

**Measuring Press Performance in Upholding Democracy: The Case of the
South African General Election of 2004.**

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Abstract

This project adopts a coherent framework developed to enable assessment of the performance of the press in upholding democracy. The framework was developed by Pippa Norris for a developed world context, but proved by this project to be equally applicable in the developing world context of South Africa. The main functions of the press in relation to elections for public office are deemed to be facilitating pluralistic competition, public participation and the protection of civil liberties and political rights. The main research method employed in this project is content analysis; applied to press coverage of the election of 2004, but the results are correlated through interviews subjected to narrative analysis.

The sample for the study includes a wide range of newspapers, from catch-all publications to publications with more segmented readerships and from provincial to national circulation newspapers. Despite the differences in the profiles of the various newspapers, the cross-title press election coverage in the case of the 2004 South African general election was internally very similar indeed. All publications covered the African National Congress more than the other parties and all gave the ANC much more parity between positive and negative coverage than the other parties. The Democratic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party received a negative slant in the coverage over all. The Independent Democrats experienced the opposite. The publications had different directional bias in their editorial coverage to the one presented in the letters to the editor. The publications gave similar amounts of practical information to voters and only to a very small degree did they explicitly encourage people to get directly involved in the electoral context, for example by casting their ballot. All publications focused strategically on the electoral context and all allowed a few dominating themes to run through their coverage. The press carried a relatively small number of watchdog-category articles. While the benchmarks in the framework employed proved very useful indeed in uncovering characteristics of the election coverage provided by the press, uncovering determining factors behind the coverage was not an aim of this study, even though theoretical perspectives on some of the background to the coverage are discussed. Given that this is, to the best knowledge of the author, the first application of the employed framework to a specific case of media coverage, the results are just that, a first set of benchmarks. Only future research can determine if the results obtained here indicate that the press did well, or badly, in upholding their role in democracy when covering the 2004 general election in South Africa.

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List of Abbreviated names of political parties in South Africa¹:

ACD- African Christian Democratic Party

ANC- African National Congress

AZAPO- Azanian People's Organisation

DA- Democratic Alliance

FF+- Freedom Front Plus

ID- Independent Democrats

IFP- Inkatha Freedom Party

KISS- Keep It Straight and Simple

MF- Minority Front

NLP- New Labour Party

NNP- New National Party

PAC- Pan Africanist Congress of Azania

GPSA- Green Party of South Africa

T.O.P.- The Organisation Party

SOPA- The Socialist Party of Azania

UDM- United Democratic Movement

NANDOS- National African National Democratic Organisation for Solidarity. This party was registered with election authorities in March 2004, too late to feature on the ballot. As of November 2004, the party is not officially registered. It was started as a marketing tool for the fast food chain Nando's².

¹ http://www.elections.org.za/Registered_parties.asp

² http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/Elections2004/0,,2-7-1557_1510057,00.html

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CHAPTER 1 The Context

1.1 Introduction

After 1994, South African media agencies have been freed of the restrictions in their political coverage that applied during the various states of emergency under the white minority governments that preceded implementation of the universal franchise. This has placed a greater responsibility on the media to reflect this new reality in a way that does not disadvantage, or privilege, any social group or maintain or reinforce established social categories in South African society unfairly. As the government stepped out of its assumed function of policing the media, the general agreement was that self-regulation by the media needed to take its place. Another important change happened at the introduction of the new political dispensation.

In South Africa, the political struggle may be said to have been partly about who should have access to state resources. During Apartheid, state resources were collected from all through taxation, but spent mostly on the white minority, who were privileged through several measures, a graphic account of which is given by among others, Nelson Mandela in his book *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994). After the political change-over, all major groups, both those who had defended the old order, and those who had opposed it through the struggle, recognised that all groups in society should contribute to the state, and the way forward for the state and the future distribution of state resources in South African should largely be determined in parliament, now elected through universal franchise. In parliament the interests of different groups in society are represented through political parties. Arguably, one of the most important tasks of the media in covering elections in representative democracies therefore becomes one of highlighting the views of the different political parties on important matters in a balanced way without unfair bias.

The most important constraint on the media today is commercial. Any media organisation needs to “organise its time productively” (Grosseberg et, al 1998: 71). As Grosseberg et. al (1998:70-73) show, using television talk shows as an example, the media go for the familiar and predictable in their coverage, treating celebrity politicians different to unknowns. The tendency to go for the predictable and spend employee time efficiently may also have other consequences, such as a tendency to go for expert and government sources, who may be more likely to have a party affiliation than the general public, but are presented as ‘neutral’. This is

one manifestation of institutional bias, where the journalist picks up the telephone and calls a source they know in advance or have used before, someone who can give an interview on short notice and give answers that translate into good quotes. Institutional bias is commonly recognised as unfair bias, but as the discussion below will show, the question remains whether for example, in South Africa, covering the dominant party more than other parties represents unfair bias on the part of the media, or if it simply reflects an acceptance that people are likely to return the party to power, and need to read more about the campaign of this party. In addition to avoiding unfair bias, the media have important responsibilities in areas such as generating interest in the elections, exposing government or opposition shortcomings and giving the potential voters practical information that they need in order to cast their vote (Norris, 2000: 24), as will be discussed below.

Recognising that the media are largely financed through advertising, they need to attract as big an audience (comprised of as many potential voters) as possible without compromising on the points above. Election campaign periods are the times when the political coverage in the media is most visible. Election coverage also has the potential to directly influence voters since the media are the source of political information accessed by most of the electorate in the run-up to voting day, as well as between elections. Only a relatively small portion of the electorate join political parties, go to rallies or seek other first hand information that will allow them to decide who to vote for through experiential and interpersonal learning, (Kenski, 1996). Ultimately a main aim of the media should be educating citizens so that they go to the ballot box informed, and take part in public debate between elections.

This study examines the performance of the South African English language press covering election 2004 against a set of benchmarks developed by Norris (2000) for first world, media saturated, consolidated representative democracies. Established and stable are other words used to describe consolidated democracies, (Gunther and Mughan, 2000: 26). Giving a timeframe indicating when a democracy goes from new to consolidated is difficult, but a democracy that is sustained through major changes of parties in government that have been mandated by the people through elections are generally considered to be consolidated democracies. Media saturated societies are, and this is my own general definition, societies where the development of the media have reached a point where the number of media messages that the consumers receive has reached a maximum, and which media organisations survive and which fold, is determined by competition. The market can not grow through

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reaching more consumers. The consumers already in the market, receive 'all' the messages they can absorb. In this study, Norris' (2000) set of benchmarks is applied to the third democratic election in a developing country with a representative democracy that is arguably still being consolidated: South Africa.

Before getting to the specific case of the 2004 election in South Africa, a discussion of some of the origins of the debates to which this study provides input is in order. Because many of the authors referred to in the following exposition wrote in an era before the advent of electronic media, one should note that in this chapter the terms 'press' and 'media' are used interchangeably. Only in subsequent chapters will the terms be used to refer to print media publications and publications across all delivery forms respectively. The role of the media in democracy has caused debate across several disciplines of the human sciences. The most relevant of these disciplines in the context of this dissertation are communication studies and political science. These debates have resulted in the development of several theories of the press, describing rights and obligations of the media based on a number of political and cultural paradigms. These theories have often sprung out of particular historic situations, and have all affected South African media practice.

1.2 The South African Context

Press history in South Africa needs to be viewed in the context of the political history of the country. For those unfamiliar with the history of South Africa, Editors Inc (2004) provides a succinct account.

Given that today's South African state, and the system within which the media perform their functions is built on a European model, only political history since the start of the colonial period will be summarised here. Davenport (1977:1) notes that between 1652, when the Dutch arrived in the Cape, and 1795, the Dutch East India Company, and subsequent Dutch settlers, controlled the colony that was the precursor to the present state of South Africa. In 1795 the British annexed the Cape and controlled the colony until 1910, when the Union of South Africa was formed. This union, as Marais (1989:28) suggests, was arguably a compromise between the British and descendants of Dutch colonialists after the British victory in the Anglo-Boer War between 1899 and 1902. Even after the victory, which came at a very high cost to the British, in the first colonial war in which their opponent employed

modern weapons and sophisticated guerrilla tactics, it was untenable for the Crown to rule the colony outright, given that the majority of the white population in the country was on the losing side and left with deep scars from the war, both physically and emotionally. In the new Union of South Africa, which comprised of the land area of today's Republic of South Africa, whites were given universal franchise, while the oppression of the majority black population continued. In 1948 Afrikaaner nationalists in the National Party under DF Malan won the general election on a programme entitled Apartheid, (Editors Inc. 2004: 37). This regime codified separation between racial groups in law, through several measures. Some of the most well known laws banned marriages between races, required registration of the population by race, assigned land to people by race, reserving 87% of the country for whites (Terreblanche, 2002: 321), and mandated separate public amenities reserved for different racial groups. As the resistance to this government increased, both among the disenfranchised non-white population and liberal white groups, the government attempted to, and over long periods of time succeeded in, suppressing dissent by imposing restrictive laws of prior restraint, indicating topics and persons that were off limits to publication. As resistance increased, states of emergency were put in place where media restrictions were further increased. The various governments up to the end of white minority rule in 1994 were all authoritarian and undemocratic in different ways. The peaceful, negotiated transition to a democracy granting universal franchise was a long process where much could have gone wrong.

Giving an enlightening account of the unusual nature of the political negotiations prior to the 1994 all-race general elections, Maphai and Gottschalk (2003: 52), attribute the success of the negotiations not to Rawls' 'veil of ignorance', but to the opposite being true. The representatives of the white minority rule knew that if they acceded to a settlement, they would in fact be resigning from power as they had no prospect of winning an electoral majority in a system with universal franchise and majority rule. But they also realised the remote possibility of finding an end to civil resistance to the then government of the country, leaving only the choice between continued violence and ceding control. The African National Congress, (ANC), on the other hand, were perhaps inclined to accept some extra provisions to protect minority rights because they knew the African majority was assured of a victory in such an election. In addition to this, the authors attribute the successful negotiations to the historical political control over the military in South Africa, a factor that did not exist in many other African (or other developing) countries.

From negotiations and the period of instability between negotiations and the first elections, where the commitment to the process by all major actors was tested through violence from all sides, emerged a new political culture that is the foundation from which the new government operates. Maphai and Gottschalk (2003: 53-54) list important factors that contributed materially to this culture taking shape. Most important was the overall change from a 'zero-sum' political environment, in which one main competing party must lose for a gain to be made by the opposing party, to "one of negotiation and mutual accommodation," (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 53). This process of change began earlier than many today realise according to this account. The major proponents were the banned labour movement and business leaders who saw that the rolling strikes had led to a stalemate and that "official channels for communication were needed," (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 53).

Limited negotiations at a local level between municipalities and the ANC-allied United Democratic Front occurred as a precursor through the 1980's. "These negotiations followed the ever-increasing consumer boycotts and work stay-a-ways that crippled businesses of all sizes," (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 53). The stalemate between government forces and opposition forces engaged in the violent struggle to overthrow or preserve the status quo came to a head in the mid 1980s only. "Mutual awareness of the stalemate ultimately facilitated the negotiation process, which began covertly in the 1980s and overtly in 1990," (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 53). The fact that the process of negotiation was driven by actors inside the country, with no formal foreign involvement until the implementation stage of the agreements that arrived with the 1994 general elections, when the international community sent personnel to monitor the elections, is also near unparalleled and contributed to the trust between negotiation partners that only mutual engagement over time can bring, and that any agreement to be reached depends upon.

The new Constitution, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Government of National Unity (GNU) were among the institutions established with the aim of building confidence, or promoting reconciliation. The parliamentary system of proportional representation ensured broad representation reflecting South African diversity, (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 53). There is some disagreement however, regarding the effectiveness of the TRC as a promoter of reconciliation. The TRC was designed to investigate atrocities committed during the Apartheid era by actors in the political struggle. The commission was mandated to offer amnesty to perpetrators as long as the crime was committed for political

reasons and the perpetrator gave a full and truthful disclosure in front of the commission. However, Terreblanche (2002: 124-132), argues the commission could have had a broader mandate, and taken a more proactive role looking into systemic exploitation inherited from the white minority rule. This would in the view of Terreblanche (2002), have been a cornerstone in promoting deeper reconciliation and been a first stepping stone to effectively redressing the fundamental inequalities in the South African economy.

The new and the old governments had to make difficult trade-offs, but even so maintained a measure of stability, allowing the process of reconciliation/confidence building to continue. Trade-offs that had to be made included striking a balance between political stability and economic feasibility, aiming for short-term results and popularity and long term results and rapid social justice and sustainability among others, (Sparks, 2003: 217-219). Finally the justice system needed reform, given that authoritarian regimes tend to deny the people at least some human rights in order to stay in power. Justice systems “in authoritarian regimes are most ill-equipped to operate in a human rights culture,” (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 54).

The rest of the paper is devoted to presenting a comprehensive account of the parliamentary landscape prior to the 2004 elections and the perceived potential for democratic development in South Africa in the future. This has a direct bearing on the ability of the media to perform well in the normative benchmarking model that will be discussed later on. Maphai and Gottschalk (2003), argue that the dominance in the South African parliamentary landscape of the ANC, further evidenced by the 2004 general election, is likely to last at least two more decades to come. With a dominant party in a proportional representative system the media have several questions on which to adopt a position. These questions however all feed into one, concerning whether the ANCs electoral dominance over the last ten years legitimises a degree of dominance in political coverage proportional to their electoral support.

One facet of this question concerns the legitimacy of the tendency of market forces to force a prioritisation of efficiency and reliability in the production of media content, discussed above, given that the transition in South Africa from a situation where the state controlled many aspects of media content formally, through law, to formally independent, market driven media is complete. The media have also seemingly achieved a political communications system (PCS) run according to media logic.

Samaras (2001: 70), describes the concepts of party and media logic as follows:

Party logic refers to situations where the operation of PCS is situated closer to the partisan side of the axis. In such cases, the party system through the partisanship of the audience and (both structural and ideological) controls, organises media production and the attributes of the media product according to its requirements. Media logic means the financial independence of the media by the state result in its political emancipation. (The media) Force politicians, institutions and the whole governmental apparatus to transform their behaviour to accommodate (their) its requirements.

* This research project does not attempt to find the answer to the question of how independent today's South African media are, and from whom. Neither does it answer the above question, whether affording the ANC a particularly prominent position in the election coverage is legitimate, considering the convenience of doing so to the media and the likely electoral support for the party. The project is based on the notion that the normative benchmarking scheme it is based upon enables the amount of coverage the ANC receives to be verified independently and that independent verification may be one possible avenue to avoiding structural bias.

Maphai and Gottschalk (2003), point out South Africa's unique situation of having a robust multi-party system, but at the same time one dominant party, the African National Congress. Writing before the 2004 general elections, Maphai and Gottschalk (2003: 62), argue that the Government of National Unity (GNU) established after the 1994 elections is still in place. They point to the ANC offering a "non partisan generosity (...) beyond the letter of the constitution of the GNU." This generosity takes the form of chairperson-ships of portfolio committees in Parliament, ministries and deputy ministries in the Cabinet.

For example, after the 1994 elections:

Government also offered Zac De Beer, then DP leader, the ambassadorship to the Netherlands, and gave the chair of the Portfolio Committee on Defence to a retired SADF general, then in the far-right Freedom Front, at the same time as President Nelson Mandela and others strongly criticised ex-president F.W. De Klerk and the NP, (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 62).

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This points to the double edged tactics that the authors find the ANC has employed over the last 10-year period. “It is consistently courteous to the third and fourth largest parties in Parliament, playing them off against the official opposition, with which it plays hard ball,” (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 62). A divided opposition, and the strong electoral majority that the ANC enjoys, means that South Africa has a system of proportional parliamentary representation, with no lower threshold that all parties need to pass in order to get in to parliament, while at the same time having stability in Government. As the Parliamentary majority, the ANC can take long term decisions, not necessarily dictated by day-to-day opinion polls. This combination is unique internationally, and has allowed South Africa to embark on structural reforms in the economy and political reform simultaneously. Structural reform is inevitably unpopular at the outset because:

Initially at least, structural adjustment programmes tend to impose severe hardships on the poorest members of society. In Africa and South Africa this means the majority. The programmes typically involve the abolition of food subsidies, reductions in social spending and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, with the resulting fee structures putting services beyond the reach of many. This is inevitably followed by a rise in unemployment, often accompanied by a rise in crime, (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 62).

All these factors make structural reforms hard to implement by governments that emerge from parliaments with proportional representation, or even by governments in countries with multi-party democratic systems over all. China is the most prominent example of a country that has undertaken painful structural reforms in the economy.³ Economic reforms have resulted in China having a high growth rate among the major economies internationally, admittedly from a low base. But the Chinese state is a one-party state and these economic reforms have not been followed by political reforms allowing the people more political and civil rights. The former Soviet Union under Michael Gorbachev from 1985 onwards is an example of a country implementing rapid political reforms, but only slower reforms to the economic structure of the country. In South Africa, both economic and political reforms have run concurrently.

³ Central Intelligence Agency country profiles: <http://www.cia.gov/publications/factbook/geos/ch.html>

The political parties themselves have also been reformed since the time of the struggle for majority rule in South Africa during the last decades of the 'Apartheid state.' Maphai and Gottschalk (2003: 59), list the ANC as "a social democratic party, which despite the DA's protestations has become the custodian of liberal values." They do not define the term 'social democratic' closer. Seen together with the unique arrangement between the South African Communist Party and the ANC, that allows dual membership, this illustrates the diversity of ideological views that have come to light within the ANC since the major fault line in South African politics disappeared, that of support or resistance to Apartheid, which united the ANC activists for decades. Terreblanche (2002: 435-470), disagrees with calling the ANC social democratic, saying the course in policy making followed by the party has been distinctly liberal, aiming to facilitate formal sector economic growth, then relying on the "trickle down effect" (Terreblanche, 2002: 435) to help raise living standards for the poor, rather than using state resources proactively to this end. According to Maphai and Gottschalk (2003: 60), the DA "still contains a liberal core, yet is the only main stream party trusted by the right wing." Sparks (2003:13), concurs saying party leader Tony Leon, and by extension the party, is "(...) essentially Eurocentric, with not an ounce of empathetic sensitivity to traditional African ways of debate and conflict resolution. (...) his style is pure Westminster, and he would doubtless have done well there, probably as a Tory". Even if dominated by whites, the DA will almost certainly increasingly develop multiple ideological personalities going forward, if it can maintain its growth in support as evidenced by the 2004 general elections⁴.

Maphai and Gottschalk (2003), see a clear profile emerging for the New National Party. The NNP "has shifted from being a custodian of apartheid values to becoming a Christian Democratic party." (2003: 59). The bad performance for the NNP at the ballot box in the 2004 general elections, and the internal acrimony in the party in the immediate aftermath of the election shows that transition in the party has not been easy. In fact the federal council of the party on August 7 and 8 2004 decided to disband the party and encourage NNP members to join the ANC⁵. Ever since the 1994 elections the electoral vote tends to move from the extremes on the political scale to the centre (the centre defined as the DA and the ANC) as confidence in the democratic consolidation process increases, (Maphai and Gottschalk,

⁴ Election results 2004 from the IEC: http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_statistic.asp,

⁵ http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=vn20040812051635104C649796: (The Party's over for the Nats, August 12 2004)

2003:59.) Using their definition of the political centre in the South African parliament, we can now say that this trend has continued in the 2004 general election⁶.

Various minorities had different ways of dealing with the new political reality in South Africa during the latter stages of the struggle and immediately afterwards. Some withdrew from political involvement, sometimes from voting, to support fundamentalists or mystic trends within Christianity, Judaism or Islam. All these alienated groups rejected some aspects of the new democratic modernity. Almost none, however, took up arms. On the ultra-right, a bare three dozen Afrikaner nationalists using names such as 'Boermag' and 'Israel Vision' became the local variant of Christian survivalism, and members were imprisoned before or after bombing incidents. In the Western Cape, some 45 vigilantes adopted pseudo-Islamic rationalisations for bombings and killings, under the banner of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad). A few local political bosses in shanty town wards killed rivals who challenged their leadership, which they were abusing to extract income through clientelism and protection rackets, (Maphai and Gottschalk, 2003: 60).

This absence of violence that by and large prevails in South Africa's current political dispensation and the new face of the international community after the end of the Cold War are among the main factors that bring Maphaia and Gottschalk (2003), to a largely positive view on the future of democracy in South Africa. Also, unique in Africa, the "powerful and vibrant" (2003:70) private sector provides an alternative power base for retirees or deposed political leaders to generate income from. This is evidenced by the peaceful transition from one generation of political leaders to the next. The strong guarantees of the Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights, and the presence of civil society groups that interact with government are also put forward as consolidating factors in terms of democracy in South Africa, (Maphai and Gottschalk 2003: 73). Ultimately, the perspective presented here seems to be that the success of any democratic government in governing South Africa in the future depends on the capacity of that government to co-operate with other groups in society to defuse potential tensions between ethnic groups, rich and poor and other social categories in

⁶ Compare these results from the Independent Electoral Commission. Results from 2004 are at http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_statsistic.asp, and 1999 results are at <http://www.elections.org.za/Results/natperprov.asp>

society, and to alleviate poverty. The government can go a long way along that path by refraining from using the media to their own electoral advantage rather than allowing access for a truly wide diversity of alternative views. Sparks (2003) and Terreblanche (2002), agree, but also point to warning lights on the horizon. Terreblanche (2002: 439-446) points to the necessity of distributing the wealth of the country more evenly, ultimately in order to keep violent conflict from returning. "The momentous political transformation should be complemented by an equally momentous socio economic transformation, in order to deracialise the economy, get rid of the ugly remnants of racial capitalism, and end poverty and destitution," (Terreblanche 2002: 441). Sparks (2003: 331-332) believes continued political stability and economic growth starts with an improved and more equal educational system: "The point is that growth, like charity begins at home," (Sparks, 2003: 332).

The struggle for a press independent of the government has been a main trend the history of the South African press. The first newspaper in South Africa, The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, was in fact printed on a press owned by the colonial government, (Retief, 2002:18). It was published on the basis that it would serve the people, but not by way of criticising the government. This extract from an announcement by government on the creation of the newspaper is telling; "it was improper and irregular.. to allow the editing of a public newspaper from a press in the hands of private individuals," (De Beer et al, 1998: 80 in Retief, 2002: 18). Immediately after the launch of the Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, competitors in private hands appeared. An initial clamp-down by the colonial government stopping the publication of the private title the Commercial Advertiser was met with fierce resistance and the launch of more private titles, resulting in a

prolonged struggle between the (private) press and the authorities, which culminated in Ordinance No 60 of May 1829. This stated that government would act against publications only in the case of proven libel or when irresponsible statements were made. The press won the encounter, and ever since, the Ordinance has been described as the 'Magna Carta' of freedom of the press in South Africa, (De Beer et al, 1998:88 in Retief, 2002:19.)

During the Apartheid - years media ownership in South Africa were in the hands of a limited number of white people via five large media conglomerates. This meant that the process of news selection was conducted within the paradigms held by whites, and that the black

majority was largely bypassed. Some press publications, most notably the Cape Town daily *Die Burger* were viewed as, and indeed viewed themselves as a government mouthpiece.

1.3 Literature Review

There is no straight forward material that adequately encompasses the subject of benchmarking media performance in regard to elections. In this literature review diverse material from media studies to political science are reviewed on the basis of their part relevance to the broad spectrum that the study is covering. This section encompasses several themes such as journalistic objectivity, political communication and marketing and media performance benchmarking.

The currency of journalists and government officials alike is their credibility, or claim to truth. The view one adopts on the overarching role of the media in society depends to a large extent on the view one shares on the notion of truth. There are two opposing paradigms at the heart of who possesses the truth that is presented in the press, (Retief, 2002: 18). Proponents of the authoritarian theory would argue that truth belongs to those in power in society, and that ordinary citizens have got no right to go out in search of the truth themselves. The people should be told only what the custodians of truth think they need to know. The opposite view on truth is held by libertarianists, who think that truth belongs to each and every individual, and that differing perspectives should be put to the people through a marketplace of ideas, where the most accepted ideas gain the most currency. These are of course very extreme opposites in the debate about where truth resides, but although not coherently codified, both were the basis of media practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was a time when the general epistemological view of science was positivist, (Stuart, 1999). In the positivist view, there is an absolute truth out there to be found, independent of the people discovering and reporting, and the task of science is to search for this truth. This was the historical origin of the concept of objectivity in science in general, as well as in journalism. In explaining how the concept of objectivity became an important part of modern journalism, Stuart (1999: 10-26), provides a helpful account of developments in England and the United States of America. He describes a division between the first newspapers emerging in the 18th and 19th centuries. Those who favoured government opinion and that of the elite, and got favourable treatment in return, often evolved into today's conservative press. Those who started up despite resistance from the elite on the other hand emphasised entertainment,

mostly remotely resembling what we would call 'human interest stories' today. They also charged a lower copy price to make their product affordable to the working class as they strove to attract a readership large enough to make them economically viable. They have, to a large extent, evolved to become today's tabloids. They also developed a sense of 'public responsibility', the need to inform their audience about society (and the perceived transgressions of the ruling elite) through facts.

Stuart (1999: 18-21), describes historical developments leading to the emergence of journalistic objectivity, in its initially recognised and narrow sense, as a journalistic ideal. Realist philosophy and technical development, most notably the telegraph, combined to institutionalise this ideal. His account of the chain of events can in broad terms be generalised to contexts in much of the Western world. Granato (1997), in the Australian context and Oltedal (2001) in the Norwegian portray a similar sequence of events in their societies, despite huge differences in timeframes and general historical frameworks. Stuart (1999: 10) cites a good measure of consensus among historians that the Venetian Gazette, weekly news-sheets, which originated in the late sixteenth century and mainly covered military and political events from all over Europe, was the first known publication broadly resembling the newspapers of today in form. By the 1600s the Gazette had multiplied, and grown in popularity and scope. From the 1600s onwards they began expanding the range of their news coverage, making the similarities to newspapers of today even stronger. The consensus breaks however, when the question turns to what was the world's first newspaper. The main problem is how to define what distinguishes a newspaper from other similar publications of the age. Not tackling the question of the 'world first' by providing a definite answer, Stuart (1999: 11) fast-forwards to the establishment in the year 1702 of the Daily Courant in London, which carried both local and, translated from newspapers abroad, international news. A strict tax and libel regime could not arrest the growth in British sales of daily newspapers in the Eighteenth century. By 1750 "London had five daily papers, six thrice-weeklies, five weeklies and (...) several cut-price thrice-weeklies, with a total circulation between them of 100 000 copies," (Smith 1979, quoted in Stuart 1999: 11). The pattern of a division between the 'respectable' papers and the cut-price ones was emulated in the American colonies. The Stamp Act of 1765 forced printers to choose between charging prices high enough to pay stamp duty, and by extension writing for an affluent readership, or going 'illegal', which made it possible to cut prices and write 'for the man in the street.'

A division emerged between newspapers who did not mind being controversial, and those who shied away from controversy. Stuart argues the origin of 'objective journalism' in Britain is linked to developments within the 'pauper press' and within the 'penny press' in the USA. 'Pauper' and 'penny' were the terms used in England and the United States to describe the newspapers in the category at the lower end of the market, in the early nineteenth century, (Stuart, 1999: 13). Because advertising as a rule-of-thumb hates controversy and loves an audience with purchasing power, high-end newspapers, the ones who avoided controversy, enjoyed high advertising revenue and carried more 'quality' editorial content than their rivals. But these 'respectable' papers paid a price of independence for their relative wealth. Partisan interests dominated them. As Williams (1978) points out: "there had been heavy direct bribery of journalists by ministers, and official government advertising was steered to papers favourable to Government opinion," (in Stuart, 1999: 13).

A parallel situation in a vastly different context can be seen in Russia as of 2004 where the media tend to be owned by 'oligarchs' or nouveau riche who made their money during the frenzy of privatisation during Boris Yeltsin's rule shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991⁷. Their media institutions are often squeezed between directives from the owners and the need to show loyalty to the government, which since late 2003 has been cracking down on selected oligarchs, most notably Russia's richest man up until his arrest in October 2003, Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The Putin presidency has been using the (overwhelmingly ill-gotten) wealth of the oligarchs as a leverage to ward off criticism by the media, by letting it be understood that those bringing perceived damaging criticism would be bogged down with inspections by some of Russia's 5 million strong force of civil public servants and/or prosecuted. Media content has also been affected by damage control after fallout from other business activities of the conglomerates owned by the nouveau riche oligarchs⁸.

In Stuart's (1999: 13-14) historical account, the cut-price publications placed a big emphasis on attracting readers by entertaining them, which led to a prominent placing of stories with a 'human interest' angle. In England, the pauper press titles also campaigned against the stamp duties until their eventual abolishment, which was not until 1861 on the commodity of paper.

⁷ As described by The Economist magazine. (The Economist, Taming the Robber Barons, a Survey of Russia, pp 5-8, May 22-28th 2004, Volume 371, Number 8376).

The duties constituted a politically motivated tax, called at the time 'tax on knowledge' (Stuart, 1999: 14) by opponents. They also applied to advertisements and the newspaper copy price. The government sought to avoid the menace of radical journalism criticising their power and privilege through imposing the duties. Ultimately advertising proved a factor more controlling of radical journalism than 'taxes on knowledge,' (Stuart, 1999: 14). Both in America and in Britain, however, the lower priced titles campaigned for social change. They also started to reflect a preference for facts over opinions in the news coverage, a desire to represent 'the public interest' against the power of the government and elite. They strove to present information in the most literal way possible, often resorting to pure transcripts of statements. (Stuart, 1999: 12-13).

Stuart (1999: 17), sees the technical development of the telegraph as perhaps the most significant part of the road towards 'journalistic objectivity' as a style. Introduced in the 1840's the telegraph became an invaluable tool for journalists reporting from the field, but the unreliability of telegraph lines forced compression of the most essential facts in a lead paragraph. This new communication path also increased co-operation between press organisations. In 1848 the wire service Associated Press (AP) was founded by different newspapers operating out of New York to provide equal access for members to reports from distant sources and each other's news, (Stuart, 1999: 17). The new service employed correspondents who wrote for all member newspapers, regardless of their political affiliation. The inverted pyramid structure was adopted; each word in a news report had to be justified in terms of cost. This made impartial news writing an ideal, allowing the individual member newspaper to colour the report according to their standing point. The establishment of trade unions for journalists also meant a formalisation, in the early 20th century, of the virtues of 'respectable' journalism. Accuracy, speed and the ability to work under temporal pressure were typically emphasised.

Granato (1997: 15), illustrates just how strong the position of the ideals constituting the old notion of objectivity remains in journalism ethics today by the observation "journalists can report in only three ways- by observing events directly, by reading documents and by interviewing people." In all situations the ideal of accuracy, as outlined by Stuart (1999), is an essential guideline for the journalist to follow. The ideals of "truthful, essential and unbiased

⁸ The Economist magazine. (The Economist, Taming the Robber Barons, a Survey of Russia, pp 5-8, May 22-28th 2004, Volume 371, Number 8376).

information” also feature prominently in, for example, the Finish Guidelines for Good Journalistic Practice⁹. However, the notion of objectivity has been expanded and interpreted in greater detail as the power and sophistication of the mass media has developed in more recent years.

In our contemporary media world a distinction between the different ways in which journalists approach their sources may be illustrative to one contemporary view of ‘objectivity’. Oltedal (2001: 74), distinguishes between the journalist’s role as opponent (motstandar), helper (hjelpar), entertainer (underhaldar) and intruder (inntrengjar) in the interview situation, opposite a source. Those of opponent, helper and entertainer are all legitimate functions for journalists to fulfil; that of intruder is not. When a journalist comes as an opponent they often have interests that are totally opposed to those of the source. The source may be a person in a position of great public responsibility in society who has something to hide. In these situations the journalist must stay sufficiently detached not resort to, for example, attacks on the source’s personality. They must be able to stick to the matter at hand, criticise and scrutinise what should be examined.

As a helper, a certain measure of detachment is also essential, (Oltedal, 2001: 75). The case at hand may relate to people who have suffered abuse or neglect. Or there may be a need to get information important and/or useful to the community at large out to people. As a helper, the journalist may often have a feeling of shared interest with the source. That feeling must also not be allowed to get too strong. Applying the ideal of objectivity in this sense means that helping the source release information should be in the public interest as well, in one way or the other, and that the truthfulness must not be in doubt, (Oltedal, 2001:75). When the journalist comes to entertain and approach their task too aggressively they may be seen as an intruder to the strictly private sphere by those reported on. In entertainment reporting a frequent allegation is lack of empathy. Any of the above journalistic functions can be perverted and the journalist may in fact come to be seen as an intruder. They may be seen as an intruder, both by the sources and by the audience, who suffer misuse of their time, or misinformation, (Oltedal, 2001: 75).

⁹ <http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/finland.html>

Relating to the classic ideal of objectivity, Gossberg et. al. (1998: 179), looks at the word representation, which “literally means ‘re-presentation.’” To represent something means to take an original, mediate it and ‘play it back’. But “(..) the process almost necessarily alters the reality of the original.” This view is predominant today, and is applicable to all media. So the view that media must represent a universal reality in order to be ‘objective’, the view which assigns the journalist the same role as a scientist, only working under a strict deadline, may have lost some of its lustre. Even if you do illuminate an issue from all angles, it’s hard to convince the people of today that an absolute truth will appear. The media savvy audience will most often look for an angle or a standing point in the reporting. That does not mean however, that objectivity in a broader sense is any less important to have as an ideal than before. Accuracy, neutrality, bias free reporting; they can all be argued to be part of the modern notion of objectivity and in fact some resist the use of the term objective journalism in favour of these terms. Many see the “reasonable reader,” (Fuller, 1996: 24) as a useful standard. In this line of thought the “reasonable reader” should be unable to pick up slants, bias, likes/dislikes etc of the journalist for the reporting to be considered objective. Some confuse the ideal of objectivity with the style of objectivity, the affect-less style of expression marked by recitation of fact. Powerful as it may be, objective writing in this sense remains a style, not an ethical aspiration for journalists.

Expanding on the notion of objectivity as a style, Tuchman (1972), sees objectivity in journalism as no more than a strategic ritual. Journalists present conflicting possibilities in their stories, they seek supporting evidence of any claims they make, they seek quotes that can be attributed to sources other than themselves, they use the structure of the inverted pyramid (placing the essence of the story first, detail later in the story) to legitimise their own judgements on what is important and what is less important and they nominally separate factual news reporting from opinion articles as an elaborate procedure to protect their credibility as relaters of events to the public. But in Tuchman’s (1972) view and according to this school of thought generally, all the trimmings of this strategy do not make the reporting any less constructed.

With all the cynicism currently prevalent in the public discourse on journalism and bias, Windshuttle (1999), has provided a powerful defence of journalism. His view is that while there are reports in the media that are not objective and fair, that does not preclude the value of objective reporting as an ideal, or make it less attainable. Even though news making is a

highly selective, socially constructed and often politically biased process, the events it describes occur in a real world that is itself independent of the news making process. “Journalists certainly construct the news bulletins, but they don’t usually construct the events they write or broadcast about,” (Windshuttle, 1999: 13).

The notion that a journalist can report an issue totally without any prior engagement whatsoever, be it to ideology, religion, nationality, personal background and so on, seems utopian. The challenge becomes not allowing these privately held commitments to turn a journalist into an intruder, be it on the sources or the audience. One of the major factors blamed for emerging cynicism in the electorate by the media malaise theory is political marketing, (Norris, 2000: 4). The concept of media malaise is discussed below. From a more positive outlook, political marketing can be defined as “a genuine policy of political communications, a global strategy involving the design, rationalisation and conveyance of political communication,” (Mareek, 1992: 24).

Commercial marketing is the root of political marketing. Political marketing merely implies adopting commercial marketing techniques to political communication, be it in connection with electoral competitions or day-to-day government communication. Mareek (1992), has presented a very hands-on guide to the concept and the techniques of political marketing. Commercial marketing is defined by Mareek (1992:25), as “a set of means by which a business venture may create, maintain and develop its market, or (if one prefers) clientele,” (original parentheses). Commercial marketing now forms an integral part of the production process. Marketing begins at the design stage of the production, and can even lead to modification of design according to a customer’s needs or desires, both inextricably linked. In politics, the modification of policies explicitly to suit perceived public opinion is rarely admitted. Marketing claims to be rational, even ‘scientific’, a claim pronounced by political marketing consultants as well. According to Mareek (1992: 36), “in political marketing the problem is to define a politician’s objectives and platforms and to influence the way citizens are to respond, particularly at the approach of elections.” Evidence that political judgement is not completely relegated from the process of political campaigning is the observation that whereas commercial sales data form the basis for commercial marketing, and are nearly perfectly reliable (Mareek, 1992:71), public opinion polls, often the bases for political marketing campaigns are rather less reliable. Still, consumer polling is a multi-billion dollar industry world wide, and many of the same techniques used in consumer polling are

increasingly used in policy formation and governing, (Johnson, 2001: 89).

The United States of America was the country where the techniques of political marketing were first applied systematically. Three factors explain the emergence of political marketing in the US, (Mareek, 1992: 7-10). The first among these is the particular nature of the US electoral system. Before presidential elections, primary elections are held to select representatives to national conventions selecting the presidential candidate by both the major parties, the Republican and the Democratic Party. Candidates are chosen by members representing their local party branches in caucuses, or in direct elections. In open primaries, any registered voter, independent of party preference may cast their vote. In closed primaries, only voters with a registered preference for the given party may vote. The number of primary elections rather than caucuses is increasing as parties do not maintain a strong organisation on the ground between elections.

Primary elections require candidates to undertake full scale campaigning, to stand out in the mind of party sympathisers from rivals and win the nomination. The candidate would in fact most likely share a lot of viewpoints with the other primary candidates: "It is considerably more difficult to convince voters to choose one candidate over another who expresses similar viewpoints than to convince them not to vote for another party, in which case the arguments can be based on ideological differences," (Mareek, 1992: 9). The second reason for the origin of political marketing in the United States is the US tradition of elections for most public offices, for example those of mayor, sheriff or judge. In many states primaries are held for gubernatorial races. Primaries are also held for the office of mayor in major cities. There also are professionally run campaigns for ballot initiatives, proposals that are put by citizens and, if enough voters support its presence on the ballot, put on the ballot for decision for by the state's electorate, (Johnson, 2001: 201-228). This means that for professional political consultants, there are campaigns to run on a continuous basis.

The third reason listed by Mareek (1992: 7-10) for the leading role that the US has played in developing political marketing is the early development of mass media in the US. For example, Mareek (1992: 10) cites the fact that by 1952 nearly 40% of American homes had television sets. In France at the same time, about 4% had one. A relatively large degree of freedom was allowed from the outset to commercial marketing in US media. The growth of American political marketing has always paralleled the evolution of the broadcast media, and

particularly its use of commercial spots. Mareek (1992: 11-21), describes the US presidential election campaigns from 1952-1992 to illustrate the main stages in the development of political marketing in the US. In 1952 presidential candidate general Eisenhower enlisted pioneer within commercial audio-visual marketing, Thomas Rosser Reeves to advise his campaign. US regulations allowed parties to appropriate space on any channel at any time as long as there was adequate financial compensation to the producers of the scheduled show. This led to long television election broadcasts being put together, often half an hour or longer. Reeves reversed this, and tailor made one short spot per state for Eisenhower, based on issues that emerged popular in polls. "Reeves influenced, for the first time, the political message directly, suggesting simplifications and change in substance," (Mareek, 1992: 12). Reeves applied the principle of always insisting on promoting a Unique Selling Position (USP) during a campaign, (Mareek, 1992: 13). Finding a USP requires the search for a differentiating factor, separating the candidate from the rest of the field, and simplification. This meant that the candidate never developed more than one category of arguments for a press conference or television appearance. On advice from Reeves, Eisenhower also took the step of changing his physical appearance with the idea to conceal his age, (Mareek, 1992: 13).

According to Mareek (1992: 13) the democratic candidate standing against Eisenhower, Adlai Stevenson, booked half hour time segments twice a week between 10-11 PM, preferring quantity to quality. From the democratic national convention, television broadcast voting delegates from all states before Stevenson's acceptance speech, all of whom took their time in order to remain longer on television in their constituency, booting Stevenson's speech out of prime time and in front of the late-night audience, (Mareek, 1992: 13). By 1956 both parties abandoned the long broadcasts all together in favour of the political commercial. The spots were placed as close to the most popular programmes as possible, so as to capitalise on their high ratings. Mareek (1992) also cites another development in 1956: the negative spot. "The democrats used spots from the 1952 Eisenhower campaign in their negative spots, adding a voice over that whispered: how's that General? Whenever the General made specific promises," (Mareek, 1992: 13).

Mareek (1992:13), sees political marketing gaining unprecedented importance in the 1960 campaign:

In 1960 the sleekest political marketing campaign up to that stage helped propel John F. Kennedy to the oval office. As the first candidate ever, Kennedy underwent media

training and publicly admitted he did not write his speeches himself. Kennedy filmed the first spots aimed at an ethnic minority, the Hispanic community.

1960 was also the year of the invention of the live televised presidential debate, between the major candidates, (Mareek, 1992:14). Incumbent Republican Vice-President Richard Nixon agreed to debates, even though Kennedy was less well known and as a consequence probably stood to gain more. Nixon appeared strained, compared to young and tanned Kennedy, (Mareek, 1992:14). Nixon believed the number of viewers would increase from one debate to the next, and so agreed to tackle his least favourite topics first leaving his favourite, foreign policy, for last. In fact, the first debate was viewed by 70-75 million people, a figure that was never to be matched in other presidential debates up to 1992.

“Nixon missed presidency by less than 100 000 votes, the first debate generally considered the reason for the failure. (...) Televised debates between main candidates have since taken on mythical value in the eyes of political communication specialists and political leaders”. (Mareek 1992: 14)

By 1964 political marketing had reached adolescence in Mareek's terms, (1992:15). This campaign featured democratic incumbent since Kennedy's assassination mid-term, Lyndon B. Johnson, versus Barry Goldwater. From the outset Goldwater made it clear he was in favour of the systematic use of tactical nuclear weapons whenever the army thought it wise. This prompted Johnson's advisor Tony Schwartz to design the now infamous negative ad dubbed the 'Daisy spot.' The ad shows a little girl peacefully plucking the petals from a daisy, counting from one to nine. Just as she reaches the number ten, a close-up of her eye is shown, and a booming voice through a loud speaker is heard. The vice counts down, ten, nine.. At the end of the countdown; there is a visual reflection of an atomic explosion in the little girl's eye. Johnson's voice says: "these are the stakes-to make a world in which all God's children can live or to go into the dark. We must love each other or die." A voice then states: "Vote for President Johnson on 3 November. The stakes are too high for you to stay home." The commercial was shown only once, but reached some fifty million viewers, (Mareek, 1992:16). By 1968, the close-up was adopted for use in political marketing. Republican candidate Richard Nixon hired Roger Ailes as ad producer. Ailes was able to convince Nixon to take a natural pose in front of the camera and to agree to be filmed in close-ups, gaining increased exposure for Nixon in line with the saying 'TV loves close ups'.

Johnson (2001: 177) points to the fact that federal regulations regarding campaign financing were enacted progressively through the 1970s. Before that “election financing was ‘cash and carry politics’”.

In 1972 the democrats hit the Nixon campaign with a text based ad designed to look like a news segment and capitalising on the credibility enjoyed by news broadcasts among viewers. The ad presented a long text apparently giving objective data on the inflation over the four preceding years, with an emphasis on the state of the US economy, which was read by a voice-over as it appeared on screen. The rise in the cost of many basic household goods was stigmatised, with the pay-off line: can you afford four more years of Mr. Nixon? (Mareek, 1992: 17). By 1976, Mareek asserts that televised political advertising, and with it political marketing, had come of age. Ads imitated both the most credible programs on TV and the ones viewers know to be non-factual, such as comedies and the like. Republican primary candidate Ronald Reagan recorded spots which portrayed him in the same style as the broadcasts with the most credibility among viewers, the news. In order to imitate the news the camera was put directly on set, just as in a field news segment. Some times technical defects that are hard to avoid in the field were deliberately inserted. These ads were broadcast directly prior to or after the news to uphold confusion, (Mareek, 1992: 18).

