

## From sick old man to mythical hero: A comparison of the Independent Online's representation of Nelson Mandela in 2010 and 2013

### ABSTRACT

In his autobiography, *Conversations with Myself*, Mandela spoke about his concern that the world had a false image of him as a saint and semi-god (Mandela, 2012). However, it can be noted that Mandela and the ANC carefully built up his symbolic power in the press and media to represent him as "some kind of Messiah" (Ottaway, 1993:11) who had led South Africa to freedom almost single-handedly, and in doing so cemented his ideals of liberation, peace and non-racialisation in the imagination of the world. However, as Mandela's health deteriorated before his death, his constructed immortality was tested as society began to question if his legacy could live on without the physical presence of 'Mandela the man'. Consequently, this article examines the representation of Mandela in his few final years. In an examination of the Independent Online news repository in 2010 and 2013, this research highlights how 'Madiba's Magic' was a carefully constructed media image and one that, during his long illness, forced South Africans, and the world, to recognise his 'humanness'. The paper concludes, however, by documenting the immense power of Mandela's legacy as played out in the press, and how, after death, his carefully constructed legacy rose above the damage of his prolonged illness, elevating him from a sick old man and reinforcing him as a mythical revolutionary.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As he hovers on the threshold, almost certainly for the last time, Madiba's long goodbye takes on the form of a return – not as a statue, or as a caricature, but as living potential. (Nic Dawes, 2013).

Nelson Mandela was a man who, since his introduction into politics in the early part of the 20th century, worked carefully with the African National Congress (ANC) to construct his image as a man of dignity, reconciliation and peace (Mandela, 1994; Smith, 2010). After his release from prison in February 1990, the world tended to remember Mandela as a man who overnight brought about unification between the people of South Africa, even though negotiations almost failed as a result of both Mandela and the then president FW de Klerk's inability to see eye-to-eye on the future of the country (Barber, 2004; Ottaway, 1993). Mandela was "regularly compared to [Moses and Jesus Christ ...] and loomed on the horizon as some kind of Messiah" (Ottaway, 1993:11) for the people of South Africa. His seemingly singled-handed and peaceful revolution helped to continue the political myth that had been created about Mandela while he was in prison (Ottaway, 1993) and re-affirmed the ex-prisoner as South Africa's 'mythical' hero of reconciliation (Martin, 2006; Moosa, 2014; Ottaway, 1993; Van Heerden, 2012).

Much of his reconciliatory nature was bolstered by press photographs and news footage of him shaking hands with his former captors, and having tea with the widows of past apartheid presidents, including Mrs Verwoerd, whose husband was generally considered as the architect of the entire apartheid system. Consequently, Mandela was able to use these "large, assertive shows of forgiveness and reconciliation" to help cement his beliefs and ideals in the minds and imagination of all people, "with a promise of a better future" (Van Heerden, 2012:136). Additionally, films and many biographies highlight his reconciliatory power and often gloss over his involvement with "the violently radical wing of the African National Congress" during the 1960s (Martin, 2006:46).

However, since Mandela's exit from politics in 1999, the ANC has suffered a number of setbacks in the political arena, ranging from social unrest culminating in the Marikana miners' massacre in 2012, to corruption charges against many of its top officials, which has led to internal fracturing within the party. Yet, with Mandela's association with the ANC, as a figure of nostalgia, the ruling party was able to use past work and images of Mandela in the media as a way of idealising the country's future and the ANC. Consequently, the ANC has been able to see off many of its critics by gliding on the coat tails of South Africa's 'mythical hero'. However, because so much emphasis has been placed on the ideological and symbolic currency of Mandela after the fall of apartheid (Barber, 2004; Smith, 2010; Van Heerden, 2012), there were questions as to what would happen to South Africa after the ninety-five year old freedom fighter died (Khumalo, 2014).

During the prolonged illness before his death, the well-known images that had circulated globally of Nelson Mandela during apartheid and the early days of South Africa's new democracy – a strong, young freedom fighter leading the country into its young, free and strong future – were replaced with images of a sick and barely lucid old man, whose deterioration appeared to match South

Africa's plunge from a miraculous new democracy to 'normal' political life. This article, therefore, aims to examine how the press handled the representation of Mandela's illness and his eventual passing away in 2013 to determine if his legacy and symbolic status have endured, or if his physical deterioration and illness became a tool to return South Africa's 'Messiah' to human form.

