ABSTRACT
This article attempts to understand how print cultures servicing different language communities fuel nationalisms that are not coterminous with a nation state. In the tradition of scholars like Benedict Anderson, it examines the connections between nationalism and print culture, but with reference to a single important event: violence at the Marikana mine. These events constituted the largest act of lethal force against civilians in the post-apartheid era. The South African press in three languages – Afrikaans, isiZulu, and English – covered the violence that erupted at the Lonmin mine in Marikana in mid-August 2012. Using original translations of daily newspapers and quantitative content analysis, the article assesses the differences among the various print media outlets covering the event. It finds that news coverage varied significantly according to the language medium in three ways: attribution of action, portrayal of sympathy and blame, and inclusion of political and economic coverage in the aftermath of the violence. These variations in coverage coincided with differences between reading publics divided by race, class, and location. The article argues that the English-language bias of most media analysis misses key points of contestation that occur in different media, both within South Africa, and throughout the post-colonial world.

ON 16 AUGUST 2012, after six days of strikes at a mine in North West Province, South Africa, police and striking miners clashed. It all started when workers at the Lonmin Platinum mine undertook unprotected strike action. Beginning on 10 August, thousands of workers walked out, demanding higher wages. The miners sought an increase in pay to match escalation in the market

*Carolyn E. Holmes (carolyneholmes@gmail.com) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science, Indiana University, and a Research Associate in the Department of Sociology, University of Pretoria. I would like to thank the following people for their help in the development and refinement of this paper: Lauren MacLean, Alex Lichtenstein, Andries Bezuidenhout, Irma du Plessis, Vasabjit Banerjee, and Timothy Rich. For their help in double checking translations, I am indebted to Heila Gonin, Madeleine Gonin, Muziwandile Hadebe, and Sindisiwe Lekoba. Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Institute for International Education for their funding of a Fellowship for Overseas Study which allowed me to conduct my dissertation fieldwork as well as to work on related projects in 2012–13.
price of platinum, as well as in compensation for the dangerous jobs that they were performing. Between 10 and 15 August, ten people were killed in violence caused by the strike, including two police officers, two private security guards, and six miners. By 15 August, several high-ranking politicians had expressed concern over the violence at the mine and pressured the police to take decisive action in dealing with strikers. But negotiations between police and strike leaders over the cessation of hostilities fell apart that afternoon. The next day, South African Police Service members opened fire on a crowd of striking miners, first with rubber bullets and then with live ammunition. Thirty-four people were killed and at least 78 more wounded. In the aftermath of the violence, police arrested at least 270 other workers.

The events of that afternoon constitute the most severe use of deadly force by police in the post-apartheid era. The incident was described in English-language newspapers as a ‘tragedy’ and a ‘massacre’, but is most commonly referred to by the name of the town in which it occurred: Marikana. The strike and the ensuing outbreak of violence made headlines across South Africa for weeks. On the whole, these facts are largely undisputed, yet at the time of initial coverage of these events, vastly different narratives emerged from different language presses.

In addition to English, South African newspapers are printed in two other major languages: Afrikaans and isiZulu. This article examines six newspapers that serve distinct ethno-linguistic communities: iSolezwe in isiZulu, the Naspers group newspapers in Afrikaans, and The Star and The Sowetan in English. Taking off from Benedict Anderson’s theory of the role of print media in building an ‘imagined community’, the article shows how such media operate within multilingual states and how they support the creation of national and sub-national imagined communities. By focusing on language communities that are the bases of distinct identities, it attempts to understand the ways in which the differences in coverage among these papers create disparities in understanding across communities and interrupt the process of national identity formation through the iterative historical process of news coverage.

In Imagined Communities, Anderson argues that print media play an essential role in linguistically, temporally, and experientially grounding an emerging community within the simultaneity of nationalist history by

providing an ‘image of antiquity’, a ‘language of power’, and a ‘unified field of exchange’.\(^5\) But what are the implications of Anderson’s argument in multilingual nation states such as South Africa? If, as Anderson proposes, language standardization and print media help to divide the world into the categories of “us” and “them”, then would print media in many languages within a single state serve to fuel sub-national communities? If communities receive substantially different coverage of key events in national history, could this interrupt the processes of forming an identity that is coterminous with an emerging nation state?

This article argues that the processes of print and linguistic nationalism are indeed taking place within sub-national communities in post-apartheid South Africa. For Anderson, the key characteristics of nationhood for his imagined communities are limited scope and sovereignty.\(^6\) Although the communities served by different language presses are limited by linguistic differences, no single community is sovereign because they are all contained within the bounds of a single multilingual state. Because the news cycle is an iterative process of history making, the differences presented by print media and the effects they have on the consolidation of group identity could pose challenges for the development of national identities because of issues of translatability and incommensurability. In developing different narratives around key events, these limited but not sovereign communities prevent the development of overarching and potentially integrative national vocabularies through which discussions across cleavages could occur.