Imitating films in the Western genre, Republican candidate for senate in Wyoming Malcom Wallop shot an ad imitating Marlboro Man ads, leading a stampede on a white horse, (Mareek, 1992: 18). In 1976, the candidates for the seat of vice president met in debate on Television for the first time. Since the 1980s nearly half the federal electioneering budgets have been allocated to TV spots. During this period, the US Supreme Court decided that lavish campaign spending is legal as long as the candidate can afford it, in its Buckley vs. Valeo decision, (Mareek, 1992:19). In 1980 President Carter ran negative ads before the primary election in New Hampshire and caucus in Iowa against Senator Edward Kennedy despite his incumbency to counter a challenge driven by Kennedy’s name recognition, (1992:19). The ‘Reagan era’ of 1980-88 saw the Unique Selling Position brought to the fore with Reagan’s clear, simple conservative platform: lower taxes, less federal government intervention and higher defence spending. Reagan also hired Hollywood gag makers to make jokes for the president, (1992:19).

In the 1988 campaign George H. W. Bush ran a negative ad in the campaign portraying Michael Dukakis as environmentally irresponsible. Mareek (1992:19) asserts that this is the first negative ad whose pretences have later been exposed as false, when it was established that the shoreline strewn with garbage shown in the ad was not in Dukakis' constituency. Mareek's account ends with the 1992 campaign. President Bush Sr. ran negative ads portraying Bill Clinton as disloyal to his country for not serving in Vietnam. This tactic may for the first time be said to have backfired strategically, as the electorate focused on the economy more than war records, (Mareek, 1992: 20).

Johnson (2001), gives an account of the electoral contests in 1996 and 2000. 1996 was the first election where both parties courted soft money actively (Johnson, 2001: 183). Soft money is money that is not covered by federal campaign law. Parties can spend undefined amounts on "party building activities" in their state and local parties. (Johnson, 2001: 183). As a consequence "\$100 000 is no longer considered top tier in this season of massive party giving. (...) The Republican Party goal for 2000 was to recruit one thousand individuals, called the 'Team One Million' willing to donate one million dollars over a four-year period." (Johnson 2001: 183). The election in 2000 was an example of the ever-longer preparation period for an election, and example of preparations going wrong on the Democratic side, in the Gore campaign, while the Bush campaign built good momentum by solid strategies early on, (Johnson, 2001: 239).

"For Al Gore's presidential campaign (...) nearly all of Gore's trusted longtime senior staff and top loyalists were brushed aside and a battery of high-priced consultants came in, often giving conflicting advise. The campaign wasted precious time trying to gain its footing, define and the redefine Gore's image, and figure out just what Gore stood for. (...) By contrast, George Bush's campaign, under the guidance of the low-profile but highly effective consultant Karl Rove was doing everything right (...): raising enormous amounts of money, lining up key Republicans, developing its strategy and message in preparation for the first crucial primaries in 2000," (Johnson, 2001: 239).

Mareek (1992: 20-21), asserts that the pace of development of political marketing in countries beyond the US has been determined by three factors main factors. The first factor is the level of development of the mass media in the respective country. Britain and other Western

European countries which have highly developed media sectors were among the first adopters of political marketing techniques. Government regulation of political marketing, especially during election time, also determines this pace. In France for example, stringent regulation forbids any form of political spots sponsored by parties or political leaders on television or radio, public or privately owned. This is often compensated by excess use of party posters. The last factor listed by Mareek (1992:21), is the general level of economic development in the particular country in question. This is not always significant. In Latin America general levels of development are often low, but politicians on this continent use sophisticated political marketing techniques.

Beyond defining political marketing, and going through its history in the US, Mareek (1992) lays down general rules of conduct in political marketing, before getting into the more specific aspects of planning and executing a campaign, (Mareek, 1992: 29-31). There are a number of major requirements that should be satisfied before a campaign may be launched. Mareek (1992) differentiates between image building and victory campaigns. When a candidate starts election with no chance of winning, their campaign is an image building campaign, and must be conducted as such. Ronald Reagan's campaign 1976 was in fact an image building campaign, preparing the way for 1980. Reagan withdrew early enough to maintain an image of fair play, while increasing his profile. The principal rules for conduct of a campaign outlined below apply to both victory and image building campaigns. They are written with the two-major-candidate US election 'races' in mind, but are equally applicable to other contexts, such as the South African context.

The first principle requirement is coherence, (Mareek 1992: 29-31). This entails that no campaign decision be taken before it has been correlated with all others. Messages presented need not be the same, but they must not be glaringly incoherent. One example is promising to spend the same specific public funds on several good causes. The coherence requirement also applies in relation to previous campaigns conducted by the same candidate or party, especially those of recent memory. The second principle listed articulates the need to re-examine earlier campaigns to learn from both faults and strengths. An effective campaign requires a redefinition of the entire campaign process, ruling out the unmodified repetition of an earlier campaign strategy, even when successful. Almost always, a change in opposition, media coverage etc. invalidates a specific aspect of the earlier approach and needs to be dealt with. Next, there should be minimal differentiation of the candidate from the rest of the field.

Minimal differentiation means differences should be visible, but not so big as to turn 'middle ground' voters away. Whatever the campaign and the choices of differentiation made, the angle decided upon must be designed to grant the politician an advantage on a specific point. Finally, Mareek (1992: 29-31), lists the principle of maximum security. This principle warns against adopting strategies that with any likelihood could jeopardise the candidate. Marketing consultants for example refrain from anticipating a future event, unless it is absolutely inevitable that it will turn out the way they predict. Future inflation rates for instance, or the future direction of a rival's campaigns are considered unwise to speculate on.

Political marketing today encompasses the entire marketing process, from preliminary market study to testing and targeting, (Mareek, 1992:28). Many associate political advertising, which is one of the tools of political marketing, with propaganda. However, by definition, political advertising is merely a type of unidirectional communication of a political message. The word 'propaganda' has a religious origin, since it was first used in connection with the creation by the Roman Catholic Church of the so-called 'congregation for the propogandation of faith' (De propaganda fide) in 1597, (Mareek 1992: 29). 'Propaganda' in the political sector was no more than the adoption of olden day conventional advertising, generally employed by government institutions: partial, one way communication trying to impose opinions, (Mareek, 1992:29).

The time frame planned for the campaign, or campaign scheduling is often telling when looking at what kind of campaign the party or candidate intends to run, (Mareek, 1992: 52). A 'blitz' campaign will aim for short term media saturation. A step by step campaign, will aim to build the candidate's image as the campaign progresses. A so-called 'teaser' campaign, or the 'stop and go – campaign, starts up again every time an event can potentially boost its impact (publication of opinion poll results, TV interview with the candidate etc.). Both these kinds of campaigns often employ 'pseudo events' at some point during the span of the campaign. A pseudo event is "an event that has been caused to occur or staged to engender press coverage or public interest."¹⁰ McNair (1995:27), cites Daniel Boorstin as the person who coined the phrase in 1962. In his meaning of the term, pseudo events were unauthentic happenings, and a sign of the increasing ties between a press sector ever hungry for news, and a political establishment ever more conscious of the importance of 'good press' for their

¹⁰ <http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/p/p0630700.htm>

electoral fortunes. Examples of pseudo events in Boorstin's sense are interviews with government leaders, news leaks and press conferences. More recently, political polls have become so prolific, in particular in the US that some see the polls as pseudo events. Edward M. Kennedy expressed this sentiment: "Polls have become the quintessential pseudo-events of the preprimary campaign".¹¹ Mareek (1992), offers an account of the main stages in the political marketing process which would be unfair to go into given the limited space available here. He discusses some normative dilemmas involved in applying strategies of political marketing, but his is primarily a 'handbook' in political marketing.

One set of normative questions discussed by Mareek (1992), present themselves when marketing consultants take over decisions of substance over policy that the politicians are elected to take. Marketing decisions are often based on the principle of selectivity of decoding and memorising communication. The receiver tends to decode messages in light of own experiences and ideas. They most frequently remember, and act upon, elements that reflect own ideas, interests and tastes. The question about whether it is right for politicians to rely on public opinion polls in making their decisions, perhaps to such an extent that their own input into what platform they present to the voters on Election Day disappears in the name of 'giving people what they want' is not answered in this book, because it is a question only the individual candidates or parties in question can answer. But Mareek's (1992) account of how advanced marketing techniques are, how little is left to chance (or to the will of the electorate?) gives an added perspective as background reading to those tasked with creating, or analysing election campaigns.

1. 4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Citizenship approaches

Gamson (1992) discusses different perspectives on the role of ordinary citizens in democracy. The two main contradicting models are the limited citizenship model and what can be termed the participatory citizenship model, (Gamson, 1992: 56-57). The limited citizenship model sees the notion of ordinary citizens actively engaged in public life as "romantic but idle fantasy," (Gamson, 1992: 56). The more "realistic" (Gamson, 1992: 56) role of citizens in this view is to "choose who among would be office holders will exercise public authority," (Gamson, 1992: 56). Between elections, "officials need to respond to problems that are

¹¹ <http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/p/p0630700.htm>

technically complex, and most people have neither the inclination, nor the ability, to master the issues involved,” (Gamson, 1992: 56). The media’s role in this vision of democracy becomes extremely important. They must expose corruption and incompetence in order for the democratic system to sustain itself, they must provide decision makers with information about public concerns, and inform the public about decisions made by those in power. But promotion of civic engagement, reflection or discussion would be limited to the period leading up to an election.

Participatory citizenship is based on the premise of “the desirability of maximising the participation of citizens in decisions that affect their lives,” (Gamson, 1992: 57). Dahlgren (1991:2-11; in Gamson 1992: 58) outlines the function of the public sphere in the participatory citizenship model. The public sphere should provide:

The institutionalised sites where popular political will should take form and citizens should be able to constitute themselves as active agents in the political process.(..) The goal is to establish structures of broadcasting in the public interest (..) which optimise diversity in terms of information, viewpoints and forms of expression, and which foster full and active citizenship.

Naturally, the term ‘public sphere’ in this context does not only refer to the media. Civic organisations, political parties, educational institutions and the media are all among a multitude of actors who would combine to form the participatory public sphere. The uni-directional nature of the mass media of today makes the definition of the role of the mass media in the participatory public sphere a difficult task. Television, newspapers and radio lend themselves well to presenting information of different forms from a single source (at a time) to consumers. But the commercial model underpinning their current existence and the price of producing media content limits the number of views reaching out to the audience.

The hierarchical structure of corporate and public leadership, and the centralised nature of media and government institutions also concentrates power. Technological factors also contribute to the uni-directional nature of television in particular, but also newspapers and radio. The only strand of current mass media that could potentially be truly interactive is the World Wide Web. Those with enough skill and interest among ‘Web users are able to create their own web sites, go to newsgroups on all kinds of topics, but there remains a gatekeeper, even if the scope for material publishable is much larger than on television, in newspapers and

on radio. The main factor keeping main-stream content on the 'Web uni-directional today is the prevailing adoption of the commercial market model in this new sphere. The need for 'the bills to be paid' invariably leads to control over content being concentrated in a limited number of hands.

The difficulty of combining the capitalist model with a truly participatory citizenship model is described pointedly by Lodge (1999). He describes the demise of the civic movement in South Africa with the appropriation by the ANC of most of the leadership of civic organisations into public offices after the elections in 1994. Lodge (1999) quotes then Premier of Gauteng Province Tokyo Sexwale as having asked "are we in power or merely in office?" shortly after the elections in 1994, (Lodge, 1999:1). This distinction outlines the difference between the views of power conveyed by these two models. In the participatory citizenship model the distinction between holding office and holding power in society is much clearer than in the limited citizenship model. The limited view on citizenship (Gamson 1992: 56), would say that as long as the government of the day, the individuals in office, conduct their business according to standards that are acceptable to the different elite groups in society, and get a renewed mandate from the mass electorate at the next elections, citizens are not likely to, and indeed should not, interfere with the government's exercise of power through strike actions, protests and other extra-parliamentary forms of action. The participatory view, on the other hand, makes the distinction between holding office and holding power clearer. Even if they have elected a government, citizens have the obligation to make themselves heard in between elections, so as to steer government policy in 'their direction', even if that means slowing down or limiting the government's exercise of power, or even exchanging the government 'out of turn'.

1.4.2 Theories on the role of the press

Much of the debate surrounding the role of the press in society has evolved around four major frameworks: the libertarian, authoritarian, egalitarian and developmental paradigms, (Retief, 2002:11). In its most crude form a libertarian view on the media holds that the government has no right to interfere with the press; truth belongs to individual citizens in society who are to be seen as rational, able to distinguish truth from falsehood. The independent search for truth is a firm human right. The media are to be dictated by market forces to serve the rational consumers that make up the people in the best way possible, (Retief, 2002:12). In direct

opposition is the oldest of these paradigms, authoritarianism. In simple terms proponents of this perspective hold that the media should serve the people through the government, dispersing information that the government wants the people to have, but not seek information on their own, for example critical information, (Retief, 2002:11-12).

Building on libertarian views, the egalitarian paradigm emphasises group rights more than those of the individual, (Retief, 2002:13-16). It holds that it is imperative that all groups, or at least all socio-economic strata in society, have equal access to the media with their views and as an arena to promote their interests. No group should dominate the media, giving them an unfair advantage in the struggle for resources or 'the minds of the people'. In South Africa, the issue of media ownership has been addressed through Black Economic Empowerment and there is a consensus throughout the media spectrum that the ownership question needs to be addressed on a continuous basis, to transfer more ownership to previously disadvantaged groups in society, (Retief, 2002:20). Traces of egalitarian thinking in South Africa post 1994 can also be seen in the growing emphasis on the social responsibility of the media, the expectation that the media present all views and voices in a particular community, the role played by government in the media (government control of airwaves and the investigation by the South African Human Rights Commission, a government body, into alleged media racism), the view that group rights, justice for all, is more important than individual liberties and the implementation of affirmative action in media institutions, (Retief, 2002:20).

The developmental model emerged in particular in newly liberated African countries in the mid-twentieth century. The developmental model "is to some extent a critique of and reaction against the West and its transnational media. It also reflects the anger and frustration of poor and media deficient nations," (Hatchen 1996:30, in Retief 2002:17). The developmental model for the media's role in society sees the media as integral to the achievement of national integration and economic development. They should contribute to nation building and patriotism. The government must provide adequate media services when the private forces are unable to do so, but the government must also have a right to mobilise the media in the task of nation building (such as fighting illiteracy and informing people on public health issues, as well as building a political consciousness). Individual rights to expression and other civil liberties are irrelevant in the face of the overwhelming problems in society. Each country has the right to control foreign journalists and the flow of news in and out of the country.

It is not hard to see that elements of this model are at work several places around the world. In South Africa there have been debates around cases where the media have criticised the government. In one such debate, over criticism levelled by the Mail&Guardian in 1997 over an armament deal between South African arms manufacturer Denel and Saudi Arabia, the white journalists behind the story were accused by colleagues in the South African media of working to a secret agenda, working against governmental efforts to tackle unemployment by criticising the deal, (Retief, 2002:21). Arguably, this model may be used as a justification for measures that are not necessarily universally considered democratic. The government of President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe has long demanded licenses from newspapers and journalists to operate, which is unique internationally. Zimbabwe also asserts the right to control the flow of foreign journalists in and out of the country. Recently it has gone one step further and taken its control over communication so far as to promulgate legislation requiring Internet Service Providers to intercept e-mails that feature a certain set of key words, among them the Movement for Democratic Change, (its leader) Morgan Tsvangirai etc. that could be deemed “spreading the propaganda of the colonialists.”¹² These four basic theories of the press have formed the basic framework for much of the debate surrounding the role of the media in society, even though variations on each of the four theories have been combined and discussed under different names than those described here. Importantly, development theory must not be confused with social responsibility theory. This model is only a recent development relative to the four main theories and is outlined by McQuail (1996). It emphasises that the media have obligations to society. The media should be objective, fair and accurate, as far as possible, and the government of the state must have the right to intervene in certain cases, where transgressions are too grave, in the public interest. However, government intervention is to be the extreme exception, and, borrowing from the libertarian model, the media are to be critical of the government rather than subservient. But, like development theory, the social responsibility model assigns the media an important role in nation building along side the government, and co-operation between the two institutions in some areas like health communication, dissemination of information regarding government decisions etc. is desirable.

¹² Peta Thornycroft, SAFM Mid Day Live, June 1st 2004.

1.4.3 Critical/ Cultural theories¹³

Now, more than ever, because of the distribution of power in society, some versions of reality have more influence than others on the image created by the media of the day. Critical analysis criticises this, and seeks to uncover why elites have more influence over the media than their number in population merits, (Dennis 2000). One critical approach is political economy theory of the media. Karl Marx pioneered political economy theory, which is still influential in the research of the media. Marxist theorists see the role of the mass media as maintaining the status quo of class dominance. The Marxist view of the media is one of class domination whereas Freedom of Speech is seen as the role of media by the liberal plurists, (Dennis 2000). Plurists see the media as an organizational system with a fairly certain degree of autonomy. It assumes a tier of management that allows a great deal of latitude to media professionals in their representations. Thus, the relationship between the media professionals and the audience is on equal ground and is voluntary, (Ledger 2000). The Marxist view of media is one of class domination. Media professionals are influenced and affected by the dominant culture. The way they work is determined by the market dictum to maximise profits, which is impossible when challenging dominant ideas, (Dennis 2000). The media shape our desires for goods through advertising, and they control the information we receive around the world. The media represent the ideology of the dominant class and the audience is unable to discern this influence because the media limits their access to ideas that seriously challenge the existing order by fulfilling the desires instilled in the audience through the media content, (Dennis 2000).

Critical media theory is useful because by applying it we may expose the myth of the 'value free' social science. By extension we can re-evaluate and expose whose reality we are being offered. Critical media theories draw attention to salient political and economic interests that influence society, and highlight social inequalities in media representation. Marx's perspective emphasises the importance of social class in relation to media ownership as well as audience interpretation. Today, some Marxists see the media as a site of struggle for ideological meaning, opening up the opposition. Marxist media research includes the study of the representation of the mass media in order to reveal the underlying ideology. Dennis (2000), sums up Marxist analysis as crudely deterministic. She sees the perspective as

¹³ <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts?Speech/rccs/portal4.htm>

'reductionist' in its materialism, allowing little diversity and subjectivity. Social class is a term not including social categories such as gender and ethnicity. Dennis (2000) sees Marxism as a grand theory with little empirical research. According to this account (Dennis 2000), upholding freedom of speech is seen as the role of the media by the liberal pluralists and non-Marxists.

Among the critical theories, the ideological state apparatus theory is relevant in the context of this research. Before the interaction of ideology and media can be clearly understood, the concept of ideology itself must first be explored. While a clear definition of ideology has never been agreed upon, we are able to rely upon existing insights into the attributes and characteristics of this human phenomenon to edify our understanding of it. Theorist Mike Cormack suggests that, "ideology is concerned with how we as individuals understand the world in which we live, our individual psychologies, and our social structures," (Ledger 2000). Though conceived of before the emergence of mass media as we know it today, French philosopher Louis Althusser, encompassed his understanding of ideology, saying ideology is "a covert force; a state in which its existence is maintained by institutions, religion, education, and mass media," (Ledger 2000).

The idea of how media and ideology interact is less ambiguous. The transmission, and consequent promotion, of a certain system of beliefs through various media boasts lasting effects on our society and on us as individuals, subconsciously altering our behaviours and beliefs. The manufacture of consent theory outlined by Chomsky and Herman (1988), is also relevant to this study. Chomsky and Herman note that:

"There are two different conceptions of democracy. One conception of democracy has it that a democratic society is one in which the public has the means to participate in some meaningful way in the management of their own affairs and the means of information are open and free. An alternative conception of democracy is that the public must be barred from managing their own affairs and the means of information must be kept narrowly and rigidly controlled. That may sound like an odd conception of democracy, but it's important to understand that it is the prevailing conception.(..), (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

Walter Lippman, sees Chomsky's idea as a "revolution in the art of democracy," which could be used to "manufacture consent," that is, to bring about agreement on part of the public to things that they did not want by the new techniques of propaganda. Manufacturing Consent has multiple ramifications. It shreds preconceived notions about the role of the media. By taking a look at the power of media through the Chomsky lens, we can note many discrepancies. How the media works and how news actually becomes news were carefully examined by Chomsky and his co-author, Edward S. Herman in their book, Manufacturing Consent (1988).

The "propaganda model" framework was put forward to help analyzing and understanding how the media work and why they perform the way they do. The propaganda model is a distinct contrast to mainstream assumptions about the media. One important thing to remember about the media is that they are deeply embedded in our market system. They are profit seeking businesses that are owned by and serve the interests of elites. The media are funded by advertisers that want their advertisements to appear in a consumer friendly environment. The media also rely heavily on a very small base of sources for their news content. So, in this model, it is important to understand that the government, large corporate businesses and the media all have a common purpose and that the media is the channel that gets out the intended message to a mass audience of consumers. Recognising that the media are joined by message solidarity makes it possible to see that there is a common theme throughout media behaviour that indicates that all media outlets run on the same platform. In order to explain that platform, a closer look at the propaganda model is in order. Information must pass through five interlinked "filters", and in doing so help shape media content. The propaganda model is about media behaviour and performance, not media effects. The filters work independently through individuals and independent action, but media content does get passed through these filters as a final test. The propaganda model can be described as a decentralized and non-conspiratorial market system of control and the processing of information for its final layout. The Manufacture of Consent theory supplies researchers with critical tools necessary to analyze contemporary media. A careful study of the medias' use of the filters reveals surprising results. While individual reporters, editors and advertisers continue to unwittingly contribute to the manufacture of consent, it is important for individuals who consume media to do so critically.

1.4.4 Normative theories

Models conceptualised by McNair (1995), McQuail (1996) and Norris (2000) on the way the media ought to work and what their role in democracy is will be described in this section. The basic assertion is that media are very much the product of the context in which they work.

Brian McNair (1995:21), lists some main function that the media ideally should fulfil in representative democracy. These are to “inform” citizens about what is happening in society, “educate” people by interpreting the meaning and significance of the above information and provide a forum for “public political discourse”. One important aspect of this is to allow for the expression of dissent. A consensus arrived at without access for the people to views differing from those of the government would be an invalid consensus according to this model. The next function of the media in this framework is to expose abuses by and within government, giving “publicity to governmental and political institutions.” This function is often referred to as the ‘watchdog function’ of the media, a term McNair endorses. The last main function of the media in this outline is providing an outlet for advocacy. “Parties, (..) require an outlet for articulation of their policies and programmes to a mass audience, and thus the media must be open to them,” (McNair, 1995:22). McNair (1995) allows for media outlets to take party-political sides at sensitive times, such as election time. In such cases McNair (1995:22) asserts that the media legitimately assumes a persuasion function, as an “outlet for advocacy”.

Parties, (..) require an outlet for articulation of their policies and programmes to a mass audience, and thus the media must be open to them. Furthermore, some media, mainly in the print sector, will actively endorse one or other of the parties at sensitive times such as elections. In this latter sense, the media’s advocacy function may also be viewed as one of persuasion,” (McNair, 1995:22).

Some theorists have taken their thinking on the role of the media a step further, away from the meta-level and tried to design ways of assessing media performance. McQuail (1996), has based his model on the premise that no matter which of the four major media theories authoritarianism, libertarianism, egalitarianism and development is chosen to describe the responsibility of the media in society, the media still “tends to occupy a contested terrain of public space,” (McQuail, 1996: 68) and there is “still potential conflict between the media and

those who exercise political or economic power,” (McQuail, 1996: 68). Also, the frameworks offered in the debate on normative standards for the media have been derived from a simple and outdated notion of 'the press', in general. According to this notion of the press it provides (mainly political) news and information. However, over and beyond these two 'products', there is a great internal diversity of mass media types and services that have evolved with changing technology and times. As one can see, McQuail (1996), wants his framework to be applicable to virtually all media forms.

There is, for instance, little of relevance in any of the variants of theory which might realistically be applied to the cinema, or the music industry, or the video market, or even a good deal of sport, fiction and entertainment on television, thus to much of what the media are doing most of the time. It is hardly plausible that these phenomena should lie entirely outside the scope of social-normative thinking, (McQuail, 1996: 67).

McQuail (1996: 67), attacks this alleged “generality”, and by implication untestability, of traditional ways to form an opinion on media performance through his framework. His starting point is three fundamental principles prerequisite in one form or another to sustaining democracy. He then operationalises these principles into benefits deriving from upholding these principles, or what he terms “communication values,” (McQuail, 1996: 72). These more specific standards for the media to uphold are intended to make assessment of media performance of the general principles easier.

Another of McQuail's (1996) underlying assumptions when putting together his normative framework is that the media needs to serve the 'public interest'. One conception of public interest is that the media need to “carry out essential tasks for the wider benefit of society, especially in social and political life,” (McQuail, 1996: 68). McQuail (1996), concedes that it is near impossible in more specific terms to agree on what is in 'the public interest' and confines himself to citing a definition from public planning: “something is in the public interest if it serves the ends of the whole society rather than the ends of some sectors of the society,” (Banfield, 1955 in McQuail, 1996: 69). He also concedes that the performance principles he has designed on the basis of the above definition of the public interest may be limited in applicability to societies in politically pluralistic, predominantly capitalist countries with “divergent media arrangements in force” (1996:69), where the principles originated.

McQuail (1996:70), discusses his performance principles on the basis that the discussion of the principles at stake “largely coincides with the core values of modern, western society.”

McQuail’s (1996) three fundamental starting principles are: freedom, justice/equality and order/solidarity. Arguably, we can see three of the four basic media theories mentioned above reflected here: libertarianism in freedom, egalitarianism in justice/equality and order/solidarity in the developmental theory. But, as McQuail (1996) concedes, the three meta-level principles often come into conflict with each other, and an appeal to one is often used to counter an appeal to another. McQuail (1996:72), nonetheless proceeds to lay out more detailed, and in his view more testable, performance principals for the media. In order for the citizenry to achieve freedom in terms of mass media, the media must have an independent status, and be capable of criticising those who wield economic and political power in society. The media must source their material from a diversity of sources, and the citizens must have access to different media channels, both for diversity of information and views to filter through to them, and in order to express their own views and opinions. From an independent status for the media outlets flow reliability of the material presented in the eyes of the audience, originality in the media material presented and a greater likelihood of a critical stance towards those in power in society. From the performance principle, access to media channels flows a choice for the citizenry to act as more than members of an audience. And from diversity of supply, flows evolution and change in the media sector and possibly in society at large.

The fundamental principle of equality is broken down into the performance principles of access, diversity and objectivity. From the principle of access, flows the desire for media open to equal access by the public. Equal access in this sense means proportional access for the different groups in society. From the principle of diversity flows a wide reach of the media, and the potential for change in the sector. From objectivity as a principle, flows neutrality, fairness and truth, (McQuail, 1996:75). The term ‘order’ is used in this framework in a “rather elastic way, to apply to symbolic (cultural) orders such as religion, art, customs, etc. as well as to forms of social order (community, society, established structures of relations),” (McQuail, 1996: 75-76). McQuail (1996: 77), says of the term ‘solidarity’:

“Some groups have no attachment in the social order beyond their own immediate context and experience. A viable normative expectation of the mass media is that they

will sympathetically recognise such a perspective, providing some access and symbolic support for the relevant groups. "

Hence, the public communication value of order is split into order in the social domain and order in the cultural domain. McQuail (1996), also distinguishes between order from the perspective of those in power, and order from the perspective of citizens at large. From order in the social domain flow two aspects; solidarity (from the perspective of citizens) and control (from the perspective of the elite). From the notion of order in the cultural domain flow authenticity and hierarchy. The notion of hierarchy here is between dominant and alternative cultural practices within the society served by the media. Authenticity is achieved to the extent that media output has its roots in the society in question. McQuail (1996: 77), defines culture in his essay as "any set of symbols organised by way of language or in some other meaningful patterning."

Norris (2000), presents a framework that seems even better suited as the basis for a normative evaluation of the performance of the press in covering an electoral contest than is the McQuail (1996) framework because she confines herself to formulating criteria to evaluate the media's handling of political communication. Thus her framework is more context specific, in line with McQuail's (1996) own argument that a detailed set of benchmarks provide a set of tools that are more easily applicable to assessing performance than a more generally applicable set. Neither Norris (2000) nor McQuail (1996) adopt a cynical view in line with 'media malaise theory'. Norris (2000:4), defines the media malaise theory as: "Accounts claiming that common practices in political communications by the news media and by party campaigns hinder 'civic engagement', meaning citizens learning about public affairs, trust in government, and political activism." The literature on media malaise originates mainly in the United States, but European authors also contribute extensively. Norris (2000:4), asserts that those who argue media malaise is rife make "two important assumptions, that media have an important impact on civic engagement, and that this impact is in a negative direction. "

The structural perspective argues that structural commercial pressures force news media to move 'down market' to survive in a fragmented multi-channel environment. Accounts that cite cultural causes for media malaise blame the proliferation of adversarial journalism in the US after Watergate and Vietnam. Finally, the growth of political marketing in campaigns, with professional spin doctors, consultants and pollsters seen to make important decisions

provide another perspective from which to criticise the media. A term related to that of media malaise is 'video malaise'. Michael Robinson first coined the phrase, video malaise. In this view, political disaffection is promoted by exposure to the high negativism, conflictual frames and anti institutional themes in television news, (Norris, 2000: 6). Connected to video malaise is the notion of 'the inadvertent audience' created by Kurt and Gladys Lang, (Norris, 2000:5). These are audience members who just happen to watch TV when the news comes on. An inadvertent audience exposed to the conflictual frame of the news may be especially prone to develop cynicism towards politics and society in general according to this theory.

The 1990's brought a distinct new popular cynicism about political leaders and government institutions, (Norris, 2000:6). This perspective sees entertainment as the new predominant value in television news, with serious political coverage being repackaged into show business. In addition, pack journalism contributes towards reducing diversity of stories and views available. Norris' (2000), intention is partly to counter these negative perceptions of the media effects on civic engagement.

(...) this book presents extensive evidence from a battery of surveys in Europe and the United States, as well as experiments in Britain, that cast strong doubts upon these claims. Instead, this book indicates that, contrary to the media malaise hypothesis, the use of the news media is positively associated with a wide range of indicators of political knowledge, trust and mobilisation, (Norris, 2000:17).

Norris goes on to outline two possible reasons for a positive link between civic engagement and attention to news media: selection effects and media effects. The underlying assumption for listing selection effects is that prior attitudes direct a person's use of mass media. The direction of causation is in other words one way, and as a result, those who are pre-disposed to take an interest in current affairs are the ones paying attention to media. They learn effectively from the exposure. This view is consistent with 'uses and gratifications literature,' (Norris, 2000: 44). The media effects theory turns the above assumption around. In this view, the process of reading about public affairs can be expected to increase our interest in and knowledge about government and politics, thereby facilitating political participation.

Before outlining her framework for evaluating press performance of their normative role in representative democracy, Norris (2000:23) outlines the main three points definitive of

representative democracy as she sees it. First, there must be pluralistic competition among parties and individuals for all positions of government power for representative democracy to function. Participation by citizens in the selection of parties and representatives through free, fair and periodic elections is also necessary. Finally, civil and political liberties, to speak, publish, assemble and organise must be in place. These liberties are essential to ensuring effective competition and participation. In addition to these criteria constitutive of representative democracy, Norris' (2000) framework for evaluating media performance as a facilitator of representative democracy is based on the assumption that what citizens need to cast informed votes at elections is "practical knowledge about the probable consequences of their political actions," (Norris, 2000: 30). The main way the media would provide this knowledge is to provide a civic forum in the wider public sphere. Norris (2000: 25), identifies a public sphere as "a meeting place or debating forum mediating between citizens and the state, facilitating informed deliberation about the major issues of the day." This definition builds on Habermas' original perspective on the term.

"By the public sphere we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed... Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion- that is, within the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions," (Pusey, 1978: 89, in McNair, 1995: 19).

These definitions imply that information goes both ways, to the electorate about the state of issues in society and intentions of their representatives, and to the representatives about the needs of the citizens as well as their opinions on issues of the day.

Norris (2000:24), takes the three dimensions of representative democracy outlined above and assigns the media three consequential overarching roles: Civic Forum, Mobilising Agent and Watchdog. The links to the four basic media theories at the beginning of this exposition are apparent and overlapping. Both the libertarian and egalitarian perspectives may be said to emphasise the creation of a civic forum as a function of the media. In Norris' (2000) sense the function of mobilising agent is probably easiest to recognise in the egalitarian perspective. Proponents of the developmental perspective would no doubt claim to serve the purpose of mobilising citizens as well, but from a different perspective, as they see nation building as paramount, not the exercise of political rights. The watchdog function is recognisable in the

libertarian perspective, as well as that of egalitarianism.

Norris (2000), goes on to outline benchmark performance indices by which media may be measured on their fulfilment of the outlined main functions. The media's performance as a civic forum may be measured by the availability and balance of news in terms of: Stopwatch balance, directional balance and agenda balance. Stopwatch balance is a term used to describe content in the audio visual media, but can also be applied to the press. This balance criterion dictates that all perspectives and views represented on the political stage, in practice by political parties, must get an equal amount of coverage. In this dissertation I have chosen the term 'numerical' balance, because my topic is the press, but these terms are interchangeable. Directional balance as a criterion dictates that all political parties must receive an equal measure of positive and negative coverage, while for agenda balance to be present, the coverage afforded to the different views and perspectives must be equally prominent in the media content.

Norris (2000), suggests assessing the media's performance in the role as mobilising agents in terms of: Practical knowledge, political interest and civic activism communicated in the media content and held among citizens. Finally, Norris suggests measuring the performance of the media in their watchdog function gauging their independence and effectiveness in terms of exposing abuses of power, public scandals and government failures. In the context of this dissertation, where the topic is election coverage, this function is partly about exposing unfulfilled election promises from earlier campaigns, shortfalls in government service delivery and forms of misleading and deceptive communications and claims originating in political parties.

There is a large degree of overlap between the normative ideals for the role of the media in democratic societies suggested by McNair (1995), McQuail (1996) and Norris (2000). Not losing sight of the limited citizen model described earlier, the apparent starting point of these perspectives, is imperative when drawing these theories together to construct a framework of benchmarks that can be used when evaluating press performance of their role in democracy in specific general elections, as occurred in this study.

Oltedal's (2001), view of the press as opponent, helper, entertainer and intruder in relation to its sources must also be borne in mind, as these concepts relate to the fundamental functions

of the media in representative democracy, upon which there is extensive agreement between McNair (1995), McQuail (1996) and Norris (2000). They all emphasise informing citizens, educating them as to the significance of the events of which they have been informed while maintaining a balanced coverage, and providing a forum for exchange of information and views between those governing and the governed. McNair (1995), allows for the prospect of print publications supporting particular parties at election time, and assigns them an “advocacy” (1995: 21) function in this context. Norris (2000) and McQuail (1996) seem more restrictive in this sense.

Norris’ (2000), framework of benchmarks measuring media performance of a defined set of functions within representative democracy was the basis for the framework constructed for this study. The main reason for this is that she confines herself to formulating criteria to evaluate the media’s handling of political communication, while McNair(1995) does not descend from the meta-level and does not design specific performance criteria useful in a concrete case study. McQuail (1996), constructs a set of benchmarks, but may be seen to leave the conflict between the aim of general applicability of the framework to all kinds of media content and the aim of specificity in the results attainable unresolved. The framework seems well suited for guarding against structural bias at the macro level, bias warned of by Chomsky and Herman (1988) as discussed above, and the ‘public interest’ that the media purport to be serving being equated with the interests of society’s elite. Chomsky and Herman’s (1988) perspective merely provides context for this study, which aims at examining the content of press coverage of a particular election, or what we may term political communication specifically, within the representative democracy system of government.

Even within the domain of political communication there are variations between contexts that mandate differences in applications of a coherent framework from case to case. In the context of an electoral contest, which is the subject of this study, emphasis is traditionally placed on the criterion of balance in the coverage. The reason for this is the claim to truth in the coverage made by the media through authoritative reporting over time, and the established fact that people tend to have little first-hand contact with actors in an electoral contest and rely on the media to convey different views and information on developments in the electoral domain second hand. A campaign is immediately followed by an election result which dictates the political landscape for the next election period, and high-temperature criticism of the media in general, or entirely confined to specific articles or TV program segments, has

been a trend both in South Africa and internationally. Criticism also almost uniformly relates to balance, (Retief 2002). A cross-sector evaluation of press coverage needs to try to amalgamate the traditional focus on balance with an emphasis on other trends in the coverage. To this end, some criteria that are not explicitly mentioned in Norris' (2000) framework are used here, but the absolute majority of criteria used as basis for this evaluation conform to Norris' (2000) model. This exposition of the elements of Norris' (2000) framework that have been adopted for this study will be structured around Norris' three overarching functions for the media in representative democracy: Acting as a Watchdog, a Mobilising agent and provision of a Civic Forum. The additions to Norris' (2000) framework made for this study will then be discussed.

McNair (1995:21), provides a concise explanation of the function of the media termed 'watchdog' in Norris' framework (2000:24). Exposing abuses by and within government is what many expect of the media, and if they fail here they may be perceived to have failed their role, independently of what they do in terms of other functions. In the electoral context, the visible 'prize' at the end of the contest is the offices of government. For this reason, not only the governing party, but also the opposition, needs to be subjected to a critical light in the election coverage.

Related to the watchdog-function is the provision of a balanced coverage. Norris (2000:24), outlines three ways in which the coverage should be balanced. In the context of an electoral contest, agenda balance is achieved when equal emphasis is placed on the different parties and their views by the media. Directional balance is achieved when there is equal bias in the coverage for or against the various parties or, theoretically, the coverage is without bias. The term 'stop-watch balance' is used by Norris (2000) to describe equilibrium in the amount of coverage afforded to the different actors in the political communication system, or in the case of elections, it applies to equilibrium in the amount of coverage afforded to the different parties contesting the elections.

Norris (2000), sees the media as responsible for giving voters information and educating voters to enable them to make informed electoral decisions. Practical information differs from voter education in its relevance to the circumstances of the specific media consumer. Practical information would for instance reveal how a vote in each political direction would affect the personal economy of members of groups in society, but also for example who might be in

favour of or oppose a development which might affect property values for individual families in an area. Voter education relates to the electoral contest, revealing new developments in the campaign, and gives views as to the significance of these developments, and practically equips citizens to take part in the elections as voters. Related to the voter education and practical information functions is the obligation of the media to promote civic activism, encouraging people to put the knowledge they have acquired to work. The function of mobilising agent is adopted in this study with the view that encouragement of civic activism needs to be explicit in the coverage in order to be recognised as such.

An essential complement to encouragement of activism is providing the people with a forum in which to express their opinions and exercise their persuasive abilities. Currently, the media accommodate this function mainly by audience participation in regular content, specifically demarcated as such, or dedicated content, such as letters to the editor in the press and talk-back programmes in radio. In this study, it was deemed important to look at the balance of the audience participation allowed in the media outlets in question, but also to examine the terminology used by audience representatives. If the editorial content and the audience-participation content employ very different language, this may signal a problem in terms of the communication of views from the people in authority to the people governed and vice versa, which is a main element in all the functions listed in this framework.

In addition to these criteria proposed by Norris (2000), this study also examines the extent to which the election coverage is constituted by a few overarching narratives. These narratives run through the coverage and in many ways dictate the parameters of the coverage. The content that falls outside these narratives becomes an anomaly. As mentioned above, Grosseberg et. al (1998:70-73), show how the media tend to go for the familiar and predictable in their coverage, treating some areas in the political landscape different to others. In line with Herman and Chomsky's (1988) manufacture of consent theory discussed above, the reason why anomalies are marginalised in the main stream media coverage is that they are at the fringes of the 'manufactured consent' that holds the current order together. Another view on the use of narratives is that they impose order on a field that is by its very nature filled with conflicting views and consequently likely complicated. This may appear more innocuous, but any order imposed is almost inevitably restrictive, and a restrictive approach to the topics raised in the coverage would not bode well for the fulfilment of the functions of the press above.

Another indicator to the focus of the election coverage is the factors that lead to a news story being judged as worthy of publication, or news values. Randall (2000), argues that the publication or otherwise of all news items is motivated by one or more factors, and that the journalist needs to be mindful not only of how they can shape a story in order to ensure publication, but also that the choices made in this regard have consequences for the view the media consumer has, of the content offered. If there is a convergence between the tendency to stick to major narratives and the news values indicating an emphasis on familiarity, the two factors may be said to corroborate the view that the diversity offered in the media content is adversely affected. In an added category to Norris' (2000) framework, this study therefore attempts to examine likely news values behind the publication of stories.

Across electoral systems, from the proportional representation system, to first-past-the-post single seat electoral system, there is a widespread perception that the focus of media coverage of the elections has tended to concentrate more and more on the strategic aspects of the electoral contest. Any decision by actors in the electoral process is discussed for its real or perceived strategic significance in this way of framing media content. Elections are often equated to horse races, personalities involved in the electoral contest emphasised along with conflicts within and between parties and topics in the campaign that become fashionable to cover, but where the substance of the topic may not merit the amount of coverage afforded. Which topics become fashionable in the news is closely related to pack journalism. All these ways of placing emphasis in stories may be said to indicate strategic framing. Norris (2000), contends that even where strategic framing dominates political coverage, exposure to news coverage of politics is better than no exposure. However, it is easy to agree with Norris (2000) that issue based framing of media content, where the substance of the issues in the election campaign is the focus, rather than the strategic competition, is preferable to strategic framing. In this study a category has been added specifically to test the presence of strategic framing.

1.5. Conclusion

It is apparent from the three preceding subsections which are the introduction, the context and the conceptual framework; that the role of media in any society should be taken seriously. The reasons for this vary from the simplistic plebsitarian demos to the concern about manufactured consent. When one looks at the context of South African politics, the evolution of the media emerging from the literature is from a mouthpiece of the government to the more fitting egalitarian ethos. The fulfilment of the role of the media in democracy should be evaluated at different levels, and frameworks have been displayed that move towards this.

Chapter 2 Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study from the outset was to determine how well the content of the election coverage by a diverse selection of South African press publications would perform when examined using a coherent set of benchmark indicators to the role of the press in representative democracy. Therefore, content analysis seemed appropriate as the primary research method of the study. The diversity of the coverage, not only in terms of voices presented, but in terms of topics discussed also seemed important. If the media will only cover a certain range of topics, the political parties have to conform to that, and make those topics the centre of their campaign to get coverage, or they have to push the agenda of the media their way, through initiatives, political marketing in one form or another, un-mediated voter mobilisation, to name but a few avenues of action. Narrative analysis seemed the best way of establishing whether there was such a set of dominating narratives in the coverage. Finally, these research methods are triangulated by interviews with press practitioners, themselves prolific contributors to the coverage that is the subject of this study. Given the limited number of interviews feasible, and the in-depth nature of the discussions, semi-structured interviews were chosen as questioning form.

This study was for a master's degree, and was undertaken by a single researcher. This had two major implications for the study. One was the limited resources available in terms of time, and naturally, financially. The practical implication of these constraints was that it was deemed necessary to limit the study to a period immediately preceding the election, when the attention surrounding the electoral contest was at its most intense, and by extension, the sample of stories was likely to be greatest in the limited number of copies that could be studied. The time constraint also meant that research had to be confined to languages spoken by the researcher. Therefore English language press was chosen for the study.

