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A critical history of the rise and fall of the first ever independently owned Matabeleland publication in Zimbabwe: The case of *The Southern Star*

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For my dad, Fanuel Dignity Moyo whose light still shines in my heart.

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ABSTRACT

This research is premised on the understanding that alternative forms of media emerge to deal with specific ideological projects and, as such, must be seen as satisfying a specific need at a specific point in time. Using the case of a weekly newspaper, *The Southern Star* which was in circulation from January 2012 to June 2012, this study sought to understand the factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper, what it sought to achieve, how it went about putting that into practice, its message in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question' and also the factors that led to the its collapse. In order to address my research questions, I adopted a two stage research design qualitative content analysis and semi structured in depth interviews. In locating the study within the qualitative epistemic understanding of research, it was clear from the qualitative content analysis of 13 editions of the publication and in depth interviews held with 15 respondents that the newspaper was set up with the aim of serving a marginalised section of the population (in this instance the Ndebele) by providing them with a platform to articulate issues affecting them. It also sought to 'speak' the 'unspoken' within the mainstream media by focusing on Matabeleland identity politics. It achieved this by creating content around the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland development, Matabeleland history and Matabeleland heroes. The newspaper also sought to emancipate the people from the South by advocated for social, cultural, economic and political justice as a resolution to the 'Matabeleland Question'. However, the newspaper failed to sustain operations due to lack of advertising revenue. As a result of the constraining political environment in which the newspaper operated, potential advertisers were afraid of placing advertisements in the newspaper because of the nature of the content produced, which in view of Zimbabwe's rival ethnic history, could easily be labelled ethnically divisive. Also, being a new player in the market worked to their disadvantage as prospective advertisers opted to place their adverts in "tried and tested" publications (Zimpapers and Alpha Media Holdings). Additionally, because of poor management, roles were not clearly defined and hence the newspaper failed to operate as a business enterprise. As noted during interviews with junior reporters, there was little or no experience at management level. The paper lacked a coordinated circulation strategy and from inception, was never officially launched, which resulted in the failure to reach significant audiences.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In recent years, the debate on the 'Matabeleland Question'[1]has gained considerable impetus in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011; Mhlanga, 2009). It is a national question embedded within the larger discourse of the idea of Zimbabwe and in particular it refers to who is considered a Zimbabwean and who is not (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 12). It is deeply lodged in the development of the idea of Zimbabwe itself and it is about inclusion of ethnicities into a single nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 12). However, evident in these debates is that Zimbabwe has become ethnically polarised, "with ethnicity continually shaping and influencing the economic, social, and political life of Zimbabwe" (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 276). Worth highlighting is the fact that the plight of contemporary Zimbabweans has moved along a debatable fault line of historical tensions between the Ndebele[2], who constitute about twenty percent of Zimbabwe's population and the Shona, who make up the dominant ethnic group in the country (Barnes, 2004: 14; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 14).

This historical animosity has manifested itself through the unfolding of particular events through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs. These events have not only left many "Ndebeles more aware of their differences with the Shona", but have also "provoked radical Ndebele cultural nationalism and radical Ndebele politics" (Lindgren, 2005 cited in Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 287), dividing opinions about the resolution of 'Matabeleland Question'. On one hand, there is the radical politics of secession spearheaded by such diaspora-based political formations as Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC) and the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF). They contest the idea of a unitary Zimbabwe state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 48) and instead propose the restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele nation, separate from the provinces of Mashonaland and Manicaland, which they call Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b; Masunungure 2006: 8). On the other hand, arguing against what it views as the continued marginalisation of the three

[1] See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion on the factors that have shaped and reinforced 'Matabeleland Question' within the Zimbabwean context.
[2] The definition of who qualifies as being Ndebele has been defined differently by different scholars. Chapter Two draws on Ndlovu-Gatsheni's five conceptions of defining the Ndebele (2008; 2009).

provinces of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and Midlands, ZAPU 2000[3] agitates for a Federal state in which provinces retain greater political and economic autonomy (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 287).

It is within this socio- political and historical context that this study is located. Therefore, in mapping the rise and fall of *The Southern Star*, from January to June 2012, the study seeks to understand why the newspaper was set up, what it sought to achieve, how it went about putting that into practice and also seeks to probe the key actor's views on why the newspaper collapsed and explores whether or not this was related to the political position promoted. Additionally, the study investigates the position the newspaper advocated with regard to the 'Matabeleland Question'. It examines the extent to which this was promoted in the pages of the newspaper.

I chose to look at *The Southern Star* because it was the first ever independently owned regional publication in Matabeleland whose thrust was to discuss issues affecting people in the Southern part of Zimbabwe. The newspaper was owned and published by the Chayah Media Services (CMS) group, whose Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is Sindiso Mazibisa, one of the lawyers behind the formation of Abammeli Human Rights Lawyers (AHRL[4]). As the Director of CMS noted in a preliminary interview I had with him, the establishment of the newspaper was driven by a "need to have a paper that spoke on behalf and for the people of Matabeleland" (interview held on the 09 May 2012).

Significance of the study

The importance of carrying out this study has been motivated by the realisation that the Ndebele people have generally been marginalised in academic and public discourses about

[3] ZAPU 2000 is a belated attempt to revive Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) following the death of Joshua Nkomo in July 1999 (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 287)

[4] Abammeli Human Rights Lawyers (AHRL) is made up of a group of lawyers from Matabeleland who broke ranks from Harare based Zimbabwe Human Rights Lawyers (ZHRL) because they refused to offer legal representation to the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) trio charged with treason in March 2011. Abammeli help the Matabeleland community to advocate for their own rights at a National, Regional and International level with special emphasis on minority rights and transitional justice as these are issues of topical and burning interest in Matabeleland http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S indiso_Mazibisa (accessed 18/05/2012).

Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 9). Having been born and grown up in Matabeleland, I was motivated to contribute to the body of knowledge about the Ndebele by carrying out the current research, on a newspaper that targeted the Southern part of Zimbabwe, where the Ndebele are located. However, as a researcher, my position in this study is to seek answers to my research questions and provide sufficiently detailed descriptions of collected data that are valid and reliable. I do this knowing that, "venturing into research on Ndebele history is automatically considered to be an "unpatriotic" exercise within state circles, as it is assumed to raise conflict-ridden ethnic problems and dirty histories not useful for nation building" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 19). However, I subscribe to Moyo's view that the 'Matabeleland Question' is critical and cannot be cursorily thrust aside; it should be subjected to intellectual and candid debate (2006 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 50). This is also what motivates my study.

Goals of the research

The objective of this study can be summarised in the following research questions:

- What factors led to the establishment of the newspaper?
- What did it seek to achieve?
- How did it go about putting that into practice?
- What was the message of *The Southern Star* in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'?
- What factors led to the collapse of the newspaper?

Methodology

The methodological approach that informs this study is primarily qualitative. Qualitative research centres on interpretivism, constructivism, and phenomenology and these are the key notions that capture the epistemological foundations of this general approach steeped in meaning making, as opposed to quantitative research which treats knowledge as pre-existing objective truths (Deacon et al, 1999; Bryman, 1984). The appropriateness of locating the study within the qualitative epistemic understanding of research is hinged on what Geertz (1973) terms "thick description" (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 272), which, in this

case, encourages a rich, detailed explanation of why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed.

The study employed a two stage research design: first, qualitative content analysis to help identify the major themes covered in the newspaper and second, in depth semi-structured interviews as a primary technique that allowed for the exploration of the owner and staff's perceptions on why the newspaper was established and why it collapsed. This also included in depth semi-structured interviews with those who advertised in the newspaper and those who did not. These two techniques were chosen because of their respective abilities to generate data relevant to address the research question. Additionally, the adopted approach enabled a comparison between the data gathered from the content analysis and that collected from the interviews for the discussion of my findings. Since the research involved interaction with human subjects, the researcher ensured that the rights of the participants were not violated, by use of informed consent in the research procedure (Seale, 1998:185).

Thesis Outline

This chapter pointed to the issues that inform the basis of this study as well as the research methods employed in carrying out the research.

Chapter Two details the social background and context of the study. First, it locates Matabeleland within the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe. This is imperative as it brings to light factors that have shaped Ndebele identity and have informed the way in which the Ndebele position themselves within the Zimbabwean context. The chapter also examines the dynamics involved in the construction of Zimbabwe history, this enables an understanding of how Zimbabwean identity is being constructed and where the Ndebele position themselves within that discourse. Additionally, a discussion on the history of the media in Zimbabwe is presented in order to locate *The Southern Star* within the media landscape.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework informing this study; first, the concept of alternative media (Atton, 2002; Harcup, 2003; Moyo, 2010), second, the political economy of

the media (Golding and Murdock, 2000; Murdock, 1990), third, the idea of social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987; Calhoun, 2002; Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004), and last the scholarship on identity formation (Hall, 1991, 1996; Woodward, 1997). These conceptual understandings provide the lens through which I analyse the collected empirical data.

Chapter Four describes and discusses the research design employed in conducting the study. I discuss the qualitative research methodology that informs the study. I also examine the major issues in qualitative research which include generalisability, validity and reliability. I present the data collection methods and the selection process employed and then I discuss the methods of analysis. At every stage, I justify the reasons for choosing certain ways of collecting data over others. The strengths and weaknesses of each approach chosen are highlighted.

Chapter Five is devoted to presentation and analysis of findings. This discussion is informed by my stated research goals and draws together the theory, method and data collected during the fieldwork. I identify the major themes that came up in the interviews and compare them to the information gathered through content analysis.

Lastly, Chapter Six is a summary of the entire study. It draws on the findings of the study in order to explain why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed. It provides insights on how the makeup of society has implications on the forms of media set up within a precise context and within a specific epoch.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief context for the study and also highlighted the goals of the research. It provided a map for the entire research process from locating the study within its socio-political and historical context, to elaborating on the data collection process and then discussing and analysing the findings drawing on theories discussed. The next chapter provides an in depth discussion on the social background and context of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Introduction

In presenting the historical account of the rise and fall of *The Southern Star*, it is imperative to provide a background on Matabeleland in order to make sense of the context in which the newspaper was established. Thus, I begin by situating Matabeleland within the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe. Within that same vein, I trace the factors that have shaped and reinforced the 'Matabeleland Question' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011) from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs. I proceed by discussing the state of the media in Zimbabwe in order to locate the emergence of *The Southern Star* within the Zimbabwean press.

Situating Matabeleland in the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a former British colony that was occupied in 1890 by a group of South African and British based mercenaries (Barnes, 2004: 140) and gained independence in 1980. Over the years, the country has been plagued with ethnic tensions and divisions that characterise Zimbabwean politics and society today. It is against this backdrop that Masunungure argues that, "one of the problems at independence was the contested and not yet fully resolved question of who constitutes the Zimbabwean polity or political community and which people should be members of that community" (2006: 5). Thus, Zimbabwe can be seen to have been "born with a very bad ethnic birthmark that was to negatively affect its national integration efforts" (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 282).

Although there are other ethnic communities - Venda, Tonga, Kalanga, Nambya, Sotho, Dombe, Xhosa, Shangani, Tswana, Barwe, Sena, Doma, Chikunda, Tonga of Mudzi, Tshwawo and Chewa (Hachipola, 1998 cited in Ndhlovu, 2006: 305) - the historical animosity between the Shona and the Ndebele can be singled out. For over the years, the Shona have been depicted as the "rulers" while the Ndebele have been presented as the "ruled" the "subaltern" (Mudenge, 1990 cited in Mhlanga, 2010: 111). Therefore, politics that

is emerging from Matabeleland region is that of protest to perceptions and realities of exclusion, marginalisation and domination (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 1). In order to make sense of these debates ensuing between the Shona and the Ndebele, one has to trace these from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

During the pre-colonial era, the dominant myth is that in the 19th century defenceless Shona people were attacked by the fierce Ndebele coming from the South, who fleeing the wrath of Shaka, crossed the Limpopo and proceeded to raid for cattle, women and land (Barnes, 2004: 142). This narrative of Shona victimisation and Ndebele aggression has been powerful and difficult to dislodge (Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004: 143). Over the years, these mythical constructs have exacerbated hostile relations between the Ndebele and Shona, and this has had far reaching implications for post-colonial developments in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003: 17). Second, is the view that Matabeleland and Mashonaland are separate states since the Ndebele existed as an independent nation up to 1893 when King Lobengula was violently removed from power by the British colonialists (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 40), while Mashonaland was occupied in 1890 by the Pioneer Column that culminated in the raising of the Union Jack Flag in Fort Salisbury in September of that year. The Ndebele state remained independent for the next four years (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 40). This led the historian Arthur Keppel-Jones to argue that Mashonaland was "occupied" and Matabeleland was "conquered" (1983: 8-11 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 40).

During the colonial era, the purpose of the colonially propagated narrative of the Shona-Ndebele relationship was to divide and rule (de Waal, 1990: 89 cited in Barnes, 2004: 142). It is in this regard that, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that, "the colonialists did not "invent" Ndebele ethnic identity; they "reconstructed" it for colonial purposes" (2008: 40). Thus, in the colonial version, the Ndebele are "mindless militaristic bullies" and the Shona are "disorganised weaklings" (Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004: 142). Furthermore, in 1963, a major ethnic rift impacted nationalist politics with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)[5] splitting along ethnic lines into the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) [6]

[5] Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 and throughout the liberation struggle, Ndebele-speaking people stuck with the party whose support base and military wing were dominated by people from the South-Western part of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 31).
[6] Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was given birth to in 1963. It became a Shona dominated party and concentrated its recruitment in Mashonaland (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 31).

that was Shona dominated and ZAPU that became Ndebele dominated (Nkomo, 1984 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 43-44). Since that time the history of ZAPU and ZANU has become a tale of ethnic politics and tribalism, bringing more division than unity to the Ndebele and the Shona (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 43-44).

In the post-colonial era, when ZANU assumed state power in 1980, it quickly penetrated the state and nation, through selective deployment of history, memory and commemoration to establish hegemony and claim uncontested political legitimacy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 3).This historical moment of ZANU triumphalism was characterised by the use of Shona pre-colonial heroes and historical monuments to imagine the nation, while Ndebele heroes and history were marginalised (Kriger, 2003: 74-75 cited in Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 285). This exclusion of the Ndebele from the Zimbabwe nation-state has been described as being built on an understanding of Robert Mugabe as the father of the nation and the foregrounding of symbols associated with the "Shona" (Kriger, 1995 cited in Lindgren, 2002: 3). This argument is premised on the view that African nation-states with nationalism as their bedrock are products of social construction (Mhlanga, 2010: 104). As such, the name of the imagined nation Zimbabwe, which was linked to the ancient ruins of Great Zimbabwe, which is of symbolic significance for Shona speakers, was challenged by those coming from Matabeleland. They argued that it was an ethnic name that was not accommodative of other people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 2).This downplaying of the Ndebele past in accounts of national history is seen by some Ndebeles "as the majority Shona speaking peoples' oppression of the Ndebele as well as the nation-state Zimbabwe's oppression of them" (Lindgren, 2002: 3).

Furthermore, the ethnic politics were exacerbated during the *Gukurahundi*[7] atrocities of 1980s in which at least 20 000 civilians in Matabeleland lost their lives when ZANU deployed the Fifth Brigade to stamp out a dissident movement (Phimister, 2009: 471). This movement consisted of Ndebele dominated ex- Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) combatants who had absconded from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA)

[7] The term *Gukurahundi* is a colloquial expression which in Shona language means "the storm that destroys everything" (Sithole and Makumbe, 1997: 133 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Other scholars have defined it as a Shona name for early rains that wash away chaff of the previous season and in that instance the chaff to be washed away was this time the Ndebele-speaking people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 46).