Although the Farlam Commission investigated and reported a single and authoritative version of events, the Marikana story presents an interesting case study in ongoing print nationalisms because of the differences in coverage in the immediate aftermath of the violence.\(^7\) The ‘imagined communities’ in South Africa, all products of political interventions aimed at shoring up the boundaries between ethno-linguistic and racial groups, are divided by many factors. The creation of new sources of division such as the vocabulary to talk about points of national crisis serves to further divide the national community. Compounded problems of incommensurability and untranslatability deprive people of the tools necessary to talk across the historically rooted boundaries of class and location, as well as the obvious divides of language.

This article shows that interpretations of key aspects of the Marikana violence differed substantially among different language presses in South Africa, particularly regarding the framing of major actors, the attributions of blame and sympathy, the construction of active and passive participants,


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 6.

and the presence of economic and political coverage. These differences highlight how the language through which South Africans consume media substantially shapes the narratives to which they are exposed in terms of what happened and how it should be interpreted. The differences in coverage almost certainly reflected the predispositions of the readers as well as helping to shape readers’ views. Thus, whether in reflecting pre-existing cleavages or in re-creating them, the media continuously entrench exclusive identification along the lines of already deep social divisions.

To present these arguments, the article proceeds by discussing the social landscape of post-apartheid South Africa with reference to the three linguistic communities as well as the role that English plays within the social and political life of the country. The next section presents the results of the quantitative content analysis (QCA) analysis of English, Afrikaans, and isiZulu newspapers to deduce the major points of difference in the coverage presented by these media. Some of the limitations of this method are also discussed. Given the constraints of QCA for non-English textual analysis, the article also draws on qualitative, in-depth comparisons of the headlines and content of newspapers in Afrikaans and isiZulu along the identified key themes: attributions of action, points of sympathy, and inclusion of political and economic analysis in coverage. It concludes by discussing the particularities of multilingual press polarization as well as the potential consequences that the differences listed above have for the development of a broader South African identity.

Newspapers, languages, and their demographics – mutually reinforcing cleavages

The divisions between different language communities in South Africa are not based on language only. Although language groups are by no means homogeneous, the regional, class-based and ethno-racial divides – created through centuries of in-group cohesion and the policies of segregation implemented by the colonial and apartheid states – reinforce the divisions between language communities. Both Afrikaans and isiZulu are languages whose speakers are geographically centred in South Africa, and whose consolidation and standardization took place in the early decades of the twentieth century. As relatively young languages spoken by communities that also emerged relatively recently as cohesive entities, Afrikaans and isiZulu attest to ‘the material reality of the power of artificial homogenization’ actively pursued by the colonial and apartheid regimes.8 Their coherence as standardized languages is the result of intense social engineering, as is the fact

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that these divisions coincide with politically salient issues of class, race, and location. Both languages are spoken widely throughout the country, with isiZulu being spoken as a first language by more than 22 percent of the population and serving as an urban lingua franca for many black South Africans. White and coloured communities speak Afrikaans, with 13.4 percent of the total South African population claiming it as a first language.

English, by contrast, is only spoken as a first language by 9.6 percent of the total South African population. Thus, although English language media are the largest source of daily news in South Africa, the audience of the English-language press is mostly comprised of people who speak English as a second language. Indeed, English is by far the most commonly reported second language in the census, with just over 30 percent of individuals claiming second-language proficiency. English is the medium of major parts of the public sphere in South Africa, including business, government, and street signs. By contrast, Afrikaans is spoken as a second language by 5.1 percent of the population. Zulu is reported as a second language by 3.9 percent. It could be argued that the extent to which these three languages are spoken as second languages gives rise to a situation in which the language of media publication is less important, because stories targeted at one community in one language can be read by members of another, undermining the linguistic barriers between different consumers of information.

However, I contend that the translatability of different media accounts is actually very limited, as nearly half of the South African population as a whole (48 percent), and 25 percent of first-language isiZulu-speakers, report speaking no second language. Moreover, monolingualism is far from random. It is most prevalent among low-income groups, with 39 percent of the 2011 census sample being both monolingual and in the lowest third of income categories. Those who report only speaking one language are also geographically concentrated in peri-urban and rural areas. Interestingly,

15. These income categories are those that report earning less than ZAR19,200 per annum. People who report having no income and are also monolingual make up 19.7 percent of the total census sample.
however, monolingualism is not broadly correlated with age, suggesting that such cleavages are unlikely to be ameliorated by the passage of time. Given this distribution of monolingualism, it is clear that while more cosmopolitan urbanites may be able to read a broad range of news in different languages, bounded language communities exist in many parts of the country.

This is an important point given the historical development of South African languages and the media over the last hundred years. With the development of the Union of South Africa and later the ideology of apartheid, language communities and the ethno-racial identities that were associated with them were promoted by the apartheid state as the foundational identity matrix for citizens in the sovereign state. Although the apartheid state’s official policies of discrimination were framed in terms of both race and ethnicity, the latter criterion was deeply connected to primordialist conceptions of tribalism and linked with the foundational principle of language. Because of the apartheid regime’s reliance on mother-tongue language as an organizing principle, the material circumstances, geographical location, and racial categorization of these groups coincide to a greater or lesser degree with the language they speak.

