



**Thesis Topic:** The alternative press in Black and White: Analysing the representation of black voices in the *Weekly Mail*'s political reporting

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## Abstract

The alternative press refers to a group of anti-apartheid newspapers which proliferated in South Africa during the early 1980s until the early 1990s. What was 'alternative' about these publications was how they actively pursued an anti-apartheid agenda in their news reporting. The *Weekly Mail* newspaper is regarded as one of the pioneers of this section of the press and is the focus of this study which examines the representation of black political voices in its political reporting. Recognising a gap in the literature on the alternative press pertaining to questions of race, gender, voice and sourcing patterns, this study utilises qualitative discourse analysis and content analysis to analyse the political reporting in the *Weekly Mail* to evaluate the representation of black voices in the newspaper. It asks the questions: how can we analyse the content emerging from the alternative press with regards to the representation of black voices? Who writes, who speaks and what does this say about race, power and black representation in the *Weekly Mail*? Would this esteemed newspaper reproduce some of the racial and gender stereotypes prevalent in mainstream newspapers, or would it shift its content to more progressive terrains?

This study revealed that the *Weekly Mail* was centred around male voices, specifically, those of black male leaders of popular black organisations. The study further revealed an interesting division in the representations of black males, where older black males were constructed as respectable, rational and approachable, while younger black males who were sometimes referred to as "young lions" in the ANC Youth League, were constructed as unthinking, violent, politically naïve and were infantilised. The findings of this study further showed that the *Weekly Mail* framed black females in politics according to their roles as wives, mothers and maternal caregivers. There were inconsistencies in how white and black women were portrayed. While black women were put strictly in their motherhood boxes, white women were allowed space to think and speak more broadly about their political ideas and aspirations.

These observations showed the ways which the *Weekly Mail* deployed subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) undertones of racial and gender biases in their representations of black political voices.

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To the ones who came before me, the ones who fought for freedom and who stood firmly against injustice. The ones who gave us the name – Mpemnyama. I stand firmly on your shoulders. Izwelethu.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction:

During the dying days of the apartheid regime, there existed the 'alternative press' which represented a section of the media concerned with espousing anti-apartheid values and to some degree, contributed to the downfall of the oppressive system. Berger (2000) calls the alternative press "indisputably" a form of "publishing for the 'people'" (Berger, 2000, p. 74). Newspapers which were regarded as part of the alternative press, for instance, *Weekly Mail, South, Grassroots, New Nation* and *Vrye Weekblad* amongst others, are often praised as crusaders for the anti-apartheid struggle within the media space, but what has been less talked about has been how these publications dealt with the question of black representation. There is little to no scholarly work dealing directly with how the alternative press represented black voices.

The aim of this study is to understand the ways in which the *Weekly Mail*, as a well-respected alternative newspaper, represented black political voices in its political reporting. It aims to shed light on a less spoken about aspect of this section of the press, the racial and gendered identities of the quoted sources in this newspaper. The study also aims to shed light on the nuanced ways in which race, carefully intertwined with hierarchies of power and gender identity, found expression in the output of the *Weekly Mail* newspaper. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in the limited research questioning race, gender and power in the alternative press.

The alternative press is significant in that it aims to alter journalistic norms by improving connections between news and community, powerful and disempowered, rich and poor and moving news to show "more diverse sourcing patterns for race and gender" (Kurpius, 2002, p. 853; Atton & Wickenden, 2008). This study utilises a content analysis and discourse analysis approach to analyse the political reporting in the *Weekly Mail* to evaluate the representation of black voices in the newspaper. The *Weekly Mail* is a focus of this study because it is regarded as a "flagship of the alternative press in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Merrett & Saunders, 2000, p. 458) and it constructed itself as a more "professional"

and independent newspaper, compared to other community, grassroots, trade union and/or Congress-aligned alternative newspapers.

Additionally, studying the ways in which some publications quote their sources gives an indication of the diversity of voices which specific publications use. Whether these sources are given voice to express their opinions, identities and worldviews is important as it can ascribe agency to certain voices while rendering others speechless. Quotes in news stories represent what van Dijk (1996) refers to as “access” to media discourse. Van Dijk (1996) notes that access represents some form of social power. According to him, more access “corresponds with more social power. In other words, measures of discourse access may be rather faithful indicators of the power of social groups and their members” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 86). The context within which certain individuals are given voice is also important, as some scholars suggest.

A textual analysis of the 1986 copies was conducted to analyse and code for markers of black representation. The year 1986 is significant because it represents the year when a State of Emergency was in full swing and its resulting censorship pressures were put on to the press (Louw & Tomaselli, 1991). As van Dijk (1991) asserts, textual analysis pays special attention to “style, rhetoric, argumentative or narrative structures or conversational strategies” (van Dijk, 1991, p. 6).

The following research questions were investigated:

- i) How can we analyse the content emerging from the alternative press with regards to the representation of black voices? Who writes, who speaks and what does this say about race, power and black representation in the *Weekly Mail*?
- ii) How did the *Weekly Mail* represent black sources in its political reporting? Did the *Weekly Mail* represent black political voices in positive or negative ways?
- iii) What proportion of those quoted in the *Weekly Mail* were black and what proportion of those quoted in the *Weekly Mail*'s political reporting were female?

This study, therefore, focuses on the specific ways the *Weekly Mail* newspaper ascribed value and meaning to the black voices quoted in its political reporting. By analysing those quoted in the reporting on black political issues, the study unpacks the contexts in which this newspaper operated.

## Chapter Two

### Literature review:

#### 2.1 Brief history of journalism in South Africa

The history of publishing in South Africa is closely linked to the history of colonialism and apartheid. As Oliphant (2000) argues, discussing forms of publishing in South Africa requires paying attention to matters far beyond just books and newspapers. It requires looking at perspectives into politics, the economy, history and technology, amongst others. Referring to literature, Oliphant (2000) describes South African literature as one which is “marked by a colonial history”, giving it distinct features. He notes that most forms of publishing found their “first inscriptions... as part of the emerging popular press” and it is for this reason that “the emergence of the press in South Africa and the constraints under which it operated directly affected the nature of early South African literatures” (Oliphant, 2000, p. 115). On to the publishing of newspapers specifically, their genesis is from 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century government gazettes and journals. The first newspaper to be published in South Africa, the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, was published in Cape Town in 1800 and it was not permitted to cover any political news causing it to “become a cheerful melange of shipping reports and parochial social events interspersed with advertisements” (Crwys-Williams, 1989, p. 10). While the *Cape Town Gazette* might have been the first to be published, *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, created on 7 January 1824, was the first “independent newspaper to be printed free of the restraining shackles of government intervention” (Crwys-Williams, 1989, p. 9). This newspaper is an example of the libertarian roots of the newspaper industry as its editors, Thomas Pringle and John Fairbain, led the way in writing critically about the Governor of the Cape at the time, Lord Charles Somerset. The paper was suspended only a few months after being established as it was viewed to have overstepped a stipulation not to publish articles of a political nature. Oliphant (2000) views this as an “early incident of State intervention in the domain of publishing” (Oliphant, 2000, p. 111). This later characterised, in differing intensity, the publishing industry from colonialism through to the consolidation of white hegemony in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, to the apartheid era when the National Party was in charge (Oliphant, 2000; McKenzie, 1999; Crwys-Williams, 1989; Jackson, 1993;

Cutten, 1935). After the paper was shut down, it took Pringle going back to London to persuade the British government to grant rights to establish freedom of the press, for the newspaper to be up and running again.

The *Commercial Advertiser* also sheds light on the place of newspapers in the colonial era as establishers of political discourse in the public sphere. McKenzie (1999) argues that the early 19<sup>th</sup> century public sphere in Cape Town was influenced by a new and emerging political culture which was associated with “economic transformations of an industrializing metropole and the rise of the middle class to political power in both Britain and its colonial dependencies”. This new “bourgeois public sphere” was closely tied to the press and it was opposed to “aristocratic privileges of the *ancient regime*”, which someone like Lord Somerset exhibited (McKenzie, 1999, p. 88). Thus, freedom of the press, with Fairbairn and Pringle as the pioneers, was established within a context of a more liberal British rule in the Cape and of a shifting public culture. However, McKenzie (1999) still notes how this public sphere excluded people along racial and gender lines. As McKenzie (1999) argues, “the political culture of the bourgeois public sphere at the Cape, although expressed in the language of universality, was exclusionary by its very nature” (McKenzie, 1999, p. 95).

Within this context of colonialism and around this same period, there emerged the black press, tied to the missionary invasion and “territorial conquest on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony” (Oliphant, 2000, p. 112). These were essentially missionary controlled publications which catered to black audiences through the writing and translation of biblical texts to African languages in order to Christianize and grow the literacy rates of black readers. Missionary schools became the bedrock of the publishing enterprise in the eastern frontier as they formed part of “the teachings, the education system, the way of life, the aspirations and ideologies... of those blacks connected with journalism in the early days” (Couzens, 1990, p. 1). A similar scenario is seen in colonial Zimbabwe where missionaries played a critical role in the emergence of black newspapers after the formation of missionary schools. This is also seen in other African countries like Zambia and Namibia, where the press developed due to links with the South African colonial establishment and with the white settler community which was in the process of sinking its feet in the ruling of the colonised nations, outside of the grip of the British Empire (Banda, 2006; Dombo, 2018; Heuva, 2001). Interestingly, with the passage of time, black journalists and editors

associated with the missionary press became more resistant to the overseeing tendencies of those in power. While the early black press was part of the Christianizing mission tied to conquest, the later 19<sup>th</sup> century black press became a key architect to the nascent phases of a Black Nationalist tradition in South Africa.

One can think of the alternative press as having linkages with this early culture of the desire for the freedom of the press under an autocratic and authoritarian state. Although the term 'alternative' is a contested one, as will be discussed below, the one common thread between the various alternative newspapers which operated during the 1980's was this continuous search and commitment to forms of media freedom. To best understand this quest, it is useful to study the context within which these papers emerged and operated during the height of apartheid repression.

## 2.2 What do we mean by alternative journalism?

One of the first challenges that one is faced with when studying the alternative press is the crisis of definitions. There is no universally agreed upon definition of what the alternative press is. While it might be hard to define, one common thread tying together many attempts at a definition is how the alternative press represents a dynamic, counter-hegemonic group of publications which usually emerge due to the growth of some social movement or broad political organising. It is a response, rather than a stagnant, specific practice (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Berger, 2000; Jackson, 1993; Mathes & Pfetsch, 1991; Phillips, 2007). Phillips (2007) refers to alternative publications as those which are "capable of pushing the wheel of social change and nibbling away at the complacency of the establishment" (Phillips, 2007, p. 49). Berger (2000) refers to the alternative press in South Africa as newspapers which emerged out of an era of "popular participation" after the late 1970's and which embodied journalistic work which was "pitted in direct opposition to racism in South African society, including opposition to racist publications" (Berger, 2000, p. 73). Berger (2000) views the alternative press as a "specialist" press of the social movements tied to the resistance against apartheid. Atton & Hamilton (2008) view alternative journalism as a practice which critiques dominant conventions of news production, representation, the commercialisation and the elitist nature of the profession, "the professional norm of objectivity; and the subordinate role of audience as receiver" (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; p. 1). The alternative press questions the place of the mainstream

press as the norm, and places itself as a counter-hegemonic alternative voice which resonates with voices unattached to structural power.

Another issue is the fact that the publications which fall under this umbrella term are varied in many ways. For instance, a publication like *Grassroots* was founded in 1980 in the Western Cape and aimed at catering to black (both African and Coloured) audiences in the region. *Grassroots* saw itself as a paper firmly planted in the community and it employed a news production strategy which involved collective participation from the community and organisations it served, including civic groups, trade unions, women's organisations, student organisations and youth clubs. The paper saw itself as being a representative of the oppressed and in a 1984 "workbook", the newspaper declared: "WE SPEAK FOR OURSELVES is one of the slogans of Grassroots Community Newsletter. This is because GRASSROOTS gives a voice to the oppressed and the exploited people of this country; to those who cannot speak through the newspapers, TV, radio and magazines of the bosses and government" (Tomaselli, 1991, p. 157). The production process involved news gathering, writing and editing, distribution and fundraising, and this was done by volunteers from the member organisations associated with the paper (Berger, 2000; van Kessel, 2000). According to van Kessel (2000), staff at the publication identified themselves as "news organizers" rather than as journalists. The paper covered "bread-and-butter" issues as a conscientizing strategy and to build "confidence in the benefits of collective action" in order to counter "a history of disempowerment" (van Kessel, 2000, p. 285).