2.2 Data Collection: Sampling for the Content Analysis

The subject of this content analysis was the coverage provided by a number of press publications in the lead-up to Election 2004 and during the election itself. Because of the limited time available to conduct the analysis, the sample period was put at the month of March 2004, and April 2004 up to the first issue of the respective publications after Election

Day. The study of all the copies provided by the newspaper outlets over the most intense period of the campaign provides a high reliability to the study, (Babbie& Mouton, 2001: 396), (Durrheim, 1999: 45) but having a limited number of press titles in the sample may put a question mark around the validity of inferences covering the whole press sector in South Africa (Babbie& Mouton, 2001: 397). The sampling does, however, include a number of different publications, from outlets of a major media corporation, via foreign owned publications, to a newspaper independently owned in KwaZulu-Natal. The readerships of these publications also vary, from an affluent, well educated readership, to more catch-all publications.

The sample consisted of these newspapers: The Mercury, The Independent on Saturday and the Independent on Sunday, The Witness, This Day and The Mail & Guardian. The Mail & Guardian is published weekly, the others are dailies. The Mercury and the Independent on Saturday are published from Durban, The Witness from Pietermaritzburg, while This Day, The Mail & Guardian and the Sunday Independent are published out of Johannesburg. The papers out of KwaZulu-Natal have their target audiences within the province, while the Johannesburg-based ones are aimed at national audiences. In the sample there are three dailies and three weeklies, allowing exploration of the significance of differing publication intervals to the content of the publication. The main print publication categories of the Independent Newspaper Group, daily and weekend newspapers are included, allowing exploration of internal differences. The copies of the Mail & Guardian contained in the sample were used for a pilot study because of their limited number.

2.3 Data Analysis: Content Analysis and Narrative Analysis

Before getting into how Norris' (2000) framework has been adopted for this study, a general discussion on the research methods of content analysis and narrative analysis seems appropriate. Content analysis has a lot of strengths as a research method. Usually, data for content analysis can be obtained cheaply and historical data can be obtained long after they were employed for their original purpose. Alternatively, the data can be accessed shortly after creation. Printed data are constant, and can be analysed over time. Content analysis is a versatile method for social study. Any manifest communication can be studied, of which newspaper copy is a good example. Content analysis may be used to study content that has already been created and employed for its original use, or retrieved data (Babbie and

Mounton, 2001: 378), among other data forms. As a consequence content analysis is unobtrusive. Research is unobtrusive when creation of the communicated material is not affected by the study. Content analysis gives answers to the question of what was communicated, and together with analysis of the results may give an indication to the question of why the content took the form that was presented, (Kenski, 1996: 68-70). Quantitative content analysis allows for the provision of concise displays of the findings. The research method of content analysis provides high validity when employed as in this study, because the emphasis of the study is the communication analysed itself, rather than the effects of the content on the receivers of the communication, or the values of the people behind the communicated material to name but two latent factors in the content.

Narrative analysis is also used in this project, through an adoption of a methodology suggested by Roe (1994). Narrative analysis focuses on the ways in which people make and use 'stories' to interpret the world. Importantly, it does not "treat narratives as stories that transmit a set of facts about the world, and is not primarily interested in whether stories are 'true' or not. In this regard (narrative analysis) is closer to social constructionism than the positivist approach."¹² This means that narrative analysis views narratives as social products that are produced by people in the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations. Narratives thereby become interpretive devices through which people represent themselves and their realities to themselves and to others.

This constructionist approach can be recognised in Roe's (1994) methodology for narrative analysis, which aims at analysing the merits of alternative courses of action, for instance by policy makers, by searching for dominant and alternative narratives in texts. A narrative, or perspective on an issue, need not be dominant or alternative because of merit, in fact a dominant narrative may gain such prestige that a proper analysis of its merits becomes difficult to execute. However, narratives are useful for making sense of complex matters, and classifying the views on the issue represents a useful way of imposing order on the different communications presented, in turn making any decision that have to be made in light of the available information easier.

¹² <http://staff.bath.ac.uk/pssc/QM-Nar-lec.htm>, Chris Griffin, accessed 14.10.2004

The main research method employed in this study is quantitative content analysis. In the context of this project, taking a quantitative focus means recognising only what Babbie & Mouton (2001: 388) call “manifest content” to the largest extent possible. This content is explicitly written in the sample texts, ‘black on white’. However examining latent content (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 388) also seems necessary to provide an added perspective. The content analysis performed as part of this project takes as its starting point a coherent set of benchmarks for media performance evaluation developed by political communication expert Pippa Norris (2000) to evaluate how well the media perform a set of normative functions that may be said to constitute their role within representative democracy, discussed above.

2.4 Research design

In designing this study on the particular case of Election 2004 decisions on how to adapt Norris’ suggested performance measurements into coding categories for content analysis have been necessary, but the intention throughout has been to keep the changes to a minimum. Norris’ (2000) broader framework is outlined above. Therefore this exposition is restricted to aspects converted into content analysis categories in this project. The role of the press as a civic forum obliges these publications to provide a multitude of contrasting views to potential electors, and allow sectors of society an avenue to communicate their preferences back to those in public office. This content analysis gives an indication as to the internal diversity of views presented by the press, meaning the diversity of views provided within the single publication under scrutiny. External diversity, the diversity of views presented by the press as a whole can also be inferred by aggregating the results from the different publications.

As one of the performance criteria in the role of provider of a civic forum, Norris (2000) uses the term “stopwatch balance” (Norris, 2000:24). This term is most applicable for television or radio. In the context of this project, the equivalent term is numerical balance. Numerical balance indicates what parties the press has been talking about the most and the least through the number of mentions of the names of the respective parties in the sample articles and headlines. Because articles with direct mentions of party names overwhelmingly proved to be relevant to the electoral contest as opposed to the general workings of government, name mentions in the text of the articles were used as the main criterion distinguishing articles relevant to the electoral contest between parties from political articles in general. In addition,

allowance was made for articles free of party name mentions but obviously relevant to the technical execution of the elections. So as not to end up with an overwhelming number of party name mentions, and in order to get results focused on the differences between the major parties and the difference between big and small parties in this context, only the four parties with the most mentions in a copy of a sample publication were counted in the aggregate results. In cases where parties had an equal number of mentions with any of the four most mentioned parties, all parties sharing the equal number of name mentions were counted. This restriction only applied to the party name mentions in the text of articles, and not to those in headlines, because the party name mentions in the headlines were deemed likely to be relatively limited in number.

The number of party name-mentions in the headlines also serves as an indicator of agenda balance. Agenda balance indicates where the newspaper places the main emphasis in its coverage, what main elements of the news agenda they highlight. Agenda setting by the media may impact the public opinion on which issues are the most important in the country at any given time. Crime is a much cited example of an issue that gains or loses public recognition of urgency with fluctuating media coverage, (Kenski, 1996: 70). Because most readers merely skim most of the articles, only reading selected ones in detail, a neutral agenda is achieved when all contesting parties are exposed to the readers as they skim through the paper, before getting into the detail of the article texts themselves. Another indicator of agenda balance is pictures of personalities connected to parties contesting the election on the front page of the publication. This is another category in this content analysis. No further analysis of the pictures themselves was conducted, beyond recording their number.

Norris' (2000) category of directional balance was adopted as a category in this content analysis. This category is used as an indicator of possible negative or positive bias towards respective parties. This aspect is also examined in the headlines and in the text of the articles separately. In the text, the criterion used was whether the right of reply had been observed and how. If an allegation is made and occupies most of the space in the article before a reply is allowed, the article remains negative towards the target of the allegations. An established aim in journalism ethics of today is to feature the rebuttal as prominently as the allegation, not bowing to the convenience of the 'strategic ritual' of objectivity. One example of this is carrying a long list of allegations and then merely noting that comment has been sought, but unsuccessfully. Even if that is so, it is the task of the journalist to refer to previous comments

by the subject of the allegations, or point out weak points in the allegations. Therefore, only when an evident effort is made to feature the rebuttal as prominently as the allegation, point for point, is the article neutral in this framework. In the headlines the indicators of bias were terms that are obviously loaded in one direction or other. This bias may be in terms of the perceived fortunes of the respective parties in the electoral race, or it may come to light in the form of quotes (negative or positive towards an electoral contestant) used as headline. Even if attribution of the quote occurs further down the article, enabling the journalist to say it belongs to the source, not themselves, the emphasis placed on the quote by placing it as the headline indicates the direction the attention of the reader is intended to go. Allowance was made for the reality that articles or headlines can be negative or positive towards a combination of more than one party and be critical of some while praising others. Because the main headline of the story, different headlines for the same story on the front page and different headlines for its continuation on another page are counted as separate headlines, the total number of headlines examined here may be larger than the number of relevant articles.

The fulfilment by the press of their normative function in Norris' (2000) framework of spreading practical knowledge is measured in two categories in this project. The first category looks at direct benefits signalled for different groups in the electorate, and by extension for the individual reader, by voting for particular parties. This category is here called 'what's-in-it-for-me' (whim). The other category indicating practical knowledge dissemination looks for explanations of intended or current public policy, and how different parties would approach different policy areas if elected to office. This indicator looks at projected consequences of voting one way or the other on a macro level, not necessarily explicitly 'brought home' to consequences for the individual voter themselves.

Practical knowledge is also related to the next categories studied. Norris assigns the media a responsibility for educating the electorate about how to vote and how the elections are arranged technically. This is captured in the category 'technical voter education' in this scheme. Educational information about the elections that is less technical, such as projections for incidents of violence on election day, and the provisions made to guard against it, objections being launched by one party against another for stealing election posters; in short information that has more of a current edge to it, is measured in the category termed 'newsy educational' information. Presenting educational stories and practical information in an accessible way encourages learning about politics and public affairs and allow the electorate

to cast “informed” (Norris, 2000:30) ballots. The next step is for the press to attempt encouraging public participation.

Given that the context of this study is an electoral contest, articles explicitly encouraging people to vote are recognised under the ‘civic activism’ category of this scheme. This category also encompasses articles that report on upcoming debates, public meetings or rallies ahead of time, giving enough detail that people can attend if they wish and give a fair idea of what will be happening. Given that only news coverage is examined, the smaller notices that routinely appear in newspapers alerting readers to events in the community do not count towards the performance of the press of this function. Because they appear routinely, they indicate no emphasis by the publication that participation from the public is particularly important and few if any ‘interest arousing’ details appear.

The function of the press as ‘watchdog’, exposing failures in government or opposition affairs, is next. Because the context of this study is an electoral contest, the application of the term ‘watchdog’ has been narrowed from Norris’ (2000) model. In this study an article qualifies as pursuing the ‘watchdog’- function if it exposes possible misconduct or mishandling of affairs by ANC or opposition officials, exposes broken promises from earlier appearances by respective officials, or criticises ANC or opposition policies or proposals. To evaluate the articles for this category, the stated source of the article has also been examined. If the article in question is an article by the news agency SAPA (South African Press Association) it has not been counted towards the ‘watchdog’ function because this is primarily an exercise to evaluate the performance of the press of its functions through their in-house editorial staff, and their decisions apparent in the content.

One way of identifying where the editorial staff place emphasis in their election coverage is to look at the framing of political stories, our next category. The design for this category was influenced by Kenski (1996: 70-81). Put simply, strategically framed stories look at the reported events and decisions as if they were staged or made purely to further a party’s position in the electoral contest. A popular metaphor describing this framing is that of the ‘horse race’ coverage of stories, focusing on ‘jockeying for positions’, ‘front runners’, personalities of the politicians, conflicts and strategic developments in the electoral contest. Strategic framing portrays any decisions taken by politicians in the light of how they are likely to affect the electoral fortunes of the parties they represent, rather than on the merits of

the action to the constituents affected. Issue-focused stories on the other hand focus on the substance of proposed policies, projected consequences of such proposals and relevant positions of political parties as well as the consequences of supporting or not supporting the policies for the voters. Obviously, issue-based framing or stories is preferable to strategic framing in most cases. But, it is important to note the possible connection to the role of the media as mobilisers of political interest. Possibly, this role would be harder to fulfil without strategic framing.

Newsvalues are factors that make stories potentially interesting enough to the public to become newsworthy. Newsworthy stories are stories deemed worthy of reporting as news by the publication that carries them. Randall (2000) introduces his framework of news values by defining news very succinctly: "News then is the fresh, unpublished, unusual and generally interesting," (Randall, 2000:23). The problem is, of course, establishing what is generally interesting. There will always be a subjective element to this, and the different application of the term news is what makes the news values applicable to this study. The news value that allowed the publication of a particular story is most often very apparent when examining the manifest content of the story, because the emphasis in the story tends to be dictated by the news value that is its foundation. Since news values 'dictate' emphasis, they gain interest in our context of electoral coverage. The press would no doubt like to think that they subordinate prominent personalities involved in the electoral contest in their coverage to the substance of the issues that differentiate the parties from each other. That is among the assumptions examined in this category. The news values codified here are an adoption of guidelines presented by Randall (2000: 23-28). The next paragraph will give a brief exposition of the news values that were converted to codes used for content analysis.

The first news value should be significance. An event or the subject of a story should reflect a development that will have a high impact on the greater society, and by extension on the reader. Examples here may include new tax regulations, corruption revelations and so forth. The corresponding news value would be proximity, which indicates that the subject of a story is close to home for the reader. This could either be physically close, such as crime in a neighbourhood, or close in other senses, for example developments in the treatment of diseases that a reader may have. The antonym of significance in this framework is news fashion. The stories motivated by this factor are about subjects that suddenly become the flavour of the month, fashionable for a time. Often these stories are part of dominant

narratives, whose truth value may not be tested. An example is when a new crime is 'discovered', such as air rage. News fashion often develops because of another news value, development. A development in a story may make it worthy of further editorial coverage if there is an additional twist or angle, or if the previously published story has had an effect. One example may be a corruption story leading to an investigation, resignations of top players, etc. The curious is also interesting to the media, here categorised under the news value curiosity. The curious is the unexpected, the funny, the strange, the abnormal. One example is old laws 'nobody' realised were still valid, but that seem overzealous or downright comic today. Given the temporal nature of an election campaign, timeliness may well be a frequently appearing news value. News has to be fresh, but the elapsed time since the occurrence of an event is not the only factor determining the timeliness of the publication of a story. If the public are conscious of the subject of a story, but the event, the development or the concrete essence of the story is not yet public knowledge the story may be timely. The prominence of the personalities discussed in the stories, may also generate interest for the story and this news value is here called prominence. A story that can lay claim to a combination of these values is even more likely to be published. However, in this study, a predominant news value has been sought for each story, and combinations have only been listed where no predominant ones could be determined.

Another important characteristic of the content in press publications is the degree to which on-going, or flowing, narratives are evident in the coverage. This may be an indicator to the internal diversity of the coverage provided by the respective publication. This project uses the term narrative in the sense of topics dominating the coverage, in an adaptation of Roe's model (1994). If the bulk of the coverage discusses a few topics in one form or the other that are within major themes that are apparent in the coverage over time, these themes become restrictive and may contribute to oversimplification of the coverage in question. Any themes that appear ubiquitous throughout the election coverage also indicate where the focus of the coverage is placed by the press. This approach to narrative analysis helps to generate an overall picture of the complex debate with many actors that is press election coverage, and the role of the press as a referee. Also, themes in the coverage may play to the advantage or disadvantage of the ruling party, or the opposition or a particular opposition party. Examples may be the preparations being made to guard against violence in the lead-up to the elections in KwaZulu-Natal, which more often than not is seen to mean guarding against violence from IFP activists, and the co-operation agreement between the ANC and the NNP, often seen as

leading to the demise of the NNP as an independent party, not merely closer co-operation between the two.

Given the fundamental function of the media as an enabler of a public debate between people in power and ordinary citizens on a range of issues as diverse as possible, the letters to the editor also become an important part of the publication to subject to content analysis. The letters have been examined for directional balance, which is the next category. This examination was done in the same way as the examination of directional balance in the articles. The terminology used in the letters has also been examined to see if there are any apparent differences between the language used by journalists in the stories, and the language used by the 'concerned citizens' who submit letters for publication. A significantly larger amount of jargon in the letters might indicate that the letter writers may have been one particular higher-than average-educated group of citizens, whereas, accepting a reasonable expectation that people writing letters to the editor on political issues are more interested than the average citizen and by extension has more knowledge on the subjects discussed, a markedly simpler language in the letters may have been an indication that jargon use on the part of the journalists might have been a problem since readers may not have picked up information disseminated as easily as both parties would have liked.

The results of the content analysis were aggregated and compiled for presentation with the help of SPSS software. This enables the presentation of the statistical results in the form of graphs and tables. The results of the content analysis will be presented by a text-based account of the results with accompanying pie charts providing a graphic illustration of the trends found, and the relationship between the results found for the different actors in the electoral contest. Trends and relative relationships were the main focus of this study rather than the absolute numbers in the results. The tables displaying the results in absolute numbers and percentage terms will be presented as appendices.

2.5 Sampling for interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the sample publications in line with Durrheim (1999: 44). The units of analysis for this study are the different coverages of the election campaign carried by the different publications in the sample. Each different coverage was prepared by a group of editorial staff members at each publication. As Durrheim (1999)

suggests: “If groups are the unit of analysis, groups (...) should be sampled, and then individual representatives within each group could be sampled to select individuals to interview,” (Durrheim, 1999: 44). Given that four independent media companies were behind the coverage of the different publications, it seemed manageable and sufficient to get a representative sample to interview one representative from each. In addition a leading independent media analyst was asked to contribute a general perspective. This analyst was approached at a conference at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in early 2004 because of his position in the well known media analytical publication, *The Media*.

The representatives of the press outlets selected for interviewing were journalists that had been the most prolific in contributing to each of the units of analysis, through creating the most of the articles in the units of observation as measured through the by-lines accompanying the articles. By-lines are the names that appear above the main text in a newspaper article, and indicate the author. By-lines also represent the way the publication wants to recognise who created what, and represent the only means available to identify the individual authoring the article. In many of the publications a lot of articles were without a name in the by-line, saying merely that it was written by a ‘staff reporter’ for example. In addition, a number of articles are without by-lines all together. Such articles were discarded for the purposes of sampling the journalists to be interviewed. Interviews were sought from the journalists with the highest numbers of by-lines per publication.

The interviews were conducted to collect qualitative results. Semi-structured interviews, which was the kind represented here are suited for collecting information about people’s “views, opinions, ideas and experiences,” (Arskey and Knight, 1999: 96). The concept of “elite interviews” (Arskey and Knight, 1999:152) was also a guiding factor to the design of the interviews. In a so-called ‘elite interview’ “ (...) the interviewee is encouraged to introduce his/her own ideas”.

Qualitative interviews, whether termed ‘elite interviews’ or ‘semi-structured’ interviews are also suited to obtaining peoples’ “spontaneous understanding” of the matters at hand (Arskey and Knight, 1999: 151), giving the respondent an opportunity to expand on their own views on the guiding topics, going beyond the preconceived notions of the researcher. The guiding questions posed to the journalists were open and were generated by meticulously following the lead of Norris’ framework (2000:24), teasing out the views of the journalists of how

important the different main functions of the media listed are, and how they went about fulfilling them as journalists. The functions queried are the functions as practical information provider to voters, voter education, mobilisers of civic engagement with the elections and the function of watchdog. The criterion of balance in the coverage and the journalistic ideal of objectivity were also the subject of questions. In addition, the framing of articles and the prominence of main narratives in the coverage were queried. Another aspect explored was what role the government should play in regulating the press, if any. An important component of the sets of questions was also to examine how much thought they gave to their normative roles as journalists in the context of this electoral coverage.

The interviews were limited in duration to 30 minutes and conducted via telephone. One interview was conducted in-person. There were no preparatory meetings or conversations discussing the substance of the interviews beforehand. The same guiding questions were the starting point in all cases, but allowance was made for following trains of thought started by subjects in their answers. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The full transcripts of the interviews were the basis for analysis. The anonymised transcripts will be presented in the appendices.

The procedure suggested by Emden (1998): in Priest et. al. (2002) was tested when conducting a narrative analysis of the interviews. This method prescribes that interviewer questions and comments be removed from transcript, as well as words that detract from the key idea of each sentence or group of sentences. The remaining text is read again, for sense, and the procedure is repeated until fragments of themes remain. These fragments are moved together to create a coherent core story.

Chapter 3 Results

3.0 Introduction

This section will commence with an exposition of the results obtained through content analysis across the publications in the sample. The results will be displayed in graphs, and trends in the results discussed. Since not all percentages could be included in the graphs, the text will mention percentages as appropriate. Please refer to tables in appendices for complete results. After the cross-title results have been presented the results obtained from the individual publications will follow. Beyond the indicators for numerical and directional balance, the structure for the analysis of the results is derived from the work of Oltedal (2001). Her set of roles of the press sees these media outlets as entertainers, helpers and opponents in relation to the political parties and the government, the main sources in election coverage. This framework seems useful in highlighting the trends found. Finally, a conclusion will be offered.

3.1 Results Across All Titles

3.1.1 Balance

Party name mentions in the texts of articles are used to measure numerical balance. This is the first category. For this category a cap was in place, meaning that only the mentions of the four most frequently mentioned party names in each newspaper copy were counted. Where there were party names that were mentioned an equal number of times to any of those in that group, all those with equal numbers were counted as well. The total number of party name mentions in the texts of the sample articles was 6118.

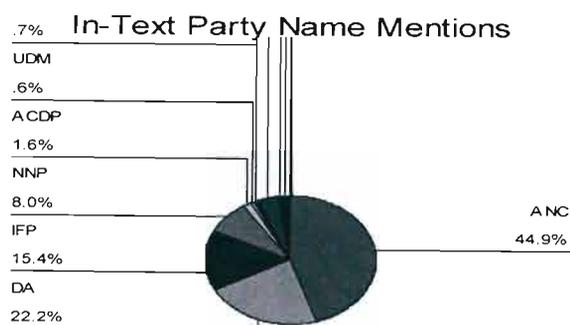


Figure 1

As can be seen from figure 1, the ANC obtained the highest number of name mentions. The next most frequently mentioned party name was that of the DA, with a low total when compared with the ANC, but a relatively larger total than their size in the outgoing Parliament would indicate¹⁴. The IFP and the NNP formed the next group of parties, followed by the high showing of the ID. The ACDP obtained comparable results to the ID in the 2004¹⁵ election, but featured more prominently in the results in this category, with 1,6% of mentions to the ID's 0,7%. The MF follows the ACDP closely at 1,5%. The UDM concludes the list of parties above 1% of party name mentions with 1,3%. For parties under 1% that had valid party name mentions in the text of the articles, please refer to table 1 in the appendices. Considering that this research was conducted from a sample of press publications across South Africa, a narrow range of parties were mentioned at all in the coverage. Only 8 parties got over 1% of party name mentions while only 15 parties got any mentions at all. One explanation for this result may be the cap imposed after the four most mentioned parties in each newspaper copy. However, the impact of this cap was limited as the least mentioned parties in any copy often got a number of mentions equal to at least one of the four most mentioned parties, and hence are included in these results. The ID was mentioned more in the headlines than in the text, which may be explained by the tendency to use Patricia De Lille's name in the text, rather than the ID party name.

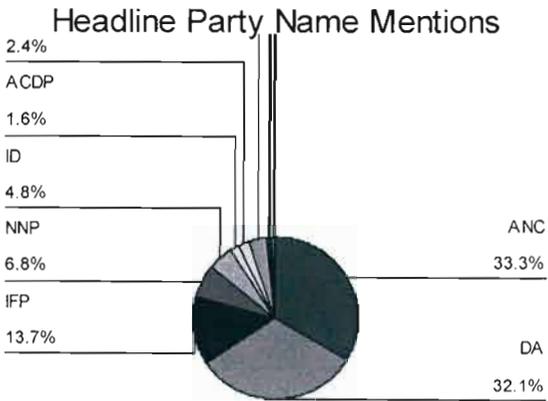


Figure 2

¹⁴ <http://www.elections.org.za/Results/natperprov.asp>
¹⁵ http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_statistics.asp

When registering party name mentions in the headlines of the sample texts there was no cap after the top four parties per copy; all name mentions were counted. A total number of 249 name mentions were recorded. Of those, the ANC and the DA got almost equal shares. Still, the ANC was mentioned most often. The IFP formed the middle range on their own, with the NNP leading the smaller parties in the results, followed by the ID. The PAC followed next at 3,6%, the FF+ at 2,4%, the ACDP at 1,6% and the GPSA, NA, NANDO and the SACP all with one name mention in the headlines, or 0,4% each.

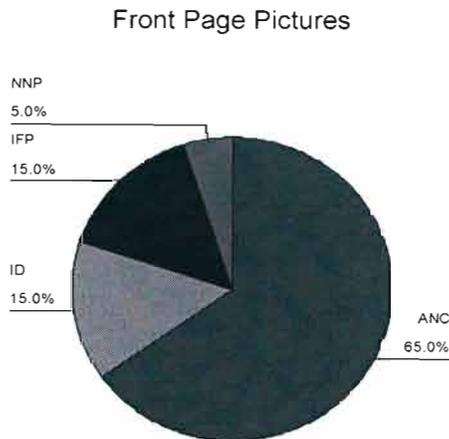


Figure 3

There were 20 front page pictures carried in the sample publications. Of those, the ANC received the dominant share followed by the ID, the IFP and the NNP. Note that the DA is absent from the list, despite its strong showing in the text of the coverage.

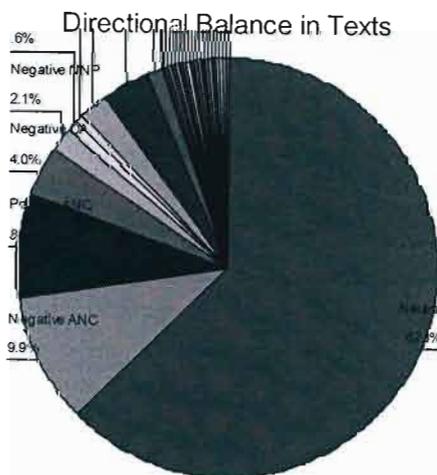


Figure 4

The next category examined directional balance in the texts of the articles. The articles deemed relevant numbered 778. McNair's, (1995) advocacy function was in evidence, even though the majority of articles were neutral. If the ideal of objectivity, or the strategic ritual of objectivity, was completely dominant, the number of neutral headlines would be closer to 100%. Among the articles where directional bias could be found, the ANC received both the most positive and the most negative articles, attracting slightly more negative than positive bias. On the negative side the DA and the IFP came next, but these parties received far from the level of parity between negative and positive coverage afforded to the ANC. Following, in terms of negative coverage were the smaller showings headed by the NNP, which was followed by the ID with 0,5%, the UDM with 0,4% and the ACDP and the PAC with 0,3% each. 0,1% were negative towards the FF+, NLP and KISS each. Positive coverage was afforded to the ID in 2,4% of the articles, the IFP in 1,2%, the ACDP in 0,4%, the FF+ in 0,4%, the SACP in 0,3% and the NA, PAC and SOPA in 0,1% of the articles. Bias also occurred towards more than one party in combination. Negative bias was present towards the ANC and NNP in 0,3% of cases, towards the DA and ID in 0,3% of the articles, ACDP and ANC in 0,1% of cases, the ACDP, DA, NNP and UDM, as well as AZAPO and SOPA in 0,1% of the articles.

A notable absence from the list of party combinations that received bias in the coverage was the Coalition for Change, entered into before the election by the DA and the IFP to form a more credible alternative to the ANC than each party could on its own. Party combinations receiving positive coverage were the ACDP and DA with 0,3% and the DA and NA, as well as the DA and GPSA, the ANC and NNP and the ANC and the ID with 0,1% each. 0,1% of articles, or one article, was positive towards the DA and negative towards the ANC. More headlines than article texts were neutral. Because of the large number of neutral articles, the directional trends in the headlines were unremarkable in that they consisted of small swings in bias only. However it is noteworthy that the ANC received a majority of the headlines that were negative towards a single party, with 5,1% out of 10,1%. The party also received the biggest share of the articles that were positive towards a single party with 3%. The DA also received a bigger share of negative articles than positive articles.

The total of headlines was slightly bigger than the number of articles deemed relevant because different referring headlines on the front pages, as well as separate headlines when a story is continued on two separate pages were counted separately to the headline that shared space with the story. The total number of headlines was 792. Of the headlines with a bias, the ANC

received more negative than positive headlines, with 3% positive headlines. This was also the case for the DA, which got 2,4% negative headlines, and 0,5 % positive. The NNP followed at 1,1% negative and 0,1% positive headlines. The IFP got almost the same number of negative and positive headlines with 0,6% negative and 0,5% positive. The FF+ received exactly the same number of positive as negative headlines with 0,3% each going in both directions. On the side of the combinations, 0,3% of the headlines were negative towards the ACDP and the ANC as well as towards the DA and ID. 0,1% were negative towards the IFP and the PAC. The only combination of parties receiving positive headlines was the ACDP and the DA with 0,3% of headlines.

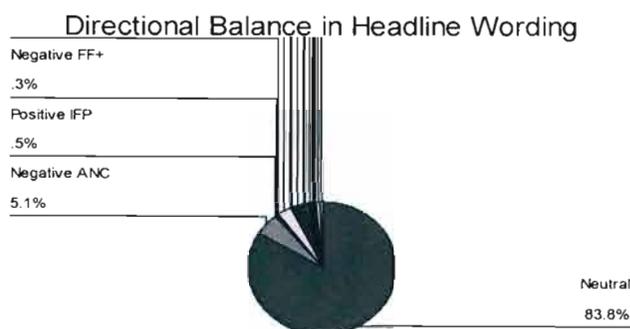


Figure 5

The next category examined the language used by authors of letters to the editor to determine their use of jargon. It emerged from the analysis that only a few out of the total of 304 letters contained jargon. This result points to a trend where the letter writers and journalists use the same language to communicate with their audiences.

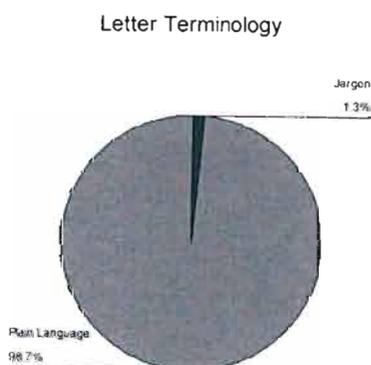
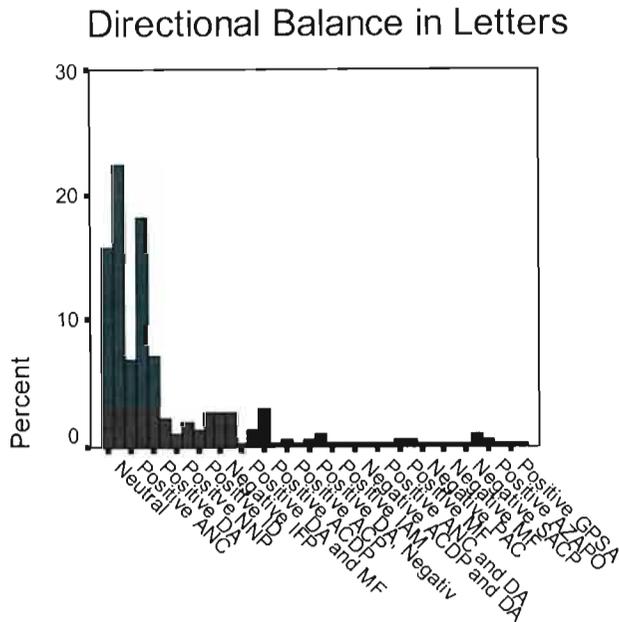


Figure 6



Directional Balance in Letters to the Editor

Figure 7

In terms of directional balance the published letters to the editor were more partisan than the articles in the same newspapers. A relatively low portion of letters was neutral. Another general trend was that there were more letters that were negative or critical towards the different parties than positive ones. 22,4% of letters were critical of the ANC. On the negative side followed the DA with 18,1%, IFP with 5,2%, the NNP with 2,3%, the ID with 2%, the ACDP with 1,3% and the ACP, UDM and SACP with 0,3%. Conflicting with the editorial coverage the DA surpassed the ANC in their number of positive letters and ended at 7,2%. The ANC got 6,9%. The ACDP is next with 3%, in front of the ID with 1,3% and the NNP with 1%. The ACP and the MF got 0,7%, whereas the IAM got 0,3%. On the combinations, 1% of letters were negative towards the DA and NNP, 0,3% were negative towards the ACDP and DA as well as the NNP and ANC. Of the positives, all combinations got 0,3% of the letters each. They were: the ANC and DA, the IFP and DA and the ANC, DA and IFP. The positive and negative combinations were: positive ANC, negative DA 1%, positive DA, negative ANC 0,7%, positive ID, negative DA 0,7%, positive ACDP, negative DA 0,3%, positive PAC, negative ANC 0,3% and positive IFP, negative ANC 0,3%.

3.1.2. The Press as Helper

The press may be said to help the parties and the electoral authorities by providing practical information to enable voters to make informed electoral decisions and by voter education. Explicit encouragement of civic activism may also be a factor to consider here. Over all, the press did not do well on these indicators. Even assuming no overlap between the two, less than four in ten articles contained such practical information. The picture becomes less gloomy when voter education is the category in question, but only slightly. Given that the representatives from the sample publications interviewed all reported going on the campaign trail reporting developments, (see transcripts, appendices 2 to 6), it seemed reasonable to expect the proportion of newsy educational articles to be higher than it actually turned out. With regards to technical education however, representatives from the Mail&Guardian and This Day said they did not see this as essential to their readerships, and only the representative from The Mercury stated his publication had placed emphasis on technical voter education, (see appendices 3, 4, and 5). The consequence of these judgements would logically be a lower percentage over all of technical educational articles. The same applies to some degree to the category registering explicit encouragement of civic activism in relation to the election campaign. Again, the representative from the Mail&Guardian stated she thought their readership might not need direct encouragement. Instead, they would find encouragement through the information contained in the articles, (see appendix 5). This does not, however, account for the very low number of articles in the election coverage over all that encouraged civic direct engagement with the election.

Practical Information in Article-WHIM

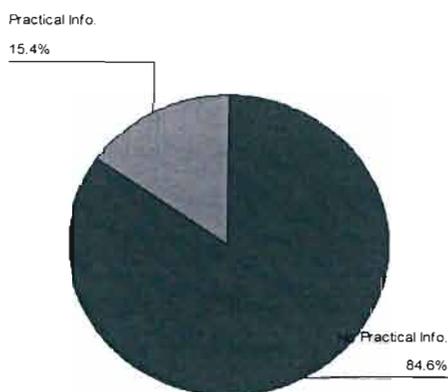


Figure 8

This category was the articles containing practical information of immediate use to different groups of voters in deciding whom to vote for. Out of a total of 778 articles only a small share contained this kind of information. Related to this category were the articles that contained policy relevant practical information.

Practical Information in Article- Policy

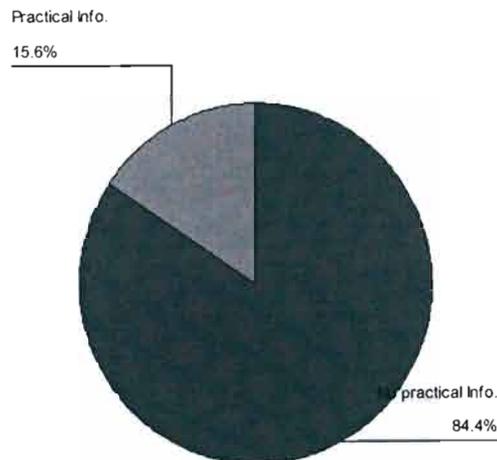


Figure 9

The group of articles containing policy relevant practical information was somewhat larger, contrary to the expectation at the outset of the study. This expectation that fewer articles would contain policy relevant practical information was based on the premise that practical information in the WHIM category is of immediate use to voters in deciding which way to vote, whereas the policy related information might have been perceived to only have longer term effects for individual voters through the social and economic groups they belong to. As seen above, the difference in frequency of the two kinds of practical information in the coverage was only slight. But the results also show that a disturbing 69% of articles contained no practical information that fit either category, even assuming no overlap between the categories. In practice, this overlap was considerable, and the number of articles containing no practical information closer to 80%.

Voter Education in Articles-Newsy

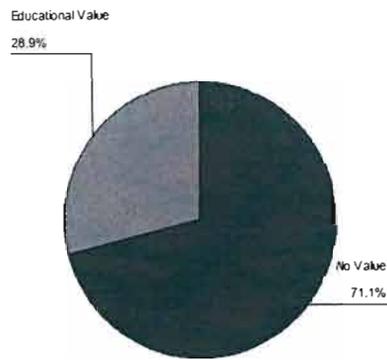


Figure 10

Technical Voter Education in Articles

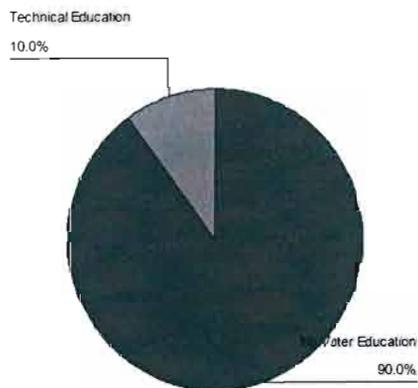


Figure 11

Another important function for the media in relation to elections is voter education. In the two categories here, 28,9% of the articles were educational to voters with regards to current development in the context of the election, while 10% contained technical voter education.

A mere 4,2% of articles fit into the next category, containing explicit encouragement for readers to engage with the electoral contest in different ways. This means that in a consolidating democracy like South Africa, 95,8% contained no such encouragement.

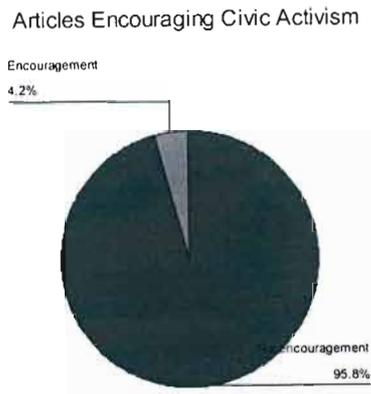


Figure 12

3.1.3. The Press as Entertainer

Perhaps the best indicator that the press sample as a whole promoted their function as entertainers highly during the election campaign is the composition of news values found. Before exploring this trend, it is appropriate to mention the combined total of stories that were apparently motivated by timeliness and development in the subject of a previous story, 62,7%. Of the remaining 37,3% the prominence of the personalities discussed in stories was the most frequent news value. The curiosity, or unusualness of the subject of the story seemed the news value behind almost the exact same number of stories based on the significance of the subject at hand, and was apparently a much weaker motivating factor than the prominence of the subjects of stories. The news values of newsfashion and proximity arguably also contribute to the overall entertainment focus of the coverage. The same trend is also visible among the combinations, despite the small number of stories seemingly motivated by a combination of news values. Notable is the much larger presence of the combination timeliness and prominence, at 4% versus timeliness and significance at 0,6%.

The overwhelming number of stories that were strategically framed, focusing on the electoral competition rather than delving deeper into policy issues, combine with the practically equal number of articles that are part of overarching narratives to emphasise the importance placed on making the articles consumable to the readers. The most prolific of these narratives were the ten-year anniversary for the new political dispensation in South Africa, the prospects for election related violence in KwaZulu-Natal, the no-holds-barred electioneering in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape and a predicted imminent demise of the NNP.

Newsvalues Apparently Behind Article

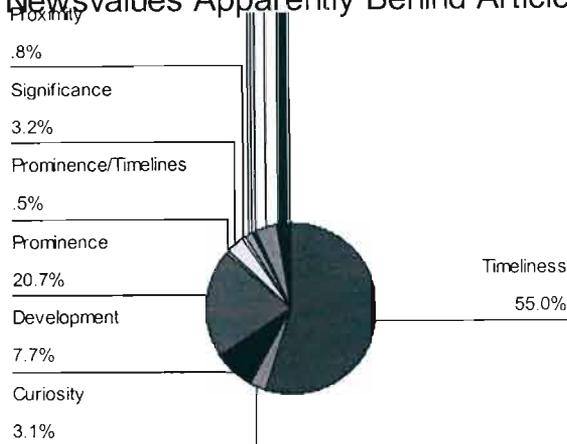


Figure 13

The majority of stories in the election coverage seemed to owe their presence there to their timely content in the electoral context. The prominence of the personalities discussed in stories was the second most frequent apparent news value, but significantly less prevalent. Development of a previously published story was next on the list. Significance, where the subject of the story is likely to have a significant impact on society as a whole and by extension on the readers, was only apparent in a relatively low number of stories. This was followed by curiosity, newsfashion and proximity. In a number of stories no predominant apparent news values could be found, but a combination of news values provided apparent reasons for publication. These combinations were: timeliness and prominence, timeliness and significance at 0,6%, timeliness and curiosity also 0,6%, timeliness and development 0,5%, newsfashion and prominence 0,4%, development and prominence 0,4%, curiosity and prominence 0,3%, timeliness and proximity 0,3% and, at 0,1% each, curiosity and significance, significance and prominence and development, curiosity and significance.

Main Narratives as Proportion of Coverage

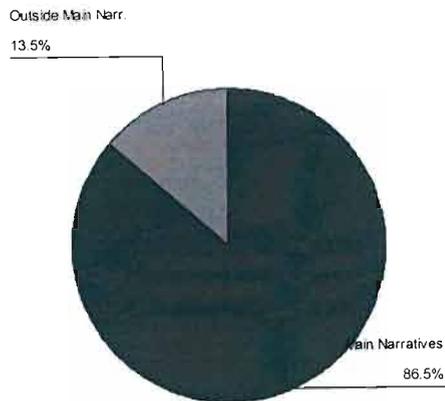


Figure 14

Framing of Articles

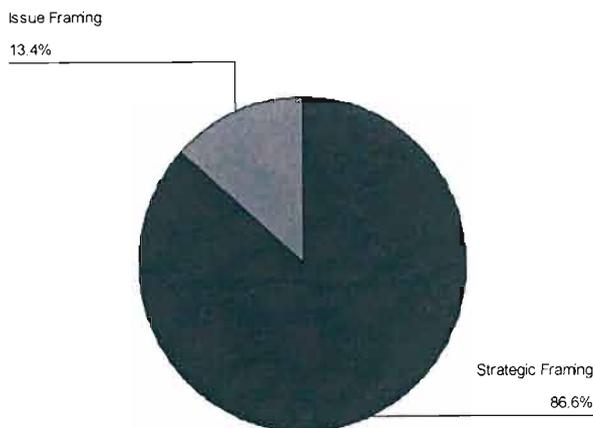


Figure 15

A large proportion of the stories proved to be part of overarching narratives, themes or big stories that ran throughout the election coverage. These numbers almost corresponded perfectly with the number of stories that were strategically framed, as opposed to making the issues at hand the centre of the framing. The overlap between stories that were part of main narratives and those with strategic frame was considerable, but not absolute. The same was true for stories with an issue framing and those that were independent of the main narratives.

3.1.4 The Press as an Opponent

The role of the press of probing information that comes from people or organisations in powerful positions in society is measured by the watchdog function category in the study. All the interviewed journalists put the watchdog function high on their agenda for what the press should be doing during an election campaign, (see appendices 2-6). One of the representatives interviewed stated this very succinctly. “We normally say that we are keeping an eye on the big brothers on behalf of the smaller brothers,” (see appendix 3). Despite this stated emphasis, only a very low number of articles in the election coverage could be termed as watchdog function articles. This result was a little affected by the decision, when designing the performance benchmarks for this study, to only recognise watchdog articles obviously produced in-house. Had those articles possibly bought from external sources also been included the number of watchdog articles would only have increased marginally. This is because these articles were significantly fewer in number than those produced in-house. The number of watchdog articles needs to be held up against the number of articles containing negative bias towards the parties, as this may be an expression of an opposition role. However, as mentioned above, the majority of articles were neutral, whilst the number of negative articles towards various parties as a general trend was counterbalanced by articles containing positive bias. It can thus be argued that in practice, the role of the press as opponent was not prominent in the coverage of the 2004 South African Election.