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 44). This was triggered by the way the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) continued to exclude ZIPRA, PF-ZAPU, and the entire leadership of this party from the imagination of the new nation, the attempt to belittle their contribution to the liberation war and the monopolisation of the media (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 4). This "made the people of Matabeleland and ZIPRA agitated, restless and unsure of their security in Zimbabwe" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 4). The *Gukurahundi* period was evidenced by the random killing of Ndebele-speakers, hunting and killing of PF-ZAPU supporters, raping of Ndebele women and girls, as well as abduction, torture, politicisation and attempts at forcing every Ndebele-speaker to switch to the Shona language and support ZANU (cited in Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)'s Report, 1997). People in Matabeleland responded by accusing Mugabe, the government and the "Shona" in general of killing the Ndebele (Lindgren, 2005: 158). This is mainly because the Fifth Brigade unit was almost entirely Shona and justified its violence in political and ethnic terms (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 286).The violence was in reality an indication of how "Ndebele particularism"[8] could not easily blend with a Shona imagined nation and "Shona triumphalism"[9] (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 46-47). Additionally, the violence was symptomatic of the failure of a smooth blending of major ethnicities into a new national identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 47). As Lindgren notes, "that historic epoch also helped solidify the feeling of Ndebele-ness among the people in Matabeleland at the cost of being Zimbabwean" (2005: 158). The outcome of this conflict was the 1987 Unity Accord which, while ending the atrocities in Matabeleland, effectively weakened the PF-ZANU opposition and confirmed the regional subordination of Matabeleland (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: xxix). It is in this regard, that Lindgren argues that, "memories of these atrocities have influenced the current political situation in

[8] Ndebele particularism is a term used to describe the history, culture, ideology and language that unite and distinguish the Ndebele community and nation from the Shona historical experiences. It attempts to revive Ndebele kingship. The notion of Ndebele particularism is at the root of the problem of how two nations (Shona and Ndebele) with different pre-colonial histories and memories can be invited into one centralised state that masquerades as a state adhering to the Shona worldview (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2008: 39-51).

[9] Shona triumphalism has led to the emanation of the following forms of oppression against the Ndebele; marginalisation of the elected Member of Parliaments (MPs) of Matabeleland, perpetrating ethnic cleansing against the people of Matabeleland, translocation of the economic resources of Matabeleland to Mashonaland, reserving key jobs for Shona people in Matabeleland, depriving the people of Matabeleland of education opportunities (proclamation of uMhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 47).

Zimbabwe, and they will continue to have far reaching consequences for Zimbabwean politics" (2002: 3).

From the above noted historical and political forces that have shaped and reinforced 'Matabeleland Question', various conceptions have emerged defining Ndebele identity. Therefore, I now turn to a discussion on how Ndebele identity has been defined. This is imperative as it will help us understand which definition of Ndebele identity the newspaper relied on in the production of stories and what they hoped to achieve.

The Ndebele of Zimbabwe are variously described as a tribe, a clan and an ethnic group (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 30). However, the best way to understand Ndebele ethnic identity is as a socially constructed phenomenon, not as a fixed primordial identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 39). For, "tribal identity is not inevitable, unchanging, given, but a product of human creativity that can be reinvented and redefined" (Ranger, 1985: 19 cited in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: xix). Therefore, in defining Ndebele identity, I draw on Ndlovu-Gatsheni's five defining conceptions, which he asserts have mushroomed over the years (2008; 2009).

First, Ndebele-ness is attributed to the royal Khumalo clan that constituted itself as the ruling elite under Mzilikazi and Lobengula Khumalo. This definition has been criticised for being too clannish and reductionist as it does not take into account the snowballing of Ndebele identity over time and space (2009: 14). Second, a linguistic definition defines being Ndebele as one who speaks Ndebele as a mother tongue (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 14). Third, a regional geographical definition defines a person who resides in Matabeleland regions and those parts of the Midlands region where Ndebele is spoken as Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 14). Fourth, an historical-pluralistic-hegemonic definition of being Ndebele celebrates the Ndebele nation as a pre-colonial form of rainbow nation that consists of a conglomeration of all those people whose ancestors were assimilated into the Ndebele state, be they of Nguni, Sotho, Shona, Kalanga, Tonga, Tswana, Venda or Lozwi extraction (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 35). The last definition is a political one that emerged during the violence of the 1980s where being Ndebele was defined as any person loyal to Joshua Nkomo and PF-ZAPU, the former liberation movement that became an opposition after 1980 (Sibanda, 2005 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 35). This political definition had the immediate impact of uniting all those who were brutalised by the Fifth Brigade, not only as a dissident community as ZANU-PF

and Robert Mugabe defined them, but also as a victimised and unwanted community that had to look for a state of their own (Msindo, 2004 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 35). These are some of the many versions of Ndebele identity that have flourished in recent years but worth noting is that since 1980, the Ndebele identity has continued to undergo a continuous process of minoritisation while Shona identity has become the agenda of hegemonic triumphalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 35).

I now turn to a discussion on the state of the media and the role it plays in the construction of different identities within the Zimbabwean context. This is imperative as it sheds light on where and how the construction of Ndebele identity fits within the Zimbabwean nation-state. Against that backdrop, the current study seeks to investigate the reasons behind the establishment of *The Southern Star* within that context.

Media landscape in Zimbabwe: a brief history

The state of the media in Zimbabwe today can only be seen and understood through the lens of the historical developments that took place in the last hundred years. These developments, occasioned by the political, economic and cultural forces at play during the colonial and post-independence epochs, have had a lasting impression on the mass media in the country (Moyo, 2003: 1). Therefore, in order to understand the Zimbabwean press as it obtains today, this section interrogates the politics surrounding the construction of Zimbabwe history. An understanding of the production of Zimbabwe history is imperative for this study as it brings to light how Zimbabwean identity is being constructed and where the Ndebele position themselves within that discourse. The central argument is that, "history plays a central role in defining both individual and group identities" (Weedon, 2004: 28). Therefore, as national histories merge, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that, "the history of the state and its people is remembered selectively giving prominence to fragments of history that promote the goals of those in power" (2007: 25) while side-lining those accounts that do not fit within the dominant discourse of those narratives.

Thus, in a political context operating on binaries, the media in Zimbabwe are polarised between pro-government and anti-government in their coverage. The former have been co-

opted into the state's "nation-building" project, which necessitates "developmental journalism", which has been interpreted to mean that the press is an ally of the state in the nation-building project (Moyo, 2005: 112-113). Thus, over the years, the state owned newspapers have deteriorated into "government propaganda mouthpieces, losing their credibility in the process" (Moyo, 2005: 113). On the other hand, the "independent media" (Moyo, 2005: 112) have taken a critical stance against the government. Thus, the argument that unfolds below discusses the dynamics between the state owned media and the "independent media" in order to locate the establishment of *The Southern Star* within the broader terrain of the media landscape in Zimbabwe.

The politics surrounding the construction of Zimbabwe history

History is at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe far more than in any other southern African country (Ranger, 2004: 31).Thus, the need to interrogate the construction of Zimbabwe history in the current epoch. This is important as it sheds more light on how the dynamics entailed in the construction of Zimbabwe history are played out and who is foregrounded and who is excluded in that discourse. As Weedon argues, in societies where there is more than one ethnic group or tradition in play, "dominant versions of history, culture and the forms of identity that they encourage often function to exclude, silence, stereotype or render invisible those who do not fit within hegemonic narratives" (2004: 24).

Therefore, drawing on Mhlanga's argument that African nation states are products of social construction (2010: 104), I argue that the construction of Zimbabwe nation-state is not an exception. For, when ZANU assumed power in 1980 when the country gained independence, a decidedly partial history of the liberation war and a decidedly partial imagination of the state and the nation ensued backed by an openly biased historical master-narrative of the struggle for independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 3). It is against this backdrop that, the ruling party in Zimbabwe (ZANU- PF) has been criticised for propagating a distorted version of the history of the nationalist struggle to legitimate their position in power (Kriger, 2006: 1151). Labelled "patriotic history" (Ranger, 2004), this brand of official nationalism celebrates the military dimensions of the liberation war and side-lines non-violent political struggles (Kriger, 2006: 1151) and it emphasises the "division of Zimbabweans into

revolutionaries and sell-outs" (Ranger, 2004: 232). Additionally, it offers a selective version of anti-colonial struggle that sustains the ZANU-PF regime (Ranger, 2005a: 8). It is in this light that, I argue that the dominant identity linked to being Zimbabwean is taken to refer to those who are "patriotic" and align themselves to the ruling party ideology.

This selective construction of the past dates back to the formation of ZANU in 1963, where the party constructed and deployed the ideology of *Chimurenga*[10] to install a particular nationalistic narrative of the nation that enabled its leaders claim to control over the direction of national history, birth of the nation; and uncontested right to perpetual power in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 1). According to Ranger, this discourse of "patriotic history" that is "intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition has been propagated at many levels especially on the state controlled television, radio and in the state controlled press" (2004: 1).

However, what stands out is that this version of nationalist history has been particularly partial, in that the official accounts of history celebrate the success of the ruling ZANU-PF, while the contribution of ZAPU has been denigrated or downplayed (Alexander et al, 2000: 1). This is further echoed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni who asserts that, "up to now Shona history, Shona symbols, and rituals still underpin state ideology at the exclusion of the Ndebele" (2011: 3). Furthermore, the events of Matabeleland in the 1980s are part of the past which "patriotic history" excludes (Ranger, 2004: 31) for this does not fit easily within the dominant narratives of history that celebrate Shona triumphalism. This is further echoed by Moyo who asserts that after the Matabeleland massacres "it was impossible for the media to investigate developments in the region as some places were declared out of bounds" (2003: 18). As such, these feelings of exclusion and marginalisation among the Ndebele have reinforced a particularistic identity (Ndhlovu, 2007 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 15). It is in this context of exclusion that I argue that, the people of Matabeleland not only continue to feel like second class citizens of Zimbabwe but also continue to seek alternative ways of redressing their political and economic grievances (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 10). This can also be seen as giving impetus to counter-hegemonic narratives and interpretations (Bond and

[10] The ideology of Chimurenga is a tale of the invention of a complex politically usable narrative by ZANU-PF in its bid to construct a postcolonial nation, unite people, gain popularity, and assume political power at the end of settler colonial rule. It was and is premised on doctrine of permanent nationalist revolution against imperialism and colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 5).

Gilliam, 1994: 1) as evidenced by the use of online media by the Ndebele to express their own identity, a case in point is that of the website *Inkundla.net*. This website is a popular online discussion forum among Zimbabweans of Ndebele ethnicity living in the diaspora who seek to advance the establishment of a separate Ndebele nation (Moyo, 2009). It is in this regard, that the establishment of *The Southern Star* can also be seen to fit within such similar alternative media platforms. Next I discuss *The Southern Star* within the press in Zimbabwe today. First, it is essential to look at the state controlled press and the "independent" press and the different political positions they fore ground.

The state controlled press

The state-owned media in Zimbabwe traces its history to the colonial period beginning with the establishment of *The Herald* (1892) and the Bulawayo *Chronicle* (1894) by the South African based Argus Printing and Publishing Company (Saunders, 1999:15). During the early years of colonialism, the whites entirely dominated the print media ensuring that newspapers put across their views and consolidated their economic and political gains (Moyo, 2003: 4). In short, the role of the media during the colonial era was in the service of buttressing the power of the white owners. Argus remained the dominant player in the media sector until the country attained independence from Britain in 1980 when the company was acquired by the new government (Saunders, 1999: 15). After independence the character of the media generally reflected the interests of the new black leadership (Saunders, 1999; Moyo, 2003). Thus, post-independence developments in the media showed some continuities rather than radical departures from colonial media practices (Kupe, 2007: 139).

In the current epoch in Zimbabwe, the government still controls large sections of what should be public media. This was necessitated by the creation of the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) in January 1981 to act as a buffer between the state and the public media under its ambit (Saunders, 1999: 16). But in practice this "independence" never materialised, as the state began interfering with both the Trust and its newspapers soon after its inception (Saunders, 1999: 16). The Zimbabwe Newspapers (Zimpapers), a public company, publishes the pro-government newspapers which include; two major national dailies *The Herald* and *The Chronicle*, as well as two major weeklies, *The Sunday Mail* and *The Sunday News* and

the vernacular *Kwayedza* (Harare) and *uMthunywa* (Bulawayo) (Moyo, 2003: 673).The company is majority-owned by government which holds 51.09 per cent of the shares with Old Mutual (one of the biggest financial institutions in the country) holding 23.80 per cent and the remaining 25.11 per cent being owned by private companies (cited in Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) Report, 2009: 7). The state owned press has thus over the years "become an appendage of the government in the name of nation building and development" (Chuma, 2005: 48). Worth highlighting is that the above-mentioned notion of "patriotic history" has been the foundations on which the state controlled media has been built. In that regard, the current study poses the question; where then does Matabeleland history fit within the dominant discourse of "patriotic history" propagated in the state owned media that clearly advances the ideology of the powers that be, in this instance the Shona?

The "independent" press

The "independent" press was not developed at independence, largely because of the restrictive legislation that existed during the 15 years of the illegal Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) that started in 1965 (Chuma, 2005: 47). During that time, the government had the power to ban any news media that was critical of the government (Chuma, 2005: 47). Therefore, independence in 1980 sparked an explosion in the private press as new publications emerged to express long neglected social and political issues (Saunders, 1999: 25). However, the relative stability of the 1980s was followed by deterioration in the country's economic situation characterised by high unemployment, high inflation and a serious decline in the government's popularity in the second half of the 1990s (Chavunduka, 2002: 282). This period saw the emergence of a vibrant class of independently-owned newspapers, which became increasingly outspoken against various policies of the new government (Saunders, 1999: 25-29).

Even though the "independent" press provided a much needed forum for the articulation of dissenting opinions from civil society, it also tended to align itself with special interest organised largely along class and to a lesser extent along racial lines that were unanimously anti-government (Chuma, 2005: 56). Of more importance to this study is how the

independent press has "uncritically endorsed the opposition, in particular the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)"[11] (Chuma, 2010: 99). As a result, relations between the government and the independent press have become increasingly hostile, a situation not helped by this sectors exposés of government leaders' private and business activities (Chavunduka, 2002: 283). The government has reacted by promulgating regulatory mechanisms that seek to stifle the development of investigative journalism and criticism on some of the leading private media critics of the government (Saunders, 1999: 33). Besides the restrictive media environment, financial issues have also played a role in hampering the development of private media (Saunders, 1999: 30). For, one of the most effective weapons used by African governments to punish "hostile" private media is starving them of advertising from government related institutions as this can have a huge impact on the viability of the newspapers, "considering that in most of Africa the government and its various departments are the biggest advertisers" (Moyo, 2005: 117).

Against this backdrop, the media in Zimbabwe has thus since independence been characterised as either state controlled or "independent". I now locate *The Southern Star* within Zimbabwean media landscape.

Locating *The Southern Star* within Zimbabwe media landscape

We need to understand *The Southern Star* weekly newspaper within the context of my previous discussion. The newspaper was the first ever independently owned regional publication in Zimbabwe and it was based in Bulawayo. It was licensed in October 2011 by the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) but started circulation in January 2012[12] and seized to operate in June of the same year. The circulation figures of the newspaper were pegged at 2500 to 3000 copies. The newsroom was fully-fledged consisting of the Editor, News Editor, two Sub- Editors, five reporters, Marketing and Advertising Manager and his team of seven.