On the other hand, *Vrye Weekblad*, founded and edited by Max Du Preez, was an Afrikaans alternative newspaper launched in 1988. The cross-racial outrage after the apartheid government changed the constitution and formed the tricameral parliament, where Indians and Coloured people would be allowed to partially participate in parliament and Africans would continue to be excluded in 1983, resulted in a countrywide eruption of violence and resistance. This, Classen (2000) argues, allowed for the emergence of "dissident Afrikaans voices ... in the Afrikaans press" (Classen, 2000, p. 405). These "Afrikaans voices" were a generation of relatively young Afrikaners with a growing disillusionment with the symbiotic relationship between the National Party and the Afrikaans press, and so they wanted "an Afrikaans newspaper independent of the National Party's shackles" (Classen, 2000, p. 406). In what played out like a feud between a strict, conservative father (National Party) and a

rebellious son (*Vrye Weekblad*), du Preez left the mainstream Afrikaans press declaring how he still loved his language and his people, and how he saw no conflict between being “an ethnic Afrikaner, writing Afrikaans, loving Afrikaans” while still rejecting Afrikaner nationalism and its white leadership. He wanted *Vrye Weekblad* to be the first Afrikaans newspaper committed to a “non-racial, democratic, united South Africa” (quoted in Classen, 2000, p. 423). The apartheid government responded with a heavy hand. The newspaper was intensely monitored and given multiple warnings by the regime; the editor, du Preez, was charged and found guilty of contravention of the Internal Security Act, and the paper was charged the highest registration fee ever recorded for a South African newspaper, an amount of R30 000. The newspaper had an equally rebellious band of publishers backing it. It was published by Wending Publikasies and its directors were “leading Afrikaans anti-apartheid figures like Frederick van Zyl Slabbert ... Sampie Terreblanche, rebel economist at the University of Stellenbosch, Christo Nel, a business consultant, and P. G. Bison, a businessman” (Classen, 2000, p. 424). Unlike *Grassroots*, *Vrye Weekblad* consisted of professional journalists who had previous work experience in the mainstream press. The paper was more independent and had no direct linkages with any political movement, while it adhered to liberal objective journalistic practices (Louw & Tomaselli, 1991). This alternative paper was at the forefront of criticizing and questioning the National Party, revealing corruption in government and in writing multiple front page exposes on the notorious security police death squads. Admittedly, *Vrye Weekblad*'s readership was “embarrassingly elite”, according to du Preez, but within the Afrikaans community, it created a creative space for debate and opened the community to what was really happening in the country at the time (Classen, 2000).

What is termed the ‘alternative press’ was at its height in South Africa from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, and it waned as South Africa ushered in a new democratic dispensation. This was a time of great political activity in the country where people were organising themselves in a militant resistance against the apartheid government, which was using unprecedented levels of force and brutality against its detractors. In the South African context, the term ‘alternative’ became contested because unlike in Western European or American countries, where the alternative press represented the views of somewhat fringe groups or minority opinions on matters, the alternative press operating under apartheid

represented the voices of the repressed majority which was often distorted, or simply omitted, in the mainstream press (Berger, 2000; Jackson, 1993; Louw & Tomaselli, 1991). Often publishing news pertaining to banned organisations like the ANC, PAC and the many civic organisations attached to the UDF, along with extra-parliamentary affairs like bus, rent and retail boycotts, the alternative press became a platform to raise voices of those the state was trying to muffle. Therefore, several editors found the term inaccurate. For instance, the *Weekly Mail's* co-editor, Anton Harber found the term to suggest alternative publications were “fringe” and said the term was “used by the state to isolate us”. Jackson (1993) correctly suggests that alternative papers saw a gap in the ways in which the mainstream press was covering (or not covering) the news and questioned the stance that the mainstream were a normal standard of what good journalism was. He suggests that to think of the alternative press as “an alternative to some pure standard, from which the alternative papers differed merely in that they offered another perspective, minimizes the size of the gap between the editorial philosophies of these two groups” (Jackson, 1993, p. 49). But, as some scholars concede, the term is useful because it describes a period where a similar trend was seen in a group of publications which formed an integral part in the fight against apartheid (Jackson, 1993; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Berger, 2000).

Another challenge is the deafening silence on the question of the representation of black voices in the alternative press. As Jackson (1993) correctly argues, there is an unsettling romanticisation of the alternative press which closes space for any kind of valuable critique on the shortcomings of the press, including how it might have reproduced dominant stereotypical norms in the ways in which it represented black voices through sourcing routines. Books and journal articles deal with this section of the press purely from a political economic perspective, looking at the political climate in which they operated and the ownership patterns of the papers, while other sources provide narrative accounts of the work of the many alternative newspapers which were operating in the 1980s. Other studies provide useful timelines about the lifespan of the most notable papers. For instance, a widely referenced book on this subject is Louw and Tomaselli's third book in a series on the South African press during apartheid, *The Alternative Press in South Africa*, which features a collection of critical essays by both authors, and from other contributors, on developments in the mainstream and alternative presses, the political climate which led to the emergence



of the alternative press, its place in the historical timeline of the resistance press in South Africa, the impact of political reforms on the alternative press and its ultimate demise (Louw & Tomaselli, 1991). While it is a meticulous contribution on the literature on the alternative press, the work's focal points are not concentrated on the complex ways which race (and gender) were articulated and represented by the alternative press. Switzer & Adhikari's authoritative look into the resistance press is also important but regrettably leaves a blank space on how black political voices were represented by these important publications (Switzer & Adhikari, 2000). Another important book is Bryan Trabold's *Rhetorics of Resistance: Opposition Journalism in Apartheid South Africa* which outlines the various rhetorical, legal and political tactics and devices which attorneys, journalists and editors from the *Weekly Mail* and *New Nation* used to subvert apartheid censorship regulations. The book is concerned with the spatial and temporal dimensions of "writing space", which Trabold refers to as "a metaphor to describe the parameters of expression" and how writers working for these publications sought to expand and maximize their writing space (Trabold, 2018, pg. 6). Maria Mboono Nghidinwa's study on the role of women journalists in Namibia's liberation struggle closes some of the gaps in the above-mentioned books. Nghidinwa (2008) utilizes feminist media discourses and intersectional feminist theory, which examines the interlocked ways which race, gender and class interact with each other to reproduce certain power discourses in society (Crenshaw, 1991), to study the "gendered relations of power within" the Namibian media structures and it "updates what has happened since independence in 1990" (Nghidinwa, 2008, p. 8). This study, however, focuses on the experiences of women journalists, both black and white, rather than looking at how Namibian women were represented in the papers that these women worked for. It's still, however, an interesting and poignant look into the place of women in the press in Africa during the liberation struggle.

### 2.3 Brief overview of the press during apartheid: The place of the alternative newspapers

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a growth in the press as it moved to more parts of the country, at the same time the black press saw significant expansion; there were progressive technological advances which made the publishing and transportation of newspapers easier amongst other things (Limb, 2012). This expansion coincided with the dominance of the British in the country, and a further growth in the English press. The Afrikaans press, which

was steadily growing at the time too and which was known for espousing Afrikaner nationalist ideals, was never shy in closely aligning itself with the nationalist government after the triumph of apartheid ideology in 1948. Apartheid empowered the Afrikaner nationalists to draft and implement laws which were to affect not only the very fabric of South African society, but also affected the structure of the press. As Jackson (1993) notes, the South African media under apartheid was shaped by decades of repressive legislation and thus it took on some of its characteristics, prompting Harvey Tyson, former the *Star* editor to say, “Every generation of South Africans, ever since that day in April 1829, has had to fight off major threats to the existence of their free press” (quoted in Jackson, 1993, p. 17).

The lineage of resistance to repression in the press, however, did not begin in the 1980s during the height of the popularity of the alternative press in South Africa. The African nationalist press served as “dominant organs of alternative news and opinion before the 1940s” (Switzer, 2000, p. 39). For instance, multilingual newspapers like *Abantu-Batho*, which was established in October 1912, coinciding with the birth of the ANC, led the way in black journalism and black intellectual intervention in South Africa. It covered issues like “pass laws, Land Act and the World War to strikes and socialism, the founding of Fort Hare, the rights of black women and Garveyism were articulated, just as mundane events such as football matches, marriages and church gatherings” (Limb, 2012, p. 2). *Abantu-Batho* ceased publication in 1931 and after this a “protest-cum-resistance press” emerged due to the “dramatic turn in events that would signal a shift from protest to resistance in the African nationalist movement during the 1940s and early 1950s” (Ukpanah, 2005, p. 8). Newspapers like the *World*, which started off as *Bantu World* and was more liberal and conciliatory in tone, shifted its outlook through time as state repression became more brutal, prompted specifically by the 1976 Soweto uprising. During this period, its editorial concerns shifted “from cooperation to uncompromising rejection of the institutions of apartheid”. It gave considerable news coverage and editorial comment to “the revival of anti-apartheid African political groups. It supported the Black Consciousness movement and the Soweto Committee of Ten (The first meeting was in *World* offices)” (St. Leger, 1981, p. 34). A national newspaper like the *Guardian*, which was published from 1937 until 1963, was socialist in outlook, and in terms of readership, it is regarded as “unquestionably the most

successful newspaper in the history of the resistance press” (Ukpanah, 2005, p. 8) and “the most significant socialist newspaper in South African history” (Switzer, 2000, p. 41). It provided sustained coverage of local and international politics, boycotts, police raids and unrest (Switzer, 2000). The *Rand Daily Mail*, which can be viewed as a direct precursor to the *Weekly Mail*, was equally as significant, as it was famous for its investigative reporting, which exposed government corruption, and for taking a stand against the censorship of the media (Gibson, 2007).

During the 1980s, when most alternative newspapers were launched, South Africa saw a revival in mass anti-apartheid struggle since the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in the 1960s and the clampdown on the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s. Amongst many other political developments, the formation by the state of the tricameral parliament (which saw Africans being explicitly excluded from political participation) was a mobilizing and uniting tool for the mass democratic movement. This saw the unification of African, Coloured and Indian civic, student, youth, women and worker organizations under the umbrella of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. According to Switzer (2000), “[t]he UDF would be the umbrella body for these and a growing number of other affiliate organizations... whose leadership and strength lay in individual communities. ... The UDF from the beginning associated itself with the exiled ANC and the inclusive, multiclass, nonracial Charterist movement, even though the Freedom Charter was not officially adopted until 1985” (Switzer, 2000, p. 24). As Switzer (2000) further notes, due to the mass protests, strikes, stayaways, consumer and local-election boycotts orchestrated by UDF-affiliated organizations, “[t]he urban black townships, in particular, became virtually ungovernable between 1984 and 1986” (Switzer, 2000, p. 27). In 1985, the apartheid government implemented a partial state of emergency, “the first one since Sharpeville in 1960... The second state of emergency was imposed nationwide in June 1986... Successive states of emergency would be imposed every year thereafter until 1990” (Switzer, 2000, p. 30). As Hachten and Giffard (1984) write, under these conditions:

“the harassment of journalists, black and white, continued. Newsmen were brought before the courts to disclose their sources of information, detained in prison for questioning, or charged with various offenses. Journalists’ applications for passports

were routinely refused. In addition to these administrative actions, the government, although already armed with numerous laws to restrict press coverage, indicated further restrictive legislation was in the offing” (Hachten & Giffard, 1984, p.12).

This period saw the proliferation of alternative newspapers such as *Grassroots*, a community organised publication in Cape Town associated with the UDF, *Vrye Weekblad*, an Afrikaans weekly which is famous for having exposed Vlaakplaas death squads, newspapers associated with the trade union movement like *South*, and of course the *Weekly Mail*.

Emerging after the gruesome attack by the apartheid regime on protesting learners in Soweto in 1976, the emergence of the alternative press is an interesting and dynamic era in journalism which has received minimal attention in South African journalism and media studies. This study hopes to contribute to the study of the alternative press through understanding the place of black political voices in one of its most important publications, *Weekly Mail*.

Numerous studies on the representation of race, ethnicity and gender in news reporting have found that the ways in which black men and women are represented in the news conform to hegemonic, racialised stereotypes about black masculinities and femininities (Bonnes, 2013; Cooky, Dycus & Dworkin, 2013; Fair, 1993; Hollinsworth, 2005; Meyers, 2004; Carter & Ross, 2011). An important study in this regard is Fair’s 1993 study on how the U.S. television news represented South African black African women and men during the apartheid era, and how the labelling used to describe the violence at the time contributed to creating a racialized and gendered discourse about black people in South Africa during the insurgency (Fair, 1993). Fair (1993) explored the representation of gender and race in three mainstream American news channels. The study focused on the depictions of black South African women and men deployed by television news broadcast channels, *ABC*, *NBC* and *CBS*, when reporting on news stories about violence amongst black people during the aftermath of the 1986 State of Emergency until December 1990. By using the racial classification of the cause of the violence as “black-on-black”, Fair (1993) found that American broadcasters used race as a tool to strip the stories of “any serious consideration that the violence stems not from race but from economic and political conditions” (Fair, 1993, p. 284). Fair (1993) found that race was weaponized as a tool for the expression and perpetration of violence. The violence expressed, mostly shown by images of black men

within political struggle, fed into the “discourse of Africa as primitive, savage, and ‘tribal’” (Fair, 1993, p. 292), while on the other hand, black women were seen as domesticised, objectified, voiceless “Others”. While there is a totalizing erasure and distortion in the racial discourse in these stories, Fair (1993) recognised that black men were still given “voice and credibility”. As the faces of violence, black men were given space to explain their violence within the context of political struggle – whether the stories showed bias towards or against them. On the contrary, black women existed “in these stories of violence only in their connection to [black] men” (Fair, 1993, p. 284). Black women were represented as apolitical reactors to events of violence. They were “voiceless symbolic representations of the violent terrain” of political struggle in the 1980’s, “limiting them to a seemingly depoliticised domestic sphere” where gender is used as an ideological weapon which generates and reproduces dominant social meanings of servile black womanhood (Fair, 1993, p. 284). On the other hand, the underlying message present in this coverage is that the perpetrators of violence are black men, the expert opinion on why this violence occurs is white men, and the blank in between is black women. What Fair (1993) sees is that black men are given voice to explain why they perpetrate violence and white men are the voice of reason, the experts and the purveyors of knowledge. As van Dijk (1991) also notes, ethnic minorities in the British context “speak in the Press through mediation, for instance through more credible or more accessible white politicians, lawyers, or action groups who defend their ‘case’” (van Dijk, 1991, p. 154). This then works, advertently or inadvertently, to naturalize unequal power relations in social life, outside of the news frame. The obvious question then becomes, if this is the way in which the voices of black people were represented in the mainstream American news, then was the case different in alternative news platforms? Was the representation of black political voices in the political reporting of an alternative newspaper like the *Weekly Mail* different because of the progressive political values which this newspaper espoused? Taking into consideration the temporal aspect of the question around gender and race discourse, can we use an intersectional approach in dissecting the content emerging from the alternative press?

