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The lack of listening:

News sources in South Africa's five general elections, 1994 – 2014

Bernadine Jones

Abstract

With most political journalism research focusing on Western elections, one tends to forget that mediatisation exists in non-Western reportage too. Television news is still a powerful political tool, especially in developing democracies and particularly in South Africa – the case of this research. This paper investigates the sources used on television news during five democratic South African elections, 1994 to 2014, and aims to shed light on the type of mediatised political reporting in and about a non-Western country. The main finding of this research is that news sources during the South African elections were made up increasingly of pundits and decreasingly of political leaders and citizens. The importance of "listening" directly cannot be overstated, especially in developing democracies like South Africa. A solid link between journalist and politician as well as journalist and citizen is crucial to implement substantive information necessary to enable the media's democratic duty. When journalists ignore citizen voices in favour of interpretive and evaluative sources, this link is steadily degraded. This paper suggests reasons for the drop-off of political and citizen sources in South African election reporting, and, on the eve of the sixth general election in May 2019, argues a case for more "straight from source" voices in political journalism.

Keywords

Political journalism/political communication, South African democracy, mediatisation, discourse analysis, news sources, television news

Political journalism studies generally focus on the Western election coverage on mainstream media, and yet mediatisation exists in non-Western coverage too. Moreover, this modern era of fast-paced, style-over-content journalism challenges our traditional understanding of newsgathering and dissemination. Despite research telling us different statistics in the West, television news is still a powerful political tool in developing democracies and particularly in South Africa – the case of this research. Wasserman (2018) acknowledges that, although digital news media use is increasing for political engagement in South Africa, accessing the

internet is still prohibitively expensive for many ordinary citizens and so traditional news media, such as television news, is a popular method for political understanding in the country. This paper therefore investigates what sources were represented on television news during the five democratic South African elections, 1994 to 2014, and aims to shed light on the type of mediatized political reporting, through the type of sources in the journalism, in and about a non-Western election.

Mediatized political reporting is, in essence, the journalistic preference of style over content where dramatic stories lead over depth of analysis. Journalists comment on the attire of the candidate rather than their words, limit political leader quotes to soundbites, and use business analysts or other journalists to interpret political words. In short, mediatized political journalism focuses on the media-aesthetic, rather than the political-policy. Duncan (2014b), Cross (2010), Bennett (2012: 2), and Louw (2005: 81) suggest that recent political journalism from the West prefers pundits over people and personalities over policies. The importance of journalistic "listening" to both political and citizen sources directly cannot be overstated, especially during volatile situations, rising unrest, and in developing democracies like South Africa. A solid link between journalist and politician and journalist and citizen is crucial to implement substantive information necessary to enable the media's democratic duty. When journalists ignore citizen voices in favor of interpretive and evaluative sources, this link is steadily degraded. This study shows that news sources during the South African elections were made up increasingly of pundits and decreasingly of political leaders.

Literature

Research about the media coverage of elections tends to be Western-centric – the view of Western elections, or Western scholarly analysis of non-Western elections. This review suggests that mediatized reporting has increased in Western political journalism, but also that non-Western election reporting grapples with issues of partisanship as well as mediatisation.

Election reporting styles in the West

A central debate about Western media coverage of elections is the "mediatisation" of politics, whereby political journalists use media-logic to present easily digestible information to television audiences. Scholars often refer to either media logic or mediatisation, but the terms are roughly the same. Media logic refers to a reporting style where policy issues are marginalized in favor of personality and celebrity (Cushion & Sambrook, 2015). According to Strömbäck (2008: 233) and Altheide and Snow (1979), who originally coined the term, media logic involves both the process of information transmission (the organization, technology, and aesthetic of the medium) as well as the format (symbolic rules for coding and decoding media messages). While Strömbäck (2008: 233) acknowledges that the definition is abstract, he defines it as the simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, and visualization of framing politics as a horse race.

The problems with this form of political journalism are not limited to only the lack of policy discussion due to the focus on aesthetics, but also include the lack of actual voicing of citizens and political leaders on television news. In essence, this "lack of listening" distances citizens from hearing themselves and their leaders, while relying on interpretive journalism that tends to be a "view from the suburbs" (Friedman, 2011), that is, showing only one reality that focuses on middle class interests.

In the age of social media, new studies have emerged on traditional political journalism using Twitter users as sources (Brands, Graham, & Broersma, 2018), yet this trend of using online sources has not meant a gravitation away from the elite (Lecheler & Kruikemeir, 2016), and scholars are not euphoric about the democratization possibilities of the internet – journalists still seem to prefer elite sources or occasions where journalist-as-experts take precedence over first-hand sources from politicians or citizens. Cushion (2018) notes that the use of interpretive journalism, where vox pops and live two-ways are framed through editorial judgements, tends to undermine impartiality and balance of election news. Chadwick et al. agree (2018) that journalists do not "signal authority" when voicing the public rather than expert sources: these citizens are not a scientific representation of public opinion either, but rather serve a journalistic narrative. Coming back to traditional media, Kleemans et al. (2017) suggest that vox pops have increased in television news over the last few decades, but so too has the voice of journalists. The increase of punditry over political voices is a trend towards interpretive journalism, but numbers do not provide the whole picture. A qualitative analysis of how leaders are framed, voiced, and what they speak about would also provide insight as to the type of political news during elections.

In a helpful analysis of Canadian election coverage, Cross (2010: 417) analyzed political news sources and found that the type of source reliance has shifted from political leader sources to punditry from analysts, echoing Louw's earlier discussion on the "punditocracy" (2005: 80). She argues that pundits give the impression of objectivity on the behalf of the broadcaster, while still employing framing and news values. Cross argues that this shift indicates an increased media-centric style of political communication. In her study, she describes two groups of sources: Knowns are politicians, officials, or the elite (2010: 417), and make up four fifths of Canadian television news sources during elections. Unknowns, conversely, are the general public, protesters, victims, participants, or voters. This project uses her terminology throughout, allowing for different subcategories to expand her original conceptualization.

General research on African election news coverage

Scholars have noted that Africa tends to get scant coverage in mainstream Western media overall (Golan, 2008; Franks, 2010; De Beer, 2010) and the same applies to studies about African elections on the media. While most available studies investigate the general coverage of Africa in global print media (Hawk, 2002; Levistky & Way, 2005; Willems, 2005; Goval, 2016), or elections from a political science perspective (Nohlen, Krennerich, & Thibaut, 1999), few speak directly to the media narratives of African democracy and elections and consider sources or framing in detail. Additionally, these studies focus on print media, giving only a passing mention to television news (Hawk, 2002; Reynolds, 1999; Southall & Daniel, 2009). South African election research usually entails a view into the political side: voting, electorate, parties, and the feasibility of democracy (Reynolds, 1999; Gouws & De Beer, 2008; Southall & Daniel, 2009; Habib & Herzenberg, 2011) rather than narrative or source analysis.

