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THE DEPICTION OF JULIUS MALEMA IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS

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ABSTRACT

*The contemporary South African press presents an antagonistic depiction of the actions of Julius Malema, the expelled (pending appeal) president of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). This depiction embodies the oppositional political force the press exhibits in its representation of the near hegemonic political power of the ANC. In its assumed capacity of socio-political watchdog the press propagates influential depictions of the political elite, depicting selected individuals in antipathetic terms. These representations, which if assumed only as objective portrayals, neglect the intended opposition that the press acts in as 'fourth estate.' This study canvasses the aversive manner in which Julius Malema is pictured in the South African press through conducting a content analysis of two South African daily newspapers, *The Cape Times* and *The Sowetan*. The study analyses five intensely media-covered events in which Malema was central. Though the depiction of Malema does not present intrinsic malevolence, his actions are presented as antagonistic through predominantly episodic and emotive framing. His explicitly insolent diction is used as fodder to engage resistance. Such reporting signifies irresponsibility where, within a decontextualised framework, selective sound-bite journalism manipulates readers, accordingly shaping content from truncated snippets that are patched together within a prevailing media logic.*

Key words: *South African press, Julius Malema, depiction, media logic, framing, agenda setting, mediatization.*

I. Background and Research Aims

Mr. Malema, for his cutthroat narration of issues and his radical ideology, has become an extremely mediatized individual, a bogeyman of sorts. He is a man who occupies his own niche in the workings of the South African press due to his unparalleled status as (expelled) youth, and possible future, leader as well as being a rabble-rouser whose controversial speeches provoke revolutionary action. This study aims to exhibit his depiction as constructed to fit into the South African political and public domain, where he is positioned

alongside political, business and social elites. Malema is essentially known for his controversial anti-capitalist speeches, opposing the free-market in favour for the ideals that directly serve the poverty-stricken masses. This is while at the same time he is living a flashy life of wealth and grandeur, surrounded by all things ornate. This fractious and clear dichotomy between word and deed, of a seemingly hypocritical existence, has afforded Mr. Malema strong convictions from most South Africans, splitting the citizenry between impressions of raging rejection and reverence. Malema is thus a central figure in the South African socio-political makeup, an ostensibly permanent news feature and thus an ideal individual to canvass for the purposes of this study.

This research aims to examine how the mediatization of Malema's persona will offer a pioneering exposé of the current representational exploits of the South African press. It is in viewing his depiction that it is hoped that much will be learnt about the contemporary ethos of the press, especially concerning its function as a political force corresponding to the politically powerful ANC and, in this case, its Youth League. While the study aims to assess, through the depiction of Malema, the contemporary ideological dialectic existent between the workings of ANC-led developmental politics and those of the liberal press, the focus will remain primarily on Malema's depiction as the research is only able to draw directly from an empirically informing view of the press. His mediatization, perennially surrounded by the game frame, and his personal niche in the South African press will be canvassed in order to interpret the present day media logic.

Malema's consistently belligerent advocacy for extreme change in South Africa and in defence of the revolutionary social democratic ideals of the ANC at the end of Apartheid proposes that what was fought for during the struggle, embodied in the Freedom Charter, was neglected in favour of a western liberalist agenda. These ideals, advancing the interests of the disenfranchised masses, have allegedly afforded him with militant support from the said

masses. His aggressive leadership of this supposed threat to stability, a fiery tongue of flagrant revolutionary advocacy and the conjectural incoherency between his manifesto and lifestyle, has seen his face being painted across the different channels of the press. His provocative approach to dealing with antagonists - by impassioned dispute - especially among opposing political parties, the media and establishments opposed to radical socio-economic change, has afforded this charismatic orator a unique position in the South African political domain. Being a patron of political agency, following his contentious election to the presidency of the ANCYL in 2008, and by his vociferous support for the now South African President, Jacob Zuma, a relationship which has subsequently soured, Malema's presence in the press remains ubiquitous. The period since 2008 has seen Malema grow into a true media phenomenon. His mercurial rise in influence was being substantiated by his characterization in the press.

II. Significance of the Research

In studying the depiction of Malema, this research intends to bring clarity to the operations of the press. To comprehend its capacity of inducing meaning, it will examine the ways that it aligns its angles of representation, offering insight into whether the press purports a certain line of representation towards individuals and whether this line remains continuous or whether it shifts. As such, the pertinence of this study lies in its allowing for insight into the hugely influential role that the press plays in executing its political agency through stylistic representation of politically powerful individuals. The intention of the work is to offer findings that will contextualise the modus operandi of the press as it constructs its narrative of politics in South Africa. This has been necessitated by obscurity as pertaining to the unresolved tension and seemingly diverging intentions of both the press and the governing ANC hegemony. This research aspires to add not only perspective on the present climate but

to offer the much needed understanding to the large terra incognita of contemporary press-political representation.

Significance arises from the fact that whereas the press constantly reports on Malema, very little academic work has been done regarding this heavyweight of South African contemporary politics. This is possibly due to either his topicality or the general irreverence that the establishment shows him. On the other hand, the fact that there are so few studies could be due to the limited results they are able to bear. As it stands, the only peer-reviewed academic work which features Malema's press representation centrally is that of Hyde-Clarke (Hyde-Clarke, 2011).

Auxiliary significance, in understanding the line of representation depicting Malema, lies in promising to shed light on the ongoing debate headed by the ANC-led government criticising the workings of the South African press and, in turn, the rejection by the press of governmental pressure on them. This depiction of an authoritative, and in this case polemical, ANC member promises to distinctly exhibit the styles and modalities of contemporary press operation.