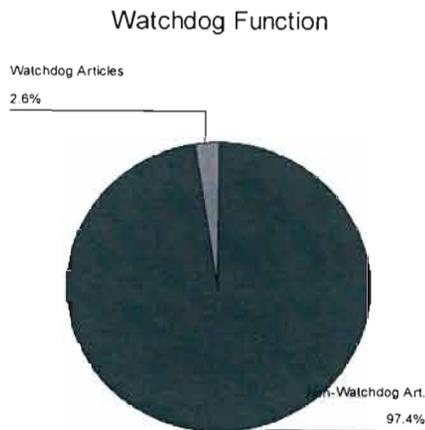


Figure 16

3.2 Single Publication Results

3.2.0. This Day

This Day launched on the October 1 2003.¹⁶ Consequently, the 2004 electoral campaign was the first campaign covered by the newspaper. The editorial staff member from This Day commends the planning before the elections that the staff was involved in, but is critical of how little it affected the coverage in the end. The one day planning session started with “grand perspectives and we had very grand ideas. So it was quite, in a way, theoretical as well as practical. How do you translate those ideas into stories, but none of what we discussed was implemented,” (appendix 4). Over all, the coverage in This Day matched the trends found in the over-all coverage above with small variations.

3.2.0.1 Balance

The editorial staff member interviewed from This Day was concerned that generally the press might not give coverage that was equitable enough during the election campaign, and did, as the only media practitioner interviewed, not flatly oppose the idea of somebody monitoring press coverage, “(..) ja, somebody should, I.. possibly a government appointed body, but independent of government as such,” (appendix 4). However, equitable coverage did not extend to absolute balance in terms of the amount of coverage given to the different parties. “I think that would be quite fake, you know?” (Appendix 4).

With a total of 310 relevant articles, This Day represents a significant share of the overall number of articles. In This Day there was a total of 2293 party name mentions in the text of the articles. The ANC again had the lion’s share, with the DA and the NNP the next two parties on the list. As a national title, This Day joins the Mail&Guardian in discussing the NNP more than the IFP, but the difference is slight. The IFP got roughly double the name mentions afforded to the ID. This means that again the ID pulled in a significant number of name mentions as a newcomer in the party political landscape. However, one needs to note here the tendency to use the name of the party leader Patricia De Lille in texts and headlines rather than the party name. The ACDP got significantly fewer party name mentions than the ID.

¹⁶ E-TV News Live at 7, October 27 2004

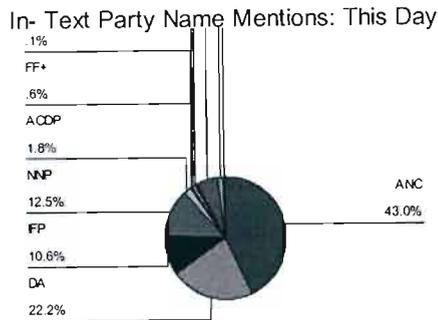


Figure 17

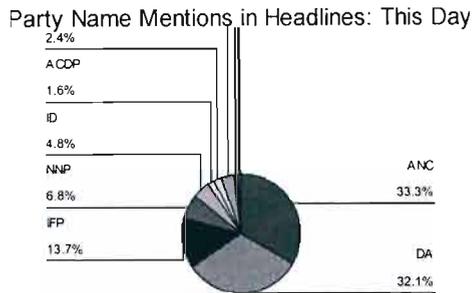


Figure 18

In the headlines, things changed in that the occurrence of ANC name mentions was less than in the texts of the articles, and the distribution among parties more even. Even though a majority of headlines had no party mentions in them, This Day proved to be more willing to use party names in their headlines than the other newspapers in the sample. There were 106 party name mentions in the headlines in This Day. Whereas the ANC got double the amount of coverage in the texts of the articles than did the DA the two were almost evenly covered in the headlines. There is a significant gap to the next group of parties, featuring the IFP and the NNP. Note the swap of ranking between the two parties. The ID was mentioned less in the headlines than in the texts, relegated to a level closer to the smaller parties in the coverage, with the PAC at 3,5% and the at FF+ 2,4%. The SACP features in this list with 0,4% of mentions, as do the GPSA, NA and NANDOS. Finally, one has to bear in mind that a

majority of headlines had no party name mentions in them.

This Day carried over half of all the front page pictures of prominent party personalities, with a total of 13 pictures. These pictures are those whose captions identify the depicted persons as members of the national or a provincial leadership of the respective parties. The pictures are not necessarily connected to articles in the newspaper, but often used on their own to describe events. The ANC received the lion's share here as it did in the cross-title results and in the other numerical balance indicators of the coverage in This Day. Contrary to their results elsewhere, and by extension to their higher profile in the election coverage both of This Day and across all titles, the DA did not receive any front page pictures. The ID on the other hand featured very prominently, with all pictures depicting their party's national leader.

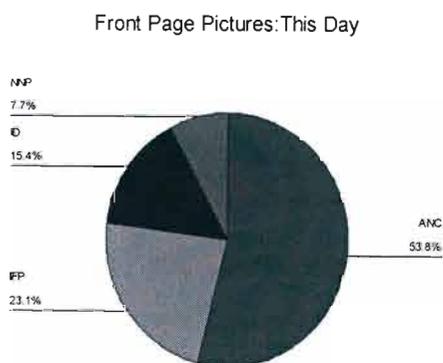


Figure 19

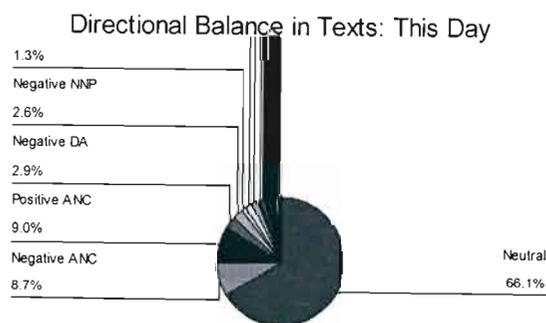


Figure 20

The patterns that were found across all titles in the directional balance of the texts of the articles also applied to the coverage by This Day. The major exception to this pattern was that

the ANC got more favourable articles than those critical towards the party. The other parties to receive more positive than negative articles were the ID, the ACDP and the FF+. Leading the opposite trend was the DA. The party received no positive articles. The NNP landed at 2,6% of the articles being negative towards them, while 1,9% were positive. The IFP got 1,6% negative and 1% positive. Among the less covered parties the UDM got 1% negative articles. 0,3% of the articles were negative towards the ACDP, NLP and the PAC respectively. On the positive side, the ACDP received 0,6% of the articles while the AZAPO, PAC and SACP all received 0,3% each. On the combinations, 0,6% of the articles were negative towards the DA and ID, 0,3% were negative towards the ANC and NNP, 0,3% were negative towards the DA and ANC, 0,3% were positive towards the DA and the ACDP, 0,3% were positive towards the ANC and NNP and another 0,3% where positive towards the ANC and NNP, while negative towards the DA.

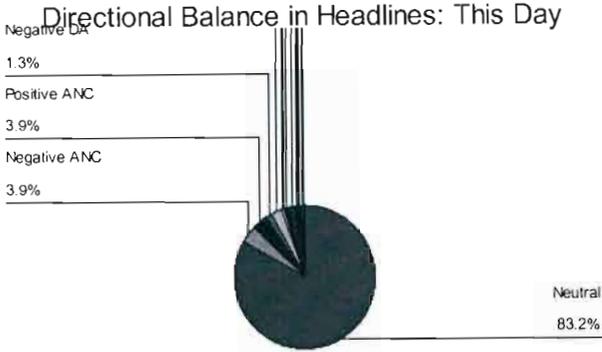


Figure 21
 Most of the headlines were neutral in terms of directional balance. Significantly, of those headlines that had a slant, the ANC received an exactly equal amount of negative and positive headlines. The governing party was the only party to receive this parity. The DA on the other hand, received no positive headlines on its own, even if it received negative headlines. The DA in combination with the ACDP did however receive 0,3% of the positive headlines. Similarly, the FF+ was mentioned in relatively many headlines, but most were negative at 1,9%. The positives came in at 0,3%. The NNP received 2,6% negative and 0,3% positive headlines. The IFP received 0,6% positive headlines, while the ID got 0,3%. The same share of headlines was positive towards the PAC. The negative headlines for the PAC came in combination with the IFP, at 0,3%. The DA and ID got 0,6% negative headlines in

combination.

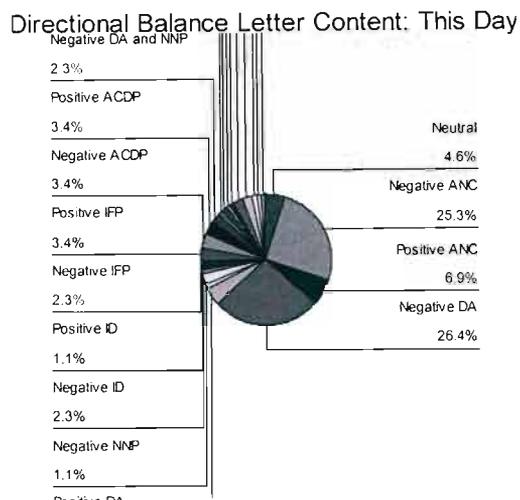


Figure 22

Directionally, the editorial coverage was largely out of tune with the directional balance in the letters to the editor. Few letters were party politically neutral. As in the editorial coverage the DA took a good beating in the letters, but contrary to the editorial coverage statistics, the ANC got similar treatment. Remarkably, in light of the editorial coverage, the ID got more negative than positive letters. The opposite was true for the IFP. The ACDP got an exact match in numbers of negative and positive letters this time. The low portion of letters concerning the NNP is also telling. While the newspaper This Day afforded the NNP 12,5% of its editorial election coverage, a mere 1,1% of published letters to the editor addressed the party. AZAPO experienced the opposite, making a good showing with 2,3% of letters, compared with only 0,5% of editorial mentions. The GPSA got 1,1% of positive letters. The NNP, UDM, SACP and PAC at 1,1% negative letters got no positives and conclude the single results. In the combinations, the combinations negative DA and NNP and negative DA and ANC got 2,3% each. Of the combinations in contradicting directions, the negative DA and positive ID got 1,1%, the positive ANC and negative DA got 1,1%, and finally 1,1% of the letters were positive towards the PAC and negative towards the ANC.

The terminology used in all letters was deemed plain.

Letter Terminology: This Day

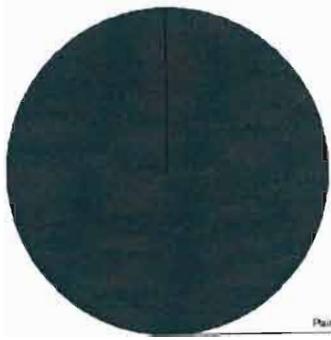


Figure 23

From the indicators of balance in the coverage by This Day we can see that the ANC was discussed more than the other parties, the party received closer to parity on the coverage over all, and significantly, received more positive than negative coverage in the text of the articles. This Day was more conservative in allowing bias in the headlines than in the texts of articles, both in terms of how much they spoke about the different parties, and whether the treatment the parties got in the headlines was negative or positive. The editorial coverage in the newspaper was sharply out of tune with the sentiments expressed in the letters to the editor.

3.2.0.2. This Day as Helper

The articles that contained practical knowledge in the whim-category, and the ones containing policy practical knowledge combined make up 27,1% of the coverage, assuming no overlap. In practice the overlap was considerable, so the total is lower. A higher number of articles were newsy educational than was the case in the cross-title results, but a lower number than the cross-title result contained technical education. The aggregate of these two categories, 34,9%, is also deceiving in that the overlap between the two was considerable.

Explicit encouragement for more active involvement by the readers with the election was found in a very low 3,2% of the coverage. Together, these numbers suggest This Day provided more current developments from the electoral arena than the average across all titles, and combined this with a decent proportion of practical information articles. However, the title did not emphasise the function of mobilising civic engagement with the elections. The editorial staff member from This Day conceded the performance by the paper in the helper

categories could have been better:

“I think still, most of This Day’s readers were very confused about whether to vote and so on. Whether they could vote out of where they were registered and those kinds of things as well. But I have a sense, and I might be very wrong, that This Day didn’t really grapple with those questions. So new, and so understaffed and so on,” (appendix 4).

Practical Knowledge: WHIM. This Day

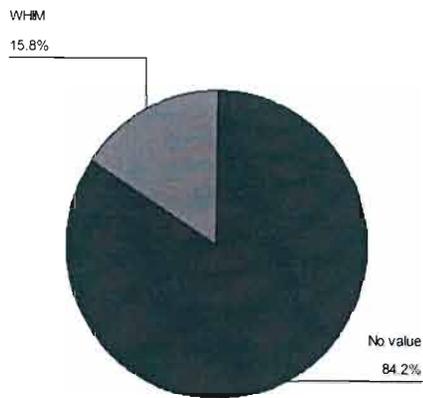


Figure 24

Practical Knowledge: Policy. This Day

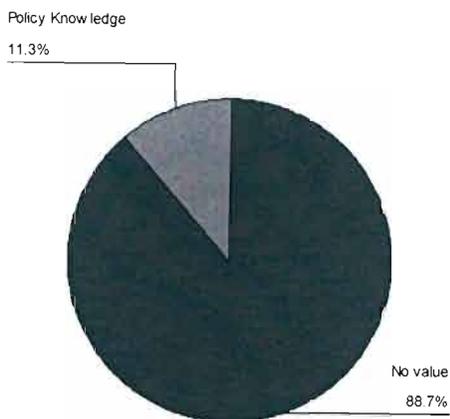


Figure 25

Voter Education: Newsy. This Day

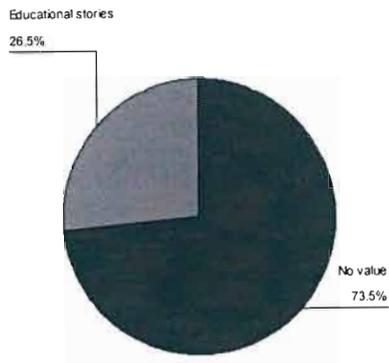


Figure 26

Voter Education: Technical. This Day

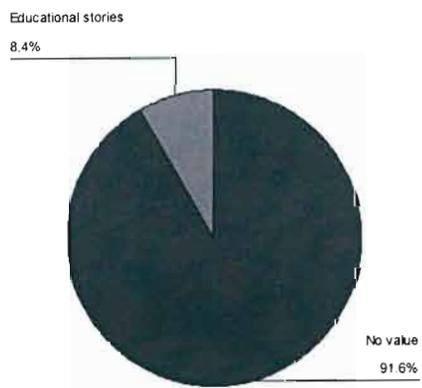


Figure 27

Civic Activism Encouragement: This Day

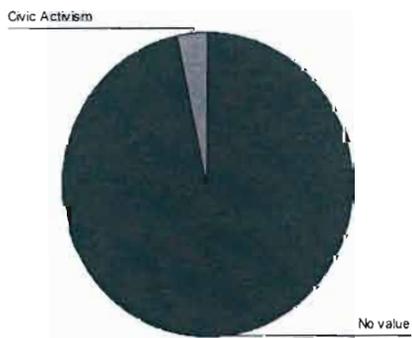


Figure 28

Explicit encouragement of more active involvement by the readers with the election was found in a mere 3,2% of the articles. In an interesting turn in the coverage, the share 3,2% matches the number of watchdog articles exactly. Despite this exact match, the overlap between the two categories is almost non-existent.

3.2.0.3. This Day as Entertainer

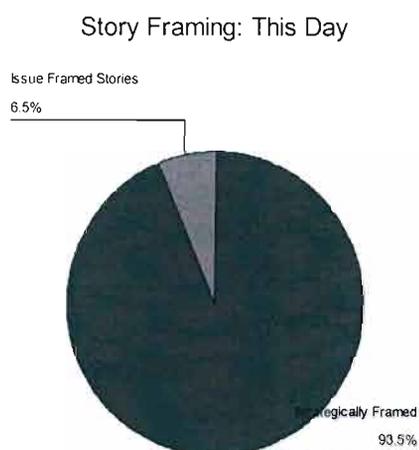


Figure 29

Stories Part of Main Narratives: This Day

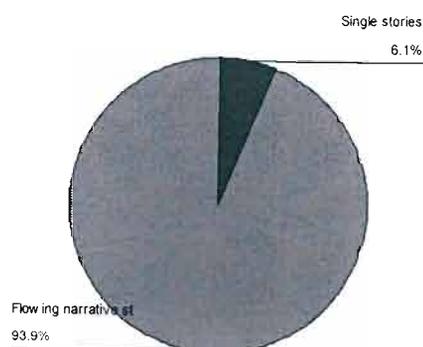


Figure 30

The results on the two indicators above are remarkable. 93,9% of articles were within the major narratives, with only 6,1% outside the grid of narratives. 93,5% of stories were strategically framed. On their own, each of these trends is restrictive of the diversity of the coverage. That effect is compounded when the two trends are viewed together. The editorial

staff member interviewed from This Day brought up one example of the lack of diversity in the coverage that applied across all titles; the lack of women’s perspectives:

“ I think, in most political parties, mostly, it’s men doing the talking. Men’s issues. Women’s issues are presented as a category, almost a separate basket, rather than part of any perspective at any given time.....

So women’s issues become much like education, or roads, just another category?

Exactly, ” (appendix 4).

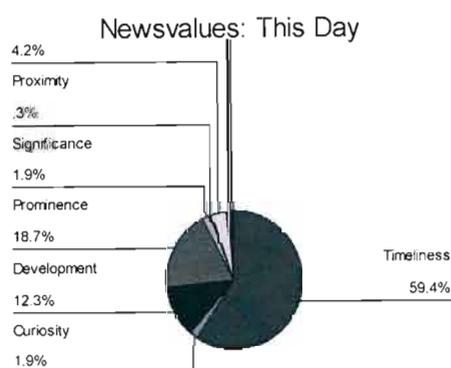


Figure 31

The familiar was clearly highlighted in This Day’s coverage. This tendency is underscored by the news values that were apparent as motivations behind the articles, as well as the results in the narrative and framing categories. A narrow range of news values were seemingly behind the articles in This Day. Most noteworthy in the news value results was the frequency of timely articles and of prominent personalities featured in the coverage, prominence being the apparent reason for the creation of a high percentage of the articles in the coverage. Prominence combined with new developments on previously published stories make up 31% of the coverage. Conversely and tellingly, significance represented the second least used apparent news value. Not unexpectedly timeliness featured prominently as a news value, apparently motivating over half the stories. On the combinations, timeliness and proximity featured highest with over double the number of stories that had significance as the apparent news value.

3.2.0.4 This Day as Opponent

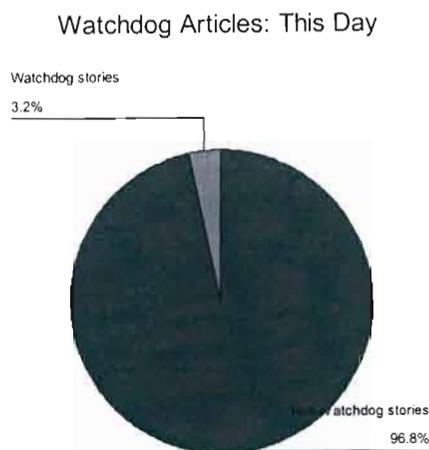


Figure 32

The low number of watchdog articles combines with the high number of positive articles afforded to the pre-election incumbent ruling party, the ANC, to show that This Day did not display the traits of an opponent to the power structures in South Africa. Asked how she thought the press, and This Day, did as watchdogs during the election campaign of 2004, the editorial staff member interviewed replied:

“Well, look, I think that they did well on things like, in the Western Cape, the likelihood of a deal, the kind of deal making that was going on between the NNP and the ANC and the IFP-ANC, the break-up of that relationship, I think there was very good coverage of those things. So that people understood that if they were voting for the NNP they were in fact clearly voting for an ANC ally,” (appendix 4).

3.2.1. The Witness

The Witness is published in Pietermaritzburg and puts its main emphasis on provincial affairs in KwaZulu-Natal. The newspaper established a presence in Durban only a few weeks before the election, (appendix 6), and so the coverage of the election was not planned on the normative level. As the respondent from the Witness explains: “It was bread and butter planning, to be perfectly honest. (..) I don’t know if it was planned that we would literally

drop down from the sky just to cut the slack on the elections, or whether it just happened that way,” (appendix 6). As a consequence, the coverage in this sample was mainly from the Pietermaritzburg staff and national sources.

The role of the journalists in covering elections is put into context by the editorial staff member interviewed in the following manner:

“(.) a lot of the actual reporting is done prior to the elections anyway, in party-political situations. We were invited for lunch with the deputy state president, or we were invited to various gatherings by political parties who were actually canvassing for support. So it is actually in the way that you actually write that and as long as you remain with that as an up-front thing, this event is being held by x, y, z, party, or, you know, in a lunch with the deputy president as a member of the ANC,” (appendix 6).

3.2.1.1. Balance

In the Witness there were a total of 1485 party name mentions in the texts. On the numerical level, the coverage of the ANC by the Witness, 40,7% of the in-text party name mentions, were on the lower side of the cross-title result. This may be partly explained by the cut-throat electoral race between the IFP and the ANC for political control of KwaZulu-Natal Province. However, this explanation is contradicted by the relatively lean coverage of the IFP, which was more than matched by that of the DA. The ID received more coverage than the NNP, also contradicting the all-title result. In the Witness, they ended at 5,8% and 3,9% respectively. The low showing of the MF, at 1,7% may also surprise, given the stated provincial focus of the coverage and the fact that the MF have their support base in KZN. The MF got 1,1%.

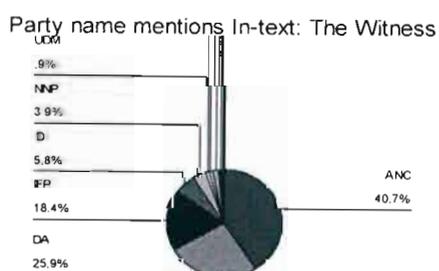


Figure 33

Despite the relatively lower mention of the ANC in the coverage, the tendency to cover the ANC more than the other parties was explained by the editorial staff member interviewed from The Witness in a manner different from the other journalists' explanations, namely by the use of pseudo events by government. However she does not defend the tendency:

"I would say, I would prefer more balance. And I would say that the one criticism I would have of the ANC is that they have abused their government positions and their government resources to actually create events with little substance for people to go to, that were attended because they were ostensibly on government business, I would be very interested to see... and a lot of the time we didn't see the sort of thing where.. we would attend a lunch, or attend a breakfast, and I don't want to single out any particular member at all.. I would be very interested to see who picked up the tab. When a gentleman arrived, if he was a high-powered minister he did have tax-payer covered guards and vehicles and whatever..now obviously opposition parties do not have the same resources. I don't think there is a clear balance, no." (Appendix 6).

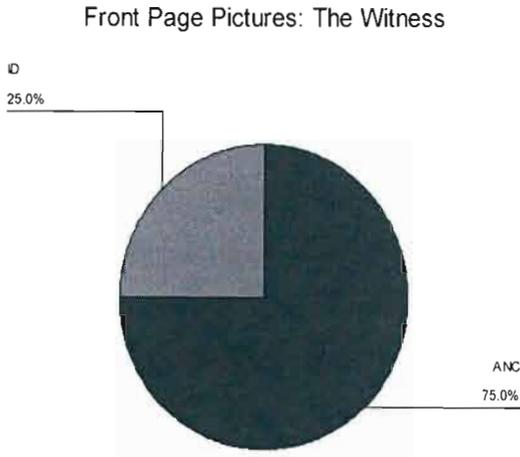


Figure 34
There were a total of four relevant front page pictures in The Witness. Front page pictures of leading political personalities were overwhelmingly connected to the ANC, as in all other publications that carried relevant front page pictures. Also true to the over all trend, the ID is represented in these results.

However, in the headlines, the DA led the way in terms of party name mentions with roughly a third of the total of 71. The ANC followed, the IFP being only slightly less discussed than the ANC. The ID got a relatively high 11%, ousting the NNP from the group of four biggest parties at 6,8%. The FF+ was in front of the smaller parties in the headlines, namely the ACDP, GPSA, ID, NANDOS and the SACP at 1,4% each.

Party Mentions in Headlines: The Witness

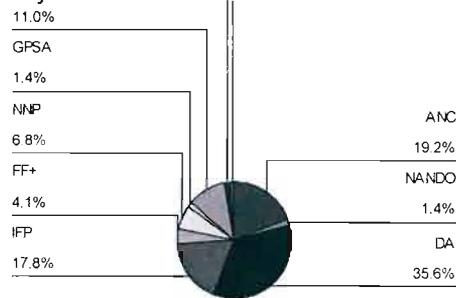


Figure 35

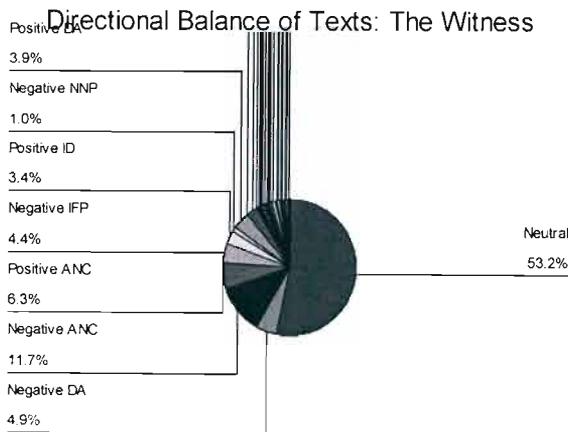


Figure 36

On the directional balance, the DA experienced a bias in far fewer stories than their proportion of party name mentions would indicate, but got an almost equal measure of positives and negatives, breaking the trend in This Day. The ANC received almost half as many positive as negative stories. The IFP got 4,4% negative stories and 2,4% positives, similar to the trend for the ANC at a lower level. The ID received almost solidly positive

coverage, as 3,4% of the stories were positive to this party, versus the 0,5% that were negative. The NNP received 1% negative stories and 1% positive.

The editorial staff member interviewed provided some perspective on the directional balance, even though she did not anticipate the result that came out of the analysis. She did, however, hope that the Witness provided a balanced coverage. The respondent maintained that:

“ (...)I must say that in Natal it’s very difficult. And I would say that certain parties actually draw negative comment just by virtue of the things they get up to. So I would think that there would have been a slight tip towards the IFP. But then again, it might very well have been earned,” (appendix 6).

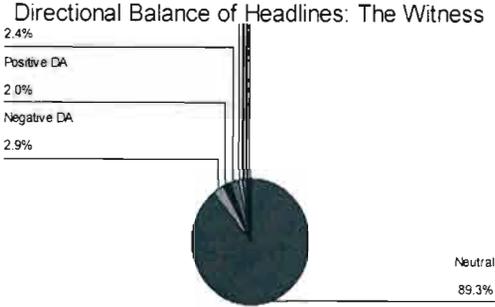


Figure 37

A very high 89,3% of the 205 relevant headlines were neutral. Breaking with the trend from the text of the articles, the DA received the most combined negative and positive bias. The ANC had a wider margin between positives and negatives, at 2,4% of headlines negative and 1% positive. The IFP did not receive any bias in the headlines, but 0,5% were negative towards the combination DA and IFP, the ‘Coalition for Change.’

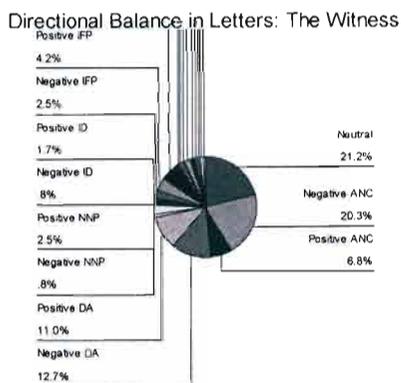


Figure 38

Of the relatively numerous 118 letters to the editor published in *The Witness*, the ANC received far more negative than positive letters. This stronger negative bias towards the ANC in the letters than the editorial content conforms to the trend in *This Day*. The number of letters negative to the ANC is almost equal to the number of letters that were neutral. The DA received a fair amount of bias directly and indirectly through the combination of the DA and the IFP, which received a relatively high 5,9% of negative letters. The IFP broke the cross-title trend and received more positive than negative letters. The same occurred to the NNP, at 0,8% negative letters and positives at 2,5%. The ID was the only party which received positive bias in the letters, but no negative letters.

There were no letters containing obvious jargon among the letters to the editor published by *The Witness*.

Terminology in Letters- The Witness

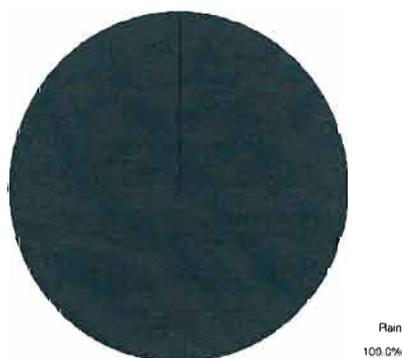


Figure 39

3.2.1.2. The Witness as Helper

On the practical knowledge side, under one fifth of the 205 articles in the Witness deemed relevant contained practical information to the voters that fit the WHIM category. Slightly fewer articles still contained policy related practical information. The number of articles that were educational on current events and developments in the electoral contest was similar; while fewer than 10% were technically educational. Civic activism was explicitly encouraged in more articles in The Witness than in most other publications in the sample, but even so the number of articles containing such encouragement can only be described as low. The editorial staff member interviewed from The Witness, though recognising its importance to these elections, assigns much of the civic activism encouragement function to radio:

"I think, in this particular election campaign it was in actually trying to get people to register to vote. That was a big problem. And a lot of people did not register. And that whole education campaign and actually going out trying to get people to come to the poll stations, and also during the day I think, this is one area where the Witness doesn't come into it and radio is very strong, is to assure people that the queues weren't terribly long, things were going very well, get a sense of how things were happening, that was very positive, I think it was important to turn to the media that were actually getting out there on the day, actually keep people informed," (appendix 6).

Practical Knowledge: WHIM. The Witness

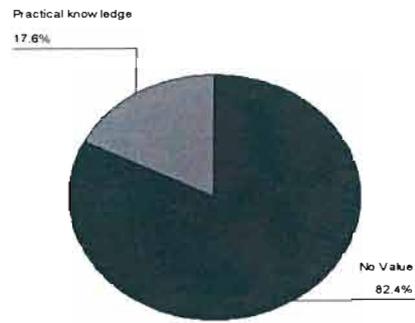


Figure 40

Practical Knowledge: Policy. The Witness

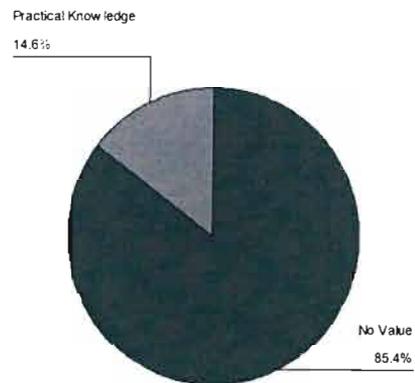


Figure 41

Voter Education: Newsy. The Witness

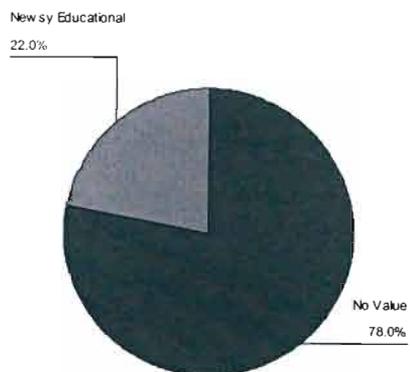


Figure 42

Voter Education- Technical. The Witness

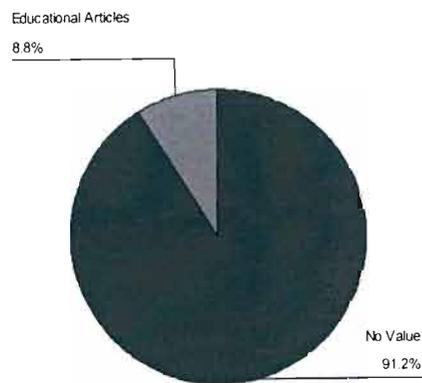


Figure 43

Civic Activism Encouragement: The Witness

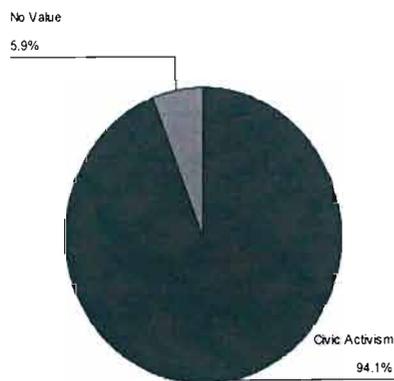


Figure 44

3.2.1.3. The Witness as Entertainer

In a trend contradicting the low number of watchdog stories discussed below, a relatively high percentage of stories were issue-framed. The number of strategically framed stories is not high when judged against the cross-title average, but strategic framing still dominated the coverage of the Witness. The stories that were part of the main narratives are also a

dominating portion.

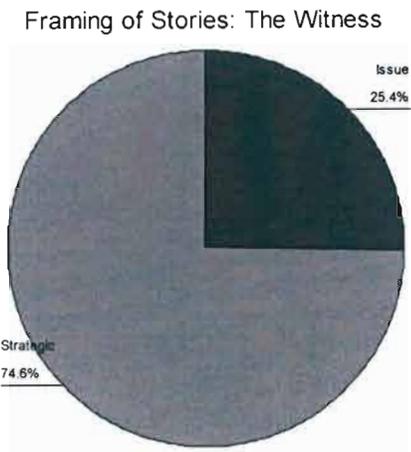


Figure 45

Stories Part of Narratives: The Witness

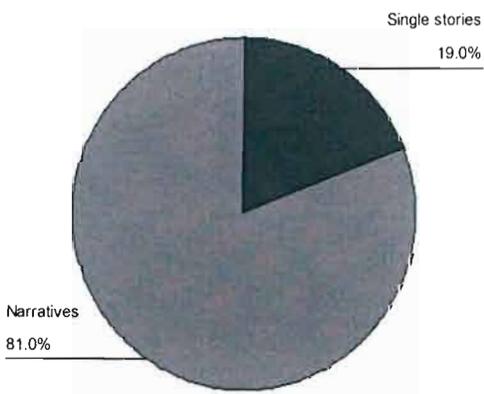


Figure 46

The framing of stories, and the strong dominance of running narratives in the coverage by The Witness, connects very well with the apparent news values behind the coverage. Prominence is a prevalent news value, while curiosity also features relatively strongly in the results. Proximity, on the other hand featured in a low number of stories, despite the more provincial and local focus of the Witness than of the national titles. Significance as the prime news value however, appeared in a puny 2% of articles. In a trend found across all the publications in the sample, the majority of articles seemed motivated by timeliness.

Newsvalues- The Witness

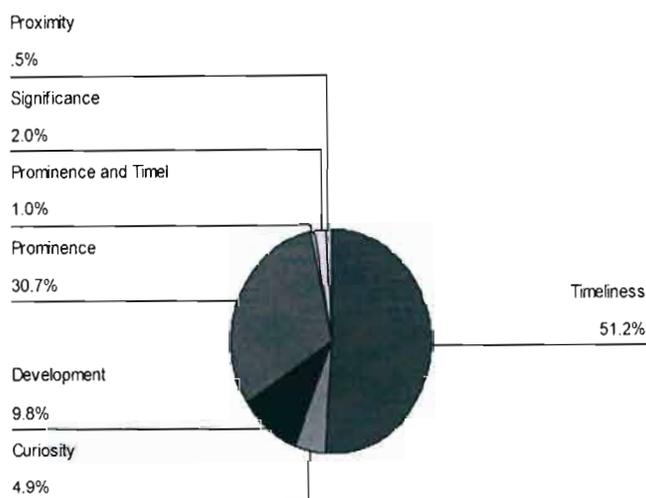


Figure 47

Tellingly, the only combination of news values behind articles, prominence and timeliness, at 1% of articles, combines with the over all picture painted in the above paragraph to point towards familiarity and entertainment being major factors in constructing the coverage by The Witness. The explicit-encouragement-of-civic-activism category also reinforced this picture. This connects very well with the apparent news values behind the coverage, with prominence behind a high 30,7% of articles and curiosity 4,9%. Proximity was an apparent motivating factor behind a low portion of the articles, at 0,5%. This is especially so given the provincial and local focus of the Witness. As stated above, a very low 2% of articles seemed motivated by significance, while timeliness seemed to motivate the majority of articles at 51, 2%.

Revealingly, the only combination of news values behind articles, prominence and timeliness, at 1% of articles, combines with the over all picture painted in the above paragraph to point towards familiarity and entertainment being major factors in constructing the coverage by The

Witness. The result in the civic activism category also reinforced this picture.

3.2.1.4. The Witness as Opponent

In the lowest total of this study, a single article, or 0,5% of the 205 articles carried by the Witness was a watchdog article. The conclusion that the Witness failed its function as an opponent to those in power, digging up hidden truth on behalf of its readers seems easy to ponder on the background of this result. The editorial staff member interviewed, however, ascribes the low number of watchdog stories to a low number of occurrences fundamentally worth exposing:

“So, in other words, was there violence, was there collusion at the poll stations and we did go out, visit the polls stations, and have a look at how people were actually being dealt with etc,” (appendix 6).

Watchdog Stories: The Witness



Figure 48

3.2.2. The Mail & Guardian

The number of issues of the Mail&Guardian in the sample was low, with only seven issues, because the publication is a weekly. The Mail&Guardian also tends to carry fewer but lengthier stories in the various parts of their domestic news sections, which were the subject of this study. The Mail&Guardian focuses strongly on its ‘digging’ journalism in its

marketing, and the editorial staff member interviewed put the critical role of the press right at the top of what the newspaper should do:

“Our role is to provide transparency for readers, and to try to expose where there are irregularities, I think that is probably the most important purpose of journalism. (...) We don’t want to collude and side with the authorities, that would be undercutting our role as watchdogs, ” (appendix 5).

The Mail&Guardian has a highly educated readership according to the editorial staff member interviewed: “ (...) they are more academic, political, trade union readers,” (transcript interview 5). Perhaps as a consequence, the share of letters to the editor that contained obvious jargon was higher than in the other publications.

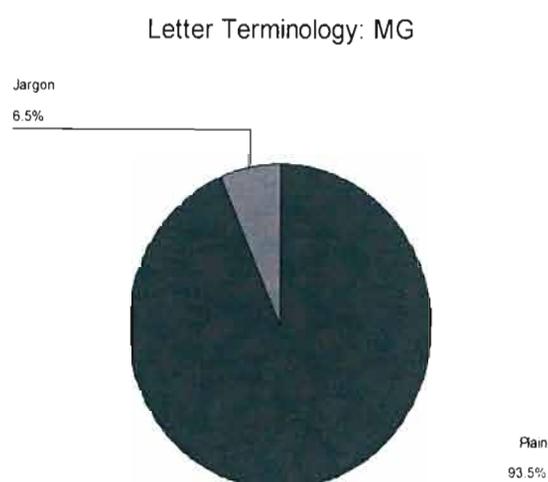


Figure 49

3.2.2.1. Balance

With regards to numerical balance, the ANC and the DA both got higher numbers of name mentions than their cross-title results. There is a big gap between the two top parties and the parties next on the list, the NNP and IFP, both of which received similar amounts of coverage. The next batch of parties is in turn some distance lower than these parties. The total

dominance of the ANC in the election coverage is defended by the editorial staff member interviewed:

“Obviously you’ve got to balance it with reporting the other parties, but you can’t, I think naturally the biggest portion is going to be taken up by the ANC because they are the biggest party, if for no other reason. I don’t think it represents partiality or bias at all, I think it’s just practical,” (appendix 5).

The ANC also dominated the party name mentions in the headlines, getting over 50%. However, two parties were on almost equal terms behind the ANC, the DA and PAC. Because of the low total of headlines, 19, little can be read into the PAC’s strong showing on this list. The NNP, however, maintained roughly the same mention in the headlines as in the texts.

In-Text Party Name Mentions: MG

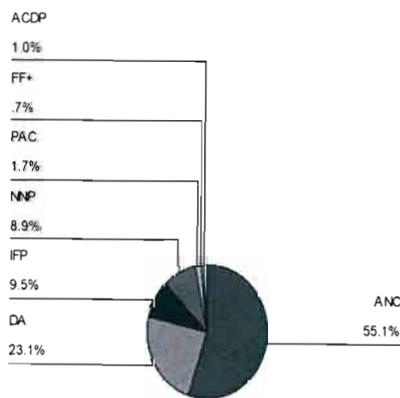


Figure 50

Party Name Mentions in Headlines: MG

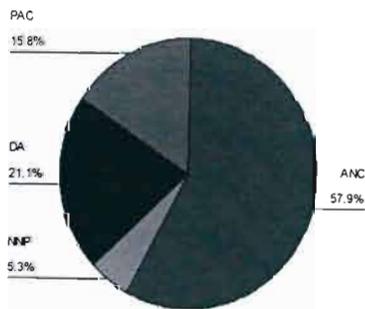


Figure 51

In terms of directional balance, a high number of the texts were neutral. In a result that turned out to be unique in this study, the ANC and the DA received almost equal amounts of critical coverage, at 6,5% and 3,2% respectively. However, considering the wide margin between the two in the amount of references in the texts of articles, the DA arguably received a more critical spotlight than the ANC. In addition, the ANC received 4,8% supportive articles, whereas the DA did not receive any. This trend sits oddly with the view of the editorial staff member interviewed on the balance of the coverage:

“Your try to be fair, you know but I think because the ANC are dominant, because they are the ruling party, you’ve got to keep a critical eye on them. So possibly, ja. More them than other parties, but I think that’s because they are the leaders, they are the ones that you’ve got to watch, I mean the DA is fairly, I mean they are sort of lame-duck. They are an opposition party but they are small, you know. And the ANC is delivering to us, you know so you do, you’ve got to be critical and you’ve got to keep them on their toes, you know. Definitely. I hope not critical in an unbalanced way, but you’re not gonna be lap-dogs either,” (appendix 5).

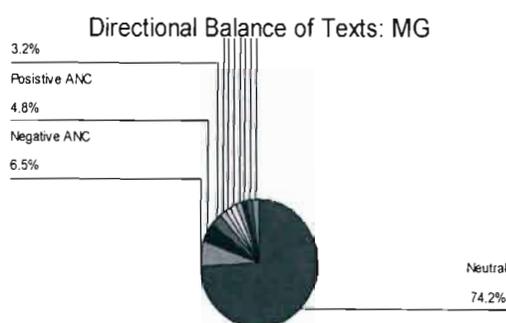


Figure 52

With regards to the smaller parties in this context, quite a few got 1,6% negative articles each, namely the FF+, the ID, the NNP, the PAC. Some combinations also received the same number of negative articles, namely DA and the IFP and the ACDP, DA, NNP and the UDM.

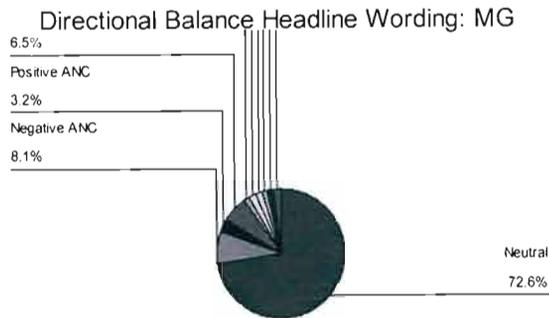


Figure 53

The Mail&Guardian was the only newspaper in the sample not to have more neutral headlines than texts in the articles. The numbers for directional balance in the headlines matched exactly those for directional balance in the texts. The referring headlines on the front page had the same wording as the headlines to the stories inside the newspaper. Also, stories that were continued on separate pages carried the headline from the first page though to subsequent pages.

