

**An examination of how organisational policy
and news professionalism are negotiated in a
newsroom: A case study of Zimbabwe's
*Financial Gazette***

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ABSTRACT

The construction of journalistic professionalism in Zimbabwe has stirred debate among scholars. Critics have argued that professionalism has been compromised by the stifling media laws in Zimbabwe as well as the extra legal measures the state has enforced to control the press. Some have also argued that a new kind of journalism must be emerging in the Zimbabwean newsroom as journalism try to cope with the political and economic pressures bedeviling the country. Much of this criticism however, has not been based on close interrogation of professionalism from the perspective of the journalists in any particular newsroom. It is against this background that this study examines the constructions of professionalism at the *Financial Gazette*. In particular it explores the meaning of professionalism through interrogating the journalistic practices the journalists consider during the process of news production in the context of overwhelming state power. In undertaking this examination, the study draws primarily on qualitative research methods, particularly observation and multi-layered individual in-depth interviews. As the study demonstrates, the interrogation of professionalism from the perspective of newsroom practices uncovers the complex manner in which professionalism is negotiated in the *Gazette's* newsroom located in a country undergoing transition in Democracy. The study establishes that when measured against normative canons of journalistic professionalism the *Gazette* is deviating from such tenets as public service and watchdog journalism. As the study indicates, perhaps unbeknown to the respondents, the ruling ZANU PF party hegemony is reproduced at the *Gazette* through choice of news values such as sovereignty and patriotism all euphemisms for ruling party's slogans.

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DEDICATION

For my family, Irene, Pardon, Nyasha and Vimbai: You are the motivational force and inspiration.

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Chapter one

1.0 Introduction

The Chapter provides the general structure of the research including: the researcher's motivation; the goals and objectives; research questions; the theoretical and methodical framework of the study and the significance of the study. The study draws on qualitative research methods to investigate how journalists at the *Financial Gazette* newspaper which is perceived to be aligned to the ruling ZANU PF party power bloc negotiate the notion of journalistic professionalism, in the context of political repression and state control of the media in Zimbabwe. The aim is to throw light on the role that can be played by a professional media during a political transition. It is no secret that the study was conducted at a time the country was undergoing a plethora of crises including hyperinflation, strict media control, harassment and detention, mass exodus of senior journalists and in some cases murder of journalists perceived to be against the government of President Robert Mugabe. In the light of all these challenges confronting the media fraternity in Zimbabwe the researcher wondered if one can still talk of journalism professionalism in the sense argued by liberal normative scholars. Interestingly, the *Gazette* mission statement is steeped in the normative theory principles of journalism professionalism.

It is the context of these multifaceted crises that the study set out to examine how all these pressures are negotiated by respondents at the *Gazette* when measured against some of normative journalism professionalism canons espoused in this Chapter and Chapter 3, of this study.

1.1A personal note

The researcher's decision to examine the constructions of professionalism at the *Financial Gazette* was also as a result of personal experiences as a Zimbabwean citizen, journalist and as a reader of the newspaper. As a reader the researcher followed the manner in which the paper covered the ongoing Zimbabwean crisis, and in particular, how the paper privileged news values on the Thabo Mbeki mediation of the dialogue between ZANU PF and the MDC (the ruling party and opposition respectively) and the June 2008 presidential run-off. Both the dialogue and June 2008 presidential run-off were very important to the researcher because like most ordinary Zimbabweans the researcher yearned for a resolution to the multi layered political and economic crises. As a journalist, the researcher's interests were on how media workers stood up to the political and economic pressures they faced in 2008 especially during the June presidential run-off elections. Interestingly the researcher noticed that in the news constructs on the dialogue the majority of the stories did not have sources and lacked depth or analysis. The researcher then held a series of informal discussions with journalists and editors from the *Financial Gazette* on the coverage of the crisis in Zimbabwe by the newspaper. The researcher held these informal discussions with the journalists during the 2007 Highway Africa conference held every September at Rhodes University. What emerged was the view that due to unique and restrictive socio-political and economic circumstances prevailing in Zimbabwe the newsroom was undergoing unique process of negotiating journalism professionalism. The researcher put it to the journalists that they could be compromising their professionalism due to proprietorship pressures and the general economic and political climate obtaining in the country. As such the researcher argued that the journalist could be helping in perpetuating the ruling

ZANU PF hegemony but, the journalists argued that they were constructing the news ethically and professionally. This response evoked in the researcher the impression of multiple discourses on what constitutes journalistic professionalism.

1.2 General theoretical background to the study

This study is predicated on liberal normative principles of journalism professionalism which posit that the media ought to fulfill specific roles in the service of their respective political and economic systems. The first among them is that the purpose of a professional media is to provide people with the information they need to provide people with the information they need to be free and self governing.

To fulfill this task:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its loyalty is to the citizens.
3. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
4. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
5. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
6. Citizens, too have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news.

These principles will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 and 4. Suffice for now to point out that as the researcher juxtaposed the principles proffered by western normative scholars as constituting journalistic professionalism to responses he got from journalists during the informal chats he wondered if the *Gazette* deviated from these principles. Indeed, the chats started to alert the researcher to the complex relationship and interplay between organisational news production contexts, state role in providing an environment conducive for media freedom and normative journalistic professionalism ideology.

These informal discussions and the questions raised by the passengers on the bus

constituted the earliest ideas and formative stages of this study. The researcher then set out to investigate the constructions of journalism professionalism at the *Gazette* cognisant of the fact that there is no single way of understanding how professionalism is negotiated in a newsroom.

1.3 Aims of the study

Against this background, this study broadly seeks to examine the effects of socio-political and economic pressures on journalism “professionalism” in a country where democracy is in transition. In keeping with qualitative research, the study interprets qualitative data generated through observation, document analysis and interviews (in-depth, emails and telephone) methods. As argued earlier, the study draws on the literature of normative theories of journalism professionalism in its examination of how professionalism is constructed at the *Gazette*. In this context the study has specified three basic normative journalism professionalism ideological assumptions. Firstly, the news media must exist to serve the public for which it is set up. Thus, news workers share a sense of ‘doing it for the public’ or of working as some kind of representative watchdog of the status quo in the name of people (Deuze 2005).

Secondly, journalism professionalism is characterised by special universal “attributes” such as expert knowledge, altruism expressed as service to the public rather than individual self-interest, and autonomy in terms of power to self-administer relatively free from government interference (Deuze 2002b, Platon and Deuze, 2003, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007, Parsons, 1954). Thirdly, journalists ought to be neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible in order to legitimate what they do.

However, these assumptions underpinning normative journalism professionalism can be problematised. What is journalism professionalism? Indeed, how is the public service role operationalised in a country where the private media are branded as the enemy of the state? Given the 2008 socio-political and economic media environment in Zimbabwe how do journalists at the *Gazette* speak to notions of journalism autonomy or independence and universal journalistic news values known alternatively as objectivity, fairness, impartiality or neutrality? How has the need to register with a government body affected the practice of journalists? How has the low remuneration and general economic decline played out in the newsroom?

1.4 Research questions

In short: the research has synthesised all these questions into two research questions under investigation:

- 1) How are the socio-economic and political factors in Zimbabwe influencing the construction of journalism professionalism at the *Gazette*?
- 2) In what ways are the “journalists cooperating, resisting or rebelling” against socio-political and economic pressures through their everyday newsroom practice?

In pursuit of these objectives and questions the study discusses the normative liberal functionalist and the constructionist journalism strand in Chapters 3 and 4. The study though, starts from the premise of liberal normative perspective of news and professionalism before drawing on the constructionist paradigm. In this way, the study remains deeply rooted in the argument that journalistic professionalism is constructed

following a dynamic process of news values, professionalism tenets and the broader structural context in which the respondents operate. As a discourse journalistic professionalism the *Gazette* must be understood within a specific historical context, place and time (see Foucault 1995). As such this study does not seek to generalise its finding, but treats the findings as specific to this case study conducted during desperate and difficult times for journalism professionalism in Zimbabwe (see Jensen 1982).

1.5 Justification and significance of study

The study is conducted at a time when news reports alleged that the press including the *Gazette* newsroom had been infiltrated by President Mugabe's dreaded Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). The effect on journalism practice of the alleged state and ruling party intrusion into the press coupled with the general deteriorating political and economic environment should not be taken for granted, but, demands scholarly research. As media scholars point out, the journalist is a professional communicator whose work is structured and shaped by a variety of historical and contemporary structures, conventions and ethical norms (McNair 2001).

The *Gazette* provided a unique case study for journalism professionalism in Zimbabwe. To start with, it is a paper that was formed by a consortium of disgruntled black businessmen and senior editors who left the government-controlled Zimpapers in 1989. In the 1990 the *Gazette* adopted a critical editorial watchdog role and presented itself as alternative voice to the government media (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). Critics argue that when Gideon Gono the Reserve Bank Governor of Zimbabwe assumed ownership of the paper in 2002 the standard of news professionalism declined at *Gazette*.

Based on these criticisms and the researcher's personal experiences as a Zimbabwean journalist, the researcher undertook this study because of the paucity of research into

constructions of news professionalism in Zimbabwe during this period of political transition. Very little research has been done on how journalists in the newsroom in Zimbabwe construct professionalism given the circumstances in which they practice. This study seeks to compensate for this gap by tapping into the inside view and experiences of journalists at a unique newsroom in Zimbabwe. The argument is: By focusing on the constructions of professionalism within a particular socio-cultural context, one can be able to see the complex process of professionalism discourse constructed as a response to a media environment overwhelmed by state control.

It is important to point out that the researcher is quite mindful of the fact that the study is a case study and as such does not represent the full range of journalists in Zimbabwe and hence is liable to raise issues of the generalisability of the study to the entire population of journalists in Zimbabwe. However, in line with the position taken by qualitative researchers, the critical issue in this study is the generalisability of the isolated cases to the theoretical propositions, rather than to populations (Hensen et. al 1998:242; Lindloff 1995:23 and Maxwell 1992:293).

1.6 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 presents a general background of the study. It highlights the research objectives and its significance and provides an outline of the thesis as a whole.

Chapter 2 discusses the context within which the *Financial Gazette* is produced, the news policy and the regulatory laws that govern the practice and the construction of professionalism in Zimbabwe. The chapter discusses first, the broader context of the Zimbabwean press (both private and state controlled), thus providing the backdrop against which professionalism and journalism practice should be understood. Secondly,

it discusses the specific profile and context of the *Financial Gazette*.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the theoretical considerations and scholarly perspectives underpinning the study. The chapter defines and historicises journalism professionalism ideology and makes an attempt at reviewing normative theoretical views and perspectives that have emerged among media scholars in trying to unpack constructs of professionalism. It also discusses the constructivist perspective of the concept of journalism professionalism. In discussing this perspective, the study draws on the wisdom of Tuchman (1978) and Louw (2005) and also borrows concepts of discourse analysis from Foucault (1995).

Chapter 4 discusses the constructionist strand of journalism professionalism. The aim is to foreground the presentation and analysis of the study which will be in Chapter 6 the analysis will draw insight on both strands of journalism professionalism.

Chapter 5 situates the study within its methodological framework-qualitative analysis. It therefore discusses the main research traditions and the theoretical underpinnings of the case study and the observation and interview techniques employed to generate data in this study. It discusses the rationale for the adoption of qualitative research design, rooted in a case study. It places emphasis on understanding the inside view of the constructions of professionalism at the *Gazette*. It also highlights the sampling procedures employed in the study.

In chapter 6 the findings of the study are examined and interpreted in relation to the research issues raised in chapter 1. It revisits the theoretical perspectives and literature review raised in chapter 2, 3 and 4. The chapter unfolds by presenting, first, the qualitative data obtained through broader structural observation, individual in depth interviews and the analysis data generated under the following four questions.

- i) In the current socio-economic and political environment is the *Gazette* able to provide a public service or investigative watchdog role?
- ii) Given the political and economic environment you described above how do you adhere to professional standards to ensure objectivity or impartiality?
- iii) What are the values that the *Gazette* adheres to in pursuit of truth telling and objectivity espoused in its mission statement?
- iv) Your mission statement promises to guarantee editorial independence and autonomy of the journalist: To what extent are the journalists autonomous or free and independent in their work?

The chapter combines the findings from in-depth interviews and presents them in narrative form. Finally chapter 7 gives a summary of and conclusions of the study, suggesting possible avenues for further research on constructions professionalism in a contemporary newsroom.

Chapter Two

Locating the *Financial Gazette* in the Zimbabwean Press context

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the broader context within which journalism at *Financial Gazette* is practiced. It takes cognisance of the fact that the practice of journalism takes place within historically specific and socially structured contexts or fields (Foucault 1978, Thompson 1988, see also Prinsloo 2003). In this context, journalism can be considered to be like any other form of cultural production, always reflecting and embodying the historical process within which it develops and the contemporary social conditions within which it is made. Thus, concepts such as objectivity or balance- editorial autonomy and impartiality so important to journalists in their everyday work-have complex socio-historical roots which reflect the values and ideas of the societies in which they emerged. In this sense, too, journalism is a social construction (McNair 2001).

Seen this way, the journalist is a cog in a wheel over whose speed and direction he or she may have little or no control (see Schlesinger 1987). Drawing insight on the above arguments, the chapter discusses three main issues. Firstly, the study will focus on the broader context of the Zimbabwean Press including both (the private and the private). In doing so, the chapter provides the backdrop against which journalism professionalism at the *Gazette* is examined. Secondly, the chapter provides brief highlights of the media laws that govern the practice of journalism in Zimbabwe and directly contribute to shaping the media environment. Thirdly, the chapter ends by highlighting the ownership and history of the *Financial Gazette*.

2.1 The press in Zimbabwe: A brief background

The Zimbabwean press as it exists today is characterised by a marked polarity between the “private press” and the state-controlled “public press” (Chuma 2005).

As Chuma argues:

The public has in recent years assumed a “comfortable” position in the mainstream media owing to the gradual and well-orchestrated gagging/muzzling of the former by government through the promulgation of prohibitive statutory instruments such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPA) (Chuma 2005).

The domineering nature of the state controlled “public press” over the “private press” has been fostered by the country’s failing economy, which has led to marked difficulties in attracting advertising, thus relegating major activity in print media to media houses surviving through cross-subsidies, which has been the case with most newspapers published under the government controlled Zimbabwe Newspapers Group (Zimpapers) stable (Chuma 2005).

Scholars argue that political efforts to control the press by the Zimbabwe government started in 1980 soon after independence. They cite the government buy-out of foreign shares at major papers, and the creation of a parastatal management board (Zimpapers) which was controlled through a Mass Media Trust (ZMMT), the national news agency (ZIANA) and the Ministry of information (Nyahunzvi 2001). Editors of Zimpapers who did not toe the government line were sacked (Saunders 1991); while certain categories of stories required Ministry of information approval (Rusike 1990:55). The Zimpapers board also came under direct control of MOI and ZANU PF central committee (1990). Even today, because most journalists in Zimbabwe work for media either owned or

tightly controlled by the state, their professional performance has been overshadowed by the need to obey orders and survive economically (Mano 2005). The ruling elite are concerned with issues of media control and monopoly so as to limit press challenges to their authority (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). Seen from this perspective, a newspaper in Zimbabwe undergoes unique newsroom processes and routines in order to survive and also to produce a quality news product. Like almost all aspects of life in that country, Zimbabwean media workers face a plethora of ‘_challenges’ or ‘_crises’, including political tensions, deteriorating standards in professionalism and array of suppressive laws (Mano 2005, BBC World Service Trust 2006, MISA 2007). The media are under constant surveillance by government operatives and four newspapers have been forced to close since 2000. Several journalists have been arrested and foreign correspondents have been deported or detained (Mano 2005, Waldahl 2004). International news agencies including the BBC, CNN and Skynews have been banned from reporting inside Zimbabwe. In 2001 President Robert Mugabe established the *Media and Information Commission* (MIC), which registers all media organisations and journalists (Waldahl 2004). The MIC shut down the country’s only private daily paper, *The Daily News* and its Sunday edition in 2003, after accusing them of improper registration (Windhal 2004, Ronning 2003). The restrictions placed by hostile laws and extralegal tactics including bombing of printing presses and intimidation of local journalists have constituted a major setback for freedom of the press in Zimbabwe (Ronning 2003).

The discussion that follows explores the broader context of the press in Zimbabwe examining first, the private press and then the state controlled press.

2.2 The private press

A retrospective survey of the control of media in colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) shows that the history of strict state control has repeated itself in post-independence Zimbabwe. The private press was developed at independence in 1980; this was largely because of the restrictive legislation that existed during the 15 years of the illegal Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) that started in 1965 by then Prime Minister Ian Smith. The declaration of a state of emergency during the UDI gave government powers to ban any news media critical of the state. By 1980, many newspapers and magazines, including the influential *Moto* (Fire) and *African Daily News*, had been banned (Zaffiro 2001:101, Chuma 2005:47).

The scenario began to shift with the relative stability of the 1980s, which saw the emergence of a small but vibrant class of the privately owned press, which became increasingly outspoken against various policies of government (Chavunduka 2002:282-283). This period followed deterioration in the country economic situation characterised by high unemployment and inflation accompanied by a serious decline in government popularity in the second half of 1990s. Several of these private printing presses prospered and contributed to wide ranging weeklies, monthlies and bi-monthlies both foreign and local in origin (Chuma 2005). Among these was the *Moto* magazine, *Parade* magazine (now defunct), the *Horizon* magazine (also defunct), the *Financial Gazette*, the *Independent*, *The Standard*, the *Daily News* (now banned) and the *Tribune* newspaper (now banned).

Although with less national reach, the private press competed with government media which including the huge empire of the state controlled Zimpapers, which published titles in every province of the country and had a well established distribution network

(Zaffiro: 103, Chavunduka 2002:283). In the early years of independence, the private press enjoyed relative autonomy from direct interference by the state and the ruling party in terms of censorship and supervision. This was in line with the state's professed commitment to "media freedom" against the backdrop of reconciliation efforts as well as the political economy of donor funding (2006). This privilege was to slowly diminish as political competition increased with the birth of opposition parties and a vocal civil society which the government saw as a serious threat to its authority. In the comfort tranquil and "free" environment, the diverse array of private media became the watchdog, watching over government shortcomings and covering issues ignored in the Zimpapers stable. Indeed, the private press became a significant terrain for mobilisation around issues of poverty, democratic rights and corruption, especially as expressed by those opposed to the government (Chuma 2005).

It became very clear that the opposition posed a serious threat to the incumbent government when the ruling party lost a referendum vote on constitutional changes in 2000. The private media published the "VOTE NO" adverts sponsored by opposition political parties and civil society groups under the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). As a result, the government instituted measures to muzzle the private press in the wake of increasing dissent within the country that found space in the private press. The impact of economic sanctions, poor economic policies and corruption gave momentum to voices of dissent which were subsequently accommodated in the private media. The government reconstituted its media policies and promulgated tougher laws, key among them, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPA). The draconian laws, severe economic pressures, escalating production costs, stiffer competition for advertising shifting markets with steeper interest rates as well as a devalued Zimbabwean

dollar, forced some private newspapers and magazines to succumb and fold-much to the relief of the government. Examples are the *Horizon* magazine and the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe's *Dispatch* (Chuma 2005). There has been speculation that the government through the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) also has a stake in one of the remaining private paper in Zimbabwe, *Financial Gazette* (*Mail and Guardian* 2005). Indeed, there are some who now view the *Gazette* as a state paper representing another camp in ZANU PF that has been sidelined by Zimpapers (Mutasah 2005). Others point out that although the *Zimbabwe Independence* remains a private paper, it has been infiltrated by Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). This speculation was given credence by a leak of an investigative story that implicated the head of the CIO in 2007 by one of the journalists at the paper (Zimonline 2007).

