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News as a Commodity Vs. News as a Public Good: Adaptation Strategies of South African Newspapers in the Digital Era

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Abstract- Drawing on labour process theory and Bourdieu‟s field theory, this study explores the challenges that newspapers face in maintaining their relevance to readers in an age where news has been de-commoditised and made readily available on the web. Empirically the study is based on four case studies of incidents where different newspapers were reported to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate reporting in recent years. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants from the selected cases. In addition to that, a key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman was also interviewed to provide further insight into the effectiveness of the Press Code in regulating accuracy in news reporting as well as the challenges that newspapers are faced with in that regard. It is argued that the digitalisation of media increases the tension between the production of news as a public good vs. its delivery as a commodity that has to ensure profit. Media is an essential pillar of democratic South Africa as it provides news to ensure that citizens are informed about issues that concern them and have the ability to make decisions on matters of concern – i.e. a public good. It is therefore crucial that news be reported in an accurate and professional manner adhering to the standards set by thePress Code. Newspapers are faced with the challenge of ensuring a balance between producing news that is accurate and adheres to the set standards outlined in the Press Code while also ensuring that they remain profitable – i.e. news as a commodity.

Keywords: labour process theory, news production, commoditisation, public good.

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Keywords: labour process theory, news production, commoditisation, public good.

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Chapter One

I. Introduction

To what extent does restructuring in the field of journalism impact on accurate news reporting? In 2012, Julius Malema took three newspapers to the Press Ombudsman for complaints of inaccurate reportage on him after they had reported inaccurately on the value of his property and his alleged imminent arrest. In this case the Press Ombudsman found in Malema's favour. As one of the key informants I interviewed for this study remarked: *They like going for Malema but they don"t check..."*[1]

Given the fact that the media, the print media in particular, is currently under fire, one might ask what goes wrong when newspapers fail to verify information and ensure accuracy prior to publishing news, such as in the case of Julius Malema mentioned here. To be sure, cases taken to the Press Ombudsman against newspapers" inaccurate reporting have increased over the years (Retief, 2002), raising concern over news quality in South African print media and opening up the media for further political attack. What are the reasons for this real or perceived decline in the quality of news reporting? It has been argued that the digitalization of news production is leading to the hollowing out of the media as one of the central pillars of democracy. Additionally, competitive pressures on the media and the subsequent commercialization of journalism have driven the standards of journalism down (McNair, 2009). In this study, I show how this is true to some extent but I argue that, in spite of these pressures, there is always room for newspapers to manoeuvre. Despite the pressures newspapers may be faced with in the production of news (structure), there are still means by which inaccurate reporting can be avoided (agency). I show the various approaches used by newspapers and by use of case studies from different newspapers, I show how newspapers can attempt to avoid the faults made. Even Rupert Murdoch (2005), given the high profile investigation of his newspaper in the United Kingdom, states that the digital changes taking place in

[1] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.

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newsrooms can be an opportunity to improve journalism and expand newspapers" reach. Thus newspapers can take proactive approaches to adapting to the digitalization of news and find means to benefit from technological developments as well as the use of online news sources and continue to maintain professionalism in news reporting.

This research is a continuation of previous work on the tension between profit and professionalism in print media and how the corporate restructuring of journalism impacts on news reporting in the South African print media (see Khumalo, 2011). This previous project was based on interviews and limited observation. It concluded that; restructuring of the newsroom has resulted in journalists being faced with more pressure in news production, given that fewer journalists and more juniors than seniors are being employed as a means of cutting costs. Furthermore, technological developments in the newsroom leads to journalists having to adapt to new media sources of news reporting and this has resulted in an increased reliance on the web at the expense of in-depth sources of information gathering. With pressure to produce news articles at greater speed, given availability of news from new media sources such as the internet and social media, newspapers have had to turn to online news reporting as well thus increasing journalists" workload. This has affected the quality of news as emphasis has become more on speed and reaching deadline as well as coming up with breaking news first as opposed to reporting more in-depth news that is given thoughtful analysis (Khumalo, 2011).

In this research I broaden these previous findings with more in-depth analyses of actual case studies. I explore the process of news production in detail, using recent cases of newspapers that have been taken to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate news reporting. These case studies reveal that it is not just the restructuring taking place in newsrooms that is impacting on the quality of news. In addition to the consequences of restructuring, newspapers are faced with several other challenges not directly related to restructuring. These include; cases of experienced people leaving the journalism profession, inadequate training, sensationalism of news and disregard for the Press Code. As a result, maintaining the high standards of news production as set by the Press Code becomes a challenge given that the tension between maintaining professionalism in news reporting vs. keeping profits remains unsolved. However, as I show in the case studies below, the errors made by newspapers can be avoided. In sociological language: despite structural factors playing a role, there is room for agency. It is of utmost importance that these issues be addressed by the print media if it wants to avoid further attempts to put limitations on press freedom.

It is important to note that variations exist between newspapers. For instance, some newspapers are highly specialized with each journalist focusing on one specific beat while in other newsrooms a lot of multitasking takes place. Additionally, some newspapers say they have not yet experienced restructuring and that they are still to experience it, while other newspapers say they have gone past restructuring. It thus appears that restructuring is taking place at different periods for different newspapers.

This study is structured as follows: It starts out with a theoretical grounding of the research study with focus on journalism as a labour process and as a field. This is followed by the methodology chapter which outlines the qualitative method(s) and selection criteria used to collect data to tackle the research question. Chapters four and five go into detailed analysis of the research findings. This is in relation to; an understanding on how news is produced as a commodity with application of Labour process theory and how news is produced as a public good with an application of field theory. Chapter six goes on to look at specific case studies in which newspapers have been sent to the Press Ombudsman in recent years. These case studies demonstrate the tension between producing news for profit motives vs. the need to maintain professionalism. The study concludes with chapter seven which provides an overall outline of the challenges newspapers face as shown in the case studies. To end of, the study illustrates how newspapers have agency and the several steps that can be taken to attempt to avoid errors in news reporting.

Chapter Two

II. Journalism As A Labour Process And A Field

The case mentioned in the introduction regarding Julius Malema reporting three newspapers to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate reporting illustrates a fundamental point discussed in this paper. It shows how news may be in the public interest, which alleged corruption committed by a public figure clearly is. However, news is also supposed to make money and bring in profits for news organizations, resulting in hasty decision to break a story before competitors. News is therefore both a public good and a commodity at the same time. Occasionally, the tension between the two may result in inaccurate reporting. In this chapter I theorise this tension by drawing on two sets of literature. In order to understand the production of news as a commodity, I draw on Marxist labour process theory. This theory is particularly appropriate, since it is interested in how the need to be profitable leads to various forms of workplace control over workers by managers, with a specific focus on technology. This

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perspective, however, has little to contribute to an understanding of the production of news as a public good. For this I turn to Pierre Bourdieu"s field theory, which analyses the "rules of the game" in various social institutions, such as the media or education. Both these theories have the advantage that a number of scholars have applied them to understanding how the restructuring of journalism impacts on news production.

a) News as a Commodity vs. News as a Public good

Tension exists between the need for newspapers to ensure that productivity is kept high and that profits are maintained, on the one hand, and the need to maintain professionalism in the reporting of news given that news is a public good which is needed for democracy on the other. Serving commercial interests primarily over producing news accurately to serve society could impact on news quality given that there may be pressure to publish quicker and publish news stories that sell. In the midst of this, quality checks may be lost thereby undermining the credibility of media as an essential pillar to democracy.

Champagne (2005) distinguishes between two types of press; one that is strictly dependent on the state and destined to serve it and the other that is constituted on the model of the for-profit commercial enterprise. Newspapers are economic enterprises directly subject to economic laws which often come into conflict with the imperatives of intellectual production; this presents a strong pressure within journalism. It is important to note that although media has the role to serve the state and inform citizens appropriately in a democratic society, profitability tends to impose strong constraints on journalistic production. The state has power of ensuring that media performs its role of informing citizenry and enforces measures to oversee the way media operates, as in the case of the Protection of State Information Bill. Should the Bill become law it will limit information that journalists can expose to the public as the Bill seeks to regulate the classification, protection and distribution of state information. Thus, the state would be able to regulate what state information the media can or cannot bring to the public eye. This notion of state power over the media can be justified by drawing on the Marxist critique of the media as a bourgeois institution which represents the interests of the ruling class in society.

The tension between making profits and maintaining professionalism is therefore a difficult one to resolve given that newspapers" profitability models are under strain from other immediate and freely available news sources. In the end newspapers face a challenge of ensuring professionalism in news reporting while still remaining profitable. As Patrick Champagne (2005) argues, a major contradiction within the operation of the journalistic field lies in that the journalistic practices that best conform to journalism ethical codes are often not profitable.

b) News as a Commodity

News is a commodity given that it is produced for consumption by the public and also with the intention of newspapers making profit from its production. News has to sell as newspaper corporations are in business, moreover with the goal of profit making. Newspapers" business model has been affected by the de-commoditisation of news content as it is offered for free on the internet. This has brought newspapers" profitability model under pressure as they have to strive to still remain in business.

As a result, more emphasis has being placed on the need to make profits thereby sacrificing quality in news reporting in some instances (McManus, 2009).

McManus (2009: 219) defines commercialization of news as "any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist"s or news organization"s best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve." As competition from other sources of news, primarily the immediacy of news offered freely on the internet, commercial interference has been on the rise. Newspapers thus compete to grab the attention of readers and to sell. As a result of this, more news is becoming sensationalized and made to sound interesting to readers, in the end accuracy is lost in some instances as I explore further in the following chapter. There is a focus on news that can sell to the public which leads to the "dumbing down" trend whereby newspapers report more on what they find appealing to readers such as reporting more on celebrities and an overemphasis on the personal lives of politicians. News organizations may be faced with an additional pressure to avoid negatively reporting on large advertisers that bring in a lot of revenue (McManus, 2009). This results in a greater possibility of newspapers" accuracy being compromised by the need to continue bringing in revenue to their organizations.

Newsrooms have had to adapt to the changes in news production which have taken place primarily as a result of technological developments leading to a need to readjust the business model of news production. Consequently, newspapers have had to employ means of cost cutting to deal with the financial pressures facing print media. Newsroom restructuring was explored in detail in part one of this study and the findings showed that cost cutting has been a strategy to ensure that newspapers continue to maintain profitable production (Khumalo, 2011). Thus costs have been cut by reducing the number of staff in most newsrooms. There has also been a tendency to employ more juniors than seniors (as seniors are more expensive to hire and have been found to be less competent in the operation of technological developments in newsrooms). Some newsrooms make use of freelancers who are only employed on a need basis and paid according to the

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number of news stories they produce thus offering cost effectiveness. Convergence/synergy is another means by which newspapers cut costs in news production. Convergence involves the production of news content for multiple platforms; information is gathered in a content pool and then disseminated in a variety of platforms within the newspaper corporation such as other newspapers within the group as well as the internet, radio, mobile, video and television.

In the next section I will explore how news is not only a commodity produced for the sake of making money but it also has to be in the public interest and adhere to the required standards of professional news reporting.

c) News as a Public good

Journalists play the role of being watchdogs on behalf of citizenry hence public interest has to be kept in mind in the production of news. As is argued by Des Freedman (2010) news has never been an ordinary commodity, news has a special status in facilitating a public sphere by providing the public with information to participate in a democratic life. High standards of news reporting should be maintained so that the public is accurately informed and can be able to make well informed decisions. As McManus (2009) argues, the more newspapers prioritize on profit making at the expense of professionalism in news reporting, then the less valuable news becomes as a resource for citizens. News is thus a public good that contributes to the pillars of democracy and it is of importance that it be produced professionally and ethically.

News cannot simply be consumed in any form; certain standards have to be observed. News has to be in the public interest, as media plays a crucial role in ensuring that citizens are well informed. The importance lies not just in how news is produced-to sell, but also on how it is received by the audience. Thus, standards of news reporting are set by the South African Press Code upon which newspapers are to adhere to ensure that news is produced in a manner that is reputable. The Press Code is the ethical Code to ensure the practice of responsible journalism in South Africa. If news is defective, there are serious ethical consequences for newspapers and ultimately implications for democracy. Because print media has enormous influence, it is of vital importance that journalism be practiced in an accountable and responsible way (Retief, 2002).

Newspapers have built into the process of news production systems to check news stories and verify that news has been reported accurately and that it adheres to the standards that are set by the South African Press Code. News stories go through various checking processes prior to being finalized for print. News editors, editors and subeditors go through the stories written by journalists to verify that the stories have been written appropriately and accurately. In addition to this process, some newspapers have an accuracy form which is meant to be filled in by every journalist that writes a news story. In this form, journalists check that they have reported news accurately and followed all standards set by the Press Code. I further explore the means to ensure accuracy in news production in detail in the next chapter. To sum up, these checking processes are in place to ensure that news as a public good is produced in the best way possible as is essential in a democratic society.

Labour process theory shows how news is produced in such a way as to keep productivity high and ensure profit generation as outlined below. Additionally, I draw on Bourdieu"s field theory to understand how news is also a public good which has to be produced in such a way that maintains levels of professionalism. I will now go on to look at each theory in turn:

The labour process theory shows how news is a commodity as it is produced for sale with the need to make profits. Labour process theory further illustrates how management seeks to ensure maximum productivity so as to maintain profits. Newspapers are corporations in business thus news is produced with the aim to sell and continue to bring in revenue to news organizations. Management seeks to control how work is organized and to cut costs where possible to achieve profitability. Some structuralist strands of labour process theory run the risk of not recognising workers as capable agents in their work. Bourdieu"s field theory addresses this gap by showing that workers can exercise agency in production. In addition, field theory illustrates how the process of news production is beyond commodity production as newspapers do not only seek to acquire economic capital in the form of revenue, but also importantly seek to obtain cultural capital in the form of original, well written news stories and publishing news accurately which keeps their newspaper standards high. Hence, news is also a public good to be produced with adherence to standards set by the Press Code and journalists can feel a sense of satisfaction in serving the public in producing news stories.

d) Theories

i. *Braverman's Labour Process Theory*

Labour process theory is relevant to this research as it specifically deals with the relationship between technology and labour. There has been a revival in this theory in studies of the media and other service industries subjected to technological change, which makes it relevant to my study. Labour process theory relates to the impact of technology on work, in this case print media. It is important to apply labour process theory to the production of news as it helps to understand the changes taking place in newsrooms as a result of technological developments especially the

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internet and the effects thereof. A return to Harry Braverman"s (1976) work on the labour process has become more prominent as processes that were applicable in manufacturing are now being utilised to mechanise and standardise service work, such as turning personalised customer advice into pre-coded steps that are subjected to broken and allocated to call centre operators. Also, business processes and administration are increasingly outsourced to dedicated agencies that often perform these functions off-shore and at lower wage rates. In addition, professional work is increasingly being subjected to deskilling as well as increased casualization of labour, such as the use of freelancers in the journalism profession.

Braverman (1976) predicted that the manufacturing working class would become deskilled over time, since Taylorist scientific management and Fordist mass production would lead to them merely repeating tasks designed by industrial engineers. Mass production, according to Braverman, depleted the craft tradition of production that had existed before the rise of factories. Breaking the production process down into pre-determined tasks separates out the conception of work from its execution, leading to deskilled, alienated labour. Assembly line technology, as invented by Henry Ford, played a key factor in this. Braverman was severely criticised for not recognising the agency of workers and the fact that they often resisted such deskilling (Edwards, 1979, Friedman, 1977; Burawoy, 1985). As pointed out above, the standardisation of work in the service economy has led to renewed interest in Braverman"s work. Interestingly enough, Henrik Ornebring (2010) recently made use of Harry Braverman"s labour process theory to explore the relationship between technology and labour in the production of news. In this research project, I draw on his study broadly to understand how the restructuring taking place in the field of journalism may affect news quality.

The critique of Braverman as too structuralist has to be taken seriously though. For this reason I also turn to Pierre Bourdieu"s field theory. This theory provides specific insight into the relationship between media and society and helps to understand structural changes that impact on the news production process. Bourdieu"s field theory shows that workers have agency in the production process, which Braverman"s version of labour process theory underplays. Thus journalists can have autonomy in producing news stories for instance by coming up with their own story ideas and are not necessarily coerced and/or exploited in producing news stories. Moreover, applying field theory to the labour process of news production aids one to understand news not just as a commodity, but also as a public good to be professionally produced to serve and inform society.

Labour process theory is concerned with how a workforce"s labour power is directed towards the production of commodities that are sold in order to make profit. Labour process theory is often applied to manual labour; this study applies the labour process theory to white collar work and shows how the labour process can also be about news production. Journalists are different from manual workers in the sense that the system of control in journalistic work is only partly concerned with the volume or speed of their output. As David Murphy (1991) argues, journalists have an additional major concern to do with the content of what they produce. This relates back to the discussion above which shows that news is a public good that has to be produced in a set manner adhering to the standards of news reporting set by the Press Code so as to ensure that the public is well informed. It should be noted that although news is a commodity that is produced for the public, it is not an ordinary commodity. News is not merely produced for commercial purposes; media is central to the pillars of democracy and has to ensure that it serves society by reporting news truthfully, accurately and fairly. In addition to what labour process theory stipulates, news is more than just a tangible product. The production of news involves knowledge work, given that journalism is distinguishable from any ordinary commodity by the ethical requirements and standards to be adhered to in the production of news content.

