

**Constructions of nationhood in secession debates related to Mthwakazi Liberation
Front in Bulawayo's *Chronicle* and *Newsday* newspapers in 2011.**

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my brother, Shepherd Melusi Ndlovu, who is gone but never forgotten.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the constructions of nationhood in two Bulawayo newspapers, the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. Against the backdrop of the emergence of a secessionist movement, Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), this research examines the discourses of nationhood in the secessionist debates raging in these two newspapers. This study is premised on a view that nationhood constructions cannot be understood outside the broader context in which these newspapers are embedded. Accordingly, it traces the roots and resurgence of Matabeleland separatist politics, exploring the political-historical forces that have shaped a distinctive Ndebele identity that poses a threat to the one, indivisible Zimbabwean national identity. Further, the study situates Matabeleland separatist politics within the broader African secessionist discourse challenging the post-colonial nation-building project on the continent. Informed by Hall's (1992, 1996) constructivist approach to identity, it considers national identities as fragmented, multiple and constantly evolving. Thus, this study is framed within Hall's (1997) constructivist approach to representation, as it examines the constructions of nationhood in and through language. The study uses qualitative research methods, as it examines the meanings of nationhood in key media texts. Informed by Foucault's discourse theory, this research employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse 12 articles from the two newspapers. The findings confirm that the representations of nationhood in the two newspapers are influenced by their position within the socio-political context. The state-owned *Chronicle* legitimates the unitary state discourse advocated by ZANU PF. On the other hand, *Newsday's* representations are informed by the discourses of the opposition political parties and civil society that challenge the dominant nation-building project. Thus, within this paper, secession and devolution emerge as alternative imaginaries that contest the authoritarian discourse of nationhood.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMH - Alpha Media Holdings.

CCJP - Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis.

FRJ - Foundation of Reason and Justice.

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

ISO - International Socialist Organisation.

GPA - Global Political Agreement.

GNU - Government of National Unity.

MCSC - Matabeleland Civil Society Consortium.

MLF - Mthwakazi Liberation Front.

MPC - Mthwakazi People's Congress.

MDC - Movement for Democratic Change.

OAU - Organisation of African Union.

OEAS - Organisation of Emerging African States.

RPP - Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Ltd.

ZANU - Zimbabwe African National Union.

ZANU PF – Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front.

ZAPU - Zimbabwe African People's Union.

ZLHR - Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

ZMMT - Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust

INTRODUCTION

Background

The question of national identity has re-emerged in Zimbabwe, animated by Matabeleland separatist identity politics. On December 2010, a secessionist movement, Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), was launched in Bulawayo. The movement is calling for the secession of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces from Zimbabwe, and the restoration of the sovereignty of the Mthwakazi state based on its 1894 borders with Mashonaland (Magagula, 2011). Matabeleland province is predominantly inhabited by the Ndebele ethnic group who constitute about twenty percent¹ of Zimbabwe's population (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b: iii). The Shona reside mainly in the Mashonaland region and constitute the dominant ethnic group in the country. To make sense of these emerging secessionist voices, they need to be situated historically. These voices are a climax of the "Matabeleland Question" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011), which underlies the "politics of Ndebele particularism and the current drive for the restoration of an autonomous Ndebele nation separate from Zimbabwe" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:30). It is a distinctive Ndebele identity that is not fitting within the Zimbabwean nation-state configuration imagined along Shona experiences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:188). Thus, the Matabeleland Question underlies the politics of alienation, resentment and grievance that is fuelling a desire for a restoration of a pre-colonial Ndebele state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:51). In short, it is a national question deeply lodged in the development of the idea of Zimbabwe itself (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:12). This study investigates the constructions of nationhood in the secession debates articulated in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* newspapers.

The construction of Ndebele particularism

In order to make sense of the nationhood constructions in the two newspapers, I trace how the Ndebele identity has been enacted, shaped and reinforced during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs. We are thus able to gain a deeper understanding not only of Ndebele particularistic identity, but also of the representations of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. Lindgren (2002) argues that the Ndebele identity is simultaneously constructed in relation to the colonial past and the present Zimbabwean nation-state. This view is augmented by Ndlovu-Gatsheni who states that "like all constructed identities, 'Ndebele-

¹ Although this is the official position in Zimbabwe, I am aware of the problem of statistics in a contested area such as Matabeleland as studies reveal that a census is a political exercise (Anderson, 2006:168).

ness' remains prone to fluidity, malleability, reinforcement, contestations, acceptance and rejections" (2009b:14). The Ndebele are presently labelled by some as a tribe, a clan, and an ethnic group (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:174). However, what should be noted for the purpose of this study is that "the Ndebele understand themselves as a nation rather than a tribe" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:174). They envisage an independent Ndebele nation-state known as Umthwakazi (Masunungure, 2006:8; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:174). This has set in motion a clash of national imaginations between Zimbabwe and Umthwakazi.

Although historians offer conflicting narratives of the Ndebele past, Lindgren's (2005) account is dominant. It is a tale of Mzilikazi Khumalo, the founder of the Ndebele Kingdom, who left Shaka's Zulu's Kingdom in 1820 with a small group of Nguni-speaking people to settle in south-western Zimbabwe (Lindgren, 2005:155). He left his homeland as a Zulu general fleeing the anger of Shaka (Ranger, 1967:33). By 1840, the Ndebele were bound together by the territory called Matabeleland in today's southern Zimbabwe (Lindgren, 2005). The name "Ndebele" was given to the group during the migration by Sotho-speaking people who called them Matabele, which in Nguni became amaNdebele (Lindgren, 2005:155). In the present day Zimbabwe, the Ndebele kingdom is structured along a caste system. At the top layer, is a group known as abeZansi, the Nguni-speakers, who joined Mzilikazi from Zululand (Lindgren, 2005). The Sotho-speakers who were incorporated along the journey to Matabeleland formed the second stratum (Lindgren, 2005). Ama Holi, those who were incorporated when the Ndebele reached Matabeleland, constituted the third group (Lindgren, 2005). The relationship within this system is summed up by Lindgren who argues that the "people of Nguni origin often are regarded as 'pure' Ndebele" (2005:156).

The Ndebele state existed as an independent kingdom up to 1893 when their king Lobengula was removed from power by the British colonialists (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). Despite colonial conquest, "the Ndebele did not give up the dream of re-establishing themselves as a nation once more with a new king at its head" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:173). Thus, from 1893, Ndebele nationalism has "developed in a distinctive and particularistic form, mediated by impulses to revive a monarchy and claim a homeland for the Ndebele separate from the whites and the Shona" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:154). From 1893 to 1930, members of the Ndebele royal family formed protest movements in Bulawayo advocating the restoration of the Ndebele monarchy (Ranger, 2010:39). This was revived in the post-independence era with Ndebele pressure groups such as Mthwakazi People's Congress challenging the idea of a

unitary Zimbabwean nation-state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Thus, the emergence of MLF in 2010 is a contemporary manifestation of Matabeleland separatist politics. My study investigates how nationhood is represented in the secession debates currently raging in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*.

Four key factors have shaped and reinforced the Matabeleland Question (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003; 2008). First, is the dominant myth that the Ndebele survived by plunder and violent raids upon the Shona people when they settled in modern Zimbabwe in the 1840s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003:17). Cooper describes King Mzilikazi as “one of the most savage destroyers of human life”, and a “tyrant who wallowed in blood and rejoiced in the smoke of burning villages” (1966:130). These mythological constructs have led to antagonistic relations between the Ndebele and Shona, and this has had far reaching implications for post-colonial developments in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003: 17). In their study of the experiences of Matabeleland communities during the post-independence violence, Alexander et al (2000:222) note that the perpetrators of the Gukurahundi remarked that “they were taking revenge for nineteenth-century Ndebele raids against their Shona ancestors”. Second, is the view that Matabeleland and Mashonaland are separate states since the former was colonised in 1893, and the latter in 1890 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Third, is the split of ZAPU² liberation movement and the formation of ZANU³ in 1963 which reinforced Ndebele-Shona cleavages (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). Ethnicity within the nationalist movement led to the fragmentation of ZAPU when a core group of Shona-speaking leaders of the party revolted against the leadership of the Ndebele-speaking Joshua Nkomo to found a new party, ZANU (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007:281). As ZANU was “Shona dominated”, and ZAPU becoming “Ndebele dominated”, the history of the two parties has become a “tale of ethnic politics and tribalism, bringing more division than unity to the Ndebele and the Shona” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:43-44; Masunungure, 2006). Consequently, the Zimbabwe nation-state was born bifurcated along ethnic fault lines, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:2) argues that ZANU’s victory over ZAPU in the 1980 elections signalled “Shona triumphalism” over

² Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 with Joshua Nkomo as one of the prominent leaders (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). Throughout the liberation struggle, the Ndebele speaking people stuck with ZAPU, and hence its support base and military wing were dominated by the people from the south- western part of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:31).

³ Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was formed in 1963, with Robert Mugabe as one of the leaders, and concentrated its recruitment in Mashonaland (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:31).

“Ndebele particularism”. Fourth, is the Gukurahundi⁴ atrocities of the 1980s in which at least 20 000 civilians in Matabeleland lost their lives when ZANU deployed the Fifth Brigade⁵ to stamp out a dissident movement (Alexander, et al 2000). A Unity Accord signed by ZANU and ZAPU in 1987 ended the atrocities, but Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that “the violence had already polarised the nation beyond repair” (2009b:16). This is corroborated by Lindgren who notes that the people in Matabeleland responded by accusing the “Shona in general of killing the Ndebele”, and this has “heightened the ‘victims’ awareness of being Ndebele and at the cost of being Zimbabwean” (2005:158).

Shaped by these historical and political forces, various conceptions have emerged defining being “Ndebele”. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) offers five interpretations of the Ndebele identity. Firstly, the “clannish” view in which Ndebeles are conceived as those linked directly with the Khumalo clan or those with Nguni surnames (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:160). The second version defines an Ndebele linguistically as anyone who speaks IsiNdebele language as a mother tongue (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:160). Thirdly, the regional-geographic interpretation defines an Ndebele as any person residing in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:160). Fourth, the “inclusive” definition in which being Ndebele means a conglomeration of all those people whose ancestors were assimilated into the Ndebele state, be they Nguni, Sotho, Shona or Kalanga (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:161). This historical-pluralistic definition celebrates the Ndebele nation as a pre-colonial form of a rainbow nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:161). The fifth version is the political definition which was concocted in the post-colonial era in response to the violence that engulfed Matabeleland and Midlands regions in the 1980s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:161). In this interpretation, being Ndebele is limited to being loyal to PF ZAPU and Joshua Nkomo (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:161). The re-tribalisation and provincialisation of Ndebele identity facilitated the unity amongst those who were brutalised by the Fifth Brigade “not only as a dissident community as ZANU PF leaders defined them, but also as victims and an unwanted community that had to look for a state of their own” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:161). Given

⁴ Gukurahundi is a Shona expression meaning the “rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest, before the spring rains” (CCJP and LRF, 2007: x111; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003:22). Some scholars argue that in the metaphor, the “last harvest” symbolizes the attainment of independence, the “chaff” connotes Matabeleland and the Ndebele that was supposed to be washed away, and the “spring rain” was the establishment of a one-party state in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003:22; Mhlanga, 2009).

⁵ The Fifth Brigade was an “almost entirely Shona-speaking military unit” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003:25; Alexander, et al 2000). Its activities are documented in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resource Foundation (LRF)’s Report (1997), *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands*.

the five conceptions of Ndebele identity begs the question of which version is foregrounded or marginalised in the contestation of national identities in the two newspapers. This study is premised on the view that the various interpretations of Ndebele identity are not politically neutral but indicate the standpoint of the newspaper, and this has implications for the manner in which nationhood is constructed.

The context of the two newspapers

The yearning for Matabeleland self-determination has surfaced in the media in intense debates about issues of national identity. The way in which secession is discussed in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* is informed by particular understandings of nationhood. In investigating the constructions of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*, it is important to situate these two papers within Zimbabwe's press landscape. The media in Zimbabwe are polarised between pro-and anti-government sentiments. The *Chronicle* is part of the Zimbabwe Newspaper Group (Zimpapers), which is owned and controlled by the government (Moyo, 2005; Saunders, 1999). In contrast, *Newsday* is privately owned and hence part of what is regarded as the "independent media" that "seem to have taken a permanent position as adversaries of the government" (Ndlela, 2005:78). Although polarised along political lines, the press in Zimbabwe have been, and are enmeshed in the politics of nationhood (Chiumbu, 2004). It is in this context that this study interrogates nationhood constructions in the current manifestation of Matabeleland secessionist politics in *Newsday* and *Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle*

The *Chronicle* is a daily newspaper published in Bulawayo, and is part of the state-controlled Zimpapers (Moyo, 2005). The *Herald*, its sister daily, is published in the capital Harare. Zimpapers also publishes weeklies: the *Sunday Mail* (Harare), *Sunday News* (Bulawayo) and *Manica Post* (Mutare). The company also produces two tabloids in indigenous languages, *Umthunywa* in Ndebele and *Kwayedza* in Shona (www.zimpapers.co.zw). Zimpapers was established in 1980 when the country attained its independence (Saunders, 1999; Windrich, 1981). Prior to independence, the *Chronicle* and the *Rhodesia Herald* were owned by the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Ltd (RPP), a subsidiary of the Argus Press of South Africa (Saunders, 1999; Windrich, 1981). In 1980, the new government faced a daunting task of transforming the press to reflect the new political dispensation (Saunders, 1999). The RPP newspapers were not Zimbabwean in the sense of reflecting the views and aspirations of the majority of the population as "they were designed from the outset to promote the cause of the

white settler colonisation and business interests in South Africa” (Windrich, 1981:5). Since this kind of orientation could not be accommodated in the new era, one of the government’s first priorities was to “change the control and editorial direction of the press” (Windrich, 1981:5). This was to be done “without frightening away potential international investors and donors, who were watching Zimbabwe closely to see if the new government would install its own propaganda machine” (Saunders, 1999:15).

To that effect, the new government bought the Argus Press in RPP and renamed the company Zimpapers (Chuma, 2010; Saunders, 1999). Zimpapers was to be operated by a trust, Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) which in principle was autonomous and democratically constituted (Chuma, 2010:92). New black editors were appointed for all Zimpapers newspapers by the ZMMT as part of the transformation process. However, as ZMMT became submerged in the political struggles, its “appearance as a neutral buffer between the state and the ruling party on the one hand and an independent public press and civil society on the other became more and more hollow” (Ronning and Kupe, 2000:140). The government began to exert influence on Zimpapers through editorial dismissals (Saunders, 1999). Geoff Nyarota, editor of the *Chronicle* was reassigned from Bulawayo to Zimpapers offices in Harare after uncovering the Willowgate corruption scandal involving government officials in 1988 (Saunders, 1999).

The transitional period was an era of “development journalism” (Saunders, 1999:18), with the media expected to promote nation-building (Kupe, 2007). The *Chronicle* and other state owned publications were involved in what William Musarurwa terms “minister and sunshine journalism” (Kupe, 2007:140), a practice that “aims to flatter those in power, rather than provide constructive criticism of government” (Saunders, 1999:20). There was a pervasive belief that the media were to contribute to the establishment of a “national sentiment in order to build a collective identity” (Chiumbu, 2004:31). Thus, the media were construed as a “tool to unify people and consolidate its power” (Chiumbu, 2004:31). This discourse of national unity was propagated in the *Chronicle*.

The turn of the millennium was marked by the propagation of what Ranger (2004) terms the “patriotic history” by the Mugabe regime. “Patriotic history” emphasises the “division of Zimbabweans into revolutionaries and sell-outs” (Ranger, 2004:232). Further, it offers a highly selective and streamlined version of anti-colonial struggle that sustains the ZANU PF regime (Ranger, 2005a:8). More importantly, Ranger notes that the “patriotic history” is

propagated in the state-controlled press, such as the *Chronicle* which runs historical articles that are narrow and divisive (2005b:10). It is in this regard that he accounts for the rise of “patriotic journalism” practised by the state-controlled press (Ranger, 2005b:8). In this journalism, practised in papers like the *Chronicle*, Zimbabweans are divided into patriots and traitors, and the world is divided into supporters and imperialists (Ranger, 2005b:15). This view is echoed by Chiumbu (2004:32) who argues that in this discourse of national identity and unity, those who do not support the government’s views and policies are labelled sell-outs and unpatriotic. The state media are marshalled to support the “Third Chimurenga in full force and in the process redefine nationhood and citizenship” (Chiumbu, 2004:32). To sum up, the *Chronicle* is state controlled and sustains the ZANU PF version of nationhood. It is against this backdrop that I tease out how this state-controlled Bulawayo paper, constructs nationhood in this current manifestation of Matabeleland secessionist politics.

Newsday

The launch of this privately owned daily newspaper on 4 June, 2010 was a major development in Zimbabwe’s mediascape (Ncube, 2010). *Newsday* was the first “independent” daily newspaper to be published after seven years (The Guardian, 2010). The *Daily News*, the last “independent” daily, had been banned by the government in 2003 (Moyo, 2005). The advent of *Newsday* cannot be properly understood outside the broader political environment that prevailed in Zimbabwe from the late 1990s. This period came to be known as the “Crisis in Zimbabwe” (Raftopoulos, 2009; Ndlela, 2005). It was an era marred by political and economic upheavals which threatened the future of the ruling party, ZANU PF (Raftopoulos, 2009). This crisis became manifest in multiple ways: confrontations over the land and property rights; and contestations over the history and meanings of nationalism (Raftopoulos, 2009:202). It also marked an emergence of critical civil society groupings campaigning around trade union, human rights, and constitutional questions (Raftopoulos, 2009:202). As the crisis unfolded, the ruling party drew on a combination of revived nationalism that privileged its role in the liberation struggle, and prioritised the centrality of the fight for land (Raftopoulos, 2009:202). For their part, the emergent trade union, civic and political opposition forces called on the anti-colonial struggles for labour, human rights, and local government and gender struggles (Raftopoulos, 2009:202). Embroiled in this struggle, the private press “uncritically endorsed the opposition, in particular the MDC⁶, and

⁶ The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched in 1999, and “represented the hope of millions of Zimbabweans searching for a way out of the deep political and economic crisis that characterises

consistently bashed ZANU PF in political reportage” (Chuma, 2010:99). As a result, they came to be perceived by ZANU PF as “mercenaries, or instruments of regime change” (Chuma, 2010:99). The *Daily News*, one of the critical newspapers, earned a label of “opposition” press from government officials (Moyo, 2005:114). Its closure in 2003 attracted both local and worldwide condemnation as the newspaper had played a pivotal role in the democratisation process (Moyo, 2005).

The launch of *Newsday* in 2010 signalled the opening up of a democratic space in Zimbabwe (Ncube, 2010). *Newsday* needs to be situated within a new political dispensation prevailing in the country. The 2008 violence that preceded the presidential run-off plunged the country into further uncertainty, leading to the MDC candidate Morgan Tsvangirai withdrawing from the run-off (Raftopoulos, 2009:229). To deal with this deadlock, a political settlement, mediated by Southern African Development Community (SADC), was signed by the two MDC formations and ZANU PF in September 2008 (Raftopoulos, 2009). For the full implementation of this settlement, which came to be known as the Global Political Agreement (GPA), the three political parties entered into a Government of National Unity (GNU) in February, 2009 (Raftopoulos, 2010). Two key points about this settlement are critical for *Newsday*. First, Article 19 of the GPA recognises the right to freedom of expression and the role of the media in a multiparty democracy. The launch of *Newsday* in 2010 came at a time when there were calls for media reforms to promote diverse voices in the new dispensation. Second, Article 7 of the GPA centres on the need to formulate measures for ensuring national healing, cohesion and unity.

Newsday is owned by Trevor Ncube⁷, and published by Alpha Media Holdings (AMH). The paper positions itself as a champion of human rights, democracy and freedom of expression (Ncube, 2010). More importantly, for Trevor Ncube, it provides “hope for a tortured nation”, as *Newsday* is supposed to play a leading role in national healing, nation-building, and reconciliation (NDT Television, 2010). Other newspapers in the AMH stable are the *Zimbabwe Independent*, a business weekly, and the *Standard*, a Sunday Paper.

Newsday has two editions, a Northern one published in Harare, and a Southern one located in Bulawayo. The *Newsday Southern* edition, the object of this study, was launched at the end of

contemporary Zimbabwe” (Raftopoulos, 2007:125). The party split in 2005, with one faction led by Morgan Tsvangirai and another by Welshman Ncube. For a discussion on the reasons of the split see Raftopoulos, 2007.

⁷ Ncube, the chairperson of the AMH, also owns the *Mail and Guardian*, published in South Africa (Matenga, 2010).

2010 in Bulawayo. Published in this city, the edition seeks to provide news for the readers in the Southern region (Sibanda, 2010), which is largely constituted by Matabeleland provinces (Lindgren, 2005; Msindo, 2005). It is in this context that my study investigates how nationhood is constructed in the Matabeleland secessionist debates in *Newsday Southern*.

Literature Review/Theoretical approaches

The scholarship on identity distinguishes between essentialist and constructionist approaches (Hall, 1992; 1996). Rather than draw on essentialism which conceives identities as singular, fully centred, and unified (Hall, 1992), this study draws on Hall's (1992; 1996) constructivist approach. He argues that identities are not fixed or permanent, but are the "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall, 1996:5). They are always in the process of formation, historically constructed, and also constructed in relation to the Other (Hall, 1991b). Further, this study is informed by the different approaches to nationalism. It is grounded in the constructionist rather than an essentialist approach as this enables an investigation of the constructions of nationhood in the media.

The study draws on a number of different strands within this constructionist perspective. Constructionists maintain that nations are not only the products of modernity but are always socially constructed (Smith, 2001). The adherents of this view include Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson (Smith, 2001:48-49; Gellner, 1983). Thus, a nation is conceived as an "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), and an imagined political community (Anderson, 1983). In addition to the constructionist view, this study also is informed by ethno-symbolism (Smith, 1999) which focuses on how myths, memories, traditions and symbolism of ethnic heritages are rediscovered and reinterpreted in the construction of nationhood. The prominent figures within this position are John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (Smith, 1999; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996). Further, this study draws heavily on the concept of the social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987; Calhoun, 2002; Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004). The notion of social imaginary entails the "ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others" (Taylor, 2004:23). The focus is on how individuals "understand their identities and their place in the world" (Gaonkar, 2002:4). At the heart of this conception is the thesis of "multiple modernities", which holds that various social imaginaries coexist in a society (Taylor, 2004). The idea of

divergent social imaginaries is useful for teasing out the contesting imaginations of nationhood in the media. On the other hand, nationalism has also been approached from an essentialist perspective. Primordialists, for example, argue that nations are organic, natural, and rooted in kinship (Smith, 1999:4). The proponents of this position include Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:8). Although this study favours the constructionist approach, essentialism is also useful for identifying the newspapers' understandings of nationhood.

Constructionists argue that identities are constituted within, not outside representation (Hall, 1996:4). The concept of representation occupies a central place in cultural studies and media studies, as it connects meaning and language to culture (Hall, 1997:15). Therefore, this study draws on the poststructuralist theory, in particular, Hall's (1997) constructivist approach to representation, underpinned by the notion that meaning is constructed in and through language (Hall, 1997:15). There is no "single, unchanging, universal 'true' meaning" (1997: 32), but meaning is socially constructed and always contested. Grounded on the discursive variant of the constructivist approach (Hall, 1997), this study employs Foucault's discourse theory, and his conceptualisation of power, knowledge and subjectivity (Hall, 1997). He defines a discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1997:44). As discourse produces knowledge about a topic at a particular historical moment, this study examines the "regimes of truth" (Hall, 1997:49) constructed about nationhood in the secessionist debates in the two newspapers. Further, Foucault's conception of power as circular rather than centralised (Hall, 1997) enables this study to tease out the various contesting discourses of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* newspapers.

The literature on ethnicity in Africa provides a framework for making sense of the secessionist movements in the continent. Nation-building in post-colonial Africa was hinged on the maxim: "for the nation to live, the tribe must die" (cited in Mamdani, 1996:135). This mantra is located within the radical politics of anti - colonial nationalist struggles advocating unity in African states (Thomson, 2010:37). Further, this study is rooted in the critical studies of African nationalism that deconstructs the postcolonial nation-building project (Chipkin, 2007). Mazrui in his "bondage of boundaries" thesis warns us of the fragility of the African post-colonial state which was often founded on inherited colonial boundaries (1994:60). This

has given rise to what Mhlanga (2010:105) terms the “northern problem”⁸ where disgruntled “subaltern ethnic minorities” yearn for a different arrangement. It is in this realm that he identifies secession bids as the “voices of those that perceive themselves as living under the bondage of boundaries” (Mhlanga, 2010:104).

