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**Historical and Heritage Studies**

*A critical analysis of the opinions of Daily Voice readers about the South African Defence Force (SANDF) in 2015 and 2019.*

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## DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my original work, that I am the sole author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety, or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

**Nathan Adams**

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost I must acknowledge and thank Professor Siona O Connell and Dr Nadia Kamies. You have patiently steered me, pushed me and encouraged me to complete this academic work – even when it seemed unlikely that I would ever reach the finish line.

The youngest son of Melvin and Merleen Adams, I am the realisation of all of your hard work, your dreams and your prayers. Without your love and guidance this would not be possible.

This work is also a dedication to my nephews and nieces, I hope that this will inspire you to also value education and know that nothing is impossible.

This was not an easy journey for me, but my gratitude to everyone who encouraged me, believed in me and motivated me when I needed it the most.

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To my husband, Sedwin Rodericks. You have been with me every step of the way and made so many sacrifices to help me reach this goal. Your support has carried me through the rough and tumble of academic life. Thank you my Seddy. Thank you.

# List of acronyms

ANC - African National Congress  
PDF – Portable Document Format  
RJB – Rek Jou Bek  
SA – South Africa  
SANNC - South African Native National Congress  
SANDF – South Africa Defence Force  
SAPS - South African Police Service  
SMS – Short Message Service

# Keywords

Agenda Setting

Apartheid

Army

Coloured

Comment

Daily Sun

Daily Voice

Die Son

Feedback

Gang Violence

Gatekeeping

Message

Newspaper

Opinion

Public Opinion

Reader

SMS

Text message

South Africa

Text

Tabloid

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# Researchers Note

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This study interrogates the relationship between the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the readers of the *Daily Voice* newspaper in 2015 and 2019.

The acronym SANDF and word army is used interchangeably throughout the research, but with no difference in meaning and is only alternatively used for ease of reading. Similarly, the acronym SMS (Short Message Service) and text message is also alternatively used, but only as similes.

The history of the racial classification ‘coloured’ is explained in this research and although it has its roots within the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa, it remains in use by both the democratic government and the generations of people who identify as coloured..

As the research details the *Daily Voice* is primarily aimed at coloured readers and it is through this lens that the relationship with the army is analysed. *Daily Voice* readers comments are the data for this research and has not been edited and unchanged and has been extracted from the newspaper as it appeared on the day of publication. Grammatical errors, spelling errors, Afrikaans words and phrases and slang words that appear in reader comments have also not been altered and edited.

# Foreword

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*There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story.* Frank Herbert (American author).

I never wanted to be a journalist, because whilst growing up in Mitchells Plain on the Cape Flats<sup>1</sup> in the 1980's, I couldn't fathom that I was worthy of the vocation. I wanted to be a storyteller and even though it took me a bit longer to gain the confidence, in my mid-20's I was eventually brave enough to start my writing journey.

When I started as a rookie journalist at a local Cape Town radio station, my writing was short, crisp and to the point, later when I became a newspaper reporter, I was given the freedom to write. There was little to no space for expression and opinion, I had to stick to the formula, introduce the story, set the scene, get both sides of the story and check that I wasn't guilty of misquoting interviewees. I did this, but at the same time I noticed that there was something unique about where I was working, the *Daily Voice* was different. It was tabloid news, but that was not its only differentiating feature from other print news media.

While many outside of the *Daily Voice* newsroom criticised the team for our tabloid<sup>2</sup> news style, we were writing and reflecting the realities of our readers and they were in many ways captivated. This was not a one-sided relationship and I became fascinated with hearing what *Daily Voice* readers thought about the news stories we published, what made them laugh, what outraged them and what moved them to action. I had longer conversations with readers when on assignment and I realised that what existed was a relationship with a newspaper and format that for the first time the all the people of Cape Town felt comfortable interacting with.

The newspaper was their companion, it informed them, entertained them, angered them and made them smile – often it was the only source of news media people were engaging with. It was this relationship that I wanted to interrogate. How could critics dismiss this news format when its readership appeared so engaged with it so passionately and used it a platform to share their own opinions. I wondered if anyone was even aware that tabloid news readers had a voice and they were willing to use it. This is what motivated this study and it is my hopes it will contribute to a broader body of work that interrogates the value of not only tabloid media but also its audiences in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The Cape Flats is a geographical term for the neighbourhoods bordering the False Bay coastline. It was designed by the Apartheid government as separate housing for Coloured residents.

<sup>2</sup> Tabloid is a term used to describe a print news format that is characterised by the compact size of a newspaper as well as its expressive, colloquial, lurid and sensationalist content.



# Abstract

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Tabloid newspapers by definition rely on sensationalist headlines and pictures to grab the attention of readers and have often been dismissed for having little news value in comparison to other media (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004). This newspaper format was only introduced in South Africa in 2001 with the launch of the weekly tabloid newspaper the *Sunday Sun* (Froneman, 2006).

Newspapers in South Africa have since first publication in the 19th Century, been a mechanism for the public to share their opinions on current affairs and issues affecting society. But they were not immune to the oppressive apartheid policies which severely restricted media freedom and banned any independent, critical news media in opposition of the minority white government.

The racial classification of coloured was given to anyone of mixed heritage, but specifically to those of Malay (an Austronesian ethnic group native) and Khoisan (a first nation South African ethnic group) descent. The South African National Defence Force, the state army in South Africa, was founded in the early 1900's but as the political landscape changed so did the aims of this branch of state. It was during the apartheid regime which legalised institutional racial classification and segregation of South Africans that the army was used by the state as a violent force. This was done routinely and with brutal force to suppress any opposition to the apartheid regime.

The *Daily Voice* was launched in Cape Town in 2005 and was aimed at a coloured readership. The *Daily Voice* has a dedicated SMS line via which it encourages readers to comment on published news stories and a selection of these comments are published in the newspaper. These opinions of *Daily Voice* readers are the main source of data for the study. In South Africa, there is little academic analysis of the interactions between tabloid readers and the newspapers.

This study investigates the *Daily Voice* newspaper's representation of its readers' opinions of the army being deployed to fight crime in Cape Town in 2015 and 2019. The public debate began in 2015, when the SANDF was first touted by politicians as a possible law enforcement tool to assist police in efforts to combat gang violence and crime in specific neighbourhoods in Cape Town. Opinions differed on the effectiveness of the SANDF and its capability of being deployed on home soil to fight crime.

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# Introduction to the study

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*The courage in journalism is sticking up for the unpopular, not the popular.*  
Geraldo Rivera (Journalist and TV host)

## Motivation for the study

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I started out my journalistic career as a radio news journalist in 2007. While working in the newsroom at a Cape Town broadcaster, I was coerced into considering applying for a vacancy at the *Daily Voice*, a tabloid newspaper published by Independent Newspapers. The former editor of the *Daily Voice* and at that time the editor of the Cape Argus, Gasant Abader strongly suggested I apply for the Deputy Editor/Senior Reporter position at the newspaper. This was the first time I had ever considered working for a newspaper or working for a tabloid newspaper. I did some research and discovered that the *Daily Voice* was the most read English newspaper in Cape Town and that it had a mainly coloured readership. These two factors appealed to me, and I applied for the position and was hired.

In total, I spent four years working as a reporter at the *Daily Voice*, and it opened my eyes to the reach and importance of tabloid news in Cape Town. In my experience there was credibility and a strong readership trust at the *Daily Voice* and in tabloid news in general that critics had overlooked. The readership was loyal, opinionated about the content they wanted to engage with and engaged with the newspaper staff daily via sending SMS'es to the dedicated text message service set up for reader feedback.

This motivated a desire I had to interrogate this feedback mechanism that existed at the newspaper. The majority coloured readership had strong opinions about the social issues that affected their daily lives and they found a platform of expression in tabloid media. Critics' dismissal of the format of tabloid news and their assessment of it as inferior journalism was for me a disservice to the people who trusted this news source.

When the SANDF was touted as a potential law enforcement solution to the uncontrollable gang violence in Cape Town, the *Daily Voice* kept its readers informed on the topic and readers made their opinions known. It's through the lens of the *Daily Voice* that I hope analyse readers' opinions on this subject which affected them directly.

The SANDF, like all state institutions underwent a period of transformation with the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. But arguably unlike other branches of the government it was the most brute force in maintaining the status quo of the repressive apartheid regime. Twenty one years after democracy, the same race group that felt first-hand the violence meted out by the state army which was an enemy of coloured and black African South Africans under Apartheid, was now being considered the protector against the shared enemy of organised criminals.

## Aim of the study

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The aim of the study is to analyse the interactions between a tabloid newspaper and its readers. Critics dismiss tabloid news for what they judge to be inferior journalism, but the sensationalist aspects of the news format should not override the fact that like any other news consumer; tabloid readers are part of crucial public debates on issues that directly affect them.

This study will not interrogate or evaluate tabloid news as a format, but rather analyse a section of *Daily Voice* readers' interactions with the newspaper. The aim of this study is to analyse what *Daily Voice* readers' opinions about the SANDF being deployed in Cape Town in 2015 was. The variance in reader's opinions of this issue in 2015 and 2019 will also be analysed but crucially, it will also examine if there was a historical shift in readers opinions of the SANDF between these time periods.

## A brief background

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The legacy of Apartheid still lingers in commercial print media in South Africa particularly for newspaper titles which existed during this time or were established as propaganda mouthpieces for the Apartheid state. (Tomaselli, 1997). The oppressive and racist laws created by the white nationalist government from 1948 to 1994 divided South African society along racial lines dictating all of society including the media. The white minority government used broadcast and print media to spread its propaganda, suppress free speech and suppress any opposition. Newspapers that opposed the state were banned, journalists' imprisoned and any "non-white" race was alienated from the press.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, critics cited the slow transformation of SA media and equitable representation of the plurality of races and cultures. (Wasserman and de Beer, 2005; Hadland, 2007).

When the first daily tabloid newspaper produced for a South African readership, the *Daily Sun* hit the shelves in 2001 it was aimed at a working class, black African audience. (Steenveld and Strelitz, 2010). What followed were tabloid newspapers which were either aimed at a specific race group or income group in niche regions of the country. In Cape Town the *Kaapse Son* was launched as a daily tabloid in 2005 by the Media 24 group and the newspaper targeted Afrikaans speaking coloured readers. In that same year, Independent Newspapers launched its first tabloid newspaper the *Daily Voice*. (Smith, Fourie and Froneman, 2012)

The articles published in the *Daily Voice* were primarily in English but colloquial slang Afrikaans and English words and phrases were commonly used.

The Cape Flats is where the *Daily Voice* is most popular and is widely distributed. The Cape Flats is a vast area stretching from False Bay inland for more than 30 kilometers, but without a geographical end point. It has been socially defined as a cluster of coloured and black African informal settlements and suburbs created by the Apartheid government. This

government used specific spatial planning to create neighbourhoods for coloured and black African families, forcibly removed from their homes which had been declared whites only areas under the racist state police, the Group Areas Act.(Harney, 2014).

A remnant of the Apartheid state, today the Cape Flats remains home to thousands of coloured and black families, the majority of whom live below the poverty line or are unemployed. It was the then state army that enforced the Apartheid laws and at times with brute force, patrolled the streets of these neighbourhoods, violently attempted to disband protests and uprisings against the oppressive regime.

But within these neighbourhoods gangs thrived over the years even with the advent of democracy in 1994. These gangs created a network for criminal activity across Cape Town that included the illicit drug trade. (Kinnes, 2017) Shooting incidents between rival gangs became common in these neighbourhoods and in 2015 it prompted calls from human rights activists, politicians and Cape Town residents for the army to be deployed to neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats to maintain law and order.

The *Daily Voice* was a platform for not only news about the stance of government officials and politicians about deploying the army on home soil, but it was also a platform for the mainly coloured readers who lived in these neighbourhoods to have their say.

The newspaper encouraged readers to share their opinions and a selection of reader comments was published in every edition of the *Daily Voice* under the column headline *Rek Your Bek* (Speak Your Mind).

# Vo*DAILY*ice

## Chapter 1

This chapter is an analysis of the origins of newspapers in South Africa and its roots in the newspaper industries in the USA and UK.

In comparison to these industries, tabloid news is in its infancy in South Africa but with its roots firmly in these two developing nations.

This chapter also introduces the Daily Voice newspaper, a Cape Town tabloid newspaper, its origins and position within the news media offering in the city.

The sensationalist aspects of tabloid news is interrogated in this chapter as well and it is argued that shallow, narrow analysis of this form of journalism does not acknowledge that the tabloid news audience is engaging with not only newspaper content but also the serious social issues that tabloid newspapers bring to the attention of its readers.

The manner in which tabloid news presents information to its audience is unique but in this chapter it is argued that the South African context and content of tabloid news is different and uniquely shaped towards its audiences.



# Read All About It: A History of Newspapers

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There exists a strong connection between the history of newspapers in South Africa and the country's turbulent and segregated political and social landscape. For centuries newspapers have been the most accessible and popular medium to inform, educate and entertain the South African public.

With its roots firmly in the model of British newspapers, South Africans have over the years fought as hard to be fairly represented in the media as they have fought for equal rights and political freedom. The history of South African print media has its origins in its British colonial past.

## British and American newspaper history

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For the purpose of this research, it is essential to gain insights into the history of Britain's newspaper industry. South African newspapers and later tabloid newspapers were all modelled from British newspapers. South Africa was colonised by the British at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its media landscape has been shaped and influenced by developments in Britain. There are key differences though and these relate specifically to the apartheid<sup>3</sup> regime in South Africa that divided all aspects of society including press freedom and freedom of speech.

It must also be noted that British and American newspapers have a shared history and publications have mimicked each other in terms of technological and editorial advancements since the 18th Century (Park 281:1923). Comparatively, the British and American newspaper industries were peers as opposed to the South African newspaper market which was commercialised in the mould of the British Press.

The modernisation of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450 revolutionised printing in Europe (Printing Press ... 2018). As technology advanced and printing became more efficient the government and the church in both Britain and America controlled the content of printed material, known as gazettes and leaflets.

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<sup>3</sup> Apartheid is an Afrikaans word which means separateness. It describes the legislated separation of race and ethnic groups started by the minority white government in South Africa in 1948 until the first democratic elections in 1994.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, newspaper ownership in both continents was an expense that only the rich and politically connected could afford. Content of publicly available material such as gazettes was biased towards the political establishment of that time (Raymond 1999:226).

Fradgley and Niebauer Jr (1995:902) argue that British newspaper ownership was questioned in the 1940's, first by the public and then government commissions that were established. They then provide research to argue that from the 1940's until 1997 the business interests of newspaper owners and their relationship with politicians had influenced the content of newspapers. This is mirrored in the history of newspapers in South Africa.

## The origins of South African newspapers

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According to Jay (2011:18) *The Cape Gazette* was the first newspaper published in South Africa. It was established in 1800 and was independently owned, but the newspaper eventually came under the control of the government who dictated the information made available to the public. At the same time the *African Advertiser* was established and according to the website, SA History online, it was a joint venture by the owners of *The Cape Gazette* who were slave traders (The Cape Town Gazette ... 2011). It further states that when the Dutch seized power in 1803, the newspaper changed its name to *Kaapsche Courant*.

This research indicated that since the first newspaper in South Africa was printed, it was difficult to distinguish the government's role in the content of the news that was publicly made available at the time. When the *Afrikaner Bond* was established in the late 19th Century, Afrikaner nationalists were determined to create and control their own news networks, including newspapers (Afrikaner Newspapers and ... 2018). The voices and opinions of black, coloured and anyone not classified as white in South Africa has always been on the side-lines of the media industry. Most notable is the establishment and reach of the *Abantu-Batho* newspaper from 1912-1931 (A history of ... 2013).

This research study confirmed that the newspaper was established by Pixley ka Isaka the leader of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC). Abantu-Batho printed news content in five languages, English, SeSotho, Zulu, Xhosa and SeTswana. The SANNC was the political home of Black Africans who believed and fought for an end to colonialism. Due to inconsistent financial support, the newspaper was printed and distributed at irregular intervals and its distribution was hampered when it became a mouthpiece of the SANNC which later became a formal Black nationalist movement, the African National Congress (ANC). The 1920's and 1930's proved to be a tumultuous time for the Black African owners of regional newspapers. The formation of various political parties impacted on newspaper ownership and editorial independence as these newspapers either ceased to publish or became part of political party communication (A history of ... 2013). This included newspapers such as *Ikwezi le Africa* (the Morningstar of Africa).

Switzer (1988:368) argues that the Black African newspapers in the 1920's and 1930's had to compete for an audience that was semi-literate and scattered across rural and urban areas of the country. He cites rural newspapers of the time such as *Ikwezi le Afrika* and the *African Leader* as being ineffective in protesting the government of the day because of its limited distribution in villages. Switzer (1988:369) describes the Black African press at the time as weak and relatively powerless and elaborates on how newspapers struggled to remain profitable. When a newspaper in South Africa at that time did not have government funding, it struggled to remain a viable business. Only newspaper owners who conceded to printing propaganda were successful in receiving financial support from the government. When apartheid laws restricted freedom of the press, there was no independently owned or financed black African newspaper in South Africa (A History of ... 2013).

## The tabloid newspaper

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Although there is no definitive research into the origins of the term tabloid it is believed to be a hybrid of the word 'tablet', at the time when the pharmaceutical industry advanced in terms of manufacturing tablets as oral medication. The diminutive shape of a tablet, prescribed for medicinal use, is thought to have inspired the description of a more compact version of a newspaper when introduced by British printers.

A tabloid newspaper is defined as "a print publication which is five columns wide and an average of one-half the size of a 'standard-sized' newspaper page that concentrates on sensational, lurid and quirky news which has bold, colourful headlines and is heavily illustrated" (Sparks & Tulloch 2000:3). A broadsheet newspaper is double these measurements. Newspapers that conform to this description of tabloid size, where the published content is not emotive and the language usage is not colloquial, are known as compact size newspapers.

## Tabloid newspapers in Cape Town

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It's notable that the *Daily Voice* was the first English (with a mix of colloquial Afrikaans), language tabloid newspaper in Cape Town. It was also the first tabloid newspaper to be published by the Independent Newspaper Group. Commercial newspapers under the Independent Newspapers stable include the *Cape Argus* which was first printed in 1857 and the *Cape Times* which went to print for the first time in 1876. In comparison to the United Kingdom and the United States of America, tabloid newspapers are relatively new in South Africa.

The history of tabloid newspapers in South Africa began when the *Sunday Sun* and the *Daily Sun* tabloids were launched in South Africa in 2001 and 2002, respectively. Both were nationally distributed tabloids and had sensationalist stories, pictures and headlines to date. These newspapers were a departure in both language and style from other newspapers that South Africans were accustomed to. Jones (2008:167) refers to the significant impact that the

first South African tabloids had in the local news market and its immediate popularity because it was a different to other types of newspapers which focused on serious issues.

The *Daily Sun* in particular proved to be popular with readers and within one year, the newspaper, founded by Media 24, became not only the most read tabloid, but also the most read newspaper in the country (Chama 2017: 127). The success of these tabloids prompted Media 24 to launch a regional tabloid newspaper in Cape Town known as the *Kaapse Son*. It was launched as a weekly newspaper, but its popularity prompted the media group to re-launch it as a daily tabloid newspaper in 2005.

Focusing on primarily an Afrikaans coloured readership, the *Kaapse Son* remains the first and only Afrikaans newspaper in the Media 24 group and expanded to include a Sunday edition. Rival newspaper group Independent Newspapers launched the *Daily Voice* on 16 March 2005. Aimed at the same target market as the already successful *Die Son*, the *Daily Voice* was unique in that it published primarily in English with Afrikaans colloquialisms. Characteristic of the tabloid genre, the newspaper had sensationalist headlines, bright colours and often humorous news stories sourced from across Cape Town.

## A history of the *Daily Voice*

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Independent Newspapers launched the *Daily Voice* on the 16 March 2005. The media company was presented with the opportunity in 2004 to start the first tabloid newspaper in South Africa but chose not to (Wasserman, 2010). The proposed tabloid was then accepted by another media company, Media 24 who launched *Die Son* in 2003. *Die Son* was successful and Irish journalist and editor, Karl Brophy at Independent Newspapers developed the idea to create a rival to the tabloid known as the *Daily Voice*.

Since inception the *Daily Voice* had published content in English and colloquial Afrikaans, including slang phrases and words from both languages. In the debut issue of the *Daily Voice*, the founding editor Karl Brophy made no excuses for the newspaper's style and tone and wrote "Simple, straightforward, down-to-earth English. Gemeng met 'n bietjie Afrikaans. We write like our people speak. And championing your cause...Telling it like it is, S'true, dis hoe dit is! Not pulling punches. Lots of shocks. We won't shy away from the horrors of murder, rape, gang wars" (Bored? Never Again...2005:2). *The Daily Sun*, a national Xhosa and English tabloid as well as *Die Son*, an Afrikaans and English tabloid, had already been launched and attracting readers (Wasserman, 2010: 47). Modelled on the format of successful British tabloid newspapers, the *Daily Voice* targeted 'coloured' readers in the Western Cape and particularly the Cape Flats in Cape Town.

*Die Son* and the *Daily Voice* were the first newspapers to reflect the hybrid English and Afrikaans colloquial language that was spoken by 'coloured' people in the Western Cape and on the Cape Flats in particular. Both newspapers were tabloid in size and content and both prioritised the news, gossip, entertainment and sport that broadsheet titles ignored but that

appealed to ‘coloured’ people and communities. (Wasserman, 2010: 165) explains that the relationship between these two tabloids and its readers often extended beyond the interviews of eyewitnesses and readers being sources of information. The tabloid journalists from both newspapers would foster relationships with the readers they met and interviewed and regularly offered them advice or directed them to appropriate support or assistance, including lawyers and government social schemes that might be able to assist them. A large percentage of the tabloid readership were characterized by being poor and disadvantaged, and they often felt helpless in certain situations and the tabloid journalists were the first people to listen to their plight and offer support or guidance (Wasserman 2010: 166).