This study does not aim to argue for the liberal freedoms upheld by the press, most pertinently against the recently passed Protection of State Information Bill, or for its generally constituting the fourth estate, serving the 'public interest.' Nor does it wish to substantiate the clearly delineated developmental aims of the government. Rather the study aims to view the outright political force as wielded by the press, inspecting the nature in which it portrays politically influential individuals and offering an inquisition into its constitution as both a political agency as well as an authority of objectivity. In mapping the reportage of a vastly mediatized Julius Malema the research is directed at debunking his representation allowing for insight into the contemporary exploits of the press. The findings

thus have potential to also provide insight into the ancillary debate between the government and the press.

III. Limitations

Limited to mapping only a modest cross-section of the workings of the press, the goal of this study is not in puzzle-solving, but rather in drawing attention to the exploits of the press whose influence in the political makeup of South Africa often goes unnoticed and whose ability to determine national perspectives is largely untested. More than mere abstract knowledge of press operations is needed as the press inherently and explicitly plays a significant role in framing national politics, and its institutional and unofficial capacity as the fourth estate often goes unnoticed. In South Africa, it is seen that the largely liberal press often purports itself as a vanguard opposition acting in resistance to the overwhelmingly dominant single-party power politics of the ANC. It is from this self-appointed counterbalance that questions of legitimacy arise. Whereas this study does not have the capacity to address this matter directly, it does intend to draw attention to this phenomenon by examining a cross-section of the press in its constructing representation of Julius Malema. The scope of the study will be constricted to the portrayal of an individual, thus allowing for highly limited findings. By looking at a selected range of incidents, this study aims to view the various reactionary and reflexive ways in which the styling and depiction of individuals, in this case aligned to the powerful ANC, can be made sense of. In describing the depiction of Malema, the study aims to identify the leading operational and stylistic modalities used by the press in the characterization of individuals. Though it considers aspects that are ubiquitous throughout the press, the horizon of this work remains fixed on one individual, and as such is bounded in its limited scope and findings.

IV. Theoretical Framework

In an increasingly mediatized world, there exists a need to structurally and theoretically make sense of that which is laid bare in the press. In order for this study to contribute to the current superimposed construction of knowledge regarding the characterization the press has of the South African political elite, it needs to incorporate relevant and appropriate theories and models. Some of these theories are Framing, Agenda Setting, and Mediatization. These will remain central throughout this study.

Entman (2004) develops a powerful model of how media framing works and suggests ways to more effectively encourage the exchange of ideas, especially concerning the press. Writing on the influential role of the media, he specifies that the concept of 'framing':

consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text... Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient ... Typically frames diagnose, evaluate and prescribe. (p. 1)

It is through viewing this selection in the related frames that one can make sense of its impact and its ability to explicitly direct attention to certain aspects of an individual. How someone is framed thus suggests how the press wishes them to be perceived by the public. Through advancing the salience of a frame, the author is able to present a certain range of selected information, while at the same time explicitly ignoring other information. It is through this manufactured selection and advance in salience that the receiver is encouraged to afford meaning to a text.

Episodic frames relate to individual occurrences and are unrelated to a timeline or the broader picture. These events are complete case studies that regard specific and complete issues. Thematic frames relate to a broader story and slot into context-specific scenarios (Gross, 2008, p. 170). Thematic framing explicitly relates the frame to the 'bigger picture', the political discourse per se. Contrasting thematic to episodic frames, Gross finds that

thematic framing leads to a broader public that shares the ascription of responsibility for political upheavals. This, in turn, leads to societal support for authority and to holding powerful individuals to account for their actions. This is opposed to the effects of episodic framing which diffuses societal bonds and positions blame on the individual depicted centrally. Through this diffusion the 'bigger picture' is blurred heightening the chance of fickle responses and the construction of antagonistic attitudes (Gross, 2008, p. 173).

In *Public Opinion*, the seminal work of Walter Lippmann, he defines the news media to be the crafters of the pictures that society carries around in their heads. McCombs and Shaw (1972) simply put it as such, "the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public" (p. 2). It is as such that the pictures that the media focus on become prominent in the eyes of the public, thus determining their thought.

Similar to framing, the Agenda Setting theory focuses on the salience of the story that is being covered in the press. While Framing examines the 'how', Agenda Setting looks at the 'what' of the story. As Cohen (as cited in McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 3) puts it, "the media doesn't (*sic*) tell us what to think; it tells (*sic*) us what to think about". This 'what' of the mediated view is essentially that which becomes central in the views of the public, and as such press salience is carried across. 'Priming' refers to the guidance that agenda setting can have on the public. With the press offering salience to their selection of issues, the theory of priming states that the public's evaluation will largely reflect this selection. "Priming is the impact that agenda setting can have on the way individuals evaluate public officials by influencing the thematic areas or issues that individuals use to form their evaluations" (Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002, p. 3).

Agenda setting is very important here. Together with the 'how', it is largely the 'what' which determines opinion formation regarding certain publicised individuals. "In choosing

and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 7).

The world and the vehicle of politics have become increasingly mediatized. The media allow man to “see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch hear, or remember” (Lippmann, 1997, p. 18). The issue of media independence from politics and society has been turned on its head, where “the important question becomes the independence of politics and society from the media” (Stromback, 2008, p. 228). With industrialised media becoming increasingly pervasive and process-oriented constructs such as mediatization have developed. This is where aspects of everyday life are explicitly affected by the media and moulded around its prevailing cultures.