In order to answer this question, this article examines the concepts of news framing, agenda-setting, myth-making and representation, in conjunction with an analysis of news stories regarding Mandela during his last three years, from South Africa's Independent Online News (IOL) repository.

### **1. REPRESENTING THE MANDELA 'MYTH'**

The concept of representation has raised critical questions about authenticity, credibility and reality. The main concerns revolve around the nature of representation being 'fake', which has important implications for the analysis of mass media representations. When one begins analysing the history of Mandela's representation after the fall of apartheid, for example, there are a number of issues which are ignored in the official narrative of both the ANC and South Africa's first democratically elected leader (Couper, 2011; Diala, 2005; Martin, 2006; Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1997). Ironically, Mandela, South Africa's key to peaceful transition, was also the man who helped form the armed wing of the African National Congress, *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), and moved the ANC toward a violent struggle that undermined the call for non-violence during the 1960s by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and then ANC chief, Albert Luthuli (Barber, 2004; Couper, 2011). Supporters of Mandela argue that his time on Robben Island helped to mellow an angry youth who went through "a gradual political awakening as part of a greater process of personal and moral maturation and development" (Van Heerden, 2012:56), while critics assert that Mandela, as a person and as a symbol for the liberation movement, was carefully constructed by the ANC and himself, to downplay his militant past in favour of his reconciliatory role (Martin, 2006). This re-affirms research done by Summers (1996), who argued that representation functions as a reproduction produced by an individual or organisation, and thus is not an entirely true version of events. Reid (2008:200) concurs, and explains that whether an event is written about or televised, it is accepted that it cannot be a report of the whole event, but rather is a mediation of the event, where "fakeness or artificiality is in some ways [...] an integral part of televised (or any other type of media) representation".

However, the nature and practices of representation beyond definitions should provide a deeper understanding of how representations are constructed and work. Stuart Hall's (1997:28) constructionist approach highlights how "we use signs, organized into languages of different kinds, to communicate meaningfully with others". He goes on to argue that meaning is produced within language, through representational systems and constructed through signifying practices. He states that these processes take place through two systems of representation, namely, concepts, which are mental representations that help to classify and organise the "world into meaningful categories", and language, consisting of signs which are important for conveying meaning (Hall, 1997:28). However, signs cannot convey meaning without codes; they need social conventions to

help translate our concepts. These social conventions are embedded in our culture which helps create 'shared maps of meaning' within society.

Hall (1997:30) warns that shared conceptual maps are not enough to make meaning of the world and explains how different cultures may interpret the world in different ways. Therefore, the reception of representations is based on learnt behaviour and language that help one make sense of the world. Hall (1997:18) acknowledges the significance of the work and social constructionist approach of the French philosopher, Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed the semiotic approach to representation through his language model in the field of representation. According to Culler (1976:19, as quoted in Hall, 1997:31), de Saussure believed the production of meaning depends on language and that "language is a system of signs, sounds, images, written words, paintings and photographs that function as signs within language in order to express and communicate ideas". The key point to be taken from de Saussure's work and Hall's systems of representation is that different language expressions (signifiers) and the mental concepts associated with them (signified) produce "signs; which when organized into languages, produced meanings and could be used to reference objects, people and events in the 'real' world" (Hall, 1997:36).

MacDonald (2003:11) builds onto Hall's argument and concludes that representations are strongly influenced by "a system of communicative practices that are integrally related to wider social and cultural practices, and that help to construct specific frameworks of thinking". Therefore, the meanings we attribute to words and images depend on "culture, experience, and our mental concepts" and how we choose to communicate these ideas – all of which is influenced by our "socio-cultural roots which result in socio-cultural effects" (MacDonald, 2003:11). Consequently, representation is a continuous process of construction and reconstruction. MacDonald (2003) explains this point by stating that the media's construction of events and ideas present a picture, or representation, of a phenomenon for interpretation. He warns that we cannot separate notions of reality from representation, because in many cases, 'reality' is shaped discursively. He suggests that the media use discourse based on ideologies to construct versions of reality open for debate and interpretation, and these are possibly, according to Foucault (quoted in MacDonald, 2003:16), due in part to our 'evolving social practices' and how they are intertwined with discourse.