As Atton and Wickenden (2005) note, sourcing routines are important in news production as they have implications on how the media represent certain dominant or marginalised groups and whether the voices of these groups are given legitimacy, credibility, speech or

social labels/stereotypes. Their study places a spotlight on the sourcing routines of the alternative press in the UK to determine the voices which are privileged in a radical, left-wing publication called *SchNEWS*. The study finds that the alternative press privileges voices of “ordinary” citizens who might be viewed as “other” or “deviant” by the mainstream press. The voices are also given space to “represent themselves directly through the expression of their ‘subjugated knowledges’” (Atton & Wickenden, 2008, p. 345). They also find that the newspaper is dominated by politically active and well-educated young people, who, similarly to those who worked for *Grassroots*, view themselves as activists first and journalists second, carefully selecting their sources, favouring “people and groups involved in direct action and campaigning”. However, Atton and Wickenden (2005) still view this as a form of privileging certain voices. They claim that the “ordinary” voices which *SchNEWS* quoted were far from “ordinary” but were “more accurately a ‘counter-elite’ whose power, legitimacy and authoritativeness are as significant to *SchNEWS* as their mainstream counterparts are to mass media” (Atton & Wickenden, 2008, p. 345). This study provides a useful lens in which to view who is given voice in the alternative press and how they are represented. However, the sources in the study are coded as 'elite' or 'non-elite' or as 'ordinary'. We are never told the race or gender of those sourced. The importance is placed on the social status/or class position of the sources, rather than on their race or gender. This gives the inaccurate impression that race and gender are non-factors in sourcing routines. Journalists, whether in the mainstream or the alternative press, make choices about who they choose to quote and the space they give those individuals. Kurpius (2002) makes an argument for the incorporation of ‘civic journalism’ to news sourcing practices because it “assumes a stronger connection to non-traditional sources, leading to greater diversity of sources in news stories” (Kurpius, 2002, p. 853). Kurpius reflects that historically, sources used by journalists have been “white, male officials who are situated in proximity to the media organisation and are easily regarded by journalists as providing credible information” and that “people of colour are generally missing from news coverage, unless it is coverage of crime or festivals” (Kurpius, 2002, p. 854). Campbell (1995) writes that although the news is not entirely white, “the infrequent presence of journalists of colour and of minority news sources dictates an otherness that is compounded when the coverage that does exist perpetuates traditional racist notions about minority life” (Campbell, 1995, p. 57). On *The problem of speaking for others*, Linda Alcoff (1991) notes that denying the ‘Other’ voice and

speaking on their behalf is “borne of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause ... and the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often ... erasure and re-inscription of sexual, national and other kinds of hierarchies” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 29). Kurpius’s study into the sourcing techniques in civic journalism provides evidence that civic journalism changes the patterns of coverage. He writes, “while this research did not look at the nature of the portrayal of the sources, positive or negative, it does indicate that groups disproportionately left out of news coverage do gain access and an opportunity to express their views in a television civic journalism model” (Kurpius, 2002, p. 859). Thus, sourcing routines in the alternative press are highly important.

#### 2.4 The *Weekly Mail*: The flagship newspaper of the alternative press

The *Weekly Mail* is a focus of this study because it is regarded as a “flagship of the alternative press in the late 1980s and early 1990s” (Merrett & Saunders, 2000, p. 458) and it configured itself as a more “professional” and independent newspaper, compared to other community, grassroots and/or Congress-aligned alternative publications. The formation of the *Weekly Mail* is directly linked to the political climate in 1985, along with the closure of the *Sunday Express* and the *Rand Daily Mail*. There are conflicting versions of the story regarding the closure of the *Rand Daily Mail*. Some believe that the newspaper, which reluctantly published its last issue on 30 April 1985, shut its doors due to a decline in circulation numbers and a drop in financial support from its funders, the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN), while others speculate the stable buckled under political pressure under the tight grip of the apartheid regime (Gibson, 2007). The *Rand Daily Mail* was launched in September 1902. Its editorial outlook shifted, from backing capitalism & mining houses in the early years, to a “strong liberal line” after the appointment of one of its most popular editors, Laurence Gander in 1957 (Mervis, 1989, p. x). It took its name from the London-based *Daily Mail* and its first editor was indeed a former journalist at the paper. Gander’s progressive outlook gained him revulsion from the Afrikaner nationalist government. His constant criticism of the apartheid regime resulted in many white readers showing “their disapproval by not buying the paper or by not advertising in it” (Mervis, 1989, p. 340). This moral dilemma, of wanting to publish stories which challenged the racist

regime, but also keeping the newspaper afloat, financially speaking, proved to be tough. SAAN managing director at the time, Clive Kinsley, lamented:

“We could not compete with white publications because we were not cost effective in terms of white readers. We could not compete with black publications because we were not cost effective in terms of our black readers; and we certainly could not compete with women’s advertising because we were not cost effective in that area. We had some strength in the financial sector but as far as consumer products were concerned, we could not get the retail or the national advertising which dealt in low cost consumer products. That essentially is the story of the *Rand Daily Mail*’s inability to compete. We went through a period of at least two years without any cover price increases, and several years without an advertising rate increase, simply because we were not competitive” (Mervis, 1989, p. 525).

While some journalists who worked for the liberal newspaper found jobs in its successor, *Business Day*, and others moved to work as journalists overseas, two journalists decided to combine their severance packages and start their own publication, the *Weekly Mail*, which published its first issue three months after the closure of the *Rand Daily Mail*, on 14 June 1985 (Gibson, 2007; Merrett & Saunders, 2000). Anton Harber, who was a political reporter at the *Rand Daily Mail* and Irwin Manoim, who worked for the *Sunday Express*, paid a newspaper registration fee of R5000, bought two computers and a laser printer for layout and editing and set out to look for publishers for their new venture.

As Merrett & Saunders (2000) highlight, the group of journalists who wrote for the newspaper were:

“liberals, others socialists, but their general perspective may be described as social democratic. They believed there was a scope for a newspaper that provided a wider range of reporting than was to be found in the mainstream commercial press, which reported relatively little news from the African community. They were keen to extend the kind of investigative reporting epitomized by the *Rand Daily Mail*. They were young – most were in their twenties or early thirties – optimistic, and brash” (Merrett & Saunders, 2000, p. 461).

Unlike the *Grassroots* writers, the *Weekly Mail* staff didn’t hold the ideological position that they were activists first, before journalists, even as individual journalists strongly opposed



apartheid ideology. For example, in 1988 when the newspaper exposed Winnie Madikizela-Mandela for her alleged involvement in the murder of a young activist, Stompie Seipei, the reporter, Thandeka Gqubule faced a lot of criticism from activists in the ANC and the UDF and her activist 'credentials' were called into question. She stood firm on her journalistic principles of questioning and probing the leadership of the democratic movement. This, she recounts, separated the murky lines of journalist versus activist. She says "... from then on I became a journalist - with certain principles, but primarily a journalist" (Manoim, 1996, pg. 125). The editors of the newspaper also experienced intimidation from the security forces, who would go as far as "shooting bullets into the front doors of their homes, throwing bricks through their windows, stringing up dead animals on their property, and making threatening phone calls at night" (Trabold, 2006, pg. 382; Trabold, 2018). The paper had the tagline, "A paper for a changing South Africa" and had a mainly white, liberal left-leaning, "relatively affluent" readership of about 20 000 copies weekly. The newspaper ranged between 24 to 28 pages and the structure of the layout differed slightly according to the spread of the news in each issue. The newspaper mainly contained political news, but it also had sections for letters to the editor, the economy, arts and books, a gig-guide and a sports section. The political reporting covered stories about detentions, disappearances and deaths of political activists, boycotts, trade unions, campaigns by banned political organisations and unrest in the black townships. During the first few years of its existence, there was a State of Emergency imposed by the apartheid regime which forbade the publication of speeches by restricted persons, the publishing of photographs of the unrest in the townships and the activities of the security police. This, the newspaper complied with, sometimes. Other times, it found creative ways to bend the law to its favour while actively refusing censorship (Merrett & Saunders, 2000; Berger, 2000; Louw & Tomaselli, 1991; Trabold, 2018).

### 2.5 What do we mean by representation?

As Hall (1997) notes, representation refers to the production of meaning through language. In the cultural circuit, representation connects meaning and language to culture. In this context, language does not only refer to that which is spoken through words, but also refers to written words, sounds, facial expressions, gestures, fashion and visual images etc (Hall, 1997). This 'language' then constructs meaning through our shared conceptual maps or the shared meanings we interpret through things. In this way, as Hall (1997) notes,

“representation is the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events” (Hall, p. 17, 1997). This thesis reads representation through language by looking at the ways in which the writing from the *Weekly Mail* constructed the political identities of its black political actors.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology:

#### 3.1 Introduction:

This study analyses the representation of black voices in the political reporting of the *Weekly Mail* newspaper, which was formed in June 1985 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The *Weekly Mail* was selected for this study due to the important role it played as an independent alternative newspaper which regarded itself as autonomous of any explicit political influence – whether from the far right (apartheid state) or from political parties (black or white). This meant that it occupied a position of not only being an opposing force to the status quo of apartheid but was also critical of the anti-apartheid voices within the left, when the need arose (Manoim, 1996; Louw & Tomaselli, 1991). This makes the paper an important site of interrogation and study for thinking about race, gender and representation in the alternative press in South Africa.

This study utilised two forms of research methods which are usually regarded as conflicting and incompatible, namely content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis is a quantitative method and discourse analysis is traditionally thought of as a qualitative research method. This is due to how content analysis “assumes a consistency of meaning that allows for occurrences of words (or other, larger units of text) to be assumed equivalent and counted”, it emphasises the “text abstracted from its contexts” while it “assumes a consistency of meaning that allows counting and coding”, while discourse analysis highlights the shifting, contested and “precarious nature of meaning” over time and has a focus on the relationship between “text and context” (Hardy et. al, 2004; p. 20). Some scholars outline the usefulness of combining these two seemingly contrasting methods in order to expand understanding of the construction of social reality through focusing on the systematic and quantitative aspects of content analysis, and the shifting and contested social meanings which discourse analysis explores (Hardy, Harley & Phillips, 2004; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Hardy et. al (2004) write that content analysis and discourse analysis are complementary “in terms of what they reveal despite conflicting ontology and epistemology” (Hardy et. al, 2004; p. 20) and combining them is “an exercise in creative

interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through texts that embody discourses; in this regard, content analysis provides an important way to demonstrate these performative links that lie at the heart of discourse analysis” (Hardy et. al, 2004; p. 22).

### 3.2 Content Analysis:

Content analysis is widely regarded as a useful method of analysing texts and evaluating recurring manifestations of specific phenomena in them. Apart from text and images, content analysis also examines “symbols, messages, information, mass-media content, and technology-supported social interactions” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. xii) to provide evidence for the “under or over-representation of particular phenomena” (Stokes, 2003, p. 134). Content analysis is important because it allows for greater samples of data to be analysed, thus allowing for generalisations to be drawn based on the large sample sizes (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Krippendorff, 2013). According to Feltham-King and Macleod (2016), content analysis requires that the data be categorised and for the categories to be “sufficiently precise, and mutually exclusive, to enable different coders to arrive at the same results when the same body of material is examined” (Feltham-King & Macleod, 2016, p. 5). As Hardy et. al. (2004) outline, content analysis is “the study of the text itself not of its relation to its context, the intentions of the producer of the text, or the reaction of the intended audience” (Hardy et. al, 2004, p. 20). According to Berelson (1952), content analysis has general assumptions, including that:

- i) interpretations about the presumed meanings, purposes or effects of texts can validly be drawn from looking at the relationships found within the text,
- ii) studying “manifest” content is meaningful and while it is understood that content may have different meanings for its producers and its audiences, for the purposes of reliability and a “uniformity of comprehension”, content analysis must “deal with relatively denotative communicative materials” and,
- iii) that numerical descriptions and considerations of texts is important, implying that the frequency of occurrences of various characteristics in the text gives insights into important communicative processes (Berelson, 1952, p. 20).