Significance of the study

Although there are studies on Matabeleland separatist politics (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a; Mhlanga, 2010; Moyo, 2009), these works do not examine the role of the mainstream media in the construction of nationhood, or of ethnic peculiarities. This research aims to remedy this deficiency. A major challenge is that “venturing into research on Ndebele history is automatically considered to be an ‘unpatriotic’ exercise within state circles, as it is presumed to raise divisive ethnic problems and dirty histories not useful for nation building” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:19). However, Moyo (2006) maintains that the Matabeleland Question is critical and cannot be cursorily thrust aside; it should be subjected to intellectual and candid debate.

Goals of the Research

The objective of this study is to interrogate how nationhood is constructed in the secessionist debates which raged in the media in 2011 sparked by the upsurge of the MLF. The aim is to tease out how nationhood is discussed and contested, and how Zimbabwe and Mthwakazi nations are imagined in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. This study juxtaposes the *Chronicle* (government owned) and *Newsday* (privately owned) to establish how nationhood is represented in a government-controlled and a privately-owned newspaper. As identities are located in a place and a particular history (Hall, 1991b), this research examines the nature of national identity constructed at this particular historical juncture. I explore how historical forces influence the conceptualisation of nationhood.

Methodology

The methodological approach of this study is qualitative, hinged on interpretivism, constructivism, and phenomenology (Deacon, et al 1999; Bryman, 1989). This enables the study to probe how nationhood is defined, interpreted and constructed in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. Further, qualitative research focuses on what Geertz (1973) terms “thick description” (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001:272), thus enabling a rich, detailed

⁸ By ‘northern’, he means colonial or Western

description of this phenomenon in its particular context. The study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method for analysing data. CDA is germane for unpacking the constructions of nationhood in texts as it is an “interpretive, contextualist, constructivist approach” (Richardson, 2007:15). Its concern is “language in use”, with a view that language is active and used meaningfully in particular contexts (Richardson, 2007: 23). As discourse plays a part in “producing and reproducing social inequalities” (Richardson, 2007: 26), the study explores the relation between language use and power relations in Matabeleland separatist politics. Although CDA consists of various approaches, Fairclough’s (1995) framework is useful as it enables an analysis of texts using various linguistic tools, and considers discursive and social practices.

The study employs a purposive sampling method which evidences the “conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures” (Deacon et al, 1999:50). As I tease out the recent constructions of nationhood, my study covers the one-year period of 2011. The stories that do not report on the MLF are excluded from the outset, as the focal issue is the secession debates in relation to the MLF. From these I select those that centre on secession and nationhood, rather than on MLF per se. Hence, from a total of 64 articles (43 from the *Newsday*, and 21 from the *Chronicle*), 39 articles focus on secession and nationhood (27 from *Newsday* and 12 from *Chronicle*). In establishing criteria regarding which articles to include and exclude, I consider the genre of the stories. Editorials are more suitable for this study as they indicate the position of the paper (Stonecipher, 1979:41). However, there is only one editorial (*Chronicle*) from the 39 articles, and therefore a sample has to be drawn from news stories and opinion columns. A further process of selection and sampling is made, based on the identification of themes that evoke discussions about nationhood.

Conclusion

This chapter maps the contours of the study, identifying the scope and boundaries in which the research question is addressed. As this study is centred on the constructions of nationhood in the Matabeleland secessionist debates, the primary concern is to situate the study within the historical-political context of the Matabeleland separatist politics. To that end, I explore the Matabeleland Question, tracing the emergence of the Ndebele particularistic identity in different historical moments. Further, this chapter offers a background to the two newspapers, and locating them within a broader political environment in Zimbabwe. The goals and the rationale for the study are also discussed. Further, a brief outline of the literature review and

the methodological position of this study are highlighted. The following chapter explores the literature that provides a framework for addressing the research question, focussing on identity, nationalism, nation-building in Africa and representation.

CHAPTER1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The politics of identity and ethnicity are resurgent in post-colonial Africa (Eyoh, et al 2004). To Ake (1993:12), ethnicity remains “the most significant element of the African reality, despite various attempts to wish it away”. Underlining the salience of ethnicity is the challenge of forging a common identity and citizenship out of different ethnic groups enclosed in post-colonial African states (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). In this section, I explore the literature that grapples with the ethnic phenomenon and nation-building in Africa. This is significant for making sense of discourses of nationhood represented in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* newspapers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011: 14) rightly points out that the Zimbabwean nation-state project cannot be understood outside the broader African nation-state project as it is “affected by the tribulations, crises and problems that continue to affect the broader African national project”.

What is a nation?

The term “nation” is undoubtedly a problematic and contentious concept (Smith, 2001). This underlines the theoretical contestations about the foundations of nations and the elements which constitute nationhood. Smith identifies two broad approaches which account for the formation of a nation: first, a view that stresses “objective” factors like religion, language, territory and customs as essential elements in the birth of nations; second, a perspective focusing on “subjective” factors as pivotal in the formation of nations (Smith, 2001:11). Within the first viewpoint, he identifies primordialism which holds that nations are founded by “objective” factors. Primordialists argue that nations are organic, natural, and rooted in kinship (Smith, 1999:4).

The advocates of “subjective” factors, on the other hand, focus on the attitudes, perceptions and sentiments as foundational elements of nations. Renan (1990) argues that the “objective” factors are not adequate for the creation of nations as nationality has a “sentimental side to it” (1990:18). He defines a nation as a “soul, a spiritual principle” founded by people who have common glories in the past and a common will in the present (Renan, 1990:19). In other words, nations are fashioned by human will rather than determined by factors such as language, geography and religion.

This is echoed by Billig (1995:24) who notes that the term “nation” carries two interconnected meanings. First, is the idea of a “nation” as a nation-state and second, is the idea of a nation-as-people. The principle of nationalism is that “any nation-as-people should have their nation-as-state” (Billig, 1995:24). He develops this idea through the concept of “banal nationalism” (Billig, 1995) in which he debunks the ideological reproduction of the established nations of the West. His argument is that nationalism is easily bracketed off as exotic, extreme, passionate and irrational, thus overlooking the everyday practices in which nationhood is endlessly flagged (Billig, 1995:39). For Billig (1995:6), nation-states are reproduced daily as nations and their citizenry as nationals. What is reproduced in spaces like the media is the whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices which underpin the idea of a nation. He postulates that the “nation is indicated or flagged in the lives of citizenry” through the habitual routines which are “unnamed” and “unnoticed” (Billig, 1995:6). By banality, he means the continual, familiar flagging or reminding of nationhood that becomes embodied in the everyday lives of citizens (Billig, 1995:8). Distinguishing between the “waved” and the unwaved” flags, Billig (1995:40) equates banal nationalism to an unwaved, unsaluted and unnoticed flag, which provide banal reminders of nationhood. The remembering is unconscious, occurring as other activities are being consciously engaged in (Billig, 1995:41).

Maintaining that the ideological assumptions of nationhood are flagged discursively in the media, Billig’s (1995:93) focus is on the “banal words”, those “routinely familiar habits of language” which continually act as reminders of nationhood. The words such as “the people” are a significant discursive formation, which banally points out the “homeland” (1995:94). Concurring with Renan’s (1990:19) notion of a nation’s existence as a “daily plebiscite”, Billig (1995) maintains that the national identity is reproduced daily in the media through habitual routines of language. It is important in this study to tease out how words such as “Zimbabweans”, Mthwakazi” and “people” are discursively constructed in the two newspapers.

Within the “subjective” category of nationalism are modernist and ethno-symbolist conceptions (Smith, 1999; 2003). First, modernists argue that nations are not only products of modernity, but are also socially constructed (Smith, 2001). Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), adherents of this view, note that nations are “invented traditions”. Further, Anderson (1983) popularises the idea of a nation as an imagined political community, imagined as sovereign and limited. However, a key drawback in this theorisation is that Anderson (1983) conceives

nationalism as a set of “modular” forms, spreading from Europe to the non-European world. Chatterjee (1993:5) rejects this perspective as inadequate to account for the historical experiences of post-colonial states as it presumes that “our imaginations must remain forever colonised”. For him, the project for the once-colonised is to claim “our freedom of imagination” (Chatterjee, 1993:13). Notwithstanding the Euro-centrism visible in this conception, the idea of an imagined political community is germane for this study, and I develop it in a subsequent section as I examine the concept of the social imaginary.

In contrast to modernist perspective, ethno-symbolists consider myth, traditions and symbolism as pivotal in the formation of nations (Smith, 1999; 2003). Smith defines a nation as a “named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members” (Smith, 2003:24). For ethno-symbolists, what gives nationalism power are the “myths, memories, traditions and symbolism of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern intelligentsia” (Smith, 1999:9). Again, the ideas of “homeland” and a national flag serve to express, represent and reinforce the boundary definition of the nation (Smith, 2003). Although ethno-symbolism provides tools for examining the construction of nationhood through myths, traditions and symbols, the main loophole of this paradigm is its focus on symbolic elements at the expense of material ones. It is in this regard that this study draws on the idea of the social imaginary, which provides a framework for conceiving identities in modern society (Taylor, 2004).

The social imaginary is an idea pioneered by Castoriadis (1987), and developed by Gaonkar (2002), Calhoun (2002), and Taylor (2004). Central to this formulation is the thesis of “multiple modernities”, a defining characteristic of modernity (Taylor, 2004). The social imaginary refers to the “ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others” (Taylor, 2004:23). Gaonkar (2002:4) shares this view, adding that it is the “means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world”. It is through the social imaginary that a society is created, given coherence and identity - what Gaonkar refers to as the hermeneutics of everyday life (2002:10). The focus is on the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings, and this is often expressed in theoretical terms, and carried out in images, stories, and legends (Taylor, 2004:23). It underlies a common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy (Taylor, 2004:23). In sum, the social imaginary entails the “making of social-historical worlds”, in which “a people imagine and act as world-making collective agents”

(Gaonkar 2002:1). In other words, the social imaginary is embedded in the habitus of a population (Gaonkar, 2002:4). Unlike theory which is monopolised by the minority, the social imaginary is “shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society” (Gaonkar, 2002:10).

At the heart of this conception is the notion that the social imaginary is shaped by its specific historical context (Stock, 2006:3). This begs the question of whether there is a single social imaginary in modern society. In other words, is it possible for several social imaginaries to coexist in a society (Stock, 2006:8)? In grappling with these questions, we must engage with the idea of “multiple modernities” (Taylor, 2004; Gaonkar, 2002). Castoriadis’s (1987) account of modernity in its multiplicity provides a basis for conceiving divergent social imaginaries. Disillusioned with the deterministic strands of Marxism, Castoriadis (1987) sought to identify the creative force in the making of social historical worlds (Gaonkar, 2002:6). His thesis is underpinned by his polemics against the dominant Western intellectual tradition, which he refers to as the “ontology of determinacy” (Gaonkar, 2002:6). Within the ontology of determinacy, society is conceived as deduced from or produced by the pre-existing conditions (Gaonkar, 2002:6). Against this view, Castoriadis (1987) contends that society is a self-creating, self-instituting enterprise, constituted by a rupture, a break in historical time (Gaonkar, 2002:6). The main argument is that each society is created differently, subsists differently, and transforms itself differently (Gaonkar, 2002:7). Underlining this position is the idea of the specificity and multiplicity of the social forms of modernity. As a result, one must not think of social imaginaries as fixed and permanent, as they can be “reflexively interrogated and hermeneutically reappropriated” (Gaonkar, 2002:8). This idea of multiple modernities is echoed in Taylor’s work (2004:1).

In tracing the development of Western modernity, Taylor (2004:1) posits that we need to speak of “multiple modernities”, the plural reflecting the fact that non-Western cultures have modernised in their own way and cannot be understood if we try to grasp them in a general theory that was designed originally with the Western case in mind. Within this perspective, one must consider alternative social imaginaries (Gaonkar, 2002:12). Besides illustrating how the social imaginary is shaped by its specific historical context, Taylor (2004) indicates the diversity of social imaginaries, thus warning us “against the thought that there is only one way a society can modernise, namely following the European template” (Stock, 2006:3). Closely related to the idea of multiple modernities, is Taylor’s (2004) notion of secularity. This perspective does not primarily refer to the decline of religion, but to the absence of a

transcendental basis on which society is thought to rest (Stock, 2006:3). As our identities are constructed and understood through particular social imaginaries, I now turn to conceptions of identity in order to engage with the questions of nationalism and ethnicity.

Theoretical approaches to Identity

This study is underpinned by Hall's (1991; 1992; 1996) constructivist, anti-essentialist conception of identity. He defines identity as the "process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect" (Hall, 1991b:47). Equally important is the idea that identities are the "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall 1996:5). He calls it a "point of suture", a

meeting point between on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken". (1996:5-6).

Hall (1991; 1996) thus offers an anti-essentialist perspective on identity. Essentialism is premised on the notion that an "identity exists as a universal and timeless core of the self which we all possess" (Barker, 2000:166). Anti-essentialists, on the other hand, hold that "identities are discursive constructions which change their meanings according to time, place, and usage" (Barker, 2000:166). It is within these two broader approaches that Hall (1992) distinguishes three conceptions of identity: those of the (a) enlightenment subject, (b) sociological subject, and (c) post-modern subject. The enlightenment conception is framed on the notion that a human being is a "fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities to reason, consciousness and action whose centre consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same" (Hall, 1992:275). Second, the sociological conception is premised on the view that the "subject is formed in relation to 'significant others' who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols of the worlds he/she initiated" (Hall, 1992:275). Lastly, is Hall's (1992) post-modern conception of identity, which is "not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one" (Hall, 1996:3). In his thesis of the "crisis of identities" in late modernity, Hall (1992:274) maintains that modern identities are being "decentred", that is, dislocated or fragmented. In this regard, identities are conceived not as "fixed, essential or permanent", but "formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1992:277). As identities are never

unified or singular, but constantly evolving, Hall (1992:277) argues that we are confronted by fleeting multiplicity of possible identities. As an identity is located in a place, and in a specific history, this begs the question of the “nature of cultural identity which belongs with that particular historical moment” (Hall, 1991a:20).

Further, identities are always constructed through ambivalence (Hall, 1991b:47). Thus, they are formed through “splitting between that which is, and that which is the other” (1991b:48). As they are constructed through difference (Hall, 1996), the identity of the self is “inscribed in the gaze of the Other” (Hall, 1991b:48). In other terms, “it is only through the relation to the Other, in relation to what it is not ... to what has been called its constitutive outside” that identity can be constructed (Hall, 1996:4). This notion is supported by Downing and Husband (2005:15) who argue that an identity is constructed when we “recognise those like us and exclude those not like us from inclusion in our identity group”. In this way, identities function as points of identification and attachment because of their capacity to “exclude, to leave out, (and) to render outside” (Hall, 1996:5). This conception enables the examination of how the contesting Zimbabwean and Mthwakazi identities are constructed in relation to each other. I tease out the construction of the “Other” in the competing discourses of nationhood, probing how the “Othering” legitimates a particular view of nationhood to the exclusion of alternative perspectives.

In addition, identities are constituted within, not outside representation (Hall, 1996:4). They entail the deployment of resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being (Hall, 1996:4). As a result, “identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation” (Hall, 1991b:49). It is crucial to note that the making of history is positional; it is dependent upon where one is located in social reality (Friedman, 1992). Histories are constructed by particular social positions in response to present needs (Friedman, 1992a; Halbwachs, 1992). In this way, history plays a key role in the constitution of identities as the narratives of the past offer answers to the questions of our national belonging (Weedon, 2004; Hall, 1996). Thus, the past is always “retold, rediscovered, and reinvented” (Hall, 1991b:58). As a result, it is important to understand the relationship between history and national identity. It must be stressed that dominant narratives of history tend to naturalise the social relations of the present (Weedon, 2004:29). Informed by this conception, this study examines constructions of nationhood in the contested history of Matabeleland. On the question of national identities, Hall (1992:292) maintains that they are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within, and in relation to,

representation. He defines a nation as a “symbolic community”, a system of cultural representation (Hall, 1992:292). As a system of representation, the idea of a nation is narrated through common stories told, the media, and histories (Hall, 1992:293). Having unpacked the theoretical perspectives of identity, it is crucial to explore the scholarship on ethnicity and nation-building in Africa.

Ethnicity and nation-building in Africa

In most African states there is not only an “obsession with ethnicity” (Ake, 1993:5), but a fundamental belief that nation-building is made upon erasing ethnicity (Hameso, 1997:1). This calls for an interrogation of the various conceptions of the term “ethnicity”. There are essentially two dominant schools of thought: primordialist and instrumentalist (Ake, 2000). Primordialists conceive ethnicity as “primordial survivals of some ethnic primitive past”, whereas instrumentalists interpret ethnicity as manufactured for “elitist manipulations” (Eyoh, et al 2004:319). However, both postulations have pitfalls and are inadequate for addressing the core concerns of ethnicity (Ake, 2000). Primordialists treat ethnic communities as static and timeless, and take their existence for granted (Ake, 2000). By placing emphasis on the “manipulative and exploitative aspect of ethnic construction”, instrumentalists, on the other hand, presume that ethnicity is always exploited or exploitable (Ake, 2000:94).

A useful approach is to define ethnicity as the “relationship between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive” (Eriksen, 1996:28). An ethnic identity thus refers to the “individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity” (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:5). Ake’s (1993) approach to ethnicity is useful not only in that it augments Hall’s (1992; 1996) concept on identity, but it also breaks away from both primordialist and instrumentalist positions. He treats ethnicity as a “living presence produced and driven by material and historical forces” (1993:1). Thus, it cannot be understood outside the political dynamics and historical forces that constitute it. However, the question of its historicity has largely been neglected by the conventional accounts of ethnicity in Africa. Hameso (1997:1) argues that ethnicity in Africa is often dismissed as tribalism, parochialism and false consciousness. He calls for a positive approach to ethnicity, noting that the project of nation-building is flawed and not based on African realities, as “what is called tribalism in Africa is often genuine nationalism” (Hameso, 1997:2). In similar vein, Ake (1993) calls for a rethinking of ethnicity which would focus on understanding, rather

than judging. He maintains that there is nothing inherently conflictual about ethnic relations (Ake, 2000: 95). Rather than dismissing ethnicity, he calls for an interrogation of the historical situations that mould and reconstruct it (Ake, 2000:95).

The Challenges of forging nationhood in Africa

This research addresses the Matabeleland Question from the vantage point of critical studies of African nationalism that deconstructs the post-colonial nation-building project (Chipkin, 2007). I argue that the “Matabeleland Question” cannot be considered outside the challenges of the nation-building project that threaten the existence of a state-sanctioned idea of one, united nation.

Artificial and arbitrary colonial boundaries

Some scholars hold that Africa’s current situation cannot be properly assessed without considering the artificial and arbitrary boundaries inherited from colonialism (Adebajo, 2005; Mazrui, 2010; Mhlanga, 2010). It is in this regard that one can account for secessionist movements and the challenges of nationhood in Africa. In what he terms the “Curse of Berlin”, Adebajo (2005:83) argues that the continent is haunted by the wider ramifications of the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference, 1884-1885. Ikome (2004:4) contends that “unlike the nations of the northern hemisphere, the peoples of Africa did not voluntarily determine the formation of nation-states and their boundaries on the continent”. Fourteen European powers met at the Berlin Conference, and negotiated the ground rules for the European “Scramble for Africa” (Mazrui, 2010: X). What has arisen is not only the contention that the African borders were created by European powers, but that the “imperialist powers displayed a painful ignorance of Africa’s physical, cultural, economic and political realities” (Ikome, 2004:5). These sentiments are echoed by Bailey (1994:4):

The political map of Africa is a Western colonial creation, drawn by Western powers with little regard to the boundaries of historic homelands or to the ethnic compositions of the subject population, and today these artificial or multi-ethnic nations lack the internal political cohesion necessary for survival as nations (Cited in Cocodia, 2008:13).

One of the major arguments in the African politics of nationhood is that the continent’s boundaries are artificial, arbitrary and require immediate review (Ikome, 2004). Despite being aware of the haphazard and arbitrary nature of the inherited boundaries, African leaders

agreed to maintain them as handed down by the colonialists (Ikome, 2004:5). The Organisation of African Union (OAU) passed the Cairo Resolution of 1964, “confirming the validity or even the sanctity of colonial boundaries” (Idowu, 2008:46). The founding fathers sought to “freeze the colonial map of Africa inherited from the Berlin Conference, stressing the inviolability of borders” (Adebajo, 2005:89). This approach was informed by the pervasive fear that reviewing Africa’s borders “would amount to opening a ‘Pandora’s Box’ that could unleash a spate of violence and possibly anarchy on the continent” (Ikome, 2004:5). The African orthodoxy holds that if any of the disparate ethnic groups trapped together in country A were allowed to secede, then the demand for secessions in countries B to Z would become irresistible (Dyer, 2010). However, a question that has arisen is “whether there is a concept of self-determination outside de-colonisation” (Idowu, 2008:47).

In his “bondage of boundaries” thesis, Mazrui (1994) argues that the partitioning of Africa has continued to shape contemporary politics. For him, Africa’s conflicts are caused by the “Bismarckian” borders “created by colonial powers to enclose groups with no traditions of shared authority” (Mazrui, 2010: X111). He thus argues that conflicts in post-colonial Africa signal decolonisation, as they entail the “disintegration of colonial structures” (Mazrui, 1995:28). This leads to the question posed by Mazrui (1994:60): “how many of the state boundaries of present-day Africa will remain intact in 100 years?” In addition, Mhlanga (2010:104) maintains that the colonial boundaries have given rise to the “northern problem”, as disenchanted subaltern ethnic minorities trapped in the colonial boundaries yearn for a different arrangement. Davidson’s (1992) notion of “crisis of institutions” is also pivotal in making sense of the challenges of nationhood in Africa.

Anti-colonial nationalism

Davidson (1992:10) identifies the challenge of nationhood in Africa as caused by a “crisis of institutions”. Central to his argument is what he identifies as the anathema of “borrowed nation-statism” (Davidson, 1992:181). He holds that decolonised African states were fashioned along European models rather than according to Africa’s own historical experiences (Davidson, 1992:10). As a result, this nation-statism led to a denial of Africa’s own historical experiences and ultimately alienation (Davidson, 1992:10). Further, Davidson (1992:164) postulates that the problem with nation-building is that post-colonial African states were forged by an ideology of “anti-colonialism nationalism”. He maintains that the struggle was never about “an imagined spectacle of the beauties of the sovereign nation-state, but the promise that the coming of the nation-state would strike away the chains of foreign

rule” (Davidson, 1992:164). In other words, post-colonial Africa was formed not by any feeling of national consciousness but by the loathing of colonial rule. However, this proved to be a “poverty of ideological thought” (1992:165) as post-colonial Africa became an arena for “tribalism” as ethnic groups within nation states competed for resources. This is echoed by Chipkin (2007) as he grapples with the question: “Do South Africans exist?” He argues that African peoples emerged primarily in and through the process of nationalist resistance to colonialism (Chipkin, 2007:2). The term “people” is conceived as a political subject, a collectivity organised in pursuit of a political end (Chipkin, 2007:2). He concludes that the “image of the South African nation looms large in the political imaginary”, with the nation “defined and produced in and through the politics and culture of nationalist struggle” (Chipkin, 2007:2).

Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a:41) identifies this problem in Zimbabwe as he argues that the liberation struggle is “celebrated as the foundation myth of the postcolonial nation”. Thus, anti-colonialism became a basis for imagining Zimbabwe to the “extent of defining the country as born out of the barrel of the gun” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:41). The Zimbabwean nation-building project proceeded as if the nation already existed, without being anchored in national sentiment, identity or consciousness (Masunungure, 2006:7). However, “nationalism cannot be reduced to a mere anti-colonial phenomenon”, because nationalism is about the “making of people and the nation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:42). The outcome was the failure of the “making of the people” out of different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:43).

