingly prominent as carriers of meaning and call for a social, pedagogical, and semiotic explanation. "The texts of the new technologies have mutated into complex, hybrid semiotic systems that have made new demands on reading and writing, social exchange and communication." (Luke, 2003: 401) Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) argue that in respect to "close" textual analysis, multimodality can "situate" textual analysis within a broader account of social production of meaning and can be a useful analytical method that sits well along other established approaches.

This section has outlined that this study adheres to the realm of qualitative discourse analysis and has shown the specific methods to be used in the empirical and analytical data chapters. It has provided the methodological and analytical underpinnings of data analysis with the description and evidence of the various analytical tools and methods to be used. Therefore, the empirical findings emanating from interview material and media texts will be analytical and critically examined through the prism of the analytical tools or methods discussed above and their methodological subtleties will be addressed. In this chapter, this study has provided an overview of the literature related to the phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in the South

African print media. This overview, therefore, will enable for a cogent and contextual analysis surrounding fractious fights between competing media houses and will account for the background factors underpinning these media wars. Then, this chapter has outlined the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It has been shown how these theoretical frameworks will enable an insightful and critical analysis of the corpus of media texts within the proceeding chapters. Poststructuralism has been shown to be a theory that allows for the analysis of complex issues and has proved to be useful in foregrounding discourses and representations. Critical Political Economy has been shown to be useful in confronting questions such as materiality, material resources and inequality. It has also been shown herein in this research that the field theory is insightful in as far as understanding of the media field where new players attack the dominance of old players within the hierarchical structure of the field by exploiting the heteronomous power structures.

Furthermore, this has provided an explication of the methods and tools by which the empirical data were sourced, organised, stored and analysed. The two-phase process of data collection was elucidated in detail. The specific reasons and choices behind the selection of media texts and interview participants were sufficiently explained. It was further explained that all media texts were incorporated into the study as part of the corpus. The methods outlined in this serves to highlight how the media war texts were interrogated and analysed applying through a critical discourse analysis process. Lastly, it has been shown in this chapter how poststructuralism with its insistence on the discursive constitution of the material can be effectively blended with critical political economy and other theoretical concepts employed in this study collapse the distinction between the discursive and material. These theories and methods will be used to critically examine the two case studies or examples of the media wars between competing media companies and editors and follow thus.

Chapter 2

Black, green and gold, Blue or Red? Should journalists openly declare their political affiliation in the public?

This chapter elucidates the relationship between opinion and argumentation discourse by analytically examining one case study that forms part of this research to shed new light on the important question on whether journalists in South Africa should openly declare their political affiliation in the public and still be allowed to practice as professional journalists. The case study approach was decided upon by 'the pursuit of a *nuanced view* of the considered phenomenon'. (Flyvbjerg, 2001) This chapter is broken down in two sections. The first section will elucidate the discourses of the editors through a critical discourse analysis and will refer to the literature delineated in chapter one. It will provide a closer scrutiny of the intersection between the independence of the media and freedom of association which are both inscribed in our Constitution and will shine the spotlight on what can be argued is the lack of an explicit regulation by the South African Press Code for print and online journalists on the question of political affiliation. The opinion discourses of the editors on issues of political affiliation, media independence and freedom of association will be highlighted in order to assess the different ways in which editors understand the relationship between journalists and political parties and will scrutinise the changing subjectivities of journalists in relation to their private and professional personas. The second section will deploy the concept of argumentation used by scholars such as O'Keefe (1998) to carry out a textual analysis of a radio podcast, which became acrimonious and personal, featuring three editors from different media houses in order to highlight the argumentative nature of media discourses generally.



Figure 2: A Facebook picture of Independent Newspapers' Group executive editor Karima Brown and editor of opinion and analysis, Vukani Mde, decked out in ANC-branded clothing. (*M&G Online*, 15 Jan 2015)

2.1 Corpus Construction: Media Texts

Three opinion articles (or pieces to use industry jargon) by Marianne Thamm, assistant editor at the *Daily Maverick*, Vukani Mde, Independent's group opinion and analysis editor, and Ferial Haffajee, former editor-in-chief of the *City Press* and in 2017 editor at large at the *Huffington Post SA*, which were published in the *Daily Maverick* website between 13 and 16 January 2015, will be examined and analysed respectively in order to reveal and highlight the varied characteristics of opinion discourse. A radio podcast emanating from SAfm's morning radio talk show, AM Live's Forum@8, and broadcast live on January 15, 2015 featuring former *Mail & Guardian* deputy editor Moshoeshoe Monare and former *Beeld* editor Adriaan Basson (presently editor at News24.com) , alongside Independent's former group executive editor (and in 2017 independent political analyst at eNCA) Karima Brown as guests to express their views about journalists who are politically affiliated, will also be analysed in order to highlight the argumentative nature of media discourse. Both these media texts highlight the important question whether it is acceptable for journalists to openly declare their political affiliation in the public and still practice as professional journalists. The transcribed interviews with editors of various media publications have been incorporated as part of media texts which form part of the corpus of this chapter and have been interspersed in

order reflect on the provide the gaze of editors on the issue of journalism and political affiliation and to highlight some discourses imbricated within media texts.

2.2 Setting the scene: A virtual encounter between the editors

Thamm's opinion piece in the *Daily Maverick* titled: "True colours shining through: Should journalists be draping themselves in party political colours?" (*Daily Maverick*, 13 January 2015) sparked a furore between editors of different media publications after her piece criticised Mde and Brown of Independent Media for attending the ANC 103rd birthday rally decked in the ruling party's regalia. This was after Mde and Brown had posted a 'selfie' of them on Twitter wearing ANC-branded hats and t-shirts. In the act of writing such a piece, Thamm, the arguer, aimed to bring back Mde and Brown into line or to rein them in, so to speak. Two days later, Mde responded to Thamm's article with a long missive, a 5 111-word opinion piece, titled, "Writing truth to (all forms of) power" (*Daily Maverick*, 15 January 2016). A day later, Haffajee responded to Mde's article, with her own article titled, "White Internet? WTF?" (*Daily Maverick*, 16 January 2016), arguing that journalists should neither be expected to choose between an 'ANC Panama hat, an EFF beret nor DA blue'. This furore between the editors on the issue of journalism and political raised many questions, among them: 'Would journalists at the Independent Media follow in the footsteps of their editors and start to turn or 'half-turn' (Daniels, 2012) towards the voice of power? Would they begin to self-censor and be less critical of the ANC, the party of their editors? Would they feel they were doing wrong by not donning ANC branded regalia at the party's events? What messaging were these editors sending to young journalists whom some of them did not experience apartheid and did not have the ideological garbage of the past? It is not the intent of this study to deeply interrogate these above-mentioned questions, except to unravel the media discourses that emerged during the virtual encounters between the editors on the issue of journalism and political affiliation.

2.3 Independent journalism and political affiliation: What did the editors write?

A discursive approach to opinion discourse, which this chapter has followed, has important theoretical and critical implications for the understanding of opinion articles written by editors during the Brown/Mde furore over questions of political affiliation for journalists. On the one hand, the views expressed by editors indicate how opinions take form and function in the context of social and cultural life. On the other hand, they reveal the dynamic power the editors hold in giving opinions to the public.

Thamm wrote:

> *The myth of the objective journalist has long been shattered. It never existed. Journalists are human and by nature gravitate towards specific ideologies and ways of thinking shaped by a myriad of influences and factors. We are not blank slates. Ultimately, however, our job is to monitor and to hold power to account – whatever its colours…While journalists have always privately harboured political sympathies or ideologies, in the past few, if any, publicly revealed these allegiances or nailed their colours to the mast…Good journalism is about monitoring and holding power to account, whether it wears black, green and gold, blue or red.* (*Daily Maverick,* 13 January, 2016)

The central argument that Thamm makes is that journalists 'have always harboured political sympathies or ideologies' and that it does not matter to know what their ideologies are, how they work, and how they are created, changed, and reproduced. She pointed out that the wearing of party regalia by journalists at official political events was a new phenomenon because 'in the past few, if any, publicly revealed these allegiances or nailed their colours to the mast'. Her contention was that despite the necessity to investigate the discursive manifestations of ideology and the need to interrogate their discursive practices embedded in social structures, it was important for the journalists to hold power to account regardless of their political allegiances, 'whether it wears black, green and gold, blue or red'.

The following except reveals how Mde felt about Thamm's criticism:

> *This has been a debate that, while interesting, I now realise to have been completely fake. At issue is not the desirability or otherwise of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' in journalism. It is one's stance with regard to the ANC, the government, and the state. This is how the dominant clique represented by Thamm has subtly defined these values over time. In their universe, objectivity and neutrality is mouthing ideologically loaded shibboleths while outwardly pretending their practice of journalism is value-free. It is assuming, without so much as a nod to self-examination, that their world view and value system is the universal norm, and moreover insisting that this norm should be obvious and acceptable to the rest of us.* (*Daily Maverick*, 15 January, 2016)

Mde brought to the fore the value perspective, arguing that the practice of journalism is not 'value-free'. According to him, there is a 'dominant clique represented by Thamm' which is trying to impose 'their world view and value system' to 'the rest of us'. Mde's discourse gravitated towards the politics of 'difference', of 'us and them', which is largely premised on covering relations of power that "reside in the arrangement and deployment of subjectivity in cultural and ideological practices". (Jordan and Weedon, 1995)

Haffajee argued in support of Thamm:

> *We are not automatons without beliefs and politics (we come from somewhere and many were activists; many vote for the ANC) but independent journalism requires an independent mind. I think Mde yielded his a long time ago; many of the examples of supposed independence he cited yesterday were written like ANC strategy documents – the tone is "here's what you need to fix, my party.* (*Daily Maverick*, 16 January, 2016)

For Haffajee, independent journalism is still possible regardless whether journalists are enamoured with ideology because journalists 'are not automations without beliefs and politics'. She critiqued Mde inferring that even though he claimed that their publications' editorials were critical of the ANC, their tone were hailing to "here's what you need to fix, my party".

2.4 Editors' discourse on self-identity and cultural differences

According to Couldry (2005: 354), the individual's relationship to the wider space of society and culture remains problematic. The opinion discourses of the editors relate to the presentation of self-identity with its reflexive aspect and ideological effects. A pointed example is Haffajee's comment which teased out the cultural differences between the editors to point out how culture and mind interpenetrate each other:

> *Imagine that, upon disagreeing with Vukani Mde's long, long, long letter, on Thursday, you diss and dismiss it as being the rambling of the Black Internet by adding supporting quotes from black writers like Eusebius McKaiser and Karima Brown.* (*Daily Maverick*, 16 January, 2016)

For Haffajee, the standard positions in media debates about the self-identity of black journalists in post-apartheid South Africa era assume, at root, that the industrial production of 'black journalistic discourse' must contribute to some wider social agreement with the views of fellow black journalists whether we call it identity-formation or social integration or both. According to Deuze (2004), "the history of journalism in elective democracies around the world has been described as the emergence of a professional identity of journalists with claims to an exclusive role and status in society, based on and at times fiercely defended by their occupational ideology". (Deuze, 2004: 277) Deuze's (2004) assertion that the professional identity of journalists is somewhat tied to their occupational identity raises two pertinent questions: What really ties the social system of black and white journalists in post-apartheid South African media era? Does occupational ideology of the South African mainstream media contain self-contradictory oppositional values among black journalists themselves?

2.5 Consenting and opposing voices

What these opinion discourses or robust contestation s and fights of the editors also revealed was that they relied on the other consenting, authoritative voices to mediate or convolute discourse in supporting or in opposing the 'Other'. As an example, it was witnessed how Haffajee entered this furore in support of Thamm and in opposition to Mde. Similarly, we observed how political commentator and broadcaster, Eusebius McKaiser, jumped on the bandwagon in support of Mde and in opposition to Thamm in his Facebook post of 13 January 2015 titled, "On South African political reporters, editors and donning your political colours: a comprehensive response to Marianne Thamm." Shi-xu (2000) makes an illuminating point:

> *…opinions may also be mediated by other voices in ways that achieve desired effects. It follows then that opinion holders and the social others, consenting or otherwise, may be not just individuals but also groups, institutions, or even cultural traditions… Opinion discourse, moreover, may not be entirely singular or unique, but interconnected with social others of different kinds and in complex ways. Opinion giving often occurs in the context of imagined or real conflicting opinions of others.* (*Ibid,* 2000: 269)

2.6 Institutional and ideological settings

Lastly, the opinions of the editors highlighted that they were not merely inward-looking and personal, but they were also embedded in institutional and ideological settings. For instance, Mde's article made reference to institutional and ideological discourses when he pointed out: "It is assuming, without so much as a nod to self-examination, that their world view and value system is the universal norm, and moreover insisting that this norm should be obvious and acceptable to the rest of us. (*Daily Maverick*, 15 January, 2016) Shi-xu (2000) contends that "…if the reality of the other is presented as purportedly one's subjective opinion, then, it is important to pay attention to the positioning of the opinion holder and, more specifically, the resulting power gains." (Shi-xu 2000: 276)

2.7 The gaze of the editors of Mde/Brown furore

A sample of editors was interviewed in this study to reflect on the important question of journalism and political affiliation. The editors who were interviewed in this study did not take part, either directly or indirectly, in the media wars that are foregrounded in this research. The fact that these editors did not take part in the Brown/Mde furore, for instance, allowed them the necessary 'distance' to engage in 'deep' reflections on the issue of journalism and political affiliation without necessarily adopting a partisan view, although "journalism is typically a discursive re-construction of reality. Rarely do journalists witness events or get to know reality in a way that does not involve the mediation of others." (Carvalho 2008: 164) Xu (2000) suggests that the discourse of opinion has a number of "rather paradoxical properties that require empirical research and critical attention." The interview method, which comprised of reflective commentary from editors, was an important component of this research. The face-to-face interviews with the following editors were conducted in Johannesburg between August and November, 2016:

- Kevin Ritchie[6], former editor of *The Star*
- Verashni Pillay[7], former editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian*
- Mpumelelo Mkhabela[8], former editor of *Sowetan* and former chairperson of the South African National Editors Forum (Sanef)
- Ray Hartley[9], editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*

The interview with Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*, was conducted through an emailed questionnaire. Below are the views expressed by the above-mentioned editors on the issue whether journalists be attached to political parties – and show it so obviously as in cladding themselves in political regalia and whether they be politically affiliated:

[6] Kevin Ritchie is now Regional Executive Editor: Gauteng & Northern Cape at Independent Newspapers
[7] Verashni Pillay is now editor-in-chief of the *Huffington Post* SA
[8] Mpumelelo Mkhabela is the station manager at Power FM

[9] Ray Hartley is now editor of *Business Live*

Ritchie stated:

> *They [Brown and Mde] went to a political meeting as party members and not as journalists. And I think there's a distinction. They weren't there to cover the event or to influence the coverage of the event in any way…They were there in their private capacities and that leads us to a brand new debate about your private persona and your professional persona…This brings us into the whole question of objectivity and impartiality. I think it's an individual choice and I don't think it's wrong. If we believe that journalists are citizens first, there's no reason why Brown and Mde could not have attended that January 8th ANC meeting in their private capacity and not as working journalists and as such have worn regalia.*

Ritchie raised a distinction between the private persona and the public persona of journalists, averring that as long as the political affiliation of the journalists is not reflected in the content of the publications, it was perfectly fine for journalists to enjoy the freedom of association as enshrined in the Constitution.

Nevill said:

> *The Karima Brown/Vukani Mde situation was unfortunate. In many countries – including the US and the UK – newspapers do take a clear political stance, openly supporting candidates from one or other party. But in South Africa, we tend to try and show we're unbiased, politically, and that stories are even-handed. But in reality those lines are blurred… Brown and Mde, if attending an ANC birthday party in their personal capacities, were perfectly entitled to wear ANC-branded T-shirts. But if they were there to do a job, and report on the event, perhaps it wasn't such a wise idea.*

Nevill preferred the US and UK model whereby newspapers are not afraid to openly declare their political affiliation in the public and tow a particular ideological line. She concurred with Ritchie that Brown and Mde were perfectly entitled to wear ANC-branded t-shirts in their personal capacities.

Pillay reflected:

> *It was a very controversial matter and I remember it clearly. My immediate reflection, which is old-school, was that you shouldn't even have the issue of political affiliation, let alone nailing your colours to the mast. I believe that journalists must not join any clubs and not get involved in political affiliation. If you are involved with a political party, I would say you need to declare that.*

For Pillay, the important matter was for journalists to declare their political allegiances.

Mkhabela posited:

> *In terms of the rules, the Press Ombudsman has actually made a point that there's nothing that prohibits them [Mde and Brown] from wearing party regalia and attend a party rally. The question is whether it is wise to do so and the answer lies squarely on the conscience of the journalist concerned. Because there's no rule prohibiting it, it does not mean it's the right thing to do or it does not mean it's entirely wrong because it might not be an issue depending on context. For example, it might not be a big issue if the said journalist is not covering politics. I agree with the Press Ombudsman in that respect.*

For Mkhabela, the issue of political affiliation rests squarely on the conscience of the journalist concerned and questioned whether it was wise for journalists to openly declare their political affiliation in the public.

Hartley stated:

> *You should not wear your political affiliation on your sleeves because it would undermine your ability to cover politics. I don't think it's useful. I think a newspaper does need to project independence in order to succeed in the South African market. I'm clearly sure that even readers in Luthuli House [ANC headquarters] want an independent newspaper. I don't think it's wise to sort of make a political like that. Of course, every journalist has a political view and vote for a particular political party, but to project publicly that your institution is behind a particular party will weaken it, no question with readers, even of that party.*

Hartley raised the issue of credibility arguing that it is not advisable for journalists to wear their political affiliation in their sleeves because newspaper readers in South Africa prefer an independent newspaper that is not politically aligned.

It was not the task of this section to analytically examine the "soundness" of the opinions inferred by the three editors because opinion discourse is generally "the sense of being *subjective,* is *personal and individual,* and that it is a *mental* trait". (Shi-xu 2000: 269) (emphasis original) Instead, this study has opted to show what these opinion discourses from the editors evidenced. The excepts in this section, extracted from opinion articles of the editors published in the *Daily Maverick* website, brought to the fore contentions and contestations among the editors, with Haffajee, Thamm, and Hartley averring that Brown and Mde had gone beyond the realms of acceptable freedom of association and journalism ethics by openly declaring their political affiliation in the public. The master narrative formulated by Mde and his colleagues at Independent Media was that, from day one, an 'anti-transformation' dominant clique in the South African print media was

against the R2-billion buyout of Independent Newspapers to a black consortium led by Dr Iqbal *Survé* of Sekunjalo Independent Media, who is thought to be close to the ANC. The tensions between the producers of media have historically been framed with varying characteristics in different strands of media research. This section has chosen to shine some light on the factional issues between the editors in the interest of opening up debates and recasting existing ones in such a way that might lead to more flexible and circuitous understanding of how editors attach meaning in issues like journalism and political affiliation in post-apartheid South Africa media era. This section has explicated the different characteristics of the opinion discourses of the editors in trying to understand the heterogeneous nature of the opinion discourses that came to the fore. The central argument in this section is that editors should be subject to criticism by both their peers and the public and that there is a need for greater-examination of not only on how the media operates, but also how do professional journalists conduct themselves in the web of political affinities which still pervade the South African media. What this Brown/Mde political party regalia furore has shown us so far is that in the country's media we have editors with multiple subjects with their related, associated notions of subjectivities and subjections. It was important for this study, then, to interview editors who did not take part in the fractious media fights and contentions in order to get 'deeper' reflections from them on whether it was not high time that journalists enjoyed the Constitution's ascription of freedom of association like other journalists do in countries such as the US and UK. The above comments by these editors pointed to a wide chasm in their understanding whether journalists should openly declare their political affiliation in the public. First, Ritchie and Nevill did not have qualms about Mde and Brown attending the ANC birthday celebration in their 'personal capacity' clad in the ruling party's regalia. Mkhabela, Hartley and Pillay contended that the issue of journalists and political affiliation was an incredibly vexed issue and emphasised journalism basic tenets of integrity and impartiality over the need for journalists to make their own considered decisions on the matter. Pillay specifically felt that it was unrealistic to expect journalists not to have a political view given our painful past from the yoke of apartheid, and she argued that it might actually be better if journalists were open about their political allegiances and declared them upfront. Second, Ritchie and Nevill views were in line with the sentiments express in the judgement handed down by the Press Ombudsman, Advocate *Johan Retief, following a dispute that was lodged by*

the Democratic Alliance (DA) national spokesperson, Phumzile van Damme, *after the Brown/Mde incident. Retief ruled: "W*hat a journalist does in his or her private or personal capacity has nothing to do with this office or with the Press Code *if such conduct does not result in the publication of journalistic content*. If a journalist misbehaves, it is at most a matter between the publication and the reporter." (www.thepresscouncil.org, 28January, 2015) (emphasis original) Retief, Ritchie and Nevill brought the issue of the separation of the private and the professional to the fore. Interestingly, the *Mail & Guardian's* Ethics and **S**ocial Media guidelines cautions its journalists to "be aware that people will still elide the two", that is, the private persona and the professional persona. (www.mg.co.za, October 2010)



Figure 3: "The ANC's 103 Birthday Bash and the Praise Singers". A cartoon by Zapiro. (*Sunday Times*, 18 Jan 2015)

2.8 Heated radio debate on journalism ethics gets personal

This section will analytically examine a radio podcast over the issue whether journalists should openly declare their political affiliation in the public and what types of relationships journalists should have with political parties in post-apartheid media era. The podcast was recorded during a morning talk radio show on SAfm's, *Forum@8,* which featured Monare and Basson as show guests and Brown as phone-in caller. According the radio show presenter, Sakina Kamwendo, Brown was initially invited as a guest in the show but could not make it, citing personal reasons. This study posits that radio talk show represents the intersection of 'everyday talk' and 'mediated discourse' and that it has the power to illuminate the individual and personal. "Talk Radio has been the most interactive form of radio. Through the act of calling in, hearing themselves on air and hearing fellow listeners call, listeners are able to view themselves as part of a dispersed community engaging with similar broadcasting content." (Easton 2005:17 cited in Ligaga and Chiumbu 2012: 245) The podcast analysed herein in this section was posted in the *Mail & Guardian* website on 15 January, 2015 and downloaded by the author of this study as part of the construction of media texts and corpus.