Such a conclusion reinforces Barthes' (2013) concept of myth-making, in which he reasons that everything can be made into a myth, as long as it is conveyed by a discourse. As with representation, Barthes (2013) highlights that myth creation is produced out of signification. However, unlike simple representation, Barthes (2013:1) argues that myth is not defined by the "object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message". "Myth does not deny things [...] its function is to talk about them; [...] it purifies them [and] gives them a natural and external justification" (Barthes, 2013:58). Consequently, he builds on de Saussure's chain of the signified and signifier, and explains that myth should be considered as the second level of signification, because "myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs [...] the final term of a first semiological chain" (Barthes, 2013:53). In other words, if one uses the construction of Mandela as an example, he, as the sign of the first level of signification, becomes the signifier in the second, and through

the continuous media reinforcement as the definite signified liberator he becomes a second level sign for the hero of South Africa who single-handedly toppled the apartheid government.

However, one must remain cognisant of the fact that myths are historical in nature, so even though the sign of Mandela as peaceful liberator appears to be natural, it is historical context which determines both the rise and longevity of mythic speech (Barthes, 2013). Therefore, if we examine the formation of the Mandela 'myth', we find that it was justified by three main occurrences: his childhood, his incarceration and the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

As already discussed, the use of the media early on in Mandela's political career helped the ANC to create a brand surrounding the young politician as a freedom fighter and human rights activist (Couper, 2011; Martin, 2006; Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1997). However, this was assisted by the apartheid system which banned anyone from discussing or documenting Mandela's youth. It was only after his release from prison that biographers, journalists and other writers were able to 'fill in the blanks', using Mandela's own carefully crafted biography (Cawood, 2014) and consequently, tended to reflect a young man from humble beginnings whose life was "marked by struggle, sacrifice and submission" (Martin, 2006). Complementing this constructed youth, Mandela's time on Robben Island helped to elevate his status and increase the mythical status of the political leader (Barber, 2004). Ironically, this was due primarily to the Nationalist government's strict censorship and banning of images and slogans that reflected Mandela in any way. Consequently, the few images that were circulated during apartheid showed a young, healthy and strong Mandela who was free "of the contamination of an ageing, imprisoned body" (Van Heerden, 2012:110), but these were minimal and as a result, Mandela became a symbol of the movement rather than a 'real-life' political leader while in prison (Barber, 2004). Therefore, once he was released his symbolic power grew and he came to represent a timeless representation of "enduring black resistance [who] bore no hatred or grudges toward whites even after 27 years in jail" (Ottaway, 1993:3).

In addition to these factors, it was reported that while Mandela was in prison he had a fearless defiance toward his warders that culminated in a deeply respectful relationship between them, helping to boost the Mandela myth even further (Van Heerden, 2012). Ottaway (1993) also documents that when the time came for his release, Mandela seemed reluctant to leave his jailers without a proper goodbye, describing them as 'close-knit family' who had shared more than twenty years together – thus re-affirming him as a man of forgiveness. After leaving prison, Mandela took advantage of his 'visual signification' and used this to pursue political stability in South Africa by establishing himself as a 'sign' of reconciliation and peace. His charismatic displays of empathy and forgiveness towards his enemies and assurance towards white South Africans and the West would see the "literary embodiment of this process of rewriting Mandela, from the fiery militant to a man of peace and reconciliation" (Van Heerden, 2012: 98). This finally culminated at the 1995 World Cup Final when Mandela appeared on the field, dressed in, what was then, white South Africans' beloved Springbok rugby jersey, to make a public display of solidarity with the white minority. This act helped to highlight the fact that the 'Boks' belonged to all South Africans and not just to the country's white population. This event was highly publicised by the media who called it Mandela's coup de grâce, where he won the adoration of "white South

Africa", even though it was initially criticised by South Africa's black majority (Carlin, 2011, quoted in Van Heerden, 2012:125).