For the Nation to Live, the Tribe must Die

The quest for forging nationhood out of disparate ethnic groups in Africa is underpinned by the maxim: “for the nation to live, the tribe must die” (cited in Mamdani, 1996:135). Thus, the desire to annihilate ethnicity became the substratum of post-colonial Africa. However, this perspective is marred by serious defects. First, there is a failure to synthesise multiple ethnic identities in forging common citizenship, as ethnic plurality is anathema to the nation-building project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Second, the nation-state is prone to “ethnic hegemony” as one ethnic group not only controls the state and its major institutions, but also dominates the other groups, containing them within a position of political marginalisation (Eyoh, et al 2004:14). It is in this regard that Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:168) argues that what must die is not the tribe, but “the nationalist-inspired notion of a monolithic nation that is deliberately blind towards realities of multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and a multi-ethnic

society". For him, the imagined "Zimbabwe" is hinged on "Shona triumphalism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008:169), in which state power is consolidated "around Shona historical symbols, Shona pre-colonial heroes and myths", to the exclusion of the Ndebele historical experiences. Zimbabwe is thus imagined as a "successor to the pre-colonial Shona formations" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:169). According Mudenge (1988):

Present day Zimbabwe, therefore, is not merely a geographical expression created by imperialism during the nineteenth century. It is a reality that has existed for centuries, with a language, a culture and a "worldview" of its own, representing the inner core of the Shona historical experience. (Cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:169)

The problem with such an exclusionary imaginary is that it fails to reconcile various ethnic groups subsumed within the post-colonial African state. What can be questioned in the case of Zimbabwe is "how this new state intended to deal with the reality of the presence of the Ndebele-speaking people within the borders of a new state that was imagined as a 'successor' to pre-colonial Shona formations" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:169). To understand the tension between a "universal" idea of "Zimbabwe" and the "particular" idea of Matabeleland separatist politics, my study is informed by Robertson's (1991) perspective on identity that is grounded on his thesis of the simultaneity of particularism and universalism. Particularism is premised on the "refusal to make any general 'universalizing' sense of the problems posed by sharp discontinuities between different forms of collective and individual life" (Robertson, 1991:73). In contrast, universalism is based on the claim that "it is possible and, indeed, desirable to grasp the world as a whole analytically; to such an extent that virtually everything ... can be explained, or at least interpreted in reference of the entire world system" (Robertson, 1991:71). His thesis is underlined by his attempt to "preserve both direct attention to particularity and difference, on the one hand, and to universality and homogeneity, on the other" (Robertson, 1991:73). His postulation rests largely on the view that "we are, in the late-twentieth century, witnesses to-and participants in-a massive, twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalisation of particularism and the particularisation of universalism" (Robertson, 1991:73).

Authoritarian nation-building

Post-colonial African governments have adopted an authoritarian approach as one of the strategies of nation building (Eyoh, et al 2004). This "Jacobin model" is premised on the view that the "state should deliberately support and diffuse a common language and culture

which shall be defined as the ‘national’ language and culture, to which all citizens should assimilate” (Eyoh, et al 2004:17). However, the problem is with the “capture” of national institutions by ethnically defined groups and parties (Eyoh, et al 2004:8). As a result, this strategy of imposing a nation is bitterly rejected by minority groups. Ibrahim (1999:4) concurs that “the strategy has simply not worked, and in many cases has backfired, by fuelling fear and resentment amongst groups who feel excluded” (cited in Eyoh, et al 2004:18). In such cases, the exploitative and coercive state becomes “irrelevant” to the consciousness and existential conditions of the groups subjected to violent repression (Ihonvbere, 1994:42). As a result, the quest for nationhood becomes subverted as the repressed masses are compelled to withdraw their loyalties to the state, finding refuge in their ethnic associations (Ihonvbere, 1994:57). In making sense of the Gukurahundi, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) maintains that the violence was symptomatic of a failure of a smooth blending of major ethnicities into a new national identity called “Zimbabwe”. It became an “invitation card on which the Ndebele were summoned into a Shona-imagined nation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:183). In other terms, “Matabeleland had to be conquered and forced into being part of Zimbabwe” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:183). However, it had dire implications for the quest of forging nationhood in the country. Jonathan Moyo, a former cabinet minister, notes that the open wounds and visible scars of the Gukurahundi have “diminished the prospects of enabling Zimbabweans to act with a common purpose and with shared aspirations on the basis of a common heritage regardless of ethnic origin” (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:168).

Secession as an alternative to authoritarian nationalism

Buchanan argues that secession has not received serious consideration in political philosophy and finds the absence of a normative theory of secession puzzling considering its salience (Buchanan, 1991: 4). In remedying this “theoretical lacuna”, he develops a coherent theory that examines the conditions under which secession is morally justifiable (1991:4). In this section, I set out various arguments that are advanced regarding secession. Informed by an understanding that secessionist movements seek to “dismember an independent state by either forcible or non-forcible means into two or more independent countries” (Keller, 2007:2), this study interrogates how nationhood is contested in the Matabeleland secessionist debates.

Buchanan (1991:4) defines secession as a “form of refusal to acknowledge the state’s claim to political authority”. In other words, it is an assertion of a “claim to self-determination by an ethno-linguistic group or an ethnically heterogeneous region” (Keller, 2007:2). The right to secede is derived from the reinterpretation of the principle of the self-determination of nations (Horowitz, 2003:5). This is echoed by Buchanan (1991:29) who posits that in much of the popular and scholarly arguments about secessionist movements, the only justification for seceding advanced is that of the “right to self-determination”. The right to self-determination is enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which stipulates that:

All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (Roethke, 2011:39).

This argument stems from the principle of national self-determination that was advanced by USA President Woodrow Wilson in post-World War 1 era (Buchanan, 1991). It is premised on the notion that colonised peoples are entitled to form states independent of their colonial rulers (Roethke, 2011:38). The exercise of this right in Africa resulted in the creation of ethnically heterogeneous states, based on pre-existing colonial boundaries (Roethke, 2011). Although initially construed as the decolonisation of inhabitants of defined colonial territories, the right to self-determination, however, did not cease to exist with the end of decolonisation (Roethke, 2011:39). What has become fundamental is the question of whether the right to self-determination exists beyond decolonisation. In grappling with this conundrum, I explore Buchanan’s (1997) theories of secession.

In his discussion of the concept of secession, Buchanan (1991:27) focuses on what he terms the “moral right to secede”. It is in this light that he focuses on the conditions under which secession is morally justified. In addressing this issue, he identifies two theories of secession, the remedial right, and the primary right theory (Buchanan, 1997). Firstly, the remedial right theorists assert that “a group has a general right to secede if only it has suffered certain injustices, for which secession is the appropriate remedy of last resort” (Buchanan, 1997:35). Thus, a group is entitled to secede if the physical survival of its members is threatened by the state (Buchanan, 1997:37). Further, the remedial right theory is premised on the view that a region has a right to secede if it was unjustly incorporated into the larger unit from which its members wish to separate (Buchanan, 1991:67). The seceding area may have been directly

annexed by the currently existing state, or it may have been unjustly acquired by some earlier state that is the ancestor of the currently existing state (Buchanan, 1991:67). Therefore, dealing with this historical grievance becomes a sound justification for secession.

Secondly, secession is approached from the primary right theory (Buchanan, 1997). Contrary to remedial right theorists who assert that no group has a right to secede unless that group suffers injustices, primary right theorists recognise that certain groups can have a general right to secede in the absence of any injustice (Buchanan, 1997:35). In other words, legitimate secession is not limited to a means of remedying injustices. The primary right theory can be categorised into two variants, the ascriptive group, and the associative group perspective. The ascriptive group theorists argue that groups whose members are defined by ascriptive characteristics have a right to secede even in the absence of injustices (Buchanan, 1997:38). This applies to groups with a common culture, history, language, and a sense of their own distinctiveness who wish to form a nation (Buchanan, 1997:38). In contrast, the associative group theorists do not view ascriptive characteristics as a necessary condition for having a right to secede (Buchanan, 1997). Rather, their focus is on the “voluntary political choice of the members of a group, their decision to form their own independent political unit” (Buchanan, 1997:39). According to this view, there is no need for secessionists to have any common connection to the territory they wish to make into their own state (Buchanan, 1997:39).

The making of Zimbabwe as a nation

The name “Zimbabwe”, chosen for the imagined post-colonial nation, was contested as voices from Matabeleland protested that it was associated with Shona ethnic identity, and hence not accommodative of other peoples (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). Michael Mawema is credited with the name “Zimbabwe” which is derived from the Great Zimbabwe historical site (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). The Matabele Home Society preferred the name “Matopos” as it was assumed to be inclusive and non-ethnic (2011:1). This indicates the pervasive factor of ethnicity in the imagination of the post-colonial nation, and the challenges of forging a new, united post-colonial nation out of diverse ethnic groups. Masunungure (2006:7) concludes that “Zimbabwe the state is a reality, but Zimbabwe the nation is still a fiction” - a view supported by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a: 356). I now turn to the concept of representation, which is fundamental if we consider the construction of identities.

The concept of representation

Having alluded to the fact that identities are constructed within representation (Hall, 1996), it is pivotal to unpack the concept of representation. Occupying a central place in cultural studies and media studies, the notion of representation connects meaning and language to culture (Hall, 1997:15). Noting that there are three theories of representation (Hall, 1997), this study is grounded in the constructivist approach. I begin by examining two approaches to representation, considered as flawed by Hall (1997), before I discuss the constructivist approach underpinning this study.

The reflective approach is premised on the idea that meaning lies in the “object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world” (Hall, 1997:24). Equally flawed is the intentional approach, which holds that “it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning in the world through language” (Hall, 1997:25). Both positions are inadequate as “neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language” (Hall, 1997:25). As a result, the constructivist approach has had the most significant impact in cultural studies, with its idea that meaning is constructed in and through language (Hall, 1997:15). Meaning is the result not of something fixed out there, in nature. There is no absolute or final fixing of meaning (Hall, 1997:24). Rather, meaning is constructed, produced. In rebutting the reflexive role of the media, Hall (1982:64) introduces the notion of “definitions of the situation”. Within this viewpoint, reality is no longer conceived as a given set of data, rather it is defined and sustained through linguistic practices. It is dependent on how selective definitions of “the real” are represented (Hall, 1982:64). In contrast to the notion of reflection, representation entails the “active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of making things mean” (Hall, 1982:64). It is the result of a signifying practice—a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean (Hall, 1997:24). The question of signification implies that things and events in the real world do not contain or propose their own, integral, single, and intrinsic meaning, which is then merely transferred through language (Hall, 1982:67). Rather, the world has to be made to mean (1982:67). It then follows that different kinds of meaning can be ascribed to the same events. Hall (1982:67) conceptualises this as the “politics of signification” as it relates to the power to signify events in a particular way. Thus, in order “for one meaning to be regularly reproduced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself”

(Hall, 1982:67). The media, as signifying agents, are a site of struggle between competing definitions (Hall, 1982). As there is always contestation over meaning, power intervenes in representation to fix meaning (Hall, 2005). However, constructivists argue that meaning can never be finally fixed (Hall, 2005:19). In other words, there is no one true, fixed meaning (2005:7). Meaning is contextual and always shifts from one historical setting to another (2005:7). As a result, it always involves an active process of interpretation. Meaning has to be actively “read” or interpreted (Hall, 1997:32). Interpretation becomes an essential component in the process of producing meaning.

Constructivists identify two related “systems of representation” at the heart of the meaning making process (Hall, 1997). First, is the conceptual system which contains the mental representations which we carry around in our heads, and allows us to interpret the world meaningfully (1997:17). Thus, meaning arises because of the shared conceptual maps which groups or members of a culture or society share (Hall, 2005:9). This system consists of different ways of organising, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and establishing complex relations between them (Hall, 1997:17). Ferdinand de Saussure argues that meaning is produced by a “system of differences”, or the marking of difference within language is fundamental to the production of meaning (Hall, 1997:32). In a nutshell, if we belong to the same culture, it means we are able to interpret the world in roughly similar ways, we are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together (Hall, 1997:18). However, a shared conceptual world is not enough as we need access to a shared language in order to represent and exchange meanings (Hall, 1997:18).

Conclusion

The aforementioned literature informs this study which teases out the contesting discourses of nationhood in newspaper discussions of secession. With the idea of a “Zimbabwe nation” contested by an alternative imagination of a “Mthwakazi nation”, the study employs the concept of social imaginary to examine how people imagine their social existence, and understand their identities and place in the world (Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004). The idea of “multiple modernities” enables the study to identify the “Mthwakazi nation” as an alternative imaginary, challenging the dominant discourse of a “Zimbabwean nation”. Premised on Hall’s (1992; 1996) perspective on identity, I investigate the conditions under which ethnicity matters in the lives of citizens. Arguing that identities are not stable but are historically constructed, and contingent, this study examines the contemporary media representations of

nationhood. I employ Mazrui (1994), Adebajo (2010), Mhlanga (2010) and Davidson's (1992) work as a frame for assessing the contestations of nationhood in Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular. In accounting for the Matabeleland secessionist movement, one must consider the creation of post-colonial African states; their imagination which is perceived as foreign inspired. It is through such consideration that one can make sense of the Matabeleland Question and the construction of nationhood in the newspaper texts. Hall's (1997; 2005) constructivist approach of representation is central to analysing the construction of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. It enables the study to examine how nationhood, the concept of the "Zimbabwean" and "Mthwakazi" nations are constructed in these newspapers. Meaning is conceived not as natural or fixed, but as contextual and produced in language. As a result, this study focuses on the signifying practices which are central in the meaning-making of nationhood.

CHAPTER2: METHODOLOGY

This study investigates constructions of nationhood in the secessionist debates provoked by the emergence of MLF in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. I do so using a qualitative methodology, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method of analysis. This chapter discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative approach, distinguishing it from quantitative research, and demonstrating its appropriateness for this study. In this regard, I examine the following key issues, namely validity and reliability indicating how they were dealt with in this study; purposive sampling as a suitable technique for data selection justifying the decisions made in selecting the articles for analysis; and finally CDA as an analytic method, indicating its relevance in addressing the concerns of this study.

Methodological approaches

The debates in the social sciences are centred on the merits and demerits of quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 1988:1). The terms “quantitative” and “qualitative” research signify more than ways of gathering data, rather, they “denote divergent assumptions about the nature and purposes of research in social sciences” (Bryman, 1988:3). Thus, they indicate ontological and epistemological positions (Bryman, 1984; Deacon et al, 1999), in other words, the “nature of the social world” (ontology), and “what we are able to know and how we can know it” (epistemology) (Seale, 2004:294). “Qualitative and quantitative” approaches are thus “competing views about the ways in which social reality ought to be studied” (Bryman, 1988:5). The two approaches are underpinned by different paradigms: the terms “positivist” and “empiricist” denote quantitative research, and “naturalistic”, “interpretivist” and “constructionists” signify qualitative research (Bryman, 1984:77; Deacon, et al 1999; Bryman, 1988:3).

Quantitative research

Rather than distinguishing quantitative research by approaches to data collection (such as social surveys), Bryman suggests it is more fruitful to examine the notion of positivism which underpins quantitative research (1988:13). Positivism refers to “scientific claims that have been posited on the basis of empirical evidence as opposed to claims that are based on religious or metaphysical beliefs” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:22). It entails a belief that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences are appropriate to the social sciences (Bryman, 1988:14; Deacon, et al 1999:4). Positivists argue that “only those phenomena which are observable, in the sense of being amenable to the senses, can validly be warranted

as knowledge” (Bryman, 1999:14). This is informed by an assumption that “social reality is ‘out there’” (Deacon, et al 1999:7). The social “facts” are understood as the social phenomena in existence independent of the individual (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:22). There is a belief in objectivity (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; 1988), with researchers required to keep their distance from their research subjects and not to allow their work to be influenced by their own values or subjective judgements (Deacon, et al 1999:4). However, this positivist belief that the natural science model is appropriate for studying social sciences is repudiated within qualitative research, which underpins this study.

Qualitative research

This study employs the qualitative approach, which draws on the “constructivist”, “interpretivist” and “phenomenological” traditions (Deacon, et al 1999; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Various methods of data collection and analysis associated with this approach include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, narrative analysis, discourse analysis (Babbie and Mouton, 2001), ethnography (Deacon et al, 1999) and critical discourse analysis (Richardson, 2007). The central concern of interpretivists is exploring the ways that people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals (Deacon, et al 1999:6). In addition, phenomenologists argue that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their life worlds (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:28). Further, constructivism insists that social realities are continually constructed and reconstructed through routine social practices and the conceptual categories that underpin them (Deacon, et al 1999:7). (Merriam, 2002:3). Qualitative research thus attempts to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:4; Merriam 2002:3). Within this approach, the world is seen from the point of view of an actor (Bryman, 1984), or from an emic perspective (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:271). This idea that social phenomena can only be interpreted from an insider perspective raises a question about the positivist notion of a “reality out there” (Deacon, et al 1999; Merriam, 2002). The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that is assumed in positivist, quantitative research (Merriam, 2002:4). Rather, qualitative researchers argue that there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and change over time (Merriam, 2002:4). In other words, there can be no knowledge of the social world independently of the social meanings that its members use to account for it, and hence, constitute it (Deacon, et al 1999:7). In essence, this means that qualitative researchers are

interested in understanding those interpretations of reality at a particular point in time and in a particular context (Merriam, 2002:4).

Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) argue that the primary goal of qualitative study is describing and understanding human behaviour. The emphasis is on what Clifford Geertz (1973) terms “thick description” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2002). The focus is on “rich, detailed description of specifics as opposed to summary, standardized descriptions of quantitatively measured variables” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:272). The main argument is that one can truly claim to understand the events through an understanding of them in relation to their context (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:272). This study employs a qualitative approach to research as its purpose is to explore the ways in which nationhood is constructed in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. It is only by locating this study within the context of the Matabeleland Question, that one can make sense of the representations of nationhood in the two newspapers.

Qualitative studies have been critiqued as subjective, unreliable and invalid (Kvale, 1989:73). The critics argue that there is no defined set of criteria available for judging qualitative research (Hammersley, 2008:158). However, such criticisms emanate from the traditions underpinning quantitative research (Hammersley, 2008). In the subsequent sections, I discuss issues of validity, reliability and generalisability from a qualitative research perspective.

Validity

Validity is generally defined as “truth” (Silverman, 2000:175), “authenticity” (Guba and Lincoln, 2008:274), or “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other set of account” (Maxwell, 1996:87). Measures to ensure validity in positivist research are well developed and accepted by the scientific community (Merriam, 2002:24). In positivist social science, validity relates to whether a method measures what it intended to measure (Kvale, 1989:74). It is argued that a certain set of assessment criteria must be met for the research to be judged as valid (Hammersley, 2008). The criteria assume that there is a “finite set of observable indicators that can tell us whether or not the findings of the study are valid, or are of value in broader terms” (Hammersley, 2008:159). However, these measures are incompatible with the basic philosophical assumptions of qualitative research (Hammersley, 2008). The issue of what is valid hinges on the philosophical question of what constitutes truth (Kvale, 1989:75; Merriam, 2002:25).

In qualitative research, the term “validity” does not imply the existence of any objective truth to which an account can be compared (Maxwell, 1996:87). Rather, qualitative inquiry assumes that there are multiple, changing realities and that individuals have their own unique constructions of reality (Merriam, 2002:25). Thus, using a “constructionist model is simply not compatible with the assumption that ‘true’ fixes on ‘reality’ can be obtained separately from particular ways of looking at it” (Silverman, 2010:278). However, this does not mean that the notion of validity is irrelevant in qualitative research. Rather, qualitative research also has measures for establishing validity although these strategies are based on a “different worldview and different questions congruent with the philosophical assumptions underlying this perspective” (Merriam, 2002:24).

Although qualitative researchers have no “golden key” to validity, Silverman (2000:188) establishes two grounds on which a research project can be said to have failed a validity test. Firstly, a scenario when few exemplary instances are reported. He terms it a problem of “anecdotalism”, whereby findings are based on well-chosen “examples” (Silverman, 2000:176). Secondly, the criteria for excluding certain instances and not others are not provided (Silverman, 2000:188). In light of these guiding principles, this study addresses validity by laying down all the steps undertaken in the selection of data and justifying all the decisions reached regarding the whole process. Another strategy of ensuring validity is prolonged engagement in data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). This relates to the researcher being submerged in the data collection phase over a long enough period to ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002:26). Further, the best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated (Merriam, 2002:26), and hence in this study an analysis of texts is conducted until no new information surfaced. One of the common strategies of ensuring validity in qualitative studies is triangulation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Silverman, 2010). Triangulation refers to the “attempt to get a ‘true’ fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings” (Silverman, 2010:276). In addition to CDA, the study employs interviews with a journalist and a columnist as another technique to make sense of nationhood constructions in the two newspapers.

Reliability

Reliability can be defined as “the extent to which research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2002:27). In other words, the question is if the study were repeated would it yield

the same results (Merriam, 2002:27)? However, reliability is problematic in social sciences because human behaviour is never static, and hence replication of a qualitative study would not yield the same results (Merriam, 2002:27). There are bound to be numerous interpretations of the same data, but this does not discredit the findings of any particular study (Merriam, 2002:27). As a result, reliability in qualitative study relates to whether the results are “consistent” with the data collected (Merriam, 2002:27; Silverman, 2000; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Rather than insisting that others get the same results as the original researcher, reliability lies in others’ concurring that given the data collected, the results make sense (Merriam, 2002:27). Hence, the main issue is whether the results are “consistent” and “dependable” (Merriam, 2002:27). One of the ways of attaining reliability is for the researcher to document his or her procedure and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently (Silverman, 2000:188). This strategy is known as “audit trail” and it entails a detailed description of “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and, how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 2002:27). In establishing reliability, I describe all the steps taken in my collection and analysis of data, showing my reflections and decisions on the problems encountered in the course of the research.

Generalisability

Generalisability is a major challenge in qualitative studies as there is a common perception that it is derived from positivist-oriented research where one can generalise in a statistical sense from a random sample to a population (Merriam, 2002:28). The question for qualitative research is the extent to which findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2002:28). In qualitative research, small, non-random samples are selected purposefully and these cannot be generalised statistically (Merriam, 2002:28). The focus of the qualitative researcher is to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many (Merriam, 2002:28). Hence, in qualitative research, generalisability has to be conceived in line with the worldview of this approach. It can be conceived as an “in-depth analysis of a particular situation and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation” (Merriam, 2002:28). The common way of generalisability in qualitative studies is a reader or user generalisability (Merriam, 2002:28). This means that “readers themselves determine the extent in which findings from a study can be applied to their context” (Merriam, 2002:28). In this situation, the role of a qualitative researcher is to provide “enough detail of the study’s context so that comparisons can be drawn” (Merriam, 2002:29). In the same vein, this study provides a thick description of the context and

information that would enable the readers to determine whether these findings can be transferred to their contexts.

Data gathering

Genres

Before detailing the selection procedure for generating the data for analysis, it is important to discuss the newspaper genres as this has implications for the articles selected. A genre is a kind of text (Cox, 2011:47), and is “first and foremost defined in terms of the function/purpose in the text type” (Le, 2010:39). Informed by these insights, this study identifies editorials, opinion columns and news reports as newspaper genres (Van Dijk, 1996; Le, 2004; Dafouz, 2008). News reporting is generally conceived as the transmission of the basic determinable facts about a news situation (Hulteng, 1973:6; Stonecipher, 1979). However, Fairclough argues that “making news is a heavily interpretive and constructive process, not simply a report of ‘the facts’” (2003:85). This not only puts into question the journalistic notion of objectivity, but also enables this study to probe how issues of nationhood are interpreted in the news stories, focusing on the “politics of signification” (Hall, 1982:67). This study also considers the editorial as a genre which is understood as a published expression of the opinion of the editor or newspaper (Stonecipher, 1979:41). Editorials are argumentative in nature as the writer posits the merits or demerits of a public issue, and seeks answers to some complex problem of public concern (Stonecipher, 1979:26; Le, 2004). The purpose is to illuminate or interpret an issue, and attempts to persuade or convert the reader to the writer’s point of view (Stonecipher, 1979:45). An editorial writer is not free of institutional constraints as he or she “must fit within the policy context of that institution to at least some degree” (Hulteng, 1973:19). In this way, editorials express the position of the newspaper or its reaction to a notable event (Le, 2010:40). Stonecipher concludes that an editorial is the “mouthpiece, the very personality of the newspaper ... the newspaper’s institutional voice” (1979:41). Against this background, editorials present an ideal choice for analysing the constructions of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* as they indicate the position of the papers.

Similar to editorials, are opinion columns which are an example of persuasive writing (Dafouz, 2008:46). These texts serve to reinforce much of the readers’ knowledge and beliefs, and also to deal with topics that are considered to be of particular societal importance at the time of publication (Dafouz, 2008:26). However, unlike editorials, they are signed by a

subject expert and may not reflect the official stance of the newspaper (Dafouz, 2008:26). However, at times the choice of columnists is influenced by the overall editorial policy of the newspaper, and also the political ideology of the writer (Stonecipher, 1979:210). Informed by these insights, opinion columns are also considered in this study as they are rich and more detailed, and indicate contesting viewpoints.

Sampling techniques

Sampling is an integral component of research, and it involves various areas such as people, institutions, social groups and texts (Deacon, et al 1999). For this study, the focus is on the selection of data for textual analysis. In the process of selecting data, it is important to define a population, which refers to “aggregates of texts, institutions, or anything else being investigated” (Deacon, et al 1999:41). From the population, a sample is drawn, that is, a segment that is selected for investigation (Bryman, 2001). Sampling strategies are broadly divided between two categories: probability (random) and non-probability (non-random) samples (Deacon, et al 1999; Ritchie, et al 2003). In probability sampling, elements in the population are chosen at random and have a known probability of selection (Ritchie, et al 2003:78). In this respect, selection of units is by chance (Deacon, et al 1999; Bryman, 2001). Probability sampling strategies include simple random sampling, systematic random sampling and stratified random sampling (Ritchie, et al 2003; Deacon, et al 1999). The main feature of probability sampling is that findings can be generalised (Bryman, 2001:92), since it is held that a sample is representative of the population from which it is selected (Babbie and Mouton, 1988: 173). Although probability sampling is generally held to be the most rigorous method of data selection, it is largely inappropriate for qualitative research (Ritchie et al, 2003:78). Qualitative research uses non-probability samples (Deacon, et al 1999; Ritchie, et al 2003:78) which is the basis of the selection of my texts for analysis.