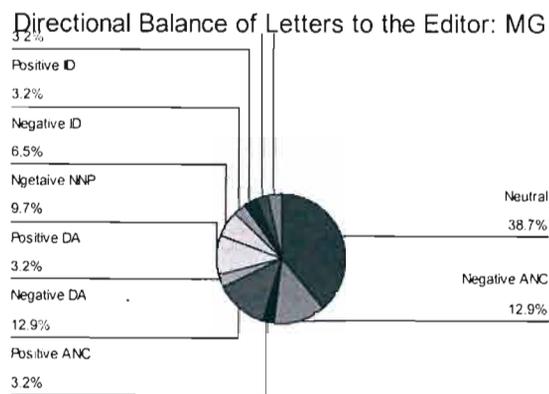


Figure 54

In terms of directional balance among the letters to the editor, a relatively high percentage was neutral. There was strict parity between the ANC and the DA, by design or default. They received the exact same number of critical letters, and the same number of positive letters. Parity also occurred for the ACDP, which got the same number of positive and negative letters. For the first time in a publication in this study, in line with the editorial coverage of

the title, the ID received more negative than positive letters. The NNP received markedly more negative than positive letters.

3.2.2.2. The Mail&Guardian as Helper

In the categories measuring provision of practical knowledge and voter education, the Mail&Guardian scores highly for their coverage compared to the cross-title result. The number to note here is the 56,5% of stories that were newsy educational. The number of newsy voter educational stories is far higher than the over all average of 28,9%. This number of articles is even higher when coupled with the 21% of articles that contained the immediately useful practical information sought in the whim category, even though the overlap between the two was significant. The 16, 1% of articles containing policy relevant practical information were also not brought to shame by the 10% in the cross-title average.

Compared to other titles, the 9,7% of stories that contained explicit encouragement of civic activity in connection with the elections was also above average, but still quite low considering South Africa's arguably still consolidating democracy. As the paper is a weekly publication, these gains on the average have to be seen against the relatively small total number of stories in the Mail&Guardian.

The journalist interviewed from the Mail&Guardian sheds light on the relationship between the high number of newsy educational and whim practical knowledge articles, and the much lower number of stories encouraging civic activism: "I don't think our role is really to encourage people, I think it's more to report on what's happening," (appendix 5).

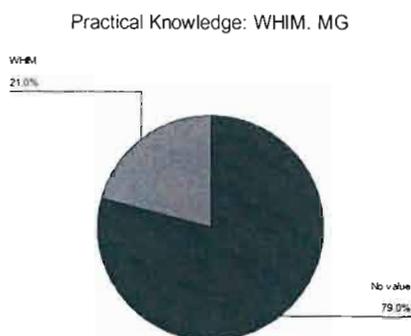


Figure 55

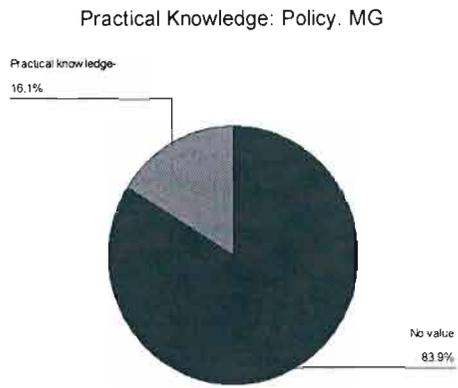


Figure 56

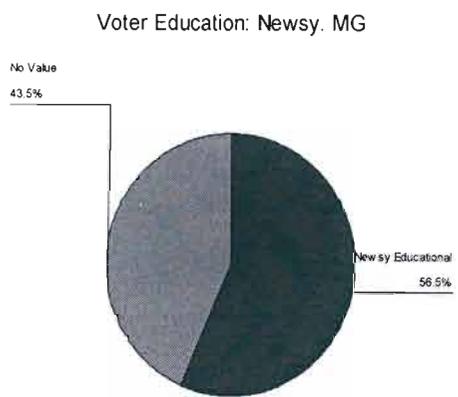


Figure 57

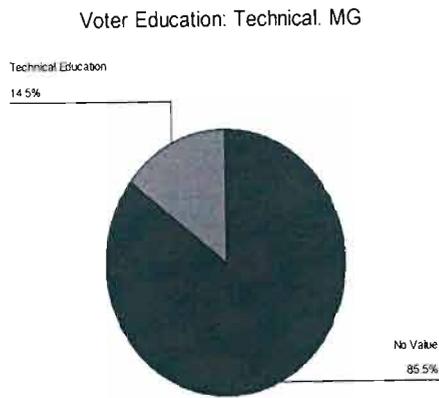


Figure 58

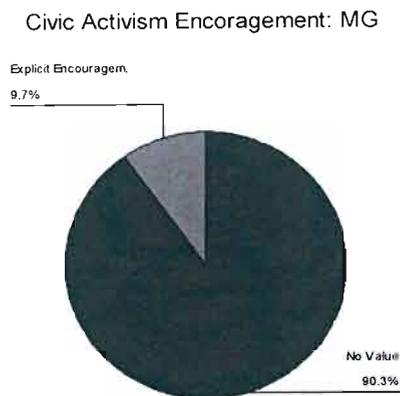


Figure 59

3.2.2.3. The Mail & Guardian as Entertainer

Forming a picture of the Mail&Guardian as an entertainer in their electoral coverage is difficult, given that two important trends in the coverage collide to some degree. The overwhelming majority of stories that formed part of the main themes sit uneasily with the relatively high share of stories framed around issues. However, the large number of narrative-confined stories is defended by the editorial staff member interviewed: “There are trends and there are patterns. But I think you need that, otherwise it’s going to be too disparate. You cater for a readership that needs some sort of pattern, you know,” (transcript interview 4).

As noted above, the number of strategically framed stories is low in relation to corresponding numbers in other sample publications, but they still represent well over half the total number of articles in the coverage. The journalist interviewed from the Mail&Guardian does not

express concern about the high number of strategically framed stories because she argues they do not represent sensationalism:

“But, do you think that’s a bad thing that the press does, go for controversy, and emphasise the strategic aspects of the party political race, or is that what they should be doing..?”

“I think some media do, and the Mail&Guardian does. I think some media will sensationalise and sex-up a story for the sake of sales, which I don’t think the Mail&Guardian does,” (appendix 5).

The news values apparently motivating the publication of the stories do not contribute clarity to the picture. They are remarkable in their small number, as only four news values played a role here. Prominence was the news value in only 3,2 % of stories, the same as the news value curiosity. The total of these two news values, 6,4 % does not point towards an entertainment focused coverage, but the absence of the news value significance points in a different direction. 80,6 % of stories were apparently motivated by timeliness.

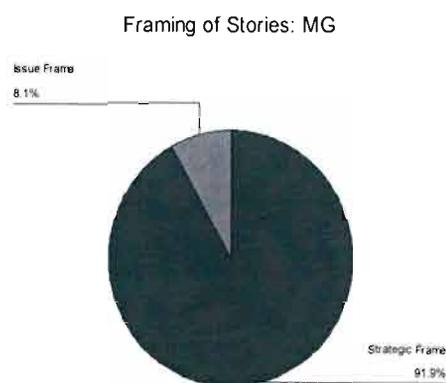


Figure 60

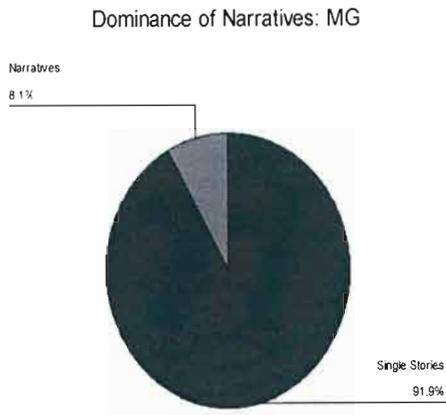


Figure 61

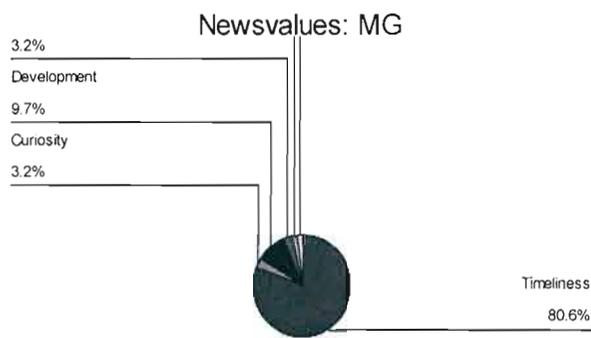


Figure 62

3.2.2.4. The Mail & Guardian as Opponent

The number of Watchdog-stories written in-house published by the Mail&Guardian may be seen as particularly low given the emphasis the Mail&Guardian interviewee places on investigative journalism. The weekly publication cycle of the newspaper also indicates that they have more time to prepare investigative stories, but seemingly the election coverage of 2004 in the newspaper centred more on developments in the election campaign than deep-digging exposes. The editorial staff member who was interviewed concurs with most of her colleagues in suggesting this is because few irregularities occurred in the electoral context, shifting the focus to more ideological issues:

“ (...) I mean in South Africa there generally aren't electoral irregularities, but in other African countries there would be, so then you've got to be more watchful there, but here it's more, probably, commenting on party politics, the idea of the ANC getting 2/3 majority, what effect that would have on democracy, it comes down to a sort of a more ideological debate, rather than irregularities, but always keeping an eye for those kinds of things,” (transcript interview 4).

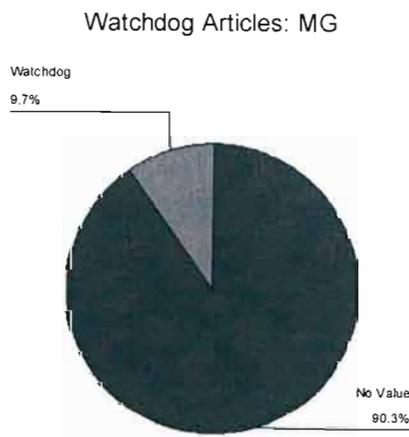


Figure 63

3.2.3. The Mercury

The Mercury is a daily publication from the Independent Newspaper Group. The paper mainly covers KwaZulu-Natal, but also draws a lot on the other Independent outlets nation-

wide in their coverage. The Mercury went in to the election campaign period with detailed plans as to how to cover the elections, and gathered input from the Independent Electoral Commission and external experts such as academics. In general, the focus of journalism should be to create debate in the view of the political reporter interviewed: “Firstly we try to keep people, or the electorate, who are key elements, or building blocks of democracy informed on matters. (..) We want to create a debate, basically. A link between the electorate and the elected,” (appendix 3).

The specific plan laid for the elections, however, focused on following party leaders, and preventing new competition to enter the market of the Mercury.

“You see, the election also coincided with the launch of This Day. A week, or two or three before that. So part of it was to ensure that they don’t penetrate into our area. We had a plan that was divided into quite a number of areas, (...) And different people were asked to cover different political players, yes,” (appendix 3).

3.2.3.1. Balance

The editorial staff member interviewed from the Mercury joined the chorus in accepting larger coverage of the larger parties in election coverage:

“During the election campaign, we even tried to give coverage to those little, small organisations. Of course, proportionate to what we think is their support. Like, for instance, we published the manifestos of all political parties. Because we want to give our readers as much, as wide as possible a choice as we can. Provided the constraints of the space that we have. So we tend to, really for minority parties, even if it’s a new party, we’ll give two-three-four-five paragraphs so people should know about it. Obviously, we trail the leaders quite extensively on manifestos, we make time to re-examine what is new in a manifesto. If the party is governing, we’ll find out what they promised previously and whether they have delivered that,” (appendix 3).

He also provided some insight into an ANC political marketing strategy that he said had paid off during the campaign:

They have a very attractive strategy, you know, they went house to house. Firstly, Thabo had been this aloof person, you know, always wearing suit on Sunday and everything. But then we begin to see him getting into the squatter camps, drinking tea, not only with African anties, but with tanties in some dorp as well, that was a story that was sold all over the world. Spin magic. We were all so fascinated with this new Thabo, but maybe we forgot about it now, (appendix 3).

In the actual coverage, the Mercury carried a total of 1070 in-text party name mentions. The ANC was slightly less dominant than in the other publications of the sample, but the IFP, the party with the KZN premier before the election, received roughly 20% less coverage than the ANC, while the DA received about 10% less than the IFP. The NNP retained its place among the big four topical parties. The new political party at the national level, the ID got a relatively low amount of coverage compared with the other publications in the sample. Consistent with the trend from the Witness, the Minority Front received little coverage despite their base in KZN, at 0,7%.

The trend of less ANC dominance than in other publications was also evident in the headline party name mentions. There was a small total of 29 party name mentions in the headlines. Here, the ANC was followed by the DA and the IFP. Again, the NNP came in among the top four at 10,3%. Notable was the absence of the ID and the MF from the list.

However, contradicting the trend from the party mentions, ANC personalities were the focus of front page pictures in the Mercury. Both pictures published were of top ANC profiles.

On directional balance there were a total of 115 relevant stories. The Mercury is the only newspaper in the sample to give the DA more positive coverage than negative. 3,3% of articles were positive towards the party, 2,0% negative. The editorial staff member anticipated this outcome of the analysis: "(..) I think the paper does have an element of sympathy for the DA," (appendix 3). The IFP however, received markedly more negative than positive articles, at 5,3% and 0,7%. The ANC suffered a similar but less pronounced trend, netting 6,7% negative articles, and 4,0% positives. However, the ID received more positive than negative articles, the positives at 2%. The IFP and SOPA received 0,7% positive articles each. A relatively low share of the articles was neutral.

The relatively low total of neutral articles contrasted sharply with the very high total of neutral headlines, at 92,7%. Conforming to an over-all trend, there was greater parity between positive and negative headlines among those headlines that had a bias. The ANC received 2% positive headlines and 2% negative headlines. The DA received more negative than positive headlines, with 1,3% and 0,7%.

As with all the other publications, the 45 letters to the editor published in the Mercury were sharply more partisan than the articles and headlines in the editorial coverage, with only 22,2% neutral. The ANC and the DA received far more criticism than praise in the letters, with 22,2% negatives for the ANC and 15,6% negatives for the DA, respectively. The positive letters came in at 6,7% for the ANC and a lower 2,2% for the DA. The NNP and the IFP also came in for criticism, with 4,4% negative letters each, and no positives. The Mercury is the only publication in the study without any positive letters for the IFP. The MF was far more discussed in the letters than in the editorial coverage, mirroring the trend from the Witness. In the Mercury, the party received 4,4% positive letters and 2,2% negative letters.

A low 2,2% of the 45 letters to the editor were considered to contain jargon.

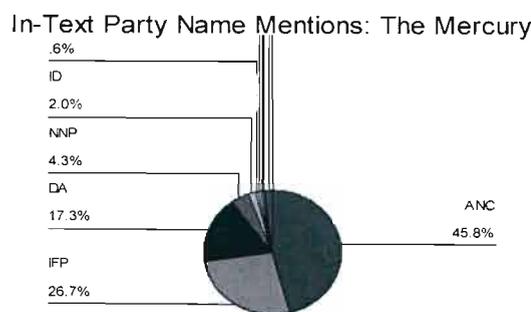


Figure 64

Headline Party Name Mentions: The Mercury

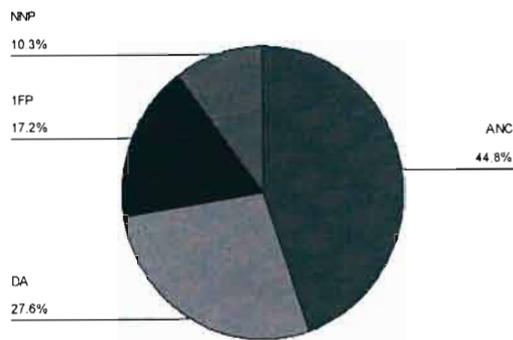


Figure 65

Direction of Headlines. The Mercury

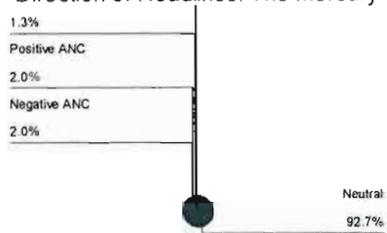


Figure 66

Directional balance letters: The Mercury

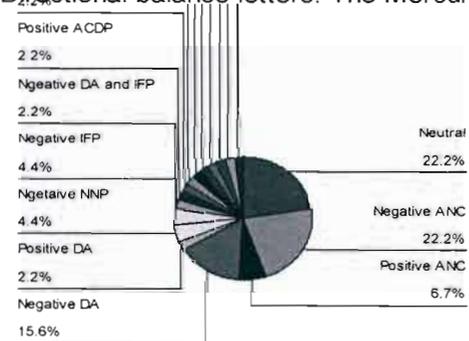


Figure 67

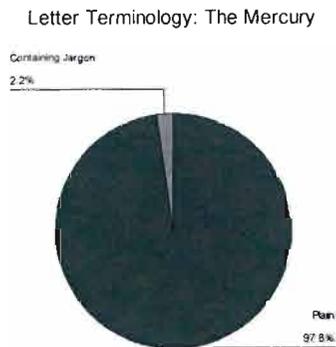


Figure 68

3.2.3.2. The Mercury as Helper

The positive indicator in this spectrum of categories from the Mercury is the newsy educational stories, which formed exactly a third of the total number of stories. The 11,3% of stories that were technical educational are also above the cross-title average. On the indicators of practical knowledge for the voters however, the coverage trended lower with a mere 12% of the articles in the whim category, a lower showing than both the Mail&Guardian and This Day and the cross-title result. A low 8,7% of articles contained policy relevant practical information. Given the stronger focus in the planning of the coverage on voter education and practical information than voiced by other publications in the sample, evidenced by the interview with the editorial staff member, the low results in these categories are disappointing. The newspaper did not fare well when it came to explicitly encouraging civic engagement with the elections either, with only 2,7% of articles containing such encouragement.

Practical Knowledge: WHIM. The Mercury

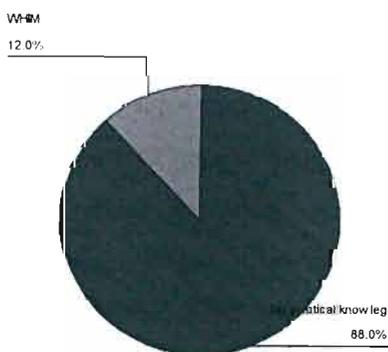


Figure 69

Practical Knowledge: Policy. The Mercury

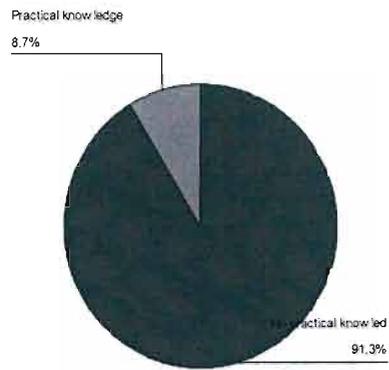


Figure 70

Voter Education: Newsy. The Mercury

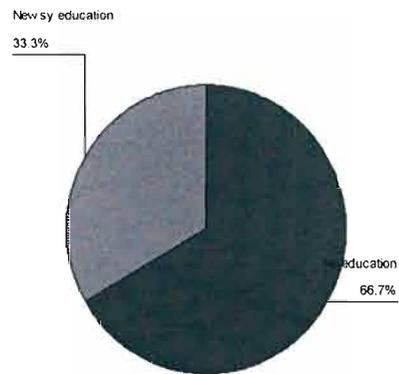


Figure 71

Voter Education: Technical. The Mercury

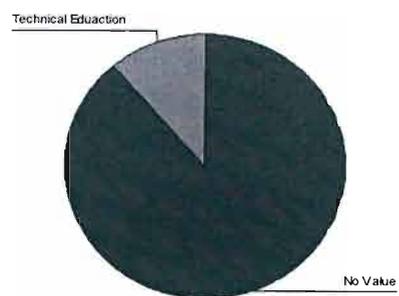


Figure 72

Civic Activity Encouragement: The Mercury

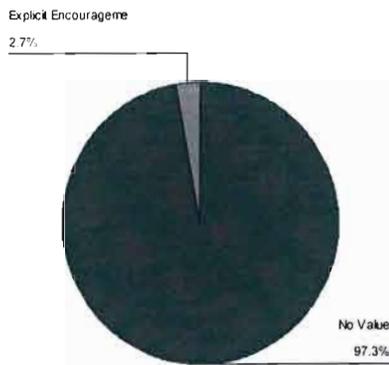


Figure 73

3.2.3.3. The Mercury as Entertainer

The Mercury had a relatively high percentage of issue framed articles in relation to the rest of the sample, at 30,7%. However, this was an anomaly, as they were quite average when it came to the number of stories outside the main narratives, at 18,7%. Anticipating the difference between the two indicators, the editorial staff member interviewed put the designation of trends to follow as an important part of the election coverage planning for any newspaper. “Each and every publication sets particular trends that it wants to follow in any given election,” (appendix 3).

In the coverage, the apparent news values motivating the coverage in the Mercury were more diverse than the other publications. A minority of stories seemed motivated by timeliness, at 46,7%. Prominence was the next most prevalent, at 18,7%, which is in line with over-all results. However newsmanship, a possible indicator of pack journalism, was high at 6,7%. The combination timeliness and prominence was evident in the exact same portion of the coverage. Curiosity seemed the motivation behind 4% of stories. The low number of significance stories found in other publications of the sample was also mirrored in the Mercury with a mere 2,7%. From these numbers it appears that the Mercury put high emphasis on entertaining coverage, with familiarity dethroned from the strong dominance in the other publications. The editorial staff member interviewed predicted a salience of the news value prominence, and was only partially proved right. His focus on prominence in the

interview was summed up most succinctly by this statement: “Almost by default prominence becomes prominent (..),” (appendix 3).

Framing of Articles: The Mercury

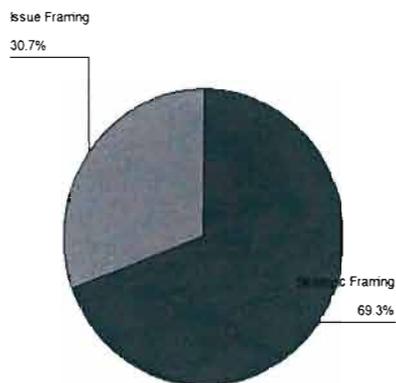


Figure 74

Dominance of Narratives: The Mercury

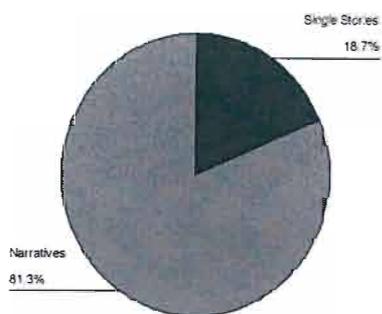


Figure 75

Newsvalues: The Mercury

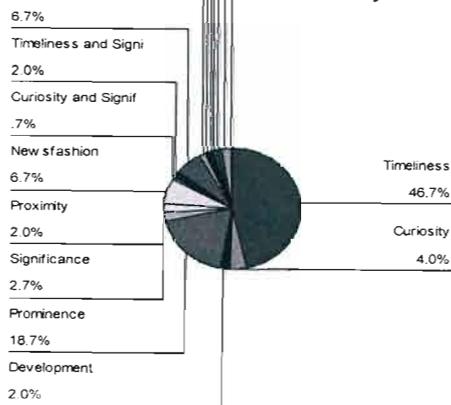


Figure 76

3.2.3.4. The Mercury as Opponent

As measured by the number of watchdog-articles, the Mercury did not fulfil its role as an opponent to people in power in any significant way, with only 0,7% of articles falling in under this category. This is below the cross-title average by a margin, and the lowest result among the dailies in the study. The editorial staff member interviewed, like the rest of the subjects, placed great emphasis on the watchdog-role of journalists however, going into to the mechanics of how one would fulfil this role as a political reporter.

“ Firstly you want to check whether the PFM is being adhered to, the Public Finance Management Act. Whether people are getting value for money, whether they people which some claim are being done for people, you know what I’m talking about? Whether the guy lives as cleanly as he claims, you know? That’s what we try to do. That’s the least we try to do,” (appendix 3).

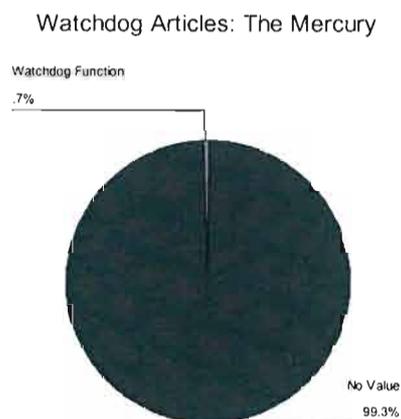


Figure 77

3.2.4.0. The independent on Saturday

The Independent on Saturday is published from Durban by the Independent Newspaper Group. The articles are typically shorter than in the Mercury, and the political content is often toned down compared to the daily publication. The Mercury, the Independent on Saturday and the Sunday Independent are all part of the same newspaper concern with an overlap in terms of staff writing for them. As the representative from Independent Newspapers was mostly concerned with the Mercury, his comments were used under the previous subsection.

Therefore, in this section, the coverage by the Independent on Saturday will be analysed in terms of results from the content analysis only.

3.2.4.1 Balance

Given that the Independent on Saturday is published once a week it carried fewer stories, and thereby fewer in-text party name mentions than the Mercury. The proportion of the coverage devoted to the different parties did not change much, however. The ANC received 48% of party name mentions while the IFP got 16,9%. The DA, with 16,2% is significantly less discussed than in the Mercury or in the cross-title result in the Independent on Saturday's coverage. The ID made an appearance in the coverage by the Independent on Saturday, while it was absent from results for the Mercury. The party ended at 4,7%. In the headlines, the ANC, DA and the IFP shared the number of party name mentions, at 33,3% each.

In terms of directional balance in the text, the ANC experienced parity between positive and negative stories, at 19% of stories going each way. Opposite to the positive coverage for the DA in the Mercury, the party received 14,3% negative stories in the Independent on Saturday, and no positives. The IFP also got negative stories only, at 4,8%, as did the ACDP. The trend was the opposite, however, for the ID which received a significantly more positive coverage in the Independent on Saturday than in the Mercury and the cross-title result, at 9,5%. The Independent on Saturday joined the cross-sample trend of having more neutral headlines than article texts. Significantly they took this the furthest with no bias in the headlines. All 21 headlines were found to be neutral.

A relatively high portion of the letters to the editor were neutral, at 40%, breaking the trend of markedly more biased letters than editorial content found in the other publications. Of those partisan, 20% each were, respectively, negative ANC, negative DA and positive DA, meaning that the DA was the party most often the subject of letters. The small total of five letters must however be kept in mind when looking at these numbers. Not one of the letters to the editor contained jargon.

Party Name Mentions In-Text- IOSA

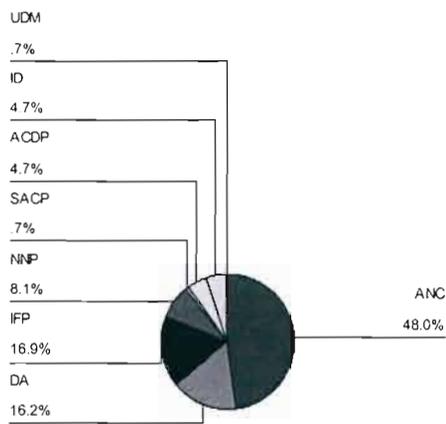


Figure 78

Headline Party Name Mentions: IOSA

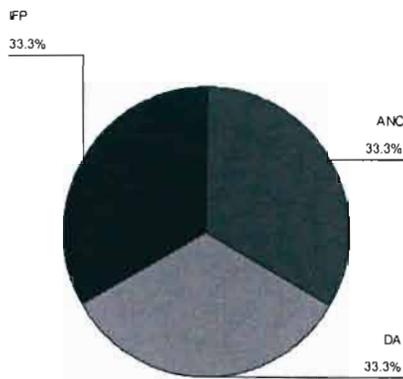


Figure 79

Directional Balance in Texts: IOSA

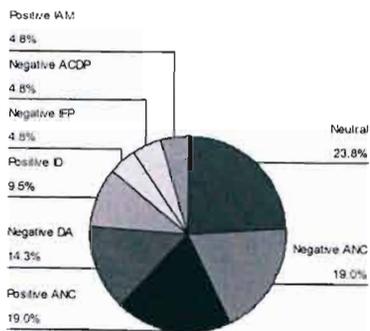


Figure 80

Headline Directional Balance: IOSA

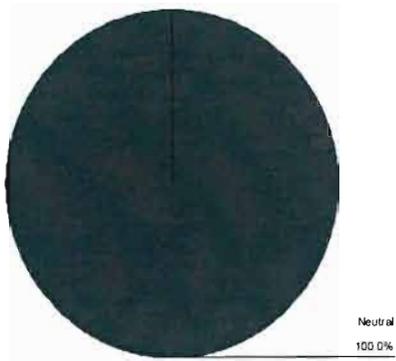


Figure 81

Directional Balance in Letters: IOSA

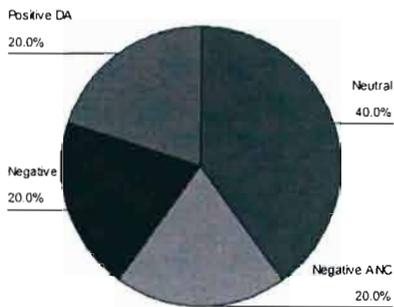


Figure 82

Terminology in Letters: IOSA



Figure 83

3.2.4.2. The Independent on Saturday as Helper

With regards to the practical knowledge indicators, in an unprecedented result, there were more policy related practical knowledge stories than whim, at 14,3% and 9,5% of stories respectively. However, none of these totals are high when compared with other publications in the sample. The categories most indicative of the Independent on Saturday's lacking performance as Helper are the voter education categories. Both the newsy educational and the technical educational categories remained empty. There were no articles explicitly encouraging civic involvement with the elections.

Practical Knowledge: WHIM. IOSA

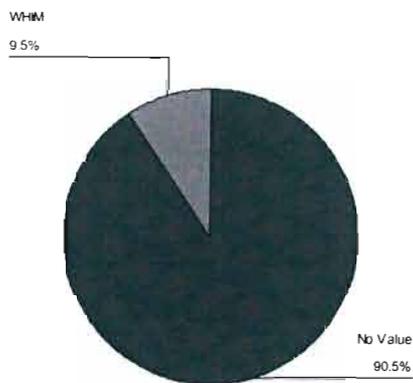


Figure 84

Practical Knowledge- Policy. IOSA

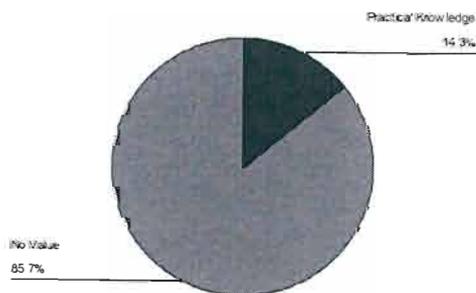


Figure 85

Voter Education Newsy: IOSA

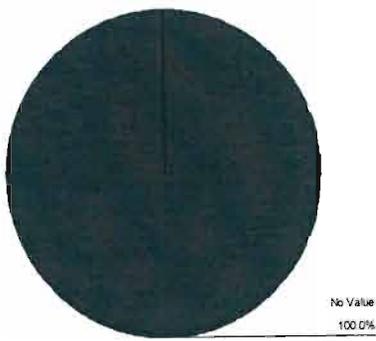


Figure 86

Voter Education Technical: IOSA

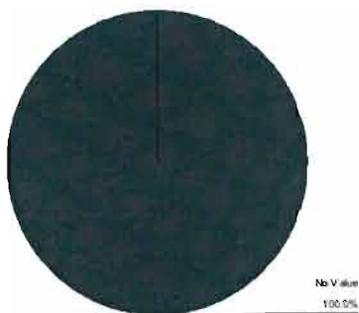


Figure 87

Civic Activism Encouragement



Figure 88

3.2.4.3. The Independent on Saturday as Entertainer

The election coverage in the Independent on Saturday was very much dominated by flowing narratives and strategic framing of stories, but the publication did not have the highest totals on any of these indicators. The still strong dominance of these parameters in the coverage

conflicted somewhat with the diverse base of news values evident in the coverage. Prominence was a less featured news value than in the rest of the sample publications, at 9,5%. Curiosity however, conformed by and large to the over all result at, 4,8%. Also conforming to the over all trend, 47,6% of stories were timely. The numbers for the single news values are reversed when the combinations are considered. Here, prominence was the pervasive news value. Timeliness and prominence combined in 14,8% of the stories, while news fashion and prominence, development and prominence and timeliness and development each combined in 4,8% of the stories. If you combine all the results built around prominence and timeliness you arrive at an overwhelming 71,9% of stories. Arguably, this combines with the numbers of stories with strategic framing and part of dominating narratives to indicate that the Independent on Saturday produced a highly tabloid coverage in the sense that they covered the election ‘race’ and ‘lighter’ topics in the electoral campaign to an overwhelming extent.

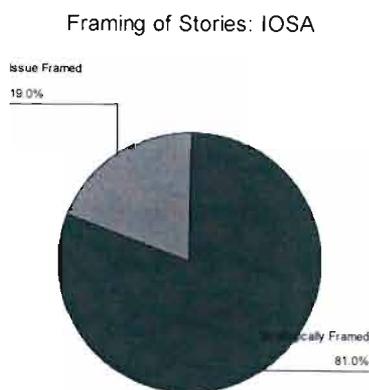


Figure 89

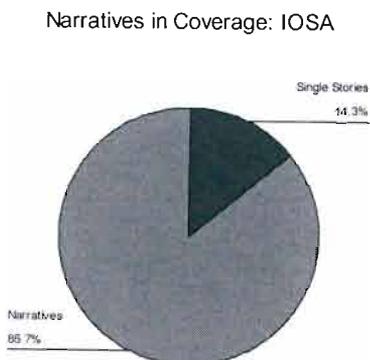


Figure 90

Newsvalues: IOSA

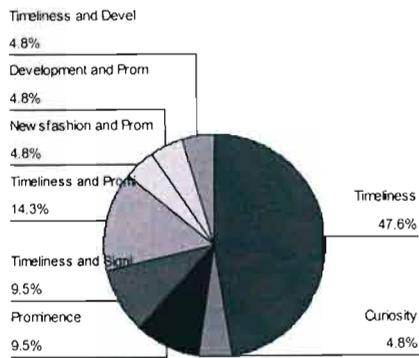


Figure 91

3.2.4.4. The Independent on Saturday as Opponent

The lack of voter educational stories combines with the lack of watchdog stories to indicate the clear entertainment focus of the election coverage in the Independent on Saturday. Even as part of a large newspaper concern, the Independent on Saturday did not carry any externally sourced watchdog stories, enforcing the above trends.

Watchdog Stories: IOSA

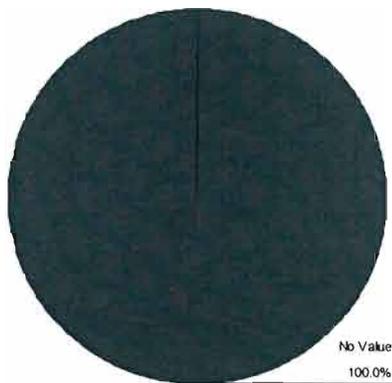


Figure 92

3.2.5. The Sunday Independent

The Sunday Independent is published from Johannesburg and carries lengthier articles than the Independent On Saturday, often bought from external writers.

3.2.5.1. Balance

The Sunday Independent had almost double the total of in-text party name mentions of its sister paper, the Independent on Saturday, but far fewer than fellow weekly publication the Mail&Guardian. This may indicate that the Sunday Independent carries longer stories than the Independent on Saturday, but fewer than the Mail&Guardian, which provides more depth as well. However, in terms of the in-text party name mention distribution, the Sunday Independent followed the over all trends, with nearly half of the party name mentions going to the ANC, a fifth of the mentions to the DA and 14% to the IFP. The PAC's 10,6% of name mentions, all occurred in one story. The NNP was covered over more stories but received only 3,8%. There was greater parity in the headline party name mentions. The ANC, the DA and the IFP received a quarter each of the headline party name mentions, the NNP received a lower, but still high 12,5%, as did the PAC.

Unsurprisingly, the ANC was represented on the one front page picture of party personalities to appear in the Sunday Independent.

As with the other publications in the sample, the largest share of article texts was neutral in terms of directional bias. In the Sunday Independent this trend was even more pronounced than in other cases, as this portion consisted of 66,7% of texts. The ANC received far fewer positive than negative stories, at 16,7% and 3,3%. 6,7% of stories were negative towards the IFP, with no positives. Most of the relevant headlines were neutral, with the ANC receiving equally as many positive as negative headlines. The IFP received the same amount of negatives as the ANC, but without the positives. The Sunday Independent stood apart from the rest of the publications in the sample in that all seven relevant letters to the editor were party politically neutral as well. This represented a reversal of the trend of more bias in the letters than in the editorial coverage.

Party Name Mentions In-Text- ISUN

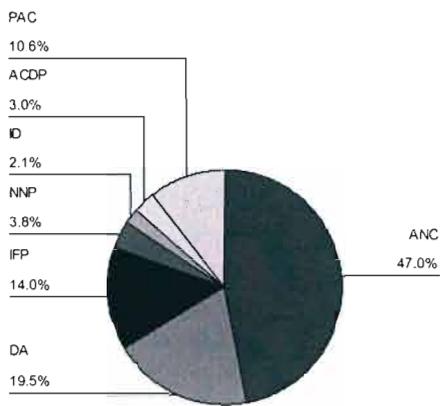


Figure 93

Party Name Mentions in Headlines: ISUN

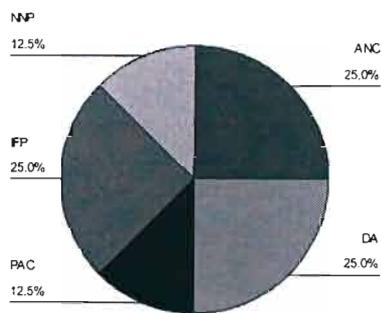


Figure 94

Front Page Pictures: ISUN



Figure 95

Directional Balance of Texts: ISUN

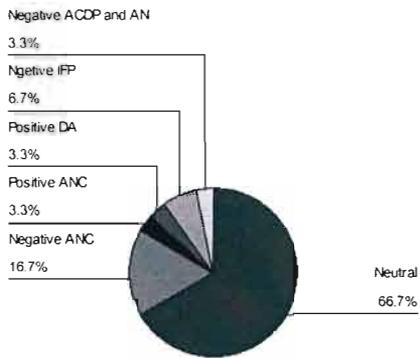


Figure 96

Directional Balance of Headlines: ISUN

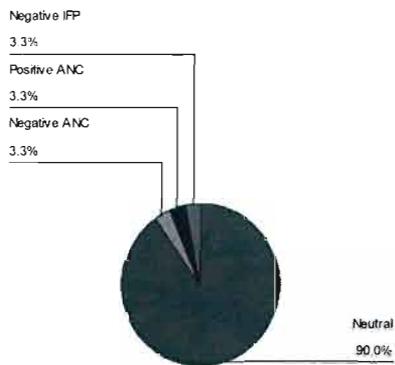


Figure 97

Directional Balance of Letters: ISUN

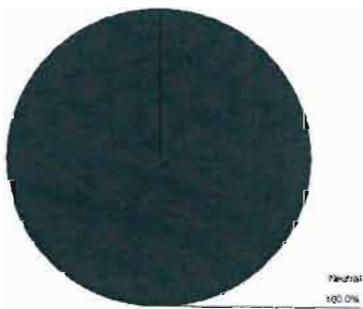


Figure 98

Terminology in letters: ISUN



Figure 99

3.2.5.2. The Sunday Independent as Helper

The Sunday Independent scored poorly on all helper-indicators, with only 4% of stories both disseminating practical knowledge to voters of the whim kind and containing policy related practical information. There was a perfect overlap between these two categories. In contradiction to the Independent on Saturday, the Sunday Independent carried voter educational stories, but scored low totals in both categories with 20% being voter educational of the kind relaying current developments in the electoral context and 10% being technical educational. The numbers for civic activism encouragement reinforce this trend, with a single story, or 3,3 % falling in this category.

WHIM: ISUN

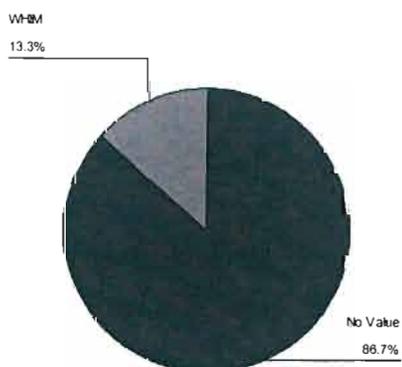


Figure 100

Practical Knowledge: Policy. ISUN

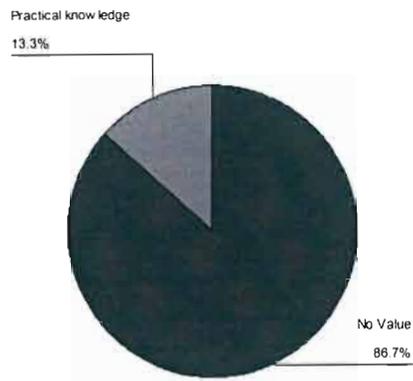


Figure 101

Voter Education: Newsy. ISUN

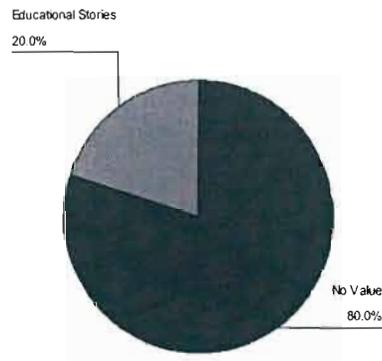


Figure 102

Voter Education: Technical. ISUN

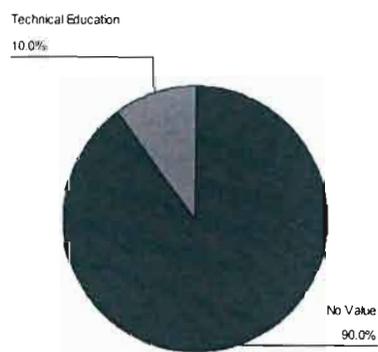


Figure 103

Stories Encouraging Civic Activism: ISUN

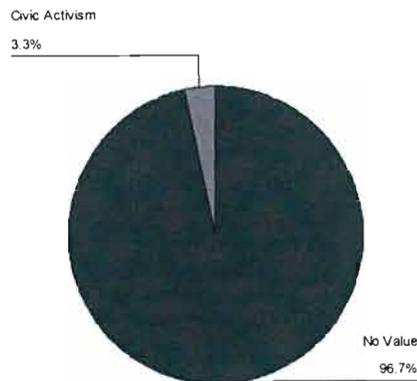


Figure 104

3.2.5.3. The Sunday Independent as Entertainer

A relatively high portion of stories, in the context of the over all results, were stand-alone, independent of the big narratives, at 30%, and issue framed, at 40%. This trend is reinforced by the news value results, where for the first time for the publications of the Independent Newspaper Group significance featured with relative prominence, at 16%. Conforming to the trend set by the rest of the publications in the sample, timeliness was the dominating news value in the coverage at 43,3% of stories. A high 26,7% reflected the prominence news value, whereas proximity and newsfashion were reflected by a relatively low 3,3% of the stories each. These results indicate that the election coverage by the Sunday Independent was far less tabloid in direction than that of The Independent on Saturday, but still level with other publications in the sample in this regard. The outstanding feature of the coverage seems to be the relatively high share of stories that were independent of the major narratives.