A major debate about election reporting in Africa is that of partisanship and the relationship between journalists and governments. Partisanship in the Global North appears linked to the political economy of the media (Waisbord, 2009: 72; Ward, 2009: 299; D'Alessio & Allen, 2006; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, & Weaver, 2011). The same issues in Africa seem instead related to the development journalism framework (Wasserman, 2014: 126) and the relationship between media and government and access to technology. Josephi

(2009: 52) notes that African print media is largely characterised by partisanship and is more closely aligned with the ideology of loyalty than objectivity, but her homogeneous conclusions are problematic. Conflating all African media as "partisan" neglects the very real paths blazed by opposition media in convoluted media systems. Shaw (2009) for instance observes that far from "praise-singing", as Bourgault (1995) suggests, much of the mainstream African media are polarized along ethnic and party lines. Temin and Smith (2002) investigate narratives in partisan Zimbabwean press during the 2000 elections, while Waldahl (2005) finds journalistic professionalism in the state- versus private-owned media in Ghana was at stake during their elections. These studies speak to the global trend of mediatisation of election coverage, but also note that unequal funding and access to information hamper African media coverage of elections. Although sourcing was not part of many of these investigations, it is interesting that local African media reported elections in the same mediatized trend we tend to see in Western elections.

Locating South Africa's elections

So why study South Africa's media or elections? Firstly, South Africa's national broadcaster is a major player in Africa (Zegeye & Harris, 2003: 11), and the unique history of apartheid complicates the narratives told about the country's democracy. South Africa is also considered the gateway to the rest of the continent (Guest, 2005), both in terms of economic viability and of South Africa's regional and continental hegemonic status (Zegeye & Harris, 2003: 11). These traits make South Africa a prime example for a study about transitional democratic elections and whether political reporting follows the mediatisation trend.

South African voters are divided, not just by race and economy, but also by geography and access to media and education. The ANC has strong loyalty in sections of the population who vote almost entirely on identity politics, while the country's politics is increasingly a two-horse race (Mkhatshwa, 2014). Voting for a general election occurs every five years through a system of Proportional Representation, where the electorate (South African citizens aged 18 or over) vote for a political party on a secret ballot. Voting usually takes place over two or more days. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) conducts voter education, registers citizens, runs the election, and counts the votes. The last five elections have been deemed free and fair by both the IEC and international monitors.

And so, from the rainbow nationalism of Mandela's presidency, to Mbeki's elitist "African Renaissance" decade, and ending in Zuma's conservative traditionalist incumbency, South Africa's 20-year democracy culminated in the 2014 general election. The lead-up to the first democratic election in 1994 was no romance story, nor did it have a fairy-tale ending. Since 1994, the ANC government has consistently won over 60% of the popular vote but voting turnout has decreased steadily since 2009. With protest action against the ruling party increasing over the last two decades (Demian, 2015), critical media coverage under threat of censorship (Reid, 2014; Louw, 2014; De Beer, Malila, Beckett, & Wasserman, 2016), and political strife tearing the ANC apart internally (Hamill, 2009: 3; Du Preez, 2013), political communication and the resultant election narratives in South African media is complicated. Literature on the 1994 election coverage was almost exclusively angled toward narratives of global media at the expense of analysis of local news; 1999 and 2004 had very little analysis from either global or local media perspectives; and 2009 and 2014 was dedicated almost entirely to local perspectives and was almost exclusively from local South African research. The overrepresentation of print news analyses was also stark: television news research was

given a passing mention in the studies (such as in Duncan, 2009; Duncan 2014b) rather than any dedicated investigation during the elections.

The noticeable drop-off of international research about the post-1994 elections suggests how far South Africa had slipped off the global radar – after the "miracle" of 1994, democracy seemed normalized and international media coverage, and the research about it, dwindled. Most international research focused on South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, where North American reporting in newspapers and broadcast media seemed to rely on event-based mediatized coverage of Westernized democracy (Sisk, 1994; Norris, 1997; Reta, 2000; Hawk, 2002). After 1994, however, there is little analysis of the international media coverage of South Africa's elections. Local research in election year compendiums (see for example Reynolds 1994, 1999; Piombo 2005; Southall 2009; and Duncan 2009, 2014b) fills in the gaps about local media coverage, but there is scant research about international media perspectives and sourcing. Additionally, broadcast media is significantly underrepresented in international research about the media coverage of South African elections, as most research focuses on print media.

Overall, studies about the role of the local media during South African elections suggest that there has been a sharp decrease in the depth of political analysis on the media during the election years (Jacobs, 1999; Duncan, 2014b; MMA, 2014), a widening gap between the citizen's concerns and the media's coverage of those issues (Jacobs, 1999), harsher political pressure on media freedom (Malila, 2014), and increasing tension between the media and government regarding political narratives, freedom, content, and ownership (Reid, 2014; Louw, 2014; De Beer et al., 2016). Finally, the international perspective of South Africa's elections has sharply decreased since 1994, with 2004 and 2009 mostly unrepresented in international media research.

Notable gaps in the literature identified are firstly the neglect of researching broadcast news in analyzing election media coverage in South Africa, and secondly the lack of qualitative data when analyzing broadcast news coverage in these elections. This study will contribute data to both of these oversights in both breadth of analysis of South African election coverage in looking at television news specifically over time, as well as the depth of analysis in qualitative data about news sourcing to determine how mediatisation occurs in the political journalism about South African's elections. The subsequent section details the methodology for researching this question.

Method

This paper was borne out of a larger study that looked at the semiotic data of television news framing of the South African elections, of which sourcing was only part. In the larger study, a combination of semiotic and discourse analysis deciphered frames and narratives of the overall representation of the elections on local and international television news. This study focuses on television broadcast news because, throughout the 20-year period of democracy in South Africa, television news was an emergent media and is still important in the political communication process. Yet, despite this influence, broadcast news is notoriously difficult to analyze. This study used a combination of framing analysis and discourse analysis to situate sources in the news about South Africa's elections and content analysis to determine frequency over time – a discussion of this methodology is in Jones (2016).