In non-probability sampling, researchers purposively select sample units as opposed to probability sampling where units are selected by chance (Deacon, et al 1999:51). This implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others (Bryman, 2001:85). In non-probability sampling:

Units are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of groups within the sampled population. The sample is not intended to be statistically representative: the chances of selection for each element

are unknown but, instead, the characteristics of the population are used as the basis of selection. (Ritchie, et al 2003:78).

There is less concern with generating findings that can be generalised to a wider population, than in providing intensive insights into complex human and social phenomena in highly specific circumstances (Deacon et al 1999:43). As a result, samples tend to be seen as “illustrative of broader social and cultural processes, rather than strictly and generally representative” (Deacon, et al 1999:43). Non-probability sampling strategies include purposive sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling (Bryman, 2001; Deacon, et al 1999; Ritchie et al 2003). This study employs purposive sampling, which evidences the “conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures” (Deacon et al, 1999:50). In this regard, the selection of the sample is based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population, and its elements, and the nature of the research aim (Babbie and Mouton, 1998). Hence, contrary to probability samples, “the chance that a particular sampling unit will be selected for the sample depends upon the subjective judgement of the researcher” (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981:299). In short, the choice of sample is based on the researcher’s “judgement and the purpose of the study” (Babbie and Mouton, 1998:166). The sampling units are chosen because they have “particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher needs to study” (Ritchie, et al 2003:78). For these reasons I include and exclude certain newspaper articles, depending on whether they fall within the parameters of the concerns of the study. Two main intertwined factors are considered as criteria for selecting sample units, first, whether articles report on MLF, and second, whether the articles focus on secession and nationhood debates.

Selection procedures

As I tease out the recent constructions of nationhood, my study covers a one-year period of 2011. The stories that do not report directly on the MLF are excluded from the outset, as the focal issue is the secession debates in relation to the MLF. From the articles that directly refer to MLF, I select those that centre on secession and nationhood, rather than on MLF per se. From a total of 64 articles (43 from the *Newsday*, and 21 from the *Chronicle*), 39 articles focus on secession and nationhood (27 from *Newsday* and 12 from *Chronicle*).

The following table shows the total number of MLF stories in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* from January to December, 2011 and the number of articles included and excluded.

	Total MLF articles	On secession	Not related to secession
<i>Chronicle</i>	21	12	9
<i>Newsday</i>	43	27	16
Total	64	39	25

In establishing criteria for which articles to include and exclude, I considered the genre of the stories. Editorials are more suitable for this study as compared to news stories as they indicate the position of the paper (Hallock, 2006). However, there is only one editorial (*Chronicle*) from the 39 articles and this means a sample had to be drawn from the news stories and opinion columns. In order to cut down the number of articles for detailed critical discourse analysis, I categorised them into themes. Four key themes became evident: **ethnicity, unity vs separation, secession vs devolution, and treason vs the right to secede**. These themes indicate the way nationhood is discussed in the two papers.

The following table indicates the thematic distribution in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*.

CHRONICLE (state owned)

NEWSDAY (privately owned)

Month	Unity vs Separation	Secession vs devolution	Ethnicity	Treason vs the right to secede		Unity vs Separation	Secession vs devolution	Ethnicity	Treason vs the right to secede	Total
January										
February				1		1		1		3
March				5		1	1		4	11
April						3		1	2	6
May		1		1		1			2	5
June	1			2						3
July	1					4				5
August						1				1
September						2				2
October								1	1	2
November						1				1

December										
TOTAL	2	1	0	9		14	1	3	9	39

From the themes, I considered the length of the articles, and the number of articles published in a particular month. Premised on these considerations, three articles were selected from the *Chronicle* and nine from *Newsday*. From the *Chronicle*, I selected an article centred on the theme of **unity vs separation**, and another on the theme of **secession vs devolution**. Although the theme of **treason vs the right to secede** is prevalent, I selected one article as the stories are follow ups on a treason trial and hence repetitive. From *Newsday*, three articles were selected on the theme of **unity vs separation**. Two articles were chosen from the theme of **treason vs the right to secede**, and three from the theme of **ethnicity**. An article was selected from the theme of **secession vs devolution**. From the nine articles selected from *Newsday*, three are news stories, and six are opinion columns which are long and detailed.

The following table indicates the final sample of articles to be analysed.

CHRONICLE

NEWSDAY

Month	Unity vs Separation	Secession vs devolution	Ethnicity	Treason vs the right to secede		Unity vs Separation	Secession vs devolution	Ethnicity	Treason vs the right to secede	Total articles
February						9 th <i>opinion</i>		23 rd <i>opinion</i>		2
March				9 th <i>news story</i>			24 th <i>opinion</i>		17 th <i>news story</i> , 24 th <i>opinion</i>	4
April						18 th <i>news story</i>		5 th <i>opinion</i>		2
May		5 th <i>news story</i>								1
July	21 st <i>editorial</i>					5 th <i>opinion</i>				2
October								17 th <i>news story</i>		1
TOTAL	1	1		1		3	1	3	2	12

Interviews

In addition, interviews were also conducted in order to contextualize *Newsday* (which was established recently in 2010 and hence there is inadequate literature published on the newspaper). An understanding of the context of the production of opinion columns is helpful in adequately making sense of them. I thus emailed a self-completion questionnaire to a *Newsday* journalist, and a telephone interview was conducted with one of the columnists. In relation to the questionnaires, an open-response format was employed as “answers can provide richer, more sensitive insights into the views and activities of respondents” (Deacon, et al 1999:79). This is a convenient and cost-effective method considering that I was based in South Africa, and respondents in Zimbabwe. A questionnaire was emailed to a journalist who works for *Newsday* Southern edition and whose by-line appeared in MLF news articles. In addition, a telephone interview was conducted with one of the columnists in order to understand the context of the production of opinion columns.

Data Analysis

Foucault and discourse theory

Discourse theory as propounded by Michel Foucault provides a framework for understanding the Zimbabwe state-sanctioned idea of a unitary post-colonial nation as a hegemonic and authoritarian discourse, and to examine the strategies that maintain it in the media texts. Further, Foucault’s conception enables this study to identify secession as an alternative discourse that is challenging the dominant post-colonial nation-building discourse. In this section, I discuss Foucault’s theorisation of discourse, knowledge, power and subjectivity (Hall, 1997; Foucault, 1981). Foucault’s conception is important as he is regarded as one of the “godfathers of CDA” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009:10) and also as his ideas are incorporated by Fairclough (1995) in his three-dimensional CDA framework of analysis (Mills, 1997) which is employed in this study.

Foucault defines discourse as a “group of statements which provide a language for talking about... a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall, 1997:44). He argues that discourse constructs the topic, thereby defining and producing our objects of knowledge (Hall, 1997:44). My study argues that discourse defines how nationhood can be talked and reasoned about. Foucault notes that discourse “rules in” and “rules out” certain ways of talking about a topic (Hall, 1997:44). He argues:

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. (Foucault, 1981:52).

Amongst these procedures is that of exclusion that sets a taboo on the object of speech, prohibiting what can be said at a particular moment (Foucault, 1981:52). From this view, we can note that discourse constructs knowledge about a topic and defines how people are to conduct themselves in relation to that particular topic. In this study, I unpack how speech is prohibited within the contesting discourses of nationhood, especially with issues of treason coming to the fore. Of further importance is Foucault's notion that "nothing has any meaning outside of discourse", an idea that lies at the heart of the "constructionist theory of meaning and representation" (Hall, 1997:45). In this regard, our knowledge of the subject of nationhood is produced by discourses, and hence, nationhood only exists meaningfully within the discourses about it. In my study of the construction of nationhood constructions in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*, four elements are considered. First, we focus on the statements which produce the knowledge about nationhood. Second, the study examines the rules which govern what is "sayable" or "thinkable" (Hall, 1997:45) about nationhood. Third, the study focuses on the subjects personified in the discourse of nationhood, that is, the "nationalist" and the "tribalist". Lastly, the study of the discourses of nationhood enables us to tease out how the knowledge about nationhood acquires authority. The last element relates to Foucault's conception of knowledge and power.

He maintains the social constructionist view that knowledge is not a reflection of reality (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:13). Rather, what is conceived as "truth" is discursively constructed as different regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Foucault argues that discourse produces a "regime of truth" rather than truth in the absolute sense (Hall, 1997:49). This means that no form of thought can claim "truth" outside of discourse, and thus, things can only assume the status of "truth" within a specific historical context (Hall, 1997). There is thus a struggle between knowledge claims which can be conceived as a contestation between different discourses which represent different ways of understanding different aspects of the world. And this begs the question about how the discourses of nationhood are constructed in the two newspapers.

Further, this discursive construction of “truth” is not apolitical as knowledge is always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power that are applied to regulate the social conduct (Hall, 1997). By this I mean that knowledge assumes the authority of “truth” and this entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices (Hall, 1997:48). This “truth” is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:14). Foucault coined the term “governmentality” to describe the techniques and procedures that are designed to direct the “conduct of men” (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998:49). From his perspective, tactics of power translate into knowledge, and hence truth and knowledge become weapons by which a society manages itself (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998:1). On this basis, “behaviour which does not conform to the rules, is, de facto, deviant” (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998:51). In his work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1979) describes the production of human sexuality in which he challenges the discursive and disciplinary construction of an “objective” sexual nature (cited in Prado, 2000). By identifying the distinction between the “deviant” and the “normal”, Foucault argues that our understandings of sexual nature results from the discourses that define sexuality and the disciplinary techniques that regulate sexual behaviour (Prado, 2000:86).

Foucault advances a novel conception of power as “capillary” and circulating, rather than radiating in a single direction (Hall, 1997: 50). He argues that “power should not be understood as exclusively oppressive but as productive” (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:13). In other words, power is “never monopolized by one centre” (Hall, 1997:49), but it permeates all levels of social existence, working on the ground to the great pyramids of power through what he calls a “capillary movement” (Hall, 1997:50). Foucault shifts our attention from the “grand, overall strategies of power, towards the many, localized circuits, tactics, mechanisms and effects through which power circulates” (Hall, 1997:50). From this theorisation, we can locate multiple discourses contesting legitimacy in the discursive space. For Foucault, discourse is a struggle, “the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1981:53). Discourse cannot be conceived as singular, because although it produces and reinforces power, “it also undermines and exposes it, it renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault, 1981:51). In this regard, we can identify secession as an alternative discourse that arose at a particular historical moment, producing new conceptions of “nationhood”, with its own authority and regime of truth that regulates social practices.

Besides the production of knowledge, Foucault develops a notion that discourse produces subjects (Hall, 1997). He maintains that an individual is not a pre-given entity, but ought to

be understood as a historical product (Prado, 2000:57). His point is that the “subject” is a product of discourse rather than existing prior to discourse (Prado, 2000:57). He is critical of the traditional view of the subject as an autonomous and stable entity fully endowed with consciousness (Hall, 1997:55). Arguing from a constructionist conception of representation, Foucault postulates that the “subject is produced within discourse”: “subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be subjected to discourse” (Hall, 1997:54). This subject is produced in two ways. First, the discourse itself produces “subjects” - figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces (Hall, 1997:56). In this study, the focus is on the discursive construction of a “nationalist”, “liberators”, “colonizers” and “tribalist” as bearers of certain regime of truth. Second, the discourse produces a place for the subject from which the discourse makes most sense (Hall, 1997:56). The argument is that we subject ourselves to power not by force, but voluntarily and willingly as discourses produce docile bodies that “may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998:50). This raises the question of how individuals are positioned as willing subjects of discourses of nationhood.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytic method

As discussed earlier, CDA is one of the methods associated with qualitative research. As I discuss CDA as a method of analysis, it is important not to detach it from its philosophical and theoretical foundations (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). CDA is an “interpretive, contextual and constructivist approach” to data collection and analysis (Richardson, 2007:15). It is premised on social constructionism, a philosophical tradition which regards the role of language in the social construction of the world (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). CDA provides a theory and method of newspaper analysis, and can be distinguished from quantitative content analysis as critical discourse analysts:

Offer interpretations of the meanings of texts rather than just quantifying textual features and deriving meaning from this; situate what is written or said in the context in which it occurs, rather than just summarising patterns or regularities in texts. (Richardson, 2007:15).

It is both a theory and method of analysing the way that individuals and institutions use language (Richardson, 2007:1). In order to understand CDA, it is important to unpack the conceptions of “discourse” and “critical” as these understandings have implications on the manner in which the social inquiry is conducted. It must be noted that CDA is a broader

movement consisting of several approaches among which there are both similarities and differences (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:60). Although there are divergences, there is also a common ground that makes the CDA approaches different from other forms of social inquiry. The term “discourse” despite being vigorously contested, is understood as “language in use” (Richardson, 2007:23). It is a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:1). The underlying assumption is that language is used to mean something and do something, and that this “meaning” and “doing” are linked to the context of its usage (Richardson, 2007:24). It is further argued that language contributes to the production and reproduction of social reality (Richardson, 2007:26). This relates to the conception of discourse as a social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:61). This implies a “dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). In other words, discourse is a form of social practice which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:61). It is constitutive in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). Hence, in CDA the focus is on how social phenomena are discursively constituted (Hammersley, 2008:110). As a result, discourses are viewed as historical and only understood in relation to their context (Richardson, 2007).

As individuals and groups employ discursive strategies in pursuit of various interests, critical discourse analysts argue that “the world can always be constructed differently” (Hammersley, 2008:110). Thus, one of the important features of CDA is that it applies a “critical impetus” to research (Wodak and Meyer, 2009:6; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). But what does a “critical” research entail? It means the aim of CDA is to:

Investigate and analyse power relations in society, and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities of social change. (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:2).

Critical discourse analysts argue that discourse contributes to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:63; Richardson, 2007). They conceive discursive practices as having ideological effects in that they perpetuate unequal power relations between social classes, men and women, and ethnic majorities and minorities (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). In this regard, the overall aim

of CDA research is to link “linguistic analysis to social analysis”, and thus, to identify the relationships of disempowerment, dominance and discrimination (Richardson, 2007:26). As it seeks to unmask the unequal power relations, and promote progressive social change, CDA does not conceive itself as politically neutral, as objectivist social science does (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:64; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Richardson, 2007). Rather, it sees itself as “engaged and committed” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258), and taking an “overt moral political position with regard to the social problem analysed” (Richardson, 2007:2). By taking the side of oppressed groups, CDA is emancipatory and aims at promoting radical social change (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:64). The main argument is that when it comes to social inequalities and power abuse, taking a neutral approach does not solve the problem, but it contributes to the perpetuation of social injustice (Richardson, 2007:2).

In employing CDA to investigate the discursive constructions of nationhood in the two newspapers, this study takes the side of the minority Ndebele ethnic group that is regarded as “living under the bondage of boundaries” (Mhlanga, 2010). Subsumed within Zimbabwe nationalism, the Matabeleland voices are yearning for different arrangement (Mhlanga, 2010). Having unpacked the literature on the plight of the Matabeleland people and established the authoritarian nature of the Zimbabwe nationalism that was hinged on “Shona triumphalism” to the exclusion of the Ndebele particularism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:169), this study identifies Matabeleland secession as an alternative discourse challenging the hegemonic Zimbabwe nation-building discourse. This study is grounded on what Mhlanga terms a “perspective of Zimbabwe from the subaltern”, a view that “challenges the notion that Zimbabwe is a united and peaceful nation” (2009:106).

From the various CDA approaches, this study embraces Fairclough’s (1995) three dimensional model as a framework of analysis. This model connects texts to discourse, and situates them in a wider social context (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Various factors influenced my choice of Fairclough’s (1995) model rather than the social psychological approach of Wetherell and Potter (1992), the social-cognitive model of van Dijk (2001) and the discourse-historical approach of Reisigl and Wodak (2001). First, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002:60) argue that Fairclough’s approach “represents, within the critical discourse analytical movement, the most developed theory and method for research in communication, culture and society”. This view is echoed by Richardson (2007:37) who notes that “Fairclough’s model of CDA ... provides a more accessible method of doing CDA than alternative theoretical approaches”. Another major factor is with respect to how these

approaches understand discourse, ideology and the historical perspective (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Fairclough (1995) incorporates the Foucauldian perspective (Mills, 1997), in which power is viewed as a “productive force rather than as a property possessed by individuals, which they exert over others” (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:63). Some CDA models, including van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach, do not subscribe to the Foucauldian notion of power (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Rather, Van Dijk’s approach pays attention to “top-down relations of dominance than to bottom-up relations of resistance (van Dijk, 2001:300). In contrast, Fairclough (1995) focuses on whether the discursive practice sustains the unequal power relations, or challenges power positions by representing reality in a new way (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). This enables this study to tease out the contestation of nationhood in the media, and thus probing whether the newspapers sustain the dominant idea of Zimbabwe nationalism, or whether this hegemonic discourse is being thwarted by an emerging, alternative discourse of Ndebele nationalism.

Further, Fairclough’s (1995) approach can be distinguished from other CDA approaches in that he views discourse not only as constitutive, but also as constituted by society (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Hence, discourse is also viewed as historical, only to be understood within a context in which the discourse arises. This enables this study to examine the constructions of nationhood in the media texts, and tease out how these constructions are not only informed by discourses of nationhood, but also constitute particular understandings of nationhood. In summary, Richardson distinguishes Fairclough (1995) from other CDA approaches in that Fairclough “attributes three dimensions to every discursive event” (2007:37). It is this three dimensional model that provides a framework for analysing media texts.

For one to fully understand discourse, Fairclough argues that an “analysis needs to draw out the form and function of the text, the way the text relates to the way it is produced and consumed, and the relation of this to the wider society in which it takes place” (Richardson, 2007:37). This means that CDA involves an analysis of the relationships of the three facets, that is, text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 1995). First, textual analysis covers the linguistic features of texts, that is, an analysis of vocabulary, semantics and grammar of sentences (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Second, discursive practice relates to an analysis of texts as they are embedded within, and relate, social conditions of production and consumption (Richardson, 2007:39; Fairclough, 1995). The relationship between the text and social practice is mediated at this level, as the text

shapes and is shaped by the social practice (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Lastly, the sociocultural practice relates to the “social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of” (Fairclough, 1995:57). This is an analysis of texts in relation to the wider context of institutional practices and society in which the event is embedded in (Richardson, 2007). It is at this level that considerations are made about whether the discursive practice reproduces, or restructures the existing social relations and the consequences this has for the broader social practice (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002).

In conducting textual analysis, this study employs various linguistic tools in order to make sense of the constructions of nationhood in media texts. First, there is the lexical analysis as the words used in a newspaper text convey the imprint of society and of value judgements (Richardson, 2007:47). Second, referential strategies as the way that people are named in news discourse can have significant impact on the way in which they are viewed (Richardson, 2007:49). Third, transitivity is also important as it describes the relationships between participants and the roles they play in the processes described in the reporting (Richardson, 2007:54). Fourth, modality indicates the speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion, about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence (Richardson, 2007:59). Lastly, I employ Aristotle’s rhetorical argumentation as this is a mode of persuasion, a “strategy that the arguer takes in persuading the audience” (Richardson, 2007:159). Aristotle identifies three divisions of rhetoric. First, the forensic argument that covers any form of argumentative discourse in which the arguer or rhetor condemns or defends someone’s past actions (Richardson, 2007:157). Secondly, the epideictic rhetoric in which a rhetor is concerned with proving someone or something worthy of admiration or disapproval (Richardson, 2007:157). Thirdly, the deliberative rhetoric adopted by a rhetor when deliberating on the desirability of a decision (Richardson, 2007:157).

Conclusion

This chapter provides the methodological framework for this study, and justifies the relevance of qualitative approach in addressing the research concerns. As the qualitative research is rooted on constructivism, interpretivism and phenomenology, I identify how these philosophical assumptions enable this study to examine the constructions of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. Further, I address the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability from a qualitative perspective. In addition, I describe the procedures undertaken in the selection of data, and demonstrating how decisions were arrived at in the

selection of articles for analysis. This study employs purposive sampling for the selection of data for critical discourse analysis. Lastly, this chapter engages with CDA as an analytical method, indicating the appropriateness of Fairclough's (1995) model in teasing out the constructions of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. Having established the methodological underpinning of the study, the following two chapters are dedicated to an analysis of texts using Fairclough's (1995) analytical model. The first of the two chapters interrogates the constructions of nationhood in the two newspapers by analysing articles focusing on two themes, **ethnicity**, and **treason vs the right to secede**. Chapter four is centred on the other two themes, **unity vs separation**, and **secession vs devolution**.

CHAPTER3: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to interrogate the constructions of nationhood in the secessionist debates related to MLF. In this chapter, I present findings obtained from an analysis of six articles in the *Newsday* and *Chronicle* newspapers based on Fairclough's (1995) three dimensional approach (texts, discursive practice, and social practice) to CDA. Three of these articles are centred on the theme of **ethnicity**, and the other three focus on the theme of **treason vs the right to secede**. The other six articles from the themes **unity vs separation** and **secession vs devolution** are dealt with in the next chapter. An interpretation of these findings is underpinned by the theoretical and methodological insights of the research. As highlighted in the previous chapter, these themes evoke the constructions of nationhood in the two papers.

Ethnicity

The vision of nation-building in post-colonial Africa is being challenged by the question of ethnicity (Eyoh, et al 2004:8). As such, the nation-building project is fragile, fraught with contradiction, and open to explosive moments that are subversive of the state-sanctioned idea of one indivisible nation (Werbner, 1998:73). In this regard, the debates on nationhood are centred on ethnicity (Eyoh, et al 2004; Ake, 1993). I examine the constructions of nationhood by analysing three articles from *Newsday* centred on the thematic issue of ethnicity. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the *Chronicle* does not have any articles on this issue. My aim is to examine how the hegemonic post-colonial nation-building discourse is sustained, or challenged, by the alternative secessionist discourse in *Newsday*.

‘MLF promoting tribal hatred’

This article appeared in *Newsday* on 17 October, 2011. It is a news story written by Khanyile Mlotshwa, a staff reporter. The ten paragraph article is centred on Collen Makumbirofa's statement that Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) was promoting tribal hatred between the Shonas and Ndebeles. Makumbirofa is a human rights activist attached to the Foundation of Reason and Justice (FRJ), a Zimbabwean civic society group. FRJ is a Zimbabwean Christian human rights organisation started by Makumbirofa and based in South Africa. It exists to

provide assistance, advocacy and awareness for the persecuted and suffering in Zimbabwe⁹. FRJ is one of the groups fighting ZANU PF, and aligned to Tsvangirai's MDC party¹⁰. The first three paragraphs highlight Makumbirofa's view that MLF is inciting ethnic hatred, and using Gukurahundi as their "marketing strategy". This argument is dismissed as a "lie" in the following four paragraphs by MLF spokesperson David Magagula who argues that MLF seeks to "restore" the state of Mthwakazi. In the last three paragraphs, Makumbirofa argues that the MLF has "evil intentions", and calls upon the Ndebeles and Shonas to unite and fight for a "one and new Zimbabwe".

Text analysis

The headline of the article "MLF promoting tribal hatred" is in speech marks, a linguistic "device that indicates it is the view of some third party" (Richardson, 2011:55). By presenting it as Makumbirofa's perspective, *Newsday* distances itself from this truth claim. This argument is developed in the lead of the story, as Makumbirofa accuses the MLF of being "tribal and evil". These lexical clauses are used in contrast to "modernism": "nationhood" is associated with a modern state (Vail, 1997:53; Van den Berghe, 1981). Van den Berghe notes that within this vision of a modern nation-state, ethnicity is constructed as "traditionalism" and hence nationalism developing out of it is stigmatised as "tribalism" (1981:3). Further, by referencing the FRJ as a "Zimbabwean civic society group" and MLF as a "secessionist party", the newspaper signifies not only the competing Foucauldian regimes of truth (Hall, 1997:49), but sets off what Hall terms a "chain of signification" (Grossberg, 1996:137) as these words establish a tension between a "modern" and "traditional" vision of a nation (Vail, 1997:53) .