In explicating the mediatized nature of politicians, Silverstone (2005) maintains, “politics, like experience, can no longer even be thought outside the media frame. Consequently, we are living in media-saturated societies” (as cited in Driessens, Raeymaeckers, Verstraeten, & Vandebussche, 2010, p. 312). With everyday perception being channelled and regulated through communication streams, mediatization comes to play an increasingly central role in how people make sense of the world around them (Driessens, Raeymaeckers, Verstraeten, & Vandebussche, 2010, p. 312). Increasingly, meaning and significance are communicated through the media. It is through reading about worldly phenomena and public figures in the mediated press that association is built up and impressions are formed.

The media have an increasingly intruding effect on the political domain, so much so that society is heading towards a “media-driven republic in which mass media will usurp the functions of political institutions in the liberal state” (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 249). If the “media-driven republic” is not already here, it is fast approaching. It is becoming more and more evident that it is impossible for politics to function outside the realm of communication for what is politics in the 21st century if not communication itself? With

mediatized politics being without autonomy, it is found that the citizen/consumer is largely excluded from direct political action (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 250). Instead, a condensed reality becomes widespread, a 'Twitterization' of everything political. These condensed realities remain in essence signifiers to greater content. Thus, the image of an individual, regardless of the angle from which it is portrayed, remains internally slanted in its limitation. Condensing personal reportage naturally implies a filter, and it is here that power is afforded to the press as it is their constructed versions of issues that are portrayed as objective and complete. There is always the selection necessary for condensation. Thus, some aspects of objectivity become obsolete. Through the powerful construct of mediatization, politics have largely been turned into public relations, a sphere of soundbite communication filtered through a commercially set up scheme.

Within mediatization theory is the conviction that these individuals turn more and more toward their own drift in obtaining knowledge from media sources, thus individually formulating their own attitudes which are largely exterior to the ideology of the political party. When aligned to these views the political effect of the press becomes evident. Those with access to information and intellectual sophistication "turn to the mass media for political orientation and guidance" (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 252). The press depiction thus increasingly becomes the first, if not the only, representation the reader confronts before decision-making.

With the media being the central source of knowledge to many, this reality is brought to "shape the meanings and values that inform our attitudes and behaviours" (Jansson, 2002, p. 6). It is thus of utmost importance to note the world as mediatized, in which the press, through its exploits, develops images of individuals that are essentially not the individuals themselves but rather their mediatized doppelgangers.

In order to analyse the juxtaposed press characterization of Julius Malema, the workings of the press must be clear, with specific focus on the 'what' and the 'how' as agenda setting and framing describe them. Framing gives meaning to the power of the communicating text. It provides structure of understanding both to the consumer of the story as well as the purposes of this study. By taking stock of both selection and salience the shape and perspective of the frame is illuminated. By posing distinct enquiries as to the content of the text the frame is reduced down to one which is comprehensible. Much of that which is excess is removed, making analysis less complex as well as assisting in shaping a greater understanding of the media effects at play.

By setting the agenda, the press guides its audience in forming opinions, priming them towards certain perspectives. Priming is mainly used by the author to capture the attention of the audience in order to sell a story. Together with agenda setting, framing allows for inspection into the competitive business as inherent in the mass media, enabling a review of how representation in the press is crafted. Mediatization theory shows how politics has become inseparable from the media, with mediatization being process-oriented. It allows for press-political relations and content to be exposed and analysed. Mediatization theory presents representation as a means to influence. To comprehend this relation is invaluable in the media-saturated world, as is asking: who speaks and who listens? Mediatization and other theories of media effects allow representation to be examinable and then discernable by deconstructing complex data. The complexity of debunking the characterization of a public figure lies in the limitations associated. It thus remains pertinent throughout to utilize the applicable theories, which offer meaning to the diverging anomalies present.

There is a very limited collection of studies that relate to the South African domain of media effects and especially to the representation of political individuals in the press. From this limitation the lack of coherence between the government and the media is substantiated.

The shortage of analysis and discussion surrounding this condition grants this research legitimacy and pertinence. With politics being largely mediated, Wasserman and de Beer's summation of "a fragile affair" best sums up the evasive ambivalence as held by the political authority towards the media's agency as a political driver. With Wasserman, de Beer and Hyde-Clarke deeming the orientation of the press to be conflict-centred as well as largely Afro-pessimistic (Wasserman & de Beer, 2005, p. 193; Hyde-Clarke, 2010, p. 41), this study is set to empirically examine the degree and character of the political force of the press through the following research question: does the South African press depict Julius Malema antagonistically?

V. Research Methodology

This research tracks five separate news events in which Julius Malema is central. The selected topics were all well published throughout the South African press. These cases, taken from a two-year timeline of representation, are examples of the issues that have contributed to Malema's characterization in the press. These are all matters that relate to or report on Malema's orations and, where applicable, the retort of opposing parties. By limiting this analysis to one which only views his portrayal in a fashion that is competitive with another party, this study works within a particular framework. Exhibiting his depiction in a construct, which promises to substantiate the inquiry into the nature and extent of the oppositional role that the press plays in its role as fourth estate, his representation contributes to assessing the exploits of the press. The scope of this study encompasses the five selected topics, each viewed over the span of a week following the first day it was reported on in the press. All of the events took place between February 2009 and May 2011. Though he was mentioned in various other news articles during the weeks in question, only the stories relating to the following events are examined here:

- a. The public quarrel, including two-way name-calling, between Malema and the leaders of the DA (Democratic Alliance), most notably DA leader, Helen Zille (24 February 2009).
- b. The inflammatory remarks made between Malema and the South African Communist Party General Secretary, Jeremy Cronin (20 November 2009).
- c. Malema's singing of the *Dibul' Ibhunú (Shoot the Boer)* song, including retort where applicable (10 March 2010).
- d. Malema expelling BBC journalist, Jonah Fisher, from a press conference, including retort where applicable (9 April 2010).
- e. Malema's calls for nationalisation, emphasising mine and 'white land' expropriation, including retort where applicable (12 May 2011).