#### 3.2.1 Methods of data gathering:

This study focuses on the political reporting found in the 1986 copies of the *Weekly Mail* (50 copies in total). It focuses on the political reporting due to how political discourse, as Fairclough (1995) notes, “provides the clearest illustration of the constitutive power of discourse” as it affects change in society due to its capacity to “constitute and mobilize those social forces that are capable of carrying into reality its promises of a new reality, in its very formulation of this new reality” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 182). In this context, 1986 is a very important year because it was marked by the government making major political decisions with dire socio-political implications. It represents the second year of the publication of the newspaper and the first year of the nationwide State of Emergency. The practical implications of this year are that the paper had been in circulation for some time, so the staff had established sourcing routines and writing styles which were unique to the publication. The political implications were that the state had already become aware of the potential for political pushback from the paper, so censorship, and to some degree, self-censorship, occurred (Manoim, 1996; Jackson, 1993; Merrett & Saunders, 2000).

This study sourced the newspapers from the SA Media database which stores thousands of copies of newspapers which cover the rich history of reporting in South Africa. The SA Media database, which is an archival platform hosted by the University of Free State, allows users to search using keywords to narrow down searches. For accuracy, hard copies of the newspaper sourced from the University of Cape Town library were used to cross-reference some of the articles. To narrow down the sample, the study focused on news reports which reported on the dominant black political parties which were organising at the time, using the keywords “African National Congress”, “ANC”, “Pan Africanist Congress”, “PAC”, “United Democratic Front”, “UDF”, “Inkatha” and “Azanian People’s Organisation”, and “AZAPO”. Trade unions were not counted as part of the black political formations in the study, due to how diverse, wide and spread out they were, including how the trade union movement in South Africa has its own unique complexities and history parallel to that of the black political parties. While recognizing the many contestations of the term black, this study uses the black consciousness definition of ‘black’ provided by one of its most popular and profound exponents, Steve Biko, which states that the definition of black is inclusive of all historically oppressed people in the South African context – African, Indian and coloured (Biko, 2004). The tension of the use of the phrase ‘black’ when referring to the political parties is

acknowledged – given the fact that apart from AZAPO, the parties above accepted white membership during the period being studied. The term is used because most of the membership was black and they were fighting for black emancipation.

The unit of analysis was the individual newspaper articles which covered the above mentioned black political formations specifically. Articles which made scant mention of the political parties, but covered events and political formations not associated with them, were not included in the articles to be analysed. Each article was coded according to the following coding categories:

i) **story headline & page number**: this was important to consider where certain stories were placed in the newspaper and which ones were given more prominence.

ii) **writer/reporter (race & gender)**: important for considerations about who writes and what that means in terms of social power. It was sometimes difficult to ascertain the race and gender of the writers with only just the name provided, so all the names were cross-referenced with material from the book, *You Have Been Warned*, which is written by the co-founder of the newspaper, Irwin Manoim, and which mentions in detail some of the first years of the newspaper's operations. Further online searches for those names which were ambiguous were done for better accuracy.

iii) **black political party**: to establish which political parties were most frequently reported on.

iv) **quoted individual (race & gender)**: to establish who was given voice/quoted in the newspaper.

v) **quote & paragraph where it appears**: to see the amount of space each speaker was granted, if any.

These coding categories were important in establishing who was given space to speak in the *Weekly Mail* and how these voices are presented. As Fairclough (1995) notes, voice is important as it helps to outline who features more prominently in mediated politics given that "it is not just professional politicians who produce media political discourse", and how that individual voices are structured differently in relation to each other (Fairclough, 1995,

p. 185). Ultimately, the purpose of quotations, which function as the direct 'voice' of news actors, is to:

- i) highlight the newsworthiness of statements from prominent news actors,
- ii) serve a narrative function of telling a more compelling story,
- iii) show the credibility of the story,
- iv) give news actors space to comment on their current situations and future plans and
- v) allow for sources to share their subjective interpretations of news events (van Dijk, 1991, p. 152).

### 3.3 Discourse Analysis:

Studying discourses in media involves investigating locations, articulations and reproductions of the media's signifying power in different forms of 'texts' – newspapers, photographs, documentaries, magazines, videos etc. This involves looking at media language and the representations which are signified by texts to understand how media discourses "help to structure social relations" due to how the media generates subject positions. In the media, "we are addressed as having a particular subject position. Readers (or viewers) are positioned in relation to the text in a specific way; the text has power to position the reader – for example to speak or to be spoken to, to write or to read, to create or to consume" (Stokes, 2003, p. 144). Discourse analysis is used in media studies to understand the construction of (dominant) ideologies and as some scholars point out, news reportage is ideologically "loaded" and it becomes important to study this loadedness to deconstruct the ideological messages present in news media (Stokes, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Fairclough (1995) explains that discourse analysis can be understood as an attempt to "show systematic links between texts, discourse practices and sociocultural practices" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 17). Hardy et. al. (2004) echo the definition by Fairclough (1995) when they outline that discourse analysis is concerned with exploring "how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created and are held in place". They go further to note that discourse analysis does not only embody "a set of techniques for conducting structured, qualitative investigations of texts, but also a set of assumptions concerning the constructive effects of language" (Hardy et. al, 2004; p. 19).

These scholars view language as a tool loaded with social power, thus the media, which primarily deals with language and the communication of texts, is engulfed in the practices of social power. Scholars also note that media discourses are associated with power and access. According to van Dijk (1996), quotes in news stories are important signifiers of access to news discourses and this access further represents a form of social power which is based on privileged access to social resources like economic opportunities, social status or “a preferential access to public discourse and communication” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 85). These scholars explain that “dominant groups” i.e. those who have social, political and economic power, have the most access to the media and this may allow them “partial control over the public at large” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 86; Fairclough, 1995).

Additionally, discourse analysis is valuable due to how it allows a focus on:

- i) wider changes in society and how those express themselves in changing media discourses,
- ii) analysing and understanding texts in a “multifunctional” context while also looking at how texts are concerned with representation and identity formation,
- iii) looking at texts linguistically and at the intertextual nature in which texts relate to each other, and including
- iv) the dialectical relationship between texts and society (Fairclough, 1995, p. 33).

Since this study considers the representation of black voices in what Fairclough (1995) refers to as “political media discourse”, it also looked at the ways black voices have been represented in the media historically. This prompts the use of van Dijk (1991) and his work on racism, the media and the power discourse plays in constructing and representing racialized (and gendered) subjects in the news. Studies on black representation in the news often find certain ingrained biases in media representations of blackness more broadly. In an interdisciplinary study, utilizing content analysis and discourse analysis, on the British press’ coverage of “ethnic affairs”, van Dijk (1991) outlines how news coverage is skewed against people of ethnic descent. He highlights that biases in news coverage of ethnic affairs (news where the main actors are African, Asian, Indian and other non-European people-of-colour), are due to the ways in which ethnic people are represented. Researchers must thus ask questions about who speaks, how often and how prominently, and on what topics they



can contribute, and what this means in terms of news production, power and access (van Dijk, 1991).

This study uses discourse analysis to decode the messages present in the *Weekly Mail's* political reporting on black political parties operating in the 1980s using a random sample of articles from the database. Studying power, "articulation of ideology" and the subject position of those who are quoted in the political stories of the paper, in relation to who was writing these stories, will allow us to have a better understanding of how the *Weekly Mail* represented black political voices.

Therefore, only conducting a discourse analysis on the text would be insufficient as it would limit the discourse and subject positions appearing in the data. But it would also be useful in that it would seek to find explanations for the absence or presence of particular voices, which content analysis cannot provide reasonable explanations for. As Hopf (2004) explains, discourse analysis "treats anomalies and absences as evidence too" (Hopf, 2004, p. 31). But, conducting a content analysis provides an extra layer to the data and shows the *extent* of the ways in which the *Weekly Mail* represented its black subjects. A combination of the two methods allowed for a more nuanced, contextual reading of the text.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

#### 4.1 Content Analysis Findings:

##### 4.1.1 Race, gender and space – who is quoted in the *Weekly Mail*?

The results of the study show that men dominated the speaking space in the *Weekly Mail's* political reporting. Specifically, 80% of the direct quotes in the political reporting on black politics was attributed to men. Breaking this down according to race shows that black men were overwhelmingly represented. Out of the quoted sample, 59.7% of the speaking space, through direct quotes, was given to black males. This was followed by white males, who were given 20.3% of the quoted space in the political stories of the newspaper. White females were given the least speaking space (4.2%), while slightly more black females (6.7%) were given space. Some of those quoted in the newspaper were not attributed names (9.1%) but were rather identified through their occupation or relevance to the story. Some of these people included activists who were in hiding, state representatives speaking on condition of anonymity or people approached for comment during protests and other situations of unrest.

Quoted sources	Number of direct quotes	Percentage
Black Male	592	59.7%
Black Female	66	6.7%
No Name Mentioned	90	9.1%
White Male	201	20.3%
White Female	42	4.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>991</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Sources, by race, gender and space given, quoted in the *Weekly Mail*

\*\* The number of direct quotes is calculated in paragraphs

In the 240 articles which were studied, the number of black males who were approached for comment were 154 (47%), followed by white males, with 85 being approached for comment (25.9%). Twenty-six black females (7.9%) were approached for comment, while 17 white females (5.2%) were approached for comment. Again, the sources approached for comment

were overwhelmingly, black and male. Interestingly, while fewer white females were approached for comment, those approached were given similar amount of space to speak when compared to black females.

Quoted sources	Number of times approached for comment	Percentage
Black Male	154	47%
Black Female	26	7.9%
No Name Mentioned	46	14.0%
White Male	85	25.9%
White Female	17	5.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 Number of times sources were approached for comment

A large majority of the quoted sources in the publication were activists or political leaders who were directly involved in political organisations. Over 60% of those who were approached for comment were activists. Although the presence of ordinary citizens as sources was the lowest, at 6.1%, the combination of activists, black political leaders and ordinary citizens makes it clear that the *Weekly Mail* gave prominence to sources that would not be normally given space to speak during the height of the State of Emergency. When the data is further analysed, it shows that black females were the most ‘ordinary citizens’ approached for comment, while white females were the least. On the contrary, an overwhelming number of black males who were quoted were activists and political leaders. Interestingly, most of the white males who were quoted worked in the private/education sector as academics, lawyers and businessmen etc, and as government officials. This is interesting given how these sources were brought into the stories to provide context, verify claims and provide balance.

Occupation	Number of times approached for comment	Percentage
Activist/Political leader	206	62.8%
Government Official	52	15.9%
Ordinary Citizen	20	6.1%
Private/Education Sector	50	15.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 The types of sources which were approached for comment by the newspaper.

Taken altogether, the content analysis reveals that the *Weekly Mail* was a male-dominated publication, both in terms of the writers of the stories and its sourcing techniques as most of the writers were white and male, while it preferred to use black males who were involved in direct political action as sources, thus making them the voice of the black majority. Atton and Wickenden (2005) view this as problematic as it reinforces ideas around sources having to have societal “power, legitimacy and authoritativeness” in order to significantly contribute to news media (Atton & Wickenden, 2005, p. 355). Additionally, the dominance of male figures as voices of authority in news production generally is as a result of patriarchal norms prevalent in newsrooms and in society (Rabe, 2002; Ross, 2007). Furthermore, the amount of space the paper gave to females, black women in particular, in terms of writing and speaking space warrants further interrogation. As Fair (1993) argues, the representations of women in war or conflict situations relegates women to the “periphery of conflict” while downplaying their involvement and reducing it to “seemingly being accidental or irrelevant” (Fair, 1993, p. 285). This then reduces the mediated political terrain to a masculine affair.

#### 4.1.2 Black political parties in the *Weekly Mail*:

Unsurprisingly, the *Weekly Mail* predominantly featured stories about black political parties from the ‘Charterist’, mass democratic movement, the UDF and the ANC. The UDF was mentioned in 140 (38.7%) out of the 240 articles, while the ANC was mentioned in 132 (36.5%) out of the 240 articles, even though the ANC was a banned organisation at the time. The least covered black political parties were the nationalist, Pan-Africanist PAC (4.7%),

which was also officially banned, and Zulu-nationalist Inkatha (6.3%) which was often viewed with suspicion and thought to be collaborating with the state in its acceptance of the Bantustan/homelands system. The black consciousness affiliated Azapo received decent coverage in the newspaper (13.8%). In many of the stories, more than one political formation would be mentioned in a single article.

Black political party	Number of stories mentioning the parties	Percentage
ANC	132	36.5%
Azapo	50	13.8%
Inkatha	23	6.3%
PAC	17	4.7%
UDF	140	38.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>362</b>	100

Table 4. Table showing the number of political parties in relation to the number of times they were mentioned in the newspaper.