The main aim of this section is deploy the concept of argumentation in order to understand the rationale of the various moves made by the radio show presenter and her invited guests in the discourse formulation. Transcribed recordings of a radio podcast were analysed through the combination of textual analysis and the deployment of the concept of "argumentation in discourse" (Amossy, 2009 [2005]) Amossy (2001: 1) state that ''argumentative analysis'' explores a dynamic process in which social, institutional, and linguistic elements are closely connected. As it was mentioned in the previous section, it is not intention and focus of this chapter to evaluate the 'soundness' of the arguments of the speakers. In understanding that argumentation is a "discursive function", Amossy (2009) spells out the role of the analyst in argumentation discourse: "The analyst has to examine the multiple verbal procedures through which the participants of an exchange try to reach an agreement, to deal with dissent or to influence ways of experiencing the world. How does discourse work to achieve these goals? (*Ibid,* 2009: 254) Similarly, in analysing the argumentative nature of the radio discourses that emerged during a heated radio debate between editors, it was important for this study to

keep in mind what Anabelo Carvalho (2008) calls the 'critical discourse moments'. By critical discourse moments, Carvahlo (2008) argued that it was pertinent to pose questions like: "Did arguments change? Did new/alternative views arise?" (*Ibid*, 2008: 166)

2.8.1 Why a textual analysis of a radio podcast?

The appeal of doing podcasting scholarship for this study was not only derived merely from the fact that podcasts are the extension of the radio's future, but emanated from the fact that a talk radio debate in the context of the multi-cultural and diverse nature of the South African society often produces and fulfils for fierce argumentative discourse. In a Mouffian sense, modern talk radio podcasts represent the uneasy coexistence of real-life conflict and antagonism and do not necessarily emphasise mutual comprehension between interlocutors. Of the various types of podcasts, the news or talk archives receive considerable attention in South Africa largely because of the current nature of the issue being podcast. In their article, "Communities of strangerhoods? - Internet, mobile phones and the changing nature of radio cultures in South Africa", Ligaga and Chiumbu (2012) observe that despite the realities of the digital divide in South Africa, information and communications technologies (ICTs) have expanded communicative radio spaces and transformed the nature of audience engagement. However, the research on the textual analysis of a radio podcast is still very rare in South Africa. Markman (2011) posits that scholarly writing on podcasting is "mostly dedicated to instructing neophytes or evangelising the uninitiated". (*Ibid* 2011: 547)

2.8.2 Forum@8 podcast: A textual analysis

The *Forum@8* is a regular talk show segment of AM Live presented by Sakina Kamwendo weekdays. All podcasts involve text and textual descriptions in their metadata. In conducting textual analysis of argumentative discourse, the study will employ Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1999) four-stage approach:

> *…the confrontation stage, where difference of opinion is defined; the opening stage, where the starting point of the discussion is established; the argumentation stage, where arguments and critical reactions are exchanged; and the concluding stage, where the result of the discussion is determined.* (Eemeren and Houtlosser, 1999:480-1)

The Opening Stage

Kamwendo kicked off the show by asking: *Can journalists be independent and objective?* By framing her 'intro' with a question, Kamwendo was effectively hooking the listeners to the topic in order to facilitate both interest and participation. She went on:

> *Now I don't know if you've seen it, but Marianne Thamm, a journalist with the Daily Maverick, says that the myth of objective journalist has long been shattered. And then there's was this whole brouhaha on the social media and networks and it centred around a picture of a journalist, in fact two senior journalists, who were donning political party branded regalia.* (SAFM, 15 January 2015)

The irony in her introduction is that Kamwendo did not mention the names of the two senior journalists who were involved in the donning party political regalia until Basson raised this discrepancy by pointing out that it is quite difficult to have a conversation without referring to specific examples. Basson contended that it would be a fundamental error to *assume* that all the radio listeners, including the show guests, instinctively know the topical subject. Unfortunately, that is how elite discourse in talk show work. Here the people who are linked to the controversy are not explicitly mentioned and it is assumed that the listeners know the subjects since journalistic output is "simultaneously constitutive of [the] social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief" (Wodak, 1995: 208 in Richardson, 2001: 144) of the educated, empowered and economically successful sections of our society. A topic on journalism ethics would certainly be of interested to elite audiences rather than to some ordinary folk in the street.

The argumentation stage

The discussion was started off by Monare who pointed out that it was understandable for journalists in South Africa to have some ideological leanings because of the bitter political conflict of the past. However, he argued that there's a problem of conflating people with their ideological backgrounds.

Monare argued:

> *If you are going to openly nail your colours to a particular political party by wearing its regalia, how then do you expect other parties to relate to you? For example, if you openly support the DA or the EFF, how do you expect the ANC to treat you? The second problem is that when you become a member of a political party, you are expected to adhere to the discipline of that political party, then there will be a clear conflict of interest between your role as a professional journalist and a member and a sympathiser of that party. There must be that distinction. Remember, as journalists, we derive our credibility from what people think of us.*

Monare emphasised the importance of credibility for professional journalists and that the issue of openly supporting a particular political line put journalists in a conflict of interest and ideological dilemma. (SAFM, 15 January 2015)

Basson stated:

> *I was uncomfortable because of the fact that senior media leaders and colleagues where openly associating themselves with the colours of a political party. I was wondering what does that mean. I haven't been able to get a clear answer.* (SAFM, 15 January 2015)

Basson found it hard to understand how did senior editorial executives decided to openly associate themselves with political parties and what messages they were sending to the reading public about their news products.

Brown responded:

> *I think the key issue here is not whether we don ANC colours or not. It's whether our professional ability to do our work as journalists is being impaired because we happen to have political views… Instead of judging us on what we wear, judge us on what we write and what we do.*

For Brown, the donning of political party regalia was a non-issue, in particular if it did not affect the modus operandi of journalists in the business of their work. What we observe and see herein in this argumentative stage is that participants in the argument take turns and introduce particular topics simultaneously to foreground "their importance and pertinence to the discussion". (Perelman and Olbretchs-Tyteca, 1969: 19 in Richardson, 2001: 146) The arguments above do not surface as 'monologic' packages and they are built in the interaction between the two protagonists (Monare and Basson) who put forward a standpoint on the issue of journalism ethics and political affiliation and an antagonist (Brown) who challenges it.

The confrontation stage

The confrontation during the radio debate started when Basson and Monare said seeing the photo of Brown and Mde clad in ANC regalia made them 'personally feel uncomfortable'. During the debate, Brown raised her voice and interjected Basson and Monare on numerous occasions, asking them what made them uncomfortable and sometimes prompting the intervention of Kamwendo, the radio presenter. Confrontation in argumentation discourse can occur in any of the four stages mentioned by Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1999), however it is most prevalent during the moments of heightened debates. The interjecting move by Brown is an example of strategic maneuvering used by a speaker in an argument to try to get his or her point of view across to the audience. "Every move made in argumentative discourse involves strategic maneuvering and it is dependent on various factors which *strategic function* a certain move can have." (Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2009:3) (emphasis original) The interventionist role played by Kamwendo during the confrontation shows us how media producers are "protecting the speaker against unwanted [*negative*] inferences…" whilst simultaneously allowing for "expression of delicate or controversial social opinions" (Van Dijk, 1987: 76 in Richardson, 2001)

The concluding stage

The concluding remarks were made by both Monare and Basson because Brown, a call-in listener, had to discontinue her participation, citing that she was on her way to a meeting. These two, then, were granted an opportunity for "influencing the result of a particular dialectical stage to one's own advantage, which manifest themselves in a systematic, coordinated and simultaneous exploitation of the opportunities afforded by that" (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 1999: 485-6 in Richardson, 2001: 146) Monare and Basson took the opportunity of the closing stage of an argument to 'drive home', so to speak, their standpoints on the issue of journalism and political affiliation without the interference from the antagonist, in this case, Brown.

In summary, what this case study on the issue of journalism and political affiliation has shown us is that there is something highly ideological and seriously political afoot issue when journalists openly and symbolically associate with political parties in public. Almost all the editors agree that it is impossible for journalists not to harbour certain ideologies given our history of racism and apartheid in South Africa, however they differ on how these ideological leanings should be expressed in form and function. For some, it is the professional ideologies of journalism such as integrity and impartiality which ought to guide journalists on the questions of political affiliation because, as Monare argued, "we derive our credibility from what people think of us". Others argue that whether ideologies are publicly expressed or not, journalists should be judged by what they do (write), as Brown argued, "Instead of judging us on what we wear, judge us on what we write and what we do". Basson conceded that up until the day Brown donned the ANC t-shirt and hat, he had never picked up any ideological leanings from her writings. This confirms what Daniels (2012) contended that the media does not operate according to the ideologies of the journalists. "Different forces drive editorial content from the diverse theoretical platforms from journalists operate to the different economic and political agendas of the media owners and managers." (Daniels, 2012: 3)

2.8.3 Opinion discourses, argumentation and discourses of the editors

This chapter dealt with two sections. The first section analysed the discourses of the editors on the pertinent issue of media independence and political affiliation and whether journalists should openly show support for political parties. The second section conducted a textual analysis of a radio podcast featuring different editors of newspaper on the same question of journalism and political affiliation. The findings show that because journalists are not a homogenous group, they differed on the issue of politically-affiliated journalists. It has shown, for example, that editors have relative autonomy in relation to their conduct in public as professional journalists in as far as they operate to the dispositions of traditional norms and standards of the journalism practices. "Autonomy generates the capacity for professionals to rule themselves according to their own norms and priorities, moreover, to legitimate the ones that want to occupy positions in that space of action." (Petre, 2012: 343)

It was also important for this chapter to deploy the concept of argumentation to analyse a radio podcast on the same issue of journalism and political affiliation. Amossy (2009) contends that 'argumentativity' constitutes an inherent feature of discourse and that "orienting the way reality is perceived, influencing a point of view and directing behaviour are actions performed by a whole range of verbal means." (Amossy, 2009) From this perspective, this chapter has fully integrated argumentation in the domain of media studies. It has shown how argumentation is an overall "discursive functioning" (Amossy, 2009) that has to be analysed in media discourse in order to understand the strategies and positions adopted and taken by the speakers respectively. As indicated earlier, the concept argumentation has not been deployed here to look for the logical validity of argument. Instead, it is used herein to show how the dissent between editors of different newspaper companies has been managed through verbal means.

Chapter 3

Mail & Guardian versus Independent Media

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the conflict that took place between 2013 and 2016 between two competing media houses, the *Mail & Guardian (M&G)* and Independent Media. The conflict also involved two subjects: Trevor Ncube of the *Mail & Guardian* and Iqbal Surve of Independent Media. The chapter will provide a theoretical perspective on the commercial imperatives of the media, in particular, the relationship between ownership and control of the media. The discussion is about the intersection between the investment of modern capital in the media and competition in a local print media industry stranglehold by big media. This case study will show how the relationship between competing media houses and media owners can turn sour and will offer the theoretical perspectives on how powerful individuals work behind the scenes to try to dominate the ownership of the local print media sector. As in Britain, the ownership of South African newspapers has always been concentrated in the hands of a few powerful 'press barons' (Curran**,** 2003) and the *Mail & Guardian* 'failed' attempt to purchase three flagship titles belonging to Independent Media (the *Pretoria News*, *Cape Times* and *The Mercury*) illustrates the fight for black media ownership and control. Drawing on the social theory of Louis Althusser, the chapter will explore how Surve, for instance, used ideological interpellation to label the *Mail & Guardian* as having "CIA links". With particular empirical reference to the South African print media context, the chapter will explicate the antagonistic relationship between these two media houses and media owners and how labelling was used to silence or lampoon voices critical of the media despite journalism's 'official' commitment to freedom of the media and freedom of expression. The chapter will also delve into the important controversies surrounding the media fight between the above-mentioned two media organisations by drawing on the insights of the editors interviewed in this study. Lastly, this chapter will deploy the concept of ideological interpellation in the Althusserian sense to elucidate how media owners used labelling to mask the real issues being asked.

3.1 *Mail & Guardian* versus Independent Media: the events

The build-up to the acrimonious media fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media began in 2013 when the *M&G* began a series of reportage on the R2-billion buyout of Independent Media South Africa (INMSA) by a consortium of black investors led by Surve, Sekunjalo Investment Holdings. The articles[10] centred on the make-up of the shareholding of the new media entity, Sekunjalo Media Consortium, the majority shareholder in Independent Media Group. The articles also raised questions about the involvement in the deal of the Public Investment Corporation (PIC), Africa's biggest fund manager that manages the pensions of South African government workers, and of the Chinese government entity, the China Development Bank (*M&G Online,* 15 August, 2013). It also emerged during the unfolding media fight that the *M&G* stable had expressed interest in acquiring three flagship titles of Independent Media, namely, *Pretoria News*, the Durban-based, *The Mercury*, and *Cape Times*[11].

The master narrative put forward by Surve was that the *M&G* was fueling speculation in the public through the stories it published around the buyout of Independent Media assets and questioning the motives of the owners of the new media entity because of its discontent after their ambitious bid to buy their three newspaper titles did not materialise. "These guys are being vindictive because I said no to them. The fact that I said they must put the offer in writing did not mean we would sell to them," Surve was quoted as saying in an article published by one his titles headlined "M&G goes to war after Surve rejects title bid" (*Business Report,* 26 August 2013). Surve claimed that the 'negative' reportage of his newspaper stable was subsequent to the rejection of the *M&G* bid. According to Surve, the M&G led a campaign under a petition circulated by the South African National Editors Forum (Sanef), of which at the time was chaired by the *M&G's* editor-in-chief Nic Dawes. The petition which Dawes wrote and addressed it to Competition Commissioner Shan Ramburuth stated that "as INMSA had a monopoly in the English-language newspaper markets of Cape Town and Durban, and large stakes in

[10] Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal, *M&G Online*, 24 May 2013
Chinese companies scoop shares in Independent News, *M&G Online*, 15 August 2013
What's black and white and in the red all over? *M&G Online*, 28 Aug 2014

[11] 'Letter shows M&G bid to buy Indy titles', IOL, 7 August 2014

Pretoria and Kimberley, "serious scrutiny" of the plans around the acquisition was needed".

The fight between the two media organisations continued well in 2014 with senior editorial group executives at Independent Media entering the fray, notably Karima Brown, the group's former executive editor. Brown told the eNCA's *Maggs on Media* programme that Independent Media had noted throughout that the M&G's 'campaign on reporting negatively' about the group. Meanwhile, the M&G had consistently refuted claims by Independent Media that it made a formal bid to buy three Independent Media titles[12] and that its coverage of the group was borne of 'vindictiveness' after the fail negotiations between the two media groups. This prompted Independent Media to publicly release or publish the bid letter from the M&G. What Surve and Brown maintained is that there was something sinister about the criticism and scrutiny of the Sekunjalo deal by competitor newspaper groups. The fight escalated further in 2015 after *The Star* newspaper together with other titles of Independent Media ran a series of stories alleging that the *M&G* facing bankruptcy[13] to the extent that it failed to meet its financial obligations to suppliers and was undergoing newsroom staff cuts through retrenchments[14]. The *M&G* retreated and issued a series of media releases or press statements[15] assuring readers and advertisers that the newspaper's viability and sustainability was assured.

[12] Survé claims against M&G skewed, *M&G Online*, 26 Aug 2013
[13] Iconic Mail&Guardian ship flounders, *IOL*, 18 July 2014
[14] Concern over retrenchments at M&G, *IOL*, 18 July 2015

[15] Independent Responds to M&G, *IOL*, 24 July 2014
M&G's Ncube responds to accusations, *M&G Online*, 22 July, 2014

3.2 'CIA links': Ideological interpellation at work

In the internecine fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media, this section will show how Surve used ideological interpellation[16] or labelling to cast the *Mail & Guardian* as having 'CIA links' and how Brown used labelling as well to cast Ncube as a 'liar'. The aim is to deconstruct the obfuscatory ideology imposed by one media to another in an attempt to mask the important issues being probed in these ensuing media wars. In August 2013, Craig McKune, *M&G* journalist, had phoned Surve to ask him questions on the structure of his consortium buying the Independent group. (*M&G Online*, 23 Aug 2013) This emerged after details had emerged that Survé's Sekunjalo Independent Media consortium had secured 55% of Independent News and Media South Africa (INMSA) alongside the state-owned Public Investment Corporation (PIC, 25%) and two Chinese state-owned companies (20%).(*M&G Online*, 23 Aug 2013) Surve reacted angrily to the call from McKune. "No. First go and ask [*Mail & Guardian* owner Trevor Ncube] if he is funded in Washington; if the entity that funds him is linked to the CIA [the United States Central Intelligence Agency] or to a fund that's got an indirect link to the CIA," he said in a recorded podcast uploaded and published in the *M&G* website on 23 August, 2013.

Surve could not support his allegations because "the value of a conspiracy theory is to foster something 'out there'". (Daniels, 2012) Similarly, Brown entered the labelling fray after Ncube had reacted to the story published by the *Star* newspaper of 18 July, 2014 which alleged that the *M&G* was 'facing a cash crunch so severe that suppliers and contributors, as well as permanent staff, have not been paid for months on end'. Brown issued a statement and labelled Ncube a "liar", saying "he has proven that he is not averse to telling odd bare-faced lie in his defence". (*Independent Online*, 23 July, 2014) This strategy of deflection adopted by the owners and executives at Independent Media shows the value of ideological interpellation or labelling as an important tool that can be "misused to considerable advantage, such as to consign disapproved opinions to the twilight world of marginality and illegitimacy". (Warby, 2002: 35) However, the ideological interpellation of the *M&G* as a 'CIA agent' as an attempt at obfuscation

[16] Ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects by means of the pre-existing category of the subject.

failed because Surve did not prove that the newspaper had 'CIA links'. Instead, he made a 'half turn' (Butler, 1997:169-189 in Daniels, 2012), saying "I'm not saying it's owned by the CIA; I'm asking you. Are you CIA? I'm asking you. I'm not telling you. Don't misquote me, because there's lots of rumours around that you guys are funded by the CIA". (*M&G Online*, 23 August, 2013)

3.3 How the *M&G* fought back

Interestingly, the interpellated subject, *Mail & Guardian,* did not attempt at obfuscation by using ideological interpellation or labelling, which is not a helpful way of clarifying the issues at stake, nor did it use the Independent's preferred mode of engagement: name-calling. Instead, the *M&G* positioned itself as a 'victim' of the conspiracy theory in the ensuing media fight between itself and the Independent Media. Ncube said every time the *Mail & Guardian* contacts Surve or his executives for a comment on a story the newspaper was working on about the Independent group, "it is turned into an opportunity to attack me or my publications". (*M&G Online,* 22 July 2014) Ncube insisted that there was something sinister in the Independent's coverage of the *M&G* as bankrupt because the newspaper was "operating under the same economic conditions as the rest of the industry". (*M&G Online,* 22 July 2014) Ncube also positioned the M&G as the bedrock of investigative journalism, the crusade of excellent journalism and the bastion of editorial independence. "If the purpose of this negative press coverage about me and my business is to persuade me to stop our journalists from doing their legitimate, credible and ethical journalism, then I am afraid that this will never happen…we don't tell our journalists which stories to write and which ones to kill. We employ professional journalists and then let them do work to the best of their ability. This will remain the way of our journalism for as long as I have anything to do with these great two companies [M&G and Alpha Media Holdings[17]]" (M&G Online, 22 July, 2014) Now there is undoubtedly a consequential dimension to the response of the *Mail & Guardian* to the coverage of its internal issues by Independent Media. First, he alleges that there is a conspiracy to side track his company from carrying out his work: "If the purpose of this negative press coverage about me and my business is to persuade me to stop our

[17] AMH is an independent media house owned by Trevor Ncube which publishes four newspapers in Zimbabwe - The Zimbabwe Independent, a business weekly published every Friday, The Standard, a weekly published every Sunday, and NewsDay, Southern Eye –the daily newspapers.

journalists from doing their legitimate, credible and ethical journalism, then I am afraid that this will never happen." Like Surve, he also fails to prove if the conspiracy exists and also fails to reveal who is behind it. Secondly, Ncube insinuates that the stories that Independent journalists write about the Mail & Guardian are done at the behest of the management: "we don't tell our journalists which stories to write and which ones to kill". Thirdly, Ncube also insinuate that the Independent Media does not employ professional journalists: "We employ professional journalists". Lastly, ironically Ncube complains of "negative press coverage" as if the role of the media is to give un-critical accounts of the events and issues. Without press-to-press coverage, there is a danger of the public having a concealed picture of the internal workings of the media.

3.4 The editors on the M&G and Independent media war

A sample of five editors and one media freedom activist were deliberately selected to be interviewed in this study. They were asked what they thought of the acrimonious media fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media and the fractious contentions between the two media owners, Ncube and Surve. These editors were drawn from various newspaper titles and did not take part directly in the ensuing media wars that reared their acrimonious heads in the public. The editors were:

- Mpumelelo Mkhabela, former editor of *Sowetan* and former chairperson of Sanef and in 2017 station manager of Power FM.
- Ray Hartley, former editor of the *Sunday Times* and editor of *Rand Daily Mail* and *Business Live*
- Verashni Pillay, former editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian* and in 2017 editor-in-chief of *Huffington Post* South Africa
- Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*
- Kevin Ritchie, former editor of *The Star* and currently regional executive editor: Gauteng and Northern Cape at Independent Media
- Micah Reddy, media freedom and diversity organiser at the Right2Know Campaign

Below are the views of the editors on the fight between *M&G* and Independent Media and Ncube and Surve.

The first question posed was: What do you think of the media fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media that emerged after the Mail & Guardian published a series of stories questioning the shareholding and ownership structure of Independent Media?

