

A media historiographical investigation: Examining three aspects of a press club's history over four decades

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Declaration

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Date: December 2018

Abstract

This media historiographical study examines the history of the founding of the National Press Club (NPC). The NPC was founded as the Pretoria Press Club (PPC) in 1978, in Pretoria. In 2002, the PPC was renamed to the NPC to keep up with transformation of South African society in general. In 1980, the PPC introduced the Newsmaker of the Year award. Since then, the PPC, and later the NPC, named a Newsmaker of the Year annually. The goals of this study were to research three elements of the history of the NPC since its founding as the PPC. The first goal was to research the reason why the PPC was founded. The second was to investigate the reason for the name change from the PPC to the NPC, and the third was to research the selection of Newsmakers from 1980 until 2017. Social network theory and social responsibility theory were found to be relevant, and were both applied as theoretical frameworks for this study. Data was collected through historical research and semi-structured interviews with ten interviewees. These interviewees were either founding members, former chairpersons, or former, and current executive committee members. The research found that the NPC (and PPC) was founded to serve as a networking platform for journalists and, secondly, to serve as a platform for journalists to raise the status of the profession. It emerged that the name of the PPC was changed to the NPC to keep up with the transformation happening in South Africa, and to support transformation of the Press Club. As for the third goal of the study, the research found that the decision for a Newsmaker was made on the grounds of news value and impact (within a specific calendar year), which is decided by the executive committee of the club. The social network theory underwrites the networking aspect of the NPC, as it explores the notion of how individuals create societies through networking. The social responsibility theory supports the NPC's founding purpose, namely to raise the status of the profession, as it prescribes certain "key journalistic standards", such as ethics and the notion of press freedom, that should be upheld by the media.

Opsomming

Hierdie mediahistoriografiese studie ondersoek die geskiedenis van die stigting van die Nasionale Persklub (NPK). Die NPK is in 1978 in Pretoria as die Pretoria Persklub (PPK) gestig. In 2002 is die PPK hernoem na die NPK om tred te hou met transformasie in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. In 1980 het die PPK die Nuusmaker van die Jaar-toekenning ingestel. Sedertdien het die PPK, en later die NPK, jaarliks 'n Nuusmaker van die Jaar benoem. Die doelwitte van hierdie studie was om drie elemente van die geskiedenis van die NPK te ondersoek sedert die stigting van die PPK. Die eerste doel was om die rede waarom die PPK gestig is, te ondersoek. Tweedens is die rede vir die naam, wat van die PPK na die NPK verander is, ondersoek. Derdens is die keuse van Nuusmakers vanaf 1980 tot 2017 ondersoek. Sosiale netwerkteorie en sosiale verantwoordelikheidsteorie is albei as relevante teoretiese vertrekpunte bevind en daarom toegepas as teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie. Data is ingesamel deur middel van historiese navorsing en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met tien rolspelers. Hierdie rolspelers was óf stigterslede, voormalige voorsitters, of voormalige en huidige uitvoerende komiteelede. Die navorsing het bevind dat die NPK (en PPK) gestig is om vir joernaliste as netwerkplatform te dien, en tweedens, as platform vir joernaliste om die status van die professie te verhoog. Wat die tweede doel van die studie betref, het dit geblyk dat die naam van die PPK na die NPK verander is om tred te hou met die transformasie in Suid-Afrika. Wat die derde doel van die studie betref, het die navorsing bevind dat die besluit vir 'n Nuusmaker gemaak word op grond van nuuswaarde en impak (binne 'n spesifieke kalenderjaar) en dit word deur die uitvoerende komitee van die klub bepaal. Die sosiale netwerk teorie onderskryf die netwerk aspek van die NPK, aangesien dit die idee ondersoek hoe individue samelewings skep deur te netwerk. Die sosiale verantwoordelikheidsteorie ondersteun die NPK se tweede stigtingsrede, naamlik om die status van die professie te verhoog, aangesien dit sekere “belangrike joernalistieke standaarde”, soos etiek en die beginsel van persvryheid, voorskryf wat deur die media gehandhaaf moet word.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The National Press Club (NPC) was founded in 1978 as the Pretoria Press Club (PPC), with “a few dozen” members (Devenish, 2016). Today the club is comprised of almost 500 members in three different membership categories: full members (journalists and news photographers), associate members (communication practitioners), and student membership (journalism student members) from all over South Africa (National Press Club, 2018a).

Twenty-one years after its founding in 1978, the NPC entered a period of transformation. In 1999, the club elected its first female chairperson, Amanda Visser, and in 2000, the club elected its first chairperson of colour, Yusuf Abramjee (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12). In 2002, the PPC changed its name to the NPC to be in line with the transformation happening in post-Apartheid South Africa (amongst other reasons) (Abramjee, 2016; De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12).

Annually, since 1980, the NPC names a person or organisation as the Newsmaker of the Year. This award is based on news value and impact throughout the previous calendar year (National Press Club, 2018b).

The history of the NPC (PPC), or any other South African press club, has not yet been academically explored, as no searches on the following search engines showed up any such studies: Academic Search Premier and Africa-Wide Information on EBSCO host, Google Scholar, International Political Science Abstracts, JSTOR, ProQuest Social Science Journals, SA ePublications on Sabinet, Sage Journals Online, Scopus, Taylor & Francis Journals, Web of Science, and Wiley Online Library.

I conducted journalistic research on this subject in 2011 and 2012 respectively, for the purpose of a newspaper article. This journalistic research was prompted by the thirtieth anniversary of the NPC, and continued in 2012 with the launch of the emBARgo, a networking venue in Pretoria. This work was done by interviewing founding members and former chairpersons, secretariats and executive committee members. An article summarising these findings was published in *Beeld* newspaper (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12).

The next section will discuss the rationale for this study.

1.2 Rationale

The aim of this research project is to study and record the history of the NPC since its founding as the PPC in 1978. It will aim to investigate three specific historical subjects of the NPC's history. Firstly, I will investigate the founding of the club in 1978 and the reason why it was founded. Secondly, I will examine the reason why its name changed from the PPC to the NPC. Thirdly, I will research how Newsmakers were selected throughout the years from 1980 until 2017.

As mentioned in the previous section, the journalistic research conducted by me in 2011 and 2012 on the history of the NPC was prompted by the thirtieth anniversary of the NPC. This journalistic research indicated the need for a more detailed study on the history of the NPC since its inception as the PPC, to preserve the history of the club.

I am closely involved with the NPC as an executive committee member and have served on several portfolios of the committee, including as former chairperson (2016-2017). Therefore, it is important to state that I am aware of the potential bias I could have regarding this study. However, I believe the background knowledge about the workings of the NPC will rather be to the benefit of the research.

The next section will briefly discuss the literature review for this study.

1.3 Literature review

No detailed academic studies about the history of a press club, both nationally and internationally, executed from an academic paradigm, and based on media theoretical underpinnings, could be found. Twelve academic articles on press clubs and the history of press clubs, and four books on the history of specific press clubs, were found in the literature search. However, several journalistic articles about the NPC were found. The lack of detailed academic studies on the history of a press club underlined the need for this historiographical study. The lacuna of academic work also created the need to approach the literature review from a different angle.

Therefore, this literature review explored literature on the founding of the oldest press clubs in the world, the reasons for their founding, and the contribution of some of these press clubs to the professionalisation of journalism. Furthermore, the exclusion of women from

press clubs also seemed to be a topic to be discussed briefly, and, finally, the founding of South African press clubs is explored.

Several press clubs claim to be the oldest press club in the world. The Birmingham Press Club (BPC) in the United Kingdom (UK), the Denver Press Club (DPC) and the Milwaukee Press Club (MPC) in the United States (US) all lay claim respectively to be the oldest press club in the world (Burt, 1997:72; Kania, 2007:40; Birmingham Press Club, 2015). A more detailed literature review will be covered extensively in Chapter 2.

The next section will discuss the theoretical framework for this study.

1.4 Theoretical framework and research questions

As noted earlier, after examining existing literature, I could not find any studies on the history of a press club based on an academic, theoretical approach. However, according to Wigston (2010:4), in order to understand how the media functions today, we need to reflect on how the media functioned in the past.

Two theories are employed for this research study, namely the social network theory and the social responsibility theory.

The social network theory applies to the one pillar of the founding of the NPC, namely that the NPC was founded for journalists in Pretoria and surrounding areas (as the PPC) to network with each other. In the chapter on the theoretical framework, Chapter 3, Borgatti, Mehra, Brass and Labianca (2009:892) are quoted as stating that the social network theory attempts to answer the question of social order, namely how “autonomous individuals can combine to create enduring, functioning societies” to live in.