2.3 The state-controlled press

As pointed out earlier, the major newspapers in Zimbabwe are owned by the state controlled Zimpapers Group. The government has had a de-facto monopoly over media since 1980 when Zimbabwe attained its independence. The ownership structure of the Zimpapers Company consists of private and government shares. The state has majority shareholding in Zimbabwe Media Trust stable of newspapers and the minority shareholder includes the Old Mutual insurance company. At Zimpapers' formation, government shares were administered by the Ministry of Information through the Zimbabwe Media Trust (ZMMT), which as Ronning points out was headed by a group of "eminent" Zimbabweans (1998). ZMMT is now no longer functional. The company published two daily titles: *The Herald*- headquartered in Harare, and the *Chronicle* (Bulawayo), and five weeklies: the *Sunday Mail* (Harare) and the *Sunday News*

(Bulawayo), *Manica Post* (Mutare) and vernacular *Kwaedza* (Harare) and *uMthunya* (Bulawayo). Editors of Zimpapers who did not toe the government line were sacked. In 1983, Farayi Munyuki, the editor of *The Herald*, was squeezed out (Saunders 1991:124). In 1984, Elias Rusike, a ZANU information and media partisan from the pre-independence days was appointed managing director of Zimpapers. The next casualty was *Sunday Mail* editor and former ZAPU publicity manager Willie Musarurwa, in 1995. He was fired for insisting on editorial independence and was accused of using his paper to publish views of opposition parties. Henry Muradzikwa, his successor, was also fired after publishing a story alleging that some Zimbabwean students had been expelled from Cuba because they had Aids.

The control and manipulation of the media became even more pronounced in 2000 with appointment of Jonathan Moyo as Minister of State for Information and Publicity. In 2001, the department of Information dissolved the ZMMT which was meant to provide the public press some –sort of autonomy”. From then on, the public press was constructed as pro-government with the private press being labelled as opposition media. It is against this background that it is argued that the development of the press in Zimbabwe after independence needs to be seen in the context of the tightening of control over debate and political expression by the ruling party (Moyo 2003). Since 2000 the press has become steadily more politicised. It seems therefore that the divisions in Zimbabwean society are reflected in the press system as a subculture of society, thus highlighting the polarisation that exists. Seen differently the opposing media perspectives could mean pluralism and should be welcome by all democrats. As others argue, the state media is vital as far as it also helps to bolster the ruling party’s ideas (Tomaselli et al

1987). Indeed, if one analyses the content of the state media sector in terms of what the press reports as well as the discourses it privileges it could be argued that it is meant to inform readers on what the government does. However, the problem is that the public press has not been able to reflect opposition politics in any positive light. Seen from this perspective, one can hardly speak of pluralism at the level of message.

The discussion below highlights the laws that regulate the practice of journalism in Zimbabwe.

2.4 Media Laws in Zimbabwe: Supremacy of the Constitution

The Zimbabwean Constitution established a system of constitutional sovereignty (as opposed to parliamentary sovereignty). This means that the constitution is theoretically the supreme law of the land and may not be abrogated by anyone; not even parliament. In terms of section 3, any law that conflicts with the Constitution is technically invalid (KAS 2003).

2.5 Legislation that governs the media in Zimbabwe

Legislation governing the communication industry in Zimbabwe is largely draconian in nature, and imposes significant constraints on the media's right to freedom of expression (KAS 2003).

The principle statutes that govern the media are as follows:

2.6 Access to information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2002 (Act 5 of 2002).

This act commenced on 15 March 2002. It was passed with the intension of regulating access to information which imposes restrictions on access to information held by public bodies such as government departments, statutory bodies and government agencies. The Act also provides for the registration of mass media service providers (such as newspapers) and the accreditation of journalists with the Media and Information Commission (MIC).

2.7 Public Order and Security Act, 2002(Act 1 of 2002).

The act commenced on 23 January 2002 and was passed with the intension of regulating internal security in Zimbabwe. It seeks to curb activities that impact upon state security, such as terrorism and subversion. The Act also seeks to regulate public gatherings.

2.8 Censorship and Entertainments Control Act, 1967 (Act 37 of 1967)

The Act came into force on 1 December 1967 with the purpose of regulating the pre-approval of content that is distributed to the public, such as magazines, videos and films. An unusual feature of the regulation is that it also regulates other forms of public entertainment, such as theatre productions and public exhibitions. The Board of Censors is responsible for administering the Act and performs all functions under legislation.

The other two Acts are the Broadcast services Act, 2001 (Act 3 of 2001), which regulates the radio and television broadcast media in Zimbabwe; and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (Commercialisation) Act, 2001(Act 26 of 2001) which governs the

broadcaster (KAS 2003:114). Having highlighted the media laws that regulate media operations in Zimbabwe the study now discusses the context of the *Financial Gazette*.

2.9 The *Financial Gazette* publication: A turbulent history of survival

The *Financial Gazette* is a business and political weekly newspaper in Zimbabwe. It publishes every Thursday. The newspaper is an interesting choice for this study because of its evolution. It was founded in 1969 by Modus Publications. In 1989 it was sold to a consortium including disgruntled former Zimpapers editors (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). These experienced editors brought in a significant measure of courage needed to publish and survive as an alternative press (Quinn 1992:47). In the 1990s the *Gazette* was very popular among businessmen who supported it with advertising and a middle class readership which saw it as a source of credible and alternative information (Kupe 1993:175). Its critical editorial policy on government marked a paradigm shift from the “dear leader” journalism practiced by Zimpapers (Moyo in Kumbula 1997:175). It was the hard-hitting private press which was able to mobilise and orchestrate popular protest (Randals 1993:636). It regularly published critical stories and editorials of government, despite attacks and threats by ministers to prosecute employees and have it closed down. In one such case, the *Gazette* and its editor Trevor Ncube criticised government policy on redistribution of privately-owned white commercial farmers (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). This type of editorship requires courage in Zimbabwe. On January 23, 1992 *Gazette* published a long article by Jonathan Moyo entitled: “Only Free Press Can Save Our Country From Manipulation”. It’s rather ironic that Moyo would later become one of the most virulent forces against media freedom in Zimbabwe. This standard of journalism has proved hard for the contemporary *Gazette* to emulate, given economic barriers to

profitable publishing and the political context in Zimbabwe. In 1993, the *Financial Gazette* reported that government had instructed companies not to advertise with them and had placed tight controls on the allocation of newsprint (index on Censorship, February 1993:41).

In October 1992, Modus publications launched a daily version of the *Gazette* and the *Sunday Gazette* a year later. All these papers remained critical of government policies. One example of the *Daily Gazette* headline in August 9 was the headline: “Poaching: Army and ZRP (police) implicated”. Due to this critical editorial stance, some of its journalists were arrested under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (2001). The Act allowed parliament and the courts to demand that journalists reveal their sources. Two *Financial Gazette* journalists were forced to do so. A third, Basil Peta, was charged with breaching Taxation Law in an investigative piece alleging tax evasions by companies owned by the ruling party ZANU (PF) Zaffiro in Tomaselli (2001:105). Contempt of parliament and criminal defamation laws left the media vulnerable to legal action for reporting defamatory statements by MPs who enjoy immunity, or by publishing certain facts which later turn out to be incorrect even if the editor did so in good faith and in the public interest. The criminal defamation law was evoked to convict *Gazette* reporter Simba Makunike in 1995 for publishing a story about President Mugabe’s secret marriage to his former secretary (AIA, 15 November 1995).

As the economic structural adjustment programme demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) began to bite in the 1990s, this presented the *Financial Gazette* with severe economic pressures. The escalating production costs, stiffer competition for advertising, shifting markets with steeper interest rates and a devalued Zimbabwean dollar forced Modus Publications to close some of its papers. First, in the late 1994, *Daily*

Gazette closed; and the *Sunday Mail* followed 14 months later. Continuous political turbulence at the *Financial Gazette* culminated with the mass exodus of key editorial staff in 1996 for a new competing weekly business paper, the *Zimbabwe Independent* founded by *Gazette* former editor Trevor Ncube (Saunders 1997:14).

In 2002 Elias Rusike's Hamba Investments Holding sold the *Gazette* to the Octadew consortium which was headed by former *Financial Gazette* editor-in-chief Francis Mdlongwa. Rusike had sold the paper to Octadew on the strict understanding that the new owners would maintain an "editorial policy that is independent of any government, political party, and/or big business" (*Mail & Guardian 2005*). The editorial charter was incorporated in the agreement of sale. However, differences later emerged between Octadew and the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (now trading as the Jewel Bank) then Chief Executive Gideon Gono who is reported to have secured equity by putting the consortium under financial pressure (*Mail & Guardian 2005*). Gono had financial leverage because Octadew had borrowed Z\$200-million from his bank to finance the deal between themselves and Hamba Investments Holdings. Gono was also the financial adviser in the deal. "A boardroom coup" was staged on 6 November 2002, when Octadew issued a statement pointing out that the deal had broken down due to "differences centering on the implementation of the newspapers' broad vision and operation issues" (*Mail and Guardian 2005*). From then on, Gideon Gono, Governor of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe became the owner of the *Financial Gazette*. There has been speculation that the government through the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) also has a stake in the paper (*Mail and Guardian 2005*). The CIO allegedly had no difficulty moving into a similar publication by the *Mirror* group (no longer operational) because like in the case of Octadew, the publishers owed the Commercial Bank large sums of money which they

had difficulty paying back. Even today, the privately owned press struggle to make ends meet in the current harsh economic and political environment. Indeed, there are some who now view the *Gazette* as a state paper representing a media-savvy faction in ZANU PF that has been sidelined by Zimpapers in the battle to succeed President Robert Mugabe (Mutasah 2005). The newspapers will be important to winning the hearts and minds of the political elite in the battle to succeed President Mugabe.

In 2007 the *Gazette* company board fired the editor Sunsley Chamunorwa, allegedly over a political story about a provincial governor and a series of lawsuits against the paper (MISA 2007). It is alleged that the Media and Information Commission (MIC) responsible for registering newspapers and journalists in Zimbabwe only registered the *Gazette* after the board had agreed to fire Chamunorwa (MISA 2007). Economic, political and proprietorship pressures in Zimbabwe force some editors and journalists to engage in self-censorship as a *modus operandi* for survival (Kumbula 1997). To survive as a media organisation, journalist or editor in Zimbabwe, one has to choose battles and causes carefully (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). Moreover, proprietorial control is also enforced through the appointment of like minded personnel in key positions that are delegated to carry out the boss's will and creation of "regimes" that undermine professional and ethical roles of journalists (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001, Mano 2005).

The *Financial Gazette's* editorial policy espouses liberal professional ethics premised on objective news and editorial independence (*Gazette website 2008*). This model of liberal journalism has its own journalism professionalism canons. Galtung and Ruge isolated a series of conditions which have to be fulfilled before an event is selected as newsworthy (John 1982). These include frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity and composition (1982). Other scholars argue

that claims to journalism professionalism in a newsroom should be should be measured against normative tenets including the ability of the press to perform a critical watchdog role and editorial independence. Further, the journalist news reports must be seen to be balanced, fair or alternatively and unbiased. Other virtues of journalism professionalism espoused by normative scholars include strict adherence to ethical obligations of reporting. The normative paradigm of journalism professionalism will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter mapped the Zimbabwean press media terrain. Its highlights include the history of the private and public press in Zimbabwe. The media laws that govern the practice of journalism in Zimbabwe are also discussed. Finally, the chapter discussed the history of the *Financial Gazette* newspaper starting from Modus Publications to its current publishing Company, Octadew.

Chapter Three: A liberal normative notion of journalistic professionalism

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of journalism as an occupational ideology and as a possible meeting point for journalistic professionalism studies. As such the chapter does not seek to provide a classical definition of what journalism professionalism is, because an attempt to provide a dictionary definition of journalism professionalism may result in limiting this broad concept of the practice of news media workers. Rather, the chapter focuses on common journalistic canons of what normative scholars argue professional journalists from different cultural settings to do. Drawing insight on the normative theories the study will then operationalise the principles to analyse how emerging socio-political and socioeconomic pressures stand to transform ways of thinking about and doing journalism at the *Gazette* newspaper in Zimbabwe. Although the ideology of journalism is an approach widely used in the literature, only rarely has it been adequately defined and operationalised to fit immediate concerns in a pragmatic way.

3.1 Journalism as a discipline of study

As a discipline and an object of study journalism is based on a consensual body of knowledge, a widely shared understanding of key theories and methods, and an international practice of teaching, learning and researching journalism (Deuze 2005).

However, if one considers the variety of disciplines and paradigms deployed to understand journalism, another contentious factor emerges: the perceived clash of perspectives coming from scholars educated in the (critical) humanities, with those in the social sciences (Zelizer, 2000). Between and within these backgrounds, there exists such

a variety of approaches to journalism, that scholars like Rühl (2000) and Schudson (2003) lament the ‘folkloric’ inconsistency of the field as well as the impossibility to generate a consensual body of knowledge out of the existing literature. It is therefore safe to argue that many scholars, educators and students all over the world are involved in journalism studies and education, but only rarely do their approaches, understandings or philosophies coincide.

As a pressing contemporary case study, the thesis investigates how political and economic pressures interface with current constructions of professionalism in a newsroom. The study argues that this approach is inspiring because it goes beyond infrastructure (such as computer hardware and software) or representationalism (as in the number of minorities or women journalists in a newsroom) when assessing what journalism as a profession means or can be in the context of a country where the media is under overwhelming state siege.

In examining how political and economic pressures interplay with the journalism professionalism as a conceptual case study, the researcher temporarily turns a blind eye to other areas that warrant critical inquiry—such as corporate colonisation of the newsroom, media concentration, as well political issues like localisation and globalisation, press freedom and media law. This study does not aim to establish a hierarchy of pressing issues, after all. While acknowledging the selectivity of the approach adopted in this study, the researcher argues that exploring the impact of the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe on media professionalism is valid because the results of the study can help unpack how these factors are constructed into the meaning of professionalism in a transitional democracy.

3.2 Journalism as ideology

The 20th Century history of the professionalisation of journalism can be typified by the consolidation of a consensual occupational ideology among journalists in different parts of the world. Conceptualising journalism as an ideology, rather than, for example, other options offered in the literature such as a profession, an industry, a literary genre, a culture or a complex social system, primarily means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork (Deuze 2005). To reiterate, this is the focus of this study. Although most scholarly work on journalism is reduced to studies of institutional news journalism, research on other more feminine or so-called ‘alternative’ journalisms suggests journalists across genres and media types invoke more or less the same ideal-typical value system when discussing and reflecting on their work (Van Zoonen, 1998).

In decades of journalism studies, scholars refer to the professionalisation process of journalists as a distinctly ideological development, as the emerging ideology served to continuously refine and reproduce a consensus about who was a ‘real’ journalist, and what (parts of) news media at any time would be considered examples of ‘real’ journalism (Deuze 2005). These evaluations shift subtly over time; yet they always serve to maintain the dominant sense of what is (and should be) journalism. Schlesinger (1978) for example writes about ‘newsmen’s occupational ideology’, Golding and Elliott (1979) speak broadly of ‘journalism’s occupational ideology’, while a decade later Soloski (1990) talks about an ‘ideology of professionalism’, and Zelizer (2004a) mentions ‘journalists’ professional ideology’. Yet most of these scholars are not explicit about what this ideology consists of, other than claiming that it contains ‘self contradictory oppositional values’ (Reese, 1990). Schudson describes the occupational ideology of journalism as

__cultural knowledge that constitutes __news judgement‘, rooted deeply in the communicators‘ consciousness (2001: 153). Elliott (1988) and McMane (1993: 215) locate journalism‘s ideology in a __class spirit‘, whereas Zelizer (2004a: 101) refers to the __collective knowledge‘ journalists employ (Deuze 2005). This understanding also trickles down to the way journalism is taught, as Brennen (2000: 106) concludes in her study of US journalism textbooks that were published in the 1980s and 1990s: __[a]ll of them address the practice of journalism from an identical ideological perspective that neglects to consider all the changes in journalism that have occurred over time‘.

In the particular context of journalism as a profession, ideology can be seen as a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular group, including – but not limited to – the general process of the production of meanings and ideas (within that group). This kind of thinking about journalists and journalism builds on an international tradition of journalism research, surveys among and interviews with journalists (Weaver, 1998). Comparing the practice in 21 countries, Weaver found support for claims that the characteristics of journalists are largely similar worldwide (1998: 456). A cross-national comparison of findings from surveys among journalists in different and more or less similar countries yields results that to some extent suggest similar processes of professionalisation as expressed through the measured characteristics of media practitioner populations (Weischenberg and Scholl, 1998). Weaver, however, concludes that there is too much disagreement over professional norms and values to claim an emergence of __universal occupational standards‘ in journalism (1998: 468). Other scholars have addressed this variety of views on how important certain universal standards are in terms of what their meanings can be in (country-) specific circumstances and different cultural contexts (Donsbach and Klett, 1993; Deuze, 2002a). What these

findings and conclusions suggest is that journalists in elective democracies share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work, but apply these in a variety of ways to give meaning to what they do (Deuze 2005). Journalists in all media types, genres and formats carry the ideology of journalism. It is therefore possible to speak of a dominant occupational ideology of journalism on which most newswriters base their professional perceptions and praxis, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across media (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 11).

Ideology is seen here as an (intellectual) process over time, through which the sum of ideas and views – notably on social and political issues – of a particular group is shaped, but also as a process by which other ideas and views are excluded or marginalised (Stevenson, 1995: 37–41; Van Ginneken, 1997: 73).

Although the notion of a ‘dominant’ ideology (or ‘dominant discourses’ through which the ideology is perpetuated as argued by Dahlgren, 1992: 9) denotes a worldview of the powerful, the term is chosen here not to denote struggle, but a collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterising professional journalism and shared most widely by its members. This ideology is generally referred to as a dominant way in which news people validate and give meaning to their work. Journalism’s ideology has, for example, been analysed as a ‘strategic ritual’ during which one positions oneself in the profession vis-a-vis media critics and publics (Tuchman, 1971). Ideology has also been identified as an instrument in the hands of journalists and editors to naturalise the structure of the news organisation or media corporation they work for (Soloski, 1990). Especially when faced with public criticism, journalists tend to apply ideological values to legitimate or self-police the recurring self, similar selection and description of events

and views in their media (Molotch and Lester, 1974; Golding and Elliott, 1979; Hall, 1982; Hallin, 1986; Reese, 1990; Zelizer, 1993; Bennett, 2001). This criticism also comes from within the profession, as, for example, when supporters of the public journalism movement blame this ideological way of thinking for the news media's inability to engage citizens (Merritt, 1995; Rosen, 1999).

Drawing from the literature cited thus far, there seems to be a consensus among scholars in the field of journalism studies that what typifies more or less universal similarities in journalism can be defined as a shared occupational ideology among newswriters which functions to self-legitimise their position in society. Even though scholars are comfortable to refer to journalism as an occupational ideology, the distinct building blocks of such an ideology are sometimes left to the imagination of the reader. Indeed, some scholars tend not to venture much further than acknowledging that there exists a professional ideology and that it is not a 'set of things', but an active practice that is continually negotiated (Reese, 1990). In the context of this study, the core characteristics of this ideology have been identified, as these can be located in the concept and historical development of journalism professionalism (Soloski, 1990: 208).

Hallin argues that the professionalisation of journalism is an ongoing process and that the corresponding development of a shared occupational ideology is a common feature of 'high modernism' in journalism (1992). In a study of professionalism conducted between the 1960s and 1990s, Hallin in particular observes the sense of wholeness and seamlessness in the practitioner's vision of professional journalism in this period. Indeed, research by Russo (1998) suggests that journalists identify themselves more easily with the profession of journalism than for example with the medium or media company that employs them. Key characteristics of this professional self-definition can be summarised

as a number of discursively constructed ideal-typical values. Journalists feel that these values give legitimacy and credibility to what they do.