[11] Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched in September 1999 and it was founded on the basis of a strong civic movement, enunciating the need for both political and economic reforms, it captured the growing disgruntlement of Zimbabwe's citizens over eroding economic conditions and the political arrogance of the ruling party (Raftopoulous, 2007: 8).

[12] http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-local-byo-10480-article New+weekly+paper+to+hit+the+streets.html (accessed 18/05/12)

The establishment of the newspaper can be argued to have been situated within the context of an "agenda of a sick nation state, whose thrust has been to decimate from the pages of its history the story of its citizens, the Ndebele" (Mhlanga, 2009: 106). Therefore, I argue that, although being an "independent" newspaper, *The Southern Star* took a pro-Matabeleland position. For in its coverage the newspaper was enmeshed in issues affecting Matabeleland and this is evidenced by the major themes covered in the newspaper that include the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland history, Matabeleland development and Matabeleland heroes.

Conclusion

The chapter has presented a discussion on the factors that have shaped and reinforced 'Matabeleland Question' over the years. The overall aim was to locate Matabeleland within the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe, in order to bring to light how Ndebele identity has been constructed over the years. A discussion on the state of the media was also highlighted in order to locate *The Southern Star* within the media landscape. The following chapter discusses the scholarship that informs the study and also offers the lens that will help make sense of the historical development of *The Southern Star* and its subsequent folding.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

As this study is concerned with investigating the establishment and subsequent closure of *The Southern Star* newspaper, this chapter discusses various scholarly arguments that have been brought forward with regard to this research phenomenon. This study draws on: first, literature on the alternative media (Atton, 2002; Harcup, 2003; Moyo, 2010), second, understandings of the political economy of the media (Golding and Murdock, 2000; Murdock, 1990), third, the idea of social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987; Calhoun, 2002; Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004) and last the scholarship on identity formation (Hall, 1990, 1991, 1996; Woodward, 1997). The theoretical frameworks to be discussed reveal diverse views pertaining to the social, economic, cultural and political realms of the production of media products. The central argument being that media products are not just another commodity sold to the consumer or viewer, they come laden with some of the prevailing social, cultural and political assumptions of those that produce it (Block et al, 2001: 207). This is imperative for this study as it highlights the importance of realising the relationship between media and society as interdependent on each other. Such an understanding will be helpful in providing answers to the factors behind setting up of alternative media, their practice and resultant closure within a specific context. Therefore, this chapter unfolds through a discussion of what different scholars have written about the impact of the macro environment on the operations of media organisations.

Alternative media

The evident looseness in defining the term "alternative media" has led some critics to argue against a fixed or universally accepted definition (Haas, 2004; Downing, 2001; Atton, 2002). The term has been used in reference to a diverse set of media practises that have been developed by various groups in different contexts. Until recently, there has been a tendency to look at forms of journalism practised within alternative media in isolation from or in opposition to the mainstream media (Harcup, 2006: 361). However, in recent years, such a "binary opposition" has been rejected, with authors like Harcup arguing that there may be

more crossover of media practise than has previously been acknowledged (2006: 361). In this light, *The Southern Star* can be seen to have exhibited the same organisational structure as the mainstream media although it differed ideologically in terms of content produced as will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

In defining alternative media projects by positioning them in opposition to the mainstream media, other scholars have used the term "radical media" (Downing, 2001) to refer to the content produced. Downing argues that, "by radical media, I refer to media, generally small scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives" (2001: 5). Thus, they contest established power with the aim of fostering wider social emancipation (Downing et al, 2001 cited in Couldry and Curran, 2003: 7). This is further echoed by Atton who asserts that "a constructive definition of alternative media can begin with the presence of radical content, most often allied to the promotion of social change (2002: 9). *The Southern Star* fits Atton and Downing's definitions to the extent that it was seen as being embroiled in the on-going debates brewing within Matabeleland politics with some calling for secession and others advocating for political and economic autonomy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b; Masunungure 2006: 8; Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 287). Additionally, in conflating the characteristics of alternative media and radical media, Downing argues that such media typically perform dual functions as "counter information institutions" and "agents of developmental power" (2001: 45). Most generally, this entails providing representation of issues and events which oppose those offered in the mainstream media and also to advocate for social and political reform (Haas, 2004: 115). Therefore, in mapping the rise and fall of *The Southern Star,* the study examines the position the newspaper took in providing alternative information to that offered in the mainstream media and also in advocating for social and political change.

Taking a historical perspective of alternative media, a key insight to note is that they are not unchanging and universal, but represent an ever changing critical response to dominant conceptions of journalism (Atton and Hamilton, 2008: 9). It is in this light that, Atton and Hamilton argue "alternative journalism should be seen as constituted by its social and historical context" (2008: 10). Thus, it should be seen as entirely determined by its relation to that and against which it struggles within a specific context. Therefore, the study builds on the idea that alternative media emerge to deal with specific ideological projects and, as such,

must be seen as satisfying a specific need at a specific point in time (Banda, 2006: 1). Thus, in locating *The Southern Star* within the alternative media discourse, this study places it within the context of contemporary Zimbabwean politics, in particular, politically marginalised discourses emanating from Matabeleland. Locating the newspaper within that context is helpful in making sense of why the newspaper was established and why it collapsed.

Drawing on Atton and Hamilton's argument on ways in which alternative media can be seen as opposing and also enabled by the conditions in which they exist (2008: 22), my study further relies on the definition of alternative media given by Couldry and Curran who write that it refers to "media production that challenges, at least implicitly, actual concentration of media power, whatever forms those concentrations may take in different locations" (2003: 7).What stands out from this definition is that these media are alternative not simply because they are non-mainstream, "but because they position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse that it produces" (Moyo, 2010: 87). This is further echoed by Whitaker (1981: 101) who asserts that such media tend to "highlight the faults of the established press" (cited in Harcup, 2006: 361) as they serve publics who in many cases are alienated from mainstream media (Harcup, 1998: 114) by offering a perspective "from below" and to say the "unspoken" (2003: 371). As such, alternative media have been seen to be home to stories that, for whatever reasons do not appear in the mainstream media (Atton, 2002: 11).

Atton (2002) points out that alternative media have served as vital conduits for the political agendas of social movements as well as helped ignite social movements through their advocacy of various marginalised social groups. It is in this regard that, alternative media have been seen to flourish during periods of social and political upheaval, while languishing during periods of relative social and political calm (Streitmatter, 2001: 275 cited in Haas, 2004: 117). A case in point is that of the *Weekly Mail* that was launched in 1985, one of the darkest periods in South African history, when the apartheid era was entering its terminal phase (Merrett and Saunders, 2000: 458-459). The newspaper is noted to have played a small but not insignificant role in the birth of a new democratic order in South Africa (Merrett and Saunders, 2000: 458). It achieved this by reporting on issues that might otherwise have not

been publicised, at the same time confronting the government and helping to expose the repressive nature of apartheid (Merrett and Saunders, 2000: 476).

In contrast to Atton (2002) and Downing (2001) who primarily define the democratic significance of alternative media in terms of their ability to affect large scale social and political change, Rodriguez (2001) defines the democratic significance of alternative media in terms of their ability to affect the everyday lives of citizens. In her detailed case studies of alternative media projects in Columbia, Nicaragua, Spain and the US, Rodriguez (2001: 160) demonstrates that what is most important about alternative media, is not what citizens do with them but how participation in these media experiments affect citizens and their communities (cited in Haas, 2004: 116). This has also been referred to as "citizen media" (Rodriguez, 2001), which has been taken to mean a philosophy of journalism and a set of practises that are embedded within the everyday lives of citizens, and media content that is both driven and produced by those people (cited in Haas, 2004: 116).

Because of the nature of alternative media to focus on the marginalised and to articulate the "unspoken" within the mainstream media, several criticisms have been levelled on their form of practise.

The alternative media have been criticised as inhabiting an "alternative ghetto" and as exemplifying "radical failure"- a failure to attract advertisers, a failure to operate in a business-like manner and a failure to reach significant audiences (see Moyo, 2010; Atton, 2002). This is further echoed by Curran (2000) who asserts that "alternative media have had a spectacular lack of success in reaching out beyond the radical ghetto and suffer generally from a lack of audience, professionalism and finance" (cited in Downey and Fenton, 2003: 196). Against this backdrop, the study will interrogate the presuppositions that have been made about the failure of alternative media, in order to measure the extent to which the politics surrounding the closure of *The Southern Star* is supported by these assumptions.

From the different positions that have been highlighted, this study is built on the idea that in order to understand the establishment and failure of alternative media, it is imperative to locate such form of media within their context. This argument is further echoed by Thompson

who asserts that, "mediated communication is always a contextualised social phenomenon: it is always embedded in social contexts which are structured in various ways and which, in turn, have a structuring impact on communication that occur" (1995: 11). The above ideas reinforce the view that media organisations operate in a cultural, socio-economic and political context whose influence cannot be ignored when their performance is to be measured. This becomes part of the justification of this study, in that if the macro environment influences media operations, then it is imperative to examine this influence so as to understand the failure of some media firms to survive in the market. These key ideas offer the lens for analysing the factors that led to the establishment and subsequent closure of *The Southern Star* within the Zimbabwean context that has been marred with ethnic tensions.

The preceding discussion has defined alternative media by juxtaposing it against the mainstream media. For the purposes of this study, I now turn to a brief discussion that elaborates how the two have been defined within the Zimbabwean context. This is significant as it buttresses my argument that enables the study to locate *The Southern Star* within the alternative media discourse.

The mainstream media have generally been associated with state owned media that have over the years, deteriorated into government propaganda mouthpieces, losing their credibility in the process (Moyo, 2005: 113). However, apart from the government controlled media, the country's media scene also consists of "independent" newspapers which include *The Financial Gazette*, the *Zimbabwean Independent*, *The Standard*, *Newsday* and *Daily News* (Moyo, 2005: 112). Ungar (1996) suggests that in countries where opposition political parties are weak owing to state repression, the "independent" media can occupy that role of opposition (cited in Moyo, 2005: 113). This assertion holds true with the case of Zimbabwe, where the alternative media has been construed to refer to the "independent" media that is oppositional to the government. However, even given this support for political opposition, it is important to note that, both the state controlled and the "independent" media can fall under the mainstream media because to a large extent they both perpetuate the hegemonic perspective of Zimbabwean nationalism hinged on Shona triumphalism. This is in contrast to the Matabeleland nationalistic politics that was propagated in *The Southern Star* newspaper as evidenced by the stories covered.

What emerges from the preceding discussion on the key tenets of alternative media is that the media environment is made up of an interplay of diverse social, cultural, political and economic factors, each exerting a degree of influence on the operations of the media. Therefore, an understanding of the history of forms of alternative media also has to be complemented by an understanding of the political economic context of their formation and practise (Atton and Hamilton, 2008: 3). It is in light, that I now turn to a discussion on the political economy approach to the media in order to elaborate on how the structures of alternative media, their ownership and support mechanisms influence their performance and content. In doing so, the study builds on William's argument that, "we should not only look for the components of the product but for the conditions of a practise" (1980: 48 cited in Golding and Murdock, 2000: 72).

Political economy approach to the media

The media cannot be considered separately from the economic system in which they operate because the economic forces of the system direct and constrain the choices of media managers (Picard, 1989: 11). As such it is critical that we unpack these forces and provide a framework for understanding the underpinnings of the economic system affecting media operations. Therefore, drawing on the political economy approach to the media, the argument here is that how the media are organised, owned and produced has an effect on their democratic function in society (McChesney, 1997 cited in Moyo, 2010: 85). Therefore, it is relevant to include political economy theory of the media in this study given the view that political and economic factors affect the operations of the media. The primary insights offered by the political economy approach are often associated with macro questions of media ownership and control (Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995: 186). The central argument is that the power of ownership and control over media influences the content of the media products and meaning carried by them (Murdock, 1990: 7).

To fully understand a political economy approach to studying media and communication, it is necessary to trace the foundations of political economy itself. The political economy approach has been institutionalised within faculties of social sciences and draws its major practitioners from people trained in economics, political science and sociology (Golding and

Murdock, 2000: 71). A single definition of political economy is almost impossible, for it is an umbrella term encompassing all theories and analytical approaches which seek to understand how economic and political relationships and interests determine the nature and functioning of social institutions and the impact or lack thereof of these relationships on social transformation and development (Fourie, 2001: 121-122). The significance of this theory to this study is that it locates media operations within the context of overarching forces of politics and economics in a social environment. Thus, the production, distribution and consumption of media products is seen as a reflection of the wider socio-political and cultural setting in which a media institution is placed.

When applied to the study of alternative journalism, political economy enables a greater understanding of the nature and implications of relationships between the role of journalism, how journalism is organised and practised, and whose interests are served (Atton and Hamilton, 2008: 25). Therefore, drawing on the political economy approach, the study critically examines the production features of *The Southern Star* and the subsequent content produced in order to ascertain the role of journalism practised, how it was practised and whose interests were being served.

Closely linked to the political economy of the media is an understanding of the financial support mechanisms put in place in the running of the organisation (Golding and Murdock, 2000). Against that backdrop the study examines the financial support of *The Southern Star* in order to understand factors that might have led to the folding of the newspaper. Drawing on Golding and Murdock's argument that, the financial viability of large sections of the press depends directly on advertising revenue (2000: 75), the study poses the following questions: who were the advertisers and how did this impact on the operations and subsequent folding of the newspaper?

Because the political economy approach to the media narrows down to looking at the economic factors affecting media operations, criticisms have been levelled by the cultural studies theorists who argue that the economic reductionism of some versions of political economy results in the failure to engage concretely with texts and audiences (Grossberg, 1995: 78). This is further echoed by Hall who asserts that "to say that ideas are determined in the last instance by the economy is to set out along the economic reductionist road" (1986:

29). That is to say, we can think of economic dynamics as playing a central role in defining the key features of the general environment within which communicative activity takes place, but not as a complete explanation of the nature of that activity (Golding and Murdock, 2000: 74). This criticism is important for the study as it brings to the fore other factors like gender, race and ethnicity that also come into play in the production and consumption of cultural artefacts (Grossberg, 1995: 73).

More specifically, the study examines the ways in which ethnicity played a role in defining the environment in which *The Southern Star* was set up and operated in. Although, the term 'ethnicity' has been defined in a variety of ways, there is general agreement that it refers to people who perceive themselves as constituting a community because of common culture, ancestry, language, history, religion or customs (Riggins, 1992: 1). Therefore, the idea of ethnicity involving an imagined community is imperative for this study because it questions the ways in which people conceive their identity within a precise context and within a specific period. This is helpful in understanding the nature of the media set up within a specific context by a group of people who identify themselves in a certain way. Therefore, I now turn to a discussion on the social imaginary to elaborate on the different ways in which people construct their identity within a specific epoch.

The social imaginary

The concept of the social imaginary has enjoyed rebirth in the millennium after Cornelius Castoriadis used the term in his 1975 book *The Imaginary Institution of Society.* This concept refers to the "notions that form the frame of reference of the average 'modern' citizen, from which he imagines, understands and conceives of his society or his social predicaments (Stock, 2006: 1). Additionally, Gaonkar deploys the idea to refer "broadly to the way a given people imagine their collective social life" and this "involves a form of understanding that has a wider grasp of our history and social existence" (Gaonkar, 2002: 10). In order to understand how this concept relates to my work, I shall begin by providing a brief account of Castoriadis formulation of the idea of the social imaginary. Second, I discuss the work of other scholars informed by Castoriadis' work in order to situate the study within those debates.