A renewed interest in Marxist labour process theory followed after the publication of Harry Braverman"s (1976) work, notably the work of theorists such as Michael Burawoy (1985) and Paul Thompson (1989).Major themes that emerge from the labour process theory literature are; the importance of the separation of conception and execution of labour, increased differentiation of the labour process, the use of technology to increase productivity and deskilling (Ornebring, 2010). I will proceed to explain these themes below after which I will examine their application to my research project.

According to Henrik Ornebring (2010), in the work of journalists, conception involves planning the content of the newspaper, what to print as well as gathering the news while execution involves the actual writing and information gathering. These processes have been rigidly separated since the industrialization of the press, there has been gradual disconnection of the technology of printing from the actual news gathering labour. This is visible in the newsroom whereby there is separate staff for news reporting, mainly journalists and news editors and also production staff that are responsible for the physical production of the newspaper i.e. preparing the paper for print. Also, journalists may be involved in the processes of news gathering and writing of news stories, however, they may not always partake in the finalizing of news stories for print. As the case studies explored in this study show, journalists" stories can get changed along the

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editing process and they may not always be aware of this until the newspaper goes to print. According to Braverman, this form of separation of the conception and execution of labour is a form of control. He saw workers as becoming deskilled by performing repetitive tasks and not being part of the mental aspect of planning work (Braverman, 1976).

With regards to the increased differentiation of the labour process, tasks have become increasingly differentiated in the newsroom with the development of more journalism beats such as online news staff, sports reporter, justice reporter, international correspondent, crime reporter so as to enhance the process of news production. Increased differentiation of tasks in the newsroom aids in keeping productivity high. Other journalist support staff such as photographers, graphic designers also exist; however, journalists are in some cases required to perform these tasks in addition to news reporting. Journalists are thus expected to have technical skills and as Henrick Ornebring (2010) argues from Braverman"s perspective, technology becomes a tool that allows management to implement organizational changes aimed at making journalistic labour more cost effective and more easily controlled.

Moreover, labour process theory looks at how technology is used to increase productivity in the workplace. Newsrooms are now increasingly dependent on technology for their work; technological advancements such as the internet and mobile phones are aiding journalists to deal with the pressure in the newsroom for instance they can now receive documents via fax and email as well as contact their sources without having to leave the newsroom. Henrick Ornebring (2010) argues that the introduction of new technologies in the production of news has worked to establish a discourse of speed as speed has become a primary measure of competitive success in the news industry. Journalists are increasingly focusing on producing news quicker and being able to break news stories first. Technological developments in the newsroom have additionally led to the introduction of more subtle forms of control by management and ensuring a quicker and more effective way of monitoring the work of journalists.

Labour process theory also looks at the aspect of deskilling; Braverman argues that there is increased deskilling of the labour force as there is increased use of technology in the workplace and workers perform repetitive and less challenging tasks; there is loss of integrated skills with more reliance on technology. By deskilling, production costs are cut and workers lose their autonomy, in addition, there is more control by management as workers do not have direct engagement in the production process (Braverman, 1976). Henrik Ornebring (2010) argues that as journalists become more skilled in digital production techniques, there is the danger of them finding less use for their news-gathering and collating skills.

As pointed out above, Braverman has been criticised for being too structuralist and for not taking workers" agency into account. Braverman (1976) argued that management had the objective to maximise their control over the labour process as well as to minimize worker"s autonomy. Braverman"s theory failed to recognise workers as capable agents to their work set structures. I critique Braverman"s argument, given that workers still have autonomy. In the production of news, journalists have a sense of agency for instance they can hold responsibility in coming up with story ideas and independently working on news stories. Similarly, Knights and Willmott (1988) argue that Braverman ignores the variability of worker resistance as some groups in the workplace resist more than others and some changes can be resisted more than others. Thus there is not a straightforward relationship between workers and management. It has further been argued that Braverman"s theory portrays management as omniscient and employees as infinitely malleable (Knights and Willmott, 1988). I argue and I show in this study that workers, in this case journalists, have a sense of agency and can be actively involved in the news production process with management not necessarily having to detect tasks for them. Although, on some occasions, management directs news stories for juniors to work on, journalists who are able to come up with their own story ideas and work independently and professionally are valued in the newsroom. The labour process is thus not always about deskilling and the degradation of work.

I now turn to Michael Burawoy"s (1979; 1985) work in further expanding on this critique of Braverman"s deskilling thesis. Burawoy argued that workers had a certain level of autonomy on the shop floor which allowed them to invest in labour through constituting work as a game. Burawoy referred to this game as „making out" and by participating in this game, workers cooperated with management in producing surplus and they consented to their exploitation (Burawoy, 1979). Both Burawoy and Bourdieu analyse this process of game playing as consisting of workers defending the game"s rules and by so doing, workers contribute to producing surplus. In addition to this, they argue that participating in constituting work as a game conceals the relations of production between capital and labour (Burawoy, 2012). Thus, surplus labour is obscured and secured through obtaining consent or cooperation from workers. When workers have less autonomy in production, they are likely to view the nature of their work as exploitative. Bourdieu states that the less autonomy a worker has the less room the worker has for meaningful investment in labour and the more likely workers will see themselves as exploited (Burawoy, 2012).

Although Burawoy"s labour process theory is based on experiences on the shop floor, it is crucial to understanding consent in the relations of production.

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For instance, in the newsroom, journalists know what is expected of them in the production of news, they can thus go out and gather information and come up with breaking stories. This can occur without editors detecting to the journalists to do as such. Journalists have satisfaction after having covered well researched and well written news stories. Thus by aiming to reach targets and performing to good standards of reporting they consent to what is expected of them in the production of news.

It could further be argued that by journalists completing among themselves in the newsroom and also by different newspapers competing in breaking news they are participating in playing a game which ultimately increases productivity in the production of news. The competition to have a front page story for instance could boost journalists to work hard to try to produce better than other fellow journalists. In the process of doing this, productivity in the newsroom is being kept high and journalists do not feel exploited, they may instead feel a sense of satisfaction for coming up with good news stories and meeting their set targets.

Burawoy"s labour process theory brings an understanding to how journalists consent to the process of news production and participate in the means to keep productivity high and maintain high standards in news reporting. This theory states that the interests of capital and labour have to be coordinated in order to ensure the simultaneous obscuring and securing of surplus value which management seeks to achieve (Burawoy, 1979). Thus in order to ensure the survival of newspapers obtaining maximum output and maintaining profits is essential, it is also essential to obtain consent and cooperation from the workers in the production process as their resistance could affect the production process. Understanding the relationship between management and journalists enables one to understand the labour process of news production better. Burawoy speaks of the internal labour market as a contributor to the obscuring and securing of surplus value, it promotes mobility within firms and dissolves tensions between workers and management (Burawoy, 1979). Worker benefits and upward mobility could be offered to workers and seniority rewarded as means to co-ordinate the interests of capitalist and labourers in the generation of surplus value. In most newsrooms, journalists are now able to move from junior to senior quicker than before and seniors have much more autonomy and responsibilities in news production.

As is visible in the production of news, the labour process does not always consist of deskilling and labour degradation. Journalists can have responsible autonomy in news production. Friedman (1977) spoke about two types of strategies used by management to exercise authority over workers, namely direct control and responsible autonomy. Direct control consists of coercive threats, close supervision as well as minimizing individual worker responsibility. On the other hand, responsible autonomy gives workers flexibility and encourages them to adapt to changing situations in a manner that is beneficial to the corporation. Under responsible autonomy, workers are given status, authority and responsibility. I show in this study how journalists have responsible autonomy in news production and can resist managerial control as I further discuss in chapter four. Journalists can resist the set structure of management setting tasks for them by coming up with their own story ideas and working through them independently thereby getting directly involved in the production process.

David Murphy (1991) looks specifically at the labour process of journalism and argues that control by management over journalistic work is achieved primarily through the permeation of the work relationship by a market ethos. As a result, journalists" desire to succeed in the profession of journalism leads them to comply with the requirements and demands of their jobs and strive to meet their targets as required. The ideology of marketing one"s work and one"s self is built into the ideology of the job. Journalists thus strive not only to produce news stories but to ensure that the news stories are marketable to the public, there is thus need to have a sense of the market in news at any given time. Additionally, as Murphy argues, journalists are made aware that their reputation is only as good as their last good story (Murphy, 1991: 146). Thus, management employs the strategy of exposing journalists directly to the rigours of the market which eliminates the need for bureaucratic control. Journalists hence become aware of what is expected of them and they strive to work hard in order to produce good stories and succeed within the system.

Paul Thompson argues that the labour process is constantly being transformed as a result of the pressures to accumulate capital (Spencer, 2000). This argument is applicable to the labour process of news production which as this research project bases its foundation from, is constantly being restructured due to financial pressures and other factors such as competition from other news sources such as online and television news and less people relying on print media as a source of news. Thompson and Smith (2010) similarly argue that there is necessity to constantly renew the forces of production and the skills of labour to expand the profit rate and to ensure competitive accumulation of capital; this in turn results in a cheapening of labour costs and creation of a complex labour force structure (Thompson and Smith, 2010).

Thus, labour process theory shows us that news is a commodity that is produced in such a way as to obtain maximum productivity so as to ensure that profits are made. Labour process theory further shows how technology is essential in the newsroom so as to increase productivity. Additionally, management control

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is essential in the labour process to ensure that journalists produce to the required standards. Control in the newsroom is not of a coercive nature, it is more subtle and consists of responsible autonomy as journalists can actively partake in coming up with news stories and gathering information for stories without direct supervision. However, management (editors) are still in control of the news content that finally gets published in the newspaper.

Nevertheless, labour process theory is less equipped to explain how news is not just produced as any other ordinary tangible commodity with the aim to sell and make profits, but as something that is seen as a public good. Bourdieu"s field theory is essential in this regard as it shows how news is beyond just an ordinary commodity; it is also a public good which is essential to democratic society as has been pointed out. Therefore, I now turn to Bourdieu"s field theory to understand news as a public good as well as to understand the agency that newspapers have in news production.

ii *Bourdieu's Field Theory*

Pierre Bourdieu defines the field as a setting in which agents and their social positions are located and in which their interrelations are determined by distribution of different kinds of capital (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Of particular significance in the production of news is economic and cultural capital. The requirements of economic capital involve circulation, advertising revenue and marketing. Cultural capital, on the other hand, involves production of original stories, uncovering scandal or influencing the social and political agenda. Forms of economic and cultural capital can reinforce each other in the production of news; an original story can push up circulation and strengthen economic capital. However, it is important to note that the imperative to sell as many copies as possible tends to weaken the cultural in relation to the requirements of the economic (Philips et al., 2010). This relates back to the tension between profit and professionalism which was explored in part one of this project. The need to sell newspapers and make profit tends to clash with that of maintaining professionalism and high standards in news reporting.

Each field has its own rules of operation by which agents in the field operate on. The rules of the game tend not to be questioned; however, these rules can be changed by agent"s actions in their spaces of possibilities (Benson and Neveu, 2005). Journalism as field has its set of rules in terms of the process of news productions, expectations to be met and ethical standards to be adhered to. Failure to adhere to the rules of news production and produce news accurately has consequences for newspapers which can be faced with penalties and this may affect newspapers" reputation and impact on media"s credibility. I show in this paper how the formal rules of the field of journalism can be altered by newspapers as Bourdieu"s field theory shows how agents in a field can attempt to change the rules of the game to their own benefit. There is conflict between the formal rules of the field as set by the Press Code and the informal rules which enable newspapers to maintain high profitability and continue to produce effectively while undergoing financial pressures, competition from other news sources and attempting to stay relevant amongst all other sources of news. The formal rules of news production get altered by newspaper corporations in an age whereby news is available for free on the web yet newspapers still have to remain in business and continue to produce and sell news to the public.

A number of authors, such as James Campton, Paul Benedetti (2010), Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu (2005) and Natalie Fenton (2010) use Bourdieu"s field theory to explore the functioning of journalism and to analyze the structural changes taking place within the newsroom. Bourdieu held that journalism is a weakly autonomous field which is structured on the basis of opposition between two poles namely; those independent of state power, political and economic power and secondly those dependent on these powers and commercial powers (Bourdieu, 2005 as cited in Fenton, 2010). Within the field of journalism, cultural capital (the ability to define and influence events) is prized, thus newspapers are keen to provide the appearance of independence. Journalism is losing more of its autonomy as economic constraints are increasingly weighing on production due to the decline in advertising and migration of readers to new media news sources resulting in employing means of cost cutting in the newsroom (Fenton, 2010). Patrick Champagne (2005) further states that journalism"s autonomy is always under threat as news production is strongly detected by the political and economic conditions in which it is organized.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to take note that as news is both a commodity that needs to be sold in order to make profit for newspaper it is also a public good. As media is one of the central pillars of democracy, it is crucial that news be produced in an ethical and professional manner to serve society. There remains a tension between the profit motive and the need to keep news professional and adhere to the standards set by the South African Press Code. I draw on labour process theories and field theory as discussed in this chapter to explain my research findings in the chapters below.

Chapter Three

III. Methodology

a) *Case studies*

I used the case study approach in order to understand the extent to which restructuring impacts on

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the quality of news. The case study approach is descriptive in nature and can provide rich information about particular situations or contexts (Blanche, 2008). This approach is of relevance to my research as I aimed to explain how and why a social phenomenon works namely the process of news production and the effects that restructuring as a result of increased technological use has brought to the quality of news produced. I chose the case study approach to answer my research question as it allowed me to obtain a rich description by looking into detail at each of the case studies selected to answer the research question. By broadly studying each of the case studies, I had the ability to obtain a broader understanding with regards to the restructuring taking place in newsrooms and other factors impacting on the diminishing quality of news in South African print media.

Cases where print media in South Africa published stories that are biased, lack facts, validity and do not make use of verifiable and legitimate sources as defined by the Press Code were explored. Recent cases whereby newspapers had been sent to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate news reporting were selected. Tim May (2011) states that a case may be selected because of the fact that its analysis will reveal conclusions that can be taken as representative of a wider class of cases. From the cases that were selected, I was able to gain a better understanding of the faults or errors made by newspapers and how some of these may be related to the consequences of restructuring that are taking place within print media at large. A total of four case studies were used for this research.

The cases I used for this research highlight the errors that newspapers occasionally make which affect the quality of news. I used multiple cases so as to obtain more in- depth findings to understand the challenges in news production as well as to enable comparison between cases (Yin, 2009). Moreover, Merriam (2009) states that the more cases included in a study, the greater the variation across the cases and the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be.

Case studies enable intensive investigation of the variables being examined, thus it was useful to employ case studies to gather the research data (Mouton and Babbie, 2001).The case study method gave me the further advantage of obtaining an extensive and in-depth understanding of the labour process in journalism. Tim May (2011) sees the use of case studies as being useful in contributing to some knowledge through theorization. This case study research will thus make a contribution to theory on how the news production process has been impacted by means of restructuring in the newsroom primarily as a result of technological developments and the sort of challenges that journalists are faced with in news production.

Case studies have the advantage of involving various sources of data namely observation, interviews and documents. I used these sources of data to obtain more in-depth information as I discuss in the following section. The research design implemented the process of triangulation .Data triangulation was incorporated by using a variety of data sources (reporters, editors, a key informant from the Press Ombudsman office, documents and conducting observations) in order to obtain the most reliable and objective results possible.

b) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are an essential source of case study information (Yin, 2009). Seven in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted to obtain the research data. Six interviews were conducted with editors and journalists from the daily and weekly newspapers selected in the case studies which demonstrate incidents of inaccurate news reporting by newspapers. An in-depth interview with one key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman was also conducted to obtain a better understanding of the cases selected and the factors involved in inaccurate news reporting as well as to understand the procedure of dealing with cases of inaccurate reporting sent to the Press Ombudsman. From this interview, I was able to better understand the measures in place to address issues of lapse in the quality of news and their effectiveness. The information obtained from the semi-structured interviews with editors, journalists and from the office of the Press Ombudsman was interpreted. Thereafter, themes were constructed from the interview findings and the data was analysed as shown in the following chapters. Throughout the research process, the primary goal was to remain as objective as possible (Kirk and Miller, 1986).