For this research, the sourcing analysis drew on qualitative narrative analysis with frequency as the quantitative analysis and sources were identified through discourse and semiotic analysis of the larger study. Once the sources were identified in each year, content analysis was used to locate the types of sources in operationally defined categories from Cross (2010). The original categories from Cross' study were subdivided to provide a deeper analysis of Knowns and Unknowns during the sample. Known source categorization remains roughly the same: pundits, journalists, experts, and leaders. However, Unknown sources were often seen in two scenarios during this sample – conducting everyday activities or queuing up to vote. The latter was framed differently: these sources were now Voters, rather than just ordinary citizens. They were exercising their right to vote on a special occasion, whereas before they were simply vox pops. It is for this reason that the distinguishing categories were divided: Unknowns could be Voters (in the queue on voting day, active citizens) or vox pops (on the street, at home, and they may or may not exercise their right to vote). Unknown sources were also split along black (including African, Indian, Colored, Chinese, or anyone other than white European) and white racial demographics, approximate age (under 20 years old was 'young' and over 20 years old as 'old'), and male or female. This sub-categorization allows for greater analysis of source identification throughout this study.

Sample

The election periods of analysis were the voting days of South Africa: 1994 (26 – 29 April), 1999 (2 June), 2004 (14 April), 2009 (22 April), and 2014 (7 May). The sample dates were chosen as the culmination of the election, where journalists would focus on the voting events, to ensure some kind of homogeneity in the events covered. These sample dates do not ordinarily consider the political campaigning or electioneering, so most substantive election information was missing from the sample. Although the voting days were the starting focus of the research, the timeframe was extended to include broadcasts for the week of the voting days to include vote setup and vote counting.

This study originally began with a sample of nine news channels – Al Jazeera English (AJE); Sky News; BBC World; CNN International; SABC 1, 2, 3, and SABC online; and eNCA. The sample of broadcasts was also extended to be more nonspecific, purposive, and accessible – the time period was of more importance than the channels, and broadcasts were selected from as many possible and available channels during the week of voting. I used a variety of search and retrieval methods including multiple search engines and paid-for as well as free to access news archives.

Final tally

Of the 153 broadcasts on 24 channels selected for analysis, the majority centered on the 2014 election, as seen in Figure 1. The sudden jump in broadcasts from 2009 onwards could be due to increased digitization and improved archival techniques over the years, but also perhaps because of increased interest in South Africa's controversial presidential candidate.

[Insert Figure 1]

Figure 1: total number of broadcasts per year

Despite a problematic archiving process at the broadcaster, the SABC provided the most broadcasts for each sample year, totaling 29. As seen in Figure 2, the range of channels was diverse. The major contributors were mainstream news channels: the SABC, CNN, the

BBC, Sky News, and AJE, but were complemented by newswires (AP, AFP, and Reuters) as well as non-mainstream channels in later years (PressTV, NTDTV, AfricaNews, and AmandlaTV).

[Insert Figure 2]

Figure 2: total number of broadcasts collected per channel

Results

This paper investigates how television news represented South African elections, and in the process of this investigation, nuanced questions arose about the speakers during the election: who spoke during each sample year and what they said seemed to give a strong indication of the relationship between journalists and politicians during South Africa's emerging democracy. The most interesting data was collected from 2009 and 2014, where punditry took hold in the coverage sources. The results from this investigation show that mediatisation was increasingly prevalent as political leader voices dropped off significantly in later years. The resultant interpretation from journalists inserted layers of distance between viewer and on-the-ground information. This section shows the detailed breakdown of each year in terms of sources and framing. Table 1 gives the breakdown of sources per year in both categories.

[Insert Table 1]

Table 1: Total number of sources per year

The following sections are split to show who speaks in the overall results of source categorization, then split into identification of sources in each election, and finally ending with the phenomenon of the political source drop-off in later years.

Who speaks?

The results show that Knowns spoke more than Unknowns after 2004, but this statistic only tells part of the story. Table 2 shows the percentages of Known and Unknown sources per year, while Table 3 shows the breakdown of type of Unknown sources. Table 4 shows the demographic of Unknown sources by age and gender. The following section will discuss Known results in further detail per year.

[Insert Table 2]

Table 2: Percentages of Known and Unknown sources per year

[Insert Table 3]

Table 3: Breakdown of type of Unknown sources per year

[Insert Table 4]

Table 4: Demographic breakdown of Unknown sources per year

Sources in 1994

Figure 3 shows that directly quoted political leaders constituted most Known sources in 1994, the most frequent source being Nelson Mandela at 25%. Political leaders were often voiced directly through interviews or prepared speeches, a trend that diminished in later years. Mandela spoke passionately about this poignant day while de Klerk was graceful in relinquishing power. Buthelezi was insistent yet diplomatic about acquiring a homeland for

his Zulu people, and in a similar tone Viljoen echoed his words for an Afrikaner *Volkstad*. Journalists, awe-inspired and breathless, spoke of a new dawn of the country, the poignancy transcending the underlying fear of a bloody civil war.

[Insert Figure 3]

Figure 3: Known sources in 1994

As seen in Table 2 and 3, however, it was the Unknowns who spoke the most, as journalists walked up and down snaking voting queues and visiting people in their homes to interview citizens about their voting euphoria. Black citizens spoke about their determination to vote no matter what, regaining their dignity through democracy, and their hopes for the future including equal education and prosperity. These black hopes were counterbalanced with white fears, which primarily focused on the loss of private property and civil liberties. On the voting day, few white voters were interviewed with the majority (understandably) being newly-enfranchised black voters.

Sources in 1999

Distinct from subsequent years, the 1994 and 1999 election samples contained no political analyst sources, instead focusing on direct political party sources as Knowns. As seen in Figure 4, the ANC received the most voicing in this sample, with Mbeki, Mandela, an untagged ANC spokesperson, and Govan and Epianette Mbeki speaking on behalf of the party. Just as in 1994, more Unknowns spoke than Knowns as journalists seemed to value the voice of citizens in reporting these first elections. As seen tables 3 and 4, Unknown sources were, this year, mostly black voters at the polls. For the first and only time in this sample, more voters were sourced than vox pops, 57% compared to 43%.

[Insert Figure 4]

Figure 4: Known speakers in 1999

With very few broadcasts available for 1999, topics were limited to the process of democracy in this second election. Journalists commented on the size of the queues (both positively and negatively), the transition from Mandela to Mbeki and how the second president would hopefully take a stance on poverty and crime, and the fear of the ANC gaining a constitution-changing two-thirds majority. Unknown sources were primarily the black population voting in their second election. Where young voters were voiced, many were critical of the ANC government on the SABC, which was surprising given the channel's difficult objectivity record (Jacobs, 1999: 154; Russell, 2009: 74; Wasserman, 2010).