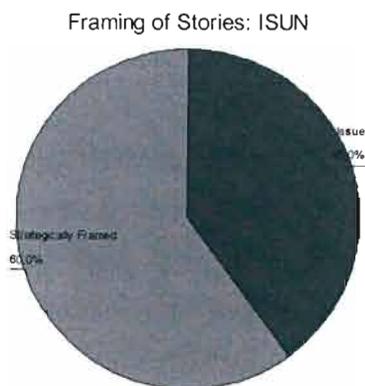


Figure 105

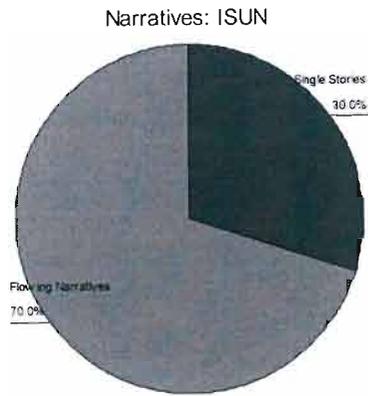


Figure 106

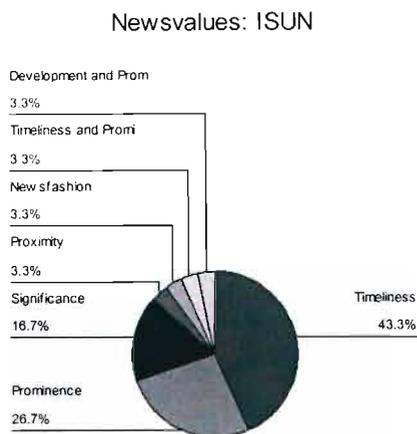


Figure 107

3.2.5.4. The Sunday Independent as Opponent

The 6,7% of stories that were watchdog stories combine well with the low number of voter educational and practical information-stories, but conflicts somewhat with the low number of neutral or negative stories in the directional balance category, in painting a picture of an election coverage in which opposition, and the critical light on people in power played only a very small role.

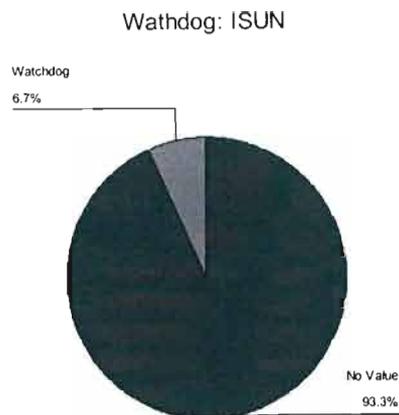


Figure 108

3.3.0 Interviews

This exposition of the main trends in the interview responses will centre around the guiding questions that were the starting points of the interviews. The different perspectives of the respondents on these quandaries are reflected in near key-word form.

3.3.1 The main functions of the press

There are diverse views in the group of respondents on the question regarding the main functions that the press should perform during a democratic election campaign. There is general agreement that the press should inform voters, or the “building blocks of democracy,” (appendix 3), about their possible alternatives in the election; the various parties and their policy proposals. Some kind of numerical balance is viewed as an important factor in achieving fairness in this regard. Most also list the watchdog function as important, one of the interviewees even placing complete emphasis on this function. Directional balance and agenda balance are also important, but not easy to maintain, given that “a lot of actual reporting is done prior to the elections anyway, in party political situations,” (appendix 5). Another function listed is creating debate, a link between the electorate and the electoral contenders. Mobilising voters to engage with the elections was a function mentioned by one of the journalists only.

3.3.2 The numerical balance of the coverage

All subjects were in agreement that the press coverage had overwhelmingly discussed the ANC more than the other parties. They also agreed that given the ANC's estimated support in the electorate, and the stronger likelihood of ANC proposals actually becoming government policies, a strong focus on the party was merited, even though one of the five interview subjects would have liked to have seen more balance. One journalist stated very pointedly that she thought the extensive ANC coverage "is realistic, you've got to," (appendix 4). In the words of another "we give a party (coverage) relative to what we think is their strength," (appendix 3).

The considerable resources of the ANC electoral machinery, and the new image of President Mbeki, both highly successful in political marketing terms, were mentioned as additional reasons for the extensive ANC coverage. The ANC was also criticised by one respondent for having "abused their government positions and government resources to actually create events of little substance for people to go to, that were attended because they were ostensibly on government business," (appendix 6). In reality these were canvassing events for votes in this view. The DA and the ID were mentioned as parties getting coverage over and above what their estimated support merited. For the ID this was because of the personality of Patricia De Lille who "knows how the news media process works," (appendix 2), and, on the other side, "particularly from the DA's point of view, they were very well armed with statistics.. it's almost like a candy store that you have to stay away from," (appendix 6).

3.3.3 The role of government in regulating press election coverage

All interviewees share a general agreement that the government should have no role in regulating the election coverage of the press in terms of normative goals and ideals. This regulation should be left to the organs of the press themselves. However, one of the interviewees thinks an independent government appointed body, perhaps similar to ICASA (the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa) in the broadcast sector, could monitor the election coverage as long as it does not become something that "shuts down and fences," (appendix 4).

3.3.4 Journalistic objectivity

All the subjects see journalistic objectivity as an ideal that journalists can only work towards, not fully achieve. They uniformly reject the notion of journalists being able to report without own comment, and do not think it desirable. Most prefer to use the terms balance and fairness instead of, or as cornerstones of, journalistic objectivity. But one interviewee stated that even though objectivity in journalism was an unattainable ideal, journalists still had to work towards it. “If you go and admit that there is no such thing as journalistic objectivity (..) you get this sort of dangerous situation where people (..) abuse that notion, from within a mainstream position to further their own position (..),” (appendix 2).

3.3.5 Narratives

All the interviewees agreed that the press tended to cover the election by way of following main narratives. The reasons given vary from pack journalism, no one wanting to be seen as having ‘missed’ something, through the subject of the stories being presented to the press as part of narratives in easy-to-adopt party statements and speeches, to the press themselves consciously organising their coverage around “the best themes,” (appendix 5), in order to make sense of a complicated electoral landscape for their readers. The respondents did not necessarily see anything wrong in structuring the coverage this way, as long as the big narratives did not prohibit other areas from being covered. On specific narratives discussed, there was disagreement as to whether the story of the prospects for political violence in KwaZulu-Natal had been driven, or toned down by the media.

3.3.6 Framing

All interviewees agree that strategic framing of stories is too prevalent, and that election coverage would benefit from more stories focused on issues. However, all also agree that some strategically framed stories are needed. “Elections are really I guess about who wins and the personalities at one level,” (appendix 4). Strategic framing not complimented with issue based stories is also “boring copy” in the view of one. “After all (..) people aren’t really betting on the elections,” (appendix 2). For the publications out of KZN, along with the Western Cape, a special set of circumstances applied in the view of another in that the electoral contest between the ANC and other parties was predicted to be close and tense. In

this view, strategic framing is more of a logical tool in tight electoral races than ones where the margins in support are wide. Also, in relation to KZN, “probably, one of your biggest problems is that, in the province, and I know this, neither of the two major newspapers, your Independent group and us, have the resources to do research in terms of senior journalists,” (appendix 6).

3.3.7 Voter Education

On voter education, the approach by the various outlets varied. This Day was a very new publication at the time of the election and in the opinion of their representative in the sample,

“(.) in practice people were just getting through the day (..) I think still a lot of This Day’s readers were very confused about whether to vote and so on. (..) But I have a sense, and I may be very wrong, that This Day didn’t really grapple with those questions,” (appendix 4).

The representative of The Witness worked in the Durban office of the publication, which was also brand new when the election was held. She concedes focusing on getting ‘the wheels in motion’ as well. The representative of Independent Newspapers outlines the most comprehensive strategy of voter education, and his group of newspapers worked actively with the Independent Electoral Commission to cater for this function. The Mail&Guardian has a readership comprising mostly “academic, political and trade union leaders,” (transcript interview 4). They therefore focused more on the ideologies and ideas behind the proposals of the parties and developments of the campaign as opposed to more overt voter education.

3.3.8 Civic activism encouragement

Views were varied on how the press could best generate interest in the election and whether this was even a function for the press to pursue. The representatives from The Witness and The Mail&Guardian argued that information is more important than interest generation for the press. As stated by one journalist, “I don’t think our role is really to encourage people, I think it’s more to report on what’s happening,” (appendix 5). Another argued that the electronic media reach more people and therefore have more of a role in generating interest, (appendix 6). The Mercury tried to generate interest in the election through facilitating debate on

relevant topics in the election in their columns. This Day tried to approach this function by making their coverage relevant to potential voters in general. The media analyst in the sample felt that over all, the government and the IEC used the theme of the ten years of democracy anniversary to counter voter apathy successfully.

3.3.9 Planning of fulfilment of functions in normative terms

Most of the journalists in the sample qualified their statements on the basis that they were not members of the editorial management of their publications and did not know the extent of planning that had happened within those quarters. With reference to the planning that did encompass the journalists however, the approach taken again varied from publication to publication. At the Witness the newly formed Durban office engaged in “bread and butter planning,” (appendix 6), as opposed to focussing on how to fulfil normative functions of the press. As noted by the media analyst in the sample, obviously “they need to get their logistics in order,” (appendix 2). Therefore, the bulk of planning taking place in the different news rooms would be of a practical character. He did however commend This Day as a publication that appeared to have done “excellent” planning before going into the election campaign coverage. The journalist working for This Day agreed that there had been a brainstorming workshop that came up with ideas for different stories and angles that could be followed and “grand perspectives, we had very grand ideas. So it was quite practical as well as theoretical. How do you translate those ideas into stories? But none of what we discussed was implemented,” (appendix 4). At the Mail&Guardian there was no planning for the elections on the normative level in which the journalists took part, but journalists applied their general set of ethics to the task at hand on a day-to-day basis. At Independent Newspapers the plan drawn up before the election focussed on how to cater for the needs and wishes of the readers in the best way possible so as to counter the challenge from This Day, since it was a brand new daily published nationally. One of the questions discussed in the plan was whether to discuss the electoral system in particular, and a perceived lack of accountability to the constituency of the individual elected representative promoted by the proportional representation system. The plan also raised the question of how to maintain a healthy debate in the newspaper as a way of generating interest in the coverage and the elections.

3.3.10 The possibility of ranking journalistic ideals in order of importance

All respondents were reluctant to say which journalistic ideals are less important than others, claiming that none can be discarded. The ideals of fairness and balance and the watchdog function were nominated as the most important by a majority of the interviewees.

The one dissenting respondent subordinated the watchdog function to that of social responsibility in many situations, providing a perspective with many similarities with the developmental press theory discussed earlier.

“The most important challenge we got facing the media in this country is in the dichotomy between activist and mobiliser. And somewhere along the line, the training institutions and the media themselves need to understand that maybe there is a different journalistic role if you’re living and working in a developing, young democracy, as we are in South Africa, i.e. some of your stories can be damaging,”
(appendix 2).

3.4.0. Conclusion

The election coverage provided by the English language press analysed is internally very similar. There is very little fundamental variation in what is found between the covers of these press outlets. A narrow range of news values permeate coverage in all the publications. The prominence of the subjects discussed is frequently prioritised ahead of significance of the subject at hand. This narrow range of news values combines with an equally narrow range of narratives within which the subjects of most of the articles are to be found. The above two factors in turn combine with the overwhelming proportion of strategic framing of the stories in the coverage. The Sunday Independent was the publication to come closest to parity in focus between the strategic aspects to the electoral competition and the issues involved in the stories carried. This publication only carried a very limited number of relevant articles, but did achieve a proportion of articles that were not strategically framed of 40%.

The results on the indicators of the provision of practical knowledge to voters useful in making their determination as to which party to vote for, how to follow the election campaign and how to vote are also indicative of the similarity in over all results among the publications. The one exception to this was that the Independent on Saturday did not carry any technical

practical information in their coverage. But the distribution among the rest of the publications of these articles conformed to the over all pattern of parity. Parity was also evident when the category of articles encouraging civic engagement with the election was examined. The results here were uniformly low, with less than five in a hundred articles containing such encouragement. This trend, however, was partly explained by the responses of the journalists interviewed. Out of the four prolific contributors to the coverage in their respective publications, two stated that explicit encouragement in articles should be toned down, in favour of engaging readers in the election process by creating debate in the newspaper columns, and providing useful information to the potential voters in the articles carried, respectively.

There proved to be numerous indicators to the lacking significance of the different readerships of the newspapers in this study, as divided by their provincial and national reach. One has been mentioned above, the uniformity in those trends and narratives that dominated the coverage. Another trend that is illustrative is that the newspaper titles were united in relegating the Minority Front to the ranks of the very small parties in terms of coverage. The Minority Front is a party that is active primarily in KwaZulu-Natal. The newspapers also uniformly covered the NNP as one of the major four parties in the country, along with the ANC, the DA and the IFP. This was so even if the bastion of national support for the NNP was known to be the Western Cape. Of course there are factors to explain this, such as the national campaigning of the NNP and the history of the party as a powerful actor in South African politics, but arguably it is doubtful whether this disparity in coverage could be maintained if prominence of the party had been a less powerful factor in determining the coverage.

The indicators showing the amount of coverage given to the different political parties also show converging trends between the different publications. The ANC dominated the coverage, getting about half the total in-text coverage. The DA was almost uniformly the number-two-party in terms of coverage in the text of the articles, covered about half as much as the ANC in the texts. The exception to this was the Mercury, which spoke more about the IFP than the DA. An exception of a different kind was the number of front page pictures of party personalities. In this case the DA did not feature, whereas the IFP got a healthy 15% of front page pictures across all titles. These pictures are somewhat removed from the textual coverage given the equally strong showing of the ID, a much smaller party with a much

weaker showing on the other numerical balance indicators. The dynamics between the ANC and the DA in terms of directional balance are also noteworthy. The ANC got more negative articles, but also more positive ones. This means that the governing party was treated less critically by the press than the Official Opposition. The DA had a higher portion of negative articles in their coverage and, by extension, fewer positives. The exception to this was the Mercury, which was the only publication to give the DA slightly more positive articles than negatives. This Day was the only newspaper to give the ANC more positive than negative coverage. The IFP received similar treatment to the DA with far more negative than positive coverage, though the tendency was less pronounced for this party. In general terms, the headlines were far more neutral than the texts of the articles in all the publications, while the letters to the editor were more partisan than the articles in the editorial coverage. Generally, the direction of the bias in the articles and in the letters to the editor did not match.

The impression of parity breaks somewhat when it comes to voter education, however. The Independent on Saturday is on the one extreme and carried no voter education at all on technical aspects of the elections or of developments and events in the campaign found in the newsy educational category. At the other end of the spectrum, the Mail&Guardian stands out with 56, 5% of their articles falling into the newsy education category. The Mercury also showed a relatively healthy result here. However, the open nature of this category means more articles would arguably be likely to fall into this category, especially given the emphasis of all the editorial staff members interviewed on informing the electorate about what happens in the electoral context. The impression of parity is also undermined by the big spread in the number of watchdog articles. A mere 0,5% of articles in the Witness fell into this category, while the Mail&Guardian came out best with 9,7%. This is a spread of more than 9% of articles, and gives an indication to the different profiles of the Witness and the Mail&Guardian. But, given the emphasis placed by all the interviewed journalists on the watchdog function, the number achieved by the Mail&Guardian should perhaps have been at the lower end of results.

Chapter 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Context and Conceptual Framework

This thesis has attempted to adapt a normative framework of benchmarks by which to evaluate the performance of the press in their role in upholding democracy, developed for a first world context, to the coverage by South African press of the 2004 general election. The results generated by this quantitative research have been triangulated with comments and perspectives from journalists at the forefront of generating the coverage that was the subject of the study, and a leading South African media analyst. The study has examined the manifest coverage rather than searching for explanations as to why the content of the press coverage of this election turned out the way it did. Yet there are perspectives in the literature around the functions of the press, and the structural context in which the press works, that can provide insights.

Various sources on related themes such as journalistic objectivity, political marketing and performance benchmarking were examined. McQuail (1996), McNair (1995) and Norris (2000) proved to be very useful in unpacking specific aspects of performance benchmarking of media in modern democracies. Moreover, various sources were used to explain the coming together of different cases of media history with different characteristics from Australia, Norway, England and Russia to the United States of America into one broad commercially driven media environment. All sources seem to demonstrate that the media in democracies play a very crucial role. This has been demonstrated through showcasing the advent of political marketing as a form of political communication. Despite the disparities between the societies above, their media contexts are similar. The literature also highlights the point that the media cannot be free from diverse normative standards, even if the principle of journalistic objectivity is used as alibi. In electoral situations, the main reason for the need for normative consideration of the workings of the media is that the media plays an integral role in packaging and selling political messages to the citizenry, as demonstrated by the literature.

The theoretical framework explored a number of diverse approaches to the study of media and politics. These include citizenship approaches that explore the role of the citizen in a democracy, as well as theories on the role of the press in democracies. The libertarian and

egalitarian models of the role of the press in democracy assign the press great responsibility for allowing diverse views and opinions to reach the citizens of society. It is likely that elements of all four major theories of the press are current in South Africa today. Authoritarianism was strongly in evidence during the Apartheid years, promoted by the then government. The media in South Africa conformed to this model in broad terms, willingly or reluctantly, (Retief, 2002: 19). Today, the developmental model may offer a better description of sections of the South African media than authoritarianism. The developmental model sees the role of the press mainly as contributing to “nation building and patriotism,” (Retief, 2002: 17). To the degree that this model holds sway in the press, the press will cover issues known to be deemed important by the government. In practical terms, this often means speeches by the president and ministers and presidential, ministerial visits and information released prominently by the government. In the developmental model, the media offer only limited criticism of the government, (Retief, 2002: 17). But in themselves, the models of the press offer only a patchy picture of the background to the election coverage on which this study reflects. The South African press today is formally free, but as mentioned by Stuart (1999) the power of advertising and the free market in limiting the range of views expressed in main stream media was discovered as early as the nineteenth century in Europe and North America. The commercial pressures on the press have not been reduced since then, even if the manifestations of these pressures are now different. The shrinking size of newsrooms and the cut-throat competition among press outlets are among the factors leading to less substance finding its way into the coverage in favour of strategic framing, a focus on conflict, sex and personalities, or so called ‘dumbing down’, of the coverage, (Norris, 2000: 13).

This dissertation looked at cultural and critical theories related to structural and commercial aspects of today’s media landscape, which include theories of political economy, pluralism and ideological state apparatus theories. The concept of manufacture of consent as articulated by Herman and Chomsky (1988: 2) refers to this tendency as one of their “filters” in their propaganda model, describing how the elites control media coverage, and so ‘manufacture consent’ to help them guard their privileged position in society. There are countless different views on which one of these different theoretical perspectives, if any, can explain the content of the political coverage of the press. Most importantly, the dissertation discussed normative models articulated by McQuail (1996), McNair (1995) and Norris (2000) around the issue of media performance benchmarking in modern democracies. These models seem to agree that general responsibilities of the media in everyday coverage and more particularly in the

coverage of election campaigns have to be combined with specific, measurable obligations.

4.2 Media performance against normative benchmarks

The numerical results generated through this study paint a coherent picture of the coverage of the election by the press. The press focused primarily on the strategic aspects of the subjects of the articles carried. The coverage was dominated by a limited set of themes or narratives that were consistently dominant throughout the coverage. The press spoke about a limited number of parties, with one party, the ANC, dominating the coverage strongly. The press showed less bias in their headlines than in the text of the articles. There was less bias in the editorial coverage than in the letters to the editor, and the direction of the bias was different in the two areas of press content. The governing party received more balanced coverage than did the most profiled opposition parties, with the DA and the IFP receiving a negative slant over all in the coverage. The ID experienced a positive slant. The press carried a relatively small number of watchdog-category articles, and were reluctant to explicitly encourage people to engage directly with the election or the electoral process. Finally, the press carried more newsy voter educational articles than articles containing practical information in the whim category. At the same time information about proposed and current policies of different parties was carried more extensively than voter education regarding the technical aspects of voting and the election process in general.

To the best of the knowledge of the author the current research is the first case study application of the employed normative media performance benchmark framework. As a consequence, the main function of this study is to establish benchmarks on the background of which further research into coverage of other electoral processes may be viewed. Some perspectives of the author regarding trends in the coverage and whether the respective trends were fortunate or unfortunate to the performance of the press of their role in democracy in the case of the South African general election of 2004 are given above, and in section 4.6.

4.3 Direction of election coverage

The developmental model is arguably in evidence in the current South African media landscape, and a significant portion of the election coverage was by admission of interviewed journalists generated from events by the political parties and governments, often arguably

pseudo events, given prominence by the structural requirements of the press and the necessity of not being 'seen to have missed anything'. Nevertheless, most of the coverage focused on challenges facing ordinary people and the country as a whole going in to the future rather than opportunities open going forward. The background to the counteracting trend in the coverage was the fact that this election was held during the year marking the ten year anniversary of the new political dispensation in South Africa. As part of the celebration of this anniversary the press focused on significant achievements that have improved the lives of South Africans since 1994. This was counterbalanced to a large degree by scrutiny of improvements that had not been achieved and problems that were still in evidence. However, this critical focus was counteracted again by reminders that the current governing party was the one that led the majority of South Africans to political emancipation. The ten years of democracy contextualisation of efforts by the electoral authorities to get people to the ballot box on Election Day also meant focus on achievements of the past decade and opportunities for the future.

4.4 Internal awareness and media performance benchmarking

Even if journalists are now free of 'old', formal allegiances such as party affinity by press publications, the similar education that journalists receive and the integration of the different media forms, print and electronic, have, some argue, resulted in the development of a common understanding of what 'good copy' is, a common mindset between journalists. In this line of thinking it does not matter which publication you work for, as long as you are a 'good journalist'. Of course, being a good journalist here does not relate to having good technical skills, it relates to knowing what 'good copy' is according to the developed common understanding. The different normative frameworks put forward by McNair (1995), McQuail (1996) and Norris (2000) are arguably fundamentally similar as to what the aspirations of journalism should be with regards to supporting democracy in society. The discussion of the results obtained in this study in the previous chapter provided fuel to the theory that, on the more practical level, there is a common understanding among press practitioners about what constitutes good election coverage.

The election coverage was similar across publications that arguably cater for different segments in the media market. According to statements by their editorial staff members interviewed, the Mail&Guardian has a highly educated readership, while the Mercury is more

of a catch-all publication. This Day is a publication still trying to establish itself and find its niche in the South African media market. The publication brands itself as a 'quality' newspaper, however. This label has traditionally been regarded as the opposite of 'tabloid', focusing more on issues than the factors described above. The Witness is a provincial newspaper, primarily covering KwaZulu-Natal, but also one of the catch-all titles. The interviewed journalists state that they themselves rarely took part in planning of how to safeguard normative standards during the election coverage. Where plans were made, they were not nearly always followed through. The journalists relied on the norms they have internalised through their journalistic careers to guide their writing, and their stated priorities of norms or standards often corresponded with the profile of the newspaper. For example, the staff member interviewed from the Mail&Guardian put a lot of emphasis on the watchdog function of journalism, on exposing wrongdoing by people in power. The journalist from the Mercury put greater emphasis on letting readers know about different electoral options and generating interest in the election through generating debate.

Despite the different profiles of the publications, and the often corresponding views of election related journalism held by journalists interviewed, there were clear trends that point to a fundamentally very similar coverage across all the publications. All publications covered the ANC more than the other parties, all gave the ANC much more parity between positive and negative coverage than the other parties, all focused strategically on the electoral context and all allowed a few dominating themes to run through their coverage. The publications gave similar amounts of practical information to voters and only to a very small degree did they explicitly encourage people to engage more actively with the electoral context. The publications also had different directional bias in their editorial coverage to the one presented in the letters to the editor.

The consequences of these results are several. The first one, perhaps the most worrying one, is that the number of issues that become topics in the electoral campaign through the media coverage, is limited. A few issues become disproportionately prominent in the coverage of the election, and even the issues that are covered are mostly covered through focus on prominent personalities or discussed mainly for their strategic impact on the electoral fortunes of different parties. The use of experts and prominent politicians as commentators may make the ordinary reader of the press coverage feel removed from the issues discussed. The parallel to the coverage of humanitarian disasters and disaster relief is tempting to draw here. Helping

the victims of disaster may seem important from the media coverage, but many people may perceive the scale of the problems as massive and start wondering if their individual contribution of help will actually matter to the people in need. The same dynamics may be at work in election coverage. That is why encouragement of civic engagement with the election is important; showing people that expressing their opinion makes a difference. The results from this study show that this function of the press did not feature prominently in the coverage by the press of this election. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were greater differences between the publications regarding the amount of their coverage that fell under the watchdog category in this study. But over all, it seems reasonable to draw the conclusion that investigative journalism did not compete on the agenda of the press with covering day-to-day events.

From the results obtained, it is difficult to say how well or how badly the press fulfilled their normative functions in this framework in covering the 2004 general election. This is because this is, to the best knowledge of the author, the first application of the framework to a concrete case and as such rather establishes benchmarks against which future results using the framework may be evaluated. Whether one determines the performance of the press to be weak or strong will be left to the reader. Some perspectives from the author have been provided above.

4.5 Methodological concerns

This study has analysed English-language press only. In a diverse society like South Africa, there are different views as to how representative the press writing in a single language is to the entire press landscape. There remains a possibility to test this representativity through applying the framework of benchmarks developed for this study to newspapers published in languages beside English. Another main limitation of this study has been the limited sample period. Research examining coverage over longer periods of time could contribute to our understanding of how coverage of the election is initiated, whether one can indeed find a point where political coverage becomes election coverage, and how the major trends develop over time. Another development of this research that could be of use is investigation into effects of the media coverage on the audience through surveys and available statistics, such as voter turnout variations, election results and the like. Audience perspectives on the election coverage by the press could also yield a corrective to the perspectives provided by those

involved in the creation of the press content analysed.

4.6 Recommendations

1. The respective professional associations of journalists and publishers should outline specific areas for consideration by the contributors to the election coverage of the respective publications on how to improve the normative quality of their election coverage. These recommended focus points should be based on existing ethical codes of conduct adopted by the professional associations, as well as benchmark results generated by independent research.
2. Going into an election campaign period, any publication should proactively consider how it can promote diversity in its election coverage, promote the engagement of citizens with the debates in connection with the election and the election itself, and expose the shortcomings of governing and political opposition parties and personalities without becoming an intruder in the process. Planning on the normative level can often augment the practical planning in preparation for the campaign period in leading to fresher election coverage.

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Copies of the following newspapers published between March 1 2004 and April 16 2004: This Day, the Mail&Guardian, the Witness, the Mercury, the Independent on Saturday and the Sunday Independent. The Independent on Saturday on April 17 and the Sunday Independent on April 18 were also examined because they were the first issues of their respective titles after this election.

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Interview 1, conducted 20.09 2004 via telephone.

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5.4. Appendix 1: Tables

Cross-Title Results

Table 1: Party Name Mentions in Texts of Articles: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	2747	44,9	44,9	44,9
	DA	1361	22,2	22,2	67,1
	IFP	945	15,4	15,4	82,6
	NNP	491	8,0	8,0	90,6
	ACDP	95	1,6	1,6	92,2
	UDM	77	1,3	1,3	93,4
	FF+	3	,0	,0	93,5
	AAC	251	4,1	4,1	97,6
	ID	41	,7	,7	98,3
	MF	89	1,5	1,5	99,7
	SACP	13	,2	,2	99,9
	PAC	2	,0	,0	100,0
	AZAPO	1	,0	,0	100,0
	NANDO	1	,0	,0	100,0
	KISS	1	,0	,0	100,0
	Total		6118	100,0	100,0

Table 2: Headline Party Name Mentions: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	ANC	83	33,3	33,3	33,3	
	DA	80	32,1	32,1	65,5	
	IFP	34	13,7	13,7	79,1	
	NNP	17	6,8	6,8	85,9	
	ID	12	4,8	4,8	90,8	
	ACDP	4	1,6	1,6	92,4	
	FF+	6	2,4	2,4	94,8	
	PAC	9	3,6	3,6	98,4	
	SACP	1	,4	,4	98,8	
	GPSA	1	,4	,4	99,2	
	NANDO	1	,4	,4	99,6	
	NA	1	,4	,4	100,0	
	Total		249	100,0	100,0	

Table 3: Front Page Pictures: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	13	65,0	65,0	65,0
	ID	3	15,0	15,0	80,0
	IFP	3	15,0	15,0	95,0
	NNP	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

Table 4: Directional Balance in Texts: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	486	62,5	62,5	62,5
	Negative ANC	77	9,9	9,9	72,4
	Positive ANC	63	8,1	8,1	80,5
	Negative DA	31	4,0	4,0	84,4
	Negative NNP	16	2,1	2,1	86,5
	Positive NNP	5	,6	,6	87,1
	Negative ID	4	,5	,5	87,7
	Positive ID	19	2,4	2,4	90,1
	Negative IFP	27	3,5	3,5	93,6
	Positive IFP	9	1,2	1,2	94,7
	Positive TOP	1	,1	,1	94,9
	Negative FF+	1	,1	,1	95,0
	Positive FF	3	,4	,4	95,4
	Positive DA and NA	1	,1	,1	95,5
	Negative ACDP	2	,3	,3	95,8
	Positive ACDP	3	,4	,4	96,1
	Negative ACDP and ANC	1	,1	,1	96,3
	Positive ACDP and DA	2	,3	,3	96,5
	Positive NANDO	1	,1	,1	96,7
	Negative ANC and DA and NNP	1	,1	,1	96,8
	Negative ANC and ID	1	,1	,1	96,9
	Positive DA, Negative ANC	1	,1	,1	97,0
	Positive SACP	2	,3	,3	97,3
	Positive NA	1	,1	,1	97,4
	Negative UDM	3	,4	,4	97,8
	Positive DA and GP	1	,1	,1	97,9
	Positive SOPA	1	,1	,1	98,1
	Negative ANC and NNP	2	,3	,3	98,3
	Positive ANC and NNP	1	,1	,1	98,5
	Negative AZAPO	1	,1	,1	98,6
	Negative PAC	2	,3	,3	98,8

Negative KISS	1	,1	,1	99,0
Negative NLP	1	,1	,1	99,1
Positive AZAPO	1	,1	,1	99,2
Positive PAC	1	,1	,1	99,4
Negative DA and ID	2	,3	,3	99,6
Negative ACDP and DA and NNP and UDM	1	,1	,1	99,7
Pos ANC and ID	1	,1	,1	99,9
Negative AZAPO and SOPA	1	,1	,1	100,0
Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 5: Directional Balance in Headline Wording: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	664	83.8	83.8	83.8
	Negative ANC	40	5.1	5.1	88.9
	Positive IFP	4	.5	.5	89.4
	Negative FF+	2	.3	.3	89.6
	Positive FF+	2	.3	.3	89.9
	Positive ANC	24	3.0	3.0	92.9
	Negative ACDP and ANC	2	.3	.3	93.2
	Positive ACDP and DA	2	.3	.3	93.4
	Negative DA	19	2.4	2.4	95.8
	Negative UDM	2	.3	.3	96.1
	Positive DA	4	.5	.5	96.6
	Negative NNP	9	1.1	1.1	97.7
	Negative PAC	1	.1	.1	97.9
	Positive NNP	1	.1	.1	98.0
	Positive PAC	1	.1	.1	98.1
	Negative DA and ID	2	.3	.3	98.4
	Negative IFP and PAC	1	.1	.1	98.5
	Negative ID	2	.3	.3	98.7
	Positive ID	5	.6	.6	99.4
	Negative IFP	5	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	792	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Directional Balance in Letters to the Editor: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	48	15,8	15,8	15,8
	Negative ANC	68	22,4	22,4	38,2
	Positive ANC	21	6,9	6,9	45,1
	Negative DA	55	18,1	18,1	63,2
	Positive DA	22	7,2	7,2	70,4
	Negative NNP	7	2,3	2,3	72,7

Positive NNP	3	1,0	1,0	73,7
Negative ID	6	2,0	2,0	75,7
Positive ID	4	1,3	1,3	77,0
Negative IFP	8	2,6	2,6	79,6
Negative IFP	8	2,6	2,6	82,2
Negative DA and IFP	8	2,6	2,6	84,9
Positive DA and MF	1	,3	,3	85,2
Negative ACDP	4	1,3	1,3	86,5
Positive ACDP	9	3,0	3,0	89,5
Negative ACP	1	,3	,3	89,8
Positive ACP	2	,7	,7	90,5
Positive DA and IFP	1	,3	,3	90,8
Positive DA, Negative ANC	2	,7	,7	91,4
Negative DA and NNP	3	1,0	1,0	92,4
Positive IAM	1	,3	,3	92,8
Negative UDM	1	,3	,3	93,1
Negative ACDP and DA	1	,3	,3	93,4
Positive DA, Negative IFP	1	,3	,3	93,8
Positive ANC and DA and IFP	1	,3	,3	94,1
Negative NNP and ANC	1	,3	,3	94,4
Positive MF	2	,7	,7	95,1
Positive ID, Negative DA	2	,7	,7	95,7
Negative PAC	1	,3	,3	96,1
Positive ACDP, Negative DA	1	,3	,3	96,4
Negative MF	1	,3	,3	96,7
Positive ANC and DA	1	,3	,3	97,0
Negative SACP	1	,3	,3	97,4
Positive ANC, Negative DA	3	1,0	1,0	98,4
Positive AZAPO	2	,7	,7	99,0
Positive PAC, Negative ANC	1	,3	,3	99,3
Positive GPSA	1	,3	,3	99,7
Positive IFP, Negative ANC	1	,3	,3	100,0
Total	304	100,0	100,0	

Table 7: Letter Terminology: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Jargon	4	1,3	1,3	1,3
	Plain Language	300	98,7	98,7	100,0
	Total	304	100,0	100,0	

Table 8: Practical Information Contained in Articles: WHIM. All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	657	84,4	84,4	84,4
	Practical Information WHIM	121	15,6	15,6	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 9: Practical Information: Policy. All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No practical info	691	87,7	87,7	87,7
	Practical info	97	12,3	12,3	100,0
	Total	788	100,0	100,0	

Table 10: Voter Education: Newsy. All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No educational value	553	71,1	71,1	71,1
	Educational value	225	28,9	28,9	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 11: Voter Education Technical: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No technical voter education	700	90,0	90,0	90,0
	Technical voter education	78	10,0	10,0	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 12: Articles Explicitly Encouraging Civic Activism: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	745	95,8	95,8	95,8
	Explicit Encouragement	33	4,2	4,2	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 13: Framing of Articles: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strategic	674	86,6	86,6	86,6
	Issue Framing	104	13,4	13,4	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 14: Articles Part of Main Narratives: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Part of main narratives	673	86,5	86,5	86,5
	Single Stories	105	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 15: Newsvalues: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	428	55,0	55,0	55,0
	Curiosity	24	3,1	3,1	58,1
	Development	60	7,7	7,7	65,8
	Prominence	161	20,7	20,7	86,5
	Prominence and Timeliness	4	,5	,5	87,0
	Significance	25	3,2	3,2	90,2
	Proximity	6	,8	,8	91,0
	Newsfashion	12	1,5	1,5	92,5
	Curiosity and Significance	1	,1	,1	92,7
	Timeliness and Significance	5	,6	,6	93,3
	Timeliness and Prominence	31	4,0	4,0	97,3
	Newsfashion and Prominence	3	,4	,4	97,7
	Development and Prominence	3	,4	,4	98,1
	Curiosity and Prominence	2	,3	,3	98,3
	Development and Curiosity and Significance	1	,1	,1	98,5
	Significance and Prominence	1	,1	,1	98,6
	Timeliness and Development	4	,5	,5	99,1
	Timeliness and Proximity	2	,3	,3	99,4
	Timeliness and Curiosity	5	,6	,6	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

Table 16: Watchdog Articles: All Titles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	758	97,4	97,4	97,4
	Watchdog Articles	20	2,6	2,6	100,0
	Total	778	100,0	100,0	

This Day

Table 17: In-Text Party Name Mentions: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	987	43,0	43,0	43,0
	DA	509	22,2	22,2	65,2
	IFP	243	10,6	10,6	75,8
	NNP	287	12,5	12,5	88,4
	ACDP	41	1,8	1,8	90,1
	FF+	14	,6	,6	90,8
	AAC	3	,1	,1	90,9
	UDM	16	,7	,7	91,6
	SACP	18	,8	,8	92,4
	ID	132	5,8	5,8	98,1
	PAC	32	1,4	1,4	99,5
	AZAPO	11	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	2293	100,0	100,0	

Table 18: Party Name Mentions in Headlines: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	83	33,3	33,3	33,3
	DA	80	32,1	32,1	65,5
	IFP	34	13,7	13,7	79,1
	NNP	17	6,8	6,8	85,9
	ID	12	4,8	4,8	90,8
	ACDP	4	1,6	1,6	92,4
	FF+	6	2,4	2,4	94,8
	PAC	9	3,6	3,6	98,4
	SACP	1	,4	,4	98,8
	GPSA	1	,4	,4	99,2
	NANDO	1	,4	,4	99,6
	NA	1	,4	,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Table 19: Front Page Pictures: This Day

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ANC	7	53.8	53.8	53.8
IFP	3	23.1	23.1	76.9
ID	2	15.4	15.4	92.3
NNP	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Table 20: Directional Balance in Texts: This Day

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	205	66.1	66.1	66.1
Negative ANC	27	8.7	8.7	74.8
Positive ANC	28	9.0	9.0	83.9
Negative DA	9	2.9	2.9	86.8
Negative NNP	8	2.6	2.6	89.4
Positive NNP	4	1.3	1.3	90.6
Positive ID	6	1.9	1.9	92.6
Negative IFP	4	1.3	1.3	93.9
Positive IFP	3	1.0	1.0	94.8
Positive FF+	2	.6	.6	95.5
Negative ACDP	1	.3	.3	95.8
Positive ACDP	1	.3	.3	96.1
Positive ACDP and DA	1	.3	.3	96.5
Negative ANC, Positive DA	1	.3	.3	96.8
Positive SACP	1	.3	.3	97.1
Negative ANC and NNP	1	.3	.3	97.4
Positive ANC and NNP	1	.3	.3	97.7
Negative PAC	1	.3	.3	98.1
Negative NLP	1	.3	.3	98.4
Positive AZAPO	1	.3	.3	98.7
PAC	1	.3	.3	99.0
Negative DA, Positive ANC and NNP	1	.3	.3	99.4
Negative DA and ID	2	.6	.6	100.0
Total	310	100.0	100.0	

Table 21: Directional Balance in Headlines: This Day

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	258	83.2	83.2	83.2
Negative ANC	12	3.9	3.9	87.1
Positive ANC	12	3.9	3.9	91.0
Negative DA	4	1.3	1.3	92.3
Negative NNP	8	2.6	2.6	94.8

Positive NNP	1	.3	.3	95.2
Positive ID	1	.3	.3	95.5
Positive IFP	2	.6	.6	96.1
Negative FF+	6	1.9	1.9	98.1
Positive FF+	1	.3	.3	98.4
Positive ACDP and DA	1	.3	.3	98.7
Positive PAC	1	.3	.3	99.0
Negative DA and ID	2	.6	.6	99.7
Negative IFP and PAC	1	.3	.3	100.0
Total	310	100.0	100.0	

Table 22: Directional Balance in Letters: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	4	4,6	4,6	4,6
	Negative ANC	22	25,3	25,3	29,9
	Positive ANC	6	6,9	6,9	36,8
	Negative DA	23	26,4	26,4	63,2
	Positive DA	4	4,6	4,6	67,8
	Negative NNP	1	1,1	1,1	69,0
	Negative ID	2	2,3	2,3	71,3
	Positive ID	1	1,1	1,1	72,4
	Negative IFP	2	2,3	2,3	74,7
	Positive IFP	3	3,4	3,4	78,2
	Negative ACDP	3	3,4	3,4	81,6
	Positive ACDP	3	3,4	3,4	85,1
	Negative DA and NNP	2	2,3	2,3	87,4
	Negative UDM	1	1,1	1,1	88,5
	Negative DA and Positive ID	1	1,1	1,1	89,7
	Negative PAC	1	1,1	1,1	90,8
	Negative SACP	1	1,1	1,1	92,0
	Negative DA and ANC	2	2,3	2,3	94,3
	Positive AZAPO	2	2,3	2,3	96,6
	Positive ANC, Negative DA	1	1,1	1,1	97,7
	Positive PAC and Negative ANC	1	1,1	1,1	98,9
	Positive GPSA	1	1,1	1,1	100,0
	Total	87	100,0	100,0	

Table 23: Letter Terminology: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Plain	87	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 24: Practical Knowledge: WHIM. This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	261	84,2	84,2	84,2
	WHIM	49	15,8	15,8	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 25: Practical Knowledge: Policy. This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No value	275	88,7	88,7	88,7
	Policy Practical Knowle.	35	11,3	11,3	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 26: Voter Education: Newsy. This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	228	73,5	73,5	73,5
	Educational	82	26,5	26,5	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 27: Voter Education: Technical. This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	284	91,6	91,6	91,6
	Educational Stories	26	8,4	8,4	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 28: Civic Activism Encouragement: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	300	96,8	96,8	96,8
	Civic Activism	10	3,2	3,2	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 29: Framing of Stories: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Issue	290	93,5	93,5	93,5
	Strategy	20	6,5	6,5	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 30: Stories Part of Main Narratives: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single Stories	19	6,1	6,1	6,1
	Flowing Narrative Stories	291	93,9	93,9	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 31: Newsvalues: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	184	59,4	59,4	59,4
	Curiosity	6	1,9	1,9	61,3
	Development	38	12,3	12,3	73,5
	Prominence	58	18,7	18,7	92,3
	Significance	6	1,9	1,9	94,2
	Proximity	1	,3	,3	94,5
	Timeliness and Prominence	13	4,2	4,2	98,7
	Development and Prominence	1	,3	,3	99,0
	Timeliness and Development	1	,3	,3	99,4
	Timeliness and Curiosity	2	,6	,6	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 32: Watchdog Function Articles: This Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	300	96,8	96,8	96,8
	Watchdog Stories	10	3,2	3,2	100,0
	Total	310	100,0	100,0	

The Witness

Table 33: Party Name Mentions In-Text: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	605	40,7	40,7	40,7
	DA	384	25,9	25,9	66,6
	IFP	273	18,4	18,4	85,0
	ID	86	5,8	5,8	90,8
	NNP	58	3,9	3,9	94,7
	UDM	14	,9	,9	95,6
	FF+	15	1,0	1,0	96,6
	ACDP	25	1,7	1,7	98,3
	MF	17	1,1	1,1	99,5

SACP	1	,1	,1	99,5
NANDO	2	,1	,1	99,7
TOP	1	,1	,1	99,7
KISS	1	,1	,1	99,8
PAC	1	,1	,1	99,9
AZAPO	1	,1	,1	99,9
SOPA	1	,1	,1	100,0
Total	1485	100,0	100,0	

Table 34: Party Name Mentions in Headlines: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	14	19,2	19,2	19,2
	NANDO	1	1,4	1,4	20,5
	DA	26	35,6	35,6	56,2
	IFP	13	17,8	17,8	74,0
	FF+	3	4,1	4,1	78,1
	NNP	5	6,8	6,8	84,9
	GPSA	1	1,4	1,4	86,3
	ID	8	11,0	11,0	97,3
	ACDP	1	1,4	1,4	98,6
	SACP	1	1,4	1,4	100,0
	Total	73	100,0	100,0	

Table 35: Front Page Pictures of Party Personalities: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	3	75.0	75.0	75.0
	ID	1	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	4	100.0	100.0	

Table 36: Directional Balance of Texts: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	109	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Negative DA	10	4.9	4.9	58.0
	Negative ANC	24	11.7	11.7	69.8
	Positive ANC	13	6.3	6.3	76.1
	Negative IFP	9	4.4	4.4	80.5
	Positive ID	7	3.4	3.4	83.9
	Negative NNP	2	1.0	1.0	84.9
	Positive DA	8	3.9	3.9	88.8
	Positive ANC, Negative DA and NNP and UDM and IFP	1	.5	.5	89.3
	Positive IFP	5	2.4	2.4	91.7
	Positive TOP	1	.5	.5	92.2
	Positive FF+	1	.5	.5	92.7

Negative DA and IFP	1	.5	.5	93.2
Positive DA and NA	1	.5	.5	93.7
Positive ACDP and DA	1	.5	.5	94.1
Positive NANDO	1	.5	.5	94.6
Negative ANC and DA and NNP	1	.5	.5	95.1
Positive DA and IFP	1	.5	.5	95.6
Positive NNP	2	1.0	1.0	96.6
Positive ANC and ID	1	.5	.5	97.1
Negative ID	1	.5	.5	97.6
Positive SACP	1	.5	.5	98.0
Positive ACDP	1	.5	.5	98.5
Positive NA	1	.5	.5	99.0
Negative UDM	1	.5	.5	99.5
Positive GPSA	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	205	100.0	100.0	