Castoriadis was drawn to the idea of the social imaginary in the late 1960s. His work sought to identify the creative force in the making of socio-historical worlds (Gaonkar, 2002: 1). According to Castoriadis, the dominant strain within the Western intellectual, which he calls "ontology of determinacy", has "consistently failed to recognise the true nature of society and history" in that "to be is to be determined" (Gaonkar, 2002: 6). Thus, against the view that society is perceived as produced by the pre-existing conditions, Castoriadis elaborates on ontology of creation by arguing that instead "each society is created differently, subsists differently and transforms itself differently" (Gaonkar, 2002: 7) because "society is a self-creating and self- instituting enterprise" (Gaonkar, 2002: 6). In this light, one can note that "it is through the collective agency of the social imaginary that a society is created, given coherence and identity" and this unity and identity is represented in "symbols, myths, legends and other collectively shared significations" (Gaonkar, 2002: 7). Thus, one need not think of modernity as one homogenous, coherent phenomenon (Stock, 2006: 1) but must conceive of it in the plural as detailed by Taylor (2004) in his engagement with the theme of "multiple modernities" to account for the differences among modernities.

In attempting to get to the specificities of Western modernity by differentiating it both from its predecessor cultures and cultures of other modernities, Taylor (2004) warns us against believing that there is only one way a society can modernise, namely through following 'the' European template (Stock, 2006: 3). Therefore, the difference in modernity should not be understood as a deviation from an idealised model but as an expression of a location in an alternative social imaginary (Gaonkar, 2002: 12). However, this raises a few questions on whether a social imaginary can in fact be shared by all members in a society, whether it can exclude certain groups, and whether it can be transformed by the presence of dissenting groups (2006: 8).

The study is grounded in the argument that social imaginaries encompass the imagined collective social life of people within a specific context and this concept may differ and exclude other groups in society. It is in this light, that the study interrogates the different ways in which the owner and staff of *The Southern Star* positioned themselves within the Zimbabwean context in the current epoch. This is imperative for it helps in understandings the effect this might have had on the establishment of the newspaper and in the manner it

operated. These are some of the issues that need to be addressed in societies characterised by diversity, in this instance, ethnic multiplicity.

Additionally, in his discussion of the concept, Gaonkar asserts:

> Social imaginaries are ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life. Often, social scientists and historians have tried to understand these entities in terms of ideas, theories, philosophies - what might be called "third-person" or "objective" points of view. But some crucial self-understandings are not formulated in explicit or theoretical moulds. They are first-person subjectivities that build upon implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices. They are embedded in the habits of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols, and the like. (2002: 4)

This understanding stresses that the social imaginary is highly practical and it is about being in the world. In that, though it is discussed as an objective social condition, in practical terms it is about the subject positions available to people in the society. This is further echoed by Gaonkar who argues that the social imaginary entails the way in which people "understand their identities and their place in the world" (2002: 4). Furthermore, social imaginaries cannot be understood apart from the historical context within which they evolve and are embedded (Gaonkar, 2002: 12) for they are "completely interwoven with social and political practice" (Stock, 2006: 2).

This whole concept on the nature of our belongingness to an "imaginative geography and history", which helps the "mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (Said, 1985: 55 cited in Hall, 1990: 232) also constitutes what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls "imagined community". According to him the nation is not a pre-existing entity, rather it is imagined and he further points to the role of the media in the mediation and imagination of the nation (Anderson, 1983, 1991). More routinely, imagined communities may stimulate exclusionary practices and hatred of the 'Other' (Anderson, 1983: 129) within a specific context. This theoretical conception by Anderson is useful for this study because it helps us interrogate the role *The Southern Star* played in the mediation and imagination of the Ndebele nation, advocated for by the radical secessionists. An understanding of this position is worthwhile in addressing the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'.

Drawing on Hall's argument that, "we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific" (1990: 222), I argue that our identities are constructed and understood through particular social imaginaries shaped by specific contexts; therefore, if the concept of social imaginary is to make sense, a wider grasp of our whole being needs to be taken into account: who we are, how we fit together and how we got to where we are (Gaonkar, 2002: 10). This brings us to the next theoretical framework that sheds more light on ways in which people perceive themselves in relation to others within a specific context, the idea of identity formation.

Identity formation

The literature on identity formation brings to light the different ways in which people enact various identities within specific contexts and within specific time frames (Hall, 1991, 1996; Woodward, 1997). The following discussion on the debates around identity formation in Zimbabwe raises questions about why we need to look at the question of identity at this moment, and whether there could there be a crisis of identity and if so, why? Therefore, in addressing these questions I discuss Hall's constructivist, anti-essentialist conception of identity (1991; 1992; 1996) and elaborate on how it relates to the study.

Identity has been defined as "an all-inclusive sameness, seamless and without internal differentiation" (Hall, 1996: 17). Within the terms of this definition, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (Hall, 1990: 223). Theorists who subscribe to this definition conceive identities as singular, fixed and unified (essentialist perspective) (Woodward, 1997: 11). On the other hand, the anti-essentialist perspective conceives identity as never complete, finalised, or fixed but rather always in the making (Castell, 1997 cited in Bekker and Leilde, 2006: 13). This entails looking at identity "as a 'production' constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1990: 222). Thus, they are not neutral independent reports on a pre-given reality but they are shaped by an exchange and interaction process (Moscovici, 1988 cited in Bekker and Leilde, 2006: 14). This involves "the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1990: 225).

Against that backdrop, Hall uses the term identity to refer to a "point of suture", which he asserts is the:

> meeting point between on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. (1996: 19)

This entails the recognition that identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think but it is "increasingly fragmented and fractured, never singular but multiple constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practises and positions" (Hall, 1996: 17). Therefore, identities are conceived to be constructed through the relation to the 'Other', the relation to what it is not and to precisely what it lack (Hall, 1996: 4). Identity is thus marked out by difference (Woodward, 1997: 9).

For the purposes of this study, it is worth noting that it is one thing to position a subject or set of people as the 'Other' of a dominant discourse, it is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge' (Hall, 1990: 226) because if a group is symbolically marked as the 'Other', the group will be socially excluded and materially disadvantaged (Woodward, 1997: 12). In this light, I argue that within the Zimbabwean context, the Ndebele are a group that have been symbolically marked as the 'Other' as evidenced by the politically and socially marginalised discourses emanating from Matabeleland. In this instance, identity is seen to be maintained through social and material conditions (Woodward, 1997: 12). Thus, in mapping the rise and fall of *The Southern Star*, it is imperative to take note of the ways in which the 'Othering' has been played out in the mainstream media and also to interrogate the effect this has had on the ways in which the 'Other' position themselves within the Zimbabwean context.

Identities are "made within the discourses of history and culture" (Hall, 1990: 226) and they are "constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (Hall, 1990: 226). It is in this regard, that identities are seen to be historically constructed (Hall, 1991b: 47-49; Woodward, 1997: 10). Thus, the identity of a community is not an unchallengeable essence, but rather it is a dynamic process, deriving its elements from stories told and retold (Ahonen, 2001: 179). As such, the construction of a history, being determined by the way in which one understands

their position in the world, becomes the production of a meaningful universe of events and narratives for an individual or collectively defined subject (Friedman, 1992: 837). However, history is ideological in the sense that it is written in a selective way from a specific perspective (Weedon, 2004) and it "is dependent upon where one is located in social reality, within society, and within global processes" (Friedman, 1992a: 194). As elaborated in Chapter Two, an understanding of the production of Zimbabwe history is imperative for this study as it will bring to light how Zimbabwean identity is being constructed and where the Ndebele position themselves within that discourse. These ideas are helpful in understanding the way in which the owner and staff of *The Southern Star* produced their stories and the effect this had on the operations of the newspaper.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter discussed four theoretical frameworks that inform the study. The central argument that cuts across the alternative media discourse, political economy approach to the media, social imaginary and identity formation literature is the different debates that have been put forward by different scholars with regard to the way in which media operations are influenced by the social, economic, cultural and political context in which they are situated. This argument buttresses the notion that the media are a contextualized social phenomenon and in attempting to understand their establishment and subsequent closure, one has to have a wider grasp of the context in which there are situated and operate in. In the next chapter, I outline the research design used for this research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The objective of this study is to map the historical development of *The Southern Star* newspaper within the socio-political context of Zimbabwe. The overall aim is to interrogate the factors that led to the establishment and the folding of the newspaper within its six months of existence. To achieve this, the study employs a research design that is rooted in the qualitative research approach that intends to seek answers to social phenomena by examining the various social settings and the individuals who inhabit them (Berg, 1 998: 7). The appropriateness of locating the study within the qualitative epistemic understanding of research is hinged on what Geertz (1973) terms "thick description" (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 272), thus enabling a rich, detailed explanation of why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed. Therefore, this chapter sets out to describe and discuss in detail the research design employed in conducting the research. First, I discuss two of the main methodological positions in research before narrowing to a discussion on the major issues in qualitative research which include generalisability, validity and reliability. Second, I present the data collection and selection process and then I discuss the methods of analysis.

Methodological Considerations

The debate over the relative virtues of quantitative and qualitative methodology has gained momentum over the past years (see Bryman, 1984; Deacon et al, 1999; Spicer, 2004). What is clear from the various discussions about these two methodologies is that they are being explicated at an epistemological level (Bryman, 1984: 75). Against this backdrop, the terms "quantitative research" and "qualitative research" have come to signify much more than ways of gathering data, they have come to denote divergent assumptions about the nature and purposes of research in the social sciences (Bryman, 1988: 3). Quantitative methodology is routinely depicted as an approach to the conduct of social research which applies a natural science and in particular a positivist approach to social phenomena (Bryman, 1984: 77). The positivists assert that investigating the social and cultural world is no different in principle to investigating the natural world and that the same basic procedures apply to both (Deacon et

al, 1999: 4). On the other hand, qualitative research methodology typically attributed to phenomenological or interpretivist traditions, emphasises the difference between the nature and practice of social sciences on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 20). In the natural sciences the only admissible scientific evidence is facts established by systematic personal observation while on the other hand, qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to (Berg, 1998: 7). Furthermore, qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives (Berg, 1998: 7). Against this backcloth, the current study draws on the qualitative approach as a framework for carrying out the research investigation, as this enables the collection of relevant data from the selected respondents that helps to address the research question.

Qualitative Research

The methodological approach that informs this study is primarily qualitative. Qualitative research centres on interpretivism, constructivism, and phenomenology and these are the key notions that capture the epistemological foundations of this general approach steeped in meaning making, as opposed to quantitative research which treats knowledge as pre-existing objective truths (Deacon et al, 1999; Bryman, 1984). Qualitative research allies with the humanities and views social life as a text whose various layers of meaning have to be teased out (Deacon et al, 1999: 7). It is in this light, that the interpretivist researchers insist that all social knowledge is co-produced out of the multiple encounters, conversations and arguments they have with the people they are studying (Deacon et al, 1999: 7). As Filmer (1972: 49) puts it, "the interpretive researchers claim there can be no social world independently of the social meanings that its members use to account it and hence constitute it" (cited in Deacon et al, 1999:7). It follows then that social realities are continually constructed and reconstructed through routine social practises and the conceptual categories that underpin them (Deacon et al, 1999: 7).

Qualitative research also involves the study of people in naturally occurring settings as the main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (Babbie and

Mouton 2001: 270, Golafshani, 2003: 600). Furthermore, the approach taken in collecting evidence that should pass as warrantable knowledge is one that entails seeing the social world through the eyes (perspective) of the actors themselves (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 271). Researchers using qualitative techniques seek to examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (Berg, 1998: 7). It is in this regard that the data collection methods which are normally used are those which involve close contact between the researcher and the research participants, which are interactive and developmental and also allow for emergent issues to be explored (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 5). Therefore, the following data collection methods have been identified with qualitative research: observational methods, group discussions, narratives and qualitative content analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 3; Babbie and Mouton 2001: 33; Bryman 1984: 77-78). Additionally, in depth interviewing, as is the case with this research, is also a major method of collecting qualitative data (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 3). According to Flick, the strength of conducting interviews enables one to study subjective viewpoints among different social groups (2006: 154). As such, interviews closely align themselves to the interpretivist approach because of their detailed engagement with the object of the study.

In qualitative research, the process often entails an inductive process in which theory is derived from empirical data (Spicer, 2004: 295). It is in this regard, that the interpretivist theorists aim at understanding the internal relations between actions by relating them to the ideas, values and purposes which give rise to them (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 31). This is further buttressed by the German scholar, Wilhelm Dilthey who believed that the aim of the human science should be to understand rather than to explain human behaviour (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 31). The former entails attempting to make sense of human behaviour through close contact with participants while the latter seeks to present human behaviour as pre existing objective truth.

What emerges from the above discussion on the qualitative research approach is that depending on the "why" and the "what" of the research, the relevant answer to the "how" may result from either a quantitative or a qualitative approach to data collection (Jensen, 1988: 4). The decision to work within the qualitative framework in the current study was influenced by the research objective that sets out to investigate the establishment of *The Southern Star* and its closure within six months of circulation. The reason being that in any

qualitative research, the aim is to "engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson, 1995: 4 cited in Golafshani, 2003: 603).

However, the practice of qualitative research has been criticised for being non-scientific and thus invalid (Berg, 1998: 2). Others argue that qualitative research also has the problem of lack of reliability, in that even when people's activities are tape recorded and transcribed, the reliability of the interpretation of transcripts may be weakened by a failure to record apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps (Silverman, 2000: 10) The issue of reliability also pertains to the replicability of the study. However, in qualitative research, because the researcher is deeply implicated in the production of the data (this entails not being a neutral observer), this is difficult to achieve. Despite the criticisms that have been levelled on the qualitative approach, the following discussion on the issues of generalisability, validity and reliability bring to the fore the reasons behind employing the current study within this framework.

Generalisability in Qualitative Research

The classic concept of generalisation also referred to as "transferability" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 277) or "external validity" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 264) refers to the extent to which findings in qualitative research or an account of a particular situation or population can be extended to other populations, times or settings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 264, Bryman, 1988: 35; Maxwell, 2002: 52). Additionally, the issue of generalisation looks at whether the findings from a study based on a sample can be said to be relevant beyond the sample and context of the research itself (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 263). Taking into account the fact that the ability to generalise findings to wider groups and circumstances is one of the common tests of validity for quantitative research, the problem of generalisation in qualitative research is that its statements are often made for a certain context or specific cases and based on analyses of relations, conditions, processes and so on in them (Flick, 2006: 391). Against that backdrop, Maxwell argues that qualitative studies are usually not designed to allow systematic generalisations to some wider population (cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002: 52). Rather, the main concern in a qualitative study is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 270). Furthermore, Ritchie and Lewis argue that "although the scope for generalisation is an important criterion by which the

quality of a research study is judged, there may also be value in individual studies which cannot be generalised" (2003: 266).

The issue of taking into account the value of generalisation in qualitative research is important in considering whether research findings from a chosen sample can be relevant beyond the sample and context of research itself (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 263). However, the qualitative researcher is not primarily interested in statistical generalisation rather an understanding of the meaning which one or two people attribute to a certain event (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 274; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 269), the obligation for ensuring transferability of findings rests on those who wish to apply it to the receiving context (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 277). This means that "readers themselves determine the extent to which findings from a study can be applied to their context" (Merriam, 2002: 28). In order to achieve this, Guba and Lincoln (1984) argue that the qualitative researcher should provide sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability to be made. The researcher should also employ purposive sampling in order to maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 277). Against that backdrop, the provision of a thick description of the context under study and information relating to the factors that led to the establishment and closure of *The Southern Star* will enable the readers to determine whether findings from the current study can be transferred to their contexts. As will be further elaborated, the current study employs purposive sampling in the selection of in depth interview respondents.The appropriateness of using purposive sampling method is that it allows the researcher to select only the interviewees, whom the interviewee deems to be capable of addressing the research question, thus maximising the specificity of information obtained within the context under study. Additionally, Bryman (2012: 406) makes the important point that the qualitative researcher is not interested in generalising to other cases, but rather speaking back to theory. In this light, the current study will help either to support or rebut the theories discusses in detail in Chapter Three.