Two prominent South African daily newspapers were used in this content analysis. One is *The Sowetan*, a left leaning Gauteng based newspaper born out of the liberation struggle when it was, and arguably still is, sympathetic to the ANC. It circulates 1 618 000 copies a day (Amps, 2011). The other is *The Cape Times*, traditionally a liberal middle-class newspaper, based in Cape Town with a much lower circulation, about 231 000 copies a day (Amps, 2011). The weekday editions of these two papers were chosen as covering a wide spectrum of the South African newspaper establishment. The two papers are not explicitly compared to each other. Their differences in outlook and format allow for a broad scope of discernment.

The units of analysis are all the articles pertaining to Malema and the five separate events written by staff journalists and published in the daily editions of *The Sowetan* and *The Cape Times*. In order to ensure adequate content to be available for the analysis at least three articles directly concerning Malema had to appear in each newspaper over the span of the week. The data collection incorporated here takes the place of a content analysis, a systematic methodology of investigation that allows for emphasis on both the nature and extent of press

representation (Berger, 1998, p. 23). Content analysis is as Titscher (as cited in Hyde-Clarke, 2011, p.46) suggests “the longest established method of text analysis among the set of empirical methods of social investigation.” This technique allows the researcher to track trends in the media, using both quantitative as well as qualitative elements. This “theoretical triangulation,” says Denzin (1970), allows for a greater interpretation of the data while ensuring their regularity. Only quantitative analysis will, however, be used in methodologically setting up the findings. This is done in order to offer a verbatim display of the wordage used in the different newspapers.

The operational variables, used to determine both the nature and extent of press characterization, are delineated here in nine probing enquiries. The variables are selected as to offer clear categorizations of the semantic value of the texts. As such, the variables help debunk the depictions by sorting each portrayal according to established terminological fields. The nine categories offer significant perception of the media effects at play.

The qualitative component lies in the structuring of the nine coded enquiries. These categories are informed by the aims of the study. By organizing the coded operational variables accordingly, individually demarcated segments are established. Coding allows for categories bounded by semantics. The incisively chosen qualitative process of coding accords the intrinsic meaning and richness of the validating quantitative data to be extracted. The underlying significance of the text is brought out through the partnership of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The quantitative process thus proceeds from the qualitative coding system. It utilizes this construction to interpret raw data and to tabulate empirical findings. It remains essential not to convey qualitative results as quantitative as this could imply inferential bias. As such, the link between the two must remain as that of a chain connecting the two yet keeping them apart. The quantitative analysis according to the aims of the study hinges on semantic categorisation and subsequent numerical computation in order to allow

for an empirical calculation. Such a study could be criticised for its offering only a single reality, limited by its constructionist angle, but as it sets out to expose a complex domain, such a narrow focus is practicable.

VI. Methodological Results

A. Tables

Table 1

Results from The Cape Times

	Event1	Event 2	Event 3	Event 4	Event 5
Number of articles	8	7	6	5	4
Wordage in the headlines:					
- Rational/Objective	3	2	5	0	2
- Emotive/Sensational	5	5	1	5	2
Phraseology used in the article to describe the events:					
- Substantive/Cognitive (Neutral)	2	2	4	0	3
- Affective/Emotional (Valence)	6	5	2	5	1
Tone of the author (specific wordage) in their description of					

Malema:					
- Flattering	0	0	0	0	1
- Objective	5	3	4	1	3
- Derogatory	3	4	2	4	0
Content and diction of Malema's reported oration:					
- Righteous/Substantive	0	0	0	0	0
- Neutral	2	3	2	1	3
- Insolent/Emotional	6	4	4	4	1
Depiction of Malema throughout the article:					
- Innocuous/Just	0	0	0	0	1
- Neutral	3	2	5	0	2
- Deviant/Unjust	5	5	1	5	1
Content and diction of the opposing party, where applicable:					
- Righteous/Substantive	0	4	0	0	0
- Neutral	1	3	2	3	2
- Insolent/Emotional	5	0	0	1	0
- Not applicable	2	0	4	1	2
Depiction of the opposing party, where applicable:					
- Innocuous/Just	1	5	0	3	0
- Neutral	4	2	2	0	2

- Deviant/Unjust	3	0	0	1	0
- Not applicable	0	0	4	1	2
The article addresses issues that:					
- Stand alone (Independent)	3	7	5	2	2
- Occur in a broader lineation of events	4	0	1	3	2
Throughout the article Malema is framed when relating to the issue:					
- In a personal capacity	4	6	3	4	2
- As a direct representative of the ANCYL	4	1	3	1	2

Table 2***Results from The Sowetan***

	Event 1	Event 2	Event 3	Event 4	Event 5
Number of articles	6	3	4	8	3
Wordage in the headlines:					
- Rational/Objective	4	1	2	5	2
- Emotive/Sensational	2	2	2	3	1
Phraseology used in the article to describe the events:					
- Substantive/Cognitive (Neutral)	1	2	3	4	3

- Affective/Emotional (Valence)	5	1	1	4	0
Tone of the author (specific wordage) in their description of Malema:					
- Flattering	0	0	0	0	0
- Objective	4	1	1	6	3
- Derogatory	2	2	3	2	0
Content and diction of Malema's reported oration:					
- Righteous/Substantive	0	0	0	0	0
- Neutral	1	0	0	3	3
- Insolent/Emotional	5	3	4	5	0
Depiction of Malema throughout the article:					
- Innocuous/Just	0	0	0	0	0
- Neutral	1	3	0	4	3
- Deviant/Unjust	5	0	4	4	0
Content and diction of the opposing party, where applicable:					
- Righteous/Substantive	0	0	0	2	0
- Neutral	0	1	3	4	2
- Insolent/Emotional	2	2	0	0	0
- Not applicable	4	0	1	2	1
Depiction of the opposing party, where applicable:					