The second theory, the social responsibility theory, applies to the second pillar of the NPC’s founding. The NPC was namely also founded on the idea to establish a platform for journalists to engage in dialogue with each other, and relevant parties, about important media issues such as media freedom. Thus, the social responsibility theory is also relevant.

The social responsibility theory forms part of a set of normative theories which assume the “ideal role” that the media should play in a society (Fourie, 2010:190). In Chapter 3, the social responsibility theory will also be explained in more detail. According to McQuail (2010:170-171), this theory prescribes certain “key journalistic standards” that should be

upheld by the media, including that the media should serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas. These two theories are explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Next, the research question will be described.

1.4.1 Research question

This media historiographical study is researched according to the following key research question:

- What is the history of the National Press Club since it was founded as the Pretoria Press Club in 1978?

The following sub-questions will help clarify this issue:

- Why was the Pretoria Press Club founded?
- Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?
- How were Newsmakers selected since 1980 to 2017?

The research approach, design and methodology applied to answer these questions will briefly be introduced in the next section.

1.5 Research approach, design and methodology

1.5.1 Research approach

This study followed a qualitative research approach. In Chapter 4, I quote Babbie and Mouton (2002:53) who write that with qualitative research, the focus is to describe and understand a phenomenon, rather than to explain and predict. This approach is also applicable to the study of human behaviour from an insider's perspective. As I am closely involved with the NPC as an executive committee member, this insider's perspective will therefore clearly also be applicable.

1.5.2 Research design

According to Babbie (2010:91), a research plan must be made to determine what you want to observe and how you want to analyse it before you can reach an interpretation. Thus, this study followed an historiographical approach. In brief, such an approach is described by Mouton (2001:171) as an attempt to “reconstruct the past” and to table events as they happened. History can be reconstructed (as close as possible) by using narrative techniques (Mouton, 2001:171).

This design has the advantage of the researcher getting the opportunity to examine different ways of how topics or events evolved over time. Furthermore, it is described as a relatively inexpensive research method (Berger, 1998:112). This approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.5.3 Research methodology

A good research design makes use of more than one research method, in order for the researcher to apply the different strengths of each method as every method has both strong and weak characteristics (Babbie, 2010:115). Two qualitative research methods are applied in this study, namely historical (archival) research, and semi-structured qualitative interviews.

1.5.3.1 Historical research

Historical research is a method through which existing data is collected, classified and analysed (Du Plooy, 2009:109). Berger (1998:112) writes that this method offers researchers the opportunity to investigate how things evolved over a certain period, thus, in the case of this study, the development of a specific press club.

For this study, I obtained written permission from the NPC (see appendix A) to make use of its limited archives, consisting of minutes of meetings, newsletters, speeches and statements. However, the NPC only has a very limited, almost non-existent archive, as documents between 1978 and 2009 were, unfortunately, disposed of in the past.

1.5.3.2 Semi-structured qualitative interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 interviewees. Each one of these interviewees were selected because of their specific involvement with the Press Club, from the founding of the club onwards.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews allow the interviewer to cover a list of topics rather than a set list of questions that must follow in a specific order (Babbie, 2010:320).

An advantage of the semi-structured interview is that the researcher can deviate from the list of questions in order to gather more information if needed (Du Plooy, 2001:177).

1.6 Thesis outline

This chapter is the introductory chapter to this study, and introduces the various aspects of this study. The thesis outline will therefore be as follows:

1.6.1 Literature review

This chapter contains the literature review. The literature review explores the founding of the oldest press clubs in the world. Furthermore, the exclusion of women from the first press clubs is explored and, finally, this chapter discusses the founding of press clubs in South Africa.

1.6.2 Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for this study, namely the social network theory and the social responsibility theories. The importance of the study of history is discussed before the two theories are explored in more detail. Firstly, the social network theory is detailed, defining what a network is, before I discuss the different schools of network theory and how to apply it to this study. Secondly, the social responsibility theory is discussed. The theory is defined before its history is traced. Furthermore, it explores the

principles of the social responsibility theory and, finally, the motivation for the selection of these theories is stated.

1.6.3 Research Methodology

The qualitative research approach, used for this study, specifically the historiographical research design and research methods, and semi-structured interviews are explained in this chapter. Furthermore, the research problem and the sub-questions for this study are stated. I will also explain the advantages of the chosen research design. Finally, this chapter will also focus on the ethical implications of this study.

1.6.4 Findings

This chapter records the findings obtained from the historical research and the semi-structured interviews. The findings are discussed in the order of the sub-questions as detailed in Chapter 4.

1.6.5 Discussion of findings

The findings, as detailed in Chapter 5, will be analysed in this chapter. Firstly, the reason for the founding of the PPC in 1978 will be discussed, followed by the reason for the name change in 2002, and finally, how Newsmakers were selected through the years.

1.6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I will summarise the findings of this study. It will include a summary of each chapter of the thesis, the final conclusion, the contribution and limitations of this study, as well as recommendations for future research.

1.7 Appendices

1.7.1 Appendix A

The first appendix is a permission letter from the NPC to grant me permission to research the history of the NPC and to access its limited archive.

1.7.2 Appendix B

The second appendix is the example letter of consent that respondents had to sign, stating that they participate voluntarily in this research study.

1.7.3 Appendix C

The third appendix is a letter from the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities), University of Stellenbosch, stating that ethical clearance was given to me for this study.

1.8 Reference list

The reference list is the final section of this thesis and lists the sources used for the research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on existing literature on the history of press clubs. Before an academic study of any kind can be done, the researcher must establish what has already been done in the specific research field. The researcher therefore must do a review of other academic studies to see what was done, and how it was done (Mouton, 2001:87).

A search on the following search engines could not find any detailed academic studies about the history of a press club, both nationally and internationally:

- Academic Search Premier and Africa-Wide Information on EBSCO host
- Google Scholar
- International Political Science Abstracts
- JSTOR
- ProQuest Social Science Journals
- SA ePublications on Sabinet
- Sage Journals Online
- Scopus
- Taylor & Francis Journals
- Web of Science and
- Wiley Online Library.

The key terms “press club” and “history” were used in the searches. To ensure that I did not accidentally miss a study, I called on Marleen Hendriksz, faculty librarian at Stellenbosch University, for assistance, who also did a further search on

- Academic Search Premier
- JSTOR
- Sage Journals Online and
- Google Scholar.

Her searches reflected the same results as those of mine.

Burt (2000:31) notes in her research regarding women press organisations specifically (which she started in 1995), that at that time, only two academic articles were written on female press organisations. This comment, although only referring to women press organisations, relates to my search results twenty years later.

This lack of detailed academic studies meant that I could not find any studies on the history of a press club executed in an academic paradigm, based on a media theoretical underpinning. Hence, this led me to conclude that there are not many historical studies about press clubs based on an academic, theoretical approach.

Still, twelve academic articles on press clubs and the history of press clubs, and four books on the history of specific press clubs, were found in the literature search. A search on the abovementioned search engines also gave no results of any academic study, specifically on the history of the National Press Club (NPC), founded as the Pretoria Press Club (PPC). Again, whilst no academic articles about the NPC were found, there were many journalistic articles about the NPC, and several about the role of the NPC and press clubs in the South African media industry.

I conducted journalistic research on the history of the NPC in 2011 and 2012 respectively, for the purpose of a newspaper article. This research was prompted by the thirtieth anniversary of the NPC in 2011, and continued in 2012 with the launch of emBARgo, a networking venue in Pretoria. (The NPC reflected on its thirtieth anniversary in 2011, but it was only in 2012 that it was established what the correct founding date for the PPC was.) My research at the time for the purposes of the newspaper article was done by interviewing founding members and former chairpersons, secretariats and executive committee members. An article summarising these findings was published in *Beeld* newspaper (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12).

The lack of detailed academic studies in this field of study confirmed the need for a historiographical study on the NPC. I will therefore now discuss the available literature according to the key concepts identified for this study.

2.2 Key Concept: Press Club

It is important to note that there are many different types of journalistic organisations with different names. Not all press clubs have the words “press club” in their name. Some call themselves an “organisation” or “association”. This study would not be a true reflection if these organisations were to be excluded based on the fact that they do not contain the term “press club” in their name.

According to one source, a press club provides its members with a “social environment to encourage the free flow of ideas and facilities to assist in providing information and analysis” to society (IAPC, 2016). It must support a free press and strive to enhance the professional interests of its members (IAPC, 2016; National Press Club, 2018c).