#### 4.1.3 Race and gender of *Weekly Mail* political reporters:

The content analysis looked at the *Weekly Mail's* political reporting of black political formations and sought to measure how often the newspaper used black voices as sources and in what racial and gendered ways this played itself out. The content analysis also sought to find out what proportion of these stories was written by whom.

Race & Gender of writers	Number of political stories in <i>Weekly Mail</i>	Percentage
Black Male Journalists	31	12.5%
No by-line	13	5.2%
White Male Journalists	126	<b>50.8%</b>
Weekly Mail Reporter	25	10.1%
White Female Journalist	53	21.4%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>248</b>	100

Table 5. Table showing the number of writers compared to political stories

\*\* The grand total number of writers of stories is 248 (instead of the 240) because writers collaborated on some of the stories.

To establish, and double-check, the race and gender of the reporters, the names were cross-referenced with pictures, names and descriptions from the book, *You have been warned* which chronicles the foundations of the *Weekly Mail* newspaper, and where there was uncertainty an online search was conducted of the individual reporters. Out of 28 reporters who were writing political stories concerning the dominant black political groupings at the time, 17 reporters were white and male, eight were white and female, three were black and male, while there were no black females writing during this period. The sample consisted of 240 articles which were coded and more than half of those articles (50.8%) were written by white males, compared to 21.4% which were written by white female journalists. In contrast, 12.5% of the stories were written by black males, notably veteran journalist, Sefako Nyaka, who wrote the bulk of these stories which were predominantly about black political activities in the townships. About 16% of the stories had no by-lines accredited to them and were thus left blank or were written under a staff writer tag (Weekly Mail Reporter, 10.8 %; No by-line, 5.2%). This may be attributed to the fact that during the years of the State of Emergency, journalists were constantly harassed, and some imprisoned by the state, and this resulted in some journalists writing under pseudonyms and as staff writers.

#### 4.2 Discourse Analysis Findings:

This section focuses on who is present in the text as a source, how the sources were contextualised in the stories and what discourses of race, gender and power were deployed by the reporters and the sources. Patterns which became evident through the discourse analysis were that black male voices were framed in two ways, as unthinking, politically naïve ‘youths’ or as rational, dignified political ‘veterans’. On the other hand, black women were represented as mothers and wives, with their speech being constrained.

##### 4.2.1 Heroes and Villains: Black subjects, white writers:

As noted above, the stories in the *Weekly Mail's* political reporting were largely written by white male reporters and frequently featured black males as a voice from the ‘ground’, white (male) experts (lawyers, academics etc.) as analysts and authoritative voices on select subject matters, and state officials as a signifier of ‘balanced’ reporting (these were both

white and black [Bantustan] officials). What this discourse analysis observed was a split in the representation of black male political voices.

For instance, in the article *"Tambo in his own words"* (January 10 – 16, 1986), the ANC president, Oliver Tambo delivers a speech from exile in Lusaka, Zambia and is quoted for the first time with the unusual permission of the Law and Order Minister, Louis Le Grange. Before and immediately after this special permission was granted, Tambo was not permitted to be quoted in the press as he was a "listed communist". The first aspect of the speech which is highlighted by the writer is Tambo's comments on the ANC's hopes to "step up the armed struggle" and how the party hopes to "involve as broad a spread of people as possible in political violence against apartheid". The writer fears that the intensification of the armed struggle by the ANC may take a "relatively large toll in white lives." The language is concerned with how the violence will spread to white communities and white bodies. In the article, Tambo is framed as a calm, calculated and reasonable leader whose comments are a reaction to the apartheid state. While the ANC's military outlook is regarded as "aggressive" and "intense" by the writer, it is understood that this is a reaction to the violence and aggression of the South African Defence Force (SADF), and the state's refusal to release the ANC leader, Nelson Mandela from Robben Island. Tambo says:

"We can stop our armed struggle anytime. But it has to be a two-way affair – unless the regime stops the violent system of apartheid, there is nothing we can do" (Barrell, 1986, p. 1).

Tambo is further quoted as he distances himself and the ANC from a bombing outside a mall in Amanzimtoti, Durban, where five white people were killed, including children. The leader is quoted at length as he explains why it is not ANC policy to attack civilians and what they termed "soft-targets":

"[There is nothing in the ANC policy] which calls for attacks on civilians in supermarkets, schools and cinemas unless these are regarded as military installations".

"Even so, the ANC will not attack children even if they are in military zones ... therefore there could have been no orders for the Amanzimtoti attack from the ANC."

"Some of them [bombers] resolve to face being disciplined by the organisation. We therefore expect there to be more Amanzimtotis in the future" (Barrell, 1986, p. 1).

Tambo then places the blame squarely on the feet of the South African troops:

“The army is there, actually shooting, fighting and killing children. Hundreds of people have been killed, massacres have been perpetrated inside and outside the country” (Barrell, 1986, p. 1).

In another article where the blast in Amanzimtoti is analysed, a separation of the calm, less radical ANC leadership in exile and the “militants” in South Africa who are more brash and aggressive, is made. The terms “young lions” and “comrades”, which members of the ANC Youth League used to address each other, are used to draw this distinction, while the leadership in exile is called “veterans” (Johnson, 1986b, p. 7). This theme of framing political activists in the townships as unthinking, violent youths with a naïve understanding of the struggle, is carried out in several articles, including a report on a week of political clashes between activists and the army in Alexandra township. The article “*Five mad days in Alex*” (February 21 – 27, 1986), contrasts the violence and unrest in Alexandra with the lush greenery and “swimming pools” of Sandton to illustrate the stark differences in the lives of blacks and whites. Later, the article shows the indifference of whites in Sandton to violence meted out against black people as they carry on with their shopping “across Louis Botha Avenue” and many of them seem “quite unperturbed about the fact that mayhem had broken out only a stone’s throw away.” The causes of the “rioting” are unknown, but the writer outlines the events which took place before it began – the banning of a ‘Release Mandela’ Committee press conference where Madikizela-Mandela was scheduled to speak and the funeral of members of Azapo “who had been killed in township violence – by residents, not police.” The emphasis is placed on the fact that it is the residents who did the killing, not the police. It is telling that none of the activists are quoted in the story, but the two black males who are quoted are cursing at the protestors. The article mentions that nearly all the 22 killed in the clashes were killed by the police but those who are quoted speak only on the people who were targeted by the activists, not the police. A “smartly-dressed” black man “in a shining car” who witnesses a resident being set alight is quoted as saying:

“These kids are crazy. We are not gaining anything by this” (Kenny, 1986, p. 6).



While a “terrified” black police officer speaking in Afrikaans is quoted after he witnesses a colleague “being bludgeoned to death by rampaging youngsters”:

“I am glad they (police) are not using teargas anymore”

“They must use guns. That is the only language these f...ing bastards understand. You should see my colleague, he is unrecognisable, his head is like a watermelon” (Kenny, 1986, p. 6).

In a different article about the psychological effects of the State of Emergency and political unrest on black children, there is an overarching anxiety about whether the Emergency will turn youths in the townships into “undisciplined”, “dehumanised youths” who are like those depicted in the film, ‘The Killing Fields’. The 1984 film is a biographical drama based on the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and it follows *New York Times* reporter, Sydney Schanberg, as he covers the Cambodian civil war with interpreter Dith Pran. The use of the film as a tool to describe the horror of the violence in the townships at the time is dismissed by academic, Tom Lodge. Lodge is a dominating voice as a political analyst and commentator in the newspaper’s political reporting. He is thrown all manner of compliments by the writers concerning his knowledge about black politics in every article he is quoted in, from being “the country’s leading expert on the ANC” to being “one of South Africa’s most respected academic observers of resistance politics” - this, after he has already been introduced as the author of the book, *Black politics in South Africa* in a story which contextualises “black-on-black” violence. While Lodge’s “authoritative” voice as commentator was sought to confirm the similarities between the Khmer Rouge movement in Cambodia and that of the township youths who had resorted to killing other black activists not affiliated to their political and ideological beliefs, his comments still dismissed the black youths as people who “vaguely” understood political power:

“In every sense the Khmer Rouge was a vile movement which saw a holocaust of three million killed, but what its adherents did is light years away from what is happening here.”

“Contrary to popular belief, the Khmer Rouge was not a group of alienated, intellectually emasculated young children wreaking their bitterness on adults. It was a movement led by French-trained Marxists who had a specific vision of how to bring about revolutionary change in Cambodia. The black youth here, while motivated by a vaguely conceived understanding of revolutionary transfer of power, are not subjected to a hierarchy of

leadership and I don't see a complete and vindictive nihilism in their actions" (Bekker, 1986d, p. 14).

In another article Lodge invokes this same idea of black youths, or "rank and file supporters" not fully understanding political ideology and philosophy. While Lodge acknowledges that the violence in the country is not the doing of black political formations like UDF and Azapo, and is thus a reaction to state violence, he maintains that:

"... organisations have a violent constituency which is sometimes beyond the control of organised leadership. This is of course exacerbated by the State of Emergency, and leads one to speculate about the motives of the government" (Johnson & Nyaka, 1986, p. 11).

Back to the article on psychology, Saths Cooper, a black man whose comments featured prominently (in 10 lengthy paragraphs) in the story, was quoted both as an educator – "a Wits psychology lecturer who is doing pioneering research", and as a political leader – a "former head of the Azanian People's Organisation". Cooper is moulded into a respectable black voice that gives insights into the causes, effects and political implications of the Emergency on the psyche of young black people. He contextualises the oppression and violence which the black youth is subjected to in the townships and how the youth express themselves through cathartic, violent behaviour:

"Behind the façade of macho behaviour, the consequences are denied, because if faced they can result in a shattering of the personality. The psychic turmoil, extreme conflict, guilt and self-hate would be enormous" (Bekker, 1986d, p. 15).

"As the enemy often becomes inaccessible and appears unassailable, it is easy to create a witchhunting pattern and deflect the violence towards those more accessible, who are part of the oppressed and exploited community" (Bekker, 1986d, p. 15).

Politically, Cooper speaks about a need for a "brave, strong, creative leadership" which can steer the youth in the right direction. He condemns the "system" for reacting against genuine "demands which any normal society would have long accommodated: political access, educational freedom, social and economic aspirations." His central argument is the legitimacy of the demands by the youth, given their existence in a violent, racist society and he warns of a bleak future:

“If in the next couple of years there is no central intervention to begin to realistically and very seriously attempt to address the issues thrust forward by this youth revolt, and personally I can’t see that happening, then the problem is going to be much more serious than it is now.”

“I don’t believe people are completely dehumanised yet. But if in the next couple of years certain things are not redressed, then the dehumanisation will be total” (Bekker, 1986d, p. 15).

After commenting on youth unemployment and the decline of the economy, and how this could potentially fuel a rise in those who will opportunistically “pay vigilantes to sow further divisions”, the writer asks, “what then can be done to ensure the youth do not become a law unto themselves?” The question is posed to Saki Macozoma, another black man who is a South African Council of Churches worker, and who defends the youths by claiming that they need guidance and should not be discarded. He comments:

“I think the broad liberation movement should never ever allow the alienation of the youth from its structures... There will be a lot of grey areas and the youth are going to take a lot of unstrategic decisions, but they should be shown where they’ve made a mistake and wooed back into the fold, much more than writing them off as thugs” (Bekker, 1986d, p. 15).

As noted above, most of the articles in the political reporting pages were phrased in a language which embraced non-racialism and anti-apartheid activism. They also followed strict journalism rules, like balance and neutrality. These articles properly contextualised topics such as the place of the youth and students’ organisations which appeared after the first Emergency, the women’s organisations which were tied both to the UDF and the trade union movement and to the different ideological strands present in the struggle, from the Charterist to the black consciousness and Pan-Africanist traditions.

#### 4.2.2 ‘Mother of the Nation’: Stories about women, by white women

Stories covered by the *Weekly Mail* with an emphasis on women in politics were almost all written by white female journalists. While black women were approached for comment on stories broadly based on political matters, very few stories explicitly focused on them and their experiences in political struggle. While black male political leaders like the UDF’s Stone

Sizane, Inkatha's Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, Azapo's Saths Cooper and the ANC's Oliver Tambo had profiles, reports and one-on-one in-depth interviews written about them, the same courtesy was not extended to black women in the political arena. There were, however, a few stories written specifically about women in the period under study. These in-depth interviews, reports and profiles covered politically active women like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu, who were both active in the ANC and the UDF at the time. In 1986, Madikizela-Mandela had recently returned to her Orlando West home after her banishment in Brandfort, Free State and she frequently gave militant speeches in rallies and mass funerals, in defiance of her banning orders from the state. Sisulu was a founding member of the Federation of South African Women in 1953, was active in the ANC Women's League and she was one of the presidents of the UDF (Hassim, 2006, 2018; Iqani, 2015; Sisulu, 2004; Walker, 1982). The *Weekly Mail* also profiled grassroots activists like Nonyanga Sibanda, a well-respected elderly black woman who was actively involved in the ANC Women's League and the UDF in Cradock, Eastern Cape, and Khethiwe Mboweni, an Azanian Students Organisation (Azaso) activist from Tzaneen who was nicknamed "Tigress of the North" by the police and was released from prison after being detained for nine months without being charged. White women who were also politically active in the liberation movement were covered, like Molly Blackburn, a Progressive Federal Party (PFP) council member in Walmer, Port Elizabeth and a member of Black Sash and Marion Sparg, one of the first white women to join the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and who was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for planting a bomb in a police station.