The concepts, values and elements said to be part of journalism's ideology in the available literature and adopted as parameters for examining the *Financial Gazette* case study can be categorised into five ideal-typical traits or values:

1. Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'newshounds', active collectors and disseminators of information). Some scholars argue that included in the watchdog role is surveillance of developments, both positive and negative, which may affect citizens welfare;
2. Objectivity: journalists are impartial and present accurate facts on events they cover and (thus) give credible news accounts as they act both as a bridge for dialogue across a wide range of views by power-holders, aspirants and citizenry; as well as hold public officials accountable for their exercise of power;
3. Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous or free to identify key issues in society and to set the news agenda as well as carry out independent verification of the facts;
4. Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news') as they offer accessible platforms for intelligible, illuminating advocacy by politicians and interests;
5. Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, as they carry out the task to educate and motivating citizens about politics and participation (Golding and Elliott 1979, Merritt 1995, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, see also (Gurevitch and Blumer 1990:25-6).

These ideological perspectives can be seen as global factors of influence in the journalistic decision-making processes, enabling us to analyse how media symbolic content is connected with larger social interests, and how meaning is constructed in the

service of power (Reese 2001). Power in the context of an occupational ideology must be understood as the power to define what ('real') journalism is, enacted for example through access to mainstream debates about journalistic quality. One has to note that these values can be attributed to other professions or social systems in society as well. These values are sometimes inevitably inconsistent or contradictory. To journalists, this generally does not seem to be a problem, as they integrate such values into their debates and evaluations of the character and quality of journalism. In doing so, journalism continuously reinvents itself – regularly revisiting similar debates. For example, on commercialisation, bureaucratisation, 'new' media technologies, seeking audiences and concentration of ownership where ideological values can be deployed to sustain operational closure, keeping outside forces at bay (Deuze 2005).

The discussion now moves on by briefly to operationalise the five ideal-typical values of journalism's ideology from a normative perspective.

3.3 Journalists provide a public service

The public-service ideal can be seen as a powerful component of journalism's ideology. It is an ideal that journalists aspire to, and use to legitimise the aggressive or increasingly interpretive styles of reporting (Clayman, 2002, Patterson, 1997). Journalists share a sense of 'doing it for the public', of working as some kind of representative watchdog of the status quo in the name of people, who 'vote with their wallets' for their services (by buying a newspaper, watching or listening to a newscast, or visiting and returning to an internet news site) (Deuze 2005). One may find evidence of such a value by specifically examining journalists' images of their audience, and by looking at their views of what they do and how their work may affect (intended) publics – as citizens or consumers. The expanding body of literature on the public journalism movement has actualised this value,

serving to reinvent journalism's role in society by invoking old or new notions of the public service ideal through 'people's journalism' (Merrill et al., 2001). Practices of public journalists tend to reinforce the dominant position of news media in communities while at the same time endorsing a more responsive attitude towards the various publics, indeed showing how an age-old ideological value can serve to maintain the status quo in journalism while its practitioners adapt to a changing media culture (Woodstock 2000, Schudson 1999).

3.4 Universal values and attributes of Journalism

Generally argued, professionalism is characterised by special "attributes" such as expert knowledge, altruism expressed as service to the public rather than individual self-interest, and autonomy in terms of power to self-administer relatively free from government interference (Deuze 2002b, Platon and Deuze, 2003, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007, Parsons, 1954). In return for journalism's claim to relative autonomy is the investiture of trust (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007). In normative theory, journalism's claim to professionalism resides in meriting the public trust. The basis for public trust is located in journalists' position as ethical managers of truth. Hence trust is based on journalists' privileged access to truth and expert power to disseminate their version of it. Where journalists exploit their position to distort truth in order to cooperate with political and institutional pressures, or in pursuit of corporate profit, it displaces the ethic of the "Fourth Estate," (Kovach and Rosentiel 2007, Richards 2005).

Normative theorists argue that any allegiance to anything other than the search for truth and public service changes the role of the professionalism as an agent of the public (reporting for the public) to an agent of the corporate and political news cartel (McGregor, 1996). Liberal democracies have endowed the Fourth Estate with a special place akin to

that of the classic professions because of their power and influence. In response, the Fourth Estate has chosen ethical codes as one of the principle techniques of demonstrating professionalism and claiming public trust. The legitimacy of the claim is the principle focus of normative theorists.

3.5. Journalists are neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible

American scholars in particular have identified objectivity as a key element of the professional self-perception of journalists (see Schudson, 1978 and 2001; Reese, 1990; Ognianova and Endersby, 1996; Mindich, 1998). Although objectivity is problematic in current thinking about the impossibility of value-neutrality, academics and journalists revisit this value through synonymous concepts like *'fairness'*, *'professional distance'*, *'detachment'* or *'impartiality'* to define and (re)legitimise what media practitioners do. Complete objectivity may not be possible but that does not mean that one should not strive for it, or redefine it in such a way that it in fact becomes possible (Ryan 2001). Other critics lament that this kind of detachment is an overriding journalistic reflex that makes its professionals immune to any kind of comment or critique, which hinders the profession's task of promoting democratic deliberation (Merritt, 1995). Feminist media scholars argue, however, that subjectivity does not contradict objectivity as both values can be considered as constitutive elements of a professional identity of journalists (Van Zoonen, 1998). The point is that the embrace, rejection as well as critical reappraisal of objectivity all help to keep it alive as an ideological cornerstone of normative journalism (Deuze 2005).

3.6. Editorial Autonomy, Freedom and Independence

Normative theorists argue that reporters in mainstream newsrooms can only thrive in a society that protects its media from censorship; in a company that saves its journalists

from the marketers; in a newsroom where journalists are not merely lackeys of their editors; and at a desk where the journalist is adequately supported through, for example, further training and education (Weaver 1998). Furthermore, they argue that any kind of development from perceived extra-journalistic forces – public criticism, marketing or corporate ownership and political manipulation – tends to get filtered through this overriding concern to be autonomous to select and construct the stories one wants to. Critics argue that this notion of privileging autonomy as a building block for journalists' professional identity precludes attempts by individual news people to be more interactive and supportive of community engagement in their work (McDevitt et al, 2002). As a result, most, if not all innovations in journalism tend to be viewed with skepticism vis a vis their perceived impact on editorial autonomy (see Singer, 2004 and Boczkowski 2004). Other scholars also point out that this elevates editorial independence to the status of an ideological value in that it functions to legitimise resistance to (as well as enabling piecemeal adaptation of) change (Deuze 2005).

3.7. Journalists have a sense of immediacy

Another key tenet of the normative theory is news immediacy which stresses the novelty of information as a defining principle. Seen from this perspective, the work of journalists therefore involves notions of speed, fast decision-making, deadlines, and working in accelerated real-time. From its earliest days, journalism relied on certain forms, archetypes, themes and routines to enable its practitioners to manage an ever-increasing volume of information within the confines of continuous deadlines (Stephens 1988, Nerone and Barnhurst 2003, Lule 2001). Previous research in the USA indicates that journalists believe that working under time pressure is a key occupational ethic in the quick delivery of news (Weaver and Wilhoit 1996). In contemporary normative theory,

this notion of speed regarding emerging journalistic practices and genres has been rekindled by the speed of news on the internet. Some scholars argue that the advent of the internet medium has given impetus to the immediacy work ethic of as journalists work non-stop in the 24/7-digital environment (Pavlik, 1999; Hall, 2001). When experienced through the eyes of journalists, speed can be seen as both an essential value and a problem side effect of news-work.

3.8 Journalists have a sense of ethics and legitimacy

Although journalists worldwide disagree on whether a code of ethical conduct should be in place or not, they do share a sense of being ethical – which in turn legitimises journalists' claims to the position as (free and fair) watchdogs of society. Past research comparing ethics codes in a number of European and Middle Eastern countries point out that even though political and social systems in these countries vary considerably, ethical guidelines reflect a broad intercultural consensus on certain key elements such as a commitment to truth and objectivity (Hafez, 2002). Some scholars argue that ethics are the all-encompassing legitimating tenet of journalism identity (Ryan 2001). However, some contemporary media scholars have argued that ethics in modern journalistic professionalism have moved to a liquid modern state of affairs of blurred differentiation across media genres (including mainstream, tabloid, and infotainment journalism), platforms, and industries (Stone and Bierhoff, 2002, Deuze, 2004a). The emergence of multi-media newsrooms or pro-active diversity awareness policies in media organisations can be seen as a good example of changes and challenges in journalistic normative notions of ethics (Campbell, 1998; Bealor 2001; Rich, 2005: 336). Contemporary scholars' argument are based on the assumption that the global picture of journalism is constantly and perhaps exponentially changing to such an extent that one has to analyse

and discuss the main attributes of such (potential) changes in order to successfully study, describe and explain contemporary journalism.

Ethics in journalism is a vehicle for journalism ideology and for the practice of striving to tell the truth. It has been argued that ethics are the basis for the privileged position of journalism in liberal democracies (Deuze 2005). The downside is that professional ethics in journalism are voluntary self-involving schemes of values. It is because of the centrality of ethics to professionalism that most schools of journalism devote time to teaching them. In almost all countries, a profession's code of ethics is created by a professional body as a way of standards control, and providing guiding principles that assist members to practice ethically. In most of these other professions, if ethical standards are not adhered to, professionals are held accountable by their peers. Moreover, this accountability is frequently enforced by state law. In some countries the composition of the professional bodies that hear complaints about unethical behaviour by their members is also important in maintaining public trust. In the US for example, such professional bodies are generally made up of a mix of representatives of the profession, the community and, significantly, an impartial legal representative. These review committees have the power to legally sanction members who fall below the standards of the profession, including suspension or disqualification from practice. The important point of departure between the classic professions and journalism is that journalists' ethics are voluntary whereas in the classic professions ethical codes are mandatory.

Journalists are not registered or 'licensed' professionals like doctors or lawyers would be. There is no statutory College of Journalism to discipline journalistic practice. As such, they cannot all be coerced into adhering to professional codes of ethics by severe statutory penalties that interfere with their ability to practice. In most cases, journalists

need not be members of a professional association or even have any tertiary qualification in order to practice (Henningham, 1998).

In Zimbabwe however, journalists are licensed to practice by the Media and Information Commission (MIC)-a government instituted body that gate keeps who practices or not, which creates a dynamic to the profession that differs from journalistic practice in countries where there is no registration and licensing.

3.9 Journalism professionalism in Zimbabwe

It is argued that Zimbabwean news media are increasingly becoming an antidemocratic force owing to the political, economic and professional problems that are continuously bedevilling the profession of journalism in the country (Mano 2005). Public and private media owners have created ‘regimes’ that undermine professional and ethical roles of journalists. Critics argue that what is even more troubling is that the country’s journalists have resigned to these developments, seeing them as ‘normal’, and finding it natural that they have to adjust their professional roles to suit the new environment (Mano 2005).

Mano further argues that,

Whilst the journalist cannot take all the blame, the state and media proprietors are publicly mandated to promote and uphold the highest standards of professional journalism. This means that levels of remuneration and benefits must not be used to defeat professional journalism and ethics. In some cases far from being docile victims of the hostile media environment obtaining in the country, most Zimbabwean journalists have ‘resisted’, ‘rebelled’ and are developing sophisticated ways of negotiating the pressures exerted on them by private and public media proprietors (2005:56).

It is also argued that in Zimbabwe journalists are re-trained when they join new newsrooms. On the face of it, there is nothing wrong with this practice. After all, whenever someone joins an organisation that person would need to be schooled about its dos and don'ts. However, within Zimbabwean journalism this practice goes much further than the usual re-orientation. It is turning out to be a thorough ideological repositioning of new recruits in the norms of the profession according to press proprietors' policies and political pressures (Mano 2005).

In the context of this study the importance of journalism in Zimbabwean society needs no introduction. Needless to say, as everywhere else, Zimbabwean journalists perform a major role in terms of citizenship, entertainment and democratic processes in the country (Ansah 1985). It is because of these crucial roles that journalism is meant to play, or actually plays, in society that this study aims to properly understand and examine how professionalism is spoken to under a stifling political and economic environment in Zimbabwe.

In this study professionalism will be explored from the competitive paradigm which emphasises a more liberal role of the media in modern politics and culture. The study explores journalistic media in terms of sources of information and societal watchdogs. Significant to this study is the argument that within the competitive paradigm, the journalist is depicted as a servant of the public interest. Thus, 'Even those working in the commercial media sector are viewed as necessary, socially useful elements of a system which taken as a whole provides for genuine competition of thought, opinion and ideology' (McNair 1998, 21).

In this light, the study has used the debates on professionalism in this chapter as background theory to understanding how politics and socio-economic factors are shaping

notions of journalism practice in a contemporary newsroom. The questions that will guide the data gathering process will be based on three key canons of the normative theories espoused in this literature: journalists ought to provide a public service role; journalists ought to be impartial in order to remain credible; journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work. As already discussed in this chapter these values have been established by previous researchers as canons of journalism professionalism that have withstood the test of time, nationality and news genres. In the context of this study the researcher seeks to find out if political and economic pressures have redefined journalism professionalism at the *Gazette*. The researcher defines journalism professionalism as the adherence of journalists to the key legitimating professional values including executing the public service role, fair and balanced reporting, and journalism independence. Seen this way journalism professionalism is unwavering in its mandate in society as it remains persistent and consistent in its loyalty to the public interest. In sum, the journalists' responses will be interrogated in the context of how much they stick to or deviate from these notions of journalistic professionalism.

3.10 Conclusion

The argument as outlined in this chapter builds on similar arguments in the contemporary literature in favor of a *‘catholic’* or *‘comprehensive’* and *‘holistic’* understanding of journalism professionalism (see Sparks 1992, Morgan, 1998, and Skinner et al., 2001). The Chapter has also analysed how the ideal-typical values of journalism professionalism vary, but, maintain almost similar meanings in different circumstances and journalism genres. The Chapter has argued that journalism professionalism as argued by normative scholars is enshrined in certain key enduring journalism principles. One such identified principle of a professional journalist in a democracy is that he must strive to tell news accounts nearest to

the truth and bear his loyalty to the citizen. In this task the media ought to work independently as a monitor of how officials exercise power on the citizens. The emphasis of the Chapter is that it is by studying how journalists from all walks of their professional life negotiate the core values that one can see the occupational ideology of journalism at work. The chapter also highlighted what the researcher perceives to be journalism professionalism before contextualising the notion of journalistic professionalism to Zimbabwe.

Chapter Four: A constructionist perspective

4.0 Introduction

The Chapter discusses the constructionist perspectives of what journalists are argued to do. The aim is to broaden the scope of understanding the debates on journalism professionalism. A key departure from the normative paradigm by constructionists like Tuchman is the argument that journalists ‘~~re~~construct reality’ rather than ‘~~find~~ it’ (Tuchman 1978).

By turning the focus onto the arguments proffered by constructionist media scholars‘ the study offers a critique of the normative notions of journalism professionalism.

As argued in Chapter 3, from a normative perspective, the journalist’s profession could be described as that of a ‘~~truth~~teller’, or ‘~~licensed~~ relayer of facts’. Normative scholars present journalism professionalism as offering to readers a truthful discourse about the real world and argue that journalistic professionalism commands legitimacy on these terms or it loses value in the marketplace. From a normative perspective, journalism professionalism ideology can be seen as a device to facilitate the social construction of legitimacy and to mobilise the trust of the readers in what they are reading, hearing or seeing (McNair 2001:65).

4.1 Constructionist perspective

Media scholars who argue in favour of the constructionist perspective point out the problematic nature of defining journalistic professionalism from the liberal normative point of view and posit that there are significant gaps that exist when journalism professionalism is seen from an entirely empiricist premises. Although constructionist scholars agree with liberal normative scholars on some points including that journalism

professionalism is a social practice that should be understood in its historical context and a specific time, they go further to argue that journalism professionalism can have a deeper meaning if studied as a discourse with its own discursive of a time. In its critique of normative concept of journalism —“professionalism”, this study privileges Tuchman (1981) and Louw’s (2005) constructivist insights of the practice of journalism.

The starting point for constructionists’ criticism of normative notions of journalism professionalism is the argument that news texts are the product of a set of institutionalised work practices as opposed to a reality existing out there. According to constructionists, media workers are socialised into work practices that are enmeshed with discourses about the “profession” of journalism— at that particular time (McNair 2005). Interestingly, constructionists agree with normative scholars that journalists are confronted by huge volumes of information and an enormous array of phenomena that could qualify as news. However, constructionist differ with normative theorists in that they argue that journalists’ create the new through sorting and selecting which of the news will be allowed to reach the audience. Thus, in the processes of news making journalists select, emphasis and de-emphasis certain viewpoints. Effectively, this means journalists are not neutral re-layers of information detached from it; rather they are gatekeepers, allowing some information to get through the gate, but, also blocking other information (White 1950). In this context, journalists working in cahoots with specific power blocs become agenda setters, setting “the agenda” or “parameters” for what is to be discussed within society (Cohen 1963). These power blocs may include either or both commercial and political interests. Constructionists argue that the gatekeeper’s or agenda setter’s role holds great importance as it can set in motion a “spiral of silence” by progressively closing out views that do not coincide with what the media portrays as

majority opinion” (Noelle-Neumann 1991). Others argue that the practice of gatekeeping has been institutionalised in sites called newsrooms, where the process of selection, emphasis and de-emphasis is industrialised into sets of systematic routines (Louw 2005). Significantly, the very routinisation of the process has tended to render journalists’ biases and impartiality opaque to journalists themselves. In addition, constructionist scholars disagree with Anglo journalists (working within an essentially empiricist world view), who believe that news is “out there”, and professional journalists “simply find it” (Louw 2005:72). Constructionist attack empiricists for claiming that journalists find news because “they know” what is “newsworthy” (2005).

According to Tuchman:

News is a “window on the world.” Journalists, through their work practices, construct a window opening through the wall, hence, creating a partial view of the overall panorama. Thus, only one portion of “reality” is available through the “window”. The rest, outside the window-frame, is hidden behind the wall. News is consequently always skewed by the size, shape and position of the window frame (1978).

In this light, news bias is not caused by any conscious decision making aimed at deliberately creating partiality—rather, the window is the outcome of whatever set practices, work routines and discourses journalists have been trained and socialised into accepting as “the way things are done” (Tuchman 1978). Constructionist media scholars dismiss the notion that once a journalist has internalised the appropriate vision of “newsworthy”, and the work routines accompanying this vision, the model becomes “naturalised” and “self policing” (1978).

Constructionists’ scrutinise and critique the notion of objectivity—a core feature of the

professional ideology of liberal journalism (Louw 2005). Liberal journalism scholars argue that professional journalists make a clear distinction on the dichotomy between objective reporting (quoting expert sources) and subjective editorialising (where writers express their views). Indeed, objective journalism also promotes the ideal of quoting two countervailing sources so as to achieve balance, fairness and neutrality (Roshco 1984:19).

Constructionists disagree with scholars of objectivity. As Entman argues:

The problem is, facts do not speak for themselves, and so quoting sources does not guarantee objectivity. But, it creates a comfortable self affirming myth of liberal journalism. It also creates an opportunity for Public relations officers (PRs) and spin doctors to have a symbiotic relationship with the media industry hungry for sources (1989:31).