Kania (2007:41) asserts that press clubs around the world are established for the social, professional and so-called “benevolent” support of journalists. Voss and Spree (2008: 30) note that in 1880, the Chicago Press Club was founded to advance contact between journalists and local leaders. Burt (1997:72) stated that press clubs started to form in the late 1860s, after the American Civil War (from 1861 to 1865). She describes these press clubs as an effort of “male journalists to bolster their pride and solidarity” whilst organisational changes happened in the industry. She further notes that these press clubs served mainly as social clubs, but also functioned as a place where journalists could meet professionally, develop contacts, and make important decisions.

In the light of this discussion I will define a press club, for this study, as an organisation which fulfils a social role, as well as a professional role for its members. On a social level, press clubs provide an opportunity for members to interact and network with journalists; often also with media relation officers. On a professional level, the club will debate media issues such as press freedom, or media ethics. It will aim to improve journalism and the profession.

As far as could be established, there are two international umbrella organisations of which press clubs may become members: the Asia Pacific Association of Press Clubs (APAPC) and the International Association of Press Clubs (IAPC) (APAPC, 2016; IAPC, 2016).

I will firstly explore the founding of press clubs internationally, focusing on the oldest press clubs founded in the United States (US), Canada and the United Kingdom (UK), before describing the founding of the first press clubs in Australasia. From the founding of

these press clubs it can be argued that press clubs played an important role for journalists to network. I will then explore the founding of the Missouri Press Association (MPA), the New York Press Club (NYPC), as well as the United States National Press Club (US NPC) to discuss how the founding of press clubs assisted in the professionalisation of journalism. The exclusion of women from press clubs will then be discussed before I finally discuss the founding of press clubs in South Africa.

2.2.1 International Press Clubs

2.2.1.1 United States

As noted above, press clubs started to form after the American Civil War (Burt, 1997:72). The Denver Press Club (DPC) claims to be the oldest operating press club in the world, founded in 1877 (Kania, 2007:40).

However, the Milwaukee Press Club (MPC) claims to be the “oldest continuously operating press club in North America, and possibly the world”, founded in 1885 after three previous attempts in 1860, 1882 and 1883 (Kania, 2007:41).

2.2.1.2 Canada

The first 35 years of the Canadian Winnipeg Press Club’s existence, established in 1887, is recorded in a chapter in a publication on the region (Jones, 2012:25-32). According to Jones, the club’s first activities were mainly socialising, activism to change libel laws in the region, and to play baseball. She also focuses on trying times: the press club closed for business during the First World War, but reopened in 1922. Jones (2012:30) also briefly refers in her chapter to the Canadian Women’s Press Club (CWPC), established in 1904.

Jones (2012:33) writes that by 1933 the Winnipeg Press Club was well established and between the 1950s and 1980s the club was very active. It provided a neutral ground where journalists of the two competitive newspapers, *Tribune* and *Free Press*, could meet and socialise without the risk of “being fired on the spot” (Jones, 2012:35). The press club only opened membership for radio journalists in 1953, and women were only allowed as members in 1970 after fierce discussions and opposition from its male members.

Throughout the years the club had its own rooms and bar, but in 2007 it had to close them due to financial pressure. Instead, members started to meet in bars and restaurants. Jones writes the fact that press clubs cannot sustain its own premises, is an existing problem for press clubs in Canada and the US (Jones, 2012:40).

2.2.1.3 United Kingdom

Countering the MPC's claim to the oldest operational press club in the world, is the Birmingham Press Club (BPC) in the United Kingdom (UK). This press club claims to be the oldest press club (as it is known in its current form) in the world. The Junior Pickwick Club (JPC) was instituted in 1865 and renamed the BPC in 1870 (Birmingham Press Club, 2015). According to Bromwich (2016) there "are various pretenders to the crown" of being the oldest, but he asserts that the BPC is the oldest. The original first minutes' book of the JPC is still in the club's archives and states that the club was founded on 16 December 1865 (Bromwich, 2016).

Also in the UK, the London Press Club was founded on 28 October 1882, 17 years after the first press club in Birmingham (London Press Club, 2015).

2.2.1.4 Australasia

Moving the focus to Australia, its National Press Club was founded almost a century after the founding of the first press club in the UK. The National Press Club in Australia was founded in 1963 as the National Press Luncheon Club and was renamed the National Press Club in 1968 (National Press Club Australia, 2016).

Taketoshi (1989:371-388) explored the history of press clubs in Japan. From the research done by him it is clear that press clubs in Japan fulfil a different role from press clubs in the West. Although networking is an important part of these press clubs, he describes the press clubs in Japan before 1945 (in other words up to before the end of the Second World War) as being "propaganda organs for the authorities", elaborating on how the clubs formed a partnership between newspapers and government. According to Taketoshi the system did not change post-1945. De Lange (1998) further explored this

phenomenon in describing how press clubs in Japan are used by government to control the flow of news.

2.2.1.5 Summary

From the literature reviewed above it can be argued that many press clubs were founded as social meeting places for journalists to network. However, Winfield (2008:11) asserts that press organisations also assisted in the professionalisation of journalism. This can specifically be argued with the founding of the Missouri Press Association (MPA) in 1867 and the founding of the New York Press Club (NYPC) in 1872, as well as the founding of the US NPC in 1908 (Banning, 2008:65-81; Brennen, 2008:154; Winfield, 2008:11). The next section will therefore focus on the founding of the press clubs that assisted in the professionalisation of journalism.

2.2.2 Professionalisation of journalism

Banning (2008:65-81) states that press clubs played a vital role in the professionalisation of journalism in the US. He states that by 1909, press associations in the US had “been supporting formal journalism education for some time” as they viewed this as a way to help professionalise journalism.

Maverick wrote, in 1870, that other professional industries, such as doctors or clergies, met on a professional basis to compare views (as cited by Banning, 2008:67). According to him, in journalism, too much rivalry existed between companies. In 1873, Hudson, in what is described as the first published general history of reporters, described the existing press clubs as merely social gatherings that will not last long (as cited by Banning, 2008:67).

2.2.2.1 Missouri Press Association

Banning (2008:74,75) writes that many of the earliest press clubs did not keep minutes of their meetings as they regarded their meetings as social gatherings. The founding of the Missouri Press Association (MPA) in 1867 is therefore important to note, as they are one of the few press clubs for which records exists – in fact, the MPA regarded their minutes of

meetings so important that they made 300 hardback copies of the minutes in the first decade. Banning (2008:72-74) argues that there is “much evidence the Missouri Press Association was founded as a professional association” with an aspiration to professionalise journalism. These early minutes recorded MPA members repeatedly referring to “themselves as professionals”, and to the field of journalism as a profession. Banning (2008:68) also argues the MPA’s first charter had different goals than other press clubs. He notes, however, that the MPA met with other press clubs in the country and that those press clubs must have been aware of the MPA’s aspirations. For example, in the 1870s and 1880s no formal education for journalists existed, but the MPA continuously discussed the need for professional training for journalists at universities (Banning, 2008:78).

In 1886, the National Editorial Association (NEA) was formed. The MPA was a strong supporter of this association and E.W. Stephens, an MPA member, became the first NEA president in 1891 (it is not mentioned why the NEA was formed in 1886 but only elected its first president in 1891). He continued to motivate the need for professionalism in journalism (Banning, 2008:79).

Banning further notes that the MPA believed a code of ethics as well as university education would form the most important pillars of professional journalism. It is interesting to note they did not support getting a license, as they believed this would infringe on the freedom of the press. In 1876 they formalised a “loose code of ethics” with rules of conduct. Banning argues that these loose rules formed the foundation for other press codes that were written in the next century.

In 1914, Walter Williams, dean of the Missouri School of Journalism,¹ established in 1908, wrote a journalism creed (Winfield, 2008:12). Winfield states this creed set the terms and fundamentals for professional journalism. This creed was “one of the first codes of ethics”, and the US NPC accepted this creed as the club’s ethical standards in 1914 (Winfield, 2008:12).

2.2.2.2 New York Press Club

Brennen (2008:154) agrees that press clubs played a vital role in the professionalisation of journalism in the US. He notes that the NYPC, founded in 1872, started as an organisation to

¹ This was the first journalism school in the USA, and the idea for this school was proposed by the MPA (Missouri School of Journalism, 2018).

support journalists professionally. Brennen asserts the NYPC served as a prototype for the US NPC. By inviting scholars and leaders to address them and holding discussions about current affairs as well as media related issues such as freedom of the press, the US NPC hoped to further the education of journalists (Winfield, 2008:11).