Although twenty years have passed since the first democratic elections, the effects of apartheid are still felt, and the geographies of segregation are still largely intact. Despite some evidence to suggest that new middle- and upper-class suburbs are more integrated now than they were in the mid-1990s, most urban and township space is still largely racially and to some extent ethno-linguistically homogeneous – and, in some places, it is re-segregating because of economic disparities and security pressures.

It is therefore difficult to tease out the implications of one division – language – from other social forces like class, race, and location. However, because the influence of print media is largely transmitted through language, and because these processes are observable and iterated through the daily news cycle, they constitute both a reflection and a deepening of the social cleavages associated with language communities.

20. This two-fold effect can be seen, for example, in the smaller differences between Afrikaans and English news coverage of the Marikana violence in the Western Cape, where the Afrikaans-speaking population spans the socio-economic spectrum and includes both mixed-race and white communities.
**South African media analysis: The English bias**

The extant scholarship on media and Marikana focuses on shortcomings of the English-language press in the coverage of the violence at Marikana. To a large extent, however, this reflects the state of media critique in South Africa on a number of important issues, such as the xenophobic violence of 2008. English-language newspapers have been the basis of critiquing the media because their readership dwarfs the reading publics of daily newspapers in Afrikaans and isiZulu.

However, to paint all Marikana news coverage as ‘an editorial failure’ based on an analysis of the English press seems to undervalue the contributions of the so-called vernacular press, which represents the most vibrant sector of South African print media. While the Zulu-language press in South Africa has seen sustained growth over the past decade, the Afrikaans press has also managed to avert some of the more precipitous declines in readership seen by many English-language news outlets.

Scholars have pointed to the lack of analysis of isiZulu and (now out of print) isiXhosa media in the context of scholarly media critique in South Africa. While scholars like Herman Wasserman have addressed the Afrikaans press, it has often been in isolation from the broader context of print media.

Yet scholars of media in multilingual contexts have pointed to the ways in which different language outlets shape and reflect different community realities.

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Examples in the literature include radio stations in Kenya preceding the 2007 election violence, newspapers in East Africa in the post-colonial period, and press catering to African diaspora communities in the West. The press is also theoretically seen to be, as discussed above, a central point of identification and the building of common identity, even among communities that are not connected to a nation state.

However, on the whole South African media analysis has ignored the fact that the media are produced in multiple languages. Although it is valuable to look at the English-language press as the largest body of print media in South Africa, this monolingual analysis misses critical aspects of the diversity of accounts. As my analysis below suggests, different English press outlets are echoing some or all of the messages put out by the Afrikaans and isiZulu press. The segmentation of the English press, along the same lines of race and class that segment language communities, means that the accounts offered by different outlets serve to reinforce the messages of the so-called vernacular press.

In order to capture the most relevant differences between newspapers, this article analyses headlines and content from all daily-distribution newspapers in South Africa in Afrikaans and isiZulu. To supplement these investigations, it also includes the two largest English-language daily, non-tabloid newspapers. None of these newspapers is affiliated with a political party or the government, and all are published in large cities in South Africa in three different provinces.

The Media24/Naspers conglomerate owns the three Afrikaans daily newspapers, Die Beeld, Die Volksblad, and Die Burger. These three newspapers geographically span the country and include Afrikaans-reading publics from the cosmopolitan Cape Town area to the more conservative Bloemfontein readership. These three newspapers published much of the same content by the same journalists in the immediate aftermath of the Marikana violence, as supplied to them by a central reporting team. Where differences arose, they are noted below.

Independent Newspapers, Ltd., owns iSolezwe, the only isiZulu daily newspaper. Zulu newspapers represent the fastest-growing sector of newsprint in South Africa. The newspapers’ sustained popularity in an age of

print media decline signals the importance of these outlets within the communities they serve.

The two English newspapers analysed in this article, *The Sowetan* and *The Star*, are published by Times Media Group and Independent Newspapers, Ltd, respectively. *The Sowetan*, started in 1981 as a newspaper of the liberation struggle, has a predominantly black readership and sells well throughout the country. The *Star*, by contrast, has a history of support for the apartheid regime, although it has had somewhat ambiguous politics in the post-apartheid era, and is patronized by a largely white and affluent readership. In important ways, these two English newspapers accord roughly with the reading publics of the isiZulu and Afrikaans newspapers’ readerships.

The circulation figures for each of the newspapers for the 2012 calendar year, as reported by the South African Audience Research Foundation, are reported in Table 1.