Mkhabela commented:

> *With regard to the Mail & Guardian and the Independent Media, I think that there was a time when the whole thing went beyond the normal contestation of what is factual, it went beyond normal contestation of what is reasonable or fair; it became bitter because now they were now beginning to question each other modus operandi, that is, the respective owners of the two organisations – the other one [Ncube] questioning the credentials of the other one and the other one [Surve] even suggesting that you have CIA links. So there was a moment when I thought it went beyond what you would have expected of a normal contestation around what is true and what is not true. It became a clear rivalry between two media bosses who were questioning each other's modus operandi or bonafides. However, quite frankly, I don't rule out the role of ego. To own a media asset that is an influencer and disseminator of information is a very powerful thing in South Africa. I won't rule out the role of egos in these battles and the battle to say who's most influential than who and the battle to say who has the best media strategy to reach more South Africans in order to gain market share and make more money.*

Mkhabela viewed the fractious contention between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media over questions of bankruptcy, sustainability, foreign funding and the structure of media shareholding became a "clear rivalry between two media bosses" [Ncube and Surve]. He believed that ego played a role in the public feud involving Ncube and Surve. Writing in the UK *Independent*, in a commentary article titled, "Fighting talk: Caught in the crossfire of male egos", film and tv writer Ellen Jones says a "public feud usually serves only the egos involved – and the bigger the ego, the more effort must be put into defending it". (*UK Independent*, 2015)

Nevill concurred with Mkhabela on the ego factor:

> *That fight between Surve and the M&G had absolutely nothing to do with ideology and absolutely everything to do with a pissing content. 'Mine is bigger than yours'. The New Age and Independent Media, supposedly both media groups loyal to government, have had their own spats with each other too. And it's all about money. And power. Power is really the big driver here; power and access to government resources. Like so much else in South Africa.*

Nevill supported Mkhabela's view that owning a big media asset had an ego effect on media owners 'mine is bigger than yours' and that the fight between the *M&G* and Independent was all about flaunting 'money' and 'power.

The second question posed was: Do you think these media wars are related to the fierce competition in a tough local print media industry facing shrinking revenues?

Nevill said:

> *To a certain extent, yes, it's tough out there and it's a battle for eyeballs and ad spend. But it's not entirely due to economic pressures. It's also about giant egos, huge debt and a government whose antipathy to media has had all sorts of consequences.*

Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*, believed that the tough economic trading climate affected the print media negatively in terms of profits and that it may have played a part in heightening tensions between the media houses, leading to war of words, but she also stressed that the fights were "not entirely due to economic pressures".

Hartley in support of Nevill and Pillay:

> *I think that South Africa's political climate has become much more aggressive and you find that the pressure on the media houses has grown, circulation declining and revenues very tough and they're [media houses] competing for a market. It's a very bitter fight for every reader, for every advertiser which never used to be when readership was growing and when circulation was growing, and everybody was growing. Now everybody is fighting each other in for this reading market in which the economic pressure of the country are mounting and people are becoming less gentlemanly than they were before.*

Hartley also blamed the economic pressures that the country was facing, averring that they had an adverse effect on the media business because there was now "a very bitter fight for every reader, for every advertiser" and that "people are becoming less gentlemanly than they were before".

The third question posed was: What do you think of the phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors?

Ritchie said:

> *I think the media wars, as you term it, are also a battle for legitimacy and the battle to gain market share. In a growing illiterate market like South Africa, there has been a huge battle, and I use that anecdotally, for viability and relevance and within the broader scheme of things, there isn't much for the new players. There are monopolistic practices as almost like cartels that make entry into the environment very difficult and then people are saying how it is for us as new media companies come into this marker and play on an equal playing field. Historically, there has been a white capital in the media and everybody who is going to come in, it's going to be difficult.*

Ritchie blamed the structural composition of the print media landscape which favoured certain media consortiums through their networks and loyalties. According to Ritchie, the print media market is a "market for loyalties" (Price, 1994: 667-705), and, as a model, it more closely approximates actual market practice and frequently reflects monopolistic and oligopolistic practices, including efforts by competitors to exclude new entrants. For him, media fights are also directly linked to the stiff nature of the competition in the media industry in a 'huge' battle for advertisers, readers and audiences in a shrinking, but also 'growing illiterate market' like the South African print industry.

Reddy concurred with Ritchie:

> *There's always going to be that structural problem where the print media will be competing for relatively scarce resources and the print media is in such dire situation at the moment and competition is even fiercer. I suppose that would heighten an already fractious environment, make things a lot worse, and make competition a lot worse. There's certainly a natural competition which is heightened because of the dire economic situation. I suppose feeding into that is the political situation. Big media publications are in a position to sink smaller rivals.*

For Reddy, the economic structure of the print media was likely to contribute to "heighten an already fractious environment, make things a lot worse, and make competition a lot worse" and that big players were in a position to "sink smaller rivals" in a local print media industry stranglehold by big media and powerful elite individuals.

The fourth question posed was: Do you think these media wars are related or linked to the broader contentious issue of print media transformation?

The editors were also asked whether they think the media wars are related to the contentious issue of print media transformation in the post-apartheid era.
Nevill said:

> *I don't think there's any ambiguity about the need for further transformation. To a certain extent, most media houses have transformed, especially at newsroom level and certainly, editor level. But diversity – and not just race – is not so obvious at the top levels of the big media groups. Last year, we had two black women as editors of the two top Sunday newspapers in South Africa. This year, both are gone. Are there any women at all on the boards of SA's large media groups? Perhaps one or two. It's a very male world still. I think it's very convenient to play toss out the transformation card when asked the tough questions.*

Nevill pointed out that although the media has transformed at a very slow pace at boardroom level in South Africa's large media groups, particularly at the level of the participation of women, one could invoke a media transformation argument, as many media owners and editors instinctively do, to "play toss out the transformation card', as Nevill put it. According to her, such invective should not be read as confirmation of the vibrancy of South Africa media democracy. Instead, she argued that the media should be subjecting anyone who frets about media transformation with scrutiny when asked

the tough questions.

Pillay stated:

> *It absolutely matters who owns the press, no question about it. You want people who are buying into the process of transformation. I'm not saying white people don't, but I do think that the project of transformation does mean black ownership and women ownership. But I think the media wars hijacked the media transformation debate and actually this makes me quite angry. Media transformation is a burning issue and it's problematic because no one is talking about it enough. When we try to do so, it's some person with the massive egos hijacks it and it becomes something about their interests. Let's talk about transformation and let's not talk about the egos involved because the debate gets lost in personalities.*

Pillay makes some important arguments. First she points to the need to rethink the conceptualisations of the transformation of the media to mean 'black ownership and women ownership'. Secondly, she raised critical concerns about a sense of fatigue when confronting these debates around media transformation because of hidden agendas and vested interests. Lastly, she pointed out that the 'egos' involved in these media transformation debates have increasingly taken on the status of panacea and highlights the curious absence of considerations of the important issue like transformation.
Mkhabela stated:

> *I wouldn't say actually what the source of these media wars is, but if you look at the comments that came from Iqbal Surve, one of his concerns, he said back then, was that people were opposed to a black person buying a majority stake in a big company like Independent Newspapers. It's clear by the he analysed it that there's an opposition from out there that say he, as a black person, cannot own this organisation that has got so much market share. The media transformation debate has been on the agenda for a while in South Africa and the media owners themselves have been concerned about it. When the media talks about the principle of transformation, there's no rivalry; they all agree about the need to transform. The only issue is that media transforms at different levels and at different pace. When Iqbal Surve came in the media side, he did position his company as a company that's for transformation, which is why he himself represents the transformation that must happen in the media by virtue of being black and by buying*

into the media space. Given our history, the issue of transformation will always be there and will always be on the agenda.

Mkhabela seems to suggest that notwithstanding the narrative of Surve, the issue of media transformation is not the backgrounder to these antagonisms between media owners and competing media houses because 'media owners themselves are concerned about it' and 'there's no rivalry'. According to him, Surve 'represents the transformation that must happen in the media by virtue of being black and by buying into the media space'. Indeed, one could conceivably argue and formulate a straight-forward political economy diagnosis of the South African print media and observe that although there has been some changes in ownership into black hands, the 'issue of transformation will always be there and will always be on the agenda', as Mkhabela put it.

Hartley contended:

Some people say that media wars are linked to media transformation, but if you look at ownership, for instance, it is not clear cut as is put. The Tiso Blackstar Group that owns this company [Times Media Group] has a lot of empowerment credentials and so on but it's often referred as a white company. However, you could tell a different story although I haven't done so in detail. I think ownership is not clear cut as somebody would like it to be. I stay away from ownership because I don't think you can break it down unless you are a family-owned business or clear-cut corporation, which used to be the case in South Africa, now you find there are diverse shareholdings. It's not like in the old days that these [media entities] were wholly-owned entities that you could ascribe a motive to an owner. It's an obscure answer but that's how I see ownership.

For Hartley, the picture of media ownership in the South African media is still obscure and that more needs to be said about the matter. In a study titled, "Who owns the news media: A study of the shareholding of South Africa's major media companies", analysts Stuart Theobald, Colin Anthony and Phibion Makuwerere note that "there has recently been significant change in the ownership of a few large media companies, leaving previous assessments out of date. (July, 2016) As it is, few systematic studies of media ownership in South Africa have been undertaken, with most public comments on media ownership highly speculative." (July, 2016) Hartley contended that the fact that the print media was no longer wholly-owned by private families or the so-called 'white monopoly capital' it was difficult to 'break down' the ownership of the media in the complex web

of consortiums that make up the shareholding structure of media companies. According to Winseck (2008), whose paper looked at the global overview of the state of communications media ownership and markets, "the emergence of a powerful nexus between both 'old' and 'new' media means that the character of media ownership and markets still matters greatly". (Winseck, 2008: 34)

3.5 Modern capital, competition, interpellation, discourses: Reflections

This section makes some findings on the discourses of the editors regarding the phenomenon of media wars in the South African print media and other interrelated aspects such as the issue of transformation, editorial motivation behind covering a story about another media and on whether newspaper really care when newspapers throw their dirty linen in the public. It will then try to apply these discourses to the theoretical concepts such as ideological interpellation or labelling as obfuscation. This chapter has offered reflections on the intersection of media wars and competition between competing media companies and has drawn on the major discourses that surround this case study in order to elucidate the discourse of the editors and how the media owners used different tactics in their fractious battle of what is true and not true when they published internal issues to the media in their respective publications – the so-called 'negative press coverage'.

First, this chapter has shown us how the fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media unfolded between 2013 and 2016; how the unfolding events highlight the agonistic nature of the relationship between two competing media houses in a tough local print media market stranglehold by big media. It has shown how the two media houses used different guises or strategies to counter the 'negative press coverage' meted out against them by a competitor publication(s) in this ensuing media fight which occurred between 2013 and 2015. The chapter has demonstrated how the Independent's executives, Surve and Brown in particular, used 'ideological interpellation' or labelling to cast shadow on the integrity of *Mail & Guardian* by alleging that it was it had 'CIA links' and by branding Ncube as a 'liar'. In addition, it has shown how such

interpellation failed in the light of the fact that the *Mail & Guardian* resisted such ideological hailing and that Surve did not provide proof that the newspaper had 'CIA links'. Therefore, this chapter has shown clearly how media owners, as opposed to journalists, use ideological interpellation, or labelling, to discredit each other in the eyes of the (reading) public. Interestingly, the *Mail & Guardian* used its long held reputation for producing investigative and excellent journalism to counter the ideological interpellation it was being subjected to. These claims that the *M&G* had 'CIA links' were a form of blowback—negative reactions to the firm's positive reputation. While blowback makes it easier to interpellate a rival media organisation, for the *M&G* a good reputation remains a significant resource in deflecting these criticisms. "Conversely, good reputations usually are thought to convey advantages; their holders receive the benefit of the doubt." (Best & Lowney, 2001: 431)

There were also nuanced views and observations from the discourses that emerged from the interviews with the editors over the questions competition and transformation in the media. Almost all the editors - Hartley, Pillay, Nevill and Richie - believed that the print media landscape is the site of struggle where media companies are often forced to compete and defend what they have in the shrinking industry faced with complex disruptions and uncertainty. They argued that the underdetermined nature of the print media allows plenty of room for fierce competition that may result in battles or fights between media houses over readers, audiences and advertisers. For instance, Nevill believed that 'it's tough out there and it's a battle for eyeballs and adspend'. Reddy and Ritchie pointed out to the 'structural' problems in the print media landscape which advantages the media behemoths and makes competition in the industry uneven, while smaller players are forced to compete with each other over crumbs. For instance, Reddy said competition would 'heighten an already fractious environment, make things a lot worse, and make competition a lot worse.'

On the contentious issue of media transformation, the discourses of the editors seemed a lot nuanced. Nevill and Pillay warned against playing the transformation card to mask the important questions being asked about the ownership structure and shareholding of some big media houses. Pillay was particularly perturbed about a trend to use the media wars in order to 'hijack' the transformation debate and she actually felt 'quite angry'

about it. Hartley felt that the media ownership issue in South Africa is mired in the complex web of investors and consortiums and that it was not easy to obtain clear information on the ultimate owners of every media company in the country. 'I stay away from ownership because I don't think you can break it down, Hartley said. Pillay and Nevill believed that to some extent transformation meant 'women ownership'. For Mkhabela, the agenda of transformation in the media will forever remain in our midst given the past history of this country. In sum, what this case study has shown us is that, firstly, there's no obvious acceptance of the investment of modern (black) capital in media and questions surrounding the ownership structure of new entities will always suffice if the shareholding is not transparent and there is a public interest element to the deal.

Secondly, this chapter has shown that competition in a tough trading economic environment may not be the reason or sole factor undergirding these media wars, but may serve as an ingredient in heightening tensions between media companies who are fighting over 'scraps'. Thirdly, it is not clear whether the issue of transformation is directly related to these media wars, except that discourses of the editors on media transformation seem to be unanimous about the need to genuinely talk about transformation. Lastly, various editors believed that the media war between the *Mail&Guardian* and Independent Media was partly linked to the 'egos' of the respective media owners who were engaging on a fractious war of words in the public because 'to own a media asset that is an influencer and disseminator of information is a very powerful thing in South Africa'.

Chapter 4

Media discourses and the gaze of the editors

This chapter is about the gaze of the editors on the relatively phenomenon of media wars between newspaper companies and editors in the South African media. First, this chapter will prefer to the literature in chapter one on media and journalistic discourses as a springboard in order to understand the relatively new phenomenon of the media wars between competing newspaper companies and editors. Second, this chapter will highlight the discourses that emerged from the interviews with the editors. Third, will draw out the themes and "a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen". (Peräkylä (2008: 870) The interviews with the editors were a key component of this exploratory study not only because of the editors' acquired 'media meta-capital', which Couldry (2003: 669) defines it as "definitional power across the whole of social space", but also because the editors have a unique speaking platform on media issues in a post-apartheid, public domain. In foregrounding the reflective views and opinions of the various editors, this chapter seeks to answer the main research question of this study, namely: What were the ideological discourses that emerged during the media wars between editors of South Africa's leading news publishers in the period 2010-2015? The editors were interviewed between August and November 2016 on various aspects related to the phenomenon of the media wars in an attempt to force them "to dig in their own flesh" (to paraphrase Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*) to find meaning. (See Appendix 5 for questions that were posed to the editors)

4.1 Editors on the phenomenon of media wars:

The first question posed to the editors was: What do you think of the media wars between rival media organisations and editors?

Ritchie said:

> *There's always been an unspoken truce that the media companies don't report upon one another and personally I think that's wrong because if media companies are going to hold other aspects of society to account, they definitely need to be held to account themselves. Traditionally, media companies in South Africa haven't been reporting about one another. I think that changed dramatically with the advent of Sekunjalo buyout of Independent Newspapers and there were definite agonistic reports. I'm not saying that whether those attacks were justified or not, but as a phenomenon, it became with [Iqbal] Surve taking over Independent Group and the Guptas starting up The New Age and ANN7.*

Ritchie pointed out that the media wars are a relatively new phenomenon in South African media which became more pronounced when modern capital was invested in the local print media industry through Sekunjalo Holdings and Oakbay Investments and a compact emerged between capital, media and politicians. He decried the fact that there were no similar 'agonistic' reports in the media when the defunct Nigerian daily, *This Day*, was launched in South Africa a few years ago and when Andrew Bonamour bought Times Media Group. For Ritchie, there is a tendency by some media houses to subjugate their competitors to different ideological hailing and interpellations and to report differently on developments within the sector depending on who are the actors. The same concern was raised by Reddy, who pointed out that the media giant, Naspers, did not get the same kind of scrutiny even though it had been found guilty, on numerous occasions, of unfair business practices by the Competition Commission in the independent community newspaper market.

Pillay stated:

> *I think it's unfortunate because we're fighting over scraps. There's a shrinking pot of revenue and we should be putting our energies on finding innovative solutions instead. I do think that there's another factor at work. It's not just about petty egos, there's a real danger of state capture and you see that played out in the newspaper wars. You also see certain publications, certain editors who are very amenable to a certain line of the governing party and owners whose newspaper dealings have been scrutinised and that's get covered by another newspaper and there's a bit of a fight. We ourselves have been scrutinised when we went through a tough time of retrenchments last year (2015). The Sunday Times wrote an article about us. I think it's only fair to scrutinise each other and that should happen more often without us becoming so defensive about it.*

Pillay intimated that there was a 'real danger' of the capture of the media by the state wherein newspaper houses seen as being 'sympathetic' to the ruling party were involved in questionable business dealings with government departments and that this was more dangerous than a hostile stand-off between media houses and editors.

Reddy concurred with Pillay:

> *It's clear that certain publications are being used by owners and managers as platforms for their own petty squabbles and this is a worrying sign. It's something that is not unique in South Africa, as we've seen it in different parts of the world. But lately with massive factional battles coming to the fore, we've seen the media being drawn into these battles. When the media sucked in and used as in the case of the Sunday Times journalists reporting on SARS (South African Revenue Services), the way the editors of the Independent Newspapers have been drawn into the squabbles between their owner Dr IqbalSurve and his detractors has been something quite worrying.*

Hartley reflected:

> *I think that for a very long time, there was an unwritten rule that the media houses would not comment on each other, one reporter would not report on another report – it was this sort of silence. You never saw reports in the media except when media companies' results came out. But that has changed and there's a lot of animosity that has built up between the media houses. That's the background – it's a new phenomenon, probably I would say of the last three to five years.*

Hartley concurred with Ritchie that media wars are a new phenomenon which have become a strong feature in the past few years. He further pointed out that in the past it was rare for a media publication to report about another competitor publication and that this has changed due to South Africa's political climate which has become 'aggressive'.

Mkhabela pointed:

> *Where the media is under threat, we are the first one to shout. It will be totally hypocritical of us to expect to benefit from the same freedom of speech that we advocate yet when it comes to ourselves and our own internal issues as the media we then want to block such engagements no matter how bitter or intense, they [media wars] are part and parcel of the debates that are happening in the country. It does not mean that because we are the media, we must be immune from criticising each other. Actually, in my own opinion I think it's healthy if we have debates with each other. These debates are very bitter sometimes and very intense, sometimes very emotional, but that should be expected in a viable democracy.*

Mkhabela advocated for a media that was tough on each other in the same way it does to some powerful quarters of the society when playing its watchdog role.

Nevill said:

> *It's a tough time for media companies, particularly newspapers and magazines. The struggle for advertising – especially since the JSE stopped paying for results advertising and GCIS took much of its advertising, including the lucrative recruitment ads, in house – has become increasingly tough... And digital has yet to deliver the kinds of returns needed to make up for the losses in print. Add to this a volatile political environment in which media is often the target, literally and figuratively, and it's a recipe for open antagonism. Media24 and Caxton have been at it for years, mostly in court – but perhaps not in so public a manner as the arrival of Surve as a proprietor has done.*

Nevill said these media wars have played out for years between Naspers and Caxton and some of these have ended up in court. According to her, these media wars were fought in the independent/ community media space.

4.2 Editors on whether media wars are linked to ideological dissonances

One of the questions posed to the editors was whether ideological effects had been a major concern in these ensuing media wars. According to Fairclough (2003), "ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation". (Fairclough, 2003: 9) Van Dijk state that in many instances ideologies develop in media discourses to "to sustain, legitimate or manage group conflicts, as well as relationships of power and dominance" (Van Dijk, 1998: 24) In a way, media wars are a form of group conflicts taking place between competing newspaper companies in the struggle to monopolise and attain dominance in the shrinking local print media industry. According to Van Dijk (2008), ideologies of groups and group relations are constructed by a 'group-based selection of relevant social values'. It can be argued that journalists select and attach special importance to such values as media independence, objectivity and impartiality. Van Dijk's (2008) conception of ideology contends that "ideology also allows us to establish the crucial link between macro-level analyses of groups, social formations and social structure, and micro-level studies of situated, individual interaction and discourse" (Ibid, 2008: 18). At the point of macro-level analysis, this study has focused on the conflict between two media houses, M&G Media Limited and Independent Media, to elucidate the intersection between modern capital and competition in the local print media market. At the micro-level analysis, this study has foregrounded the corrosive influence of politics on journalism in post-apartheid South Africa media era and the wide chasm between editors on the pertinent issue of whether journalists should openly declare their political affiliation in the public and still be accepted to practice as professional journalists.

> *Ideologies are basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of socio-cultural values, and organised by an ideological schema that represents self-definition of a group. Besides their function of sustaining the interests of groups, ideologies have a cognitive function of organising the social representations (attitudes, knowledge) of the group, and thus indirectly monitor the group-related social practices, and hence also the text and talk of its members.* (Van Dijk, 1995: 248)

In his paper that looked at the ideological perspectives in media discourse, Asghar (2014: 170) argues that newspapers have the potential to affect their readership in one way or the other and are likely to exploit the language use to propagate certain ideologies among their readership. However, Hartley says that although some media owners have publicly declared that their media houses would be adopting a particular political or ideological posture, this is not always reflected in the contents of their publications.

The second question posed was: Do you think these media wars are related to ideological battles between newspaper companies and editors?

Hartley reflected:

> *When I actually read these publications, I don't see ideological differences. You sit down and read The Star or the Business Day, and you don't see as much difference as some people think there is.*

Hartley was referring to Surve who has publicly stated that his media empire will be sympathetic to the ANC-led government. Hartley's views are consistent with those expressed by Daniels (2012) in her concluding reflections contained in her book, "Fight for Democracy: The ANC and the Media in South Africa", that "there was little ideology at work in the disperate worlds of journalists". (Daniels, 2012: 205) Other editors have also argued that different ideologies in the newsroom bolster media plurality and diversity. The discourses of the editors on the ideological orientation of the journalism and its impact to journalism seem to adopt an ideological dissonance perspective and support a point made by Zizek (2012) on the hidden nature of the notion on ideology which seems to "pop up precisely when we attempt to avoid it, while it fails to appear where one would clearly expect it to dwell". (Zizek, 2012: 2) The editors were unanimous in their contention that the media wars were not linked to any ideological differences between different media companies and editors.