In this regard, Cunningham dismisses “objectivity” as excuses for “lazy reporting”. He argues that pursuit of “objectivity” makes journalists passive recipients of spin—doctored news, rather than aggressive analysers and explainers of it (2003:26). Constructionists argue that objectivity is a flawed premise to defend journalism professionalism on precisely because it assumes that “reality” exists beyond human experience of the world (Carey 1989:26). As Molotch and Lester argue, the version of “reality” produced in the media narratives is not a reflection of the “objective” world, but rather “the political work by which events are constituted by those who hold power” (1974:111). The positivistic ethos of objectivity asks journalists to divorce their personal responses to their subjects from their direct observation of them-and, and perhaps more damagingly, suggests that their capacity to emphasise or identify with that subject compromises professionalism (Schudson 1978:151-152 see also Rosen 1999:36). In this light, constructionists argue

that far from producing an “unbiased” account of events, “objective” journalists are actually reproducing socially dominant perspectives and denying the validity of their own, potentially divergent understanding of the world. They simply adopt the “bias” of a socially legitimated perspective (Molotch and Lester 1974). Thus, the veneration of objectivity undermines the very discursive diversity that liberal pluralism argues is the primary characteristic of its “free market place of ideas” (Kelley and Donway 1990). Consistent with this argument is the view that “objectivity” is a strategic “ritual” invoked by professional journalists almost as a sort of talisman against censure (Tuchman 1978). Constructionist scholars argue that objectivity serve as a psychic survival tool for journalists, enabling them to resolve the conflicts arguably inherent in pursuing a “public service” model of journalism within the largely commercially driven context of the newsroom. One of the central contradictions inherent in the “individualistic perception of media communications’ ethics” is the clash between the individual sense of professional ethics and the realities of the market place” or “realities of politics” faced by private and public organisations (White 1995:442). White further argues that objectivity encourages “conformity to media organisation routines” but, discourages the exploration of “broader cultural questions” (1995:443). This argument seems to suggest that the centralisation of objectivity as the primary ethic of professional journalism threatens to frame non-objective or advocacy journalism as not only “unprofessional,” but also morally unsound (see Schudson 1978).

Constructionists further critique objectivity and argue that the social disengagement advocated by supporters of objectivity breeds a lack of empathy with the humanity that journalism seeks to serve. Seen as such, they argue that objectivity could be described as a “voyeuristic” consciousness that “enables people in the media to experience being part

of a political community and yet, at the same time, to insulate themselves from the risk that normally comes from being part of such a community” (Gabel 2000:197). Some argue that the principle of objectivity arose from journalism’s “destructive compromise” between the urge to be part of a community and the conflicting fear of being linked to a particular social, cultural or political group (Hochheimer 2001:101).

Constructionists argue that the idea for “truth” in journalism cannot be conflated with the techniques of “objective” journalism, as often objectivity comprise constructing oppositions, simplifying complex social realities and pre-structuring reader recognition of certain dominant common-sense assumptions-rather than questioning those assumptions (Lichtenberg 2000). Some critics argue that it seems objectivity is meant to protect news organisations from accusations of bias and the possibility of libel. Perhaps more frighteningly, it is because the concept of depicting highly complex socio-economic, political and cultural “realities” as faithfully as possible has come to be mistaken for a “he said, she said” news narrative method that denies those very complexities (Curran 1991:99).

4.2 Borrowing Foucaudian insights

In light of these contestations, borrowing Foucaudian insight on the productive nature of discourse may enrich the study of how professionalism is constructed at the *Financial Gazette*. Foucault’s insights are relevant in that the study is concerned with construction of journalism professionalism discourse at a particular historical time in a particular newsroom in Zimbabwe. Here a discourse is understood as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” (Foucault 1980:132).

Thus, this ordered system has its ensemble of what is assumed to be “true” and “false”

separated out, and excluded out (Prinsloo 2003). Moreover, discourses in Foucault's terms constitute people's knowledge, attitudes and values, which consequently have material effects through their actions on themselves and others. In light of this, one could argue that this study is concerned with how journalists at the *Gazette* constitute professionalism—as seen through their own “eyes”. The search for qualitative descriptions informed by the “inside view” of the journalists at the *Gazette* is central to this study because the purpose of this study is to understand professionalism from the point of view of the subjects of study. Consistent with this notion of constitutive nature of discourse is Foucault's description of power as productive and not simply repressive; discourses through which people are constituted circulate and exist in their actions (cited in Prinsloo 2003).

4.3 Conclusion

In keeping with this argument, it could be argued that, the way professionalism is constituted at the *Financial Gazette* is expressed in the way the journalists discipline themselves to produce news in certain ways. Crucial for this study is the assumption that journalism professional discourses are always multiple, sometimes ambiguous and contested and certainly not totally determining as they are from the available repertoire or systems of professionalism that journalists are constituted as subjects. In this study, the *Gazette* newsroom is the loci where the prevailing professionalism are constructed, inscribed, repeated and normalised and also perhaps contested.

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold; first, it describes and discusses the research design and procedure followed in the case study. Second, it highlights the sampling procedures employed in the study. The chapter places particular focus on the following: the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative case study research; the research procedure and sampling (observation, document analysis, interviews including individual in-depth interviews); and the data analysis procedures.

If we as academic researchers are interested in understanding the constructions of news professionalism in a particular newsroom, we have to use a research approach that enables us to interrogate the processes and negotiations through the “eyes” of the subjects and understand them in their social contexts (Mores 1993:33).

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the subject matter. This means that qualitative research studies subjects in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2).

Qualitative research can establish regularities in social life while the evidence can allow the processes which link the variables to be revealed (Bryman 1998:142).

5.1 Research design and procedure

In designing this study, the researcher chose the case study of the *Financial Gazette* newspaper, published in Zimbabwe by Octadew Holding Company. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the methodological approach is principally qualitative. Qualitative empirical methods of data gathering are suitable for this case study given that the purpose is to

access an “insider’s” perspective characteristic of a culture or sub-culture (Wimmick and Dominic 1991, Priest 1996: 106-107). When the goal is to understand the “insider’s” inside perspective, quantitative design is just not the way to go. Rather, one requires a holistic and inductive approach which provides an opportunity to develop a descriptive, rich understanding and insight into individual beliefs, concerns, motivations, aspirations, lifestyles, culture, behaviour, and preferences.

The question of the appropriateness of the qualitative approach and techniques discussed in sections below is therefore closely linked to the epistemological foundations of qualitative research methods. The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative methodology are typically attributed to phenomenology whose cardinal point is that it takes the actor’s perspective as the point of departure (Bryman 1984). This suits the emphasis of this study: exploring; understanding; describing and explaining a complex phenomenon of the contestations between normative news professionalism notions on one hand and the impact of political and economic pressures on news media workers in a country where media practice is heavily controlled by the state, on the other.

Qualitative methods employed in this case study will help investigate the relationships, patterns and configurations of the journalists practice in a country where journalists have had to change jobs in order to reject and resist or rebel against “unprofessional” newsroom policies and political pressures (Mano 2005). The focus is on investigating the full multi-dimensional notion of journalistic professionalism at the *Gazette* at a historical point in time as described in Chapter 2. Thus, this study is concerned with the gaps between the reality and the ideal journalism professionalism.

5.2 Goals of the research

The goal of the research is to establish the effects of socio-political and economic pressures on constructions of journalism —“journalism professionalism” in a country where democracy is in transition. The study determined two research questions:

- 1) How are the socio-economic and political factors influencing the construction of journalism professionalism at the *Gazette*?
- 2) In what ways are the “journalists cooperating, resisting or rebelling” against state hegemony through their everyday newsroom practice?

5.3 The Case study approach (including advantages and disadvantages)

This study adopted a case study approach—an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; applicable when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 1984: 23). This path is aimed at helping the researcher to gain understanding of a complex issue as well as fill in the paucity of research about how professionalism is negotiated in the contemporary political and economic environment in Zimbabwe. The strength of this case study approach lies in its emphasis on detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and the establishment of their relationships (Susan 1997).

However, critics of the case study method point out that the study of one small case can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generalisability of findings. It could therefore be argued that the findings of this study may not be considered a reflection of

the practice of journalism in all newsrooms in Zimbabwe, but only represent constructions of professionalism at the *Gazette*. Others argue that the intense exposure of the researcher to the case study biases the findings. Indeed, some dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool. Cognisant of the weaknesses of the case study approach this study planned interviews and observation techniques carefully so as to gather credible data needed to answer the research questions of the study. This is in-line with the argument that researchers continue to use the case study research path with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems (Yin 1984).

In designing this case study path the research followed a particular set of steps. The first step was to establish a firm research goal as highlighted earlier in this chapter. The goal was tied to the *Financial Gazette* newsroom. The researcher constantly referred to these two focal points during the course of the study.

5.4 The informal conversational interview

The informal interviews started with a small group of *Financial Gazette* journalists who attended Highway Africa conference at Rhodes University in 2007. The conversational interview resembled a chat, during which the respondents sometimes forgot that they were being interviewed. Most of the questions asked flowed from the immediate context. This is in line with the argument that informal conversational interviews are useful for exploring participant observation's fieldwork (Berry 1999).

5.5 The guided interview

When the researcher employed this approach he first prepared a basic checklist. The checklist was to make sure that all relevant topics were covered. However, the researcher was still free to explore, probe and ask questions he deemed interesting to the research. This type of interview approach was useful for eliciting information about the *Gazette's* ethical values, induction of new recruits, and journalists' own notions of professionalism. The general interview guide approach was useful as it _allowed for in-depth probing while permitting the researcher to keep the interview within the objectives of the study' (Berry 1999, Wenden 1982:39).

5.6 The standardised open-ended interview

The researcher used this approach to prepare a set of open-ended questions which were carefully worded and arranged. The purpose was to minimise variations in the questions posed to the respondents. Although standardised open-ended interviews provided less flexibility for questions than the other two mentioned previously, probing was still possible, as this depended on the nature of the questions (Patton 1987:112).

5.7. Interviews

5.7.1 Interviewing the sample group

The in-depth interviews with the sample group were conducted in three different phases.

5.7.2 First phase

Informal conversational interview and document analysis was used for the first phase. As pointed out earlier, this phase involved individual casual chats with two *Financial Gazette* journalists who attended Highway Africa conference at Rhodes University in South Africa in 2007 and later the perusal of the *Gazette* news stories and its guiding vision and mission statements. *The Gazette's* mission statement and news constructs informed the researcher's interview question later on during in-depth interviews. From the conversations with these journalists, the researcher had the impression that they struggled to cope with media polarisation and overwhelming state power in their everyday practice and their ways of coping differed tremendously.

5.7.3 Second phase

The researcher furthered the investigation by conducting second phase interviews which had the dual purpose of exploring topics for investigation, and subsequently using them as pilot studies. Three more one-on-one interviews with the journalists in the sample group were carried out, using a mixed interview method – a combination of the informal conversational interview and the general interview guide approach. The interview method was regarded as a mixed one because it only had a very vague checklist and a further exploration of research focus was still needed. The results of this stage of interviewing narrowed the focus down to professionalism strategies with special attention being paid to institutional environment and the practice of news construction.

The researcher discovered that in-depth interviewing was a suitable method in eliciting data from the media workers. Indeed, the interviewing techniques suggested by the

literature in the paragraphs below were found to be appropriate for collecting data. Additionally, the researcher made several useful discoveries from this ‘hands on’ experience. First, it was helpful to start the interview with a topic that the informants felt comfortable with. In this light, the researcher decided to start with questions that explored the media environment in Zimbabwe. Something related to their life and journalism practice in the “new media environment” was found to be a good starting point for conversations.

Finding the optimal time for interviewing was the second important step. Interviewing journalists after a long working day tended to be inappropriate. One interview had to, for example, be cut short because the journalist was worried about failing to catch a bus home. Fatigue was noticeable in this after-work interview. While arranging appointments with the journalist, issues such as their work activities, everyday routines, and news gathering diary time-tables had to be taken into consideration.

Third, it was found that these journalists sometimes gave contradictory information in the interviews. When this happened, reconfirmation of their comments would be solicited. Fourth, on some occasions, the interviews were interrupted. To avoid disturbances during the interviews, we carried them out during lunch hour in the *Financial Gazette*’s newsroom library. This way the researcher was able to disguise himself as someone just having a chat with a friend during lunch. In all the cases the Editor in Chief and most of the staff members would be away on lunch.

5.7.4 Third phase

This phase was carried out in two different stages using the guided interview approach.

During these interviews, questions were directed at uncovering information related to the specific focuses derived from the second phase. There were two other purposes in the second stage interviews. The first was to check the reliability of the data collected from the respondents in the first interviews. Before the second interviews, the informants were asked to read the transcriptions of their first interview to see if there were any misinterpretations on the part of the researcher. The researcher contacted the respondents who were not available for face to face validity and reliability check through emails and by phone calls. In this case, the researcher verbally read the transcriptions to them and also later emailed them the transcripts. A few misinterpretations were found and duly corrected. To reiterate, the second purpose of the second interviews was to supplement the first interviews.

5.8 Using multi methods

The case study employed multi method formulae with observations and interviews being the two main tools of gathering data. These two techniques were used to gather descriptions of the real life-world of journalism practice at the *Gazette* with respect to how the journalists themselves interpreted and gave meaning of their practice. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this study this study employed observation and a variety of interviewing techniques to gather the relevant data.

5.9 Sampling

The research was planned to include media workers including journalists and advertising staff at the *Financial Gazette*. The advertising staffs were important because the researcher also wanted to find out if political and economic factors also impacted on the

selection of paid for content at the *Gazette*. A sample size of eight journalists and two advertising staff were interviewed through snowball sampling. To be eligible for the study the respondents had to have worked for the *Gazette* for one year. The snowball method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki 1981). The method is particularly applicable when the focus of the study is on a sensitive issue possibly concerning a relatively private matter and thus requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study (Biernacki 1981). In a different context, it is a research method uniquely designed to allow for sampling of natural interactional units (Coleman 1958). The use of snowball sampling in this study entailed a little more than just rolling it through a personal contact and then simply sitting down and allowing the rolling chain to follow its own course. Neither was the chain referral method of sampling a self-contained and self-propelled phenomenon which magically rolled out on its own. Rather, the researcher actively and deliberately developed and controlled the sample initiation, progress and termination. In the following sections the discussion turns on to a number of methodological problem areas that were associated with the snowballing sampling methods.

5.10 Finding respondents and starting referral chains.

Although snowball sampling in this study depended on initial contacts suggesting further people for the researcher to approach it was not entirely a process of chance but depended on an increasing sensitivity and attentiveness to information related to the study's focus. In a sense, it was the researcher's prepared mind that drove the process by both knowing the focus of the study and taking advantage of opportunities presented by referrals.

5.11 Controlling the chains

Some scholars argue that as the research progresses, control over the chain referrals should become more specific and biased on substantive considerations (see Broadhead 1978). In this study, control was exercised in an attempt to ensure that the sample included respondents that in qualitative terms reflected what was thought to be the general characteristics of the population of media workers. These included editors, journalists and advertising staff. As the data gathering and analysis progressed, various patterns of information began to emerge, sorted out, conceptualised, and provided the basis for future sampling. At this point control over the referral chains was not only selective but also based on theoretical considerations. To illustrate, during the earlier interviews the researcher discovered that the degree to which political and socio-economic pressures impacted on professionalism was understood differently by some respondents. The divergent views on the political and economic impact on the behaviour and practice of journalists guided the future sample efforts towards balancing both sides of the divide. Thus an attempt was made to start referral chains with journalists who represented different viewpoints. Throughout the sampling and data gathering process the researcher was seized with the question: In what direction should the referral chain be guided? The decision here was based on at least two considerations: the representativeness of the sample and repetition of the data. Some scholars argue that when the purpose of the study is to generate theory, the incoming data should be analysed on an ongoing basis (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). In the final stages the researcher made an effort to make sure that the referrals chains would be discontinued once the data became repetitious.

Although scholars argue that snowballing presents a higher chance of interviewing like-minded people, it was suitable for this study in the context of suspicion and fear that existed in the newsroom when the study was conducted. Respondents were more prepared to be interviewed when they had the approval and support of friends. To compensate for the inherent biases of snow-balling, the researcher also started the snowball chain from different people. In the paragraphs below the study sheds light on the how data was gathered in this study.

5.12 Data gathering techniques qualitative techniques

This study employed a two-prolonged approach based on observation and a repertoire of interview techniques to gather data. Scholars argue that a participant observer collects data by participating in the daily life of those he or she is studying (Yin 1994, Mac and Ghail 1994). “The approach is close to everyday interaction, involving conversations to discover participants' interpretations of situations they are involved in,” (Becker 1958: 652). Thus, the study sought to find meaning in the encounters and situations of journalism practice at the *Financial Gazette* newsroom in the context of political and economic crises.

The researcher gained access as a journalism teacher in the newsroom after a tip off by one of the journalists at the *Gazette*. The journalists advised the researcher that in the prevailing context, the Editor in Chief was going to play it safe by not granting an official acceptance for the study to be conducted. This could be so in order to protect himself from possible “negative” consequences resulting from the research. Indeed, an official letter outlining the topic and the research objectives was submitted to the Editor in Chief. Although to an extent the study cannot be exonerated from ethical considerations associated with secretive

studies the circumstances were different. As some scholars argue there is no study which is completely devoid of secrecy and deception.

There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the 'space' created by this distance that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done. Without that distance, without such analytical space, the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 103).

Scholars argue that participant observation is not a single method but rather a characteristic style of research which makes use of a number of methods and techniques—including, interviewing and document analysis. Below the study focuses on the interview techniques used to complement observation in this study.

5.13 Probing and following-up on questions

The purpose of probing was to deepen the response to a question, to increase the richness of the data being obtained and to give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that the researcher desired (Patton 1987).

Probing and following up on questions was done through direct questioning of what the respondents said. For example "Could you say something more about that?"; "Can you give a more detailed description of what happens?"; "Do you have further examples of this?" Alternatively, the researcher nodded, or gave a "mmmm," or just a pause to indicate to the subject to go on with the description. These cues were drawn from scholars who argue that ~~repeating~~ repeating significant words of an answer can lead to further elaboration”

(Kvale 1996:133).

5.14 Interpreting questions

Throughout the interviews, the researcher clarified and extended the meanings of the respondents' statements to avoid misinterpretations on their part. Kvale argues that researchers may use question like Is it correct that you feel that...?"; "Does the expression...cover what you have just expressed?" (Kvale 1996:196). This was in order to allow the interviewees to confirm or disconfirm the interpretation of the researcher (1996).

5.15 Sensitive questions

The researcher avoided asking potentially irritating questions to the respondents especially that which could result in interruption of the interview. Scholars argue that the respondents may well feel uneasy and adopt avoidance tactics if the questioning is unnecessarily too deep and irritating (Cicourel 1964).

5.16 Maintaining control of the interview

Although the researcher allowed the interviewees to travel wherever they liked, he kept a rough checklist of ideas and areas he wanted to explore. Proficient interviewers should always be in control of a conversation which they guide and bend to the service of their research interest (Palmer 1928).

5.17 Establishing rapport

To establish rapport, the researcher endeavoured to respect the respondents' opinions by recognising their responses. This was also shown by the researchers' tone of voice,

expressions and gestures. In addition, a good rapport was established by attentive listening, with the interviewer showing interest and respect for what the respondents said (Kvale1996). A good interview allows respondents to finish what they are saying, by letting them proceed at their –own rate of thinking and speaking” (1996:148).

Scholars argue that there are three basic approaches to conducting qualitative in-depth interviewing (Patton 1987:113). The study now turns to these basic stages in the paragraphs below.

5.18 In-depth interviewing

The study employed in-depth interviewing as the main method to collect data because of the study’s interpretative approach. The central concern of this interpretative research is to understand the journalism practice at a holistic level. The data for this qualitative inquiry is mostly people’s words and actions, thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:46).

In-depth interviewing also had the strength of eliciting information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the respondents’ point of view (Berry 1999). In this study this type of interview involved asking respondents open-ended questions, and probing wherever necessary to obtain useful data.