Makumbirofa develops his position by positing that the MLF is "promoting" hatred of Shonas. A transitivity analysis of the material process "promoting" indicates that the Shonas are constructed as an object, that is, as affected in a material way by an action or process (Fowler, 1991:75). Within this unitary state discourse, the Ndebeles and MLF are constructed as agents, or doers of an action (Fowler, 1991:75), which is a threat to human security. Moreover, in the second paragraph Makumbirofa is referenced as a "human rights activist",

⁹ <http://www.zimbabwehope.org>

¹⁰ <http://greatindaba.com/issue/january-2011/article/time-to-get-rid-of-mugabe>

and this not only positions him as a champion of human rights, but also constructs MLF's secession calls as a threat to human security. It is crucial to note that Magagula is referred to as a "spokesperson" of MLF rather than a human rights activist, although the right to self-determination is recognised in international covenants (Buchanan, 1991:29; Horowitz, 2003:5). Thus, human rights is rooted within a modernist discourse, whereas ethnicity is conceived as particularistic identity (Pollis and Schwab, 2000:15; Vail, 1997). This indicates how the politics of human rights shapes and mediates the contours of nationhood in Zimbabwe, and in this instance, how it is mobilised to legitimate the unitary state discourse.

Further, nationhood is contested in the appropriation of the "Gukurahundi" as the lexis is open to various readings. Within the dominant unitary state discourse, the Gukurahundi is constructed by Makumbirofa as a "marketing strategy", a lexical phrase suggesting that the MLF uses the memories of atrocities for political manipulation. In so doing, it is a means of prohibiting speech (Foucault, 1981:52) as it potentially sustains the dominant discourse of silence that surrounds the topic of Gukurahundi (Eppel, 2004; Alexander, et al 2000). Conversely, the Gukurahundi is appropriated within the secessionist discourse to define the imagined political community of "Mthwakazi". This supports Lindgren's (2005:158) view that the Gukurahundi strengthened and spread feelings of Ndebeleness. Since identities are constructed through difference (Hall, 1991b; 1996), the Gukurahundi is a boundary marker (Downing and Husband, 2005:15) that demarcates "Zimbabwe" and "Mthwakazi" nations. In the same way as Zertal examines the ways that Israel has appropriated and used the memory of the Holocaust in its politics of nationhood (2005:1), so the Matabeleland situation provides the ghost of the Gukurahundi as ever-present in the imagination of the Ndebele "nation". It is thus, the "politics of death in the service of the nation" (Zertal, 2005:1).

In paragraphs four to six, the secessionist discourse emerges with Magagula arguing that Makumbirofa is undermining the "genuine cause of the people of Mthwakazi". There is a reminder of nationhood (Billig, 1995) as Magagula's choice of words underpins the idea of the Mthwakazi "nation". The expression "cause of the people of Mthwakazi" suggests a legitimate movement, and hence evokes a collective national sentiment which Billig describes as "banal nationalism", or the everyday references which underpin the idea of nationalism (1995:6). As the term "people" is a discursive construct of a collectivity in pursuit of a political end (Chipkin, 2007:2), Mthwakazi is imagined as a nation-as-people (Billig, 1995). Further, Magagula constructs "Mthwakazi" as a nation that "was there" and which the MLF wants to "restore". This idea of restoring rather than creating something new

gives credence to the secessionist discourse, as “Mthwakazi” is constructed as a “nation” currently trapped under the Zimbabwean “bondage of boundaries” (Mazrui, 1994).

In the last three paragraphs, the dominant unitary state discourse is reinforced as Makumbirofa argues that Lobengula, the Ndebele King, “invaded Madzimbabwe and committed genocide against Shonas”. The material process “invaded” constructs an idea of Ndebeles as settlers and Shona as natives of Zimbabwe, and thus, affirming Mamdani’s thesis that the politics of indigeneity is ever-present in the crisis of citizenship in postcolonial Africa (2001:14). This supports Ndhlovu’s argument that the legitimacy of the Ndebeles in Zimbabwe is questionable as they are considered to be migrants of the Mfecane uprisings that took place in Tshaka’s Zululand in the 1820s (2009:94). Further, by projecting an image of Ndebele violence, Makumbirofa perpetuates the dominant colonially-propagated narrative of Ndebeles as violent raiders and Shonas as defenceless (Barnes, 2004:142; Cooper, 1966; Ranger, 1967). This narrative of Shona victimisation and Ndebele aggression (Barnes, 2004) is reconstructed to maintain the dominant discourse of the unitary state. However, from this argument, the dominant discourse of a unitary state is exposed as Makumbirofa’s conflating of “Madzimbabwe” (Zimbabwe) with the Shona group supports the view that the Zimbabwean nation-state is a “successor state to pre-colonial Shona formations” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:168; Mhlanga, 2010:109). In short, although this privileges the hegemonic view, naming the Shona people as “Madzimbabwe”, renders fragile the unitary state discourse as Zimbabwe is constructed as a state imagined along Shona histories (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:1).

The concluding paragraph is Makumbirofa’s exhortation to Ndebeles to unite with the Shonas and “fight for a one and new Zimbabwe together”, rather than seek secession. The discourse of a “new Zimbabwe” is emerging from the political arena as it resonates with the Tsvangirai-led MDC political party’s campaign motto: “a new Zimbabwe, a new beginning” (Mapala, 2009). Makumbirofa employs an obligation modal expression “should fight” and a deliberative argument about a desirable future (Richardson, 2007) which is a “New Zimbabwe”. In short, Makumbirofa is a subject of an alternative Zimbabwean nationalist discourse which seeks political change, and hence perceives MLF’s secession bid as an obstacle to the struggle for a “New Zimbabwe”. Although this might be a worthy call, the issue is how the Ndebeles are to be incorporated into this imagined nation. This indicates a tension between idea of a “nation” as a modern artefact, and a “nation” as ethnic particularism (Vail, 1997:53).

Discursive practices

An understanding of *Newsday* as an institution, its structure and the journalistic practices is crucial in making sense of how this newspaper positions itself in the nationhood contestations. Firstly, the article being analysed is a news report which adheres to the journalistic principle of objectivity in which a journalist distances him or herself from the truth claims of the report (Richardson, 2007:86). This is done through the writer's use of scare quotes and sourcing. However, this does not mean the news report is not value-laden as value judgements are built through news gathering, news writing, news selection, editing and presentation (Richardson, 2007:86). Joseph Mazibuko, a *Newsday* journalist, believes that *Newsday* "follows a middle of the road policy".¹¹ In his view, this means that "MLF is given attention, but not due attention"¹² in the newspaper. This position taken by the newspaper is not ideologically neutral, as indicated by the struggles between journalistic independence and institutional constraints. Despite its Bulawayo location, the *Newsday Southern Edition* is edited in Harare, and this has created a conflict between journalistic autonomy in Bulawayo, and institutional constraints in Harare¹³. Mazibuko, who has spent all his life in Matabeleland states that "all MLF stories are from the reporters' initiative. No one in the editorial team is on the lookout of MLF diaries"¹⁴.

According to Mazibuko, debates on Matabeleland secession are discouraged by *Newsday* editors in Harare whom he views as "Zimbabwean politics oriented and tend to question and spike some of the MLF stories arguing that it will divide the nation/people"¹⁵. In other words, the newspaper's position on MLF is informed by what Mazibuko terms the politics "of fighting to remove Zanu PF and install MDC in power in vain hope that this will bring democracy. Any other politics contrary to that is seen as detrimental to the larger national vision". This suggests the constraints on journalistic practice as the journalist in Matabeleland seeks to bring the MLF cause to the fore, but is constrained by the editorial policy in Harare. However, as Giddens asserts, the constitution of agency and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, but represents a duality (1984:25). Journalists are both enabled and constrained by the structure, and this process of negotiation between structure and agency elucidates *Newsday's* position. Further, one must consider the

¹¹ From an interview with Joseph Mazibuko, one of the *Newsday* reporters who has been covering the MLF.

¹² Joseph Mazibuko (not his real name)

¹³ From an interview with Mazibuko

¹⁴ Interview with Mazibuko

¹⁵ Interview with Mazibuko

conditions of consumption (Richardson, 2007) in order to make sense of the nationhood contestations. The primary audiences of *Newsday Southern Edition* are the Matabeleland community, an area renowned as a hotbed of political opposition as voters have supported one opposition party or another (Eppel, 2008:1). As a struggle for Matabeleland has ensued between MDC factions and separatist movements (Eppel, 2008), these forces influence the nature of the nationhood debates in *Newsday*.

Social practice

This article was published at a time when MLF was hosting rallies in South Africa, challenging the nation-state of Zimbabwe, and when the MDC formations were seeking to dislodge ZANU PF from power. As discourse constitutes the social world and is also shaped by other social practices (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:61), it is important to make sense of the dialectical relationship between *Newsday* and other social practices (civil society and opposition political forces). The emergent civic groupings formed an alliance with the MDC in campaigning for human rights, constitutional rights and political change in the country (Raftopoulos, 2009). It is against this background that FRJ, a civil society group, advanced the discourse of political change in the form of MDC's political slogan "New Zimbabwe". The private press has also been embroiled in this political struggle for change, aligning with the opposition forces, hence assuming the identity of "opposition press" (Moyo, 2005:114). Thus, the MDC, FRJ and *Newsday* all belong to the same "discursive formation" (Hall, 1997:44) as they define a particular way of talking about nationhood centred on creating a "New Zimbabwe". Consequently, the Matabeleland Question is denied and trivialised, and dismissed as tribalism by the MDC populist line (Moyo, 2006), as in this optimistic mood the emphasis is on ethnicity's role as a "disrupter" (Vail, 1997:54) of an envisioned "New Zimbabwe". The overarching argument within this discourse is that we do not need division in Zimbabwe; there is an overriding need for unity and not tribalism (Moyo, 2006). Hence, it is in this way that *Newsday* sustains the MDC's nationhood discourse by privileging the views of a civil society organization. Although this newspaper is constituted by the nationhood discourses from the MDC formations and civil society, it in turn shapes the audience's understanding of nationhood.

‘Ndebele-Shona relations: recipe for disaster’

This article was written by Khumbulani Maphosa, an opinion columnist and was published by *Newsday* on the 23 February, 2011. Maphosa represents himself as a “media practitioner, researcher and advocate for social and political justice”. He persuades audiences about the existence of ethnic animosity between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups. Maphosa constructs his argument in three modes. First, is the emphasis on the tensions between the two ethnic groups, a position he develops in the second level of the argument by proposing an immediate formulation of mechanisms to avert ethnic conflict. The article concludes with the writer arguing that if the two ethnic groups cannot coexist, then secession might be the solution. In analysing the columnist’s position, my purpose is to examine how “a sense of nationness” (Bhabha, 1990:2) is signified in this article.

Text analysis

The headline ‘Ndebele-Shona relations: recipe for disaster’ defines the stance being taken by the author. Through the use of metaphor, “recipe for disaster”, the author persuades readers about the incompatibility of the two ethnic groups. This is supported by the lead paragraph in which he argues that “the graffiti is written over”, a metaphor which indicates that the tensions between these two groups are glaring. Besides these metaphors, this article is replete with visceral language: “inscribed in bold letters”, “you can feel, touch and smell it”, and “it can almost choke you to death” that signify that ethnic tensions are evident in everyday lives. The main argument is that ethnicity is salient in Zimbabwe; a “living presence” (Ake, 2000:95), and “one of the challenges to the survival of both the state and the country” (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007:275).

Against this background, the writer challenges the notion of a unitary state by urging the readers to “forget about national unity”. He argues that the rhetoric of togetherness and “one proud nation of Sisonke/tiritose” are propaganda statements used for political expediency. In this way, he disputes the claim that Zimbabwe is a “rainbow nation” (Bornman, 2006), as he argues that unity does not exist as the country is marred by ethnic hostilities. This echoes Mhlanga’s argument that the view that Zimbabwe is a united and peaceful nation is false (2009:106). Having established that the Zimbabwean national identity is in “crisis”, that is, “fragmented” (Hall, 1992:274) by ethnic cleavages, the columnist identifies the socio-historical forces that have produced and reinforced these ethnic tensions. In analysing this

construction of identities through “difference” (Hall, 1996), I examine predication, which is the representation of the “values and characteristics of social actors” (Richardson, 2007:52). Maphosa argues that the Shonas see the Ndebeles as having an “undesired appetite to learn and adapt” which goes back to the “early days of their founding fathers Mzilikazi and Lobengula”. Conversely, Maphosa argues that the Ndebeles describe the Shonas as having an “excessive greed for power and wealth dating back to the days of their spirit mediums Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi”.¹⁶ The rediscovery of pre-colonial figures in this contestation suggests that the Zimbabwean nation-state is “bifurcated into irreconcilable Ndebele and Shona identities” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:42). With different myths of origin and ancestry (Smith, 2003:174), the crisis of the Zimbabwean nation-state is with how two ethnic groups, “with different pre-colonial histories and memories can be invited into one centralised state” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:51).

Maphosa further observes that the Ndebeles believe that “if it was not for Umbuqazwe/Gukurahundi and the subsequent discrimination and annihilation things would be better”. He uses the metaphors “miscarriage of justice”, and “closed-door under-carpet dealings” to suggest that the victims of the atrocities have been denied justice, as the Gukurahundi is perceived as a closed chapter within the dominant circles (CCJP, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). This affirms Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s notion that within the discourse of authoritarian nation-building, unity is built on “forced amnesia” or “on the basis of forgetting the past” (2009a:153). Further, Maphosa attests to an understanding that these unacknowledged atrocities have left a festering wound in the psyche of the Zimbabwean nation (CCJP, 2007:xv1; Eppel, 2004; Robins, 1996). As such, Maphosa advances an alternative vision of nation-building by arguing that silencing the past can “spark outrage and tribal clashes”.

The writer develops his argument by appealing to audiences to address these ethnic tensions before they “cause carnage”. He employs metaphorical expressions “carnage”, “bloodbath”, “trigger”, “ticking time bomb” and “boom”, to warn the audiences that an ethnic conflict with dire consequences can erupt at any time. Maphosa thus makes a pathotic argument (Richardson, 2007:160) that is meant to move audiences from an emotional state of calm to that of fear. In evoking meanings of ethnic carnage and human tragedy, he conjures up the memory of Rwanda, a country where the Hutu ethnic group massacred nearly a million Tutsis

¹⁶ Mzilikazi and Lobengula are the kings of the pre-colonial Ndebele state (Lindgren, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008), whilst Nehanda and Kaguvi are the pre-colonial Shona spirit mediums who are mythologized for playing a key role in instigating rebellion against colonial conquest in the 1890s (Fontein, 2010:424; Beach, 1998:27).

(Mamdani, 2001:5). Maphosa further poses a rhetorical question: “should we wait and let time decide our fate and destiny?” to persuade readers about the need of setting up of a commission of ethnic relations and ethnic interests.

In addition, the writer employs the obligation modal expression “should” as a rhetorical device to advocate an “unbiased language policy”. He argues that there is “no honest and progressive Ndebele interest” for civil servants and public officers to “use Shona in a predominantly Ndebele-speaking area like Bulawayo”. This position indicates the tensions and challenges of nation-building in multilingual and multicultural post-colonial Africa (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998; Ngugi Wa Thiong’O, 1986; Ndhlovu, 2009). The columnist’s call for an “unbiased” language policy affirms the notion in post-colonial Africa that there is “linguistic homogenization” as minority languages are suppressed and replaced by the languages of the dominant group as they are perceived as obstacles to the cultivation of a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the state (Bulcha, 1997:325). Thus, the Matabeleland Question is represented as resistance to the discrimination and subjugation of the Ndebele language by the “Shona political hegemony” (Ndhlovu, 2006:305), and to the Jacobin republicanism nation-building strategy (Eyoh, et al, 2004:17).

The rhetorical force of this opinion piece is strengthened by the use of a marriage metaphor in the conclusion. An idea of marriage connotes a covenant or a bond between people. In this case, Maphosa constructs the union of the Ndebele and Shona as a “marriage of inconvenience”, a metaphor that reinforces an argument that these ethnic groups lack a feeling of common belonging. The expressions “force” and “cohabitate” connote a union that is illegitimate and anchored on coercion rather than mutual consent. As a result, the writer considers “divorce”, a metaphor for secession, to ensure the “safety and happiness for both parties”. Through the use of the marriage metaphor, the writer constructs the Zimbabwe “nation” as a “clash of civilisations” (Huntington, 1996). In this case, he represents the two ethnic groups as lacking a “common rich legacy of memories, and a desire to live together” (Renan, 1990:1). As such, the discourse of a unitary state is contested, and secession is constructed as an alternative imagination of nationhood.

Discursive practice

This article is an opinion column, suggesting that its purpose is to persuade audiences on a topic considered of social importance (Dafouz, 2008:26). As a columnist, Maphosa is thus regarded as an expert who is expected to expound his opinion for the general public

(Krieghbaum, 1956:345). He works for Habakkuk Trust as an Information and Advocacy Officer. Habakkuk Trust is a Bulawayo-based civic organisation that is involved in issues of advocacy, capacity building and social justice¹⁷. Although an opinion column may not reflect the official stance of the newspaper (Dafouz, 2008), the choice of a columnist can be influenced by the overall editorial policy of the newspaper, and also by the political ideology of the writer (Stonecipher, 1979:210). As such, it can be argued that the choice of the columnist suggests *Newsday*'s position. The newspaper presents itself as a cultural space, a terrain for the contestations of nationhood. Without editorials which explicitly state the newspaper's position on a topic (Le, 2010:39), the columns in *Newsday* provide an arena for the nationhood perspectives competing in civil society spaces.

Social practice

The article was published at a period when the debates on ethnicity, Gukurahundi and secession are rife following the launch of MLF. Further, the launch of the MLF has raised questions about the significance of the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Reintegration set up under the Global Political Agreement (GPA) to ensure national cohesion, national healing and national unity. It is in this context that Maphosa provides a detailed account of the Matabeleland Question. However, he does not take an overtly secessionist position, but rather advances a counter-hegemonic discourse associated with civil society's "nation-building from below" model (Eyoh, et al 2004:18), which resonates with opposition politics in Zimbabwe. This article thus challenges the hegemonic "top-down Jacobin nation-building strategy" (Eyoh, et al 2004:17) of the post-colonial Zanu PF government. Authored by a columnist working for a civil society group based in Bulawayo, this article indicates that Matabeleland secessionist politics is debated not only in the media, but in other spaces such as civic society. However, *Newsday* is not only constituted by the discourses constructed in other spaces, but it also shapes audiences' understandings of nationhood.

I'm tribalist, like you!

This opinion piece was written by Rejoice Ngwenya, and published by *Newsday* on 5 April, 2011. Authored in the context of the split of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) sparked by the on-going MLF treason trial, Ngwenya tackles the "touchy subject of

¹⁷ <http://relzim.org/news/2420/>

tribalism". Arguing against what he terms the "Ndebele worldview", the columnist advances his "liberal perspective on positive tribalism". First, he highlights why the Ndebeles consider themselves to be victims of Shona tribalism in Zimbabwe. Secondly, Ngwenya advances his position and dismisses Ndebeles as tribalists who are "overwhelmed" by their "ethnic superiority". In examining the linguistic devices used in this article in the construction of a "tribalist", I identify the meanings of nationhood in the texts.

In the headline "I'm a tribalist, like you!" the term "tribalist" is used as a predication form to represent the values and characteristics of the social actors being addressed. Ngwenya is challenging the "Ndebele worldview" on tribalism, and uses "you" to address the social actors disenchanted with the discrimination of the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe. The lead reinforces the headline as it highlights the tensions between the ZLHR and Abammeli¹⁸, a "consortium" of "disgruntled members" from Bulawayo. Through the metaphor "Libya" to signify the conflict, and the references "Zimbabwe" and "Bulawayo" to describe the two associations, Ngwenya constructs the contesting national imaginaries. Further, it is important to note that Ngwenya refers to the subject of tribalism as "touchy", a word which suggests that the topic is sensitive, supporting the view that in Zimbabwe the issue of ethnicity is usually brushed aside, rather than spoken about (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:154).

In the second paragraph, the columnist argues that whenever a person of "Shona origin acts outside the Ndebele worldview", criticism centres on tribalism. The lexis "worldview" not only implies that the Ndebeles and Shonas interpret social reality differently, but that the Shonas are being compelled to act within the Ndebeles' belief and value system. In this regard, Ngwenya is "disheartened" by the conflict between the ZLHR and Abammeli as he notes that ZLHR are not tribalists, but are acting outside the "Ndebele worldview". He points to some of the features of the "Ndebele worldview". First, he argues that within the "Ndebele worldview", the Shonas in Bulawayo who "cannot converse" in Ndebele are "labelled" tribalists. The expression "cannot converse" and "labelled" suggests that the Shonas are unjustly accused by the Ndebeles of being "tribalists". Further, the columnist notes that Ndebeles argue that they are "compelled" to speak Shona in Harare for "survival". A transitivity analysis indicates that the material processes "compelled" and "survival" not only

¹⁸ Abammeli Lawyers for Human Rights is a human rights network formed by lawyers from Matabeleland in response to the refusal by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) to give assistance to MLF members on trial for treason. Abammeli is representing the MLF leaders in the on-going treason trial. <http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-2084-article-Tribal+split+of+Zimbabwe+lawyers+over+MLF.htm>

affirm the view that the Ndebele language is systematically marginalised in Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2009:305), but also echoes Bulcha's argument that in multi-ethnic states, ethnic identities are suppressed to create homogeneous nation-states (1997:325). As their "language is neglected", Ndebele particularism is constructed as linguistic nationalism (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998:5).

Further, the alternative vision of nationhood emerges in the view that ZANU PF was founded on "splitting" Zimbabwe into Shona and Ndebele. The lexis "splitting" indicates division, and affirms the view that Zimbabwe was born bifurcated along ethnic fault lines in 1980 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:2). Second, the view that the Shonas "provide" national leadership "enlisting" the services of Ndebele "apologists" echoes the view that in post-colonial Africa, national institutions have been captured by ethnically defined groups and parties (Eyoh, et al 2004:8). As such, within the secessionist discourse the crisis of the Zimbabwean nation-state is represented as the Ndebele's feelings of exclusion and resentment of the post-colonial nation as a Shona nation and post-colonial state serving Shona interests at the expense of Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:47). However, the columnist conceives these disenchanted voices in Matabeleland as "positive tribalism", a predication employed to silence the Ndebele's grievances. Further, he identifies the advocates of "positive tribalism" as the MLF, Imbovane Yamahlabezulu, and Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland. These groups signify radical Ndebele politics that contest the idea of a Zimbabwean unitary state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:48).

To account for the emergence of Ndebele particularism, the columnist quotes Ndlovu-Gatsheni who condemns "Zanu PF's attitude towards Ndebele liberation heroes". The referential strategy "Ndebele liberation heroes", as signifies contesting visions of nationhood. First, this naming supports the argument that the "nation is defined in the culture and politics of nationalist struggle" (Chipkin, 2007:2; Davidson, 1992). Second, it affirms that the politics of death, bones, funeral and commemoration are at heart of the contestation of the Zimbabwean national narrative (Fontein, 2010; Muchemwa, 2010). The ZANU PF government commemorates individuals who have contributed to the liberation struggle by posthumously declaring them "national heroes" and burying them at the Heroes Acre in Harare (Muchemwa, 2010: 508; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2009:950). As argued by Muchemwa, the cemetery and place of death has become the central site from which the Zimbabwean polis is imagined and articulated (2010: 504). Lastly, the term "attitude" suggests that Ndebele liberation heroes are excluded in the imagination of the nation. Within

this secessionist discourse of nationhood, it is held that the imagination of Zimbabwe is “Shona-centred” and “ZANU PF-centred”, excluding ZAPU and Ndebele communities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2009:950).

Further, within the alternative narrative of the nation there is an argument that Zimbabwean historians have “glorified Shona history”. The verb “glorified” connotes a celebration and elevation of Shona historical symbols, Shona pre-colonial heroes and myths into the imagination of the post-colonial nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:168). This supports the argument that history plays a key role in the constitution of identities as the narratives of the past offer answers to the questions of our national belonging (Weedon, 2004; Hall, 1996). As the making of history is positional, and depends on one’s location in social reality (Freedman, 1992a; Halbwachs, 1992), the expression “glorified” echoes Robins’ argument that Zimbabwean historical narratives were constructed under conditions of nationalist triumphalism (1996:74). As such, it raises a fundamental question about whose history underpins the imagination of the post-colonial nation.

In concluding his argument, the columnist repudiates the “Ndebele worldview” as he dismisses it as “positive tribalism”. He argues that the Ndebeles who are complaining of being victims of tribalism are “overwhelmed” by their “ethnic superiority”. By equating the disenchantment in Matabeleland with Ndebele ethnic arrogance, the columnist obscures the structural inequalities in Zimbabwe. This resonates with the thinking of the African pioneering nationalist that “for the nation to live, the tribe must die” (Mamdani, 1996:135).

Discursive practice

This opinion piece, a persuasive form in which the writer expresses the merits and demerits of an issue (Dafouz, 2008), is authored by an expert (Krieghbaum, 1956:345), indicating that Rejoice Ngwenya is regarded by the newspaper as knowledgeable on this topic. Ngwenya, who represents himself as a “social commentator”, is a political and social activist, and a regular columnist of *Newsday*. This further suggests that *Newsday*, a privately-owned paper, is enmeshed with the civic society groupings in the contestation of Matabeleland secessionist politics. Ngwenya and the ZLHR are discursively constructed as Foucauldian subjects of the unitary state discourse, challenging the resurgence of an alternative secessionist discourse.