4.3 Editors on editorial considerations and motivations

The third question posed was: What are the editorial considerations you make as an editor when you decide to publish a story about a competitor publication?

Against the background of conflicts that have marked the media's relationship with each other post-apartheid era, the editors were also asked what could possibly be an editorial motivation when a particular newspaper decides to publish (or run to use industry jargon) a 'negative' story about another competitor publication. We have said earlier that the media rarely report about another media and that when this happens, the hostilities are all played out on the pages of newspapers.

Mkhabela said:

> *There will always be contestations tempered by the fact that if you write about the rival media organisation where you're objective in the gathering of the story, so the person or the media organisation who is publishing the story will always be viewed by the person who is the subject of the story through the lens of competition. So what could be an ordinary story suddenly is turned into a rival media war. Newspapers are not newsmakers but sometimes there may be issues that are newsworthy about them and you have to subject such news to the same reporting standards as you would normally do to any other story.*

For Mkhabela, market competition may be put forward as an underlying reason behind a particular media war in order to try to counteract a 'negative' story published by a rival publication even though it may be genuinely newsworthy and in the public interest.
Hartley reflected:

> *I used to say when I was a newspaper editor that reporting about another media is like a dog licking its ass, it's nice for the dog but it's not very nice to watch for everybody else. When readers read about a shocking finances of one paper in another paper, you kinda wonder is it accurate or is it something done at the behest of the management.*

Hartley suggests that the editorial decision to publish a story about a rival media organisation may sometimes be trumpeted by the interests of the owners and managers. He further concurred with Mkhabela that these stories look like an 'expression of competition' between media houses which get 'taken with a big pinch of salt' by the readers.

Pillay contended:

> *We are such a small industry that we are afraid to cover each other even when something legitimate happens in another newspaper. But to be quite honest and I'm not proud to say this, I would think twice [about publishing a story about another newspaper] because I would think oh! I'm going to bump into this editor at Sanef (South African National Editors Forum) and it's going to be awkward. I shouldn't be doing that right? A lot of journalists are wary of doing that kind of reporting. They ask: How can I report about the industry because I may not get a job later? For instance, we have reported on Iqbal Surve of Independent, obviously not under my editorship, and there have been a backlash on the people who have been covering him and it shouldn't be so. If it's in the public interest because there's PIC (Public Investment Corporation) money involved, it should get covered because that's public money.*

Pillay pointed out to the constraints and difficulties editors face when making editorial decisions on whether to cover a story about a rival media organisation. She said journalists were reluctant to cover a story about another rival media because they fear of burning their bridges in a media industry where barriers to entry still exist.

Ritchie said:

> *I think the most basic question is the story newsworthy because is it's not newsworthy you would be accused of running a vendetta or an agenda, so it has to be newsworthy.*

Ritchie was referring to the conventional rules of journalism, stressing that any story should get published if it is factual and truthful.

4.4 Editors on whether media wars can harm the image of the profession

The fourth question posed was: Do you think these media can harm the image of the journalism profession?

Hartley said:

> *I think these fights takes energy away from improving reporting and ensuring that your newspapers are successful in the public arena. If you're spending time fighting with your competitors a dirty war, then you're not gonna chart a way-forward to build a credible paper. I think it's very damaging and I think it also sends a message to the readers that the media is busy with the same kind of factionalism you find all over the place, also here in the press.*

Hartley believes that these media wars have the potential to harm the image of journalism profession, especially in the eyes of the public. He further suggests that the media is not immune from the fractured aspects of the South African society.

Pillay disagreed with Hartley:

> *Certain editors have long standing animosity and proxy wars. It [media wars] must be done in a dispassionate way so that it must not look personal, it must not look petty, and it should be done in the public interest. I'm not saying all the editors have egos, I probably have an ego as well, I'm just saying we need to depersonalise these debates.*

For Pillay, these media wars can continue as long as they are not based on the egos of the editors and personality clashes. Her sentiments are shared by Ritchie, Mkhabela and Reddy and follow thus:

Mkhabela concurred with Pillay:

> *I don't think they will harm the journalism, not at all. The only thing is if the wars are fought on lies and not on facts, people from outside, whether readers or audiences, might begin to say these people they fight each other based on lies and not facts, can we then trust them that when it comes to us. That fact might arise in the public domain if the fights are about lies and not the truth.*

Ritchie stated:

> *They can harm us, but is it not necessary for us to be harmed in order to get better because we don't have special rights? Media wars are important to keep us honest. However, we must be very careful of the golden thread that links us to audiences, market and our readers because if we start to turn them off because it's starting becoming a petty point scoring kind of engagement, they are going to stop reading us.*

Ritchie cautioned against a trend in which media wars degenerate into personality clashes between the editors and owners and advocate for a situation whereby the media scrutinise each other.

Reddy reflected:

> *I think when the personal squabbles of the editors and their narrow interests and preoccupations start to influence the content of the paper, it's a bad thing. We've seen editors being overbearing and using print space to air very personal grievances. It's been eminently clear in the case on Independent Media where a lot of articles have been used to defend Iqbal Surve*.

For Reddy, it is a bad thing when media wars are fought out on news pages. Clearly, there was no intention among the editors interviewed in this study of stopping covering each other.

4.5 Do readers care about the newspapers' dirty laundry?

The fifth question posed was: Do newspaper readers care about stories publishing dirty linen of another competitor publication?

In an article titled, "Are public spats between media owners good for business?" Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*, states that "the open antagonisms between the newspapers(s)...are unprecedented in the history of South African newspapers. The gist of the arguments from those on the ground is; 'Do readers really care about what goes on inside newspapers or is this spat between owners all battling for the same advertising buck?" (*TheMediaOnline*: 29 July, 2014) The question of whether readers are interested in the internal squabbles of the media was also posed to the editors.

Nevill stated:

> *I used to think readers didn't care about what goes on inside newsrooms, that so long as the news was delivered by a trustworthy source they were happy just to read the story. But media has been so politicised in South Africa that this has changed... Of course the majority are happy to read their news, but there is a very vocal part of society that watches what goes on inside the media and is fascinated by the machinations behind the scenes.*

Ritchie said:

> *We've seen it [reader interest] where the politics of the newspaper intersect with the politics of the national agenda, I would say there's reader interest but when it's the internal politics of the paper, I think readers are turned off.*

Reddy commented:

> *I think people have a natural interest because the media plays a crucial role in society, it has power and influence and while the media likes to be a watchdog and stand above the fray, it's very much part of it.*

Ritchie and Reddy felt quite strongly that readers have an interest in stories about the media. Nevill pointed out that when the ruling party, the ANC, "makes a meal" of attacking the media whenever it can, and blaming the media for all sorts of ills, "the media becomes the story" and attracts interest from the readers and audiences.

4.6 Media wars, ideological dissonances and editorial motivations

This chapter has revealed the various discourses that emerged during the ensuing media wars under study through the gaze of the editors. First, editors seem to be unanimous that the phenomenon of media wars is relatively new in South Africa and that it became more pronounced when the Guptas launched their own newspaper in 2010, *The New Age*, and later their television channel *ANN7* and when Sekunjalo Investment Consortium made a move to purchase Independent Newspapers in 2013. Second, the editors also seem to be in agreement that stiff competition coupled with the tough market conditions seems to be the main reason undergirding these media wars, although they did not rule out in the fray the role of egos and clashes of personalities between media owners and editors. Thirdly, there seems to be a wide chasm between the editors on whether readers care about or are interested in the internal squabbles of the media, with some averring that if the internal issues of the media are in the public interest, they should be foregrounded and others arguing that these media feuds have the potential of putting off readers especially if they are personal and centred around petty egos. Fourthly, editors revealed that journalists are not keen on covering media fights because – in the words of Pillay – the industry is 'small' and therefore journalists are wary of burning their bridges. Fifthly, some editors alluded to some editorial dilemmas they face when they decide to cover a story about another rival media house, although they pointed out that this should not be the case because the media should subject itself in the same scrutiny it subjects to the rest of society to hold power to account. Sixthly, there was also another wide chasm among the editors on whether these media wars have the potential of harming the image of the journalism profession. Some felt that these wars were necessary for the media to create agonistic spaces within the media where there are dissensions, splits, contestations and dislocations "pluralistic and agonistic spaces can only flourish in a lack of unity and a radical ambiguity, intrinsic to the deepening of democracy (of which the media plays a significant role), the final realisation of which is imperfect and unending". (Daniels, 2012: 216-217) Others were wary of these media wars, especially if they degenerated into petty squabbles to the extent of driving away readers, audiences and advertisers. Lastly, editors did not believe that these media wars were linked to some wide ideological differences between editors and competing

media houses, pointing out differences in ideologies have a positive impact on media plurality and diversity. In sum, this chapter has sought to answer the main research question of this study, namely: What were the ideological discourses that emerged during the media wars between editors of South Africa's leading news publishers in the period 2010-2015? Nevill concurred with Ritchie and Reddy that the arrival of the new owners of the Independent Newspapers, Sekunjalo Holdings, into the print media scene seem to have fueled the tensions between competing newspaper companies and editors in a way that is unprecedented, although media wars between media behemoths and small players have been a permanent feature that played out through the courts in the independent community media space. The views of the editors above explicate the fact that the media wars are not some spontaneous phenomenon. They are borne out of grinding experience in the tough South African print media market in which competing media houses are fighting over 'scraps' against the backdrop of shrinking newspaper revenues and declining advertising spend. These media wars are also linked to the fractious nature inherent of the South African society although the egos of media owners and the editors is also touted as a contributing factor in building animosity within the sector.

Chapter 5

The Politics of Representation: How one media (mis)represented the other?

This chapter engages in the practical performance of critical discourse analysis (CDA) by raising questions about media representations that are closely tied to questions of power and ideology and looks at different types of representations that take form and shape when a news publication publishes a story about a rival news publication on issues internal to it irrespective of whether those issues are in the public interest or not. First, this chapter will delineate some of the intricate historical and contemporary poststructuralist debates on the theories of representations. Second, the chapter focuses on the role that language and power play in the discourses of representation by conducting a critical discourse analysis of five articles[18] published online by the two English-language news websites, namely, the *M&G Online* and *Independent Online*. These five articles were published between 2013 and 2014 during the period of heightened media tensions between the two media organisations and included a conflict which involved two subjects, Trevor Ncube, publisher of the *Mail & Guardian* and Dr Iqbal Surve, executive chairman of the Independent Media Group. This chapter provides a critical discourse analysis of the coverage of one media by another. It will outline which certain representational themes emerged and the ideologies revealed by some of these themes, including the 'marginal' representation of the actors or subjects. The ultimate point is to unravel how some of South Africa's leading news publications represented their competitors in their editorial platforms and will investigate the editorial motivations behind certain representations. The collision of print media houses demands that we see these media wars between competing media companies as the discursive production and representation of marginal discourses that should be interrogated in order to highlight the discursive tensions inherent within media discourses of representations. It has been argued in the previous chapter that fierce

[18] M&G's Trevor Ncube responds to accusations, *M&G Online,* 22 July 2014.
Surve claims against M&G skewed, *M&G Online,* 26 August 2013.
Independent responds to M&G, *Independent Online*, 24 July 2014.
M&G goes to war after Surve rejects title bid, *Independent Online*, 26 August 2013.
Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal, M&G Online, 24 May 2013

competition among competing media houses to gain market share in the shrinking printing media landscape is potentially one of the factors underpinning these media wars. It is for this reason that this chapter seeks to find out whether the representation of one media by another is not predicated upon the discursive marginalising discourses of competition aimed at portraying a rival media organisation in a negative light. The linguistic and materialistic-oriented CDA that is employed in this chapter looks at the various ways in which news articles portrayed another competitor news outlet and the ideological practices that are discursively produced by those articles in order to create interest and attention among the (reading) publics. In doing so, the cultural concept of '*Othering*' is employed in this chapter in order to deconstruct how different publications represented their counterparts.

5.1 Collapsing the distinction between discursive and material representations

This chapter makes a tentative claim that truth (in the absolute sense) can never be captured and represented in its pure, multi-dimensional form by the limited construct of discourse and the limited constructs of the medium (Hobbs, 2008: 11). Therefore, the theory of representation as has been advanced by English scholarly work on discourse undertaken in the area of media and cultural studies is employed herein in this research not only to highlight the discursive practices of representation but also to elucidate the material constructs of representation of one media by another. Hobbs (2008: 10) argued that there will always be contentions and contestations over the questions of truth in relation to how it is presented and represented by the media. Hobbs (2008) stated that Foucault did not speak of truth as a journalist might, but rather spoke of 'regimes of truth', supported by discursive formations, that are *made true* through 'discursive practices' (emphasis original). Hobbs (2008:10) quoted Foucault (cited in Hall, 1997:49) on how he viewed discourses of truth and the 'production' of the human and social sciences to elucidate the point that the media, as an integral part of society, has its 'general politics' of truth:

> *Truth isn't outside power. …Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned … the*

status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

In light of the above, Kress and Bearne (2001: 93) argue that the old theories of representations need rethinking. More so, (Bearne, 2003) contended that this is even more necessary and compelling because of the effects of major shifts in the form of text which are now 'part of our world'. In his writings on representation, Hall (2001a) dealt with practice and activation of representation of visual images in the media, signaling the ideology and power politics of contestation and struggle involved in attributing meanings to images – in essence the 'truth'. Hall (2001a) recognised and acknowledged the fact that language – in its pure form- is representative and drew from Foucault's argument that first and foremost saw 'discourse as a way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time', in representative terms, to unearth the discursive practices as situated in some historical background, always shaped by ideology and couched in the 'regime of representation'(Hall, 2001b: 328) in which each multimodal text and image contain meaning-making in relation to other texts and images across a variety of diverse texts and media. Hobbs (2008) was particularly interested not only in the discursive representation of discourse but also the tensions that bring to the fore the 'power dynamics invoked when some people attempt to impose meanings or influence others in the way they reference particular representations'. Therefore, this chapter deploys the argument that the linguistic representations of media texts should not be prioritised over the material and instead puts forward a suggestion that we must move 'beyond a simplistic consideration of objects by reconceptualising materialism so it is understood as interwoven with cultural, social, and political networks' (Campbell 2005 cited in Hobbs, 2008). The materialistic condition of media representations are more elucidated by Shapiro (1996: xvii cited in Hobbs, 2008) who argue that 'discourse is always...a form of impoverishment, even as it affords value and access. All intelligible oral and textual articulations involve a temporary fix on a meaning at the expense of other possible structures of intelligibility'. Hobbs (2008) contends that 'the language of the media is one of the most pervasive and widespread discourses that people from all sorts of literate societies are exposed to'. It can be argued that because all media texts are mediated, the media field in Bourdieunian (1993) sense can be regarded as a representational field. What will the outcome of these representations be, we may ask?

The poststructuralist textual analysis that follows in the following sections may provide some clues or answers. The theories elucidated above are useful in aiding discourse analysis conducted in the case study of the M&G and Indy Media since they enable the bringing to the fore of representation of discourse and tensions that make explicit power dynamics in representations.

5.2 The corpus construction of media texts

The media texts that are analysed herein in this chapter are comprised of two press releases issued by the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media that were published in their online news websites (*M&G Online* and *Independent Online*) on 22 and 24 July, 2014 respectively. They are also made up of two articles written by Phillip De Wet, associate editor of the *Mail & Guardian* and Wiseman Khuzwayo of the Business Report[19] that were published also in the *M&G Online* and *Independent Online* news websites respectively on 26 August 2013. The articles were first grouped according to their unique journalistic genres: one being press statements issued by the senior management executives of the two media organisations and the other being traditional hard news articles written by two journalists who work in these two media groups. Then, the articles or media texts were then organised according to thematic themes and the issues they addressed. Lastly, the articles were grouped according to the relative proximity of their publication dates. A critical discourse analysis was carried out thereafter in order to highlight the ways in which both the journalists and media owners used texts and images to represent their rival media organisations. The organisation and the analysis of the media texts that follows in the next section has been informed by an understanding that all media texts are discursively mediated and the recognition that media representations are closely tied to questions of ideology and power.

[19] The *Business Report* is the business insert for daily papers of Independent Media around the country and is South Africa's largest business newspaper with 1,2 million readers, according to the Group's website (www.iol.co.za).

5.3 The self-representation of the M&G and Independent Media

This section focuses on a critical discourse analysis of two media releases issued by the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media on 22 and 23 July, 2014 respectively after *The Star* newspaper had published a story headlined "Iconic Mail & Guardian ship flounders", which alleged that the newspaper was facing bankruptcy and that it had failed to pay its suppliers for months (*The Star*, 18 July 2014). Both press release articles will be juxtaposed and analysed respectively. The first example to be critically analysed is a press release issued by the *Mail & Guardian* on 24 July, 2014 (See Appendix 3) that was published in its website headlined "M&G's Trevor Ncube responds to accusations". Firstly, the headline is ambiguous because there is no sense of a precise issue at hand. Rather, what is emphasised in the headline is that the *Mail & Guardian* is responding to 'accusations'. It does not state clearly that it is responding to accusations made by whom. Ironically, the headline is not focused on the Independent Media since it was its publication, *The Star*, and other titles in the Independent Media group, which broke the story that the *M&G* was facing bankruptcy (*M&G Online*, 22 July 2014). Develotte and Rechniewski (2001) cited in MacRitchie and Seedat (2008: 340) argue that although headlines may sometimes seem deeply ambiguous, the "surface difference may be a disguise for articulating deeper meaning and associations". Andrew (2007: 25) stated that headlines "inevitably enhance or "play up" some information while suppressing other information. (Tannenbaum 1953, in Andrew, 2007: 25) The question, then, is how can readers arrive at an interpretation of such a headline and what can be read from it? It is suggested herein in this study that since story headlines occupy prominent positions in the media texts, the non-mention of the Independent Media in the headline was itself a deliberate underrepresentation or marginal representation of a rival media organisation by another media.



Mail&Guardian
AFRICA'S BEST READ

OPINION

M&G's Trevor Ncube responds to accusations

Trevor Ncube 22 Jul 2014 16:23

Trevor Ncube, publisher of the Mail & Guardian, responds to reports published in the Star newspaper that his operations are in financial trouble.

Here is my response to reports that have been carried in the *Star* and its sister publications in the Independent Group about Mail & Guardian Media and Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) over the past few days:

1. A pattern is emerging that every time the *Mail & Guardian* contacts Dr Iqbal Surve, executive chairperson of Independent News and Media, South Africa (INMSA), or his executives, for a comment on a story the *M&G* is working on, it is turned into an opportunity to attack me or my publications.

2. I have avoided responding to these attacks because I strongly believe that the wider public does not benefit when publishers fight. This response is to provide context and to put the record straight.

3. Last year when approached by amaBhungane, the M&G's Centre for Investigative Journalism, to explain how he had funded the acquisition of INMSA, Dr Surve's response was to allege that my businesses were funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He has never been able to provide the proof he claimed to have to support this allegation.

4. Last week while I was on leave, I understand the *M&G* approached Tony Howard, the deputy Executive Chairman, and Takudzwah Hove, the CFO of INMSA with a set of questions on a story that they were working on. On Friday, the papers in the Independent stable ran stories about *M&G* and AMH. No effort was made to seek comment from me to verify the allegations.