As stated above, the most well-known black women who were quoted in the newspaper were Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu, who were represented as wives of imprisoned ANC leaders, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, and as mothers. For example, in the two stories about Madikizela-Mandela's court appearances in relation to her banning orders, she is referred to as the "wife of jailed ANC leader, Nelson Mandela", and "Mrs Mandela" by one writer (Nyaka, 1986b, p. 3), and as the "defiant" wife of Mandela by another (Bekker, 1986f, p. 5). The second writer mentions how she is dressed "in black leather and wore a badge bearing the picture of Martin Luther King, Jnr" (Bekker, 1986f, p. 5), something which is hardly ever done for male leaders. However, Madikizela-Mandela's fashion sense has always been a talking point in the media. As Iqani (2015) highlights,

Madikizela-Mandela has historically been “publicly celebrated for her beauty, fashionable dress sense, and general air of style and grace” (Iqani, 2015, p. 781). Articles which did not label Madikizela-Mandela as Mandela’s wife were ones which covered negative aspects of her political life. For instance, in an article about the mysterious deaths of two UDF and Azapo leaders in custody, Madikizela-Mandela’s comments about necklacing are invoked considering 32 badly burnt bodies which were discovered by police and suspected to have been necklaced. Her comments are said to have elicited a “slip-stream of intense controversy” as she was seen to be justifying necklacing. She is quoted as having said:

“Hand in hand, with our box of matches, and with our necklace, we shall liberate this country” (Laurence, 1986a, p. 2).

In this article she is only referred to as a “black leader” and her association with Nelson Mandela is lost. Similarly, a story about her being pelted with “eggs, sand and cooldrink cans” by a crowd outside a courtroom makes the front page (unlike other stories about her) and she is not attributed any particular title, she is simply referred to as “Winnie Mandela” (Johnson, 1986a, p. 1).

On the other hand, Albertina Sisulu hardly elicits any negative commentary from the newspaper, and she is framed as a caring mother, wife and a women’s rights activist. She is represented as “the epitome of political dignity” (Hassim, 2018, p. 907). In a report on her refusal to testify against her adopted son, Jongumzi Sisulu, she is established first as a mother in the headline, then as a political leader in the first paragraph (“a United Democratic Front president”), then her marriage association is established in the last paragraph (“Mrs Sisulu is the wife of Walter Sisulu, an ANC leader who has served 22 years of a life sentence”) (Weekly Mail Reporter, 1986, p. 5). In a different article where Sisulu is quoted speaking in a funeral, the writer reminds readers that along with Winnie, she has been given the title “our mother” by young activists. The writer also captures Sisulu’s “fiery speech”:

“The government is pinned against the wall as the struggle intensifies... [South Africa is ruled by] a government of frightened cockroaches... [a] government of greedy vultures who want to eat alone” (Laurence, 1986b, p. 6).

And as she addresses white mothers:

“Today black children are dying. It will happen to white mothers tomorrow” (Laurence, 1986b, p. 6).

The profile about Nonyanga Sibanda (Bekker, 1986c, p.16) and the report about Khethiwe Mboweni’s release (Bekker, 1986e, p. 6) are both centred on how tough these women are and how much pain they endured under the apartheid regime. This is juxtaposed with femininity and motherhood because even though Sibanda is referred to as being “iron-hard”, she is also called a “grandma” in the headline and multiple times in the story; and even though Mboweni is referred to as a “Tigress”, she is also referred to as a “tiny woman” in the first paragraph and a “divorcee with two children” in the second. In the selected quotes, Sibanda recounts her many arrests and her history in the ANC Women’s League. Her ordinariness, and indeed the ordinariness of many black women who were part of the struggle, is highlighted when she is described as a “tall woman wearing a bowler hat and a black caftan [moving] heavily on swollen ankles among the tens of thousands of mourners who attended the funeral of Matthew Goniwe” (Bekker, 1986c, p. 16). To observers who are not from Cradock, Sibanda is “just another elderly woman”. On top of this, her presence in the pages of the *Weekly Mail* is anchored to the funeral of the well-known anti-apartheid activists, Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli; while her political convictions are also associated with the expulsion of her husband from South Africa to Zimbabwe. It is mentioned much later in the article that at the time, Sibanda was the deputy president of the Cradock Residents Association (Cradora) and that she was a founding member of the Cradock Women’s Organisation (Crawo). On the other hand, Mboweni is introduced as a woman whose political life is characterised by anguish, depression and agony. While she might be a “tigress”, her tiny frame, in comparison to the amount of suffering she has endured, contrasts her fragility with her mental state and political will. Words like “suffered”, “weak”, “worthless”, “burden” are used as descriptors of Mboweni’s sense of guilt about not being able to take care of her sons due to her political activity and her new job (Bekker, 1986e, p. 6).

In instances where black women are quoted as ‘ordinary’ citizens they are given one to two lines to express themselves. In an article where gruesome details about a “vigilante group” called the A-team which “terrorises” the community of Chesterville, in Durban, black male political activists are asked for comment on the situation and its implications for political

organising in the area; a police representative (who is not named) gives the official word from the state and a black woman speaks, on condition of anonymity, on how the situation has affected her family and neighbours. She is portrayed as an apolitical resident who is “afraid of taking sides”. Her comments are in the closing paragraphs of the story and she says:

“We [her family & neighbours] just greet each other and say nothing more. When my husband and I get home from work we close the door and don’t go out”.

“I hope and pray that my son doesn’t go running around the township getting mixed up in these things” (Paddock & Smith, 1986, p. 4).

Her quotes are the ‘human interest’ element in the story and are incorporated after the ‘real news’ have been discussed by the men. In another story where an eight-year-old black boy is arrested, charged with intimidation & assault and then denied bail, the child’s aunt, Salome Ngcobo, speaks as a parental figure and explains her interactions with the police regarding the case:

“The boy was frantic and crying... The police told us as it was late for us to take him home, we should come to court the following morning” (Nyaka, 1986a, p. 1).

The presence of the boy’s father is acknowledged in the story, but he is not quoted. In another story explaining the cancellation of Matthew Goniwe and other civic leaders’ unveiling memorials, Nyameka Goniwe – who only gets quoted in the newspaper in relation to the death of her activist husband, is described as “Goniwe’s widow” and she says:

“We wanted everybody who could to attend, but many important people are either staying out of sight or find it difficult to move around... We will now hold the ceremony late in the year, depending on the state of affairs” (Tyala, 1986, p. 8).

And lastly, in a story about the death of a detainee in custody, two sources are quoted in the story, the deceased detainee’s mother, Violet Songelwa and a spokesperson of the South African Prison Services, Lt-Col A van Vuuren. As expected, the mother is given minimal space to express her grief and sense of loss:

“He was a fine man. We don’t know what we will do now” (Kruger, 1986, p. 1).

While the lieutenant is given space to speak on behalf of his department. In four paragraphs, he denies allegations that no attention was given to the detainee, counters the allegations with claims that the detainee received medical attention, states the circumstances of the death and officially states protocol concerning deaths in custody.

In the reports which focused on politically active white women, their political convictions were framed in more positive language. For instance, Molly Blackburn's funeral is anchored around the recollections of Blackburn's political achievements and her warm relationship with the black community which surrounded the white suburb she lived in. The funeral is constructed as a small-scale test-run of what a liberal, non-racial South African society might look like, where black and white people attend the same funerals and walk the same streets without arrests. Although the white people in the suburb are astonished at the presence of black people in the area (one white onlooker says "I've never seen anything like this... Where do they [black people] all come from? I know it's Molly Blackburn's funeral but isn't she a white person?"), the writer, a white woman, paints a picture of racial harmony in hopes to convince readers of the feasibility of racial integration. During the funeral, the writer describes Walmer as a "liberated zone" – giving the impression that "liberation" only required integration of the two races and for black people to occupy white spaces. In the first paragraph of the article we are told of Blackburn's "vision" of a "non-racial" society and how her funeral, "for a few hours", made this vision into a reality due to the overwhelming number of black people that attended it. Blackburn is introduced in the following paragraph as a person who had "devoted herself to fighting for human rights". Interestingly, the people who are quoted in this story, apart from the white onlooker, are all black, and mostly male – Dr Allan Boesak, Reverend Mvume Dandala and Mkhuseleli Jack. Another person who is quoted is Matthew "Goniwe's widow Nyameka" who is given one line to say:

"We have lost a mother" (Bekker, 1986b, p. 8).

Blackburn's identity is tied to marriage and motherhood by the writer too, who writes that Blackburn was a "doctor's wife and mother of seven", while highlighting her distinctive "silver hair" and that she liked to knit. In the paper's coverage of Sparg's imprisonment, the shock of a white woman joining the military wing of the ANC is made clear by the centring of Sparg's race and gender in the title of the story. The fact that she is the "first white South African woman known to have served as a member of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto



we Sizwe” is made known in the second paragraph of the story. The writer highlights how the judge “found it difficult to understand” why a white South African would be a “dedicated Marxist and revolutionary” and she writes about how shortly after her imprisonment, “certain newspapers described Sparg as a lonely, overweight person who turned to revolutionary politics out of a desire to belong”. The white female journalist quickly comes to Sparg’s defence and recounts how “confident” and “measured” she was while testifying. Sparg is described as a “former journalist”, “a soldier”, a “Rhodes University graduate” and is presented as a concerned “patriot” fighting a just cause. Sparg is quoted speaking about how she became politically conscious after the death of Steve Biko, how she “rejected the notion that a journalist could be neutral or objective” in a country like South Africa (something the journalists at the *Weekly Mail* believed in too) and about her time in exile (Bekker, 1986a, p. 3).

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

The findings of the content analysis of 240 articles taken from the 50 editions of the *Weekly Mail* in 1986 indicates that black voices were the most numerically represented group in the political reporting by means of quoting. These were mostly the voices of black people who were involved in the extra-parliamentary liberation movement. The findings show that 66.4% of direct quotes were from black voices. This indicates the *Weekly Mail* stayed true to its philosophy of being a newspaper which accurately reflected the struggle from all points of view and dedicated itself to writing about the atrocities committed by the security police in the black townships. The paper adopted a white-liberal, left-leaning ideological stance which presented itself through discourses of non-racialism and colour-blindness. Manoim (1996) describes the paper as having been a “colour-blind” newspaper which “favoured one-person-one-vote, the release of Nelson Mandela, peace talks with the ANC, an end to capital punishment and programmes for social reconstruction and national health” (Manoim, 1996, pg. 27). While the state was trying to prevent the media from reporting about the immense violence its security forces were enacting on the liberation movement, the *Weekly Mail* repeatedly violated and undermined some of the State of Emergency regulations and censorship laws, publishing articles on deaths in detention, boycotts and on black political formations, some of which were banned at the time. The skill of being able to navigate the intimidation by the security police, the censorship laws and eventually publishing stories which no other English publications would touch, meant that the *Weekly Mail* was engaged in what Trabold (2006) refers to as “indirect resistance” (Trabold, 2006).

When one takes a closer look at the proportions of representation between black males and females, however, the results indicate that most of the voices which were represented were that of black males, specifically those who were involved in political organisations such as the UDF and the ANC. This patriarchal idea that only (black) males are the authoritative voices in the political arena has a consistent prevalence in society, but it has always been challenged by women activists and collectives which contributed not only to the liberation movement, but to the alternative publishing terrain (Detainees Parents Support Committee, 1988; Hassim, 2006; Meer, 1998; Meintjies, 1998; Seekings, 1991; Walker, 1982).

Alternative magazines like *Speak*, which was launched in 1983 and was written and edited by women, is a case in point. As co-founding editor of *Speak*, Meer (1998) writes that “[w]omen have often been called mothers of the revolution, but women were revolutionaries too.” She critiques the “alternative media” as having been centred on men: “[t]hese publications carried very little about women, however, and it was more often than not the voices of men that were heard in their articles” (Meer, 1998, p. 9). Phillips (2007) briefly outlines how feminist discourse flipped the script on the ways in which the alternative press operated in the 1970s in the United Kingdom. She explains how several UK feminist alternative publications emerged due to concerns about the alternative press’ depictions of women and by how women had assumed subordinate roles in the running of these publications (Phillips, 2007). In the South African context, activists in the Durban Women’s Group were moved to start a newsletter (which later became a national magazine), *Speak*, which featured an all-women editorial collective, and specifically concentrated on ‘women’s issues’ within the struggle, as articulated by women who were active participants in political organisations, trade unions and self-help groups (Meer, 1998).