The in-depth interviews helped the study to draw on several strengths of the face to face encounters the researcher had with the respondents. Unlike any other data gathering

strategy, face to face interviews take advantage of social cues such as voice, intonation and body language. During face to face, the respondents gave the researcher a lot of extra information (Emans 1986). In addition during these interviews there was no significant time delay between question and answers as the researcher and respondents directly reacted to what was being said or done. The answers of the respondents were more spontaneous and had limited delays. However, there were times when the researcher concentrated much more on the questions he asked and the answers the respondents gave. This was specifically so when an unstructured or semi structured interview list was used, and the researcher had to formulate questions as a result of the interactive nature of communication.

Wengraf argues for "double attention" and points out that:

You must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and at the same time you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixe time at the level of depth and detail that you need (2001:194).

The researcher asked for permission to tape record the respondents, which had the advantage that the interview report was more accurate than writing out notes. To guard against not taking any notes during the interview, the researcher took notes during the interview as a back up to the recorder. The researcher also took notes as a way of checking if all the questions had been answered.

Face to face interviews also had the advantage that the researcher had a lot of possibilities to create a good interview ambience. In other words the researcher could make more use of

the situation. When compared to other techniques the other advantage of the face to face was that it was easy terminate. During a face to face interview, the researcher and the respondent have at their disposal enough clues to show that the end of the interview is near, for example by shuffling the papers and turning off the tape recorder (Wengraf 2001). In this study the explicit way was by thanking the respondents for their cooperation and asking them whether there were further remarks that were relevant to the topic or the interview process. Sometimes this led to an emergent of a whole new area of information as the respondent let go all they might have held back.

Disadvantages of in-depth-direct interviews

This visibility can lead to disturbing effects, when the interviewer guides with his or her behaviour the respondent in a special direction. In one interview the researcher forgot to push the "record" button and was only saved by the note-taking. The disadvantage of tape recorded interview was the time a transcription of the tape recording consumed. As Bryman argues, one hour of tape may take five to six hours to transcribe (2001). These interviews also brought with them time and financial costs. The *Financial Gazette* newsroom is 40 kilometers away from the researcher's house and as such traveling to and from it had financial implications and tested the resilience and patience of the researcher. Sometimes the process of traveling and interviewing one journalist took more than eight hours. It even took more days, when the respondent was busy with meeting deadlines and cancelling interviews. Face to face interviews which had to be held in the researcher's house come at the cost of food and privacy inconvenience.

5.19 Telephone interviews

One of the advantages of telephone interviewing was the extended *access to participants*, compared to face to face interviews.

Mann and Steward argue that,

Telephone interviews have the advantage of accessing a wider geographical access as the researcher can reach people from all over the globe, if they have access to telephone or computer; it enables researchers to contact populations that might be difficult to work with on a face to face basis (2000:157).

Telephone interviews were suitable because some of the respondents elected to be interviewed in privacy and gave their telephone numbers and email addresses. Telephone interviews also complemented face to face interviews and made it possible to access to respondents on and off-site. Telephone interviews helped especially when the researcher needed information related to house style and organisational values. Once the rapport was established, telephone interviews enabled the researcher to follow up on questions perceived to be politically no-go areas.

Disadvantages of telephone interviews

Although the researcher could interview respondents who were not easy to access for face to face interviews, one of the disadvantages of the communication by telephone was the reduction of social cues. The researcher could not see the interviewee, so body language could not be used as a source of extra information. However, social cues such as voice and

intonation were still available. The researcher relied on the social cues including voice tone for terminating the telephone interview without problems.

Another disadvantage of the telephone interview was that the interviewer had no view on the contextual situation in which the interviewee was which made it impossible to create a good interview ambience. In one of the situations the respondent was called away by his Editor, so the interview had to be stopped abruptly.

Another disadvantage of the telephone interview was that the researcher could not tape record the interview because there was no telephone recording software. As scholars argue, tape recording a telephone interview depends on the equipment and a speakerphone is recommended (Burke and Miller 2001). If the telephone interview was tape recorded it would still be time consuming during transcription (2001). Another interview technique used was the MSN messenger. In the following paragraphs the researcher explains how this technique was followed.

5.20 MSN Messenger Interviews

When compared to face to face and telephone interviews, one of the advantages of MSN messenger interviewing was the extended *access to participants* (Coomber 1997). Although through MSN the researcher could interview journalists who were not easy to access, one of the disadvantages of MSN messenger was the absence of social cues. In some cases the lack of some elements like intonation, were filled up with the use of emoticons.

Coomber argues:

Before the MSN users were able to create simple emoticons with a normal keyboard, for example a "smiley" could be made as ":)". Nowadays the keyboard gives the opportunity to create more advanced emoticons "☺". This is also the case with MSN messenger, where professionally developed emoticons can be put straight into a message (1997: 120).

Some scholars argue that MSN messenger and other such programmes have the advantage that they "can protect the researcher by offering a degree of *anonymity*, perhaps through the adoption of an (e-mail) pseudonym (Bampton and Cowton 2002:18).

To reiterate, granting respondents' anonymity was important to this study due to the suspicions and polarisation that existed in the *Financial Gazette*'s newsroom at the time of the research. Some respondents requested anonymity for fear of victimisation and possible job losses. Scholars argue that, in general, anonymous discussions may have higher levels of spontaneous self-disclosure than face to face discussions (Joinson 2001). Others have argued that "under the protective cloak of anonymity respondents can express the way they truly feel and think" (Spears and Lea 1994:435). When the topic of research asks for information concerning attitudes and behaviour from the interviewee, the preference for MSN Messenger interviews becomes significant. The chance that the interviewee will give a richer and a socially undesirable answer is higher (Spears and Lea 1994:43).

The other advantage of MSN interview was that it is saved costs and time, because the researcher did not have to travel to meet with the respondents. However, critics argue that

to have a good and in-depth interview by MSN messenger takes about double the time of a face to face interview (Markham 2004). In addition, the quality of the interview can easily be compromised as the researcher and the respondents' concentration can decrease, resulting in negative consequences in the quality of the interview (2004). To counter the loss of concentration, the researcher kept the messages short and dealt with one subject at a time. The advantages of conducting different short sessions of MSN were that the researcher had the time to study the messages and to come up with additional questions. Another advantage of the MSN messenger was that disturbing background noises were automatically eliminated.

The MSN messenger interviews also had the advantage of being rooted in technology. In the first place, interviewing with MSN interviews were directly downloaded to the computer, so there was no transcription time. But direct recording also brought with it the reluctance of taking any notes during the interview. As discussed earlier under telephone interviews, hand written notes are an important back up even when the interview is tape recorded. The danger of not taking notes was even bigger when employing MSN messenger interviewing technique. This was because writing in a chat room and taking notes at the same time was extremely difficult. The reluctance to take notes during MSN interviews was also due to the immediacy of the exchanges and the excitement that accompanied the process. As others have argued, the flow of dialogue should be smooth and one should not have to break the train of thought by having to jot down notes (Pollock 2004:4).

The other advantage of MSN was the quick feedback and clarification of misconceptions and short hand. This was possible because when the researcher writing, the respondent

could read the message at the bottom of the screen. This reduced the possibility of both of us writing at the same time.

Disadvantages of MSN interviews

The disadvantage of MSN messenger was that it was dependent on willingness and competent access to reliable technology on both the researcher and respondents (Bampton and Cowton 2002). MSN interviews required fast typing and the termination of the interview was sometimes abrupt, which was compounded by occasional power cuts and load shedding in Harare. Like the telephone interviews, the disadvantage of the MSN messenger interview was that the researcher had no view on the contextual situation in which the respondents were.

Another interviewing technique used in this study which is closely linked to the MSN method is e-mail.

5.21 E-mail interviews

The advantages and disadvantages of the e-mail interview were in many ways similar to those of the telephone and MSN Messenger. Like the telephone and MSN messenger interviews the email interviews had the advantage of extended *access to participants* compared to face to face interviews (Coomber 1997). On the other hand as was with using MSN messenger, the disadvantage of using e-mail included the complete lack of social cues. Therefore e-mail interviewing "provided a limited register for communication" (Bampton and Cowton 2002). Using emoticons, as already discussed in the MSN interview, helped to diminish the effects of this disadvantage. However, the meaning of the messages communicated by the emoticons depended on the respondents who encoded the messages.

Each respondent had their own communication style. The researcher had to adapt to the online personal communication style accordingly (Kivits 2005). However, the common culture shared between the researcher and the respondents helped minimise the differences in email-communication style. This is in line with scholars who argue that when cultural backgrounds are similar between the researcher and the respondents, email emotions do not generate different interpretations from messages without emoticons (Walther and D'addario 2001:342).

The other advantage of the e-mails was that it eliminated disturbing background noises—a common feature of face to face interviews. E-mail also had the added advantage of researcher formulating the questions in advance and the respondents answering at their own convenience—exercising the independence of place and time. Although less expensive compared to face to face this technique costs much more time and generally has a low throughput rate. The researcher had to wait for days or weeks before getting the answers to questions. Due to the long periods in between the e-mail responses some respondents forgot to reply to questions (Kivits 2005). When the researcher experienced this problem he sent reminders at appropriate intervals to the respondents. Some respondents then responded but one did not. Some scholars argue that e-mail interviews have the advantage that the respondents can take time to respond and therefore develop better answers (Bampton and Cowton 2002; see also Kivits 2005).

As Kivits further argues:

In permitting a lengthy delay between communications, an email-interview gives the interviewee time to construct a response to a particular question. It provides for

example the opportunity to find information which might be required, although the researcher then does not know what resources the interviewee has drawn upon (2005:33).

E-mail interviews also had an extra advantage in that the researcher and the respondents did not have to identify a mutually convenient time to talk to each other (Bampton and Cowton 2002).

Due to the technology advantage, like MSN e-mail interview answers were easy and fast as they were directly downloaded onto the computer. E-mail interviews were particularly efficient by eliminating the need to travel (2002). Given that the researcher was based in South Africa and could not travel to Zimbabwe all the time, the reduction in travel costs became quite significant. Another advantage was that the researcher did not have to take notes. Some scholars argue that e-mail interview interaction simply dies away thus, has no formal way of termination. However, in this study the interactions were deep and extended; resulting in difficulties about closure (Mann and Steward 2000:157). The section below discusses how data was processed in this case study.

5.22 Data processing

The researcher examined the data collected through interviews using different interpretation methods. The central aim was to establish relationships between the research object and the outcomes with reference to the original research questions. Throughout the evaluation and analysis process, the researcher remained open to new opportunities and insights. The case study method, with its use of multiple data collection methods and analysis techniques, provided the researcher with opportunities to

triangulate data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.

The data was transcribed and arranged according to different themes and categories. The data collected during observation was analysed separately from that generated during in-depth interviews and gathered through preliminary document analysis. These tactics used in analysis forced the researcher to move beyond initial impressions to improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings. The researcher categorised, tabulated, and recombined data to address the initial purpose of the study. This enabled the researcher to cross-check facts and discrepancies in accounts. The researcher carried out repeat interviews with two of the interviewees in order to verify key observations and to check some facts. When observations converged with data obtained through interviews the researcher's confidence in the findings increased. Conflicting perceptions on the other hand, caused the researcher to pry more deeply through repeat interviews carried out mostly through e-mail.

Another technique the researcher employed was the cross-theme search for patterns from both the observations and the interviews. Cross theme search prevented the researcher from reaching premature conclusions as it required that he looked at the data in several different ways. Cross-theme analysis divided the data by type across all the themes investigated. When a pattern from one data type was corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding became stronger. When evidence conflicted, deeper probing of the differences was conducted to identify the cause or source of conflict. In all cases, the researcher treated the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions answering the original "how" and "what" research questions.

5.23 Conclusion

The Case Study was complex because it involved multiple sources of data and included multiple cases of data gathering techniques within the one study. This resulted in the production of large amounts of data for analysis. The study used the case study method to explain a situation and to describe the notion of “journalism professionalism” phenomenon at the *Gazette*. The advantages of the case study method included its applicability to real-life and contemporary human situations.

Chapter Six: Data presentation and analysis

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss qualitative data of the study generated through direct researcher observation, analysis of policy document and several kinds of in-depth interviews. As pointed out in Chapter 5, the rationale for the techniques is that in qualitative research the researcher is an integral part of the data. In fact, without the direct participation of the researcher, no data could exist (Wimmer and Dominic 1997:84). Indeed, researchers argue that observational evidence is useful in providing additional information about a topic being studied (Yin 1984: 86-87).

In this case, the analysis is in line with the key research question this study set out to answer which was to examine how political and socio-economic pressures inform notions of journalistic professionalism at a newsroom overwhelmed by state power in Zimbabwe. As argued in Chapter 3, the journalism professionalism is measured against three normative professional ideological canons: Firstly, is the journalists' ability to disseminate information in the service of the public interest. Normative scholarship posits that the public-service ideal is the most powerful component of journalism's ideology. As such, the public interest is an ideal that journalists aspire to, and use to legitimise their aggressive or increasingly interpretive styles of reporting (Clayman, 2002, Patterson, 1997). To fulfill the public service role, journalists ought to share a sense of 'doing it for the public', of working as some kind of representative watchdog of the status quo in the name of people (Deuze 2005). In short, the interest of this study involves exploring the ability of the *Financial Gazette's* respondents to be watchdogs on the state as well as active collectors and disseminators of information.

The second canon is the extent of editorial autonomy and journalistic independence at the *Gazette*, and the third one involves the kind of news values and ethical judgments privileged at the *Financial Gazette*.

Normative journalistic professional notions including objectivity have been analysed using synonymous concepts such as ‘fairness’, ‘professional distance’, ‘detachment’ or ‘impartiality’ to define and (re)legitimise what media practitioners do (Deuze 2005). Remaining rooted in the objectives of this study, the interpretation, analysis and discussions are informed by the theoretical considerations and literature review in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The chapter gives a broad framework of the political and economic time context within which the study was conducted. This is because this environment formed the basis of most of the questions during the direct observation and subsequent in-depth interviews phases of the research. These findings are presented, illustrated and corroborated with quotations arising from interviews comprising 10 respondents—all media workers at the *Financial Gazette* in Zimbabwe.

Due to the qualitative nature of the methodology employed in the study, the data generated from observation and in-depth interviews are sometimes presented and discussed concurrently, under three sections in narrative form based on the three major normative journalism professionalism thematic canons discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Given the sensitive nature of the media environment in Zimbabwe at the time of the study (2008) and the nature of questions put to the respondents’, the researcher agreed to guarantee them anonymity. The respondents feared retribution from their current employer and from possible future employers. The researcher interviewed five journalists

and in this study the researcher refers to them as J1-5, in this case the letter ‘J’ stands for Journalists. The researcher also interviewed three editors. They will be referred as E1-3, with E standing for editors. Lastly, the researcher interviewed two workers from the advertising department. These two will be referred to as A1-2, and A will stand for advertising.

In the paragraphs below, the study discusses the results under the sections observation, document analysis and in-depth interviews. As noted in Chapter 5, the themes that guided the questions for the study were developed from both the literature discussed in Chapter 3 and from preliminary field interviews conducted on a sample group of respondents.

6.1 Background to observation findings

The researcher’s observation placed special emphasis on concepts rather than people. The aim was to ultimately build a theoretical explanation by specifying the journalism professionalism in terms of conditions that gave rise to it and how journalists expressed it through actions and interaction. Above all, the findings are not meant to be a landscape picture generalisable to a broader population per se, but they are to be understood as a zoom in portrait snapshot of a particular point in time at the *Financial Gazette* newsroom.

Broader structural conditions experiences

The analysis of the broader structural conditions of this study is not restricted to the conditions that manifest immediately on the journalism professionalism phenomena but rather; it includes broader conditions of the study including as argued earlier the socio-politico and economic conditions. It could be argued that the significance of the findings of the study cannot be comprehensively understood outside the political and economic structures that provide the conditional matrix of the research (Strauss and Corbin 1988:135-138; Strauss and Corbin 1989). In this light, the observations analyses

begin from a broad political and economic analysis before narrowing the scope into the newsroom. In doing so, the study is not simply listing structural conditions or referring to them as a background for "better understanding" of the study, but also showing specific linkages between conditions, actions and consequences (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The political structural context of the study is discussed in the paragraphs below.

6.2 Political structural context

The researcher collected data through observations from April to 30 June 2008, while online interviews continued to September 2008. During the data generation period, the researcher discovered that the media environment in Zimbabwe was severely constrained, with media workers operating under tremendous pressure from state and security agents as well as non-state agents including youth militia, members of political parties and ruling party aligned war veterans. The political tensions were heightened by a pending presidential run-off election between President Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF party and opposition presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai of the opposition MDC party. The run-off was held on 27 June 2008, before being condemned by SADC election observers as not free or fair. To put the presidential run off election into context, one should point out that it was conducted against the backdrop of a tightly contested and disputed first round poll won by Morgan Tsvangirai of the opposition MDC party. The vote count itself took three months before being announced.

The political tension was noticeable throughout the observation and interview stages of the study. The researcher also observed that there was a high level of fear within the media industry. For example, in April 2008, Edward Chikomba, a freelance journalist and cameraman had been abducted from his home in the capital Harare. His badly beaten

body was found in bushes next to a road some 50km west of Harare (BBC news, 5 April 2008). Although no one was ever arrested for the gruesome murder, fingers were pointed at state security operatives. This tragedy had a chilling effect on all media workers. At the *Gazette* newsroom Chikomba's death was discussed in low tones throughout the observation period. It could be argued that this was a defining moment for journalism professionalism as it tested the strength and resolve of media workers in Zimbabwe.

On the first day of observation, respondent E1 invited the researcher to the Harare Quill Press Club located at the Ambassador Hotel in the city's central business district. When the researcher got to the Quill Club there were 15 journalists from different media houses sharing jokes and drinks. Interestingly, after observing how the journalists chose their seats, the researcher noticed that journalists from public and private media did not mingle. They sat in public and private media "camps" and occasionally spoke in whispers with their colleagues. Respondent E1, informed the researcher that journalists from private and public media had developed an adversarial relationship with one another. Each camp accused the other of not being real "professional journalists." When the researcher listened into the two polarised "camps" conversations, he discovered that the public media were being labelled as the "mouthpiece and spin doctors" of the ruling ZANU PF party while the private media were being accused of "selling out" to the Americans, and British "regime change" agenda. Under these labels, perceived positive media coverage of the opposition MDC party by private media would be classified as "selling out" by the ruling power bloc. Spinning out government propaganda by the public media would be considered as a service in defense of the country from western neo-colonial forces. The researcher was intrigued by the lack of collegiality among the journalists from across the

divide. Clearly, the lack of a binding oneness in the pursuit of professionalism can be argued to be a departure from key findings by previous normative scholars who argue that journalists generally take pride in their jobs as professionals as opposed to being identified with the particular media organisations they work for (Hafez 2002). This behavior is consistent with Mazango's observations that in Zimbabwe the newsroom has become both a crucial setting and a tool of power struggle, resulting in boundaries of freedom of expression coming under stress as a vulnerable government attempts to influence public opinion in its favour (Mazango 2005:34).

To get a deeper appreciation of the animosity between journalists, one could also draw on knowledge of the binary viewpoints and media polarity in Zimbabwe which divided the media into what the government terms the "patriotic media" and the "oppositional media" (Mazango 2005:43). The oppositional media include the independent titles, the hostile white "South African press" and the Western Media. The oppositional media criticises the Robert Mugabe government for abrogating the constitution and inculcating a culture of violence as an essential component of political discourse in Zimbabwe. They often portray the government as autocratic and tyrannical (Mazango 2005).