Sources in 2004

In a significant jump from the two previous elections, Knowns became the most prevalent voices in the 2004 election at 80% compared to 20% Unknown sources. As seen in Figure 5, President Mbeki, the IEC, and the police were the most frequent of all in the 2004 coverage. Political leaders of other parties were allowed a brief statement on the SABC broadcasts (hence all at 4% of the sample), but ultimately the authorities – Mbeki, the IEC, and the police – spoke most often. The ANC also received the lion's share of the political party coverage with Mbeki and Mandela speaking on behalf of the party. This seems to indicate that the voice of political leaders took precedence over the voice of the citizens, a change from 1994 and 1999. Unknown voices were hardly present in the 2004 sample, and only two voters spoke – the majority were older female voxes speaking about problems in the country rather than a sense of euphoria for voting, as seen in other elections.

[Insert Figure 5]

Figure 5: Known speakers in 2004

The discourse of the 2004 election on local channels tended to glorify authorities and is probably due to the SABC's mandate of putting the good news about the government first. Temin and Smith (2002: 593) and Waldahl (2005) suggest that shallow and narrow frames exist on some African media because of government involvement, which ultimately hinders reporters in presenting "watchdog" journalism. While it's not clear that the ANC had any direct influence in local journalism, especially in 2004, researchers (Jacobs, 1999: 156; Gouws & De Beer, 2008; Wasserman & De Beer, 2009; Malila, 2014) suggest that a chilling effect did occur, largely due to Mbeki's quest for unquestioning loyalty from the media. This chilling effect could also explain the lack of citizen sourcing in the subsequent election coverage.

Sources in 2009

Following the trend from 2004, Knowns were voiced more often than Unknowns in 2009 at 60% compared to 40%. There are two interesting factors in the Known sourcing. Firstly, in Figure 6 we see that the ANC again received the lion's share of sources, with Zuma, Mbeki, and Mandela making up 33% of the Known sources in the sample.

[Insert Figure 6]

Figure 6: Known sources in 2009

As expected, due to the man's plentiful appearances across the channels, Jacob Zuma "spoke" the most during the sample: journalists fixated on his image as if he were already president, yet the candidate hardly ever spoke directly to journalists. He spoke most frequently in prepared speeches that were depicted as lip flaps, wherein journalists spoke in voiceover during visuals of Zuma addressing a crowd. Bucy and Grabe (2009: 202) suggest that lip flaps are unflattering and are generally discouraged in political journalism as it is often seen as biased coverage. This type of framing positions Zuma as seen but not heard in a trend that Bucy and Grabe (2009.: 74) suggest is common in Western political journalism. Zuma "speaks" most frequently in the 2009 sample, which highlights his importance, yet because of the lip flaps and prepared speeches, he remains distant and unknown. Zuma is essentially "re-voiced" because the journalist or political analyst interprets his actions, words, and policies. While media coverage first diminished citizen or Unknown sources from 2004, from 2009 the lack of listening appears to be political sources themselves – Known sources were increasingly pundits and decreasingly directly quoted political sources.

Secondly, the 2009 election coverage was the first time that political analysts or pundits represented such a large slice of the Known sources. 21% of all Known sources were pundits (business and political analysts) in 2009, collectively sourced as often as Zuma, and seemed to speak at greater length than the President's quick soundbites. Zuma was voiced in small "bite-sized" sound- and image-bites of a few seconds each as compared to longer, in depth discussion from analysts.

Duncan (2009: 230) finds that in 2009 local journalists failed to investigate the elections beyond a brief and superficial portrayal of parties and voters, and that US-style mediatisation, negative public interest, and issue-based reporting was prevalent in South African news coverage. Indeed, this analysis of the 2009 media coverage agrees – the lack of first-hand sources indicates Zuma's disdain for the media (discussed at length in Calland,

2013 and Duncan, 2009), yet the increasing use of pundits in place of direct sources expands the distance between politics and citizens. Punditry indicates media-centric election coverage, but also highlights the deterioration of the relationship between the ANC and journalists. In 2009, journalists fail to listen to political leaders by inserting punditry in place of political sources, and to citizens as Unknown sources slipped from the majority in 1994 through 2004 to 40% in 2009. The lack of listening to citizens is problematized in the next sections.

Sources in 2014

Continuing with the trend from 2009, the 2014 election coverage had more Known sources than Unknowns and, for the first time, pundits spoke more often than political leaders. As seen in Figure 7, these pundits formed three groups: journalists as experts, political analysts, and economic analysts. By far, the largest voice in the 2014 election came from the journalists themselves – they interviewed each other in the studio for interpretation and explanation of the voting days and spoke at length in two-way interview on location about the protest action on the days prior to the election.

[Insert Figure 7]

Figure 7: Known sources in 2014

Pundits were first used significantly in 2009 to explain the ANC's policy and Zuma's effect on South Africa. In 2014, political analysts overtook political leader sources including the President in frequency of voice, and again explained policy issues. In a stark contrast to 2009, Jacob Zuma only spoke in 6% of sources, while political spokespeople (those members who were not leaders or candidates) from various parties spoke more than the individual leaders themselves. Punditry created context that political leaders seemingly could not, which somewhat coincides with Cross' (2010: 425) findings.

Very few citizen voices were heard in 2014, with 68% Known compared to 32% Unknown where, despite a major news topic being pre-election community protests, only two sources were protesters themselves. While Western studies (such as Cushion, 2017) suggest that this Unknown source percentage may be impressive, in a non-Western developing democracy like South Africa, where voting days are punctuated by violent political protests, the lack of grassroots representation during the elections is problematic.

The grinding poverty that most black South Africans face almost always happens away from the viewer during this election, in the background, at a safe distance. We hear very little from the communities who are actively involved in the protests, although as with 1994 a few broadcasts do attempt some kind of complex and investigative journalism. Punditry and journalistic voices are much more common than first-hand experiences, either from Unknown citizens or Known political and community leaders, and in 2014 it seemed like journalists were either unprepared or unwilling to seek out direct sources, particularly in terms of the protest action bookending the election. These findings coincide with Duncan's (2014b: 152) conclusions and the MMA (2014: 3) research: the shallow portrayal of the election meant that style and interpretation was allowed to triumph over substance and investigation.

Political sources drop off

As we can see through the frequency and type of voices, punditry increased dramatically in 2009 and 2014, while the drop off from political leader sources was equally significant. As

table 2 shows at the start of this paper, sources across in the first two election years were mostly the Unknowns or vox pops until 2004, where Knowns, and particularly pundits, suddenly became preferred sources at 80%. From then on, Known sources were the preferred voices at 60% (2009) and 68% (2014).