- Innocuous/Just	1	0	3	5	0
- Neutral	4	3	0	2	2
- Deviant/Unjust	1	0	0	0	0
- Not applicable	0	0	1	1	1
Article addresses issues that:					
- Stand alone (Independent)	4	3	2	5	3
- Occur in broader lineation of events	2	0	2	3	0
Throughout the article Malema is framed when relating to the issue:					
- In a personal capacity	5	3	3	4	3
- As a direct representative of the ANCYL	1	0	1	4	0

Table 3***Overall Results of The Cape Times, The Sowetan and Both Combined***

	The Cape		
	<i>Times</i>	<i>The Sowetan</i>	Combined
Total number of articles	30	24	54
Wordage in the headlines:			
- Rational/Objective	12	14	26
- Emotive/Sensational	18	10	28
Phraseology used in the article to			

describe the events:

- Substantive/Cognitive (Neutral)	11	13	24
- Affective/Emotional (Valence)	19	11	30

Tone of the author (specific wordage) in
their description of Malema:

- Flattering	1	0	1
- Objective	16	15	31
- Derogatory	13	9	22

Content and diction of

Malema's reported oration:

- Righteous/Substantive	0	0	0
- Neutral	11	7	18
- Insolent/Emotional	19	17	36

Depiction of Malema

throughout the article:

- Innocuous/Just	1	0	1
- Neutral	12	11	23
- Deviant/Unjust	17	13	30

Content and diction of the

opposing party, where applicable:

- Righteous/Substantive	4	2	6
- Neutral	11	10	21
- Insolent/Emotional	6	4	10
- Not applicable	9	8	17

Depiction of the opposing party,

where applicable:

- Innocuous/Just	9	9	18
- Neutral	10	11	21
- Deviant/Unjust	4	1	5
- Not applicable	7	3	10

Article addresses issues that:

- Stand alone (Independent)	19	17	36
- Occur in broader lineation of events	11	7	18

Throughout the article Malema is framed when relating to the issue:

- In a personal capacity	19	18	37
- As a direct representative of the ANCYL	11	6	17