Table 37: Directional Balance of Headlines: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	183	89.3	89.3	89.3
	Negative DA	6	2.9	2.9	92.2
	Positive DA	4	2.0	2.0	94.1
	Negative ANC	5	2.4	2.4	96.6
	Positive ANC	2	1.0	1.0	97.6
	Positive FF+	1	.5	.5	98.0
	Negative IFP	1	.5	.5	98.5
	Positive ID	1	.5	.5	99.0
	Negative UDM	1	.5	.5	99.5
	Negative DA and IFP	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

Table 38: Directional Balance in Letters: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	25	21,2	21,2	21,2
	Negative ANC	24	20,3	20,3	41,5
	Positive ANC	8	6,8	6,8	48,3
	Negative DA	15	12,7	12,7	61,0
	Positive DA	13	11,0	11,0	72,0
	Negative NNP	1	,8	,8	72,9
	Positive NNP	3	2,5	2,5	75,4
	Negative ID	1	,8	,8	76,3
	Positive ID	2	1,7	1,7	78,0
	Negative IFP	3	2,5	2,5	80,5

Positive IFP	5	4,2	4,2	84,7
Negative DA and IFP	7	5,9	5,9	90,7
Negative ACDP	1	,8	,8	91,5
Positive ACDP	1	,8	,8	92,4
Negative ACP	1	,8	,8	93,2
Positive ACP	2	1,7	1,7	94,9
Positive DA, Negative ANC	2	1,7	1,7	96,6
Negative DA and NNP	1	,8	,8	97,5
Negative ACDP and DA	1	,8	,8	98,3
Positive DA, Negative IFP	1	,8	,8	99,2
Positive ANC and DA and IFP	1	,8	,8	100,0
Total	118	100,0	100,0	

Table 39: Terminology in Letters to the Editor: The Witness

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Plain	118	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 40: Practical Knowledge Articles: WHIM. The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Articles without practical knowledge value	169	82,4	82,4	82,4
	Practical knowledge articles	36	17,6	17,6	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 41: Practical Knowledge Articles: Policy. The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Articles with no practical knowledge value	175	85,4	85,4	85,4
	Articles with public policy related practical knowledge	30	14,6	14,6	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 42: Voter Education: Newsy. The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	160	78,0	78,0	78,0
	Educational On Current Developments and Events in Campaign	45	22,0	22,0	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 43: Voter Education: Technical. The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	187	91,2	91,2	91,2
	Voter Education: Technical	18	8,8	8,8	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 44: Civic Activism Encouragement: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	193	94,1	94,1	94,1
	Stories with Explicit Encouragement	12	5,9	5,9	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 45: Framing of Stories: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Issue	52	25,4	25,4	25,4
	Strategy	153	74,6	74,6	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 46: Stories Part of Main Narratives: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single Stories	39	19,0	19,0	19,0
	Stories Part of Main Narratives	166	81,0	81,0	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Table 47: Newsvalues: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	105	51.2	51.2	51.2
	Curiosity	10	4.9	4.9	56.1
	Development	20	9.8	9.8	65.9
	Prominence	63	30.7	30.7	96.6

Prominence and Timeliness Significance	2	1.0	1.0	97.6
Proximity	4	2.0	2.0	99.5
Total	1	.5	.5	100.0
	205	100.0	100.0	

Table 48: Stories in Pursuit of Watchdog Role: The Witness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-watchdog stories	204	99,5	99,5	99,5
	Watchdog stories	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

Mail&Guardian

Table 49: Party Name Mentions In-Text: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	488	55,1	55,1	55,1
	DA	205	23,1	23,1	78,2
	IFP	84	9,5	9,5	87,7
	NNP	79	8,9	8,9	96,6
	PAC	15	1,7	1,7	98,3
	FF	6	,7	,7	99,0
	ACDP	9	1,0	1,0	100,0
	Total	886	100,0	100,0	

Table 50: Party Name Mentions in Headlines: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	11	57,9	57,9	57,9
	NNP	1	5,3	5,3	63,2
	DA	4	21,1	21,1	84,2
	PAC	3	15,8	15,8	100,0
	Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Table 51: Directional Balance of Texts: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	46	74.2	74.2	74.2
	Negative ANC	4	6.5	6.5	80.6
	Positive ANC	3	4.8	4.8	85.5
	Negative DA	2	3.2	3.2	88.7
	Negative NNP	1	1.6	1.6	90.3
	Negative ID	1	1.6	1.6	91.9
	Positive ID	1	1.6	1.6	93.5

Negative DA and IFP	1	1.6	1.6	95.2
Negative FF+	1	1.6	1.6	96.8
Negative PAC	1	1.6	1.6	98.4
Negative DA and NNP and ACDP and UDM	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 52: Directional Balance in Headlines: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	45	72,6	72,6	72,6
	Negative ANC	5	8,1	8,1	80,6
	Positive ANC	2	3,2	3,2	83,9
	Negative DA	4	6,5	6,5	90,3
	Negative NNP	1	1,6	1,6	91,9
	Negative ID	1	1,6	1,6	93,5
	Negative DA and IFP	1	1,6	1,6	95,2
	Negative FF+	1	1,6	1,6	96,8
	Negative PAC	1	1,6	1,6	98,4
	Negative ACDP and DA and NNP and UDM	1	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	62	100,0	100,0	

Table 53: Directional Balance of Letters: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
	Negative ANC	4	12.9	12.9	51.6
	Positive ANC	1	3.2	3.2	54.8
	Negative DA	4	12.9	12.9	67.7
	Positive DA	1	3.2	3.2	71.0
	Negative NNP	3	9.7	9.7	80.6
	Negative ID	2	6.5	6.5	87.1
	Positive ID	1	3.2	3.2	90.3
	Negative ACDP	1	3.2	3.2	93.5
	Positive ACDP	1	3.2	3.2	96.8
	Positive IFP and ANC	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Table 54: Terminology in Letters to the Editor: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Plain	29	93.5	93.5	93.5
	Jargon	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Table 55: Practical Knowledge Articles: WHIM. Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No value	49	79.0	79.0	79.0
	WHIM	13	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 56: Practical Knowledge Articles: Policy. Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No value	52	83.9	83.9	83.9
	Practical Knowledge: Policy	10	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 57: Voter education: Newsy. Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-Educational Newsy	35	56.5	56.5	56.5
	Educational	27	43.5	43.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 58: Voter Education: Technical. Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	52	83,9	83,9	83,9
	Technical Educational Stories	10	16,1	16,1	100,0
	Total	62	100,0	100,0	

Table 59: Stories Encouraging Civic Activism: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	56	90,3	90,3	90,3
	Stories With Explicit Civic Activism Encouragement	6	9,7	9,7	100,0
	Total	62	100,0	100,0	

Table 60: Framing of Stories: Mail & Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strategy	57	91.9	91.9	91.9
	Issue	5	8.1	8.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 61: Narratives: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single Stories	57	91.9	91.9	91.9
	Stories Part of Main Narratives	5	8.1	8.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 62: Newsvalues: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	50	80.6	80.6	80.6
	Curiosity	2	3.2	3.2	83.9
	Development	6	9.7	9.7	93.5
	Prominence	2	3.2	3.2	96.8
	Significance	1	1.6	1.6	98.4
	Timeliness/Curiosity	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 63: Watchdog: Mail&Guardian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	56	90,3	90,3	90,3
	Watchdog	6	9,7	9,7	100,0
	Total	62	100,0	100,0	

Mercury

Table 64: In-Text Party Name Mentions: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	490	45,8	45,8	45,8
	IFP	286	26,7	26,7	72,5
	DA	185	17,3	17,3	89,8
	NNP	46	4,3	4,3	94,1
	ID	21	2,0	2,0	96,1
	UDM	6	,6	,6	96,6
	ACDP	6	,6	,6	97,2
	MF	7	,7	,7	97,9

FF+	5	,5	,5	98,3
PAC	17	1,6	1,6	99,9
AZAPO	1	,1	,1	100,0
Total	1070	100,0	100,0	

Table 65: Headline Party Name Mentions: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	13	44.8	44.8	44.8
	DA	8	27.6	27.6	72.4
	IFP	5	17.2	17.2	89.7
	NNP	3	10.3	10.3	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 66: Directional Balance in Texts: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	103	68,7	68,7	68,7
	Negative ANC	10	6,7	6,7	75,3
	Positive DA	6	4,0	4,0	79,3
	Negative DA	5	3,3	3,3	82,7
	Positive DA	3	2,0	2,0	84,7
	Negative NNP	2	1,3	1,3	86,0
	Negative ID	1	,7	,7	86,7
	Positive ID	3	2,0	2,0	88,7
	Negative IFP	8	5,3	5,3	94,0
	Positive IFP	1	,7	,7	94,7
	Negative DA and IFP	1	,7	,7	95,3
	Positive DA and IFP	1	,7	,7	96,0
	Negative ANC and ID	1	,7	,7	96,7
	Positive SOPA	1	,7	,7	97,3
	Positive ANC and NNP	1	,7	,7	98,0
	Negative AZAPO	1	,7	,7	98,7
	Negative KISS	1	,7	,7	99,3
	Positive SOPA and AZAPO and PAC	1	,7	,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 67: Directional balance: Headlines. The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	139	92,7	92,7	92,7
	Negative ANC	3	2,0	2,0	94,7
	Positive ANC	3	2,0	2,0	96,7
	Negative DA	2	1,3	1,3	98,0

Positive DA	1	,7	,7	98,7
Positive NNP	1	,7	,7	99,3
Negative UDM	1	,7	,7	100,0
Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 68: Directional Balance in Letters: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	10	22,2	22,2	22,2
	Negative ANC	10	22,2	22,2	44,4
	Positive ANC	3	6,7	6,7	51,1
	Negative DA	7	15,6	15,6	66,7
	Positive DA	1	2,2	2,2	68,9
	Negative NNP	2	4,4	4,4	73,3
	Negative IFP	2	4,4	4,4	77,8
	Negative DA and IFP	1	2,2	2,2	80,0
	Positive ACDP	1	2,2	2,2	82,2
	Positive DA and IFP	1	2,2	2,2	84,4
	Negative ANC and NNP	1	2,2	2,2	86,7
	Positive PAC and AZAPO	1	2,2	2,2	88,9
	Positive MF	1	2,2	2,2	91,1
	Positive ACDP, Negative DA	1	2,2	2,2	93,3
	Negative MF	1	2,2	2,2	95,6
	Positive MF	1	2,2	2,2	97,8
	Positive ANC and DA	1	2,2	2,2	100,0
	Total	45	100,0	100,0	

Table 69: Terminology in Letters: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Plain	44	97,8	97,8	97,8
	Letters Containing Jargon	1	2,2	2,2	100,0
	Total	45	100,0	100,0	

Table 70: Civic Activism Encouragement: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	146	97,3	97,3	97,3
	Explicit Encouragement	4	2,7	2,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 71: Practical Knowledge: WHIM. The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	132	88,0	88,0	88,0
	WHIM	18	12,0	12,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 72: Practical Knowledge Articles: Policy. The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No practical knowledge	137	91,3	91,3	91,3
	Practical knowledge	13	8,7	8,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 73: Voter Education: Newsy. The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	100	66,7	66,7	66,7
	Newsy Education	50	33,3	33,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 74: Voter Education: Technical. The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	133	88,7	88,7	88,7
	Technical Education	17	11,3	11,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 75: Framing of Articles: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strategic	104	69,3	69,3	69,3
	Issue	46	30,7	30,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 76: Prevalence of Narratives: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single Stories	28	18,7	18,7	18,7
	Stories Part of Narratives	122	81,3	81,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Table 77: Newsvalues: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	70	46,7	46,7	46,7
	Curiosity	6	4,0	4,0	50,7
	Development	3	2,0	2,0	52,7
	Prominence	28	18,7	18,7	71,3
	Significance	4	2,7	2,7	74,0
	Proximity	3	2,0	2,0	76,0
	Newsfashion	10	6,7	6,7	82,7
	Curiosity and Significance	1	,7	,7	83,3
	Timeliness and Significance	3	2,0	2,0	85,3
	Timeliness and Prominence	10	6,7	6,7	92,0
	Newsfashion and Prominence	2	1,3	1,3	93,3
	Curiosity and prominence	2	1,3	1,3	94,7
	Development and Curiosity and Significance	1	,7	,7	95,3
	Significance and Prominence	1	,7	,7	96,0
	Timeliness and Development	2	1,3	1,3	97,3
	Timeliness and Proximity	3	2,0	2,0	99,3
Timeliness and Curiosity	1	,7	,7	100,0	
Total	150	100,0	100,0		

Table 78: Watchdog: The Mercury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	149	99,3	99,3	99,3
	Watchdog Function Stories	1	,7	,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Independent on Saturday

Table 79: Party Name Mentions In-Text: Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	71	48,0	48,0	48,0
	DA	24	16,2	16,2	64,2
	IFP	25	16,9	16,9	81,1
	NNP	12	8,1	8,1	89,2
	SACP	1	,7	,7	89,9
	ACDP	7	4,7	4,7	94,6

ID	7	4,7	4,7	99,3
UDM	1	,7	,7	100,0
Total	148	100,0	100,0	

Table 80: Headline Party Name Mentions: Independent on Saturday

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ANC	2	33,3	33,3	33,3
DA	2	33,3	33,3	66,7
IFP	2	33,3	33,3	100,0
Total	6	100,0	100,0	

Table 81: Directional Balance in Texts: Independent on Saturday

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	5	23,8	23,8	23,8
Negative ANC	4	19,0	19,0	42,9
Positive ANC	4	19,0	19,0	61,9
Negative DA	3	14,3	14,3	76,2
Positive ID	2	9,5	9,5	85,7
Negative IFP	1	4,8	4,8	90,5
Negative ACDP	1	4,8	4,8	95,2
Positive IAM	1	4,8	4,8	100,0
Total	21	100,0	100,0	

Table 82: Directional Balance in Headlines- Independent on Saturday

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	21	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 83: Directional Balance in Letters- Independent on Saturday

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	2	40,0	40,0	40,0
Negative ANC	1	20,0	20,0	60,0
Negative DA	1	20,0	20,0	80,0
Positive DA	1	20,0	20,0	100,0
Total	5	100,0	100,0	

Table 84: Terminology in Letters to the Editor- Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Plain language	5	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 85: Front Page Pictures: Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	1	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 86: Practical Knowledge: WHIM. Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	19	90,5	90,5	90,5
	WHIM	2	9,5	9,5	100,0
	Total	21	100,0	100,0	

Table 87: Practical Knowledge: Policy. Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Practical Knowledge	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
	No Value	18	85.7	85.7	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 88: Voter Education: Newsy. Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	21	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 89: Voter Education: Technical. Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	21	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 90: Civic Activism Encouragement- Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	21	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 91: Framing of Stories- Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strategy	17	81,0	81,0	81,0
	Issue	4	19,0	19,0	100,0
	Total	21	100,0	100,0	

Table 92: Narratives in Coverage: Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single story	3	14,3	14,3	14,3
	Part of big story	18	85,7	85,7	100,0
	Total	21	100,0	100,0	

Table 93: Newsvalues- Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	10	47,6	47,6	47,6
	Curiosity	1	4,8	4,8	52,4
	Prominence	2	9,5	9,5	61,9
	Timeliness and Significance	2	9,5	9,5	71,4
	Timeliness and Prominence	3	14,3	14,3	85,7
	Newsfash. and Prominence	1	4,8	4,8	90,5
	Developm. and Prominence	1	4,8	4,8	95,2
	Timeliness and Developm.	1	4,8	4,8	100,0
	Total	21	100,0	100,0	

Table 94: Watchdog Stories- Independent on Saturday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-watchdog stories	21	100,0	100,0	100,0

Sunday Independent

Table 95: Party Name Mentions In-Text: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	111	47,0	47,0	47,0
	DA	46	19,5	19,5	66,5
	IFP	33	14,0	14,0	80,5
	NNP	9	3,8	3,8	84,3
	ID	5	2,1	2,1	86,4
	ACDP	7	3,0	3,0	89,4
	PAC	25	10,6	10,6	100,0
	Total	236	100,0	100,0	

Table 96: Party Name Mentions in Headlines- Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	2	25,0	25,0	25,0
	DA	2	25,0	25,0	50,0
	PAC	1	12,5	12,5	62,5
	IFP	2	25,0	25,0	87,5
	NNP	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 97: Front Page Pictures- Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ANC	1	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 98: Directional Balance of Texts- Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	20	66,7	66,7	66,7
	Negative ANC	5	16,7	16,7	83,3
	Positive ANC	1	3,3	3,3	86,7
	Positive DA	1	3,3	3,3	90,0
	Negative IFP	2	6,7	6,7	96,7
	Negative ACDP and ANC	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 99: Directional Balance of Headlines: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	27	90,0	90,0	90,0
	Negative ANC	1	3,3	3,3	93,3
	Positive ANC	1	3,3	3,3	96,7
	Negative IFP	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 100: Directional Balance of Letters: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	7	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 101: Terminology in Letters to the Editor- Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Plain language	7	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 102: WHIM: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No practical knowledge	26	86,7	86,7	86,7
	WHIM	4	13,3	13,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 103: Practical Knowledge- Policy. Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	26	86,7	86,7	86,7
	Practical Knowledge: Policy	4	13,3	13,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 104: Voter Education: Newsy. Independent on Sunday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	24	80,0	80,0	80,0
	Educational Stories	6	20,0	20,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 105: Voter Education: Technical. Independent on Sunday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	27	90,0	90,0	90,0
	Voter Education: Technical	3	10,0	10,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 106: Stories Encouraging Civic Activism: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	29	96,7	96,7	96,7
	Civic Activism Encouragem.	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 107: Framing of Stories: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Issue	12	40,0	40,0	40,0
	Strategic	18	60,0	60,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 108: Narratives: Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single Stories	9	30,0	30,0	30,0
	Stories Part of Flowing Narratives	21	70,0	70,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 109: Newsvalues: Independent on Sunday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Timeliness	13	43,3	43,3	43,3
	Prominence	8	26,7	26,7	70,0
	Significance	5	16,7	16,7	86,7
	Proximity	1	3,3	3,3	90,0
	Newsfashion	1	3,3	3,3	93,3
	Timeliness and Prominence	1	3,3	3,3	96,7
	Development and Prominence	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Table 110: Watchdog- Sunday Independent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Value	28	93,3	93,3	93,3
	Watchdog	2	6,7	6,7	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

5.5. Appendix 2: Transcript of interview one. Conducted 20.09 2004 10: 30.

What do you think, as a media analyst, are the main functions that the press should ideally perform during an election campaign?

Well, a couple. I mean, I think the most important is information on the policy proposals of the various parties. And that should be done in a fair and equitable manner. Obviously, when you look at the analysis, the ANC got a lot more coverage and the rationale for that from the media's side was we know the ANC is going to get in, they are probably going to get in with over 70% sort of majority, and so therefore they got a much higher percentage of the coverage. But, if you're not giving the readership an opportunity to analyse the alternative policy proposals of the opposition parties, then you know, it becomes a *fait accompli*, sort of. That the ANC is going to get 70% just gets accepted. So I think the media fell a little bit short over that.

But do you think there should be equity between the different parties in absolute terms?

I'm not saying there should be equity in absolute terms. I'm saying that there was a *duff* on sort of, policy information on the opposition parties. We didn't really know what they were about. We knew what the ANC was about, because we knew it was creating work and fighting poverty, and we had a pretty good idea of how they proposed to do that. You know, following the state of the nation address and the 15 billion that's just gone into the public works projects. We have actually seen the ANC following through on this, even though the Sunday Times came up with a bullshit story that suggested maybe they weren't. The story was totally false, a la Mbeki's letter to the nation in August. From the side of the political parties, well the media sort of complained that the political parties didn't seem to have policies, but then the media needs to address that, they have to question that.

But, do you think government should have a role in overseeing the press as far as election coverage is concerned?

Absolutely not. It's not a governmental thing, but in broadcast, you know, there is a stipulation that ICASA has. And that is that the specific amount of airtime needs to be given to all the parties leading up to an election. And there is a formula for working out exactly how that is broken down, which is contradictory in itself. We did a piece of that I think in our April issue.

Related to the issue of balance, perhaps, what does journalistic objectivity mean to you?

In what sense?

Just as a standard, you know, what does it entail, and is it attainable?

I don't believe it is attainable at all, but I believe it's an ideal that you have to work towards. That sort of idea can be abused. You know, if you go and you admit that there is no such thing as journalistic objectivity, perhaps in an academic sense there isn't, there is no such thing as objectivity anywhere, but if journalists admit to that, you get this sort of dangerous situation where people like Thami Mazwai abuse that notion, from within a mainstream position to further their own position, and I think that's what happened. You can't argue with the, sort of, substance of Mazwai's argument that journalistic objectivity doesn't exist, but you can argue

for a guy who is in that position, on the SABC board, putting forward, you know that argument. And the reason he is putting it forward is to defend himself against the private media's accusations that he is an ANC lackey. So objectivity needs to be there as an ideal. But it is what objectivity implies as an ideal. It's fairness, it's accuracy, it's approaching both sides for comment, it's responsibility. That's what objectivity implies. The story is always going to be coloured. If you take fairness and balance into account, I think those words are more important than objectivity.

But, as far as the watchdog function of the press goes, do you think the press did well during the 2004 election campaign?

I don't really know, I mean, I think the broadcast media, on the day of the election, did really well. In terms of covering the mood of the nation, getting into the outlying areas, looking at some of the problems, facilitating the public process. The entire nation knew that on April 14 it was national elections, that wasn't a problem. We had big voter turnout. But I think again, in the period leading up to the elections, certain aspects of the media could have done a bit better in informing the electorate of the policy proposals and of the alternatives they had.

And that of course feeds into the promises that the parties make during the election campaign. Was the coverage skewed do you think or were they just neglecting certain aspects of the policy documents?

I don't think the coverage was intentionally skewed, no. But I think media is going to go where there is the most information, and they are going to go to the stories that actually make the news. And what that implies is that some of the smaller parties don't really understand the media at all, because they weren't playing up to them. Patricia De Lille came out in the Media/Tenor-survey as the most high profile and the most positively sort of perceived political leader in the April elections, and I think that she fully understands the way the news media process works. Maybe the other leaders don't. I think it is an indictment as much on the parties as it is on the media that we didn't really have a sense of the policy alternatives.

But you can't just boil it down to the question of resources and political marketing? You think that's too simple?

Absolutely it's too simple. I mean, it's not a matter of resources to understand who the editors and the political editors are specifically of the major media brands, and getting a hold of them and saying we want to come and see you, these are our policy proposals and you don't need a marketing budget to do that. But I think political marketing played a role during the campaign, definitely. I mean political marketing, and I'm not going to say it in the sense that it happens in the US, the sort of lobbying system is not relevant here at all, but political marketing in the sense that Patricia De Lille, again I come back to that example, knew exactly how to position herself as an image, and as an icon, and as a person who appeals to a specific part of the electorate, and that is political marketing.

Just looking at a general trend that I found, was that most of the stories that were election relevant were part of a few, big, running stories. Do you agree that there is a tendency in the press to go with the same running stories and why does it or why does it not happen?

Oh absolutely, I would agree with that definitely, but the interesting thing about these elections is that the violence in KwaZulu-Natal was not that big on the agenda. And I think you have to applaud the media for that. But also, it's a function of the fact that the country has grown up in the last five years. Those sort of issues are kind of sorting themselves out. That said, you have to applaud the media for not jumping on one or two isolated incidents and blowing them out of all proportion to sensationalistic events that marred the elections. The media were very careful about that.

But given that the press tend to go with these big, running stories a lot, do you think that's necessarily wrong?

It depends on what the story is for it necessarily to be wrong, I think crime as a big running story is a worthwhile story, I mean, every political party knows that it's a national problem and running with that is OK. But running with again like the KwaZulu-Natal violence, that might have played itself out, but that doesn't have that much relevance, and running with it specifically to sell copy is not ok. So you've got to look at what the factors are.

And another general trend that I found was that there was a lot of strategic framing, where the journalist focuses on strategic aspects of decisions and events that the actors in the electoral contest make, rather than the substantive issues. Do you think this practice is common in election coverage?

Do you have an example of that, give me an example..

You know, just focusing on the horse race between the different parties rather than focusing on what's in the manifestos etc.

Ja, that is very common, I mean, exactly, this is kind of what we were discussing in the beginning, it's a lot easier to look at the horse race. And it's a lot easier to take the polls and to say: x is doing that and y is doing that. But that's not analysis, that's exactly what you call it, that's horse race coverage, and I think it's playing out in the US elections right now in a big way. Instead of looking at the issues it's becoming the election of the pollsters. And it is the horse race issue, and, you know, how popular is John Kerry today because he saved his daughter's drowning hamster? It's that sort of stuff.

But one argument for strategic framing is that it makes it easier to generate interest in the election?

I don't necessarily agree with that. I mean, people aren't really betting on the elections. Horse race analysis is sort of 'right when you've got a stake in it. But, you know, everybody knows that the ANC was going to come in with a majority and I don't know, I find that boring copy personally. I mean, obviously you have to research that. But I think, my gut feeling tells me that copy that would sell a lot more is the debates and the issues, I mean, if you get a 'he said-she said', Leon against Mbeki on strategies for tackling unemployment, that sells copy.

How do you think that the media, or the press I should say, tried to counter voter apathy this time around?

I think they did, and I think to a large extent they succeeded. Our voter turnout was pretty good. I think the IEC had a big role to play in that. I think the fact that it was ten years of

democracy, and all the celebrations around that helped a lot. But I think that, sort of, the government and the IEC worked pretty smart in using the ten years of democracy to counter voter apathy. There was a big sense of national pride on Election Day. Even people who hadn't intended to vote, you know, suddenly wake up on April 14 and haven't registered and they can't vote now and they felt upset about it, felt sort of marginalised from the country, which showed that, you know, the right mood was created. The right mood existed, I don't even think it was created, it existed.

And another, sort of, function that the press is often assigned during election campaign periods is educating voters, you know..

Ja..

On the technical aspects, as well as the more policy, substance aspects: How do you think they managed that this time?

I think broadcast media did really well. The news radio stations, obviously the public broadcaster, that's one of its key mandates and reasons for existence, I think it did well, private media..it depends on which newspaper you are looking at. The Daily Sun and that sort of papers did give the odd article about it, but your Mail&Guardians and Sunday Times, I suppose they would consider it talking down to their readers if they told them how to vote and when to vote. So they didn't do it, but, you know it's more a function of broadcast media. You know, radio in this country reaches 70% of the population. And radio did well, radio did well.

Looking at the coverage, as you obviously have extensively, the journalists, do you think the journalists went in to the campaign period with a plan as to how to fulfil their normative functions, as it were, or do you think the planning that was done was on a practical level?

I think certain of the newsrooms, I mean 702 is an example, and Pippa Green again is a big example, head of the SABC radio news, sat down with their journalists way before the election and came up with an election coverage plan, and the journalists pretty much had to stick to that. You know, you've got to cover the outlying areas, you've got to cover the province and the rural areas, you've got to look at how the sort of socio-economic problems in those areas affect voters and will sway voters. A classic example of that was the San communities in the Northern Cape. I mean they've, the SABC has just launched the first San radio station in the world. And apparently this community didn't vote because they felt they were a sort of voiceless South African majority anyway. They felt that their needs weren't being met by the ANC, and you know, they weren't going to vote because they had nobody representing them. So those sort of stories were covered by the SABC and the broadcast media, and by the print media to a certain extent as well. I can't give a general answer; I can give an answer on various media brands. I think This Day was excellent, I think E-TV was excellent on the day, I think SABC radio was very good. So generally, plans in some newsrooms were better than others. Obviously, they had to get their logistics in order.

But, in the sort of, hectic, every day lives of journalists, do you think that focusing on ideals has a relevance? And what are the most important journalistic ideals in your view?

In terms of the elections?

Yes, but what I'm getting at here is, is there a difference between election times and between-periods, basically?

That's a really broad question, I think, ok, now it depends on what kind of journalist you've got. Your political journalists are generally sort of idealistic people, I suppose. And they are pretty well informed on the whole. Although, in this country there is this other debate. I mean, are political journalists in South Africa well informed enough, a lot of people would say no, and over all I would probably say no as well. Your editors are a pretty idealistic bunch, and I'm thinking of Sandile Dikeni at This Day. Do their ideals colour their reporting, are they too high, I'd say not, you know on the whole the political coverage in this country, well it does two things, it gets a lot of the stories wrong, and there is a great debate in South African journalism, there is the accusation that black journalists are the only journalists with the entrées into the top echelons of political power, but if they write something critical of the government they are seen as unpatriotic. White journalists, if they write, don't get the sort of entrees because they don't have the networks and they are just seen as racist when they publish something sort of critical of the government. I mean, that's a very crude way of putting it, but I think that sort of tread does exist.

So, are there any journalistic ideals that can be discarded, or is it not really possible to make a pecking order?

The most important challenge we got facing media in this country is on the dichotomy between activist and mobiliser. And somewhere along the line, the training institutions and the journalists themselves need to understand that maybe there is a different journalistic role if you're living and working as a journalist in a developing, young democracy as we are in South Africa, i.e. some of your stories can be damaging. That's not to say that you don't expose government corruption. You do that. But it just means that the old adage that bad news sells might not be the right thing for this country. And I think we need to really look at that in a big way, both in our training institutions and in our newsrooms. So the social responsibility role tends to clash with the watchdog function. But, you know, that sort of observer, objectivist kind of journalist ideal which they keep to but it can be damaging too, again, it's between development communication and watchdog journalism. The observer/activist dichotomy.

But given that most of the literature on journalistic ideals comes from the rich West, as it were, that sort of conflicts with the reality that is in the developing country of South Africa?

Absolutely, I would agree with that statement.

Do you remember a story that was about the elections and if you have talked to the journalist behind it about what the thinking was in terms of what function the story was in pursuit of etc?

Which story, any specific?

No, no, just if you remember an example, you know?

Ja, I spoke to a lot of the guys, I mean I've spoken to Sandile Dikeni about his sort of coverage. I don't remember any specific story, but I do remember speaking to Siandile about you know, coverage of KwaZulu-Natal..what it actually was, was I was writing a story for the Mail&Guardian on a release that Media/Tenor had just put out naming This Day as the most objective newspaper or most objective media brand, and I was just asking him, you know drilling into why he thought that. Obviously, he was very happy to be named that, and they put it on their master head. But his sort of come back was that probably more than a lot of other media brands they give equal voice to the smaller parties, and I think that was correct. Just having a look at This Day, from the period of January up until April I think they did. I mean, so ja, that's one example I remember.

5.6. Appendix 3: Transcript interview two. Conducted 01.09. 2004 15:00.

Do you as a journalist ever think of journalism as upholding democracy in your work, and if so, How?

There are a number of ways we do it. Firstly we try to keep people, or the electorate, who are key elements, or building blocks of democracy, informed on matters. I'm a political reporter, I'm writing in the political arena. So we want them to make informed choices and informed decisions more generally. That's one level. At the other level, we keep an eye on the workings of the provincial legislature, the government; I work in the province, the government. That is, inside the government. You know, we try to hold them to their promises. We look at how they spend the money that is allocated to them. And generally how they take decisions and whether they involve the electorate, the people, in taking decisions. We want to create a debate, basically. A link between the electorate and the elected. We want to create a debate, open debate. And we are also playing that watchdog role. How the government..whether the people get value for money spent, you know, policy issues, you know, that we outlined during the election campaign, all those kinds of things. I think that's how we try to contribute towards the building blocks of democracy.

So the functions that the press performs during an election campaign, how do they vary from functions the press performs between elections?

Ach, it differs, basically. Each and every publication sets particular trends that it wants to follow in any given election. But, while outside elections we want to reflect according to what they do at any given time, according to their popularity. During the election campaign, we even tried to give coverage to those little, small organisations. Of course, proportionate to what we think is their support. Like, for instance, we published the manifestos of all political parties. Because we want to give our readers as much, as wide as possible a choice as we can. Provided the constraints of the space that we have. So we tend to, really for minority parties, even if it's a new party, we'll give two-three-four-five paragraphs so people should know about it. Obviously, we trail the leaders quite extensively on manifestos, we make time to re-examine what is new in a manifesto. If the party is governing, we'll find out what they promised previously and whether they have delivered that.

You say that you focus on trends during the election campaign. What do you mean by trends?

You see, what we have tended to do at the Mercury, we decide for ourselves what are the issues. We could either sit down with political analysts, political lecturers and so on and say

what are the issues, I suppose the key issues of the last election..the most key one was the HIV-AIDS, there has been a debate around that. The ANC government seems to have been very reluctant to move on that issue of anti-retrovirals. There was somewhat a little bit of change. They changed a little bit on that one. That area. But then in KwaZulu-Natal, the province that had conflict for some time, the last elections coincided with the ten years of democracy. So we said, let's visit the communities that were in the flashpoint of violence, see how things have changed. Let's visit most of the parts of the communities. Let's find out if they are still flashing. Let's see if they are still fighting fodder with oxen and donkeys, whether there has been improvement in their lives. We wanted it to be relevant to what has been happening. But, particularly..yes?

You consciously focus on a few big stories, and the strategic party political race?

Yes, we identify things that would represent the major challenges for the people of KwaZulu-Natal in the last ten years. And we spoke to the political parties, and said what is it that they wanted to see. We looked at what they were saying against the manifestos. Of course we looked at the personalities as well, at the people..

The prominence factor?

Yes, certainly. Almost by default prominence becomes prominent, but not only that. We looked at the communities. One of the greatest things that have changed is since 1994 the demographics of South Africa has changed. Previously we had what was called the Group Areas Act. Westville has changed which was a previous urban area, what has happened? Schools have changed. There are Africans, there are Indians, there are Coloureds, there are Whites, we looked at all that kind of interaction. Whether those things represented progress, or whether they represented reversal. All those kinds of things, we thought they were important. And we also tracked young leaders..I mean ten years ago these guys were activists, shouting on the streets, now they are generals and you know what I'm talking about, all those kinds of things.

So you checked how they are doing now, ja..But, did you have a plan, as it were, when you went in to the election period?

No, we did have a plan. You see, the election also coincided with the launch of This Day. A week, or two or three before that. So part of it was to ensure that they don't penetrate into our area. We had a plan that was divided into quite a number of areas; I don't know if I could still get it for you, it was divided into a number of areas. And different people were asked to cover different political players, yes.

But you didn't talk specifically about how you would contribute to the consolidation of democracy during the elections, I mean, on the level of the ideal functions of the press?

No, we reflected quite a lot of things, the electoral system itself, whether it was the best to serve the people. Because our biggest concern in South Africa is around the issue of the electoral system. We understand why we need the proportional representation, but that basically tends to take away a politician from their constituency, and then it takes away the direct accountability. Which we think are the key elements of democracy. I mean, the person is not accountable. Once he goes to Cape Town he does not come back the next five years. There are a lot of debates around those issues. We dealt with institutions of South Africa,

professors from universities, we examined and re-examined a number of political formulations and raised a debate around that.

You tried to get the debate going in your columns?

Yes..

As far as the role of government in regulating the press in their coverage of the elections, what role if any should government have there?

In South Africa, the problem we have, with the exception of the SABC which is quite strictly controlled, with a lot of debate about how they should do this and that, it's up to newspapers.. Previously there was a regulation that if you write a story, towards the end you must say who you are and your address, around election time, but there is no obligation to do so now. I think a paper is free to advocate for whatever political ideal it wants to in South Africa. And I think there is a fairly wide range of different views that are expressed by different newspapers. Although my feeling would be, clearly the newspapers are pendant to the LSMs, Living Standard Measurements. Basically most or all newspapers want people who have disposable income, they want to be read by those people, because then they can sell those readers to advertisers. As it is now, largely newspapers write for people with disposable incomes because they are businesses. You could debate whether it is possible to have community newspapers, but who is going to fund them? There is going to be a problem there because again, who is going to determine the agenda of those newspapers?

On balance, you think that it's good that government doesn't have a role now in regulating the press?

I would say so, yes. I think, living in the Southern hemisphere, we are living in a very exiting country as far as newspapers are concerned. Safe to say that newsrooms are shrinking, but those are for operational reasons; I suppose it's the same all over the world. But there is little space now, but in terms of the debate I think, you write what you like, which is good.

Turning to specific ideals of journalism, one that is very often mentioned is objectivity. What does journalistic objectivity mean to you?

I think it's a very relative commodity, objectivity. It depends on where you are standing. We can debate this thing until cows come home. There is a socialisation of journalists themselves.

Within the publication?

No, no, as a person, where do I come from? There is a difference between a journalist who comes from (the formerly whites-only suburb) Westville and one who comes from (the township) Umlazi. That part might come out. I think the least that we strive for is fairness. Fairness is the least that we could actually afford to strive for. I think objectivity is a very expensive commodity. I don't know whether it is affordable, we strive towards it. But the least that we could work towards and almost achieve is that one of fairness. Coming back to you getting your view across as well, giving your side of the story. Because the media themselves are contested terrain, there are forces that are contesting it. Some of the political forces have got money. If the ANC puts a big rally in 'Martizburg and the IFP, DA and so on doesn't have money, if it's a big rally, obviously it will attract a lot of attention. How do you

stay objective in this sea of all this contestation, it becomes difficult, you know.

If you were to try to be objective, what would that mean? Extracting yourself from the story?

Essentially yes. But let's debate this thing. (DA leader) Tony Leon tells me that they are the last line of defence between the one-party-state and democracy. I mean, how do I..it's rubbish..a one party state is when you have got a decree saying only one party can operate in that country. I can report what he says, but I've got a problem with that. I can report it, but there might be a comment from me that says in fact in KZN we have got about 6 or 7 parties, in Cape Town we've got about ten. We're just nowhere near being a one party state. How do I stay objective, if I insert the comment, am I still objective? How do I report what he says raw without misleading people? Because it means I'm a tape recorder. Once you've said it, I should record it, objectively. You know what I'm talking about? As a senior political writer there has to be an element of comment and analysis. Those two items always should be there. If you pick a newspaper you can say that the journalist is wasting my time, but the journalist knows very well that these guys can't deliver what they are talking about. So I can't believe and write that they are going to deliver it if I'm convinced as a political reporter that they won't be able to deliver it. You might say I'm not being objective, but I can't be a tape recorder just replaying what they are saying. I have to be critical, you know? The whole question of objectivity is very debatable, and the extent to which we need the term is also debatable, I think fairness is just as good.

And the term watchdog?

We normally say that we are keeping an eye on the big brothers on behalf of the smaller brothers. That's what we say. Firstly you want to check whether the PFM is being adhered to, the Public Finance Management Act. Whether people are getting value for money, whether they people which some claim are being done for people, you know what I'm talking about? Whether the guy lives as cleanly as he claims, you know? That's what we try to do. That's the least we try to do.

You mentioned earlier that you tried to examine electoral promises from pervious campaigns this time, you know?

We did, yeah; I must personally say that I was disappointed by the ANC because it came back with the same promises, the same package of promises. Personally I've got a problem with some of the things they changed; I think really they want to create a nation that is dependent on hand-outs from the government and so on. I mean, they really tried to do things that we have to encourage people to do themselves, control themselves. They promised thousands of free houses, electricity and, you know, and then the expectation is high. And while the government might be able to deliver, it may take 20 or 30 years, given the ravages of the Apartheid and all these things.

Which party do you think your publication covered the most, if we're talking about The Mercury now?

I'm sure it's the ANC. Basically there were three major parties that got our coverage. (IFP leader Mangosuthu) Buthelezi is very strong in KwaZulu-Natal, or was very strong in KwaZulu-Natal. I was tasked to follow him. I went to about ten or fifteen of his rallies, and to

the final one in Nongoma. But we discovered that it was not working for us because..you see, what happens, the biggest problem with elections is that he would go to all these rallies almost with one speech, you know what I'm talking about, so there's nothing fresh that comes from me if I follow him. Politicians don't look at what's happening in that area and try to pitch themselves, say: we'll deal with this. They'll come with a generic kind of position and say: this is what we'll do. You see what I'm talking about? So we found that it was counterproductive, we got nothing fresh. But the ANC received the most political coverage. I mean, the flooded the province with top guns, I think from the eighth of January. The first national council was held here, in Durban, and the launch of the manifesto. And they just flooded the province, but with a clever political marketing strategy behind. The IFP didn't have those kinds of resources. The DA came in and out, but also I don't think they are strong on the question of resources as well. But I think the paper does have an element of sympathy for the DA.

But you answered the call of the ANC machinery, so to speak?

There are two things that happened. The editor sits and watches the news, or takes another paper and says: 'Why didn't we get that? There was this huge rally, why didn't we get that one?' (laughter) And I'll say: 'They did it in Umlazi and KwaMashu, there was nothing really new.' 'No, no we must record it', he feels he's missing something, or..So there are all these ongoing battles within this institution itself. But what'll say is that we went out of our way to cover the minor players. When they tell you they're in town, always make sure you cover it. At times you'll say 'no, you're saying the same things.' But we attended the final rally which was in Nongoma. And I was based in Ulundi for the whole election period.

One general trend I found is that most publications talked about the ANC overwhelmingly, you know?

They have a very attractive strategy, you know, they went house to house. Firstly Thabo, had been this aloof person, you know always wearing suit on Sunday and everything. But then we begin to see him getting into the squatter camps, drinking tea, not only with African anties, but with tanties in some dorp as well, that was a story that was sold all over the world. Spin magic. We were all so fascinated with this new Thabo, but maybe we forgot about it now.

Do you think it's justifiable to cover the ANC to such an extent, or should the other parties get equal coverage in absolute terms during the election coverage?

I don't know. It think what, we would give a party relative to what we think is their strength. We have got a responsibility also; we have to be fair, because the ANC is a policy maker. People must know what..the ANC was always going to be elected the government. Polls were pointing to that as well. So we thought it was important that people should know what the possible government, the obvious government, was saying. While we should report other parties, we shouldn't create the false impression that there would be a new government. We also report on what the president is saying, so that we can hold the president to what he is saying once he has been inaugurated.

Another trend that I found as well, was that the newspapers focused on a set of a few big running stories though out their coverage, like the ten years of democracy, like the violence prospects in KwaZulu-Natal etceteras. Do you think that is a conscious choice that journalists make that they need to make sense of the landscape for the reader by

following a few big stories, or..?

I think the biggest problem is that we don't want to be seen as having missed it. But the biggest problem which was coming from Gauteng, the people in Gauteng felt that there would be violence in KwaZulu-Natal, and we told them no, there's no chance of it. Because in as far as we are concerned, the conditions that allowed political violence have been removed in the past ten years. We believe the state had a hand in it, and the state has changed, and organs of the state are controlled by different people. Also, given that every policeman that was available was sent into this province, because the imagined threat was here. But there was a conflict; they were saying what's happening in Richmond? You know, those flashpoints. So we had to go out, but we said there's nothing. There were some small things here and there were the IFP tried to stop the ANC but otherwise...

So, it is more convenient than limiting to the journalists basically, to focus on those bigger stories, with the strategic view to the electoral competition?

(Laughter) There has to be a way of how we are going to cover the elections. What we need to debate is whether this way of doing it is correct. I mean, it is what we are doing now. As far as I can remember we have never debated it. I think we need to sit down with people like yourself to critique the coverage and see how we can make it better. You see, for the convenience of the newspaper we publish limited space, we have to know what is going to come in, when it's going to come in, where it's going to come from, those are some of the things that are frustrating us, you know what I mean?

But, could you give an example of a story that you did during March and April, up to Election Day and try to go through the thinking behind it, in terms of how to fulfil your journalistic role in terms of the normative ideals we have been discussing?