Similar to other press clubs of the time, they limited their membership to white male journalists, but the civil rights movement eventually led to the inclusion of “minorities”, meaning male black journalists.

2.2.2.3 US National Press Club

Winfield (2008:11) argues that the US NPC was also founded as a press club to promote journalism as a profession. The US NPC was founded on 12 May 1908 as a social meeting place – e.g., the bar stayed open after midnight – later than other bars, but was also founded to “foster the ethical standards” of journalism (Winfield, 2008:11). Brennen (2008:154) notes that the US NPC founding charter “marked the development of a national social institution” that will recognise and be respected by journalists.

Almost seven decades later, in 1985, the US NPC merged with the Women’s National Press Club, founded in 1919, and formed the Washington Press Club (WPC) (Winfield, 2008:324).

From the information above, it can be said that press clubs were founded to serve the professional as well as the social needs of journalists. They also played a role in developing journalism as an industry, to develop codes of ethics, or professional creeds, as journalists convened to discuss matters such as freedom of the press, and challenge issues such as libel laws.

According to Voss and Spree (2008:30), by 1919 most American cities had press clubs to serve the professional and social needs of journalists. However, most, but not all of these clubs, like the US NPC, excluded women. One exception was, again, the MPA, which allowed a few female members, but they were mostly the wives of newspapermen (Burt, 2000:120).

The next section will focus on this issue of allowing female journalists, and their ensuing battle, to be included in the all-male press clubs.

2.3 Exclusion of women

It was mostly the bigger, well-established press clubs that excluded women journalists (Voss & Spree, 2008:30). Female members were not allowed because male members stated the press club “is no place for a lady”, as it was “a place where men smoked, drank and gamble[d]” (Burt, 1997:72).

It is interesting to note that the majority of the academic articles found on the history of press clubs are about the history of women’s press clubs, and the struggle for equality for women to join all-male press clubs.

Burt (1997:72) researched the founding of women’s press clubs and how the female journalists tried to legitimatise their jobs in a male-dominated working environment. She states that the exclusion of women from press clubs made it difficult for them to network and socialise within their industry. She found that this led to the founding of women’s press clubs.

Between 1885 and 1902, eighteen women’s press clubs were formed in America and Canada. These clubs gave female journalists a platform to socialise and network together in their struggle to earn a rightful place in journalism (Beasley, 2008:178). Beasley notes that many of these women’s press clubs also welcomed women who “occasionally published material or wished to do so” in order to promote journalism as a career for women. These membership qualifications were a controversial topic, and some press clubs even split due to this. Many of these clubs published their own newsletters to advocate the rights of women.

Burt (2000:109-111) found that as a result of this active assimilation of women journalists in women’s press clubs, since the founding of these organisations in the early 1880s, female journalists in the newsroom increased from 3% to 48% from the 1880s until 2000.

These organisations also formed part of the broader movement to promote the rights of women as many of the founders and women involved in the women’s press clubs were also part of the women’s rights movement (Burt, 2000:150).

By the 1940s the women’s press clubs actively worked to promote journalism education for women by hosting workshops and offering scholarships (Burt, 2000:240).

The founding and history of the Canadian Women’s Press Club (CWPC) is chronicled by several authors. The CWPC was founded after 16 women journalists demanded free railway passes to cover the 1904 World’s Fair in St Louis. (Male journalists covering the fair

received free railway passes.) They decided to form the CWPC on their return journey (Muir & Mitchell, 2012:47-49).

A comprehensive history of the CWPC over the period of 1904, when it was established, to 1971, when it was closed down, was recorded by Rex (1995). She notes that this press club played a major role in opening the doors of journalism as a profession to women (Rex, 1995:x).

In Kay's monograph (2012), focusing on this train journey, it is stated that the covering of this fair was a professional milestone for women. The journey made them "professionals". On the journey back, they decided not to let it end there, and formed the CWPC, a club that would become the longest running women's press club (Kay, 2012:115-153).

The founding of the Women's Press Club of New York City (WPNYC) is recorded by Gottlieb (1995), in which she writes how Jane Cunningham Croly formed Sorosis, a women's club in 1868, after she was denied a ticket to attend a lecture by Charles Dickens at the men's only NYPC. After Sorosis decided not to limit their membership to writers only, Croly founded the WPCNYC in 1889. According to Gottlieb, the press club gave women a platform to empower and educate themselves. The club also played an important social role for these women who were not welcome at the men only club, while working in a male dominated environment (Gottlieb, 1995:156-163).

Voss and Spree (2008:28-43) chronicled the struggle for women journalists to become members of the Milwaukee Press Club, established in 1885. This club welcomed its first female members in 1971.

Beasley (1988:112) recorded the history of the (American) Women's National Press Club's founding in 1919 in Washington D.C. This club existed until 1971 (no coincidental links with the name change of the CWPC in the same year could be found) and provided a platform for the women who wanted camaraderie with colleagues, but who were barred from the mainstream press clubs.

Burt (2000:246-248) notes that as women journalists gained legitimacy, the all-male press clubs started to allow female members to attend. In the 1960s women in some areas could choose if they wanted to belong to a women's press club, or a mixed-sex press club. After the 1970s most press clubs allowed female members.

Next, the establishment of press clubs in South Africa will be discussed.

2.4 The founding of South African press clubs

It could be assumed that South African press clubs were only founded a century after the first press clubs formed in England, the United States and Canada, and that it would be similar to the establishment of press clubs in, for example, Australia.

Searches on the above-mentioned search engines did not give any results of an academic study based on a media theoretical underpinning done on a South African press club.

One academic study was found on the history of a journalistic organisation, namely the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) (Barratt, 2006). SANEF's membership is made up of editors, senior journalists and academics and focuses on media issues such as media freedom, ethics, quality and diversity (SANEF, 2016). Barratt (2006) studied the founding in 1996, and the first five years of the organisation, to establish the role editors played in the democratisation of South Africa. She, indeed, stated that her study of a journalistic association, explained by journalistic theories, was an unusual academic study.

A search, on the search engines as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, on press clubs in South Africa found the following press clubs or journalistic organisations (focused on networking as defined above): The Cape Town Press Club (Cape Town Press Club), Johannesburg Press Club (JPC), South African Freelancers' Association (Safrea) and ProJourn. It must also be noted that several special interest groups exist, such as the Forum of Journalists for Transformation (FJT) and the South African Science Journalists' Association (SASJA), as well as the South African Communications Association (SACOMM). Organisations that do not exist anymore are the Forum for Black Journalists and the South African Union of Journalists.

The CTPC was founded in 1975 by journalist Tom Copeland and claims to be the oldest in South Africa (Cape Town Press Club, 2016). According to its Facebook page, the JPC was founded in 1956, but this could not be verified (Johannesburg Press Club, 2016). It is therefore unclear which club is the oldest, but the CTPC would be the oldest operating club.

Safrea was founded in 1999 for all types of freelancers in the media field (Safrea, 2016). This is mostly a virtual networking group, as they communicate daily through email and social media groups. They also host occasional networking functions.

In 2010, ProJourn, an umbrella organisation for professional journalists, was founded by Michael Schmidt (ProJourn, 2010a). It is unclear how active this organisation is. Except for irregular tweets (only two tweets in 2018) on the ProJourn twitter account, the website has not been updated since 2010 and its Facebook group is mostly inactive with irregular posts by the founder (ProJourn, 2010b, ProJourn, 2010c).

In 2015, the FJT was founded and Piet Rampedi was appointed as interim president (Ujuh, 2015).

SASJA is a South African non-profit organisation for science and technology writers with the specific mission to “promote, develop and support” science journalists and media practitioners (LampSA, 2018; SASJA, 2018). SACOMM, founded in 1974, is a professional association that “represents academics from around southern Africa working in communication and related fields” (SACOMM, 2018).

Only three different references could be found as to the existence of a Durban Press Club. In the curriculum vitae of Archbishop Denis Hurley, it is noted that he received the “Headliner of the Year” award in 1989 from the Durban Press Club (Denis Hurley Centre, 2015). The Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives refers to a speech, *Why PW can't keep Treurnicht*, by Alan Paton, to the Durban Press Club in 1980 (Alan Paton Centre, 2015). Also, a newspaper article from *The Daily News* refers to a press club luncheon held in Durban (The Daily News, 1981:9).

In 2012, the Durban University of Technology attempted to start a Durban Press Club, but this has not succeeded yet (Sewlal, 2015).