Social practice

This article was published in the period of the split of the ZLHR, and the subsequent formation of Abammeli, a network of Matabeleland lawyers representing MLF in the treason trial. It is in this context that the columnist makes an argument regarding what he terms a ‘touchy’ subject of tribalism. The upsurge of MLF not only sparked the bifurcation of ZLHR, but it also evoked the resurgence of the Matabeleland Question in various spaces including the education, government, civil society, economic sector, and the media. As nationhood is constructed in these spaces, this supports Foucault’s notion that power permeates all levels of society in a ‘capillary movement’ (Hall, 1997:50). Thus, it is in these spaces that the social reality of nationhood is sustained and transformed (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). In this way, *Newsday* is constituted by the discourses of nationhood mobilised from other sectors such as the civil society, but at the same time, shapes the social practices by constructing particular understandings of nationhood. Although this article privileges the unitary state discourse as constructed by the columnist, power is “never monopolised by one centre” (Hall, 1997:49), and as such, this dominant vision is challenged by an alternative secessionist imagination.

Treason vs the right to secede

At the heart of the nationhood debates, is the tension between defining secession as an expression of a right to self-determination, or as an act of treason. Against this background, two articles from *Newsday* and one from the *Chronicle* centred on the theme of **treason vs the right to secede** are analysed. As alluded to in the previous chapter, one article is selected from the *Chronicle* because the articles are follow-ups on the treason trial and hence repetitive. All three articles were published in March, when the MLF treason trial began. It is also the month when the highest number of articles on this secessionist movement was recorded.

Political activists face treason charges

This news story, written by a court reporter, appeared in the *Chronicle* on 9 March, 2011. It is a short article detailing the court proceedings involving three MLF leaders, Paul Siwela, John Gazi, and Charles Thomas, who are facing treason charges. The headline “political activists face treason charges” indicates that this article is framed on the notion of treason. This is strengthened in the lead of the story as the writer highlights that the accused are calling for the “separation of Matabeleland from the rest of the country”. In the subsequent paragraphs, the writer discusses the state’s position against the MLF leaders, indicating that the

prosecutor alleges that the trio “connived and agreed to distribute fliers” inciting people to “demonstrate against the Government and advocate for a separate state of Mthwakazi”.

Text analysis

The lexis “treason” in the headline and in paragraph two suggests that the call for secession is interpreted as a treasonous action. By focusing on treason and obscuring the notion of the right to self-determination, the newspaper operates within the discourse of a post-colonial African nation-building discourse which affirms the “sanctity of colonial boundaries” (Idowu, 2008:46). It is within the hegemonic post-colonial nationhood discourse that “treason” becomes a disciplinary practice, a technique to constrain and regulate (Hall, 1997:48) the conduct of those challenging the unitary state discourse. The *Chronicle* frames this news story on “Section 20 (1) (b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 9:23 (treason)”, an indication of the nationhood struggles in the legal statutes. As such, the state, legal statutes, provincial magistrate’s court, prison, police, and state-owned media constitute a discursive formation (Hall, 1997) that produces and sustains the Zimbabwean unitary state discourse of nation-building. It is in these spaces that the alternative secessionist discourse is suppressed, as “calling for the separation of Matabeleland” amounts to a “taboo on the object of speech” (Foucault, 1981). As the behaviour of MLF leaders does not conform to the dominant nationhood understandings, the *Chronicle* thus represents the movement as “deviant” (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998:51). As treason is invoked to ward off secessionist pressures, this is an example of the way in which nationhood as a “regime of truth” is embedded in relations of power (Hall, 1997; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:14).

Besides focusing on the notion of “treason”, the reporter reinforces the dominant discourse by arguing that the MLF is calling for the “separation of Matabeleland from the rest of the country”. The clause “rest of the country” legitimates the unitary state viewpoint by disarticulating Matabeleland from the imagined Mthwakazi “nation”, and rearticulating it in the Zimbabwean post-colonial nation. As such, the reporter constructs the MLF’s advocacy for the creation of an Mthwakazi “nation” as illegitimate, thus sustaining the post-colonial nation-building discourse. The reporter employs referential strategies to marginalise the alternative nationhood discourse. In paragraph two, Siwela, one of the MLF leaders, is referred to as a “losing presidential candidate”, which undermines his legitimacy as it suggests that he failed to gain power through constitutional means, and hence he is resorting

to subversive means. Secondly, the reporter also draws on Aristotle's forensic argument (Richardson, 2007) to condemn Siwela's past record, thereby repudiating the secessionist discourse. In other words, the *Chronicle* could have referenced to the social actor as human rights activist considering that the right to self-determination is enshrined in international covenants (Buchanan, 1997; Horowitz, 2003).

In paragraph six, the argument that the MLF "tried to influence people to demonstrate against the Government" is significant as it suggests a particular understanding of nationhood. A transitivity analysis reveals that the material processes signified by the terms "demonstrate", "connived", and "distribute" are employed to depict the MLF as violent, and a threat to human security. This delegitimises secession as a right to self-determination (Horowitz, 2003; Buchanan, 1997), and sustains the dominant unitary state discourse. Thus, the writer's focus is on framing the secessionist calls as treasonous, and a threat to human security.

Discursive practice

This article is written as a news story, with the reporter adhering to the journalistic ideology of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972; Richardson, 2007:86). In covering this court case, the journalist also considers ethical issues, giving space to the contending views. Although the contending viewpoints are presented, an examination of the journalistic practices of news selection and presentation reveals that this news report has value judgements. The angle of the news story is on treason, thereby legitimating the unitary state discourse by closing alternative frames. This criminalises the "voices of those that perceive themselves as living under the bondage of boundaries" (Mhlanga, 2010:104). By structuring the news report within the hegemonic discourse, the reporter obscures the notion of secession as a right to self-determination (Buchanan, 1997), and thereby marginalising the idea of the Mthwakazi nation.

Social practice

In making sense of the *Chronicle*'s position on the secessionist debates, one must go beyond examining the journalistic practices, and situate the newspaper within the wider socio-political context. This newspaper is state-owned (Kupe, 2007), and hence articulates the unitary state discourse of nation-building. By focusing on treason, rather than the grievances and bitterness of Matabeleland people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011), the state-controlled paper promotes a Zimbabwean "national sentiment in order to build a collective identity"

(Chiumbu, 2004:31). Further, as the target market of the newspaper is Matabeleland readers, the *Chronicle* supports the unitary state discourse that stifles any debate on the Matabeleland Question which can alienate audiences from the state. In conclusion, the issue of treason lies at the heart of this article in order to sustain the unequal relations between the state and the dissenting voices of Matabeleland. As this dominant nationhood “truth”, which is constructed and reinforced in other spaces like the courts, police and prisons, this state-owned newspaper also operates within this discursive formation. In this regard, this article sustains the Zanu PF’s unitary state vision of nation-building.

Secessionist movement woos MLF

This hard news story written by Khanyile Mlotshwa was published by *Newsday* on 24 March, 2011. The reporter’s focus is on the MLF’s invitation to join the Organisation of Emerging African States (OEAS), a “Pan-African body that advocates separation of states”. By examining the referential strategies, transitivity and other linguistic tools used, one is able to make sense of *Newsday*’s construction of nationhood.

Text analysis

In the headline “Secessionist movement woos MLF”, the writer employs a transitivity material process “woos” to construct the MLF as a movement enmeshed in the wider African secessionist project. The reporter constructs the MLF as constituted within a discourse that is seeking the re-imagination of African nation-states. By employing Plato’s logetic argumentation (Richardson, 2007), he builds deductive arguments about the OEAS from which to draw conclusions about the MLF. First, he makes an assertion that OEAS is a Pan-African secessionist movement aiming to annul geo-political borders created during the colonial era in Africa. Secondly, he makes a statement that MLF is a secessionist movement. From the above premises, a conclusion can be drawn that MLF seeks to annul geo-political borders created during the colonial era.

Further, the writer references the OEAS as a “Pan-African body” that advocates the “separation of states”. The term “Pan African” sets off a chain of significations (Grossberg, 1996:137) which can be appropriated by different social forces and actors (Adogamhe, 2008:8). Thus, it is “disarticulated from its place within one discourse and articulated in a different position” (Hall, 1982:80). It is disarticulated from its dominant meaning held by the African founding fathers within the unitary state discourse (Adogamhe, 2008:9). This

signifier is then rearticulated within a secessionist chain of connotation, with “independence” constructed as the dismantling of the African boundaries bequeathed from colonialism (Mazrui, 1994; Adebajo, 2005). In light of Volosinov’s argument about the multi-accentuality of the sign (Hall, 1982:78), the term “Pan African” is assigned a new meaning within the secessionist discourse.

Further, the reporter argues that OEAS is advocating the “separation of states”. In this way, the term “separation” underlies an emergence of a new “regime of truth” (Hall, 1997) that is defining new ways of reasoning and talking about nationhood in Africa. Thus, the post-colonial African national imaginary is being contested, with the OEAS and MLF constructed as Foucauldian subjects of an alternative social imaginary (Gaonkar, 2002:12). As such, this affirms the thesis of multiple modernities, an argument that in the modern era there are divergent ways through which people imagine their social existence (Taylor, 2004:23). The reporter reinforces the secessionist view by quoting Ebenezer Akwanga, secretary-general of OEAS, who suggests that the secessionist trend signifies a desire for “unconditional self-determination for our people”. Thus, within this discourse, secession is constructed as a right to self-determination, rather than treason. This idea of “self-determination” presupposes that certain people are being oppressed, that is, they are living under the “bondage of boundaries” (Mazrui, 1998; Adebajo, 2005). This supports the view that the ethnic groupings that are oppressed by structures of the modern system of states are challenging the state structures that engulf them (Anaya, 1990:837). In this representation, the secessionist movements in Africa are depicted as crusades for the liberation of ethnic groups who are subsumed within the “colonial-era borders”. This secessionist view is reinforced in the last three paragraphs.

First, the reporter refers to the secessionist movements in Africa as “exile governments”, and “emerging African states”; expressions that not only signify an existence of divergent social imaginaries (Stock, 2006:8), but also denote an African society constituted by a rupture (Gaonkar, 2002:6), as secessionist movements are challenging the established social order. Second, he argues that the secessionist movements seek to “annul geo-political borders created during the colonial era in Africa”. The terms “annul” and “created” signify the contestations of nationhood in Africa. This suggests that the nationalist struggle did not lead to decolonisation as the current African states are imagined along a “European template” (Stock, 2006:3; Mazrui, 1994). As Africa’s post-colonial states are inherited colonial territories, the secessionists are advocating what Chatterjee terms the “freedom of imagination” (1993:13).

Akwanga declares that the “colonial-era borders of Africa must be shattered as an artificial construct”. The predication “colonial-era” to signify the boundaries echoes the conviction that the peoples of Africa did not voluntarily determine the formation of nation-states and their boundaries on the continent (Ikome, 2004:4; Adebajo, 2005). Further, the term “shattered” affirms the notion that secessionist movements are an indication of the “collapse of the colonial state”, and a “disintegration of colonial structures” (Mazrui, 1995:28). It further supports the view that the African nation-states are alien, flawed and not based on African realities (Hameso, 1997:2). Thus, secession is constructed as the “birth of a truly decolonised Africa”, a “new Africa trying to breathe” (Mazrui, 1995:28). This is a challenge to the unitary state discourse of nation-building, as MLF’s secession is constructed as the project of the dismantling of colonial structures (Zimbabwe) and creating a new post-colonial order (Mthwakazi).

Discursive practice

The conventions of a news story enable the reporter to use scare quotes and sourcing to remain aloof from the nationhood knowledge claims being advanced. But the article does not provide an in depth analysis or critique of secession and the nationhood contestations. Rather, the journalist reports on MLF’s invitation to join OEAS, without assessing the merits and demerits of such a move. Although this article lacks a deeper analysis of secession, the reporter’s selection of words, sources and other linguistic devices privilege the alternative secessionist discourse. This affirms an argument by Mazibuko that some *Newsday* journalists in Bulawayo identify with the secessionist view but are constrained by the newspaper’s editorial policy in Harare which is “Zimbabwean politics oriented”¹⁹.

Social practice

The article was published in the context of the treason trial of MLF leaders, and the journalist situates the Matabeleland Question within the broader context of post-colonial nation-building project in Africa. Thus, the MLF and OEAS constitute a discursive formation that seeks the redrawing of the map of Africa. As such, the knowledge claims of nationhood are contested not only in the Matabeleland situation, but also in other spaces where the African boundaries are challenged. Thus, by foregrounding the claims for the autonomy of Matabeleland, the reporter repudiates the unitary state discourse that conceives secession as a

¹⁹ Interview with Joseph Mazibuko

treasonous act. The reporter thus privileges the secessionist discourse as the concept of self-determination is invoked to restore the asserted “sovereignty” of a historical community that roughly corresponds to the contemporary claimant group (Anaya, 1990:839). As such, in this article the Matabeleland secessionist view gains credibility as an assertion of the right to self-determination of a historical based community.

Has Northern Zimbabwe chosen to hear no evil regarding secessionists?

Written by Mziwandile Ndlovu, this opinion column was published by *Newsday* on 17 March, 2011. The author begins by depicting ZANU PF as a violent party that maintains its power through “arrests, beatings, disappearances and trumped up charges” against its opponents. Against this background, he notes that in the last couple of weeks “the state has evoked treason” against two sets of individuals. First, he identifies Munyaradzi Gwisai, Hopewell Gumbo and colleagues. Gwisai, an official of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), was arrested with 45 other human rights activists for allegedly plotting to destabilise the government after they were found watching video footage of the Egypt uprising (Nleya, 2011). Second, Ndlovu notes the MLF trio of Paul Siwela, Charles Thomas and John Gazi who are calling for secession of Matabeleland. Unlike the case of Gwisai that has gained prominence and broader coverage, the columnist argues that the MLF treason trial has been neglected by the media and pro-democracy civil society to the extent that an “outsider following events in Zimbabwe would be pardoned for thinking there is only one group facing treason charges”. As a result, he denounces the media, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and other pro-democracy civil society groups for what he conceives as the discrimination against the MLF and the Ndebele people. It is in this light that the writer calls for the need to rethink the conception of human rights in order to include secessionists.

The headline “Has Northern Zimbabwe chosen to hear no evil regarding secessionists?” indicates the bifurcation in the country, as the term “Northern” signifies Mashonaland, and is juxtaposed with the “Southern” region which refers to Matabeleland (Lindgren, 2005; Msindo, 2005). The columnist thus constructs “Northern Zimbabwe” as the centre of power, implying that Matabeleland is relegated to the margins. This representation not only suggests that MLF is undermined by forces in Harare, but it also raises questions about the politics of citizenship in Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2009; Mhlanga, 2010). Further, he uses the lexical terms “beatings”, “disappearances” and “trumped up charges” to construct an image of the violence

and intimidation being deployed by ZANU PF (Kriger, 2005:2). Against this background, Ndlovu states that “we are all saddened as a country” by the arrests of Gwisai, whom he eulogises for his “selfless, tireless, and priceless” service to the “fight for democracy in Zimbabwe”. In this way, he attempts to persuade readers that his purpose is not to undermine Gwisai, but rather to enlighten audiences about the MLF trio who are “still languishing at Khami Remand prison”. The expression “languishing” evokes an image of state brutality, suggesting that the MLF leaders require protection and support from civic society groups as their human rights are being violated. The columnist appeals for the application of the “universality of human rights within the context of these two treason cases”. The term “universality” presupposes bias and discrimination in the interpretation of human rights as he argues that the MLF trial has received “scant media coverage and prominence from pro-democracy civil society”. This question of representation supports the argument that the Ndebeles are systematically marginalised in various spheres in Zimbabwe (Mhlanga, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011).

The columnist suggests that it is not “criminal” to call for secession; rather it is “within one’s human rights to advocate for a political alternative”. First, the term “criminal” repudiates the unitary state discourse that criminalises secession. Second, the expression “political alternative” legitimises secession as a right to self-determination (Buchanan, 1991:29; Roethke, 2011:39). Thus, he not only challenges the unitary state discourse, but also the pro-democracy civil society groupings that are silent on the plight of the MLF trio. The writer asserts that the ZLHR declined to support the MLF, stating that the “institution does not support secession”. Ndlovu regards the ZLHR’s position as “annoying”, an expression used to invite the readers to condemn this human rights organisation. As such, the ZLHR’s focus on Gwisai who is fighting for “democracy”, rather than the MLF trio advocating “secession”, indicates a clash of national imaginaries. It is important to note that within the position of the pro-democracy movement, the idea “secession” is excluded from the liberal scope of “democracy”, although the right to self-determination is enshrined in international covenants (Horowitz, 2002; Buchanan, 1997). The phrase “fight for democracy” constructs Gwisai and pro-democracy movements as constituted within the dominant paradigm of modernisation which entails progress, civilization, democracy, human rights and good governance (Vail, 1997:53; Jones, 2006). Within this dominant human rights paradigm, the MLF are denoted as supporting ethnic particularism, a political position deemed “traditional, retrogressive and divisive” (Vail, 1997:53). Thus, the terms “democracy” and “secession” represent a struggle

between “Zimbabwe” and “Mthwakazi” imaginaries; between the “modern” and the “traditional” (Vail, 1997: 53; Pollis and Schwab, 2000:9). The writer’s call for the MLF to be included in the corpus of human rights not only challenges the dominant human rights discourse that is embedded in the assumptions and presuppositions of the Western imaginary (Mutua, 2002:11; Pollis and Schwab, 2000:15), but also contests the idea of the Zimbabwean modern nation-state.

Maphosa constructs the split of the ZLHR and the subsequent formation of Abammeli Human Rights Lawyers Network as symptomatic of ethnic polarisation prevailing in civil society. By referring to “Bulawayo”, “Ndebele” and “Matabeleland” to depict Abammeli, the columnist reinforces his argument that the civil society is marred by the ethnic bifurcation. He builds an argument that Ndebeles are under-represented in the Zimbabwean post-colonial state, as he refers to the MLF leaders as “Zimbabweans with a minority viewpoint”, in an “environment where the majority rules”. This “minority” vs “majority” dichotomy indicates the centrality of the question of representation in the politics of citizenship in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Ndhlovu, 2006). As the MLF are depicted as the voices of the marginalised Ndebele minority group, this resonates with Moyo’s (2006) thesis that Ndebeles are a minority group that needs protection. As such, the writer argues that the MLF and Ndebeles are victims of human rights violations as they are treated as “second-class citizens”. This expression “second-class citizens” affirms the view that the Matabeleland Question is a “response to realities and perceptions of exclusion, marginalisation and confinement to second class citizenship of Ndebele-speaking people” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:1). The columnist also argues that secessionist calls are driven by “years of marginalisation by President Robert Mugabe’s government” and “unresolved human rights abuses”. The term “marginalisation” supports the argument that the resurgence of the Matabeleland separatist politics is caused by feelings of exclusion and marginalisation in Matabeleland (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:12). As such, the writer challenges the dominant unitary state discourse, and concludes by calling for the need to “build a modern and inclusive state”. This expression not only resonates with the vision of a rainbow nation (Bornman, 2006), but indicates that the columnist is himself a subject of an alternative Zimbabwean nationalist discourse, rather than as secessionist one. Thus, he is calling for a Zimbabwean post-colonial state that accommodates minority ethnic groups.

Discursive practice

This opinion column is argumentative and persuasive (Dafouz, 2008), with the writer assuming the position of an expert with an authority to guide the general public. Ndlovu is an Information Officer at Bulawayo Agenda Trust, a civil society group. He was not tasked by the paper to produce this opinion column; rather, it was through his own volition that he undertook this task.²⁰ These conditions of production demonstrate a tension between the volition of a columnist and the constraints of the editorial policy. With the columnist working for a civil society group in Bulawayo, his criticism of the media and the civil society in “Northern Zimbabwe” suggests that nationhood is contested not only in the media, but also in the civil society spaces.

Social practice

Newsday is constituted within the wider socio-political environment prevailing in the country, and hence the discourses cannot be understood without taking the context into consideration (Fairclough and Wodak (1997:276). With the emergence of the MLF, the newspaper became embroiled in the nationhood struggles raging in different social spaces. It thus became a site of struggle between civil society groups bifurcated along ethnic lines. Against this background, it is clear that the columnist promotes an alternative discourse that challenges the dominant nationhood discourse of “Northern Zimbabwe”. Together with Abammeli, the author constitutes a discursive formation that contests the nationhood discourse of ZLHR and other pro-democracy movements. As symbolic forms in the media are shaped by the social and cultural forces in which they are embedded (Thompson, 1995), it is evident that the nationhood discourses in *Newsday* are not only shaped by other social practices, but they also constitute the social world by defining secession as a right to self-determination.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings from an analysis of six articles which focus on the two themes; **ethnicity**, and **treason vs the right to secede**. It is evident that in the *Chronicle*, the discussion on ethnicity is obscured as the focus is on framing secession as a treasonous act. This indicates that this state-owned paper reproduces the hegemonic unitary state discourse of nationhood. In contrast, *Newsday* is constituted by the nationhood discourse from various civil society spaces where issues of history, memory, human rights and the Gukurahundi are central. The newspaper presents itself as an arena for nationhood debates as various

²⁰ From a telephone interview with Mziwandile Ndlovu.

columnists from various civil society groups contest. In the following chapter, I examine the constructions of nationhood in these two papers focusing on the remaining themes; **unity vs separation**, and **secession vs devolution**.

CHAPTER4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

In the previous chapter, six articles from the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* were analysed centred on two themes, **ethnicity** and **treason vs the right to secede**. In this chapter, I present findings from an analysis of six articles: four are centred on the theme of **unity vs separation**, and two are centred on **secession vs devolution**.

Unity vs Separation

Central to these secessionist debates is the question about the need to maintain a unitary state, or for Matabeleland to separate from Zimbabwe. On the one hand, the secessionist discourse calls for the dismantling of current nation-state boundaries and granting autonomy to ethnic groups enclosed in these frontiers (Mazrui, 1994; Adebajo, 2005). On the other hand, the dominant nationhood discourse repudiates separatist movements and calls for the maintenance of the unitary state. Against this background, I examine three articles from *Newsday*, and one article from the *Chronicle*. The debates on this issue indicate the newspapers' representations of nationhood.

MLF marches for secession

This hard news story, written by reporter Khanyile Mlotshwa, was published by *Newsday* on 18 April 2011. It describes the MLF's planned march to the Zimbabwean consulate in South Africa to submit a "comprehensive version of the Mthwakazi secessionist document". The story is narrated in the voice of David Magagula, the MLF spokesperson, who is the only source. As the secessionist document contains the justifications for secession, it is important to interrogate the representations of nationhood in this article.

The verb, "marches", in the headline frames the writer's position as it indicates the struggle for secession. This is reinforced in paragraph two as Magagula states that the MLF is planning to deliver a document to the consulate containing the "legal and the moral justification for the restoration of the sovereignty of the Mthwakazi state". First, the phrase "legal and moral justification" supports Buchanan's (1991:27) thesis of the "moral right to secede" which stipulates that there are conditions under which secession is justifiable. Second, the idea of the "restoration of the sovereignty of the Mthwakazi state" legitimates the secession discourse as it presupposes that "Mthwakazi" existed prior to the current

Zimbabwean nation-state. This argument is framed within the discourse of nationhood that advocates the dismantling of African boundaries which are considered artificial and arbitrary (Ikome, 2004; Mazrui, 1994; Adebajo, 2005).

This perspective is developed in paragraph 3 as Magagula notes that MLF wants to create an awareness on the “Mthwakazi independence cause and the plight of the forgotten people of Mthwakazi”. The term “independence” suggests that the “people” of Mthwakazi are in state of bondage, and they seek liberation from Zimbabwe. Thus, the “people” of “Mthwakazi” are constructed as living under the “bondage of boundaries” (Mazrui, 1994). As such, Zimbabwe and Mthwakazi are constructed as divergent social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, the expression “forgotten people of Mthwakazi” not only points the Mthwakazi “homeland” but also reinforces an idea that any nation-as-people should have its nation-as-state (Billig, 1995:24). As the arguer presupposes the existence of a “people” who have been “forgotten”, he thus makes a call to the international community for the “Mthwakazi” people to be granted “independence”. He further defines the “people of Mthwakazi” as those residing in the “Matabeleland and Midlands parts of Zimbabwe”. This construction resonates with the regional-geographical interpretation of the Ndebele identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a:160).