I was unable to conduct the interviews with the complainants involved in the selected cases as had been planned in the research proposal. This was because of the difficulty in reaching the complainants from the cases selected which all involve high profile people. I was able to make up for this limitation by making use of the available full rulings on all the cases as provided on the website of the Press Ombudsman.

c) Observation and use of documents

I was able to conduct non participant observation in two newsrooms that I gained access to during some of the interview sessions held. This enabled me as the researcher to access information from the natural setting i.e. the newsroom (Yin, 2009). Additionally, I was taken around a detailed tour in one of the newsrooms and I was able to observe and gain a better understanding of the structure of the newsroom and the processes involved in news production. The Information that I obtained from the observations conducted was added to that from the interviews to obtain more depth and better understanding of the

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context being studied. In addition to conducting observations, I also made use of documents namely newspaper articles and the records of the rulings on the Press Ombudsman website. Use of documents was essential in helping me validate and amplify evidence from the interviews and observations I carried out (Yin, 2009). Tim May (2011) substantiates this by stating that multiple methods are essential to case study research to enable the obtaining of rich descriptions as there is maximum confrontation through various mechanisms between the researcher and the field of study.

d) Selection

Tim May establishes significance in asking the question "what is this case of" when conducting case study research (May, 2011:230), the defining choices in case study research are whether, when and how to bound the case. I used three of the cases I selected as possible cases in the research proposal. One additional case that had not been selected in the proposal was added to these during the data collection phase (Mathews Phosa and the ANC vs. City Press). The four cases were selected according to availability of respondents (journalists and editors from each of the selected newspapers) to interview. The media organizations selected are all located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The cases selected demonstrate lapse of quality control in different newspaper publications and by studying them broadly, I was able to understand the link between restructuring taking place in newsrooms and the decline in news quality. I selected more recent cases that were referred to the Press Ombudsman and I attempted to ensure representativeness of cases from different newspaper publications (both daily and weekly newspapers were selected). In each of the cases that I explored I focused on whether the faults made related to restructuring or other factors and if these errors could have been avoided. The selected cases further illustrate the tension between news as a public good vs. the need for news to be profitable and how prioritising the profit motive and not adequately checking news for accuracy could occasionally result in inaccurate reporting. This will be explored further in the following chapters.

e) Ethics

To ensure that my research is ethical, I made sure that all participants interviewed understood that their participation in the study was voluntary. Prior to beginning each interview, participants were informed that they were free to decline to continue with the interview at any time and that there would not be any negative repercussions for doing so. Prior to recording during the interview sessions, participants were asked for their consent to make sure that all data was collected ethically. Additionally, participants interviewed were assured that their identities would not be revealed in the write up of the research. I explained to the participants that the information that they gave me would only be publicized in the context of academic reporting and nowhere else. (Babbie and Mouton, 2001) Consent forms were given to each participant to sign prior to each interview session conducted. A sample copy of this form is attached in the appendix.

Chapter Four

IV. The Production of News as a Commodity

a) A typical day in the newsroom

A day in the newsroom typically begins with an early morning session between journalists and news editors. During this session, news editors brainstorm and discuss with journalists the stories they are going to be working on and what direction to take with the news stories for the next newspaper edition. Journalists can suggest story ideas to the news editors who can accept them, dismiss them or advise on which direction the stories should take.

A story diary meeting is held at 11am,2[2] in this meeting, news editors meet and discuss the big news stories for the day. At this stage, news editors consult journalists to inform them of any changes or additions to news stories as discussed in the diary meeting. For instance, news editors can decide to assign two journalists to a big story which may have been selected as one of the big stories of the day and may possibly need more focus. Journalists spend most of the day gathering information for news stories. This involves contacting or meeting specific news sources for information and making follow ups for the stories they are working on. Journalists also have to ensure that enough sources have being consulted to verify the accuracy of the story and also ensuring that a balanced story is produced.

The writing up of news stories has to be done in time for the deadline upon which journalists send their written news stories to the specific section editors. News stories are submitted via an online database to the specific editors to check the content and style of writing in the news stories. Different section editors exist in newsrooms and usually consist of sports editors, business editors and political editors depending on the newspaper. The various section editors liaise with the editor of the newspaper and assess the news stories submitted by the journalists. News stories are checked for accuracy. At this stage, journalists can be contacted for clarity on their stories or to revise their news stories.

[2] The times provided for conducting various news production tasks in the description below are merely a guideline as newspapers may differ.

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Production staff is the staff that physically produces the newspaper. They begin their duties in the newsroom at 3pm. At this stage, a meeting is held with the production staff to discuss a page plan to show how many pages the newspaper will have and the advertising for the following day. A decision is made as to what the strongest story of the day is and the positioning of each news story. Additionally photographic editors select the appropriate pictures to go with news stories.

The subbing and layout process takes place after the meeting held at 3pm. Once news editors are satisfied with the content of news stories, the next process would be to send the stories to the subeditors. Layout subeditors layout the stories on the page while copy subeditors check grammar on news stories, write headlines and ensure that news stories are written in the appropriate writing style of the newspaper. Subeditors can rewrite unclear parts of news stories or completely reconstruct them should they see need to. In some newspapers, a revised sub then looks at the copy to make sure that there are no further mistakes. Subs hence have the duty to ensure that news is presentable and marketable as a product (Murphy, 1991). The editor is the final eye of the newspaper and can make changes if he/she sees fit before the paper gets printed.

In addition to the production of the print copy of the newspaper, there also occurs production of news online. Given the developments of the internet, a major shift has arisen in news production, as the internet has become a major source of news providing immediacy to readers. This has meant that newspapers have had to adopt and produce news both for print and online. Newspapers are under pressure to constantly break news on their websites as well as to provide Facebook and Twitter feeds on current news. Some newspapers have separate staff for the production of online news staff while in other newspapers, journalists are expected to multitask and ensure that they also focus on producing news for the newspaper website as well as social media.

The news production process described above is typical for daily newspapers. Weekly newspapers would differ in the sense that more analysis is given to news stories thus more time is given to produce news stories. However, weekly newspapers, similar to daily newspapers, also have to constantly produce news stories on their websites as well as social media.

In the following section I will go on to discuss themes obtained from my research interviews that are directly linked to the restructuring taking place within newsrooms. Newspapers face competition from the immediacy and free news provided on the internet. As a result, their profitability model is threatened as they lose some readers and advertisers to the internet. As newspapers are in business they need to produce news in order to sell and make profits, they thus strategize to ensure that they continue to keep productivity high while cutting costs where possible in the newsroom. By restructuring, newsrooms attempt to adapt to the digitalization of news and strive to stay relevant and keep producing news profitably. The themes discussed in the following chapter draw attention to the production of news as a commodity.

b) Restructuring

For purposes of this project, restructuring is defined as; changes made in the structure and operation of an organization (in this case the newsroom). The aim is to adapt the newsroom to the ever changing information age such as online news sources while still maintaining profitability. Technological developments primarily the internet have brought about fundamental changes to the process of news production, the structure of the newsroom as well as transformation of the industry as a whole. The internet is a significant factor in the restructuring taking place within the news industry. Newspapers are adjusting their working practices in response to the developments brought about by the internet. Additionally, changes are occurring within newspapers as a result of new commercial pressures in a far more competitive media environment (Philips, 2010).

The internet has become a source of news that offers immediacy and offers news that is readily available thus newspapers have had to strive to still remain relevant. This has brought about a challenge to newspapers as their means to maintain profitability has been shaken. As a response to these changes in news production and in order for newspapers to deal with the pressures that they are faced with, newsrooms have undergone means of restructuring to adapt. These means of restructuring were explored in detail in part one of this study and include; cutting down staff, juniorisation, use of convergence/synergy, increased use of technology in newsrooms, use of freelancers and use of news agencies (Khumalo, 2011).

In the following section, I discuss the themes that are directly linked to restructuring that were gathered from the interviews conducted with key informants. These are namely: The decline in print media as the main source of news, Pressure in news production, less staff, use of more juniors in newsrooms/juniorisation, increased use of technology, Use of News agencies and freelancers and increased management control vs. autonomy of journalists.

This chapter focuses on how news is produced as a commodity. Reference to the labour process theory which is of relevance to explaining news as a commodity will be made. I will make use of the following concepts from the labour process theory to explain the findings below; increased use of technology in production, increasing productivity and the need to make profits, deskilling, separation of conception and

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execution of labour, managerial control and worker autonomy. These concepts illustrate the need for work to be as productive as possible, with management monitoring production and ensuring that costs are cut where possible with the objective being the need to keep profits high. Within the profession of journalism, there is the need to get the most out of journalists and to ensure that they each meet their targets in news production and abide by the standards set by their newspaper. In the production of news, technology such as mobile phones and the internet are used to increase productivity and help journalists to better manage the pressure in news production. Cutting costs for instance by hiring less staff and more juniors than seniors as discussed below is a means to lower production costs with the aim of achieving the profit motive.

c) The decline in print media as the main source of news

A major challenge faced by newspapers is that of staying relevant in an era where its primary product, news has become increasingly digitalized. This has resulted in the migration of readers to more immediate news sources that have been brought about by technological developments. This shows the contradictions in the labour process theory. While technological developments in the newsroom are beneficial in enhancing quicker production, the internet also has negative repercussions to news production. The internet has brought about challenges to the news production model as newspapers now struggle to stay relevant given that they have to compete with more immediate news sources. While striving to stay in business, newspapers thus have to adapt and come up with an online business model that guarantees profit making.

One key informant held:

"*When I started, newspapers were still the key means of getting information. Production of news was different; we are now in a completely different world with windows, desktop and Mac publishing all of which have changed our universe completely.*" [3]

Another key informant stated that:

"When I started, print media had a very safe and secure space in the landscape. This has been significantly changed by the advent of online media. There has been quite a significant concern whether online news websites would eventually take the place of newspapers because of the immediacy." [4]

Berkowitz (2009) argues that journalists will never control the flow of information the way they did as a media environment in which only few voices had the opportunity to be heard and only with the permission of a media gatekeeper, is gone for good. Print media faces the challenge of reporting stories that would have already been reported on several immediate news platforms by the time newspaper(s) are published. As a result, there has had to be re-purposing of how newspapers project stories and the need to bring in new angles to what has already been reported on other news sources. It is thus essential for newspapers to move to a space of analysis and produce in-depth news stories to continue being relevant to readers.

As a result of the decline of advertising and circulation faced by newspapers, there has been need to readjust the print media business model. As was gathered in some of the interviews held, a number of newspapers have moved their news content online in addition to their print editions. In addition to this, some news content on news websites has been put behind pay wall i.e. readers are now expected to pay for content. Some newspapers now have an online edition of all their news which is only available by paid subscription. This development enables readers to read the newspaper using digital devices such as PC"s, IPhones, I pads, Blackberry"s and Windows mobile devices .This is a means by which newspapers are attempting to stay relevant in the digital age. Offering readers news only through subscription can also provide a challenge to newspapers as they have to provide content that is worth paying for.

As one key informant remarked:

"We make people pay for online content so we have to offer them something different that they cannot get elsewhere." [5]

Launching an online business model which ensures putting news content behind pay wall is a challenge for other less established newspapers. As was gathered from the interviews with key informants, newspapers have to establish their brands prior to being able to provide online news on a subscription basis. The challenge is competing with other more established brands and attaining loyal readership that would still see the need to pay for online news content. One interviewee held that:

"At the moment we keep all content available on the website because the paper is only a few years old. We are competing against other established brands. It"s more or less in terms of brand visibility and establishing our brand on the market…" [6]

[3] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.

[4] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

[5] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[6] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

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Thus, while newspapers continue to be faced with financial pressures and competition from other news sources, the challenge becomes maintaining high standards in news reporting. This could work positively in terms of news quality as newspapers make an effort to report news in a more professional manner to keep their relevance and to avoid the collapsing of print media in South Africa.

Some newsrooms do not have separate staff for online and print news. Hence journalists are occasionally required to update news online i.e. on the news website in addition to Facebook and twitter feeds over and above reporting news for the print copy. This could have the effect of increasing the pressure journalists are faced with and may impact on the news output produced. To elaborate on this point, one key informant mentioned the following:

"When there is a mistake on a story, newspapers also have to correct the information on the website, on their archives; some don"t, even though the story was corrected on print. That is a problem…"[7]

d) Pressure in News production

The process of news production is marked by a lot of pressure as newspapers are faced with deadlines to publish news and they compete among themselves to publish breaking stories first. Pressure in news production combined with newspapers competing to break news first can have an impact on the quality of news produced as the focus may be driven by speed as opposed to maintaining high standards in news reporting. Natalie Fenton (2010) held that commercial pressures in journalism are likely to increase the temptation to rely on cheaper forms of newsgathering and this can be detrimental to original in-depth journalism.

The following was stated by one interviewee:

"There is a lot of pressure in news reporting, to be the first with stories, which can take the focus away from giving in-depth news."[8]

Pressure to produce news intensifies particularly in newsrooms that are unable to have their journalists specializing in specific news beats. In cases where journalists are able to specialize in specific news beats and are not required to perform additional tasks, there is less pressure given that journalists have more time to focus on their assigned tasks. Journalists have high targets to meet and in some newsrooms they are required to be multiskilled as they have to report on different news beats and perform additional functions in addition to news reporting. These include producing news on multiple platforms such as on news websites and on social media and in some instances mentoring junior journalists. As was gathered from the interviews held and the newsrooms in which observations took place, pressure varies between weekly and daily newspapers, with daily newspapers having more pressure to produce news as they are required to meet publishing deadline on a daily basis.

Newspapers face pressure to meet print deadline while also ensuring that all the breaking stories of the day or week are complete and ready for publishing. Missing a deadline especially on breaking news means that other newspapers could get to the news story first, newspapers thus strive to get the breaking news stories out there as quickly as possible. Daily newspapers face more pressure in this regard given the limited time. By the time news stories are sent to print, stories should have been checked for accuracy with all the requirements set by the Press Code having been adhered to. John Pavlik (2001) sees deadline pressures as having serious negative consequences for the accuracy of news. This is because journalists under intense deadline pressure can make errors, have little time for fact checking and can get a story fundamentally wrong (Pavlik, 2001).

Newspapers undergo pressure to produce more news articles for different news platforms in a limited amount of time. This pressure, it is argued could result in fewer journalists gathering information outside the newsroom. There is an increasing reliance on the internet as a source of news and overreliance on the internet could result in a decline in original news reporting. This is further discussed in the section below on "Increased use of technology in the production of news."

Pressure also arises in instances where a newsroom has few reporters having to report on all news stories for the newspapers. This shall be explored further below under the section focusing on "Less Staff". Additionally, multitasking becomes the case in some newsrooms with journalists having to take up more than one job specification as a means of cutting costs (making use of skills that are already available within the newsroom). One senior reporter interviewed stated that she had the task of conducting news desk duties (news editor) in addition to her role of reporting news stories. This is a demanding form of multitasking given that being a senior editor requires high set targets for contributing news stories to the newspaper. Targets set for senior reporters according to one newspaper studied include:

"…writing three splashes every week, four page leads, contributing towards investigation and mentoring juniors."[9]

[7] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.

[8] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[9] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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On the other hand, news editors are responsible for the overall content of the newspaper. They are required to assign stories to reporters, listen to story ideas, and give direction on how to work on news stories. Thus having to perform multiple tasks as this case in point demonstrates may result in pressure that could have an impact on the quality of output.

As was gathered from the interviews conducted, the difference between weekly and daily newspapers is becoming more blurred. This is because weekly newspapers are also under pressure to report on breaking stories on online platforms as they unfold. A key informant from a weekly newspaper held that:

"We don"t think of ourselves in the way that weekly newspapers were. They were slow, had luxury of time. We produce daily and are constantly breaking stories online. So I think differences between daily, weekly and online have fallen away." [10]

Thus, both weekly and daily newspapers are faced with pressure in news reporting although it could be argued that daily newspapers face more pressure to meet publishing deadlines on a daily basis.

Other forms of pressure that newspaper corporations face include the requirements of meeting deadlines for the printing and distribution of newspapers. Most newspapers do not own their own printing press; these are shared among different newspaper publishers. Printing times are set by the printing presses thus newspapers have to meet the set deadlines for printing. Failure to do so could result in their time slots being taken by other newspapers. Additionally, the service of distributing newspapers for sale after they have been printed is outsourced which requires that newspapers submit their print copies to the organization(s) in charge of distribution within the set deadline. Outsourcing the service of distribution of newspaper is cheaper for print media corporations than if they had to employ full time staff and obtain additional resources for the distribution of newspapers. An additional advantage is that of making use of labour from organizations that have specialized skills and resources for the effective distribution of newspapers.

Labour process theory looks at how technology is used to increase productivity in the workplace. Technological advancements such as the internet, instant messaging and mobile phones aid journalists to deal with the pressure faced in news production thereby enhancing quicker production. For instance journalists can receive documents from their sources via email or fax and can download some information such as court cases from the web which makes the process of news gathering less demanding.