Further, in Zimbabwe the discourse of the phrase "sell out" dates back to the liberation war (of the 1960s-1970s) during which the words were used as slogans to mobilise people against collaborating with colonial Ian Smith regime. In the war-time context the phrase "sell out" was a derogatory term used to refer to people who spied for the colonial government on the movements of guerrilla soldiers fighting for Zimbabwe's independence. "Sell outs" were constructed to be despised. Freedom fighters arraigned the suspected "sell outs" in front of villagers during all-night vigils called *Pungwes* where

they were killed by either burning or shooting. The punishment was meant to instill fear into potential spies. The strategy seems to be the same in 2008—if a little more sophisticated. Although no journalist has been burnt in front of public many have been caricatured, arrested, abducted and haunted out of their jobs, while foreign journalists being deported and their organisations banned from operating in Zimbabwe. So when the government officials branded the independent press in Zimbabwe as “sell outs” it implied that they were to be treated as an enemy of the ZANU PF government and of the people. Evoking the “sell out” discourse sent chilling memories into the journalist fraternity. From a professional media theory framework, succumbing to the “sell out” threat can be argued to be giving up on a key legitimating journalism professionalism role of watching over the excesses of the government of the day.

6.3 Socio- economic environment

Another key facet of observation in this study is the economic environment. The collapsing Zimbabwean economy had a direct bearing on how journalist played their professional role. As respondent E1, explained, both the private and public media organisations were operating under a harsh economic environment as was the rest of the country. In June 2008 when the the observation was carried out the inflation rate was estimated to be over 355,000% (*The Zimbabwe Independent* 15 May 2008). Due to this high inflation rate salaries purchasing power were eroded and the value of salaries reduced to a mere pittance. According to respondent E2, due the unfolding economic crisis media outlets were suffering from lack of equipments, as well as journalistic tools and vehicles to cover stories. He also pointed out that media organisations across the divide were experiencing crippling shortages of print

consumables and newsprint. This was attributed to the government's imposition of price restrictions on newspapers through the National Price Commission. Many journalists had either been retrenched due to lack of newspaper business or had been pressured to resign. Respondent A1 pointed out that the number of print copies at the *Gazette* had dropped to an all-time low of 10 000 in 2008 from 40 000 in 2007. As respondent A 2 explained:

Due to both the harsh economic environment and perceived change in the *Gazette's* news value emphasis there are fewer readers buying our hard copies. There are also fewer businesses advertising with the *Gazette* when compared to the early 2000s when carried advertisement on almost every page (interview 18 June 2008).

This low circulation figure and lack of public debate forums' including active public engagements on topical issues through platforms such as blogs linked to the *Gazette's* website, hotlines and "grassroots" news sourcing and could be argued to have curtailed the role of the newspaper as an alternative source of information.

6.4 Inside the *Financial Gazette* newsroom

When the researcher visited the *Financial Gazette* newsroom in May and June, 2008 respondent E1, informed him of the presence of security operatives at the door. In order to gain entry into the newsroom the security personnel first sought confirmation from the respondent the researcher wished to meet. Inside, the *Financial Gazette* newsroom is divided into different sections. At the centre is a larger news room with desk top computers which are used by reporters. Reporters work from this bigger newsroom which is also the venue for weekly editorial meetings. The Editor in Chief and sub editors have separate offices on the same floor. On the ground floor are the library, the marketing and advertising as well as the circulation and distribution offices.

During the time the researcher visited the newsroom the *Gazette* had high staff turnover. Senior journalists had left the weekly paper for various reasons and the newsroom looked deserted. On a normal day the routines in the newsroom started with editors and journalists reading other newspapers and checking news and information on internet sources. One should be quick to add that the *Gazette* newsroom experienced crippling electricity cuts due to government power load shedding. From the searches and the journalists own news ideas the respondents generated potential story schedules which they would pitch during the editorial meetings. During the editorial meetings editors and reporters would agree on the stories to cover. Several of such formal and informal discussions between the editors and the reporters would be conducted on one on one and on the telephone during which any one of the stories could be dropped, or promoted to a more significant position. Respondent E1 explained that the *Gazette's* strategy is to carry a political and business news story on the front page. The newspaper itself publishes on pink newsprint and it's divided into Business, Political, Art and Sports sections.

The busiest days were Wednesdays when the reporters held an editorial meeting and Thursdays when the paper was published. Wednesdays were characterised by reporters and editors moving around, searching texts and picture databases. The day was also characterised by formal and informal meetings, visits to the library, making phone calls to sources, typing, editing of photographs, and discussions about layout. Besides working on the news stories respondents occasionally engaged in impromptu conversations on different issues including the cost of living and politics. On the low number of reporters in the newsroom respondent J5 informed the researcher that due to economic difficulties, journalists skipped work on some days in order to save costs on transport and food.

During the process of writing news pieces the journalists complained about the sudden

changes in length or emphasis on their stories. Some respondents told the researcher that their stories were abandoned or spiked for being ~~hot~~ "potatoes".

As J1 put it:

When I write about opposition candidates their quotations are changed to something beyond my recognition. On some occasions they are dropped for being without explanation (interview 13 June 2008).

While some respondents would be disappointed when informed that their stories had been spiked, others would be asked to do a rewrite before resubmitting it to the sub editors. The sub-editors' tasks included fact checking, constructing headlines, making final decisions about size and page layout, selecting pictures or ordering graphics. While the practice of ~~kill~~ "killing stories" and rewriting stories can be considered as a normal newsroom practice the difference is that during the period under the study Zimbabwean journalists were "often coerced to change their stories in order to suppress or fabricate 'facts'" (Mano 2005). Critics point out that the phrase rewriting was a metaphor for changing news angles to one more favourable to the regime. Others argue that editors from both private and public newsrooms "could arbitrarily rewrite a reporter's story and delete crucial facts without telling the reporter, and yet still attach the reporter's by-line to the now unrecognisable product" (Media Professionalism and Ethics 2002, xii).

In the following section the study focuses on document analysis.

6.5 Document analysis

Although the researcher requested for a copy of the *Gazette's* code of ethics it was not provided. This was despite several promises that it would be availed to him. However, the researcher scanned through three important documents as sources of data: copies of the *Financial Gazette* newspaper; its mission statement; and Zimbabwe's media laws. This

approach was in keeping with the qualitative ambition of searching out one's analytical categories in the field itself—even though research questions and purposes inevitably orient a study (Jensen 1982). The open inclusive approach was helpful especially in the early stages of the study and was comparable, to a degree to pilot studies in other research designs. However, the study did not rely completely on the data gleaned from the documents as it was only used in establishing the context of the study. What separated documents data from that obtained through observation and in-depth interviews the relatively naturalistic or unobtrusive nature—the data was “found” rather than “generated” through the researcher's intervention in the field (Jensen 1982). As such the data had a limited or indirect explanatory value for the research question. In this study the documents addressed issues which fell outside or between the day-to-day news constructions of the journalists' professionalism in the newsroom.

Although the researcher was not given the *Gazette's* house writing style document, the respondents explained some of the *Gazette's* news writing policy guidelines to the researcher. As Respondent E1 put it: “In general when writing the story our house style is that we do not sensationalise stories. We use a language that is respectful to the shareholders and in particular president Robert Mugabe,” (interview 10 June 2008).

The excerpts below provide a further example of what the *Gazette* news writing policy. As Respondent E2 explains:

For example, during the forthcoming elections, the pictures that matter most are those of the competing candidates. The policy is the pictures for the president (Robert Mugabe) must be good. For the leader of the opposition (Morgan Tsvangirai) the pictures must be moderate. The *Gazette* does not use pictures that might be viewed as disrespectful to the president because pictures communicate

themselves (email interview 12 June 2008).

Respondent E3 said the language policy was that the *Gazette* reporters were not allowed to describe the state president as a dictator or tyranny. Neither were they allowed to describe President Robert Mugabe using phrases like the 84-year old president. When referring Morgan Tsvangirai they would prefer to call him leader of a faction of the MDC and not use phrases like the president of the opposition party.

As respondent E3 explained:

We do not like to use sensational language. We have a clear mission to report ethically. Our mission statement enunciates our vision and professional values. We stand guided by those sacred goals (email interview 15 June 2008).

From respondent E3's extract above, it can be argued that from the onset the *Gazette* "house policy" is steeped in deferring to ZANU PF and denigrates the MDC. Normative scholars would refer to this as partisan bias which does not favour news professionalism.

In the sections below the study discusses data generated through various interview techniques including in-depth one on one, e-mails and phone calls. As highlighted in Chapter 5, the in-depth interviews were carried out using a set of questions which were followed with flexibility.

6.6 In-depth interviews

Critics argue that the philosophy of a dispassionate observer has been dismissed as a myth as there is no researcher who sets out to examine something without some kind of thesis, even an unconscious one, about what it should be. Thus there ought to be one level at least where a researcher judges whether a social activity ought to exist, and if they do

whether they should exist in a different way. For this study the researcher had a set of questions underpinned by normative principles of journalism professionalism. The questions were employed to guide in-depth interviews. Below the study presents the questions and the excerpts obtained from respondents. To start off the interviews the researcher asked the respondents the following questions:

Question 1: In the current socio-economic and political environment is the Gazette able to provide a public service and investigative watchdog role?

In response to this question, respondent E1 revealed that it was no longer possible for him and his colleagues to carry out investigative stories and play watchdog to the government. Respondent E1 argued that a combination of government instituted measures and loss of senior and experienced journalists crippled the capacity of the paper to carry out investigative stories and watch over the government on behalf of the public. For example, the government had reconstituted its media policies and promulgated tougher laws, key among them, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPA). Respondent E1 said he censored himself about how much detail he could reveal in a story on what the government was doing right or wrong. He also said even quoting sources perceived to be oppositional could lead to trouble with the Ministry of Information. He reminded the researcher that watchdog role on which ironically the *Gazette* had gained its popularity in the 1990s was no longer possible because of the change of proprietorship and the political environment.

Respondent E1, continued:

My honest answer would be to say the *Gazette* and private media are under state siege. On our part, we have toned down on how much sting we can privilege in our criticism of government officials actions. The state operatives and ruling party

vigilantes can harass and persecute media workers perceived to be critical of government policies with impunity (interview 10 June 2008).

Debating the role of the *Gazette* in the 1990s scholars argue that in 1989 when it was sold to a consortium including disgruntled former Zimpapers editors, the paper had experienced editors who brought in a significant measure of courage needed to publish and survive as an alternative press as well as contribute to building a democracy in Zimbabwe (Quinn 1992:47). In the 1990s the *Gazette* was very popular among businessmen who supported it with advertising, and had a middle class readership which saw it as a source of credible and alternative information (Kupe 1993:175). Its critical editorial policy on government marked a paradigm shift from the “dear leader” journalism practiced by Zimpapers (Moyo in Kumbula 1997:175). The *Gazette* was part of the hard-hitting private press which was able to mobilise and orchestrate popular protest (Randals 1993:636). It regularly published critical stories and editorials against government, despite attacks and threats by ministers to prosecute employees and have the paper closed down. In one such incident, the *Gazette* and its editor Trevor Ncube criticised government policy on redistribution of privately-owned white commercial farmers (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001).

Indeed, in view of respondent E1’s comments on censorship, it can be argued that the *Gazette* had shifted its editorial stance. Respondent E1 further said the difficulties in providing a public service role were further compounded by the fact that journalists could be arrested for publishing stories the government perceived to be defamatory or too sensitive for its liking. In explaining how deep-seated the fear of arrest was in the newsroom, respondent E1 reminded the researcher that when the *Daily Gazette*, a sister paper to the weekly *Financial Gazette*, (now defunct) published an investigative story on

9 August 1993 journalists were arrested. The story had the headline: “Poaching: Army and ZRP (police) implicated”. Due to this critical editorial stance, some of its journalists were arrested under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

The Act allows parliament and the courts to demand that journalists reveal their sources. Two *Financial Gazette* journalists were forced to do so. A third, Basil Peta, was charged with breaching Taxation Law in an investigative story that alleged tax evasions by companies owned by the ruling ZANU (PF) (see also Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001:105). Respondent E2 and E3 agreed with respondent E1 that contempt of parliament and criminal defamation laws left the media vulnerable to legal action for reporting defamatory statements by ZANU PF MPs who enjoy immunity, or by publishing certain facts which later turn out to be incorrect even if the editor did so in good faith and in the public interest. Respondent E 3 said the government had overwhelming power to punish media workers including using the Media and Information Commission to deny registration of perceived government —media rebels.”

All the three respondents E1-3, pointed out that they remembered that the criminal defamation law was evoked to convict their former colleague at the *Gazette*, a reporter Simba Makunike in 1995, for publishing a story about President Mugabe’s secret marriage to his former secretary (see also Moyo 1995). In sum, respondent E1 said it seemed the government was intolerant of the watchdog role of the media and could unleash legal and extra legal measures to thwart the public service role of the media including the *Gazette*.

In his closing remarks to the question of watchdog role respondent E1 said he feared that the media fraternity was divided, and with media workers groups including Zimbabwe Union for journalists (ZUJ) and MISA Zimbabwe chapter being underequipped to protect

journalists from being arrested on flimsy charges journalists could be detained without trial for months. On the public service role, respondent E1 lamented that the *Gazette* did not have public forums including blogs, personal opinion pages, chat rooms for public criticism and compromise.

As respondent E1, continued:

The *Gazette* website is not interactive –the public can not react to disclosures, developing trends and indeed, break news through forums like blogs and chat rooms. The public are excluded yet new media technologies could help tap into the public voices. The public can correct half truths and lies as well political propaganda in our stories. I do not think we are being honest brokers (interview 10 June 2008).

Critics argue that the press forum-creating capacity if managed properly can be so pervasive that it can inform almost every aspect of the journalists work, beginning with initial story idea hints, analysis of impacts of events on the community and the provision of contexts that can be used for comparisons and contrasts. However, the public forums must be built on the same principles as the rest of journalism, starting with truthfulness, facts and verification (Kovach and Rosenteistiel 2007). Others observe that adapting the principles of journalism to the techniques of citizen bloggers, online chats and other public service forums could not only produce a new powerful tool for watchdog reporting but engender a recognition of the need for a new journalism professionalism based on the press and the public.

Responding to the watchdog role of the *Gazette*, respondent E2 said:

It's up to each journalist not to be reckless. I tell my junior reporters that a living journalist is better than a dead hero. In this country journalists are

criminalised for doing their job. The roles have been switched, instead of the press watching the state, the state policies and censor the journalists in order to muzzle public debate (interview 12 June 2008).

In light of all the comments by respondents E1 and E2, above, one could ask where this leaves the *Gazette* journalism professionalism. While E2's concerns could be argued to be genuine, one should be quick to point out that normative theorists argue that any allegiance to anything other than the search for truth and public service changes the role of the professionalism as an agent of the public (reporting for the public) to an agent of the corporate and political news cartel (McGregor, 1996). Indeed, by convincing junior reporters that they should strive less for the public service professional canon, respondent E2 could be changing to being an agent of a political cartel in Zimbabwe.

Responding to the same question E3 pointed out that carrying investigative stories was risky as reporters were likely to step on the toes of people aligned to the ruling ZANU PF party. The problem was that it would be interpreted as "selling out" to the opposition. Respondent E3 said he would not push the watchdog role "boundary" because he knew that with the political culture of violence the government's intolerance to media scrutiny he would be persecuted alone for that.

Generally argued, it can be noted that the feeling of fear had a tight grip on all the respondents. Indeed, the government had managed to control respondents' by instilling fear of persecution and thereby curtailing the journalists' ability to perform the watchdog role expected of the media in a democracy. From a normative perspective it could be argued that by not watching over government excesses respondent E1-3 had abdicated an important task of journalism professionalism in a democracy.

Liberal scholars are unshaken in their belief that as watchdogs journalists ought to play a

role of monitoring and reporting on the functions of the three arms of government: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. They further observe that it is the journalists' role to report and make sense of the activities of these three facets of life (Keeble 2001). They conclude that it is from the watchdog role that journalism professionalism acquires legitimacy in the market place. On the other hand in Zimbabwe (2008), fulfilling the public service role requires a careful balancing act and it's probably fair to argue that without adequate job security, Zimbabwean journalists tended to follow the whims of the editors, who themselves were at the mercy of media proprietors and politicians.

Respondent J1 was more candid in his response to the watchdog role as he put it:

The question is watching the state on whose behalf? Without the rule of law where will one find protection or justice? In a political environment like this one should not try his lucky that far. To be frank we all prefer soft issues and hope to live to see another day. The space for the media and other state arms to function independent has been closed (interview June 13 2008).

This could be interpreted as implying that for the most part, it seemed for the Zimbabwean journalist- the most effective way to avoid political pressures was to cooperate with those who exerted it and "journalists often cooperated with the powerful, even if not solely to ward off pressure" but to keep their jobs (Gans 1980: 270).

Respondent J2 cited the tough media laws including defamation and registration laws as hindrances to playing the watchdog role. As he put it: "investigative stories by nature involved access to private information and exposing officials' sensitive activities." He added that with AIPA victimisation for publishing investigative stories was a reality.

Commenting on the same question J3 revealed it when came to being arrested for publishing investigative stories everyone knew that it was not a "if arrested but a when"

question. Respondent J3 believed that the Zimbabwe Republic Police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had assembled a team of ZANU PF loyalists policemen (ZRP) to crackdown on journalists who wrote news pieces critical corrupt of ruling party officials. On his part said he had resigned to playing it safe by lifting stories from other publications and writing news on soft beats including art and lifestyle. As if feeling guilty, respondent J3 pointed out that he was not an exception in this practice as in his view it had become almost an unwritten survival strategy employed by many of his colleagues. He added that all newspapers carried similar stories because everyone wanted to avoid being singled out.

As respondent J4 put explained:

The government classifies journalists who watch over its negative policies as a criminal or terrorist bent on sabotaging it. They have a policy –code named arrest first then investigate.” If they identify you as an enemy of the state they will use the army to arrest you” (Interview 15 June 2008).

Respondent J5 agreed with J4 on the dangers associated with writing stories critical of government. However, rather than giving in he said he had resorted to writing using a pseudo names for foreign news organisations. In the excerpt below respondent J5 said:

Writing for foreign media is a better option to playing a dangerous game of trying to publish with the *Gazette*. The benefit is twofold: first; my work will remain fundamentally original and interpretive. That way I won't be just quoting official sources but, carrying out the investigations myself. Second; the foreign media pays me in foreign currency which has a predictable value and exchange rate. I come to the *Gazette* for the technology that enables me to conduct internet research and to write my stories for the foreign media (email interview 22 June 2008).

On a comparative level, one should point out that critics argue that journalists reporting on government excesses have never had it easy anywhere in the world. For example, Curran warns that journalists must always remember that the market does not "guarantee critical scrutiny of either public or private power" (2002: 225). In this light, it should not be considered a complete surprise that the ZANU PF government also subjects both news workers and the media to "compromising restraint" (Curran 2002). However, it could be argued that in both cases, professionalism, that is journalism in the service of the public interest, is seriously undermined at the *Gazette*. One could argue that instead of adopting the government's ideology the respondents at the *Gazette* needed to be more aware of these constraints and develop more effective ways of managing conflict between their professional norms and politically driven pressures (Mano 2005).

For respondent J5, the *Gazette* was now just another state paper representing a media-savvy faction in ZANU PF that had been sidelined by the state controlled Zimpapers in the battle to succeed President Robert Mugabe. According to J5 the question of playing a public service role was now out of the editorial scheme as the newspaper was important to winning the hearts and minds of the political elite in the battle to succeed President Mugabe.

Following up on question 1 and the respondents' answers the researcher asked the following question:

Question 2: Given the political and economic environment you described above how do you adhere to professional standards to ensure objectivity or impartiality?

Respondents J1-J5 concurred that they knew that as professionals their first obligation was on getting the news facts right. Respondent J1 said he knew that professional journalism's task was to pursue accuracy and fairness in all news accounts. He believed

at the *Gazette*, they attempted to fulfill this principle of normative professionalism by quoting from the two sides of a story. However, they pointed out that some of their stories could be seen as partial because editors cut off the context of oppositional views. Respondent J1 added that he made sure that in his news stories he included more than one voice to a news event.