Glenn and Knaggs (2005:4) point to this approach of *Daily Voice* journalists, leaving the office and speaking to people in the communities they report on as being the exception rather than the norm in newsrooms. The *Daily Voice* reporting team is also lauded for not relying on subscription service news agencies and contacting people directly, often face-to-face before publishing a story.

A consequence of this news-gathering approach is that the *Daily Voice* was known for being reliable. In comparison to its broadsheet competitors, the *Daily Voice* prints a larger percentage of news from the community in which it is distributed and read than national or international news features (Glenn & Knaggs 2005: 5).

A third result of the localised approach to news coverage was that since its inception, the *Daily Voice* has created and organised and supported campaigns within the neighbourhoods in which they report where they believed they could assist to resolve a social ill or concern. Glenn and Knaggs (2005: 3) highlight this in their interview with Brophy where he explains that the *Daily Voice* assisted a community in getting a bushy area cleared. It was reported that the bush in Blue Downs on the Cape Flats was being used for criminal activity, including the alleged rape and murder of women and children, an issue which Brophy says they had to do more than just report on. It is these aspects of the *Daily Voice* news reporting that makes it unique. This readership interacts with the newspaper and comments on published reporting which is why an analysis of these comments is at the heart of this study.

***“Unfortunately in this country there is a correlation between race and class which is always going to be a problem because apartheid was a self fulfilling and self perpetuating political system. And unfortunately, at the moment, you can still talk about your readers in terms of race when you really should be talking about readers in terms of class. Elsewhere in the world, everybody deals with newspapers’ readers in terms of class. In Britain, in the UK, newspapers are aimed at people in a certain classes. Now our newspaper is quite clearly aimed at a working class population; now unfortunately it so happens because of apartheid, the vast majority of that population happens to be of a certain pigmentation.”***(Glenn and Knaggs, 2005)

## Sensationalism and tabloid newspapers

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In 1904, Harmsworth was ennobled and given the title of Lord Northcliffe as a royal viscountcy in 1918 (Baylen 2001:5). By then he was already labelled a press baron because of his influence and control of the British press. Baylen (2001:3) in his assessment of Lord Northcliffe after establishing the *Daily Illustrated Mirror* writes that “Northcliffe continued to extend his newspaper empire by purchasing *The Observer* in 1905 and by acquiring and reviving the almost bankrupt Times in 1908. Thus, by the onset of war in 1914, Northcliffe was truly a newspaper tycoon in possession of almost 50 percent of London's morning and evening newspapers and in control of approximately 15 percent of the Sunday papers sales.” He also did not waver in his approach to a more “popular journalism” which included a greater focus on the personal lives of newsmakers and public figures of that time. One of Lord Northcliffe’s competitors was W.T. Stead who was the owner and editor of the Pall Mall Gazette. Conboy (2010) in his review of media mass markets explains that Stead was at the helm of a news investigation that led to the term “New Journalism” being coined. The investigative story had all the hallmarks of a tabloid news piece and most importantly was sensationalist, as Conboy writes “the ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ story, which exposed Victorian hypocrisy on child prostitution in a series of articles from 6 July 1885 (Conboy 2010:6).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, newspaper owners and editors in both the USA and UK, sought maximum value out of the printing of their titles. Bird (1990:379) evaluates how sensation was engrained into American journalists at the *National Enquirer* in the 1980’s. She highlights that facts were selectively used in print news articles to create a narrative in a news story that had a desired editorial outcome for publication. In her research Bird concludes that there is no difference between the journalistic work of tabloid news reporters and their counterparts at broadsheet newspapers. She points out in her research that many tabloid writers and journalists have previous experience at newspapers considered to be “mainstream and serious press” and that they made the transition with ease. (Bird 1990:379-380).

This is a characteristic noted in tabloid newspapers in the UK, USA and South Africa. Glenn and Knaggs (2005:4) in their evaluation of the *Daily Voice* points out that criticism of tabloid newspapers is borne from a societal expectation of the media to be the most truthful storytellers. The main criticism of tabloid being that sensation is created through the use of colloquial language, headlines that are witty or humorous and created to attract attention. However, the tabloid genre in South Africa was different because the news agenda in South Africa and readership was different. South Africa is a developing nation and hence it has different social ills in comparison to developed countries such as the USA and UK. No two countries are the same and no two societies are the same but the readership needs in South Africa is unique. There are 11 official languages in South Africa and varying degrees of literacy in across the country in rural and urban areas. Mother tongue languages differ from city to city, by race, ethnic and cultural groups.

When the *Daily Sun* was launched, it elicited strong criticism from newspaper editors and academics, for a sensationalist approach to news (Wasserman 2010:5). Journalists Lizette Rabe and Guy Berger were fierce critics of these sensationalist aspects of South African tabloid newspapers. Guy Berger was a judge at the Mondi Shanduka Awards in 2005 and stated that the South African journalism awards panel did not hold tabloid journalism in high esteem “I accept that there is skill and talent that goes into tabloidism. Good luck to them. But the circulation success of their junk-journalism does not render it as valuable as the kind of work that is required to come tops in the Mondis” (Berger 2011).

Lizette Rabe was a columnist and the Head of the Postgraduate Department of Journalism at the University of Stellenbosch in 2005. She questioned whether the *Daily Voice* was a credible news offering. In response to the first editions of the *Daily Voice*, online column whether tabloid newspapers damages the reputation of journalists and the entire media industry (Rabe: 2005). Berger and Rabe are the critics that Bird refers to and urges to see beyond the tone and journalistic style of tabloid news.

Glenn and Knaggs (2005:7) interviewed the founding editor of the *Daily Voice*, Karl Brophy about the criticism of the sensationalism of content in the *Daily Voice* and he believed it was an unfair attack “The thing about this town [Cape Town] is that it has great news. I don’t mean it’s all good news. The stuff that happens here, it’s incredible. One of the criticisms of tabloids is that we sensationalise things; there is absolutely no necessity to sensationalise any news in Cape Town because it’s sensational anyway. Like in the last number of months, we have a woman on trial for the youngest contract killing in the world. With a contract killing of a baby, you can’t sensationalise that. You know I think South African newspapers are guilty of de-sensationalizing news. Like when the *Cape Times* or *Die Burger* or any other newspaper carries two to four paragraphs on page 8 or page 10 saying that there were 12 murders in Khayelitsha on the weekend, that’s de-sensationalizing things.”

The sensationalist aspects of news reporting are not limited to newspapers and tabloids. As news media evolved, and technological advancements were made, so has the term tabloid. Authors (Glynn 2000; Ursell 2001; Davis 2003; Conboy 2005) have all used the term ‘tabloidization’ when referring to sensationalist aspects of news reporting in both broadsheet newspapers, in broadcasting and in online media. This criticism is levelled at any news outlet that appears to have selectively reported facts or information to the public in a biased manner and simultaneously relying on humour, slang or graphic images in their reporting (Örnebring and Jönsson 2004:283).

Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2001:223) indicate that an aim of tabloid newspapers was to appeal to readers by presenting stories that were entertaining and salacious often appealing to the lowest common denominator. While this is an aspect of tabloid newspapers, in South Africa tabloid newspapers covered the same serious social concerns and current affairs issues that other media did. When tabloids were introduced in South Africa, the country was still in the infancy of its democracy. The nature of the oppressive Apartheid regime meant that the media in the country was controlled by the minority white government. In consequence, only the voices of white people were reflected in established media, including newspapers.

Tabloid newspapers reflected the daily lives and concerns of black and mixed race communities. The sensationalist aspects of tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Sun*, the *Daily Voice* and *Die Son* also had to appeal to its readers. As previously discussed, the *Daily Sun* had a majority Black African readership and often used stories of witchcraft and cultural myths as a means to entertain audiences. Allegations of supernatural sightings was given precedence in the pages of the *Daily Sun*.

The Cape Town tabloids, the *Daily Voice* and the *Daily Sun* targeted a mainly Coloured audience and gang violence was an important issue for both newspapers readership. Bain (2006:11) highlights that there was social capital in the *Daily Voice's* reporting of gang violence and that it resonated with its readership. Reports of criminal activity on the Cape Flats was part of the *Daily Voice's* news coverage which Bain interrogates in his research of the newspaper's visual rhetoric.

The evolution of the term sensationalism as it relates to news media continues to change as society changes. In South Africa this is evident in the change of the political dispensation. What is morally and ethically permissible for public consumption in democratic South Africa today, was deemed illegal and immoral under Apartheid, British and Dutch rule.

Wasserman (2010:178) states that South African tabloid newspaper content is a hybrid of factual news reporting of current events, politics and general news but also entertainment news and gossip columns. His seminal research concludes that the sensationalist aspects of tabloid newspapers should not be the sole reason that it is criticised for a perceived lack of news value to readers. He also argues that mass media continues to evolve in the manner and tone in which it engages, informs and educates its audience (Wasserman 2010:116).



# Vo*DAILY*ice

## Chapter 2

An analysis of certain communication theories is important in this research analysis as the *Daily Voice* is a publicly available source of information and in this chapter it needed to be interrogated.

Communication happens in various forms and criticism that tabloid news is a sensationalist form of communication is well established. In this chapter there is an analysis that goes beyond critiquing the journalistic merits of tabloid news but starts to look at the conversations that this medium is having with its audience.

Within tabloid news in general and the *Daily Voice* specifically crime reporting is notable and this is analysed in this chapter as a way to begin to look at the very serious social issues that tabloid news does not ignore.

To look at the history of crime reporting in South Africa is crucial because like many other journalistic efforts it was hampered by the oppressive apartheid government and there was a freedom of reporting crime that is unique to tabloid newspapers and the *Daily Voice*

# Theories and Crime reporting in newspapers

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The media is instrumental in developing the narrative of public sentiment and opinion and in presenting arguments about societal issues. The Chapel Hill study published in 1986 was a seminal work in agenda setting theory and analysed the news media coverage of the American presidential election. It is the commercial aim of a newspaper to engage readers by getting their attention and increasing readership to remain profitable. As explained tabloid newspapers are unique in its approach to reach its audience with bold and humorous headlines that is criticised for being scandalous. This key aspect of tabloids is itself an agenda setting characteristic because tabloid newspapers are designed to illicit an emotional response from readers. Tan and Weaver (2013:784) argue that every media outlet has its constraints. These include editorial and commercial constraint which are not isolated from one another. The style and tone of a tabloid such as the *Daily Voice* has these limitations which is a key aspect of agenda setting.

The *Daily Voice* succeeds in capturing its audience attention with the use of colloquial language and slang terminology in English and Afrikaans. This means that although ethical and accepted journalist practice is used when interviewees are quoted directly in the newspaper, colloquialisms are present in descriptions and reportage. *Daily Voice* editorial staff, including the journalist adapt the description of all published stories to include this style and grammar. Language usage is therefore another way in which the *Daily Voice* uses agenda setting characteristics.

This kind of filtering is evidence of the spiral of silence theory which is closely linked to agenda setting theory. Noelle-Neumann (1974) established this theory through research of news coverage in Europe. It espouses that if a newspaper, or any media, does not give coverage to a certain issue it won't be important in the public domain. The *Daily Voice* would be doing this if there is a bias or an omission in the messages and reader feedback selected for publication. Given format and editorial restrictions, there will always be an omission of certain aspects of a news story before it is published. A pattern of bias or omission is neither ethical nor moral. The spiral of silence applied at the *Daily Voice* relates to an omission based on a language.

Another closely associated theory to agenda setting is priming theory. This sees each person as a link in a chain that carries information or an opinion. In association with each other, the interconnectedness influences each other's opinions (Potter 2012:21). This theory would not be applicable to an analysis of the *Daily Voice* SMS column. As explained, messages are edited for brevity by at least one journalist or editorial staff member. Although the reader messages are grouped and themed, it would not be true to say that one message could influence the tone of another. Messages are also sent independently and readers are not sharing information before messages are delivered to the newspaper. The commonality of

tone and themes of messages is created by the newspaper staff, and although similar opinions might be reflected it cannot be confirmed as being the intention of the reader. The priming theory will be applicable for these research purposes where the *Daily Voice* articles that readers reference being an independent link in the information chain. News articles which readers respond to can influence reader comments and opinions and would be important if the reader had an emotive response and shared this with the newspaper.

Omissions and selecting facts for publication is part of the journalistic workflow as there are space limitations in newspaper printing. Roessler (2012:2) asserts that although editing must take place in newspaper production, it must always be done without a deliberate agenda to change facts. Roessler also highlights that agenda setting is divided into different categories for example, political agenda setting, psychological agenda manipulation and agenda setting for monetary gain. Neither of these subcategories are easy to identify, but this research seeks to identify if there is a pattern in the published reader messages in the *Daily Voice* as it relates to gang violence in 2015. The *Daily Voice* has a moral and journalistic responsibility to reflect a diversity of views as newspapers do influence public sentiment and opinion.

## Trust and tabloids

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Journalism in South Africa during the authoritarian Apartheid era was legislated and policed in favour of the minority, the white government of that time (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 38). As a result of no free press, reporting was biased towards the undemocratic government who also restricted freedom of movement and was guilty of human rights abuses. Journalists who attempted to accurately and in an unbiased manner report the political and societal issues in South Africa would do so in fear of being banned from the country or arrested. When the democratic transition took place on 27 April 1994, it ushered in a new era for South African journalists and media outlets. The Constitution, which was enacted in 1996, guarantees freedom of the press. Broadsheet newspapers remained a staple in the SA media environment until the advent of the tabloid newspaper. A characteristic of the tabloid newspaper was that it reflected the reality of working class South Africans and published stories in slang and colloquial language that made it appealing to this market.

Crime reporting and the accuracy of crime statistics from the South African Police Service (SAPS) was publicly debated and disputed by academics, journalists and politicians. Under the oppressive Apartheid system, accurate crime statistics was not available. Journalists had no official means by which to verify crime statistics in non-white areas because the Apartheid government kept records secret. This meant that with the advent of democracy a more accurate account of crime in South African societies could be reported by journalists.

Broadsheet newspapers did this but had no comparable data with which to work. When tabloid newspapers were launched, crime was a key issue of news reporting. Because of the nature of SA tabloids and its niche audience, geographically, linguistically and culturally,

crime was often reported in first person accounts. As previously explained, Karl Brophy was a strong supporter of the tabloid newspaper format and that it was an effective journalistic medium to share current affairs and news in Cape Town (Knaggs 2015: 5). In the launch edition of the paper Brophy wrote in an editorial that he believed broadsheet newspapers were guilty of under reporting crime in the city.

As explained the tabloid news style was eye-catching and this was a point of criticism. A week after its launch, the *Daily Voice* was also being publicly criticized when the Head of the Postgraduate Department of Journalism at the University of Stellenbosch Lizette Rabe questioned whether the newspaper was a credible news offering. In her online column Rabe asked “The question that needs to be asked, is – and don’t shoot, it’s just the messenger - what does it (tabloid journalism) do to the status of journalism? The credibility of the media? The integrity of those professionals who proudly call themselves journalists?” (Rabe: 2005). This question is a polarization of the newspaper industry between pitting mainstream media against the then newcomers tabloid. This juxtaposition is a reflection of a mistrust of news reported in tabloids.

Representation in the media in the media is an important aspect especially in the history of South African media. Ouellette (2013: 56) identifies the media’s “burden of representation” to its audience to reflect a plurality of races, ethnicities, religions and languages which “can become unbearable.” This is not a choice for media groups, who are legally obliged to reflect in its coverage that is guaranteed in the South African constitution and media laws. In the tabloid press there is an even greater sensitivity within a niche audience, either defined by race, language or geographical location to not encourage stereotypes of groups of people. There is a heavier burden of representation for tabloid press because of the localised readership and a media environment where readers are encouraged to actively engage with editorial content by responding to it. Crystal and Davy (1992:3) argue the importance of there being a difference in the language of newspaper reporting and conversational language. The contention is that a more formal language and grammar usage will give an editorially authoritative voice. Brophy refers this as a different “news sociology” implemented at the *Daily Voice* and that they implore a less academic approach to news reporting and language (Hadland (2008:108).

The colloquial language usage evokes an emotive tone to the *Daily Voice* news articles which is done deliberately to grab the attention of the reader which can be examined through a semiotic analysis. This is a study of a phrase or text to reveal the signs or indicators which seek to provoke an emotion or a response from the intended audience. Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock (1999).

## Reporting on gangs and crime

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Crime reporters were hampered by the restrictive legislation of the apartheid government to accurately document and publish incidents of crime. These restrictions as well as the apartheid government’s strict media monitoring and effective propaganda efforts meant that

the lived experiences of the majority of South Africans before 1994 and the democratic state was not truthfully reflected in newspapers or broadcast media. The democratically elected South African government protected media freedom and this for the first time allowed for the fair reflection of crime in newspapers, television and radio.

Crime like all other current affairs issues was not accurately reported on during apartheid due to the prohibitive legislation in South Africa at that time. This is primarily due to restrictions placed on journalists and the public in accessing information in and disseminating in a transparent manner and on a public platform. This meant that crime statistics was just one of the many indicators of the state of the apartheid governed society that at the time was not publicly available. Statistics and data that was shared by the apartheid regime was also not always reliable or verifiable as the nationalist, minority government relied on propaganda to maintain control of the state as well as the political landscape.

On 27 April 1950, the apartheid government in South Africa adopted the Group Areas Act with segregated citizens along racial lines and included special planning designs to ensure different race groups did not live together (District 6...2017). On 11 February 1966, the legislation was used to forcibly remove residents of District Six located near the Cape Town City Centre and relocate them to various areas across the city based on their race (District 6 ... 2017). Coloured residents were relocated to Hanover Park, Manenberg and Mitchells Plain approximately 20 km's from the City Centre which was "low cost letting schemes...funded from the municipal rates account." (Mitchell's Plain...2016). This large suburb became known as the Cape Flats.

In Cape Town gang violence on the Cape Flats is historically linked to this oppressive National Party apartheid regime. Gangs had always been a feature of coloured communities as men grouped together to protect their neighbourhoods from internal and external perceived threats (Jensen 2008). The legislative restrictions of apartheid also meant that people were legally confined to areas according to their race. With the relocation of communities, gangs in these communities became more violent and criminal networks were established (Jensen, 2008). When the *Daily Voice* launched it was the first print representation of this societal reality and unlike its newspaper competitors, did so in its readers own colloquial language and in a familiar grammatical style and tone.

Gaur (2014:142) argues that media agencies have a duty of care when it comes to influencing public opinion, concluding that there needs to be a greater sensitivity in media reporting on news stories and specific news events in a series of reports. For the *Daily Voice* newspaper this duty of care relates directly to its regular coverage of gang violence on the Cape Flats, and the representation of facts and key role players such as politicians and police management quoted in news coverage.

Since its first edition the *Daily Voice* reportage included gang violence and publishing explicit pictures and descriptions of crime. This was in sharp contrast to other newspapers in Cape Town that also assigned space to gang violence coverage as Brophy explained yet those

newspapers would use the same crime scene photos as the *Daily Voice* or assign significantly less column issues to such content. In 2015, when the debate about various crime fighting strategies was debated publicly, the *Daily Voice* played a prominent role in shaping readers opinion. When there are public debates about social issues and opposing views on one issue, Bennett (2009:259) cautions that established/mainstream media risk elevating one viewpoint over another and being guilty of bias. Contrary to this Barbie Zelizer argues that tabloids “unrestrictive narrative” is the perfect platform for journalists report on news that directly affects their readers “These stories require time, resources, and skills, but they help meet journalism’s obligations to do more than narrate the increasingly inconsequential tide of amusement, diversion and official spin that pervades” (Zelizer 2009).

The *Daily Voice* relied solely on its reporters for its newspaper content and to solicit public opinion for its news stories. According to Berger (2002), critics of the *Daily Voice* and of South African tabloids argued that the newspaper format and content is a media offering that doesn’t adhere to journalistic principles of accuracy and fairness; and that tabloid newspapers are guilty of bias and sensationalist reporting. These views are in stark contrast to the history of crime reporting in South Africa before the democratic dispensation in 1994. Crime reporting remains a crucial element of the *Daily Voice*’s news agenda as it aims to reflect the realities of its readers.

## Introduction to research theories

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There are numerous research theories that can be applied to studies of newspapers and the media industry. Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White (2009:71) detail the history of normative theory as traced from Aristotle to the libertarian traditions and modern day media. In summary, the theory is defined by values that are important to society at the time and how the media conveys this when information is disseminated.

But geographically and historically there are differences between newspaper readers and the way information is received and shared. The norms are not the same. Shaw (2009) argues that there are oral traditions in Africa as well as a history of colonialism that makes African media unique. Berger (2002: 23) agrees and also highlights that in South Africa even the role of society and the public’s interaction and relationship with the media is not comparable to any other territory. Hallin and Mancini (2004) criticises this research approach arguing that an Anglo-American media model is not one size fits all in a plural media landscape. The *Daily Voice* was the first English tabloid in Cape Town and the first tabloid newspaper printed by Independent Newspapers (REF). This sets it apart from other newspapers in content and style and the manner in which it disseminated information to the public. There are universal theories that can be used in an assessment of both tabloid media and specifically the *Daily Voice*.

## Agenda setting theory

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Mass media has since its inception been instrumental in shaping public opinion through coverage of news events. McCombs and Shaw (1972) devised the term when they analysed election campaigns and news media coverage. Walter Lippman describes this as shaping of public sentiment as: “the world outside and the Pictures in our heads” in his 1922 book entitled *Public Opinion*. The manner in which information is processed and disseminated by any media organisation is therefore crucial in creating a societal reality.

The media is instrumental in developing the narrative of public sentiment and opinion and in presenting arguments about societal issues. The Chapel Hill study published in 1986 was a seminal work in agenda setting theory and analysed the news media coverage of the American presidential election. It is the commercial aim of a newspaper to engage readers by getting their attention and increasing readership to remain profitable.