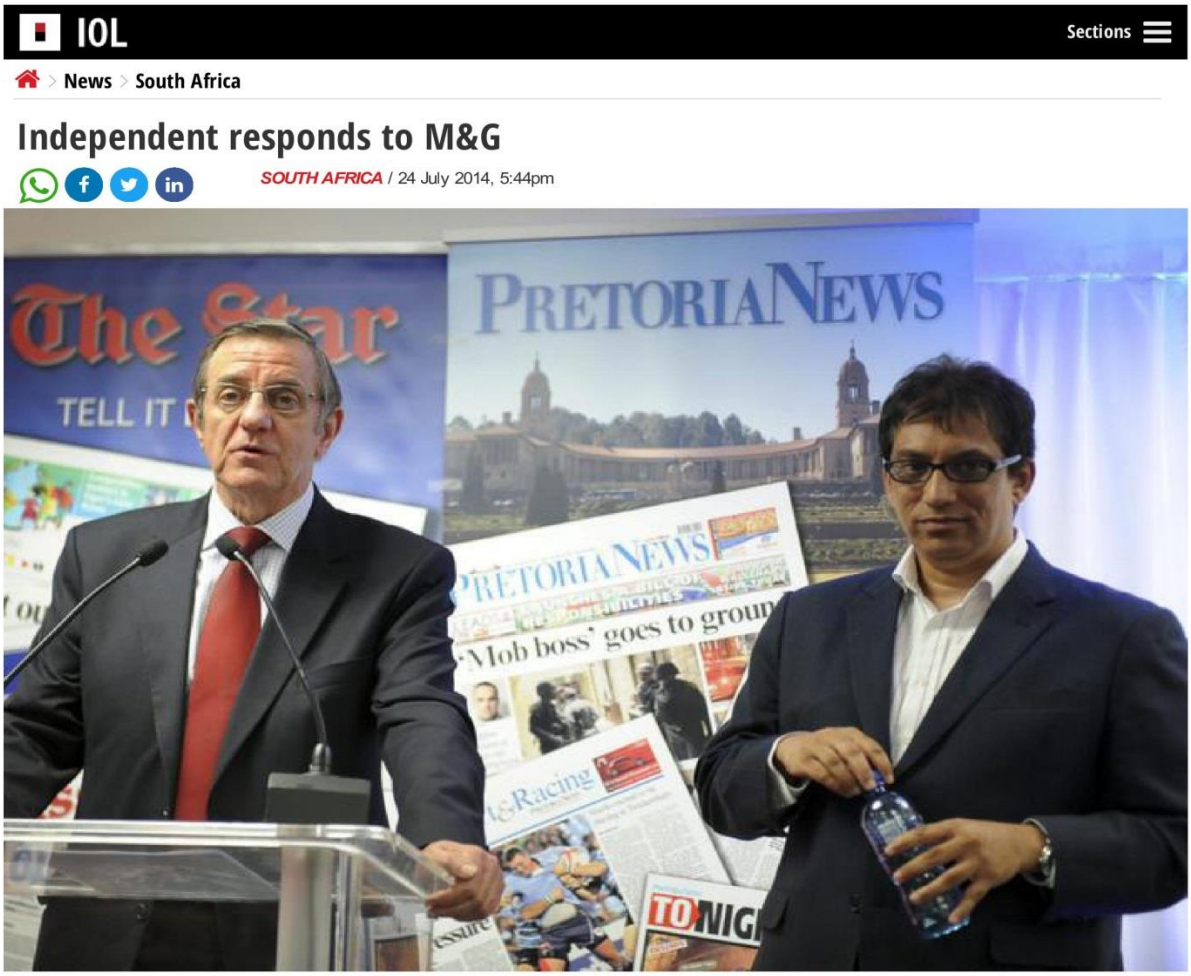
5. Sometime last year Dr Surve called and, among other things, asked that I talk to the *M&G* investigative team,

Figure 4: A photo of the publisher of the *Mail & Guardian* Trevor Ncube contained in a press release issued M&G Media. (*M&G Online*, 22 July, 2014)

Bearne and Kress (2001: 89) ask: "Can image do what writing does? Can writing do what image does? If there are these two modes of communicating what do we need to understand about each of them, about what each can and cannot do or cannot do easily, about their arrangements on the page or on the screen?" The above picture of the

publisher of the *Mail & Guardian*, Trevor Ncube, was taken from a press release article published by the *M&G Online* (See Appendix 3) and contained a caption that read "Trevor Ncube, publisher of the *Mail & Guardian*, responds to reports published in the Star newspaper that his operations are in financial trouble". Firstly, the caption did not credit the photographer or the person who might have taken the picture. Therefore, because of this and on the basis of available information, it is not clear whether the picture was taken during a press conference whereby Ncube was responding to 'reports published in the Star newspaper' or to 'accusations' as the caption and the headline respectively implied so. This is important to note because media texts are sometimes represented with images that do not necessarily portray the event or are sometimes represented by images that do not contribute to the text coverage of an event. As part and parcel of artistic discourses, images can be manipulated to represent or portray a story in particular ways. Shohat and Stam (1994: 180) observed that "rather than directly reflecting the real, or even refracting the real, artistic discourse constitutes a refraction of a refraction; that is, a mediated version of an already textualised and "discusivised" socio-ideological world". It is partly for this reason why it was important for this chapter to describe the features contained in the image. The image (Appendix 3) shown above depicts Ncube in a suit standing in a podium behind the microphone and supposedly reading from the papers in front of him as if he is addressing an audience. In the background of the picture is a *Mail & Guardian* brand logo. The image appears ubiquitously and clearly occupies a position of dominance within the screen of the web page. (Appendix 3) The image seems like it has been sourced internally within the media organisation to serve as an institutional representation tool aimed at portraying the *Mail & Guardian* and its publisher, Ncube, in a good light amid the 'negative coverage' (M&G Online, 22 July, 2014) that the newspaper company was facing severe financial constraints. There is another point worth mentioning here about the arrangement and positioning of the press release article in the newspaper's webpage screen. The article was published under the opinion section of the *M&G Online*. Understandably, the views expressed in the press release are those of Ncube and presumably those of the *Mail & Guardian*. However, traditionally press releases are published under the news section of newspapers as regurgitated news. Interestingly, the publishing of the press releases as an "opinion" article (as opposed to a news article) suggests that it might have been decided upon by

the media organisation as a strategy for the "development and rational justification of a stance on a controversial … matter" (Smirnova, 2009: 79) because opinion articles "allows for subjectivity and tolerates polemic discourse". (Sminorva, 2009: 79) It is clear from the *Mail & Guardian* press release that Ncube is the one who is narrating the story about the events that have unfolded between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media. The other players mentioned in his narrative include Dr Iqbal Surve, executive chairperson of Independent News and Media, South Africa (INMSA) and his executives, the amaBhungane, the M&G's Centre for Investigative Journalism, Tony Howard, the deputy executive chairman at INMSA and Takudzwah Hove, the chief financial officer at INMSA. Their mention in the press release article show how representations occur in and through one another. It also highlights the fact that representations (re)constitute subjectivities.



Chairman of Independent Newspapers, Dr Iqbal Surve, and Tony Howard, the Deputy Executive Chairman. Picture: Motshwari Mofokeng

Independent Newspapers response to statement by Mr Trevor Ncube on behalf of Mail & Guardian

We have taken note of a press release issued this past Tuesday by Mr Trevor Ncube, a shareholder of Mail & Guardian ('M&G) and Alpha Media Holdings ("AMH").

We are surprised, that in response to an article that ran in certain of our newspapers last Friday about difficulties being experienced at the Mail & Guardian, it was necessary for Mr. Ncube to issue a detailed statement which really did not provide any answers to the real issues that were reported on.

We will equally not be intimidated or deterred by the actions and reporting of the Mail & Guardian and other competitors on the steps we are openly taking to transform our business from a legacy print-media company into a growth-focused, proud multi-platform media and content company.

Our strategies, which are being carefully implemented, are based on building a sustainable modern media business which includes the expansion of our current brands and the development of new products and multimedia offerings in clearly defined and identified niches markets.

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Figure 5: A photo of chairman of Independent Newspapers, Dr Iqbal Surve, and Tony Howard, the Deputy Executive Chairman. (*IOL*, 24 July, 2014)

The second media text this chapter looks at is a press release issued by Independent Media and published in its website, the *Independent Online*, on 24 July, 2014, headlined: "Independent responds to M&G" (See Appendix 3). Unlike the headline in *Mail & Guardian* press release article, here the headline is clear and less ambiguous. It

indicates that the Independent Media is responding to the subject of the press release article, in this case, the *Mail & Guardian.* In his paper that questioned whether do newspaper headlines present another roadblock for low-information rationality, Andrew (2007: 24) stated that, functionally speaking, headlines are "simplifying mechanisms that summarise and attract attention to what lies ahead (or below)". The headline of the Independent Media press release article, stated above, has clearly served the functional purpose of the headlines as the "media-generated shortcuts for heuristic information" in the pursuit of a reader's attention. (Andrew, 2007: 24)
The Independent Media press release article was published accompanied by a photograph that depicted Surve, on the right, and on the left, Howard. (See Appendix 3) The picture carried a caption which read, "Chairman of Independent Newspapers, Dr Iqbal Surve, and Tony Howard, the Deputy Executive Chairman". According to the picture credit, it was taken by Motshwari Mofokeng, a photojournalist at the *Daily News*, one of the Independent Media group titles based in Durban.

It is interesting to note that the picture caption provides no clues as whether the picture is linked to the text coverage of press release article other than that it features Howard, who was the issuer of the press release on behalf of Independent Media. Somewhat, it suggests that it was a 'file' picture which might have been used in the story for graphic or illustration purposes only. The features in the photograph itself are quite telling and interesting. In the background of the photograph are two banners emblazoned with the mastheads of the two flagship daily titles of Independent Media in Gauteng, *The Star* and *Pretoria News*, and the images of their front page copies. (See Appendix 3) In the *Pretoria News* banner, a picture of Union Buildings, the official seat of the South African government, can be visibly seen from it. What do we, then, makeup of the image in the light of its contents? The effect of this photograph is that it foregrounds the representational discourses of hegemony and heteronomy. First, the interconnections between *representation* and *hegemony* cannot be underestimated when it comes to how media houses portray themselves as compared to the way they portray their competitors. This is illustrated by the semiotic difference between the images published in both press releases. For instance, the picture of Surve and Howard is backgrounded by the powerful images Independent Media's two flagship titles in Gauteng, *The Star* and *Pretoria News*.

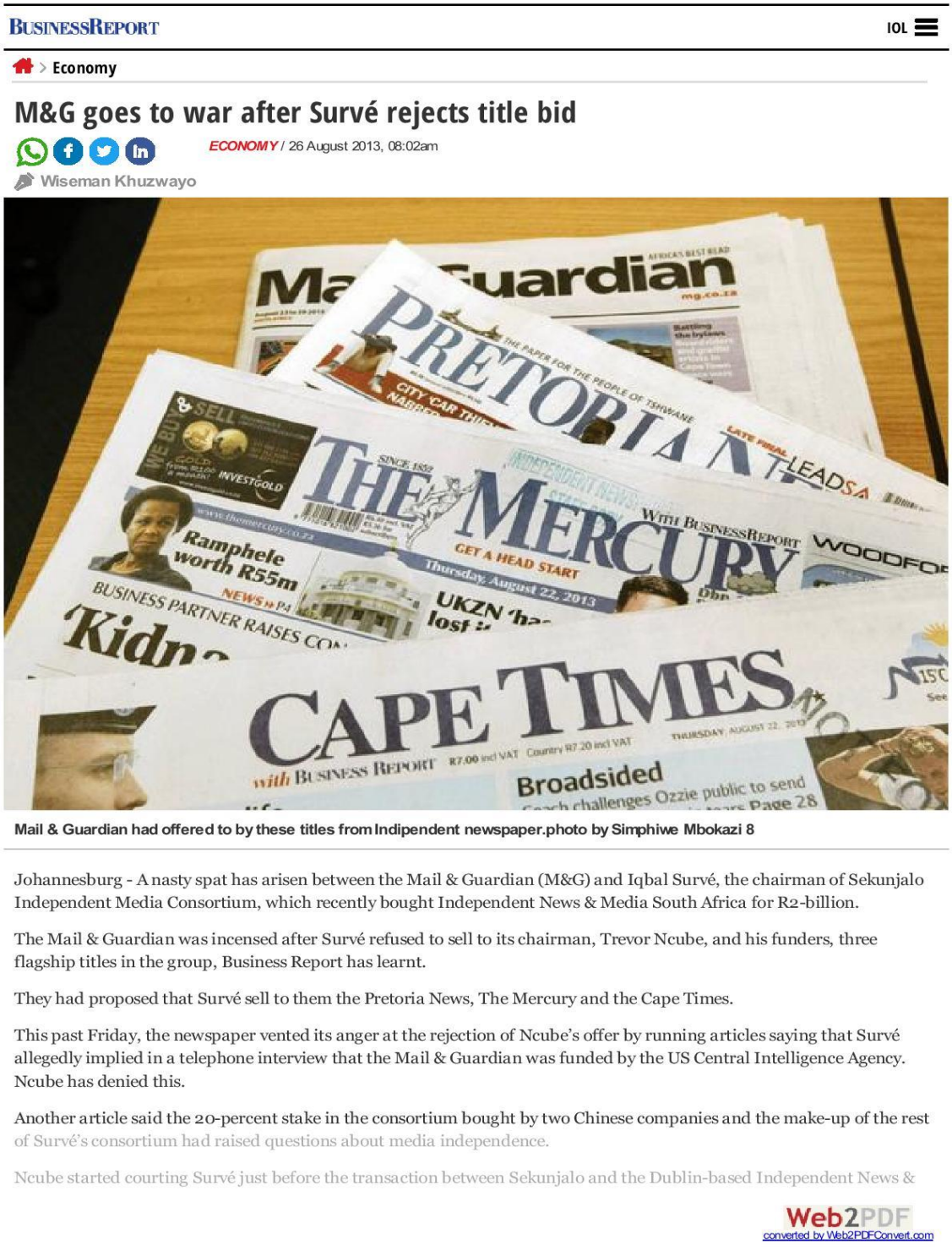
This suggests a legitimising common sense which is aimed at sustaining relations of dominance over the picture of Ncube backgrounded by the *Mail & Guardian*, the only mainstream title owned by the Mail & Guardian Media Limited in South Africa. In addition to *The Star* and *Pretoria News*, Independent Media, South Africa's largest English language newspaper group, also publishes several other newspapers, including the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argu*s in Cape Town and *The Mercury* in Durban. Fairclough (2001: 3) states that 'discourses include representations of how things are and have been'. Second, the background image of the Union Buildings in the *Pretoria News* banner has deeper and significant meanings too. If one looks at the image of the Union Buildings through the lens of Bourdieu's (1983) concept of the media field, it is quite clear that the image projects the Independent Media group as having moved closer to the "heteronomous" pole representing forces external to the media field – in this case – the government. Writing in *News24*, columnist Allister Sparks said since Surve took over at Independent Media, he has given repeated assurances that the newspapers will retain their independence, but "events under his chairmanship tell another story. There has been a rapid changing of editors and other senior newsroom executives, experienced reporters and copy editors have disappeared, and established columnists have ceased to be published". (*News24*, 3 February, 2016) Malherbe et al. (2016: 590) argue that we should conceptualise images as "reflecting consciousness, meaning that the image is not understood with respect to that which it depicts, but rather that which it allows the viewer to experience". (cf. Sartre, 2006)

5.4 The representation of polemic discourses

This second section of the chapter will use a multimodal approach to analysing texts and images. "Media texts are here considered as multimodal since not only the written language but also the visual input contributes to the overall message." (Caldas-Coulthard, 2003:273) The two articles by Khuzwayo and De Wet (See Appendix 3) are examined and analysed accordingly herein in order to highlight the ways in which South African newspaper companies represented one another in their editorial platforms. The media representations of one media by the other are contextualised herein in this study through a reference to the South African media landscape as itself a "contested and transitional space". (Wasserman, 2012) This section also seeks to find out whether commercial interests may be behind certain media representations and will unravel the ideological meanings embedded in those representations. Lastly, this section will examine modes of representation of key media discourses or themes related to the representation of otherness.

"M&G goes to war after Surve rejects bid"

This study has delineated in the outset that the media wars between competing newspaper companies and editors needed to be seen as "wars" and not to be shot through the seamless narrative of media debates. In this regard, the headline of Khuzwayo's article, "M&G goes to war after Survé rejects title bid", seems to support this tentative argument. The headline immediately brings into context a conflict scenario or situation. It paints a picture of media companies at war with each other in the battle to gain market share in the South African print media. The article (See Appendix 3) was published with a photograph, which is reproduced in *Figure 4* (see below). The photograph was taken by Simphiwe Mbokazi of Independent Media and contained a caption that reads: "Mail & Guardian had offered to by [sic] these titles from Indipendent [sic] newspaper". Fishman and Marvin (2003: 33) state that "visual images are often thought to have powerful effects".



BUSINESSREPORT IOL

Economy

M&G goes to war after Survé rejects title bid

ECONOMY / 26 August 2013, 08:02am

Wiseman Khuzwayo

Mail & Guardian had offered to by these titles from Indipendent newspaper.photo by Simphiwe Mbokazi 8

Johannesburg - A nasty spat has arisen between the Mail & Guardian (M&G) and Iqbal Survé, the chairman of Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium, which recently bought Independent News & Media South Africa for R2-billion.

The Mail & Guardian was incensed after Survé refused to sell to its chairman, Trevor Ncube, and his funders, three flagship titles in the group, Business Report has learnt.

They had proposed that Survé sell to them the Pretoria News, The Mercury and the Cape Times.

This past Friday, the newspaper vented its anger at the rejection of Ncube's offer by running articles saying that Survé allegedly implied in a telephone interview that the Mail & Guardian was funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency. Ncube has denied this.

Another article said the 20-percent stake in the consortium bought by two Chinese companies and the make-up of the rest of Survé's consortium had raised questions about media independence.

Ncube started courting Survé just before the transaction between Sekunjalo and the Dublin-based Independent News &

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Figure 6: A photo of the publications' titles of Independent Newspapers and the M&G Media groups contained in a story published by the *Business Report*. (*Business Report*, 26 August, 2013)

Therefore, it is important to pay attention on how the photograph was constructed and represented and to highlight the powerful effects or messages it might have. In the picture, the copy of the *Mail & Guardian* is put in an inferior and obscure position to reinforce notions of hegemonic representations. The three titles of Independent Media seem to weigh heavily on the *Mail & Guardian* and symbolises the hegemonic power

that the Independent Media has over the *Mail & Guardian* stable. Independent Media is the biggest English-language newspaper publisher in the country, with 18 titles. From this perspective, the image's construction has hegemonic ambitions. Seemingly taken on top of what looked like an office table, the image shall be read ideologically to describe the ways in which big media houses uses hegemony to create consent for its dominance over others. (Gramsci, 1971) "Photography appears to us as a simple capturing of reality – the camera is pointed, a snap is taken and the moment is frozen in time. There appears to be little which can get in the way of the picture and the reality it purports to be representing, the process appears transparent and in little need of extended thought. But further analysis demonstrates that a whole series of decisions were involved in the taking of the photograph which affect the way it will be interpreted." (Pearson and Warburton, 2005: 164) The narrator of the story, Khuzwayo, makes several intertextual references to other texts, including references to several articles the *Mail & Guardian* had written about Independent Media and Surve. The article also referred to an "undated letter" (*Independent Online,* 23 August, 2014) which was allegedly delivered by the *Mail & Guardian* to Surve in order to express interest in acquiring three newspaper title belonging to Independent Media.

In this way, representation takes a form of "manifest intertextuality" (Fairclough, 1992: 85) whereby the property of texts may be full of other texts that can be "selected, changed, and contextualized…to assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth". (Fairclough, 1992: 84) Kress (1996) posits that the treatment of any topic will always depend on who is chosen to comment and whose opinions and definitions are sought. In this regard, the article is well-sourced. However, it deliberately state as facts some general assumptions and makes use of negative describers to interpellate subjects. For instance, the article state that "Detractors of Survé hoped the transaction would not be authorised by the regulator [Competition Competition]". The word 'detractors' serves as a negative describer and is used herein to describe the players involved in the event. The journalist makes bland assertion that all the so-called detractors had hoped that the Competition would not authorise the R2 billion Sekunjalo buyiout of Independent Newspapers without supporting it with concrete facts. Interestingly, the article was published under the "economy" section and not under the general category of new implying that it fell within the realm of company news and therefore the representational

themes emerging from it should be seen in this light as economic representations.

"Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal"

This section will conduct a critical discourse analysis of an article written by De Wet (See Appendix 3) of the *Mail & Guardian* which was published on 24 May 2013, headlined: "Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal". The article claimed that Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium has refused to disclose details of its shareholding until the shareholders of Independent Newspapers in Ireland had vetted the deal, which was being considered by the Competition Commission. The orientation of the article takes the form of what Fairclough calls 'manifest intertextuality' whereby quotations and reports of the news actors' speech take centre stage, either directly or indirectly. The article thus makes reference to other texts: "it emerged this week that a quarter of the group may soon be owned by a government pension fund, and that three men closely aligned with the government and the ANC will be in charge of the new owners." De Wet, the narrator, also uses quotations selectively of news actors as neither transparent nor simple citations. (Teo, 2000 cited in Ying 2008: 95)



Mail&Guardian
AFRICA'S BEST READ

NATIONAL

Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal

Phillip De Wet 24 May 2013 00:00

Iqbal Survé, Sekunjalo Group's chief executive, is putting out fires sparked by its bid to buy Independent Newspapers. (Lerato Maduna)

The consortium due to buy South Africa's biggest newspaper group has come out fighting, blaming rising desperation among competitors for questions around its shareholding and intentions.

Irish shareholders are due to decide the fate of the local Independent Group in a little less than a month, a decision that will bring major changes to daily media in the country, one way or another.

Although many questions will remain unanswered until then, it emerged this week that a quarter of the group may soon be owned by a government pension fund, and that three men closely aligned with the government and the ANC will be in charge of the new owners.

The ANC has long argued that although voters show it has overwhelming support among the public, the media landscape does not reflect a similar distribution. The party has also long considered launching its own media presence, with several similar projects considered (and mostly discarded) by the government.

There has also been considerable controversy in the funding of the *New Age*, a newspaper owned by the Gupta family that is closely aligned with the family of President Jacob Zuma, and which attracts a great deal of government advertising, and sponsorship from government-owned companies.

The Independent Group in Ireland this week called an extraordinary meeting on June 17, at which shareholders are expected to vote in favour of a corporate restructuring to include the sale, for R2-billion in cash, of its assets in South Africa. Those include the *Star, Isolezwe,* the *Cape Argus*, the *Cape Times*, the Daily Voice, local newspapers in Pretoria and Kimberley and various weekend newspapers.

Figure 7: A story published by the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper over government connections in the sale of Independent Newspapers. (*M&G Online*, 24 May, 2013)

Ying (2008) argue that the inclusion of texts into other texts (or intertextuality) involves the "(re)interpretations of events and power relations between news participants and that in the process of their selections, quotations, and changes of the speech of various news

actors, news texts redefine the power structure and create meanings about the world that news actors inhabit. (Van Dijk, 1989 in Ying, 2008: 95)

Therefore, the study of "the representation of social actors through quotation patterns - the systematic empowering of certain actors and groups and silencing of others - sheds light on a newspaper's perspectives on the relations social actors have with the world and with other actors, and the ways in which news events and actors are interpreted and represented by the newspaper". (Ying, 2008: 95) The important point to make here is that De Wet had selected and chosen the quotations he wanted to include in the story and omitted those he wanted not to include in the story in order to choose quotation patterns that will represent the Independent Media in a particular way. His choice of the quotations has deeper meanings. For instance, as the following sentence will illustrate, the De Wet, pulls a quote from Surve that make a claim that the 'negative' stories published about the acquisition of Independent Media by Sekunjalo were intended to tarnish the image of the group because they feared its formidable presence in the market. "Quite frankly, I'm tired of all the speculation and the rubbish," Survé said, laying the blame for swirling rumour and speculation squarely on other publications. "Don't pretend if you are a competitor that you do not have an agenda to put a competitor out of business, and tarnish them before they even get out of the starting blocks ...Other media will find a formidable competitor in Sekunjalo". De Wet's linking words are quite interesting to analyse – "laying the blame for swirling rumour and speculation on ther publication". The reference to "other publications" is effectively a reference to the Mail & Guardian as it was one of the publications who broke that Sekunjalo were bidding for Independent Newspapers and all of its assets. De Wet, like Khuzwayo of Independent Media, used ideological interpellation and referred to Independent Media as a "government mouthpiece". This comparison and juxtaposition between the two articles written by the respective journalists of the two publications is therefore in as afar they use labelling to cast another competitor publication in a bad light. The point in *abnitio* is that selection of particular quotations does have an important effect on how media representations take shape and form.

