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Title: "Becoming a Journalist: A Study into the Professional Socialisation and Training of Entry-Level Journalists at the *Cape Argus* Newspaper"

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Abstract: This thesis attempts to examine the construction of 'professionalism' within the newsroom of the *Cape Argus*, an English-medium newspaper in post-apartheid South Africa. It is a qualitative study which tries to evaluate how a particular mainstream media discourse of 'professionalism' is enacted and struggled over in the attitudes, behaviour and perceptions of entry-level journalists and news managers at the newspaper. It asks what the process of 'becoming a journalist' requires of entry-level journalists in terms of their previous education and personal qualities – and examines the newsroom strategies employed by news managers when entry-level journalists do not meet these particular requirements. This thesis looks at how the pressures of operating a daily English-language commercial newspaper may shape both the 'professional' expectations of news managers and their ability to positively contribute to entry-level journalists' 'newsroom training'. In attempting to examine the nature of journalistic 'professionalism', this study explores the ideology of knowledge construction within mainstream South African media. Operating from a 'radical democratic' perspective of journalism, which prioritises journalism as a vehicle for diverse social, cultural and political expression, this thesis suggests that South African media education needs to enable journalism students' understanding of the ideological construction of journalistic 'professionalism'.

Becoming a Journalist: A Study into the Professional Socialisation and Training of Entry-Level Journalists at the *Cape Argus* Newspaper

Chapter One: Introduction

I have worked at the *Cape Argus* newspaper in Cape Town from my first year as a journalism student at Rhodes University until my current level of Masters study. As a result of my academic study, my perspective of newsroom practices and dynamics has evolved from the understanding of a relatively inexperienced 'junior reporter' to an increasingly self-conscious appraisal of how my behaviour and attitudes were being directed by the newsroom norms and values that I had come to adopt as 'professional'. As I became more exposed to media and social theory in the course of my studies, I was able to identify this process as 'newsroom socialisation', an area of study theoretically located within newsroom sociology (see Tuchman 1972, McNair 1998, Louw 2001). Not only was I interested by this process, within which the construction of my 'professional' self was directly implicated, but I was also intrigued by how other entry-level journalists – particularly those whose social and economic situation were different from my own middle-class white background – experienced it.

In my interaction with other entry-level journalists, I became aware that the relative ease with which I was able to 'fit into' the newsroom was not universally common. In particular, I found that journalists from backgrounds where English was not spoken as a first language frequently expressed frustration and self-doubt in their ability to function as 'professionals' in the English-language newsroom. I came to realise that it was not only my ability as a first-language English speaker and my socially and materially privileged education that enabled me to operate confidently and without any sense of inner contradiction in the newsroom (see Bourdieu 1990a) – and learnt that I also shared the common-sense understanding of what constituted journalistic 'professionalism' in the eyes of a significant majority of the newsroom managers and sub editors. My ability to recognise and internalise newsroom values meant that I could not only reproduce 'Argus style', but also maintain the underlying common-sense that governed the functioning of the *Cape Argus* as a mainstream commercial South African publication – with little sense of inner contradiction at being directed by such a 'natural' system of knowledge processing and prioritisation. I was able to produce articles that could be used with minimal alteration, and I was considered 'productive' and 'professional' on that basis. Within the market-logic of the newsroom, my naturalised sense of 'appropriate' journalistic style, form and narrative marked me as a productive asset. As a result, my self-

perceived right to function as a 'professional journalist' was gradually validated and my confidence in my own 'justified place' in the newsroom increased.

For my colleagues A and B, the experience of operating in the newsroom was different to my own. Both were first language Xhosa speakers who had grown up in the rural Eastern Cape. Arguably the skewed political economy of the South African media – which is designed to serve a middle to upper income English-speaking social elite – precluded them from pursuing careers in Xhosa-medium publications (see Duncan 2000, Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1987). This skewed political economy arguably translates not only into the material privileging of the South African English-language media, but also lives itself through the social standing ascribed to English-medium communication (see Choonoo 1997).

Both A and B expressed a lack of confidence in their claim to 'professional' journalistic status, which appeared to be largely premised on an entrenched sense of self-deficiency in their grasp and use of the English language. Although both invested time, effort and energy in their work and both articulated a strong commitment to the idea that they 'could make a difference' through journalism, they expressed doubts that they could be considered 'real journalists' – particularly in the light of the often drastic changes they observed in their post-subbing stories, which they took as an indication of their amateurism. I observed how B in particular became increasingly despondent and doubtful about her ability as a journalist – seeming never to consider how her background and proficiency in Xhosa could be an asset to the newsroom, or serve as a potential means of challenging the "primacy of a Euro-South African frame of reference" so powerfully prevalent in mainstream media depictions of South African life (Fordred-Green 2000:711, also see Louw 2001:159). It seemed as though she had not only been socialised into a position of marginalisation in the newsroom – but that she had accepted that position and the terms of her disempowerment as perfectly legitimate. She frequently stated that she was trying to "improve" her English by reading novels in her spare time and supported the news management-proposed idea of a "writing coach" to mentor the entry-level journalists – but never regarded her sense of her 'professional' journalistic inadequacy as the result of anything but her own individual deficiency. According to Apple (1982:40), in doing so, she identified herself within a space traditionally ascribed to 'deviancy', where "(a)ny lack of mobility, any failure in achievement, is defined as a lack within the individual or group who has failed" (see Giroux 2003:105, also see Apple 1996:96, Banks 1997:39).

As I read further into journalism training in post-apartheid South Africa, I became aware that the capabilities of journalists from historically oppressed backgrounds where English was not spoken as a first language were defined largely in terms of what they lacked. The studies and commentaries I read (De Beer and Steyn 2002, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Taole 1997, Forbes 1995) all centred on the supposed ability deficits of South Africa's new generation of entry-level journalists – and arguably did not demonstrate any awareness of the problematic and ideologically laden nature of defining and measuring knowledge or skill itself (see Giroux 2003, hooks 1994, Shapiro 1988).

The concept of language “standards” can arguably be used as a means of enabling greater communicative access and understanding between individuals from differing social and linguistic backgrounds – by requiring that communicators work towards a language that is both intent on mutual understanding and mindful of its own social construction. It is, however, the contention of this thesis that the so-called “standard” language construction within English-speaking South African media is frequently used as a self-denying justification for the social, material and discursive marginalisation of historically oppressed journalists from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language. It is, arguably, used as a fundamentally disrespectful means of defining such journalists by their language “deficits”.

Social Understanding and the Big Picture: Examining the Micro-Macro Dimensions of Power within the Construct of Journalistic ‘Professionalism’

Although my study initially sought to interrogate the way in which a mainstream English-language newspaper such as the *Cape Argus* managed the training and professional socialisation of entry-level journalists like myself, I became aware that such a study tended to assume that ‘training’ was an ideologically neutral practice separate from that of the ideologically laden professional socialisation process and, indeed, ignored how these fundamentally interwoven processes were articulated and understood within wider patterns of social struggle in South African society. In other words, I was “implicitly endorsing a micro view of power which either ignores completely or significantly undervalues the importance of a macro-structural dimension to power” (Layder 1993:151, Silverman 1985:77, Apple 1982:39 also see Alexander and Giesen 1987, Münch and Smelser 1987, Jordan and Yeomans 1995 and Kincheloe and McLaren 1994). This thesis therefore attempts, for example, to

operate with an understanding of the “macro” influence of the political economy of the South African media as implicit in the privileging of English-language media.

In initially advocating a primarily micro-sociological approach, I was also failing to examine how the concept of journalistic ‘professionalism’ constructed and maintained in the *Cape Argus* newsroom – and potentially within the newsrooms of other mainstream South African newsrooms – effectively produced not only ‘professional news content’ but the terms by which it was recognised, understood and produced. I was ignoring the socio-political constructedness of both knowledge and language (see Foucault 1972, Freire and Macedo 1987, Shapiro 1988, Giroux 1993, Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Apple 1982, Apple 1993, hooks 1994, Shor and Freire 1987). According to Foucault (1972), the way in which knowledge is constituted and understood by a specific society at a specific moment can reveal much about the way in which power is structured and exercised within that society. How we are taught to measure skill and competence in an enterprise like journalism – which involves the production of socially acceptable ‘knowledge’ – will arguably manifest patterns of dominance within our society. Rather than simply assuming the unquestioned validity (and ideological neutrality) of the so-called knowledge ‘standard’, a critical theoretical approach attempts to discern what Shapiro (1988:5) describes as the “ideological scripting” that disguises the “limitations, exclusions and silences” of such a ‘standard’. According to Giroux (1993:157), both teachers and cultural workers “need to take up the issue of language around a politics of difference, one that provides the conditions for teachers, students and others to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to live in a manner in which they have the opportunity to govern and shape society rather than being consigned to its margins.”

In my interviews with entry-level journalists and news managers, as well as my participant observation of news conferences, I grew increasingly conscious that, rather than simply looking at the micro processes that governed how journalists came to understand what defined ‘professional’ behaviour and competence, I needed to interrogate why and in whose interests this construction was achieved (Louw 1991:395, Freire and Macedo 1987:142-143, Apple 1982:57, Giroux 1993:60). As a result, I aimed to use my research as a means of gaining access to a sense of how entry-level journalists and news managers understood the concept of journalistic professionalism, related themselves to that concept and manifested their sense of professional confidence and efficacy within the newsroom. I attempted to apply Foucault’s understanding of “the subject” as the basis for how I examined how the dominant discourse

around professionalism was spoken through the behaviour and attitudes of entry-level journalists and news managers – through their adoption or struggle to accept its logic and values. As Foucault (2000: 331) argues, interrogating the formation of the subject involves understanding the form of power that “applies itself to immediate everyday life, categorises the individual, marks him by his individuality, attaches to him his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognise and others have to recognise in him.” Foucault suggests that, in order to understand how power operates, we need to examine the struggles that define its existence: one of which is “the struggle against the privileges of knowledge” or “the opposition to the effects of power linked with knowledge, competence and qualification” (2000:330). By studying the professional socialisation process of entry-level journalists, I hoped to be able to examine the struggle involved in the imposition of a particular ‘professionalism’ discourse on subjects not initially convinced of its validity – as well as the strategies employed by news managers to maintain the authority of that discourse.

As part of the contextualisation of my study, I examine the *Cape Argus*’s history as a mainstream commercial newspaper during the Apartheid era. I draw particularly on the report commissioned by Independent Newspapers (the Irish-owned company which bought the Argus Company in 1995) into human rights abuses committed by the Argus Company under Apartheid (Patten 1997). In doing so, I hope to examine how the ‘problem’ of “the incompetence of black journalists” and the ill-regard for their ‘unobjective’ “advocacy” (Latakomo, quoted in Patten 1997:49) was constructed in a period of blatant social oppression for particular political purposes – and continues to be reproduced in different forms in post-apartheid South Africa.

As suggested previously in this chapter, any discourse around ‘competence’ arguably works both to privilege certain forms of language and ways of understanding over others, and to arguably maintain the social privileging of particular class-situated, gendered and Eurocentric subjects. It is the contention of this thesis that an arguable danger exists in conflating all communicative struggles – be they the manifestations of genuine difficulty in grasping contradictory laws of grammar and syntax or the linguistic products of more subtle slippages between different ‘ways of seeing’ – as the simple results of individual ‘incompetence’. Such conflation can only serve to undermine any potential for genuine discursive diversity – by reducing challenges to socially dominant understandings to the easily dismissed result of ‘technical’ ineptitude.

The following section outlines the approach adopted in chapter two of this thesis, which critically examines the concept of journalistic 'professionalism'.

Chapter Two: Professionalism

This chapter draws on Foucault's theories around power, language and the construction of the subject to examine the dominant construction of journalistic professionalism within the South African media environment. It analyses how Foucault's theories enable the linkage of micro-sociological phenomena to a macro-sociological understanding of social dominance (Silverman 1985: 82-91) and will argue that the mainstream 'professionalism' construct in South African media is profoundly related to the continued "primacy of a Euro-South African frame of reference" in its news narratives (Fordred-Green 2000:711). Further, chapter two interrogates how mainstream media 'professionalism' discourses work to obscure their own ideological fashioning, by casting the ideal 'professional' journalist as an assemblage of 'technical' skills and 'natural' talent (see Hall 1982:62-63, Bourdieu 1990b:109, Hall 1973, Tuchman 1972, McNair 1998, Louw 2001, Dahlgren 1992, and Elliott 1987). This chapter suggests that if, as Tuchman (1978:12) argues, "the act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality", the ability of journalists to discern what constitutes 'news' is less a question of 'technical' ability than of the recognition of a dominant social vision of 'reality' (see Fairclough 1995).

After interrogating the ideological construction of 'professionalism', this thesis examines the concept of 'training' as a means of attaining both supposedly 'neutral' competencies and professional recognition.

Chapter Three: Training

Chapter three looks at the way in which the concept of 'technical' training has assumed a significant discursive power in its perceived ability to redress structural inequalities within the South African media industry. It draws on the work of critical literacy theorists like Freire and Macedo (1987), Bourdieu (1991), Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Apple (1982 and 1993), Shor and Freire (1987) to suggest that education can not serve as a transforming agent within a society still operating according to a common-sense privileging of middle-class Eurocentrism as the 'standard' by which 'knowledge' is evaluated (also see Laclau 1990). It will argue that any attempt to 'integrate' historically marginalized people into a work

environment that has failed to examine the complicity of its structures, language and routines in perpetuating that marginalisation can serve only to reinforce it – albeit with dangerously less self-awareness.

Within post-apartheid South African transformation discourses, training is frequently presented as a process that “will even out the imbalances” created by Apartheid’s structural and cultural discriminatory policies and practices (Berger 1995:165). As South African newsrooms attempt to reflect the country’s political changes by altering their staff demographics, the difficulties experienced by the journalists from historically oppressed backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language – who work in predominantly English media – have emerged as significant to the way in which the effectiveness of media transformation has been measured. (Berger 1995:166, Teer-Tomaselli 1997:7, Taole 1997:15 and De Beer and Steyn 2002:34, also see Forbes 1995). Within media organisations, employment equity arguably tends to be the focus of the training/ transformation discourse – often assuming that an altered newsroom complexion will automatically result in increased content diversity (Sidego 2002, Howa 2002, also see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, hooks 1994, Steenveld 1998, De Uriate et al 2003), and that demographically diverse newsrooms will enable and encourage the development of intellectual and social diversity.

This ‘demography equals diversity’ approach has arguably also tended to ignore the middle-class common-sense that dominates English-language media in South Africa, treating diversity as virtually completely race-based. Chapter three suggests that the concept of ‘diversity’ itself requires a greater understanding of how differentially located social beings are enabled or retarded in their discursive expression by both the macro political-economic structures of the newsroom and the privileging of particular social discourses.

The following section outlines the methodological approach utilised in this thesis.

Chapter Four: Methodology

My thesis is a critical ethnographic study and therefore foregrounds the individual experiences of selected research subjects within specific power contexts, rather than seeking to generate statistically reliable results that can be generalised to larger populations (see Wu and Weaver’s 1997 study on the professional identities prioritised by Chinese journalism students for an example of a quantitative research paper). Critical ethnography is a Marxist-

based research approach which recognises that “ethnographic research has to be embedded within a broader political economy of capitalism” (Jordan and Yeomans et al 1995: 398) in order to avoid what Jordan and Yeomans (1982:49) describe as the “methodological individualism” which leads to “the neglect of other dimensions of social reality”.

Chapter four discusses not only the rationale for utilising the qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing and participant observation in this study, but also interrogates the concept of reflexive sociology advocated by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). They argue that reflexivity “makes possible a more responsible politics” because it “can help free intellectuals from their illusions – and first of all from the illusion that they do not have any, especially about themselves – and can at least have the negative virtue of making it more difficult for them to bring a passive and unconscious contribution to symbolic domination” (1992:194). In acknowledging his or her position within the social and discursive universe that he or she is attempting to explicate, the reflexive sociologist arguably lessens the danger that he or she will perpetuate the very common-sense that he or she should be critically evaluating. In my initial research around the issue of journalism training in South Africa, I struggled to realise how my concept of journalistic ‘professionalism’ was not only shaped by my five years of working as an entry-level journalist at the *Cape Argus*, but was also a product of my own socio-economic position. As will be more fully explored in chapter four, this had profound implications for the way in which I initially constructed and understood the concept of training.

Chapter Five Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions chapter of this thesis explores the perceptions and experiences of entry-level journalists in the *Cape Argus* newsroom – particularly in relation to their understandings of professionalism. It also examines the expectations that news managers have of ‘professional’ journalists.

Chapter five suggests means of understanding the way in which the construction of ‘professionalism’ is neither ideologically neutral nor a product of a universal common-sense. It evaluates how entry-level journalists –specifically those from historically marginalised backgrounds – describe the struggles involved with ‘becoming professional’, approaching these struggles not as the inevitable product of some inadequacy on the part of the journalist, but rather as a result of “the opposition to the effects of power linked with knowledge,

competence and qualification” (Foucault 2000:330, see Apple 1996, Giroux 2003). It explores how journalists from different gender, class, ethnic and language backgrounds develop strategies for ‘professional’ acceptance in an environment that often defines them as ‘information-gatherers’ rather than ‘journalists’. It examines the differential “skills” required for the ‘information-gatherer’ role, versus that of the ‘journalist’. Further, it interrogates the way in which these journalists, interviewed in my research, tended to describe their newsroom role as providing the ‘raw’ information ingredients that would be transformed by news managers into a final news ‘product’ – from which they were fundamentally and discursively alienated. Chapter five will interrogate the construction of the ‘professional ideal’ directly articulated and tacitly endorsed by news managers and entry-level journalists, suggesting that such an ‘ideal’ is both informed by the productive logic of the commercial newsroom and premised on an unquestioned middle-class Eurocentric ‘way of being’ - one that both enacts the social marginalisation of historically oppressed journalists and potentially blinds, with its own arrogant certainty, those whose social capital it privileges (see Giroux 1992, hooks 1994, Ladson-Billings 2003).

In conclusion, chapter five suggests that the empowerment of journalists from previously oppressed backgrounds requires media industry investment in training – not to simply reproduce mainstream common-sense media language and practice, but to enable journalists to create content that will not be progressively discursively alienated from them by news production processes. It must also be noted that – while journalists and news managers at the *Cape Argus* supported the idea of hiring of a writing coach – the actual employment of such an individual has been discussed for the last two years, with little result. The newspaper’s seeming lack of commitment to the development of entry-level journalists – admittedly retarded, on a macro level, by chronic understaffing and the demands of daily newspaper production – appeared to be a significant factor in the demotivation of entry-level journalists from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, and to whom additional training seemed to offer an opportunity for greater ‘professional’ recognition.

In addition to highlighting the patterns of domination that shape how ‘professionalism’ is understood within a particular mainstream South African publication, it is hoped that this thesis will enable greater awareness of how these patterns marginalise the voices of historically oppressed journalists in post-apartheid newsrooms. Rather than simply accepting the discursive forms and strategies employed by mainstream narratives as an “objective” and

unquestionably appropriate way of depicting the “reality” of life in South Africa, we need to start asking how the depiction of that “reality” continues to ignore the experiences and beliefs of the country’s historically marginalised people – or retards the progress of profound structural change in South African society. Ultimately, we need to ask whether the focus on ‘training’, as a process of teaching historically oppressed journalists to model their writing on the predominantly conservative discourses of mainstream South African publications, is simply a way of ensuring the primacy of a particular mythology – one that is in desperate need of a “reality” check.

Chapter Two: Professionalism Introduction

This chapter utilises Foucault's theories about knowledge and power as a basis for interrogating the construction of 'professionalism' within journalism – not as a 'neutral' measure of technical skill and competence, but rather as a means of privileging certain discursive practices, and their claims to represent 'reality', over others. Further, it analyses how Foucault's theories enable the linkage of micro-sociological phenomena to a macro-sociological understanding of deeper patterns of social dominance (Silverman 1985: 82-91), suggesting that the construction of 'professionalism' within the South African media industry is heavily implicated in the continued dominance of a Eurocentric frame of reference in the country's mainstream media narratives (Fordred-Green 2000, Gready 1990, Davis 1997, Choonoo 1997, Prinsloo 2001, Louw 2001).

Using Thompson's (1984:199) definition of ideology as "meaning in the service of power", this chapter examines how the concept of journalistic 'professionalism' is itself both the product and the site of ideological contestation – one that has profound implications for the way in which journalism's social role is understood. In addition to tracing the various normative positions that have defined academia's approach to the social use and functions of professionalism in journalism, this chapter also attempts to isolate the language, 'skills' and behaviour thought to constitute it – in particular, objectivity and 'news sense'. Adopting a critical approach to these concepts and referring to Fairclough's (1995) work on media discourse and its ideological work, this chapter attempts to understand how they perpetuate a 'way of being' that both privileges and marginalises particular social 'realities' or discourses – both in and out of the newsroom environment. It interrogates the suggestion that the world's "prevailing press ideology" of the "twin doctrines of Objectivity and Social Responsibility" (Bekken 1998:27) is less the result of a commitment to 'socially responsible' journalism than a "a way of reconciling market flaws with the traditional conception of the democratic role of the media" (Curran 1991:98, Elliott 1987:147).