## **2. FRAMING AND AGENDA-SETTING**

Pan and Kosicki (1993) argue that it is important to establish credible sources within a text and determine which ideologies are given precedence regarding certain issues. The importance of understanding frames is that they "reveal the imprint of power by registering the identity of actors or interests that compete to dominate the text" (Fourie, 2007:246) and if subordinate positions are not defended, expressions framed in the original story can become the media and public's dominant opinion, resulting in a particular reality.

Framing also works to structure news discourse in a functional order of narratives for the purposes of storytelling (Deacon et al., 2010). News narratives are framed in such a way that from the headlines, lead sentence, and statements of witnesses and accredited sources, a specific pattern is followed to form a thematic structure and discourse schema, thereby constructing the desired message with a structured air of authority and trustworthiness (Bignell, 2004).

Consequently, the media are able to "focus public attention on specific issues" (McQuail and Windahl, 1993:238), and thus set the agenda as to the way in which certain issues are addressed. However, one must acknowledge that the process of agenda-setting does not necessarily mean that the media have 'evil' or deceptive intentions in their framing strategies (McCombs, 1997, quoted in Fourie, 2007). Agenda-setting is merely the process whereby reoccurring cues on certain news issues appear over a period of days, weeks, months or even longer, allowing audiences to identify the salience of certain news items (Fourie, 2007). Therefore, when the media set the agenda, they not only tell people *what* to think about, but also *how important* certain topics have become (our emphasis; Entman, 2007; Fourie, 2007). Consequently, when examining the news articles pertaining to Mandela, one is required to be critical of both the thematic structures in place and the word choices made by journalists in order to determine the type of frames and agenda they have created for audiences to interpret.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this study is to compare the way that Nelson Mandela was represented in 2010 and 2013 via the Independent Online (IOL) news repository. The time-frames selected were determined by the renewed interest that news media both locally and globally paid to Mandela during the Football World Cup as South Africa's 'magical talisman', and again when his health continued to deteriorate in 2013 culminating in his passing away. The IOL repository was chosen because it hosts all news stories published by South Africa's Independent Group which is responsible for printing more than 30 of South Africa's daily, weekly and community newspapers. Units for analysis were purposefully selected using the search terms "Nelson Mandela" and "Madiba" during 2010 and 2013. Only those stories which referred to Nelson Mandela directly were examined, while those that only made mention of him in passing, or headlined his foundation and family members

were excluded. Based on these criteria, nine articles were extracted from 2010 and 36 articles were extracted from 2013 up until, and including, November 2013. December 2013, the month he died, was analysed separately, as it contained more than 800 relevant news stories and would indicate how the framing of Mandela differed from before his death.

In order to sort through the large amount of data, a content analysis of word choice was done for each time period in order to determine common discursive patterns and themes. Using word cloud software, the researchers were able to sort through all articles and determine the most frequently mentioned words and phrases in relation to Mandela. Once the content analysis had been completed, articles which contained the most number of common words and phrases were deconstructed, with the purpose of searching for narrative themes and discourse schemas surrounding the representation of Mandela, thus leading the researchers to conclude how he was represented during his illness and death.

#### 4. MANDELA'S MAGIC

Out of the nine articles selected for analysis, 4342 words were extracted. Once eliminating common words such as 'a', 'the', 'as', 'to' and the like, our analysis revealed 54 words which recurred most often in the articles. As seen in Figure 1 below, reference to Mandela in 2010 was dominated by themes surrounding the Football World Cup and the people of Africa. The most interesting related to Mandela include 'magic', 'icon', and 'Madiba'.

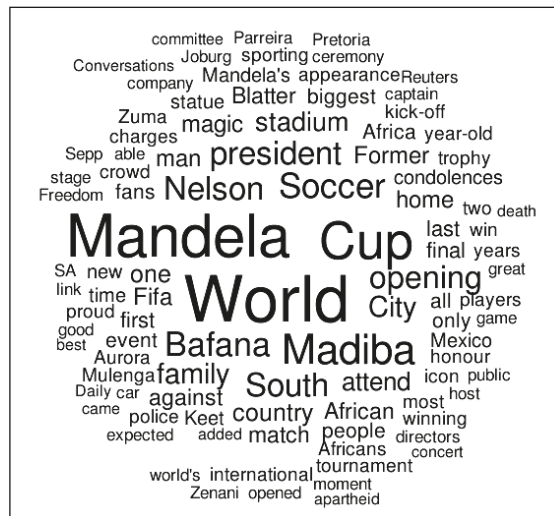


Figure 1

Of the nine articles that referred to Mandela, two articles contained a concentration of the thematic 'World Cup Soccer' words identified above. They are "Madiba Magic to shine on Bafana" and