The preference for punditry, according to Louw (2005: 80-81) and Strömback (2008: 233), is a sign of mediatisation– the elite speak for and about the citizens, acting as a sort of go-between, re-telling the information in a mediatized format of soundbites and interpretation. Where citizens and other Unknowns were voiced in this sample, this tended to come from non-Western channels and local South African networks. While these high statistics of Know voices seem to show that political leaders speak more often in later years, in fact it is the opposite: Figure 8 shows the decline of political sources compared to punditry.

[Insert Figure 8]

Figure 8: Percentage of political sources in all Known sources per year

Journalists and political leaders seemed to disengage in later years. Instead of voicing political leaders directly (and this applies to the ANC as well as other opposition parties), journalists selected political analysts, other journalists, and thought leaders to explain and interpret. Figure 8 shows that 71% of Known sources were political in 1994, but this drops to only 21% in 2014.

Although Jacob Zuma's strict control of media narratives in this year may contribute to the significant drop off in 2014, the lack of political sources applies to all parties, not just the ANC. Journalists from 2004 onwards tend to speak *about* the leaders, rather than *to* them. The quality of political voices in later years is poor, with journalists focusing on scandalous "horse race" framing. Cross (2010) found that the type of source focus has shifted from political leader voices to punditry instead, echoing Louw's earlier discussion on "punditocracy" (2005: 80), and this paper agrees, at least towards the later election years. The preference for punditry expands the distance between both the viewer and the politicians and the politicians with citizens, with more layers of interpretation added between participant and audience.

Discussion and Conclusion

As seen in the 2009 and 2014 election years, political voices were substantially missing from the broadcasts, leading most journalists to rely on simplistic juxtaposition and lip flaps to present a shallow overview of a complex society fraught with protests and violence. But why is this happening? The answer appears to be two-fold: firstly, the relationship between journalists and politicians in South Africa is increasingly fraught. Secondly, mediatisation in political reporting is partly due to underfunded newsrooms and poorly-trained journalists multitasking in the quest to break news first with pundits, rather than sources that are difficult to acquire on the ground – both in the form of Unknown citizens and Known political leaders.

Relationships

The deteriorating relationship between the ANC and journalists is an on-going concern for South African media and is reflected in this study's findings of political source drop off. This problematic and worsening relationship could be one reason for the demise of ANC sources in later years. In order to create and maintain a functioning democracy, substantive

information between communities and governments should be adequately mediated through the news media, and a first step towards this is to voice both political leaders and citizens first-hand. This lack of listening from journalists in this election sample points to an increasingly mediatized technique in election coverage as they prefer pundits to politicians, an act that is exacerbated by the ANC's antagonism toward mainstream media. This political source drop-off creates distance between viewer and political action in the country. Journalists seem to stop listening firstly to Unknown sources and then to political leaders as pundits become preferred sources. This type of news is particularly problematic in a developing democracy such as South Africa where accurate and timeous dissemination of information is critical amongst citizens. It also disagrees with many African news studies, which assume a kind of partisanship between government and press. In this study, both state- and private-owned local media disengaged with political sources in later years.

This study also reiterates Duncan's warnings in 2014: the top down organization of a media that promotes authority sources yet neglects citizens "has serious implications, as it fosters a society that is unable to see itself, and respond to its most pressing problems" (2014a: 92). The media should provide substantive information necessary to enable democracy but, "in order for them to play this role, they need to constitute an inclusive public sphere that provides equality of opportunity to receive information, to listen and to speak" (2014a.: 76). Where elections were preceded by protest action, in 2009 and 2014, journalists seemed reluctant or unable to voice the protesters directly. Unknown sources in these two years stood at 40% and 32% respectively, and only two or three of these sources were actually protesters. These protests are forms of resistance to the government yet, as Duncan (2014a) suggests, journalists rarely frame these protests from the ground up, choosing rather to focus on elite sources of punditry to explain and interpret. Having said this, it should be noted that Unknown sources across the years were demographically split according to racial makeup in a way that seems representative of South Africa's citizen population. Black sources routinely outnumbered white sources, both in terms of voter and vox pop categorization. The overall lack of Unknown sources is problematic, despite journalists' attempts to keep these sources representative of South African demographics. One of the reasons for journalists using elite pundit sources rather than Unknown citizens or Known politicians could be explained by the trend towards mediatized political communication.

Mediatisation

Louw (2005: 81), Cross (2010), Bennett (2012: 2), and Duncan (2014b) suggest that recent political journalism from the West prefers drama to depth, pundits over people, and personalities over policies. Understandably, voicing political leaders and citizens comes with limitations: time, resources, training, and funding are all barriers to including more first-hand voices, while adding political sources depends on the relationship between politicians and the media. Underfunded newsrooms and pressure-filled mainstream news means journalists rarely have the time, space, or inclination to voice these sources adequately (Duncan, 2009: 222; Wasserman, Bosch, Chuma, 2016). However, in order to effect change, journalists should take the lead in using citizen and political sources. Embedding journalism is a costly exercise, and in an era where journalism is in a global crisis, this may seem like a tall order.

Beckett (2016) asserts that news media should not merely listen and represent voices, but rather create the space for the relationship that allows us to hear each other better. Listening to the community and presenting these voices on broadcast media is a key tenet of journalism, yet the art of listening is slowly being subjugated in the blizzard of fast news and

mediatized razzmatazz. In a democracy like South Africa, it is thus up to the journalists and editors themselves to regard community, citizen, and political voices as powerful sources, rather than rely on the easily accessible elite voices of punditry and journalists-as-experts. Getting more journalists on the ground, up close and personal with the first-hand sources may help halt the stampede in political journalism to mediatized Post-Truth information. It remains to be seen whether journalists attempt to voice South African citizens and leaders more or less in the upcoming sixth general election in May 2019.