The launching of *Speak* and other women-centred political activities corresponded to a re-awakening of (black) women’s activism during the Emergency which was facilitated by the civic movement which “drew women into politics in large numbers” (Hassim, 2006, pg. 47) but, these women were evidently not being incorporated into the leadership structures of these organisations. Women were “located principally among the rank and file of popular organisations” (Detainees Parents Support Committee, 1988, pg. 7). This would explain why a majority of those who were approached for comment by the *Weekly Mail* as spokespersons of political organisations were black men. This very idea of the exclusion of women in political leadership became a sore point in the ANC’s 1991 policy conference when the Women’s League demanded better representation in the National Executive Committee (NEC) structure of the organisation, but were met with excuses, dismissals and apathy (Hassim, 2006).

What the findings also show is that even in stories where both black men and women were quoted, more lines/space were given to black men to speak directly without being paraphrased. This means that black male speech was ascribed more value and authority. Black men were given space to outline their “subjective interpretation” of the world (van

Dijk, 1991). Fair (1993) describes a similar trend in the television news representations of black males involved in political violence in South Africa during the mid-1980s. She observes that black male voices were given credibility and authority in matters relating to politics but were still represented in ways which regarded black/African masculinity as primitive, animalistic and dangerous (Fair, 1993). And this is where the complexity of the representations of race and gender in the news lies – at how blackness can be used as a marker of primitivity, servitude, violence, docility, while gendered blackness can represent male sexuality, militancy, authority and value, and black female invisibility, victimhood and marginalisation (Baderoon, 2002; Fair, 1993; James, 2009; Meintjies, 1998; Seekings, 1995). This is evidenced by how the *Weekly Mail* could view black men as authoritative voices in black political struggle, but also deploy stereotypes of black masculinity as animalistic and violent (“wild-faced”, “undisciplined”, “vigilantes”). Alongside how, even as black women actively participated in political struggle, their subjectivities were confined to motherhood and marriage.

The omnipresent place of the UDF and the ANC in the pages of the *Weekly Mail* was unsurprising because this corresponded with the political climate in the period which is under study. As Tomaselli (1991) highlights, during the mid-1980s, “[a] variety of serious structural contradictions in apartheid were exposed and exploited by the African National Congress and especially by the domestic non-racial trans-class alliance of the United Democratic Front” (Tomaselli, 1991, p. 156). In 1986 when the State of Emergency was underway, black townships were under “military occupation” and the draconian laws imposed by the regime “made life a nightmare for the black population” (Magubane, 1987, pg. 473). During this time, the organising strategies of the UDF “brought community groups, workers and students into the arena of political resistance and raised fundamental questions about the structure of society and the appropriate role of the black majority” in the future of South Africa. This resulted in a wider participation from a wide variety of black communities and “an increasing number of white youths” (Magubane, 1987, pg. 475). This widened the scope of political actors involved in the liberation struggle. Wilderson (2008), an African-American scholar who was also part of Umkhonto We Sizwe in the 1980s, writes that the centring of the UDF in the “political life” of the mid-1980s was partly due to widespread support of the movement from blacks and also from the white liberals who had

been rejected “at the hands of Black Consciousness” in the 1970s. The openness of the UDF saw white liberals attaching themselves to it because of its “‘nonracial’ class analysis”, while tacitly dismissing Azapo’s strategy of only organising within the black community (Wilderson, 2008). Tomaselli (1991) further writes that Azapo “kept up a degree of pressure” against the state, hence a reasonable presence in the pages of this newspaper. What might have contributed to the prevalence of the UDF and Azapo specifically were the clashes which occurred between these organisations during the period under study (Tomaselli, 1991).

It must be noted though, that the newspaper covered a wide variety of political stories outside of the framework of this study. These included stories on parliamentary affairs and on white political formations which were represented in parliament including the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), and stories on the anti-apartheid formations which were aligned to the UDF, like the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) which predominantly organised within the white community. A story which fell outside of the scope of this study but dominated the politics pages was the much-publicised resignation of PFP parliamentarian, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert in 1986.

The content analysis also focused on the occupations of the quoted individuals in the newspaper to further reveal the nuances present in quoting patterns. The *Weekly Mail* largely quoted activists and political leaders in their political reporting. They made up 62.8% of the quotes. Government officials and individuals in the Private/Education sectors were more or less equally represented, 15.9% and 15.2% respectively. The least represented were Ordinary Citizens who made up 6.1% of the quotes. The distinction between activists and ordinary citizens is taken from Atton & Wickenden’s (2005) idea that activist voices are given greater prominence in alternative publications (as to be expected), in contrast to ordinary citizens (something which is unexpected) who may not have access to the publications and their journalists, such that the alternative publications reproduce sourcing hierarchies which are present in the mainstream press. They call this a “counter-elite” dominance which occurs due to how grassroots activists become “explicitly politicized”, thus making them reliable sources for journalists in the alternative press (Atton & Wickenden, 2005). The voices which are prioritised in this context are better resourced, politically aware activists, while “at the bottom of this hierarchy are the non-activist, non-politicized

‘citizens’” (Atton & Wickenden, 2005, p. 355). Thus, the quoted activists are still regarded as authoritative, reliable ‘experts’ in the terrain of political struggle. The main takeaway message from the results of this section however is that the *Weekly Mail* actively pursued black voices of political leaders in stories about black politics.

The *Weekly Mail* co-editor, Anton Harber, expressed how the newspaper struggled with the idea of being called an “alternative” publication. The editors and some of the journalists came from the English liberal press and thus some of the newsroom production practices which were associated with mainstream publications became apparent. Unlike other alternative publications, like *Grassroots*, *South*, *Speak* and *New Nation*, the *Weekly Mail* was deliberately not associated with any political formation (UDF, the feminist/women’s movement, or ANC) and thus it was not pressured to prioritise the voices of certain organisations or present their views in a positive light. While other alternative publications viewed quoting black political formations as a way to subvert and reorganise newsroom norms and culture, the *Weekly Mail* stayed within that terrain, balancing its progressive representations of the struggle, with the running of a ‘proper’ newsroom. This was the selling point of the newspaper: that it could adhere to ‘professional’ journalistic standards while maintaining a form of criticality against the state and activists’ resistance strategies. Practically, this meant that deadline pressures, strategies of “selection and summarization” of sources, space, advertising, production cycles, objectivity & balance, and newsroom culture all played a role in who and how sources were selected and represented (Manoim, 1996; Merrett & Saunders, 2000; Trabold, 2006; van Dijk, 1991; van Kessel, 2000).

The racialised and gendered ways in which newsbeats have historically been assigned, i.e. ‘hard news’ (politics, crime and the economy) being assigned to men and ‘soft news’ (health, entertainment and education) being assigned to women (Graff, 2016; Nghidinwa, 2008; Rabe, 2002; Ross, 2007), affected the gender distribution among the writers. As seen in the findings of the content analysis, women were scarce as political reporters, especially black women. The women journalists interviewed by Nghidinwa (2008) who were operating in different newsrooms in Namibia during the liberation struggle outlined how there were very few women journalists who covered politics, how they had to fight to cover the male-dominated beats, how men in the newsroom undermined them due to their perceived lack of knowledge on matters relating to politics, and how the most significant stories were

assigned to men. Nghidinwa (2008) also factors in Bantu Education as a possible inhibitor of black women (and black men) from having more prominent roles in newsrooms. In practical terms, Bantu Education made sure that fields like journalism were reserved for whites, and blacks were restricted to jobs like administration, teaching and nursing. As Ndimande (2013) writes, Bantu Education's implementation was aimed at ideologically crippling young black minds and stifling their political militancy, but it also had an economic dimension: it was designed to "restructure the conditions of social reproduction of the black working-class, simultaneously creating the conditions for stabilizing the black urban under-class of semi-skilled laborers..." (Ndimande, 2013, p. 22; Nghidinwa, 2008). Several of the white women journalists interviewed by Nghidinwa (2008) admitted to having a privileged position in the newsroom, compared to black women at the time, while they also had a tough time as women in the male dominated journalism field. An interviewee called Lucy states:

"I would be stupid and naïve to believe that my racial classification didn't affect my prism approach to life and journalism. Even though I was an English-speaking Catholic, born to 'second class' South Africans of Greek and Portuguese origin and grew up in a conservative Afrikaans town outside Johannesburg, I still had a lot more opportunities than the majority of 'black' South Africans (and Namibians)" (Nghidinwa, 2008, p. 75).

Given this context, it is not surprising that just over half (50.8%) of the 240 articles which were investigated were written by white males. White female journalists were responsible for 21.4% of the stories, while 12.5% of the stories were written by three black males. Stories with no by-lines and which were written by the staff writer constituted 15.3% of the data. No black female journalists were writing. This is not surprising when the nature of apartheid segregation is considered, which separated people racially, spatially and economically. But even within the context of apartheid, for a newspaper that considered itself to be progressive; it was regrettable that so few black journalists were involved during the founding stages of the paper. *Weekly Mail* co-founder, Manoim (1996) concedes that the newspaper was "always uncomfortably conscious of the 'whiteness' of our newsroom" (Manoim, 1996, pg. 81). The paper later developed a trainee programme for young black journalists in 1988 which produced some of South Africa's most well-known journalists and editors like Thandeka Gqubule, Ferial Haffajee and Vuyo Mvoko. And even with their presence, their rise to editorial and managerial positions was slow (Manoim, 1996).

The absence of black female writers in the initial stages of this newspaper does not mean that there were no black women who were journalists at the time. In this regard, the newspaper became imprisoned in the logic of apartheid and inadvertently functioned in its service by denying black women the right to write their own stories, in their own voices. This silencing of black women as writers, especially in the political news beat, is due to how black women's speech historically has been viewed as being "largely apolitical" (Fair, 1993). Considering this structure of patriarchy and whiteness opens doors to ask questions about voice, power and race. What is evident here is that white males were the ones with the power to shape worldviews through writing and naming, and according to Bourdieu (1998) to "name is to show, to create, to bring into existence" (quoted in Baderoon, 2002, pg. 369). One might link and think of the communication between the white male journalists (as writers) and black male activists (as news actors) as a mediated dialogue which conveys and articulates unequal relations of power. It is a dialogue which speaks to ideas of societal dominance and subservience, empowerment and disempowerment, superiority and inferiority. When one also considers that the white male journalists were writing for a white, relatively affluent, well-educated, left leaning, politically conscious readership, one can consider that the white men were essentially writing for themselves.

The discourse analysis found that there were varied and interesting patterns of source selection and representation by the *Weekly Mail* reporters. There was also an expected overriding use of language which showed lenience towards political transition, democracy and non-racialism. An interesting finding was how black male voices were used in stories which covered white political actors like Molly Blackburn and Joe Slovo. It was also interesting how some white writers insisted on quoting black voices even when there were white sources available. A shining example of this was the veteran reporter, Patrick Laurence, who had a generally balanced writing style and sometimes quoted only black political actors directly and paraphrased or left out white voices. Laurence also routinely wrote emotive impassioned features which insisted on the need for a "new" South Africa and called the apartheid establishment the government of the "old". This general ethos around discourses of non-racialism and transition was also present in reporting about issues relating specifically to women. Ruth Bekker for instance was one of the women journalists



who covered women's issues specifically, but she also covered the broader landscape of the politics beat.

The results of the discourse analysis looking at the representation of black male voices centres around two key findings, the depiction of young black males as violent and ultra-radical militants, and older black men in leadership positions as rational, reasonable and experienced. What ties all these stories together is the subtlety with which they portray black men in political leadership as authoritative voices on matters concerning the black community, while those who are 'ordinary' members (or rank and file or "youths") of the black community partaking in political actions were viewed less favourably. The anxieties exhibited by the white writers about the violence in the townships reflected a disapproval of the strategies employed by those engaged in political struggle – the anxiety intensified at the mere thought of the violence touching white bodies and moving to white communities. As Seekings (1996) observed, "[i]n South Africa, black 'youth' have been characterised as a 'social problem' whenever privileged observers have worried that violence and disorder would sweep out of the working-class townships into white, middle-class areas, or onto the national political stage" (Seekings, 1996, p. 116). This anxiety was illustrated numerous times, like in an article describing a timeline of violent events which occurred in Durban, where the writer noted, "[t]he violence that was endemic in the townships around the city had come to central Durban" (Robertson, 1986, p. 5). Another writer commented that violence "has sent shock waves through white South Africa... ANC attacks, for the most part, were either located in black areas or were directed at institutional targets rather than people" (Lodge, 1986, p. 7).

Seekings (1995) studied the representations of black youth in the press (specifically the *Sunday Times*) in the late 1980s and early 1990s and found that they were represented as deviant, violent and destructive by the mainstream English press. The framework he recognised in the early 1990s in the mainstream press is also present, albeit in a more subtle and sophisticated way, in the *Weekly Mail* in 1986. As the transition process to the negotiations between the recently unbanned liberation movements and the National Party became more complicated, and in turn resulted in fluctuations of intense violence, the *Weekly Mail* was seen utilising language which aided in developing the notion of young black male "youths" as "aimless" and "hardened". In 1992, the *Weekly Mail* wrote:

“While an uprising like that of 1976 seems unlikely, aimless revolts by gun-toting 1990s youths, unemployed and hardened by the factional violence of the past two years, may be a lot worse. Already anarchic, misplaced violence is part of township life.”