This chapter examines how newsroom sociology has attempted to uncover and demystify the norms, values and behaviours that define 'professionalism' within specific newsrooms. (Tuchman 1978, Schudson 2000), looking particularly at the field's renewed interest in the "cultural dimension" of news production (Schudson 2000: 175, also see Shoemaker 1991, Louw 2001). Drawing on Foucault, as well as the concepts of cultural capital and privileged

knowledge detailed by Bourdieu, this chapter interrogates how a newsroom's discursive strategies and organisational structures perpetuate the domination of an arguably largely conservative commercial South African media discourse – and ask at what cost it does so. It specifically examines the construction of the apparent 'skills deficit' among historically oppressed journalists, from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, within mainstream media organisations as an effective strategy for maintaining the dominance of middle-class Eurocentric discourse as 'the standard' for media communication (see Forbes 1995:114). It interrogates the way in which a focus on language as a neutral 'skill', that requires simple 'technical' mastery in order for any would-be communicator to express themselves, obscures the functions of language as a social marker – which excludes and marginalises as much as it privileges (see Shapiro 1988, hooks 1994, Banks 1997, Giroux 1993, Giroux 2003). It further argues that the emphasis on the 'skills deficit' amongst entry-level journalists, from those from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, arguably deflects attention from understanding such "deficiencies" as a manifestation of patterns of social marginalisation to seeing them as 'truths' within themselves (see Giroux 1993:61).

This chapter's critical examination of the construction and function of 'professionalism' in journalism will hopefully serve as an effective base for the following chapter's interrogation of the struggles that define its existence in post-apartheid South Africa.

The following section attempts to outline this thesis's theoretical approach to the concepts of professionalism, suggesting that its construction and the largely taken-for-granted assumptions that constitute it are aspects of a power-knowledge relationship that perpetuates and maintains the domination of certain dominant social discourses (Curran 1991, Schudson 2000).

Power and Knowledge

By problematising the notion of 'professionalism' within journalism and questioning how and in whose interests it is constructed, this thesis adopts a critical approach towards the supposedly neutrally defined measures of 'skill' and 'competence'. This construction of 'professionalism', as well as the knowledges and discursive forms it both privileges and marginalises, is arguably even more significant because of its power to shape how journalists may come to reproduce dominant social understandings, to be "spoken" by them (see Hall

1982:88, Foucault 1972:49, Fairclough 1995:182). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994:139-140) define this critical approach as operating from the following assumptions:

that all thought is mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription... that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterises contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their status as natural, necessary, or inevitable”(also see Bourdieu 1991:129, Fairclough 1995:12, 54 and Apple 1996:96).

By refusing to treat language as a mere ‘neutral’ vessel for the communication of ‘messages’, critical theorists – particularly critical literacy theorists – have exposed language as a key site of ideological struggle. They have also suggested that the hegemonically affirmative potential of socially ‘legitimate’ language is at its most powerful when its authority is understood as ‘natural’ – and when resistance towards it is cast as individual failure or ‘stupidity’ (see Freire and Macedo 1987, Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Apple 1982 and 1993 and Shor and Freire 1987). As suggested in chapter one, language “standards” can be part of a critically conscious project that empowers communicators to work towards articulating themselves through an accessible language mindful of its own ideological nuances. It is this thesis’s argument, however, that such “standards” are most often used – within South African English-language media – as a means of justifying the marginalisation of journalists outside the privileged newsroom discourse of middle-class Eurocentricism.

Hall (1982:88) has described this critical approach as the emphasising the “rediscovery of ideology and the social and political significance of language”, and the “*re*-discovery of ideology”. Arguably, focusing on the material impact and discursive strategies both employed and enacted by particular ideologies can illuminate the patterns of dominance that shape ideas and their articulation in modern social life – serving to debase the ‘naturalness’ of socially constructed ‘common-sense’ (see Foucault 2001:69). By problematising the ideological construction of knowledge, post-modern theorists like Foucault enable an exploration “of the way in which discourses are implicated in relations of power and how power and knowledge serve as dialectically reinitiating practices that regulate what is considered reasonable and true” (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994:140, also see Foucault 1984). Further, such exploration can reveal how the privileging of certain ‘truths’ and ‘knowledges’ – and the seemingly self-

evident naturalness of such privileging – effectively retards or prevents the participation of marginalised social groups in ‘knowledge’ production (see Prior 1997:70-71).

Foucault’s theories about power and its social manifestations arguably serve as a useful basis for grasping how the macro\micro relations of power cannot and should not be divorced in meaningful social analysis (see Layder 1993:153, Silverman 1993:77-79, Apple 1982:94, Giroux 1992). Instead of accepting approaches to power which focus on the domination of subordinate social groups through blatant oppression, censorship or disguise, Foucault draws attention to the various strategies through which power is manifested – power’s “productive effectiveness, its strategic resourcefulness, its positivity” (1979:86). Foucault understands power not as a monolithic and oppressive force that dominates its social subjects ‘from above’, but as a social entity that has multiple forms of ‘capillary’ existence. The analysis of these ‘capillary’ forms of power is concerned with “the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (1980:39). By studying the historically defined discourses constructed around sexuality or punishment in specific societies, for example, Foucault was able to interrogate the way in which those societies enacted patterns of dominance in the very terrains of what and how they were able to think.

The primary focus of this thesis lies in an emphasis on discourse and language as forces for social legitimisation that maintain their validity through the very patterns of dominance that they enact (see Foucault 1972, Foucault 1984 and Bourdieu 1991). By possessing the power to define what constitutes the ‘standard’ form of language, for example, socially dominant groups arguably possess the means to reproduce the terms of recognition for their own legitimacy (Shor and Freire 1987). In addressing the concept of so-called “standard” forms of language, Bourdieu (1991: 113) argues that the social power of “legitimate” language or “language of authority” does not exist

as the racism of social class would have it, in the set of prosodic and articulatory variations which define distinguished pronunciation, or in the complexity of the syntax or the richness of the vocabulary, in other words in the intrinsic properties of discourse itself, but rather in the social conditions of production and reproduction of the distribution between the classes of the knowledge and recognition of the legitimate language” (also see Fairclough’s discussion of the ideological imperatives of ‘standard’ language use 1989: 56-58).

By examining how journalists and news managers articulate their perceptions of 'professionalism', this thesis attempts to examine the discursive roots of these articulations – guided by the Foucauldian notion that discourses cannot be treated “as a group of signs (signifying elements relating to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (1972:49). The construction of a discourse of 'professionalism' in journalism that prioritises objectivity, 'fact-oriented' reporting and the superiority of certain 'standard' language forms, for example, makes it even more difficult for historically oppressed journalists to write narratives that do not simply echo the form and assumptions of the dominant mainstream news narrative – since, to be considered 'professional', they must continuously strive for a 'standard' language and form that undermines any discursive existence but its own. The class interests that define so-called 'standards' of 'professionalism' can therefore be said to focus on the narrow ideological vision of a social elite – arguably excluding non-middle-class understandings of the world. It must again be noted that Foucault's approach insists on a critical contextualisation of the particular discourse under analysis. Approaching the topic of journalism training in South Africa, then, we must not only ask who is granted the right to speak about what constitutes a 'professional' journalist, but also the historical roots of such authority. We need to question how the terms employed in the debate around journalism education both enact the dominance of a particular discursive construction of professionalism and are themselves enacted by that particular historically situated discourse. Finally, we need to ask in whose interests such constructions operate (see Foucault 1972:50, Prior 1997:71, Weedon, Tolson & Mort 1980:211). These questions will be interrogated in the following chapter.

The following section analyses the problematic nature of defining journalistic 'professionalism', suggesting that significant gaps exist between the conventional liberal pluralist understanding of journalism's 'public service'/'public watchdog' role and the social, political, economic and cultural forces that limit its effectiveness (see Curran 1991, Schudson 2000, Hallin 2000).

The Construction of Professionalism and Journalism: An Overview

According to the Collins Concise dictionary, a 'profession' can be defined as “an occupation requiring special training in the liberal arts or sciences, esp. one of three learned professions, law, theology or medicine”. The Concise Oxford dictionary defines a 'profession' as “a vocation or calling, esp. one that involves some branch of advanced learning or science”. In

Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies, O'Sullivan et al (1997:244) identify two major analytical approaches to the study of professions and professionalism. The first is based on a functionalist perspective and sees the professional status of an occupation as being identified by certain key attributes. These attributes include the need for “*specialised skills*, based on theoretical non-common sense knowledge... gained through extensive, often intensive *education*, which makes possible regulation of occupational entry, often in the name of ‘the profession’ which also regulates entrants conduct by a *code of ethics* which tend to stress *public service*.” (emphasis original). According to Nordenstreng (1998:125), the functionalist perspective of professionalism imbues the concept with a heightened moral authority: “The functionalist approach took the view that professions gradually occupied the place of religion and the pre-industrial moral order in order to uphold social harmony and balance under the new conditions of capitalist economy”.

According to O'Sullivan et al, underlying the functionalist understanding of professionalism is the assumption that professions offer special socially beneficial services to society and that a unique mutual relationship exists between the professional practitioner and his or her client. It could therefore be argued that a functionalist identification of journalism as a profession is strongly premised on liberal pluralism's “public service” model of journalism, assuming that journalists operate as a “fourth estate”, “watchdog” or autonomous agent for the public good (see Marshall 1939 cited in Nordenstreng 1998, Keane 1991, McNair 1995, Negrine 1996). The Goldsmiths Media Group (2000:22) identify some of liberal pluralism's ‘ideal’ media functions as providing

access for a wide range of citizens to put forward their views, an arena for rational debate on the issues affecting society and the state, a source of objective information, widely available to all citizens, and a check (‘watchdog role’) on the activities of powerful institutions and individuals”.

Further, the Group suggests that despite news itself being a “cultural commodity, produced both privately and publicly”(2000:22), liberal pluralist theory continues to examine it according to its ability to fulfil these ‘ideal’ functions.

The idea of media as an arena of key public socio-political debate, directing the decisions made by the state, is central to Habermas's (1962) ‘public sphere’ model of the media. Habermas argues that the growth of early modern capitalism enabled the existence of an independent area of public debate, the ‘public sphere’, by creating a “new public engaged in

critical political discussion” (Curran 1991:83). Although Habermas has been criticised for idealising his model’s historical genesis (Mortensen 1977; Curran 1991), Curran (1991:83) argues that the ‘public sphere’ model “offers nevertheless a powerful and arresting vision of the role of the media in a democratic society”. Amongst other media goals, Curran argues that the ‘public sphere’ model suggests that the media “should enable individuals to reinterpret their social experience, and question the assumptions and ideas of the dominant culture” (1991:103). Implicit in this aim is the idea that media should be comprised of socially divergent voices who possess – and are able to articulate – differing intellectual perspectives, thereby undermining the discursive dominance of the socially powerful. The ‘public sphere’ model fails, however, to recognise the impact of power on the ability of particular groups or individuals to articulate ideas or perspectives that differ from or oppose dominant social discourses. Not adopting the ritual of ‘objectivity’ for example, would usually result in a journalist’s story being labelled as unusable and thereby excluded from publication (see discussion on objectivity later in this chapter).

O’Sullivan et al suggest that more recent approaches to the study of professions and professionalism have argued that these concepts need to be examined in the context of the power relations that determine their definition and practice. According to Johnson (1972 cited in O’Sullivan et al 1997:245), “a profession is not, then, an occupation, but a means of controlling an occupation.” The anti-functionalist approach evolved from its early perspective of professionalism as a “form of imperialism” (Ilich 1973:633-5) which “turned active citizens into passive consumers” (Nordenstreng 1998:126) to a Neo-Weberian approach which analysed professionalism in terms of market, rather than social, power – examining “how the professions had succeeded in gaining a monopoly position in the market of services” (Kontinnen 1989:175, also see Beam 1990: 2, Abbott 1988).

Various anti-functionalist studies have examined the complex forces that influence the way in which professionalism is defined and practised – arguing that, far from being a neutral measure of specialised skill and behavioural competency, professionalism is profoundly ideological and, as such, deeply contested (see McNair 1998, Elliot 1987, Golding 1977). As an occupation primarily concerned with the production (or reproduction) of knowledge and, thereby, the prioritisation of particular cultural norms and values, journalism arguably requires the legitimacy of professional status in order to remain credible (Elliott 1977:150). But journalism’s status as a ‘profession’ is itself contested (Wu, Weaver and Johnson

1996:535, Dahlgren 1992:8, Beam 1990:1, Hallin 2000: 220, Shoemaker and Reese 1991). According to Wu, Weaver and Johnson (1996:535), the validity of journalism's claim to professional status depends on the criteria used to judge it. Manoff and Schudson (1986:6) define journalism as "a form of fiction operating out of its own conventions and understandings and within its own set of sociological, ideological and literary constraints" and locate these 'constraints' within the broad categories of ideology, organisational influences and literary conventions. Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey suggest that journalists' relationships to media organisations are a significant factor in the separation of journalism from other professions, arguing that while medical and legal professionals can operate without organisational support, "journalists are almost totally dependent on organisations for dissemination of their products" (1979:753). The journalist may then experience conflict between an individual commitment to the idea of "journalism for the public good" and a commitment to the news organisation in which he or she operates (see Beam 1990:8, Johnstone et al 1976).

At this point it is useful to return to the differing understandings of professionalism offered by functionalist and anti-functionalist approaches, which Nordenstreng identifies an "media-centric" and "citizen-centric" respectively. On the most simple level of analysis, if one defines journalism's role in society according to the "public sphere"/ "fourth estate" model offered by liberal pluralism, then journalism's professional status is arguably legitimated by its "public service" function (see Emery 1972; Alexander 1981). If, however, journalism is scrutinised according to the anti-functionalist understanding of professionalism as a socially biased means of legitimising society's intellectual and material status quo, then its evaluation as a "profession" becomes more fraught. Not only is the idea of professional autonomy in journalism undermined, but the label of "professional" – in the liberal pluralist sense of being public service-oriented – is compromised. Besides supporting particular ideological aims and understandings, functionalist concepts of professionalism that embrace objectivity, fairness and the promotion of pluralism as the core values that govern journalism's 'professional identity' may disregard the organisational and social forces that impact on how journalists are enabled or retarded in their ability to operate as autonomous 'professionals' (Gallagher 1982:153).

Though anti-functionalist approaches enable greater awareness of professionalism as an agent for the reproduction of inequitable social structures and relations, they tend to focus on how

socially legitimated professions – such as law and medicine – exclude and undermine the ability of ‘non-professionals’ to operate within certain social areas. As discussed previously, they tend to focus on how professions gain a monopoly on the right to perform particular social functions, thereby excluding certain groups. This thesis differs in its approach, looking at how the construction of journalistic ‘professionalism’ limits, privileges and marginalizes particular discourses and discursive forms within the construction of journalistic narratives – thereby perpetuating patterns of social domination within the sphere of cultural production. It sees media ‘professionals’ not as a socially unified group pursuing self-oriented goals, but as a collective of differentially socially positioned subjects who have their very sense of capability and operation within the newsroom environment limited by their relationship to an ideologically fraught concept of ‘professionalism’. This thesis therefore focuses on the ability of ‘professionalism’ to perpetuate discursive marginalisation (see Foucault 1972, Giroux 1993, Fairclough 1995).

In its critique of the mainstream media concept of journalism ‘professionalism’, this thesis adopts Curran’s (1996) radical democratic model of journalism as its basis for understanding media’s ideal social role. Curran (1996:55) identifies the radical democratic analysis as focused on how mass communications should “mediate in an equitable way conflict and competition between different groups in society”. According to this perspective, genuine media pluralism is to be appreciated because “it is a solvent which tends to dissolve dominant myths in society” and “makes available multiple definitions of collective interest” rather than proclaiming “a single ‘national interest’ that can mask and universalise a dominant class interest” (Curran 1996:57).

The following section examines the way in which traditionally upheld tenets of journalistic ‘professionalism’ – and the forms and methods commonly understood to manifest such ideals within the news narrative – may enact and enable the domination of particular social discourses within commercial media texts.

Ideology and the Production of Knowledge: Objectivity and News Values

Bekken (1998:27) argues that the professionalisation of journalism has led to the “twin doctrines of Objectivity and Social Responsibility” becoming the world’s “prevailing press ideology”. Drawing on Carey’s (1969) essay ‘The Communications Revolution and the

Professional Communicator”, Bekken suggests that the contemporary communicator “no longer communicates on his or her behalf, speaking the truth as she sees it” (1998:27). Rather, “communicators become technicians – professionals – charged with conveying information and opinions according to established criteria” (1998:27). As Carey argues: “The canons of objectivity turn the journalist into a professional communicator; from an independent observer and critic to a relatively passive link in a communication chain” (1969:33 cited in Bekken 1998:28). According to Bekken, the role of the ‘objective’ journalist is simply to serve as a conduit for elite interests, with little to no opportunity for media workers to offer their own particular perceptions or opinions. He argues that journalism’s ‘crusading’ potential is no longer a prominent part of the “prevailing press ideology” in democratic society or even “particularly respectable” (1998:27).

Curran (1991:98) argues that the concept of ‘media professionalism’ was embraced by developed world media as “a way of reconciling market flaws with the traditional conception of the democratic role of the media”. According to Curran, by positing the ‘professional’ journalist as the guardian of public interest – and positioning him or her as the ‘counterweight’ to internal and external integrity-threatening and largely commercial media influences – the “cult of professionalism” ensures the rehabilitation of media’s democratic role “without structural reform” (1991: 98-99). Arguably, the genesis of the concept of journalistic professionalism as a compromise between the inherent structural biases of the market and the media’s supposed ‘public service’ role ultimately leaves it on ideologically shaky ground (also see Elliott 1987:147). Curran further argues that the idea that journalists will behave as autonomous professionals, operating with the ‘public interest’ as their principle motivation, fails to acknowledge how the specific contexts within which journalists operate can “influence – and even distort – their definition of professionalism” (1991:99 also see Tuchman 1978, McNair 1998, Louw 2001, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001).

Professionalism arguably works as a means of ensuring the unquestioned prevalence of particular discursive forms and, thereby, the dominance of the ideologies that shape them. As Golding argues in his study of the development of Nigerian broadcast journalists:

Less tangible or explicit than either organisation or training are the contextual values and assumptions built into the very ethos of media professionalism as it is transferred to developing countries. These values generate both general ‘philosophies’ of broadcasting and specific understandings about correct and laudable practice in the production of mass media” (1977; cited in Uche 1991:5).

Arguably, the 'slickness' of developed world media not only set universal 'technical' standards, but also encourages developing world media "to emulate (developed world media) in style, philosophy and format" (1977; cited in Uche 1991:5).

Objectivity

This thesis suggests that there is a tendency within much liberal pluralist media theory to emphasise the normative aspects of 'professional' journalism's ideal social role and ethical priorities – and to treat the 'techniques' believed to embody them as taken-for-granted and unproblematic (see Pulitzer 1904, Lippmann 1920). This treats journalism as a simple process of 'news production', where certain tried-and-trusted methods of content assemblage are guaranteed to produce a perfectly 'balanced' and 'objective' story – not unlike the narrative version of an assembly line car. Any perceived failure to achieve 'balance' can then be blamed on the individual ineptitude of the journalist, who failed to 'follow the formula' (see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:75). But, as several theorists argue, journalism does not produce a material product – instead, it produces (and reproduces) both the narratives that inform certain dominant worldviews and the terms by which they are recognised as legitimate (see Cohen and Young 1973, Hall 1982, Gallagher 1982, Fairclough 1995, Schudson 2000, Goldsmiths Media Group 2000). Arguably, one of the principle means by which mainstream commercial journalism achieves its legitimacy is through its emphasis on 'objectivity' as a central tenet of its operation. 'Objectivity' is advocated as a 'technique' that will ensure that journalism is 'balanced' and without bias – and, as such, the ideology of objectivity itself is disguised beneath its assumed journalistic function (Bennett 1982:306). By advocating 'objectivity' as both a normative standard and the technique that will achieve that standard, liberal pluralist theory arguably closes it off from potential questioning and critical examination (see Rosen 1999:36, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:74). Instead of interrogating the discursive patterns that construct objectivity and are perpetuated by it, evaluation of the legitimacy of media narratives tends to measure how they succeed or fail to measuring up to its criteria (see Lichtenberg 2000:245). As Schudson (2000:178) argues:

An especially complex question concerns whether one should find distressing, and try to explain, the deviation from 'fair' or 'objective' reporting or, instead, should find disturbing and try to understand how it is that 'fair', 'objective' reporting presents a portrait of the world in tune with the views of dominant groups in society" (also see Fowler 1991).

Debatably, journalistic professionalism's traditional strongly stated commitments to the supposedly 'neutral' values of objectivity, fairness and the promotion of pluralism continue to exert a powerful influence on how journalistic professionalism is understood today (see Beam 1990, Keeble 2001; Rampal 1996, McQuail 1991, Schudson 2000, Lichtenberg 2000). In much contemporary media theory, however, objectivity appears to have lost the romance of its depictions as journalism's moral centre and has been critiqued as everything from a pragmatic response to newsroom demands (Tuchman 1972) to a means of justifying the political apathy of modern mainstream journalism (Hochheimer 2001). Although the ability to be 'objective' is often presented as a common-sense and 'natural' trait of journalistic 'professionalism', objectivity is itself informed by a complex social and political history (see Chalaby 1996, Louw 2001). Several theorists (White 1995, McNair 1998) have argued persuasively that the status of objectivity as a central journalistic aim is premised on a positivistic faith in 'absolute truth'; a belief that "reality is accessible by simple observation" (Entman 1989:50). According to Bryman (1988:15), positivism implies that "only those phenomena which are observable....can validly be warranted as knowledge."