As explained, tabloid newspapers are unique in its approach to reach its audience with bold and humorous headlines that are criticised for being scandalous. This key aspect of tabloids is itself an agenda setting characteristic because tabloid newspapers are designed to elicit an emotional response from readers.

Tan and Weaver (2013:784) argue that every media outlet has its constraints. These include editorial and commercial constraints which are not isolated from one another. The style and tone of a tabloid such as the *Daily Voice* has these limitations which is a key aspect of agenda setting.

The *Daily Voice* succeeds in capturing its audience attention with the use of colloquial language and slang terminology in English and Afrikaans. This means that although ethical and accepted journalist practice is used when interviewees are quoted directly in the newspaper, colloquialisms are present in descriptions and reportage. *Daily Voice* editorial staff, including the journalists, adapts the description of all published stories to include this style and grammar. Language usage is therefore another way in which the *Daily Voice* uses agenda setting characteristics.

Omissions and selecting facts for publication is part of the journalistic workflow as there are space limitations in newspaper printing. Roessler, 2012 asserts that although editing must take place in newspaper production, it must always be done without a deliberate agenda to change facts. Roessler also highlights that agenda setting is divided into different categories for example, political agenda setting, psychological agenda manipulation and agenda setting for monetary gain. Neither of these subcategories are easy to identify, but this research seeks to identify if there is a pattern in the published reader messages in the *Daily Voice* as it relates to gang violence in 2015. The *Daily Voice* has a moral and journalistic responsibility to reflect a diversity of views as newspapers do influence public sentiment and opinion.

## Public opinion

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The theory of public opinion is a normative theory that relates to the responsibility of news media as a catalyst for shaping the views of its readers.

The *Daily Voice* sets the tone for what is a direct and often explicit narrative to readers who share their thoughts via the SMS line.

This engagement with readers meant that the news agenda was open to influence by reader feedback and suggestions for journalists to respond to issues that would not otherwise be explored.

The editorial direction would then not be created in isolation by the news staff, reporters of the *Daily Voice* Editor. There is a flow of communication to the *Daily Voice* news gathering team via its dedicated SMS line and it's reflected in the newspaper. By categorising the reader feedback and analysing the editorial setting and influence of the newspaper when imparting information about gang violence in Cape Town in 2015 is determined.

## Semiotics

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There is more than one of signifiers which can then be used to establish the intention of the author or a pattern in a series of texts that contain the same signifiers from the same source. Hall (1980: 130) refers to the importance of the “encoding/decoding” of the information communicated between the sender and the receiver. In the case of the *Daily Voice* the journalist receives the message and codes the message in a news article to the reader. This decoding by the reader is in an instinctive way, but it is not devoid of the receivers own bias, beliefs and values although this might not be the main intention of the receiver. The news articles become important messages sent and received daily to a targeted audience who can choose to respond to the newspaper via the SMS line provided. Hall (1980:137) refers to this as a negotiated code. The readers extract the information which impacts directly on them and applies it in a generalised manner by either strengthening or challenging their opinion or viewpoint. Gaur (2014:142) argues the media has a greater duty of care when it comes to influencing public opinion, concluding that there needs to be a greater sensitivity in media reporting on news stories and specific news events in a series of reports. For the *Daily Voice* newspaper this duty of care relates directly to its regular coverage of gang violence on the Cape Flats, the use of language and pictures and the selected reader comments about the crime situation and proposed solutions.

## Gatekeeping

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The term ‘gatekeeping’ is broadly used to describe the flow of information into and out of a newsroom. Focus is also drawn to the obstacles that would impede this from external sources (White 1950). As explained, tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Voice* rely on humour and eye-catching headlines to differentiate themselves from other newspapers. McCombs (2004:



14) emphasises that the tone of media is important and that it does have an effect in the way information is received. If information is presented in a humorous or witty manner then readers are less likely to form serious opinions about the subject matter.

The characteristics and obstacles of gatekeeping in any news organisation and the subjective manner in which decisions are made to disseminate news to the public is important. Each newspaper will have a different workflow and consequently various ways in which information is processed and made published. At the *Daily Voice* the workflow of how reader messages are published is also unique. The messages are received via a short message service (SMS) number which is printed in every edition of the newspaper. Readers are encouraged to send their feedback and opinions on *Daily Voice* news stories to this SMS number.

Not all messages received by the *Daily Voice* are printed as is stated in the newspaper and only a selection of reader feedback is published. This selection is done by the *Daily Voice* editorial team and is the responsibility of one staff member who either assists fact checking or editing content submitted for publication by journalists and columnists.

# VoICE

DAILY

## Chapter 3

The origins and history of the SANDF is intertwined with the minority rule of the apartheid government. In this chapter this legacy is analysed and how it relates to the relationship that coloured people would have had with this organ of state.

The starting point also had to interrogate the roots of the coloured racial classification and this race groupings position both within apartheid and democratic South Africa.

The Group Areas Act and its effectiveness in dividing race groups both geographically and ideologically during and after apartheid is also looked at in this chapter. Coupled with this is the establishment of the neighbourhoods that make up the Cape Flats in Cape Town and at the heart of this area of the city the neighbourhood of Mitchells Plain.

Not only is Mitchells Plain a microcosm of the Group Areas Act and its legacy that still exists today, but it is here where the target of the *Daily Voice* is. From this juncture, coloured identity is explored as well as how it has been the subject of misanalysis and stereotypes.

Mitchells Plain is also my home and it was important for me to reflect on my own experiences growing up in the neighbourhood of Westridge, Mitchells Plain in the late 90's.

# The SANDF and coloured identity

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## The SANDF to the rescue

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In part a motivation for this study was what I had observed over time in *Daily Voice* readers opinions about crime and violence. It was an issue which affected the readers directly but it appeared their opinions were not recognised or validated by the people who were in positions of power to change the situation.

The army has been a hallmark of the apartheid regime and for those race groups oppressed and violated by this brute force, the army was always the enemy. During apartheid, the army was a key instrument used to enforce the law and ensure the status quo of the minority white government by any means necessary. If the army took action and you disagreed with it there was no way that a person classified as coloured could complain or lay a charge against the state. The entire apartheid state machinery was built to crush and enforce the undemocratic political will. The SANDF was one of the first state institutions that needed to be transformed when apartheid ended. To be inclusive of the South African demographic, to be more of a peace keeping force at home and abroad and to adapt overall to the democratic dispensation.

These bureaucratic changes are outlined in this chapter and explained in the timeline that occurred. What cannot be measured is the sentiment of the South African public overall towards the SANDF. This is why the *Daily Voice* readers and general public opinion that the army be deployed onto the streets of the Cape Flats was a topic that I wanted to investigate. I personally questioned whether the army had been transformed to the point where it was no longer considered the enemy of the people but their saviour. To assist in crime fighting efforts was not the primary mandate of the SANDF and the area of deployment – the Cape Flats, has many social ills. Crime, violence and gangs have their roots in many of these social ills and is only the product of it, the solution was not a simple one. This was in part the motivation for this research, but as this chapter will outline, it is a complex issue that is rooted in apartheid autocracy. The ground the soldiers were asked to protect carried the burden of many of apartheid's crimes and the solution to violence and gang culture and crime was not going to be found overnight or with a deployment of troops.

## The SANDF

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The SANDF in its current composition was established after South Africa became a democracy in 1994. The country had a negotiated transfer of power from apartheid to the democratic elections on 27 April 1994 and the military was known at the time as the armed forces. The liberation groupings that fought for the countries democratic dispensation did so with armed forces and these troops would be integrated into the army that would become the SANDF.

These were Bantustan<sup>4</sup> forces that included armed wings of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party (Uys, 1997). Matloa (2015) points out that the establishment of the SANDF like the negotiation that led to democratic election was an agreement between the liberation movements and the government at the time that the SANDF would be established. South Africa's new armed force, the SANDF was therefore established on 27 April 1994 the day that democratic elections took place.

Wessels (2009) states that there were many organisational changes that needed to take place to ensure the formation of the SANDF. "...since 1994, the SANDF has also undergone structural transformation, which included the disbandment of the old territorial Army commands and of the commando units, the establishment of an Army Office, Air Force Office and Navy Office in the place of the Army, Air Force and Navy headquarters, and the restoration of civilian control over the SANDF, with a Secretary of Defence becoming the administrative head of the Department of Defence, while the Chief of the SANDF commands the armed forces as such." (Wessels, 2009).

The predecessor to the SANDF was the South African Defence Force (SADF) and this was the state army of the apartheid government. The Nationalist Party ensured that the SADF was equipped to suppress both any opposition to the apartheid regime. It was an army comprised of a majority white managerial structure and conscription of white males was legislated as integral part of maintaining the SADF.

Stott (2002) clarifies that maintaining the efficacy of the SADF did not just begin with conscription of white males. "Militarisation at the ideological level manifested itself across a range of areas; school cadet systems, youth preparedness programmes, the promotion of war toys and games, the compulsory registration of 16-year-old white boys for conscription and the progressive extension of compulsory military service for white male youths to two years plus annual camps." (Stott, 2002). It was this structure that needed to be dismantled, integrated and re-built in order to be representative of the democratic South Africa that the SANDF was tasked with serving and protecting.

Under the Union of South Africa there was specific compensation made for those males classified as coloured to join the Union Defence Force (Timothy J. Stapleton, 2013). Although this was significant, as Stapleton (2013: 137) points out in his account of the origins of coloured representation in the South African army at the time it did not give this race group any kind of advantage or equality within military ranks. Coloured men were only allowed to join what was known as the Cape Corps and it existed within very strict military and apartheid legislative parameters. South Africa sent forces to aid the British in the First World War and strict criteria was set for coloured men who could sign up and join this infantry (The Cape Coloured Corps and the First World War. South African History Online).

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<sup>4</sup> The origins of the word Bantu is a derogatory term in reference to Black Africans. A Bantustan was a black homeland, or black state within the borders of South Africa intended by the apartheid government to allow black Africans autonomy over their political and social welfare.

“The First Battalion of the Cape Corps embarked for East Africa on 9 February 1916 on board the H.M.T. Armadale Castle, arriving in Mombasa on 17 February 1916. For the first nine months, the battalion was occupied with tasks that supported the advancing British troops. This included guarding bases, patrolling roads, building of bridges, transport duties, hospital duties and various administrative tasks.” (The Cape Coloured Corps and the First World War. South African History Online).

Stapleton writes: “the creation, in December (1914), of the Cape Corps...consisted of 1,000 armed Coloured volunteers under white officers and represented a radical departure from the principle of an all-white Union Defence Force. Since the outbreak of war, the Cape Town–centered African Political Organization (APO) had been calling for the enlistment of Coloured soldiers, and as early as December 1914, and it had organized 10,000 potential volunteers. Responding to white fears that the Cape Corps would lead to an extension of the Cape non-racial franchise to other parts of the country, the Botha administration pointed out that this force was paid for by imperial rather than South African funds and therefore would have no local claims.”

This inclusion of coloured volunteers to the armed forces did very little to contribute positively to public sentiment about racial equality at the time both within the military and within South African society. It had the opposite affect and was a divisive political action that only benefited the cause of fighting the war at the time. There was no lasting legacy of the Cape Corps that existed when the SANDF was formed. The actions of the apartheid armed services as the violent enforcer of the minority government was an memory that was far more recent to South Africans than the historical role that coloured men had in the South African armed forces in the early 1900’s.

## The might of the army

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A change to South Africa’s military structure has also precipitated by changes in the political landscape of the country. As Matloa (2015) details the structure and functions of the military took place when the country became a Union in 1912 and in 1957, four years before South Africa was declared a Republic. “The Union Defence Force (UDF) was established in 1912 in terms of the South African Defence Act No 13 of 1912, following the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 (Cilliers & Reichardt, 1995; Gutteridge, 1996). The UDF was later renamed South African Defence Force (SADF) in 1957 in terms of Defence Act No 44 of 1957.” Matloa (2015). As explained the military was again integrated and transformed in 1994 when the country became a democracy, but notably unlike previous military changes it was crucial that the military be representative of the various races and ethnicities in the country as well as inclusive of females.

Apartheid legislated that white South Africans were given preference in South Africa in all aspects of society and in the army it was no different. SANDF recruited white men and were conscripted into the armed forces at the age of 18 years old. This was mandatory for white men up until it was done away with on 24 August 1993 (Cock, 1989).

Stott 2002 writes: “Militarisation at the ideological level manifested itself across a range of areas; school cadet systems, youth preparedness programmes, the promotion of war toys and games, the compulsory registration of 16-year-old white boys for conscription and the progressive extension of compulsory military service for white male youths to two years plus annual camps. A militarised and, therefore, violent response to prevailing conditions, came to be seen as the acceptable solution to apartheid South Africa's problems.”

Conscription was one of the ways the apartheid army remained well resourced, but it was also funded as a priority of the apartheid government (Esterhuyse, 2019). During the apartheid regime the army was deployed within the borders of South Africa as well as in other countries. This meant that the army needed to be well resourced as it funded operations at home and abroad. Esterhuyse 2019 states that “the SADF, at the time, had access to almost unlimited personnel and budgetary resources. Its access to the general personnel resources of the apartheid state, through the system of conscription, provided the military with access to very specialist resources, which professional armies often found difficult to access.” The army was the enforcer of the apartheid regime and viewed by human rights activists and freedom fighters in South Africa as the enemy.

Stott 2002 points out that the military was at the centre of all South Africans lives during the apartheid era regardless of races. He writes: “As white South Africa became increasingly militarised, so too did South Africa's black communities, either in collaboration with the state and its security forces, or in direct opposition to it. But the militarisation of members of South Africa's white community effectively breathed life into the apartheid leviathan, as they seemed impervious to, and largely insulated from, the security force abuses committed in their name.” It’s these violations of security forces in the ‘coloured’ and ‘black’ townships created by the apartheid government that ensured that the army was the most visible enemy of the state that people had contact with. It was a brutal force that ensured that protests against the apartheid regime was quelled with violence.

## Calling for the army

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This research project focuses on two time periods during the Daily Voice’s existence that there was a public call for the SANDF to be deployed to the Cape Flats. Notably, this was not the first time that there was a public debate on whether the SANDF should assist local law enforcement to deal with gangsterism and the resultant crime in Cape Town. Less than three months after the first democratic elections took place on 27 April 1994, Cape Town residents asked for the government to deploy the army to curb crime in their neighbourhoods.

# SANDF to be sent to gang areas

THE SA National Defence Force will next week be sent into Cape Flats areas plagued by gangsterism, the ANC's Western Cape spokesman on policing, Mr Vincent Diba, told protesters outside Parliament yesterday.

The protesters had called for the removal of "corrupt" police from Manenberg, and for the deployment of the SANDF in the area.

Mr Diba said he had held talks with Western Cape MEC for police Mr Patrick McKenzie but Mr McKenzie does not yet have the delegated powers to address the gang problem.

Mr McKenzie was not available for comment last night.

"I want to assure you now that you say you want the SANDF to go to Manenberg," said Mr Diba. "You will get it. You are definitely going to get the defence force in that area."

He said he would speak to Minister of Safety and Security Mr Sidney Mufamadi and report back to the group on Monday.

The SANDF would be in Manenberg "definitely in the coming week". An independent office to receive complaints against the police would also be set up, he said.

However, both police and SANDF spokesmen last night denied any knowledge of the move.

Police spokesman Colonel Raymond Dowd said earlier in response to the protesters' call for SANDF deployment that the matter was a community policing matter with which the SANDF were not equipped to deal. The SANDF would not be deployed without prior consultation with the police. — Sapa, Staff Reporter

Figure 1: An article from the Cape Times newspaper published on 2 June 1994

As this research will later show, there were several instances where the SANDF was deployed within the borders of South Africa as mandated by the President of the country. This included for disaster management operations following natural disasters such as floods and in a peace keeping role when the country hosted the 2010 Fifa World Cup soccer tournament (Esterhuyse, 2019).

It is through the lens of the Daily Voice newspaper in 2015 and 2019 and specifically the RJB column that this research focuses. It remains a unique time period in that Daily Voice readers (who are majority coloured) had the first opportunity to express their opinions on a media platform which was targeted for them and which they trusted.<sup>5</sup> (Wasserman, 2010).

It remains a contentious issue both among *Daily Voice* readers and the public at large whether the army is the correct state authority to be policing the streets of the Cape Flats in response to gang violence. When the army has been deployed or calls for the deployment of the army are made publicly by politicians the debate reignites in the public sphere. To some *Daily Voice* readers the SANDF even in the democratic era remains an enemy to the people and to others they are the only and last line of defence against the daily realities of crime and violence on the Cape Flats.

From 1997 until 2019 there were numerous police and army operations that were launched and each had varying degrees of success (Kinnes, 2017). As is pointed out in this research some of the reasons for the failure of these collaborations between police and the army includes, bad planning, poor visibility, a lack of political will and little to no co-operation with residents who live in these neighbourhoods. Importantly what Kinnes concludes is that political will played a role from the first operation to tackle gang violence and 1997 and hampered crime fighting efforts. He writes: “The political context was loaded with calls for transformation of the SAPS as they could not stop the violence.

Police officers were fighting different crime tendencies such as gangsterism, vigilantism and urban terror. But these officers were in the same units and a distinction between the two types of criminals was easily glazed over during police operations. They also had to contend with members of the old order and newer ‘plastic cops’.

These factors affected, and in many ways, influenced the ability of the SAPS to effectively exercise their own governance in communities.” This lack of effectiveness on the part of the police is crucial to why people were calling for stronger action in the form of the army to be deployed and from 1997 until 2015 these calls grew from strength to strength in the public debate. But the budget constraints within both the police and the army also did not get better on an annual basis. Every year the resources of law enforcement was evaluated and tighter budget cuts implemented and the ‘do more with less’ political attitude was met with fierce public criticism (Lamb, 2018).

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<sup>5</sup> The trust in tabloid newspapers by its readership is well established by research done by Herman Wasserman



Kinnes points out that there are expectations that are set when the army is deployed to the Cape Flats and that these are not met (Measuring the Success of the Cape Flats Army Deployment, UCT News). He comments: “It’s politics that’s at the heart of us not being able to deliver proper resources and safety for poor people that’s really affected,” he said. Kinnes also called for patience from the media and politicians to allow police and the army to carry out its operations. He further warned that a possible negative consequence of the army’s deployment is growing public belief that the police are unable to effectively manage the gangs. He predicts that the morale of communities to fight crime will be affected by this perception and will no doubt worsen post-deployment. “I think that the fact that you’ve brought the army to civilian life ... has created false hope,” said Kinnes.”

Public sentiment cannot be controlled and this therefore expectations and criticism from the people directly affected by the gang violence and the deployment of the army is inevitable.

*“Gangsterism on the Cape Flats is a complex phenomenon which finds its roots in the sad legacy of apartheid; in a post-apartheid South Africa it has extended its tentacles of power to become a 'power player' in the lives of many communities. In such contexts an urban public theology and the communities of faith it wants to serve, therefore, have an indissoluble task to engage such 'powers' and the dynamic between power and powerlessness. This dynamic has been shown to be complex and exists at multiple levels: psychological, social, economic and spiritual.”* (Bowers Du Toit, 2014)

## A coloured identity

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The coloured racial classification is a key element of this research project. The *Daily Voice* is targeted and marketed to a majority audience who are coloured<sup>6</sup> and according to market research from Independent Newspapers in 2014, the *Daily Voice* main distribution area was the Cape Flats, so as to reach its largely coloured readership where they live. This 2014 research is the last publically available market research done on the *Daily Voice* readership and in the public domain. That research does make recommendations to the owners and management team of the *Daily Voice* with regards to the content of the newspaper and social changes that affected its readers that would affect their buying habits.

The 2014 *Daily Voice* Intercept Research<sup>7</sup> recommended that the *Daily Voice*:

- Continue with local community content
- Continue with crime and scandalous stories
- Do follow up on interesting local stories where possible
- Widen your *Daily Voice* distribution if possible within the Peninsula

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<sup>6</sup> Daily Voice Intercept Research (2014) was distributed to advertisers and made publicly available.

<sup>7</sup> This research was conducted by an independent marketing company to assist the *Daily Voice* in understanding the makeup of its readership.

- Create a column where readers can engage with advertisers regarding their product if possible (already do have telephone numbers of advertisers on most ads as feedback channel)
- Not enough justification for Afrikaans integration in *Daily Voice*.

Academic research done by Glenn and Knaggs, 2005; Matthews, 2009 and Wasserman 2010, also show that coloured people make up the majority of the *Daily Voice* readers. It is therefore important to understand the notion of ‘coloured identity’ when analysing the *Daily Voice* readership.

While the Group Areas Act of 1950 had an immediate and traumatic effect on property, ownership and the freedom of movement of South Africans not classified as white, it also shifted the politics of the day. Liberation movements such as the ANC operated underground as they had been banned in South Africa. Davis (2018: 28) writes that it was the Group Areas Act that changed the dynamics of even banned political formations specifically those operating within Cape Town. Davis write “In an ideal form, (the Group Areas Act) the entire African population would be reduced in the Cape, leaving only a pliable, male workforce of migrants living in hostels. Although the ideal outcomes of these laws did not match the realities of enforcement, the effect of this codification of pre-existing forms of segregation had a threefold effect on political developments during the latter half of the 1950s. First, it weakened claims on residency, splitting working-class families and placing entire communities in jeopardy of being endorsed out of the city. Second, these laws attempted to drive a wedge between Coloured and African workers. The twin pressures of residential segregation and the social engineering of labor, following others, radicalized working-class politics in the Western Cape to a degree perhaps unseen in other areas.”