To understand these differences for all newspapers under consideration, the same basic sampling methods were used to identify articles and headlines for inclusion in this analysis. Searches were conducted in the newspapers’ online archives, with a specified date range of 16–27 August 2012, using only the word ‘Marikana’ as the central search term. All articles returned were read in full and included in the analysis if they were written by the newspaper staff, included original content, and were directly referencing the violence or reactions to it as central themes. QCA was run on all of the headlines and text of articles fitting these themes, and graphically displayed in word clouds produced by Atlas.ti. Due to the limitations of QCA in analysing non-English sources, further thematic investigations were carried out on Afrikaans and isiZulu newspaper headlines and content.

For the qualitative analysis, key quotes were identified from the articles and translated by the author. These quotes, included below, exemplify the broader message of the articles from which they are drawn.

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33. These parameters excluded the following types of newspaper content: letters to the editor, timelines of apartheid history and police violence, lists of social media interactions such as “Twitter Roundups”, and lists of commodity prices.

Comparison of the coverage of the Marikana violence

As the language of the public sphere in South Africa, English provides a common medium of exchange that is widely spoken outside South Africa, unlike Afrikaans and isiZulu. The English language media’s framing of the Marikana violence, then, could provide an interesting binding force to counteract the more fractious tendencies of the Afrikaans and isiZulu press. However, the English-language newspapers’ coverage of the strike and ensuing violence has been the subject of criticism from both academics and activists. Peter Alexander, Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell, and Bongani Xezwi criticize the English-language media for its reliance on official accounts, which they argue bias both the readers and the journalists against the striking miners. Jane Duncan, for example, finds that across all English-language news sources, in the period from 13–22 August, only about 3 percent of news information came from workers’ accounts of what was happening at the mine. The Afrikaans newspapers largely duplicate these lacunae. Testimony and statements from the miners and their families occur much less frequently in Afrikaans newspapers than in their isiZulu counterparts. These issues will be discussed in more detail below.

Yet extant accounts examine the English language press as a whole, and thereby flatten the differences in accounts within this category. While it is true that, for example, workers’ accounts of the violence and their demands are largely underrepresented across all media outlets, the differences

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Table 1 Readership statistics

South African print media readership statistics, January–December 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Afrikaans newspapers</th>
<th>isiZulu newspaper</th>
<th>English newspapers (selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of publication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>Die Beeld, 441,000</td>
<td>iSolezwe, 943,000</td>
<td>The Sowetan, 646,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>Die Burger, 497,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Star, 615,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloemfontein</td>
<td>Die Volksblad, 155,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>The Sowetan, 646,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>The Star, 615,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,093,000</td>
<td>943,000</td>
<td>2,261,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of adult population</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of the coverage of the Marikana violence

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Yet extant accounts examine the English language press as a whole, and thereby flatten the differences in accounts within this category. While it is true that, for example, workers’ accounts of the violence and their demands are largely underrepresented across all media outlets, the differences

36. Alexander, Lekgowa, Mmope, Sinwell, and Xezwi, Marikana: a view from the mountain and a case to answer.
between the two largest English language daily newspapers, *The Sowetan* and *The Star*, are striking. Figures 1 and 2 show word clouds of the first ten days of newspaper coverage from each of these outlets, both headlines and article text, with the size of the word indicating the frequency of its use.

Whereas *The Sowetan*’s coverage, shown in Figure 1, emphasizes the role of the police, and workers or miners, *The Star* (Figure 2) referenced mining interests and commodity prices, in addition to identifying the violence as happening in ‘Lonmin mines’, which explains the dominance of the corporation’s name in the coverage. The mine, along with its owners and shareholders, then, loom much larger in the stories presented by *The Star*, than in the coverage at the same time by *The Sowetan*. While neither paper
depended on the testimony of workers, as evidenced by Duncan’s analysis, they do tell different kinds of stories in the aggregate.

Similar patterns can be seen in the newspaper content of both the Afrikaans and isiZulu press, whose word clouds appear remarkably similar to those English newspapers with similar reading publics. The most frequently used words in iSolezwe, as shown in Figure 3, are amaphoyisa and abasebenzi, meaning police and workers, while other words like mayini and ezemayini/basemayini/emayini are the isiZulu words for mine, and the phrase ‘in the mine’. These results are similar to the results from The Sowetan. The stories in these two papers focus on the interactions of police and miners. By contrast, the Afrikaans press QCA, represented in Figure 4, largely...
replicates *The Star*’s central focus on Lonmin as an actor, with the Afrikaans words *werkers* and *mense* or workers and people, as the third possible actors. Interestingly, however, the Afrikaans newspapers’ word cloud has the term *geweld*, meaning force or violence, occurring relatively frequently. This term, which was settled on fairly quickly as the main descriptive term of the events at Marikana is not a strong word, and has ambiguous attributions of blame, as I discuss below.

The grammatical structures in Afrikaans and isiZulu reduce the ability of QCA to attribute importance to words correctly, since the algorithms are based on English grammar. Therefore, the next section delves more deeply into a qualitative analysis of the headlines and article text from the isiZulu and Afrikaans newspapers to understand more fully the differences in the accounts presented.