As I have mentioned above, in some newsrooms journalists are required to multitask for instance by reporting for different news platforms including online. This results in journalists having to learn additional skills to enable the performance of other tasks required in the newsroom such as producing social media feeds, uploading videos for news stories online and producing news for different news beats. In this process of journalists learning additional skills and having to perform more tasks, it could be argued that they are up skilling. This is as opposed to Braverman"s (1976) deskilling thesis which entails workers losing skills upon performing repetitive tasks with the introduction of technology to the workplace.

e) Less staff

In the labour process, capital has a primary motive to produce surplus, thus management seeks to cut production costs by all means while attempting to keep productivity high. This explains the cutting of staff in the newsroom as a means to cut news production costs. However, the challenge that arises may be dealing with the consequences of having few staff in the newsroom who will effectively cover all news stories. Contradictions thus exist in the labour process theory as is shown by this factor of reducing staff. Having less staff could lead to more pressure in news production and it is arguable in some instances whether this does not result in failure to adequately verify the accuracy of news stories and failure to provide in-depth cover of a broad range of news stories as required.

As gathered from the newsroom observations which took place during the data collection phase as well as the interviews held, various newsrooms have few reporters to cover news stories. This has come about in an effort to cut costs in the production of news given the financial constraints that Print media has had to undergo with the decline of revenue from circulation. One key informant held that:

"We do not have enough staff to cover all stories, often we don"t cover stories that we are supposed to because we do not have the manpower." [11]

It is important to note that some newsrooms still have enough journalists to be able to permit specialization in news production. Newsrooms with less journalists experience more pressure with reporting news as they have less time to adequately focus on news stories as opposed to those that focus on specific news beats would. One key informant from a newsroom with few reporters stated that:

"I think understaffing is a problem, journalists are expected to produce so much and quality disappears

[10] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.

[11] Interview, journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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along the line. You do not have enough time to read things because you are under pressure to produce."[12]

One further remarked:

"Where there are few people, your quality goes down, your checks and balances go out of the window. You are chasing profits and you become less careful."[13]

f) Juniorisation and Inadequate training in journalism

Juniorisation of newsrooms is part of the strategy to lower production costs as the cutting of staff discussed above. As economic constraints weigh on news production and as newspapers" profit models are threatened by competition from new media sources of news as has been discussed, there is need for newspapers to cut costs where possible.

Newsrooms have become more juniorised as more senior experienced staff are more expensive to hire. Due to financial pressures that Print media has been undergoing, more senior journalists have been replaced with juniors. Some newsrooms are more juniorised than others. Juniors often have less skills thus they may require additional training and mentorship to enable them to work independently and maintain the high standards required with news reporting. Increased Juniorisation in newsrooms may impact on the quality of news produced in instances where juniors are not offered adequate training prior to being allowed to produce news for newspapers.

There are also reduced numbers of skilled people in newsrooms as a number of senior reporters leave the journalism profession to become part of other fields, most prominently Public Relations. One key informant remarked:

"It's a very young newsroom…I wish we had a couple of older people for experience."[14]

Juniorisation can turn out to be a challenge in the production of news. This is because there are demands and tight deadlines to be met and there may not always be time to guide the juniors to sufficiently verify their news stories and/or subbing tasks prior to publishing of the newspaper. One problem which exists in some newsrooms is that of promoting junior reporters to higher positions too early in their careers. In this instance, juniors are given a lot of responsibilities in the newsroom without the necessary skills or experience to cope with the demands and pressures required in the newsroom (Steyn and De Beer, 2004).

One interviewee held that:

"Lots of staff is junior to midlevel and there are a lot of demands. This puts pressure on you as a news editor because often you find yourself writing stories for the juniors although they are the ones who would have gone out and brought the stories into the newsroom."[15]

Thus, juniors may at times be less capable in producing news stories but as a result of shortage of staff and pressure in the newsroom, they are required to also produce news stories for the newspapers. The challenge then becomes one of maintaining good standards in news reporting and ensuring that there is checking and rechecking of stories so that news stories adhere to the Press Code, while on the other hand attempting to keep costs low by hiring less skilled people.

To support the argument that replacing senior reporters with more juniors could have an impact on the quality of news produced, one key informant stated that:

"The institutional memory of news reporting is gone. The juniors take up 80% of the newsroom; they do not know what happened five years ago. Some of the junior subs edit and they chop and change and they don't necessarily know the important issues"[16]

Newsroom juniorisation provides further illustration of contradictions in the labour process as juniors are cheaper to employ but they may have less experience and thus produce less. As has been argued, the quality of news can be affected in instances where juniors are relied on to carry out more demanding tasks like the subbing process in news production.

The production process of news has generally entailed lack of autonomy for junior journalists. Juniors are often assigned to stories to work on by the news editor. News editors then guide the juniors and advise them on the direction the stories should take. This lack of autonomy among junior journalists is now shifting as was revealed from the interviews conducted. Some junior journalists do have autonomy as they are able to come up with their own story ideas which get approved by the news editor. One junior reporter interviewed emerged as an independent journalist who has been able to come up with breaking news stories and front page leads. This was confirmed by viewing copies of the news stories that this junior had written in the past. This reporter stated that:

"*As a junior, the contract says the editor chooses news stories for you, but it depends on one's capabilities…I come up with my own stories, I always get my stuff together…*" [17]

"As a junior, you still have to learn everything. But, with me, everything worked differently. I wrote my first front

[12] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[13] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[14] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[15] Interview, Journalist from a Daily newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[16] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[17] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

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page story in three weeks! I have been told that journalism needs me."[18]

This shows that even juniors can be capable of reporting news effectively and maintaining the standards of news reporting. Thus, one cannot argue that juniors will always produce news that does not adhere to standards of quality news reporting as exceptional cases do exist. Burawoy"s theory of the labour process demonstrates how workers have some autonomy in production relations. Applying this theory to the newsroom, as has been shown some journalists, even juniors are able to independently produce news stories without editors directing to them which stories to cover and how to go about covering them. As Bourdieu argues, autonomy is valued in a field, thus junior journalists that are able to go against the set structure and effectively produce news stories will be of value in newsrooms.

One major point gathered from the interviews held with key informants from different newspapers is that; the inadequate training offered to journalists as they enter the profession is a key reason for the decline in news quality in South African Print media. Most participants interviewed established that inadequate training for journalists entering the profession impacts on accurate news reporting. One key informant stated that:

"The calibre of journalists coming through the training programme is shocking. And these people have completed their degrees or diplomas! I"m shocked at the quality of the people; we need to up the game in journalism training at the Universities, Technicons and colleges. The standard of journalism training needs to improve."[19]

An additional problem with journalism training is that mentioned above, namely that of lack of training with regards to the application of media ethics. Journalism students are taught more theory in media institutions, thus when they begin working in the newsroom they face difficulty in applying the theory they have learnt such as making good ethical decisions and adherence to the Press Code in news reporting. One key informant stated that:

"The theory should be scaled down not overemphasized, students should be taught to apply. That is part of the problem, because journalists are not ready to apply what they have learnt. There are exceptions of course, but this applies to most institutions."[20]

A key informant from another newspaper talking about the problem with news quality in South Africa held that:

"There is a lack of investment in people, in training. We should be concerned about this and look at rectifying it."[21]

However, despite the challenge of lack of training as mentioned, several media houses offer internships to juniors that are entering the journalism profession. These help to practically train and prepare journalists for the news reporting process. Journalism ethics is part of the curriculum in the media internship of one media group studied. As one former intern from the Group interviewed held:

"During the internship, we got visited by the Ombudsman to talk about ethics in journalism, case studies of bad reporting and how to avoid errors. It was rewarding…"[22]

There is thus need to invest in the right quality of journalists for better news quality.

g) Increased use of technology in the production of news

Technological developments, particularly the internet have brought about fundamental changes to the production of news. News readers are now exposed to other sources of news; online, radio, and television which has brought about a decline of Print media as the main source of news as has been discussed above. Technology such as cell phones, computers/laptops and video cameras are beneficial to the work of journalists. Journalists are now able to report on news from wherever they are as they can record news events with their mobile devices and speak to sources more easily. News can now be uploaded instantly onto news sites as well as social media. Journalists also find the internet as advantageous as they are able to find documents such as court cases online which saves time. The speed of the internet enables journalists to get data without having to leave the newsroom.

Rupert Murdoch (2005) sees the internet as a useful tool that newspapers can use to their advantage in order to remain competitive. One way of doing this which he mentions is that of encouraging readers to think of the web as a place to engage reporters and editors in extended discussions about particular news stories. Thus, the internet provides an advantage of allowing interaction between journalists and readers on issues that would have been reported on.

It is worth noting that, the production process of news is not entirely driven by technology. There is still a crucial need for journalists to go out where events are

[18] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[19] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[20] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[21] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.
[22] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

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taking place and speak to people. One key informant stated that:

"In journalism the story is not told by sitting in your office and speaking to the people on your telephone. Journalists need to speak to people face to face regularly for the best stories."[23]

The internet is a useful tool in news reporting if used appropriately and if all information obtained from it is verified to ensure accuracy. Angela Philips et al (2010) state that for journalists trained to use web searching tools intelligently, the speed and scope of the internet and the ability to make connections between different pieces of information makes it a powerful tool. On the other hand, the internet can be problematic if used as a primary source and if journalists do not verify the information they find online. Thus, talking to sources and going out to obtain more information be it in the form of pictures, videos or speaking to those affected by the incident or those who witnessed an event provides more in-depth news. The internet also becomes problematic when journalists plagiarise information from the web to write news stories which results in a greater homogenization of news content. One key informant stated that:

"I hate it when journalists use the internet and construct their stories by not going to meet people. I don"t allow that as far as I can, you need to go out and talk to people…"[24]

Another key informant reported the concern of a decline in the practice of journalists going out to speak to sources and obtain in-depth information for news stories. As was held:

"There is a practice of telephone journalism; journalists do not go out there anymore. Journalists are lazy! They are waiting for reports and documents to land on their lap; they don"t go out and do old school journalism anymore."[25]

This section thus shows how, as labour process theory articulates, technological developments are essential in a workplace to increase productivity. In the newsroom, technological advancements make it possible to produce news quicker for instance contacting sources has become easier with emails, mobile devices and instant messaging. Journalists are also able to communicate with their news editors while on their laptops, ipads or other mobile devices. This means that journalists are now able to write stories from whichever location and still receive feedback as required. As one key informant held:

"We have purchased equipment for our reporters. They get laptops, electronic readers, data cards and they can do the job wherever they are."[26]

Technology in the newsroom has thus helped to enhance "speed up" news production and also to try and manage the pressure in news production. It has been further argued that the introduction of technology in the workplace has resulted in more subtle forms of control. For instance in the newsroom, journalists are not necessarily physically supervised, editors are able to monitor journalists news stories via an online database by which they submit their stories.

A challenge arises with use of technology if journalists over rely on it specifically, the internet. Should journalists rely on the internet as a source of obtaining information for news stories, this could result in a loss of the traditional high end journalism skills where by journalists obtain in-depth information for new stories by speaking to people and exploring the broader picture of news stories. The result of this could possibly be what Braverman speaks of as deskilling whereby workers lose their skills as they perform repetitive less challenging tasks. In this case, journalists may become deskilled with over-reliance on the internet for news stories and not seeking to verify information by speaking to independent sources.

h) News Agencies and Use of freelancers

Use of news agencies and freelancers are a means by which newspapers are able to obtain news stories on a need basis i.e. when the journalists in the newsroom are unable to cover news stories in other regions. This is thus a means by newspapers to increase productivity in the production of news. When there is a breaking story, newspapers ensure that they are able to cover it as they could lose readers and possibly their credibility should they be unable to cover news stories that the public needs to hear/ read about. Using freelancers is a cost cutting means given that these are only used and paid on a need basis. News agencies could also be a cost cutting means as newspapers do not have to pay travel and accommodation costs to send reporters to cover stories in all regions, instead they subscribe to news agencies.

Newspapers subscribe to News Agencies to cover other news stories. News agencies supply newspapers with news that is beyond their reporting reach. Newspapers may not always have enough journalists to adequately cover stories in certain regions. A key informant stated that:

"We have access to wire copy like Reuters and SAPA, so we have different ways of getting stories for the

[23] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

[24] Interview, Editor from a Weekly newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.

[25] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

[26] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

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newspaper. In terms of reporting, we concentrate on the story that we are not going to find elsewhere…" [27]

In addition to News Agencies, freelancers are used to cover other news stories where need be and are paid according to what they produce. Freelancers can offer newspapers stories, otherwise they can be contracted should there be need for them to report on specific stories.

i) Managerial Control vs. autonomy in the production of news

Managerial control is an essential aspect in the process of news production to ensure that productivity is kept high and newspapers standards of news reporting are maintained. News editors are generally the directors of the newspaper as they come up with the story diary of the newspaper, assign stories to journalists and monitor news stories that journalists are working on. The editor on the other hand makes the final decision about what is included in the newspaper and is responsible for all the content in the newspaper. Describing a typical day in news production in a daily newspaper, one key informant held that:

"*In the morning, reporters sit with the news editors; they tell them what they are going to be doing. Story ideas can be agreed to, interrogated or dismissed."* [28]

This shows that journalists can come up with story ideas that they would like to work on thus they may have some autonomy in news reporting. This is on condition that the news editors agree to the story ideas. News editors still remain in control of the stories in the newspaper as they can dismiss story ideas and suggest others in addition to giving direction to the story ideas agreed on.

As labour process theory shows, workers can be separated from the planning aspect of work, Braverman refers to this as the separation of conception and execution of labour. In news production, journalists" stories can get changed by editors without them even being consulted. This shows how journalists are not part of the whole production process as they are not involved in the finalization of news stories.

Control in the production process of news has shifted to more subtle forms over time. One way this is shown is by the sitting structure in most newsrooms. (As observed during the data collection phase) Section editors, editors and journalists work on the same floor. The set-up is in such a way that journalists are able to interact well directly with the editors and vice versa. Journalists can also access the editor"s office which is also situated close to their workstations thus the hierarchy is not visible. As one editor stated:

"Restructuring has brought an invasion of the power principle, I no longer hold power in the way that editors used to, and people demand answers. In the past, the editor was the oracle. Now you get challenges, some people actually help me edit the paper. Now we have less hierarchy, we sit on the same floor." [29]

Managerial control is further visible in the targets that management sets for journalists to meet in production. Journalists are expected to adhere to certain targets in the production of news in order to keep productivity high. Management ensures that these targets are adhered to, in this way ensuring that the standards of news reporting set by the newspaper are maintained. As one key informant stated:

"The market also sets the standards-if you are not good you won"t sell. We can move people along if they don"t deliver. " [30]

From the interviews conducted, it was found that autonomy in news production is generally less among juniors. It should however be noted that this is shifting (as was discussed above) given that some junior journalists can have autonomy as was shown by one junior journalist interviewed. Junior journalists are less skilled in news reporting and are thus more often than not less capable. As a result of this, there is constant need to mentor them and guide them through the stories they are working on to ensure that it is done according to the newspapers standards. They work according to what they are told to do; in this case control becomes essential to making sure that they perform as required. One key informant illustrated the difficulty of working with juniors by stating the following:

"We spend more time trying to re-write the stories juniors write." [31]

However, this lack of autonomy among juniors is shifting as there are juniors who are able to come up with story ideas and also write well researched stories on their own without the need for constant guidance. Thus juniors can still go against the set structure which expects news editors to detect stories and how they work on them. This shows journalists can have agency and change the set structure to how they see best while still maintaining the newspapers standards of reporting. The same can be said about senior journalists who can challenge news editors and make contributions to the story diaries which may have already been set. Autonomy thus exists among journalists with capabilities of reporting news that maintains the standards set by the newspaper itself and the Press Code.

[27] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.
[28] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.
[29] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[30] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[31] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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This factor is demonstrated but one key informant"s statement:

"As a junior, the contract says the editor chooses the story, but it depends on one"s capabilities-I come up with my own stories, I always get my stuff together."[32]

Thus, to conclude, the restructuring taking place within newsrooms can be explained by the labour process theory which shows how news is a commodity and is produced in order to make profits. Hence, the newsroom structure has to be adapted to changing information technology to ensure that newspapers remain relevant, are able to cut costs where possible and continue to maintain profitability. Although labour process theory shows that there is a constant tension between production and profitability, it is important to note that labour process by itself cannot adequately explain the process of news production. Labour process theory does not show that journalists have agency and are also self-motivated and may not feel exploited, journalists may feel satisfied in them performing a public service. There is thus a need to turn to Bourdieu"s field theory to explain journalists" agency and the production of news as a public good as news is not just produced in order to make money; media is an essential pillar of democracy as has been pointed out. The following section is grounded on Bourdieu"s field theory to illustrate the agency newspapers and journalists have in the production of news.

Chapter Five

V. The Production of News as a Public Good

This chapter adds to the discussions made in the previous chapter by showing how news is also produced as a public good. As pointed out earlier, labour process theory runs the risk of being structuralist and not viewing journalists as capable agents who can make independent choices in the production of news. I turn to Bourdieu"s field theory in this chapter to explain agency existent in the process of news production. I will draw on the following concepts from the theory to explain the production of news as a public good; Agency, autonomy, economic and cultural capital, and the rules of the field. It should be noted that although news is also a public good, there still remains a constant tension between producing news professionally for public interest and producing news that sells to meet the profit motive. Thus, when the profit motive supersedes that of ensuring that news as a public good is produced professionally to serve society, the quality of news is affected as the case studies in chapter six allude to.