Validity in Qualitative Research

Validity is another word for "truth" (Silverman, 2000: 175) "correctness" or "precision" of a research finding (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 273). Additionally, Hammersley (1992: 69)

argues that, “an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise” (cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 273). The notion of external validity, that looks at whether findings from a study can be “transferred” or “applied” to other groups within the wider population or to other settings is an important concept in qualitative research, as it allows for the generalisation of findings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 275).

Drawing on the constructivist perspective that presents the view that there is no single absolute truth but a multiplicity of ways in which people construct reality (Kvale, 1996: 231), Hammersley (1992) argues that we can never know with certainty that an account is true because we have no independent and completely reliable access to reality (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 276). However, this does not necessarily mean that the notion of validity is not significant in qualitative research. Although some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, at the same time they have realised the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research (Golafshani, 2003: 602). Therefore, validity in qualitative research should be judged on the basis of having adequate evidence offered in support of the description and analysis of the phenomena being studied (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 276). Additionally, in increasing validity in qualitative research, the researcher can adopt the concept of triangulation which is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research findings (Golafshani, 2003: 603; Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 275). This may entail the triangulation of sources, that is comparing data from different qualitative methods as well as theory triangulation, which entails looking at data from different theoretical perspectives (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 276). Against that backcloth, the current study aims at increasing the validity of its findings by comparing data collected from qualitative content analysis and that collected from in depth interviews. Additionally, the study draws on four theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Three to help make sense of the data collected with regard to the rise and fall of *The Southern Star*.

Furthermore, Silverman states that the validity of research claims may be undermined when a few exemplary instances are reported and when the criteria for including certain instances and not others are not provided (2000: 188). Against that backdrop, the current study sets out to maximise validity of its findings by clearly mapping the research design employed and stating the choice for using it. In addition, reasons for research-related decisions are fore

grounded and a rich detailed interpretation of the data collected from the respondents is provided.

Reliability in Qualitative Research

Reliability also referred to as "dependability" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 300), "confirmability" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 278) refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992: 67 cited in Silverman, 2000: 9; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 276). This is further echoed by Wimmer and Dominick who assert that, "a measure is reliable if it consistently gives the same answer" (1991: 54). However, the extent to which replicability can occur in qualitative research has been questioned in a number of accounts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 270). This is because in the constructivist understanding of social life, there is no single reality to be captured. Therefore, while the notion of reliability in quantitative research is used to evaluate the quality of the study with the "purpose of explaining", quality in qualitative research has the purpose of "generating understanding" (Golafshani, 2003: 601).

Stenbacka (2001: 551) argues that the notion of reliability is one of the quality concepts in qualitative research which need to be solved in order to claim a study as part of proper research (cited in Golafshani, 2003: 602). In that regard, attention has to be paid on how to ensure that qualitative research is reliable, or has some qualities associated with potential replication. These include: to ensure that the research is robust by carrying out internal checks on the quality of the data and its interpretation and a need to assure the reader of the research by providing information about the research process (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 272). This is further supported by Flick who asserts that, "the reliability of the whole process will be better the more detailed the research process is documented as a whole" (2006: 370). Furthermore, in increasing the reliability of the study, the researcher has to document his or her procedure and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently (Silverman, 2000: 188). Against that backcloth, the current study provides a detailed map on the research process undertaken to allow for checks on the process.

Data selection and collection process

When sampling strategies for social research are described, a key distinction is made between probability (random) and non-probability (non random) samples (see for example Deacon et al, 1999; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2001). On one hand, probability sampling entails the rigorous approach to sampling where elements in the population are chosen randomly and have a known probability of selection (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78). This kind of sampling approach allows for the generalisation of findings to the wider population (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78; Deacon et al, 1999: 43). On the other hand, non-probability sampling (usually used in qualitative research) entails the deliberate selection of units to reflect particular features of or groups within the sampled population (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78). The sample in this instance is not intended to be "statistically representative" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78) but rather "illustrative of broader social and cultural processes" (Deacon et al, 1999: 43). For the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling techniques are employed because they are well suited to small scale, in depth studies, as I further elaborate.

My study employed a two stage research design. A qualitative content analysis helped identify the major themes covered in the newspaper and secondly, in depth interviewing allowed for the exploration of subject's perceptions on why the newspaper was established and why it collapsed. These two techniques were chosen because of their respective abilities to generate data relevant to address the research question. Additionally, the adopted approach enabled a detailed comparison between the data gathered from the content analysis and that collected from the interviews

Qualitative content analysis

My first act of data selection entailed a preliminary qualitative content analysis of the stories covered in *The Southern Star*. This was driven by the argument put forward by Schroder et al who posit that the researcher must have a certain amount of knowledge about the media product under investigation "in order to be able to conduct meaningful and focused conversations with the informants about it" (2003: 154). As such qualitative content analysis was carried out in a bid to familiarise myself with the stories and major themes covered in the newspaper.

In defining qualitative content analysis, Berg notes that in "counting" of textual elements this merely provides a means of identifying, organising, indexing and retrieving data (2007: 307). The purpose being to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics of texts and therefore to be able to say something about the messages, images, representations of such texts and their wider social significance (Hansen et al, 1998: 95). However, qualitative content analysis has been criticised for not being value free because it demarcates certain dimensions or aspects of the text for analysis, and in so doing, involves making subjective choices of what to analyse (Hansen et al, 1998: 95). Furthermore, qualitative content analysis is seen as a method for analysing texts and not a theory, in that it does not give pointers on what aspects of texts have to be examined and how those dimensions should be interpreted (Hansen eta al, 1998: 99). Therefore, drawing on my theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Three, the following discussion on the aspects of texts examined justifies why I chose certain texts and not others.

Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling which allows the researcher to purposively select sampling units that are readily available (Deacon et al, 1999: 54) was used in the selection of the newspaper editions I used for my analysis. Due to the fact that *The Southern Star* has no archive of back-copies, out of the 20 editions produced within six months of production, I managed to access 13 editions (see Appendix 1). In conducting the qualitative content analysis on *The Southern Star*, my focus was on identifying the major themes in the stories covered. It is in that regard that I chose to conduct qualitative content analysis on the front page, using headlines and editorial articles because these helped bring to the fore the important issues given prominence by the newspaper in its coverage of stories.

My first act of data selection focused on the front page. My choice was influenced by the fact that the front page mirrors "the editorial instincts of newspaper ownership and staff" (Weldon 2008: 2). Furthermore, the front page is the "showcase", "prime editorial real estate" of the newspaper that announces the personality, news values and writing styles of the paper's editorial (Weldon, 2008: 30). In addition, "the tone of the front page is a fairly accurate criterion of the whole paper" (Armstrong, 1926 cited in Weldon, 2008: 6). It is in this regard

that the front page of *The Southern Star* is argued to mirror the position taken by the newspaper in its coverage of stories and also to echo the editorial stance of the newspaper. Furthermore, headlines were also chosen for analysis in order to identify the major themes covered. I chose to look at headlines because traditionally newspaper headlines have been characterised as a sign post for readers, telling them what the most important stories are (Rafferty, 2008: 226) by summarising the news items (Dor, 2003: 697; Rafferty, 2008: 226). Nir (1993) also asserts that newspaper headlines have to attract the attention of the reader and to provoke the reader to read the story (cited in Dor, 2003: 697). Therefore, an analysis of the headlines featured in the newspaper enabled me to identity the themes of the major stories covered.

In addition to analysing the front page and headlines, the study also looked at the editorial page. The reason being that, an editorial can best be defined as the "newspaper's institutional voice" (Stonecipher, 1979: 41) in that each editorial defines at a given time how media construct their socio-cultural environment and where they position themselves in it (Le, 2010: xi). Additionally, in presenting the "newspaper's position or reaction to a notable event" (Le, 2010: 40), an editorial maybe thought of as a journalistic essay which either attempts to inform, explain, persuade or to convince (Stonecipher, 1979: 40) its readers. For Santo, "the most precise barometer of a newspaper's position on political and social questions is assumed to reside on the editorial page- the heart, soul and conscience of the newspaper" (1994: 94 cited in Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008: 70). Against that backcloth, an analysis of the editorials featured in *The Southern Star* was worthwhile as they highlighted the editorial policy of the newspaper thus bringing to light the topical issues given prominence during coverage of stories.

Knowledge about the following major themes; the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland history, Matabeleland heroes and Matabeleland development identified in the coverage of stories would be meaningless without talking to the owner and staff of the newspaper to find out what they set out to achieve by establishing the newspaper and how they went about putting it into practice. It is in this regard that, the next section presents the second stage of the research design that involved collection of data using semi structured in depth interviews. Additionally, carrying out qualitative content analysis of the major themes covered in the

newspaper provided information that informed the structure of the questions asked in the interviews conducted.

Semi structured in depth interviews

In order to find out why the newspaper was established and why it collapsed, the researcher carried out semi-structured in depth interviews with selected respondents. The process entailed oral face to face interaction with the respondents, as research interviews entail gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals (Cohen and Marion, 1994: 272). The in depth interview is often described by some as "a form of conversation with a purpose" (Webb and Webb, 1932: 130 cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 138). The method selected promoted an active, open ended dialogue while at the same time allowing the interviewer to control the discussion by referring to an interview guide (see Appendix 2) that set out the issues to be covered during the conversation (Deacon et al, 1999: 64).

Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values by providing better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions (Seale, 1998: 182). This approach tends to be used by those who come from an ontological position which values people's knowledge, values and experiences as meaningful and worthy of exploration (Seale, 1998: 182). Thus, in using semi structured in depth interviews as a method for collecting data, the goal was to study society and its manifestations from an interpretivist approach in which the study is grounded. That is, perceiving social realities as continually being constructed and reconstructed through social practices and the conceptual categories that underpin them (Deacon et al, 1999: 7). In that regard, qualitative interviewing therefore tends to be seen as involving the production of knowledge more than the excavation of it (Mason, 2002: 63).

Semi-structured in depth interviews were appropriate for this study as the less structured questioning technique gave the interviewer considerable freedom to elaborate and rephrase questions to ensure they were properly understood (Deacon et al, 1999: 66). Furthermore, semi-structured interview is a flexible method that allows the interviewees to speak in their own voices with their own language (Seale, 1998: 182). It is in this regard, that I chose to

collect data that will address the research question by conducting interviews because they are a form of communication, that allow the extracting of different forms of information from individuals and groups (Seale, 1998: 180).

However, semi-structured in depth interviews have been criticised for involving "high preparation, high risk, high gain and a high analysis operation" (Wengraf, 2001: 5 cited in Seale, 1998: 186). Thus, the time involved in conducting interviews limits the possibility of covering large samples. Therefore, the aim is to come up with a strategy that will allow for the researcher to consider who will be interviewed and who will not in order to achieve a good understanding of the issue under research (Seale, 1998: 186). In that regard, the following section outlines the sampling procedure used in the selection of research subjects from the broader population.

Purposive sampling

The study employed purposive sampling which evidences the "conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures" (Deacon et al, 1999: 50) in the selection of potential interviewees as research subjects. The appropriateness of using purposive sampling method is that the cases to be included in the sample are at the discretion of the researcher where consideration is given to the case's relevance to the research question (Cohen and Marion, 1994: 89). Furthermore, the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78). Since the purpose of the study is to explore why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed, it was appropriate that I interview the owner, staff, those who advertised in the newspaper and those who did not. This sampling frame was appropriate in addressing the research question because it allowed for the generation of rich and detailed account of the research subjects' perceptions about the establishment and closure of the newspaper.

Even though purposive sampling involves deliberate choices, this should not suggest any bias in the nature of the choices made. Therefore, the process of purposive sampling requires clear objectivity so that the sample stands up to independent scrutiny (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:

80). All too often, qualitative samples are criticised for not holding features of quantitative samples (scale, distributional representation). However, these would do nothing to enhance the robustness of the sample for its qualitative purpose (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 82). The aim in qualitative research is to gain an understanding of the nature of phenomenon, to unpack meanings and to develop explanations (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 82) in order to yield information that is rich in detail.

Interview procedure

Based on the understanding that qualitative interviewing requires a great deal of planning (Mason, 2002: 67; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 142), this section provides more detail on how the interviews with the research subjects were carried out. In line with the research question and the data generated from the qualitative content analysis of the newspaper, the researcher drafted an interview guide that foregrounded the issues to be discussed during the interviews. Prior to conducting the interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with two journalists in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview guide (Deacon et al, 1999: 66). From the feedback given, the interview guide was revised and other questions altered.

Interviews were conducted in a period of 30 days, from the 10th of June to the 10th of July 2013. All interviews conducted were preceded by an introduction aimed at reassuring the respondents about the legitimacy of the research and their capability to deal with the questions to be asked (Deacon et al, 1999: 74). This was done with the help of an introductory letter from my supervisor (see Appendix 3). At this stage, informed consent was obtained from the interviewees (Seale, 1998:185) where the researcher underlined that the information collected was to be treated sensitively, discreetly and where necessary have their confidentiality respected (Deacon et al, 1999: 74; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 65-71) (see Appendix 4). Participants were also asked for permission to have the interviews recorded on tape. Granted their consent, all interviews held were recorded to allow for accuracy during the transcription process (Silverman, 2010: 199). The interviews were not formal and as a researcher, I was able to elaborate and rephrase questions (Deacon et al, 1999: 66) in order for the interviewees to understand what I was asking. At the end of each interview, the researcher thanked the interviewees for their help and invited them to add any further

comments they may feel relevant (Deacon et al, 1999: 74). This was made possible by providing the interviewees with the researcher's contact details.

Data analysis procedures

Analysis of data collected is a continuous process that entails two stages. The first requires managing the data and the second involves making sense of the evidence through descriptive or explanatory accounts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 219). Since all face-to-face interviews were tape recorded, after completion of the interview process, all the interviews were transcribed verbatim for purposes of analysis. I then carried out data management of the data collected which entailed deciding upon the themes or concepts under which the data was labelled, sorted and compared (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 221). However, in order to construct this thematic framework, I first had to gain an overview of the data coverage and become familiar with the data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 221). This entailed sorting or ordering the data in a way that allowed for the material with similar content to be located together. The purpose of doing that was to allow me to focus on each subject in turn so that the details and distinctions that lie within could be unpacked (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 229). The final stage of data management involved summarising or synthesising the original data in order to reduce the amount of material to a manageable level. However, at this stage, I ensured the key terms, phrases and expressions of the participants were retained as much as possible (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 221). After completing this stage, the data collected from interviews was read against the information gathered from the qualitative content analysis. This provided the basis for my discussion of findings, reported in the next chapter.

Difficulties encountered

The collection of data coincided with the period when Zimbabwe was set to hold Presidential elections on the 31st of July 2013 and because of the unstable political environment, interviewees were concerned about partaking in the research. As a researcher, I persisted and set appointments to meet up with the interviewees and on meeting them I showed them the introductory letter from my supervisor and also assured them information collected would be used for research purposes only. Another setback experienced was that the companies that

had not advertised in *The Southern Star* had their Marketing and Advertising departments based in Harare. As such, three interviews with these companies were conducted over the telephone.