This study now proceeds to briefly introduce the founding of the PPC, later renamed the NPC, as foundation and context for the research project.

2.5 The National Press Club

The PPC was founded in 1978. The first committee meeting was held on 12 July 1978 at the Kaapse Wyntaphuis, Vermeulen Street, Pretoria (Hau-Yoon, 2012). The late journalist, Bernardi Wessels, then at the *Rand Daily Mail*, suggested the idea of founding a club for representatives of the different media houses (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12).

In 2002, the press club's name was changed to the National Press Club – Pretoria. In 2009, it was decided at an executive committee meeting to drop the word Pretoria from its

logo and correspondence, and it became the National Press Club (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:12; Rootman, 2016). Since 1980, the press club has selected a person or organisation as its Newsmaker of the Year annually (National Press Club, 2018b).

2.6 Summary

This literature review reflected on the existing literature on press clubs and their history, and concluded that a significant lacuna exists regarding such studies within the academic environment.

For this reason, the literature overview was constructed by first discussing the concept “press club”. It then proceeded to review the founding of press clubs internationally. In this section I reflected firstly on the founding of the oldest press clubs globally, before discussing the press clubs that assisted in the professionalisation of journalism. The exclusion of women as press club members, and subsequent founding of women’s press clubs, was discussed next. Finally, I described the founding of press clubs in South Africa and specifically mentioned the founding of the NPC to show its context within the national context.

The next chapter will focus on the relevant theories that will be used to research this topic.

Chapter 3: Theoretical approach

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, after searching for, and examining, existing literature I could not find any studies on the history of a press club based on an academic, theoretical approach. I referred to the historiographical study on SANEF, in which the researcher notes that her study of a journalistic association explained by journalism theories was an unusual academic study (Barratt, 2006:i). Similarly, Rabe (2014:13) asserts that media historiography is an understudied field.

Still, Wigston (2010:4) states that it is important to study the history of the media. According to him, in order to understand how the media function today, we need to reflect on how the media functioned in the past. Wigston (2010:4) notes that several internal and external factors influence the development of the media over time. Wigston asserts that if we wish to understand the past (in this instance, the history of the NPC) it must be explained according to a particular theory.

However, he acknowledges that media history research has its challenges. He points out that because media history as a field of study is a recent development, there is not yet a usable model for researchers that will enable them to “undertake an all-encompassing historical study” (Wigston, 2010:5).

Whilst it was not possible to reflect on existing literature about theoretical studies in this specific historical field, it is nevertheless imperative for this project, as an academic study, to be based on a theoretical framework.

As explained by Fourie (2010:103), theory is used to “describe, interpret, understand, evaluate and predict” an occurrence. A phenomenon can be analysed by several different theories, but every new theory can add or emphasise different aspects of the phenomenon, and therefore improve our understanding of the phenomenon.

According to Fourie (2010:116), it is difficult to state that a certain theory is only concerned with or applicable to a specific media field, as the same theory could also be applied to another media field. He underlines that all media theory in one way or another describe, interpret, explain and evaluate the power of the media and the role of the media in our changing society.

Similarly, McQuail (2010:87) also notes that the theories that are available can overlap and be inconsistent, and are often “guided by conflicting ideologies and assumptions of

society”. He states that theories are not formed systematically or logically, but rather react to “real-life problems” and what happened in the past.

Nord (as cited in Rabe, 2014) refers to two main approaches within historiography, namely the humanist/positivist and the scientific/idealist approach.

Rabe (2014:18) explains that Nord differentiates between the humanist historian and the social scientist historian. The humanist historian attempts to understand an event through studying its context within a specific period. The social sciences historian attempts to draw a conclusion and draw theories of events, without a regard to a specific period (Rabe, 2014:18). Nord (as cited in Rabe, 2014:18) notes that it is being realised more and more that the lines of distinction between these two approaches are getting blurred.

Fourie (2010:145) also avers that all mass communication theories depart from the two “grand theories”, namely the positivistic and critical approach. He argues that the “fusion of paradigms” shows that these two approaches build on and lend from each other.

Rabe (2014:19) further notes that historiography “is a combination of the two approaches”, as its research is built on empirical research and interpreted from factual findings.

Considering these statements and explanation of the “fusion” of paradigms, one can assume that it is possible to apply a number of (mass communication) theories to a media historical study.

For the purpose of this study, I choose two theories, namely social network theory and social responsibility theory as the theoretical framework.

Borgatti, Mehra, Brass and Labianca (2009:892) write that the social network theory attempts to answer the question of social order, namely how “autonomous individuals can combine to create enduring, functioning societies” to live in. This theory is applicable to the one part of the founding of the National Press Club (NPC), namely of when the NPC was founded for journalists in Pretoria and surrounding areas as the Pretoria Press Club (PPC) to network with each other. This is – still today – an important imperative for the NPC, with its monthly networking forums, where members network with each other and members of the organisations that host them.

However, the NPC was also founded on the idea of establishing a platform for journalists to engage in dialogue with each other and relevant parties about important media issues such as media freedom (Grobler, 2017). Consequently, I also chose the social responsibility theory to explain and interpret this research. The social responsibility theory

describes certain “key journalistic standards” that should be upheld by the media, including that the media should serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas (McQuail, 2010:170-171).

In the next section, I will now first discuss the social network theory followed by a discussion of the social responsibility theory.

3.2 Social Network Theory

3.2.1 What is a network?

For the purposes of this study on the NPC (in other words, an organisation that can be classified as a network), it is necessary to reflect on what a network is and briefly explain how a network works.

Caldarelli and Catanzaro (2012:4) define a network as a structure in which elements such as individuals are connected. Kadushin (2012:197) outlines a network as a “set of relations between objects”. His definition of objects could refer to different things, but for the purpose of this research it would refer to people, namely the members of the PPC and NPC who are connected to one another through their relationship as members of the Press Club.

A network is also described as “channels of communication that are interconnected” in groups and organisations (Watson & Hill, 2003:190). A communication network will consist of different dyads. The different dyads link to each other, but they do not necessarily link to all. Neither do all the dyads have the same access to information, or participate equally. At the Press Club, the editor of the *Pretoria News* and a student at the Tshwane University of Technology might both be members of the club, but the editor will have more connections and access to information than the student, although the editor and student link to each other through membership of the club. Prell (2012:8) argues that the word “actor”, as a more sociological term, is more applicable.

Latour (2011:799) defines network as transforming something that was able to stand on its own, to something that now has a need to “subsist through a complex ecology of tributaries, allies, accomplices, and helpers”. This will prove to be the case with the founding of the PPC. The journalists and editors felt a need to establish a professional forum to support each other in the media industry.

Castells (2000:501) also describes a network as “a set of interconnected nodes”. He describes the node as the point where a curve meets itself. The definition of the node itself

depends on the network in which it finds itself. One example he uses to explain this is the network of global financial flow: stock exchange markets and their service centres are nodes in the network of global financial flow. For Castells, nodes are links in a bigger framework. One can possibly equate this to how, through the years, many chairpersons of the NPC (and especially during the PPC years), were also editors in their newsrooms (such as the SABC, *Beeld* or *Pretoria News*).

Watson and Hill (2003: 191) state that it is assumed a network with a higher density of links will mean a shorter distance between different links and, therefore, information will be distributed equally. In a network where a “high level of centrality” exists, some members will have more information than others. Some networks will suffer more when one link leaves the group; a missing link will have a bigger effect in a chain network than in a circle network. As an example, one can state that Yusuf Abramjee was one of the most influential chairpersons that served the Press Club during his term as chairperson. He had business and political connections that assisted the club in its work. During his second term of office, he cemented sponsorships that stood the club in good stead for many years to come (Rootman, 2016). One can possibly state that his departure from the club left a void as his departure also meant less club sponsorships.

According to Watson and Hill (2003: 191), a sub-network could be born within a network when links are stronger between certain members within the network. Thus, one can say that throughout the years, the executive committee of the Press Club was an example of such a sub-network, as this group of people work together to uphold the NPC.

Castells (2000:501) notes that a network is an open structure and can expand and include new links as long as they share the same values or goals of the existing network. A network-based social structure is “a highly dynamic, open system” that can easily innovate (Castells, 2000:502). In this case, one can state that new members join the NPC on a monthly basis, pending approval by the executive committee to ensure they fit the criteria to become a member (National Press Club, 2018a).