In this section, I discuss other factors that impact on the quality of news in South African print media that are not directly related to the issue of restructuring. These factors illustrate how newsroom staff and newspapers broadly have agency to manoeuvre through the strategies or means of restructuring taking place within newsrooms and strive to continue to produce news while attaining profits. Through the formal rules of ethical reporting that are set by the Press Code, newspapers are able to attempt to remain relevant and also to ensure that they still make profits. Although in some instances, quality may be lost along the way as newspapers attempt to keep a balance between professionalism in news reporting and keeping profits, there are still means and structures by which newspapers check or verify accuracy in news reporting. The factors to be explored that demonstrate the room for agency within newspapers are as follows: skilled people leaving the journalism profession, Non adherence to the Press Code, news sources, competition to produce breaking news stories, means to verify accuracy, preoccupation with politics and sensationalism of news.

a) Loss of more skilled/experienced people as they leave the Journalism profession

As has been highlighted in this paper, technological developments in the newsroom have brought about significant changes in news production. One of the impacts of these changes has been that of newsroom operations being under financial strain due to threats caused by the availability of news freely online and having to compete and adapt to these changes. One negative result of this has been the departure of some experienced journalists from newsrooms as they are dissatisfied with the financial incentive which does not seem to go with the demands and pressures involved in the work of news production. The journalism profession faces a major challenge of losing some skilled journalists as they leave for other fields, most prominently being public relations officers. As gathered from the interviews held, part of the reason for this is for financial gain as some journalists feel the journalism profession does not offer reasonable salaries for the amount of pressure and hard work involved. This loss of skilled people impacts on the level of expertise that newsrooms have as well as their ability to maintain high standards in news reporting. One interviewee held that:

"We have seen smaller newsrooms, smaller numbers of editors, and editors are a really important quality control layer. The expertise of these people has been yoked and they have gone into public relations etc."[33]

One key informant interviewed who showed high levels of expertise in reporting for the newspaper

[32] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[33] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.

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she worked for held that she was leaving journalism for good. The newspaper"s editors had tried to overturn her decision but she was still leaving the profession. She remarked at the level of pressure that came with being a journalist which produced strain to one"s personal life. As was held:

"My sources are hurt that I am leaving journalism. They say I"m young, I have guts and I"m very convincing…Journalism does need me, but I also have a life…" [34]

This aspect of more skilled people leaving journalism further demonstrates contradictions existent in the labour process. Technology is beneficial to the workplace in order to enhance productivity and simplify tasks. On the other hand, technological advancements can result in other challenges in a workplace. In this case, because of technological advancements leading to the availability of immediate and readily available news sources, newspapers have been faced with financial pressures as they strive to compete with online news sources and attempt to remain relevant. As a result of these financial pressures, newspapers end up losing skilled staff that they may have invested training on thereby further causing a shortage of skills in newsrooms. This becomes a serious concern for newspapers which sometimes end up digging deep into their budgets to pay journalists more money to prevent them from leaving their newsrooms.

This aspect of journalists leaving the profession also shows that despite the internal labour market which Burawoy spoke about which promotes mobility within firms and encourages workers to stay longer in firms, journalists have agency and can still make personal choices and decide to leave when they see fit.

b) Disregard for the Press Code

Disregard for the Press Code is a key reason for the decline in news quality in the South African Print media. The Press Code guides journalists on news gathering and reporting to ensure that standards of media ethics and responsible journalism are maintained. Journalists have the role of accurately informing and educating the public of what is taking place in society, thus it is crucial to adhere to the standards of accurate reporting set by the Press Code. If the Press Code is properly enforced, it aids in maintaining standards in accurate news reporting. If the public is not well informed, unnecessary harm can be caused to people, society would become misinformed and as a result the public could lose confidence in media reporting.

One key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman reported the disregard of the Press Code as being one of the major challenges to the decline in the level of South African journalism. Upon visiting media houses around the country, members of the office of the Ombudsman established that a large number of journalists had not read the Press Code in addition to not being able to apply it. It was held that:

"We found that some have not even heard of a Press Code, it was shocking for us. This accounts for unethical reporting because the Press Code is the ethical guideline. So they use their common sense as a guideline" [35]

Key informants interviewed saw the importance of abiding by the Press Code in news reporting as it sets the standards of accuracy in news reporting. There was general consensus among the interviewees as to the fact that reporters are expected to familiarise themselves with the Press Code. One informant held that:

"The Press Code should be like our bible in reporting. The Code protects newspapers, if you adhere to it there is no way you can be taken to an Ombudsman or challenged for something you have written." [36]

Another informant held that:

"The Press Code helps to keep the standards and remind you of the rules you have to follow. It becomes part of you as a journalist, that I can"t do this and I can"t do that, and as a newspaper as well."

The Press Ombudsman is the watchdog of the Press and ensures that newspaper practice proper application of the Press Code and report news accurately. All participants interviewed, except one, saw the role of the Ombudsman as being effective in instilling accurate news reporting within print media. One interviewee held that:

"The Ombudsman has become more active to say newspapers" apologies should be on the front page or have as much prominence as the story did. This affects the newspaper"s reputation and the more times you have this you can lose trust with your readers." [37]

The Ombudsman thus has a crucial active role to play in ensuring that the Press Code is properly practiced and applied among newspapers. Newspapers face penalties if found to have been in breach of the Press Code, these involve newspapers being asked to retract stories to the most serious penalty being that of a front page apology. Having to do a front page apology is damaging to a newspaper"s reputation and could result in more accurate reporting going forward as the newspaper strives to maintain its readership. As an interviewee described:

[34] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[35] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.

[36] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

[37] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, 2012-11-26.

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"A front page apology hurts the newspaper; it takes away their credibility and valuable space."[38]

One key informant who did not see the role of the Ombudsman as being useful in instilling accurate news reporting among newspapers stated that:

"In my opinion, I don"t know what the Ombudsman is there for. They have been coming down hard (unnecessarily) on newspapers because of the information Bill; they want to show government or whoever it is that they want to show that they are hard on newspapers…"[39]

A further challenge noted in newspapers reporting news inaccurately is that of failure to apply the Press Code to news production. After the office of the Press Ombudsman began a countrywide campaign to make sure that media houses had a copy of the Press Code, there was found to still be problems with newspapers adequately applying the Code. The following was mentioned, to further emphasize the point:

"Most of the curriculum in media institutions is on theory, the last part is practical. Journalists are supposed to be trained to make good ethical decisions… [40]

Non adherence to the Press Code by newspapers illustrates the challenges faced by newspapers in maintaining the rules or standards to be maintained in the process of news production. Newspapers have agency and decide what they see as news that will sell and may risk going against the requirements of reporting set by the Press Code. Bourdieu"s field theory shows how agents in a field can attempt to change the rules of the game to their own benefits. A conflict exists between the formal rules of the field as set by the Press Code and the informal rules (e.g. the need to come up with breaking news first) which enable newspapers to maintain high profitability and continue to produce effectively while undergoing financial pressures and competing with other news sources. Even after newspapers have been sent to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate reporting, they still go back to the same news production process and battle with the same pressures and challenges and the need to keep making profits. It thus becomes a challenge for newspapers to produce professionally and maintain profitability at the same time.

c) News sources

News sources are an important aspect of news reporting thus maintaining a good relationship with sources is important, while at the same time ensuring that newspapers still write balanced stories and avoid being biased in news reporting. Talking about the importance of maintaining a good relationship with sources, one key informant held that:

"Contact building is important; sometimes you take them for lunch. You need to take care of sources e.g. being polite and showing courtesy. Some sources are scared; we have to protect them because without them we would not have had some of the stories that we do…"[41]

Journalists may face challenges in obtaining information from news sources and contacts. Some sources can be difficult to reach or unavailable thus making it difficult for newspapers to write fair and balanced news stories in time for print deadlines and this can be a challenge in news production. In addition to this, some sources may not be honest in what they report to newspapers which may have an impact of news quality if newspapers do not check and verify information effectively. News sources may want to drive their own personal interests in order to gain public favour. One key informant stated that:

"Sources are a greatest asset and liability, cultivating and getting trust is important to having a source of news all the time. On the other hand, sources have their own motivations; they can get you into big trouble if their motives are not pure and they want to serve their own personal interests." [42]

One other interviewee held that:

"Businesses or organizations can be slow to produce or formulate responses to a crisis and we have deadlines, then sometimes you end up not being able to run with the story. Sometimes, sources can lie, if you cannot see them it"s worse…"[43]

It is thus important to verify all information received from sources, regardless of the kind of relationship that has been built with them to ensure fair and unbiased news reporting. One interviewee said the following:

"I always ask my sources for proof in the form of documents and not just accept the story."[44]

With technological developments in the newsroom such as online and social media news reporting, use of emails and instant messaging to communicate and the web to access information, there has been less face to face contact with sources. This has posed as a challenge to the quality of news produced. This is because more reliance on the web for

[38] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[39] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[40] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[41] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[42] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[43] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[44] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

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news stories results in the loss of traditionalistic journalism standards in which news gathering involved speaking to more people and obtaining more in- depth accounts of stories. One key informant stated that:

"Journalists want to read up stuff on the internet, there are less face to face meetings with sources. They expect sources to come to us instead of going to them and saying –what do you have for me…"[45]

Using other newspapers as sources of information was noted as being an additional problem in the decline in the quality of news produced by newspapers. As was stated:

"Using other newspapers as a source is a problem, assuming something is true because it was published. Newspapers should still verify information. They simply Google and those are not primary sources, you cannot verify with a secondary source."[46]

Reliance on the internet as a source of news instead of journalists going out to gather information by speaking to people could result in what Braverman termed deskilling. Over time, journalists could lose their skills of taking part in in-depth news reporting which involves meeting people and investigating issues outside of the newsroom and not relying on the information on the internet.

To deal with the challenges that may arise with dealing with news sources, newspapers may rely on sources that they already know to obtain information for news stories. Additionally, the choice to rely on the web as a source of information for some news stories so as to produce news quicker may be made by journalists. It is important to know that choices that newspapers make have consequences and can in some instances work against the quality of news. For instance as Case study one in chapter six shows, reliance on sources already known from the past and not verifying information with other sources may result in inaccurate reporting.

d) Competition

As Bourdieu"s field theory stipulates, within a field, there is competition for legitimate appropriation of what is at stake in the struggle within the field (Bourdieu, 2005). Within the field of journalism, there is competition to appropriate the readership, to come up with breaking news first and to publish exclusive information.

Prior to the internet becoming a major source for news for many readers, in daily print journalism, reporters would not know if they had been „scooped" by rival newspapers until the next day"s newspapers were out. By then it would have been too late to do anything about it. Now, as news has become more digitalized, every story goes online instantly and journalists are now under intense pressure not to miss anything appearing on their rival"s websites (Philips, 2010).

One key informant described print media as very competitive and held that:

"The market is very competitive, we have to stay relevant. You have to get very good people, you have to keep watching what the big papers are doing. You have to see yourself as global, you have to be interesting don"t just be concerned with your own country."[47]

To show the competition that exists to produce breaking news, one participant further held:

"As a weekly, if you miss it, somebody else will cover it."[48]

It was further remarked by another interviewee:

"You have to run like a headless chicken, make sure you get things that no one is going to get. We must make sure we have something different because we have the same readers, otherwise our sales will go down."[49]

Competition between newspapers also involves other newspapers wanting to „poach" more skilled journalists from other newspapers. This seemed to be a common concern amongst most participants interviewed. One key informant held that:

"The things that these young people can do with technology are unbelievable, so they get poached all the time. You have this contradiction between the size of the newsroom and the emerging hunger for talent."[50]

Another key informant stated that:

"Junior people get trained and then the person is pouched by other newspapers when they become developed."[51]

Two participants interviewed held that they had been offered positions in other newspapers one of whom stayed after being offered a salary rise by their current newspaper. The other participant stated the following reason for not leaving for another newspaper:

"I have been offered two jobs since I have been here. The reason why I stay is because I love the product and I can also see myself develop and I can see the contribution I"m making towards the paper and also to staff members growing."

Noteworthy is the fact that news sources are also involved in the competition between newspapers

[45] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[46] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[47] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[48] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[49] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[50] Interview, Editor from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-28.
[51] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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and between journalists within the same newsroom. As one key informant held:

"We compete for the same sources even within the newspaper. Often, sources also decide on which newspaper they want their story. They know the intensity of the story and which paper would suit it."

Burawoy"s analysis of workers constituting work as a game which made work feel more rewarding and offer emotional satisfaction and extrinsic rewards to workers could be applied to this notion of competition to understand it better. Constituting work as a game involves consenting to production relations while enhancing productivity. It could be argued that by journalists competing among themselves in the newsroom and also by different newspapers competing in breaking news they are participating in playing a game which ultimately increases productivity in the production of news. Journalists have a sense of agency in news production given that with the desire to succeed in their work they choose to perform at their best within the competitive media environment and come up with good news stories that could improve their individual reputations.

The competition to have a front page story for instance could enhance journalists to work hard to try to produce better than other fellow journalists. In the process of doing this, the goal of keeping productivity high in the newsroom is achieved. Additionally, journalists may feel a sense of satisfaction every time that they meet their set targets or produce good news stories that serve a public good and readers acknowledge .Journalists could also try by all means to avoid inaccurate news reporting which could end up in disciplinary action. In this way, journalists constantly strive to stay at the top in producing news efficiently which is beneficial to management as productivity is kept high thereby aiding profit making.

e) Means of checking accuracy prior to publishing of news stories

Despite the pressure that newspapers may be faced with, there are still means that they use to check and ensure accuracy of news stories prior to publishing of stories as was gathered from the interviews conducted. In the application of Bourdieu"s field theory, these means of verifying and ensuring accuracy are an effort by newspapers to adhere to the rules of the field. The rules of the journalism field stipulate that news be produced in a manner that adheres to the South African Press Code.

Newspapers thus have structures in place in the news production process to ensure that these rules are adhered to as failure to do so has ethical implications and could result in the newspaper losing its credibility.

One newspaper group has an accuracy form which is adapted from the Press Code. This form is completed by journalists to show that they have written news accurately. The following is confirmed in the form: if names have been used correctly, if dates, figures, quotations and facts are correct. Additionally the form also checks that the journalists are satisfied with the accuracy and fairness of the story(s) and whether all parties involved where contacted. Finally, a check is done to ensure that all necessary documents were obtained to substantiate the report. One key informant held that:

"Every single reporter has to sit with another reporter and go through the form. The reporter will then sign the form. This is done every time; if they pick up anything they will go and change it. The form is then filed."[52]

Newspapers may be faced with high pressure, demands and competition in the process of news production, it is however still crucial to ensure that all news is produced accurately and adheres to the South African Press Code. One key informant further stated that:

"Accuracy is very important, especially in this day and age with the Protection of Information Bill. We have measures in place to protect ourselves and our reporter. On our accuracy form we ask; „have you spoken to independent sources", in this day and age people are running agendas so you can be fed misinformation…"[53]

The process of news production is structured in such a way that checking and rechecking is done prior to the newspaper going to print. After journalists report on news stories, their stories are sent to the relevant section editors for instance the political editor, sports editor, business editor who then checks the content of the stories and also checks for accuracy. The journalists" stories are then sent to the sub editors who conduct further checks on the stories by way of proof reading, checking the grammar and writing story headlines. The editor then does the final checks on the stories and has the final say on which stories are published and which ones are not. Thus, by the time the newspaper goes to print, news stories ought to have gone past processes of checking and rechecking ensuring that news is produced accurately and fairly as set out by the Press Code.

Asked about how to ensure adherence to the standards of news reporting set by the Press Code, one journalist held that:

"We are our own gatekeepers; we know what will get us into trouble and what can"t. You as a journalist have to make sure you check everything before sending it to the news desk. The editor will then check. Every story needs

[52] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

[53] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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to have proof of allegations, you must have documents, don"t write hear-say."[54]

Thus, journalists and editors have to take responsibility in their production tasks to ensure that maintaining accuracy remains central in all processes of production. Should accuracy checks not be effectively conducted during the news production process, this then has an impact on the quality of news produced. The subbing process, for instance, was found to have a profound influence on the final accuracy of news stories produced. In some instances, as was found in the interviews conducted, subeditors cut out important information from news stories sometimes resulting in inaccurate reports. To illustrate this, one key informant held that:

"I have recently had a case in one newspaper, a complaint about comment not being included in five stories in a row- and that"s so fundamental in a story. All these times, the sub had taken it out for reasons of space. The sub was junior and did not understand the importance of comment."