5.5 Conclusion: Discourses and representational meanings

This chapter has conducted a critical discourse analysis in order to unmask how the media represents itself positively in its editorial pages using press statements and how it portrays a competitor publication or media company negatively through the use of news articles. It has shown that negative representations are predicated, in this case study of the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media, on the discursive representation of a rival media house as a competitor in the same market. The question of why news texts are represented in the ways they are is always a complex one. This chapter has undertaken a practical implementation of critical discourse analysis into selected media texts of M&G and Indy Media prove that the media constitute a 'machinery of representation'. (Hall, 1978: 95) It has referred to the literature enunciated in chapter one in order highlight the nuanced historical and contemporary post-structural debates on the theories of representation and argued for the non-splitting of the discursive from the material in order to make explicit and open the questions of power and ideology in media representations.

This chapter dealt with how the media companies self-represented themselves in their editorial platforms and this revealed some interesting findings. For example, Surve used the hegemonic power of his 18 publication and his close ties to the Union Buildings to represent him and his media empire as elucidated in the article. On the other hand, the Mail & Guardian published a picture of Ncube in pinned suit to symbolise that the owner was in charge and that the Mail & Guardian "ship was not floundering" as the article published in Independent Media intimated.

This chapter showed that media companies used images to self-represent themselves in the positive light whilst at the same communicating hegemonic discourses to their rival media counterparts. The study found that images were not only used for illustration purposes in the telling of the news but that "images have authority over the imagination". (Moeller: 1999: 47) The two images (See Appendix 3) published by the Independent Media are a case in point and were classic examples whereby the interplay between hegemonic discourses and positive representations was in motion in the ensuing media wars between the two media organisations. First, it has shown that the media companies

were likely to employ under-representation tactics and strategies in the way they portrayed their competitors. This was more evident in the headlines of the press release articles that were closely examined in this chapter. For instance, the *Mail & Guardian* article (See Appendix 3) chose to omit the name of Independent Media name in its headline in spite of the fact that the newspaper was responding to the accusations the Independent Media had made against it in a series of articles it ran in its various newspaper titles. Instead, it opted to publish a headline that contained ambiguities. Second, this chapter has made an attempt to consider how the images (See Appendix 3) that were published contributed to the reports because, even in print media, photographs are no longer acceptable as having a simple illustration function.

Third, this chapter deconstructed the question of how the rival media companies used describers to portray the 'others' in these ensuing media wars. The cultural concept of *Othering* was used in this chapter and revealed that media companies generally used negative describers to describe an event or the players involved. For example, in one of the articles, the *Business Report* is referred as "the business insert for daily Independent papers around the country". Fourth, the chapter showed that both media organisations disguised their press releases as news articles or opinion articles in one way or the other.

The goal of the critique was to go beyond representation in order to challenge the subjectivity that makes it possible. Therefore, this chapter has presented two types of representations. Self-representations allowed the media houses to "ddetermine ... what and who gets represented and what and who routinely gets left out (and) how things, people, events, relationships get represented ... the structure of access to the media is systematically skewed towards certain social categories". (Hall, 1978) Polemic representations were "determined by the antagonistic relations between its members and intended to be mutually exclusive.

These polemical representations must be viewed in the context of an opposition or struggle between groups and are often expressed in terms of a dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor." (Pop, 2008: 221-222) In sum, the representations of one media by another are backgrounded both by commercial imperatives of the media and hegemonic discourses of power and raise questions whether editorial considerations

behind certain representations are done at the behest of the newspaper management. The media became an agonistic space through these polemic representations with the *M&G* holding itself up as an "independent" publication free from political interference and accusing the Independent Media of being a lapdog of the ANC.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Agonistic media, Cracks, Ideological Interpellation, Othering

This chapter rounds off the arguments that have been made in this dissertation and fleshes out some main findings revealed by this research.

6.1 Agonism, post-structuralism: media as an 'agonistic space'

This study has shown that media is an "agonistic space"[20] that the media wars between competing newspapers companies and editors should be understood in the context that there will always be fights, contentions, and contestations within the media because the media is vulnerable to divisions and conflicts. One of the main premises of this dissertation is that it is not possible under these circumstances to have unity in the media. Therefore, the agonistic approach to the study of media wars that was applied in this research does not only appreciate the real conflictual nature of the frontiers between competing media companies and editors, but also allows to 'open-up' the media as Mouffe theorised in 2006 (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 973-4) This study posited at the outset that the media barely reports about issues internal to the media. It further noted that media wars seem to manifest more often when the news media reports 'negatively' about internal issues to another competitor publication or rival media house. The central theme running through this dissertation is that the media wars between newspaper companies and editors should not constitute the media as enemies, as "us and them, but rather as "adversaries".

This is how this research has theorised the relatively new phenomenon of media wars in the South African print media in the post-apartheid era, which is also then constitutive of a democracy. It has foregrounded these media wars as a positive development in the study of media as an agonistic space in as far as these media wars bring to the floor issues internal to the media given that the media remains largely a 'secretive domain' whilst it wields power to hold to account other aspects of society. This study has found the theories of Foucault (1966, 1970, 1977a, 1980), Bourdieu (1993, 1996, 1998a,

[20] Mouffe's insisted on the importance of the idea of the agonistic public space in a democracy where people are exposed to the conflicting ideas that characterise it.

1998b, 2005), Mouffe (1992, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2005), Althusser (1971) and Mansell (2004) most useful in providing the theoretical framework in which to place the media wars and their discourses in the South African media. Some of the concepts used include, ideological interpellation, othering, argumentation, agonistic pluralism, and media field.

6.2 Signs of cracks and dislocations

This research has deployed Bourdieu's (1993) field theory in order to grasp the marked shifts that have occurred within the South African "media field" since 2010 because the demographic profile of new entrants in the field determines whether, upon entering the field, they would gravitate towards the "'heteronomous' pole representing economic and political capital (forces external to the field) or "the 'autonomous' pole representing the special capital unique to that field (e.g., artistic or scientific or other species of cultural capital)". (Bourdieu, 1998: 70-71) It can be argued that the 'special capital' unique to the "media field" in South African print media context is symbolised by newspaper companies taking membership of the Press Council and Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) if their newspaper products are delivered *en mass* to the market, whether they are sold or not.

In line with the argument of the demographic profile of new entrants in the field, it can be argued that the actions of Independent Media to pull out of the Press Council's self-regulatory system symbolises a media group that is positioning itself closer to the heteronomous pole within the media field, "even to the extent of making obsolete or outmoded the dominant genres that have till then characterised the field" (Boshoff and Garman, Forthcoming) Therefore, this study concludes that actions of the Independent Media to pull of the Press Council and *The New Age's* decision not to join the ABC signify a media field that shows cracks and dislocations.

6.3 Having it both ways: the media caught up in political ideologies

In 2008, Herman Wasserman wrote a paper titled, "*Having it both ways: balancing market and political interests at a South African daily newspaper*", and argued that the process of democratic transition in South Africa has "brought many changes to the national political economic context within which media companies operate. These changes have also brought challenges for South African media companies to reposition themselves ideologically, with their political-economic interests in mind" (Wasserman, 2008: 1). It was not too long ago when editors of various news publications were caught up in political and ideological battles over whether journalists should be members of political parties or show open support of political parties. What the views of the editors interviewed in this study revealed is that the discourses of the editors showed a lack of consensus on the "the ideal-typical values of journalism's ideology" (Deuze, 2005: 442) on the one hand, and differences over the distinction between the professional identity of journalists and their private personas, on the other hand. For example, Kevin Ritchie, regional executive editor at Independent Newspapers and former editor of *The Star*, felt that there was nothing wrong for Mde and Brown to wear ANC-branded t-shirts and hats in their 'private persona' and thought that this was a matter of 'an individual choice'. On the other hand, Ray Hartley, editor of *Business Live* and former editor of the *Sunday Times*, felt that under no circumstances should journalists wear their political affiliation on "their sleeves' because 'it would undermine your ability to cover politics'.

Mpumelelo Mkhabela, station manager at Power FM and former editor of the *Sowetan*, highlighted that in terms of the rules, nothing prohibits journalists from associating with political parties, however he felt that *'because there's no rule prohibiting it, it does not mean it's the right thing to do or it does not mean it's entirely wrong because it might not be an issue depending on context. For example, it might not be a big issue if the said journalist is not covering politics."* The rules that Mkhabela was referring to are the regulations contained in the Press Council's Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African print and online media (as effective January 1, 2016) Nevill argued that Mde and Brown were 'perfectly' entitled to wear ANC-branded t-shirts, *'but if they were there* [ANC 103rd birthday rally] *to do a job, and report on the event, perhaps it wasn't such a wise idea'*. She decried the way in which journalism was practiced in South

Africa, where journalists and newspapers do not take a clear political stance: *"... in South Africa, we tend to try and show we're unbiased, politically, and that the stories are even-handed. But in reality those lines are blurred…"*

6.4 *M&G* versus Indy Media: ideological interpellation at work

The fractious media fight between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media was discussed and analysed in great detail in chapter 3. In trying to understand this media war between the two media companies, this dissertation, deployed Althusser's concept of "ideological interpellation" to unmask how the two newspaper groups used naming or labelling in order to mask the real issues that were being asked pertaining to the funding and ownership structure of their business operations. For example, Iqbal Surve of Independent Media used ideological interpellation to label the *Mail & Guardian* as a 'CIA agent' and alleged that there were "rumours" that the M&G is funded and influenced US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In the same manner, the *Mail & Guardian* also ideologically interpellated Independent Media as a "pro-government mouthpiece" long before the shareholders of Independent Group in Ireland had vetted the R2-billion sale of Independent Newspapers to Sekunjalo Independent Media. There were both pessimistic and optimistic moments during the time when these ideological interpellations were at play in the ensuing media fight between the two media companies. It was a pessimistic moment when Brown entered the fight between the two media bosses [Ncube and Surve] and labelled Trevor Ncube of the *Mail & Guardian* 'a liar' who "is not averse to telling the odd bare-faced lie in his defence". It was an optimistic moment when the ideological interpellation of the *M&G* as a 'CIA agent' failed because Surve could not provide evidence to prove his allegations or to support the "rumours".

6.5 The politics of representation and misrepresentations

One of the central inquiries posed in this dissertation was that given that the media barely reports on one another, which representational themes emerged during these media wars and what ideologies were revealed by these themes. Chapter 5 of this study delved deeply on how the media companies represented themselves in their editorial pages and misrepresented their rival competitors, and also investigated whether some of these representations were not predicated upon discursive marginalisation discourses of competition aimed at portraying a rival media organisation in a negative light. The linguistic and materialistic-oriented critical discourse analysis was then deployed to conduct a though textual analysis on how language and power plays out in the discourses of representations.

The media texts that were looked in this study were mainly press releases and news articles written by senior journalists who work in the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media. The study found that both newspaper houses represented themselves in a positive or hegemonic light in their editorial pages through the press statements they issued and published. It also found that there were general negative representations that were conferred to rival newspaper companies and that this was achieved through the use of negative describers. For example, the Independent Media used hegemonic representation when it photographed and published a picture containing an image of its three titles weighing heavily on the *M&G* newspaper copy against the backdrop that the M&G Media Limited publishes the one newspaper in South Africa, the *Mail & Guardian*, whilst Independent Media publishes 18 titles across the country. This will be more elucidated in the discourses of the editors below.

6.6 Understanding media wars: the discourses of the editors

The discourses of the editors interviewed in this study on the relatively new phenomenon of media wars were interesting but also indicative of a democracy in action, filled with fights and contestations. They showed some wide ideological schisms on some issues, towards broad consensus on other issues. In some cases they revealed nuanced and

perceptive insights, particularly on whether the editors made certain editorial considerations other than those routinely applied on any news story when they decide to publish a 'negative' story about a rival and competitor media house. These ideological schisms should also have shown the ANC (who has always spoken about the media as though it is one hegemonic bloc) that the media is not one, but has many ideologies, split in multiple ways and very divided. This is good for the plurality of voices that the ANC says it wants. Editors were unanimous that media wars were a relatively new phenomenon that became noticeable when *The New Age* entered the local print media market in 2010 and when Sekunjalo Independent Media purchased Independent Newspapers in 2013. It was also interesting that the editors on the outside of these splits and fights had different views on the matter.

The editors shared some wide ranging thoughts on the specific media war between the *Mail & Guardian* and Independent Media. Mkhabela, in an interview with the author of this study, felt the media war between the *M&G* and Independent Media 'became a clear rivalry between two media bosses [Ncube and Surve] who were questioning each other's *modus operandi* or *bonafides*'. For Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*, the whole thing was predicated on the egos of the media bosses probably derived from owning a big media asset, 'mine is bigger than yours'. The editors also alluded to some editorial dilemmas they face when deciding to publish a story about internal issues of a competitor publication. The comments of Verashni Pillay, editor-in-chief of *Huffington Post SA* and former editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian,* were both shocking and interesting: "*I would think twice [about publishing a story about another newspaper] because I would think oh! I'm going to bump into this editor at Sanef (South African National Editors Forum) and it's going to be awkward*". Likewise, it emerged that journalists were wary of writing a 'negative' story about another rival media house because – in the words of Pillay - the media is "such a very small industry that we are afraid to cover each other even when something legitimate happens in another newspaper". Like in the issue of journalists and political affiliation, the editors differed on whether media wars posed a threat to journalism practice and the image of the journalism profession. Ritchie felt the media wars were important to keep the media 'honest' but warned of the danger of terminating the 'golden thread" that links the media with audiences, readers and advertisers if media wars started to become 'petty point

scoring king of engagement'. Hartley was totally against them: "*I use to say when I was a newspaper editor that reporting about another media is like a dog licking its ass, it's nice for the dog but it's not very nice to watch for everybody else. When readers read about the shocking finances of one paper in another paper, you kinda wonder is it accurate or is it something done at the behest is this word correct? Is not behest that he was saying – please check of the management."* Very clearly some editors were comfortable with the dirty linen being aired while others felt embarrassed elucidating also that this was not common on the past.

This concluding chapter has demonstrated how the media war between two media companies in post-apartheid South Africa could be theorised under the intersectional nexus of the discourses of political affiliation, competition (as in a fight for market share), representation as well as democracy in action. The public war also demonstrated a break from the past where media protected each other, as the discourse from the editors revealed. It is possible that this fight between the M&G and Independent could lead the way for more to come as the media continues to split and fracture. The media war researched in this dissertation has probably set the scene for more agonistic dislocations, especially in the year 2017 as the ruling party heads towards in national elective conference.

6.7 Contribution and directions for future research

Benson (1998: 477) posits that "media field researchers do not simply offer a grim diagnosis of the news media and leave it at that: They argue that the first step toward change is to bring to consciousness the invisible structures of belief and practice that lead actors to unwittingly reproduce the system, even as they struggle within it". It has been the tacit task of this dissertation to conduct a symptomatic reading of media wars in South Africa and not to dismiss them as mere froth. This cross-disciplinary study of the media wars and their discourses in the South African media field has fruitfully applied concepts from sociology, cultural studies, linguistics and media studies as a means of gazing at these media wars from a perspective of a "deep time for the media" (Zeilinski, 2012: 13) which opens-up spaces for imagination in research. It has theorised and foregrounded these media wars and analysed their complexities and paradoxes and explained the factors that may be underpinning them or contributing to their rapid evolution. This research suggests many interesting directions for future research. Future research on a more comprehensive study of media wars could thus provide a more representative picture of this emerging phenomenon. Future research on whether journalists who write these stories about another media are doing so at the behest of management could be another intriguing study. A more empirically-oriented approach that compares the clicks per view on average of stories about the media published online to other general stories could be of interest.

6.8 Limitations

Although care has been taken to relate the study of media wars in the South African print media both to their institutional and social environments, this is a micro-level, exploratory study that has only focused on two examples or case studies of media wars, which are not sufficient enough to provide for a more comprehensive and representative picture of this emerging phenomenon. Therefore, the findings of this study are limited, primarily for two reasons - by the study's focus only on two case studies or examples of media wars and by the small sample of the editors who participated and the absence of the views of the journalists who are central in the writing of stories. Nonetheless, the views and insights of the experienced editors ought to lend the study some credibility.

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KNOWLEDGE IS THE NEW BLACK.
3 DECEMBER 2016 13:41 (SOUTH AFRICA)

DAILY MAVERICK

OPINIONISTA VUKANI MDE

Writing truth to (all forms of) power

VUKANI MDE 15 JAN 2015 10:08 (SOUTH AFRICA)

An answer to Marianne Thamm's column "True Colours Shining Through: Should journalists be draping themselves in party political colours?"

As you may know by now, I spent my last weekend in Cape Town. It was lovely, and no I didn't experience any racism. If someone did try a racist move on me I missed it. I can, on occasion, be totally oblivious to bullshit, a point I will have to return to just now.

I managed to attend the ANC's gala dinner on Friday night and their rally at the magnificent Cape Town stadium on Saturday. The rally, as rallies tend to be, was lively and made for a great afternoon. The gala dinner was a damp squib. Guests were 'entertained' by a flat stand up comic and for the main course were 'treated' to a rather dry chicken breast. Someone even denied my request for orange juice. I can't speak to the quality of dessert, as I left immediately after the chicken, which must have been served at 11pm.

But the stadium experience was much better. It was my first time in the stadium and really, what a wonderful piece of art and engineering it is. Not a bad seat in the entire house. I must watch a football game there some time. Naturally, the ANC didn't cater for the 70,000 crowd it says came to celebrate its 103rd birthday, but this was just as well, given the previous night's dinner. Instead, we (my wife Nosipho, colleague Karima Brown, and I) ended up at Mama Tembo's Cafe in Sea Point after the rally, for drinks and tapas. It was perfect. We had to work on the Sunday, and in my experience the ANC is not a pleasant drunk, so we skipped the various after-parties around the city and went to sleep early.

There was also a lot of work to be done, and I was exhausted on returning to Johannesburg on Monday evening, so I collapsed on my bed and woke up the next morning. What I woke up to was something that made me think I had unknowingly slipped through a wormhole and emerged in a strange new galaxy; no, a whole other moral universe in which the personal preferences of complete strangers were deemed to have some kind of ethical hold on me. I woke up to a veritable storm in an online teacup.

You see on Saturday, while joining the ANC in its celebration of its 103rd birthday, we'd taken selfies (or 'groupies', what does one call a selfie with more than one 'self' in it?) as one absolutely has to these days. In them, I am decked in out in Nosipho's rather tight-fitting black ANC tee, and Karima has on a white straw hat with the party's badge on the front. In case you don't know (where have you been?) Karima is Group Executive Editor at Independent Media, a position that gives her ultimate responsibility for group editorial content across all titles and platforms. I am Independent's group head for op-ed and analysis, giving me responsibility for content in that area. That is Independent Media, owned since 2013 by Dr Iqbal Surve, who is (again, how do you not know this?) a well known hater of Editorial Independence and basically just..., well, Evil Incarnate.

The image so outraged Marianne Thamm of the Daily Maverick that she immediately sat down to write over

1400 words of indignant condemnation. It appeared with the title True Colours Shining Through: Should journalists be draping themselves in party political colours?

In it, Thamm first rattles off a laundry list of the ANC's failures, both recent and historic. The point of this list, insofar as I could make out, was that.... well to be perfectly honest I don't have the first clue what her point was. But here it is:

> "We have a president who, since taking office in 2009, has been dogged by scandal and allegations of impropriety and corruption and a government increasingly concerned with establishing a specific "good news" narrative in the media in the face of visible failure in many areas. The Marikana massacre, a bloated and often incompetent civil service, the education and energy crisis, e-tolls, ailing parastatals, crime, corruption and an attempt by factions in the ruling party to capture the intelligence services as well as influence the judiciary. These are all sins of incumbency and a vibrant and independent media is vital in holding government and power to account."

None of that, as a critique of the ANC or the state, is particularly new or original. In fact one wouldn't need to look very hard to find the same things written in the platforms of the Iqbal Surve-owned Independent Media, and probably a lot of it by myself or Karima Brown. Just by way of example, here's a snippet of The Cape Time's editorial of January 8, the day on which the ANC celebrates its birthday:

> "Today, in office for twenty years, the party is beset by all the challenges and weaknesses one expects of a party in power for too long, and some that one does not. The ANC wallows in the muck of what the party itself calls 'the sins of incumbency'. Patronage, corruption, and aversion to accountability are rife. The courage, discipline and visionary outlook of former years is in short supply. The party is big and messy and unwieldy, mired in multiple factional battles driven almost entirely by financial and power interests, rather than ideology and principle. It often finds itself at odds with the manifest interests of the very people it seeks to lead. It is on the back foot in the public discourse, because despite its immense social and political power, it is unsure of itself and lacks confidence. Too often it deploys brute force when soft power will do, the ultimate sign of the insecure impostor.

The city and province where the ANC has chosen to take its annual celebration this year are an apt illustration of its challenges. The party hasn't governed the Western Cape since 2009, and the City of Cape Town since 2006. It is unlikely to recover its ground here anytime soon. The reasons for its loss of power (not to mention legitimacy) are complex and multi layered, but you wouldn't know it listening to the ANC's own explanations. Those are riddled with self-pity and blame shifting, coming dangerously close to denigrating the province's electorate; as if it is the people who need to prove their credentials to the ANC, not the other way round."

That's probably more devastating and eloquent an articulation of the ANC's parlous state than Thamm, even in the throes of her faux moral outrage, would ever be able to muster.

But, according to her, the Independent group is part of a cohort of media outlets that are working hand in glove with the ANC to close down the space for a "free press". Apparently, there's also been a "diversion of government advertising to publications and media outlets perceived to be sympathetic to the ruling party".

It would be a monumental waste of my time to even ask her for any substantiation of this last claim. She has no basis to even believe the government is planning to 'shift' advertising in any direction, other than a hysterical but evidence-thin story carried in the *Mail & Guardian*, which have since been repeated uncritically in other media.

In the addled imaginations of our detractors and competitors (pretty much the same crowd), Independent has won far more "government advertising" than it has in the real world in which you and I live. It's a part of the competitor narrative of Independent that has been greedily seized upon by the white liberal intelligentsia because it is a useful lie with which to discredit black and/or progressive media outlets interested in telling a counter-hegemonic story to that imposed on the country by them. I would stake my life on the fact that Independent lags both of its major competitor groups, Times Media and Media 24, on government and state

advertising, and this is likely to be the case for a few years still. Not that we are not working hard to change the picture regarding government (and private) advertising. What strategies we will use to do this, we are neither willing to share in public nor be apologetic about.