**Afrikaans and isiZulu news**

Table 2 displays the news headlines and key quotes from isiZulu and Afrikaans newspapers from 17 August 2012, the day the violence was first reported in print, as well as the ten days following. What this collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Afrikaans news</th>
<th>Zulu news</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 August</td>
<td>‘Lyke in Lonmin moles ruk SA/make internasionaal opslae’ (Corpses from Lonmin troubles stun SA/make international headlines)</td>
<td>‘Bloedbad: Polisie Skiet 18 myners dood’ (Bloodbath: Police shoot 18 miners dead)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Bloedbad: Tot 20 sterf toe hulle polisie aanval’ (Bloodbath: Up to twenty die when they attack police)</td>
<td>‘Isibhicongo emayini: Amaphoyisa alalise uyaca emayini’ (Catastrophe/devastation/destruction at the mine: Police massacre many in the mines)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2 Headlines, 17 August 2012**


reveals is an interesting range of interpretations of both the lead-up to and the aftermath of the violence at Marikana. As noted above, the Afrikaans newspapers utilized much of the same content because they published reports from a unified reporting team on the scene. The coverage in *iSolezwe* used its own reporting team, as well as translating some content from the South African Press Association newswire.

The major differences that arise from these headlines are in three key areas: constructions of action and reaction; points of blame/sympathy; and coverage of political and economic factors. Each of these categories, discussed in detail below, signals a different way of interpreting the events related to the violence at Marikana. Through constructing one or the other side as responsible for the violence because of their actions, or casting one side’s claims as sympathetic and the other’s as blameworthy, members of the reading public are encouraged to view one side as perpetrators of violence, and the other side as victims. These differences present incommensurable accounts of the events at Marikana. The inclusion of political and economic factors in the coverage of the violence changes the frame through which the violence is viewed and re-casts the story in terms of worldly effects, as opposed to human tragedy or police brutality.

The first day of news coverage provides some of the starkest contrasts between the Afrikaans and isiZulu newspapers’ accounts of the basic facts of the violence. In *iSolezwe*, the article entitled ‘Amaphoyisa alalise uyaca emayini’ (‘Police massacre many in the mines’) opens with the following description of the events of the afternoon of 16 August:

> The police of this country yesterday created destruction among striking miners at the Lonmin Marikana Platinum mine when they shot at the miners and wiped them away. At the time of writing yesterday evening the number of those who were killed and wounded in this disaster at the mine was not yet established. In a report on television news channel E.TV, they confirmed the names of 12 people. Some of the miners were injured very badly, since it was necessary that a large number of ambulances hastened to come to help, and the hundreds of workers on strike made room for them at the mountain where the strike began.43

The coverage of these events in *Die Burger*, *Die Volksblad*, and *Die Beeld* is almost uniform, with only slight differences in phrasing to indicate the employment of separate reporting teams.44 The article was printed with three

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different titles, shown in the chart above. Despite the different headlines, all of the newspapers’ accounts begin by saying:

Shock waves were sent around the world yesterday by the worst police violence since South Africa’s political transition, in which 18 to 20 people at Lonmin’s Marikana mine were shot. The shooting erupted yesterday just after 16:00 … when a group of protesters, armed with machetes and spears, stormed a police line. The policemen were nervous because the strikers had stolen firearms from two policemen in the riot on Monday afternoon after strikers hacked a fellow hostel resident to death. As the miners stormed the group, the policemen opened fire on them with automatic rifles and pistols.45

The major difference between these accounts lies in the use of active verbs, and the groups to which actions are attributed. Whereas iSolezwe begins its coverage with the phrase ‘police created destruction’, the Naspers papers begin with a passive construction in the opening sentence, followed by the attribution of violent action to strikers: storming a police line. This characterization is also brought out in the human-interest coverage addressed below, by framing the violence as a ‘shootout’, implying that there was an exchange of fire, rather than unarmed miners being shot by police.

By depicting the police as the party under attack, and contextualizing the violence in the events of the prior week, Die Volksblad, Die Beeld, and Die Burger present the police as having a limited range of possible reactions and as under an imminent threat. These sentiments are reinforced in the following days’ coverage, when both Die Volksblad and Die Beeld published opinion pieces defending the actions of police by saying that they were ‘likely within their rights’ in opening fire on the protesting miners.46

In general, the coverage of the violence in iSolezwe was more sympathetic to the workers’ strike claims, as well as their perspective in the immediate aftermath, than Afrikaans-language press content. Rather than focusing on the economic impact of the strikes in the days leading up to the clash, iSolezwe focused on the violence of the preceding days and the official reactions to it. The Afrikaans newspapers, on the other hand, chose to focus the prior coverage of the Marikana strike on mine owners’ reactions to the strike and the economic effects of the work stoppage.