### The divisive Group Areas Act (1950)

The Group Areas Act was effective in its divisive nature to not only geographically separate people along racial lines, but to also drive a wedge between races that had united to liberate South Africa from minority rule. These divisions that were sought to be legislated even divided race groups into sub-race groups an issue that Harney, 2014 points us was particularly effective in separate those classified as coloured. She points out the not only did the Group Areas Act of 1950, but the Population Registration Act of the same year, work in tandem to even separate family members from each based on the apartheid racial classification. Harney does elaborate on the lasting effects of both pieces of liberation and points out that the dawn of democracy in 1994 the majority coloured population voted for the National Party as the majority party in the province. This is despite the National Party having been at the helm of crafting apartheid legislation and ensuring its effectiveness within South African political and social structures. Martin (1998:1) on the other hand chooses to see the similarities that those classified as coloured has with other South African race groups at the time. He argues that because the majority of coloured South Africans spoke Afrikaans that it did not make them dissimilar to white Afrikaans speaking nationals. He writes: “Though

many live in extremely poor conditions, we find a middle class and intellectuals amongst them. They are either Christians or Muslims. Many consider Afrikaans as their first language, while the majority is bilingual, and in some families only English is used. These factors amplify the bonds they have in common with the rest of the South African population, and cannot subsequently be considered as markers of distinction.” This kind of broad generalisation is divisive in that it uses languages as a unifier between races but in the multi-cultural context this is a narrow and shallow analysis.

The aim of the Group Areas Act was to divide race groups and neither similarities in language, culture or even intellectual ideologies was enough to withstand the power of the divisive legislation. The Group Areas Act succeeded in moving communities of people further away from each other both geographically and ideologically. It succeeded in pitting races groups against each other elevating a minority over a majority and isolating that majority in all sectors of society. This kind of legislated divisiveness only benefitted the oppressor in South Africa and the race group under which the government of the day was classified – white. It gave the minority an advantage not only in its standing within society but also an educational advantage, a cultural advantage and superiority in terms of decision making and reasoning within the political body.

Although the similarities that coloured people shared with their oppressor were evident it was never an equaliser in terms of the oppression they suffered and were subjected to. In fact any kind of perceived leniency from the white minority government towards those classified as coloured only further divided not only that race group but alienated them further from society. By the 1980’s, with the effectiveness of the Group Areas Act and all apartheid legislation well established, the South African government agreed to give limited political power to Indian and Coloured political representatives in what was known as the tricameral Parliament (*SAHA - South African History Archive - Against Botha’s Deal*). It was this political change that Adhikari (2010: 46) notes as significant in change at a time when more was being written and discussed on the role of coloured South Africans. He writes: “This surge in historical writing was triggered by intensified anti-apartheid resistance in the western Cape during the 1980s as well as the concomitant controversy over the participation of some coloured leaders in P W Botha’s tricameral parliament. Both raised the political profile of the community and upped the stakes in the increasingly bitter wrangle over the racial and ethnic distinctiveness of coloured people.” This tussle over the identity and place within society for those classified as coloured would not be resolved and is arguably still debated today. It is a legacy of the political and social ideologies of a section of the coloured community during apartheid which caused further division not only amongst this race group but in other race groups as well.

## A coloured history

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The term ‘coloured’ is a racial classification derived by the apartheid government for South Africans whose ethnicity stems from Malaysia and Indonesia. In other countries the classification of ‘mixed raced’ is the closest comparison to what in South Africa is termed a

“coloured’

Racial classifications exist in the democratic dispensation and so does the term ‘coloured.’ It in part refers to people of mixed descent but the generations before them would have been termed as Malay or even geographically defined as Cape Malay. This is a reference to anyone who was brought to Cape Town as a result of the slave trade in the 17th century. It was this first colonization of the British in 1652 which also resulted in the ethnic cleansing of the hunter-gatherer tribes in South Africa. These were nomadic tribes of what has been academically and homogenous labelled as the Khoi-San people (Winds Blow Afar: 2017).

It’s an important distinction to make that the ‘coloured’ classification originated as a bureaucratic term of the apartheid government, but has been adopted socially in the democratic era. The Khoi and San people have struggled to disassociate from the racial classification as coloured. Mellet 2017 explains that since colonization in the 17th century, these tribes of people were never able to determine their classification within society: “Indigenous people descendants with a direct lineage connection to any of the five most discriminated against and marginalised, account for around 30% of those classified as “Coloured” if one consults the 1865 census figures for ‘Hottentots as distinct from “Others” later referred to as “Coloured”. The five groups here refer to the San, Namaqua, Griqua, Korana and the Revivalist Cape Khoena.” So to be referred to as ‘coloured’ in South Africa would mean that your genealogy could have its origins in the first nations community such as the Khoi or San tribes or you could be descended from Malaysia or Indonesia. Martin (1998), explains that since the apartheid regime ended and democracy was established, many people who identify as coloured have consciously created and celebrated their uniqueness through their diversity. This includes lifestyle and cultural norms and practices but also language usage which is unique to this ethnic grouping. The colloquial use of Afrikaans is celebrated by coloured people and has evolved into a sub set language over the years which is a hallmark of their identity.

Slavery, British colonialism and apartheid brutally shaped what it mean to be coloured and democracy allowed coloured people for the first time to determine their own societal position as well as dispel misconceptions and stereotypes in the media and public sphere at large (Harney, 2014)

There remains a group of Khoena and San people scattered around South Africa who do not identify as coloured but by their tribal ancestry. They are a shrinking minority of first nation clans who are not only fighting for survival but fighting to be represented within the democratic South African legislative and political landscape (Hope, no date). These clans are clinging to the traditions and cultural norms of their ancestors and trying to preserve the tribal way of life that the Khoena would have upheld. Trying to find a place within democratic South Africa has not been easy for this group. They have limited land and access to economic tools to self-determine their future, sustain their families and grow their tribes (Ahluwalia and Zegeye, 2003; Adhikari, 2004; Fransman, 2005).

## Mitchells Plain: A History

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At the heart of the Cape Flats is Mitchells Plain, a neighbourhood carved out by the apartheid government as a re-settlement for coloured people who were forcefully removed from their homes.

In 1970, the collective of farms bordering the False Bay coastline were earmarked for housing developments for coloured families. Debruin (2016) outlines how Mitchells Plain was touted by the government at that time as a grand architectural project that would benefit and improve the lives of the people who moved there. The majority of the families who moved to Mitchells Plain in the 1970's either had no choice but to move there or believed that the area would be developed and grown to their benefit.

The origins of the name 'Mitchells Plain' is not certain and there are various theories as to how the suburbs within the geographical area was also named (Debruin: 2016). The mixed housing developments grew to six suburbs and they are a blend of brick and mortar structures and informal structures made from wood or sheet metal.

Ghettos popped up within these suburbs as access to employment was limited and people were from the economic hubs and industrial areas of Cape Town. Mitchells Plain has since its inception been a multiracial and multicultural community of people. The unifying factor being that its first residents who made the area their home did so with little choice but to move and fashion a living for themselves.

The social ills of Mitchells Plain are but one aspect of the area. Today there are health facilities, cultural resources, schools, shopping complexes and many more facilities that service the area. These were born out of necessity for a group of people who never chose to live in Mitchells Plain but were either directly forced to do so because of apartheid separation laws or as a result of the minority governments economic and social policies for coloured people.

Since the start of democracy there have been many improvements and developments in the 45 suburbs that make up the Mitchells Plain area, but the history of the area cannot be altered. It remains far from economic hubs, with most residents relying on public transport to get into and out of the area. The levels of poverty and unemployment has worsened annually and there are areas of Mitchells Plain which has become slums.

## Mitchells Plain: My home

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I was born on 19 February 1983 and was the youngest of four children. My earliest memory of Mitchells Plain was the patch of green field that was adjacent to our family home, it was referred to as a park but barely fitted the description. It was there that I played as a young child, learned to ride my bike, played football in the winter, and cricket and tennis in the summer. It was more than a playground; it was a meeting point for the children of the neighbourhood. The space we played on was a patchy green field, bordering the communal

parking area in the crescent in which the homes were clustered. The maisonette homes in our neighbourhood were all the same, a product of apartheid architecture but the people who lived in these homes also looked the same, all coloured.

It was not something that at the time I thought was peculiar, not something I questioned. We all looked the same, spoke the same language, in similar accents – a homogenous group of children. My primary school was across the road of my home as you entered the crescent, it was here that I received the first seven years of my formal education. But at school there was a bit more diversity. Classes were divided between the English first language pupils and the Afrikaans first language pupils and in the English classes were children who the apartheid government had classified as black African.

I was in the English-speaking cohort and alongside me were the pupils classified as black African and although not expressly said by any of the teachers or fellow pupils, I knew they were different in some way. They didn't live in Mitchells Plain, but were dropped off at the school gates every morning by minibus taxi drivers and the school bus. It was this bus that first caught my attention and what I associated this cohort of students with. In the mornings and the afternoons, my fellow classmates would tumble into or out of this bus which had standing room only because it was overloaded with young children. My 8-year-old eyes would stare in wonderment as I observed the bus-load of children, some hanging out the windows; chattering with one another. They spoke their native language of isiXhosa and the audible clicks of this language were foreign to me. For as long as I could I would stand beside the bus and try to soak up the atmosphere, their joy, laughter and conversation as if I could interpret and somehow take a part of it home with me. At school, the black African children rarely spoke their mother tongue; they were encouraged to speak only English and Afrikaans which was the medium of instruction at the time. On the school playground they would whisper to one another when they spoke isiXhosa and this only heightened my belief that it was a foreign language, a secret language which only they shared.

In the microcosm of the school playground, there existed an alien language to me, spoken by a group of peers that didn't look like me, or who did not live or play where I did. It was only when I left this world, that I realised the significance of my own identity. When I graduated Primary School, my parents enrolled me at Livingstone High School which was 17km's away from home and outside of Mitchells Plain, in a more affluent Cape Town suburb called Claremont. I was anxious about attending a school outside of Mitchells Plain, because I knew that anywhere outside of the bubble I called home, I would be a foreigner. It was an hour bus ride from my home to high school and enroute a handful of school children who also lived in Mitchells Plain were on board the bus to get to school outside of the area, including Livingstone High School at Claremont. We were outsiders. I had become the child on the bus being dropped at school from outside of their comfort zone. The 'otherness' of being from Mitchells Plain was apparent and this geographical divide lingered until I completed high school.

The ecosystem that is Mitchells Plain operates on an axis outside of the rest of Cape Town and even neighbouring suburbs. There is a social pattern of living, socialising and even speaking that is unique to the neighbourhood. I never questioned my reality. I had nothing else to compare it too. But my experience at high school changed my perception of reality when I realised that what I perceived as normal was not the shared reality of those who don't live in Mitchells Plain. It's at home where it's 'normal' for an elderly person to wake up at 3am and stand in a queue at a clinic or hospital from 4am onwards and wait the entire day for medication or medical attention. It's at home where it's 'normal' that police don't come to your street unless there's been a serious crime committed.

It's at home where the thief who breaks into a house is dealt with by the community who beat him in the street and leaves him for dead – mob justice is the only justice. It's at home, where from a young age you learn the skill of training your ear to hear the difference between the sound of a gunshot or the sound of a car sputtering down the road; it's where you learn to discern the sound of a police vehicle siren, an ambulance and a fire engine.

Mitchells Plain is a community of 'otherness' where people are united by the fact that the generations before them had been forcefully relocated to what was a development for coloured people that was meant to uproot them from their reality and create a new one for them. The flat and arid land that is Mitchells Plain has blossomed many generations of families who have pride in their neighbourhood and are even boastful about their childhood homes and experiences. But it also gave rise to a generation of gang leaders and gang members, who found the Mitchells Plain to be fertile ground for their crimes, drug deals and illicit activities. Collectively the people who today call Mitchells Plain home, this includes me; continue to feel the effects of the apartheid government experiment. The intention was to isolate an entire race group, deprive them of basic services and keep them trapped from economic and social opportunities and in their 'otherness.'



**Figure 2: The Grade 7 class of 1995 at Ridgeville Primary School in Mitchells Plain. I am seated in the front row, second from the left.**



# Vo*DAILY*ice

## Chapter 4

Gang violence has been a social ill during apartheid and remains a problem in not only Cape Town but across South Africa today.

To analyse the origins of gangs and gang culture has been the subject of numerous academic works but it needs to be looked at through the lens of coloured identity. With specific analysis of how it has contributed to the patriarchal structure of coloured communities an analysis of gang culture is done in this chapter.

Analysing the role of gangs in Cape Town communities cannot be done without an analysis of the realities of the people who live in the neighbourhoods where gangs operate.

The *Daily Voice* aims to reflect the reality of its readers and the issue of combating gang violence is one of the biggest social issues on the Cape Flats where the newspaper is most prevalently distributed. It was also crucial to once again interrogate the realities of the Cape Flats as an area and a community of people when analysing gang violence and this is done in this chapter.

# Cape Flats gangs and crime reporting

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## Introduction

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Gang violence in Cape Town and on the Cape Flats has been a source of political and public debate since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Politicians, civic action groups and law enforcement agencies from every sphere of government as well as residents affected by the violent crimes have consistently voiced their opinions on the matter (Underhill, 2013).

The origin of gang violence on the Cape Flats is historically linked to the oppressive National Party regime in South Africa. On 27 April 1950, the Apartheid government in South Africa adopted the Group Areas Act with segregated citizens along racial lines and included special planning designs to ensure different race groups did not live together (Martin, 1998). On 11 February 1966, the legislation was used to forcibly remove residents of District Six located near the Cape Town City Centre and relocate them to various areas across the city based on their race. Coloured residents were relocated to Hanover Park, Manenberg and Mitchells Plain approximately 20 km's from the City Centre which was "low cost letting schemes...funded from the municipal rates account." (Brohat et al., 2017).

The army was deployed onto the Cape Flats to help curb gangsterism in 1989, 2015 and 2019. According to Bernado (2019), the SANDF was deployed in 2019 not because of an outcry from residents affected by the criminal activity; but by politicians. It was a contentious issue and politicians publicly differed on the matter. South African Police Minister Bheki Cele announced on 19 July 2018 that he would not be deploying the SANDF to neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats affected by gang violence (Cele Says No...2018). Minister Cele's predecessors had taken the same stance, but none had been as decisive as him and publicly announced that the army was not a policing option for civilians (Petersen, 2018). This decision by the Minister was a turning point in the news coverage of the issue, which had been widely reported by the media in Cape Town and the rest of South Africa. The Minister remained vocal about his opposition to deploying the army to the Cape Flats, arguing that the army being used for civilian law enforcement was an extreme measure.

The police had a dedicated team that worked solely on gang related crimes and the Police Minister and the President, Cyril Ramaphosa believed that this was sufficient law enforcement. President Ramaphosa said: "The Anti-Gang Unit is an indication that government has heard the pleas of the citizens who are crippled with fear because of gangsterism, and government is now acting to tackle the problem head on" (Anti-Gang unit ready...2018).

In 2018, the African National Congress (ANC) was the official opposition political party in Cape Town and the Democratic Alliance was in power in the City of Cape Town and disagreed with the Police Minister and the President. This governance disparity meant that the disagreement over policing needs was debated between politicians, publicly and reflected

in the media. Democratic Alliance politicians disagreed with both the President and the Police Minister.

## The Cape Flats conundrum

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The Cape Flats was the epicentre of the *Daily Voice* readership and when I was employed as a journalist there it was the most important area to reflect in news stories. People wanted to read about what was happening in their neighbourhood and they would often speak about this when I interviewed them. It was mentioned many times by residents of the Cape Flats that they never interacted with any other journalists besides those from tabloid newspapers, including the *Daily Voice*. People would rarely hesitate to speak to journalists who took the time to speak with them in their own neighbourhood and the only time there was a hesitation was if someone felt that speaking to a journalist would in some way endanger them or their family. People were eager to chat about their lived experiences in their neighbourhoods in the Cape Flats. As a former *Daily Voice* journalist, I recall that it would often be at a crime scene on the Cape Flats that a resident would approach me and ask if they could speak with me. While there to cover an incidence of violence, a fire at a home or a shooting incident that left someone either injured or dead; people would readily approach journalists who were there. This eagerness to share information allowed me and other journalists to very easily speak to residents. All of the other checks and balances needed to be done when speaking to residents about the possibility of publishing a story and including their comments. Establishing the facts but also reflecting the sentiment of residents was a balance that always needed to be maintained. Yet the overall experience was that residents did want to talk, they did want to share their opinions and they were eager for the public beyond their neighbourhood to be made aware of their issues.

This is one of the reasons why tabloid newspapers are criticised for publishing gossip, rumours and conjecture. In the context of crime reporting, it can also be dangerous to publish unverified facts in any newspaper. This not only puts the subjects of the news story at risk but also the people identified or quoted in danger. What was always important for me as a journalist was to convey the sentiment of those I spoke to and to reflect their reality. The Cape Flats is isolated from the rest of Cape Town, it was designed by the apartheid government to be separate from the economic hubs of the city. This legacy has lingered on till today and now not by choice, there are many residents on the Cape Flats whose reality is vastly different to other people in Cape Town. This has also meant that there are many residents who live in Cape Town who might never have been or never will be on the Cape Flats. To publicly share the opinions of this community and accurately reflect their reality to people who might never experience it or witness it first hand was also one of my aims as a tabloid news reporter at the *Daily Voice*.

This is why the *Daily Voice* feedback platform is in my opinion is such an important aspect of the newspaper's offering to its audience and to the public. It's another outlet for those readers on the Cape Flats to use to air their views, share their experiences and directly share their reality. In the context of crime and violence, this RJB is also a space for readers to see

the common concerns that they might share with someone who either lives on the Cape Flats or doesn't. It also broadens the views of all *Daily Voice* readers and takes away the aspect of isolation and separation that was the original intention when the Cape Flats and its numerous housing developments that were created by the apartheid government.

## A history of gang violence

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To understand the origins of gang violence and its roots in the coloured community, it must always be noted that this community has been marginalised politically and socially from the beginning of colonisation in South Africa. From their tribal roots to what is considered the modern day coloured community, autonomy for their own determination has never been a homogenous or politically supported priority in South Africa (Adhikari, 2010; Tewelde, 2020).

The forced removals of coloured people from their homes was a hallmark of the apartheid government, they not only geographically removed people from their places and neighbourhoods of birth but caused communities to splinter. This led to people being forcefully relocated to remote housing developments that were created with the specific intention of keeping all South Africans separate from white communities. These neighbourhoods, including suburbs on the Cape Flats were some distance from the Cape Town city centre and from work opportunities. The aim of the legislated separation of race groups and resultant forced removals was to isolate races from each other but also to disadvantage these communities to the benefit of those South African classified as white or European. When people were relocated, it was to areas that they were unfamiliar with, where there was often little or no infrastructure and basic amenities or housing developments that was still in the process of being completed. Communities had no or limited access to public transport and were forced to fend for themselves to sustain their livelihoods including to buy food, travel to work or merely to leave the neighbourhoods they had been relocated to.

These obstacles to daily living and survival meant that people had to create new communities in the neighbourhoods they found themselves in. This kind of autonomy has both positive and negative consequences. While it meant that people banded together, it also resulted in people feeling responsible for their own safety in these communities in which they had found themselves which had quickly become urban ghettos on the fringes of cities across South Africa.

In Cape Town, coloured people were familiar with street gangs that operated within neighbourhoods and grew out of a need for communities to ensure their own safety (Bowers Du Toit, 2014). It was when communities were splintered and forcefully removed from their places of birth that gangs became a problem. Bowers: 2018, notes in his research that it was at this point that the street gangs evolved and transitioned from an autonomous law enforcement outside of government structures to illegal networks of criminals: "Street gangs of the pre-apartheid era have now evolved into sophisticated and violent criminal fraternities which have grown in numbers post-1994 and have set up powerful empires which preside

over drug running, extortion, money laundering, robbery and prostitution rings, amongst others.”

Kinnes (2017: 24) indicates that before the advent of democracy in 1992, Cape Town gangs had evolved and were not isolated from the political uprisings and fight for a democratic state. Gangs chose allegiances to either the status quo of the repressive apartheid government or the political movements which sought democratic rule. He dispels the myth that gangs on the Cape Flats were used as political tools, but rather as a way for politicians and would-be politicians to influence communities and sway public opinion. In his research, not only does he look at the police governance of gangs but also comes to the conclusion that a weak and divide policing structure and division amongst the politicians in charge of policing strengthens gang networks and criminal activities.

While street gangs were born out of a need for communities to police their own neighbourhoods, when their neighbourhood were demolished and they were relocated far from the ruins of their home by the apartheid government so were those who associated in gangs. They too adapted to their new surroundings, re-grouped and evolved into a wider criminal network. Street gangs were no longer the protectors of the communities but the criminal elements within communities that over time and with the dawn of democracy became more sophisticated, controlling the sale of drugs, ammunition and other illegal goods within the ghettos they found themselves in (Hope, no date; Bowers Du Toit, 2014)

Parallel to the evolution of street gangs into the organised crime networks that they have become today is the evolution and influence of prison gangs (Steinberg, 2004). The ‘number gangs’ known as the 26s, 27s and 28s are more than 100 years old and from behind bars are not only a law unto themselves but control the workings of the gang networks on the Cape Flats and across South Africa. Research remains ongoing as to the exact origins of these gangs as it is cloaked in mythological and urban legend and remains a secret society of mostly adult coloured men who are the guardians of the gang culture and its power. There remains interconnectedness between the number prison gangs and the gangs on the Cape Flats which are not only a mirror of these gangs but are even greater in membership. Working in synergy with one another, these gangs have been able to form alliances, but also initiate rivalries between gangs with violent and deadly consequences for gang members and innocent members of the communities within which these gangs operate.

The ghettos created by the apartheid government became fertile breeding grounds for gang activity to flourish and this put the innocent residents who had been forcefully relocated in the middle of gang warfare and criminal activities. With the drug trade growing over the years, the burden of drug abuse also contributes to many social ills as generations of men and women battled drug addiction and turned to petty or violent crimes to pay for their drug habits. The burden on these communities remains a fixture of the township ghettos created by apartheid government and forgotten by the democratic state. Rooted in these communities are rival gangs that prey on the innocent, resort to violence and crime to cement their place in the hierarchy of gang culture and failed policing efforts over decades that could never control the social ills created by a legacy of minority government rule. It is within these communities

that tabloid newspapers find their readership and speak directly to them in their own language and about their own stories. Crime and gang violence remains a hallmark of the Cape Flats and a daily reality for the people who live in these neighbourhoods. Tabloid newspapers report and reflect this reality and so do the platforms created for reader feedback as is illustrated in this research study.