How about this little gem: "The Independent Newspaper Group, under its new owners with the controlling shareholding held by Iqbal Survé's Sekunjalo Consortium, has been particularly vocal in its support for the ruling party."

Um, where exactly? Since we've been nothing less than "vocal" in our support, surely it wouldn't be hard to cite one or two examples of outright ANC support from our group. Any senior journalist who cares a fig for the importance of evidence-based writing would have cited at least one. Just one.

I will cite you one very interesting example, from the eve of last year's general election; in other words the perfect moment for a "vocal" pro-ANC media group to nail its colours to the ANC mast. Lord knows it would have been a perfectly justifiable stance, since other papers didn't hesitate to state their party political preferences. The *M&G* had no particular preference, as long as you didn't vote ANC. They published an editorial calling on their readers to support anyone but. Given that, you would think that Iqbal Surve, then in control of Independent and apparently the single-handed destroyer of editorial integrity in our media, would take the opportunity presented by the *M&G*'s partisan stance to instruct all his editors to support the ruling party.

Yet, here is what a group editorial that appeared in all our papers said:

> "As polling date draws closer, many newspapers have taken the step of coming out to endorse one political party or the other, urging their readers to vote as they advise. [This newspaper] is read by mature, independent adults. We therefore won't presume to tell them how they should exercise their democratic right. South Africa is so diverse, and still so divided along racial, cultural, class and other fault lines that it is in any case impossible to propose a one size fits all solution to the conundrum of who you should support when your polling station opens tomorrow. Make your own determination based on your needs, aspirations, experiences, and no doubt, your identity.
>
> But what we will implore you to do is to vote. Participate. Make a stand. Speak and be heard. It matters more than you know. Recently some ANC malcontents have led a spirited campaign to persuade you to spoil your vote as a way of registering your unhappiness with both the ruling party and its opposition. Spoiling your vote, and thus squandering your democratic birthright, is not a demonstration of voter power but a deliberate act of powerlessness. It is the surest way to give yourself no say in how – or by whom – you are governed. By all means let your choice be guided by your unhappiness (or contentment), but do make a choice.
>
> Spoiling your ballot, or refusing to vote in the first place, is to silence yourself. In politics more than anywhere else, silence is interpreted as consent."

Some "vocal support" that is.

Thamm's piece continues along its sanctimonious and dishonest way until it reaches its moral crescendo, in which she condemns Karima Brown and I for our "unwavering political allegiance" to the ANC. The terms upon which she bases her indignation are interesting and reveal more about Thamm than they do about us, but I'll return to this shortly. Let me tell you a little bit first about the online storm in a teacup, because it is interesting for its own reasons.

In the days since the article appeared, what I may best describe as the 'white internet' has gone into total overdrive. The piece has since been shared, tweeted and discussed ad nauseam. The comments sections were on fire, the anger and outrage visceral, the insults colourful. Adriaan Basson of Beeld was "disturbed" and his "journalist's heart was sore", the poor thing. Jill Moodie of Grubstreet was up in arms. Max du Preez wrote an urgent letter cancelling his column in the Cape Times, to avoid being 'tainted'. There's been a lot of mutual status sharing, 'liking', 'hear hear'-style comments, and other examples of digital backslapping since.

Like I said, I don't think the white internet (or the white media establishment in its entirety) will ever forgive that picture, ever.

My initial response was mild amusement. Social commentator Eusebius Mckaiser, who has since written a thorough demolition of Thamm's supposed ethical' objections and the hypocrisy of her position, shared it on his Facebook wall and tried to cajole a response out of me. I said something along the lines of "I refuse to waste time on that long-winded, sanctimonious but ultimately pointless drivel".

While my view of Thamm's article haven't changed (they've only been strengthened by her weak responses to the many counter-points put to her in the debate) I have since decided to write back to Thamm, her outraged cohorts, the Daily Maverick, and anyone else who would presume to tell me what I should think and feel (about the ANC or anything else) or how I should behave.

In my subsequent Facebook response to Thamm, I take her on over two key points, which I said and still believe are at the nub of her attack on us, though she doesn't articulate it in the terms I employ below:

- She suggests (but doesn't say) that our stance on journalists supporting political parties or ideologies is inconsistent, even hypocritical. The example she cites is Independent's firing last year of former Business Report senior writer Donwald Pressly. "In April last year Business Report journalist Donwald Pressly was fired for seeking political office with the Democratic Alliance, a move which new Group Executive Editor, Karima Brown, described as "a breach of Independent Newspapers' editorial code of conduct and code of ethics and a breach of the trust that those readers place in our titles and the writers who put them together".

Ja well no fine."

Now the Pressly example is a curious one. For one thing, it is completely disanalogous. Pressly lost his job not because he supported a particular political party, but simply because he took steps to seek elected office through that party AND failed to declare same to his editor and readers. At the time, his lawyer publicly tried, unsuccessfully, to frame the issue as his client being victimised for his political leanings. In her citing of the example, Thamm is subtly endorsing this little white lie. Pressly would have been free to take any number of selfies of himself in DA regalia if he wanted. Hell, he was even free to seek parliamentary office on a DA ticket. All that would have been required was full disclosure of the fact to his editor and the readers, and that would have been the end of it.

And why, you might ask, would it be more important for Pressly to declare his interest in public office than it is for me to declare that I went to an ANC birthday bash and put on a branded shirt? The answer to this brings me to the second reason why the Pressly example is so inappropriate:

At the time that Donwald Pressly sought to be admitted to the DA's electoral list, that party was contesting an election based upon a manifesto of policy proposals, ranging from the economy to education, health and foreign affairs. As bureau chief for BR, Pressly had the job to assess, critique and report on this policy platform for his readers, both before the election and afterwards, when the DA would use their policy platform as the basis on which to engage the governing party. Seeking to be elected to parliament on that very same policy platform presents a clear conflict of interest. That is why there was an ethical duty to declare. It is an ethical duty that simply does not arise when you pitch up at a political party's birthday bash, with no duty or intent to report on proceedings.

Anyone who seeks elected office with a political party is, by definition, endorsing the political and policy platform of that party in its entirety. This is not something you can do while claiming to write critically about that party and its platform every day. On the other hand, attending a party's birthday bash, or even wearing its regalia, is in no way a wholesale approval of everything contained in its manifesto or policy documents. It is also not a surrender of one's critical faculties in relation to said party. In the very same election in which Pressly sought to become a DA member of parliament, I refused to vote for the ANC precisely because I disagreed with key aspects of its (economic) policy.

Yet Thamm suggests that in future I should attach a disclaimer to anything I write, so that my readers will know what she claims is my "unwavering political allegiance" (unwavering allegiance to the ANC is quite possibly the funniest thing I've ever been accused of in my career, but more on that shortly). Strangely, even though Thamm is obviously aware of the details behind the Pressly matter, I don't recall her once making a similar disclosure call in relation to him or being so outraged at his behaviour. When I questioned her, in my Facebook response, about the inconsistency of her stance on the two issues, would you like to guess her response? It was something along the lines of 'well I was busy at the time and didn't get around to it'. Ja w no fine.



In another Facebook thread, when she was again questioned on her double standards, Thamm concedes th she had "always been uneasy" about Donwald Pressly's heavy leaning towards the DA. This, of course, is bullshit. Personally I would hope that Pressly cares as much about what Marianne Thamm thinks of his political leanings as I do about her views about my own: not one bit.

The nexus issue isn't Pressly's political 'leaning', about which absolutely no one at Independent cares. It is rather dishonest and unethical conduct, something that she accuses Karima Brown and I of on the flimsies excuse. One set of rules for some, another set for the rest.

- Thamm's second line of attack, adopted subsequently in other corners of the white internet, is best paraphrased as 'well, at least think about the children'.

  "Let's frame it this way.

  Would it be acceptable to Brown and Mde if a journalist in the Independent group, attending a DA fede congress or birthday party or an EFF event, posted photographs of themselves decked out in those party's colours?"

It's a fair enough question, and one to which a fair journalist would seek a real answer, since there's clearl so much riding on it. Not Thamm though, she merely assumes the answer that works best for her argumen "If not, why is it okay for them to do so?"

Here is Adriaan Basson, on the same tip, as quoted on Grubstreet:

> "*if a reporter from your group saw you and Vukani at the rally, what would they think? And how would this influence them in future? Attending the rally is one thing. Wearing ANC colours is another. What are you "saying" by wearing ANC hats/shirts? That you support the party, even though you are not a card-carrying member? I would have been deeply uncomfortable seeing my seniors wearing political colours at a party rally.*"

Not that it matters to the people who asked the questions, but here was my answer to the question whether I would have any problem with the political affiliations of Independent journalists: If any Independent journo of whatever level of seniority went to a DA/EFF/ANC event not to report on it but as a supporter of that party and posted pics of themselves, they would have NO problem with me or anyone in the group. Personally I don't want journalists who are "objective" automatons. And I have no problem with people who believe differently to me as long as they are capable of thinking through their own biases, as I myself strive to.

The answer opened up a new discussion about the desirability or otherwise of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality'. In his eloquent rebuttal, Mckaiser frames the issue in a way I won't even attempt to improve upon:

> "....can we please cash out this idea of political neutrality and objectivity? Here, both sides are lazy very often. Those advocating 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' never say what they mean, let alone offer justification for why it is desirable to report 'neutrally' or 'objectively' as if they are citing a mathematical axiom. Similarly, many on my side of this debate have now resorted to simply asserting the slogan, 'Objectivity is a myth' without explaining themselves either. Let me stake a position here bluntly, and make the case. I consider objectivity and neutrality both NOT possible, and undesirable even if it was possible. The reason is simple. No writer, including reporters, can wholly divorce the facts of their life, their upbringing, their education, their travels, their mentors' influences....their entire psychologies, in

> fact, from the reporting and writing choices they make, be these choices about what to write, or what to NOT write about; what tone and style to use, or not to use; what pictures to use to accompany a story, and which ones to leave out. This in turn means that if you look at 100 news reports a reporter has written or columns written by a columnist, you would be able to make reasonable inferences about their interests, their values, their biases, their convictions."

Mckaiser also touches on the open and often stated biases of many columnists, writers, analysts and editors in the South African landscape, and wonders why this is viewed as less problematic than attending a party event dressed in that party's colours. It's a legitimate question, to which the self-appointed defenders of objectivity and balance have yet to offer up a convincing answer. This is particularly important given an argument that has been advanced along the lines that appearing in public in ANC regalia sends a subtle message to journalists who report to me that subservience to the ANC is what's required of them.

Here's Grubstreet:

> "I think it very unwise for editors – and Brown and Mde are the most influential editorial staff members in the Indie group – to be seen at such an event in such a manner. A couple of friendly conversations with ANC bigwigs and it opens the door to expectation.

It also creates a climate of expectation for your staff members – and this, I am told, is how it works at the SABC. Human nature being what it is, a leader does not need to give a direct order to have something done. A leader also creates the environment – a culture, if you like – in which underlings read the signs that tell her which path leads to advancement and which doesn't."

Most unbelievable is the *M&G*'s deputy editor, who told SAFM radio that wearing an ANC shirt in public while off duty would send a "chilling message" and is meant to "bully" junior reporters who have a duty to cover the ANC for our stable. Think about that just for another second. Then consider that the *M&G* has a publicly stated editorial position *against* the ANC. Oddly, their position on the ANC apparently sends no chilling messages to their juniors, who will cover the 2016 municipal election knowing that the paper they work for has and possibly will again call on voters to abandon the ANC.

This has got me thinking: I've been a senior editor at Independent for a year now. If reporters in the group are trying to read the tea leaves, as it were, to work out "which path leads to advancement and which doesn't", there would actually be a lot of material to work with. But here's the thing, most of it would not be giving them the signals that the white internet insists they should be getting.

Here are my thoughts on the ANC's election victory last year, published in Independent's Sunday publications and online, in an article titled 'Winners and Losers of Election 2014':

> "But increasingly the ANC's impressive results are a chimera. Falling democratic participation levels mask the extent of the party's increasing legitimacy problem for now, but may pose insurmountable challenges in future: the 2014 voter turn-out was 73 percent, down from 77 percent five years ago. That's bad enough, but nowhere near the full story. There were over 25 million registered voters this year, and 18, 6 million came out to vote. In other words, nearly seven million didn't bother. Going further, the 25 million registered are only part of the voting age population of 35 million; another 10 million haven't even taken that initial step. 11, 4 million of 35 million potential voters isn't as impressive as '11,4m out of 18, 6m'. Only half of all people who qualify cast a vote on May 7, and the ANC has the active consent of only 33 percent of adult South Africans.
>
> Don't get me wrong, ordinarily there's nothing wrong with that. Across the world, the governments of democratic nations are chosen by shockingly small percentages of the adult population. That reality, however, should provide no comfort at Luthuli House. Participation levels in South Africa are declining as a result of disillusionment with democracy, and those opting out are more likely to be potential ANC voters than anyone else.
>
> In its moments of self-reflection after this election, the question the ANC should be asking itself is this:

> what happens when those who have given up on us and our promises, those who are shocked by our moral and ethical lapses, the poor who are angered by our coziness with money, and our cowardly subservience to destructive orthodoxies, when those alienated by our abandonment of the values-based leadership of Tambo and Mandela, disillusioned from the notion that we are capable of being for anything but ourselves; what happens when all these decide not to stay away, but turn up at the polls?"

In the same article I was unforgiving in my assessment of the shocking state of the ANC in the Nelson Mandela Metro, who featured as one of the 'Losers' of the 2014 election:

> "ANC - 49, DA - 40. Too close. And if you live in this metro, not at all surprising. But before the DA gets too excited about Election 2016, let's recall that these numbers are similar to what we saw in 2009. Back then the DA wanked itself silly about the possibility of a Cope/DA coalition ousting the disastrous ANC. In 2011, the ruling party limped over the line, just. It really would be a shame if the same script played out again this time around."

Now I'm sure I have on occasion written stuff that's very complimentary or supportive of the ANC (when necessary and warranted) over my 12 years of writing on South African politics, though I struggle to find any that dates from my time at Independent. But looking at the above, how would any reporter in the group conclude that the best way to advance at Independent is to kowtow to the ruling party? How do you get that signal from an editor who has stated, in public and in writing, his desire to see the ANC lose the election in a major metro? Why are people, journalists no less, so quick to speak out of their arses, with virtually no attempt to at evidence-based argumentation?

This has been a debate that, while interesting, I now realise to have been completely fake. At issue is not the desirability or otherwise of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' in journalism. It is one's stance with regard to the ANC, the government, and the state. This is how the dominant clique represented by Thamm has subtly defined these values over time. In their universe, objectivity and neutrality is mouthing ideologically loaded shibboleths while outwardly pretending their practice of journalism is value-free. It is assuming, without so much as a nod to self-examination, that their world view and value system is the universal norm, and moreover insisting that this norm should be obvious and acceptable to the rest of us. This crowd likes to misappropriate Edward Said's definition of the role of the public intellectual as "speaking truth to power", and have turned it into a meaningless platitude. For them, "truth" is opposition and "power" is the ANC (and its alliance), a redefinition of terms coupled with an unwillingness to admit that, in South Africa especially, power is diffuse and resides in spaces outside the public and the political, spaces in which they themselves still hold sway. Far easier to repeat empty slogans about speaking truth to power than to admit that you (your class, your race, your gender, your language) are the wielder of significant cultural and discursive power.

Thamm engages in this self-servingly narrow definition of power when she ends her article by patronisingly defining 'good journalism' as being about "holding power to account, whether it wears black, green and gold, blue, or red." Never mind that in the 1400 words preceding this, not once does she demonstrate a failure on our part to hold "black, green and gold" power to account. In fact quite the opposite, she ruffles our hair because some of our group titles had come in for some stick at the weekend for their "critical reporting" on the ANC. For the record, and speaking for myself only, I do not wear criticism from the ANC as a badge of honour that proves my independence to the likes of Thamm or anyone. I treat the ill-founded criticisms from ANC (and other) politicians the same way I do back-handed praise from self-appointed arbiters of good journalism: with disdain. And in the unlikely case that you are interested in allowing my work and my words to define who I am with no interference from you, here is *my* personal creed and *my* approach to journalism:

I do and say and wear what I like. I go where I like. I write what I like. I write truth to power, both the overt political kind exercised by the ANC and others, and the subtle but oppressive cultural power of South Africa's dominant elite as represented by you, Marianne Thamm. That fact, and that fact alone, is what truly discomforts you. **DM**

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EVERYONE'S PREFERRED PHONE-A-FRIEND
3 DECEMBER 2016 13:45 (SOUTH AFRICA)

DAILY MAVERICK

OPINIONISTA FERIAL HAFFAJEE

White Internet? WTF?

FERIAL HAFFAJEE 16 JAN 2015 01:58 (SOUTH AFRICA)

To suggest that the only honest option for journalists is to choose between an ANC Panama hat, an EFF beret or DA blue lacks imagination or an understanding of new media and political zeitgeist.

Imagine that, upon disagreeing with Vukani Mde's long, long, long letter, published here on Thursday, you diss and dismiss it as being the rambling of the Black Internet by adding supporting quotes from black writers like Eusebius McKaiser and Karima Brown.

Throughout the critique, refer to an opposing school of thought sneeringly and dismissively as the Black Internet.

Do that and you would have your arse whipped to the Human Rights Commission before you could say Hendrik Verwoerd. There's a word for dismissing the arguments of people based on their melanin content - it's called racism.

But when a cool black dude dismisses the views of colleagues as the collective rantings of the White Internet, it's fine? Nobody says anything because that's okay?

It was a cheap trick in a time of cheapened discourse.

Downhill

From here, it's a short downhill to dismissing ideas you don't like as the Pan-Africanist or Zulu or Xhosa or coloured or socialist or feminist Internet. Pick a pigeonhole for your prejudice. Then dismiss the argument.

Instead of properly engaging the ideas of colleagues Marianne Thamm, Adriaan Basson and Gill Moodie, you can lump them together as hegemonic white thought to stick to your ill-considered decision to don party colours while holding the august position of being the most powerful opinion editor in the country?

It wasn't too long ago when minds as different as Nelson Mandela's, Robert Sobukwe's and Neville Alexander's were lumped together by apartheid's mad men as Black Terrorist propaganda. (Mandela was of the Congress tradition; Sobukwe was Pan-Africanist and Alexander was a socialist. They were all brilliant but very, very different.) Does Mde see the problem with slipping into easy racial shorthand? I guess not. It's true that those who do not know the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it.

Views like those of Mde, Brown and McKaiser will usher us straight back to an era where journalism was compromised for political ideology (Naspers and the SABC) and where self-censorship became the norm (the White English press, with notable exceptions, of course).

The White Internet theme is also at odds with Independent Media's recent trumpeting of its non-racial values.

And when the Black Internet disagrees with you? Ignore them

The other problem with believing that the opposition to partisan journalism is White Internet hysteria, is you don't hear black voices. Your race card makes us invisible. As far as I can read, there are many black people like me who do not get an airing in Mde's article, but who believe that partisan journalism harms our profession.

By framing his critique with the idea of a hegemonic White Internet, you don't have to deal with the substantive issues of journalism your black colleagues raise in our era of easy race-labelling.

We are not automatons without beliefs and politics (we come from somewhere and many were activists; many vote for the ANC) but independent journalism requires an independent mind. I think Mde yielded his a long time ago; many of the examples of supposed independence he cited yesterday were written like ANC strategy documents – the tone is "here's what you need to fix, my party".

For what it's worth, independence is not the impossible construct and the unreachable goal that Mde, McKaiser and Brown set it up as in their various writings. When you say it's an impossible idea, then you offer partisanship as the only alternative. It's not, in my experience and practice.

Yes, we can be independent and non-partisan

Many journalists are neither party hacks nor ciphers without beliefs.

The Constitution offers a set of non-partisan values that can guide journalists' hands. In its system of equal but competing rights, it offers a torchlight on how to create debates on class, socioeconomic rights, labour and business. The multi-party model and our system of proportional representation give further guidance.

In covering politics, you can emulate the principle of proportional representation in how you allocate space for competing political ideas. From the rules governing the SABC, we can take lessons in how to amplify the various manifestos of different political formations in equitable ways.

Political coverage is not an either/or business as current pundits suggest - if you are genuinely democratic, there are numerous ways of covering the full spectrum of ideas and ideologies regardless of your own. The best media gives readers a taste of the entire political edifice not only the bits you think they should be reading.

The digital world of engagement has infinite possibilities to democratise our media spaces by giving space to new voices and it offers layered new ways of holding power to account. We need be neither stenographers nor phonographs for any political formation.

To suggest, as I've been reading, that the only honest option for journalists is to choose between an ANC Panama hat, an EFF beret or DA blue lacks imagination or an understanding of new media and political zeitgeist.

In that, it's almost as impotent as the critique of an amorphous White Internet: it gets a few populist hoorahs, but in the end is deeply dissatisfying. **DM**

FERIAL HAFFAJEE

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WHERE IGNORANCE FEARS TO TREAD.
3 DECEMBER 2016 13:44 (SOUTH AFRICA)

DAILY MAVERICK

OPINIONISTA MARIANNE THAMM

True colours shining through: Should journalists be draping themselves in party political colours?

MARIANNE THAMM 13 JAN 2015 01:34 (SOUTH AFRICA)

The myth of the objective journalist has long been shattered. It never existed. Journalists are human and by nature gravitate towards specific ideologies and ways of thinking shaped by a myriad of influences and factors. We are not blank slates. Ultimately, however, our job is to monitor and to hold power to account – whatever its colours.

There was much black, green and gold in the streets of Cape Town this weekend as ANC leadership and supporters flooded into the city to celebrate the party's 103rd birthday.

"We are going to paint Cape Town yellow. And if there is not enough room in Cape Town Stadium we will paint it yellower outside," trumpeted Secretary General Gwede Mantashe at a press conference earlier in the week.

There was a time, not too long ago, when wearing these three colours or publicly displaying the face of Nelson Mandela risked detention and arrest. In the 1980s, the sudden appearance of a banned ANC flag during the endless mass funerals of activists who had been murdered by the state would provoke a profound feeling of defiance and inspiration.

Many journalists back then openly supported the United Democratic Front (UDF), regarded as the internal wing of the then-banned ANC. There were editors, including my own at the Cape Times, Tony Heard, who were sympathetic to the ANC. Heard eventually lost his job in 1985 after publishing an interview with Oliver Tambo, the then-exiled President of the ANC and who was a "banned" person in South Africa. Heard risked imprisonment in publishing the interview.