46. Pauli van Wyk, ‘Dit is kriteria vir optrede: polisie “was waarskynlik binne regte”’, Volksblad, 18 August 2012, <http://152.111.11.6/argief/berigte/volksblad/2012/08/18/VB/5/pvwoptog_1827-508.html> (28 March 2014); Pauli van Wyk, ‘Polisie “tree op binne sy regte met reaksie”’, Die Beeld, 18 August 2012, <http://152.111.1.88/argief/berigte/beeld/2012/08/18/B1/4/pvwoptog.html> (29 March 2014). The headline of Die Beeld’s article described the police as ‘acting within their rights with reaction’. Die Volksblad’s headline was ‘These are the criteria for action: the police were likely within their rights.’
The most striking contrast in coverage comes in the headlines from 17 August, as catalogued in Table 2. Whereas *iSolezwe* framed the violence in terms of a police attack on miners, the Afrikaans newspapers were slightly more ambiguous. One Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Volksblad*, stands out in this regard in the sense that it actually reverses the blame, albeit subtly in translation, to say that the violence was the fault of the striking workers attacking police. *Die Beeld*, by contrast, places the blame with the police. *Die Burger* does not blame any party and uses less emotional language than the other two, characterizing the violence as *moles* (troubles) rather than as a massacre, as reported in the other papers. Yet, as discussed above, in the opening paragraphs of the articles, issues of blame are somewhat muddied.

These articles, in addition to attributing blame, also differ in a key respect; the terminology used to describe the violence. *iSolezwe* uses the word *isibhicingo* throughout their coverage to describe the violence. This word, loosely translated, means catastrophe, devastation, or destruction. It is a very expressive term, and in *iSolezwe* it has been used only a few times in the recent past, and almost exclusively to describe violence involving multiple human deaths in the context of violence.

The term used by *Die Volksblad* and *Die Beeld*, ‘bloedbad’, can be translated as bloodbath, massacre, or carnage, which is also an evocative term. However, this term has cropped up numerous times in headlines in Naspers papers, to describe everything from the South African Rand’s declining exchange rate\(^47\) to the theft and slaughter of livestock.\(^48\)

The inclusion of articles based on the effects of the strike and violence on miners and their families also points to the differences in sympathy and attachment of the reading publics to the miners, the police, and the mine owners. The headlines listed below (Table 3) have been labelled as ‘human interest’ articles because of their emphasis on putting ‘a human face and emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem, so it makes people regard the crisis as serious, urgent, or dangerous’.\(^49\) All of these articles present the stories of the violence from the side of the workers and their families, incorporating interview testimony.

The characterizations of the effects of the violence in these stories were very similar. The opening paragraphs of the first published human-interest stories on 18 and 19 August record similar anxieties among the families of

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workers who, at that time, were uncertain of the identities of the people who had been killed or injured in the violence.

Table 3 Human interest stories, 18–27 August 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Afrikaans news</th>
<th>Zulu news</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die Burger</td>
<td>Die Beeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 August</td>
<td>‘Families soek na vermistes’ (Families search for the missing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 August</td>
<td>‘Ons wou nie aanval, ons het gehardloop uit vrees’: Oorlewendes praat oor Marikana-treurspel (‘We did not attack, we ran because we were afraid’: Survivors talk about Marikana tragedy)</td>
<td>‘Umunyu befuna isihlobo zesibhicongo’ (Sympathy for relatives of the massacre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 August</td>
<td>‘Daar word nie na hulle geluister, sê polisie’ (No one is listening to them, say police)</td>
<td>‘Kushone unina wofele esibhicongweni’ (The mother of a person who was killed in the destruction dies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ek het die hele naweek gehuil’ (I cried the whole weekend)</td>
<td>Nothing published</td>
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Continued


51. Gerhard Pretorius, ‘Ons wou nie aanval, ons het gehardloop uit vrees’: oorlewendes praat oor Marikana-treurspel (‘We did not attack, we ran because we were afraid’: Survivors talk about Marikana tragedy), Die Volksblad, 20 August 2012, <http://152.111.1.6/argief/berigte/volksblad/2012/08/20/VB/2/tgpmynslagoffers_1924.html> (29 March 2014). Die Burger’s version of this story was published under the headline ‘‘Ons wou nie aantal’: reinigingsceremonie op terrein gehou’ ‘We did not attack.’ Cleansing ceremonies held on the site Gerhard Pretorius, ‘Ons Wou Nie Aanval’: reinigingsceremonie op terrein gehou’, Die Burger, 20 August 2012, <http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/dieburger/2012/08/20/SK/2/tgpmynslagoffers_1924.html> (16 April 2014).