This point would demonstrate a case whereby news stories lack a balanced view as the comments would have been removed. The news stories would then be biased resulting in inaccurate news. It is thus essential to have the right level of professionalism in the checking of news stories as failure to adequately check could result in a decline in the quality of news produced. Unprofessionalism in news production can result in unnecessary harm caused to people thus it is essential to conduct thorough checks. Another key informant stated the following:

"We"ve had an incident recently where the sub cut out a comment from a story and the spokesperson shouted at the reporter. We had to speak to the spokesperson and say- „look we understand that you are angry but the reporter did put the comment, it was the subs that took it off, we apologise for that"…"

The question that arises then is whether the checking processes in the production process of news are adequate to ensure quality news that adheres to the Press Code. This is questionable as the examples above show that there are still slip ups which take place that result in inaccurate reporting even if there are structures to check and ensure accurate reporting. It should be noted that even within the set structures, agents in the newsroom still have agency to act for instance the subs can decide to alter information in journalists" news stories or as they decide on headlines as they make the choice to sensationalize the headline in a certain way in order to make the story attractive to readers. Additionally, as editors have the final say in what gets published in the newspaper, they conduct the final checks and can make choices on whether there is need to change any information on news stories.

f) Preoccupation with politics/lack of diversity in the news that is reported

There was general consensus among the participants interviewed over the fact that newspapers overemphasize on reporting on politics. It was found that newspapers at times lose sight of other important aspects going on in society that the public needs to be informed about. There is thus lack of diversity in the news stories that are reported there by losing sight of the bigger picture in society. One key informant stated the following:

"I think journalists have become preoccupied with politics, production and celebrities and forgotten about the ordinary people on the streets. South Africa is not about politicians, it"s not about Mangaung and the ANC. We have a population of 52million who want to know about stuff that affects them e.g. education, crime and health. Our readers are getting fatigued; we are not offering our readers as much as we should."[55]

Another key informant stated that:

"We get obsessed with the politics of the day, but a country is made up of people not politicians."[56]

One could argue that the overemphasis on reporting on politics could be because of a need to sell newspapers. Writing news about politics and exposing politicians could arguably be news that is attractive to readers. Thus in the struggle to maintain profits, newspapers may place emphasis on news that is seen as news that sells. Moreover, this illustrates the agency that newspapers have in deciding what best to focus on in reporting to attract readers.

g) Sensationalism

News sensationalism is a further illustration of newspapers altering the formal rules of the field of journalism for the benefit of selling news and hence making profits. Newspapers increasingly sensationalize headlines and news stories to make the news sound more interesting and so that it may be more appealing to readers. This may alter the accuracy of news reports thereby going against the formal rules required in the field of journalism, namely to maintain accuracy and fairness in news reporting. Thus sensationalizing news illustrates how newspaper actively make choices on how best to make the news they produce appear marketable as a product.

News has become more and more sensationalized and this was seen by the participants interviewed as one of the factors that impact on news

[54] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[55] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

[56] Interview, Editor from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-12.

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quality given that news that is sensationalized occasionally results in inaccurate reporting. For purposes of this project, by Sensationalism, I refer to: the use of exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy in order to provoke public interest. Sensationalism can be used in order to entice readers, in order to sell the paper. There was general consensus among the majority of participants interviewed that sensationalism does result in a decline in the quality of news that newspapers produce. One key informant held that:

"With digital media, people want to bring out the more sensational topics, this has been detrimental to overall news quality; we end up reading the popular stuff instead of the more in-depth stories."[57]

Another interviewee held that:

"The problem is that journalists rush to sensationalize news, to me that"s the biggest problem in news quality-publishing stories that sound exciting to readers…"[58]

h) Effects of newspapers being sent to the Press Ombudsman

From studying the Press Ombudsman rulings with newspapers over the years, there appears to be a reoccurrence of the same newspapers breaching the Press Code repetitively. A question that then arises is; is the role of the Press Ombudsman in ensuring that newspapers report news accurately and holding them accountable for failure to do so taken seriously or has being taken to the Press Ombudsman for inaccurate news reporting now been normalised by newspapers? From some of the interviews conducted with research participants, it appears there may be to some extent, a normalisation of newspapers being sent to the Press Ombudsman. Asked if the reputation of the newspaper had been changed by the Ombudsman ruling against one particular newspaper after having breached the Press Code in news reporting, one key informant held the following:

"The reputation of the paper did not change; we know the political environment we are operating in at the moment. „Newspaper A" was also taken to the Ombudsman; Newspaper B" was also taken there by the same complainant. So the credibility of the newspaper is not affected by something like that. And I mean one political party took „Newspaper C" to the Ombudsman who then ruled against the newspaper"s favour…"[59]

From the above quote, it would seem that just because the majority of newspapers, even those with a lot of credibility from the public get reported to the Press Ombudsman at some point then this does not necessarily do harm to the reputation of newspapers. The factor of concern then becomes that; does the penalty given by the Ombudsman to newspapers found to be in breach of the Press Code actually discipline newspapers. In addition, are the penalties given to newspapers sufficient enough to bring about a decline in inaccurate news reporting? In an interview with a key informant from the office of the Ombudsman, he expressed similar concern with the procedure for sending complaints on newspapers. It was confirmed that, (at the time of conducting the interview in November 2012), the complaints procedure did not effectively address the problem of newspapers being constantly on the wrong. The following was stated:

"I"m not sure if the current complaints procedure helps because newspapers keep making mistakes. Next year"s system is a huge improvement…"[60]

"If a newspaper continues to be on the wrong, at the moment, nothing can happen, but our system will be changing from the first of January 2013 with an amended Press Code and Constitution. Thus, when the new system is in place, if we detect a trend we can summon the newspaper to come to the Ombudsman"s office. We can also ask the editor to appear before the Press council. It"s a huge step forward…"[61]

Thus, the news complaints procedure which has been in place from the 1st of January 2013 aims to address the challenge of newspapers constantly being found in breach of the Press Code. This is through instilling harsher disciplinary measures on newspapers. I then pose the following question; will this new complaints and disciplinary procedure be effective in bringing about more accurate reporting in the South African Print media? Given that newspapers are still exposed to the same labour process of news production which comprises of pressure, competition deadlines and the pursuit of profits it would be difficult to completely eliminate the errors made in news production. Maintaining professionalism by reporting news accurately and rightfully serving society can be a challenge given that this can clash with the primary need for the newspaper to make profits.

If newspapers are taken to the Press Ombudsman continuously for reporting news accurately, this raises questions on the effectiveness of the rules under which journalists operate. Ultimately, one could argue that if being reported to the Press

[57] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[58] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[59] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.
[60] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.
[61] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.

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Ombudsman is normalised by newspapers then a crisis exists in the field of journalism. This is because of agents constantly outdoing with the rules that govern the field i.e. the standards of professional news reporting that are set by the Press Code.

To conclude, in addition to news being a commodity that needs to sell, news is also produced as a public good which has to serve society and be produced within clearly laid out professional and ethical standards. As field theory illustrates, news is not just produced to acquire economic capital but newspapers also strive to obtain cultural capital as they compete in producing breaking news stories and journalists strive to produce original, well researched articles. Newspapers from time to time face challenges in maintaining the professionalism required in news reporting which results in them being taken to the Press Ombudsman as a result of complaints on the accuracy of some of their stories. However, newspapers still take risks to try and ensure that they remain profitable while they continue to carry out their democratic role of informing society and doing so professionally.

In the following chapter, I look at specific case studies which demonstrate inaccurate reporting in the South African print media. These cases illustrate the tension which exists between news as a commodity and news as a public good and demonstrate how the profit motive can occasionally get in the way of quality and professionalism thereby resulting in a decline in news quality.

Chapter Six

VI. Commodity vs. Public Good Case Studies

As the previous two chapters have shown, news is a commodity which is produced for sale to the public to make a profit. News is also a public good produced with the need to serve public interest by keeping society well informed of issues that affect them. Given the availability of news from new media sources, newspapers are under pressure to compete with news that is readily available to readers. Technology is increasingly employed in newsrooms to aid journalists to deal with the pressure in news production and to increase productivity. Journalists" work is monitored and checked by editors to ensure that targets are reached, accuracy measures are complied with and that news stories are in accordance to the standards set by publishers. Cost cutting has been employed in newsrooms to ensure that the economic model of news production is adjusted so that profits are maintained. These strategies of cost cutting as discussed above may in some instances be detrimental to the quality of news that newspapers produce. For instance, some newsrooms report of juniors being less skilled and inadequately trained for professional news reporting resulting in them writing news articles that may not have been well researched and therefore inaccurate.

I have also shown that newspapers have room for agency in the production of news as they manoeuvre through restructuring taking place within their newsrooms and as they strive to stay relevant in producing news to the public. Newspapers are faced with challenges as they seek to achieve the profit motive in their operations. These challenges include loss of skilled people from journalism and the difficulty in dealing with some news sources as discussed above. As has been pointed out, newspapers have means and structures in the process of news production to ensure that accuracy is ensured in reporting given that news is a public good. There is an attempt by newspapers to make sure that news, which is a public good, is also marketable to the public for instance by sensationalizing news and focusing on reporting news that sells. Newspapers take risks and sometimes go against the formal rules of the field of journalism set by the Press Code to ensure that the news which they produce is also profitable to them. It is the challenge of achieving both ends of profitability and professionalism that in some instances results in inaccurate reporting as the profit motive may surpass that of maintaining accuracy in reporting.

In this section, I focus on specific case studies that demonstrate inaccurate news reporting by newspapers. I draw from the research findings discussed in the previous two chapters which show the tension between producing news professionally as a public good vs. producing news for commercial purposes with the need to maintain profits. I now focus on actual case studies of inaccurate news reporting to highlight the tension that arises when a newspaper decides to pursue the profit motive by investing less resources in investigative reporting and not following up story leads resulting in inaccuracies in articles that then get published thereby damaging the newspaper"s reputation.

A number of the factors mentioned in the previous two chapters help to explain the errors that were made by these particular newspapers selected. This section thus brings in a more in-depth analysis of the kind of challenges that newspapers are faced with in maintaining standards of news reporting by exploring practical examples. I refer to four recent cases in which different newspapers were taken to the Press Ombudsman for having reported news inaccurately. I then draw on the issues that led to the specific errors some of which are directly related to restructuring and others which involve other factors which illustrate the agency that newspapers have in news production. Each of the errors made by the newspaper shall be looked at in detail in relation to the process of news production and the nature of challenges that arise with regards to

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maintaining high standards in news reporting. It should be noted that most errors that arise in news production can be prevented. Newspapers have agency and they can make decisions to ensure that accuracy checks are conducted effectively in news reporting to avoid mistakes in written articles. Although newspapers have different approaches to news gathering, there are several lessons they can learn from each other in order to maintain high standards in news reporting despite the pressures they may be faced with.

Case Study One

a) Julius Malema Vs. The Times

i. *Outline of the case*

The Times newspaper reported that there was a joint investigation between SARS and the HAWKS to investigate Julius Malema and that the investigation was almost complete and it was a matter of time before authorities acted. This story which was published on 31 October 2011 was headlined "*Julius Malema on the ropes.*" According to the response from The Times given during the hearing held before the Press Ombudsman following a complaint from Julius Malema, their reporter who had the story had read the story which appeared in The Sunday Independent the previous day, after which she contacted unnamed sources from SARS and the Hawks to follow up on the story.

Soon after the story was published, there was written proof obtained with regards to there being no warrant of arrest by the HAWKS and there being no joint investigation as confirmed by SARS. Thus the Times newspaper had published inaccurate information. The newspaper had additionally failed to provide evidence to support the false statement; unnamed sources from SARS and the Hawks had been used and were not disclosed to the Ombudsman.

The newspaper presented the joint investigation into Malema "as good as complete" and that "it was a matter of time" before authorities acted as a fact yet it was found to be untrue. The newspaper was thus found to be in breach of Article 1.1 of the Press code which requires newspapers to report news accurately, truthfully and fairly. The newspaper corroborated but did not verify its information which is in breach of Article 1.4 of the Press code which states that "where there is a reason to doubt the accuracy of a report and it is practicable to verify the accuracy thereof, it shall be verified. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of a report, this shall be mentioned in such report." Additionally, the newspaper did not ask Malema or his legal representative for comment which is in breach of Article 1.5 of the Press code –"a publication should seek the views of serious critical reportage in advance of publication."

b) Analysis of Case Study

The faults made by the newspaper in this case demonstrate the sort of challenges that newspapers are faced with in the process of news production. Challenges arise in the need to meet deadlines while producing news which adheres to the standards set by the Press Code.

c) News Sources

Newspapers are sometimes faced with the challenge of obtaining information from relevant sources for particular news stories. In this case, the journalist who wrote the story failed to adequately contact Julius Malema for comment. According to the findings from the interviews with key informants, attempts made to reach Julius Malema and his spokesperson for comment had been unsuccessful. The newspaper was thus faced with the challenge of attempting to reach the sources for the news story for comment while approaching deadline, thereby in the end running with the story as it was. This further demonstrates the difficulty that arises with newspapers having to meet deadlines, working under pressure and sometimes having to face difficult sources or contacts for information. Sources may not be adequately reached for comment because of the need to meet publishing deadlines and the fear of not running with the story and other rival newspapers getting hold of it first.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, news sources are an important aspect of news reporting thus failure of newspapers to obtain comment may be detrimental to overall news quality. Failure of the newspaper to obtain comment from the key subject of the news story resulted in an unbalanced and inaccurate account. During the hearing, it was held that the newspaper should have contacted Julius Malema"s legal representative after having failed to reach him and his spokesperson. Failure to do so and publishing the story without comment demonstrates lack of professionalism on the part of the newspaper as the Press Code clearly states the need to obtain comment from the subjects of critical reportage. (Article 1.5 of The Press Code).

The newspaper used unnamed sources to obtain information for the story which was found to be based on inaccurate allegations. The newspaper held that these sources had been used in the past and found to be reliable thus the editor and the journalist had no reason to doubt the information. This shows that reliance on sources from the past and not conducting extra checks and verifying the information with other sources results in newspapers reporting biased information. Angela Philips et al (2010) state that with increasing speed and rolling deadlines that newspapers are faced with, the result is that newspapers use the most available sources and these are the sources that they already know. Despite loyalty to sources, it is still crucial to verify information provided prior to publishing news. As one key informant rightfully stated:

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"I have got very good sources that give me the story before other papers, that"s the kind of relationship I have built with my sources…I also ask them for proof in the form of documents and not just accept the story."[62]

Thus, regardless of how good a relationship a journalist has built with their sources, information still needs to be verified before it can be published. In this way, newspapers are able to avoid unnecessary false reporting.

Thus, as labour process theory illustrates, there is need to maintain high productivity in the production of news and to ensure that profits are generated. As deadlines approach, newspapers are faced with pressure to wrap up news stories and send them to print to ensure that the breaking stories are in the newspaper the following day and the newspaper is able to generate revenue from the sales. In this case, the effort to reach Julius Malema for comment on the news story would have required more time; hence deadline could have been missed. Newspapers fear missing deadlines on a breaking news stories as rival newspapers could publish the story first.

As meeting publishing deadlines becomes a priority in the production of news, this could result in non-conformation to the formal rules of the field of journalism. As the Press Code stipulates, subjects of reportage have to be reached for comment prior to publishing any news story that concerns them. Failing to conform to this expectation set by the Press Code shows what Bourdieu referred to by stating that agents can alter the rules of their field for their own benefit. In this case, the newspaper"s need to publish and sell news led to the failure to adhere to the need to ensure that sources had been adequately contacted prior to going ahead with publishing the news story. This illustrates how the tension between making profits and producing news accurately may play out, in this case with the profit motive prevailing over that of adhering to the rules of the field of journalism.

d) Sensationalism

Sensationalism involves newspapers" use of exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy in order to provoke public interest. In this case, The Times newspaper reported that: *the investigation was "as good as complete" and it was "just a matter of time" before authorities acted*. These allegations were found to be untrue. The language used by the newspaper portrayed unverified information as fact and reported it as such. The form of language used sounds exciting to the reader, it is sensationalized yet it is inaccurate. Use of sensationalism in news reporting was found to be a key factor in the decline of news quality in South African Print media as was discussed in the previous chapter. This could be as a result of newspapers" need to sell news and make profit becoming more of a priority that maintaining professionalism in news reporting as was discussed above.

One key informant held that:

"There is the problem of sensationalism, e.g. one newspaper wrongfully calling someone a "war load", that is exaggeration! This is sensationalism, to sell the newspaper. There is complete disregard for that person."[63]

Sensationalism in news reporting impacts on the standards or quality of news produced as information becomes exaggerated and ceases to be accurate. As economic constraints weigh on production, newspapers must take steps to adapt to the developments brought about by the internet. Consequently, the formal rules set aside for newspapers to stick to in news reporting are altered to ensure that news remains profitable. Sensationalizing news thus becomes a means to maintain the interest of readers to buy and read print copy.

e) Inadequate means to verify accuracy

In the case under discussion, the inadequate verification of information before publishing the news story was a major reason that resulted in the inaccurate reporting by the newspaper. Steps should have been taken by the newspaper to verify the information. The information was obtained from anonymous sources from the Hawks and SARS about the investigation against Julius Malema. Although the newspaper saw these sources as reliable, failure to adequately check the allegations presents as unprofessionalism on the part of the newspaper.