B. Graphs

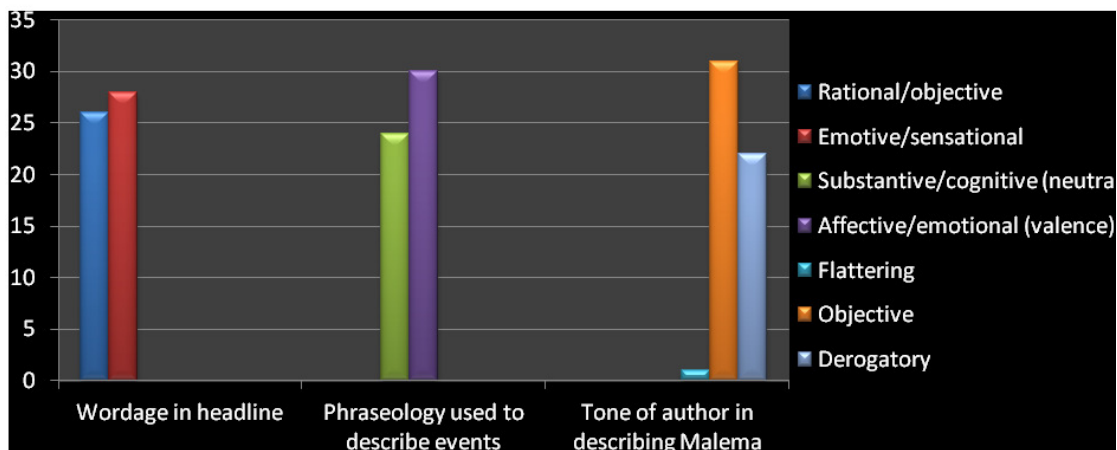


Figure 1. Wordage, phraseology and tone used by the author

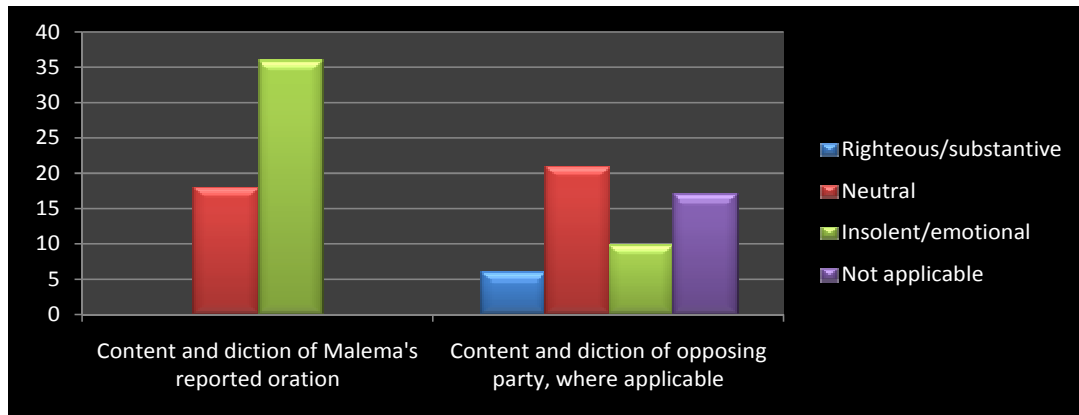


Figure 2. The content and diction of the interlocutors

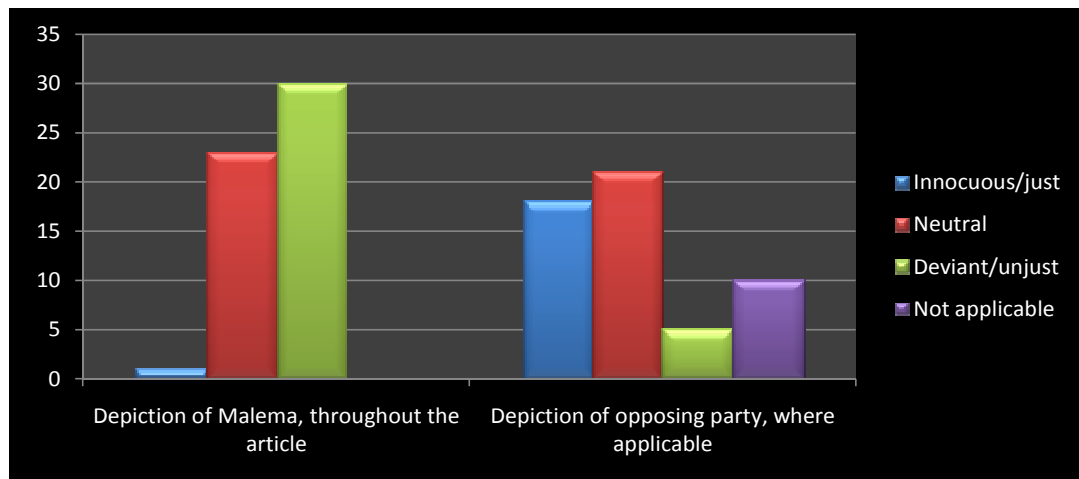


Figure 3. Character depiction

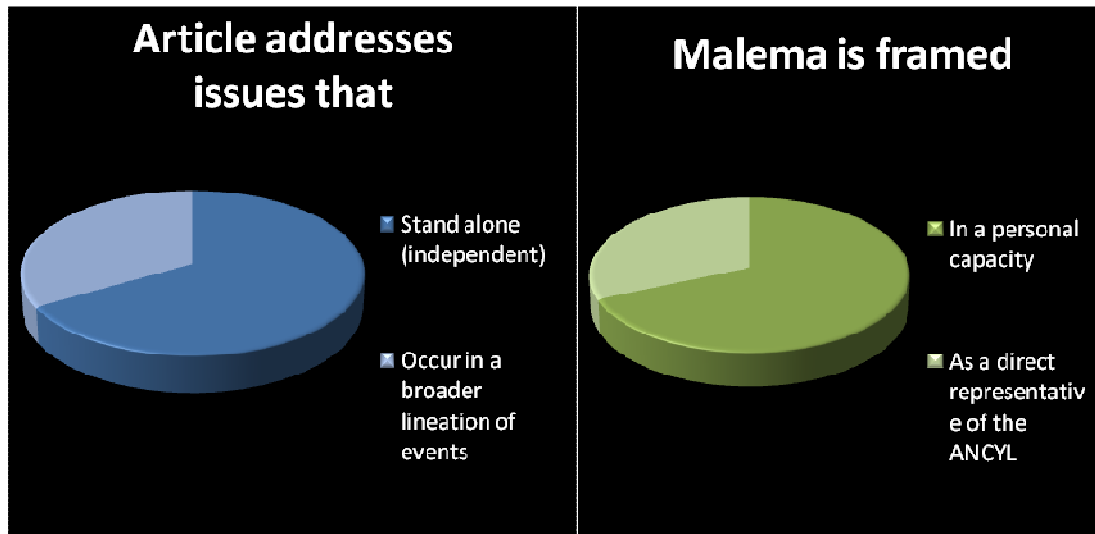


Figure 4. Dependent versus independent issues *Figure 5. Affiliation of the frame*

VII. Findings

Throughout the five week examination period, 54 articles across the two papers featured Julius Malema centrally to the specific issues under study. Even though the timeframe was explicitly selected, this mass reportage of a junior individual who held no public office at the time is indeed noteworthy. There had in fact been various other articles featuring Malema during these weeks of investigation, but as these did not report on the issues in question they were not included. With an average exceeding one article per day of investigation across the two weekday papers, this cross-section of the press clearly shows Malema's depiction in controversial events to be prioritised. It is certainly remarkable that this youth leader has such a presence in the eyes of the press and subsequently in the minds of the public. From these findings it becomes all too clear that he plays a central role in the contemporary South African political scene or at least that is what the press is unambiguously telling its readers.

The findings from Figure 1 indicate that headlines are indeed good indicators for the content of articles. Roughly the same percentage of articles carried an 'emotive' headline as those which were characterized by 'affective' content. These percentages both respectively outweighed their counterparts, the categories of 'objective' and 'substantive'. Though this

margin proves to be small, it is still significant to note that both the headlines as well as the content of the articles were tilted in favour of emotive phraseology. Given that the issues tracked here are polemical, it is remarkable that Malema received such great depiction when issues were presented as ‘valent,’ valency being a core dimension of the press agenda enforcing obtrusiveness. The matters reported on here were made obtrusive as ‘affective’ prevailed over ‘substantive’ descriptions. This valency contributes substance to Malema’s image, serving up obtrusive narratives to the readers (Kiouisis, 2004, p. 76)