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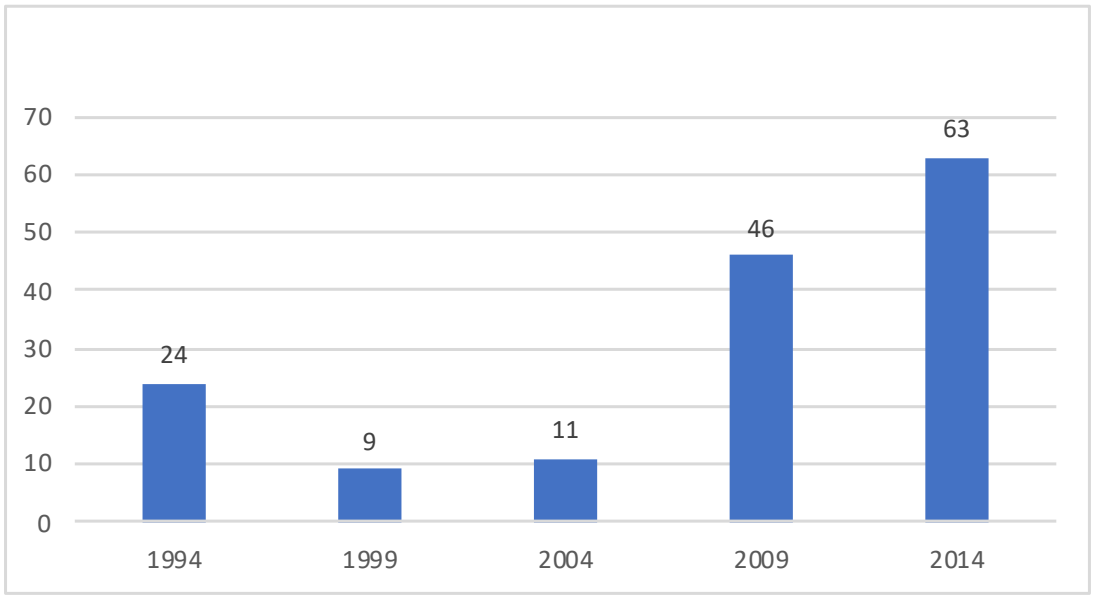
Author biography

Bernadine Jones is a Lecturer in Media and Communications at the Coventry University and an active researcher in journalism studies, political communication, and television news representation. Her PhD was on the global and local representation of South African elections on TV news, from the University of Cape Town in 2018. Her research spans the fields of media and politics, with a particular interest in semiotic and visual analysis of political journalism.

Figure 1



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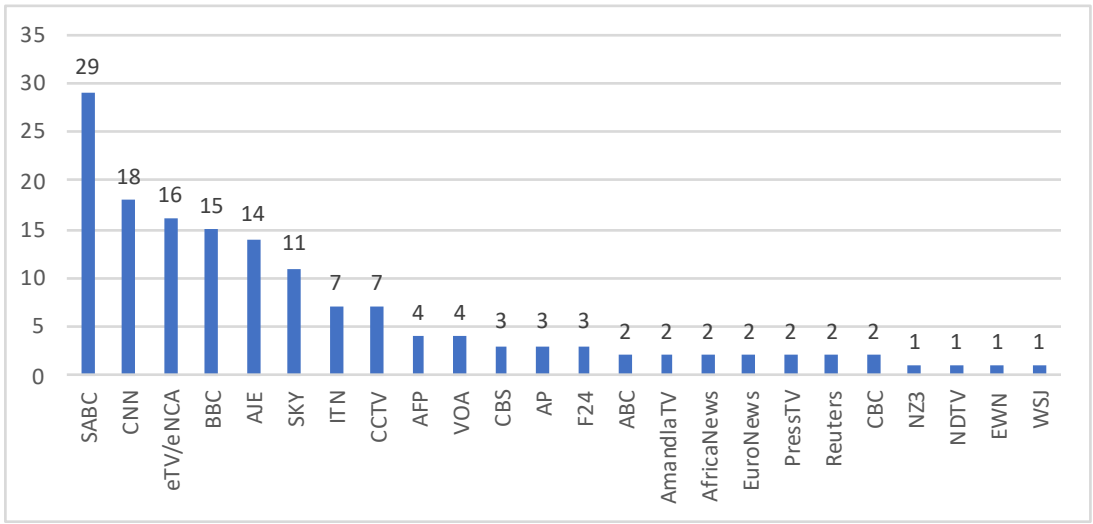

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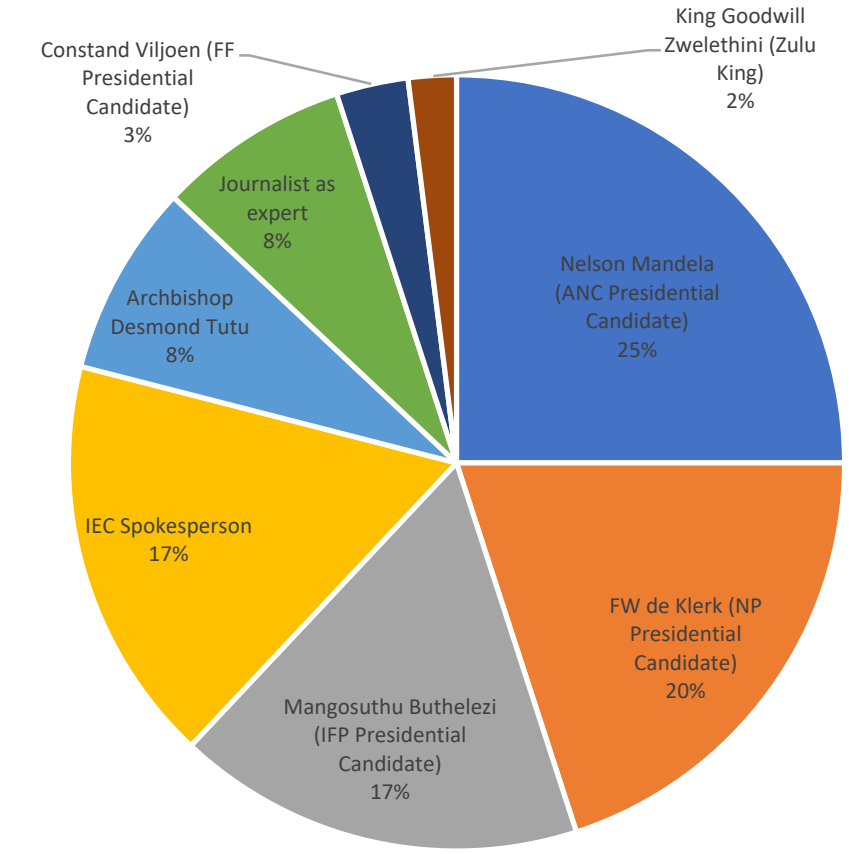