Due to inadequate checking being carried out, mere allegations of an investigation were reported as fact. The challenge faced by newspapers as in this case is the ability to adequately verify information while working under pressure to reach deadlines. Newspapers can become preoccupied with the need to break news stories before other newspapers do thus it becomes a challenge to hold a story and not publish it right away so as to conduct more checks on the information that has been obtained. This factor contributes to a decline in news quality, given that newspapers can become focused on completing news stories and publishing them quickly and less time is given to produce more accurate and in-depth stories with verified information from more independent sources.

[62] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

[63] Interview, Key informant from the office of the Press Ombudsman, Johannesburg, 2012-11-09.

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As was discussed in the previous chapter, despite the pressure that newspapers may be faced with, there are still steps taken to check and ensure accuracy of news stories prior to publishing. Having said that, this particular case demonstrates that the checking processes in the production of news may not be adequate to ensure accurate news reporting. The processes may be in place but once the editor is satisfied with the news stories they may give the go ahead to print even though there may possibly be some contesting issues. In this case, the editor is said to have agreed with the use of the anonymous sources. This draws into the theme of managerial control which I will now discuss in relation to this case.

As newspapers are faced with pressure given that they have to compete with news that is readily available on the internet, it becomes more challenging to adhere to the standards of reporting set by the Press Code. As Bourdieu argues, economic pressures can weigh on the field of journalism and affect its cultural capital as original reporting becomes affected by the rush to meet deadlines and sell newspapers. Thus, this further points out to the tension that has been elaborated on in this paper. This is the fact that the need to keep profits high can affect that of maintaining professionalism, in the end resulting in inaccurate reporting.

f) Managerial Control in News production

The editor has the final say of what gets published in the newspaper. He/she is the final eye before the paper can be sent to print. Thus, when the editor gives the go- ahead on a story, the story gets published. One key informant interviewed for this particular case held that:

"The issue of the two unnamed sources; these were two completely different people. I told the editor, she knew that and she was happy with it…The editor was with me when we published the story so she knows the ins and outs, I sat with the editor, we went through absolutely everything and she gave the green light. "[64]

This shows that once the editor checks the story and is satisfied with it, it can then get published. This case thus demonstrates management control in the labour process as management has the final say of the final product that gets published. The use of anonymous sources was approved by the editor despite the information not being verified. Editors have power in the production of news and as a result should ensure that they maintain professionalism in news reporting. The challenge arises with newspapers competing in the rush to break news stories and in the process of this, accuracy measures could be inadequately carried out. It was the responsibility of the editor to make sure that the allegations from the anonymous sources had been verified as facts by the journalist in charge of the story prior to giving the go ahead to publishing the story. Failure to verify the accuracy of the information led to unnecessary harm being caused to the complainant.

Case Study Two

a) Manie Van Schalkwyk Vs. Sunday Independent

i. *Outline of the Case*

Credit Ombudsman, Manie Van Schalkwyk complained about a story in the Sunday Independent published on the 21st August 2011. The story involved a complaint by the debt counsellor Reginald Matjokana against the complainant, Manie Van Schalkwyk for conflict of interest that he lodged with the public prosecutor and the Hawks.

The headline of the story was found to be misleading and not a reflection of the content of the story. The headline was "*Allegations of a conflict of interest and corruption against credit Ombudsman*." Manie complained that this was a misinterpretation of the story and that the headline was damaging to his reputation. The newspaper argued that the inclusion of the words *and corruption* to the headline was an innocent error made by subeditors in the unfortunate rush to meet deadline. The editor of the Sunday Independent denied that the error was intentional and meant to sensationalize the story and was willing to apologise for the error.

The headline was found to be in breach of Article 5.1 Of the Press Code that states that „headlines shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the report in question." In addition, Van Schalkwyk was not accused of corruption thus the use of that word was found to be untruthful and unfair and inaccurate and in breach of Article 1.1 of the Press Code which requires newspapers to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.

b) Analysis of Case Study

i. *Pressure in news production*

It is worth noting that newspapers are faced with pressure in news production as they have to meet deadlines with publishing news stories and are in constant competition with more immediate news sources as has been pointed out. Daily newspapers are faced with more pressure as they have less time to investigate on and write news stories. Although weekly newspapers have more time to meet deadline, they have to produce more in-depth and more analytic stories to Daily newspapers as most of the stories they cover would have already been broken by the time the weekly newspapers are published.

In this case, as has been mentioned above, the newspaper argued that the inclusion of the words *and corruption* to the headline had been an innocent error made by subeditors in the rush to meet deadlines.

[64] Interview, Journalist from a Daily Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-27.

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Despite the fact that the newspaper may have been faced with pressure, professionalism should still have been maintained which would have entailed ensuring that all necessary checks were done to make sure headlines and news content are accurate. The subeditors in this case had the responsibility to make sure the headlines portrayed the actual news story, failure to which they would get blamed. As one key informant responsible for writing the story held:

"It was written by the subeditors so it has nothing to do with me, they write the headlines."[65]

The newspaper should have given more time to the checking of news stories including that of headlines prior to publishing the story. Thus, pressure in news production does impact on the quality of news that newspapers produce as there is a rush to meet deadline and break news stories. In the process of this urgency, some quality checks may be lost along the way. This may moreover demonstrate the tension that newspapers face between producing news so as to sell and make profits while on the other hand also ensuring that all necessary checks are conducted to ensure that news produced adheres to the set standards of professionalism.

It is the onus of the newspaper and ultimately the editor who is in charge of the news stories to ensure that enough checks are conducted to ensure that news that is published maintains the standards set by the Press Code.

The pressure that newspapers face in the rush to meet deadlines as in this particular case demonstrates the contradictions inherent in the labour process theory. Technological developments in the newsroom, more specifically the internet assist journalists to be able to meet deadlines, for instance they can phone sources to confirm information, receive documents via email and also use the web to confirm spellings and other names. On the other hand, the developments brought about by the internet which has resulted in the immediacy of news and news being freely available online is the major reason why newspapers are undergoing pressures in news production. Newspapers are under pressure as they now have to compete with online news sources, they need to maintain the interests of their readers, remain relevant in an increasingly digital age and continue to maintain profits.

c) Sensationalism

Headlines may sometimes be constructed in such a way as to sensationalize news stories. An appealing headline can entice readers" interest in buying and reading news stories. However, when a particular headline misrepresents the story being reported on as in this particular Case study, then it becomes a reflection of inaccurate reporting which goes against the Press Code. As was discussed in the previous chapter, sensationalizing news stories does have an impact on accurate news reporting as it could end up in an inaccurate or exaggerated picture being given to the news story.

The addition of the word "corruption" to the headline may have been an "innocent error" as the newspaper pointed out. However, it may well have been sensationalism of the matter or to make the story more appealing to readers.

Sensationalizing news headlines is a means by newspapers to sell and continue to make profits. The tension between maintaining professionalism and keeping profits is visible in this regard. If headlines are sensationalized, news may be made to sound interesting and may attract more readers, however, sensationalism, as in this case may result in news being inaccurate thereby impacting on the professionalism required from news production.

Case Study Three

a) Khaya Ngqula Vs. Sunday Times

i. *Outline of the Case*

In this case, former CEO of South African Airways complained about two stories in the Sunday Times published on 5 December 2010 written by Brendan Peacock and Robert Laing. The stories were headlined "*Fat-cat parastatal bosses come and go, but they get the cream.*" And "*Getting paid to go away-Robert Laing introduces the boys who made a mint out of quitting.*" The complaint is that both stories portray Ngqula as a failure as he had failed to comply with his duties while being CEO of the SAA and the second story untruthfully states that he was sacked. Ngqula held that these stories were humiliating considering he had been commended for doing an outstanding job as the CEO of SAA.

The Sunday Times" findings were based on the KPMG report which is a global network of professional services firms providing audit, tax and advisory services. At the time that these stories were published, the findings from the KPMG report were unproven allegations. The Sunday Times held that reputable media such as The Mail and Guardian and Fin 24 had also reported that Ngqula had been fired. It was found that Ngqula was not fired, there was a settlement agreement between him and SAA thus the newspapers should have followed a proper process of verification. There was a breach of Article 1.1 of the Press Code which is outlined in the previous case. In addition, given that the findings from the KPMG report were mere allegations at the time of publication, it was incorrect to state it as fact that Khaya Ngqula was a failure. For this, the newspaper was also found to be in breach of Article 1.1 of the Press Code.

[65] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

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b) Analysis of Case Study

i. *News Sources*

The allegations that were reported as facts in the news story were based on findings from the KPMG report which is a source that had not been tested for accuracy. KPMG was thus not a source that the newspaper could have relied on to publish a news story portraying Khaya Ngqula as a failure. Reporting allegations as fact results in inaccurate news reporting as in this case study given that the allegations had not been proved. Use of secondary sources of news by newspapers can have an impact on the quality of news produced if the information from the sources has not been verified from reliable independent sources. :

Using what other newspapers have reported as a source of information also impacts on the quality of news produced. As was precisely held by the Deputy Press Ombudsman during the hearing of this case:

"The mere fact that other newspapers reported that Ngqula had been fired is no proof that that was in fact true."

Thus, newspapers need to independently verify information and not base news stories on what other media has published. The use of primary sources to verify information is crucial to maintaining accuracy in news reporting.

As Bourdieu"s field theory illustrates, the formal rules of the field can be changed by agents" actions in their spaces of possibilities. In this case, the newspaper went against the formal rules of the field set by the Press Code and made use of a secondary source as well as the fact that other newspapers had published the same information and hence published the news story as it was. The formal rules of the field require newspapers to always ensure that information from secondary sources is verified prior to news being published. However, journalism is a competitive field and newspapers may feel the need to run with a story just because other rival newspapers have published it and may feel they also need to offer their readers something on the news story in order to sell. Newspapers demonstrate their sense of agency by choosing the news sources that they perceive to be effective in providing them with information that aids in producing breaking news stories that attract more readership and are profitable for the publisher.

c) Managerial control in news production

This case additionally demonstrates how news stories can occasionally get changed during the editorial process. This is after journalists have submitted the news stories that they would have been working on to the News desk or to the news editors. The editor has the final say over what gets published in the newspaper and thus has the authority to change content on news stories that have been written. As it appears from this case, the journalist may not always be contacted about the additions or changes made to the story. One key informant interviewed who partook in writing the news stories held that the news story got changed by the editor hence it ending up being inaccurate by the time of publishing. The key informant stated the following:

"Initially, the story stated that: Khaya Ngqula left the organization after which the story was changed to: he was fired…"[66]

The editor has the final say on what gets published in the newspaper as has been pointed out. Thus, once editors have gone through the news stories and made changes as they see fit they give a go ahead for the newspaper to go to print. The journalists involved in writing news stories have no ability to make further editions to the paper at that stage. There is ambiguity as to whether journalists have the ability to follow up and double check on their news stories prior to being sent to print. The key informant further held that:

"I don"t know if I would have had the power to change it, but there is built into the process a second check by the journalist…because it goes out in your name, it"s your responsibility to check the story because some of the changes made could have been wrong."[67]

Thus, journalists may not necessarily always be aware of the sort of changes that can be made to the news stories they would have written prior to publishing. As the editor has the final say, he/she may decide to contact the journalist to confirm the changes made or may not do so. During the editing process, important information can be lost from news stories and this can have an impact on the accuracy of the news produced. *One key informant stated that:*

"Nearly every story can be cut because of space and important information can be lost."[68]

I think it would be of importance to always check with the journalists responsible for stories prior to making any final changes to the content of news stories. In this case, the journalist had been working on the story and had the evidence to suggest that Khaya Ngqula had been offered a settlement agreement. However, as the editor has the power in news production, he changed the statement to what he had understood it to be and as the editor is the face of the newspaper, changes made are at his/her discretion.

Labour process theory illustrates the increased separation between conception and execution as a form of control by management. Workers do not have direct engagement in the labour process. As this case

[66] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[67] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.
[68] Interview, Journalist from a Weekly Newspaper, Johannesburg, 2012-11-26.

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demonstrates, journalists are responsible for the process of news gathering and writing news stories, however management may exclude them from planning and finalizing news stories in preparation for print. This shows that management is in control of the news production process. The editor has agency and decides whether or not to check with journalists prior to making changes to their news stories or as in this case the journalist may not know of the changes made until the newspaper is published.

d) Competition between newspapers

As this case demonstrates, competition exists between newspapers to write and publish breaking stories first as the discussion on „competition" in the previous chapter shows. Thus, once one newspaper broke the story on Khaya Ngqula"s failure and him being fired, this was a trigger for other newspapers to also write on that and attempt to bring a new angle to that story. This is visible from the labour process of news production. When journalists and editors meet to discuss news stories for the day or week, reference is made to other newspapers. Thus, stories that have been published by other newspapers are then followed up on. In the midst of this competition between newspapers, the importance of verifying the accuracy of information prior to reporting it as news still remains. By using reliable, Independent sources and verifying information that has been published as well as adhering to all other standards of news reporting set by the Press Code, newspapers can achieve more accurate news reporting and also earn public respect.

The competition between newspapers as outlined by this case could be explained by Burawoy"s theory on the labour process which sees workers as having some autonomy which allows them to invest in labour by constituting work as a game. In the same way, by newspapers being in competition, journalists can thrive in their news reporting tasks to ensure that they come up with good story ideas and breaking news for their particular newspapers. Journalists may strive to ensure that their newspaper maintains high standards in reporting and that the newspaper"s brand is well preserved in the public. As newspapers compete as a whole to break news stories, journalists are also in competition as individuals as coming up with breaking news stories gives them personal satisfaction while also aiding in achieving management"s profit motive.

Case Study Four

a) Mathews Phosa And The Anc Vs. City Press

i. *Outline of the Case*

The ANC treasurer-general Dr Mathews Phosa and the ANC complained about a front page story in the City Press written on August 16, 2009, headlined "*Phosa tries to muzzle City Press*." The story held that Phosa tried to stop the City Press from publishing allegations regarding his responsibility in leaking information that may have damaged Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe from becoming President Jacob Zuma"s successor in 2012.

Phosa complained that the City Press had contacted him too late for comment despite the fact that the journalist had been working on the story for some time. This was found to be in breach of Article 1.1 of the Press Code which stipulates that "The Press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly." The newspaper denied not having offered Phosa a reasonable opportunity to comment.

The first part of the introduction of the story held that Mathews Phosa had mounted an eleventh-hour bid to try and stop the City Press from publishing the story. This statement was found to be unfair as it was not balanced with that Phosa had only been contacted at the eleventh hour. The newspaper was thus found to be in breach of Article 1.1 of The Press Code(as stipulated above) and Article 1.2.2 which states that "News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts (whether) by omissions…"

The newspaper made use of anonymous sources in the story and did not state their number, credibility and their independence. As a result, it was found to be in breach of Article 1.4 of the Press Code: "When there is a reason to doubt the accuracy of a report and it is practicable to verify the accuracy thereof, it shall be verified. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of a report, this shall be mentioned in such a report." The posters referring to the story read: "Now it"s Phosa vs. Motlanthe" which was found to have been the newspaper"s opinion being presented as fact. This was in breach of Article 5.2 of the Press Code: "Posters shall not mislead the public."

b) Analysis of Case Study

i. *Lack of professionalism*

The newspaper demonstrated lack of professionalism in its failure to contact the main subject of the news story on time. Mathew Phosa was not given a reasonable opportunity to comment on the news story which as evidence shows, the journalist had been working on for some time. Thus, failure to contact the main subject of the story on time was not an issue of pressure in production given that it was apparent that the journalist responsible for the story had started working on it several days prior to publication. The newspaper was unfair to Phosa; the main subject of the story, by not offering him ample time to respond yet evidence showed that the newspaper had been in contact with other members of the ANC about the story.

The newspaper, additionally failed to report a balanced account of the story as it reported on "Phosa"s eleventh hour bid to stop City Press from publishing the story." Having reported that, the newspaper omitted the

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fact that Phosa had only been contacted in the eleventh hour which showed a negligent departure from the facts by the newspaper. This form of unbalanced reporting could have been as a result of the newspaper attempting to serve its own personal agendas from the news story. A further possibility may have been the reporter of the story acting as an agent for forces within the ANC that may have been opposed to Mathews Phosa. This unbalanced reporting was unnecessary and unfair to the subject of the story who had a right to have sufficient time to respond to the contents of the story. This nature of lack of professionalism in news reporting can lead to a decline in accurate news reporting. These errors can be avoided by newspapers to avoid causing unnecessary harm to people and also to ensure the adherence to the standards of reporting set by the Press Code.