Post-modern critiques of objectivity argue that it is a flawed premise precisely because it assumes that a finite 'reality' exists beyond human experience of the world (also see Carey 1989:26). As Molotch and Lester (1974:111) argue, the version of 'reality' produced in media narratives is not a reflection of the 'objective' world, but rather "the political work by which events are constituted by those who happen to currently hold power" (also see MacKinnon 1982:537). For journalists, the positivistic ethos of objectivity asks that they divorce their personal responses to their subjects from their direct observation of them – and, perhaps more damagingly, suggests that their capacity to emphasise or identify with that subject compromises their professionalism (see MacDonald 1971:81, Schudson 1978: 151-152, Rosen 1999:36). Ironically, the critique offered by Molotch and Lester suggest 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 understandings of the world. They simply adopt the 'bias' of a socially legitimated perspective. 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' (see Barron 1975, Kelley and Donway 1990) – by revering a 'technique' for symbolising 'difference' rather than the expression of that difference itself (Tracey 1978, Curran 1991: 97-98 and also see Curran 1996, 2000 for a critique of the liberal pluralist model of the media).

Several theorists have focused on objectivity's pragmatic value to both the organisational functioning of the newsroom and the legitimacy of journalistic narratives. McNair (1998:65) argues that the idea of objectivity, though "the oldest and still the key legitimating professional ethic of liberal journalism" is simply "a guarantee of quality control which asks us to believe that what is being said is valid and believable." McQuail (1991:75) defines objectivity as "a particular form of media *practice* and also a particular attitude to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination" (emphasis original). Tuchman (1972) describes objectivity as an occupational practice that serves not to defend the public interest, but to protect journalists themselves. According to Tuchman (1972:660): "To journalists, like social scientists, the term 'objectivity' stands as a bulwark between themselves and critics." She proposes that objectivity should be understood as a "strategic ritual" invoked by journalists almost as a sort of talisman against potential censure. Tuchman defines 'ritual' as being a "routine procedure which has relatively little or only tangential relevance to the end sought" (1972:661). By invoking ritual as protection against potential criticism and by using it as a means of maintaining routines subscribed by the "cognitive limits of rationality" (March and Simons 1967:137), Tuchman further argues that journalists are pursuing a 'strategy' or protective tactic. Objectivity may then 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.

Despite its pragmatic utility within the newsroom, objectivity is often described as one of the central 'professional ethics' of journalism, elevating its status to that of a moral guiding occupational practice. Christians (1977) argues that professional ethics essentially stress a 'neutral' positivistic objectivity as the basis for ethical evaluation – effectively denying the opportunity for media ethics to be discussed within a wider frame of moral discourse. As a result, the "discourse of public media performance" has been defined and understood in "essentially amoral, functionalistic, instrumental, utilitarian terms rather than as cultural and moral issues" (White 1995:444). In his examination of journalistic 'professional ethics', White (1995:441) argues that they have traditionally been defined as "the norms which bind 'the individual conscience' of the practitioner in the media workplace". In an argument similar to Curran's (1991), White suggests that one of the central contradictions inherent in the "individualistic perception of media and 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" (1995:442). Far from bringing about media reform, White suggests that the professionalisation of journalism and the "definition of ethics in terms of professional codes" has constrained and deformed notions of media morality (1995:443), encouraging "conformity to media organisation routines" and discouraging the exploration of "broader cultural questions" (1995:443). White's argument would seem to suggest that the signification 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 (also see Schudson 1978, Beam 1990).

Certain theorists have taken the view that the social disengagement advocated by supporters of objectivity breeds a lack of empathy with the very humanity that journalism should seek to serve. Gabel describes objectivity 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). Gabel suggests 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. The compromise, he argues, "is to watch (the community) – with all the excitement that 'watching it' implies – in a voyeuristic way" (Gabel 2000:197). Hochheimer argues that, by emphasising the need for journalism students to become 'objective observers', journalism education turns these students "against the very humanity they are charged to represent" (2001:101). Observation, with its connotations of scientific detachment, arguably reduces the status of the 'observed' to that of an object, enabling the observer to define and explain the circumstances of a community – with little or no real understanding of its complex conditions of existence.

Several of these criticisms of objectivity suggest that its claim to produce a 'balanced' reflection of 'reality' can serve as an extremely powerful agent of social and discursive domination – precisely because the terms by which it is defined and is seen to function seem to deny the possibility of ideological influence (see Tuchman 1972, Schudson 1978). As Fairclough (1995:83) argues, news narratives may enact the "design" of objectivity – by including diverse sources, for example – but the "framing" of such sources can significantly affect how they are interpreted. This thesis suggests that the idea of searching for 'truth' in journalism cannot be conflated with the techniques of 'objective' journalism, which often consist of constructing oppositions, simplifying complex social realities and pre-structuring

reader recognition of certain dominant common-sense assumptions – rather than questioning those assumptions (see Lichtenberg 2000 for a refutation of this argument). Partly, this is because mainstream news production is tightly constrained within limits of time and space and requires certain organisational routines in order to operate according to commercial notions of efficiency (Curran 1991:98 McNair 1998, McQuail 1991, Gitlin 1983, Inglis 1990). Certainly, it is because the appearance of objectivity protects news organisations from accusations of bias – and, more financially damagingly, the possibility of legal action. Perhaps, most 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 (see Curran 1991:99) – and casts those who may deviate from that method as ‘non-objective’, ‘biased’ and ‘unprofessional’ (Beam 1991). The ‘professional’ ideal becomes premised on “the form, rather than the content of the message” (Elliott 1977:151).

News Values

While ‘objectivity’ possesses a powerful hold over the concept of what constitutes journalistic ‘professionalism’, the measurement of a journalist’s ‘natural ability’ is arguably strongly linked to his or her ability to ‘recognise a good story’ or display good ‘news values’ (see Bell 1991:147). Central to the construction of a mainstream news product is the process by which an event’s specifically chosen elements are selected, combined and defined as a particular form of ‘story’ (see Palmer 1998:432-436, Shoemaker 1991). Integral to the success of this process is the journalist’s ability to perceive not only the elements that could make an occurrence worthy of newsdesk interest, but to construct these elements into a form that ‘fits’ a particular news genre (hard news or features, for example) – thereby shaping how they will be discursively and materially located within the publication (Tuchman 1974). Arguably, this process requires the journalist to manifest his or her grasp of culturally defined notions of what constitutes ‘news’ and its genre categories – thereby tacitly demonstrating a sharing of dominant newsroom ‘common-sense’ (see Bell 1991:155-157). Central to the effectiveness of this value-laden exercise in discursive reproduction is a denial of its own ideology - a belief that ‘reality’ exists ‘out there’ and can be linguistically captured (see Sonderling 1998:18, 20 and Fairclough 1992:87).

‘News values’ are arguably often then cast as evidence of ‘natural’ ability, subtly reinforcing the newsroom common-sense myth that “good journalists are born, not made” – and,

arguably, serving as an exclusionary mechanism for those individuals who fail to display it (see Bourdieu 1990b). The supposedly instinctual quality of good 'news sense' effectively denies any potential for explication, as, to ask for explanation would be to admit to a deficit in one's 'professional' biology. As Hall (1973:181) argues: "News values are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society. All 'true journalists' are supposed to possess it: few can or are willing to identify and define it" (also see Fowler 1991:12-17). Tuchman (1972:672) describes news values as "the sacred knowledge, the secret ability...which differentiates (the journalist) from other people." She argues that using news judgement to justify the process of news selection is "an inherently defensive stance, for 'news judgement' is the ability to choose 'objectively' between and among competing 'facts', to decide which facts are more 'important' or 'interesting'" (1972: 670, also see Louw 2001, Shoemaker 1991:21-23).

The construction of the 'professional' journalist as an individual who possesses 'news sense' remains a powerful part of journalistic mythology, but some theorists have argued that it serves as a 'coping mechanism' that enables news organisations to manage information flow, rather than to identify and publicise stories on the basis of social knowledge benefits (McNair 1998:77). Dahlgren (1992:10) draws on Golding and Elliott (1979) to argue that news values are partly "*de facto* justifications of non-negotiable imperatives, i.e. they make virtue of organisational necessity" (see McNair 1998:77, Fowler 1991:20). In order to process the large amount of information available about daily events, Boyd (1988) suggests that journalists develop a supposedly 'instinctive' news sense, one that is actually acquired during the professionalisation process through training, peer group pressure and newsroom discipline (see Louw 2001).

'Objectivity' and 'news values' – supposedly two of the principle markers of journalistic 'professionalism' – appear then to manifest the contradictions of the 'professionalism' concept itself. Though both constructs are understood to be means of ensuring the liberal pluralist ideal of media as 'fourth estate' and 'public watch dog', the vague and almost mythic shrouding of their form and operation belie the very 'science' they are premised upon (see Schudson 2000: 192-193). Not only is the discursive construction of objectivity problematic in the relationship that it constructs between 'reality' and its depiction in mainstream media, but it arguably perpetuates an understanding of the world that denies the possible validity of other perspectives – precisely because it claims for itself the label, method and common-sense

acceptability of 'science' (see Curran 1991: 101, Hallin 1985, Fowler 1991). This thesis suggests that a deeper understanding of journalistic 'professionalism' requires an examination of its common-sense ethics and practices as aspects of particular discursive strategies that both privilege and marginalise certain ways of understanding the world (see Schudson 2000:194, Hallin 2000:227, Giroux 1993:162). Rather than measuring the 'professionalism' of journalists in terms of their ability to reproduce the techniques and narratives of so-called 'objective' journalism and to exercise good 'news sense' (see Elliott 1977:149-150) – and labelling any resistance to such practices as 'professional failure' (Kumar 1975) – this thesis suggests that the construction of 'professionalism' itself needs to be evaluated (see Nordenstreng 1998:128).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine the concept of professionalism as it applies to the practice of journalism, suggesting that the notion of journalistic professionalism needs to be understood as an ideological, rather than technical, means of privileging and perpetuating dominant social discourses. In the following chapter, this thesis examines journalism training in South Africa. It looks at how the country's focus on social transformation may have enabled greater demographic diversity in newsrooms, but suggests that this 'diversity' has not translated into greater discursive variance – due largely to the continued dominance of particular mainstream media discourses. It interrogates how dominant notions of 'professionalism' are 'spoken through' historically oppressed journalists, arguably serving to socialise them into positions of social marginalisation within the newsroom's material and discursive environment. It asks how and why the notion of 'technical' training has been constructed almost as a form of 'magic' capable of 'correcting' the results of racist Apartheid educational policies, where newsroom ideals of professionalism seem to remain static. Lastly, it will suggest that, if journalism is to encourage change, and be changed itself, it cannot rely on the narrative forms and techniques by which it was productively defined in a pre-transformation society (see Laclau 1990).

Chapter Three: Training

Introduction

The previous chapter adopted a critical approach to the concept of journalistic 'professionalism', using Foucault's theories around knowledge and power to suggest that journalistic 'professionalism' is not based upon ideologically neutral 'technical' skills and competencies that are easily accessible to those willing to learn them. Rather, it argued that the veneration of the commercial mainstream media construction of professionalism – as constituted by 'objectivity' and newsroom-defined 'news values' – serves as a means of privileging certain discursive practices and their claims to represent 'reality' over others (see Fairclough 1995, Shor and Freire 1987, De Uriate et al 2003). The previous chapter problematised the liberal pluralist model of media as 'public watchdog', suggesting that commercial mainstream media predominantly function, not as 'neutral' disseminators of 'knowledge', but as the means by which certain occurrences, values and common-sense are constructed and legitimised as 'knowledge' (see Hall 1982:64). As such, it serves as a 'watchdog' for the interests of certain socially dominant 'publics' and acts to further ensure the 'naturalness' of that domination (see Curran 1991, Schudson 2000). It argued that the construction of journalistic professionalism arguably endorses the legitimacy of particular dominant social discourses and the practices, language and behaviour that enact them – and, simultaneously, undermines the legitimacy of positions and forms discursively different from its own (see Hall 1982, Foucault 1972, Fairclough 1995, Giroux 1993, Apple 1996 and 1993, Bourdieu 1991). Utilising Fairclough's (1995) work on mainstream media discourse and its ideological work, the previous chapter examined the construction of 'objectivity' and 'news values' within journalism mythology and attempted to understand how such discourse perpetuates both the privileging and marginalisation of particular 'ways of being' and ways of understanding the world (see Hall 1973, Curran 1991).

This chapter examines journalism training in a South Africa in the midst of a struggle for social and discursive change (see Louw 1991, Marais 1998, Berger 2000, Steenveld 1998, Deegan 1999, Fordred-Green 2000). It examines how the continued dominance of particular mainstream media constructions of 'professionalism' has affected both the arguable Eurocentric hegemony of mainstream South African media and the realisation of greater ideological diversity in the country's more demographically differentiated newsrooms. It suggests that dominant notions of 'professionalism' – rather than securing the expression of

diverse discourses – work instead to marginalise journalists from non-middle-class backgrounds, where English is often not spoken as a first language, into positions of social marginalisation within the newsroom (see Louw 2001:159-160, De Uriate et al 2003). Drawing on several recent evaluative reports on the capabilities of South African entry-level journalists (Forbes 1995, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Taole 1997 and De Beer and Steyn 2002), this chapter argues that many of South Africa's new generation of entry-level journalists – particularly those from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language – have been described largely in terms of their apparent 'skills deficits'. It examines the underlying ideological assumptions that may influence these understandings, suggesting that particular social biases, such as those of class and gender – play a large part in their construction (see Sayer 1992:95, Janks and Ivanic 1992, Bourdieu 1990b:109, Hall 1982). It also questions why so little attention has been paid to the perceptions and experiences of entry-level oppressed journalists themselves. Arguably, such an omission potentially encourages the construction of journalists as the mute and largely anonymous objects of 'professional' evaluation – but never questions how they themselves construct the 'professional' ideal or relate to its dominant newsroom construction (see Shoemaker and Mayfield 1987, Louw 2001).

Finally, this chapter suggests that journalism training should enable entry-level journalists to operate with a more critical awareness of the discourses that both shape how they construct news narratives and how they themselves are constructed as 'professionals'. It suggests that, while mentoring schemes and writing programmes may improve the confidence of journalists from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, such teaching must be accompanied by critical awareness of the ideological structuring of 'standard' language use and news narrative conventions (see Fairclough 1992a, 1992b, Janks and Ivanic 1992, Giroux 1993, Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, Shor and Freire 1987, Hall 1982, Sonderling 1998). Rather than attributing newsroom marginalisation experiences to a personal lack of skill or intelligence, such theoretical insight may enable entry-level journalists to recognise and effectively challenge the strategies informing such evaluation – critically understanding the 'rules' of commercial knowledge production, so that they may be able to appropriate and subvert them (see Bourdieu 1991, Hall 1982). Only then will South African media start enacting the greater discursive diversity that their demographically altered newsrooms are arguably struggling to achieve (see Fordred-Green 2000, Steenveld 1998, also see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:105,188).

At the base of any examination and evaluation of journalism training lie the questions: ‘What are we training for? What is the ultimate end of journalistic teaching?’ As was suggested in the previous chapter, the conceptual construction of the journalistic ‘professional’ – particularly in South Africa as a transitional society – is a site of considerable discursive struggle. This struggle for power over the definition, practice and purpose of journalism education appears, however, to be increasingly concentrated in the hands of the mainstream media industry – both internationally and locally (see Ledbetter 1997, Reese and Cohen 2000, Potter 1999, Medsger 1996, Addison 1995, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Louw and Verwey 1999, Molotch and Lester 1981:133). The following section attempts to provide an overview of local and international debates over the ideal constitution and role of journalism education, suggesting that such debates manifest not only struggles to define journalism’s social purpose – but also demonstrate who has the power to set the terms for that definition.

**The Struggle for Purpose:
The who, what, why and how of modern journalism education**

Discussion around journalism training in America has consisted of increasingly pressing questions around the value, relevance and composition of tertiary level journalism education courses (Henry 1999; Kees 1996, Blanchard and Christ 1985, Medsger 1996). Some media thinkers have argued that the critical skills developed by theoretically focused courses are essential in enabling students to become thoughtful consumers and producers of media (Hynes 2001, Black 1995). Others argue that the capacity of media education for the development of critical thinking has been compromised by an increasing focus on meeting the ‘skills’ demands of commercial media (see Shor and Freire 1987:67, Ledbetter 1997). Arguably, much contemporary analysis of journalism education tends to evaluate its success or failure on the basis of its value to the media industry, rather than critiquing its potential to fulfil a public service role (see Potter 1999, Kees 1996, Addison 1995, Budd 1985).

Reese and Cohen (2000:213) argue that professional journalism education has produced a generation of students who are “increasingly disengaged from the democratic process”, as well as from the social responsibility ideal that journalism embodies in classic liberal pluralist theory. They argue that the concept of professionalism, as used by many educators, frequently denotes a concentration on “occupational ‘hands-on’ skills, as distinguished from more purely academic or theory-based endeavours” (2000:217), ignoring the deeper social responsibilities ascribed to the liberal pluralist conception of professionalism (see Beam 1990). Further, they

suggest that “what often gets called ‘professional’ within academic programmes may often indeed be more aptly described as vocationalism to the extent that it involves learning by emulation” (2000:217, also see Giroux 1987:3, Apple and Zenk 1996 and Fairclough’s 1990 discussion on the technologisation of discourse). They argue that the value of basic ‘technical’ training in undergraduate journalism education to industry “lies in subsidising a role that industry would otherwise have to assume to create a productive entry-level workforce”(2000:213, also see Freire and Macedo 1987, Apple and Oliver 1996, Giroux 1993, Giroux 2003). Pursuing an ideal liberal pluralist model of journalism as the ‘fourth estate’, they argue that the aim of journalism education “should ultimately be to improve the practice of journalism and thereby the democratic process in which it is rooted” (2000:214). Instead, it would seem that much contemporary ‘professional’ journalism education is striving to pre-socialise its students to become efficient producers of generic ‘content forms’ – without any problematisation of those ‘forms’ and their social implications (see Fairclough 1990).

Ledbetter argues that American journalism schools are “struggling to define their very purpose” and are “unsure of how, and what, they should teach or whether they should even exist” (1997:1). This crisis has found its most powerful expression in the debate around whether journalism should be part of an integrated marketing and communications course, rather than existing as an area of study in its own right. In her exploration of the challenges confronting contemporary journalism education, Medsger (1996) notes that the “strongest winds of change” in the field are pushing for journalism education to exist as an academic discipline that can be merged into “communication courses”. These courses would be “designed not to prepare journalists – people with a mission to stimulate public discourse and serve the public interest – but to prepare generic communicators who could be hired to serve any interest” (1996:5). Essentially driven by an economic imperative to ensure that courses are attractive to prospective students – enabling them to find employment in the media industry – journalism educators have been forced to regard industry needs as pivotal to the way in which their courses are structured and run (Ledbetter 1997, De Uriate et al 2003).

Locating the ‘journalist versus generalist’ debate within the context of contemporary South African journalism education, it can be argued that, as in America, journalism’s uncertain professional status and purpose in South African society has left journalism education and its purpose open to contestation. If journalism is approached as an occupation with significant social responsibilities, requiring a complex understanding of both society and the media, then

a critical theoretical education which teaches mainstream journalism forms with insight into what their discourses “do in the world” (Grossberg 1998:27) becomes important. If, however, journalism is approached as one area of specialisation within the sphere of ‘communication for profit’, then teaching the strategies and practices of commercial communication is arguably more profitable. While this is an obviously simplified comparison, it nevertheless forms the basis for one of the most significant debates in contemporary South African journalism education: that between technikon and university-based teaching.

Louw and Verwey (1999:82) argue that the growing popularity of technikon education is premised on the perception that “education that is career-orientated is more useful to society than the more liberal university education”, a perception that seems to equate social needs with the requirements of the media and communication industry (see Giroux 2003, Fairclough 1995). Addison (1995:151) comments that media employers often have an expectation that technikon-trained journalists will be “job-ready from the moment they walk into a newsroom”. He suggests that this preference for technikon-trained journalists is based on a belief that “technikon trainees are likely to accept the pay scales and news values of their employers and to work within the given media system without undue complaint” (1995:152). As noted by Louw and Verwey (1999:83), the incorporation of internships and practical workplace training into technikon course curricula is part of the industry-technikon partnership widely accepted as preparing students for the workplace. This approach’s emphasis on journalism as a primarily ‘technical’ occupation arguably serves to perpetuate the uncritical acceptance of knowledge construction as a ‘neutral’ and unproblematic process (see Hall 1982, Apple 1982:47-48, Shoemaker and Mayfield 1981, Louw 2001, Sonderling 1998). In doing so, it casts ‘efficiency’ – the ability to quickly and easily manufacture particular news ‘forms’ – as professionally more desirable than ‘efficacy’ – the ability to challenge how people are taught to understand and respond to the world (see McLaren 2001:115, McLaren and Leonard 1993, Apple and Oliver 1996:54). Forbes (1995:129) argues that one of the shortfalls of ‘on-the-job’ training is that “the traditional way of training journalists without relating to other mass media or criticism of the media, limits not only the individual but also the Corporation”. Forbes argues that ‘on-the-job’ training limits entry-level journalists to continually going through organisationally defined motions, requiring them to “merely package the news” without any creative thinking” (1995: 129). Nonetheless, Forbes orientates his argument towards his perception of industry’s need for more “creative” content, without exploring how theoretical media teaching might enable entry-level journalists

to subvert newsroom categorisation and strategically challenge dominant news discourses (see McLaren 2001, Nain 2001). Forbes justifies the value of theoretical teaching as potentially useful to industry, thereby supporting the notion that the ultimate end of journalism education is to meet industry needs.