Conclusion

This chapter has located the current study within the qualitative research paradigm, outlined the two stage research design adopted and the analytical framework to be used. Justification for using qualitative content analysis and in semi structured in-depth interviews as methods for collecting data were stated. The following chapter sets out to present an analysis and interpretation of the findings arising from information collected with regard to why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

As has been outlined in the preceding chapters, the objective of this study is to critically map the historical development of *The Southern Star* newspaper within the socio-political context of Zimbabwe. The weekly newspaper which was in circulation from January 2012 to June 2012, was the first ever independently owned regional publication in Zimbabwe whose target audience consisted of people from the Southern part of Zimbabwe, where the Ndebele are predominantly located. Drawing from the theoretical viewpoints articulated in Chapter Three, this chapter presents the findings of the study with the aim of understanding why the newspaper was set up, what it sought to achieve, how it went about putting that into practice and also to find out what led to its collapse. It is in this regard, that the chapter presents and analyses the findings from data gathered through qualitative content analysis of 13 editions of the publication and juxtaposing it with data collected through semi structured in-depth interviews with 15 respondents. These findings will be presented and supported with quotations arising from in-depth interviews and snippets of relevant stories picked from the content analysis. The presentation and discussion of findings will fall under the following broad research questions;

1. What factors led to the establishment of the newspaper?
2. What was the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'?
3. What led to the collapse of the newspaper?

Factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper

The study locates *The Southern Star* newspaper within the alternative media discourse because of the nature of the content and journalism practiced. However, instead of looking at the journalism practiced in isolation from or in opposition to the mainstream media[13]

[13] See elaborate discussion on what constitute the mainstream media within the context of this study in Chapter Three.

(Harcup, 2006: 361), I concur with the argument that such "binary opposition" should be rejected, with authors like Harcup arguing that there may be more crossover of media practice than has been previously acknowledged (2006: 361). It is in this light that I argue that *The Southern Star* exhibited the same organisational structure as the mainstream media as evidenced by the newsroom structure that was fully-fledged consisting of the Editor, News Editor, two Sub- Editors, five reporters, Marketing and Advertising Manager and his team of seven Marketing Executives.

However, the newspaper differed with other mainstream newspapers in Zimbabwe in terms of its overt ideological slant towards alternative media ethos and the impact of particular socio-political causes, particularly the 'Matabeleland Question'.

It has been noted that alternative media projects emerge to deal with specific ideological projects and, as such must be seen as satisfying a specific need at a specific point in time (Banda, 2006: 1). Therefore, in unpacking the factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper, the Acting News Editor had this to say:

> **Busani[14]:** *The Southern Star* is a project that was started under Chayah media services. Chayah is a Biblical word of an angelic messenger. It was a very strong grouping of people who were so disfranchised and all they needed was a Chayah[15] to message hence the name *The Southern Star* and Chayah media services. There are two things why *The Southern Star* was established to achieve: the first is precisely for all other purposes that newspapers are born for which is literally to disseminate information, but most importantly as an avenue of telling "our" story. If I am saying "our" story I mean people from the Southern Region. We were ascertaining our right to self-determination. We saw that the only way we could project our own things, the only way we can write about our own heroes is for us to own our own paper.

In addition, the Marketing and Advertising Executive said:

> **Nkosana:** *The Southern Star* was not a political tool. Rather it was a platform to give voices to the people who have been neglected with issues that relate to politics, economics and their social life. We were not saying we are the "Messiahs". We just wanted to set the agenda to say, "Rise Matabeleland rise, you have been given your own platform to say what you want".

[14] Sadly Busani died in a car accident on the 28th of July 2013. May his dear soul rest in peace.
[15] Chayah as used in this context refers to a messenger.

> **Muziwakhe[16]:** The paper was very clear that it sought to serve the people of the South. Using the news value of proximity, we had to work on content that is sensitive or at least close to the hearts of the people of Matabeleland and Midlands. We had to address the key development challenges that the people face, what is the sentiment of the people, what is the personality of the people of Matabeleland.

From the above responses, one can note that the newspaper was set up with the motive of performing the journalistic roles of alternative media, which is of providing a channel, a forum, or a platform for other voices or sources to reach a self-chosen public. This argument is further buttressed by Atton (2002) who points out that alternative media have served as vital conduits for the political agendas of social movements, as well as helped ignite social movements through their advocacy of various marginalised social groups. The newspaper achieved that by offering a counter public forum for the people in the South in order for them to have a platform to discuss problems affecting them. In this regard, *The Southern Star* can be seen to have been set up with the aim of serving publics who in many cases are alienated from the mainstream media (Harcup, 1998: 114), in this instance people from Matabeleland. The paper could thus be seen as attempting to correct this anomaly by enabling the people of Matabeleland to re-define their own identity. This also links to the issue of the social imaginary - referring to the "personality of the people". However, drawing from the discussion in Chapter Two that locates Matabeleland within the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe, what came to light is that the Ndebele identity has been constructed differently over the years (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; 2009). This begs the question - which definition of Ndebele identity did the newspaper rely on in their target audience? According to the Editor:

> **Bukhosi[17]:** We were not apologetic, ours was a regional paper. It was written "Iphepha labantu - The people's paper" and by 'abantu' we meant people of this region, of this marginalised region, the Ndebeles and anyone who belongs to that group. If Shonas have come here and identify with our problems then so be it.

> **Busani:** The Southern Region is strictly defined not by the tribe but by the geographical positioning. The people of the Southern Region we were saying whether you are Tonga, Ndebele, Chewa, Shona, as long as you are in the Southern Region. We were telling our story because a Shona boy who stays in Bulawayo suffers similar prejudices like a Ndebele boy so we were saying people of the Southern Region.

[16] Muziwakhe though not his real name was one of the reporters.
[17] Bukhosi is not his real name.

From the above responses, one can conclude that the newspaper relied on the regional geographical definition in defining their target audience. This regional geographical definition defines a person who resides in Matabeleland regions and those parts of Midlands region where Ndebele is spoken as being Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 14).

Further, drawing from the findings taken from the qualitative content analysis carried on 13 editions, the following major themes emerged: the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland history, Matabeleland heroes and Matabeleland development. These themes represent the important issues given prominence by the newspaper in its coverage of stories. The table below gives a summary on the distribution of stories according to the four major themes highlighted.

Fig.1 A summary of the thematic distribution of front page, headlines and editorials of *The Southern Star* from January to June 2012

THEME	FRONT PAGE	HEADLINES	EDITORIAL	TOTAL
***Gukurahundi* genocide**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**6**
Matabeleland development	**3**	**4**	**3**	**10**
Matabeleland history	**1**	**3**	**3**	**7**
Matabeleland heroes	**0**	**2**	**2**	**4**

From the four major themes identified, I argue that the content of *The Southern Star*, to a large extent projected the characteristic of alternative media projects that have been positioned in opposition to the mainstream media. Drawing on the argument that, "such media projects express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives" (Downing, 2001: 5), I tease out how the newspaper in its coverage of stories challenged the dominant discourse produced in the mainstream media. As noted by the owner of the newspaper:

> **Sindiso:** We brought a breath of fresh air because unlike *The Chronicle* which is state controlled, we openly dealt with issues that resonate with the people such as those

> relating to development, to language and to culture. We were the first people to break the Njelele story[18]. Other newspapers followed suit but they were afraid because of the political figures or military figures involved.

Drawing from the discussion in Chapter Two on the state of the media in Zimbabwe, what emerges is that the state controlled media has over the years been used as a tool by the government to mainstream their different policies and also to set the agenda for their key concerns. I argue that these policies continue to be anchored in a nationalist version of history that has been particularly partial, where the success of the ruling ZANU-PF party is celebrated while the contribution of ZAPU is downplayed (Alexander et al, 2000:1). However, in contrast *The Southern Star* focused on Matabeleland nationalistic politics as evidenced by the four major themes highlighted.

In order to have a deeper understanding of the motive behind adopting a counter-hegemonic stance in the coverage of stories produced by the newspaper, one needs to take into account that alternative forms of media are constituted by their social and historical context (Atton and Hamilton, 2008: 10). Therefore, an understanding of the fact that the media are a contextualised social phenomenon helps us to unpack the makeup of Matabeleland by locating it within the broader context of Zimbabwe. The objective is to enable an understanding of the ways in which the producers of the newspaper imagined, understood and perceived their existence within the context of Zimbabwe that has shaped and reinforced currents of "Ndebele particularism"[19]. This idea is well elaborated in the social imaginary scholarship discussed in Chapter Three that is helpful in shedding light on how this might have influenced the nature of the content of the newspaper.

> **Busani:** There is this nationalism propaganda which wants to assume that nationalism cannot be confined to a certain geographical area. Pardon me for sounding as a secessionist but it doesn't matter because it's true anyway. I cannot be apologetic for what I am. Whilst Zimbabwe is a nation it's ok as a nation. But there are some of us who because of deliberate government policing and disfranchising from the government, have come to believe that we are not part of Zimbabwe.

[18] The story highlights how 600 suspected ZANU-PF supporters descended on one of the sacred shrines in the Matabeleland region, Njelele where a re-burial and bad luck cleansing ceremony was carried out in order to appease their colleagues who were shot and killed in the Chimoio area in Mozambique during the war of liberation (9-15 March 2012).

[19] See elaborate discussion on Ndebele particularistic identity in Chapter Three.

The above response points to the argument that a nation is not a pre-existing entity. Rather it is imagined and the media are seen to play a significant role in the mediation and imagination of it (Anderson, 1983, 1991). Further, drawing from the literature on identity formation discussed in Chapter Three, on ways in which identities are conceived to be constructed through the relation to the 'Other' and the relation to what it is not (Hall, 1996:4), the above interview response foregrounds the subject position that has been acquired by the interviewee that is contrary to the nationalist identity. In that, within the Zimbabwean context, there is a nationalist ideology that is fore grounded as the key marker of being Zimbabwean and is propagated by the ruling party (ZANU-PF) through the state controlled media (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 3). Those who do not align themselves with the ruling party ideology are then labeled as the 'Other'. This group symbolically marked as the 'Other' are socially excluded and materially disadvantaged (Woodward, 1997: 12). This is further buttressed by the response given by another reporter who asserted that:

> **Vulindlela[20]:** The Matabeleland issue is that we have been marginalised. Development has been in the other part of the country. Matabeleland lacks a voice and we need a voice. Therefore at the end of the day, *The Southern Star* was there to give the Matabeleland Region a voice. People in Matabeleland need to be appreciated; people need to acknowledge our existence. We need political and social recognition.

Within the context of this study, I argue that the Ndebele have been symbolically marked as the 'Other' as evidenced by the politically and socially marginalised discourses emanating in Matabeleland within the current epoch. This in turn can be argued to have an influence on the manner in which those labeled as the 'Other' perceive their existence within the Zimbabwean context. Thus, the social imaginary cannot be shared by all members in a society, as evidenced by the exclusion of those who do not align themselves to the dominant identity linked to being Zimbabwean. I argue that the manner in which the Ndebele perceive themselves within the Zimbabwean context constitute a different social imaginary. Therefore, that I concur with the idea that the politics that is emerging from Matabeleland region (where the newspaper was located) is that of protest to perceptions and realities of exclusion, marginalisation and domination (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2011: 1). Drawing on the criticism leveled at the political economy approach to the media by the cultural studies theorists, that

[20]Vulindlela is not his real name

other factors like ethnicity also come into play in the production of cultural artefacts (Grossberg, 1995: 73), I argue that the sentiments shared by the producers of the newspaper on the way in which they understood their identity and place within the Zimbabwean context, played a significant role in influencing the motive behind setting up and the editorial content of the newspaper.

Having highlighted the reasons behind establishing the newspaper and also identifying who the target audiences were, I unpack what the producers sought to achieve and how they went about putting their goals into practice. Drawing from the discussion on the politics surrounding the construction of Zimbabwe history in Chapter Two, what emerged is that 'patriotic history' conveyed through the state owned media tended to exclude the events of Matabeleland in the 1980s, where 20 000 civilians lost their lives through the *Gukurahundi* atrocities (Phimister, 2009: 471). The *Gukurahundi* era is perceived as a 'closed chapter' within the dominant circles (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). It is precisely because of this silence that *The Southern Star* in its coverage attempted to 'speak' the 'unspoken' (Harcup, 2003:371).

> **Muziwakhe:** We were very clear that we amplify the voices and issues of the people of the South, those issues that the conventional media was shying away from.
>
> **Dumisani[21]:** You realise that in the Southern Region there are newspapers that fall under Zimpapers but because they are state controlled they do not cover issues of the people from the South. Certain issues like *Gukurahundi* and other developmental issues which have always been echoed by our leaders that we are marginalised. We were writing about those issues.
>
> **Vulindlela:** People needed to know, to hear what is happening in Matabeleland. It has been long since *Gukurahundi*. People are not even sure what happened during the *Gukurahundi.* So at the end of the day we came out and we tried to give people the real events of what happened.
>
> **Nkosana:** *The Southern Star* wanted to set the agenda for the development of Matabeleland, and to raise issues that have been suppressed for the past 33 years. That is why you can see our thrust was *Gukurahundi* because there has not been a forum where we can openly discuss it. We are not saying we want to go back to *Gukurahundi*. We are saying let us discuss it, be frank, have a discourse to say this thing really did take place and what is the way forward.

[21] Dumisani though not his real name was one of the reporters.

The above responses support the literature on alternative media which claim that they are established to foster wider social emancipation and to promote social change (Downing et al, 2001 cited in Couldry and Curran, 2003:7; Atton, 2002: 9). It can be argued that the newspaper managed to achieve that by challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse that it produces (Moyo, 2010, 87) by covering stories to do with Matabeleland development, the *Gukurahundi* atrocities and marginalisation of Matabeleland.

> **Nkosana:** The whole point of coming up with *The Southern Star* was that all the newspapers in Zimbabwe are politically inclined to certain people, that is the mouth piece of certain politics, certain politicians, certain ideologies. All seem to be politically inclined but above all, all of them have no role in furthering the development for Matabeleland. No one is tackling the issue of *Gukurahundi* and the marginalisation of Matabeleland.
>
> **Bukhosi:** *Gukurahundi* is not closed by anyone and it will never be closed until the people of Tsholotsho, Lupane, and Kezi have been compensated, those mass graves dug and people buried properly. That is when it will be closed. Otherwise for now it is not closed, not at all.

The sentiments shared by the producers of the newspaper suggest that the victims of the atrocities have been denied justice by the perpetrators of the *Gukurahundi* genocide. Therefore, the newspaper typically advocated for social and political reform (Haas, 2004: 115).

The counter hegemonic nature of the content of the newspaper can also be supported by findings drawn from qualitative content analysis, where the following stories were covered and featured as headlines on the front page; "*Gukurahundi was wrong": Sibanda*[22], *Tribalism taught at schools*[23], and *Gukurahundi army cleansed at Njelele*[24]. Therefore, the newspaper sought to liberate people from the South by giving them a platform to redress their political

[22] The story details the ordeals of the *Gukurahundi* atrocities. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veteran Associations (ZNLWVA) leader, Jabulani Sibanda is calling for compensation of the victims of the atrocities. He further asserts that people should be told the truth about what happened during that time (27 January-2 February 2012).

[23] The story highlights how an Ordinary Level History textbook, Dynamics of History Book 3 which is said to have been written by a Former Cabinet Minister of the ruling party, Aeneas Chigwedere, contains distorted history aimed at portraying the Ndebele community as inferior to their Mashonaland counterparts (24 February-1 March 2012).