This case demonstrates the argument which has been raised in this paper before; that of newspapers" lapse in professional reporting as they strive to still remain relevant to readers and stay in business. Newspapers may fall more towards the focus on news as a commodity which needs to sell and lose focus on the crucial aspect of the role of news as a public good that has to be produced in a manner that adheres to the standards of ethical reporting set by the Press Code. Failure to adhere to the requirements expected of accurate reporting has consequences of newspapers being sent to the Press Ombudsman and being given penalties which could affect their reputation.

c) News sources

The accuracy of the news story was additionally affected by failure of the newspaper to verify the accuracy of the sources that were used for the news story. Anonymous sources were used upon which no credibility or independence was mentioned in the report. This omission results in doubts over the independence of the sources used in the story thus the reliability of the information reported on becomes questionable to the public. Thus to ensure that newspapers adhere to the standards of accuracy set by the Press Code, reliability and independence of sources should be shown and no reason should be left to doubt the accuracy of a report. In cases where it is not possible to verify accuracy of a report, it is the onus of the newspaper to indicate that.

The failure to verify the accuracy of news sources demonstrates a lack of professionalism by the newspaper. This provides a demonstration of the profit motive weakening professionalism in news reporting. When professionalism in news reporting is compromised to sell newspapers, the result is weakening of cultural capital within the field of journalism given that there is less original and in-depth reporting.

d) Sensationalism

The use of the newspaper"s opinion and portraying it as fact on the newspaper posters could have been sensationalism of the news headline. "*Now it"s Phosa vs. Motlanthe*" was displayed on the posters referring to the news story yet the contested relationship between Motlanthe and Phosa was based on opinion and had not been verified. The poster headline is „catchy" and could have been used to draw more readers" interest in reading the story.

This sort of departure from accuracy by sensationalizing headlines on posters can be misleading to readers and may not be a true portrayal of the actual news story. This thus supports the argument that has been made on sensationalism in this paper; that sensationalising news can result in a departure from the truth in news stories and hence impacts on accurate news reporting.

As has been illustrated previously in this paper, sensationalism of news illustrates the conflict between the formal rules in the field of journalism, namely adhering to the Press Code and the informal rules which enable newspapers to continue to make profits. Sensationalizing news is a means to ensure that news that is produced is marketable to the public.

To conclude, by studying practical cases of inaccurate reporting by different newspapers this chapter has illustrated the nature of errors that take place in the production of news. As newspapers compete with online news sources and strive to remain profitable, a challenge arises in ensuring that all accuracy checks are conducted effectively and that news is produced in a professional manner for the public. The following chapter concludes the paper by providing an overall summary of the findings as well as outlining various means in which newspapers can demonstrate agency and attempt to avoid errors in news reporting.

Chapter Seven

VII. Concluding Remarks

The study started out by looking at news as a commodity with the need to generate profit for newspapers as well as being a public good which is essential to democracy and whose reportage needs to adhere to the standards set by the Press Code. Labour process theory was applied to understand how news is produced as a commodity while field theory was used to enable further understanding on how news is also produced as a public good.

It is of importance that news, as a public good be reported professionally to ensure that citizens are well informed. As the findings in this study have shown, newspapers can be proactive and adapt to the digital era and still remain professional and maintain their relevance to readers. However, the tension between maintaining professionalism and making profit remains

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difficult to resolve. Newspapers face challenges with their profitability models as news becomes de-commodified and readily available on the internet. With increased pressure to produce on more news platforms and attempts to cut costs and maintain relevance to readers, accuracy checks may be compromised, sometimes resulting in reporting news inaccurately or unprofessionally. Profitability tends to impose constraints on production of news. As has been shown in this paper, the need to make profit by newspapers may result in a focus on news that is attractive to readers which in some cases may lack accuracy. For instance, news may become more sensationalized and more emphasis may be placed on reporting on politics and personal lives of politicians or celebrities as this is seen as news that is attractive to readers and that may sell.

To understand the tension between news as a commodity vs. news as a public good I looked at four case studies in which different newspapers were reported to the Press Ombudsman for breaching the Press Code in news reporting. These cases illustrate that newspapers have room for agency and they can take steps to avoid the errors made in news reporting, primarily by conducting thorough accuracy checks and ensuring adherence to the Press Code prior to sending stories to print. The following table summarizes the findings from the case studies showing the nature of faults made by newspapers in the production of news.

Table 1: Summary of findings from case studies

Case Study	Reasons for newspaper's faults
1. Julius Malema vs. The Times	Failure to adequately contact sources for comment Sensationalism of news Inadequate means to verify accuracy of information Managerial control in news production
2. Manie Van Schalkwyk vs. Sunday Independent	Pressure in news production Sensationalism of news headlines
3. Khaya Ngqula vs. Sunday Times	Use of unreliable news sources Placing reliance on what other newspapers have published as fact Managerial control in news production Competition between newspapers
4. Mathews Phosa and the ANC vs. City Press	Lack of professionalism in news reporting Failure to verify accuracy of news sources Sensationalism of news

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Although one cannot generalise from the findings of the case studies selected, certainly these case studies elaborate on some of the major challenges that newspapers face in producing news accurately as discussed in chapters four and five. As the table shows, the challenge faced by newspapers in contacting sources and being able to adequately verify their independence and accuracy is a major concern. Additionally, sensationalism of news stood out to be a major concern from the case studies. This elaborates the argument raised above of the tension that newspapers face i.e. being able to report news professionally without surrendering to the need to make profits. By surrendering to the profit motive, news becomes packaged in such a way as to sell to the readers with the standards of accuracy expected from news reporting being lost along the way.

The challenges that newspapers face in news production relate back to the restructuring taking place in newsrooms that has been discussed above. With the need to produce quicker and compete with the immediacy and free news available online, newspapers are under pressure to stay relevant to readers and continue to produce news professionally while on the other hand, their profit model is under threat. With the need to come up with breaking news first, newspapers aim to produce news quicker, this is enhanced by the technological developments available in the newsroom such as the internet which enhance production. Within the labour process of news production which is primarily marked with high pressure and demands, newspapers can fail to adequately check and verify accuracy of news reports in the rush to meet deadline. As the case studies above have shown, inability to adequately verify information given by news sources can result in inaccurate reporting. Newspapers thus face a challenge of time constraints and the need to take the right steps to contact relevant sources adequately and make sure that all news is in accordance with the standards set by the Press Code prior to publishing.

The editor has the final say of what goes into the newspaper and as has been shown in the case studies above, stories can get changed without journalists being consulted about the changes made to their news stories. It is thus the onus of sub editors and editors to ensure that they contact relevant journalists and verify that changes that are being made to news stories do not result in a compromise on the accuracy of the news stories.

a) Newspapers' room for agency in ensuring effective news production

I will now go on to discuss the various steps that newspapers can take to avoid the nature of errors that occur in news production. As has been pointed out, newspapers are not passive, they have agency and can make decisions with regards to how to best produce news. News production is more complex than the rush to make profits. Newspapers seek to report news accurately and achieve high standards and seek to remain relevant and commendable to their readers. I am in agreement with Des Freedman (2010) on the point that news organizations are not about to lose their large numbers of readership as long as they continue to invest in original journalism and continue to look for ways to make themselves relevant to their readers.

There is need to ensure that the profit motive of newspapers does not interfere with original in-depth accurate news reporting as this could result in readers losing trust in media"s role in serving democracy . This is a major challenge as has been pointed out in this paper. Newspapers may be faced with financial strain as they may not have found an effective online business model for news production and also as they may have lost some readers and advertisers to the internet. As a result, the main focus could shift to trying to accumulate as much revenue from newspaper sales and advertising hence resulting in the possibility of accuracy and professionalism ceasing to be the primary focus. Lauren Fine (2012) suggests the need for newspapers to also adapt their advertising to digital media as an attempt to ensure that the bulk of revenue obtained by news corporations continues to come from advertising. This is because a dependence on revenue from news content and sale of newspapers could result in news quality being compromised given that there may be overemphasis on producing news that sells as opposed to maintaining high standards in reporting. She further sees the need to upgrade News Corporations" sales/ advertising departments so as to improve the advertising revenue and as a result avoid dependence on newspaper circulation for revenue.

It is important for journalists to create much more engaging, navigable, contextualised reports that tell the day"s events more accurately, fully and dynamically (Pavlik, 2001). Journalists should avoid over reliance on the web as a source of news, instead news reporting needs to involve going out to where events that are news worthy are occurring, speaking to people involved and obtaining more in-depth accounts to make the public better informed. Information obtained online by journalists needs to be evaluated given that in some instances information available on the internet can be inaccurate and misleading.

As has been mentioned in this paper, there is need for more investment in training in journalism to ensure that news is reported in a more professional manner. Des Freedman (2010) sees under investment as being a major threat to journalism. He suggests that the future of news depends on investment in technology, in resources and in journalists themselves. Steyn and De Beer (2004) further suggest that future

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training and education in journalism should take cognisance of the scope and impact of the social, economic, political, economic and technological factors shaping and transforming the media industry. The needs of new media audiences should be addressed. With the introduction of digital technologies in the newsroom and increased use of the internet as a tool for news reporting, it is essential to ensure that journalists are well trained to use the latest technology and the internet appropriately for news reporting.

As was pointed out during interviews with key informants, it is essential to improve the standards of journalism training in some institutions. Students training to be journalists should be given extensive training on the application of media ethics in news reporting. It is important for journalists to understand the importance of the Press Code and its proper application. Several media organizations take junior journalists through an internship programme before being officially recruited to a newspaper and being allowed to publish news stories. Internship programmes are beneficial to new journalists given that they receive practical training which helps prepare them for the pressures and challenges present in the production of news It is important for journalists to take personal responsibility and accountability for stories they publish as news, they need to check and recheck their work prior to submitting their news stories as is done in the accuracy form mentioned above which is used by some newspapers to ensure accurate reporting by journalists. Moreover, sub editors and news editors should verify that all changes made to news stories do not in any way compromise accuracy in news reporting. In addition, newsrooms need to make further use of technological developments to meet the demands of deadlines. Technology has a lot to offer to make the process of news production more effective and productive. For instance, before the newspaper goes to print, journalists and editors can all be online on their laptops or I Pads to ensure that if there is any misunderstanding on a news story, such issues can immediately be clarified with the journalist(s) involved.

A suggestion for further research would be the further exploration of how best news organizations can make use of technological developments to be able to effectively manage the demands of news production and publishing deadlines while still ensuring professionalism in news reporting

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Questionnaires

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE: Interview Guide: Editors/ Journalists

- For how long have you been in your position?
- What sort of job training and mentoring did you have to undergo in your career in journalism?
- What is your role in the production of news?
- What standards does the newspaper set to ensure that you report news accurately and fairly to the public?
- What is your view on the Press code in terms of its applicability and reasonableness to the production of news? and how do you practice it as a newspaper?
- What challenges does the newspaper face in the production of news?
- Do you think the restructuring taking place in newsrooms (PROBE) impacts on the quality of news that you produce?
- What other factors may have an impact on accurate news reporting in the South African print media?
- What are your most memorable cases that have been directed to the Press ombudsman by the public?
- Do you think these cases were dealt with fairly?
- How was the image of the newspaper changed after the relevant case(s)?
- Is the newspaper handling reporting any differently after complaints being sent to the Press ombudsman?

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE: Press Ombudsman's Office

- What sort of news complaints does the Press Ombudsman deal with?
- What measures are put in place to ensure that newspapers adhere to the
- Press code?
- What is the procedure after newspapers are found to have been in breach of the Press Code in their reporting? Is there a penalty fee that they have to pay? Does this procedure aid in better news reporting?
- In your view, are the news stories that are brought to the Press ombudsman a
- true reflection of print media"s lapse in accurate reporting?
- Can we attribute the diminishing quality of news in SA Print media to the restructuring that newsrooms have been experiencing? (PROBE)

a. Managerial control over news production
b. Increased use of technology
c. Pressure to produce news quicker
d. Less staff
e. Use of news agencies
f. Juniorisation

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- Technological advancements are argued to contribute largely to newsrooms having to restructure and find means to cut costs while still maintaining profits (labour process theory) what impact does technology have on quality of news produced?
- What other factors do you think contribute to newspapers reporting news that does not adhere to the Press Code
- How does the Press ombudsman reinforce the Press Code?
- What are the challenges that are faced in enforcing print media ethics and responsible reporting?
- What do you think can be done to improve the quality of news that is published by the SA print media?

Appendix 2: Consent Form

University Of Pretoria
Department Of Sociogy

Consent Form

Research Question: To what extent does the restructuring in the field of journalism impact on accurate news reporting? A Case Study analysis of print media in South Africa

Researcher: Sibonile Linda Khumalo

I Agree To Participate In This Study. I Realise That This Information Will Be Used For Educational Purposes. I Understand That I May Withdraw From This Study At Any Time And That All Information Will Be Treated With Confidentiality And Anonimity. I Understand The Intent Of This Study.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3: The South African Press Code

Preamble

Whereas:

Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines the right to freedom of expression as follows:
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:
(a) Freedom of the press and other media;
(b) Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
(c) Freedom of artistic creativity; and
(d) Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.
(2) The right in subsection (1) does not extend to
(a) Propaganda for war;
(b) Incitement of imminent violence; or
(c) Advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm. The basic principle to be upheld is that the freedom of the press is indivisible from and subject to the same rights and duties as that of the individual and rests on the public's fundamental right to be informed and freely to receive and to disseminate opinions; and The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve society by informing citizens and enabling them to make informed judgments on the issues of the time; and The freedom of the press allows for an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces that shape society.

Now Therefore:

The Press Council of South Africa accepts the following Code which will guide the South African Press Ombudsman and the South African Press Appeals Panel to reach decisions on complaints from the public after publication of the relevant material. Furthermore, the Press Council of South Africa is hereby constituted as a self-regulatory mechanism to provide impartial, expeditious and cost-effective arbitration to settle complaints based on and arising from this Code.

Definition

For purposes of this Code, “child pornography" shall mean: “Any image or any description of a person, real or simulated, who is or who is depicted or described as being, under the age of 18 years, engaged in sexual conduct; participating in or assisting another person to participate in sexual conduct; or showing or describing the

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body or parts of the body of the person in a manner or circumstances which, in context, amounts to sexual exploitation, or in a manner capable of being used for purposes of sexual exploitation."

1. Reporting of News

1.1 The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.
1.2 News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:
1.2.1 Distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation; 94
1.2.2 Material omissions; or
1.2.3 Summarisation.
1.3 Only what may reasonably be true, having regard to the sources of the news, may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly with due regard to context and importance. Where a report is not based on facts or is founded on opinions, allegation, rumour or supposition, it shall be presented in such manner as to indicate this clearly.
1.4 Where there is reason to doubt the accuracy of a report and it is practicable to verify the accuracy thereof, it shall be verified. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of a report, this shall be mentioned in such report.
1.5 A publication should usually seek the views of the subject of serious critical reportage in advance of publication; provided that this need not be done where the publication has reasonable grounds for believing that by doing so it would be prevented from publishing the report or where evidence might be destroyed or witnesses intimidated.
1.6 A publication should make amends for publishing information or comment that is found to be inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, a retraction, correction or explanation.
1.7 Reports, photographs or sketches relative to matters involving indecency or obscenity shall be presented with due sensitivity towards the prevailing moral climate.
1.7.1 A visual presentation of sexual conduct may not be published, unless a legitimate public interest dictates otherwise.
1.7.2 Child pornography shall not be published.
1.8 The identity of rape victims and victims of sexual violence shall not be published without the consent of the victim.
1.9 News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless a legitimate public interest dictates otherwise.
1.10 In both news and comment the press shall exercise exceptional care and consideration in matters involving the private lives and concerns of individuals, bearing in mind that any right to privacy may be overridden only by a legitimate public interest.

2. Discrimination and Hate Speech

2.1 The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.
2.2 The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter.
2.3 The press has the right and indeed the duty to report and comment on all matters of legitimate public interest. This right and duty must, however, be balanced against the obligation not to publish material which amounts to hate speech.

3. Advocacy A publication is justified in strongly advocating its own views on controversial topics provided that it treats its readers fairly by:

3.1 Making fact and opinion clearly distinguishable;
3.2 Not misrepresenting or suppressing relevant facts;
3.4 Not distorting the facts in text or headlines.

4. Comment

4.1 The press shall be entitled to comment upon or criticise any actions or events of public importance provided such comments or criticisms are fairly and honestly made.
4.2 Comment by the press shall be presented in such manner that it appears clearly that it is comment, and shall be made on facts truly stated or fairly indicated and referred to.
4.3 Comment by the press shall be an honest expression of opinion, without malice or dishonest motives, and shall take fair account of all available facts which are material to the matter commented upon.

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5. Headlines, Posters, Pictures and Captions

5.1 Headlines and captions to pictures shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the report or picture in question.
5.2 Posters shall not mislead the public and shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the reports in question.
5.3 Pictures shall not misrepresent or mislead nor be manipulated to do so.

6. Confidential Sources The press has an obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

7. Payment for Articles No payment shall be made for feature articles to persons engaged in crime or other notorious misbehaviour, or to convicted persons or their associates, including family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and the payment is necessary for this to be done.

8. Violence Due care and responsibility shall be exercised by the press with regard to the presentation of brutality, violence and atrocities.

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