Training in contemporary South Africa – which will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter – has been largely shaped by a ‘training as transformation’ discourse. In common with much liberal pluralist theorising on diversity in South African newsrooms (see Berger 2000), the ‘transformation discourse’ in American journalism education has largely centred on how education can enable greater ‘minority representation’ – defined largely in terms of numerical presence – in both journalism education and media organisations (Stone 1984, McGill 1999, Phipps 1998, Neuwirth 1998, Hernandez 1995, also see De Uriate et al 2003). As De Uriate et al (2003:vii) argue, such approaches equate the integration of ‘minority’ journalists, “inclusion of those populations historically subject to segregation by law and de facto”, with diversity – “difference in perspective as the result of different race, class, history, social and gender experience”. In casting demographic difference as both evidencing and generating discursive diversity – referred to as “intellectual diversity” by De Uriate et al – these approaches consider “genetic diversity” to be “a sort of pigment-based guarantee of different perspectives”, ignoring a journalistic ‘professionalisation’ process that “requires a consensus definition of newsworthiness” (De Uriate et al 2003:5, also see hooks 1994, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001).

At this point it is worth noting that, although South Africa’s historically oppressed journalists are from the country’s ethnic majority, their position within mainstream newspapers is arguably that of a discursive ‘minority’ and can arguably be compared to the experiences of ‘minority’ journalists in America (see Apple 1996:25). Further, both American and South African media enact and are enacted by resistance to and repetition of historic patterns of formalised racism – where naturalised ‘professional’ discourses of white middle-class conservatism continue to define the terms by which discursive validity of ‘professional’ journalism is measured (see Gans 1979, Giroux 1992, Gabriel 1998, De Uriate et al 2003). It would appear, however, that American academic literature demonstrates a greater tendency to examine the experiences and perceptions of ‘minority’ journalists (Newkirk 2000, De Uriate et al 2003, Nelson 1993) – providing perspectives of lived struggles against marginalisation that are noticeably absent from South African journalism studies. In contrast to the idealised

liberal pluralist conception of discursive diversity as automatically guaranteed by demographic difference, the experiences of so-called 'minority' journalists in American newsrooms have denied this logic (see Nelson 1993, Newkirk 2000, Neuwirth 1998, De Uriate et al 2003). As Herb Frazier, an African American journalist and Knight International Press Fellow notes: "One of the searing effects of racism, is that it undermines one's sense of self-confidence. My training and work experience did not set aside a nagging question in my mind. Am I here because I am good at what I do, or am I here because I am black?" (2002:36). Frazier refers to the "cultural double-vision" that W.E.B. Du Bois wrote about in *The Souls of Black Folk*, where Du Bois described being black in America as always seeing "oneself through the eyes of others" (cited in Frazier 2002:37). This "cultural double-vision", Frazier argues, left him "uncertain" about whether his sense of professional journalistic achievement was justified or whether he was "merely window dressing in what would otherwise be an all-white newsroom" (2002:37).

It is the argument of this thesis that the process whereby journalists are granted 'professional' status and power within the newsroom is integrally linked to their ability to successfully adopt dominant norms and values, as well as to reproduce the 'standard' forms and discourses of the news organisation – which, arguably in both South Africa and America, are primarily oriented to conservative middle-class understandings of the world (see Gans 1979, Gready 1990, Prinsloo 2001, Sonderling 1998, Louw 2001, Choonoo 1997, Davis 1997, Marais 1998, McGreal 1999, De Uriate 2003). While this complex process involves varying degrees of struggle for the journalists negotiating their way through it, it is perhaps easiest for those who share the dominant newsroom discourses to adapt to news production rituals with little sense of uncertainty or contradiction – because they share what Bourdieu describes as social and cultural 'capital' with those who have 'symbolic power', or "the power of 'world making'" (1990b:137, see Davis 1997, Choonoo 1997). The ultimate power of such shared social-cultural knowledge and perspective is realised when it becomes 'symbolic capital', when it is "misrecognised in its arbitrary truth as capital and recognised as legitimate" (Bourdieu 1990b:112). Social-cultural capital becomes symbolically powerful when the behavioural and articulatory manifestations of a privileged class position are "socially recognised...on the basis of a principle that tends to appear innate, instinctive, as a 'natural gift'" – and which works to subtly legitimate social racism against those who labour to emulate it (Bourdieu 1990b:109, see Hall 1982:62-63).

The following section examines the ‘professional’ evaluation of South Africa’s new generation of entry-level journalists – particularly those from non-middle class historically oppressed communities, where English is frequently not spoken as a first language – as implicated in a deeper struggle for the ‘power to define’ a transitional society. It looks at how the construction and framing of the apparent ‘skills deficit’ among entry-level journalists may serve as a means of perpetuating the marginalisation of certain socially, economically and politically situated individuals and simultaneously justify that marginalisation through application of its own self-affirming ‘standards’ (see Fairclough 1992a, Bourdieu 1991, Giroux 1987). Further, it interrogates the discursive construction of ‘technical’ training as a simple means of ‘correcting’ such ‘deficits’ – without encouraging the critical awareness that could discursively challenge the dominant structures and common-sense that both birthed South Africa’s profound social inequality and defined its oppressed as ‘lacking’.

Defining by Deficit? Journalism and Professional ‘Standards’ in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Like its American counterpart, South African journalism education has arguably had its purpose and direction shaped by industry imperatives – with much debate in journalism education centring on how best to meet industry needs, rather than focusing on how to fulfil particular public service mandates (see Addison 1995, Thloloe 1995, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Louw and Verwey 1999). It could be said that newsroom transformation needs and the resultant drive to recruit and train journalists of colour have been significantly influenced by legislative and commercial imperatives (see Adams 2002).

Recent investigations into South African media training have concentrated on the apparent ‘skills deficit’ that exists among the country’s entry-level journalists – often suggesting the existence of a disparity between the “skills and competencies taught in the respective media educational facilities and what are required by media institutions” (Teer-Tomaselli 1995). In her investigation into media training in post-Apartheid South Africa, Teer-Tomaselli describes the most common complaint voiced by media professionals – in regards to university journalism education – as being its failure to provide journalists with “the practical know-how that they needed in the workplace” (1995:3, see Thloloe 1995:182, Roodt 1998:425). Common-sense notions of training, as discussed previously in this chapter, show a clear bias towards conceiving its purposes in ‘technical’ terms – without a significant examination of the values and ideology that load these ‘technical skills’ with meaning beyond

their surface neutrality. Teer-Tomaselli identifies the 'skills deficit' described by media professionals in terms of a deficit in "practical know-how" – specifically as a lack of the "most basic skills such as typing and the ability to write competent English articles". She goes on to paraphrase the concern of a newspaper deputy editor that the "main problem experienced by newspapers in this period of affirmative action type programmes is that many of the entry-level journalists are second language English speakers" (see Garman 1998). According to Teer-Tomaselli, this lack of first language skills "obviously causes a great deal of consternation among editors and deputy editors of English language newspapers who require and demand excellent English language skills." In his analysis of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's training programmes and procedures, Forbes (1995:114) states that "not being proficient in the mother tongue is viewed (by SABC trainers and managers) as a great deficiency". Dominant English-medium newsroom ideology manifests itself in the common-sense understanding of English as the "mother tongue", casting English language use and competency as a natural and completely reasonable expectation. Forbes quotes Tim Robson, then SABC Editor for Training and Quality Control, as saying that it was not the task of trainers – in English medium newsrooms – to educate people "in qualities they should have acquired through the normal education process" (1995:114), the "normal education process" being insinuated as one that ensures a certain kind of English language competency (see Heugh 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003a and 2003b for a critique on English mono-lingualism in South African schools).

Supposed language and 'professional' incompetence was effectively used to undermine the discursive validity of black journalists in mainstream commercial English-language newsrooms during the Apartheid era (see Patten 1997, Ntombela 1979, Battersby 1981). In an interview quoted in Patten (1997:50), former editor of *The Sowetan* Joe Latakomo demonstrated how the common-sense of mainstream Apartheid newsroom enacted its discursive marginalisation of black journalists by defining them as 'information-gatherers', rather than journalistic 'professionals'. Answering a question about whether he thought the labelling of black journalists as incompetent during the Apartheid was deserved, he responded: "I don't think incompetent in the gathering of news. They were good news hounds and I would vouch for them. They would get the facts and the information." In addition to demonstrating an approach to 'facts' and 'information' that denies the discursive character of their selection, combination and definition (also see Claasen 2000), Latakomo tacitly endorses a perception of black journalists as the providers of a raw 'information substance'

that would then be transformed into the final 'news product' by the newsroom's 'skilled' sub-editors. He seems to suggest that the often drastic intervention of mainstream news managers into the narrative constructions produced by black journalists had no potential to devalue the black journalist's confidence or 'professional' status in the newsroom. Further, Latakomo fails to interrogate the way in which the taken-for-grantedness of such intervention perpetuated the marginalisation of black journalists, precisely because it was never required to justify its own validity. Interestingly, Latakomo does acknowledge a political element to black journalists' struggle for 'professional' legitimacy. He points out that the ease with which mainstream newspapers accepted the 'police version' of events left so-called 'black' publications like *The World* or *The Sowetan* "out on a limb", because black journalists would often write vastly different accounts of the same events, which they witnessed directly (also see Davis 1997). According to Latakomo (in Patten 1997:50): "(Publications like *The World* and *The Sowetan*) looked the odd man out, and therefore there must be something wrong with reporters." Latakomo's account exposes the way in which the news values and ideological perceptions of mainstream 'white' media perpetuated wider social margins in their prioritisation of 'official' accounts over those offered by black journalists during Apartheid – and demonstrates just how effectively dominant constructions of 'reality' can enforce marginality on alternate perspectives, by dialectically casting their non-mainstream genesis, form and lack of social authority as the very causes of such marginalisation.

Arguably, the ideological dimensions and implications of how 'skill' and 'professionalism' are measured have received little attention in media research. Rather, as will be shown in the example of the South African National Editors' Forum "2002 South African National Journalism Skills Audit", a certain construction of journalistic 'skill' is taken as an unassailable 'fact' in its own right and used as the basis by which journalistic competence is measured. The South African National Editors' Forum "2002 South African National Journalism Skills Audit" attempted to identify and quantify "certain skills that junior reporters...might lack when they enter the media from universities, technikons or other tertiary training institutions." The audit aimed to "conduct a situation analysis of journalism reporting, writing and accuracy skills among reporters with between 2 and 5 years experience" (De Beer and Steyn 2002:1). It concluded that, amongst other things, tertiary training needed to address entry-level journalists' "lack of basic practical skills", including lack of accuracy, poor interviewing techniques, poor research methods, bad spelling and punctuation and problems with multi-skilling. The report also identified a "lack of conceptual

skills” as a problem area that should be addressed on a tertiary training level. ‘Conceptual skills’ were defined as consisting of “analytical and critical skills”, “creativity” and “general knowledge” (2002:62). The Audit has been criticised for its methodological sloppiness (see Steenveld 2003), but it provides an important illustration of just how unexamined and naturalised constructions of ‘professionalism’ can be used to reproduce socially dominant notions of what constitutes ‘knowledge’ and its legitimate forms (see, for example, Claasen 2000). For example, the Audit fails to recognise the concept of ‘general knowledge’ as particularly problematic – as it involves the selection and preferencing of particular ‘knowledge areas’ over others (see McLaren 2001, Giroux 2003). Giroux’s (1992) comments on Hirsch’s 1987 American bestseller, *Cultural literacy – What every American needs to know*, point to the dangers of a view of ‘cultural literacy’ as the successful grasp of “an assemblage of names, dates, and events that allegedly reveal the master code of cultural literacy” (1992:233). As Giroux further argues: “Culture in Hirsch’s view is seen as a time capsule of past events, prevalent social idioms and sanctioned codes of behaviour of a given nation and merely presents itself for all to participate in its language and conventions” (1992:234). Arguably, the concept of ‘general knowledge’ as both ideologically neutral and universally accessible serves as an effective means of disguising the social biases inherent in both the selection and recognition of such ‘knowledge’ (see Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999).

A similar failure to interrogate the ideological premises informing particular constructions of journalistic skill appears in Taole’s investigation into the training and assessment of media professionals at SAfm – a South African national radio station intended to “cater for English speaking listeners of all races in line with the political transformation taking place in the country”. The report was prompted by the station’s rapid loss of listenership following its 1995 re-launch and attempted to explain the part, if any, that “professional training of SAfm media professionals...played in the station’s decline of listenership”(1997:4). It further argued that “the poor standard of language of the newly appointed presenters and newsreaders” was the most significant cause of negative listener response to the station. According to one ex-listener, who appeared to believe that “anything other than English as spoken by first language speakers could never be good enough” (Taole 1997:4): “What is needed is a radio service...run by reporters, presenters and producers whose mother tongue is English.” Rather than questioning how such attitudes manifest patterns of cultural racism, Taole instead asks whether “poor training” was responsible for listenership complaints. Taking criticism of poor language ‘standards’ and pronunciation as unproblematic and without social bias, Taole

criticises the South African Broadcasting Corporation for its lack of a “section which ensured that there was a standardisation of pronunciation” and concludes: “The result was that listeners were subjected to “a rainbow pronunciation” of words” (1997:13). Using the adjective “rainbow” – which originates from Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s definition of South Africa as a ‘rainbow nation’ – to negatively describe the pronunciation practices of diverse South Africans arguably both reinforces both the notion of diversity as intrinsically linked to a ‘drop in standards’ and the dominance of Eurocentric middle-class elitism in defining those standards. It is again useful to return to Bourdieu’s (1991: 113) argument that the social power of the “language of authority” does not exist “as the racism of social class would have it...in the intrinsic properties of discourse itself, but rather in the social conditions of production and reproduction of the distribution between the classes of the knowledge and recognition of the legitimate language” (see Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999:101-102).

South African media discourse around the training of entry-level journalists – particularly those from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language – has tended to depict it as a corrective mechanism, allowing trainees to fulfil newsroom defined professional competencies. In this context, training can be understood as a means of creating journalists who can produce organisationally acceptable content *despite* their potentially diverse socio-economic, class and cultural backgrounds – backgrounds which are perceived as potential hindrances in the practice of ‘professional’ journalism (see De Uriate et al 2003:1). Training can therefore be understood, according to such thinking, as a means of lessening the potentially disturbing impact that change may bring to the newsroom, because it can teach journalists to accept that newsroom’s ideology, manifested through certain norms, values and behaviours, as ‘professional’ and beyond question. In this context, entry-level journalists – located in diverse socio-demographic positions – become identified as ‘professional’ when they “fit into an established culture that was not expected to bend to accommodate them” (Newkirk 2000:80, see Thomas Jnr 1991:7).

The ‘skills deficit’ construction seems to demonstrate a profound naturalisation of the idea that ‘the standard’ use of a language exists beyond the realm of ideology (see Bourdieu 1991, Shor and Freire 1987, Giroux 1987, Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999). Interrogating the ideology that informs the construction of entry-level journalists as possessing certain ‘skills deficits’ that require ‘correction’ through training arguably involves asking “not what is false about it, but what is true” (Apple 1996:20, Bourdieu 1991:135). As Apple argues, effective

ideology usually possesses some element of 'truth' that connects it to "real problems, real experiences"(1996:20). Within the South African context, this requires acknowledging the profound oppression that defined the lives of black South Africans under Apartheid – and its manifestation in an education system that concentrated nearly all its resources on white education (see Criticos 2001:155). While the gross inequality of the Apartheid education system served as a means of structurally limiting the life opportunities available to black South Africans, it arguably also served as a means of reproducing a discourse of white intellectual superiority as 'the standard' by which 'good' education was and continues to be defined. Perhaps this is why the colonialist emphasis on 'the queen's English' and speaking and writing 'properly' continues to maintain its anachronistic grip on the way in which South African journalism – and education – is evaluated (see Heugh 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003a and 2003b, Alexander 2000, Freire and Macedo 1987:143, Bourdieu 1991:113, Prinsloo 2001:205). The danger of the 'skills deficit' construction is not, then, its acknowledgement of Apartheid's deeply discriminatory education system. Rather, its failure to recognise the blinkered colonialism of white Apartheid education as itself problematic reveals a tendency to define 'skills' according to a construction of 'intelligence' that perpetuates the very class racism of Apartheid education itself (see Apple 1993:39-40, Giroux 1987:14, De Uriate 2003:44).

The following section will examine the construction of the 'training for transformation' discourse within South African journalism and media education, suggesting that it manifests struggles over both the power to define 'transformation' and the means to effect that definition.

Training Discourse in South Africa

The term 'transformation' has come to assume a powerful and largely uninterrogated place within the discursive universe of the 'New South Africa' and is usually taken, on a common-sense level, to describe the transition of post-apartheid society to a democratic ethos and operation (see Berger 2000). Within this particular context, a common-sense understanding of training has come to recognise it as a means of enabling the people who were previously disadvantaged under Apartheid to access levels of skill and proficiency previously reserved for the privileged white minority – who, under Apartheid, were given a vastly better resourced education (see Berger 1995, Heugh 2001.7, 1999 and 2003b, Hartshorne 1992). As was suggested previously, this construction is problematic in its tacit privileging of a particular

middle-class colonial form of 'knowledge' as the 'standard' by which education is measured (see Bourdieu 1991, Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999, Sonderling 1998).

In attempting to demonstrate palpable social change, the post-Apartheid South African government has sought to encourage greater workplace opportunities for previously disadvantaged individuals through, among other strategies, policy implementation (Deegan 1999). The Employment Equity Act, which was enacted in 1998, sets up guidelines for how businesses employing more than 50 people should alter staff gender and colour demographics to reflect those of South African society. Failure to comply with the conditions laid out in the Employment Equity Act may result in the imposition of fines and, perhaps more damagingly for the company involved, potential loss of goodwill and future business opportunities. The government's formation of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and adoption of the Skills Development Act, which compels business organisations to support employee education, both provide an indication of training's perceived significance to South Africa's transformation process. In addition to the formation of the South African Qualifications Authority and adoption of the Skills Development Act, specific training areas will also be more thoroughly evaluated by a specific media Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA). Arguably, while the government's legislative steps attempt to address the need for greater workplace opportunities for historically oppressed groups, they operate under the liberal pluralist assumption that demographic diversity automatically leads to a greater expression of ideological and cultural diversity in the workplace, in this case the newsroom – where 'transformation' is automatically achieved with a change in newsroom complexion (see Steenveld 1998, De Uriate et al 2003, also see Prinsloo 2001:198, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001).

Several contemporary analyses of journalism training in South Africa have focused on its potential to encourage media 'diversity' by equipping historically oppressed journalists with the 'skills' they need to operate in mainstream news organisations (see Clay 1995, Sidego 2000; Howa 2000). In its draft position paper, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) identifies training as key to the fulfilment of its mandate to ensure greater development and diversity within South African media. It defines media development as enabling excluded or marginalized groups to access media – whether as owners, managers or producers. According to the MDDA, media diversity involves "ensuring that all interests and sectors have affordable access to a range of views and information fully reflective of our

society” (2000:5) – with training being central to the pursuit of this mandate. It lists two of its training focus areas as being “skills development... to ensure more skilled media practitioners from marginalized sectors” and the active promotion of media development and diversity issues in both institutional and in-house training curricula (2000:41) – treating the presence of “practitioners from marginalized sectors” as automatically linked to increased discursive diversity.

Apart from failing to acknowledge how power and its enactment in newsroom practices, attitudes, values and discourses may retard the development of profound discursive diversity, ‘demography equals diversity’ approaches may tacitly endorse the racism they seek to challenge (see De Uriate et al 2003). Steenveld (1998:2) suggests that discussion around South African media ‘transformation’ “tends to surface as a race debate” based on a flawed “race essentialism” position that proposes that “only black (or white) journalists “know” what the “black (or white) experience is”(see Berger 2000:9, De Uriate et al 2003:35, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:105, also see Dyson 1993, hooks 1994, King 1995, Ladson-Billings 2003, Fine et al 2003). Rather than concentrate on how individual experience of the world is mediated by a number of different and sometimes contradictory social variables – such as class, gender, spirituality or sexuality (see Omi and Winant 1986, Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999) – Steenveld argues that a race essentialist position “presumes that there is a singular “black” or “white” experience which can be “objectively” represented” (1998:2). In examining the potential for “other voices” in media discourse, Steenveld suggests that questions about where these voices come from, how their articulation in media narratives can be enabled or how they may be retarded are more useful than employing an approach which ultimately reduces the attitudes and understandings of complex human subjectivities to a single demographic descriptor.

Nevertheless, the race essentialist approach continues to exert a powerful influence on how South African media transformation is understood. A September 2001 article about Johannesburg newspaper *The Star*'s a programme to train nine black sub editors (posted on the Newspaper Association of America web site) depicted the programme as a means of ensuring that the newspaper produced diverse content that was reflective of South Africa's culturally diverse community. Nazeem Howa, managing director of Independent Newspapers in Gauteng was quoted as saying that *The Star* needed to “ensure that our content covers black South Africa properly” because of moral and business imperatives. Howa adds: “Who better

to ensure that our content is correctly targeted than those from the communities we wish to attract?” (Adams 2001:2). The article suggests that there is a direct relationship between diverse demographic representation in a newsroom and its production of a type of ‘diverse’ content that will automatically appeal to the communities of those people who wrote or subbed it – demonstrating both the race essentialism position detailed by Steenveld and the strength of its pervasive influence on newsroom common-sense.