[24] This is a follow up story of the Njelele saga where Matabeleland leaders are said to be silent about what transpired at Njelele even after months since the first story was written (18- 24 May 2012).

and economic grievances in a society where they have been marginalised. The above stories covered, buttress the counter hegemonic position the newspaper took in writing about the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland history and Matabeleland heroes.

In addition, the position the newspaper advocated with regard to the political and social debates that have gained momentum in Matabeleland in the current epoch was also foregrounded in the following articles written on their editorial page; *Gukurahundi: Provide solutions now*[25], *Don't feed poison to our children*[26] , and *Stop politicising DiMaf funds*[27]. Editorials are a "newspaper's institutional voice" (Stonecipher, 1979: 41) that presents its "position or reaction to a notable event" (Le, 2010: 40) with the aim of informing, explaining, persuading or convincing (Stonecipher, 1979: 40) its readers. In this regard, the newspaper's aim was to clarify certain issues and also to persuade the readers that they have a right to be heard with issues that affect them and those responsible are called upon to liberate and bring about social change to the people in Matabeleland.

Having brought to light the factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper, what the producers sought to achieve and how they went about executing their goals, I now turn to a discussion on the position the newspaper advocated for with regard to the 'Matabeleland Question'. It is imperative to unpack this because the newspaper was set up within the socio-political context that is marred with dividing opinions about the resolution of 'Matabeleland Question'. This debate on who constitute the Zimbabwean community has gained momentum with on one hand, the radical politics contesting the idea of a unitary Zimbabwe state by calling for a restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele state, separate from the rest of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:48). On the other hand, there are those calling for the provinces of

[25] The comment rebuts the sentiments by some ZANU-PF and government functionaries that the "death of such a number of innocent and defenseless people of a defined tribe is water under the bridge" to the editorial that "stinks to the high heavens and must never go unchallenged". Therefore, a call to relevant authorities and other interested parties to spearhead the truth telling and forgiving process is made (3-9 February 2012).

[26] The comment in no uncertain terms expresses how "appalled, shocked and dismayed" the editorial felt over the contents of the Ordinary Level History textbook. The sentiments evoked are that this is a "Grand Plan to denigrate and symbolically annihilate the Ndebeles from the history of Zimbabwe". Therefore, in a bid to stop the distorting of history, Chigwedere (author of the book) must apologise and the Ministry of Education must remove the book from the syllabus as a matter of urgency (24 February-1 March 2012).

[27] A call is made to politicians in Matabeleland to speak with one voice on the issue of the promised US $40 million Distressed Industries and Marginalisation Areas Fund (DiMaf) meant to restore the operations of Bulawayo industries. The aim is to ensure that the money comes and plays its intended role of developing the city and the region as a whole (13-19 April 2012).

Matabeleland South, North and Midlands to retain greater political and economic autonomy (Muzondidya and Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2007:287). Worth noting is that these dividing opinions have emerged in Matabeleland as alternative imaginaries to the unitary state discourse.

What was the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'?

In mapping the rise and fall of the newspaper, I now interrogate the position *The Southern Star* took with regard to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'. From the discussion given in Chapter Two, I elaborated on factors that have shaped and reinforced the 'Matabeleland Question' from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs. What emerged is that the bedrock of the 'Matabeleland Question' brings about the politics of Ndebele particularistic identity and the current drive for the restoration of an autonomous Ndebele nation separate from Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:30). This underlies a unique Ndebele identity that is not fitting within the construction of Zimbabwean nation-state imagined along Shona experiences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:188). Therefore, the 'Matabeleland Question' triggers the politics of alienation, resentment and grievance that is fuelling a desire for a restoration of a pre-colonial Ndebele state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:51). It is within this context, that the message the newspaper conveyed with regard to the 'Matabeleland Question' has to be understood within the current epoch.

> **Sindiso:** We were providing a platform for people of the South, people in these affected Regions to tell us how they wanted the political discourse to move ahead. So you notice that we gave acres of space to so called secessionist because we were covering the treason trial elaborately. We allowed them to indicate the reasons why they thought that they should be secession. We also gave acres of space to the MDC led by Welshman Ncube which dealt with the issue of devolution[28]. The issues of secession, devolution or social and political reform are topical issues. We could not avoid them as a newspaper if we wanted to become relevant. So we took the view that ultimately people through political process will have to make the decision but people had to make the decision from an informed position and that informed position was to give space to the so called secessionist and to those advocating for social and political reform.

[28] Devolution or democratic decentralisation is a system of governance that entails the transfer of power and resources to sub national authorities that are both (relatively) independent of central government and democratically elected (Crawford and Hartmann, 2008: 9).

> **Muziwakhe:** Among some of the key stories that we ran with as a newspaper was the treason trial of the MLF trio, which we felt conventional media was not doing enough justice with. It is not taboo for anyone to call for secession, secession is not taboo it is a modern system of governance that is used in many places across the world. So we were very clear, we were seriously and openly in support of devolution of power and we also made it clear that those who are secessionist had a right to be and we will not stifle their voices as a newspaper, we will amplify their calls if others are not giving them a notice.

The role the media plays in society influences the range of discourses at play in texts. Therefore, because *The Southern Star* was set up with the motivate of serving the people in Matabeleland by informing them of what was happening around their region and also providing a platform for those who have been sidelined in the mainstream media to be heard, this impacted on the range of discourses the newspaper presented with regard to the 'Matabeleland Question'. In this light the newspaper is evidenced to have covered the radical politics of the secessionists who are contesting the idea of a unitary Zimbabwe state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:48). However, the idea of giving space to the MLF trio did not necessarily imply that the newspaper was pushing for secession but rather it was playing its role of informing the public about the interests of a group of people pushing for a certain agenda within regard to the resolution of 'Matabeleland Question'.

> **Bukhosi:** We were advocating for social, cultural and political justice that is why we attacked those people who danced naked at Njelele. That is our sacred place. That is where we used to ask for rain. We never advocated for secession because it is treasonance in Zimbabwe, we did not want to find ourselves in court but we covered extensively the trial of the secessionist, Siwela and company but as a newspaper we did not take a position on the call for secession but we did support devolution naturally.

From the above interview response, one can note that the newspaper in its coverage of stories, to a large extent aimed at promoting the devolution of powers as a way of resolving the 'Matabeleland Question'. This position is an offshoot of the sentiments shared by the producers of the newspaper who argue against the continued marginalisation of the three provinces of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and Midlands. Therefore, in advocating for these provinces to retain greater political and economic autonomy (Muzondidya and Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2007: 287), the producers of the newspaper sought to

promote social, cultural and political justice in a context that has continued to sideline them in both academic and public discourses about Zimbabwe (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2009: 9).

Factors that led to the closure of the newspaper

Having presented the findings that speak to why the newspaper was established, what it sought to achieve, how it went about putting that into practice and also presenting the position the newspaper took with regard to the 'Matabeleland Question', I now look at the factors that led to the closure of *The Southern Star*. In order to elaborate on the findings derived, the following section sub-divides factors that led to the closure of the newspaper into external and internal factors. The former addresses the following factors: how the newspaper suffered in terms of advertising revenue and the constraining political environment in which the newspaper operated in, while the latter teases out the issue of poor management in running of the newspaper and the failure to reach significant audiences.

External factors that led to the closure of the newspaper

Drawing on the political economy approach to the media which locates media operations within the context of overarching forces of politics and economics in a social environment, I tease out how these forces played a role in the closure of *The Southern Star*. An important component that is closely linked to the political economy approach to the media is an understanding of the financial support mechanisms put in place in the everyday operation of an organisation (Golding and Murdock, 2000). It is in this light that I examine the extent to which this might have led to the closure of the newspaper.

> **Muziwakhe:** A newspaper mainly thrives on advertising revenue but why were we struggling as a newspaper to get advertising? You find that support in terms of advertising was not forthcoming. One of our conclusions is with so much de-industrialisation happening in the province, is there any industry to talk about left in the city, if companies are closing every other month? Who exactly was going to advertise in the newspaper? It also comes to the decision making, the decision makers, and the people who were meant to give us business. These are managers of corporate entities in Bulawayo and the Southern part of the country. Does their ethnicity not influence the publications that they give business? Why would some people, for example, give business to *The Chronicle* and not *The Southern Star*? Do

> they think that the content of *The Southern Star* was perhaps a threat to the interests they are serving? Or were they uncomfortable with the content of the paper?

The respondent highlights how the newspaper industry survives on advertising revenue to facilitate the running of the organisation. However, there have been criticisms that have been leveled on alternative forms of media with regard to their failure to attract advertisers (Moyo, 2010: Atton, 2002). This begs the question of whether *The Southern Star* was also failing to attract enough advertisers that would help generate funding for running the newspaper. This question also speaks to the above interview response, where the respondent also attempts to understand why as a newspaper they were failing to get advertising. In answering that question the Advertising and Marketing Manager succinctly detail the reasons behind that failure:

> **Leroy[29]:** The few adverts we got were from Bulawayo. The problem is that most of the big players in advertising are based in Harare - the banks, insurance guys, the service people all have their Head Offices in Harare. So we had this problem that most of the big players are centralised. So for you to get your adverts you had to liaise with the Head Offices in Harare.

Another respondent added:

> **Sindiso:** Some advertising agents would tell us that their adverts are being controlled from Harare. We would try to call Harare and send people to Harare and they would start telling of an elaborate process. For companies that are based here you had to source for adverts in Harare which is ridiculous.

It goes without saying that, because companies approached had their adverts being controlled from Harare, in essence these companies would be against the political line taken by the newspaper. As such, I argue that the economic and political marginalisation of Matabeleland can be seen to have impacted on the ability of the newspaper to survive. Additionally, the above interview responses can be further buttressed by responses I got when I visited three companies (Telecel, Econet and Tel One)[30] in Bulawayo. Whilst these companies did not

[29] Leroy is not his real name.

[30] 1. Telecel Zimbabwe is currently the second largest mobile phone network in Zimbabwe and it is 60-percent owned by Egypt-based Orascom while the rest of the company is owned by a Zimbabwean consortium called the Empowerment Corporation. http://www.telecel.co.zw/index.php/about-us (accessed 18/ 09/13)

advertise in *The Southern Star*, they have overt advertorial presence in most Zimbabwean mainstream press. In all the three companies I was told that for any questions regarding advertising and marketing, these could only be responded through the companies' Head Offices in Harare. Later, from the three telephone interviews I had with the Advertising and Marketing personnel from Telecel, Econet and Tel One in Harare I was told they did not know about *The Southern Star* and hence they never placed advertisements in the newspaper. Another interesting point to note is that considering the fact that Tel One is a state- owned telephone operator, I agree with the argument that one of the most effective weapons used by African governments to punish "hostile" media is by starving them of advertising from government related institutions (Moyo, 2005: 117).

Leroy pointed to another hindrance that the newspaper faced in sourcing for advertising:

> **Leroy:** Before you are rated by the Advertising Media Association (ADMA)[31], you cannot go about claiming you have such a section of the market. You will just be relying on trying to convince the advertisers that you have something that can market them. Also you find that the advertiser does not believe that a new paper can actually put his product in the market. He would rather stick to the established players like Zimpapers and Alpha Media Holdings. It takes some time for you to get trust from the client and for them to believe that you have really hit the market.

From the above interview response, one can note that because *The Southern Star* was a new player in the market and had not yet been rated by the ADMA, it was difficult for them to source for advertisers since advertisers chose to work with the "tried and tested" media organisations.

Alternative media thrive well in environments where diversity of opinions is respected, and where supporting structures (especially in the form of advertisers) exist so as to propagate its

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2. Econet Wireless Zimbabwe is Zimbabwe's largest provider of telecommunications services, providing solutions in mobile and fixed wireless telephony, public payphones, internet access and payment solutions. The founder and chairman is Strive Masiyiwa. https://www.econet.co.zw/ (accessed 18/ 09/13)

3. Tel•One Private Limited Zimbabwe is a state-owned telephone operator providing voice, internet and data services. http://www.telone.co.zw/ (accessed 18/ 09/13)

[31] The Advertising Media Association (ADMA) falls under The Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (ZARF) which was established in 1997 to undertake independent market research on behalf of advertisers, the media, publishers, advertising agencies, public relations' consultants, etc. http://www.zarf.co.zw/ (accessed 18/ 09/13)

cause. In Zimbabwe, even if such structures exist, deviating too much towards radical discourses which threatens the mainstream may be construed as supporting anti-political establishment.

> **Sindiso:** Our initial impression, which I think in the short or medium term proved wrong, was that people in the Southern region were going to identify with the paper and also to place adverts. But our plan went wrong because of the issues that we were tackling which relate to development in the South, tribalism and languages. Some people were uncomfortable with them. They would phone us privately and have meetings privately with us and say, "Look the things you are saying are ok but some of us are afraid if we place adverts we would be seen as if we are actually sponsoring or talking about issues relating to massacres, development in Matabeleland or lack of development". As a result we suffered in terms of advertising revenue because they were very low.
>
> **Busani:** Financing of the newspaper became hard from local business people. Our paper was talking about issues that are taboo. Our paper was breaking barriers like the *Gukurahundi* atrocities, telling Mugabe that if he is old and sick and has failed it is as true as that and it is not our problem. We were telling our story. Our paper was exposing a lot of serious scandals and one that almost dealt us a death blow is the Njelele story[32].
>
> **Nkosana:** People are very sensitive in Bulawayo, the minute you start talking about *Gukurahundi* and Mthwakazi they want to disassociate themselves from you because of the political environment. People do not want to be associated with programs or events or fora that tackle issues that the government seems to ignore.

From the above interview responses, what emerges is that the nature of the content of the newspaper made it difficult to attract advertisers. Not only was the content produced very sensitive but also the political environment in which the newspaper operated in was not conducive to allow for the dissemination of alternative content in contrast to the dominant discourse being circulated.

> **Vulindlela:** People were hostile, especially politicians. People were reluctant and afraid to talk about what happened at the Njelele. It's like the political environment in the country is not conducive because when you talk about Ndebele you are now a

[32] The story highlights how 600 suspected ZANU-PF supporters descended on one of the sacred shrines in the Matabeleland region, Njelele where a re-burial and bad luck cleansing ceremony was carried out in order to appease their colleagues who were shot and killed in the Chimoio area in Mozambique during the war of liberation (9-15 March 2012).

> "tribalist" and when you talk about something that is happening in Matabeleland like issues to do with marginalisation you are now a "regionalist". It is very difficult to fund something which is very tribal. The paper was tribal. It's a fact. So I think it was difficult for Mazibisa to get sponsorship for a tribal paper.

Therefore, media organisations are seen to operate in cultural, socio economic and political contexts whose influence cannot be ignored when their performance is to be measured. It is in this light that the failure of the newspaper can also be attributed to the context in which the newspaper operated in.

> **Sindiso:** Politics is playing a big role in the way the media functions and I think I am vindicated in that position because of what happened to *The Southern Star*. We did not have political backing. We had ideas to change our community. We had ideas to do well. But we noticed that political formations wanted either to control or manipulate the media house, in the sense that if they did not know who was politically controlling the publication, it became difficult. For the record we approached a number of political formations and individuals to say, "This is a community publication; we do not mind whoever you are as long you are from here if you can contribute to sustain the publication". But we realised that if you do not control the politics you have a problem. So politics plays a critical role and people are always suspicious because they were always questioning who is politically behind *The Southern Star*. There was no political figure or individual really behind *The Southern Star*, it was concerned people with a vision from the South who wanted to make change using media as a tool for that change. But you need political backing or you need a lot of financial backing like Trevor Ncube.