Respondent J2 said he believed that fairness and accuracy on news coverage at the *Gazette* was compromised by editors who embellished some news pieces. He added that although the news content was bi-partisan to an extent because they interviewed and wrote stories from a diverse pool of sources including politicians, commercial company spokespeople, PR and NGOs there was a strange mix of essay and facts in some editorials. On this account he believed the *Gazette* did not provide the whole account but part of the polarised discussions. For respondent J3, he believed that the news stories he wrote were balanced because he ensured he never included his own views but simply ~~to~~ told the facts as they were.” As respondent J3 continued: ~~the~~ facts spoke for themselves they are sacrosanct in journalism while opinion is a question of choice.”

Respondent J4 defended privileging more voices from government sources and said it was natural for him to quote more government officials because they made more news. He added that even when he quoted government officials, he just relayed their points of views without mediating the truth. While respondent J5 said he believed he was impartial because he completed his tasks within deadline regardless of who the sources in the news were. Respondent J5 also said he thought he was objective because all his official sources and news stories were checked and verified by editors to make sure he remained fair and impartial before going to print. As respondent J5 put, ~~for~~ every news story we keep a contact book of the sources and we are required to show the contact lists to the editors.”

As gatekeepers, editors were privileged to approve or disapprove the sources. He added: “They are trained professional editors; I am a trained professional journalist, our conduct is above board.”

In the light of claims that journalists are retrained to toe the line in the newsrooms in Zimbabwe respondent J5 comments on the editors’ pedigree raised eyebrow to the researcher. Respondent J5 revealed that editors at the *Gazette* regularly received in house training on how to serve in their positions as editors. What comes out clearly from the views of all the respondents is that objectivity and impartiality are conflated into the simple exercise of quoting two sides to a story. Critics argue that this is a narrow understanding of the concepts of impartiality. Others argue that the problem is, contrary to respondent J3’s assertions, facts do not speak for themselves and so quoting sources does not guarantee objectivity. Other critics accuse the belief in quoting two or more sources as a way of operationalising the notion of objectivity was only meant to help lazy journalists create a comfortable self-affirming myth of news impartiality. While others argue that quoting from the two sides of the story only creates an opportunity for Public relations officers (PRs) and spin doctors to have a symbiotic relationship with the media industry hungry for sources (Entman 1989:31).

In this regard, Cunningham argues that blind pursuit of “objectivity” makes journalists passive recipients of spin—doctored news, rather than aggressive analysers and explainers of it (2003:26). On this note, objectivity as described by the respondents at the *Gazette* can be argued to be based on a flawed premise. This type of objectivity does not adequately defend the journalism professionalism because it assumes that “reality” exists beyond human experience of the world (Carey 1989:26). As Molotch and Lester argue, the version of “reality” produced in the media narratives is not a reflection of the

–objective” world, but rather –the political work by which events are constituted by those who hold power” (1974:111).

In this light, it could be argued that perhaps unbeknownst to the respondents, far from producing an –unbiased” account of events, the respondents were actually reproducing socially dominant perspectives and denying the validity of their own, potentially divergent understanding of the world. As such they simply adopt the –bias” of a socially legitimated perspective (Molotch and Lester 1974). Others argue that the pursuit of official sources as a way of achieving objectivity does not mean freedom from political or ideological bias. Indeed that very pursuit can lead to structural bias (McNair 2001). Other scholars also argue that organisational demand for –source credibility” combined with the time pressures imposed by the news production process favour established sources, yet these established sources are not typically disinterested observers motivated only by the love of the truth (Murphy 1991 cited in McNair 2001). Others argue that the pace of modern journalism requires that both factual accuracy and significance of news context not be taken for granted. This is important because journalistic definitions of who is a legitimate validating source of information, reinforced by the convenience of accessing some sources over others, may lead to the exclusion of voices which have something relevant to say on the issue (McNair 2001).

From the advertising section, respondents A1 and A2 revealed that the advertising department took advertisements from the government agencies and the ruling party power bloc without questions. However, when it came to advertisements from groups perceived to be oppositional, including NGOs, both respondents A1-2 revealed that they were instructed to check whether the content offended the government. For example, it had to take the intervention of SADC election observers for their department to be

allowed to accept political campaign advertisements from opposition groups. The advertising situation in 2008 seemed similar to 1993, when the *Financial Gazette* reported that government had instructed companies under its control not to advertise with them and had placed tight controls on the allocation of newsprint to the paper so as to curtail its print copies (index on Censorship, February 1993:41).

Question 3: What are the news values that the Gazette adheres to in pursuit of the ethical truth telling philosophy espoused in the organisation's mission statement?

This question generated what could be argued to be controversial responses. Respondent E1 said the *Gazette* privileged patriotism as the key value in the news constructs. According to E1, and E2, journalists had to understand that they “were Zimbabweans first before [being] journalists.” According to E2, journalists had to remember that the greatest philosophy was “my country first.” In this light, the *Gazette's* construction of the notion of truth telling as depicted in the mission statement was rooted in Zimbabwe's collective history borne out of the 1970s armed struggle. For the *Gazette* (2008), a key ethical guideline to reporting entailed defending the sovereignty of Zimbabwe.

Picking up on the same theme of patriotism, E3 revealed that in pursuit of truthful reporting, the *Gazette* urged journalists to select stories that had relevance to national pride. He added that in his view, it was fair for a Zimbabwean paper not follow western biases and not to act like puppets. Respondent E3 added that the *Gazette's* news angle was that the truth of the country's colonial history especially efforts to redress land imbalances created by colonial regimes had to be told without fear or favour. Respondent E3 stressed that the editorial allegiance was rooted in patriotism to the country's liberation principles.

Scholars argue that the balance between patriotism and objectivity in journalism is both

delicate and debatable. Some explain the problem of patriotism versus objectivity by arguing that those who question the objectivity and patriotism of journalism do not understand the role of a journalist (Kovach 2002:2). So when citizens, media scholars, politicians and government officials ask: “Are you a Zimbabwean first, or a journalist?” It is because they do not understand the journalist’s role. Critics argue that this question would not arise at all if the public understood the role and the processes which journalists use to gather information (Kovach 2002).

Kovach explains:

“A journalist is never more true to democracy – is never more engaged as a citizen, is never more patriotic – than when aggressively doing the job of independently verifying the news of the day; questioning the actions of those in authority; disclosing information the public needs but others wish to keep a secret for self interested purposes,” (Kovach 2002 : 2).

In view of E1’s responses to the editorial allegiance it could also be argued that not only do the public and politicians need more knowledge on what constitutes notions of patriotism and journalism news objectivity. Respondent E1, and other like-minded respondents at the *Gazette* also need to be enlightened more on what constitutes journalism, patriotism and the public service role to the nation. To start with normative scholars argue that professionalism loyalty and allegiance should be to the citizens. In fact, normative scholars argue that a journalist is most patriotic when he is being sceptical and reporting on what the government has done or not done. There is an interdependent role between the journalist, the public and the government. The journalist does his job in the public interest and the public wants to know what the government is doing or not doing in their name (Kovach: 2002).

Taken on face value respondent E2's rejection of the notion of being a puppet may be considered plausible. However, when understood in the context of the polarised media environment of June 2008 a whole new discourse emerges. Respondent E2 could be accused being embedded in the ruling party hegemony. Indeed, he could be seen as blowing the trumpet on behalf of the ruling ZANU PF's hard line stance on the media's role in Zimbabwe. Seen this way the difference between a political party commissar perspective and a professional journalistic view from a private publisher becomes blurred. During the time the study was conducted, it was the Zimbabwe government's strategy to control or even admonish journalists who wrote what the government did not want the public to hear by appealing to their "patriotic" feelings. In a way this was some form of intimidation. In Zimbabwe the government of President Robert Mugabe refers to all journalists working in the independent media as "puppets" of western governments and their agenda including respect for human rights, a democracy underpinned by free and fair elections and leadership regime change. It could be argued that they are deemed and labelled unpatriotic because they give discerning citizens a platform to be heard and do not pander to the whims of the establishment. The government's attack on privately controlled media was played out through editorials and hard-hitting columns falling under by-lines such as "Nathaniel Manheru" in the *Herald*, "Fafataona Mahoso" and "Lowani Ndlovu" in the *Sunday Mail* and "Mzala Joe" in *The Sunday News*. The content of the columns is a complex mixture of vitriol and intellectual discourse on pan-Africanism and through them the government tries to unpack and expose, discredit and smear the opposition, variously labeling them as "misguided", "stooges", "terrorists", "puppets", and "sell outs" (Chuma 2005:43).

Critics of President Robert Mugabe's handling of the media argue that his government

labels journalists who report on the excesses of his government towards its citizens as being unpatriotic. They argue that to the contrary, the journalists are patriotic in that they are trying to curb the abuse of power and remind political authorities to have respect for the constitution. Others argue that what matters in the journalist's report is accuracy and that the report is set in the right context so the story remains credible. As normative media scholars would argue, journalists cannot afford to toe the government line because they fear being labelled puppets or unpatriotic.

Borrowing a leaf from contestations elsewhere in the media, one notes that it is not only in Zimbabwe where journalists reporting on a conflict are labelled unpatriotic. Greenslade gives an example from history to show that even when reporting that one's country is losing a war when the war is on-going a journalist can be accused of being un-patriotic (2004). *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent, Marguerite Higgins reported the Korean War in a critical manner which invoked the wrath of the American general, Douglas MacArthur, who said that journalists were aiding the Koreans as opposed to being patriotic by waging a psychological war (Greenslade 2004). Greenslade observes that journalist Higgins refused to conform to MacArthur pointing out that "it was necessary to tell the hard bruising truth... to tell graphically the moments of desperation and horror endured by an unprepared army, so that American public opinion would demand that it does not happen again," (Greenslade 2004: 6). Like the respondents in this modern research, Higgins's argument was logical in that although she was being viewed as unpatriotic, she was actually the most patriotic of the lot because she was protecting the interests of American by telling them what was happening to their sons and daughters so that it would not happen again.

Knightley also argues that William Howard Russell's expose of the poor medical

situation of British soldiers in the Crimean War (which year was this?) resulted in the public donating loads of goods and money towards their upkeep (1989). This was despite Russell enduring absolute hostility from senior officers for his reports which showed the war effort was badly managed. The government of the day resigned and Greenslade (2004) says that although some of Russell's reports turned out to be inaccurate, the substances of his stories were correct.

Question 4: Your mission statement promises to guarantee editorial independence and autonomy of the journalist: To what extent are the journalists autonomous or free and independent in their work?

This question drew mixed responses from the respondents. Respondent E1 believed that when compared to the public media the *Gazette* was more independent and autonomous from direct government interference.

As respondent E1 put it:

We are autonomous professionals in this newsroom. We are not like our colleagues at the state-controlled *Herald* or the *Sunday Mail* where journalists are given stories by government operatives on flash disks to publish and all they have to do is write their names as by lines. They wear ZANU PF party regalia while on duty and everybody can see them wearing that on Television. We do not do that in this newsroom (interview 10 June 2008).

Respondent E2, agreed with respondent E1, and said there was a difference in the level of political interferences between his previous experiences at a daily publication and the *Gazette* newsroom. Respondent E2 said that when he worked at the previous newsroom which published a daily newspaper, Robert Mugabe's Central Intelligence Operatives (CIOs) bragged about how the intelligence unit had infiltrated all newsrooms and

dictated what the press reported. Respondent E3 however, felt the *Gazette* was not independent in the sense that he once received an anonymous call threatening to deal with him after he wrote a story with a title: Tsvangirai Poser. In the story, he said the opposition leader's supporters wanted him to come back from Botswana where he was in unofficial exile and participate in the run-off election.

As respondent E3 said:

Most of us in this newsroom have two cell phone cards because we suspect our lines are bugged. In order to dodge spies from eavesdropping on our conversations with sources, we change the cell phone cards regularly. We also believe our telephone lines are bugged and our emails are monitored (Email interview 15 May 2008).

Respondent J1 said he was not sure if the government spies, the CIO had a physical presence in the newsroom or not. As he put it:

Remember the world was shocked in 2007 when we woke up to discover that another private newspaper, the Zimbabwe Independent had been infiltrated by the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). This speculation was given credence by a leak of an investigative story that implicated the head of the CIO in 2007 by one of the journalists at the paper (see also Zimonline 2007, Email interview 18 May 2008).

Respondent J2 said that he felt the editorial slant at the *Financial Gazette* was more inclined to the government agenda than to an autonomous and independent private paper.

Respondent J2 said:

Sometimes our news content read like we are another government *Herald*. The editors are nervous of writing stories that may sting the government officials. I

think they fear being fired. The Editor in Chief says we should not vilify the government like some Diaspora online publications that have taken up the regime change agenda and demonise the government (Email interview 18 May 2008).

Respondents J3 and J-5 concurred that they had experienced subtle censorship by the editors on how much detail that was critical of the government actions they could write. Respondent J3 pointed out that he found it difficult to write the bad side of government actions because the editors would just drop the story. He also believed that the practice of detaining and harassing journalists by state operatives was in itself an act of censorship and threat to journalists' freedom to write truthful accounts of what they saw. Respondent J4 said he did not believe the political environment allowed for a free and independent press in Zimbabwe. To illustrate, respondent J4 said he had followed with a sad heart how some of his colleagues from both foreign and local media organisations have either been arrested, or deported for writing stories critical of government activities.

Like respondent J3, respondent J4 said he did not believe journalists and editors at the *Gazette* were safe to write freely because in 2007 the *Gazette* company board fired the editor Sunsley Chamunorwa, allegedly over a political story about a provincial governor and a series of lawsuits against the paper, (see also MISA 2007). It is also alleged that the Media and Information Commission (MIC) responsible for registering newspapers and journalists in Zimbabwe only registered the *Gazette* after the board had agreed to fire Chamunorwa (MISA 2007). In this context, others argue that economic, political and proprietorship pressures in Zimbabwe force some editors and journalists to engage in self-censorship as *modus operandi* for survival (Kumbula 1997). While some observe that to survive as a media organisation, a journalist or editor in Zimbabwe, one has to carefully choose battles and causes (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). Moreover, far from being

autonomous and independent, in newsrooms proprietorial control is enforced through the appointment of like-minded personnel into key positions that are delegated to carry out the boss's will and the creation of "regimes" that undermine professional and ethical roles of journalists (Mano 2005).

Given the comments by respondents and the political and economic pressures in 2008, one could argue that it is proving hard for the contemporary *Gazette* to emulate the standard of journalism for which it was celebrated for in the 1990s. In the 1990s, the *Gazette* carved its own niche as the hard-hitting private press which was able to mobilise and orchestrate popular protest in the service of the public (Randals 1993:636). The *Gazette* managed to regularly publish critical stories and editorials of government despite attacks and threats by ministers to prosecute employees and have it closed down.

Drawing parallels to the *Gazette* of the 1990s respondent J5 criticised the contemporary newspaper's editorial policy that offered uncritical privilege to the ruling political party view points while paying less or zero attention to opposing perspectives and labeling alternative viewpoints as foreign agendas. Respondent J5 pointed out that if the loyalty of journalists at the *Gazette* was to the state of Zimbabwe as opposed to the government of the day, then they would have the power and responsibility to criticise those who have been elected to lead whenever they stopped serving the interest of the country. Respondent J5 said in general in Zimbabwe, the issue of journalistic autonomy was complex in that the government in power demanded loyalty from journalists when writing certain stories as opposed to journalist's loyalty being about the interests of the country and not a ruling party. In this light, he did not believe that there was autonomy in the sense of journalism professionalism.

Indeed, normative theorists argue that reporters in mainstream newsrooms can only thrive

in a society that protects its media from censorship; in a company that saves its journalists from the marketers; in a newsroom where journalists are not merely lackeys of their editors; and at a desk where the journalist is adequately supported through, for example, further training and education (Weaver, 1998). Furthermore, they warn that any kind of pressures from perceived extra-journalistic forces – public criticism, marketing or corporate ownership and political manipulation – should get filtered through this overriding concern to be autonomous to select and professionally construct the stories one wants to. At the *Gazette* it can be argued that the lack of critical coverage on government actions affects public debate on topical issues. Normative scholars argue that it is good judgments and an abiding commitment to the principle of first allegiance to citizens that separates a professional journalist from the partisan. In this light, journalists must be smart enough and honest to recognise that even opinion must be based on something more substantial than personal beliefs if it is to be of journalistic use. Thus autonomy is not just from believing in people or groups of people. But it is a craft based on reporting, learning understanding and educating (Kovach and Rosensteil 2007).

6.7 Conclusion

From the discussion above it is clear that professionalism as a basis for journalism responsibility to the public service as opposed to only political officials is an extensive topic. What comes out clearly from the discussions with the respondents in this chapter is the notion that if professionalism is viewed on a continuum of three canons (public service role, editorial autonomy and journalist impartiality) the press may be regarded as a professionalising occupation.

If, however, the *Gazette* were to claim that it is indeed part of the professional press in the sense argued by liberal normative scholars, it should ensure progress on all the levels of

professionalism. As such it is also important for the *Gazette* respondents to realise that insistence on a single or few attributes of professionalism will not be sufficient nor will these be applicable measures in the professionalisation of journalism. The core of journalism professionalism depends primarily on building on the theory and practice of the key liberal normative tenets discussed in Chapter 3. While it is true that the socio-political and economic environment in Zimbabwe does not support media freedom, it is also clear that more knowledge and insight on the part of the respondents regarding the extensive task of the press may lead to more clarity and useful dialogue on the press responsibility and journalism professionalism. Further, one should also point out how over-simplified a conception, professionalism can be if seen as simply a manifestation of universally accessible and ideologically “neutral” competencies. It is clear that “professionalism” should be struggled over in a complex way. Unfortunately, for most part it appears the respondents’ professional performance is undermined by the need to obey orders and survive. In part, this can be argued to be consistent with the notion of the constitutive nature of power of the ruling class ideology. Seen this way, it could be argued that at the *Gazette*, ruling party hegemony is re-produced and not simply repressive; as it has constituted most of the respondents and is circulated in their actions as well as notions of professionalism.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up the major issues that arose out of this study. To flash back, the thesis has sought to understand and examine the constructions of journalism professionalism within the newsroom of the *Financial Gazette*, a weekly political and business newspaper in Zimbabwe. The socio-economic and political context of the study has been noted to be one that can be equated to walking a land minefield. This includes an economy undergoing galloping inflation-the highest anywhere in the world. The economic crises in itself was a set back to journalism professionalism as it impacted negatively on the respondents salaries and the ability of the newsroom to operate profitably.

A second tier of the problems that affected the construction of journalism professionalism was the political and media legal environment the *Gazette* operated under. By any measure the political atmosphere could be described as harsh, charged and averse to media and speech freedom. The government instituted pieces of media regulation including media legislation such as Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) made journalistic watchdog role difficult to implement without a measure of courage.

Political violence including arrests, torture, abduction, phone call threats, murder and labeling were cited as part of a multi pronged strategy of the Government to muzzle the media. Indeed, these were key impediments to journalism service in the public interest as set out in this study.

The third tier composed the respondents themselves and their understanding of the

notions of their role as professional journalists in the face of the unfolding crises.

Against this backdrop, the study specifically sought to interrogate the constructions of journalistic professionalism in the newsroom tapping into the “inside perspective” of the respondents but measuring their responses against normative concepts of journalism professionalism. When measured against normative canons of journalistic professionalism espoused in Chapters 1 and 3 the respondents understanding of what the media out to do to a political and economic system of democratic societies one could argue that it superficial. Further, the study examined the data generated from the observations, documents and several forms of interviewees against the theory and literature discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The method adopted for this case study remained rooted in qualitative studies hence its reliance on research techniques including observation, document analysis and interviews. In general one could argue that study has lead to deeper appreciation of the complex notions of the discourses surrounding journalism professionalism in a young democracy in transition. The result all the measures unleashed by the government on the media and media workers has been the emergence of a constitutive force of the discourse of ruling party elites as noted at the *Gazette* through values like patriotism, pan Africanism, and a rejection of puppetry labels. Bearing in mind that the *Gazette* has a history of critical watchdog role in Zimbabwe this could be argued to be a key departure from its own standards set in the 1990's as noted in Chapter 3. One should also point out the *Gazette* mission statement is steeped in values such as editorial independence and journalism autonomy and a promise to its readers to tell truthful accounts. However, this is not suggest that journalistic professionalism is unidirectional but only to argue that one does not go out to study a phenomenon without a set of principles on which to evaluate what

he observes. Thus, one accepts the fluidity of the notions around journalistic professionalism, but, at the same time recognises that there are certain journalistic principles that underpin the practice of journalistic professionalism regardless time, space, culture genre.