“The revolt of township youths in the Vaal [south of Johannesburg] is already uglier than the uprisings of June 1976. Today's youths are armed, their violence anarchic and random, their targets innocent passers-by (WM, May 29, 1992)” (quoted in Seekings, 1996, p. 107).

These findings are interesting given that they reveal a continuation of the use of discourses which painted young black men as uncontrollable, disorderly, prone to random violence and politically unrefined. This element revealed a shortcoming of this study – that it only covered one year and thus could not possibly reveal the gradual changes in the discourses of youth militancy present in the *Weekly Mail*. Furthermore, the results of the discourse analysis showed the use of discourses which not only infantilised young black men, but also outlined their perceived political naiveté and proclivity for anarchy and violence, as can be seen in the odd comparison to the Khmer Rouge regime. Seekings (1996) observes a similar trend in the characterisation of black youth in the 1990s, where they were “even compared to the Khmer Rouge of Kampuchea” (Seekings, 1996, p. 103).

As stated above, the discourse around youth deviance in young black men was present, but subtle. This is owing to the support which the *Weekly Mail* espoused for the liberation movement. However, one article which stood out as one which would fit in the mainstream narrative of racist imagery was one titled “*Five mad days in Alex*”. The out of place article stood out for its blatant use of racialised biases against young black activists. The article used words like “violent”, “arsonists” and “rampaging” to describe the young activists in Alexandra. It further said:

“The sound of gunfire crackled through Alexandra on Sunday and Monday when the township’s teenagers went to war.”

“Wild-faced teenagers stopped cars, waving their fists to the cry of ‘Viva’” (Kenny, 1986, p. 6).

These descriptors denied them their subjectivity, especially considering that they were not given a voice to shed light on a reason for their actions. They were crafted into the stereotype of the faceless, nameless, angry black mob.

In contrast to this, older black men in political leadership were viewed as more rational and their actions were explained in terms of the context of apartheid repression. Indeed, their words and actions were viewed as *reactions* to repression. Black men in political leadership were often quoted in context, they were given fitting attributions with no leading adjectives and they were quoted using neutral and general language. Someone like the then ANC president, Oliver Tambo, would be said to be speaking “slowly and choosing his words deliberately” (Barrell, 1986, p. 1). Quotes from these men were used to explain political concepts, the rationale for acts of retaliation by different organisations, mostly the ANC and the UDF. Even though men from these organisations were the most frequently quoted, other men from other black organisations were quoted, often a mix of them in one story. These men’s political participation was constructed around the idea of respectability politics and black civility. This means that their political participation and articulations were confined to agreeable manners which required rationality, gradualism and dialogue. These men were also seen as reliable sources in that they were available for comment, i.e. they had “access” to the reporters, they were viewed as being knowledgeable about politics, well-educated and articulate like the Azapo’s Saths Cooper, as a psychologist, Allan Boesak as an activist and theologian, for example. Lastly, the terrain of political organising during this period was highly gendered and individualised. Their place as leaders was unquestioned, in the same way that male political participation was unquestioned. While the Afrikaner nationalist government viewed and constructed them as terrorists, the alternative press was eager to humanise them, thus placing them at the forefront of political discourse.

Politically prominent and powerful black women like Albertina Sisulu and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela were found in the news frame attached to their imprisoned husbands – unless on occasions when they were acting in a manner which was undesirable, in the case of Madikizela-Mandela. Hassim (2018) regards Madikizela-Mandela as a complex figure in that her image embodies and conjures anxieties around the political transition, violence, moralism and populism. While it can be argued that the pervasive ways which news media

frame women as mothers is problematic, Hassim (2018) complicates the understanding of the term “Mother of the Nation”, as Madikizela-Mandela was often referred to. Hassim locates it within a South African socio-political context rather than limiting its use and meaning “in terms of women’s role within the nuclear family”. Hassim (2018) insists that the term operated at a symbolic level which “transcended child-bearing and childrearing” and that “motherhood was understood to be an ethical and political commitment to the creation of a new society. Motherhood provided the enabling framework to draw masses of women into various forms of collective action” (Hassim, 2018, p. 898). Indeed, one sees that black women were often quoted speaking about their activism in relation to their children, and how seeing the heavy-handedness of the police on their children politicised them (Detainees Parents Support Committee, 1988).

However, on a wider and more structural scale, as noted by black feminist scholar, Joy James, the public’s imagination of what a revolutionary is, is shaped by perceptions of gender, agency, race and sex – “not just ideology”. Women who are involved in struggle are perceived according to the presence or absence of males in their narratives. James (2009) describes how it is easy to “imagine antiracist revolutionary struggle against the state without (black) women... but to imagine revolution against state violence in the absence of (black) men often draws a blank.” She further highlights how representations of men in struggle are “independent of women”, while women “generally appear as revolutionaries only in association with men” (James, 2009, p. 138). The media is not exempt from deploying these gendered discourses and representations around who is regarded as a worthy revolutionary. The *Weekly Mail* stuck to the stereotypical way of portraying women, specifically black women, as mothers, aunts, widows, and grandmothers who were there to narrate and corroborate stories of trauma and displacement. These women were given only one line in most paragraphs to express their grief or to explain the deaths or detentions of their sons, husbands or nephews. This didn’t stray from the mainstream view of black women which existed in the news media, as Fair (1993) observed. While the *Weekly Mail* can be commended in the apartheid context for having black women as sources who were part of the political struggle, the level of importance granted to certain sources observed Atton and Wickenden’s idea of the alternative hierarchy of sources because the women who

were approached for comment, as few as they were, were activists and people who were generally accessible to the journalists, rather than ordinary members of communities.

The discourse analysis also revealed a disparity in the representations of black and white women involved in political struggle. While both white and black women were framed within gendered constructions of motherhood and womanhood, white women were positively reflected as women with agency, that is, as people with “the human capacity to act” (Ahearn, 1999, p. 12). On the other hand, stereotypical and dehumanising tropes of black women as ‘tough’ and ‘victim’ were deployed. The two stories about Blackburn and Sparg make it most obvious that the *Weekly Mail* was targeted at a predominantly white audience. The language used to describe the two women was geared towards convincing white readers of the presence, place and legitimacy of white women in the struggle, while also showing support to their ideas around non-racialism and an end to racial segregation. While black women were generally quoted more than white women, the black women who were approached for comment were divided between ordinary citizens and political activists. White women were almost all politically active individuals. Two articles which quoted both black and white women and spoke positively about the prospects of the women’s movement only appeared during the commemoration of the 1956 Women’s Day march. One article carefully painted a picture of the political work of women’s organisations in the context of a State of Emergency while the other outlined some of the ideological disparities present in the women’s movement and the determination to resolve them and work towards unity.

These findings should be taken in the context of apartheid as well as in the context of the number of black women who were approached for comment in total. In the context of apartheid, black women being approached for comment at all (but especially as sources commenting on their own political activity), was something out of the ordinary. This made the *Weekly Mail* a departure from the norm, also flagging it as a threat to the state. However, the ways in which black women were quoted as sources did not significantly depart from the broader stereotypical ways in which black women are depicted in news even to this day – as victims, wives and apolitical storytellers added for colour or context (Fair, 1993; James, 2009; Graff, 2016; Iqani, 2015; Rabe, 2002; Ross, 2007). And while the newspaper tried to cover “women’s issues” in political contexts (like women’s organisations,

their activities such as conferences & protests, and women's day commemorations), these were stories largely left to white female reporters. This reinforced the hard news/soft news dichotomy and the gendered ways in which beats are distributed in newsrooms.

While it can be argued that the newspaper made use of stereotypical frames to represent the voices of black political actors, this discourse was not pervasive. Several thoughtful and balanced stories which showcased the nuanced ways in which black people reacted to the illegitimate government of the apartheid state were written. These were articles which were sympathetic to the plight of the oppressed and which contextualized the actions of those in political struggle. As discussed above, these articles were predominantly written by white writers, bringing into question the media "gaze" which, as Chiumbu (2016) argues, is "located within an ideological machine that reproduces" certain dominant discourses (Chiumbu, 2016, p. 421). The results of this study outline what is already known – that the *Weekly Mail* had content which was sympathetic to the anti-apartheid movement and it sought to showcase the black political voices which were muffled by the regime. What was missing from the literature, however, was *how* these voices were represented and in what racialised and gendered ways were these representations spread out. What was revealed by the results was that the representations were varying and complex, but they were not all positive or progressive.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which black political voices were represented in the political reporting of one of South Africa's most well-known alternative newspapers, the *Weekly Mail*. The study sought to understand how the race and gender of those quoted in the newspaper was used by reporters to aid or circumvent the dominant stereotypes associated with these identities which are sometimes perpetuated by the news media. Another aim of this study was to contribute to scholarly research on the alternative press and to fill a gap in the research pertaining to the representation of black voices in the alternative press generally, and the *Weekly Mail* specifically. Given its progressive outlook on political reporting, the aim was to see if the publication would reproduce some of the racial stereotypes prevalent in mainstream news, or if it would shift its content to more progressive terrains. The aim of the study was also to uncover the ways in which power distributed itself in the production and content of the newspaper. The study wanted to find out who writes, who speaks and what symbolic interpretations can be drawn from this in relation to questions of race, gender, power, privilege and black representation.

As was to be expected, the findings of the content analysis revealed that most of the reporters in the *Weekly Mail's* politics pages were white and male. The *Weekly Mail* newsroom was relatively small compared to its mainstream counterparts and it consisted of colleagues (and friends) who quickly assembled after the closure of the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Express*. Apartheid meant that even newsrooms were segregated according to race, such that one would hardly find any black reporters in what was deemed 'white publications'. Due to the pool of people the *Weekly Mail* recruited as its first staff during the initial stages of the publication, the reporters were true to this white, male dominant demographic. Even the co-founder of the newspaper conceded to the whiteness of the publication, stating that they were always acutely aware of this. Manoim (1996) also wrote about how some of the women journalists in the newsroom made their dissatisfaction with the maleness of the newsroom boldly known (Manoim, 1996).

The findings of this study showed that 80% of direct quotes were attributed to males, driving home the fact that the *Weekly Mail* was centred on male voices. However, a breakdown of this figure showed that black males were the overriding voice of black political affairs in the coverage. Those who were of interest to this publication were black males who were leaders of popular political organisations. The researcher expected that because the paper was established and run by white, male editors that they would automatically seek voices that validated their own worldviews, prejudices and experiences about apartheid repression, and thus white male voices would be centred, but the content analysis results disproved this and instead showed that black, male political voices were centred instead. However, the representations of black male voices were split. While older black males were constructed as respectable, rational and approachable, younger black males who were part of the “rank and file” or the “militants”, were constructed as unthinking, violent, politically naïve and were infantilised.

The results of this study further showed that the *Weekly Mail* framed black females in politics according to their roles as wives, mothers and maternal caregivers. There were inconsistencies in how white and black women were portrayed. While black women were put strictly in their motherhood boxes, white women were allowed space to think and speak more broadly about their political ideas and aspirations. These observations show the ways which the *Weekly Mail* contributed to the greater discourse around racialised and gendered identities of black political voices in the news at the time. As made evident by the results, there were subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) undertones of racial and gender biases in the reporting of the *Weekly Mail*. The combination of the content analysis and the discourse analysis proved useful in revealing the multi-layered ways which gender and race were reproduced in the pages of the *Weekly Mail*'s political reporting. One of the research questions was about investigating if the depictions of black political actors would be negative or positive. The research results showed that it would be naïve to think of these representations as purely negative, or as purely positive. There were positive and constructive representations of both male and female black voices which outlined the many political interventions which were waged against the oppressive apartheid regime. However, these were not the only representations. Negative ones were present too, which



centred on white fears and constructed black rebellion against the system as brash and unsophisticated.

It is important to note that this study was limited in scope as only one year's issue of the newspaper was analysed. The study also only focused on black political formations and didn't delve into how the newspaper represented black people in all its political reporting, its arts & books section and its sports section. Thus, more intense and intentional research must be conducted in order to make broader generalisations about the ways in which the newspaper represented black voices more broadly. While it was beneficial to focus on the *Weekly Mail* due to its influence in the alternative publishing realm, this meant that the study was limited to an English, national, weekly publication, and was thus not representative of the wide array of the alternative newspapers which existed during this period. Future research in this area could rectify this by looking at the representation of black voices in a wider, more diverse sample of alternative newspapers. The focus of the study only being on political reporting could also be rectified in future research. Further research could include the rich, complex and dynamic history of the organising in the trade union movement, for instance. Further research could also widen the scope of the research. This study was also limited by time constraints and could therefore not go beyond one year. It would be interesting to see the changes in discourse and representation from various alternative newspapers during the State of Emergency until the period right before the first democratic elections, given the amount of violence, state repression and political activity at the time.

A reading of the positive, balanced and progressive representations of black voices in the political reporting of the *Weekly Mail*, along with a contextualisation of the racialised, gendered, stereotypical depictions of this group allows for a nuanced, critical reading of the content emerging from the newspaper which moves away from the largely romantic idea of a superhero newspaper which fought bravely against apartheid outside of the context of race, gender and power.

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