As explained, gangs had always been a feature of coloured communities as men grouped together to protect their neighbourhoods from internal and external perceived threats (Jensen 2008). With the relocation of communities, gangs in these communities became more violent and criminal networks were established (Jensen (2008: 28). When the *Daily Voice* launched, it was the first print representation of this societal reality and unlike its newspaper competitors, did so in its readers own colloquial language and in a familiar grammatical style and tone (Hadland et al. (2008). Tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Voice* were a relatively new newspaper format in comparison to broadsheet publications. Gaur (2014:142) argues that all media outlets have a duty of care when it comes to influencing public opinion, concluding that there needs to be a greater sensitivity in media reporting on news stories and specific news events in a series of reports. This burden to be sensitive to the reader is arguably greater for a tabloid newspaper which presents its news as well as rumours and gossip about news in a humorous manner. The *Daily Voice* also had this duty of care as it relates to its coverage of gang violence on the Cape Flats. As previously outlined, the format of a tabloid publication is to present its content in light-hearted and humorous manner to capture the reader's attention. This definition of a tabloid contradicts the very serious social issues that Brophy promised to *Daily Voice* readers that his news team would aim to accurately reflect.

## Crime reporting

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Since its first edition, the *Daily Voice* pushed the boundaries of print journalism by publishing explicit pictures and descriptions of crime and in particular gang violence. This was in sharp contrast to other newspapers in Cape Town that also assigned space to gang violence coverage as Brophy explained, yet those newspapers would use the same crime scene photos as the *Daily Voice* or assigning significantly less column issues to such content. In 2015, when the debate about various crime fighting strategies was debated publicly, the *Daily Voice* played a prominent role in shaping readers opinion. The *Daily Voice* was published in both English and colloquial Afrikaans and this was contributing factor as to why the newspaper used images as prominently as it did. This is partly because the editorial team was aware of the fact that they needed to capture and maintain the attention of their readers even if the language of the article was not what they wanted to read. This meant that they aimed to still inform their readers not only by using words but also with pictures – people needed to immediately know what the story they were looking at was about without reading a single word of a news article. This meant that images were used large and in portrait format and in the layout of the *Daily Voice* the words of the story were wrapped around the pictures. The main story on a *Daily Voice* newspaper page always had a picture, and was part of the information the news team intended to impart to their readership.

When there are public debates about social issues and opposing views on one issue, Bennett (2009:259) cautions that established/mainstream media risk elevating one viewpoint over another and being guilty of bias. Contrary to this, Barbie Zelizer argues that tabloids “unrestrictive narrative” is the perfect platform for journalists to report on news that directly affects their readers “These stories require time, resources, and skills, but they help meet journalism’s obligations to do more than narrate the increasingly inconsequential tide of amusement, diversion and official spin that pervades” (Zelizer 2009: 47).

The *Daily Voice* relied solely on its reporters for its newspaper content and to solicit public opinion for its news stories. Critics of the *Daily Voice* and of South African tabloids argued that the newspaper format and content is a media offering that doesn’t adhere to journalistic principles of accuracy and fairness; and that tabloid newspapers are guilty of bias and sensationalist reporting (SA’s tabloids rise...2005). These views are in stark contrast to the history of crime reporting in South Africa before the democratic dispensation in 1994. Crime reporters were curtailed by the restrictive legislation of the Apartheid government to accurately document and publish incidents of crime. These restrictions as well as the Apartheid government’s strict media monitoring and effective propaganda efforts meant that the lived experiences of the majority of South Africans before 1994 and the democratic state was not truthfully reflected in newspapers or broadcast media. The democratically elected South African government protected media freedom and this for the first time allowed for the fair reflection of crime in newspapers, television and radio. Tabloid is by definition a humorous and quirky media, not devoid of facts, but peppered with rumours and gossip. The *Daily Voice* applied this to all its stories, including crime reporting. Rumours and conjecture was published in the majority of *Daily Voice* news stories and for the first time speculation about the motives about specific violent incidents and detailed accounts from eyewitnesses was given a public platform in the form of a news story. Allegations of what motivated gang violence was part of the *Daily Voice* coverage of these gang stories and readers responses to that was published in a dedicated column. Readers were encouraged to use the SMS service to comment on gang violence stories which happened in their community and across Cape Town.

## Crime Statistics

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The Western Cape has the highest rate of gang violence in South Africa. According to the 2018/19 crime stats, 1120 murders were linked to gang violence, of which 938 were attributed to the Western Cape. The province also holds four of the top five precincts where the most murders were reported. These include Nyanga, Delft, Khayelitsha and Philippi East, and Hanover Park.<sup>8</sup> Effective policing strategies in the country and particularly in Cape Town where the governing political party was the Democratic Alliance (DA) remained a contentious issue. The DA had regional political control but were an opposition party at national level and this created a chasm of political tussles as the DA only had political power over regional law enforcement. The blame game between political rivals was a hallmark of

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<sup>8</sup> Crime statistics are released in South Africa annually by the SA Police Service.

the political landscape in Cape Town. The DA wanted more control over national state policing resources which the ANC was in charge of. This laid the foundation for public squabbles while crime escalated across Cape Town and the Cape Flats (Kinnes, 2017).

This is an important aspect which is highlighted in the analysis of the *Daily Voice* reader feedback. Readers noticed and commented on the political disagreements on how to combat crime, gang violence and social ills on the Cape Flats.

Readers were not isolated from public debates about the manner in which authorities shared the data as it related to crime and violence. Opposing political parties ensured that their voices, opinions and political positions were in the public domain and this added to the public debate. Because of the separation of powers between city councils and national government, there was always going to be a discrepancy and debate about which sphere of government was responsible for which law enforcement agency. In Cape Town, this was exacerbated by the fact that the city council and national government was politically controlled by different political parties. As the data will show, the fact that politicians couldn't find a common ground and publicly disagreed about crime prevention and law enforcement was of concern to *Daily Voice* readers. This also added to the frustration of not only *Daily Voice* readers but also the residents who lived on the Cape Flats and who were directly affected by the political disagreements. The issue of the frequency of releasing crime statistics was also a public debate that politicians from both the Cape Town council and the national South African government added their voice to. This meant that the public was aware of the issue of crime statistics and that would also want to voice their opinion about the issue.

Crime statistics were always released retrospectively, which meant that the public would only be informed of the totality of criminal and violent incidents at least a year after it was reported. (Charles, 2019; *Community Policing Forum & Neighbourhood Watch Challenges in Western Cape*. PMG, n.d.). In 2019, there was a disagreement as to how community policing structures and the police worked together to tackle crime in the area. *Community Policing Forum & Neighbourhood Watch Challenges in Western Cape* highlight the constraints on the police and the lack of resources as well as the fact that "Mitchells Plain had two stations with an excess of 1.2 million people living in the area and this was certainly a concern. The lack of infrastructure and service in informal settlements generally led to a loss of lives and impacted on the safety of SAPS members that need to go into these areas with the continually escalating crime, attacks on SAPS, and no real protection for volunteers."

Lamb (2018:25) illustrates how the debate about crime in Cape Town and crime reporting was an issue of public debate and contention amongst politicians. He writes: "there has been considerable high-level political advocacy, from both the Premier of the Western Cape (Helen Zille) and the national Minister of Police at the time (Fikile Mbalula), for the SANDF to be redeployed in high crime areas in Cape Town. This is once more a reflection of the opposing political views with regards to the deployment of the army. This polarisation was reflected in the public discourse including in the *Daily Voice*."





# VoICE

*DAILY*

## Chapter 5

This chapter is an analysis of the opinions of *Daily Voice* readers as found in the messages that was received via the SMS service Rek Jou Bek.

An analysis is done to show that not only was there a conversation happening between the *Daily Voice* and its readers but also a conversation between *Daily Voice* readers among each other.

This analysis proves that tabloid news readers are finding their voice and sharing their opinions on the platforms provided, but also offering solutions to social ills which directly affects them.

There are a myriad of social and journalistic values that can be found in the analysis of the data and also where it is situated within the context of tabloid news.

To highlight and analyse the voices and opinions of *Daily Voice* readers was crucial for two reasons. Firstly to acknowledge that the readers of the *Daily Voice* have a platform where they can express themselves freely and secondly to analyse the reader opinions as it relates to sentiment towards the army.

# The Data

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The data used for the study is publically available both on the internet and in public library archives where newspapers are collected and stored.

Online access to the published newspapers allowed me to have uniformity in terms of the format of data. Reader comments were always published on one page of every edition of the *Daily Voice* and under the heading *Rek Your Bek* (Speak Your Mind). This one page could be downloaded in PDF format. Searching each document for a common word, in this study the search word was ‘army’ and the daily, monthly and annual searches could be calculated.

*Daily Voice* reader comments were not altered for meaning when published, slang terms and a mix of English and Afrikaans is part of the tabloid news format. SMS’es was published as received and profanities were included but blurred out when published so as not to offend or be in breach of the Press Council guidelines.

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative methodological framework. Qualitative research methodology is an approach that focuses on words rather than numbers when collecting and analysing data (Bryman, 2012). The study focuses on *Daily Voice* reader’s responses to articles and reported crimes during 2015 and 2019 as it relates to gang violence.

There are two data sets, the data from the *Daily Voice* SMS line (32832) that was published in 2015 and 2019 relating to gang violence. Selected reader message were published in the newspaper every day.

There are limitations to the data which directly impacts on conclusions of the study. The data is only the published *Daily Voice* reader comments. In 2015, these are only messages sent directly to the SMS line, but in 2019 the published reader comments was sourced from the SMS line and the *Daily Voice* Facebook page.

Readers can remain anonymous when sending messages to the newspaper. This is a limitation in being able to separate comments by age, gender, race or geographic location.

This study is therefore an analysis of *Daily Voice* reader comments in the specified years, and is not a reflection of the sentiment of a specific homogenous group beyond those who had access to the newspaper articles, either in online or print publication.

The data is also only the opinions of those readers who voluntarily submitted their comment to the newspaper and no broad conclusions can be made as to the entire readership.

What the data does reflect though is that *Daily Voice* readers do have a platform to voice their opinions, engage with each other as well as with the content published by the *Daily Voice* editorial team (journalists and columnists).

The *Rek Your Bek* column was always published in every *Daily Voice* edition in both 2015 and 2019 with a breakdown as follows in table 1.

**Table 1: Rek Your Bek columns in 2015 and 2019**

	2015 Rek Your Bek columns	2019 Rek Your Bek columns
January	20	21
February	20	20
March	22	20
April	19	20
May	20	22
June	21	19
July	23	23
August	19	21
September	21	20
October	22	23
November	21	21
December	20	18
Total	248	248

\*Extracted from the *Daily Voice* in 2015 and 2019

The 248 Rek Your Bek columns published in each year had sub headings which indicated the theme of the messages received. This was the newspaper's own way of categorising the content of reader messages thematically. This thematic grouping of messages meant it was easier for readers to follow newsworthy topics or subjects or general commentary from readers which were always grouped together.

Readers voluntarily commented on any of the content in the *Daily Voice* and the thematic headlines helps readers to see, at a glance what specific news stories or subjects readers are being discussed. General comments were grouped together at the top of the column, followed by specific news stories or subjects being discussed, including sport and entertainment news. Because of the nature of newspapers, the comments were always in response to the published articles from the day before i.e. readers would comment on content in that day's newspaper and their messages would be reflected in the following day's newspaper.

This was not a limitation to readers who wanted to continue giving their opinions and responses to stories and published messages. Reader comments would also be about news stories from days and weeks after it was published in the *Daily Voice*.

For the purposes of this study, a search for the word 'army' was done on all 496 Rek Your Bek columns (as shown in Table 2) This, was done to determine reader's opinions about the deployment of the army to neighbourhoods in Cape Town where gang violence was prevalent.

The research shows that the word ‘army’ was recorded as follows in the Rek Your Bek column.

**Table 2: The number of days the word army appeared in reader messages to the *Daily Voice* in 2015 and 2019**

	2015 Days when the army was discussed in Rek Your Bek	2019 Days when the army was discussed in Rek Your Bek
January	3	0
February	2	3
March	1	2
April	6	0
May	10	0
June	3	5
July	2	15
August	0	10
September	0	11
October	0	3
November	2	4
December	1	1
Total	30	54

\*Extracted from the *Daily Voice* in 2015 and 2019

When the army was first deployed onto the streets of Cape Town in 2015, twelve percent of *Daily Voice* comment pages that year reflected reader sentiment about the army’s presence on the streets of Cape Town. This nearly doubled in 2019 when 21 percent of Rek Your Bek columns for that year reflected reader opinions about the army’s deployment.

As the data in Table 2 indicates, there is a direct link between the *Daily Voice* publishing articles about the army as a policing resource on the Cape Flats and people sharing their own opinions on this matter.

## Data Analysis

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For the purpose of this research, reader SMS’es related to gang violence in 2015 and 2019 have been extracted from the *Daily Voice* and copied into a Word Document. The SMS’es that was published could be extracted from the newspaper and a thematic analysis done. The discourse fragments from the data, was then grouped into themes and categorised.

Once the data was extracted and categorised into daily and monthly categories it was clear that *Daily Voice* readers used the comment space to discuss the newspaper content.

Two patterns emerged, the first is that readers' responses were a mirror of the newspaper's content and secondly that readers responded to each other's comments which created an alternative conversation in the newspaper.

This is a qualitative research study of SMS's sent to the *Daily Voice* in 2015 and 2019, relating to gang violence and by default a cross-sectional thematic analysis of the newspaper's coverage of gang violence during the same 12 month periods. Glaser and Strauss (2017:23) argued that using a substantive theory i.e. where data is part of a "specific sector" and the researcher can divide it into categories and compare it, is a reliable model for research.

Berger (2011:205) identifies qualitative research as the preferred research method when analysing texts, as well as it being unobtrusive and resulting in data that can be quantified. The data extracted was unedited from publication and not edited when categorised.

This approach allowed for the data to be analysed at regular intervals when needed and allowed for comparison between months and years as indicated previously.

## Data reliability

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This is a qualitative research study aiming to find common themes between three units of analysis and whether these units were independent from each other or influenced each other and whether there are common themes. The research project will use approaches of Creswell (2009) as this will ensure the reliability and validity of this study as it relates to the *Daily Voice's* news coverage and reader comments of gang violence in 2015. Validation strategies should be ensured throughout a study as it allows the researcher to record procedures when validating the findings of a study (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative validity, which is also a form of trustworthiness; is when the researcher checks the accuracy of data findings by means of definite procedures and Creswell points to eight validation measures which include; triangulation, member checking, rich descriptions, bias, negative information, prolonged time, peer debriefing and external auditing. The researcher will make use of the following three:

- Use member checking. This will gauge the accuracy of the findings by taking the themes or final report back to the interviewees to determine whether they feel the information is accurate. The interview structure will also allow for reference back to the participants at various intervals during the interviews and by summarising their perceptions for clarity.
- Clarifying the bias brought in by the researcher. This can be done by self-reflection, as it will create an open and unbiased data from interviews, therefore throughout the reporting of the findings the researcher will offer reflective insight if it is deemed necessary.
- The researcher is encouraged to do peer debriefing. This will ensure the accuracy of the account will be enhanced. The designated peer will review and question the research project findings. Therefore, after each set of data

collection and categorisation, the researcher will be debriefed by his supervisor, designated as the peer for the research. All opinions and ideas will be discussed and the supervisor will act as a neutral sounding board as this will eliminate any bias if it exists.

Further assurances of reliability and validity is that for this study the advantages of content and thematic analysis is that the topic is a current news event and that the data extrapolated is the published newspaper columns. The published news articles are also archived electronically and available in hard copy which is also a reliable unit of data.

## The Daily Voice Reader Data: 2015

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### Introduction

The year 2015 is significant in the coverage of gang violence in Cape Town because political leaders in the province debated whether to deploy the SANDF to the Cape Flats to maintain law and order. In 2015 there was only one platform and one way for *Daily Voice* readers to send their comments to the newspaper for publication. The *Daily Voice* SMS line was open to anyone who had access to a cellphone and could afford the R1 SMS fee.



Figure 3: Rek Your Bek banner headline 2015

Figure 3 is the banner headline that appeared on every column and was not only an indication to readers that it was the opinion column, but also informed them of the details they would need to submit their opinion. Readers were able to not only comment on published news stories, but also to reply to each other's comments. Because the messages were selected by the *Daily Voice* editorial team, there was no guarantee that if a reader sent a message it would be published in the newspaper.

The cost of a single edition of the *Daily Voice* was R3.50 (three rand and fifty cents) from the beginning of 2015 until the 30 September 2015. The cost of one copy of the newspaper increased by 30 cents (thirty cents) on 1 October 2015 to R3.80 (three rand and eight cents).

It is noted that the cost of submitting your opinion to the *Daily Voice* SMS platform was 28 percent of the price of buying the newspaper in 2015.

### *The data analysis*

In the first three months of 2015 there were only six days where the *Daily Voice* published reader comments relating to gang violence. The comments were broad references to the army and readers voicing their frustration that that the army was not being deployed in Cape Town.

The first comment in January was a reference to the SANDF being deployed to neighbouring Mozambique to assist that country with humanitarian relief after a devastating flood. The reader referenced this and used it to justify his argument that the SANDF was not being deployed to the benefit of South African citizens (SANDF to help...2015).

*“Our government sends troops to neighbouring countries to save people who are victims of flooding, and the cycle repeats itself annually. The Cape Flats is at war, innocent people are killed daily, yet government refuses to deploy the army to assist the police. How many more must die before they act? One gets the impression the government doesn’t care if Cape Coloureds kill each other. It’s like they are saying: this is your punishment for voting DA. Rev OP Bougardt.”<sup>9</sup>*

Three days after the publication of the above comment two Daily Voice readers responded with their own opinions on this particular reader message that the newspaper published.

*“Reverend Bougardt: You must get your facts straight. Firstly, the army belongs to the national government. Secondly, we won’t get them because we like law and order, even though it sometimes gets difficult under the DA, we do survive. Gangs are an age-old problem and were managed by the old gang unit. So please get your facts straight or zip your lip. Marki Boy.”*

*“Rev Bougardt, please stop talking s\*\*\*, the government does care. Why play the blame game here we created gangsters our-selves by allowing our children to be gangsters. My two sons tried to get involved but I moered them out of it. Remember the army is trained to kill, so again we will have killing and then what are we going to say? Mk Tattoo.”<sup>10</sup>*

These three comments prove that *Daily Voice* readers were creating a conversation, separate from the content of news articles published in the newspaper. It is also evident that *Daily Voice* readers are passionate about expressing their views and willing to share their opinions on a trusted, public platform.

The last SMS for January 2015 which relates to the army is also a response to the opinion shared in this ongoing conversation. This proves that readers were not only engaging with the first opinion shared on this topic, but also the opinions that followed. This created a thread of conversation between readers.

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<sup>9</sup> Daily Voice reader comment published on 23 January 2015

<sup>10</sup> These two Daily Voice reader comments were published on 26 January 2015



The two comments relating to the SANDF in 2015, was running commentary on how the SANDF should be brought in to quell residents from protesting on the streets of Cape Town and a this message from a reader who made a general comment about criminal activity.

*Please help SA Police and army. Why wait on instructions from the President? Go and get our streets free from crime. We shouldn't celebrate Freedom Day because we're not free. Wake up SA, all of us inC ape Town must get together at the stadium or anywhere to pray for our country. Charon.<sup>11</sup>*

There was only one comment about the SANDF in RJB in March 2015. It related to the army being deployed to assist fire fighters extinguish a wildfire around Table Mountain which had destroyed residents property. The reader was outraged that the army could be called in to assist with this natural disaster, but not as a law enforcement for citizens.

*I don't know who to blame, local government or national government. The army is being brought in to combat the fires, and my deepest sympathy to those affected but for heaven's sake what's more dangerous? The fire of nature or the fire of guns in our communities on the CapeFlats? Vurly vd Ocean View.<sup>12</sup>*

April 2015 is significant as it was during this month that xenophobic violence erupted across South Africa. People not born in South Africa were targeted, violently attacked and in total seven people were killed. The violence started in the coastal city of Durban, South Africa on 11 April 2015 and days later there were violent attacks on non-South African citizens in Johannesburg (The numbers behind...2015). In the affected neighbourhoods in both cities the army was deployed to support local law enforcement *Daily Voice* readers responded to the xenophobic violence by expressing their opinions in the RJB. On 23 April 2015, there were seven comments comparing government's response to violent xenophobic mob violence and the gang violence on the Cape Flats.

*"The government can deploy the army to help deal with the xenophobic attacks that has taken seven lives to date, but what about the scores of innocent lives lost on the Cape Flats due to gang violence? Mr B."*

*"So the gangsters can kill us but the foreigners get army protection. I can't believe this. We are your own brothers and sisters, you run to us for votes."*

*"Now our people are going to moan about the army that's in KZN and Joburg because of the xenophobia. We live in the last days, so we must appreciate life while we're still alive."*

*"I cannot believe what I saw on the news. They could bring in the army for the foreigners, but our people are dying like flies in Manenberg, Tafelsig but no help from our president for our South African citizens, but Zuma could cancel his trips to other countries to sort out xenophobia. What does this tell you? We are NOTHING to him. Ralfie Adonis."*

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<sup>11</sup> This comment was published in the Daily Voice on 23 February 2015.

<sup>12</sup> A reader comment published in the Daily Voice on 6 March 2015.