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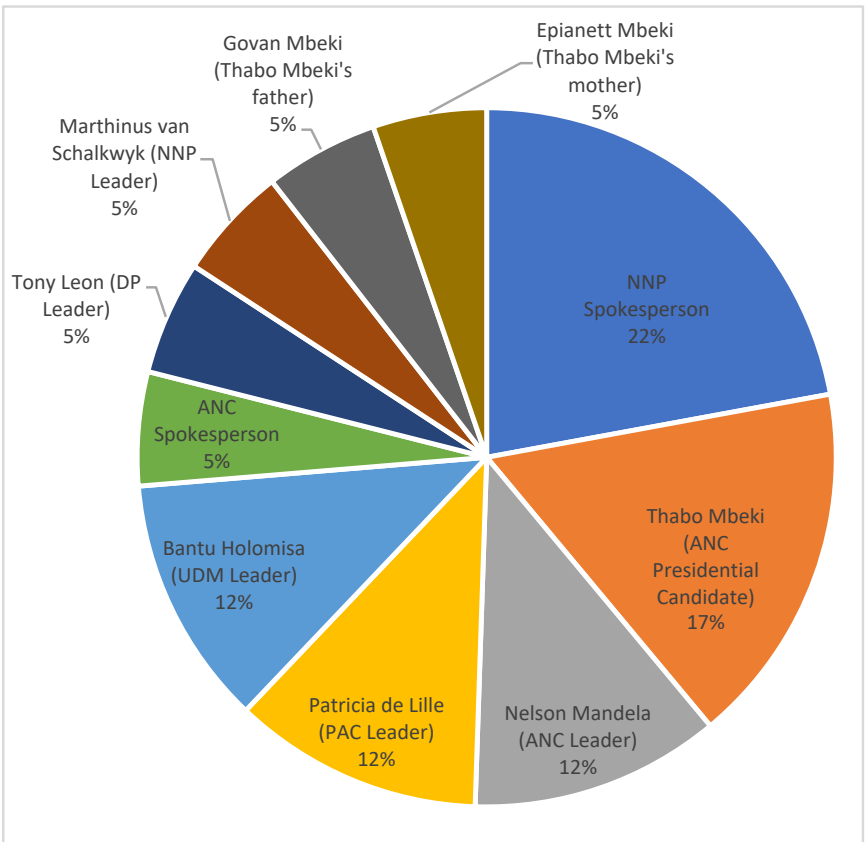

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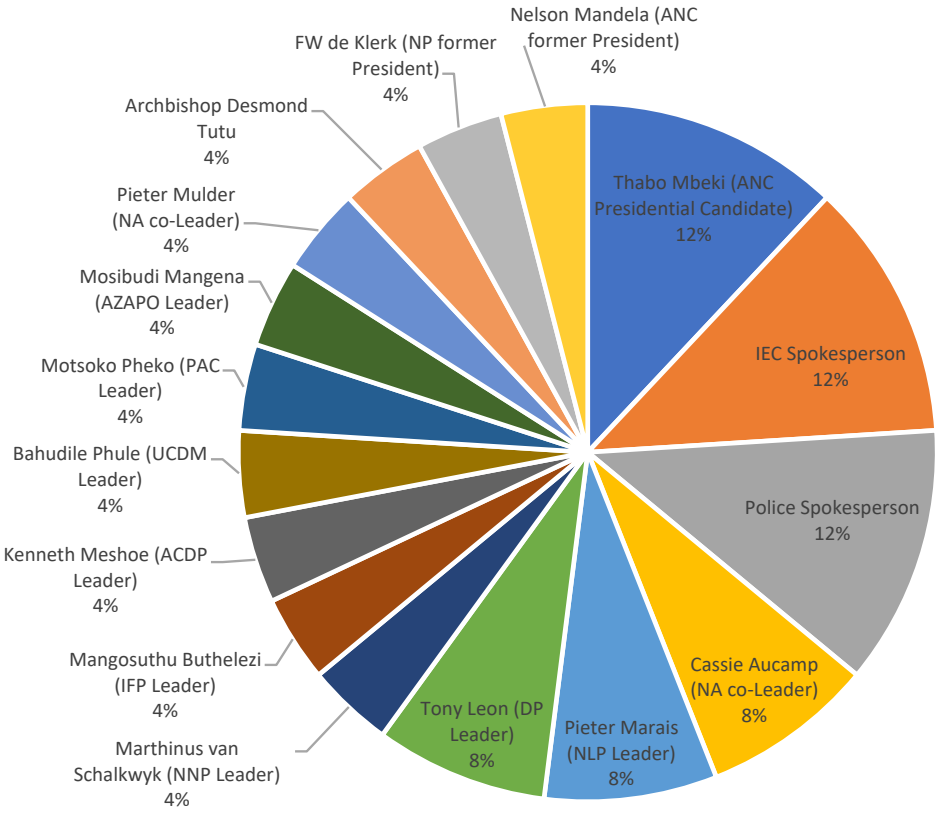

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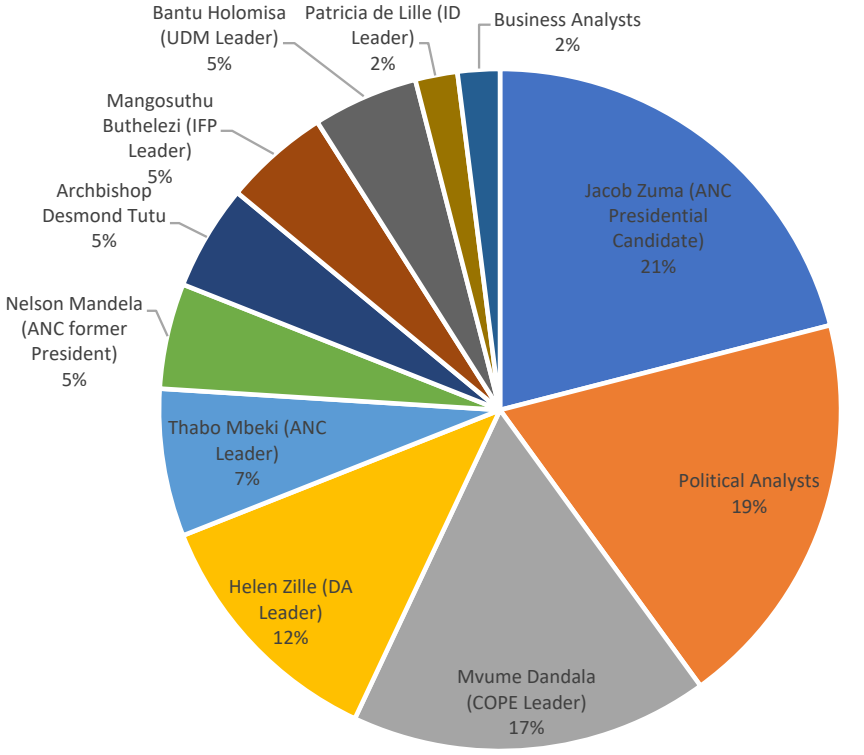