Figure 1, furthermore, illustrates that the ‘objective’ tone was the most prevalent in describing Malema. Despite the prevalence of the ‘objective’ tone, the glaring difference between ‘derogatory’ and ‘flattering’ descriptions deserves attention. It is not that a flattering tone is in any way required, but an overwhelming twenty two to one articles incorporated a derogatory tone, thus offering this analysis great insights into the manner in which Malema’s image is constructed in the press. With Figure 1 offering a view of the framing of the issue at hand being relatively stable, it is significant to note the agenda being set to a tone that presents Malema in a deprecating manner. As such, the reader is primed with an objective description as well as a derogatory one which, according to agenda setting theory, influences opinion formation. What the reader is oriented to think about here is the polarised view of Malema in which he is derogated. While it is not only the author’s tone that determines the ‘game frame,’ such a critical attitude does localise him on the ‘losing’ side. The comments of Wasserman, de Beer and Hyde-Clarke relating to heightened Afro-pessimism in the press are recalled when observing such orientation. The tone reporting on Malema clearly points towards a fixed message of despair, suggesting hopelessness and directly opposing the governmental agenda for the press as socially constructive. This orientation contributes to a growing spiral of cynicism, which intrinsically keeps the public away from real politics, involving them in a cyclical realm of social problems as opposed to solutions.

Figure 5 shows that more than double the number of articles frame Malema in a 'personal capacity,' as opposed to those framing him as a 'direct representative of the ANCYL.' This ascendance of the individual frame contributes to the construction of a cult of personality. As such his image is ascribed much substance as it becomes integrated in the public discourse, in time a set representation becoming normalised (Langer, 2007, p. 71). This individual depiction makes his doings central to the readers, thus their attitudes are being shaped from that which is presented. Due to this dominance in representation of personal capacity, the findings from the other figures present even greater significance to his characterisation.

Figure 2 shows the content and diction of Malema's use of language to be highly 'insolent.' The count of articles where his language was 'insolent' was exactly double that in which it was found to be 'neutral.' While the issues at hand were controversial and while the author was reporting on current affairs, thus given little time to reflect on frequently emotive comments, the dominant angle of reportage does bring into question the motives of the press, especially where it becomes clear that his impassioned charisma is invariably presented as destructive. Through the literature review it was seen that, that which is said by an actor directly builds character, thus by steering clear of direct judgement, the press can shape an individual through the individual's own words. By perpetually reporting on a personality prone to belligerent oration the author is able to saliently select and set the agenda through snippets of soundbite reporting focussing on controversial issues and passing off an impartial view via using the speech of the party present.

This is not to say that the press is unbalanced. Instead this exhibits its capacity to intentionally direct attention through its selection of coverage, which is intrinsically directed to being enterprisingly market driven. The press's reportage of Malema's radical content and diction could be read as a direct counterbalance, a concerted effort to oppose his pugnacity. Content and diction largely shape personalities accordingly. Noting the role that the press

plays in selecting that which is reported on, the difference between image and reality comes into question. By reporting on his aggressive language, his image is afforded belligerent substantiation. However, it is clear that his controversially charismatic personality, combined with his ability to deliver definitive speeches, yields him the ability to influence political waves, which could be exactly what he strives for as it affords him the ears of the public. His command over aggressive dialogue evokes retorting hostility. However, mostly, where applicable, the content and diction of the opposing party is reported on as 'neutral,' with some retorts being 'substantive.' This balanced neutrality suggests a gentler touch in dealing with the opposing party. Their speech remains a riposte to Malema's, aligned to the counterbalance that the press bears.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 all inform the framing process, which remains intrinsically a contextualising process. In figure 3, Malema is depicted largely as 'deviant.' Here depiction corresponds to the manner in which he is framed. Drawing extensively from Entman's description of framing, being the driving power behind the communicating text, depiction is informed by that which evaluates and diagnoses the content of the article (Entman, 2004, p. 1). By viewing the frame as either 'just' or 'unjust,' when not 'neutral,' the articles were evaluated in their entirety, drawing from their explicit accounts. Though drawing only from the denotative significance of the texts, acknowledgment must be given to the fact that only one researcher examined the work, more researchers would possibly have contributed to greater consistency.

The dominance of the 'unjust' frame in Figure 3 is in ascendance over the 'neutral' one, while on only one occasion is his depiction presented as 'just.' Malema's frame throughout the study is thus one of deviance. Significantly, Figure 3 also points to the framing of the opposing party, where applicable. The 'neutral' frame is dominant here, but when not 'neutral' the evaluation is largely tilted towards a 'just' depiction of the opposing party. With

the articles relating to issues of dispute, the contextualisation of the various frames displays ideas as transferred through the selected salience, but when one frame dominates, the contextualisation of scope becomes limited. In accordance with the 'game frame,' where the 'winner' and the 'loser' are distinguished separately, Malema is predominantly framed as the 'loser.' It is not that the opposing party necessarily 'triumphs' over him. Rather, it is that he is framed as 'unjust,' and thus seen as deficient while the opposing party picks up the spoils as 'winner.' When reported on, the opposing party is framed against the explicitly central figure of Malema; thus, it is always framed in retort. On ten occasions, the article only observed Malema with no other party being framed. When the opposing party is framed in retort, and especially when no other party is being framed, the press can be seen to act as a player in the game, offering resistance through its depiction of the central player.

Aligned to the 'game frame,' Wolfsfeld's political contest model suggests that when one frame is promoted against another, the result is the political influence of the party being promoted (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 2). In this case, the reverse is seen where the central frame in which Malema is presented is explicitly demoted offering political dissuasion. By influencing the depiction of the parties involved, the press acts as the moral force explicitly promoting or demoting. However, the political contest model also illuminates the profiteering aspects of the press, as is seen in Herman and Chomsky (1988), where the businesslike media explicitly distort reportage in order to accommodate the profit motive. Thus, divergence arises in viewing its role as fourth estate, benefiting from its role as moral force through framing, but at the same time taking note of its office as enterprising business.