Katz, Lazer, Arrow and Contractor (2004:308-309) state that networks can fluctuate in the type of links between actors. Different links include communication links, affective links, formal links, work links, proximity links and cognitive links. Usually, actors share more than one tie in a network. For instance, a news editor and the journalist who reports to her, work together (formal link), but they can also be friends (affective link), and they can have proximity ties (their offices are close together in distance).

According to Katz *et al.* (2004:309) one can also distinguish between strong and weak links. Strong links include a high level of trust, such as family and friends. Weak links are, for example, acquaintances that include someone outside the circle that you contact on a regular basis.

These scholars further explain that links could vary in content (for example, the “actors” discuss the weather or sports), frequency (daily or weekly), and medium (this could, for example, be personal or written communication or instant messaging), and signs (whether you like or dislike someone) (Katz *et al.*, 2004:309).

Caldarelli and Catanzaro (2012:18) assert that connections between nodes can be positive or negative. Therefore one can say that friends within a press club would be a positive connection, but enemies, perhaps colleagues from rival papers, or a journalist and media liaison with a negative relationship, would be a negative connection.

Katz *et al.* (2004:39) argue that the construction of a group can be determined as, firstly, the structural features of a network – groups are nodes of fully or almost connected people in a population, and secondly, a group could be a set group of people within a determined category (for example, the focus of this study, the NPC).

According to Kadushin (2012:197) networking is to use a network actively in order to make connections. Latour (2011:800) further states that if you want to define the actor, you must “deploy its attributes”, which is to network. He states that it is a reversible process. A network is nothing without its actors, and an actor is nothing but a network. He asserts that the word “network” is the concept that does the work. In this case, one can say that the NPC needs to hold networking forums for its members, but the members need to employ these functions to network with one another.

Caldarelli and Catanzaro (2012:4) aver that this underlying network structure of any phenomenon could be crucial in the quest to understand it. Often a phenomenon can be understood by looking at the network and interactions within it. They state that the networks are “becoming the paradigm to uncover the hidden architecture of complexity”. For example, in researching the newsmakers awarded by the Press Club through the years, the paradigm or background of the small network of people, namely the executive committee of the Press Club, making the final decision in the selection, could perhaps give an indication of why specific newsmakers were elected at specific times in history.

In the section above, it is clear that a network consists of a set of actors that are all connected to each other in different ways. As I have indicated all along, this is important for

the focus of this study on the Press Club. The members of the Press Club are all actors, connected to each other, some journalists, some public relations officers, but all work in the broader media industry.

In the next section I will discuss the different schools of network theory.

3.2.2 Schools of network theory

Social network theory forms part of the bigger network theory perspective. For the purpose of this study the social network theory is the most relevant theory.

Borgatti *et al.* (2009:894) write that the oldest critique against the social network theory is a lack of theory in the field. But they reject this critique by stating that there is so much theory available that it can be difficult to organise and simplify.

For this reason, I have chosen to use the demarcation and explanation set out by Katz *et al.* (2004:13). They state that within the network perspective there are five different “schools of thought” that attempt to explain networking:

- Theories of self-interest;
- Theories of social exchange or dependency;
- Theories of mutual or collective interest;
- Cognitive theories;
- Theories of homophily.

Out of these five different schools of thought (within the social networking theory), only four are applicable to this study; the cognitive theories are not applicable as they are more relevant for small group studies.

I will discuss these theories and their relevance to this study in the next section.

3.2.2.1 Theories of self-interest

In this paradigm, scholars assume that people form ties with others for their own benefit. Katz *et al.* (2004:313) state the roots of this school are founded in the work of James

Coleman, in 1988, who illustrated that actors in a group operate in the group out of self-interest. The actors see their linking in a network as an investment to their social capital from which they can benefit later on.

Muijs, West and Ainscow (2010:9) refer to this as the theory of social capital. Lin (1999:30) defines social capital simply as “investment in social relations with expected returns”. It can be concluded that this theory assumes actors network as individuals with other individuals to benefit their own interest.

For the purposes of this study, this particular theory applies as members of the NPC join the NPC mostly out of self-interest. Members see their membership and networking as an investment in their careers. They expect to benefit from the networking with other members, for example, a journalist networks with an editor from another media house in the hope to get a foot in the door for possible job opportunities.

3.2.2.2 Theories of social exchange or dependency

This school of thought has its roots in the work of George Homans in 1950. According to him, people network in order to trade their valuable resources. The sustainability of the relationship is dependent on what both parties can gain from the relationship (Katz *et al.*, 2004:314).

Katz *et al.* further explain that in 1972 Richard Emerson broadened this perspective. According to Emerson, every actor in a network can exchange resources because they also form part of another network. For example, a member of the NPC could also be a member of Safrea or another journalism organisation. Katz *et al.* (2004:314) argue that according to the social exchange theory, actors network so that they can become less dependent on other actors but make more people dependent on them. This theory is also referred to as the network exchange theory.

This theory applies to this study for the reason that the associate members (public relation officers) of the NPC join to expand their media contact database. They want to network to distribute stories and make journalists dependent on their relationship. One such example would be a government spokesperson that joins the NPC to expand his media contacts database, but also makes them dependable on him for stories.

3.2.2.3 Theories of mutual or collective interest

Theories of mutual interest or collective action form a third group in the network approach. Marwell and Oliver (1993:2) explain that the foundation for this perspective is that the actors have a common interest and believe that when working together they can achieve more.

Katz *et al.* (2014:314) point out that the theory best developed in this perspective is the public goods theory. According to them, the public goods theory was developed by Samuelson in 1954 to explain collective ownership of goods versus private ownership. In recent years it was further developed to explain the shared possession of intellectual property. According to Katz *et al.* (2014:315), the public goods theory attempts to explain why actors form a group to create and maintain public goods in order for everyone in the group to benefit. This collective action theory assumes the opposite of the self-interest theories, as actors network to “mobilize for collective action in their environment”.

Although this theory assumes the opposite of the self-interest theory, it is applicable to this study as well. One of the reasons for the founding of the PPC was to have a platform to debate and fight for media freedom in South Africa. This has continued to be an important role of the PPC and, later, NPC through the years.

3.2.2.4 Cognitive theories

According to Katz *et al.* (2004:315), cognitive theories also contribute to the network perspective.

Bandura (2001:266) states that the social cognitive theory assumes that although people are shaped by their environment or “inner forces”, they are also “self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating” beings. It assumes that actors produce social systems as much as they are products of those social systems.

Katz *et al.* (2004:315) name specifically the theory of cognitive consistency and the theory of transactive memory systems as contributors to this family of theories. Both theories focus on the perceptions of the actors in a group but differ in the reason why the actors start a network and sustain network ties.

As already stated, this theory does not relate to this study, as it is more applicable to small group studies.

3.2.2.5 Theories of homophily

This perspective assumes that people network with people with whom they can associate. Katz *et al.* (2004:317) assert that these similarities can be similarities in terms of “age, gender, education, prestige, social class, tenure and occupation”. Katz *et al.* further state that, currently, people would rather group together in terms of professional identity than categories such as gender or age.

This theory is applicable to this study as members join the NPC to network with people with similar interests, namely journalism and media.

3.2.2.6 Summary

In this section, the different schools of thought within the social network theory were presented. Four of the five schools of thought are relevant to this study of the NPC.

In the next section I will discuss the social responsibility theory and its relevance to this study.

3.3 Social responsibility theory

In the previous section I focused on the networking aspect of the NPC. However, the press club was also founded to establish a platform for journalists to engage in dialogue with each other and relevant parties about important media issues such as media freedom. Therefore, the social responsibility theory is also employed for this historiographical study. This section will reflect on a definition of the social responsibility theory, criticism on the theory, and the motivation why it is employed for this study.

3.3.1 Definition of the social responsibility theory

One definition of social responsibility theory is that it is a normative theory “that substitutes media industry and public responsibility for total media freedom on the one hand and for external control on the other” (Baran & Davis, 2015:61).

Also, Fourie (2010:191) avers that social responsibility theory is a normative theory. The normative theory answers questions about the role of the media and the daily operative issues that the media deal with (Baran & Davis, 2015:61).

Normative theory concerns itself with how the media “should” function in society so that the media can “conform to or realize a set of ideal social values” (Baran & Davis, 2015:16). They write that the purpose of normative theory is to describe how the media “should” be operated if certain values and principles are upheld, instead of describing how things are, or providing a scientific explanation.

McQuail (2010:14) notes that normative theory is noteworthy as it plays an important role in the “shaping and legitimating” of media institutions. This theory also has influence on what is expected from the media by society. Fourie (2010:178) asserts that the objective of normative theory is to “develop a yardstick against which media performance, accountability and quality can be measured and controlled”.