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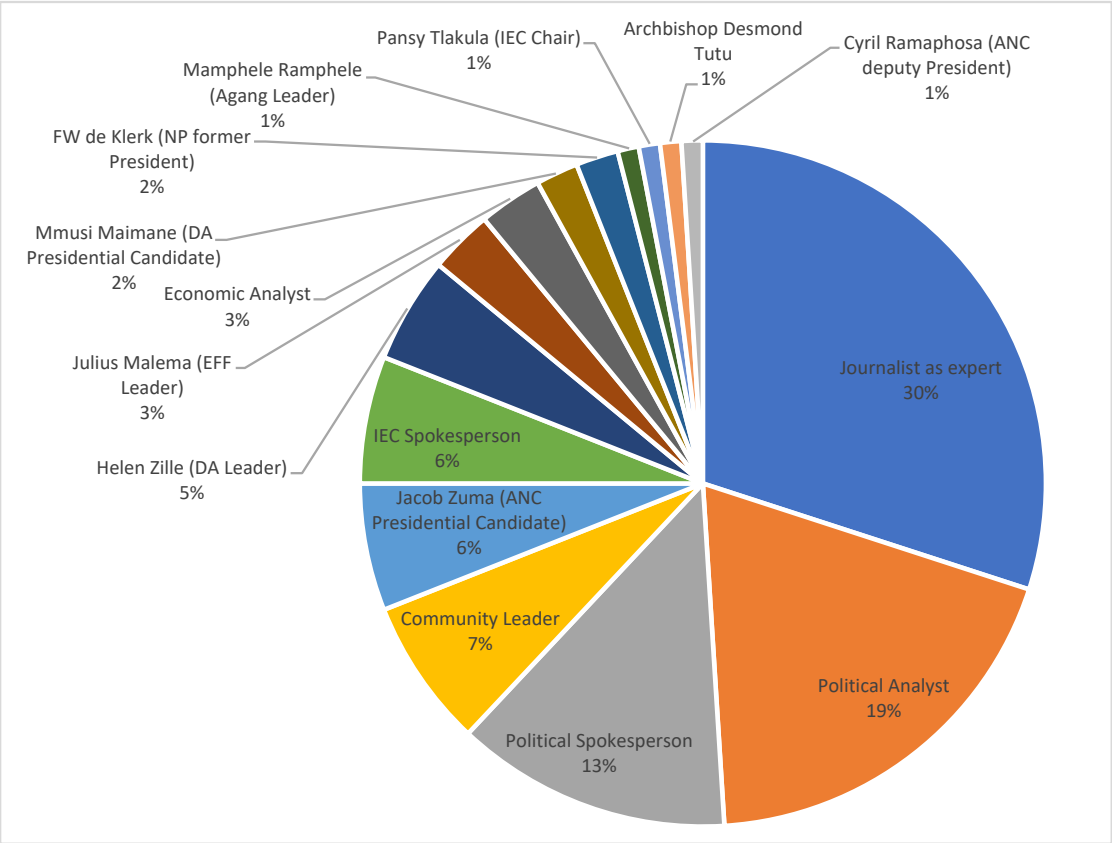

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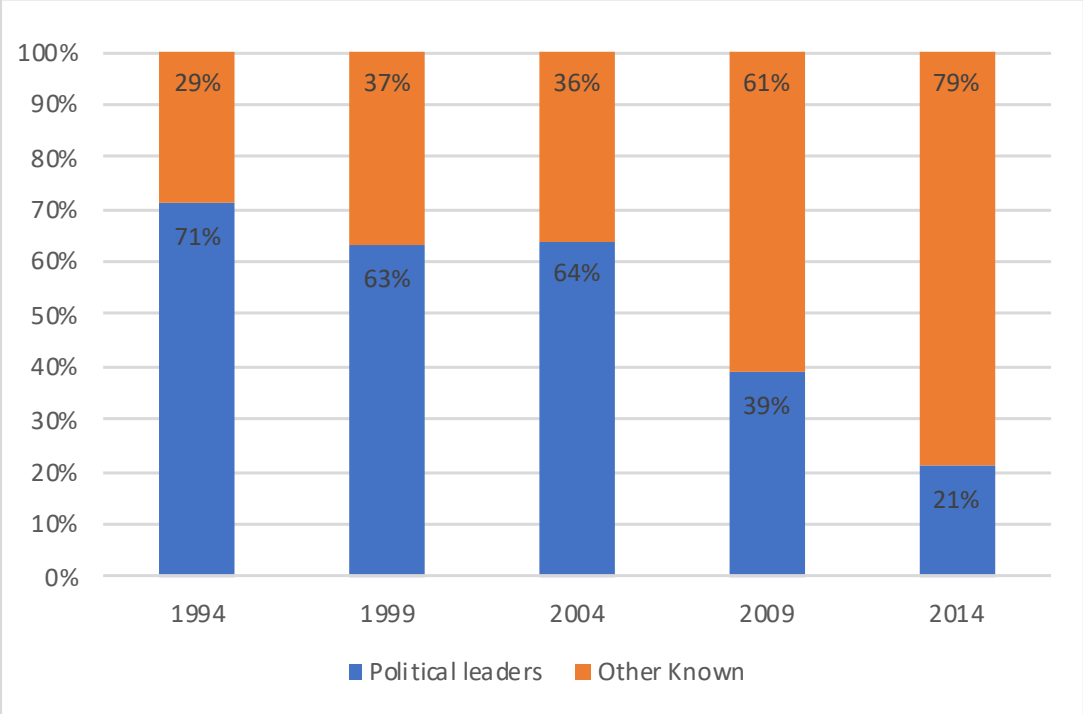

Table 1

Year	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
Knowns	42	19	25	102	136
Unknowns	55	23	6	71	64

Table 2

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
	%	%	%	%	%
Knowns	43	45	80	60	68
Unknowns	57	55	20	40	32

Table 3

		1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
		%	%	%	%	%
Voter	Voter white	4	8	17	3	8
	Voter black	32	49	17	32	38
Vox	Vox white	29	0	0	14	6
	Vox black	35	43	66	51	48

Table 4

		1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
		%	%	%	%	%
Age	Young	15	35	33	37	44
	Old	85	65	67	63	56
Gender	Male	65	61	71	65	56
	Female	35	39	83	35	44