“World Cup fans crave ‘Madiba Magic’”; however, these stories were quite similar and differed from one another only slightly to cater for the audiences of the printed newspapers in which they originally appeared. Therefore, the most in-depth story, “World Cup fans crave ‘Madiba Magic’”, was chosen for a more detailed analysis of themes.

This article dealt with the South African football team's opening match at the 2010 Football World Cup against Mexico. The article gives voice to excited supporters en route to the stadium to watch the game, but more importantly, it highlights supporters' expectations to see Mandela bring his ‘Madiba Magic’ to both the South African team and the World Cup. The article goes on to give a brief background about the “91-year-old Mandela” as the “icon of the struggle against whites-only apartheid rule” and how he “walked to freedom in 1990 after 27 years in captivity” to become South Africa's “first black president and moral inspiration” for the people. Supporters who were interviewed in the article reflect on South Africa's transformation and the World Cup Soccer finals as a dream finally realised for the country.

In this article, Mandela and his actions are represented by the following important key words and phrases: “first black president”, “moral inspiration”, “expected at the tournament”, “Madiba magic”, “clan name Madiba”, “icon of the struggle”, “walking to freedom” and the “91-year-old Mandela”. By analysing the discursive practices, as explained by Hall (1997) earlier in this article, it is evident that Mandela is being represented as a talisman of luck and ‘magic’ for the match. It is implied that his presence alone will ensure that South Africa will win against Mexico, as indicated by a supporter's assumption that “Madiba's magic will help us win the match”. In addition, the fact that the article places emphasis on phrases like “first black president” and “moral inspiration” helps to set Mandela apart from all previous presidents of South Africa, implying that they were not seen as moral or authentic. Overall the article is set up as a narrative schema that stars Mandela as the ‘saviour’ who freed South Africa, and who is now also expected to bring a touch of ‘magic’ by appearing at the World Cup finals to help the South African team overcome their struggle against Mexico. This act is expected, even though Mandela's great granddaughter died in a car accident the night before, and despite his frailty at the age of 91, helping to re-affirm Mandela as a symbol who ‘puts the people first’ regardless of his own struggles. This exemplifies the concept of framing, as defined by O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2007), and concurrently cements the argument of Deacon et al. (2010), that news discourse data are structured in a functional order of narratives for the purpose of storytelling. In the article other phrases such as “the games have started, nothing can stop us now” and “I never thought this day would come” are examples of language that continually alludes to the struggle against apartheid rule and the victory of the people in South Africa. Interviews are used as a way to reflect on South Africa's past and how the World Cup tournament is a victory for the people of South Africa, thus creating a narrative of triumph over adversity. The phrase “South Africa's transformation from international pariah to World Cup host” reinforces this ideology, and gives the nation power and credibility on a par with other democratic countries around the world.

As already stipulated, Barthes (2013:51) describes myth as “a type of speech”. The type of language or discourse used to convey information about Mandela in this article is ‘mythical speech’, as it uses “material that has already been worked on, which presupposes a signifying



consciousness that one can reason about” (Barthes, 2013:51). For example, it can be argued that by referring to Mandela by his clan name ‘Madiba’, and with phrases such as “Madiba magic”, “work his magic”, “icon of the struggle” and “first black president”, each operates to perpetuate a certain reality of the subject in the mind of the reader about the myth surrounding Mandela – namely that he is a man capable of super-human feats, such as ‘walking to freedom’ without resistance. It can therefore be argued that the Football World Cup aimed to create community among South Africans. When the article mentions things such as “finally, the realization of the South African dream”, “draped in South African flags”, “the whole country was expecting to see him” and “the entire nation feels his pain”, it can be argued that the article helps to reinforce the myth of a united South Africa thanks to Madiba’s magic through the use of ideological discourse. The overall narrative of the article is constructed in such a way that we believe that Mandela will inspire South Africa’s football team, and the fans, and through his presence at the game will lead them to victory, just as he did in the past against the apartheid government. However, this is not the case when examining the articles that led up to his death in 2013.