The next section will reflect on the origins of the social responsibility theory, to tie in with the historiographical focus for this study.

3.3.2 History of the social responsibility theory

This theory developed from a debate that evolved at the start of the previous century in the United States (US), with radical libertarians on one side, arguing for no laws to govern the media, versus an extreme opposing side, lobbying for direct media regulation (Baran & Davis, 2015:62).

The American press received extensive criticism during the first few decades of the last century. This included criticism that the media are sensational and commercial, and displayed tendencies of monopoly and political imbalance (McQuail, 2010:170).

Magazine publisher Henry Luce founded a private commission of inquiry in 1942, chaired by the Chancellor of the Chicago University, Robert Hutchins. This commission, the 1947 Commission on Freedom of the Press, had to examine the functioning of the media in the US (McQuail, 2010:170).

This commission of inquiry published their findings in 1947. In their report they concluded that the press did not meet the needs of the American public and that this

shortcoming was also the media's biggest threat to media freedom (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947:68).

McQuail (2010:170) notes that this inquiry was an important milestone for several reasons. It was the first of many such inquiries, often done by governments to examine whether the media fulfil their role in society and how they need to change. It was also an example for other countries, and, he notes, the report contributed to the theory and practise of accountability (McQuail, 2010:170).

It also theorised the idea that the media have a social responsibility towards society, however, McQuail (2010:170) notes that there is no evidence that this report improved the press of the time.

The report described certain "key journalistic standards" that should be upheld by the media, including truthful and contextual reporting by the media, that the media should serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas, and to give a representation of all groups in society. It noted that the media should control itself, but if it failed to do so, government should be able to step in. The report also stated that the government should not only allow media freedom, but should promote it (McQuail, 2010:170-171).

Fourie (2010:194) writes that independent regulatory bodies and professional bodies within the media were proposed as a solution to the merging of the ideas of press freedom and social responsibility. In this case, one of the reasons the PPC was founded in 1978 as an independent group was to provide a platform to its members to discuss media issues such as media freedom.

McQuail (2010:170) states that the Hutchins Report contributed to the "practice of accountability" and the theorising of accountability that followed with the development of the normative theories. According to McQuail (2010:170), the report paved the way for Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's development of the normative theories.

Fourie (2010:190) also refers to the 1956 study by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm. From this report they developed the four normative theories to measure freedom of expression. These theories constituted the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist theories (Fourie, 2010:191). From these four theories, the social responsibility theory is applicable to this study.

The next section will focus on the principles of the social responsibility theory.

3.3.3 Principles of the social responsibility theory

McQuail (2010:171) writes that the social responsibility theory assumes the following principles:

- The media have a responsibility towards the public;
- The media should give reporting that is “truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant”;
- A free media must practise self-regulation;
- Certain ethical and professional codes of conduct must be followed;
- The media should uphold public interest, and should it fail to do so, it may lead to a government stepping in.

Fourie (2010:194) writes that this theory proposes two solutions for the media to merge freedom with their social responsibility towards society: firstly, regulatory bodies, and secondly, professional bodies.

Regulatory bodies would be internal media organisations that are independent from government, but regulate the media, such as the South African Press Council, Code and Ombud system, or the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa.

Professional bodies should “advance and nurture balanced and impartial news presentation” such as the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF), or, in the case of this study, the NPC, as an example of such a professional body. The latter notes in its Constitution:

“The aims of the club will be to promote the professional and social interests of its members in the media fraternity” (National Press Club, 2018d).

During the years it might have appeared as if the NPC focuses more on the social and networking aspect of the club, however, it did play a role in upholding press freedom by organising media discussions, meetings with government bodies about media issues, or

raising their voices when needed, as will be proposed next by citing examples from the recent past where the NPC attempted to uphold the principles of the social responsibility theory, as compared to McQuail:

- The social responsibility theory underwrites the principles that the media have a responsibility towards the public and should uphold public interest (McQuail, 2010:171). In November 2011, the NPC protested against the Protection of Information Bill. The Bill was also labelled the Secrecy Bill. The NPC declared the day on which the National Assembly voted, as ‘Black Tuesday’, motivating South Africans to wear black to protest the Bill. Protests were organised, and T-shirts printed (Mallison, 2011). Abramjee (2012) said that this protest united the media and civil society. According to him, politicians, academics, corporate South Africans and NGO’s joined the NPC and spoke out against the Bill. The NPC argued that freedom of speech and freedom of expression is key to a free media and that they would oppose any move to silence the media, even if it meant they had to go to the Constitutional Court (Abramjee, 2012).
- As noted above, McQuail (2010:171) writes that the media should provide reporting that is “truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant” and that certain ethical and professional codes of conduct must be followed. The NPC, when certain situations required to do so, has issued statements to voice their concern about specific (mostly media) issues. For example, on 27 September 2012 it came to light that the *Citizen* newspaper manipulated a front-page photo (19 September 2012) of a Kabul suicide bomb explosion in which eight South Africans were killed. The paper photoshopped the dead bodies on the front-page photo instead of blurring or visibly distorting the bodies of the photo by “cloning out” the bodies. One of their photographers, Johann Hattingh (the whistle blower), was fired for speaking out on the subject and making defamatory remarks about the *Citizen* on Twitter (Parker, 2012). The NPC immediately sent out a press release supporting Hattingh’s view and condoning the edited photo. The NPC then held a discussion evening to discuss the altering of the photo, the ethics surrounding it, and the firing of Hattingh.
- Since 2011, the NPC holds the annual Percy Qoboza Memorial Lecture on 19 October to celebrate the work and life of former editor Percy Qoboza. It is held on

(or close to) 19 October to commemorate the day in 1977 when the Apartheid Government arrested and jailed newspaper editors Percy Qoboza and Aggrey Klaaste and banned the newspapers *The World* and the *Weekend World*, and declared 19 Black Consciousness organisations illegal (National Press Club, 2018e). This day is now known in South Africa as National Press Freedom Day or Black Wednesday. At this memorial lecture, the club also awards a deserving journalism student with the Patrick Hlahla Bursary to study an honours degree in journalism. In the past, the NPC also gave a bursary to two second-year journalism students for a five-month exchange programme between the then Technikon Pretoria (now Tshwane University of Technology) and Windesheim University in the Netherlands (Van Niekerk, 2016).

- One last example is the NPC's role to host neutral press briefings. The NPC provides a platform to newsmakers or organisations that need a neutral platform for a media briefing. One such example is when the civil organisation, the Organisation for Undoing Tax Abuse (Outa), was formed, primarily to protest the controversial e-tolling of Gauteng toll roads before they had monetary support from the public. The NPC would host their briefings, giving them a platform and exposing them to a media audience to broadcast their message.

3.3.4 Summary

In this section, the social responsibility theory was presented. The theory was defined, the theory's history was discussed, and the principles of the social responsibility theory and its relevance to this study were described. A summary of this chapter will follow next, before the research design and methodology for this study will be presented.

3.4 Summary

This chapter presented the social network theory and social responsibility theories as the theoretical framework for this study and argued why it was the most relevant theoretical points of departure to underpin this study.

The next chapter will describe the research design and research methods that will be applied.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the qualitative research approach for this study, the historiographical research design and the research methods that I used to investigate the history of the National Press Club (NPC).

I will firstly restate the research problem and research questions that I set out with. Secondly, I will discuss the approach I used, followed by the research design and methods used, i.e., historical research and interviews. This chapter will also reflect my own close involvement with the NPC as an executive committee member and former chairperson of the NPC.

4.2 Research problem

The aim of this research project was to investigate the history of the NPC. Founded as the Pretoria Press Club (PPC) in 1978, I intended to study the founding of the club, examine the name change from the PPC to the NPC in 1999, and reflect on the process of electing newsmakers since 1980 from within a media historiographical paradigm.

4.3 Research question

I proposed to conduct this historiographical study according to the following key research question:

- What is the history of the National Press Club since it was founded as the Pretoria Press Club in 1978?

The aim of the following sub-questions was to help clarify these questions:

- Why was the Pretoria Press Club founded?

- Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?
- How were Newsmakers selected since 1980 to 2017?

4.4 Research approach: Qualitative research

Communication research can follow a quantitative or qualitative approach. This section will discuss the qualitative approach that I used for this study. I will describe the differences between quantitative and qualitative research and discuss advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative approach.