As argued in Chapter 1 and 3 they include:

1. journalism first obligation is the truth;
2. its loyalty is to the truth;
3. its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover and above all;
4. it must be an independent monitor of power.

Against these principles, clearly, the study has established that professionalism at the *Gazette* is mobilised in the service of the dominant elites groups in Zimbabwe. Thus: it does not criticise or watch over advertisers, the government and the proprietors and those who are closely linked to it. As revealed by respondents the journalist depends on the elites for news sourcing and perspectives. The larger groups of people outside this bracket are spoken about; hence the study argues in this context that a vital and perhaps “rich” perspective to a story from this constituency is left untapped. In this light, the balance, neutrality and objectivity argued for by the respondents in the study become susceptible to structural and editorial biases. It appears as if the cornerstone of journalistic professionalism at the *Gazette* is premised on its cordial relations with the government dictates. If one had a moment to borrow from Moyo’s long article published in the *Gazette* on 23 January, 1992, entitled: Only a Free Press Can Save Our Country From Manipulation,” he could adopt it to read as follows:

This is where the *Gazette* (2008) and the government-controlled media fails the nation. Their brief is to report ZANU PF affairs as if the ruling party is greater than

the nation. This docility sometimes takes disgusting proportions, as when the media reports whatever Mr Mugabe says and wherever he says it without analysing its contents. Presumably this is in keeping with the ZANU PF doctrine of presidential infallibility. Mistakes have not been covered by the government media because of the “dear leader,” mentality, which has served as a major political impediment to freedom of the press in this country (cited in Kumbula, 1997:175).

Until 2000 when he was appointed as Minister of Information Moyo was Mugabe’s most articulate critic and was widely quoted in the foreign news reports dealing with political affairs in Zimbabwe (Zaffiro in Tomaselli 2001). Moyo’s comments came as a response to a Presidential condemnation of private weekly newspapers, magazines, and some individuals whom Mugabe accused of “yellow journalism.” In the 1990’s Mugabe used to label news stories critical of his governments policies from the *Gazette* as “pink lies”-a direct reference and ridicule to the pink newsprint colour on which the *Gazette* is printed. A significant discovery of the study is that the respondents themselves do not seem to be conscious of their contribution in the service of the very system that inhibits their journalism freedom to act as a Fourth Estate. Their practice is embedded in ideological notions strikingly similar to the one employed by the state controlled Zimpapers titles (see Ranger 2003). However, this is not to imply that *Financial Gazette* (2008) is a replica of the *Herald* because it still maintains glimpses of divergent political sources unlike the former.

Of note also is that the respondents seem to have assumed the role of uncritical or passive relayers of official viewpoints as way of protecting themselves. The danger of this way of professionalism is that stories borne out of this process lack investigative analysis. As

pointed out in Chapter 6, the danger is that official sources are not disinterested neutral observers of events; rather they have their own biases.

Other notable practices in the name of journalism professionalism at the *Gazette* that bergs to be understood in the context of the political and economic pressures of the time include: the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust of visitors in the newsroom; the practice of writing for foreign media news agencies using pseudo names. In short: The general tension fostered by the political climate in the country made the journalistic professionalism a unique and dynamic process of daily negotiations for journalists at the paper in order to both survive and produce a quality product.

7.1 Summary

Respondents are trapped in between the need to conform to the pressures from both the in-house news guidelines and the ideal liberal normative tenets of journalistic practices in a democracy. This tension is not easy for the respondents to navigate given the political and economic realities. The overwhelming state muzzling of the media has forced senior journalists to leave the newsroom and junior journalists to tone down on the watchdog role. Similarly the public service role of journalistic professionalism espoused by normative scholars has been curtailed by both political and economic pressures as well as inadequate knowledge and courage on how to carry on in the midst of all the state perpetuated hostilities on the media in Zimbabwe (2008).

Against this backdrop, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the knowledge base from which other scholars can draw in examining and interrogating how “journalistic professionalism” is shaped by economic and political pressures at a particular historical times in a specific newsrooms.

7.2 Scope for future studies

While this study was largely exploratory in many ways, it leads to possible areas for further examination of how journalistic professionalism is constructed in specific socio-cultural and political contexts. Given that the study has established that the constructions of professionalism pander broadly to the tension between liberal functionalism and constructionist theory paradigm, it is essential that further research strives to resolve this tension through recourse to such notions as the notion of journalism professionalism discourse analysis, how ruling power and ideology is reproduced in the newsroom (see Fairclough 1992, Thompson 1990). Central in the next studies could be the argument that ideology should retain its critical importance in the construction of the discourse of journalism professionalism. The researcher hopes for a study where a Foucauldian critical conception approach could help unravel the relationship between power and ideology and the construction of journalistic professionalism discourses in Zimbabwe. This way we guard against the oversimplification of the constructions of professionalism as seen through routines, socialization, training of journalists and values including truth reportage, and the provision of forums for public criticism.

This emerges from the observation that ideology operates as much through the newsroom policies, routines and journalism form and news values. As Thompson argues, symbolic forms are not ideological in themselves, but need to be analysed “*in situ*” in relation to structures of power that it may or may not help sustain (cited in Strelitz 2005:27). Closely related to the foregoing research direction is the critical need to reassess the socio-cultural practice of professionalism in Zimbabwe after 2008.

Perhaps a more insightful study will also have to go beyond the two broad socio-political and political categories concerned with issues of power and ideology

(economic, political) and include the level of training, education and journalistic experiences and explore how these too may contribute to the construction of professionalism in a newsroom. Thus, unearthing whether one or more of the layers of the crisis in Zimbabwe is constitutive of professionalism than the other.

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Appendix 1

The Financial Gazette Mission Statement

Vision

To be a must read and indispensable voice of the truth on business and political news in Southern Africa

Our mission

As a serious and factual publication guided by the ethics of the profession we aim to:

- Guarantee editorial independence of the publication
- Provide readers with in- depth new analysis, informed opinion and commentary
- Provide advertisers with premium publication that effectively reaches their target market
- Seek adequate and fair returns for our stakeholders
- Empower our staff and enhance their quality of life
- Comply with corporate governance standards and must be a good cooperate citizen

Our core values

To achieve this we are guided the following core values

- Customer oriented
- Team work
- Professionalism
- Creativity
- Integrity and honesty
- Ethical

About The Financial Gazette

The Financial Gazette, established in 1969, is Southern Africa's leading business and political newspaper well known for its in-depth and authoritative reportage that is anchored on providing timely, accurate, fair and balanced news.

Owned by Zimbabwean investors, the weekly newspaper jealously guards its editorial independence and supports democratic and pluralistic politics and free market policies.

Widely quoted by the international media because of its authoritative news reports, the Financial Gazette has become a must read for decision-makers in government and the corporate world who want to be kept abreast of the rapidly unfolding political and economic landscape of Southern Africa.

As a specialist publication, the Financial Gazette deliberately limits its weekly print run, although this has grown from 25 000 copies in 1996 to 40 000 in 2000, reflecting the newspaper's growing readership mostly in Zimbabwe where it is headquartered.

An independent media survey puts the newspaper's weekly readership of its printed edition at about 400 000, far ahead of its nearest competitor which has 260 000 readers.

The Financial Gazette's Online Edition is the most widely read Zimbabwean newspaper, recording more than one million hits every month.

<http://www.fingaz.co.zw/index.aspx> accessed 3 December 2008

Appendix 2

2008 *Financial Gazette* news routines and policy Questionnaire

Hello,

My name is Jonathan Gandari from the School of Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University. I am conducting a research examining how political and economic pressures inform notions of journalistic professionalism in a newsroom. Your responses will be held in strict confidence. Neither your name nor any other information that could identify you will be used in the final report.

Editorial policy, Mission statement, house style and Gatekeeping

1. Does the organisation have policy guideline on the professional conduct of journalists on selecting?

- (a). News ideas and news values
- (b). what to and not publish

2. How do you negotiate?

- (a) Objectivity and balance in the story
- (b) Organisational neutrality, confidentiality?
- (c) Plurality of sources and perspectives?
- (d) Accuracy and factuality?

3. What is your policy on?

- (a). anonymous sources
- (b) Background sources
- (c) Using information and stories from other publications
- (d) Government sources and opposition sources

4. How do you negotiate editorial Independence?

- (a) What is your policy on?
- (b) Covering political groups and political affiliations of journalists
- (b) Advertisements
- (c) Accepting Gifts and favours

5. How do you induct new members into the *Financial Gazette's* house policy?

6. How do you negotiate government laws and regulations such as?
- (a) AIIPA
 - (b) POSA
 - (c) Registrations of *Gazette's* journalists and your organisation

7. How do journalists implement

- (a). The *Gazette's* mission statement
- (b). code of ethics

Journalists' questionnaire

Editorial/ indaba/ (Dare) meetings

1. How often do you attend Diary Meetings?
2. What is the purpose of the Diary Meetings?
3. What issues are emphasised during the Diary meetings?
4. When doing a story what do you consider most important, professionalism or organisational policy?
5. On what issues do you often refer to the *Gazette's* policy document?
6. Would you lie or give a bribe to get a story?
7. Would you accept money or a present from a source?
8. What is your perception of professionalism at the *Gazette*?

Appendix 3

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

[Chapter 10:27]

80 Abuse of journalistic privilege

A journalist who abuses his journalistic privilege by—

- (a) intentionally or recklessly falsifying information; or
 - (b) maliciously or fraudulently fabricating information; or
 - (c) publishing any statement—
 - (i) knowing it to be false or without having reasonable grounds for believing it to be true; and
 - (ii) recklessly, or with malicious or fraudulent intent, representing it as a true statement;
- or
- (d) committing or facilitating the commission of a criminal offence;

shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level seven or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

The Public Order and Security Act [Chapter 11:17]

5 Subverting constitutional government

(1) In this section—“~~coercing~~” means constraining, compelling or restraining by

(a) physical force or violence or, if accompanied by physical force or violence or the threat thereof, boycott, civil disobedience or resistance to any law, whether such resistance is active or passive; or

(b) threats to apply or employ any of the means described in paragraph

(a);—“~~unconstitutional means~~” means any process which is not a process provided for in

the Constitution and the law.

(2) Any person who, whether inside or outside Zimbabwe

(a) organises or sets up or advocates, urges or suggests the organisation or setting up of, any group or body with a view to that group or body 55

(i) overthrowing or attempting to overthrow the Government by unconstitutional means; or

(ii) taking over or attempting to take over Government by unconstitutional means or usurping the functions of the Government; or

(iii) coercing or attempting to coerce the Government; or

(b) supports or assists any group or body in doing or attempting to do any of the things described in subparagraphs (i), (ii) or (iii) of paragraph (a); shall be guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twenty years without the option of a fine.

15 Publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the State

(1) Any person who, whether inside or outside Zimbabwe, publishes or communicates to any other person a statement which is wholly or materially false with the intention or realising that there is a risk or possibility of—

(a) inciting or promoting public disorder or public violence or endangering public safety; or

(b) adversely affecting the defence or economic interests of Zimbabwe; or

(c) undermining public confidence in a law enforcement agency, the Prison Service or the Defence Forces of Zimbabwe; or

(d) interfering with, disrupting or interrupting any essential service;

shall, whether or not the publication or communication results in a consequence referred

to in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d), be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

(2) Any person who, whether inside or outside Zimbabwe and whether with or without the intention or realisation referred to in subsection (1), publishes or communicates to any other person a statement which is wholly or materially false and which—

(a) he knows to be false; or

(b) he does not have reasonable grounds for believing to be true;

shall, if the publication or communication of the statement—

(i) promotes or incites public disorder or public violence or endangers public safety; or 56

(ii) adversely affects the defence or economic interests of Zimbabwe; or

(iii) undermines public confidence in a law enforcement agency, the Prison Service or the Defence Forces of Zimbabwe; or

(iv) interferes with, disrupts or interrupts any essential service; be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

16 Undermining authority of or insulting President

(1) In this section—

~~“publicly”, in relation to making a statement, means—~~

(a) making the statement in a public place or any place to which the public or any section of the public have access;

(b) publishing it in any printed or electronic medium for reception by the public;

~~“statement” includes any act or gesture.~~

(2) Any person who publicly and intentionally—

(a) makes any false statement about or concerning the President or an acting President knowing or realising that there is a risk or possibility of—

(i) engendering feelings of hostility towards; or

(ii) causing hatred, contempt or ridicule of; the President or an acting President, whether in person or in respect of his office; or

(b) makes any abusive, indecent, obscene or false statement about or concerning the President or an acting President, whether in respect of his person or his office; or shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding twenty thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

Media Commission

In terms of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act [*Chapter 10:27*] the body responsible for registering and de-registering media services, accrediting journalists and disciplining journalists is the Media Commission. The Media Commission is controlled and managed by a Board consisting of not less than 5 and not more than 7 members appointed by the Minister, after consultation with the President. [s 40]. The Minister also appoints both the chair and the vice-chair of the Board. (The provision that at least three of the members must be nominated by an association of journalists and an association of media houses will be deleted if the proposed amendments to the Act contained in the Amendment Bill H.B.9 of 2002 are passed.) The Fourth and Fifth Schedules of the Act give the Minister broad powers over members, including the power to set the terms of office, as well as other terms and conditions, including allowances, and to remove a member on a number of grounds, some of which are highly subjective

Registration and de-registration of mass media services and news agencies

In terms of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act a mass media owner must register before it carries out mass media service activities. [s 66] The registration is for a period of two years and the registration may be renewed. [s 66(5)]

It is a criminal offence to operate without being registered the maximum penalty for which is a fine not exceeding \$300 000 or two years imprisonment or both. [s 72 (2)]

Mass media services are very broadly defined. The relevant definitions taken from s 2 of the Act (as they will read if the amendments contained in the Amendment Bill (H.B. 9 of 2002) are passed) are these: ~~“mass medium”~~ or ~~“mass media”~~ includes any medium or media consisting in the transmission, circulation or distribution of voice, visual, data or textual messages to an unlimited number of persons, and includes an advertising agency, publisher, production house or, except as otherwise excluded or specially provided for in this Act, a news agency or broadcasting service as defined in the Broadcasting Services Act [*Chapter 12:06*]; ~~“mass media products”~~ means an advertisement, the total print or part of the total print of a separate issue of a periodically printed publication, a separate issue of a teletext programme, the total data or part of the data of any electronically transmitted material, or audio or video recorded programme; ~~“mass media service”~~ means any service that produces mass media products, whether or not it also disseminates them.

The only grounds upon which the Commission may refuse to register a mass media service are that the mass media service: fails to comply with the provisions of this Act; or 48 gives false or misleading information in its application or the application contains a misrepresentation; or seeks to be registered in the name of an existing registered mass media service.[s 69]On its own initiative or after investigating a complaint made by an interested party, the Media Commission can suspend or cancel the registration certificate

of a mass media service if it has reasonable grounds for believing that the registration certificate was issued in error or through fraud or there has been a misrepresentation or non-disclosure of a material fact by the mass media owner concerned; or a mass media service concerned does not publish or go on air within twelve months from the date of registration; or the mass media service concerned has contravened the following sections of the Act - the section barring ownership of media services by non-Zimbabweans, by banned organisations and by insolvent person [s 65]; the section requiring publications to bear the publisher's imprint [s 75]; the section requiring a mass media service to deposit free copies of its periodical with the Commission and the National Archives [s 76]; the section requiring a mass media service to publish when required to do so by the Commission court decisions and Commission decisions pertaining to that mass media service [s 77] the section requiring a mass media service to publish a reply from the person affected by an untruthful story or a story that impinges on that person's rights or lawful interests [s 89]. Any person operating a news agency must be registered by the Media Commission. The penalty for operating a news agency without being registered is a fine up to \$300 000 or imprisonment for up to 2 years or both. [s 74]

News agencies that operate in Zimbabwe – whether they are domiciled within or outside the country – are prohibited from employing non-licensed journalists. [s 79(6)] 49 Section 90 of the Act provides that a representative office of a foreign mass media service may only operate in Zimbabwe if it has obtained permission from the Media Commission. Such permission is valid for 12 months but it can be renewed on the same terms and conditions that applied to it previously.

There is a right of appeal to the Administrative Court against a refusal by the Media Commission to register a mass media service. (This will become s 69 (2) if the Access to

Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Bill, 2002 (H.B. 9 of 2002 comes into operation.) In terms of s 90A of the Amendment Bill (H.B. 9 of 2002) if an applicant is refused registration and he or she succeeds in his or her appeal to the Administrative Court against this decision, the applicant is not then entitled to be registered but instead his or her application for registration will be remitted to the Media Commission for re-determination.

Foreign journalists and representative office of foreign mass media service

Foreign journalists must be accredited in terms of s 79(4) of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act [*Chapter 10:27*]. The maximum period for which the Media Commission may accredit a foreign journalist is 30 days. [s 79(4) as it will read if the proposed amendments contained in the Amendment Bill (H.B. 9 of 2002) come into operation.] 42

In terms of s 90 of the Act (as it will read if the proposed amendments contained in the Amendment Bill (H.B. 9 of 2002) come into operation) a representative office of a foreign mass media service may only operate in Zimbabwe if it has obtained permission from the Media Commission. Such permission is valid for 12 months but it can be renewed on the same terms and conditions that applied to it previously. The only journalists that could be employed in this representative office are journalists who are Zimbabwean citizens or who are permanently resident in Zimbabwe or are foreign journalists with accreditation (but foreign journalists can only be accredited for a maximum of 30 days.)

The Courts and Adjudicating Authorities (Publicity Restrictions) Act [*Chapter 7:04*] 57

In terms of s 3 a court or a tribunal, board, commission, authority or person exercising quasijudicial or administrative functions has the power to impose restrictions on what

information may be revealed about the proceedings if it considers it necessary or expedient to do so -

(i) where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice, particularly where it is satisfied that a witness or his family members will suffer harm if his identity is revealed;
or

(ii) in interlocutory proceedings; or

(iii) in the interests of public morality; or

(iv) in the interests of the welfare of persons under 18; or

(v) to protect the private lives of persons concerned in the proceedings; or

(vi) to protect the safety or private lives of persons related to or connected with any person concerned in the proceedings.

The court, tribunal or other administrative authority must impose suitable restrictions whenever it is satisfied that it is necessary or expedient to do so in the interests of defence, public safety, public order or the economic interests of the State.

The court, tribunal or other administrative authority may order:

(a) that all persons or such class of persons as is specified will be excluded from the proceedings;

(b) that the name, address or other information likely to reveal the identity of any person concerned or mentioned in the proceedings must not be publicly disclosed;

(c) that information revealing or likely to reveal any place or locality concerned or mentioned in the proceedings must not be disclosed;

(d) that the whole or any specified part of the proceedings must not be publicly disclosed.

The Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs may issue a certificate preventing the disclosure of any matter in court proceedings. He also has the power under

s 4 to issue a certificate prohibiting the disclosure on the grounds of public interest of any matter before a court, tribunal or other administrative authority or even prohibiting disclosure of the fact that any proceedings may or will be instituted. He may prohibit the making of copies of any document related to the proceedings or require the return of such a document.