55. Die Beeld published the same article under the headline ‘“Gaan hulle nou vir my werk gee?” “Will they give me work now?”’ Piet Matipa, “Ek het die hele naweek gehuil’, Die
In Volksblad’s and Beeld’s story, entitled ‘Loved ones still wondering’, the opening paragraph states:

Residents of the shantytown at Lonmin mine yesterday did not know where to start looking for their loved ones. By Sunday afternoon, scores of people still did not know whether their relatives were among the 34 people who died on Sunday in a shootout between miners and police or if they are among the 78 injured. Many were transported to hospitals as far away as Pretoria and Johannesburg, but it is not yet clear to which mortuaries the deceased have been brought.59

The account given in the iSolezwe article, entitled ‘Sympathy for the relatives of the massacre’, has many of the same facts, but with more emotional language:

An eruption of sadness happened among the families of the workers who were a part of the protest in the Marikana mine in the North West, because relatives have not been able to find out from Lonmin who has died or been injured in the violence.60

Table 3. Continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Afrikaans news</th>
<th>Zulu news</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die Burger</td>
<td>Die Beeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>‘Staan die myners se mense by’ (The miners’ families stand by)56</td>
<td>Nothing published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 August</td>
<td>‘Asiyeshwami eyokufa kwabasezimayini’ (It is not new for us that people die in the mines)58</td>
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The opening phrase, ‘an eruption of sadness’, as well as the blame placed on the mine (Lonmin) for the delay in identifying the dead and the wounded, give this story a greater degree of emotional intensity and urgency than the Afrikaans account. The differences in emotive language could be explained, however, because iSolezwe frequently uses metaphor and bombastic language in daily coverage. As explained above, the Naspers papers are not free of dramatic and symbolic language, as shown in the use of the word ‘bloodbath’.

Several of the human interest stories were picked up by only two of the three Naspers Afrikaans papers. Yet, generally speaking, human interest pieces about the violence occurred about as often in the Afrikaans press as in the isiZulu press. A key difference, however, occurs in the angle of coverage. All three Naspers papers published an article on 21 August that included interview testimony from several police officers involved in the shooting, arguing that their point of view and their side of the story was being ignored. The story, as published in Die Volksblad and Die Beeld, opens with the evocative quote from an anonymous member of the police unit at Marikana: ‘No one gives a f**k about the two policemen who died.’ The story focuses on the stresses of the police officers in trying to contain and respond to the violent strike action, as well as their unclear orders from their commanding officers and ill-defined standard operating procedures.

iSolezwe’s human interest stories are told exclusively from the point of view of the miners and their families. They recount details not just of the violence of 16 August, but also the dangerous working conditions for the miners and the hardships of migrant labour and squalid living conditions. In the article on 27 August, entitled ‘It is not new for us that people die in the mines’, workers’ families recount the problems they have had with mine companies failing to notify them of the deaths of their loved ones, as well as never receiving compensation for those deaths.

In contrast to the human-interest angle of Marikana violence, the very real material consequences of industrial strife have also been the subject of many articles. Since August 2012, the political and economic effects of the violence in Marikana have had widespread negative consequences for the exchange rate of the South African Rand, output levels of precious metals from South African mines, and investor confidence in the mining industry.
sector. Newspapers around the world have covered these kinds of effects, yet in the days immediately following the violence, Afrikaans and isiZulu

<table>
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<td>17 August</td>
<td>Is minister steeds net ‘verontrus?’ (Is the minister still only ‘disturbed?’)</td>
<td>‘Lonmin-myn se menseslagting’ (Lonmin mine massacre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 August</td>
<td>‘Marikana-geweld “het dak politieke motiewe”’ (Marikana violence ‘may have a political motive’)</td>
<td>‘Yimithonseyana ephemulele ukuzosebenza’ (Only a few report for work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 August</td>
<td>‘NUM, Amcu en mynpolitiek’ (NUM, AMCU and the politics of mines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 August</td>
<td>‘Marikana sal ANC nie swaai’ (Marikana will not move the ANC)</td>
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newspapers dealt very differently with the economic and political aspects of the Marikana story, as is demonstrated in Table 4, below.

_Die Beeld_ published an article on 17 August that detailed the kinds of economic effects that the country could see from the Marikana violence. The article, entitled ‘Is minister steeds net “verontrus”? (Is the minister still only “disturbed”?'), opens by saying:

The bloodbath yesterday afternoon at the Lonmin mine in Marikana is not only a human tragedy, but it will affect South Africa politically and economically for quite a while. Investors in the mining industry have become wary of the politics of our country. Shocks like these, and questions about our country’s political stability – and the safety of investments – cause concern with investors, which has only been inflamed under the current government.

Similar, but distinct, articles were published in _Die Volksblad_ on 18 and 22 August and in _Die Burger_ on 25 August.

Additionally, in all three Afrikaans newspapers, an article published on 22 August entitled ‘Marikana-geweld “het dalk politieke motiewe”’ (Marikana violence ‘may have a political motive’) directly criticizes the government’s and party politicians’ roles in the strike action and the ensuing violence:

The violent protests at Lonmin’s Marikana mine are not just the result of a wage dispute between the employer and rock drill operators and there may be political motives behind it. … According to Gideon du Plessis, general secretary of Solidarity, many of the nearly 3,000 demonstrators were sacked employees of Lonmin and Impala Platinum (Implats) mines, while others claiming to be members of the rock drill operators actually worked in other job categories or were unemployed community members. ‘It is clear that many of the protesting workers were not aggrieved rock drill operators, but that strike opportunists exploited the strike and the misdeeds that have been committed’, Du Plessis said.