**5. MANDELA’S LAST YEAR**

Of the thirty-six articles that were extracted from IOL up until November 2013, 15 505 words were counted. Out of this, the most prominent words related to an ‘ailing Mandela’. The most frequent words were ‘Mandela’ and ‘hospital’, but other important words and phrases to note are ‘infection’, ‘serious but stable condition’, ‘doctors’, ‘treatment’ and ‘receiving medical support’. The most frequent phrases quoted throughout the thirty-six articles are “serious but stable condition” and “wishing a speedy recovery”. The article that identified most significantly with this theme was “Mandela faces fourth day in hospital”.

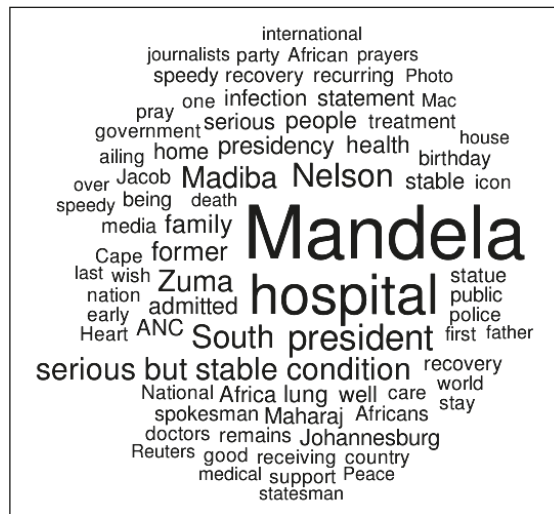


Figure 2

This article reports extensively on the hospitalisation of the “94-year-old Mandela”, his condition, intensive care treatment and the various ailments that he had been treated for in the past. A number of high profile people are listed as commenting on Mandela’s condition, as well as some members of the public who wished him a speedy recovery and others who commented on having to prepare for the worst. The article highlights the fact that there had been no official announcement as to Mandela’s actual condition, but mention is made of Mandela’s ex-wife and daughter visiting him, as well as his wife, Graça Machel, staying by his bedside.

The article also highlights allegations made against President Jacob Zuma and top party officials for exploiting Mandela for political gain. Criticism is brought against the ANC who was facing the 2014 elections “amid widespread corruption, poverty and poor public services”. Government spokesperson, Mac Maharaj, confirmed that close loved ones were allowed to visit Mandela to “create a conducive environment for his recovery” thereby denying media reports that “the party and the government [had] been barred from visiting Mandela in hospital”. A member of the public however, is quoted as saying that “it’s time to let him go”, which appears to reflect the sentiment contained within many news reports during this period.

Overall, the article represents Mandela as having a continuous pattern of ill health, by using words such as ‘frail’, ‘sick’ and ‘aged’, as well as associating his condition with a list of diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, infections, lung problems, prostate cancer and stomach ailments. He is said to have appeared “unsmiling and looking exceedingly frail.” Despite all the negative ‘medical and ill health’ discourse used to describe his condition, he is still referred to as “a beloved, global symbol of peace and forgiveness” and “revered statesman and father of the rainbow nation”. But unlike in the past, when these statements were uttered with veneration, the article frames Mandela with a type of endearment that one would usually associate with an elderly loved one who is close to death.

Framing techniques are used extensively to escalate the story about Mandela’s ailing health; from the headline to the end, fears of anticipated unrest after his passing away are alluded to. Through the use of the word ‘faces’ in the headline “Mandela faces fourth day in hospital”, the article implies that he is a fighter, which, it can be argued, may be an attempt by the media to give hope, calm fears, and direct South Africans back to Mandela’s youth when he was a boxer and freedom fighter. This is further reinforced by the word ‘endures’ when the article states that “the beloved father once again endures the ravages of time”, just as it appeared he did when he was imprisoned. However, the words ‘scares’, ‘prayers’ and ‘increasing concern’ are used in conjunction with each other to help build tension relating to Mandela’s deteriorating health and help highlight that this is nothing like the struggles that he was able to overcome in the past.