Many of us retain a deep emotional attachment to the colours of the ANC for this very reason.

But there were many journalists also – and almost all mainstream media owners – back then, who supported the status quo – i.e. the sham "two-party democracy" of the Apartheid state. The English- speaking media generally supported opposition parties while also reporting on the growing tide of resistance and concomitant state repression in the country's townships. In 1987, veteran Cape Times columnist, John Scott, who was recently unceremoniously dumped by the paper, resigned as assistant editor to stand as a Progressive Federal Party candidate in Simonstown.

Black and left-leaning white journalists (many of whom later found a home at the Cape Times post 1994) who were sympathetic to the UDF and who covered the growing resistance in the townships often found stories either spiked or altered by editors and news editors. Motives would often be questioned for a particular angle, depending on who was working on the "desk" on a particular day or night.

But that was then.

This is now.

We live in a democratic, free South Africa where the ANC is the ruling party, the party in power. The supreme law of the country is the Constitution, which guarantees and protects the rights of all citizens.

You would either have to be Steve Hofmeyr or have been on a 20-year space mission if you claimed that South Africa is not a better country, unrecognisable from its pre-1994 political incarnation.

But it is precisely because the ANC is now in power that we should be cautious not to be swept away by nostalgia and the party's cachet as a former liberation movement, once the moral lodestar of the struggle – with the likes of Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Chris Hani as leaders.

We have a president who, since taking office in 2009, has been dogged by scandal and allegations of impropriety and corruption and a government increasingly concerned with establishing a specific "good news" narrative in the media in the face of visible failure in many areas. The Marikana massacre, a bloated and often incompetent civil service, the education and energy crisis, e-tolls, ailing parastatals, crime, corruption and an attempt by factions in the ruling party to capture the intelligence services as well as influence the judiciary. These are all sins of incumbency and a vibrant and independent media is vital in holding government and power to account.

While the country enjoys a free press, it is a space that is increasingly being squeezed, not only by laws such as the The Protection of State Information Bill (Secrecy Bill), the National Key Points Act, the General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill and the now-on-hold Media Appeals Tribunal resolution of the ANC, but also through the diversion of government advertising to publications and media outlets perceived to be sympathetic to the ruling party. These include the Gupta family's ANN7 television station, The New Age and, more recently, Independent Newspapers. The SABC is unashamedly a state and not a public broadcaster. The choice of stories it chooses NOT to cover, or the pro-government slant in all its news bulletins, is evidence of this. To say nothing of sympathetic board and other appointments.

Generally media objectivity is an illusion, as Noam Chomsky has pointed out, and outlets globally serve government and corporate interests. But within this narrow room to manoeuvre there is always space for courageous, outspoken journalism that serves readers rather than these interests. Luckily the internet has provided a space for voices that counter those who sing from government or a business hymnal.

In 1994, Sir Tony O'Reilly bought The Argus Company, previously owned by the Anglo American Corporation, with promises to Nelson Mandela that the media house would be generally sympathetic to the aims of the new, democratic ANC government. While O'Reilly stripped the group of its assets, diminishing capacity and newsrooms, titles attempted to maintain a modicum of "objective" reporting of the dynamic, changing political landscape.

The Independent Newspaper Group, under its new owners with the controlling shareholding held by Iqbal Survé's Sekunjalo Consortium, has been particularly vocal in its support for the ruling party.

Since Survé's acquisition of the group in 2013, a number of high-profile veteran journalists (some of whom admittedly could have been regarded as "dead wood" but many who were consummate professionals) were culled from the Cape Times specifically. These included Cape Times editor Alide Dasnois and veteran journalists Tony Weaver and Janet Heard. There were at least 12 other resignations, stripping the paper of its institutional memory and expertise.

While journalists have always privately harboured political sympathies or ideologies, in the past few, if any, publicly revealed these allegiances or nailed their colours to the mast. When Scott decided to stand for the PFP in 1987 he resigned from the Cape Times. He was, however, re-employed later in spite of this. But those were different times.

In April last year Business Report journalist Donwald Pressly was fired for seeking political office with the Democratic Alliance, a move which new Group Executive Editor, Karima Brown, described as "a breach of

Independent Newspapers' editorial code of conduct and code of ethics and a breach of the trust that those readers place in our titles and the writers who put them together".

Ja well no fine.

This weekend Brown and fellow veteran journalist and now Group Editor of Opinion and Analysis, Vukani Mde, posted pictures of themselves decked out in ANC regalia attending the party's 103rd celebrations in Cape Town. Both Brown and Mde are experienced journalists who have covered the political landscape for several publications for many years. They both bring unique insights into the workings and troubles of the ruling party. But while there is a significant difference between standing for political office, as Pressly did, and donning the colours of a political party at a rally, one must question both these senior editors public display of their political allegiances.

Let's frame it this way.

Would it be acceptable to Brown and Mde if a journalist in the Independent group, attending a DA federal congress or birthday party or an EFF event, posted photographs of themselves decked out in those party's colours?

If not, why is it okay for them to do so?

While Mde and Brown did not report on proceedings, and in fact some of the titles in the Independent Group did come in for criticism from Mantashe at the weekend for their critical reporting, it would be in the interests of transparency for them to perhaps insert a disclaimer in the titles they serve alerting readers to their apparently unwavering political allegiances.

While the ANC and the tripartite alliance might once have represented our hopes and political aspirations and it is tempting to be caught up in past struggle nostalgia – today the party is firmly in government. As such it is subordinate to the Constitution of South Africa and the will of the people. This is what and whom we serve. If government – whether the DA in the Western Cape or the ANC in the rest of the country – threatens or undermines our democratic freedoms we must expose this without fear or favour.

Good journalism is about monitoring and holding power to account, whether it wears black, green and gold, blue or red. **DM**

MARIANNE THAMM

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DO NOT MISS

OPINION

M&G's Trevor Ncube responds to accusations

Trevor Ncube 22 Jul 2014 16:23



Trevor Ncube, publisher of the Mail & Guardian, responds to reports published in the Star newspaper that his operations are in financial trouble.

Here is my response to reports that have been carried in the *Star* and its sister publications in the Independent Group about Mail & Guardian Media and Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) over the past few days:

1. A pattern is emerging that every time the *Mail & Guardian* contacts Dr Iqbal Surve, executive chairperson of Independent News and Media, South Africa (INMSA), or his executives, for a comment on a story the *M&G* is working on, it is turned into an opportunity to attack me or my publications.

2. I have avoided responding to these attacks because I strongly believe that the wider public does not benefit when publishers fight. This response is to provide context and to put the record straight.

3. Last year when approached by amaBhungane, the M&G's Centre for Investigative Journalism, to explain how he had funded the acquisition of INMSA, Dr Surve's response was to allege that my businesses were funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He has never been able to provide the proof he claimed to have to support this allegation.

4. Last week while I was on leave, I understand the *M&G* approached Tony Howard, the deputy Executive Chairman, and Takudzwah Hove, the CFO of INMSA with a set of questions on a story that they were working on. On Friday, the papers in the Independent stable ran stories about *M&G* and AMH. No effort was made to seek comment from me to verify the allegations.

5. Sometime last year Dr Surve called and, among other things, asked that I talk to the *M&G* investigative team,

and tell them not to work on stories relating to the acquisition of INMSA. I told him I couldn't do this as I don't tell our journalists what to write and what not to write. He seemed very surprised.

6. *M&G* and AMH are independent entities with two common shareholders, namely myself and the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF). The two companies (AMH and *M&G*) operate completely independent of each other and are self-sustainable. Moreover, each company has its own independent board of directors.

7. Like all companies in Zimbabwe, AMH is dealing with the challenges of an economy in free fall. We founded AMH 18 years ago with one title and 13 employees and we currently employ 315 people across four newspaper titles. We are confident we have the talent, experience and brands to see us through Zimbabwe's worst economic crisis.

8. The *M&G* is operating under the same economic conditions as the rest of the industry, and continues to operate successfully as one of the key independent media voices in South Africa.

9. If the purpose of this negative press coverage about me and my businesses is to persuade me to stop our journalists from doing their legitimate, credible and ethical journalism, then I am afraid that this will never happen.

10. As a former journalist and editor, telling journalists what to do goes against my principles and ethics.

11. At *M&G* and AMH we don't tell our journalists which stories to write and which ones to kill. We employ professional journalists and then let them do their work to the best of their ability. This will remain the way of our journalism for as long as I have anything to do with these two great companies.



Trevor Ncube

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Controversy over government link in Independent Group deal

Phillip De Wet 24 May 2013 00:00



Iqbal Survé, Sekunjalo Group's chief executive, is putting out fires sparked by its bid to buy Independent Newspapers. (Lerato Maduna)

The consortium due to buy South Africa's biggest newspaper group has come out fighting, blaming rising desperation among competitors for questions around its shareholding and intentions.

Irish shareholders are due to decide the fate of the local Independent Group in a little less than a month, a decision that will bring major changes to daily media in the country, one way or another.

Although many questions will remain unanswered until then, it emerged this week that a quarter of the group may soon be owned by a government pension fund, and that three men closely aligned with the government and the ANC will be in charge of the new owners.

The ANC has long argued that although voters show it has overwhelming support among the public, the media landscape does not reflect a similar distribution. The party has also long considered launching its own media presence, with several similar projects considered (and mostly discarded) by the government.

There has also been considerable controversy in the funding of the *New Age*, a newspaper owned by the Gupta family that is closely aligned with the family of President Jacob Zuma, and which attracts a great deal of government advertising, and sponsorship from government-owned companies.

The Independent Group in Ireland this week called an extraordinary meeting on June 17, at which shareholders are expected to vote in favour of a corporate restructuring to include the sale, for R2-billion in cash, of its assets in South Africa. Those include the *Star, Isolezwe,* the *Cape Argus*, the *Cape Times*, the Daily Voice, local newspapers in Pretoria and Kimberley and various weekend newspapers.

Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium, the local buyer of the business, has refused to disclose details of its shareholding until after the June vote, and though the acquisition is currently before the Competition Commission, shareholder details are contained in a confidential part of the paperwork.

Pro-government mouthpiece

Sekunjalo head Iqbal Survé this week laughed off concerns that he could be creating a powerful pro-government mouthpiece.

"You are going to like our consortium," Survé said. "We have three trade union investment companies, we have community groupings, equity for employees. We have people from very different political persuasions, independent-minded individuals. It is very diverse."

Survé also dismissed reports that a government pension fund was putting up R500-million, a quarter of the purchase price, in return for a 25% stake, but would not provide accurate numbers.

"We are bound by confidentiality until we can make a joint announcement after the [Irish shareholder vote]," he said. On the 18th [of June] we will be happy to announce all the details: the editorial policy, the editorial advisory board, the shareholding, everything."

Sekunjalo has committed to creating an editorial advisory board populated by "a group of elders" to guide the newspapers, and ensure tough but fair coverage – with a touch of the positive.

"The one objective I have is nation-building," Survé said. "We want to create an opportunity to use Independent to tell stories, to do quality journalism, to be critical where we need to be, but also to keep in mind that we have a nation to build."

Survé confirmed that businessperson Sandile Zungu and ANC MP Mandla Mandela are involved in the acquisition, but would not disclose details of their holding or anticipated positions. "Number one, the sellers will sue me," he said.

Defeat

Zungu is considered to be closely aligned with the ANC and the government, with political connections similar to those of Survé, though not drawn from the same struggle history. Those political connections have helped to fuel speculation about the role the Public Investment Corporation (PIC), which manages government pension money, is playing in the acquisition.

In December 2012, the *Mail & Guardian* saw correspondence from lawyers acting on behalf of Groovin Nchabeleng, a losing bidder for the Independent acquisition, which alleged that an about-turn by the PIC had contributed to that consortium's defeat at the hands of Sekunjalo.

According to Nchabeleng's group, the PIC said in July that it was concerned about perceptions that it favoured any of the several bidders in the process, and would maintain neutrality. But in late November it suddenly withdrew its support for competing bids, in effect torpedoing the chances of those contesting the transaction with Sekunjalo.

In response to questions, the PIC said it had decided to support a single bidder (later confirmed to be Sekunjalo), in the normal course of its business, based on considerations such as commercial viability and required returns "as expected and obligated by its clients' mandates".

At the time of the dispute with PIC, Nchabeleng refused to speak to the *M&G*. This week it was clear he still wants a seat on the train. He told the M&G: "We might be working with Iqbal. We are passionate about media. One way or another we will find a way of working with Iqbal."

Survé said Nchabeleng had assured him that he considers Sekunjalo to have won the bid fair and square.

"Quite frankly, I'm tired of all the speculation and the rubbish," Survé said, laying the blame for swirling rumour and speculation squarely on other publications. "Don't pretend if you are a competitor that you do not have an

agenda to put a competitor out of business, and tarnish them before they even get out of the starting blocks ... Other media will find a formidable competitor in Sekunjalo, and they know it." – *Additional reporting by Sam Sole*

The government's chums at Sekunjalo

Three names have been linked to the consortium intent on buying the Independent Group. All three are closely aligned with the government and the ANC.

Iqbal Survé

Survé acts as a businessman ambassador for South Africa on a regular basis. He sits on a business board within the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Brics) grouping. In March he led a delegation to the United Arab Emirates – in his personal capacity – to work towards the release of doctor Cyril Karabus. He heads up a business co-operation body between Saudi Arabia and South Africa, and serves on a similar body between South Africa and the United States.

Sandile Zungu

Zungu also serves on the Brics business board and has acted as the chairperson of state arms company Denel. He has been a fundraiser for both the ANC and Jacob Zuma, and is believed to have made a play for a post within the presidency. He has acted as an adviser to Zuma on empowerment issues, and serves as a trustee of Brand SA, appointments to which are made by Zuma.

Mandla Mandela

Best known as the grandson of Nelson Mandela and for occasional controversies in his private life, Mandela is an ANC MP as well as a traditional chief.



Phillip de Wet

Phillip de Wet writes about politics, society, economics, and the areas where these collide. He has never been anything other than a journalist, though he has been involved in starting new newspapers, magazines and websites, a suspiciously large percentage of which are no longer in business. PGP fingerprint: CF74 7B0F F037 ACB9 779C 902B 793C 8781 4548 D165 Read more from **Phillip de Wet**

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Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium | Independent Group | Iqbal Surve

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Shake-up for newspaper groups

Government fund buys 25% stake in Independent News

Independent responds to M&G

SOUTH AFRICA / 24 July 2014, 5:44pm



Chairman of Independent Newspapers, Dr Iqbal Surve, and Tony Howard, the Deputy Executive Chairman. Picture: Motshwari Mofokeng

Independent Newspapers response to statement by Mr Trevor Ncube on behalf of Mail & Guardian

We have taken note of a press release issued this past Tuesday by Mr Trevor Ncube, a shareholder of Mail & Guardian ('M&G) and Alpha Media Holdings ("AMH").

We are surprised, that in response to an article that ran in certain of our newspapers last Friday about difficulties being experienced at the Mail & Guardian, it was necessary for Mr. Ncube to issue a detailed statement which really did not provide any answers to the real issues that were reported on.

We will equally not be intimidated or deterred by the actions and reporting of the Mail & Guardian and other competitors on the steps we are openly taking to transform our business from a legacy print-media company into a growth-focused, proud multi-platform media and content company.

Our strategies, which are being carefully implemented, are based on building a sustainable modern media business which includes the expansion of our current brands and the development of new products and multimedia offerings in clearly defined and identified niches markets.

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Our actions are no different from those being taken by all other print-media companies - including each of the major newspaper groups in South Africa as well as many overseas. We therefore find this obsession of our competitors with the changes taking place at Independent surprising and somewhat sinister.

The Mail & Guardian, in particular, has been relentless in the pursuit of this sinister agenda against Independent. The Mail & Guardian has also not shied away from using its editorial space to pursue what are corporate interests against Independent.

This pattern of behaviour was established even before the Sekunjalo acquisition. The initial motive for it seems to have been Mr. Ncube's (subsequently failed) attempt to acquire three Independent titles when the group was put up for sale last year. It is now a matter of public record that he has pursued this agenda as follows:

* The former editor of the Mail & Guardian, Mr. Nic Dawes, tried to use his position as chairman of the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) to formally oppose the sale of Independent to Sekunjalo, on the most spurious grounds and without any mandate from Sanef. Mr. Dawes was forced to apologise for his action by his Sanef colleagues

* When Mr. Ncube failed to acquire a portion of Independent, the Mail &Guardian started a disinformation campaign against Independent and Sekunjalo, running a series of poorly researched, unsubstantiated stories casting aspersions on Sekunjalo, its chairman, Independent and its employees, and our shareholders.

* Since the failure of his attempted acquisition of a portion of our company, the tone and thrust of Mr. Ncube's newspaper's coverage of Independent has been stridently negative, and Mail & Guardian has sought to align itself to every anti-Independent cause going. The aim is to derail Independent's restructuring and re-emergence under its new ownership and management

* In his statement, Mr. Ncube has been disingenuous, trying to create the impression that he has spoken to Dr Surve or Independent has called him, and alleging that we have tried to “stop” his journalists from writing negative stories. We can categorically state that the last direct conversation between Dr. Surve and Mr. Ncube took place last year shortly following our company's acquisition by Sekunjalo, and it concerned only Mr. Ncube's failed attempt to buy three Independent titles.

* Mr. Ncube's seeming motive is to draw Dr. Surve into a public spat, by suggesting that the latter was behind The Star's stories on the financial health of his business. Dr. Surve has been away at the BRICS Council and had no involvement or knowledge of what our journalists were working on.

* Mr. Ncube claims not to instruct his journalists on what to write, and yet with his behavior he is attempting intimidate ours. Intimidation is the worst form of editorial interference.

* We will vigorously defend our rights in relation to the above, and any more unethical, mendacious behaviour from Mail & Guardian.

The redesign of our business is an internal matter and we will deal with it in this manner, respecting the rights and privacy of our employees - as well as the company's and shareholder's rights to re-engineer the business to meet the needs of transforming the business into a modern media and content company.

The company will not comment further in respect of any questions relating to the transformation and repositioning of its business activities. As has been said repeatedly, this is an internal matter and will be dealt with on this basis.

A L Howard

Deputy Executive Chairman

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M&G goes to war after Survé rejects title bid

ECONOMY / 26 August 2013, 08:02am

Wiseman Khuzwayo



Mail & Guardian had offered to by these titles from Indipendent newspaper.photo by Simphiwe Mbokazi 8

Johannesburg - A nasty spat has arisen between the Mail & Guardian (M&G) and Iqbal Survé, the chairman of Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium, which recently bought Independent News & Media South Africa for R2-billion.

The Mail & Guardian was incensed after Survé refused to sell to its chairman, Trevor Ncube, and his funders, three flagship titles in the group, Business Report has learnt.

They had proposed that Survé sell to them the Pretoria News, The Mercury and the Cape Times.

This past Friday, the newspaper vented its anger at the rejection of Ncube's offer by running articles saying that Survé allegedly implied in a telephone interview that the Mail & Guardian was funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency. Ncube has denied this.

Another article said the 20-percent stake in the consortium bought by two Chinese companies and the make-up of the rest of Survé's consortium had raised questions about media independence.

Ncube started courting Survé just before the transaction between Sekunjalo and the Dublin-based Independent News &

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Media, the immediate former owners of Independent Newspapers, was to be considered by the Competition Commission.

Implied in Ncube's offer was a veiled threat that if Survé did not consider selling the three titles the competition authorities might block the Sekunjalo-led consortium's acquisition of Independent Newspapers.

Detractors of Survé hoped the transaction would not be authorised by the regulator.

In the hope of broadening the scope of their business, Ncube and Hoosain Karjieker, the chief executive of the Mail & Guardian, made an unsolicited bid to Survé in an undated letter, which was forwarded to him on May 16.

Initially, the two had made a verbal offer to Survé for the three titles but he insisted that they must put the offer in writing, according to people familiar with the matter.

In the letter, a copy of which is in the possession of Business Report, the two express their ambition to extend the scope of their media business from the current weekly publication of the Mail & Guardian to include various additional titles.

But the letter makes no mention of how much Ncube and his funders were offering for the three flagship titles.

Independent Newspapers is the biggest English-language newspaper publisher in the country, with 18 titles, among them Business Report and IOL.

Ncube and Karjieker said they enjoyed the support of potential funding partners, particularly the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF).

That MDLF is now called the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF). It owns 10 percent of the Mail & Guardian and 39 percent of Ncube's Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), which owns four Zimbabwean newspapers.

The MDIF says on its website that it is a mission-driven investment fund for independent news outlets in countries without a free press.

Asked why the MDIF was investing in the Mail & Guardian, which operated in a country with a free press, Karjieker said: "This is clearly one of a number of factors they take into consideration when making investment decisions of this nature."

Ncube said the MDIF provided an interest bearing finance facility to AMH. "There are fixed terms and conditions applicable to the loan finance."

AMH made monthly repayments to service the loan funding, he said.

Survé said on Friday: "These guys are being vindictive because I said no to them. The fact that I said they must put the offer in writing did not mean we would sell to them."

Subsequent to the rejection of the offer, Nic Dawes, who was the editor of the Mail & Guardian until the middle of the month, led a campaign under the banner of the South African National Editors Forum (Sanef) to have the commission extend its scrutiny of the Sekunjalo bid for Independent Newspapers because of a lack of information about funding, the identity of Survé's consortium and its shareholders and concerns about independence.

A petition circulated by Sanef, which at the time was chaired by Dawes, also said "the company has a monopoly in the English-language newspaper markets of Cape Town and Durban, as well as arguably Pretoria and Kimberley" and because of that "serious scrutiny of its plans" was required.

But when the campaign raised the ire of outside observers and staff members of Independent Newspapers, who were not contacted about the matter, Dawes decided to back off, saying in a June 4 statement that "while we will not be pursuing formal engagement with the Competition Commission, we look forward to further discussion with Dr Survé and other stakeholders on these matters".

The latest revelations will serve to underscore concerns that Survé has raised in recent months.

He has consistently claimed that there was something sinister about the criticism and the scrutiny that competitor newspaper groups directed toward his purchase of Independent Newspapers. - Business Report

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