The only comparable article in _iSolezwe_ entitled ‘Yimithonseyana ephumelele ukuzosebenza’ (Only a few report for work) deals with the continuation of the work stoppage, the fears of the workers after the violence, and their continuing demand for a wage of R12,500 per month. The articles that deal with the visits of political leaders such as Julius Malema to the Marikana area instead note the importance of politicians in demanding a commission of inquiry into the violence.

_Conclusions_

South African society is still highly divided and there is evidence that the policy avenues pursued by the ANC-led central government harm the

73. See, for example, the article entitled ‘Sebehlonziwe ababulawe ngamaphoyisa emayini’ (People killed by police in the mine have been identified) on 22 August 2012.
process of creating a democratic community. While many of the aspects of societal division have been inherited from the apartheid era as well as the preceding century of segregationist policy making, the daily news cycle presents a dynamic venue for examining the persistence and re-creation of such historical divisions, or potentially, their amelioration. The differences in news coverage of key events such as the violence in mid-August 2012 at the Marikana mine are key to understanding the ongoing processes of creating and sustaining communities that could be at odds with the project of democratic consolidation, or what the current government calls “social cohesion.”

The variations within the newspaper coverage in terms of which groups are framed as the main actors, which parties are the subjects of sympathy, and the inclusion of political and economic coverage interlaced with the reporting of the violence, constitute major differences. Although this analysis covers a relatively short period of time, the initial coverage of the Marikana event provides a frame through which the reading public could understand future events. As such, the role of print media in the consolidation of communities, as theorized by Anderson, is taking place within communities that are limited but not, as we have seen, sovereign.

The similarities between English-language news sources and the perspectives offered in Afrikaans-media outlets could signal an evolving class consensus between emerging black middle-class readers of some English daily news and the historically privileged and more affluent readership of Afrikaans daily newspapers. However, even if this is the case, the fact that the isiZulu press – the fastest-growing sector in South African media – presents such a different picture of the events and violence at Marikana signals the deepening of a different kind of social cleavage through the same process. If the English media do provide a countervailing force to the fractious tendencies of the vernacular presses, they are by no means a neutral point and are themselves also fractured along the same lines of class, race, language and location as the so-called vernacular press.

The problem of media polarization plagues monolingual as well as multilingual states. One need not look any further than the media climate in the United States to understand the impact that consumption of media from one collection of sources has on citizens’ political knowledge, as well as their participation. There are certainly a number of debates in domestic

politics in the United States that are framed in entirely incommensurate ways, such as climate change and abortion. These differences in coverage and interpretation may interrupt the processes of building the sense of simultaneity described by Benedict Anderson. Yet the further challenge of a multilingual press, coinciding with the already deep cleavages of class and location in South Africa, adds a uniquely troublesome problem of untranslatability to the already present difficulties of incommensurability and isolation.

Whereas a media consumer in a monolingual nation could conceivably understand or engage with the language presented by different news sources, the multilingual press does not provide such access without fluency across multiple languages – and, as we have seen, this is missing for a significant proportion of the South African population. The difficulty of translation between languages with radically different grammatical structures and idioms is illustrated by studies of textbook translation in South Africa, which reveal that despite common educational standards there are significant differences between textbooks printed in different languages.78

The nature of the social cleavages in South Africa means that there is also a lack of meaningful social interaction between people from different ethno-linguistic communities, especially outside urban areas. As a result, the frames presented in media servicing Afrikaans- and isiZulu-speaking communities are not in competition with one another.79 At best, they are in competition with the frames presented in the English-language media, but often consumers of so-called vernacular media do not regularly consume news from English-language sources, or, if they do, are likely to access stories reported in a way that is more consistent with the vernacular press.80

The informational and interpretational barriers that this creates within society are particularly pronounced in a country such as South Africa, that has a history of different kinds of structural inequality and continues to experience widespread poverty.

The passage of time has allowed for the emergence of a consensus regarding the events that occurred at Marikana in mid-August 2012, thanks in part to the Farlam Commission’s exhaustive inquiry into the events. As in so many other media-saturated publics, however, a story that is nearly

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two years old no longer makes front-page news. The media-consuming public is now focused on other ongoing scandals and political events. Marikana, and the violence at the mines, is no longer a central point of discussion for the South African public at large. Therefore, although the Farlam Commission extensively debated the language to be used in describing the violence and settled on a common vocabulary, including references to “collusion” of police and mine ownership to “encircle” but not “trap” miners, it seems unlikely that such carefully considered wording will overcome the diverse initial accounts in different language media. The common vocabulary that has been offered by experts and commissions of inquiry will not become the vernacular.