The perceived failure of media ‘transformation’ to manifest itself in an altered newsroom philosophy and news discourse has angered several commentators (see Mamele 1999, Megwa 2001) – who view it as “quite simply the replacing of white men by the same species with a different hue” (Mamele 1999:1). Megwa (2001:281) argues that South African media have yet to experience transformation on a profound level and suggests that “apartheid’s ghost... is yet to be exorcised from (South Africa’s) media system.” He suggests that South African media’s transformative potential has been retarded by its “inordinate dependence on advertising as a major source of funding” – a dependence that “limits its journalistic function and constricts it from producing a politically sophisticated and informed citizenry” (2001:282, see Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1987). Megwa argues that South African journalism education should “produce journalists well-equipped to understand and explain the dynamics and complexities of the change that has taken place and continues to take place in the country” (2001:283).

Nevertheless, he fails fully to interrogate how journalism’s perceived purpose, be it for commercial profit or social benefit, will shape the way in which this contextual knowledge is taught – and, as previously discussed, limits the question of discursive diversity to a “race debate” (Steenveld 1998:1).

Returning then to the question posed earlier in this chapter: ‘What are we training for? What is the ultimate end of journalistic teaching?’, this thesis will suggest that journalism education – if it is going to be a relevant force in profound social transformation of post-apartheid South Africa – must challenge the very values and premises that commercial media operations and narratives are based upon. As Bourdieu (1990b:137) states: “To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced”. Journalism education should not simply be a means by which journalists from historically oppressed backgrounds – as well as journalists whose learning has been retarded by the self-hypnotising, largely class-based perception of their own ‘rightness’ – are conditioned into reproducing dominantly defined news narratives.

Rather, it should enable students to recognise the ideological character of dominant journalistic grammar, form and vocabulary – and to work with, rather than be worked by, its discourses. Education that empowers needs to focus not only on the broader ideologies that are enacted in specific discourses around journalistic ‘professionalism’ and education – it also needs to ask why they are so successful in their reproduction (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985:103, Apple 1996, Janks 1997).

This thesis is focused on exploring how discourses around training and professionalism in a South African newsroom are ‘spoken through’ and struggled over in the ‘professional’ lives of entry-level journalists and their interactions with news managers (see Foucault 1972, 1980). While this thesis realises that the purpose and operation of journalism education in South Africa is defined by contradiction, it functions with the belief that journalism can still be a meaningful site of social struggle – in spite of its largely commercially defined nature. For South African media to enact greater discursive diversity – in other words, produce content conscious of its own discursive workings and defined by its challenge to stereotype and socially dominant ‘common-sense’ – it is the suggestion of this thesis that journalists need greater critical awareness of journalism as a knowledge construction process. The following section will examine the notion of critical education/literacy as key to the empowerment of journalists as effective agents of socio-economic, political and cultural critique, rather than ‘efficient’ reproducers of dominantly defined and structured news narratives.

Critical Education: Training for more than margins

In contrast to the mainstream commercial media emphasis on ‘technical’ or ‘skills’ training as essential to both ‘good’ journalism education and the ‘transformation’ of the newsroom – arguably by enabling historically oppressed journalists to reproduce ‘standard’ commercial mainstream news narratives and thus legitimating their ‘right to write’ – critical education/literacy traditions encourage students to question the ideological basis of such ‘standards’ (Shor and Freire 1987:71, Prinsloo 2001:200, also see Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, Apple 1993). It is important to note that critical education does not reject the teaching of the forms and vocabularies of so-called ‘standard’ language, neither does it disregard the importance of vocational or ‘technical’ training to the perceived ‘employability’ of students. Shor and Freire (1987:68-69) argue that, while critical educators need “to be efficient in

training, in forming the educatees scientifically and technically”, they nevertheless need to “try to *unveil* the ideology enveloped in the *very* expectations of the students” (emphasis original, also see Aronowitz and Giroux 1985:65, Criticos 2001:157, Gilmour 1988). Critical literacy operates with an acute awareness of language “as a major force in the construction of human subjectivities”, possessing the ability to “confirm or deny the life histories and experiences of the people who use it” (Freire and Macedo 1987:149, also see hooks 1994, Giroux 1993, Sonderling 1998, Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999). It insists that ‘standard’ language teaching be infused with a critical consciousness of how language enacts patterns of social dominance – as well as suggesting how the appropriation of ‘standard’ language forms can be used to challenge the very hegemonic project it is structured to reproduce (Shor and Freire 1987:71-72, Aronowitz and Giroux 1985:157-158). To borrow from Bourdieu, critical education involves teaching learners the “rules of the game” for dominant knowledge construction, so that they can recognise its strategies and participate in it, creatively challenging the limits it attempts to place on their ‘game’ and potentially effecting its change (see Bourdieu 1991:125, Hall 1982, Chouliakiri and Fairclough 1999:9-10).

For South African journalism students, critical education would need to involve questions around the discursive imperatives that inform the grammar and structure of news narratives, how the sourcing of stories may reproduce social hierarchies or work to undermine the perspectives of the socially marginalized. It could examine the tendency within mainstream South African media to reduce highly complex social phenomena (for example, the trauma, deprivation and psychological rationale behind the rape of infants in some of South Africa’s most economically depressed areas) to certain simplified constructions that are then reproduced as social ‘fact’ (the explanation of these rapes as motivated by a desire to cure Aids through sexual intercourse with a virgin). Further, it could look at the way in which the form and grammar of economic journalism – arguably intended to inform people of the macro-economic policies, processes, events and decisions that will impact directly on their lives – is made inaccessible through jargon and removed from the realm of ‘everyday news’ (see Kariithi 1995, 2002). The above-mentioned examples are not intended simply to serve as concrete validation of the conservative and consensus-constructing tendencies within South African commercial media. Rather, they highlight the need for journalism education to encourage critical thinking and insight among its students, suggesting that journalists need education that will enable them to be more than manufacturers of familiar narratives and

comfortable social myths - which invariably only serve to obscure more complex and subtle 'realities' from the citizenry they claim to empower.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to interrogate the status of training as an ideologically neutral means of equipping prospective journalists with the 'technical' skills required to operate as 'professionals'. It has examined the way in which particular understandings of journalism's social role influence the way in which journalism is taught, suggesting that – as in America – South African journalism education is increasingly defined according to industry needs and standards. Within many South African newsrooms, the need to demonstrate palpable social 'transformation' has prompted an emphasis on demographic difference as inextricably linked to discursive diversity, with training being portrayed as a means of enabling the expression of such 'diversity'. This chapter has suggested that, while training may improve the efficiency of journalists in particular 'skills areas', it also has a significant potential to prioritise ideologically dominant newsroom modes of expression as professionally desirable and thereby to retard the development of real discursive diversity. Finally, it argues that educating entry-level journalists about the discursive positions that shape so-called 'professional' practice may enable them to operate more confidently and strategically within the newsroom – so that they may understand the ideological basis for certain modes of reporting and be able to open these modes to greater discursive possibility.

The following chapter will detail the methodology employed in this study. Not only does it explain the use of particular research methods and choice of subjects, but it also examines the challenges involved in relating micro-sociological phenomena to the patterns of macro-sociological power (see Silverman 1985, Kincheloe and McLaren 1994) – focusing on the particular importance of contextualisation and self-reflexivity to such approaches (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Finally, it will provide a contemporary history and analysis of the *Cape Argus* as a mainstream commercial South African newspaper.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapters have attempted to examine the way in which professionalism and training have been defined and understood within both South African and international academia and media industries. In addition to outlining and critically examining the central debates around these areas, these chapters have also tried to suggest that certain ‘common sense’ understandings of journalism professionalism and training remain unexamined (see De Uriate et al 2003, Louw 2001, Sonderling 1998). They have argued that, far from being a neutrally constructed universal measure of particular ‘technical’ skills and competencies, the mainstream South African newsroom concept of journalism professionalism enacts and is enacted through the “primacy of a Euro-South African frame of reference” in mainstream South African media (Fordred-Green 2000:711, Prinsloo 2001:205, Jacobs 2002 also see Asante 1991:172, Calmore 1992:2161-2162, Ladson-Billings 2003). Finally, they have suggested that greater critical awareness of the discourse and language of news narratives – and their role in reproducing both socially dominant ‘common-sense’ and the terms by which both they and such ideological ‘knowledges’ are defined as socially legitimate – is essential to the empowerment of critically aware journalists, particularly those from historically oppressed backgrounds (see Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, Shor and Freire 1987, Apple 1993, Fairclough 1992a, 1992b and 1995, Criticos 2001, Prinsloo 2001).

Arguably, the primarily quantitative analysis employed by researchers examining the status and practice of South African journalism training has tended to support mainstream newsroom ‘common sense’, remaining deafeningly silent on the expectations, experiences and attitudes of entry-level journalists themselves (see, as examples of quantitative studies, Forbes 1995, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Taole 1997, De Beer and Steyn 2002). Taking media industry defined ‘standards’, ‘skills’ and ‘competencies’ as the ideologically neutral basis for measuring journalistic ‘professionalism’, these studies have failed to interrogate the way in which such constructions both privilege some and marginalise other ways of understanding and expressing the world (see Hall 1982, Fairclough 1995, Miller 1997, Chouliakiris and Fairclough 1999, De Uriate et al 2003, Ladson-Billings 2003). Arguably, in ignoring how relations of power are implicated in the privileging of particular forms of ‘knowledge’ – and endorsing the unquestionable status of their modes of construction in mainstream news media narratives as the ‘standard’ – such approaches serve to perpetuate the ‘natural’ legitimacy and

defining power of dominant commercial media conceptions of 'professionalism'. In doing so, they continue tacitly to undermine the perspectives of historically oppressed and currently marginalized journalists as striving for a 'standard' whose very construction is designed to exclude them (see Hall 1982, Freire and Shor 1987, Fairclough 1992a and 1992b, Apple 1993, Apple 1996, Giroux 2003).

In contrast to such approaches, this thesis adopts a critical research approach that attempts to question how particular entry-level journalists and news managers understand journalistic 'professionalism' and relate themselves to its 'common-sense' existence in a mainstream commercial South African newspaper newsroom (see Deacon et al 1999:9-13, Kincheloe and McLaren 1994, Foley 2002, Chouliakiris and Fairclough 1999:21-28). Rather than focusing on verifying the 'truth' of particular historically located claims, this thesis attempts to understand "how effects of truth are produced within discourses which themselves are neither true or false" (Foucault 1980:131). Employing the qualitative research techniques of semi-structured interviews and participant observation, it attempts to examine how mainstream commercial discourses of journalistic 'professionalism' are 'spoken through' and struggled over in the self-conceptions, behaviours and beliefs of media workers (see Foucault 1972 and 1977, Miller 1997). In addition to detailing the methodology used in pursuit of this aim, the following chapter explores the challenges and difficulties faced in relating micro-sociological research to the macro-sociological patterns of dominance and marginalisation that they manifest (see Layder 1993, Münch and Smelser 1987, Alexander and Giesen 1987, Giesen 1987, Münch 1987, Miller 1997). It suggests that the reflexive sociology advocated by Bourdieu and other critical theorists (see Bourdieu 1990b, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Kincheloe and McLaren 1994, Davis 1999, Foley 2002) is central to the depth of such research. In enabling researchers to locate themselves within the social universes they examine and attempt to critique, reflexive sociology may arguably protect critical researchers from reproducing the very 'common sense' they aim to demystify (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994:140, Segall 2001:588-589, hooks 1994:54-55, Miller 1997, Foley 2002, Fine et al 2003). As part of this thesis's reflexive project and in recognition of Foucault's emphasis on the importance of historical contextualisation in critical research (see Foucault 1977, Prior 1997, Bryman 1988:64-65, Layder 1993), this chapter provides a contemporary history of the *Cape Argus* and details how both entry-level journalists and news managers interviewed in the study were selected. As previously discussed, the following section examines the challenges of relating micro-sociological research to the exercise of power on a macro-sociological level

(see Layder 1993, Munch and Smelser 1987, Alexander and Giesen 1987, Kincheloe and McLaren 1994, Holstein and Gubrium 1994, Deacon et al 1999:9-13, Miller 1997).

Investigating Power: The Micro-Macro Challenge

Arguably, much academic debate around humanities-based research methodology continues to centre around the perceived value and validity of quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research – and the terms by which that validity is itself defined (see Bryman 1988a, Lindlof 1995). While recognising the importance of this debate to the perceived purposes and ideological framing of social research, this chapter focuses largely on how qualitative research methodology can be used to investigate power by “building bridges” between qualitative methodology and Foucauldian discourse analyses (see Miller 1997, Prior 1997). This thesis’s commitment to qualitative methodology, which is admittedly influenced by the material constraints involved in small-scale unfunded research, should nevertheless be understood as philosophically rooted. The author’s use of qualitative methodology – particularly the in-depth interviewing of entry-level journalists – is influenced by the perceived objectification and qualitative silence of entry-level journalists in previous studies (see Teer-Tomaselli 1997, De Beer and Steyn 2002). As has been suggested throughout this thesis, the majority of studies into South African journalism training and transformation have adopted the ‘science’ of quantitative research methods in their investigations – qualitatively ignoring the ideological imperatives that determine how media ‘knowledge’ or ‘professionalism’ is productively and discursively constituted (see Downing 1987:80, Denzin 1999: 315). The use of qualitative methods (for example, semi-structured interviews) has been limited to accessing the perspectives of news managers, arguably perpetuating the ‘naturalness’ of the dominant newsroom perspectives of ‘professionalism’ and maintaining the newsroom “hierarchy of credibility” (Becker 1999a:36). In contrast to the largely quantitative post-apartheid journalism training studies engaged in by Teer-Tomaselli (1997) and De Beer and Steyn (2002), this thesis utilises the qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing and participant observation to attempt to investigate the individual perceptions and experiences of entry-level journalists and news managers. It seeks to understand the “meanings as well as causes” of these media workers’ understandings of ‘professionalism’. (Finch cited in Hammersley 1992: 151, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994:248) – attempting “not to replicate common sense but to explicate common sense” (Silverman 1993:185, Rock 1999: 24, Shapiro 1988:54). Finally, this thesis’s methodological choices attempt to counter the tendency within post-Apartheid journalism training and newsroom ‘transformation’ studies to construct the

newsroom presence of historically oppressed journalists, from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, as a 'problem' (see Forbes 1995, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Taole 1997, De Beer and Steyn 2002). It denies the unquestioned newsroom 'common sense' perception that 'skills deficits' among such journalists – which are never interrogated as both ideologically constructed and subjectivity constricting – are responsible for their 'lack' of journalistic 'professionalism'. As Silverman (1993:184-185) argues: "Paradoxically, by refusing to begin from a common conception of what is 'wrong' in a setting, we may be most able to contribute to the identification of what is going on, and thereby, how it may be modified to the desired ends" (also see Bazanger and Dodier 1997:9, Rock 1999:7).

Seeking to study how power lives itself through specific social subjects entails the challenge of relating the beliefs and behaviour of individuals to the largely invisible macro-sociological forces and discourses that allow their social possibility (see Denzin 1994:509, also see Knights and Willmott 1985). Layder argues that most qualitative research methods ignore the way in which wider social power dynamics shape the behaviour and experiences of research subjects, "at the same time as implicitly endorsing a micro view of power which either ignores completely or significantly undervalues the importance of a macro-structural dimension to power" (1993:151, also see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:144, Chouliakiris and Fairclough 1999:21-28, Hall 1996). In contrast to the sidelining of questions of power in conventional micro-sociological research, critical ethnography – sometimes called "critical realism" (Deacon et al 1999:9-13) – attempts to operate with a profound consciousness of the power of ideology as "inscribed in the materiality of social and institutional practices" (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994:140, Deacon et al 1999:10, Apple 1982:94, see Kincheloe 1993, Downing 1987, Denzin 1999, Shapiro 1988, McLaren 1989). Critical approaches stress that it is only when "analysis of underlying social and cultural formations is combined with research on the ways these structures are negotiated and contested on the ground" that social research is able to "arrive at a comprehensive account of the organisation of meaning" (Deacon et al 1999:12). In contrast to conventional ethnography, which critics argue concentrates on the "phenomenal forms of everyday life" without grasping "the inner relations, causal processes and generative mechanisms that are often invisible to actors" (Sharp 1982:48); critical ethnography challenges the notion that individuals are the autonomous constructors of their own social 'reality'.



'Validity', Reflexivity and Historical Contextualisation in Critical Research

Arguably, part of the critical response to the post-modern "double crisis of representation and legitimation" (Denzin 1999:311, also see Segall 2001:579, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994:254, Clifford 1986, Gergen and Gergen 2003) that continues to challenge qualitative research 'validity' with its awareness of 'reality' as socially constructed, has been an intensified focus on reflexivity within the research process (see Silverman 1993: 197, Marcus 1994:568, Altheide and Johnson 1994). According to Denzin (1999:311), the "double crisis of representation and legitimation" is based on two assumptions: firstly, that researchers "can no longer directly capture lived experience" as such experience is arguably "created in the social text written by the researcher" and, secondly, that the "traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research" are "problematic" (also see Gergen and Gergen 2003:577). The traditional criterion of 'validity' is understood not as a means of ensuring that research data corresponds with 'the world out there', but as a tool for fixing the researcher's authority (Lather 1993) which "allows a particular regime of truth within a particular text (and community of scholars) to work its way on the reader" (Denzin 1999:314, see Foucault 1980:131, 133).

In response, critical theorists have sought to locate themselves within their texts, not as neutral "God's-eye" observers of the full spectrum of human interaction and perception, but as socio-economically and politically situated subjects (Gergen and Gergen 2003:579, also see Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:675, Giroux 1993:162, Manning 1999:333, Fine et al 2003). As Bourdieu argues: "A reflexive sociology can help free intellectuals from their illusions – and first of all from the illusion that they do not have any, especially about themselves – and can at least have the negative virtue of making it more difficult for them to bring a passive and unconscious contribution to symbolic domination" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:195, also see Jordan and Yeomans 1995, Giroux 1993, King 1992, Segall 2001, Foley 2002). Central to the project of critical research is a reflexive awareness of the researcher as herself implicated within the patterns of discursive dominance that she is attempting to explicate (see Altheide and Johnson 1994). Critical researchers are then faced with the challenge of confronting dominant 'common sense' constructions without their arguments reproducing the terms of the very discourses they seek to explicate – discourses that may often tacitly contribute to their own understandings of the world (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994:153, Fine 1998, Andersen 1994 Segall 2001, Foley 2002). As Reinharz (1983) argues, the research act

involves more than the study of others – it is process of self-discovery (see Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:685).

As a journalism graduate student who has worked at the *Cape Argus* for the last five years, I must acknowledge several intersecting and sometimes contradictory subject positions that shaped the form and focus of my research. In attempting to avoid the reflexive positioning that Marcus (1994: 572) describes as “a sterile form of identity politics... a formulaic incantation...in which one boldly “comes clean” and pronounces a positioned identity” (also see hooks 1990:54, Song and Parker 1999, Fine et al 2003:169-170), I will attempt to go beyond using demographic and class status announcements to evidence the ‘reflexivity’ of my research. Instead, I will attempt to relate how such socially determined labels worked for and against me in determining my newsroom status, shaping my relationships with entry-level journalists and news managers and determining the landscape of my own taken-for-granted perceptions (see Giroux 1991 and 1993, Bhavnani 1993, Andersen 1994, Denzin 1997, Gergen and Gergen 2003).

As a white, middle-class, first-language English-speaking female ‘junior reporter’ who has been successfully able to identify and reproduce the news narrative forms valued as ‘professional’ by news managers, I have benefited from sharing common discursive perspectives and ‘cultural capital’ with the largely middle-class group of news managers who edit my copy (see Boudieu 1990b, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Angrosino and de Pérez 2000: 687). Having started work at the *Cape Argus* when I was nineteen years old, I have experienced the anxiety of the professional socialisation process – as well as the confidence-enhancing experience of having my news narrative constructions recognised as legitimate and ‘professional’ by news managers. While I attempt to challenge the notion of ‘professionalism’ as constituted by supposedly ideologically neutral ‘skills’ and ‘competencies’, I have myself been privileged by my identification – within the *Cape Argus* newsroom – as a ‘professional’. Part of this identification was enabled by the social capital I possess as a middle-class, first-language English speaking university graduate and the relative ease with which I was able to negotiate my newsroom socialisation process. My research is shaped by my relationships with the entry-level journalists and news managers whom I interviewed and observed – as well as the power dynamics that inscribed these relationships. I felt I was able to draw on the relatively equitable power dynamic that defined my relationship with the entry-level journalists, despite differing socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, because of the shared

experience of newsroom socialisation. I did, however, feel a more palpable sense of constriction in my interviews with news managers. To some degree, this constriction was a product of my desire to maintain the approval of the people who managed my opportunities within the newsroom (see Altheide 1999). More powerfully perhaps, it resulted from my struggle to relate to news managers outside of the power hierarchy that spoke itself through the newsroom's discursive and material universe – it was a function of my own sense of place within the 'social stratification' of the newsroom (Altheide and Johnson 1994:491). My own sense of 'professionalism' – and desire to progress to greater 'professional' status – was determined by their approval. Lastly, this research is also the product of a liberal arts education in journalism and media studies, which has shaped the way I have come theoretically to construct my understanding of power and its enactment in the *Cape Argus* newsroom (see Giroux 1993:162, Spivak 1990, Bourdieu and Collier 1988). I realise that, as Tyler (1991:91) explains, "the discourse of critique is always and inextricably involved in what it criticises". In acknowledging my own "semiotic technologies" (Haraway 1988: 579), I hope to confront the "double crisis of representation and legitimisation" that challenges critical research – with an uneasy consciousness of my own bias and limitation, rather than the arrogance and comfort of its denial (Segall 2001:579, see hooks 1990, Altheide and Johnson 1994, Lather 1991, Becker 1999).