It's difficult, I mean, I can't remember..I have a lot of analytical, post-newsish stuff to look at. Part of it was to examine the period of the past ten years, and part of it which was the most important part was what was going to happen in KwaZulu-Natal in the event of a new government. Given that, for about 20 years or so..previously there was the then KwaZulu homeland, I can't remember for how long it was there, about ten or twenty years, and then from there the IFP had been in power for all those years, the IFP was in power for the past ten years. But then suddenly there was going to be that cultural shock. All the DGs (Director Generals) and everyone else, all the top government bureaucrats had come from the IFP, suddenly that was going to change, and it did change. We had to prepare our readers for that. And try to find out how, you know, how they were going to react, because.. you know what I'm talking about? The biggest problem that we had is that for the past ten years the pollsters had all got it wrong in KwaZulu-Natal. They had always given the ANC a margin and underplayed the IFP, but the IFP has always won. So while the opinion polls were showing that the ANC might win, we didn't believe they were going to win, but we had to prepare the readers for that, because it might happen. And it happened. There was a fairly peaceful transition.

Yes, but basically you focused on being a watchdog, as it were, and educating the public about what might happen..Ok..So, how well do you think your publication maintained a balance with regards to positive versus negative coverage of the different parties?

There was a period when we were going through the manifestos. That we were presenting as it was, I mean we even left it to the parties to write the pieces themselves.

But then, beyond that..?

Ach, there were some, there were some other events like people defecting from this party to that party on the eve of the elections. I remember the guy who moved from the Minority Front to the DA and then in the second week he was with the ANC. We were critical of some of those people. Of course, we were critical of the IFP when they didn't allow other people to come into Empangeni, their area, we were critical of that not appearing to contribute towards free and fair elections, hostile and no-go areas ..I think we were critical of that one.

So you consider the watchdog role as the most important ideal function of a journalist?

Yes, mostly that's what it's about, you know..

And what are the least important ideals in your view?

I don't know if I could nominate one or more...At the end of the day you just do what you think is right..

Returning to the balance in your coverage, as far as the parties were concerned, you maintained the balance well?

We did, yes.

How did you as a publication seek to generate interest in the elections?

Parties were..parties obviously have their machinery well oiled. But around the question of issues we used the public's questions, readers would write to us or e-mail. There were a number of questions we posed, and people were coming on their own and saying what they wanted to say. But times of elections is the time when the media is the most contested commodity. I mean, people from political operators they will come with requests and they want to write opinion pieces, they want to do this, they want to query that, you know what I'm talking about? It's a time when stories just come to you. You get flooded.

But as far as generating interest in the elections, you basically took what the readers said themselves and..

We, we tried to create debate, interest through debate. We looked particularly at the question of voter apathy as well. We were involved in the question of voter education, we had workshops with the IEC: why is it important to vote and all those kinds of things we tried to say it was important to vote and to deepen the roots of democracy, we did.

And you educated the public as to the technical..

Yes, yes, technical things. We used to call them the 'fool's guide' to voting. You'll find two ballot papers; one will be for the province, one national etc. There was the whole question of section 21 whereby you can vote in one area where you were not registered and all those things, you know that caused a lot of furore after the IFP wanted people to lose that

opportunity, you know the IEC specifically asked us to underplay that because they didn't want people to suddenly go and vote in areas where they are not registered, there was a problem about that and I'm sure they are going to re-examine that because it caused a lot of problems afterwards.

5.7. Appendix 4: Transcript of interview three. Conducted 20.09. 2004 14:30.

What do you think are the main functions that the press should ideally perform during an election campaign?

Well, I think they need to provide information, first and foremost of different parties, what they stand for, who is standing, who their leadership is, their different policies, some kind of critical perspective on the statements that are issued by the parties, and the speeches. I think that, particularly mass media, media that can reach people who don't necessarily buy newspapers every day, play probably a more important role, in reaching people in rural areas, people who are poor, most people in this country actually.

But, should government have a role in overseeing the press in terms of their election coverage?

How do you mean government?

I'm thinking in terms of making sure that the coverage is equitable etc. ?

I see what you mean, ja, somebody should, I..possibly a government appointed body, but independent of government as such.

So, when we're specifically talking about the press, you don't mind if there is a body that is appointed that is sort of similar to the one that governs broadcasting now, ICASA you know?

I don't have a problem with that. The problem I think occurs when it becomes, when the body becomes something that shuts down or fences, right? Particularly the problem in our country, we have a very strong majority party, so the temptation to use that weight and silence..to get government, the ruling party's viewpoint to have some overwhelming dominance is a problem. But I mean, I don't have a problem with some kind of monitoring body, no.

Maybe that feeds into the next question, which is: what are the most important things that the press should not be doing when covering the election campaign?

I think, to only cover some parties and not others, that is a problem, and we are all do it too easily. Obviously, I think there is an argument to be made that larger parties do deserve more coverage, they represent, they have represented more people. But there is a tendency to not allow smaller parties any space what so ever. Uncritical use of parties' statements without providing perspective I think is a real problem. Parties that are quite sophisticated at using media statements and so on actually get, and an example certainly is the DA, get huge amounts of coverage and not everything that they are saying should be accepted at face value. It's fine to write what they are saying, but you need to give some perspective, to hear other voices on these issues. And journalists are lazy, alright. That's an understatement. And all my colleagues, the younger journalists are also inexperienced. What should journalists not be

doing, eh, I think there is too little coverage of campaigning in rural areas, there is too little coverage of how election campaigns affect ordinary people. So there is an overwhelming kind of urban bias in most reporting, and that's a question of resources I think. The SABC can afford to go all over, not many other organisations can. And I think people need to be gender-aware.

Do you think that's something that failed this time, or..?

I think, in most political parties, mostly, it's men doing the talking. Men's issues. Women's issues are presented as a category, almost a separate basket, rather than part of any perspective at any given time.

So women's issues become much like education, or roads, just another category?

Exactly.

But just in terms of the balance between the parties as well, one general trend that I found is that the ANC gets a majority of the coverage as well, in comparison to the other parties, and do you think that's so, and if so, do you think that's fair? Or is it a responsibility of the press to seek out representatives of the smaller parties?

Yes, I think it is. Not all small parties have the resources or the sophistication or the skills, or whatever it takes, to reach..or there are some people who just don't know how to reach the organisations. I think that Angela (Quintal), my colleague, is good at getting smaller parties space and getting stories that were interesting from smaller parties in the electioneering phase. But I think it is also inevitable that the ANC is the biggest party.

So you're not looking for absolute balance in terms of coverage?

I think that would be quite fake, you know? I mean, you can't have every single party that's contesting the elections speaking on every single issue, that would become unwieldy. And obviously people, most people at the moment support the ANC so logic says that most of the public are going to be mostly interested in what the ANC has to say. You've got to think of your readers' interests as well.

Journalistic objectivity, could you try to define what that means to you?

Well, I think it's in this..Ok, what I think is that one needs to understand one's bias and one self, what you're thinking about doing. I think you need to balance fairness, and air as many voices as possible.

And thinking of the term watchdog, what does that entail do you think, in connection with the election coverage?

I think that it would have to entail a pre-agreed, pre-agreed by media and other players, kind of approach. If I'm saying one thing, other people might have a very different idea. And then some kind of monitoring that looks at both space given to different parties, different politicians and so on...

Oh, I think I wasn't quite clear as to what I meant by watchdog. I mean, you know, the press itself often talk of their function as a watchdog, you know, to expose wrongdoing etc. And it was more in that sense that I spoke of watchdog, not one overseeing the press.

Ok, I think the press should represent public interest in a broad sense. And so it would have to..It's difficult in electioneering, in an election, to give an answer to this. For example, I'll give you an answer now for the Parliament. I think it's important that the press writes about the travel voucher investigation, about different ideas for the defence review, a lot of things that politicians for many parties wouldn't really wish to push into the public domain, but that the public have a right to know.

So it's more making sure that uncomfortable topics are discussed as well?

Ja, and that public representatives are held accountable. Because they are public figures and are paid by the public. So in that sense, ja.

But how well do you think the press did as watchdogs during this year's election, and what aspects of the role that they have were neglected, if any?

Well, look, I think that they did well on things like, in the Western Cape, the likelihood of a deal, the kind of deal making that was going on between the NNP and the ANC and the IFP-ANC, the break-up of that relationship, I think there was very good coverage of those things. So that people understood that if they were voting for the NNP they were in fact clearly voting for an ANC ally.

Related to the watchdog function again, I mean in terms of promises made, you know, in manifestos etc by the parties, how does the press, you know, respond to the promises that are made?

I think that's the follow-up thing. I mean we need to follow up and look at what has been done. And I think that people have been doing that because the president had a very strong emphasis on delivery; in a hundred days, and short term delivery and so on. So the press have actually taken a cue from him and started.. The Mail&Guardian recently started looking at how far delivery has occurred. Generally, in the past, I think, you know, five years ago nobody really looked at what's been delivered and what hasn't. I think it might have shifted, but I'm not sure if the cue has really come from the press, rather than from actually government.

Another trend that I found is that the overwhelming majority of stories that were published in the press were related to a handful of, you know, big running stories, you know like..

IT..

Ja, etc, you know. Do you agree that there is a tendency in the press to go with a few big running stories that sort of dominate the coverage and if so why or why doesn't it happen?

Ja, look, some of those stories were important. I think the IT story was important, in terms of government direction of the post election government, eh, I think that there has been very

little tendency to look at other kinds of things, eh, to go to rural areas and look at housing and social issues and stories. The coloured vote was the big story in the Western Cape, which is a very old saga.

Do you think there is anything wrong with having a few big stories dominating the coverage or does it just simply make sense of the landscape for the readers?

I think it does make sense of the landscape, but I also think that there is a lack of creative thinking. Coupled with a lack of resources, often. So that, for example we toyed with an idea, we came up with a whole pre-election workshop of ideas that were not implemented. One of the ideas which was really nice was to go on the road and go, say, from the Western Cape to the Northern Cape or wherever and do stories in all the towns and areas as you go along. Election related, but not big names, big issues, but more kind of local issue stuff. That kind of thing would be really nice. I think one of the problems is that these elections started out being viewed as boring. You know, the result was largely a foregone conclusion. The race was non-existent in most areas. KZN and Western Cape were the exceptions. Editors want to sell papers, I mean that is a particular problem, and they say we just don't want to read all this about politics, that's not very exciting.

So they want to read about the race instead?

Yeah, so it's not a new precedent, you know, there are a whole lot of circumstances to it. Radio and TV I paid less attention to and I would have less understanding of the dynamics.

But, if you as a journalist were to write a story a bit on the side of the big, running ones, do you think it would be harder to get attention for that story?

Yes. Without a doubt. I mean, everybody wants the big stories up front, used well and so on, so. If it's not on the agenda of the paper, it's not gonna be on your agenda for the day.

Related to the framing that you mentioned earlier that you know, it's easier to talk about the horse race than about the issues sometimes, do you think that is a prevailing tendency, and if so is it a bad thing?

I think, I mean elections are really I guess about who wins and the personalities at one level, I don't know if it's always a bad thing, but I mean, when you are talking about the political parties contesting to become government, you should certainly at some level be talking about their policies and different perspectives on how it should be done and what should be done. The issues, ja. It's also problematic, how do you make those come to life for, the readers of the (Cape) Argus, say, or the Sowetan. Issues often become dead if they are not given a human face.

So the strategic framing is used as a means of generating interest as well?

Ja.

How did you as a newspaper seek to educate people and get them interested in the elections education related to policy alternatives, and also the technical side?

I'm not a good person to answer that question. Because I was down here in Cape Town. I don't really understand what decisions were made up in Joburg. I also think This Day is such a new paper that in practise people were just getting through the day, rather than..at the Independent Newspapers they had a broader policy, alright? And I think they did a hell of a lot in fact. I have a sense of the readership of This Day, it's a tiny grouping, and they're quite elite, very different kind of..

Ja, so you would be feeling that if you were to try to educate them, you would be talking down to them..?

Well, I think it would be a different kind of education that would be required. I think still, most of This Day's readers were very confused about whether to vote and so on. Whether they could vote out of where they were registered and those kinds of things as well. But I have a sense, and I might be very wrong, that This Day didn't really grapple with those questions. So new, and so understaffed and so on.

You mentioned earlier that you had a brainstorming session about the election. Was that the main of the planning that you as journalists took part in relation to the elections, you know?

Yes, yes it was.

And did you focus mostly on practical bread and butter planning, or did you focus on what functions you would be fulfilling by the steps you would take?

Grand perspectives and we had very grand ideas. So it was quite, in a way, theoretical as well as practical. How do you translate those ideas into stories, but none of what we discussed was implemented.

Do you think focusing on ideals still has some value in the hectic every-day lives of journalists, as it were?

I do, I do, I don't know what my colleagues would think.

But are there any ideals that we have discussed, do you think there is a pecking order between the ideals, where some are more important than others, or can't you really make that distinction?

Look, I mean I would speak for myself, but it's important to have a sense of integrity, to your readers, to what you believe in, I'm not crazy about the term objectivity. But balance, providing space for different voices and perspectives into some form of truth, ja, all of which I think is open to critical viewpoints, ja. But you've also got to deal with reality, you have to sell papers. And you have the constraints of where you work, and competition and what other papers are doing and so on. So you have to do a balancing act. What your editors think, what your sub editors do to your stories and so on, ja.

But are there any important things that the press should not be doing during the election coverage do you think?

Not taking one side blindly. Not ignoring parties, facts uncomfortable to them. I don't think that in South Africa at this point, I don't think the role of the press is to be party political in a very crude way.

But you don't believe in absolute balance in terms of the amount of coverage that we talked about earlier?

I'm not sure that can be absolutely achieved. I certainly do think that different, well argued positions should be put forward in one story so that people can actually make up their own minds as far as that is possible.

But I often see in the coverage, I'm not specifically talking about This Day here, the practice of having one story that presents one viewpoint, you know, and then another story presenting another view..

I think that's ok, you know. As one publication. I mean, you'd have to look at how those stories were used, and how they are placed and so on. To see whether they balance each other out, but I think that's quite a good thing.

I don't know if you would be able to remember this far back, but could you try to give an example of a story you did during March and April up to the election and describe your thinking around it in terms of normative functions of the press?

I truly can't remember...

That fine, I mean it is like several months ago, so..

I'd have to go back and look at what I did.

The final question really relates to what some name as another function of the press, to encourage civic activism and making people want to take active part in life in society, as the press how do you think you tried to encourage people to speak their minds in connection with the election, not necessarily through voting, but..

I think quite a few of the newspapers, the Independent Newspaper Group again comes to mind, did do stuff like that. And I think they did it by going out, speaking to ordinary people, getting their viewpoints on issues; explaining how people go about voting, I think in the Western Cape the election race, and the awareness that votes counted, was very much part of stories that were done on the ANC-NNP- DA situation. Whether we did it at This Day, I..I mean, I'm sure just to the kinds of stories that were written, you know, we tried to make things sound exiting, we tried to make it relevant, I remember doing stories around apathy, actually, youth apathy and projections around youth not registering and so on. Youth in the Western Cape not registering in the coloured areas, predominantly coloured areas. There's also, there's a counter viewpoint that says that if people were unhappy, they would go and register and vote. You can say, ok, this is why it's important to vote, these issues affect you. Housing, schooling and so on, but that doesn't necessarily mean anything to people who think, ach, it's ok that way it is.

Do you think that's often confused with voter apathy, that voter apathy might often not be as bad as we think it is?

I do actually, where people are seriously unhappy they would actually bother to vote, ja.

5.8. Appendix 5: Transcript of interview four. Conducted 30.08. 2004 13:20.

Do you as a journalist ever think of journalists as contributing to upholding democracy?

Yes definitely. Our role is to provide transparency for readers, and to try to expose where there are irregularities, I think that is probably the most important purpose of journalism. In South Africa in particular the most important purpose of journalism is probably to uphold democracy.

And, in terms of functions that the media should ideally perform during an election campaign, would that be mainly exposing irregularities as well, or..?

Oh, ja, definitely, I mean we would look for that, we keep an eye on that. Also just to report on the general efficiency of the running of the elections, and, ja, I mean you would always keep a watchful and critical eye out for any irregularities, that is our role. We don't want to collude and side with the authorities. That would be undercutting our role as watchdogs.

So, should government have a role in regulating the press in this context, to ensure balanced coverage during an election campaign?

No, absolutely not. The government should have no regulatory role at all. They should provide facilities, which they did, they provided very good facilities. They certainly should not intervene at all in how we cover the elections, not at all. We have to ensure our impartiality as the press, that's not their role.

Right, so what do you mean facilities that they provide then, are they purely technical?

Purely technical..

Statistics etceteras?

Yes, stats, computers, media rooms..but no certainly they shouldn't get involved at any ideological level at all, not at all.

So, are there any things that the press should not do during an election campaign, in your view?

Ja, well they shouldn't collude with government or the authorities at all, they should always remain fair and balanced, they shouldn't give one side more coverage than another. Even if they personally support one party they should steer away from prioritising that party over others. It's the basics, sort of the basic rules of journalism, avoid bias, remain objective, and always strive for balance. And if you don't do any of these things, then, I mean those are the

things that one shouldn't do. So those are basically the things we strive for as journalists.

Do you equate balance with objectivity, what does journalistic objectivity mean to you?

I don't think that there is such a thing as objectivity in journalism. I think you're always going to be somehow immersed in a story. It's difficult to extract yourself completely from it, but you've got to then remain balanced, ensure that you always give all sides a fair chance to comment and a fair chance to air their views. So, you yourself may have your own views, but you must always allow other sides to comment equally.

But you yourself used the term in the answer to my previous question?

Yes, well, objectivity is an easy term to grasp for when describing journalistic ideals, but objectivity I think is a bit pie-in-the-sky for journalists, something we should strive for, but I don't think it's realistic. I think balance is the same thing, really.

So balance is the more realistic term?

Much more realistic, and it's far easier to achieve I think. I don't think it's possible that we can be sterile people without any views ourselves, I mean you inevitably do have them, and then you become less objective, but you can maintain balance.

Objectivity is obviously linked to the term watchdog, are there any aspects of the term watchdog that are more important during the coverage of an election campaign than during other periods, or is it just about exposing irregularities like you said before?

It depends, I mean in South Africa there generally aren't electoral irregularities, but in other African countries there would be, so then you've got to be more watchful there, but here it's more, probably, commenting on party politics, the idea of the ANC getting 2/3 majority, what effect that would have on democracy, it comes down to a sort of a more ideological debate, rather than irregularities, but always keeping an eye for those kinds of things. But I don't think you apply other standards and ethics during elections than you do to other kinds of reporting, I think you've got to remain constant..

So the differences are practical, really?

They are practical, ja, I mean during election periods you probably work a bit harder, but that's on a practical level. On a principal level you don't change anything.

In terms of promises that parties make during election campaigns, do you think it's part of the watchdog function to hold up party promises and see how..?

How they are achieving..Definitely, you've definitely got to watch that, but that's more of the long term reporting role, you use those as a benchmark and see how much they have achieved. And make sure they don't make empty promises during the election time to expand their own platform. So, ja, you do, you definitely take those as the benchmarks and use them later on, definitely. You take them very seriously.

How well do you think the press in general did during these elections, do you have a view?

Ja, I think there was some controversy over the SABC and their impartiality, but that will always be the case because they are the state broadcaster. But I think in general the press did very well. It wasn't an exciting election, if you compare it to the 1994 election, there wasn't much controversy, which makes for good elections, but bad news, or boring news, but ja I think it was covered very well in general.

But, do you think that's a bad thing that the press does go for controversy and emphasise the strategic aspects of the party political race, or is that what they should be doing..?

I think some media do, and the Mail&Guardian does. I think some media will sensationalise and sex-up a story for the sake of sales, which I don't think the Mail&Guardian does. Some papers sex it up and sell a story, definitely. But then it comes back down to balance, a sensational story is very often an unbalanced story, where you purposively omitted some of the detail etceteras to get the story down to the sexiest, you know, but I mean I would hope and I know that the Mail&Guardian doesn't do that at all, so it differs from publication to publication. What your mandate says, what your...

What your focus is, basically?

Ja..

In general you think that you as the Mail&Guardian provided a fairly balanced coverage?

Ja definitely, I mean that is one of the pillars of our mission, and I think we did achieve that well.

But, in general following the coverage, I found that the press over all tends to speak overwhelmingly about the ANC, positively or negatively, they speak more about the ANC than any other party really. Do you think it's justified if that's so?

I think so, they are the leading party, so you, they are the ones that you focus on predominantly because their promises are the ones that need to be taken seriously by the electorate. Obviously you've got to balance it with reporting the other parties, but you can't, I think naturally the biggest portion is going to be taken up by the ANC because they are the biggest party, if for no other reason. I don't think it represents partiality or bias at all, I think it's just practical.

And you don't think all that coverage for the ANC strengthens their position, becomes a self fulfilling prophecy?

Not at all, I think it's realistic, you've got to. I mean, you can't report as much on the DA as you do on the ANC, it just wouldn't make sense..So it's purely a logical formula..

Another general trend that I found is that the overwhelming number of stories that are published are part of a handful of big running stories, or overarching narratives as we

like to call them, but do you agree that there is a tendency in the press to go with the same big running stories?

Give an example, what sort of stories?

One example, the prospects for violence in KwaZulu-Natal..

Yes definitely, I think you do focus a lot on themes like that. There are trends and there are patterns. But I think you need that, otherwise it's going to be too disparate. You cater for a readership that needs some sort of pattern, you know. KZN for example has always been a hot-spot, and this year in particular, there were threats of renewed violence, so it did become important. The two-thirds majority issue also became important for the first time, I'm trying to think of other big themes.. electorate apathy, it's just basic, it's just trends that you need to follow, if you ignore them you are irresponsible. So definitely, there are stories that run through.

So, it's part of the obligations of the press to make sense for the readership of what's happening, really?

Yes, ja. You do try to pick up on the best themes and report on things around those, and the smaller slices of life, but yes, you need to explain everything to the reader, otherwise there will be gaps in their understanding of the elections and our political landscape.

But do you think, if you write a story that's outside one of the major themes, do you think it has to be 'better', do you think it's harder to get attention for that story, or..

No, not really, I think people get bored by the big stories as well, so something different is often very refreshing and vitalising, but what we strive for specifically is obviously to keep an eye out for the big stories, but often the dailies pick up on those, and we end up following those, so we try and get a different angle, different story, different people to talk different voices. Those other stories are just as important, if not more, than the trends. There will always be offshoots of those themes, and usually stranger stories are attached to those in one way or another. One is not more important than the other..

But it's not something you consciously think about, you know that we've got to follow this or that, it seems natural?

It does, yes. I mean you tend to think about it, break away from the regular patterns of dailies etc, you do. You got to follow editorial leads and pick up on your own ideas, but generally it is what you do.

Another function of the press during an election campaign may be said to be to educate the public about the elections themselves, you know, what the options are and how the elections are run technically etceteras ..

Yes..

Do you know a lot about the readership of the Mail&Guardian if they are more educated than the average citizen would be?

Yes, they are more academic, political, trade union readers.

How did you seek to educate this readership?

I think our readership doesn't necessarily need that. They don't need to be told where to go, what to do etceteras. That would probably be more, The Star would probably to more of that, possibly the Sunday Times, because their readership is a lot bigger. Ours is more looking at the ideas and the ideologies behind and that sort of thing. And where there are irregularities we report those, but yeah it isn't necessary to educate them on a technical level, if people want to find that out they can do to the IEC web-site. So no, we don't really make space for that at that level, that would be for the layman I think.

How did you try to encourage people to go and participate in the election, I mean, just by voting or by, you know attending meetings and so on?

I don't think our role is really to encourage people, I think it's more to report on what's happening. That's what we covered, how political parties approached different issues etceteras. It's not necessarily to encourage people to go and attend these things more to inform people about what's happening and how parties are approaching these issues. And then it's up to the reader to go and choose. I mean, we try not to be prescriptive, rather to let them choose. Provide the options, ja. That's generally our role.

And that goes for the act of voting as well?

Definitely, ja, but voter apathy is a big concern for us, and we write about that. But we wouldn't say: 'you must go and vote' because you write about the issue. The issue of apathy itself.

I don't know if you can remember this far back just now, but could you give an example of a story you yourself did in March or April up to the election and describe your thinking around that story in terms of ideal press functions?

I'm trying to think of which stories I did... It's so far back.. One story I did was one where I went out to KwaZulu-Natal to investigate whether or not the fears of violence were valid. Because there was a lot of hype and media sensationalism over the fact that there would be violence, so I went down there to see how the people on the ground were feeling, and I think the idea behind it was to get a better balance and a bit of perspective on these reports. And I actually found that there was no desire for violence and people were fighting against it, it was the opposite of what had been reported. So basically I saw a very balanced, positive perspective on what people on the ground actually wanted, because I think they are often ignored. We all listen to the big-wigs who will try and incite division etceteras by saying they're going to use violence. Then you talk to people on the floor or the ground who are actually involved in that and find out their views, and they in fact didn't want any of that, and in fact didn't believe any of it. So that was basically to provide some perspective I think, ja. And to get a bit of balance. That's one example.

With regards to the ideal functions that we discussed previously, did you have an overall plan within your publication to fulfil those ideals, or did you just go about it in a very practical way?

You always do, I mean you've got certain principals and ethical benchmarks that we report by, and that's basically what we apply, we apply that to any sort of reporting, to get more in-depth stories, to create balance etceteras, to get the different voices on to the paper. You go with the flow more, pick up on big stories, trying to get the story behind the story. Plan-wise, there might have been one, the political editor would know more about that..

But you didn't have discussion among yourselves about how you would go about this specifically for the elections, you just..

We did have some themes, for example we had 'ten tough ones' which were one of the senior editors Drew Forrest who interviewed party leaders, with ten tough questions, so we did have some stories that ran through like that, but otherwise no, it was probably more spontaneous. There would have been a plan at editor level, I'm not a hundred percent sure what that was.

OK, so in terms of positive versus negative coverage afforded to the various parties, the question really is how well you felt you maintained the balance?

Your try to be fair, you know but I think because the ANC are dominant, because they are the ruling party, you've got to keep a critical eye on them. So possibly, ja. More them than other parties, but I think that's because they are the leaders, they are the ones that you've got to watch, I mean the DA is fairly, I mean they are sort of lame-duck. They are an opposition party but they are small, you know. And the ANC is delivering to us, you know so you do, you've got to be critical and you've got to keep them on their toes, you know. Definitely. I hope not critical in an unbalanced way, but you're not gonna be lap-dogs either.

Did you use the party manifestos in any way?

Ja, you look at those as a benchmark of what their promises are, I mean it is the basic standards version of their promises.

But for the opposition parties, that is basically what you've got to go by?

Yes.

Another general question, do you think focusing on journalistic ideals has relevance in the hectic every-day lives of journalists?

Oh ja, you have to, if you don't you're going to lose touch and become dishonest, ja. That is your bedrock.

And you said earlier that maintaining the balance was the most important, do you..can we say it that clearly or do you think there other ideals that are just as important?

Balance, watchdog, eh, honesty, truth. I mean truth, that's what you're trying to get at. You tell truth as far as you know it that you're told, that's the basic tenants of our ethics. That's the base, ja.

But do you think there are some ideals that can be disregarded in a way that people try to impose on journalists, that are not really..

Can you give me an example?

I'm just trying to see if we can prioritise the ideals downwards as well, you know. Do you think that's possible?

I think there are some, probably truth and balance are the most important, you know, and then obviously objectivity, but I don't think you can discard any, no. You've got to keep them all on a fairly equal plain. I think it would be silly to prioritise, sort of, measuring honesty, how do you do that?

You mentioned earlier encouraging public participation at rallies etceteras, where you focused more on informing about the elections rather than encouraging people to participate, is that generally applicable as well, that you tend to focus on things that happen rather than encouraging people to be civilly active?

I think, by informing you are encouraging people. It happens anywhere, I mean if you inform people that such and such is happening, this is this party's manifesto and that is another party's response to it you are inadvertently encouraging them to participate. By reading the newspaper they are participating in politics. So I don't really think you can separate the two. I don't think you can separate participation from information. I think, by informing, you keep people actually participating, and I think, ja, that's the basis of any newspaper, you inform readers and then participating in politics, or whatever it is.

One measure that you can use is that a lot of newspapers tend to inform about what has happened, rather than what will happen, you know in terms of rallies etceteras?

You do, you do stories, but we try and do stories beforehand and try and project what may happen, but that doesn't make for very interesting reading. News is retrospective, that's the nature of it. So it wouldn't be fair or perhaps very honest news if you pre-empt anything that's going to happen. You trust that people would be politically astute enough to find out where these things are happening before, and then read a post-mortem afterwards.

5.9. Appendix 6: Transcript of interview five. Conducted 20.09. 2004 16:30.

Do you as a journalist think of journalists as upholding democracy, and if so, how?

You mean in terms of actually reporting on it? What you're saying to me is, do we uphold democracy in the way we work? Ok, generally I think the idea is to remain objective. Which is not always easy, considering a lot of the actual reporting is done prior to the elections anyway, in party-political situations. We were invited for lunch with the deputy state president, or we were invited to various gatherings by political parties who were actually canvassing for support. So it is actually in the way that you actually write that and as long as you remain with that as an up-front thing, this event is being held by x, y, z, party, or, you know, in a lunch with the deputy president as a member of the ANC. So what we actually tried to do was to put in their titles in terms of their ANC position or IFP position or DA position, rather than their government position, particularly with ministers or whatever. It wasn't as much a meeting with the deputy president, it was a meeting with the KwaZulu-Natal head of the ANC or whatever. I can't remember precisely what titles we used, simply because there were so many of them. And the idea is..the difficulty there is to also..when you've got a party that is actually in power, the temptation is to want to go to the various

gatherings that are being hosted by the high profile people. And unfortunately, in this country it's very much slanted towards one political party. So you've actually got to be very careful that you actually don't give too much coverage to one and not enough coverage to the others. Because otherwise, by definition, you are actually favouring one above the other. It is quite difficult, during the election it was pretty much made very easy in the sense that most of the reporting back was actually done through a totally..you know, a body that was not party affiliated at all. I covered much of that sort of general report-back, and the criminal activities were practically non-existent. So that actually put us in a very awkward position, because we didn't actually have too many situations. There was one situation where we had an IFP, sort of, accusation via a member of the media, actually in an international media group, where there was clearly an alliance between them and the party concerned, which was very awkward. But it didn't receive much attention from other members of the media, funnily enough, because I think we were aware of it. Eh.. At the actual election results, by then it was pretty much a foregone conclusion, the difficulty there was to remain neutral. We were at the rally and there were people trying to push flags into our hands and, sort of join in the dances and whatever, and the idea was to actually stay on the outskirts which wasn't very, very easy, because it was very exiting and very emotional,

Ja, it tends to be..

But in general, you know, just by reporting on it, I think in terms of South African history, it's democratic. Because you don't actually have elections until you've been fair. I would say this was probably one of the easier elections, because there was practically nothing happening.

But that goes back to journalistic objectivity, what does journalistic objectivity mean to you?

For me it is very important, but then the interesting thing is that my background is not as a political reporter. My background actually happens to be general, sort of, social reporting; and believe it or not, finance and economics. So I tend to actually take on a much more clinical approach, and tend to go for the numbers and that sort of thing, ballots and that rather than actually peoples' opinions, I try to use that as my measure, you know, I tend to be a bit more numerical I think, than most.

But do you think objectivity in journalism is attainable, what does it entail?

It's a difficult one.. my personal view, and not a view that can be attached to the Witness, I don't necessarily believe that you can be objective as a journalist. Simply because you are a human being with your own psychological and social history, so you see and interpret things through your experience, your position, as a human being and as a journalist. That said, I think there can be a middle line, you work on ethics rather, that can be adhered to and I'm particularly emphatic about objectivity in that sense, but you know..at some point, your history with this country particularly, because again it is so emotive, will come to bear.

But, what do you think are the main functions that the press ideally should perform during an election campaign?

I think, in this particular election campaign it was in actually trying to get people to register to vote. That was a big problem. And a lot of people did not register. And that whole education campaign and actually going out trying to get people to come to the poll stations, and also

during the day I think, this is one area where the Witness doesn't come into it and radio is very strong, is to assure people that the queues weren't terribly long, things were going very well, get a sense of how things were happening, that was very positive, I think it was important to turn to the media that were actually getting out there on the day, actually keep people informed. We were very much retrospective just by nature of the newspaper, I think there was a re-assurance role that was important, because people were worried.

But it's more of an information role than an interest-generating role?

On the day, I think it's too late if you haven't got interest.. So then I think it is an information role, because a lot of people who actually had registered didn't vote, that was the other side of it. So it was actually to get people to the station, but then again, informative. That you're not gonna waste your whole day standing in the line.

Do you think government should have a role in overseeing the press coverage and..

No. I think government did play a role in that they did publish information on a party-political basis. And by nature of the fact that all government ministers are affiliated to a political party, it's actually tilted. So what I actually, I fully support the Independent Electoral Commission's view that any advertised statement actually had to have to party-political banner-head on it. And having an independent electoral body, yes, that is the only way I feel that there should be an involvement, but you know, it's very difficult to take even the state President, who is affiliated to the ANC and you're not going to get fair comment.

But the term watchdog, I mean, in connection to the press and the election coverage, what thoughts does that bring?

I think of watchdog, I think it was very much a case of things happening, was something actually being done that was verging on the criminal, that's what I'm getting at. So, in other words, was there violence, was there collusion at the poll stations and we did go out, visit the polls stations, and have a look at how people were actually being dealt with etc. Again, even our presence in those polling stations was watched over, so we couldn't actually interact, ask people questions. We could ask them in the line before they reached a certain point, and after they got out. But, even that I think is probably a good idea. Because then you..even by virtue of being the press, you can be quite intimidating. And I certainly had people, sort of shy away from talking to the press. People who just wanted to be left in peace to cast their vote etc, so you could actually become part of the problem if you didn't handle it properly. On the other hand, if something did go horribly wrong, and we did have a situation where people were shot at, people were intimidated, I think then the press is imperative. But we were actually.. we were all fired up for that kind of thing to happen because it has happened in previous elections, but it didn't happen in this one. So it was actually a bit of a non-event in terms of press coverage. There wasn't a hell of a lot to report about. And to be quite honest, we had a few problems with the report-back from the Independent Electoral Commission because a lot of it was press conferences that were called and cancelled at the last minute, or called when you weren't aware of it, and so that.. the problem we had at the election was actually access to information, which wasn't very efficient and so, getting it out wasn't either.

Let's turn to the political promises that parties make during election campaigns. How does the press respond to these promises?

We responded by simply recording them, and let me just make clear how we work. The Durban office is a bureau, OK, of the main newsroom in Pietermaritzburg. (PMB) So it's a case of co-ordinating what was happening in Durban with what was happening in PMB and the promises made. If they were national promises made, they were handled by Pietermaritzburg. Provincially, likewise. It was actually at independent gatherings that I would have covered, the Durban only, that I would have handled them and there was also the issue that a lot of the time, if things were happening simultaneously between the two cities they were incorporated into a single article. So actually, the representation of them could have been made by sub-editors combining the story, or any one of us, or neither of us. Technically it's a bit of an awkward situation. If I was sitting at a basic daily newspaper, it would be easier to answer that, but generally the idea was not to give too much, you know, too much credence to the promises except to actually note them, because also, a lot of the time, particularly from the DA's point of view, they were very well armed with statistics, and this was promised in the last election and this was delivered sort of thing. It was very tempting when you had such lovely statistics to actually take that, but then, who is actually interpreting them? You've got to keep.. it's almost like a candy store that you have to stay away from. It's easier later down the line where some of the election promises had been acted upon quite admirably, in terms of various municipal budget schemes and things that have been put in place and service delivery and things like that. The inaugural speech by the state president said to the nation, he has actually carried through from that. That you can assess backwards because then it's no longer part of a competition, it's part of what the government promised beforehand, and that we have commented on editorially, both in articles and independent.

But do you think you managed to maintain balance in your coverage?

I would like to think so, yes.

In terms of a general trend that I found, which is that the ANC got talked about more than any other party..

I agree.

Do you think that's justified given the size of the ANC or should there be absolute balance?

I would say, I would prefer more balance. And I would say that the one criticism I would have of the ANC is that they have abused their government positions and their government resources to actually create events with little substance for people to go to, that were attended because they were ostensibly on government business, I would be very interested to see... and a lot of the time we didn't see the sort of thing where.. we would attend a lunch, or attend a breakfast, and I don't want to single out any particular member at all.. I would be very interested to see who picked up the tab. When a gentleman arrived, if he was a high-powered minister he did have tax-payer covered guards and vehicles and whatever.. now obviously opposition parties do not have the same resources. I don't think there is a clear balance, no. I mean, that's a terribly honest answer, but that's exactly what I feel.

But, do you think that in getting to the smaller parties, it's more of a responsibility for the press to go to them, rather than for them to come to the press, if you know what I mean..?

I would agree with you. But the problem is, there's two issues with the South African press. And number one is the resources that you actually have and the second one, and I am quite critical of this, not so much only in my own newspaper, but in general, when they are putting a story together lesser known players, even independent politicians, are not as newsworthy and tend to take a back seat just in terms of the way newsrooms work. But once you've written a story, even if your top paragraph actually was a lesser known politician, that copy is going to be cut as it's incorporated into another story or it's going to be edited. So you have no real guarantee that your own input into that kind of situation is carried through.

That's why it's easier to go with the big profiles?

It is, ja.

Another trend that I found was also that most of the coverage formed part of a few big running stories, do you agree that there is a tendency in the press to go with the same running stories, and..

I think that it was presented to the press in that form as well. I would say, yes there is a clear tendency for the press to carry that on as running stories, but I have copies of all the speeches of all candidates, and they also carry it on themselves. It came from both sides. That I would say would be on the decade of democracy theme, but that was actually fairly neutral because everybody was happy about it. The violence issue, that was very much pushed from the newspapers. And that was very much newspaper created as you would go to something and there might not be any mention of it, but you would get questions from the floor from the press on that, so yes there definitely was, but then violence was also a concern of the people that we are reporting to. There was a great deal of fear of violence in the province, even if it didn't happen.

Do you think that going with these few big stories is justified considering that it might help the readership make sense of a complicated landscape more easily, or do you think that it's only a bad thing?

I think balance is always a good idea. I think that generally what would happen practically is that the very emotive issues, such as the violence story, could very well be the stories that you find in the front pages or in the front half of the paper, but in terms of analytical stories I would say you need a far wider kind of approach. Issues that actually perhaps are more important even than the fact that we've had 10 years of democracy you should actually look at things like delivery of houses, delivery of electricity, sanitation and basic services; how much was promised, how much has been achieved, and an actual proper.. you know, are you making empty promises to people or what's the difference between the previous election and this one. I think, to actually tackle such complicated issues, you actually need more space. You cannot argue an issue like that in a front page story. So it depends on what fits what.

Another trend that I found really was that there was a lot of strategic focus in the stories, you know, a lot of focus on the horse race and the competitors, rather than the issues...

I would definitely agree with you.

Again, is that merely a bad thing, or does it help generate interest in the elections that otherwise would be lost?

It is probably a bad thing. I say that because my background is in economics, so my first response would be to say that more issue related stories should have been done. Probably, one of your big problems is that, in the province, and I know this, neither of the two main newspapers, the Independent (Newspaper) Group and us, had the resources to do the research in terms of senior journalists. Actually able to do effective comparative analysis. And I think it was wanting. And I think the problem was that we have a province, if you did a national kind of study it would be very different, because KwaZulu-Natal always has been characterised by politics just by virtue of the IFP/ANC history. And it's unfortunate that the press actually gets drawn into that. And I think they were drawn into it. I'm not necessarily saying that it is a good thing because the issue really was: What were the people voting for? At the end of the day, I think, having sat with people in lines and in townships, whatever you'd like to call them, they were voting for jobs, housing, a decent standard of living more than they were voting for individual personalities.

When you went into the election campaign period, did you have a plan, for instance sessions to brainstorm how you would fulfil the different functions in democracy as an organ of the press, or was it just bread and butter planning?

It was bread and butter planning, to be perfectly honest. I think one thing, from the point of view of the Witness, let me qualify what actually happened. We in Durban were a brand new office. And we started working literally a few weeks before the election. So the actual more intricate planning we weren't party to as the Durban bureau. So we very much picked up the tail end of that because the paper had decided to expand at that particular time, and I think.. I don't know if it was planned that we would literally drop down from the sky just to cut the slack on the elections, or whether it just happened that way. But the office was actually barely a month old at the time of the election. So, in terms of long-term planning, it was actually quite difficult, we pretty much just worked with the guidance of the people in Pietermeratzburg and as we became more familiar with it from day to day we put our own input into what they were telling us to do, so it was a bit of a difficult situation, I think the next election will be a different thing, We will be an established office and have more far-reaching planning.

Would you be able to give an example of a story that you remember doing during March and April in the lead-up and if you had any thinking around the normative side of that story, or is it too far back to remember off hand?

You know, a lot of the stuff that we put together was amalgamated into stories. Which was quite a frustrating and a relieving thing, we were both fairly new and stretched as far as The Witness was concerned. And I come from the background of a large national daily, so it was very easy to slot into that, but it wasn't quite the same newspaper, so that was one thing. The other thing that came to mind, the one I remember funnily enough was a meeting that we did have with Jacob Zuma. And I did actually expect it to go along the lines of a party-political type of ranting race, you know, sort of campaigning, and he was actually surprisingly enough more sort of asking me questions, other than giving out information. So that was one thing I was quite surprised about. That was from their side in, which made reporting it more easy. Our problem, and I think this thing affected both the journalists here who covered most of the election was just the plain difficulty of extracting information on the day, which was a pain in

the neck, very, very badly handled. And it was very, very difficult just to get the information, let alone report it reliably and in context. Because you couldn't get the information, you couldn't find the context. So it was actually a very frustrating day, it was probably most of my most frustrating days I have been through. Simply because of the lack of information. Both in the few days before the elections, and the feedback, both before and immediately after the elections. So it was actually, it didn't help us in making reliable and responsible coverage. The Commission (the IEC) was not exactly a good source, we found it closed a lot of doors for us, and that to my mind.. next election, I'll make sure I have opened a few of my own beforehand because I just have to do that. I was very much our first sensible elections in which there weren't really ridiculous situations to run after, so we weren't firefighting, but that's the price to pay for it. Quite frankly we were all surprised.

Do you think, in the more every-day life of journalists, do you think that focusing on ideals still has a relevance?

I don't think ideals in Africa have relevance. Because ideals to my mind are things that you don't attain. Africa is a really hard place to live but a place I deeply love, and I think that the relevance in Africa is delivery. And the things that are in place to ensure delivery, and I think that is the important aspect. What we wish to deliver, what is needed, I don't think it's actually idealism at all. I don't think we have actually matured to the point where.. The democracy is so young that democratic ideals, when you haven't got a job and you haven't got food to eat.. You know, in my personal opinion probably the worst that you'll find is something general like that, but people want to see delivery, they want to see the taxpayer's money to be used for what it is meant to be used, and they want to see constant officials in place and we want to move beyond the petty nonsense that goes with these fraud scams and using money where it shouldn't be used etc. So that's, I wouldn't call them ideals, I think we're still in a very early era, and that's where the press is important because we need to scratch those out who are doing things that they shouldn't be doing. You know, people aren't getting their pension, people haven't got decent housing, that's the role of the press I see in Africa anyway. That's very much a watchdog role, but a watchdog role on the ground issues that matter, rather than ideals.

In terms of positive versus negative coverage afforded to the different parties, by your publication, do you think you managed to strike a good balance there, or.. ?

I would hope so, but I must say that in Natal it's very difficult. And I would say that certain parties actually draw negative comment just by virtue of the things they get up to. So I would think that there would have been a slight tip towards the IFP. But then again, it might very well have been earned.

Are we talking about the capital issue here or are we talking about the violence issue or?

Probably, well the violence it was fairly cut and dry because either there was violence or there wasn't. But in terms of actual positive positioning of individual political parties, we had the history of what they had got up to the four years beforehand and their own, you know problems and lack of problems actually pretty much dictated that. I'm not saying that it was actually fair and straight down the line, I think, I don't think you're going to find an ideal.