Magagula argues that the “Gukurahundi genocide” is one of the justifications for the “restoration of the sovereignty of the Mthwakazi state”. The term “genocide” indicates the politics of signification at play, as the memory of the Gukurahundi is invoked to advance the secessionist discourse. Within this chain of signification (Grossberg, 1996:137), the term “genocide” is assigned a meaning to give credibility to the secessionist cause. This is informed by remedial right secession theory which holds that “a group has a general right to secede if only it has suffered certain injustices, for which secession is the appropriate remedy of last resort” (Buchanan, 1997:35). Second, Magagula identifies the “marginalisation” of the Mthwakazi people and “fiscal imbalances” in Zimbabwe as further justifications for secession. The expressions “marginalisation” and “fiscal imbalances” affirm the argument that the people of Matabeleland are discriminated against and excluded from the economic and socio-political domains of Zimbabwe (Musemwa, 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). Third, the arguer identifies the “state-sponsored destruction of Mthwakazi languages” as another rationale for seeking separation. The expression “destruction” resonates with the argument that the hegemonic nation-building in Zimbabwe is marred by “cultural oppression and the desire for linguistic uniformity” (Ndlovu, 2009: x111). Further, as language is often the marker that communities utilise to differentiate insiders from outsiders (Ruzza, 2000:168),

Magagula constructs the Mthwakazi and Zimbabwe as national imaginaries that are imagined in linguistic forms. However, to better understand the representations of nationhood in *Newsday*, it is important to consider the social conditions which underlie the production and circulation of messages (Thompson, 1995:11; Richardson, 2007).

Discursive practice

This article is a hard news report (Hulteng, 1973:6), although it fails to meet the standards of the journalistic ideology of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972) as the reporter uses the MLF spokesperson as the only source in the story. As such, this privileges the secessionist discourse as the voices of the unitary state are absent. This indicates the struggle to define nationhood in the institutional practices, as tensions exist between the journalistic autonomy of the Bulawayo newsroom, and the institutional constraints of *Newsday*'s headquarters in Harare²¹. In this case, it is the agency of the reporter that prevails over the institutional constraints, as the secessionist discourse is foregrounded in this article. Yet, it is also important to consider the broader social context in which the discursive event is embedded.

Social practice

This news story was published by *Newsday* on 18 April, the date set aside by the state as the Independence Day national holiday. On this day, Zanu PF commemorates the birth of the nation, as the Zimbabwe polis is imagined and articulated (Muchemwa, 2010:504). It is on this day that the MLF members planned to march to the Zimbabwean consulate in South Africa, where the MLF's headquarters are located. The discourse of a unitary state is denaturalised by the emerging secessionist voices in this article. By exposing the naturalised interpretation of a single, unitary state, the secessionist discourse indicates that "the world can always be constructed differently" (Hammersley, 2008:110). Thus, this article not only critiques the unitary state discourse, but also provides the "possibilities of social change" (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002:2) in the form of a secessionist discourse.

Matabeleland issue and the need for framework on ethnic relations

This opinion piece was written by Dumisani Nkomo and appeared in *Newsday* on 9 February, 2011. Nkomo is the CEO of Habakkuk Trust, and spokesperson of the Matabeleland Civil Society Consortium. Written in the context of the "emergence of radical groups" calling for

²¹ Interview with Joseph Mazibuko, a reporter.

the “total secession of Matabeleland from Zimbabwe”, the columnist argues that the “Matabeleland issue” will take the centre stage in the “post transition era”. Against this background, he interrogates the Matabeleland issue and explores “possible solutions” in addressing it. In the headline, the columnist uses the expression, “Matabeleland issue”, to signify Matabeleland identity politics. This description resonates with what scholars term the Matabeleland Question (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011; Moyo, 2006). Nkomo argues that the Matabeleland issue manifested in the form of “radical groups” calling for secession. The term “radical” is used as a predication form to signify Ndebele radical politics contesting the idea of a unitary Zimbabwean state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:48). In interrogating the Matabeleland Question, Nkomo notes that the problem is not with the “radical groups”, but the “socio economic and political conditions” which have ignited calls for secession. The expression, “socio economic and political conditions”, upholds the view that the feelings of exclusion and marginalisation harboured by the Ndebele have fuelled their resentment of the Zimbabwean post-colonial nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:47). It is these conditions, Nkomo argues, that “have caused some Zimbabweans to think they are not Zimbabweans”. Thus, the reference “Zimbabweans” sets off a chain of signification (Grossberg, 1996:135) as the term connotes a contestation of national imaginaries. This resonates with Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s summation that Matabeleland is a “nation within a nation” (2009a:150) in Zimbabwe.

The columnist locates the origins of the Matabeleland issue within Zimbabwean nationalist politics. He argues that although the early nationalists like Joshua Nkomo were “epitomised by a spirit of nationalism”, the advent of Zanu in 1964” led to the “tribalisation of Zimbabwean politics”. First, the expressions “nationalism” and “tribalisation” signify a contestation between universality and particularity (Robertson, 1991:73). A nation is constructed as universal, and an ethnic group as particular. Thus, a “tribe” is seen as anathema to the national quest (Mamdani, 1996:135; Hameso, 1997). Second, the Zanu PF party is constructed as the architect of the “tribalisation of Zimbabwean politics”, and this affirms the view that Zimbabwe was born in 1980 with a terrible ethnic-tribal birth mark (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:2; Masunungure, 2006). The columnist argues that it is only by considering this political environment that one can make sense of the calls for secession.

He then develops his argument by exposing the ways in which the Zanu PF nation-building project has alienated the Ndebele from the Zimbabwean nation-state. First, he uses the phrases “vice-presidents”, “deputies”, “political concubines” and “decorative ornaments” to suggest that the Ndebele are subjected to a subservient role in the governance of the country.

This representation reinforces the view that the marginalisation of the ethnic minorities in Africa's post-colonial nation-states has led to resentment and has heightened separatist politics (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Ihonvbere, 1994). Second, Nkomo notes that the discontent in Matabeleland is caused by the "gross underdevelopment" of the region. By using the phrase "gross underdevelopment", he suggests that there is a deliberate reluctance by the state to allocate resources and promote economic growth in Matabeleland. Nkomo argues that Bulawayo, which was an "industrial hub in the 1970s", has become a "pale shadow of its former self", with companies relocating to Harare. This affirms Musemwa's (2006) thesis of "disciplining the dissident city" in which he argues that development challenges in Matabeleland are caused by the central government's reluctance to allocate adequate resources to urban water development in the region. By constructing the Ndebele as "economic refugees" who have "fled" to South Africa, the writer highlights the economic marginalisation of Matabeleland (Mhlanga, 2010:107). He uses a metaphor "fair share of the national cake" to call for an equal distribution of resources in the country.

Third, the columnist examines how the legacy of the Gukurahundi has subverted the quest for forging a collective Zimbabwean national identity. He uses the expressions "unresolved", "outstanding issue", "ignored", and "wounds" to signify not only the failure of Zanu PF to acknowledge the atrocities (Eppel, 2004:47; Alexander et al, 2000), but also to argue that the Gukurahundi has alienated the Ndebele from the Zimbabwean nation-state (Lindgren, 2005:158). He argues further that the "deployment of non-Ndebele teachers in Matabeleland" is "disadvantaging children" from the area. The terms "deployment" and "disadvantaging" represents an authoritarian state inflicting cultural domination over the Ndebele. This constructs Matabeleland separatist politics as a resistance to the state's imposed cultural homogeneity (Ndhlovu, 2009:305; Eyoh, et al 2004). Lastly, the writer argues that the history books give an impression that "Ndebeles played a peripheral role ... in the liberation struggle". The term "peripheral role" signifies that the Ndebele are obscured in the narration of the Zimbabwean nation, and this indicates the salience of the narratives of the liberation war mythology in the imagination of a post-colonial nation (Davidson, 1992; Werbner, 1998). As such, the Matabeleland secession is represented as the voices of the "marginalised or excluded stories from underrepresented groups" (Colmeiro, 2011: 20). It is against this background that the columnist concludes by calling for "true national unity", rather than the current "smokescreen reconciliation and fake reconciliation based on lies". This depiction of

the current unitary state as a “smokescreen” and “fake” reinforces Mhlanga’s assertion that the idea of a Zimbabwean nation is false (2009:106).

In order to resolve the Matabeleland Question, the columnist proposes that a “truth and justice commission” be set up to look into the Gukurahundi “massacres”. Further, he makes a plea for “affirmative action in infrastructural and human development” in Matabeleland. Lastly, Nkomo calls for a new constitution that would establish the devolution of powers as a system of governance in Zimbabwe. He argues that this would “minimise uneven development” and contribute to a “greater sense of nationhood”.

Discursive practice

This opinion column was authored by Dumisani Nkomo, the CEO of Habakkuk Trust, and spokesperson of the Matabeleland Civil Society Consortium (MCSC). Habakkuk Trust is a Bulawayo-based civil society group, which is part of the umbrella of the MCSC. The MCSC is an assembly of Matabeleland civic society groups, which advocates the development of the region and for devolution of power to be included in the new constitution²². The writer is a regular columnist for *Newsday* and its sister publication, the *Zimbabwe Independent*. As an opinion piece, the article is argumentative as the writer analyses the resurgence of the Matabeleland issue and specifically its implications for nationhood. *Newsday*’s perspective on nationhood is shaped by the debates raging in civil society spaces. To establish whether this opinion piece sustains the status quo, or transforms the social relations, one must consider the wider context in which these texts are embedded.

Social practice

It is important to note that nationhood is contested not only in the media but also civil society. The columnist is positioned within the counter-hegemonic discourse that challenges the authoritarian vision of nationhood. This article was published at a time when the civil society groups in Matabeleland were calling for a new constitution to include the devolution of power as a system of governance in order to address the Matabeleland issue. It is evident that although this article challenges the dominant unitary state perspective, it does not advocate the secessionist trajectory. Rather, it champions the devolution of powers as a system of governance within the Zimbabwean configuration. As such, *Newsday* is a site of struggle

²² The members of the consortium include Habakkuk Trust, Christian Alliance, Radio Dialogue, and Bulawayo Agenda (<http://www.newsday.co.zw/article/2012-07-19-groups-decide-on-devolution>).

constituted by nationhood discourses contested in various spaces, but at the same time it shapes audiences' understanding of nationhood.

What do we do with the Joshua Nkomo legacy?

The rise of the MLF has reinvigorated debates on the legacy of the late Joshua Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU and Vice President of Zimbabwe²³. In this *Newsday* feature of 5 July, 2011, Khanyile Mlotshwa traces Nkomo's changing identities. He examines how Nkomo has been seen differently in different historical moments by different social actors. The writer argues that Nkomo who was once vilified as the "father of dissidents" is now seen as "Father Zimbabwe" within the Zimbabwean nationalist vision. However, Mlotshwa asserts that within the contemporary context of the "marginalisation of Matabeleland", an "angry generation" appropriate different meanings of Nkomo. As such, I examine how the changing legacy of Nkomo indicates various understandings of nationhood in the media texts.

The headline, structured as a rhetorical question, establishes the contestations of Nkomo's identity. In the lead, Mlotshwa highlights that Nkomo is a central figure in Zimbabwean nationalism. He notes that for those who lived through the liberation struggle, Nkomo had a "demi-god" status, and they only fell short of "worshipping" the soil he walked on. By using the phrases that venerate Nkomo, the writer strengthens Smith's view that a nation is hinged on "heroes and messiahs" who are elevated by popular memory, and in some way reveal the inner goodness of the nation, epitomizing its virtues and its hopes (2003:41). However, the writer notes that due to the "vast emptiness of Zimbabwean nationalism" and the "marginalisation of Matabeleland", an "angry generation" treats Nkomo with ambivalence. This suggests that the Zimbabwean unitary state discourse is fraught with contestations. Further, this shift in Nkomo's identity affirms Hall's assertion that identities are not fixed, but rather, are multiple and constantly evolving (1992:277).

The writer's argument about the shift of Nkomo's identity is deepened in paragraph 3 as he quotes Dinizulu Macaphulana who posits that Nkomo's title of "Father Zimbabwe"²⁴ is a "criminal falsehood". In this way, Magagula challenges the Zanu PF discourse that celebrates Nkomo and re-inscribes him into the narrative of the nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems,

²³ Joshua Nkomo was the leader of ZAPU, a liberation movement that had a support base in Matabeleland. He became the Vice President of Zimbabwe after the signing of the Unity Accord of 1987. Nkomo died in July 1999 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:31; Muchemwa, 2010).

²⁴ ZANU PF awarded Nkomo this title posthumously, invoking him as the "father of the nation" (Muchemwa, 2010:511; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010:201).

2009:963). The reference “Father Zimbabwe” suggests that within the dominant discourse, the nation is commemorated through its “heroes” who are elevated to the level of ancestors of this nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2009; Muchemwa, 2010: 510). Thus, this naming indicates that the Zimbabwean national identity is re-constructed and re-invented through the remembrance of nationalists (Muchemwa, 2010:504). However, Macaphulana challenges this dominant nationhood discourse as he argues that future generations would view Nkomo as a “cowardly traitor”, rather than a “colossal hero”. This naming constructs the people of Matabeleland as having been betrayed by Nkomo²⁵. In this regard, the cultural artefact “Nkomo” sets up a chain of significations (Grossberg, 1996:158) as he is a “colossal hero” within the domain of Zimbabwean post-colonial nationhood, and a “cowardly traitor” within the secessionist discourse. This affirms Hall’s (1986) view that meaning and identity cannot be guaranteed.

The writer shifts to the “betrayal” of Nkomo as he uses the terms “demonised”, “suffered” and “annihilation” to argue that during the Gukurahundi era, Nkomo was portrayed by Zanu as an enemy of the Zimbabwean nation-building project. Mlotshwa employs the predication forms “cobra in the house” and “father of dissidents” to indicate Zanu PF’s negative construction of Nkomo’s identity. However, the writer notes this representation changed as Nkomo is currently celebrated as the “peace-loving architect of unity” within the dominant nation-building discourse. This reveals Nkomo’s multiple “subject positions” (Hall, 1996:5), and affirms the view that identities are constructed and shaped within a particular historical moment (Hall, 1991a:20). Further, it shows that within the unitary state discourse of nationhood, Nkomo has assumed the identity of an “advocate of post-independence unity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2010:199)²⁶.

Having examined Nkomo’s positioning within the post-colonial nationhood discourse, the writer explores the secessionist’s perspective on Nkomo. To that effect, Mlotshwa quotes Sabelo Ngwenya, the MLF’s secretary for legal affairs, who depicts Nkomo as a “true Zimbabwean nationalist” who was betrayed by “Shona supremacists”. He argues that Nkomo tried to be a “Zimbabwean”, but was failed by the “Zanu system”. In describing Nkomo as a “true Zimbabwean nationalist”, Ngwenya locates him within the Zimbabwean nationalist

²⁵ In Matabeleland and Midlands, Nkomo and former ZAPU leaders are seen as having sold out their followers for signing the 1987 Unity Accord. Nkomo is thus portrayed as a sell-out rather than a selfless nation-builder (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2010:201).

²⁶ After the signing of the Unity Accord, ZANU PF began to portray Nkomo in a positive light as a selfless nation-builder and unifier (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2010:200).

project. As such, this suggests that Nkomo is excluded from the envisaged Mthwakazi imaginary. Further, Ngwenya notes that Nkomo failed to create a “rainbow nation” out of Zimbabwe, and that has become MLF’s driving force to “revert to our status as a sovereign state of Mthwakazi”. In this way, “Zimbabwe” and “Mthwakazi” are constructed as contesting imaginaries, as a nation’s name is a mark of differentiation (Smith, 2003:38). The term “revert” is employed to suggest that the Mthwakazi national community is imagined as a restoration of a pre-colonial state (Mazrui, 1994; Adebajo, 2005).

In the last paragraphs, the writer quotes Nkomo’s former colleagues who describe him as a “hero” and a “pioneer fighter”. This reinforces Mlotshwa’s argument that Nkomo’s legacy is in crisis as he represents a different ideological figure to different social actors. However, there is a need to unpack the social conditions of the production of this article in order to make sense of the contestations of nationhood.

Discursive practice

This opinion piece was written by Khanyile Mlotshwa, *Newsday*’s reporter who has the most by-lines on MLF news stories. As an opinion piece, the article is argumentative, with the writer expounding on the various identities of Joshua Nkomo. As one of the journalists from *Newsday* Southern edition noted, the institutional environment is “Zimbabwean politics oriented”²⁷, and this article reveals the reporter’s initiative in generating discussions on Matabeleland secessionist politics.

Social practice

This feature was produced at the time of the commemoration of the July 1999 death of Nkomo. From July 2001, ZANU PF introduced the Umdala Wethu (Our Father) music galas to remember Nkomo’s contribution to the nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2010:201). This commemoration of “national heroes” is a central feature of Zanu PF’s hegemonic discourse of nation-building (Muchemwa, 2010; Kriger, 1995). Confronted with resistance from Matabeleland, ZANU PF has evoked Nkomo as a symbol of national unity in order to foster the Zimbabwean national consciousness (Muchemwa, 2010:509). Against this background, the writer challenges this unitary state discourse by exposing ways in which Nkomo’s legacy has been mobilised to sustain the ZANU PF’s nation-building project, and perpetuate the marginalisation of Matabeleland. Constituted by these debates raging in

²⁷ From an interview with Joseph Mazibuko

various spaces concerning the centrality of Nkomo in the imagination of Zimbabwe, the writer also shapes the audiences' understanding of nationhood. In conclusion, this article is framed within this secessionist discourse as it debunks the Zanu PF narrative of the nation that associates "authentic citizenship with death" (Muchemwa, 2010:507). Although there is a struggle over meaning in media texts, the *Newsday* journalist foregrounds the Matabeleland secessionist perspective by denaturalising Nkomo as "Father Zimbabwe".

Secession is not the answer

This 30-paragraphs article by Kenneth Mavhumashava, the political news editor of the *Chronicle* was published on 21 July, 2011. Arguing that the question of secession has been brought to the fore in Matabeleland by the upsurge of the MLF, he argues against Matabeleland separation. First, he explores various secessionist movements, such as the American Civil War, and South Sudan, which he argues have resulted in armed conflicts that have killed millions of people. Then he narrows his focus to the Matabeleland secessionist calls and presents an argument against this separation. Thirdly, he challenges the devolution of power as another alternative nationhood imaginary. Finally, Mavhumashava reinforces the unitary state discourse.

The headline, "secession is not the answer", states his position. This is reinforced in the first four paragraphs as he employs a deductive argument to assert various statements in order to draw a conclusion against the secession of Matabeleland. First, he asserts that secession has resulted in armed conflicts that have killed millions of people through war, famine and disease. Second, he asserts that the MLF is spearheading a secession movement in Matabeleland. From the above premises, Mavhumashava concludes that the Matabeleland separatist movement would lead to an armed conflict which would result in the unprecedented suffering of people.

It is important to examine transitivity in the texts as this indicates the representation of various social actors. The writer uses the expressions "caused", "killed", and "displaced" to hold the secessionists accountable for the casualties and suffering caused by armed conflicts. This delegitimises the separatist movements and sustains the status quo of the unitary state discourse. Further, he uses the terms "conflict", "war", "civil war" and "sad chapter" as war imagery to signify the imminent danger posed by the secessionist calls. In this representation, the secessionists are constructed as the disrupters of social harmony, and the unitary state as a

fair, legitimate and permanent institution. However, this not only trivialises the grievances of the secessionists, but also naturalises the inequalities prevailing in the existing social order.

In paragraph five, Mavhumashava narrows his focus to Matabeleland as he argues that the question of secession and devolution of power have “come to the fore”. As such, these divergent national imaginaries affirm the thesis of multiple modernities (Taylor, 2004). Further, the writer develops his case against separation as he quotes Peter Nyoni and Ibbo Mandaza who denigrate secession as “crazy”, “retrogressive” and “outdated”. These expressions not only represent the current nation-state configuration as modern, but also affirm an assumption held within the unitary state discourse that secession amounts to parochialism and backwardness (Hameso, 1997:2; Vail, 1997). Nyoni argues that the MLF is trying to “split” a country that has been a “unitary state for more than 100 years”. The term “split” suggests that secession is a disrupter of a social harmony that exists in a post-colonial nation-state. Further, to persuade readers that MLF’s call for secession would spark various separatist movements, Nyoni poses a rhetorical question: “If Matabeleland goes, who will be next?” This affirms the knowledge claim held within the dominant discourse that if one group is allowed to secede, demands for secession would become irresistible, and hence amounting to opening a Pandora’s Box that would unleash a spate of anarchy (Dyer, 2010; Ikome, 2004:5).

The writer advances his case against secession by drawing on an ethotic argument, as he focuses on the character of the speakers. This is the rule of authority which is premised on an assumption that audiences are most likely to be persuaded by someone of good character, with expertise, and with first-hand experience (Richardson, 2007:159-160). As such, I examine the naming of the two subjects: a “secessionist” and a “nationalist”. First, the writer repudiates the secessionist perspective through the disparaging naming of MLF leaders. He refers to Paul Siwela, one of the leaders of MLF, as a “serial election loser”, a derogatory phrase that not only ridicules his character, but also undermines the secessionist cause. In contrast, the writer legitimises the unitary state discourse by describing Nyoni and Mandaza as a “political commentator” and “political scientist” respectively. This referential strategy suggests that these social actors are knowledgeable, and have authority on issues of nationhood. Further, Enos Nkala, another advocate of a unitary state, is described as a “veteran nationalist”, and “one of the many influential figures opposed to secession”. The writer draws on the speaker’s liberation struggle credentials to persuade the readers about the authenticity of the dominant post-colonial unitary state discourse. By noting that Nkala

“warned” that the history of secession is marred by “armed conflict”, the writer attempts to instil fear in the hearts of the Matabeleland community dealing with the legacies of the unacknowledged atrocities of 1980s (Alexander, et al 2000:230). Nkala is one of the figures accused of instigating the Gukurahundi (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2010:195; Kriger, 2005:5).

It is important to note that that the “nationalist” and “secessionist” are not accorded equal space in this newspaper. The pro-unitary state sources are given a voice, as opposed to the MLF members. As such, this sustains the dominant discourse as it disallows voices that seek transformation. In the second part of the article, the writer tackles the question of devolution of power. In conclusion, Mavhumashava dismisses both secession and devolution of power as alternative imaginaries, and consolidates the unitary state discourse.

Discursive practice

Produced as an editorial, this article constructs an argument exploring the merits and demerits of secession. As the purpose of an editorial writer is not only to interpret an issue, but also to persuade or convert the reader (Stonecipher, 1979:45), Mavhumashava makes a case against the secession of Matabeleland, arguing that it “is not the answer”. As such, it can thus be argued that this is the newspaper’s official position as an editorial is the “mouthpiece, the very personality of the newspaper ... the newspaper’s institutional voice” (Stonecipher, 1979:41). The primary audiences of the *Chronicle* are the Matabeleland communities dealing with the scars of the Gukurahundi (Alexander, et al 2000; Eppel, 2004). It is against this background that the writer indirectly conjures up the memory of the Gukurahundi by warning readers that secession would lead to a conflict.

Social practice

It is important to consider the wider social context in which the media texts are embedded as this indicates whether this article reproduces the status quo, or is transformative. Firstly, the *Chronicle* is a state-owned newspaper that is expected to promote nation-building, and build national identity (Kupe, 2007; Chiumbu, 2004:31). By sustaining Zanu PF’s version of national identity and unity, the *Chronicle* redefines nationhood and citizenship (Chiumbu, 2004:31). In the context of this media environment in which the *Chronicle* is embedded, it can be argued that this newspaper reproduces a nationhood narrative that sustains the post-colonial unitary state discourse. Produced in the context of the on-going treason trial of three

MLF leaders which had reinvigorated nationhood debates in various public spaces, this article delegitimises the contending national imaginaries.

Secession vs devolution

The discourses of secession and devolution have emerged in Matabeleland as alternative imaginaries to the hegemonic, unitary state discourse. Against this background, I examine how secession and devolution are contested in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* as perspectives that seek ascendancy over the unitary state discourse. In this regard, I analyse one article from each newspaper.

Thin line between secession and devolution

In this article published by *Newsday* on 24 March, 2011, Dumisani Sibanda, the Bureau Chief of *Newsday Southern Edition*, draws a distinction between secession and devolution of power. He begins by arguing that in Matabeleland the idea of devolution of power was the “buzzword in the run up to the national constitution making exercise”, with various civic organisations, pressure groups and political parties lobbying people from region to advocate for this system of governance. The writer notes that *Newsday* commissioned the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) to carry out research on the popularity of devolution of power in Matabeleland. In this study, he reveals, it was discovered that “about two-thirds of people from Matabeleland” are interested in this system of governance. However, Sibanda posits that the emergence of the MLF advocating for “self-determination” has brought in a “new dimension to the issue of resolving the marginalisation of Matabeleland region”.