In addition to providing some sense of my own discursive positioning within the *Cape Argus* newsroom, as well as an account of how my research subjects were selected, the critical project of this text necessitates a historical contextualisation of the newsroom as 'research site' (Layder 1993). The Argus Company, which was previously owned and controlled by mining giant Anglo American through its associated company JCI, was gradually bought out by Irish-based Independent Newspapers between 1994 and 1995. As one of the Argus Company's oldest publications, the *Cape Argus* was arguably rooted in a company culture that premised itself on seeking to "represent the interests" of "home-language English speakers" (Patten 1997: 6) – who were arguably nearly all white and middle-class. According to Patten, this position evolved as the Argus company "came to represent wider interests founded on support for free enterprise and the upholding of liberal Western democratic values, including freedom of speech, the rule of law and justice for all"(1997:6). The expression of such values did not, however, translate into a clear condemnation of the racism and human rights violations that characterised Apartheid-era government (Berger 1997:2, Mazwai 1997, Harber 1997). In its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

investigation into the South African media's role in supporting Apartheid, Independent Newspapers acknowledged historical "short-comings" in the Argus Group's response to Apartheid media restrictions (Berger 1997:1, see Patten 1997, Skerjal 1997). Explanations of discriminatory actions (for example, the company's slowness in recruiting black staff, the prejudicial reporting of crime and accidents) were provided "in terms of how the newspapers and journalists were victims of the apartheid system" (Skerjal 1997:6). The media's complicity in discursively reproducing a world where "black lives were cheap and human rights went unrecognised" (Berger 1997:1) was never addressed and the relationship between language, discourse and power went uninterrogated. Independent Newspapers (has) arguably attempted to challenge the unflattering aspects of Argus-era collusion with the Apartheid government by publicising its affirmative action appointments and training programmes (see Adams 2002). As such, it has largely adopted the view of newsroom 'transformation' discussed in the previous chapter – one that continues to focus on demographic diversity as implicitly related to discursive difference (see Steenveld 1998). As a result, discourse – particularly around training of black journalists – tends to cast it as a 'corrective' measure and does little to question how the prevailing 'professional' discourse within the newsroom may itself require 'correction'.

While employment equity demands tend to be met on the lower rungs of the *Cape Argus's* social hierarchy – with several journalists of colour, particularly females, working in junior positions – senior journalists and editorial management are largely white.

Research for this thesis was conducted in the *Cape Argus* newsroom between June and July 2002 and involved semi-structured interviews with four entry-level journalists and four news managers. As a critical qualitative analysis, this study seeks to generate understandings that interact with pre-existing theory around particular discursive constructs, rather than being able to generalise statistical results back to larger populations (see Bryman 1988a:34-35). Critical research insists that research subjects be understood not simply as the sum of their own supposedly autonomous beliefs, circumstances and knowledges – but are viewed as the sites where dominant discourses are enacted and struggled over, where the macro forces of social domination insert themselves into human bodies. The significance of apartheid education in defining not only life opportunity – but also influencing a class-based and arguably Eurocentric 'standard' for 'knowledge' (see Prinsloo 2001) – can be considered such a 'macro' force. According to this approach, the small size of the study sample does not

undermine or negate the cogency of its findings – although sample selection processes maintain conventional academic definitions of ‘rigour’ through detailed explanation.

In this study, entry-level journalists were defined as those with less than a year and a half’s journalism employment at the newspaper, with the stipulation of employment excluding learners and journalism students who occasionally ‘work-shadowed’ at the newspaper. Of the four entry-level journalists who met these criteria, three were interviewed – with the fourth, a white English-speaking female – unavailable for an interview during the research period. Two of the entry-level journalist research subjects were media students at Cape Technikon reaching the end of their paid internship at the *Cape Argus* and were thus able to provide a great deal of insight into their perceived evolution into ‘professionals’. One was a first-language Xhosa-speaking male from the rural Eastern Cape who had been living in Cape Town for several years, while the other was a white first-language English-speaking male originally from East London. The third research subject – a first-language Xhosa-speaking female from the rural Eastern Cape, who had obtained a three year journalism diploma at Border Technikon – had been working at Independent Newspapers for less than a year, but had worked at the company’s *Personal Finance* publication for a brief period before being moved to the *Cape Argus*. The news managers interviewed – the two news editors, night news editor and chief copy sub – were all required to interact with the entry-level journalists on a daily basis, whether to approve their story ideas, allocate stories to them or check and review their copy. They were all consistently identified by entry-level journalists as the people who managed their ‘professionalisation’ within the newsroom and ‘formed a bridge’ (as one news manager put it) between the journalists and sub editors. All the news managers who had ongoing, daily interaction with entry-level journalists – both in the structured context of news conferences and more informal ‘chats’ – were interviewed. At the time when research was conducted, both the news editor and assistant news editor were journalists of colour who had been involved in the ‘struggle’ press in Apartheid South Africa. The assistant news editor was an English-speaking female, while the news editor was a bilingual male. Both had studied together at Peninsula Technikon, although the news editor was older than the assistant news editor. The night news editor and chief copy sub were, respectively, a white English-speaking male and female. The night news editor had been Technikon-educated and had travelled extensively before settling in Cape Town, while the chief copy sub had studied at Rhodes University and worked at a London paper for a number of years. It must be noted, however, that (in) the time since research was conducted, one of the news managers (has) left for another

company, one has been moved into a political editor position and one has been promoted – with only one of the entry-level journalists remaining at the paper.

Following the previous detailing of research subject selection, the following section will specifically examine how the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interview were utilised, challenged and adapted within the critical project of this thesis.

Participant Observation and Semi-structured Interviews: Definition, Description, Limitations and Aims

While recognising that the final explication of any social ‘reality’ is impossible, this thesis adopts the qualitative research purpose of providing “access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (Miller and Glasner 1999: 100). This thesis combines in-depth, semi-structured interviews of entry-level journalists and news managers with participant observation of the morning news conferences in which they interacted with both each other and senior journalists. The strength of combining semi-structured interviews with participant observation is that it arguably enables researchers to compare observations of particular interactions with the experiences articulated by their participants (see Denzin 1989, Flick 1992, Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2 Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:668).

Oakley (1981) argues that conventional interview reports tend to focus on easily verifiable details – how many were conducted, their duration, how they were recorded and the structuring of their questions – ignoring “the characteristics of interviewers...interviewees’ feelings about being interviewed, the quality of the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee” (Andersen 1999:133, also see Song and Parker 1999, Fontana and Frey 2000). Andersen argues that such approaches emphasise that “the best data are those produced with minimal human contact and minimal interrelationship” (1999:134), casting the ‘ideal’ interview as one in which the interviewer completely assumes one-way control over the interviewer-interviewee interaction (see Ribbens 1989 for a discussion of ‘ideal’ interviewer-interviewee intimacy). As was noted earlier in this chapter, my control over the interview process was significantly determined by my own sense of the newsroom power hierarchy (see Fontana and Frey 2000:647, 651, Altheide 1999) and the varying levels of familiarity in my relationships with research subjects. At the time when my research was conducted, I had been periodically working at the *Cape Argus* for four years and had established both working and personal relationships with certain news managers – and, more recently, with the entry-level journalists. While this enabled me to draw on shared experiences and newsroom ‘common

sense' in the research interviews (see Bryman 1988b, Crompton and Jones 1988, also see Clifford 1986:9), it meant that interviews frequently followed conversation-like patterns of exchange, rather than fixed question-answer formats. I also found that my entry-level journalist interviewees were more likely to ask for my perceptions on certain topics and experiences, often seeming to seek validation of their own understandings (see Oakley 1981:49, Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:658-659). I found that interviews with news managers were briefer and involved a greater proportion of diversionary comments and questions than those with entry-level journalists – arguably because of news managers' increased sense of power in limiting and defining the interview process. In using a semi-structured or semi-standardised interview format, I was able to ask questions which I considered vital in each interview and could also “alter their sequence and probe for more information” (Fielding 1993: 136). Admittedly, as a relatively inexperienced academic researcher, it was comforting for me to have an interview schedule to ‘fall back on’ – even though I frequently deviated from its set questions.

Participant observation can be described as the “sustained immersion of the researcher among those he or she seeks to study with a view to generating an in-depth account of the group” (Bryman 1988:45, Becker 1999b, Rock 1999, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, Hansen et al 1998). It is also described as a qualitative method – theoretically informed by symbolic interactionism's commitment grasping the human mediation of experience – that enables researchers to grasp the greatest sense of a research situation's social complexity (Patton 1999: 152, Becker and Geer 1970:133, Rock 1999). Arguably, the “double crisis of representation and legitimation” (Denzin 1999:311) has also significantly reshaped the programme and aims of participant observation. As Angrosino and de Pérez (2000:674) argue, where once participant observers were asked “if they had lived up to the expected standards of objectivity”, “(i)n the post-modern milieu, by contrast, the criticism is directed at the standards themselves” (also see Gould 1998:72). Nevertheless, this thesis's approach adopts the argument that participant observation may be useful in contrasting the perceptions and experiences articulated by research subjects in interviews with the lived performative aspect of their interactions with each other (see Hansen et al 1998). As suggested by Hansen et al (1998:44), “media practitioners immersed in their professional outlook and working ethos may be poorly placed to articulate and reflect upon the taken-for-granted assumptions or wider systems of constraints routinely informing media work and output”. As someone who was already a member of the group I was studying, I could be identified as a “complete-

member researcher” (Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:677). While this status meant that my presence was arguably less likely to “alter the flow of interaction unnaturally” (Adler and Adler 1994:380), it also meant that I was subject (as previously discussed) to newsroom power hierarchies and sometimes had to push subjects to ‘spell out’ what they took as ‘shared’ newsroom ‘common sense’ (see Angrosino and de Pérez 2000:691). Nevertheless, I believe that my “complete member-researcher” status enabled my research subjects to be more open and direct in interviews – perhaps because they knew I would be able to identify blatantly dishonest statements and, in the case of the entry-level journalists, maybe because they felt I shared many of their perceptions, experiences and anxieties.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to outline and critique the methodological approach utilised within this thesis – detailing both the potential pitfalls involved in the critical qualitative research project, as well as the self-aware strategies employed by the researcher to guard against them. The following chapter will examine the findings constructed after the newsroom immersion period and interviews were completed, seeking to relate the researcher’s transcripts, perceptions and experiences to the theoretical discussions of the previous chapters.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis have attempted to construct a critical theoretical framework for the analysis of how journalistic ‘professionalism’ discourses are constructed and ‘spoken through’ the understandings and practices of South African media workers (Foucault 1970, 1972 and 1980) – with particular focus on the processes whereby entry-level journalists adopt and struggle over the contradictions of such ‘professional’ understandings. These chapters have tried to enact a methodological approach that is acutely conscious of the researcher as implicated in the construction of the research narrative, as well as cautious of denying the ideological framing inherent in the very form and language of the research text itself (see Maqagi 1990:22-23, Denzin 1999, Gergen and Gergen 2003, hooks 1994, Angrosino and de Pérez 2000, Manning 1999, Fine et al 2003).

Following from this research orientation, this chapter utilises a critically engaged approach in its analysis of how specific entry-level journalists and news managers draw on particular “discursive repertoires” (Frankenberg 1993:16) to articulate the terms by which ‘professionalism’ is recognised. It examines interviewee responses, not as ‘neutral’ reflections of ‘reality’ or the manifestations of demographic or status characteristics, but as the mediated enactments of particular socially determined and ideologically biased discourses. By drawing attention to the assumptions, beliefs and contradictions that both constitute and enact dominant newsroom ‘common sense’, this chapter attempts to understand the constitutive power of dominant discourse – how it ‘speaks through’ the self-perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of particular socially positioned entry-level journalists and news managers (see Foucault 1980). Using Curran’s radical democratic model of media as a basis for comparison – one that understands the “central objective” of media as being “the full expression of differences within society.. rather than the maintenance of balance between established structures of power” (1996:56) – this chapter argues that the model of professionalism predominantly advocated by *Cape Argus* news managers and entry-level journalists is premised on the liberal notion of media as “information provider”, rather than as an agent for challenging the social status quo (see Curran 1996). In addition to interrogating the discursive construction and implications of this model, this chapter explores how the recognition of particular ‘professional’ characteristics is conditioned by the newsroom’s commercial imperatives, as well as by the social dominance of a particular construction of

'knowledge' and language excellence – which is arguably informed by a Eurocentric and socially exclusionary model of 'good English', rather than operating as a standard for communicative accessibility – within South Africa.

In the sections that follow, this chapter draws on interview excerpts to describe and analyse the model a 'professionalism' articulated by entry-level journalists and news managers at the *Cape Argus*. It thematically examines how the newsroom's commercial imperatives, 'standard' language constructions, news values and the culture of the newsroom itself dialectically inform and are informed by a particular dominant construction of 'professionalism' – as well as attempting to explicate the contradictions and struggle that characterise certain media workers' experience of this construction.

The Construction and Recognition of 'Professionalism': A Critical Examination

As discussed in the previous chapter, this thesis was initially constructed around an uncritical attempt to describe the professional socialisation experiences of entry-level journalists in terms of a dominant discourse of journalism 'professionalism' that treated its own construction as ideologically neutral. Initially, my strongest impression of my interviews with entry-level journalists was centred on the marked differences in 'professional' self-confidence that I perceived between the first-language English-speaking journalists and journalists whose first language was Xhosa. I tended to concentrate on language ability as a 'fact' in itself, rather than as a partial manifestation of the 'power to define' attached to specific class, gender and ethnic positions. While I believed that the confidence of first language Xhosa-speaking journalists was being eroded by *Cape Argus* management's apparent lack of commitment to their training and/or mentoring in the newsroom, lack of feedback and often harsh judgements of story 'quality', I did not question the legitimacy of the dominant 'professionalism' discourse that engendered these conditions. Essentially, I failed to examine how the very standards of 'professionalism' were "spoken through" and constitutive of a social discourse that privileged certain forms of social 'knowledge' and marginalized others (see Foucault 1980, Giroux 1992, hooks 1990, Shapiro 1988, Spivak 1990, Chouliakiris and Fairclough 1999). I failed to interrogate how the behaviours and narrative modes of 'professional' journalism, seemingly more easily grasped and manifested in the behaviours and narratives modes of middle-class English-speaking journalists, arguably enacted the "primacy of a Euro-South African frame of reference" (Fordred-Green 2000:711) within the discursive and

material environment of the newsroom (see Prinsloo 2001:205, Jacobs 2002 and Asante 1991:172, Calmore 1992:2161-2162, Ladson-Billings 2003).

In an attempt to challenge what is, arguably, an over-simplified conception of 'professionalism' as simply a manifestation of universally accessible and ideologically 'neutral' competencies, this chapter specifically examines how the construction of 'professionalism' is struggled over in complex human subjects – and interrogates how it may confuse, silence and limit those outside of its gambit of class and language privilege.

A and B, two of my entry-level journalist research subjects, had both been working as entry-level journalists at the *Cape Argus* for just under a year when I interviewed them. B was employed in a permanent general reporter position and A was completing his Peninsula Technikon in-service training at the time that research was conducted. My third subject, C, was a 28-year-old English-speaking white male raised in the Eastern Cape. After working for several years, he said he realised that he was "meant" to study journalism and had started studying at Peninsula Technikon.

Both A and B were first-language Xhosa-speakers from the rural Eastern Cape, although A had moved to Cape Town in 1996 and did not articulate the 'culture shock' expressed by B in regard to her introduction to urban city life the year before.

Cape Town is like a big place and then I grew up in a very small place in a rural area so it's different in that it's like a very big place with different people. You have whites, you have coloureds, you have everyone here. Whereas where I grew up we had only black people, we are not just black people only Xhosa-speaking we couldn't speak, didn't speak any other language. Ja we were only speaking one language and whereas in Cape Town you can... you have Afrikaans, you have English, you have Xhosa (...)

Even at this early stage of the interview, B described much of her sense of socio-cultural estrangement in terms of an inability to communicate – one that she linked to her rural background. Later in the interview, B returned to her rural upbringing as an explanation for her self-described lack of journalistic self-confidence.

sometimes I do find it difficult to just keep on asking people questions sometimes I just ask them and then if they just... just leave it. Maybe it's because of my background, where I come from but you have to adapt you know to Cape Town society, community. Ja, because it's totally different I'm telling you, have you ever been in rural areas?

KM: Um like Grahamstown...

No I think Grahamstown is much better because it's a.. though it's very small. (...) I never grew up in farm, but I grew up in a village. Rural village where you had to go to the river to fetch water, you had to make fire, ah...(sighs) We had to cook... when you want to cook you had to make up fire (...) you don't have electricity, we don't have gas, we don't have nothing. You have to make up firewood to cook.

KM: So Cape Town must be a bit of culture shock to you...

Ja. Very, very big culture shock. It's totally different where I grew up. I grew up... I left there when I was 15 (...) and I went to a boarding school. It was still in the rural areas but it was much better. Ja, because you could play (...) Where I grew up, we used to go to the river to fetch water. Ja and cook, we had to make up fire so we didn't have to do that, so it was like much better. (..) Just to study it was kind of like life-changing for me. (...) to go to the high school.

Like A, B placed a great deal of emphasis on education as enabling greater social opportunity, describing her ultimate career ambition to become the “education reporter” as a result of “the fact that I've never received good education”. B had been educated in a small rural Eastern Cape school until she turned 15, when she started boarding at a high school in Lady Frey. She described this experience as “heaven” compared to the physical hardships of her rural life. After matriculating, B studied for a three-year journalism diploma at Border Technikon.

During his interview, A stressed he needed to get a degree –after he completed his technikon studies – in order to achieve social recognition.

education is, ah actually in this world of ours is one thing that is (...) vital. You, one needs to be educated and (...) the more you actually (...) become aware, or the more (...) you learn, the more you get to know things. (...) the other thing if you've got an education it's easy for you, at the same time to get jobs, you know the jobs that are going to make you become a person among the wealthy people, so not even wealthy, just amongst the people.

(...)

I mean the education will give you status the status or (...) you'll become an individual, you'll be able to speak amongst the people and say this is what I've done and be recognised because of your achievements also.

For A, education appeared to be conceived primarily in terms of its social capital – one that was expressed primarily as a means of enabling its recipients to “speak amongst the people”. At the same time, it spoke into a conception – also expressed by B – of the status associated with ‘professional’ learning as earned, rather than inherent. C and A were sometimes quite dismissive of their technikon education, saying several times that they had learnt more about ‘journalism’ during their internship period than they ever had at technikon. A was more self-deprecating about his earlier work at the newspaper than C – who seemed to view his internship as a process of tailoring his pre-existing natural abilities to the newsroom's needs.

Unlike C, A approached the internship as a learning process vital to the development of his abilities, rather than their adaptation to a specific environment.

For A, the process of 'education' and, arguably, 'becoming a journalist' was one of acquiring the social capital that would enable him to speak (and be heard). Unlike the 'born' journalist conception articulated by certain interview subjects (which will be discussed later in this chapter) A's conception of 'professionalism' implied the active and ongoing engagement of the journalist in a state of becoming 'professional', rather than the ease of the 'naturally gifted' individual's effortless transition into journalism.

The following section examines the significance of language to the professional recognition – suggesting that 'language skills' are not simply related to the grasp of ideologically neutral 'technique' and 'competence' but also fundamentally shaped by particular dominant social discourses.

'Good English': Language, Professionalism and Power

The concept, construction and measurement of so-called 'good English' can never be evaluated in isolation from the particular social history that provides its context. As previously argued, South Africa's apartheid education system is heavily implicated in the material and social privileging of the country's white population. When seeking to evaluate a particular subject's 'language competence', an awareness of this privilege and its manifestations becomes important. We need to ask whether so-called 'good English' is evaluated on grounds of effective and widely accessible communication, or if the construction of 'correct' pronunciation and/or grammar serves as a marker for class, race and gender privilege.

Both A and B emphasised their commitment to an idea of the journalist as 'public watchdog', suggesting that, through the transmission of ideologically 'neutral' information, they were able to instigate public action for social change (see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:114). While seemingly passionate about the social ideals of journalism, both articulated a perception of themselves as 'professionally' disabled by their status as first-language Xhosa speakers in an English-medium newspaper – though this belief seemed to be differentially 'spoken through' and struggled in each journalist's 'professional' self-conceptions and strategies. B said on several occasions in her interview that she knew that her English was "not good" or described

it as “bad”, and it was apparent that much of her expressed lack of ‘professional’ confidence rested on both this profoundly internalised and unquestioned self-perception – as well as an acute awareness of her early Apartheid-era education as “bad”.

Arguably, language discrimination has become one of the more insidious faces of racism in contemporary South African society – one which rests on the deeply ideological construct of Eurocentric English as the ‘standard’ for both spoken and grammatical communicative competence (see, for example, Taole 1997, Teer-Tomaselli 1997, also see Shapiro 1988, Apple 1982, Apple 1996). As argued previously, this ‘standard’ – rather than being used to encourage the development of language accessible to people from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds – frequently becomes a vehicle for class racism, a means of marginalising individuals from non-privileged class backgrounds. What makes this racism so effective is its capacity to deflect attention from its own constitutive prejudice – by focusing on the constructed ‘failure’ of marginalized groups to meet an apparently universally created and accessible ‘standard’ – and thereby to maintain the terms of its own social dominance (see Ladson-Billings 2003, Said 1979, King 1995). B’s response to a question about the challenges of working as a journalist whose first language was not English arguably demonstrated the effectiveness of the ‘standard’ language construction in deflecting attention from its own ideological genesis.