*“Why send the army to KwaZulu -Natal and not to the gang-infested areas in the Western Cape like Hanover Park, where innocent people are also killed. Is it because we are so-called coloureds? We are sick and tired of this so-called ANC-led government. Winnie the Gunner. Hanover Park.”*

The newspaper also reflected opposing reader sentiment at that time with regards to the army entering the Cape Flats. This is evident by this reader sentiment which was published alongside the opposing views above. *“The army have been trained to kill. Will a soldier be arrested if he shoots somebody died during the course of duty? Vra maarnet.”*

**FENCED IN: Foreigners get support**

# XENO-NO

**ZULU King Goodwill Zwelithini has vehemently denied that he said people should take up arms and attack foreign nationals.**

The king was addressing a peace imbizo at Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban yesterday and called upon the Zulu nation to protect foreign nationals and not to attack them.

Speaking in Zulu, the king said: "The war I want you to take part in, is war of protecting foreign nationals, no matter from which country."

He said that if he had said there should be war, South Africa would have been "in ash".

He also claimed a 'third force' was to blame for the violent attacks directed at foreign nationals.

The monarch said the imbizo was called because there was a need to protect the already tarnished image of the Zulu nation.

**Careless**

Xenophobic violence has left at least seven people dead and displaced thousands.

Various speakers, including Freedom Party leader, Mangosuthu Buthe, criticised the media for "careless reporting" and disavowed the king's speech at Pongolo in northern KwaZulu-Natal last month.

Zwelithini delivered a speech in Zulu, and reportedly called foreigners "lice" that must go back to their countries.

Addressing the crowd, Buthe called for an end to the attacks and said: "Our people are attacking the very same people who offered us shelter during apartheid. There is no sense in what is happening. We are ashamed."

Earlier in the day anti-foreigner sentiment ran high, even among the king's regiment) who could be heard chanting that foreigners should leave South Africa.

The crowd of mostly hostel dwellers, armed with sticks and knobkerries, jeered when delegates from other countries were introduced.

Jabu Ntshande from Bona told ANA that while she did not condone the killing of foreigners, they were sworn to leave South Africa.

"Government must speak the truth, they must take action against the drug lords who are foreigners," Ntshande said.

"They are selling drugs and destroying our communities."

**FEELS A SHAME: Buthe**

## King tells crowd to protect foreigners

By VOICE REPORTER

**INGONYAMA YAMAZULU  
SILU AZWELITHINI KA BHEKIZULU  
HIS MAJESTY THE KING**

**ADDRESS: King Zwelithini rallies crowd at imbizo**

Figure 4: The Daily Voice coverage of xenophobic related violence in South Africa/21 April 2015

As Figure 4 illustrates, the *Daily Voice* published news content about the xenophobic related violence which was taking place in April 2015 in Durban, South Africa. This was an issue that received both national and international news coverage and would prove to be the catalyst for *Daily Voice* readers questioning the role of the SANDF and their absence in fighting crime on the Cape Flats. It is also notable that although a regional newspaper in Cape Town, the *Daily Voice* did deem the violence in Durban as newsworthy to its readership. Tabloid newspapers are often geographically editorialised and the newspaper column inches are dedicated to news that directly affects the audience within their target region. The xenophobic violence was not taking place in Cape Town but it was an important news story with the *Daily Voice* reflected.

The regular coverage of crime and violence in the *Daily Voice* was centred on incidents that took place in Cape Town and the Cape Flats. The coverage of xenophobic violence elsewhere in South Africa was therefore not a departure from the news editorial agenda. What is significant though is that it did prompt responses from *Daily Voice* readers who commented on the xenophobic hate crimes and applied it to crime incidents in Cape Town and the deployment of the army to the Cape Flats. *Daily Voice* readers responses meant that people were aware of criminal activities that did not directly affect them, but they felt it important to still share their opinion about it and express themselves on this public platform.

These comments from April 2015 preceded the army being deployed to the Cape Flats in May 2015. The comments also show that *Daily Voice* readers trusted the newspaper to the extent that they sent their discontent with the government and the then President Jacob Zuma to the publication. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press is enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, but this was not the case during apartheid.<sup>13</sup>

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media; freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity; and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.”* Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996.

This research shows that *Daily Voice* readers were confident enough to exercise their rights with regards to the media and the newspaper itself did not censor reader messages. This is evident in the data as the newspaper would often use special characters to replace certain letters in swear words but this would still convey the sentiment of the message. In this way the *Daily Voice* was allowing the full expression of their media rights and the rights of their readership. Browne, 2018 argues that South African tabloids, including the *Daily Voice* have a huge responsibility in upholding their readers’ right to have their opinions published. At the same time he cautions that because of the sensationalist nature of tabloid newspapers they have an added duty of care in how they present news stories about politics, xenophobia and homophobia to their readers. This became a reality for the *Daily Voice*.

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<sup>13</sup> “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media; freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity; and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.”

Operation Fiela began as a joint operation by all law enforcement arms of the state in April 2015 to arrest undocumented immigrants in South Africa following the xenophobic violence as previously mentioned. In Cape Town, Operation Fiela had another aim and that was to deploy the army to the Cape Flats as requested by some politicians and Cape Town residents. In May 2015 the army was deployed to the Cape Flats and the *Daily Voice* readers made their opinions known via RJB. In this month, there were 24 reader comments relating to the army's deployment and it was published over 10 days. The presence of the army was not only an emotive issue for the residents it directly affected, but also for anyone who had felt strongly about crime prevention in Cape Town. Politics was also part of the public debate, because of the different spheres of government and the opposing political parties that were in control of the different arms of state. As this *Daily Voice* reader comment on 5 May 2015 shows, readers were aware of the political divide on the issue of the army deployment.

*Listening to Wilmot James and Mmusi Maimane's DA leadership debate, I came to the conclusion that they can do nothing to change policy so that they can solve the social ills on the Cape Flats or the Western Cape. Firstly, both cannot lead the party to win the national election, so bringing the army will have no impact for social change in the Cape Flats. From Ebie in Retreat.*

The *Daily Voice* Editor Taariq Halim had a weekly column which was published in the newspaper under the heading Munier Grootbek (Munier Big Mouth). It was an opinion column in which the editor, who is also a journalist, shares his own views on topical issues that has been covered in the news and the newspaper. In his column published on 15 May 2015, he shared his own opinion on the growing calls for more law enforcement to deal with the increase in crime and violence on the Cape Flats. He wrote: "Campaign for more policing in your community, rally against drug dealers, gangsters and woman and child abusers. If you are living in terror in a gang-ravaged area, call for the army. Fight for more drug rehabs, better schools, hospitals and sport facilities." On the same day newspaper published a news article that the army had arrived on the Cape Flats and that they were part of a joint operation with the police which had taken place in Mitchells Plain. As can be seen in Figure 5 below, prominence was given to the army-police operation and the coverage included both information and pictures of the army in action.



PRETORIA: Members of SANDF at Mitchell's Plain, 2015. Photo by JYVONDA NGUMANE

# Army's in town



MULTI: Police search illegal immigrants in Mitchell's Plain



MULTI: Police search illegal immigrants in Mitchell's Plain

**SKELMS** in Mitchell's Plain yesterday ran for their lives as the police and army struck to crack down on illegal activities.

Police spokesman Captain JC Wyle says the joint operation by City of Cape Town and national law enforcement forces saw the arrest of 11 illegal immigrants and the confiscation of goods and cash worth R1 million.

Wyle says that since starting operations last September, "over 100 illegal immigrants" have been arrested in Mitchell's Plain.

He says at least 100 of the arrested immigrants are from the Eastern Cape and other parts of the country, and are being held in detention centres.

The operation is a joint effort between police and army to target illegal immigrants and their activities.

**Forced**

All immigrants and their belongings were searched and all illegal goods were found to be used to be searched by police.

A large group of immigrants were always present in the centre.

During the raid, police and army officers searched immigrants and their belongings.

Wyle says a goal of the operation is to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the area.

A police officer at the scene said the main purpose of the raid was to

## M. PLAIN MALL RAIDED FOR ILLEGALS & DRUGS

REPORTING BY  
**Mpumi Khwa**

SEARCHING FOR illegal immigrants, weapons and drugs in Mitchell's Plain yesterday.

A large number of illegal immigrants were arrested during the raid.

Police and army officers searched immigrants and their belongings.

The operation is a joint effort between police and army to target illegal immigrants and their activities.

Wyle says a goal of the operation is to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the area.

A police officer at the scene said the main purpose of the raid was to

search for weapons and drugs, and to arrest illegal immigrants.



MULTI: Police search illegal immigrants in Mitchell's Plain

Figure 5: Daily Voice article published on 15 May 2015 on page 6

Similar to all other content in the newspapers, it was up to readers to either ignore or respond to what was being presented to them, this included the news item (Figure ) and the opinion piece written by the editor. All of this content set the foundation for what would become a army operation on the Cape Flats which was extensively covered in the *Daily Voice* and other media. The use of pictures in Figure 5 is also noteworthy as it illustrates the army's presence on the Cape Flats. This illustration is important for a tabloid newspaper such as the *Daily Voice* which publishes in English but with a mixture of colloquial Afrikaans and slang. The background of the images would also be recognisable to Mitchells Plain residents and is a very clear representation of army operations in their neighbourhood.

In the next edition of the *Daily Voice* published on the 17 May 2015, there were two reader comments in Rek Jou Bek (RJB) relating to the army on the Cape Flats. It's not clear whether either of the two readers were responding to the news story or the editorial opinion piece on the subject.

*Great to see army in Mitchells Plain, all we need to do is have all scrapyards closed, then thieves will have nowhere to sell goods they steal from our houses.*

*The army is here. Now move closer to the Flats and don't leave until this killing of inno-cent lives has stopped. Ralfie.*

As will be outlined in the conclusion of this research there is a need to contextualise reader comments in RJB. A reader could be offering general comment or making reference to a specific incident but this is not expressly stated in RJB. A disclaimer would be useful not only to the reader, but also to the person sharing their comments with the newspaper if the *Daily Voice* elaborated on how it selected reader opinions for publication.

It is evident from the content on 15 and 17 May 2015 that there is a direct connection between the *Daily Voice* content and the reader messages. Whether readers were in agreement or opposed to what they were reading, they trusted the newspaper enough to share their comments on the platform provided. It also shows that not only were readers moved to criticise but also to show positive sentiment when they felt it was warranted. Reader emotions are reflected in their opinions. This is evident in both the language usage and grammar they choose when they use the reader platform.

On 17 May 2015, two reader comments on the subject continued the conversation in RJB and once again showed that diverse opinions were being reflected.

*Look at the police and army, raiding Mitchells Plain mall. It's really something 'dramatic'. They raided the mall instead of those gang areas where innocent people are murdered almost daily.*

*Thank you Lord for answering our prayers. We welcome the army together with SAPS and the Metro Police into Manenberg. So-called gangsters beware, and you drug king-pins, your days are numbered. You should hang your heads in shame. How can you call yourselves CleverKids when you are so illiterate?*

From the above comments it is also evident that the *Daily Voice* was printing reader comments anonymously, regardless of the content of the messages received. For readers to be

able to see that their identity can be withheld and their opinions still shared is a way for people to gain even more confidence and trust in the newspaper. There was no stipulation in the RJB guidelines to readers that they needed to identify themselves, only instructions on how to send your message and the financial cost of doing so. As previously explained interacting on a public media platform was only something that “coloured” were able to do in the democratic era in South Africa. To add limitations to that interaction, including the necessity of having to identify yourself would have been an added hindrance for readers who wanted to share their opinions.

On 25 May 2015, there were ten reader comments relating to the topic, the most comments (on the subject) published on a single day for that year. As can be seen from the sample below, the newspaper reflected opposing reader sentiments.

*“Thumbs up for the army. I also have family in Manenberg and it’s such a shame how they must live in fear. Keep the gangsters away from the innocent people. Guys, you rock!”*

*“WTF!!! The army in our townships. Are we now a military state? Can’t the police and law enforcement do their work? Get rid of the corrupt cops and politicians first.”*

Comments from *Daily Voice* readers remained a reflection of not only what the news stories published in the newspaper but also the lived experiences of people. Figure 6 shows the front page of the *Daily Voice* on 25 May 2015 and illustrates the content of the news piece on that day.





Figure 6: *Daily Voice* front page, 25 May 2015

In response to this news article one reader commented: *“Who says the gangsters are not scared of the army? They wait for the army to leave before they start. The day will come when the army is still there and start shooting at them. Then you will see something. Just wish you are not there. Sexyboy.”*

At the time of Operation Fiela, media reports were that residents of Cape Town were happy to have the army on the streets to assist police with dealing with gangs. With the help of the police, the army conducted raids on suspected gang members’ homes and at houses that were believed to used as central points in neighbourhoods from which gangs traded in illicit drugs. (Gang-ridden Cape...2015). It was only in September 2015, that government confirm that 9968 people had been arrested in South Africa as part of Operation Fiela, 1264 arrests were made in the Western Cape (The numbers behind...2015).

Following this period (April-May 2015) and the army withdrawing from the Cape Flats, coverage of the matter and reader comments decreased. There were only a total of 14 comments about the army deployment published in RJB in June, July, November and December 2015.

On 10 July 2015, politicians once again disagreed on the effectiveness of the army deployment on the Cape Flats and *Daily Voice* readers made their opinions known.

Reader comment: *“After all this time blaming Pres-ident Zuma for not sending the army to gang-infested areas you find out it’s your own beloved DA that don’t want them (the army) there. Mr B.”*

Reader comment: *“What gives with DA MP Kobus Marais. The DA fought tooth and nail to have the army deployed in gang-ridden areas but are now playing politics opposing the army. Kobus, ask your leader what she has been calling for. Winston Mgextse Gilbert.”*

Reader comment: *“The DA mustn't act stupid. Operation Fiela has been one of the best decisions made by the ANC government. Give credit where it is due. It must continue till the gangs have been defeated. RCS.”*

The sentiment of *Daily Voice* readers in November 2015 about the army mirrors that of what people were saying in April 2015. The army was deployed in the Western Cape in November 2015 to assist in marine defence. Poaching of abalone, a marine snail which is a seafood delicacy and its shell a type of pearl used for amongst other things jewellery. As was the case in April 2015, *Daily Voice* readers shared their opinion on 23 November 2015 that they believed the resources of the army were being misdirected away from the Cape Flats.

Reader comment: *“Why doesn’t the army get called into protect people who live in fear and are prisoners in their own homes? #GangstersMustFall.The army and police must patrol every day for a month, not just one weekend and then off they go. From Jojo.”*

Reader comment: *“One can now clearly see this government doesn’t care a s\*\*\* about its people. We have been asking to bring in the army for so long without any success. But now they bring the army in for abalone poachers. So what they are saying is that abalone is more important than us. David.”*

Reader comment: “*They send in the army to protect the perlemoen, but yet they don't send the army in to help SAPS with the gangsters. Is the government getting a cut? GI Joe.*”

Reader comment: “*What, the army for perly? Is some stupid seafood more important than human life? This is ridiculous. Our borders are open and we are losing the war on gangsterism. Surely they can use our taxes better. Just saying.*”

These comments published on 23 November 2015 were published in RJB under the heading *Army vs Poachers* to once again categorise *Daily Voice* comments in a thematic way for readers.

Notably there was also no *Daily Voice* news coverage, or reader comments about the army in August, September and October 2015. This is also partly as a result of no news stories in which the army or their operations was the subject.

## The Daily Voice Reader Data: 2019

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### Introduction

Four years after the army was deployed to the Cape Flats in 2015, public sentiment once again grew for the army to return.

The reader data from the *Daily Voice* in 2019 mirrors that of 2015, but there is one exception. In 2019, the *Daily Voice* was publishing articles that were in the print newspaper online, on the *Daily Voice* website ([www.dailyvoice.co.za](http://www.dailyvoice.co.za)) and on the company's parent online news service Independent Online which is also known as IOL ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)). *Daily Voice* articles were also posted online via the newspaper's social media channels, Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook was a popular choice for *Daily Voice* readers to read the news content online as it was not costly in terms of mobile data usage and the platform allows for zero-data browsing. In 2019, the RJB column reflected the sentiments made by *Daily Voice* readers online. When readers commented on *Daily Voice* Facebook articles (which were exact replicas of the print news articles) comments were selected and published in the newspaper. Similar to the SMS line, the *Daily Voice* editorial team would select comments from the newspaper's Facebook page for publication.

The SMS and Facebook comments were separated when published in the newspaper in part to reflect the source of the comments for readers; but also to encourage the public to use these platforms.

Unlike in 2015, in 2019 there were three ways in which to comment on *Daily Voice* stories and content, readers could SMS, Whatsapp or leave a comment on Facebook (See Figure 6).



**Figure 7: Rek Your Bek banner headline 2019**

In comparison to 2015, the newspaper also increased in price in 2019. At the start of 2019, the cost of a single edition of the *Daily Voice* was R4.50 (four rand and fifty cents) and there was a price increase on 15 July 2019. The cost of one copy of the newspaper then increased by 30 cents (thirty cents) to R4.80 (four rand and eight cents).

The cost of sending an SMS to the RJB platform was R1.50 (compared to R1 in 2015). Therefore if a reader sent an SMS to RJB in 2019 it was at a cost of 33.3 percent of the price of purchasing the newspaper.

The inflation over this four year period is an impediment for potential readers to access and comment on *Daily Voice* content, but similarly the newspaper provided access to their content which was free. Access to social media and the *Daily Voice* does require mobile data and internet access via a mobile phone or personal computer but it was less expensive than buying a physical copy of the newspaper

### *The data analysis*

It's evident that because there were more ways for Daily Voice readers to send through their comments, more reader comments were reflected in the newspaper in 2019 as opposed to 2015. The increase in communication platforms meant that there was also an increase in space allocated to reader comments in the newspaper. As explained, the reader comments were divided in terms of the source of the comment (Facebook or text messages) and these two columns created more space for reader opinions in 2019.

In January, April and May 2019 there were no reader comments relating to the army being deployed to the Cape Flats in the RJB column. In February 2019, there were comments on three different days relating to the army. The reader comment published on 25 February 2019 is notable for its length in comparison to other comments. This 180 word comment is nearly double the average word count of 55 word comments the newspaper published in 2015.

Reader comment: *“It is ludicrous for any member of the South African government (local or national) to suggest that the army should be used to “address the high crime rate”. The primary reason to raise an army is to protect your country and the population from EXTERNAL aggression. To expect that force to take on the duty of monitoring it’s own citizens, is an admission that the police force is inadequate and/or incompetent. If that is the case then the president and his cohorts should immediately disband SAPS and replace it with an armed militia. Just how nonsensical that scenario is can be borne out by the number of banana republics around the world now governed by the same armies originally set up to*

*protect them. From 1829 onward, countries have enjoyed non-military policing originally promulgated and subsequently proved by Sir Robert Peel. As an example, the (mostly) still unarmed forces in the UK manage to keep a hold on law and order by a combination of honesty, integrity, world class training, discipline and respect for the public. AKA, Bishop Lavis.”*

This comment was sent via the text message/Whatsapp mobile service. The RJB column does not separate messages sent via the SMS line and the Whatsapp service. It's evident from the length of this message that the *Daily Voice* did not censor lengthier comments that were sent via text message. There are no character limits on text messages or on Facebook comments, but because of space constraints in the column inches of a newspaper there would be limitations for the *Daily Voice* when publishing these comments.

The *Daily Voice* reported that within a few weeks at the start of 2019 (between January and February 2019), 25 people were killed as a result of gang violence. Under the sub-heading *25 KILLED IN GANG WAR* a reader comment from Facebook was published on 26 February 2019. The title of the sub-heading is also the headline of the published newspaper article the day before which is what prompted the comment: *“25 people killed in less than a month and the Army is doing training in Muizenburg. Training for what war? When we on the Cape Flats are losing family members in daily battles. Yagya Lewis.”*

It was this increase in violence that prompted the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele to once again add his voice to the public debate about the army assisting police with crime fighting. On 5 March 2019, the *Daily Voice* published reader comments which were responses to the article *Cele Says No To The Army On The Cape Flats*. All of these comments were sourced from the Facebook reader comments responding to that article:

Reader comment: *“To sort the gang problem out, [it] requires an effective solution. 1. Ban all gangs. And label them under the domestic terrorism act. 2. This will allow the police to establish mobile Joint Operation Commands to call in more crews from other provinces. 3. Finances: this allows the provincial government to use the national budget for more police officers. Once you outlaw gangs and label it under the domestic terrorism act, the military can be called in under the provincial government act for domestic terrorism. Any crime under the domestic terrorism act falls under the military. And you don't need the president's signature. The Constitution for domestic terrorism explains that any group that holds communities hostage are labeled domestic terrorists. Go read the Constitution on domestic terrorism. You need a third majority vote from the provincial legislature to deploy the military to do search and seizures. KD Brookes.”*

Reader comment: *“Bringing [the] army in won't solve a thing. They were brought in before. The Constitution must change and firstly politicians [have] to acknowledge crime, and it's not being done. Chantal Oliver.”*

Reader comment: *“The type of violence we're seeing as a result of gangs on the Cape Flats, for example, is not the result of shortcomings in policing in the area, but other underlying factors such as poverty and unemployment. Political factors at play, local authorities must come to the party and provide basic infrastructure and services. The army won't be able to*

*do police work as per our Constitution. They will have to bring calmness and police will basically have to focus on investigations. Mohamad Ajwad Cassiem.”*

Reader comment: *“If Cele says yes, deploy them, he admits failure of the police, which means failure on his part. So don’t expect the military anytime soon. Christopher Scott.”*

Reader comment: *“The army was here to deal with some problematic fish [and] brought out all the heavy artillery. Faizel Solomon.”*

Reader comment: *“There is a reason. The minister is correct. They are a last resort. Mncedisi Eric.”*

The sentiment towards the Police Minister’s stance and comments about crime prevention on the Cape Flats continued for months as is evident from the following comments in July 2019.