The repetition of phrases and words help to highlight a narrative, emphasise a point, and set it as a public agenda (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The phrase “serious but stable condition” appears 64 times throughout the thirty-six articles, while “wishing a speedy recovery” appears only 42 times. The first phrase is used by doctors to describe Mandela’s health, while “wishing a speedy recovery” is generally used by non-medical authorities. It could be argued that the authoritative

voice of medical staff uttering the more negative of the two phrases creates a narrative that will inevitably end in death, but the inclusion of the more positive phrase, especially when quoted from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helps to give readers assurance that Mandela is being taken care of and that something is being done to make him well again. The article makes a point of highlighting that Mandela's lung problems were alleged to have started while in prison. With reference to Barthes (2013), the virtue of historical data and its analogies help the reader form meaning beyond what is obvious in the text. For instance, it can be argued that by mentioning that Mandela was infected while he was in prison emphasises that his 'struggle' is ongoing, thus weakening the assumption that he is super-human and conqueror of his oppressors.

However, what makes this such an important article in terms of the overall discourses surrounding Mandela, is how it positions the ANC in opposition to Mandela and his ideals of reconciliation. The article accuses the ANC of exploiting Mandela for political gain and that without its "Nelson Mandela shine", it will be forced to address issues of "widespread corruption, poverty and poor public services" without its unifying icon. The article is able to distance Mandela from the ANC by stressing that members of the party are not to be given access to Mandela while in hospital. The report further segregates Mandela from the ANC by stating that he spent only one term in office and then turned his energy to the "real battles" such as "HIV/AIDs and conflict resolution", which implies that he made a decision to leave both politics and the ANC.

Interestingly, the article makes reference to "symbol of peace" and "father of the rainbow nation" without ever using the name Mandela. Instead, when speaking of him directly, the article quotes statements from the public that highlight that they "are prepared for the worst", and acknowledge that "he has done his part", "it's time to let him go", and we "should be thinking about his going home." Essentially, it appears to 'kill off' Mandela the man and his link to the ANC, and instead reinforces the sign of the 'mystical' Mandela, extending his legacy and ideals as things that South Africa and its mortal politicians have yet to achieve – a theme that was continued in articles after his death.

## **6. MANDELA AFTER DEATH**

During December 2013, IOL published more than 800 stories directly relating to Mandela, and more than 200 000 words were extracted. Apart from those words which related to Mandela's death and burial, as can be noted in Figure 3 below, other prominent words which demanded attention were 'people', 'family', 'freedom', 'struggle icon', 'democratic', 'liberation', 'peace', 'united' and 'greatest'.



be the media's attempt to create a new myth and deprecate the naysayers – South Africa is not doomed without Mandela, and we are capable of fulfilling his ideals on our own.

## 7. CONCLUSION

While this paper has only been able to address three articles in-depth, it is apparent through the analysis of word choice that there has been a marked shift in the way South Africa's press has chosen to represent Nelson Mandela between 2010 and 2013. In 2010, the country still regarded Mandela as a 'magical' talisman whose mere presence could overcome obstacles and hardship and bless South Africa's football team, and the nation, with the power to contend with the world's greatest. However, as his health deteriorated over the next few years, the South African press came to question what would happen to their beloved country without the great Mandela to protect them from ever-increasing political instability. The press gave voice to these concerns, but simultaneously also pointed out that Mandela deserved 'rest' for what he had done for the country, and slowly eased the country into dealing with a future without him. The metamorphosis of South Africa's mythical man finally came when Nelson Mandela passed away on 5 December 2013. The press forgot the narrative of uncertainty and focused on the legacy that Mandela had built, and highlighted how the ideals of South Africa's mythical hero would be passed down and enacted upon by the next generation of fighters.

## Endnotes

1. If not otherwise stated, all quotes in this section come from AFP (2010).
2. If not otherwise stated, all quotes in this section come from AFP (2013).
3. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes in this section refer to SAPA (2013).

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