(...) sometimes people tend to have a negative attitude. If you talk to people over the telephone. Even people when they phone the news desk and then they hear that it’s an African, a black person answering the phone. They freak out, trying to, (...) ‘Can I speak to the people who can speak Afrikaans or can speak good English’...so sometimes you feel insulted.

KM: They actually use those words “speak good English”?

Ja, ja. One day when it was, I think it was my first month here... “Can I speak to someone who can speak good English? Or someone who can speak Afrikaans?” Ja.

KM: And how did you.. how did that...

And I find that (...) an insult. (...) because I think that they have to understand that we grew up in South Africa where there was Apartheid. We never got (...) most black people never got, I’m not saying all of them, but most of them never got good education. So I think that they have to understand that we never got good education so we cannot be the same.

(...)

Ja so they can’t expect us to know everything to be like... because it takes time to be like to (...)be good...

KM: Do you think that that’s a fair comment though, saying that you don’t speak good English cause that’s...

It's not fair cause it's kind of insult...sometimes you get just that sad question "what am I doing here?", sometimes you just ask yourself what are you doing here, why have you involved yourself with this...

Though B expressed sadness and frustration at prejudicial attitudes she encountered from certain callers to the *Cape Argus*, she did not challenge the barely disguised racism of their responses to her Xhosa accent. It can be argued that B's accent not only differentiated her as being a black African woman, but also served as a class marker. Rather than an understanding the intersection of racism and class bias involved in certain callers' refusal to communicate with her, B adopted the vocabulary of prejudice used to define her as linguistically 'deficient' – suggesting that callers should tolerate her language 'problem' as the unfortunate result of poor Apartheid education. Instead of challenging the social privileging and veiled racism that spoke themselves through certain callers' identification of her accent as a marker of 'language deficiency', B enacted her own marginalisation by treating such marking as a 'truth' in itself. It was also apparent that B believed that there was a certain 'standard' of language use that, once reached, would assure its holder of social acceptance and recognition – the status of being 'good'.

B did not specify exactly what constituted 'good' language. Instead, she talked about the attributes of the 'good' journalist as including "good communication skills" – a capacity to understand and empathise with people – and the ability to write "well". B's project of 'becoming good' – unaided by any form of newsroom mentorship – was arguably centred on an imitation of the styles she observed in other publications, rather an understanding of the grammar and logic of the 'news' narrative itself.

You go out and do stories so you obviously have to, to love people. You try to be very quiet to people (...) very good communication skills and writing well. (...)

KM: So when you say writing skills, what kind of things would those incorporate? What does, what are writing skills?

You need to, to, to do a lot of research, trying to find out what are the people writing about, trying to look at the style(...). I think it helps if you read different newspapers, books, because you learn how to write, (...) those kind of things.

While 'standards' for language may enable more effective and accessible communication, should they themselves be positively expressed and explained, they may also become an ill-defined construct that works to perpetuate social marginalisation.

B's self-focused project of transformation arguably served and serves as a strategy for psychic survival, enabling B's belief that she could engineer the conditions of her own acceptance. Discussing the journalists she admired in the newsroom, B suggested that "hard work" was a fundamental part of their 'professional' success.

(...) I think a lot of hard working is what makes them (...) good writers. Because if you are not a hard worker, you can't be a good writer. If you just take everything for granted you can not just be, (...) a good writer so ja I think a lot of hard working, a lot of reading it helps them to be good writers today.

B's construction of the "good writer" as a "hard worker" stands in sharp contrast to the 'born' journalist concept – which will be discussed later in this chapter – seemingly so prevalent amongst news managers and certain entry-level journalists. For B, good journalism was a function of considered observation and empathy, rather than the 'instinctive' identification of 'news'. According to B, good journalism was not effortless.

X, then a back desk copy editor at the *Cape Argus*, had been working in journalism for thirty years when this thesis research was conducted. Apart from being employed as a sub at *The Times* in London, she had worked exclusively at South African Argus Group/Independent Newspapers publications. Asked about the people management aspects of her job, X said she felt it was not "one of my best skills" adding "I think I'm better at English". It was apparent that language 'skill' – primarily reflected in established 'correct' spelling and grammar forms, the ability to construct a 'news' narrative chronology and, perhaps most importantly, the competence to accurately capture an 'accurate' version of the events reported – was of central importance to X's conception of journalistic 'professionalism'. In response to a question about how she measured the development of the Technikon internees (three of the entry-level journalists interviewed) over the period of their internship, X articulated her responses largely in terms of acquired 'technical' language 'competencies'.

(laughs) Well, they learn to spell 'separate' with an 'a'. (...) I mean we start off with a, (...) style sheet thing and I mean I expect (...) them to read that and familiarise themselves with that and so start using Argus style. (...), I also expect them to learn basics like if its seventh street it's seventh street and not seventh avenue and not seventh crescent or seventh lane or anything. They must check these things up and that's another thing that you say use your spellcheck, use the resources that are available. (...) and as the year goes by, they tend to improve and get, so that they are doing those things and that there is less work involved in going through their copy.

X's understanding of so-called journalistic 'training' – particularly the mentoring she did via email – was conceptualised largely as a means of improving the productive efficiency of

commercial news-making. In response to a question about her mentoring role, X said she saw it as a way of “mak(ing) life easier” for herself.

(...) I mean to make my own life easier in much as I can get people to write in a way that I consider to be better, it can make my life easier so that I don't have to do as much work on their copy. (...) so in one sense it's to make my own life easier, but also obviously we have we have a training function and a mentoring function (...) (...)but it's, it's passing on skills that were passed on to me you know. (...) I'm talking about stuff (...) some writing skills, some professionalism skills, (...) you know just what it is to be a professional, a professional in an office, where you do things professionally, as opposed to say a high school student or even say a university student where you're like ah, well that'll do. And I mean professional is, should be better than that'll do. It should be actually as good as, as best as you can make it. (...)

X emphasised the creation of “a polished product” as central to her definition of journalistic professionalism and identified ‘ideal’ journalism ‘professionals’ as “people who care about the language”. X also expressed an understanding of the language ‘standard’ as an inflexible measure of competence that had to be striven for, rather than examined, questioned or negotiated. Part of X's expectation of ‘professional’ journalists was that they possessed a level of language competency above that of the average first-language English speaker. In her response to a question about how the newsroom facilitated both ‘polished’ news production and the mentoring of entry-level journalists, X tacitly enforced a perception that the ‘professional’ status of black journalists – from backgrounds where English was not spoken as a first language – was rendered suspect by their language status.

I think that many of the (...) particularly obviously black reporters whose English, having to write English as a second or third language, they are quite magnificent in what they do. (...) but it's still, what they're producing is not polished English. The (...)big problem is...I mean that's not a big deal. I mean (...) we can do that, that's what we're trained to do. The problem, the thing that frightens me is that sometimes you're interpreting stuff, you're trying to you're trying to figure out what the person is saying and I'm always scared that we're figuring it out wrong. (...) to the extent that we might be, when something could mean this or this and you go with this and actually it's the wrong interpretation. (...)so far we haven't had any, in my experience I haven't had any cases where we've (...) made a major mistake in that regard but it could happen and it's quite unnerving that. (...) and there're lots of little pitfalls and things like just ah misspellings, mis ah mistranslation, mispronunciation of words which are then spelt the way they are heard. We might have, there was somebody talking about, there was a story about something to do with AIDS and somebody had said...it was a protest...and (...)the police or someone had said you must leave. And I didn't know whether it was written down you must leave if it was eave of ive, in other words you must live, you AIDS people who are ill, you must live or you must go. And you have you have little situations like that. (...)seat and sit. (...)mostly you can tell what is meant but occasionally you can't be quite sure and then you try phone people up and they are not at home or whatever and ah you can't be quite sure what is what is meant and that, that's scary. Um I once had a reporter at the Pretoria News who said to me ‘Ah X, what I have in my head and what comes out on the screen are two different things’ and it

must be hugely hugely hard. I'm very grateful that I work in my own language. It must be terribly difficult and I think they do a magnificent job, but it is as I say a concern.

X's concerns about the potential inaccuracy of black journalists from second or third English-language backgrounds, while representative of her direct and honestly expressed experience, could arguably have been made about any reporter – regardless of their background. It has been my observation that the perception of a journalist's accuracy – and the respect accorded to them as 'professionals' – is deeply influenced by the trust relationship that exists between him or herself and the sub editors. More experienced journalists, most of whom share middle-class social capital with the sub editors and news managers, are unlikely not to be consulted about potential changes in their articles. Having mastered the forms and grammar of mainstream news – as well as demonstrating the ability to identify 'news' through 'news sense' – such journalists have established their 'professional' status and are accorded more respect in the newsroom. Entry-level journalists, according to newsroom logic, have yet to earn that respect.

In the *Cape Argus* newsroom, which all managers interviewed described as significantly understaffed, entry-level journalists are often expected to produce front-page stories with little input from over-worked news managers. These stories are often almost completely rewritten when they appear in the newspaper. One of the more unfortunate aspects of this process is the motivational damage done to journalists who define 'professionalism' according to their perceived autonomy in the newsroom – and whose copy is drastically altered with little consultation with them. During his interview, A expressed frustration over an incident in which a figure in one of his stories – which was correct – had been changed during the editing process.

I put the right figure but then they assumed that this is the situation and they changed the figure. Which is not good for our paper. It's not good for our paper, (...) If they don't understand something they should ask you: is this right? (...) (...)Because you can't just assume this is the situation. If I wrote a story, if you need to change something on that story which you're not sure about, you should contact the person that wrote the story and that's it. (pause) (...) Because that's the thing that has been said to me. If you doubt that then you should contact the person who you interviewed.

While X's responses appeared to demonstrate a honest consideration of the challenges facing sub editors striving for accuracy and clarity in the narratives they edited, they were also skewed by the unconsidered power dynamics that infused the sub/journalist relationship. The incorrect sub-editing of A's story also arguably demonstrated the way in which standards for

accuracy were 'spoken through' by the newsroom's power hierarchy. The credibility of a sub editor's perception – of the 'reality' of a narrative and the validity of the journalist himself – meant that A was not even consulted about his own story. As a result, the accuracy of the story, as well as A's sense of 'professional' stature and reputation – was undermined. A mutually respectful relationship between sub editors and entry-level journalists, which would involve greater consultation between the two, could arguably address much of the dissatisfaction and demotivation expressed by either group.

According to Y, a news editor, while the sub editors carry a significant amount of discursive and political power within the newsroom, their 'knowledge' resources tended to be largely white and middle-class –sometimes resulting in the newspaper publishing blatant factual errors.

(...) I don't want to go at the subs but anyway, some can't get the basic facts down correctly. I think that is a bigger problem. And again (...) in a city as diverse as Cape Town (...) it is always a problem and the history of the city (...) it really makes it difficult if you're staying in Green Point or somewhere to actually go around the mountain to Khayelitsha and find out where exactly Harare is and place it so when you writing about it or subbing about it that you know that it's not next to the N2 for example, though Khayelitsha is next to the N2, um, or those sorts of things. But they get it wrong as well. (...) but the people in Khayelitsha buy the papers and think fuck. Um these guys might have just forgotten to locate Harare exactly in Khayelitsha. They decide that we need to put say that Harare is in Khayelitsha near Landsdowne Road whatever. So they put it in and they get it completely wrong, because they don't have a clue where these places are. And that is just as bad.

More than simply asserting that the predominantly middle-class subbing pool did not have sufficient knowledge of township geography, Y's comments again pointed to the lack of consultation that has arguably come to define much of the relationship between sub editors and entry-level journalists. Entry-level journalists, particularly those from backgrounds where English is not spoken as a first language, seemed from my observations to be the most vulnerable to this lack of consultation – arguably because their junior position and supposed 'language problem' was less likely to be accorded the 'professional' respect given to more senior journalists. This status – a function of the intersection of class-based knowledge, language use and internalised 'news' forms and genres – is frequently and dangerously reduced to a question of the journalist's 'natural ability'. As will be argued further on in this chapter, it is far more complex than that – and the way in which it productively enables certain individuals and disables others requires far greater understanding.

Facing The Challenge? 'Training', Language and Commercial News Production Pressures

While all the news managers interviewed identified the language challenges faced by journalists from backgrounds where English was not spoken as a first language as a concern, it was my observation that their newsroom dealings with such journalists belied the sympathy that they articulated in private. X stated in her interview that “many of the (...) black reporters (...) having to write English as a second or third language (...) are quite magnificent in what they do.” Nevertheless, she seemed unaware of how her habit of publicly making disparaging comments about journalists’ articles could be feeding into the very “confidence problems” that she discussed later in her interview. Within the *Cape Argus* newsroom, which arguably operates under the social Darwinist motto of “sink or swim”, the potential damage of X’s occasional vocal admonishments is denied by a newsroom ‘teaching through fear’ ethos that belies its own ineffectiveness by claiming that ‘the strong will survive’. This tendency, also witnessed in Y’s admitted tactic of using the threat of humiliation to ensure that entry-level journalists were always “informed” in news conferences, is undoubtedly exacerbated by the time pressures and demands of the commercial newsroom. One news editor claimed she no longer “even bother(ed)” with feedback because “I can bitch and scream only for so much (...)I don’t have the energy or the time to actually (...) sit behind somebody all the time”.

Certain news managers expressed regret about the level of feedback offered to entry-level journalists, but suggested that the proposed hiring of a writing coach was evidence of Independent’s commitment to their professional development. One of the news editors did admit, however, that she was “disillusioned” by management’s failure to translate a publicly stated commitment to the hiring of a writing coach and/or content editor into an actual appointment. Commenting on her role in mentoring entry-level journalists, she admitted that the *Cape Argus*’s stated commitment to the training and mentoring of entry-level journalists was often compromised by the demands of daily news production.

I think in what’s wrong with the Argus. The news desk structure doesn’t allow that. So yes, I’m supposed to be very involved and I am very involved but I find that often the selection of news or the news that’s produced is not of the standard it should be. (...) so when I’m selling a story to the editor for instance I know that it could be a much better story, but we’ve haven’t had the time to spend with the reporter to actually produce the story.

While acknowledging the pressures of daily news production, blindly accepting a newsroom logic places its greatest priority on the 'efficiency' of the news production process – continually designating second-language English-speaking journalists as productive 'problems' – serves not only to perpetuate the ongoing marginalisation of such journalists, but also denies the democratic responsibility of media to enable and respect discursively diverse voices. In this way of thinking, journalists' challenges to the constitutive content of 'news' are reduced to production-retarding obstacles, refigured as "language problems" and swiftly rehabilitated into the accepted form and language of the mainstream 'news' narrative. The racially defined resource limitations placed on black education during Apartheid are obliquely acknowledged, but never effectively challenged with critical newsroom education and mentorship programmes. Instead, journalists outside the sphere of middle-class education are simply moved from one margin to another.

What Is News? The Language, Form and Values of Mainstream News

As has been previously argued, the 'news' narrative construction largely enacts newsroom 'common sense' – a murky realm of cultural assumption that is powerfully 'spoken through' by socially dominant systems of thought (see Foucault 1980, Fairclough 1995, Louw 2001, Sonderling 1998). This thesis has suggested that 'news sense', the apparently natural ability of the competent journalist to identify and extract the 'news' from particular events and occurrences, is significantly determined by the journalist's sharing of particular dominant social values (see Hall 1973, Tuchman 1972) – which may arguably also stand in strong contrast to journalism's stated democratic aims. As McNair (1998:79) argues: "If news values can be seen as an expression of social values, then the news values prevailing in liberal democratic societies refer to a world which is ethnocentric, elite-oriented and focused on 'negative happenings' (good news is no news)" (see Boyd 1988:165, Gans 1979, Rosen 1999). The vague and almost mythic quality of 'news sense' arguably makes it difficult for media workers to interrogate the way in which 'news sense' is itself a particular discursive construction with particular political biases – because to question 'news sense' would be to reveal a deficit in 'natural' journalistic ability. As a result, the journalist is confronted with the difficulties of recognising the 'news' within the plethora of experience, interpretation and occurrence that constitutes human 'reality', and then reproducing the particular discursively structured narratives that both enact 'news' and secure the conditions for its future reproduction.

A's strategic response to his self-described 'language problem' also seemed to centre around a conception of himself as an efficient 'information gatherer'. A emphasised that the capacity of a journalist to "gather news" was more important than 'writing skills'. Stressing that a 'good' journalist was able to gather all the information related to a particular 'news' occurrence, A echoed entry-level journalist C's assertion that he was 'good' because he provided the news desk "with everything they could ever want" – and arguably manifested a position that I found articulated in my interviews with news managers. As expressed by X: "Some reporters here a) their English is not very good and their English writing is never going to be very much good (...) but they know how to get information" (see Latakomo cited in Patten 1997). Asked to provide details of what the journalist's social role was, A stressed the thoroughness of news-gathering as the journalist's primary function – the quantity and relevance of information accumulated by the journalist was framed as central to ensuring a vaguely defined public awareness of "what is important".

We gather news and present those news to the people in the way that they would understand them. You must try and actually make sure that if you (...)gather those news, you make sure that you (...) get as much information, so that your story, (...) doesn't lack some information (...) so the whole thing is about gathering the news and giving the news to the people, so that they can (...) know what is important at the end of the day is to make sure that those people who get those news (...)They get the information that they need to (...) but they must get it right and they, they don't need to be (...) left ah wanting to know (...)

Later in his interview, A articulated a justifiable level of confusion about the logic of the newspaper's criteria of newsworthiness – suggesting that news management should provide journalists with a list of how 'news' was determined. As a technikon student, he said he had not been introduced to any theory related to 'news values'. While A articulated a perception of himself as a 'news' or 'information-gatherer' – adopting a mimetic notion of journalism as a 'reflection' of 'reality' (see Shoemaker and Mayfield 1987) – his journalistic experience appeared to have challenged his certainty in the social agenda of news production itself.

Ja, I mean you know sometimes you get things (...) If someone says like in the desk this is, you must go and do that you feel (...)personally (...)this is really not something that you should be doing, this is not...news enough. But then if they say you must go and then (...) you ask yourself "what is news?" and "what is not news?" because like this year, I've had some experiences. I've written a number of stories which are positive you know you find you go out there to Gugulethu and you come back and you write something which is positive, something that has happened and then those stories don't make it into the paper and then you ask yourself "what is really news?" and "what is the role of the journalist?". (...)But then hey, you see the other thing, I find there is something bad, bad, bad, bad or there's a robbery or killing or whatever or shooting up in Khayelitsha or something like that and you say to the news desk (...)there's this

thing happening in Khayelitsha, they're gonna say go, go, go, go. They won't hesitate, you know. But then if you say there's this thing which is sort of a positive story, they say OK, that's earlies, you have to you know...But I think we they actually we need to really those people in charge (...) need to come up with a description, something that is gonna tell us what is news we, you know. (...)this one year has changed my way of (...) my whole thinking. Because now I've got a question as to what, now what really (...)what is news you know and what constitutes news?

Arguably, coming to understand the narrative elements prioritised by the news desk as 'facts' and 'relevant information' is one of the central aspects to newsroom socialisation – one that is not grasped with universal ease (see Hall 1973, Tuchman 1978). B related how, particularly in her first days as the *Cape Argus*, she had struggled to understand exactly 'what' the news desk expected from her – and how her inability to understand the newsroom's 'information regime' reinforced her own feelings of frustration and 'professional' self-doubt.

(...) there was this one story when I had picture but I didn't have quote in that story. They never used it because they said I should have (...) put her quote in my story and then (...) I never knew that I should have done that. You see, so you end up losing sometimes, you end up being the one who's gonna be discredited because they never tell you these things, but the next thing when you do, when these mistakes happen, then they come and tell you "No unfortunately we won't use your story because you did this". I mean, you don't know. (...) I think the first time when I went with a photographer for a day, they asked for the names. And then I said no I don't have those. And then they said, V told me "Why didn't you take names?" and then I said no you never told me to. And then she said "Don't you know that you should have taken names if you go with a photographer?" and then I said no I didn't know, I thought it was the job of a photographer to do that. You see they never told me that, but now they expected me to take names (...)

Asked about the mentoring she received from news managers, B said that, although she had received some feedback when she started at the *Cape Argus*, this had not been the case over her last few months at the paper – something which seemed to cause her a great deal of frustration. B believed that her technikon training was only one aspect of her learning process as a journalist and, like both A and C, claimed she learnt more about 'journalism' during her internship than during her three years at Border Technikon. Although she never defined exactly what 'journalism' constituted, B suggested that her internship had helped her to identify 'professional' behaviour and journalistic style. B also manifested a strategic commitment to the market-logic of the *Cape Argus* as a commercial newspaper – adopting a mind-set, echoed in her long working hours and drive to 'produce', which justified her self-questioned 'professional' status on the basis of her industrious capability.

The following sections attempt to examine the construction of what I believed to be the dominant discourse of ‘professionalism’ in the *Cape Argus* newsroom, interrogating the strategies, assumptions and silences that enable and maintain their effective dominance.

The Power to Define: Professionalism and the ‘Invisibility of Whiteness’

As I progressed with my research, I realised that I needed to evaluate the way in which the dominant discourse of professionalism not only specifically perpetuated the discursive and material marginalisation of journalists from backgrounds where English was not spoken as a first language – but how it also perceptually and discursively limited those it privileged (see Giroux 1992:17, Rabinow 1986). During my research, the self-professed ‘professional’ arrogance frequently expressed by C, an English-speaking middle-class white man, seemed to present a seductive but arguably damaging binary contrast with the ‘professional’ uncertainty articulated by A and B. It became clear, as I reviewed C’s interview transcripts and observed his newsroom interactions, that his sense of his own ‘professionalism’ – premised on particular Eurocentric notions of ‘knowledge’ and education, as well as based on a competitive and individualistic conception of journalism – was both fraught with contradiction and sometimes dangerously self-deceptive. Of all my interview subjects, C demonstrated the greatest consciousness of the ultimately constructed nature of the journalistic narrative – but described this construction largely in terms of his own ability to determine how readers understood ‘news’.