The political contest remains a competition for access, and even though Malema's representation is dissuading, it must be noted that by receiving such a mass of attention as he does it adds to building his cult of personality. This characterization proves to be a direct route to the public. His mediatization as 'deviant' promoted his flagrantly revolutionary

intentions through soundbite communication. The condensed reality that mediatization presents could thus be seen as public relations for his supposed ideology for extreme change.

The findings in Figure 4 emphatically point towards a dominant use of episodic framing, with articles framing the issues as 'standing alone' being exactly double in number those that frame them as 'occurring in a broader lineation of events.' As discussed earlier, episodic framing describes events singularly as closed and complete. While the issues reported on do describe specific topical occurrences, the overwhelming proof as found in Figure 4 suggests that not enough is done to contextualise the matters that make the news. By decontextualising the reader from the setting, the episodic frame affords a more dramatically immediate reading of the event. Frames that cover broader timelines present greater context by not reporting on everything as effectual. Thus, if an event is recounted in a rushed or lurid manner, its broader contextualisation would allow for greater conceptualisation of the issue, which would ensure greater press responsibility. Such contextualisation is particularly essential when polemical matters are presented, thus offering greater objectivity as opposed to the injection of prompt substance as seen in episodic frames. These frames are prone to overemphasise the roles of the individuals depicted centrally. The bigger picture becomes blurred by offering the reader situational facts, thus allowing for personal interpretation from singular stories and not requiring the reader to examine a broader representation. With such a narrow scope, greater abstraction of the thematic schema takes place. Such framing essentially isolates the individuals reported on, allowing judgements from content that is fundamentally abbreviated. If placed in terms of 'horse race,' the dominant episodic frames do not cover the race, but merely offer the result. By simply ascribing meaning to accessible issues, a spiral of political cynicism arises among the public perception (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996, p. 74).

It has become clear from the influential power the press wields that the research question, which asks whether the press depicts Malema antagonistically, does not merit a simple

answer. In essence, the press can and does only present its assessment in an abbreviated manner. With political events taking place haphazardly the way it report on issues is essentially often through an episodic frame, as seen throughout the analysis. However, with the influential role that it plays, contextualisation is needed when covering polemical issues, especially when relating to an individual such as Malema who holds a cult of personality wielded through obtrusive depiction. Thus, by placing texts into a broader lineation of events, allowing for greater contextualisation, the press will ensure a greater degree of responsibility.

The extent to which Malema already features in the press has cyclically prioritised his depiction even further. His deviant image is surrounded by sensational topics elevating his presence. With his mere presence explicitly implicating the issues at hand as being obtrusive, his image becomes normalised as insolent. Such reporting makes for sensational reading, which additionally spurs the newspapers on with such reportage being vendible.

The degree and character of the political force of the press are best shown through the consistently deprecating way in which Malema is framed. He is, however, mostly framed through selective soundbites from his speeches used in the compilation of reports that decontextualise this individual prone to belligerent comments. The character of the press illustrates a countering power, the elevated nature of mediatization and the authority of heightened media logic offering it great agency. The degree of political force is proved through predominant episodic and emotive framing. His explicitly polarised depiction and the insolent reportage of his content and diction all add up to a presentation of pugnacity.

Through an accumulative construction of sensational narratives Malema's character is perpetually substantiated and reinforced by controversial affairs. Though the press's countering depiction of Malema does not present intrinsic malevolence, his actions are presented as antagonistic. His explicitly insolent diction is used as fodder to engage resistance. Such reporting signifies irresponsibility where, within a decontextualised

framework, selective soundbite journalism manipulates its readers accordingly, shaping content from truncated snippets that are patched together within the prevailing media logic.

VIII. Discussion

Though limited to viewing only a cross-section of the events that have yielded Julius Malema's controversial characterization, this study has affirmed the role of the press as a political force, detailing the oppositional manner in which it depicts Malema. The analysis shows a prevailing media logic where an antagonistic frame is crafted from his insolent oration. This valency of depiction affirms that it is media logic that constitutes political communication. It is from this reportage that Malema is yielded a substantial position in the South African press. Regardless of its pessimistic angle, Malema's depiction has created a powerful cult of personality, an ostensibly permanent news feature, and a persona that straddles the political realm. By using an antagonistic frame to describe an antagonistic individual, the press effectively uses the vigour and posture of the said individual as countering resistance to his highly emotive and aversive oration. This perspective allowed for examining the oppositional political force of the press. Malema has proved to be the ideal individual to study in this manner. With controversy perennially surrounding him, his depiction in the press is clearly illuminated and so is the modality of press representation corresponding to him.

In conclusion, this study has merely scratched the surface as to political representation in the press. Further work is necessitated to achieve a greater comprehension. The research has indicated a powerful media logic, which has taken upon itself the responsibility to keep political power in check. This study has, however, ascertained that greater measures are needed in order to ensure responsibility. Significantly, during the compilation of this research The Press Council of South Africa had its Press Code refashioned. The modifications to the code that governs print media were instituted allowing for the improvement and assurance of

quality journalism with a new clause which concerns reputation and dignity (The Press Council of South Africa, 2011). This adjustment came at a time when the diverging views of the ANC and the press seemed incompatible, and the press especially came under strain for the manner in which it dealt with individuals. This improvement to the code, accompanied by the shelving of the Media Appeals Tribunal, indicates possible amelioration between the political incumbency and the press. The findings from this study correspond to the refashioned Press Code and support its call for greater press responsibility, especially endorsing the renewed focus on the representation of the individual.

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