3 July 2019, reader comment: *“I just heard Police Minister Bheki Cele state that crime on the Cape Flats is not bad enough to deploy the army. How many people must still die in gang violence for it to be enough for him? I believe if it happened in areas like Bishops court, the army would’ve been there already.”*

4 July 2019, reader comment: *“Bheki Cele said it is not the Army’s mandate to deal with gangsters and the crime is not bad enough. This was also said by Helen Zille. The Army is trained to kill. If ever they should deploy the Army, I’m sure you will have the parents of gangsters moaning “my son is not a gangster” when they get apprehended. Bheki Cele says you can’t bring the Army into the Western Cape to fight crime because they are trained for war. Fikile Mbalula is opening a war room in the Western Cape to fight crime. Who know’s what they are doing?”*

The army was deployed to the Cape Flats and on 15 July 2019, there were comments published in RJB comments in response to the *Daily Voice* news article entitled *Army Deployment: Residents Ask Why Now?* Its indicated that these comments were from the Facebook publication of the article.

Reader comment: *“I don’t understand. Communities are crying for help, children are dying! And they ask such a k@k question? Jody Daniels.”*

Reader comment: *“Jody Daniels, I understand [their] question because in coloured communities this also happened, but now that 13 people [were] shot dead in Philippi he decided to deploy the SANDF. Marshall Muller.”*

Reader comment: *“Happy this has finally happened. These communities will feel somewhat safer in their homes and this being after years of living in fear. Shaun Craig Koff.”*

Reader comment: *“Does his reason really matter now? Some people will find any reason to complain. Just be grateful that the army will come in and assist and hopefully the community will be safe. Shabeer Mahomed.”*

Reader comment: *“Better late than never! Just be grateful we’re finally gonna get the soldiers!! Nankulo Bhuti Wakwa Sokombela.”*

Reader comment: *“All those making it a race thing should just keep their comments to themselves. Both black and coloured communities have suffered great losses of families and friends through gang violence. Let’s focus on building our communities together as one for the better and stop politicking this matter. Lazola Regan Vukapi.”*

As the *Daily Voice* continued with daily coverage of the army and police operations on the Cape Flats, there were also daily comments on the issue in RJB. The coverage of the army’s presence on the streets and the crime in their neighbourhoods was part of the lived experience of *Daily Voice* readers. This is evidenced in the Facebook comments on 18 July 2019. On this day, reader comments were extracted from the *Daily Voice* Facebook page in response to the story with the headline *43 ‘Weekend Murder’ In Cape Town Despite Heavier Police Presence*. A sample of these comments show that this was an issue that was part of the newspaper’s readers daily reality

Reader comment: *“Heavy police presence? Where? I saw two SAPS patrol vans the entire weekend in Manenberg. So where was the heavy presence exactly? Zurayda Mervis.”*

Reader comment: *“Soon this is gonna spill into the city centre, beaches and malls, then we’ll really see police and military intervention. Just you wait and see. Leon Xiphu.”*

Reader comment: *“Can the retarded government wake up and reinstate the death penalty? Talk about democracy. I see politicians fighting for power and money while those who voted for them are gunned down. Iya Samuels.”*

Reader comment: *“I don’t see any soldiers in my community yet. Sphamandla Blqprawdkt Mxoli.”*

This reflection of what was happening in the neighbourhood that their readers lived is also evidenced that tabloid newspapers in South Africa are unique. Comparable to the UK and the USA, where tabloid newspapers are rooted in the sensationalist aspects of stories and focused on gossip, the entertainment industry and lifestyle content, tabloid newspapers in South Africa are more community focused. This is reflected in the content of the reader comments, that not only were readers responding to news coverage about serious social ills such as crime and violence, but they were also questioning of how state resources were used. A reader comment on 22 July 2019 reflects this: *“Is the government also going to deploy the army in the drug hot spots in Cape Town, [like] Maitland, Bellville, Muizenberg [and] Table View? Drugs, like guns, are killing our children.”* On the same day one reader opines that although his is not a shared reality of the majority of *Daily Voice* readers, the issue of the army being used to combat gangs is an important one everyone in Cape Town: *“I’m a white South African. I really feel for my brothers and sisters on the Cape Flats. The army and SAPS should close down the affected areas and search every house. There must be so many low-life scum that have broken their parole. Put them on a ship and sink it in the middle of the ocean. No loss. Smiley. Constantia.”*

This comment is notable in that it shows that the *Daily Voice* content was reaching a wider audience on social media, as opposed to the print newspaper. The target market might be the majority ‘coloured’ readership, but with content from the newspaper being shared on Facebook and Twitter *Daily Voice* content was being seen by people who might not have

opted to by the newspaper. By consequence, the opinions of *Daily Voice* readers were being shared by a wider audience than those who chose to read the print newspaper.

On 22 July it was also notable that the *Daily Voice* reflected the opinions firstly, of people who opposed the army's deployment on the Cape Flats and secondly of people who identified as gang members operating on the Cape Flats. The article relating to the former is entitled *Cape Flats Mense Protest Against Army Deployment* and the latter was entitled *Cape Flats Gangs Say Army 'Won't Touch Us'*.

The comments relating to the *Daily Voice* news article about opposition to the army as a law enforcement force on the streets of the Cape Flats was varied. The RJB comments shows both people who agreed and opposed the idea that people should be protesting the presence of the army and it being deployed on home soil. Readers voiced their support and disbelief that their fellow citizens would protest the army on the streets of gang-ridden neighbourhoods.

Reader comment "*I also cannot believe this ... they want the army ... army comes, then they say they don't [want] the army ... they want social workers ... who will be shot at also. Nicholas Gupta Mlotshwa.*"

Reader comment: "*Hulle sal protest, want hulle is die probleem self! Winifred Larey.*"

Reader comment: "*I don't agree with protesting the army's deployment, that's foolish. But on the other hand, how the hell can it change anything when the gang bosses were given A FULL WEEK'S NOTICE. They had more than enough time to adjust their operations accordingly. Gang bosses are prepared to take a loss in profits for the next three months, they will lie low and scale down activity to ensure that vital high-ranking members of their organisation are not arrested. I expected our army to hit harder. This deployment is very lacklustre; seems like more of a photo op than anything else. Kaizer Senosi*"

Reader comment: "*Social workers vs the army. The army sounds like a better option in this instance. Thirza Damons.*"

Both the news article and the reader comments in response to it is evidence that the *Daily Voice* did reflect a diversity of reader views on this issue. Not only was this a topical issue, but it was a social reality that directly affected *Daily Voice* readers. Similarly when the *Daily Voice* reflected the views of people who identified as gang members it solicited reader response. Some readers took issue with the fact that the journalists had interviewed known gang members and the newspaper had provided them with a platform to air their views.

Reader comment: "*You should have asked them to prove it and show you how they conduct their 'business' in the presence of the army. Without the army they're invincible, with the army around they're invisible. Adeeb Supercharged Petersen.*"

Reader comment: "*That is the way of the gangster. Groot bek behind closed doors [it's] a whole new world; then they plea and bargain. Errol Siljeur.*"

Reader comment: "*Cool story. How about you divulge the names of the gangs you claim to have said this. Lincoln Moyce.*"



Reader comment: *“The government must recruit the gangs to go to the army, really. They seem to have a proper attitude. Not scared, gooi oorlog toe. Natalie April.”*

Reader comment: *“Moenie worrie nie, tot hulle begin val en afgemaai word deur die army. Winston Lackey.”*

Reader comment: *“The gangsters and their so-called leaders are just cowards. Elvis Mans. Hulle praat skoon snert. Is reeds omdat hulle bang is nou gaan hulle ding pyn. Hamilton Jansen.”*

Reader comment: *“Hulle sal k@k. Die army het groter guns as hulle. Ragerlaoji Dank Vanstaden.”*

Reader comment: *“The army should make a few examples for gangs to fear them. Mohamed Rasool Anthony.”*

Reader comment: *“Asb army, skiet die goed vrek! Edwill Jacobs.”*

What is also notable is that the *Daily Voice* also reflected reader criticism to published news articles. It was a response mechanism from readers that showed that people had opinions not only about the content of news articles but also in the manner in which the content was shared as news. This reader comment from 24 July proves that *Daily Voice* readers were engaging with the news content in nuanced ways.

Reader comment: *“In Tuesday’s Daily Voice there is an article about “Army brings death down”. Don’t they mean ‘up’? They came to Hanover Park to parade their presence and we haven’t seen them again. Quinton Arendse’s death could maybe have been avoided as gangsters first paraded around Phillans Walk just after 3pm, three of them. Residents of Ontario Court called the one by name, saying there are kids in the road. The gangster waved his gun, showing children to run home. Then they continued towards Oribi Court. Less than three hours later poor Mr. Arendse lost his life. If residents were so concerned they could have called police and stated they saw “so and so” in Phillans Walk shooting, so he could be arrested. He lives less than five minutes away from Phillans Walk. And I did call several times, but, as usual, no police came. [With] the march on Saturday, let’s see who residents support: the gangsters or their community. These gangsters are shooting at us, not their rivals. We can take them out of their houses if we stand together or bring Pagad in, they will know what to do”*

On July 30 under the headline *Army Deployment Will Not Solve Gang Problem* opposing reader viewers were continuing to be reflected.

Reader comment: *“Yes, the army won’t help stop crime, but very harsh punishment will. [The court system] needs to stop corruption [when granting] bail. [How can someone] kill another person and [get] out on R500 bail? Someone’s life cannot be worth R500; it’s priceless, but not in this country. Christina Johnson.”*

Reader comment: *“If some SAPS members were not so incompetent and corrupt and [were] more loyal and focused on serious crimes then [there would be] no need to have deployed the army. [The] ANC and police commissioner [are] useless. Sharon Werthen.”*

Reader comment: “*Standing together is going to solve the problem. The army doesn’t care. Leonard Abrahams.*”

Reader comment: “*The army must stay. Alexander Fuchs.*”

The interactions between *Daily Voice* readers were at times also more than a conversation between two people via the RJB. Because of the public nature of the newspaper and the platform that it had created, there was also the opportunity for readers to either directly or indirectly educate or inform each other. This is the mandate of news media, to ‘inform, educate and entertain’ and for tabloid media each of these ideals is exaggerated (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004). *Daily Voice* readers were doing this, whether they were aware of it or not.

On 31 July 2019 the newspaper published: “Saw the army the other day in convoys of four. I also saw each convoy had their own military ambulance following. It’s like the army knows they are gonna get hurt against our Cape Flats gunslingers lol. Mr. Good.” This reader comment prompted a response on 2 August 2019 which read: “Mr. Good, I don’t think you have an idea of what the army is all about. Whether it be operational, a sports event, military parade there will always be medical personnel present. Do your home [work] first, sir. I am so fed up with all these strategies the government comes up with to stop gang violence in various communities. Yes, the army was called in, but hello?! They are here and nothing changed. I think the only way forward is to make gangsterism illegal, so if you catch one, lock him up and remove the number from his skin, shave his hair and put him in jail in another city for two years before even starting with his case. That’s only if they are being locked up for drugs [and] theft, but not murder . Miss Fed up.”

These two comments also indicate that the *Daily Voice* editorial team was aware that readers responded to each other’s comments and conducted conversations via the reader column. The fact that the newspaper would often have this chain of reader conversations continuing over a few days indicates that the journalists and editorial management were not unaware of the reader conversations and opinions taking place in the column because it was their responsibility to publish comments and comment replies.

Bird (1990) concludes that there is no difference between the journalistic work of tabloid news reporters and their counterparts at broadsheet newspapers. She points out in her research that many tabloid writers and journalists have previous experience at newspapers considered to be “mainstream and serious press” and that they made the transition with ease. This is a characteristic noted in tabloid newspapers in the UK, USA and South Africa (Bird, 1990). Glenn and Knaggs (2005:4) in their evaluation of the *Daily Voice* points out that criticism of tabloid newspapers is borne from a societal expectation of the media to be the most truthful storytellers. This storytelling characteristic is also evident in the *Daily Voice* reader comments. People want to express themselves and have an opinion, not only on the newspaper’s content but also on the issues that affect their lives.

In August 2019, *Daily Voice* readers continued to comment on the army’s operations and presence in Cape Town. The newspaper coverage of army operations this month was also varied. The *Daily Voice* reported on how soldiers allegedly assaulted an innocent man, the army raided an illegal abalone plant and a pregnant woman was shot in killed in Manenberg

on the Cape Flats (allegedly by a known gang member). This was all detailed in the space of a few weeks as the army operations continued in Cape Town for the rest of the year.

In September 2019, the *Daily Voice* continued to provide coverage of incidents of crime and violence on the Cape Flats. On 16 September 2019 readers responded to a story published in the *Daily Voice* under the headline ‘6 Shot In Manenberg War Zone’

Reader comment: *“Now I really don’t understand. I was under the impression the army was deployed to stop this kind of situation? Where are they? Zaib Jacobs.”*

Reader comment: *“Why is the army here again? Nicola Baadjies.”*

This sentiment is echoed throughout the month of September and there is no evidence of published reader comments either in support of the army or positive comments about soldiers continued presence in Cape Town. On 18 September 2019, the *Daily Voice* published only three reader comments in response to their news story that the army would remain on the streets of Cape Town and on the Cape Flats until March 2020. At the time this was the official operational plan, which the newspaper reported on. Only reader comments from Facebook were published in RJB in response to this news.

Reader comment: *“What is the purpose of the army on the Cape Flats? All I saw them doing was being rude to everybody and hitting and targeting the innocent. And secondly, I see no decline in crime on the Cape Flats. How many innocent [people] died on [the] Flats since the deployment of army? Marisha Moses.”*

Reader comment: *“Ag, not to be negative but they raided a very busy merchant’s house 2 doors away from us on Sunday afternoon, but found nothing, as usual. Ten minutes later it as business as usual. Caryn-Leigh Stober.”*

Reader comment: *“The army will be more effective if they operate on their own... Fabian Uys.”*

In October only three reader comments relating to the army operations in Cape Town were published in the *Daily Voice* and none of these comments were positive feedback about the SANDF. One comment was in relation to a soldier allegedly assaulting a well known singer and entertainer in Cape Town on 20 October 2019. The other two comments were general statements about crime, gangs and the army as a law enforcement solution to these social ills.

Reader comment published on 1 October 2019: *“I really don’t get whatever the government is doing by putting laws into place that are so contradictory. They don’t want the death sentence to be reinstated and yet they are killing innocent unborn babies by legalising abortions. They brought in the army, but the killing and raping of vulnerable young children, young girls and boys, women and men, abuse of the elderly and mentally challenged, not to mention the oppressed people, go on and on. Yes, there are police officers who are doing their work diligently, but so many others are so corrupt.”*

Reader comment published on 18 October 2019: *“The army is torturing innocent people and the gangsters are shooting innocent people. We are not safe anywhere. JvK.”*

On 13 November 2019, the *Daily Voice* reported on a 56 year old man, described as a grandfather who was arrested for selling drugs. The next day RJB featured one comment from a reader who responded to this story and the comment were published under the headline *Oupa, 56, bust for mering tik* (Grandfather, 56 arrested for selling drugs).

Reader comment: “Then people come on Facebook and badmouth the police and army when they search the elderly. Jeanne Wyngaard.”

There were four comments in November 2019 and one comment in December 2019 relating to the army featured in RJB. As shown above these were broad references to the army who at the time were still present and operational on the Cape Flats.

### A sample of Daily Voice coverage

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Analysing the data from *Daily Voice* readers is crucial to understanding not only the sentiment but the general interest that readers had as it pertains to the SANDF and its uses as a crime fighting mechanism on the Cape Flats. Readers were informed in a myriad of ways which would of included their personal experiences both past and present as well as continual coverage in the media as this had become an issue of both regional and national importance. Reader comments as reflected in the *Daily Voice* was therefore not made in isolation but informed by these various factors.

The *Daily Voice* was editorial team which comprises primarily of a team of journalists and columnists would also have covered the issue, presenting the opinions of politicians, decision makers and the people affected by the army’s deployment. This meant that the newspaper’s coverage of this issue was notable at the time of publication as it would have prompted reader responses and influenced then to share their views by communicating via RJB, as previously detailed in this research.



Figure 8: Two *Daily Voice* street pole advertising posters

Part of the *Daily Voice* advertising and marketing strategy as a daily newspaper looking to entice readers to buy the newspaper was to create, print and distribute posters that were attached to street poles across Cape Town (see Figure 8). What this also illustrates is that the *Daily Voice* used this not only was a marketing tool but that it could be used as a way to influence reader and even non-reader opinion. Any member of the public that saw and could read one of the posters would be able to engage with the message that it was conveying. This had the power to not only influence potential buyers of the newspaper before they even read the printed publication, but possibly also convey a strong message to readers before they send their comments to RJB. These street posters would entice readers to possibly encourage an already held belief or sentiment or illicit a negative response that could result in someone not buying the newspaper and ever reading the story behind the headline. These snap shot headlines would have been part of the information that a *Daily Voice* reader received if they saw it in a public space before they purchased the newspaper. These street poster fit into not only the *Daily Voice* narrative of sharing information with the public but also the crucial Agenda Setting Theory as previously highlighted in this research project.

Informing a *Daily Voice* reader would then begin before the person even reads the newspaper and sees the story behind the headline drawing their own conclusions on the information imparted and received.

Once a potential reader has seen the advertising on public street poles, if they buy the newspaper, the next thing that they would see is the front page of that day's *Daily Voice*.

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WHERE IS THE ARMY?

SANDF in city, ready to strike

FULL STORY ON PAGE 5



Crime fighter killed in 'hit'



SOCCER CHAMPS GET HELP

Readers open hearts to robbed youth teams - P8

WIMBLEDON AND CWC FINALS - PAGE 20



Figure 9: The Daily Voice front page published 15 July 2019

The front page of the newspaper has all the same aspects as the posters that are used to advertise and entice the reader to buy the newspaper. This first page is what the reader would see when they first pick up the newspaper and consider buy it. The layout of the *Daily Voice* is such that it uses words and images to illustrate a selection of news stories in that day's edition. As figure 9 shows, the *Daily Voice* uses bright colours and short sentences as headlines and information snippets to convey this selection of stories to potential readers. Figure 9 is also a sample of a *Daily Voice* front page that highlights the newspapers coverage of the army deployment in Cape Town. In this sample the newspaper is asking a direct question *Where Is The Army?*, It was content such as this that readers would see and prompt them to share their opinions via RJB. The *Daily Voice* has once again used all the journalistic elements of tabloid newspapers on its front page, bright colours, images that describe the story and emotive language in the form of headlines.

Asking its readers a question on the front page of the newspaper is a communicative device to not only entice people to buy the newspaper but also a way to solicit readers to contribute their answers or thoughts about the question posed.

The front page is the start of the readers journey to engage with the content of the newspaper. It would be from this point onwards, once a reader has the newspaper in their hands, that their own decision making becomes paramount. Personal preference is what leads the reader, they could choose to read the newspaper from the first page to the last page, start reading the newspaper from the middle or the last page, or just simply browse and flip through the pages. But the front page is the starting point of the reading journey of any newspaper and a compass for the reader as to the direction of the day's news menu which has been assembled. When the *Daily Voice* uses emotive language or asks a question on the front page of the newspaper it is part of the tools at news team's disposal to grab reader attention. The result of this can be an increase in newspaper sales but it is also a way to get readers to offer their opinions in response to the emotive language or the question posed

**GANGLAND**

# Thank God for army



**RESIDENTS** of Mamelodi thanked the Lord that the army has finally answered their prayers and come to their gang-war-ravaged neighbourhood.

Gangsters had a rough week ending yesterday morning when cops, accompanied by the North African National Defence Force, raided their homes before they could cook their illegal goods.

Police took Operation Mela to the gang-riddled streets of Mamelodi, arresting 20 people on charges including selling drugs.

The operation was led by the North Liaison Area vice command Dineo Mokoena, who are at war over drug trade.

**Happy**

Residents have welcomed the raid, saying it was long overdue.

"The community was very happy about the raid," says community police forum chairperson Makhosini Jantjie.

"Many people come up to me and tell me they were happy about the operation and that this was the first time since the raid that they have been able to sleep peacefully."

There is a party in the air, as the police and the SANDF, who are at war over the drug trade, dig a well of peace.

An area previously known as NE and TD are now history as several buildings are being used as a police station.

**Drugs**

Police seized a large quantity of drugs, including a large quantity of drugs, including a large quantity of drugs.

There is a party in the air, as the police and the SANDF, who are at war over the drug trade, dig a well of peace.



ON THE JOB: Cops patrol the streets and search for drugs.



SEARCHING: Cops looking for hidden drugs and guns.



SEARCHING: Cops looking for hidden drugs and guns.



SEARCHING: A large quantity of drugs hidden in a house.

Figure 10: Daily Voice news article published on 22 May 2015



Figure 10 is a sample from the *Daily Voice* newspaper published on 22 May 2015, as part of coverage of the army deployment on the Cape Flats. It is clear that the style of tabloid news and the *Daily Voice* layout focuses attention to the headline and pictures illustrated in the news piece. As explained, this is part of the criticism of tabloid news but also one of the news formats trademarks. The debate of the tabloid news format is not notable but not at the heart of this research. What figure 10 shows is that the *Daily Voice* in its own unique news style published news that was topical and relevant news that directly affected its readers. The pictures published in this article is the important as it is a reflecting of the reality for *Daily Voice* readers, this was their neighbourhood, people who they could identify with in a direct manner. The importance of this has been highlighted previously in the marked differences between what tabloid news is in South Africa compared to the USA and the UK which is where the legacy of print news in South Africa is rooted. Tabloid news in SA is a mixture of entertainment, gossip and when needed is also a reflection of the violence and crime in the communities of their readership. This is an important aspect that critics of tabloid news overlook, the importance of the information that tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Voice* are responsible for it. The balance of a news agenda is discussed in this research and it remains balance for any news medium, regardless of the manner in which the news is conveyed. The sensationalist aspects of tabloid news has also been interrogated in this research and as is evident in figure 10 the *Daily Voice* appears to be able to strike the balance when presenting serious issues to its readers.