KM: Do (...) you think you have any role to play in interpreting information?

Absolutely. I mean you’re actually kind of like a god sometimes even if no one reads that story. You know, I’m very aware of the fact that I can shape the story. I mean it will sound 100% objective, but I’m shaping the story. I know what (indistinct) I’m putting the thing into the intro, I’m choosing what goes second and I’m choosing what to leave the reader with... the last sentence.

Later in the interview, C described the *Cape Argus* readership as being “somewhat retarded” and “not...all that advanced”. Enacting a sense of the contradiction that arguably defined the interview, he described his perceived journalistic role as being akin to that of a social and moral ‘teacher’, simultaneously suggesting that the journalist was more advanced than the audience he or she was writing for and needed to write with a consciousness of that advancement.

(pause) I think, I think. This is a bit off topic but I think the most difficult thing for a journalist is that...here at the Argus I would say, as a journalist anywhere, actually, you need to be open-minded. So what happens is you’re tolerant. You’re tolerant of gay

people, you're tolerant of everyone. (...) you don't differentiate, you don't discriminate, whatever. But you're writing for an audience that does. Now, I'll answer this as a question: do you write in such a way that you actually respect what the society you're writing for believes in, or do you (...) try and help them progress? A bit. (...) You see what I mean? So I define the role as a little bit of both those things. In other words, keep in mind that you don't want to shock them too much, you don't want to give them too much too soon, but at the same time, but here you're kind of playing god and maybe it's not professional, but it happens. At the same time, try and move society forward. Try and teach men that (...) harassing a woman, you know, at work...it's difficult though when that actually happens in our newsroom...try and teach men that you can't harass women and (...) touch their bums...you know what I'm saying? Like we've got to teach people that.

C's example of what teaching would entail – “that you can't harass women and (...) touch their bums” – is arguably a manifestation of the paternalistic middle-class values that inform his 'professional' self-perception of the journalist as teacher of the socially and intellectually ignorant. His notion of the journalist as “tolerant” of “gay people... of everyone” also suggested that the journalist him or herself occupied a socially dominant position - one that enabled him or her to set the standards for “tolerance” (see Giroux 1993, Apple 1996, Banks 1997). Commenting on the newsroom's 'diversity', Steven also revealed a tendency to essentialise the identities of his black and coloured colleagues in terms of race, while describing his white colleagues in terms of their political commitments. Steven also positioned his definitions and descriptions of his colleagues as the 'facts' of their existence – his power to define them, or right to do so, was seemingly never acknowledged.

(...) but I loved the people, I loved the other journalists and Y and everyone. I liked the attitudes. I liked the wide variety of people I could choose from every day to sit down and talk to, you know, from conservative snobs to English liberals to, um, to coloured people who paranoid about fucking race and, and black people who, fuck, I can't think of anything bad about them actually.

It became clearer as I observed C's newsroom interactions, and spoke with him on several other occasions, that he regarded himself as non-racist, non-sexist and, to borrow from his vocabulary, “tolerant”. At the same time, his internalisation of an individualistic, macho concept of what it meant to be a journalistic 'professional' arguably prevented him from questioning how his 'professional' persona was enacting the very values he claimed to oppose. Seeming never to have questioned the autonomy and certainty of his own socially shaped vision, he measured the world by his own 'reality' – and embraced its biases as 'truth'. As Giroux (1992:117) argues, the “norm of whiteness... secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible” (see Frankenberg 1993). Giroux further suggests that grasping the subtle workings of racism requires understanding how “whiteness serves as a norm to privilege its own definitions of power while simultaneously concealing the political and social distinctions

embedded in its essentialist constructions of difference through the categories of race, class and gender” (1992:126, see Fusco 1988, hooks 1990, King 1995, Ladson-Billings 2003).

While articulating a cynical awareness of the assembly-line production of journalism in capitalistic society, C also expressed an aspirational ‘professional’ conception of himself as a future war correspondent – a description that arguably was ‘spoken through’ by the capitalistic values of individualism, machismo (boy’s own adventures) and paternalism.

I didn’t have this perception of journalism that said it was some kind of ‘beautiful thing’ that would change the world and I wanted to change everything and create this utopia, (...), because at that age already I had the understanding that all media is owned by the rich and if you work from there you just have no choice, it must protect the interests of the rich, thus the advertising and whatever. (...) I don’t think as a journalist I can make much of a difference, so what happened was I went into journalism understanding that there were certain obligations I had to society, but largely I had to look after my own...or I had to have an understanding of, of myself in the whole situation. I had to be selfish and decide I’m also doing this for myself. (...) So I want to do war correspondence. Not because I want war to end, because I know it never will. I want to do war correspondence because I want to go to sleep at night and be, and feel like I’m lucky to be alive. You see? I want to go to sleep at night and think ‘Fuck, this is unbelievable, like I made it through an entire day of leopard-crawling and bombs going off everywhere’ and whatever. I want to do that for myself. But I’ll write moving stories as well, about the people suffering (...)

The often contradictory nature of C’s ‘professional’ self-perception arguably enacted his half-acknowledged desire to be ‘professionally’ recognised within the newsroom – a dual-natured desire enacted in what he alluded to as both “getting everything”, “producing” and “keep(ing) in mind the people who sub and who sit at the news desk (...) show(ing) people that I have a certain amount of intellectual capacity”. He also referred later on in the interview to how “unbelievably good” he felt after receiving praise from certain of the subs and made a point of highlighting that his interest and talent lay in ‘analysis’ – the art of seeing stories from a “different angle”. C appeared to position himself as a figure beyond the gambit of definition and simultaneously, by virtue of his ‘unique’ perspective, able to set the definitions of those around him. While describing himself and certain aspects of his writing as “eccentric”, “strange”, “creative” and “different”, C also stressed that he was “taken seriously” by both powerful newsroom actors and the social players he interacts with – presenting a construction of himself as a ‘professional’ capable of meeting newsroom demands, but also intellectually and creatively gifted in the artistry of his writing.

(.....) So I’ll have this strange quote in a hard news story about death, but it really sounds pretty good, ‘cause I asked the guy a really strange question. So I never had that problem with the *Cape Times*. Like I’d be sent out on a story and my personality was such that I’d get there, stand back and off run these you know, Alistair Arendse or whoever from the *Cape Times*, interviewing people madly and he’s so busy and I stand

there and I get a feel of what's happening here. I look at a tree, I look at the blood next to the tree, I look at the family, I look at the cops. Like I just, I get, I wanna feel it and then after that, I have very unique ways of doing things, you know? So I think that my personality helps me in that way, but possibly I'm a little bit strange or eccentric and that comes out in the stories and then that then makes them feel that they're new.

(.....)

SO: (...) I think I'm...ja, they take me seriously when I come up with story ideas which means I have a track record of actually kind of producing, you know, when I say I'm going to. (...) but I often set myself impossible tasks. Like because of the whole thing if you ask me a simple question, I have to go back into the 1820's to look at where we come from, bloodlines and this is why we behave like that, whatever. I do that whole thing and eventually I think a story through to the stage where it's at the end of the thought process and I think I'm going to do an international story and (laughs) why Mr Whoever killed Mr Whoever just down the road... you see what I'm saying?

Arguably, C's expressed need for a more profound understanding of the seemingly banal constituents of the conventional 'hard news' narrative both reinforced his own god-like perception of himself as all-seeing observer and enacted an unconscious conception of human history as inevitably European. Stating that his response to a simple question would be to "go back into the 1820's to look at where we come from" constructs South African history as birthed in colonialism. Arguably, C's neo-colonial conception of 'knowledge' is effective because it is 'invisible' and seems not to threaten his conception of himself as a 'tolerant' albeit paternalistic 'teacher' of the *Cape Argus* readership – precisely because it articulates itself through the self-assured (and assuring) vocabulary of Eurocentrism. While attempting to establish a notion of himself as a politically conscious intellectual capable of rising above the messy humanity that he observed, C's 'professional' self-conception was undermined by a denial of its 'tolerance' as constructed around a white, middle-class male subject (see Giroux 1993, Prinsloo 2001, Fine et al 2003, Morrison 1992, King 1995, Ladson-Billings 2003, Rabinow 1986, hooks 1994).

"Good journalists are born": 'Professionalism' and the Cult of Individualism

While repeatedly reiterating his own lack of prejudice, C's construction of himself as a journalistic 'professional' was arguably 'spoken through' by a patriarchal, competitive individualism that was more dangerous for its capacity for self-denial (see Bourdieu 1984, Giroux 1992, Rabinow 1986, Apple and Zenk 1996, Apple 1996, Ladson-Billings 2003). C's understanding of his relationship with Y also seemed to enact his struggle to maintain his professed anti-authoritarian individualism and simultaneously achieve 'professional' recognition. While seeming to identify with much of Y's publicly macho behaviour and toughness – which at one point resulted in him spiking five of C's stories because of ethical

concerns – C, while assuming his unquestioned power to define those around him, nevertheless articulated a curious mix of admiration, derision and patronisation towards Y.

I know when I write a good story and I know when Y thinks a story is good. He treats me extra badly and I understand that, because... because I've had experience with people like Y, so I understand that deep down, he's just a big baby... sensitive, sensitive, sensitive man.. who thinks like he's something big, but he's not.

(...)

let me just completely contradict what I just said, (...) I think I was kind of complimenting myself in that I adapted to Joe's attitude very well, but (...) I think that if (...) the news desk had been run by either V or X I would have (...) achieved a lot more here and I would have worked far more consistently and (pause) there'd be a lot more flair, like for instance they've supported me on things I said I wanted.

(...)

I feel bad though. Please mix what I said about Joe in the first thing to the second thing.(...) I would actually rather work.. it's strange. (...) Let me explain this to you and try and keep this in mind when you write this stuff up, because (pause) if X or V had been news editor, I automatically want to be rebellious ... (...) Because they'd be too sharp and too straight down the line. You understand? But with Joe being the way he is, I'm co-operative. So we're similar in that way, him and I so I understand the way he sees things and I kind of enjoy that. (...) Like I think I, I probably produce better for Joe... but I think I'm one in a million and I don't think that most people could do all that well under him. But, strangely enough, I like that. It makes sense. I like his attitude.

Y is an experienced struggle journalist who began his career in newspaper reporting at *South*, a so-called 'alternative' anti-apartheid publication. As someone who spoke about a life 'spoken through' by the oppressive discrimination attached to so-called "coloured" status under the Apartheid regime, Y defined his life as significantly defined by institutionalised racism. In contrast, then 28-year-old C admitted that he had benefited from his 'white' status under Apartheid – but discussed this privileging in vague and often dismissive terms, as something quite distant from his present existence.

This thesis has frequently suggested that the realm of human understanding is not determined by the sum of individual demographic elements (see Omi and Winant 1986, Dyson 1993, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, De Uriate et al 2003, Fine et al 2003). Both Y and C seemed unwilling to articulate any sense of any struggle in their processes of achieving 'professionalism', tacitly reinforcing the notion of journalism as an inborn gift.

While C had described the difficulties he experienced with certain news managers – particularly Y – in terms of the almost expected clashes between the 'creative' journalist and the 'conservative' commercial newsroom, he seemed never to doubt the validity of his own

'professionalism' and implied 'natural' ability. Like Y, C appeared to advocate the idea that journalism was an inherent ability (see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001:41).

C: (...) I don't think you need to study journalism to be a journalist. I just think you've either got it or you don't, I really do.

Y explained his choice of career as being an option that he perceived and experienced as "easy", describing his career progression in terms of the inevitable evolution of a 'natural' journalist.

You know. Just that I enjoy journalism a lot and I was probably too enthusiastic for my own good and I ended getting quite a lot of stuff (...), that made it to the front pages of the paper on a very regular basis. And as a result of that I, my progression through the ranks was very rapid. (...) so after working here for about two years they made me a senior reporter and probably two years later a special writer and the following year assistant news editor and two years ago now I think, news editor.

(...)

I opted for journalism largely because I felt it was easy and (...) I was relatively old at the time already and I thought that would be quite easy. (...) and I opted to do it, because it was an easy way out of a difficult situation.

KM: Was it as easy as you thought it would be?

Ja

Unwilling to define exactly how the process of gaining 'professional' journalistic recognition was "easy", Y often spoke about it in the passive voice, as a course almost wholly separate from his own efforts. His stories "made it to the front pages on a very regular basis", his "progression through the ranks was very rapid", he was "made" a senior reporter, special writer, assistant news editor and then the news editor at the *Cape Argus*. Y seemed to suggest that he displayed the traits of the 'natural' journalist so obviously that his professional progress was the result of 'natural selection'. While not open to fully divulging details of his past, Y also said he had chosen a career in journalism as the result of a previous life that left him "very little choices" – again subtly suggesting that 'journalism' had chosen him. He never suggested that this 'dark past' had enabled him to develop contacts who would later aid him in writing stories, nor did he acknowledge that he – like the entry-level journalists – had had to undergo a challenging professional socialisation process.

Y's responses were, however, not without contradiction. When asked what he expected from entry-level journalists newly introduced into the newsroom, Y's response appeared to enact an individualistic construct of the journalist as an ambitious, socially autonomous and self-motivated agent of his or her own 'professional' destiny. He seemed to suggest a model for

'professional' progression quite different from his own, apparently effortless rise "through the ranks".

Look I expect people to show a sense of being confident, of being. Knowing what they're about, knowing what they want. (...) there must be some level of enthusiasm for what they're about. From there, we then need to fill in some of the gaps in terms of their understanding of what's happening around them, their understanding of newsroom politics of Argus style for example all of those, that's all political. But I expect people to come in here with that sort of desire and energy that they want to achieve something in life man, succeed at attempting to reach those goals and achievements. If they don't have that, then it's pointless them coming here, I'm not gonna spend my time trying or helping them to sort out what Argus style is if they never ever gonna be using it ever again...

Y's expectations of entry-level journalists as possessing "that sort of desire and energy" to "want to achieve something" seemed to stand in marked contrast to his own self-described "easy" professional progression. Arguably, what he described was a kind of 'work', an 'effort' to "achieve something" that placed responsibility for the entry-level journalist's 'professional' progression directly on him or her.

It could further be argued that the contradictions expressed by Y in his conception of his own professional progression versus his expectations of entry-level journalists were very much a function of his particular social and 'professional' location at the time when they were constructed. As a then journalist – subject to the choices and perceptions of management – it perhaps suited Y to believe that his own 'natural' abilities would be recognised and rewarded. As a news manager, subject to a number of work-related pressures, it was easier for him to cast entry-level journalists as responsible for their own development – casting any struggle to progress as completely the 'fault' of the journalist him or herself.

Arguably, the suggested *Cape Argus* newsroom marking of 'professional failure' – both tacitly and directly expressed – largely ignores how social, political and economic structures may influence the professional socialisation process. To believe that individual journalists are the sole authors of their 'professional' success – discounting the influence of socio-economic or political capital on how their abilities are measured, confidence is shaped and social access is determined – is to deny the culpability of media organisations in constructing the terms and conditions for entry-level journalists' 'professional' progression. The individualism of the 'ideal' journalistic 'professional', which I repeatedly confronted in my research interviews and reading of journalism literature, arguably serves as a means of ensuring its own existence – precisely because it places the autonomous self at the centre of its own construction. The

ability to recognise socially determined ‘news values’, reproduce news narrative forms, share privileged forms of ‘cultural capital’ – and, perhaps most importantly, to manifest the ‘productivity’ that arises as a result of these socially determined ‘competencies’ – portrays itself as professionally desirable and ideologically ‘neutral’. The generally dismissive comments used to describe the journalism training offered by both technikons and universities – made by both news managers and the entry-level journalists – seemed to suggest that such institutions contributed little to the ‘professional’ development of such journalists, particularly their ‘news’ writing abilities.

Self-reliance seemed to be seen as central to ‘professional’ evolution (see Klein 2000:268). Social Darwinism arguably enacted itself through the vocabulary used by news editors to describe entry-level journalists’ introduction to the newsroom: they were “thrown in the deep end” and expected to “sink or swim”. Their ability to do so is then taken as evidence of their ‘natural’ abilities as ‘true professionals’ – and their ‘failure’ as a result of their own deficient journalistic biology (see Apple 1982, Giroux 1992, Apple and Zenk 1996).

More than emphasising the value of journalistic self-motivation, these descriptions are arguably also deeply influenced by the commercial realities of daily newspaper production. The ‘born’ journalist requires little ‘professional’ nurturing, he or she is able to ‘fit in’ into the newsroom and immediately become productive – not only identifying ‘good stories’, but also ‘getting all the facts’. While bordering on the mythic, the ‘born’ journalist is also convenient, diverting any potential responsibility for the development of ‘professional’ media workers away from already understaffed newsrooms.

Individualism should thus be understood not as the ‘natural’ essence of the ‘born’ journalist, but as part of the commercial newsroom’s strategic repertoire – effectively requiring little newsroom commitment to the critical growth of journalists, ensuring a focus on productive efficiency over human development and casting any questioning of its own processes as ‘professionally’ suspect. The reporter’s internalisation of the ‘born’ journalist construct arguably serves as a validation of his or her inborn ‘professionalism’, while the struggle to manifest its behaviours and attitudes is threatened with the mark of failure – one that speaks itself through the very biology of the ‘non-journalist’.

**Conclusion:
A New Language for Transformation?**

The recent focus on the 'skills deficit' among entry-level journalists – again, with particular emphasis on the 'problem' of second-language English-speaking journalists (see Teer-Tomaselli 1997, Taole 1997, De Beer and Steyn 2002) – arguably enacts a dominant assumption that 'transformation' refers to a process whereby historically oppressed journalists transform themselves to the needs of the commercial newsroom. In contrast, this thesis argues that the discursive and social essence of the newsroom itself needs to be problematised as part of a project of enabling greater discursive diversity in South African media. As argued by Laclau (1990:162): "the important epistemological breaks do not occur when new solutions have been given to old problems, but when a radical change in the ground of the debate strips the old problems of their sense." Should South African journalism seek actively to involve itself in a social transformation process that challenges the dominance of middle-class Eurocentrism as the 'standard' for human thought and expression, it is the argument of this thesis that media workers – from a variety of experience levels – need to start critically engaging this 'standard' and, indeed, the silences that lie beneath it (Spivak 1990).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to understand and explore the construction of ‘professionalism’ within the newsroom of the *Cape Argus*, an English-medium newspaper in post-apartheid South Africa.

It is a small and in-depth qualitative study which has tried to evaluate how a particular mainstream media discourse of ‘professionalism’ is enacted and struggled over in the attitudes, behaviour and perceptions of entry-level journalists and news managers at the newspaper. It asks what the process of ‘becoming a journalist’ requires of entry-level journalists in terms of their previous education and personal qualities – and examines the newsroom strategies employed by news managers when entry-level journalists do not meet these particular requirements.

This thesis has examined how the pressures of operating a daily English-language commercial newspaper may shape both the ‘professional’ expectations of news managers and their ability to contribute positively to entry-level journalists’ ‘newsroom training’. It has questioned the expectations and newsroom experiences of entry-level journalists themselves, asking how they experienced their entry into a commercial English-medium publication. It has asked how journalists’ ‘professional socialisation’ process influenced not only their perceptions of ‘journalism’, but also their own ‘professional’ self-belief.

In attempting to examine the nature of journalistic ‘professionalism’, this study has needed to explore broadly the ideology of knowledge construction within mainstream South African media. This thesis recognises that specific communicative ‘standards’ may encourage individuals from diverse social backgrounds to strive towards accessible, respectful and honest expression, but contends that the concept of “standards” can also be a vehicle for their marginalisation. Further study into the construction of ‘professionalism’ in mainstream English-medium newsrooms could include a more intense focus on the issue of language and the construction of language ‘standards’, as well as a greater examination of the social construction of ‘news values’ in post-apartheid South Africa.

With post-apartheid South Africa’s predominant political discourse arguably centred on an often ill-defined project of ‘transformation’, the country’s media organisations have tended to equate political and social change with altered newsroom demographics. A tendency to reduce

diversity to a function of diverse racial representation – largely discounting questions of class, gender and spirituality – has arguably contributed to the superficiality of ‘transformation’ in South African English-language media. By expecting journalists to transform themselves to adapt to the middle-class Eurocentrism that arguably dominates English-language media ‘news values’ – and doing little to enable journalists outside of a particular privileged class and language background to progress beyond limited reporting jobs – this model has shifted the onus for transformation from newsrooms to individual journalists. The result, this thesis argues, is that the struggle for intellectual, social and political newsroom diversity is fundamentally stunted.

Finally, this thesis has suggested that the question of media training in South Africa requires a renewed commitment to providing entry-level journalists not only with the ‘competence’ to function as media ‘professionals’ – but the critical capacity to question and engage with the construction of ‘professionalism’ itself. Operating from a ‘radical democratic’ perspective of journalism, which prioritises journalism as a vehicle for diverse social, cultural and political expression, this thesis has suggested that South African media education needs to enable journalism students’ understanding of the ideological construction of journalistic ‘professionalism’.

Arguably, only when entry-level journalists and news managers are able to understand how their particular social and language-status impacts on how they are ‘lived through’ by a particular construction of ‘professionalism’, will they be able to challenge the inevitable silences that such a construction reproduces.

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