This response reflects the argument made by political economists who asserts that political factors affect the operations of the media and the media cannot be considered separately from that (Murdock, 1990; Garnham, 1995). This argument is further buttressed by the following response that emerged in one of the interviews:

> **Sihle[33]:** At some point the main funder pulled out, he was not willing to fund anymore. The reason being he wanted to own most of the shares, he wanted to have his own Editor, brings his own Human Resource Manager, change the whole system of which the CEO did not want because Chayah media was his own brain child.

[33] Sihle though not her real name was one of the Reporters.

What emerges from the above response is the fact that the power of ownership also to a large extent entails the power to control (Murdock, 1990: 7). In that regard, if the main funder had been afforded the opportunity to continue funding the newspaper, changes in the organisation would have been effected and those would include a reshuffling of the staff that would subsequently alter the content produced. This argument of the way in which ownership also entails the potential to control the operations of the organisation is further echoed by another respondent who noted that:

> **Busani:** All along all newspapers have been owned, directed and controlled from Harare. Their news styles or their news, their contents are heavily influenced by their owners. To the extent that a newspaper has to serve the interests of this Region, the Southern Region, it becomes a token paper (brings me a copy of *Southern Eye*[34] and shows me*)*. Why am I saying it's a token? They will have your first two stories here about this Region, and then they write all their Harare stories on other pages. So the first page becomes the token.

The whole debate around who ultimately has power in terms of influencing media content seems to point to business and politics, at least in Zimbabwe. In this light, I argue that claims to media owners, journalistic or managerial autonomy all seem a fallacy in the face of powerful political and business interests taking centre stage in the current epoch. Therefore, whilst the media (inclusive of managers, journalists and owners) may have noble causes in society (as was the case with *The Southern Star*), these can be difficult to champion if they operate contrary to established norms, business interests and political views. This becomes more pronounced in clearly bifurcated countries where the major fault lines of social fragmentation are clearly by ethnicity and political allegiance. This argument clearly holds true with the case of Zimbabwe.

Having brought to light the external factors that contributed to the closure of the newspaper, I now turn to a discussion on the internal factors that speak to the issue of poor management in running of the newspaper and the failure to reach significant audiences.

[34] *Southern Eye* is a daily newspaper that was launched on the 3rd of June by Alpha Media Holdings (AMH). As the name suggests, the title is targeted at readers in the southern parts of Zimbabwe that is Midlands, Masvingo and the Matabeleland provinces. http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-regional-byo-30947.html (accessed 18/09/13)

Internal factors that led to the closure of the newspaper

Drawing from the argument presented earlier that the newspaper exhibited the same organisational structure as the mainstream media, though it differed ideologically in terms of the content produced, the following response given with regard to newsroom roles raised questions about the management structure put in place to oversee the running of the organisation:

> **Dumisani:** The Editor did not act as an Editor as such, the person who was acting as the Editor was the News Editor. In any normal setting, any newsroom, the Editor is an overseer, he or she is the one with authority as compared to the News Editor but in our scenario the News Editor appeared to have more power than the Editor

Probed further about why this was the case:

> **Dumisani:** There was very poor management and roles were not clearly defined especially at management level.
>
> **Busani:** There are external factors that led to the closure of the paper and internal ones. Our internal ones had to do more with our quality management systems. Newspaper management is different from everything else that we are governing. There was so much experience in writing stories and in news gathering, but little or no experience in management.
>
> **Bukhosi:** There were a lot of media management issues that needed to be sorted which were not there when the newspaper was there which might have led also to the collapse of the paper. The management part of it was almost nonexistent.

From the above interview responses what emerges is that because roles where not clearly defined at management level the newspaper failed to survive.

> **Muziwakhe:** Some of the people that were playing key roles in driving the project also contributed to the demise of the newspaper.

This begs the question of how those in management position contributed to the folding of the newspaper. The following interview responses touch on the sentiments shared by the respondents about the resultant effect of poor management on the operations of the newspaper and how this led to the subsequent closure of it.

Dumisani: The reason why *The Southern Star* was closed for me was not the issue of funding, but the issue was management. The environment was chaotic, even me as reporter I was not pleased. The News Editor used to print the paper but as you know in any normal news publication set up, the production and circulation team is responsible for that.

Bukhosi: I lost interest in the circulation figures after I discovered we did not have a circulation manager. At the end of the day we lost it on the circulation, because the owners of the paper would sometimes distribute the paper for free to anyone and other times they would sell it on the streets. They would do this saying they wanted to generate interest among readers but without a plan on when this is going to stop. This needed to be planned by the circulation and marketing guys to ascertain when was the promotion going to end and if we were promoting, who were we targeting. The paper was never officially launched as a way of advertising it. It just found itself on the street and it meant it was going to sell only on its headlines and nothing else.

From the above interview responses what emerges is the fact that due to lack of clearly defined roles, it became difficult to operate the organisation in a business-like manner. It is in this light that I agree with the criticism leveled on alternative media, that they are seen as inhabiting an "alternative ghetto" and as exemplifying "radical failure"- that is a failure to operate in a business-like manner and they also lack professionalism (see Moyo, 2010; Atton, 2002; Curran, 2002 in Downey and Fenton, 2003: 196). As a result of the chaotic environment the newspaper operated in other challenges were also experienced that also led to the closure of the newspaper.

Ndumiso[35]: They (referring to the pioneers of the newspaper) failed to come up with a proper distribution strategy that would allow the newspaper to reach their target audience.

Dumisani: There a number of issues why the paper did not succeed. The project was good, it was noble, but it was not well planned. The paper was not launched. The people did not know about it. Only a few people aligned to the Mthwakazi idea were the ones who knew about the paper. Other times the paper would be on the street but people would not see it because they were no banners. We wrote good stories but they were not sold, people did not read them.

From the above interview responses what emerges is that because of a poor distribution plan the newspaper failed to reach its target audience and at the end of the day this affected the sales. Additionally the newspaper was never launched; hence the target audiences were not

[35] Ndumiso though not his real name was a reporter.

aware of the new project. This in effect led to the newspaper having to suffer from lack of an audience. This argument is further echoed by another criticism leveled at alternative media that asserts that their demise is as a result of their failure to reach significant audiences (see Moyo, 2010; Atton, 2002; Curran, 2002 in Downey and Fenton, 2003: 196).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main findings of the research by addressing three broad research questions. These are namely: factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper, the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question', and factors that led to the closure of the newspaper. The discussion was supported by the theoretical framework informing the study discussed elaborately in Chapter Three. The analysis was carried out through the presentation of findings derived from in-depth interviews and content analysis carried out. In line with the theoretical framework alluded to, this chapter has highlighted how *The Southern Star* as alternative media, was set up with the aim of serving a marginalised section of the population by proving them with a platform to articulate social, economic and cultural issues affecting them. The overall aim of the newspaper was to promote social emancipation of the people of the South. However, considering the fact that the media are a contextualised phenomenon, and they come laden with some of the prevailing social, cultural and political assumptions of those that produce them, the demise of the newspaper was as a result of lack of advertising revenue, the constraining political environment in which the newspaper operated in, poor management and the failure to reach significant audiences. The next chapter gives a broad conclusion to the whole study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sums up the main findings of this study. The objective of this study was to critically map the historical development of *The Southern Star* newspaper within the socio-political context of Zimbabwe. The weekly newspaper which was in circulation from January 2012 to June 2012, was the first ever independently owned regional publication in Zimbabwe whose target audience consisted of people from the Southern part of Zimbabwe, where the Ndebele are predominately located. By locating Matabeleland within the socio-political and historical context of Zimbabwe, I sought to understand the factors that led to the establishment of the newspaper, what it sought to achieve, how it went about putting that into practice, its message in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question' and also the factors that led to the collapse of the newspaper.

In order to achieve that, the study adopted a two stage research design (qualitative content analysis and semi structured in depth interviews) to answer the research questions raised in this study. Located within the qualitative research tradition and its concerns with how social subjects make meanings of their lived experiences (Deacon et al, 1999; Bryman, 1984), audience studies elicited what Geertz (1973) terms "thick description" (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 272), which, in this study, produced rich and detailed explanations of why *The Southern Star* was established and why it collapsed. Qualitative content analysis of 13 editions of the publication showed that the newspaper fore grounded the following major themes; the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland history, Matabeleland development and Matabeleland heroes. Additionally, in depth interviews held with 15 respondents allowed for the exploration of subject's perceptions on why the newspaper was established and why it collapsed. The justification for using the stated methods for collecting data was stated (see detailed discussion in Chapter Four).

PRIMARY FINDINGS

In Chapter Five I presented and analysed the findings from data gathered through qualitative content analysis and juxtaposed this with data collected through semi structured in-depth interviews. These findings were presented and supported by quotations arising from in-depth interviews and snippets of relevant stories picked from the content analysis. The presentation and discussion of findings was discussed under the following broad research questions;

1. What factors led to the establishment of the newspaper?
2. What was the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'?
3. What led to the collapse of the newspaper?

The discussion of findings was supported by the theoretical framework informing the study that is literature on the alternative media, understandings of the political economy of the media, the idea of social imaginary and last the scholarship on identity formation.

What factors led to the establishment of the newspaper?

In line with the literature on the alternative media, I highlighted how *The Southern Star* as an alternative media was set up with the aim of serving a marginalised section of the population (in this instance the Ndebele) by providing them with a platform to articulate social, economic and cultural issues affecting them. Additionally, in its coverage of stories that relate to the *Gukurahundi* genocide, Matabeleland development, Matabeleland history and Matabeleland heroes, the newspaper sought to 'speak' the 'unspoken' within the mainstream media. It achieved that by challenging the dominant discourse (which systematically silence the 'Matabeleland Question') propped by the mainstream media by putting to the fore the Matabeleland cultural identity politics. By covering stories that resonate with the people in Matabeleland, the newspaper aimed at bringing to the fore and celebrating Matabeleland heroes, Matabeleland development and Matabeleland history.

What was the message of the newspaper in relation to debates emanating from the 'Matabeleland Question'?

From the in depth interview and content analysis findings, it emerged that the overall aim of the newspaper was to foster wider social emancipation and promote social change among people of the South. Therefore, in seeking to liberate the people from the South, the newspaper advocated for social, cultural, economic and political justice as a resolution to the 'Matabeleland Question'.

What led to the collapse of the newspaper?

Considering that the media are a contextualised phenomenon and they come laden with prevailing social, cultural and political assumptions of those that produce them (Thompson, 1995: 11) the demise of the newspaper was discussed under two factors; that is external and internal. The former made it clear that the newspaper collapsed because it lacked advertising revenue. The main reason for failing to source for advertisements was stated as a result of the constraining political environment in which the newspaper operated in. Advertisers were afraid to place advertisements in the newspaper because of the nature of the content produced which could easily be viewed as ethnically divisive and anti social consensus. Additionally, being a new player in the market and not having been rated by ADMA meant that potential advertisers opted to place their adverts in "tried and tested" publications (Zimpapers and Alpha Media Holdings). Internally, because of poor management, roles were not clearly defined and hence the newspaper failed to operate as a business enterprise. As noted during interviews with junior reporters, there was little or no experience at management level. The paper lacked a coordinated circulation strategy and from inception, was never officially launched, which resulted in the failure to reach significant audiences.

In summation, the current study adds to the body of knowledge around the role and function of alternative media, especially the difficulty of sustaining vibrant 'minority' dialogues in societies that are fraught with ethnic politics and a business community patronised by dominant groups. This is important considering the fact that alternative forms of media have been used as vital conduits for the political agendas of social movements as well as helping

ignite these social movements through the advocacy of marginalised social groups in society (Atton, 2002).

APPENDIX ONE

TABLE ILLUSTRATING THE NEWSPAPER EDITIONS ACCESSED

MONTH	WEEK	ACCESSED EDITION
January	7-13	✓
	14-20	
	21-27	
	28-3	✓
February	4-10	✓
	11-17	✓
	18-24	✓
	25-2	✓
March	3-9	✓
	10-16	✓
	17-23	✓
	24-30	
April	31-6	✓
	7-13	
	14-20	✓
	21-27	✓
May	28-4	
	5-11	
	12-18	
	19-25	✓
	26-1	
June	2-8	
	9-15	
	16-22	
	23-29	
July	30-6	
	7-13	
	14-20	

20 EDITIONS PRODUCED

13 ACCESSED

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW GUIDE

OWNER

1. Who owned the newspaper?
2. What factors led to the establishment of the newspaper?
3. What role did *The Southern Star* seek to achieve?
4. How long was the newspaper in circulation for?
5. Who were your target audience?
6. What was the business plan of the newspaper? - (how did you intend to sustain the newspaper?)
7. What other financial support mechanisms did the newspaper rely on?
8. Who did you view as your potential advertisers?
9. With regard to the 'Matabeleland Question' debates going on, what was the position of *The Southern Star*?
10. To what extent was this position promoted in the pages of the newspaper?
11. Did the newspaper have any features that set it apart from the state and independent owned newspapers in the country? If so, state them?
12. What happened to the newspaper?
13. What led to that?
14. What challenges did you face in running the newspaper?
15. Any additional information and comments?

EDITOR

1. Describe your role
2. How was the newsroom structured?
3. What were the circulation figures of the newspaper?
4. What was the nature of the content of the newspaper?
5. What role did *The Southern Star* seek to achieve?
6. In the stories covered, whose interests were being fore grounded and what did you hope to achieve?

7. Did the current socio-political context in any way impact on the way your stories on Matabeleland were constructed? If so, how?
8. With regard to the 'Matabeleland Question' what position did the newspaper advocate for?
9. What happened to the newspaper?
10. What might have led to that?
11. What challenges did you face in running of the newspaper?
12. Can the closure of the newspaper be related to the political position promoted? If so, why?
13. Any additional information and comments

STAFF

1. Describe your role
2. What determined news selection at *The Southern Star*?
3. Who had the final say in stories that came out?
4. With regard to the 'Matabeleland Question' what position did the newspaper advocate for?
5. What happened to the newspaper?
6. What might have led to that?
7. Can the closure of the newspaper be related to the political position promoted? If so, why?
8. Any additional information and comments

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

1. Describe the role of your newspaper.
2. Who were your target audience?
3. How many copies were you producing on a weekly basis?
4. Who were your advertisers?
5. Was the newspaper business sustainable? If not, why so?
6. Did you face any challenges in sourcing for advertisers? If so, why?
7. What happened to the newspaper?
8. What might have led to that?

9. Can the closure of the newspaper be related to the political position promoted? If so, why?
10. Any additional information and comments

THOSE WHO ADVERTISED

1. What does your company deal with?
2. Who are your target consumers?
3. How did you know about *The Southern Star*?
4. When did you start advertising in the newspaper and for how long did you advertise in it?
5. Do you place your advertisements in other newspaper? If so, which ones?
6. Any additional information and comments

THOSE WHO DID NOT ADVERTISE

1. What does your company deal with?
2. Who are your target consumers?
3. Did you know about *The Southern Star?* If so why did you not advertise in the newspaper?
4. Do you place your advertisements in other newspaper? If so, which ones

APPENDIX THREE

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

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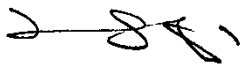
27 May 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that Chelesani Moyo (student number - g12m4368) is a registered Masters student at Rhodes University. She is currently researching Zimbabwe media and needs information on *The Southern Star* newspaper. The information she obtains will be used for thesis purposes only.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Professor Larry Strelitz
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APPENDIX FOUR

CONSENT FORM

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