The totality of newspaper posters, front pages and articles are the three main units of journalism that not only tabloid newspapers uses, but all print news media uses to attract and gain reader attention. As described in this research, it is the exaggeration of these elements which is at the centre of criticism of tabloid news, but in the South African context this is a shallow analysis of the news media. Tabloid news in South Africa like all other media attracts reader feedback and a narrow analysis of tabloid newspapers that dismisses it as a news source is also a dismissal of this reader interaction. Tabloid news readers are the audiences consuming news in colloquial language, in a sensationalist journalistic style that they find acceptable. This research has shown that there is a conversation that is happening among tabloid news readers at the *Daily Voice* and that it is a direct response not only to news coverage, but to serious social issues that directly affects them. To discount or devalue the tabloid news genre is to ignore the opinions of its readers.

The sensationalist aspects that are associated with tabloid newspapers is also absent from its coverage of the gang violence and the army deployment on the Cape Flats. There appeared to be a separation in the sampled articles presented and other *Daily Voice* content, a distinction that was obviously made by the news team. It's evident that this serious issue of the army and its presence in the neighbourhoods of *Daily Voice* readers was not the subject of humour, gossip or any other kind of sensation. This is an important factor to recognise because it was the balance that only tabloid news in South Africa was able to do. The *Daily Voice* was able to balance these aspects of tabloid news, sharing the entertainment and humours stories alongside the more serious news such as the army deployment. The totality of tabloid news is not one genre, it's a mixture of the light and the serious and this is dismissed by critics who narrowly only view tabloid news as light, sensationalist journalism. But as can be seen in the sampled news articles and poster the *Daily Voice* spoke directly to its audience without diminishing the seriousness of the news it was imparting in any manner either with its headlines, images or language usage. Tabloid news readers were not in any way starved of facts or the reality of what was happening in their neighbours or being decided by politicians and policy-makers that would impact their reality. In the *Daily Voice* reader data there is

strong criticism of all aspects of the news story but not a single criticism of the manner in which the news was delivered. The tabloid news readers did not appear to misinterpret each other's comment, the news content or even the images that the newspaper published, further proof that the news service albeit in the vehicle of the tabloid genre was not prohibitive to informing its readers.

# Vo*DAILY*ice

## Chapter 6

In the conclusion of this research it is important to acknowledge the impact of *Daily Voice* reader comments on the content of the newspaper as a whole. The reader comments are a valuable thread of how tabloid news readers are not only willing to share their opinions on a public platform but also starting conversations amongst themselves which must not be ignored.

There is a journalistic but also academic value in the reader opinions which is outlined in the research and this conclusion.

The opportunity also exists for the *Daily Voice* and other tabloid newspapers with similar reader feedback platforms to expand and further engage with the reader opinions that they receive.

Social media and the print newspapers are both options to increase the platforms available to readers and for the news content creators to engage with reader opinions in a more constructive way to integrate it into the information offering that is shared.

# Conclusion

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In the study of the Daily Voice entitled ‘The Daily Voice and the return of the Coloured Repressed’ author Angie Knaggs makes several research observations. One of the conclusions is that “While the questions of audience reactions is properly the subject of further study, the circulation success of The Daily Voice suggests that readers find the local reporter dealing with their concerns a more palatable request than the bland international fare of the news wires,” (Glenn and Knaggs, 2005). In part, this research study begun to further that study of audience reactions that Knaggs believes needs to be done. Knaggs further believes that critics of tabloid media have been dismissive of the impact of the medium because they cannot overlook the journalistic style.

As explained, this is in part what this study has set out to do, to not be an analysis of the style or journalistic value of tabloid news. The aim in part, is to show that there is an alternative conversation that is taking place within tabloid media in South Africa beyond the news stories published by the journalists of the newspaper. People are not only talking about topics that feel are important to them, but many are offering solutions to societal issues that directly affect them.

As reflected in the literature analysis of this study, South African newspapers and tabloid newspapers have their roots within the British media. This link to the colonial past of South Africa lingers within its media space, but comparisons are not ideal. The tabloid news space has allowed for people who in the democratic era have found a media platform that they feel comfortable enough with to engage in. This means that the tabloid news in South Africa and specifically Cape Town is hyper local and a lot more reflective of the reality of readers’ daily lives. This is a unique comparison to tabloid news media in any other territory, including in Britain. In other countries tabloid news is focused on entertainment news, celebrity gossip and sports news. In South African tabloid newspapers this content is reflected on but emphasis is also placed on social ills and issues. These social ills are linked to engrained poverty in communities such as the Cape Flats. High levels unemployment is a reality in these communities as was highlighted previously as a result of the apartheid system.

This study can conclude that Daily Voice readers are engaging with the news content they are reading, either in print or online. The Daily Voice and other South African newspapers and tabloid newspapers would do well to continue offering platforms to their readers to engage with each other and the newspaper’s content. In the case of the Daily Voice this research shows that the newspaper has done this by reflecting the comments made by readers on social media in 2019 and subsequent years. The Daily Voice should continue and where possible expand on the platforms it creates for its readers to provide their feedback. If the newspaper so chooses they could also use existing platforms that readers use to engage with news content, to respond to readers and also generate leads for follow-up stories that readers could provide.

There is a legacy of print news media in South Africa which mirrors that of newspapers in other countries, including Britain. The South African tabloid newspapers are a unique space for previously excluded race groups to express themselves about issues that directly affect them and have their opinions shared on a public platform that did not exist before democracy.

## Opinions change

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The theory of public opinion is a normative theory that relates to the responsibility of news media as a catalyst for the contributing and forming a sentiment with its audience.

The *Daily Voice* sets the tone for what is a direct and often explicit narrative to readers who share their thoughts via the SMS line.

This engagement with readers meant that the news agenda was open to influence by reader feedback and suggestions for journalists to respond to issues that would not otherwise be explored. The editorial direction would then not be created in isolation by the news staff, reporters or the *Daily Voice* Editor. This research shows the flow of communication to the *Daily Voice* via its dedicated SMS line, but it cannot measure how the staff responded to reader feedback, only how it was represented in the newspaper. RJB was a platform that has the power to influence both the views and sentiments of *Daily Voice* readers but also it's staff. This does not have to be a negative influence but a constructive one if *Daily Voice* readers use the data from RJB to help inform the rest of their content offerings. If they notice that there is something the readers are talking about that is of concern to them but not covered in the newspaper or investigated by the journalists, they have the power to do this. They are also able to use the data to help educate and inform readers who might want to know the legalities or facts of a particular issue. The *Daily Voice* editorial staff can use the data from RJB to even map patterns or trends in reader conversations that could be helpful when reporting on issues that directly impacts their readers.

The reader's response to news stories and issues that take place in their community is immediate and direct to the editorial staff. The selection process is done by grouping the subject of the messages and grouping it under sub headings in the *Rek Your Bek* column which is published daily. This means that there is a likelihood that unless a reader is offering their opinion on a social issue and no one else is, their comment might not be published. Frame-building consists of those factors influencing the structure of the decision making process for the selection of sms'es and content for news stories (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These internal factors affect the people *Daily Voice* journalists would interview as well as the opinions published in the newspaper. Without a strict set of rules for both the sms column and print news stories, within the tabloid news factor the *Daily Voice* would be allowing for subjective decisions to be made by either the editor or reporters. This is one the limitations and editorial measures that would need to be considered by the *Daily Voice* and other media which canvasses and reflects reader opinion. The process of selecting reader comments for publication is not known, but it would be beneficial if newspapers, including the *Daily Voice* were to explain to readers how this is done. This will encourage more people to contribute to

the public platform and also allay any fears of bias if the news team is transparent about their editorial process. Given that reader comments are sourced from both the dedicated SMS line and social media, it would be prudent to post an explanation on *Daily Voice* social media platforms as to how reader views are selected. An automatic response to reader SMS'es should also include such an explanation or summation to detail so that the reader is immediately informed as to the process followed, before their text message/opinion is published on any public platforms.

Such a disclaimer could also assist readers in understanding why their comments might not have been published. Readers would need to be reminded that within the confines of the RJB column, the space for reader comments might be limited. Any credibility or ethical considerations that the news team might be undertaking can also be explained in such a disclaimer to readers. This is an opinion platform so there should be parameters set for the staff that needs to select comments for publication. This public platform could also be the subject of a defamation case if a comment offends a reader who is possibly publicly named or accused of a crime without any proof. The onus would then be on the *Daily Voice* to prove that due diligence was done and that it exercised its duty of care when selecting reader messages for public consumption.

When sampling the opinions of RJB there are definitive conclusions that can be drawn.

Readers are submitting their comments and fellow readers are aware of this and people regularly respond to one another, either to show agreement or to voice a disagreement. This creates a platform for reader conversations to take place, albeit over a period of days, due to the nature of print news media. In 2019 when the *Daily Voice* was publishing comments it received to stories posted on its public Facebook page, the newspaper also reflected when readers commented on each other's thoughts. The reader column creates a chain of conversation which is merely a feature in the newspaper but not an integral part of its news offering. Reader comments become static blurbs that is separate from the news stories readers are engaging with and sharing opinions on.

In the formatting of the newspaper content, reader comments could be published adjacent to or on the same page that the comments are referencing. This will not only highlight reader opinions even further, but also signal to readers that their comments are recognised as being part of the news content and not a separate platform.

From the data it is evident that the *Daily Voice* editorial team tries to provide a balance of reader comment and a diversity of opinions. If the editor were to explain to readers either via social media or in the print publication what the criteria is for reader comment selection in the newspaper that might encourage more readers to share their views.

Reader interactions among each other are evidence that tabloid news readers are responsive to both the news coverage they consume as well as the each other's opinions. The *Daily Voice* can encourage this conversation by prompting reader feedback on topics via opinion polls and more direct reader engagement. This is valuable data that could inform the journalists as to what the readers are interested in and what is important to them.

As outlined, tabloid news readers in South Africa have been previously marginalised and either ignored, misrepresented or under-represented in the media. These readers have found a trusted voice in tabloid news that critics cannot dismiss because of the sensationalist format with which the information is published. These readers are having a conversation about social challenges such as gang violence and crime and their opinions are valid and need to be acknowledged because they are directly affected by these issues.

Evidenced from the data there has been a shift in opinion of the army as being the enemy during apartheid to a law enforcement protector in the democratic era. These opinions and support for the army cannot be ignored as it represents a shift in perceptions and trust in this arm of government.

The producers of tabloid news and information should do more than note the daily opinions of their readers, but use the data to inform their decision making with regards to information sharing because their readers are evidently keen to have their voices heard.

## The story continues

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Between 2015 and 2019 there were changes that took place in the manner in which the *Daily Voice* sourced and published its reader feedback. What is evident is that the newspaper has the foundation of a reader feedback mechanism that it can grow and use as a source not only for news content but also to speak and interact with its readers.

While social media platforms have been used to engage with readers, it's the print newspaper that remains the original source of information sharing and reader interactions.

Tabloid newspapers and the *Daily Voice* have a unique opportunity to not only share information but also to inform and educate readers in the feedback platform where they feel comfortable to interact. The conversation should be ongoing and the teams of journalists and editors that compile tabloid news should always be aware of what their readers are saying. This would allow for a responsiveness that would not only feed readers information that they choose to consume; but also to challenge misconceptions and broaden the manner and information that people are receiving.

Unlike its counterparts in the UK and USA, in South Africa tabloid newspapers are a trusted space where people who have been alienated from the commercial media space have found their voice. The serious issues of social injustices and crimes are reflected in tabloid newspapers in South Africa in general and in the *Daily Voice* in particular. The lessons for the media in this are broad, but specifically for tabloid news media it is evidence that not only is their audience listening to them but also talking. Tabloid news must increase the platforms it creates for reader feedback and engagement not only to expand on its audience but to increase the amount of voices and opinions that enter the public domain which in the past was excluded from doing so or was misrepresented.

Critics cannot dismiss the value of tabloid news sources in South Africa based solely on the journalistic nature of how it shares information with its audience. The tabloid news audience in general and particularly the *Daily Voice* readership are informed, opinionated and a valuable contributor to how social ills need to be addressed and their current realities changed for the better.

## Listen to the reader

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Reader feedback as is presented in the *Daily Voice* is a vast, collective archive of data. To the news team that compiles every edition of the newspaper, this data would trickle in on a daily basis, making it more manageable to publish. It also means there is an opportunity to do more with the data than to mirror what is being sent to the news team and published in the newspaper.

The formal media industry not only in South Africa but around the world has had to adapt to changes in technology and changes in how information is compiled and consumed. The increase in citizen journalism and social media has accelerated a plurality of voices and information that is publically available. There already exists all of these elements of a plurality of voices within the data of reader opinions at the *Daily Voice* which creates a network that is reflected within the published newspaper as a social media space. The platform itself has not changed in terms of just a one-way communication stream where readers are able to send text messages. If the platform is to be expanded it would create a broader social media space that could exist in print form or on the internet. The data is not altered in any way so if it was repurposed and publicly available on another platform it would allow for people to further interact with the data.

To listen to the reader is not easy because of the vast amount of data that the *Daily Voice* receives. But to reflect the reader opinions more broadly would be a greater attempt at showing readers that their opinions are being acknowledged and serving its intended purpose of being made public.

In print, it would be possible to publish a separate series or pull-out booklet of reader opinions that could be inserted into the newspaper as a leaflet and companion piece to the newspaper. This would provide the opportunity to reflect reader opinions that were not published on the day after they were sent or possibly didn't make it to publication at all due to space concerns in the newspaper. This 'best of the best' concept of reader opinions could also contain reader comments that were submitted via *Daily Voice* social media channels. A digital version of such a leaflet could also be created. This would further encourage readers to engage with the newspaper, share their opinion and know that their voices are being heard.

Another form of acknowledgement would be to add a section to the comment platform where readers could share their opinion in the same manner that *Daily Voice* columnists do.

The opportunity exists for the *Daily Voice* to approach their readers or put out a call to readers who would be interested in submitting a column type news piece to the newspaper.

This would give at least one reader the regular opportunity to more broadly share their thoughts and once again to directly express their daily reality and issues that they deem important.

*Daily Voice* reader columnists would become another resource for content that would add value to the existing RJB platform but also the pool of existing columnists at the newspaper who are qualified journalists. This would be a form of citizen journalism that would create an opportunity for *Daily Voice* readers they might not otherwise have.



The *Daily Voice* could also join forces with other news media and either lean on digital resources that it does not have and in a type of media exchange offer the data from the reader opinions. Social media and online is where news media, regardless of the genre of journalism can converge and collaborate. If *Daily Voice* readers opinions were published on a shared platform with another news brand and possibly other reader feedback this would be an acknowledgement that readers were being heard. The opinions of the tabloid news readers currently only exists in tabloid news and as previously explained is often overlooked or dismissed by critics. If tabloid news readers opinions were presented side-by-side with the views of other media consumers (possibly other newspaper readers) this would create an opportunity for an equality of opinions. Doing this would also expand the reach of the audience that would see and possibly interact with tabloid readers. Currently the tabloid news reader opinion is only visible and available within the confines of the tabloid news space in print and online,

Despite the opportunities that do exist, the *Daily Voice* would have to more clearly explain the terms and conditions that does or could apply to readers sending the newspaper their comments. This is done in a short synopsis currently but would need to be expanded.

## Collaborate with readers

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*Daily Voice* readers have already created conversations in the feedback platform exists nowhere else in the newspaper and is only carried forward by them. A conversation can begin and end between two people, and be expanded to multiple people commenting on the same issue and response for various days in succession. The *Daily Voice* news team are not part of this conversation but there is an opportunity for them to be a part of this conversation and collaborate with readers. If there was a persona created within RJB, for example a Mr or Mrs *Daily Voice* character, one of the journalists or even the editor could interact and collaborate with readers using this pseudonym. In response to reader concerns or even to assist readers who highlight a problem they have, this persona and the *Daily Voice* team could respond and assist. This could be in the form of a community outreach, problem solver or even just a commentator that could add their opinion (positive or negative sentiment) to reader suggestions. But this kind of communicator could also open the door of the newsroom and the inner workings of the *Daily Voice* to its readers.

To create the chance for readers to collaborate with the people behind the *Daily Voice* means there would be endless possibilities of future ventures at the newspaper.

The option also exists for a tip-off line to be created where readers could anonymously send information to the news team to investigate and follow-up. *Daily Voice* readers would then be able to share information with the news team in another manner and it possibly becoming news items that that a reader initiated. As previously explained there is a level of trust between the *Daily Voice* newspaper and its readers so this opportunity to invite reader tip-offs could be well received and successful. For the social ills that readers are already commenting on, if given the opportunity to share further information anonymously readers could contribute even more to the journalistic content and possible resolve the issue. Within the anonymous feedback, readers would also be given the opportunity to collaborate with the

*Daily Voice* because the news team might be able to provide advice or resources that readers would otherwise not have.

Collaboration efforts could also be done virtually with *Daily Voice* readers who are already interacting and sending their feedback via social media. Doing this would once again broaden the reach of feedback the newspaper would get as people who don't necessarily read the newspaper but do follow its social media pages might be more willing to interact with the news team. The barriers to entry for this communication are also lower as it would not incur the cost of a text message sent to RJB. If the reader is already on a social media platform and interacting in the digital space the opportunity exists for people to not only provide feedback to the *Daily Voice* via social media but possibly contribute tip-offs anonymously there as well.

Expanding in any way on reader feedback would also assist the *Daily Voice* in countering criticism of the sensationalist aspects of tabloid news. If the feedback platform is increased and reader opinions are not edited or altered (as is the case with RJB) critics would get an unfiltered set of data that would not necessarily be described as sensationalist. To counter this criticism proactively, the *Daily Voice* and other tabloid newspaper would be able to reach more people and potential readers who possibly also held the view that tabloid newspaper was not a medium they cared to interact with because of perceptions of journalistic exaggerations or inaccuracies.

Collaborations with readers would also counter the narrative that tabloid newspapers create and gossip, rumours and fake news. If *Daily Voice* allows readers to create content with the news team, people would gain first hand insight into the journalistic process and possibly become ambassadors for the newspaper. Readers who interact via the current RJB platform are already these kinds of ambassadors because they would be able to see that the comments that they submitted were printed unaltered in the newspaper.

Allowing these readers to collaborate with the *Daily Voice* team and possibly the journalists would also allow readers' access to a network of resources that that they might not have.

As previously discussed, the profile of the *Daily Voice* reader is someone who ordinarily would not contribute or interact on legacy media platforms. The feedback platform even in its current operation does allow for the newspaper to share its resources with readers in a constructive manner. *Daily Voice* readers are already interacting amongst each other so the chance that collaborations could happen between a group of people and the *Daily Voice* team also exists. Readers' who possibly might never have been able to meet, work together or even share resources and advice are on the unified platform that the newspaper has created.

Efforts to increase the feedback platform of the *Daily Voice* need not also be a costly exercise for the newspaper. Dedicating extra space in the newspaper or printing a separate supplement with only reader comments would incur a cost but the newspaper has existing social media platforms where the cost barriers are lower or not there at all. The news team already extracts the reader comments from the dedicated RJB SMS platform and on social media. Adding an extra platform such as direct messages or dedicated social media page for reader comments might even simplify what the staff is already doing. To increase the platforms for reader feedback and collaboration would add to the work flow of the news team but greatly enrich the offering to all readers. Initially broadening the feedback platform via social media would

also allow for reader to remain anonymous from the beginning of the new initiative and allows the *Daily Voice* to adapt and even cancel it at any time.

## Reader opportunity

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In the conclusion of this research it is evident that the word opportunity is often as used as this is the most apt way to describe the analysis of the *Daily Voice* reader comments. There is a captive audience within this tabloid newspaper space who are eager to have their voices heard and contribute to society. These are voices who never had this opportunity before democracy and now want to not only have their say but also be heard and accepted.

The value in the opportunity is overlooked when there is a fixation on the tabloid news genre. The relationship between the tabloid news reader and the army has changed. During apartheid soldiers were the enemy and it is evident that in 2015 and 2019 they were touted by many *Daily Voice* readers as a part solution to the violence in the neighbourhoods.

There is an opportunity of all tabloid newspapers to properly utilise the reader comments they receive and to listen and speak to the readers who are speaking to them.

The direct nature of the tabloid news format is lost when it comes to the reader platforms created and readers are left to mull on their own and even converse amongst themselves with no evidence that either the news team or decision makers such as local politicians are listening.

To ignore these reader conversations is an injustice to journalism and to not properly expand on it is a missed opportunity for journalists and researchers.

Behind the veil of sensationalism, tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Voice* are delivering credible news to their audience and the audience is responding. Future platforms must not be one-way communication as is the case with the current reader column in the *Daily Voice* it must be a conversation that is facilitated and the flow of communication continues with minimal barriers. The untapped potential of other relationship shifts beyond *Daily Voice* readers including coloured residents of Cape Town and the army is not known. Public sentiment is a moving target and to measure it accurately is difficult but not impossible. Sentiment was not measure in this research project but there is the opportunity to do this with other organs of state, divisions of government and even specific political parties and politicians.

Opportunity exists for this genre of news to shake-off the criticism it attracts and to explore further platforms for their readers to express themselves and contribute to society via the media and beyond. Doing this would be a positive way to also broaden media participation as well as information sharing between readers, journalists and the public as a whole.

The role of tabloid media is no different to media in general and the aims remain universal, to inform, entertain and educate. Tabloid newspapers such as *Daily Voice* are doing this and their readers are responding, but their voices are at risk of being entirely overlooked because of the genre within which it exists.

Taken within context, but away from the tabloid news space only increases the value of these readers opinions, which has as much agency and importance as reader comments and opinions in other news sources.

Tabloid news producers can do this on their own or they can join forces and create their own universal platform which would quickly and effectively boost their reader opinions within society. The context must remain unchanged but with more platforms to comment and to be able to do so in a language and within a media space where they are comfortable and that they trust is what current tabloid readers and future tabloid readers deserve.

The digital options and technological solutions exist to also make this happen, but with the readers already commenting in the print news format this would be the obvious place to expand and amplify their voices.

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