Text analysis

The headline frames the writer’s argument as it draws a distinction between devolution²⁸ and secession. He uses the idiom “thin line” to indicate the difficulties in distinguishing between these two competing perspectives. As these two views contest the centralised, unitary state discourse, this affirms Foucault’s notion that discourses are multiple and in contestation in a discursive space (Hall, 1997). Sibanda narrows his scope to the discourse of devolution as he argues it became the “buzzword”, suggesting that the idea gained momentum in Matabeleland. The debates on this system of governance were waged in various spaces such

²⁸ Devolution of power is a system of governance that entails the transfer of power and resources to sub-national authorities that are both (relatively) independent of central government and democratically elected (Crawford and Hartmann, 2008:9; Forje, 2006). Together with deconcentration and delegation, devolution constitutes the forms of administrative decentralisation (Crawford and Hartmann, 2008; Mhlanga, 2010).

as the “civic organisations, political parties and pressure groups”, and this supports Mhlanga’s (2009) assertion that devolution forms much of today’s currency in many public spheres. Further, the argument that *Newsday* “commissioned” MPOI to carry out research is important as it suggests that *Newsday* was an active participant, rather than distanced reporter, in the debates about devolution.

The writer advances an argument that the MLF’s advocacy of “self-determination” brought a new dimension to the issue of “resolving the marginalisation” of the region. First, the phrase “self-determination” constructs Matabeleland secessionist politics as underpinned by the principle of the self-determination of nations (Horowitz, 2003:5). Second, the expression “marginalisation” supports the notion that the post-colonial state in Africa is exploitative, and as a result has become “irrelevant” to the repressed ethnic minorities (Ihonvbere, 1994:42). The writer wonders whether the issue of the “region breaking away to be a separate republic” would be a better way of “resolving the Matabeleland problems than devolution of power”. In this regard, he quotes Effie Ncube, of Matabeleland Constitutional Reform Agenda (Macra) who advances a secessionist view. Ncube argues that the question of secession should be put to the “people through a referendum”, as was done in Sudan and Canada. Thus, he conjures up a memory of Sudan to infer that the Matabeleland secession can be resolved through a referendum. This argument is informed by the writer’s assumption that his readers are not only familiar with the Sudanese case, but are also positive about the resolution that came out as a result of the referendum. Further, Ncube argues that Matabeleland should secede as the area is “bigger in size than Swaziland or Switzerland”, thus drawing on a comparison to legitimate the secessionist view.

Further, the writer explores the arguments in favour of the devolution of power. In this regard, he quotes Dumisani Nkomo, a civic activist, and Methuseli Moyo, Zapu spokesperson. Nkomo argues that secession “would be a difficult proposition without resorting to military force”. In this regard, Nkomo uses the modal truth verb “would” to persuade the readers to pursue the devolution option which does not have military repercussions, as compared to secession. As such, the phrase “military force” frames secession as a dangerous route fraught with violence, a message that resonates with the audiences whose memories of the Gukurahundi are still vivid (Alexander, et al 2000; CCJP and LRF, 2007). Moyo reinforces this devolution perspective by arguing that “people should not mistake devolution of power for secession”. He employs a truth modal phrase “will” to argue that devolution is meant to benefit other areas besides Matabeleland. Further, by noting

that devolution “is being practised in South Africa and the United States”, Moyo uses an analogy to persuade audiences that this system of governance can be applied in Zimbabwe. He concludes by asserting that devolution does not entail the dismantling of the nation-state as there would still be “one country”, “one flag” and “one national anthem”. Thus, he uses the expressions that represent nationhood in order to persuade the audiences that devolution is preferable to secession as it would maintain the current Zimbabwean nation-state configuration.

Discursive practice

As an opinion piece, the Bureau Chief of *Newsday Southern Edition* makes a persuasive case for what he sees as a resolution to the Matabeleland problems. The primary consumers of this article are the people of Matabeleland where *Newsday Southern* edition is situated. It is in this realm that Sibanda explores the issues of devolution and secession that resonate with the Matabeleland community. Although this article is not an editorial which is the “newspaper’s institutional voice” (Stonecipher, 1979:41), it is significant that it was written by the Bureau Chief as this suggests the position of this newspaper in these secessionist debates.

Social practice

These texts are situated within the broader context of the debates about the system of governance appropriate for resolving the issue of the “marginalisation of Matabeleland”. It is in this context that the issue of the system of governance is contested in various spaces such as the civic organisations, political parties, pressure groups and the media. In these spaces, the post-colonial nation-state discourse is challenged as an authoritarian and centralised instrument of force (Forje, 2006:6). The people of Matabeleland are represented as an ethnic minority on the fringes of underdevelopment, and hence harbouring a sense of non-belonging (Forje, 2006:9). This affirms Davidson’s thesis of “crisis of institutions”, as he terms the African post-colonial nation-building project as borrowed nation-statism that has denied the continent its own histories and indigenous institutions (1992:104). As *Newsday* is constituted by these discourses of nationhood contested in various spheres, this reinforces Foucault’s notion that power is “never monopolized by one centre” (Hall, 1997:49). This article is transformative in the sense that the centralised, unitary state discourse is challenged. However, *Newsday* privileges the discourse of devolution over that of secession. As such, the newspaper is not only constituted by the discourse of devolution, but at the same time, shapes the readers’ understandings of nationhood.

Zapu against secession of Matabeleland

This news story was published by the *Chronicle* on 5 May, 2011, with the reporter arguing that Zapu is against the secession of Matabeleland. The writer frames this position by using the voice of Dumiso Dabengwa²⁹, ZAPU President, who produced a statement disassociating his party from the MLF's secessionist politics. The headline and lead of the story introduce this argument, and this position is strengthened in the subsequent paragraphs, as Dabengwa calls for "national cohesion". Further, he argues that Zapu is a "founder and authentic liberation movement of the whole of Zimbabwe", rather than a "tribal movement" or a "regional party" like the MLF. By rejecting secession, Dabengwa advocates the devolution of power as an answer to the "problems affecting Matabeleland".

Text analysis

In the headline and lead paragraph, the reporter posits that ZAPU is "against" the secession of Matabeleland, an expression that carries authoritative weight. This is strengthened by the argument that MLF wants to "separate" the Matabeleland "region" from the "rest of the country". The terms "rest" and "country" naturalises the current Zimbabwean unitary state configuration, whilst the construction of Matabeleland as a "region" delegitimises the secessionist claims. As Matabeleland is constructed as the particular, and Zimbabwe as the universal (Robertson, 1991:73), this argument sustains the unitary state discourse as it undermines Matabeleland's claims for autonomy. Further, the reporter represses the secessionist discourse by employing an ethotic argument as the mode of persuasion. In this way, the journalist draws on the character of Dabengwa, an authoritative figure in Matabeleland. As a former military commander of a liberation movement that had a strong support base in Matabeleland (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:31), the character of Dabengwa is used to persuade the audiences against the secessionist view. As such, the reporter evokes the past glories of Dabengwa, and the popularity of Zapu in Matabeleland to undermine the secessionist cause.

In paragraph four, Dabengwa calls for the need to "maintain national cohesion and preserve richness and diversity as a nation". In this way, he constructs Zimbabwe as one indivisible

²⁹ Dabengwa is a ZAPU nationalist, and a former commander of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), a military wing of ZAPU (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006:65). In 1982 he was arrested and detained on charges of treason together with Lookout Masuku, another ZIPRA commander (Kriger, 1995:53). Dabengwa was released at the signing of the Unity Accord of ZAPU and ZANU in 1987. Together with other prominent Zapu leaders, Dabengwa walked out of the Unity Accord to revive ZAPU in 2009 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:10).

nation (Werbner, 1998:73) and thus, limits the possibilities for imagining Mthwakazi. The verbs “maintain” and “preserve” naturalise and legitimate the Zimbabwean nation-state. In the same vein, the words “cohesion”, “richness” and “diversity” represent Zimbabwe as a rainbow nation (Bornman, 2006); a national community embracing common citizenship out of diverse peoples and cultures. Dabengwa builds his argument against secession as he describes the MLF as “tribal”, an expression held within the unitary state discourse. The predication form “tribal” associates the secessionist voices with an evil plague in Africa (Hameso, 1997:4; Vail, 1997). This attests to the view that the post-colonial national project is anchored on the maxim that “for the nation to live, the tribe must die” (cited in Mamdani, 1996:135). In this construction of a “nation” and a “tribe”, the Mthwakazi imaginary is represented as tribalist, whilst Zimbabwe is constructed as a nation. This affirms the view that a nation is associated with a modern state (Vail, 1997:53), while issues of ethnicity are stigmatised as “traditionalism” (Van Den Berghe, 1981:3).

Dabengwa advances an argument against secession as he states that his party is not advocating “subverting a constitutional government”. The phrase “subverting” is used to represent MLF’s secessionist calls as treasonous. In contrast, the expression “constitutional government” is evoked to naturalise the current Zimbabwean nation-state as it constructs it as legitimate. Thus, the writer mobilises the legal discourses to counter the emerging secessionist calls. This position is reinforced as Dabengwa asserts that “Zapu is the founder and authentic liberation of the whole of Zimbabwe”. By naming ZAPU as the “founder” and “authentic” liberation movement, Dabengwa invokes the party’s liberation war credentials to legitimate the unitary state discourse, and counter the MLF which does not have any liberation war background. Second, the idea of the “liberation of the whole of Zimbabwe” affirms the argument that in the African post-colonial states, the founding of the nation is imagined in decolonisation (Werbner, 1998:75; Davidson, 1992; Chipkin, 2007). As such, the birth of a Zimbabwean nation is through the barrel of an anti-colonial gun (Werbner, 1998:75). Within this discourse, alternative ideas of national identity, such as Mthwakazi “nation”, are repressed. This resonates with Davidson’s argument that nation-statism in post-colonial Africa meant the need to deny and refute every history, every institution, and any civilisation that existed before it (1992:4). It is within this dominant discourse that this re-imagination of a pre-colonial Ndebele “nation” through the MLF secessionist politics is regarded as tribal, backward and irrelevant.

After deploring secession, Dabengwa proposes devolution of power as an alternative to “Harare-based centralist government system”. The devolution of power is constructed as “new, fair and democratic”, an expression that repudiates the secessionist discourse which Dabengwa described as “tribal” and “subverting the constitutional government”. Further, he argues that “Zapu supports the concept of Umthwakazi on a cultural and social level”. In this way, the sign “Umthwakazi” sets off a chain of significations (Grossberg, 1996:158) as Dabengwa disarticulates it from a meaning of a political community, and rearticulates it as a cultural community. This repudiates the secessionist discourse where “Umthwakazi” is the imagined homeland of the Ndebele people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:174). To further denounce the secessionist claims, he “dismisses” as “unfounded allegations” the view that Chief Khayisa Ndiweni³⁰ advocated the secession of Matabeleland in the run up to the 1980 elections. Dabengwa not only employs the terms “dismisses” and “unfounded”, but also invokes the memory of Chief Ndiweni, a prominent figure in Matabeleland, to repudiate the secessionist claims.

Discursive practice

It is important to consider the discursive practice as the genre and the organisational practices of the *Chronicle* have implications on the representations of nationhood in this newspaper. This article is a news report, and as such, it is assumed that the reporter would uphold the journalistic standards of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972; Stonecipher, 1979). However, this news story is one-sided as it is an excerpt from a statement released by the Zapu party. The reporter foregrounds the voice of Dabengwa, and excludes alternative voices that are agitating for secession. As such, it is evident that the alternative secessionist discourse is marginalised by this institutional practice of news production.

Social Practice

As Matabeleland secessionist politics was hotly debated in various spaces, questions were raised about ZAPU’s position, a party with a rich history in the liberation struggle in Matabeleland. As already noted, the *Chronicle* is a state-owned paper (Kupe, 2007; Saunders, 1999; Ranger, 2005). It is thus not surprising that it takes an overtly anti-secessionist perspective by affirming the taken for granted nationhood assumptions of the post-colonial nation-building project. With multiple possibilities of belonging contested in various spaces

³⁰ Ndiweni was an Ndebele paramount Chief and a prominent figure in Matabeleland as he was a symbol of Ndebele culture and tradition (Lindgren, 2005). He passed away in 2010.

such as the constitution, the *Chronicle* perpetuates the dominant discourse of nationhood. By constructing secession as tribalist and regionalist, the newspaper sustains the established knowledge claims of the hegemonic nationhood discourse. Although the unitary state discourse is being challenged by the devolution of power and secessionist viewpoints, one can conclude that the *Chronicle* is not only constituted by the dominant post-colonial nation-building discourse, but at the same time, helps to shape a collective Zimbabwean national identity.

Conclusion

This chapter presents findings obtained from an analysis of six articles centred on two themes, **unity vs separation**, and **secession vs devolution**. It is evident that the state-owned *Chronicle* sustains the unitary state discourse of nationhood by invoking the liberation war mythology (Werbner, 1998), and disparaging secession as tribalist (Hameso, 1997: Vail, 1997). In contrast, in *Newsday* the discourse of a unitary state is challenged by both the secessionist and devolution imaginaries. Although various columnists contest the hegemonic nationhood discourse, they do not take an overtly secessionist position. Rather, together with Bulawayo civil society movements, the columnists are all constituted within a discursive formation advocating the devolution of power. However, the secessionist discourse is privileged in a news story and an opinion piece written by one reporter who gives space to the MLF to advance their position.

CONCLUSION

Summary

This study examines the constructions of nationhood in the secessionist debates related to the MLF. In the introduction, I lay out the scope and boundaries of the research. The objective of this study is to investigate how nationhood is represented in the two Bulawayo newspapers, the *Chronicle* (state-owned) and *Newsday* (privately-owned), at this historical moment. As the upsurge of the MLF indicates the current resurgence of Matabeleland secessionist politics, this study investigates the constructions of nationhood in 2011. The chapter provides an historical-political context in which the discursive events in the newspapers are embedded. In this regard, I trace the origins of the Matabeleland secessionist politics, exploring how the Ndebele particularistic identity has been shaped in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Lindgren, 2002). As the newspapers are situated within the Matabeleland socio-political environment, I explore the current resurgence of the Matabeleland Question which underlies the Ndebele particularistic identity and the drive for a separate state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011; Moyo, 2006). This study is informed by the view that discourses cannot be understood outside the broader context in which the media texts are embedded (Thompson, 1995; Richardson, 2007; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Further, chapter one situates the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* within the broader Zimbabwean mediascape. I note that the *Chronicle* is a state-owned paper that propagates the ZANU PF narrative of nation-building (Chiumbu, 2004; Ranger, 2005; Saunders, 1999; Kupe, 2007). On the other hand, *Newsday* is privately-owned, and part of the “independent media” which take an anti-ZANU PF position (Ndlela, 2005; Chuma, 2010). It is against this background that this study examines the constructions of nationhood in these two Bulawayo newspapers.

After tracing the socio-historical context in which these two papers are located, chapter one provides a theoretical frame in which to make sense of the contestations of nationhood in the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*. I examine Hall’s (1992; 1996) constructivist approach to identity, which informs my position that national identities as decentred and fragmented. Second, my research is informed by the different strands within the constructivist approach to nationalism. Within this perspective, a nation is viewed as socially constructed and an imagined political community (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Anderson, 1983). Further, this study draws on the idea of the social imaginary as I examine how people imagine their social existence (Taylor, 2004; Gaonkar, 2002). In addition, this research is grounded on the critical

studies of African nationalism that contest the African post-colonial nation-building project (Chipkin, 2004). Within this paradigm, the African post-colonial state is seen as fragile and founded on inherited colonial boundaries (Mazrui, 1994; Adebajo, 2010; Ikome, 2004). It is in this vein that this study identifies the MLF secessionist calls as the voices of an ethnic minority group enclosed within the “bondage of boundaries” (Mazrui, 1994; Mhlanga, 2010). Lastly, chapter one indicates that this study is framed within the constructivist approach to representation (Hall, 1997). As meaning is constructed in and through language (Hall, 1997), I investigate the representations of nationhood in the media texts.

In chapter two, I discuss the methodological insights which underpin this research. I argue that the debates on qualitative and quantitative approaches signify the divergent ontological and epistemological presuppositions (Bryman, 1984; Deacon, et al 1999). As this study is framed within a qualitative approach, I argue that reality is not “out there” (Deacon, et al 1999); rather, meaning is socially constructed (Merriam, 2002; Deacon, et al 1999). As there are multiple constructions of reality (Merriam, 2002:4), the qualitative approach enables this study to examine the constructions of nationhood at this historical point in time. The emphasis is on providing a “thick description” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2002), which enables this study to examine the constructions of nationhood in the socio-political context of Matabeleland. Further, I engage with issues of validity, reliability and generalisability, from a qualitative approach. This chapter also discusses the data gathering procedures, and details the steps involved in the selection of data. I employ purposive sampling which is suitable for qualitative research (Deacon, et al 1999; Ritchie, et al 2003:78). As sampling units are purposively selected, 12 articles are analysed from a population of 64 articles drawn in the one-year period of 2011. Lastly, chapter two discusses the issue of data analysis, and argues that CDA is a suitable approach for addressing the research objectives. In this regard, I discuss Foucault’s discourse theory which informs Fairclough’s (1995) analytical method of texts, discursive practice and social practice which I employ.

Primary findings

I dedicate two chapters for data analysis and presentation of findings from the two newspapers. In chapter three, I examine the constructions of nationhood in the six articles derived from the two themes of **ethnicity**, and **treason vs the right to secede**. The other six articles centred on the themes of **unity vs separation**, and **secession vs devolution** are

analysed in chapter four. From the findings obtained, it is evident that the MLF was adequately covered in *Newsday* as compared to the *Chronicle*. Further, most of the *Chronicle*'s articles cover the treason trial of the three MLF leaders. As such, this newspaper frames secession as treason, thus obscuring the notion of the right to self-determination. This sustains the hegemonic nationhood discourse which maintains the sanctity of colonial boundaries (Idowu, 2008; Ikome, 2004). As none of the articles in the *Chronicle* focus on the issue of ethnicity, this suggests that this newspaper may be limiting debates on ethnicity, thus affirming the view that within the dominant circles, issues of ethnicity are brushed aside (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). The focus of this state-owned paper is on unity, as evident in the editorial produced that advocates a unitary state. This is done by constructing Zimbabwe as a nation, and secession as tribalism, thus affirming the maxim held within the unitary state discourse that for the nation to live, the tribe must die (Mamdani, 1996; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Further, by evoking the liberation war mythology, this newspaper constructs the Zimbabwean post-colonial nation-state as founded on the nationalist struggle (Chipkin, 2007; Werbner, 1998; Davidson, 1992).

In contrast, *Newsday* is a cultural space where nationhood is contested by columnists from various civil society groups. This indicates that this privately-owned paper is constituted by the nationhood debates raging in civil society spaces. Although these columnists contest the ZANU PF's authoritarian nationhood discourse, they do not take an overtly secessionist position. Rather, they advocate the devolution discourse which characterises the opposition politics in Zimbabwe. This suggests that this privately-owned paper, together with the civil society groups and the MDC, are all constituted within a discursive formation promoting the devolution discourse. However, the secessionist discourse is highlighted in the MLF news stories written by Khanyile Mlotshwa, the paper's reporter with most by-lines. In this secessionist discourse, the Zimbabwean nation-state is constructed as a product of artificial and arbitrary boundaries inherited from colonialism (Adebajo, 2010; Mazrui, 1994). Accordingly, Mthwakazi is constructed as a "nation" subsumed in the "bondage of boundaries" (Mazrui, 1994; Ikome, 2004; Mhlana, 2010).

Against this background, *Newsday* represents itself as a public arena for alternative discourses challenging the African post-colonial nation-building project. The paper does not have an editorial which would indicate the newspaper's position in these secessionist debates. As a result, both the secessionist and devolution imaginaries are highlighted in this newspaper. It is evident that within these alternative nationhood discourses, Ndebele

particularism is constructed as linguistic nationalism challenging Shona cultural hegemony (Ndhlovu, 2006; Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). Further, the Zimbabwean nation-state is constructed as a “clash of civilisations”; a manifestation of irreconcilable Ndebele and Shona identities (Huntington, 1996; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). These two ethnic groups are represented as having different histories, myths of origins and ancestry, and lacking a will to live together (Smith, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The argument is that the Zimbabwean nation-state is hinged on Shona historical symbols, Shona pre-colonial heroes and myths, to the exclusion of Ndebele historical experiences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008:169). In addition, it is evident that the legacy of the Gukurahundi has alienated the Ndebele from the Zimbabwean nation-state, thus solidifying the imagination of the Mthwakazi “nation” (Lindgren, 2005; Alexander, et al 2000; Eppel, 2004).

In conclusion, an investigation of the nationhood constructions in the two newspapers affirms the view that discourses cannot be understood outside the context in which those discourses are embedded (Richardson, 2007; Hall, 1997). The *Chronicle* and *Newsday* are positioned by the socio-political and historical environment which has shaped, and is reinforcing a particularistic Ndebele identity. Thus, the Zimbabwean nation-state is contested by Matabeleland separatist politics manifesting itself in the form of a distinctive Ndebele culture, history, and language. Although the *Chronicle* and *Newsday* are constituted by these social practices, the two newspapers, at the same time, shape audiences’ understandings of nationhood. Further, the nationhood constructions in the two newspapers indicate that the Ndebele particularistic identity is not fixed, but is constantly changing (Moyo, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). Thus, Ndebele nationalism is not depicted as the restoration of a monarchy (Ranger, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). Rather, at this historical moment, the imagined Mthwakazi “nation” is a manifestation of the current Ndebele’s feelings of exclusion and marginalisation within the Zimbabwean nation-state.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide for *Newsday* journalist

1. How long have you worked at *Newsday*?
2. How long have you been staying in Bulawayo?
3. How does the *Newsday Southern Edition* differ from the *Northern Edition*?
4. Is the *Newsday* online edition constituted by stories from both the *Southern* and *Northern editions*?
5. How many journalists work at *Newsday Southern Edition*?
6. How many journalists cover stories on MLF in the *Southern Edition*?
7. Are you assigned by the editor or Bureau Chief to cover MLF or it's by your own initiative?
8. What challenges do you encounter in reporting on Matabeleland secession?
9. Do you think the political environment in the country influences journalists' reportage of MLF on *Newsday*?
10. What is your view on the editorial and ownership influence on the way you report on Matabeleland secession?
11. In your opinion, do you think Matabeleland secession is given attention in *Newsday*?
12. Are there any stories which you have written but have been filtered by the editorial team?
13. What is the general view of your colleagues on Matabeleland secession?
14. What is your personal view on Matabeleland secession?

Appendix 2

Interview guide for *Newsday* columnist

1. Do you have a contract with *Newsday* to produce opinion pieces?
2. Are you given topics by *Newsday* or it is from your own initiative?
3. Do you write opinion pieces for other newspapers?

Appendix 3

Sample stories from the *Chronicle* and *Newsday*

Ethnicity

1. 'MLF promoting tribal hatred' (*Newsday*, 17 October 2011).
2. 'Ndebele-Shona relations: recipe for disaster' (*Newsday*, 23 February 2011).
3. I'm tribalist, like you! (*Newsday*, 5 April 2011).

Treason vs the right to secede

4. Political activists face treason charges (*Chronicle*, 9 March 2011).
5. Secessionist movement woos MLF (*Newsday*, 24 March 2011).
6. Has Northern Zimbabwe chosen to hear no evil regarding secessionists? (*Newsday*, 17 March 2011).

Unity vs separation

7. MLF marches for secession (*Newsday*, 18 April 2011).
8. Matabeleland issue and the need for framework on ethnic relations (*Newsday*, 9 February 2011).
9. What do we do with the Joshua Nkomo legacy? (*Newsday*, 5 July 2011).
10. Secession is not the answer (*Chronicle*, 21 July 2011).

Secession vs devolution

11. Thin line between secession and devolution (*Newsday*, 24 March 2011).
12. Zapu against secession of Matabeleland (*Chronicle*, 5 May 2011).

Appendix 4

‘MLF promoting tribal hatred’ (*Newsday*, 17 October 2011).

Appendix 5

‘Ndebele-Shona relations: recipe for disaster’ (*Newsday*, 23 February 2011).

Appendix 6

I'm tribalist, like you! (*Newsday*, 5 April 2011).

Appendix 7

Political activists face treason charges (*Chronicle*, 9 March 2011).

Appendix 8

Secessionist movement woos MLF (*Newsday*, 24 March 2011).

Appendix 9

Has Northern Zimbabwe chosen to hear no evil regarding secessionists? (*Newsday*, 17 March 2011).

Appendix 10

MLF marches for secession (*Newsday*, 18 April 2011).

Appendix 11

Matabeleland issue and the need for framework on ethnic relations (*Newsday*, 9 February 2011).

Appendix 12

What do we do with the Joshua Nkomo legacy? (*Newsday*, 5 July 2011).

Appendix 13

Secession is not the answer (*Chronicle*, 21 July 2011).

Annexure 14

Thin line between secession and devolution (*Newsday*, 24 March 2011).

Annexure 15

Zapu against secession of Matabeleland (*Chronicle*, 5 May 2011).