Quantitative research aims to “describe, predict and explain” (Du Plooy, 2009:87) human behaviour by drawing a conclusion from a sample of numerical data that was collected. With qualitative research, the focus is on describing and understanding a phenomenon rather than to explain and predict (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:53). It can also describe and seek to understand human behaviour by studying a phenomenon from an insider’s perspective – as is the case with this project, since I, as researcher, am also involved in the organisation that is the focus of this study. Where quantitative research typically makes use of statistics and numerical data, the qualitative approach relies on an in-depth description of the subject. This approach uses observational methods of research to gather information (Du Plooy, 2009:87; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:53).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:49), there have been debates in the mass media field in recent years about which method would be the best to use for media studies. They assert that both approaches have value, but the goals of a research study will determine the best approach for that study.

The differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches, as discussed by Babbie and Mouton (2002:270), Du Plooy (2009:89) and Wimmer and Dominick (2011:49) can be summarised as follows. In qualitative research:

- The researcher can observe social actors in their natural environment as opposed to the sometimes artificial set-up of survey research.
- The research focus is on “process rather than outcome”.
- Qualitative methods can lead to a better understanding of a phenomenon, especially when it is examined for the first time (as is the case for this project). The goal is to get an in-depth understanding of the subject.

- The focus is on the perspective from the inside.
- Qualitative methods are flexible. For example, the researcher can realise whilst busy with the study that the objective of the study might change (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:270; Du Plooy, 2009:89; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:49).

The aim of this study was to research the history of the NPC, and for this purpose I chose to follow a qualitative approach. Du Plooy (2009:88) states that a researcher will follow a qualitative research approach when she intends to study the properties of a group or organisation, as is the case with this study. This will usually be done by inductive reasoning. The researcher will observe a phenomenon based on specific assumptions and conclude with a description of what was observed. With inductive reasoning, questions will be based on assumptions, but end with a summarised description of the information received (Du Plooy, 2009:88).

Babbie and Mouton (2002:273) write that with inductive reasoning the researcher will describe events as they happened and then build a hypothesis or theory out of these data gathered.

Some of the disadvantages of this approach include that samples might be too small to generalise the information, and if not planned properly it could have no value and data could be unreliable due to a researcher losing objectivity when getting too close to the subject (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:48).

My own close involvement with the NPC as an executive committee member since 2008 and former chairperson (2016-2017) must be noted, as possible bias could exist (this will also be discussed under ethical considerations in Chapter 4). But, as Babbie and Mouton (2002:271-272) note, the qualitative researcher should attempt to do research from an insider's perspective. They further note that another characteristic of qualitative research is that it aims to describe and understand a subject within its context. The personal and close involvement of the researcher with the NPC could therefore be an advantage to the research as it adds to understanding the context of the NPC, having inside knowledge about the functioning of the organisation.

The next section will discuss the research design for this study, which is historiographical.

4.5 Design: Historiographical study

Babbie (2010:91) points out that scientific research is about observing a phenomenon and construing observations. He states that before an interpretation can be reached, a research plan must be made to determine what you want to observe, and how you want to analyse it. In order to research the history of the NPC, an historiographical study is an appropriate research design. Conboy (2012:1) describes journalism history as one of the most fertile sub-fields of Journalism Studies.

Nord and Nelson (1981:279) define history as “an empirical study that uses various levels or generalization to describe, interpret, or explain collections of data”. Mouton (2001:170) describes an historiographical study as an attempt to “reconstruct the past” and to table events as they happened. By using narrative techniques, it becomes possible to “reconstruct” history as close as possible (Mouton, 2001:171). Sonderling (1997:90) notes that researchers can only study the past through records (written documents, artefacts) and listening to people’s recollections of the past.

He asserts that historical research of the forms of communication can lead to a better understanding of the past and assist predictions about the future (Sonderling, 1997:89). He also states that historical research involves trying to read messages from the past and seeking to understand how past societies communicated.

Rabe (2014:18) mentions a more recent (and South African) definition of historiography by De Villiers, in which historiography is described as part of the humanities and “an attempt to mine the ‘accessible sediment, reports, and analyses of events in the past’”.

According to Sonderling (1997:87-89), studying the history of communication is a fairly recent phenomenon. He notes that communications scholars’ interest in the “nature of history, its relation to communication theory and the value of historical research methods” only started in the late 1970s. Sonderling (1997:88) argues that there used to be a division between scientific and historical research methods. Nord (2003:363) adds to this, stating that for a long time researchers debated whether history is a “form of science or a genre of literature” (Nord, 2003:363). According to Sonderling (1997:88) scientific and historical research methods do not differ fundamentally. He describes some similarities between these two:

- A historical study can be described as a “science of human beings” in the past;
- Both scientists and historians mostly observe their subject matters indirectly;
- Both formulate theories to explain their findings;
- Both deal with biased data.

Sonderling (1997:88) notes that the division has been discarded and that the historical research method is now accepted as a “scientific and valid” approach in communication studies (Sonderling, 1997:88). Further to this, Conboy (2012:6) believes there is now a growing interest for studies in this field. He asserts that the importance of history is on the increase in journalism as news media uses the past to “differentiate themselves as mere information providers” (Conboy, 2012:6).

One of the advantages of this design, according to Berger (1998:112), is that with historical research the researcher gets the opportunity to examine in different ways how a topic or events evolve over time. He further argues that this is a relatively inexpensive research method. In the case of this study, there was no cost involved in working through the archives of the Press Club, and low costs involved with doing the interviews, as most interviews could take place in Pretoria, where I am based.

It is important to also note the limitations that this design holds. An historiographical study design is limited by the availability of research documents and the way the researcher understands history (Mouton, 2001:171). Berger (1998:113) adds to this, stating that the accuracy of sources could be a limitation. He asserts that whilst studying the data it could be difficult to differentiate between facts and opinions. Nord (2003:377), however, argues that this should not stop a researcher from using this approach.

Berger also agrees with Mouton that a researcher could be limited by the difficulty of finding information on the research topic (1998:113). He adds (1998:111-112) that by using a selection of evidence available, the researcher can only do her best to reconstruct the history and interpret it. Berger notes that different historians will disagree on the “validity of data” and about the importance of events. Therefore, the researcher will use the available data to suggest what is important.

According to Nord and Nelson (1981:280) many historians do not aim to generalise a topic, but rather to understand and describe it as it happened in its timeframe. I will also apply this concept in this study, namely, instead of trying to generalise the history of the

NPC, the aim is rather to describe the particular history, and to understand the name change as well as the naming of Newsmakers.

The following section focuses on the research methods applied for this study.

4.6 Research methods

According to Babbie (2010:115) some research methods can be more appropriately applied to certain research topics than other methods. He observes that every research method comes with strong and weak characteristics. A good research design makes use of more than one method, thus enabling the researcher to make use of the different strengths of each method (Babbie, 2010:115).

In order to carry out this historiographical study, I proposed using two qualitative research methods, namely historical (archival) research and qualitative interviews. I will firstly discuss the historical research method.

4.6.1 Historical research

Historical research is a method through which existing data is collected, classified and analysed (Du Plooy, 2009:109). Berger (1998:112) writes that this method offers researchers the opportunity to investigate how things evolved over a certain period, thus, in the case of this study, the development of a specific press club.

Sonderling (1997:89-90) suggests that in communication research, historical research assists researchers in studying the development of “different means of communication”, their forms, functions and related people and organisations. He further notes that history is only available through the memories of people and by analysing data from the past.

Existing studies done by historians on a specific topic could, according to Babbie (2010:355), be a “great” starting point for in-depth research. In the case of this project, however, as already stated in Chapter 2, limited studies on the history of press clubs were found.

According to Berger (1998:112) the fact that research must rely on people’s memories and data from the past is one of the disadvantages of this method, as it could be difficult to

find such data. The researcher also has to ensure that her sources are accurate. Historians must separate facts from interpretations and opinions (Berger, 1998:113).

Therefore, it is important to consult official documents, such as speeches, charters and statements from the past to learn more about an organisation. It is also important to attempt to get replication or confirmation regarding certain facts to increase confidence in the validity of the research (Babbie, 2010:356).

Also, Sonderling discusses how the method of historical research uses records of the past to study the history of a certain topic (1997:98). He explains that a researcher can make use of primary or secondary sources of information. Primary sources are documents and information that originated in the period that is examined. These sources can provide the researcher with unmediated information. Examples of this would be original minutes of meetings, documents and interviews with people who have first-hand information about the topic being studied (Sonderling, 1997:98). Primary sources are also called raw data, and Babbie (2010:355) asserts that a researcher would ultimately like to examine such “raw data”.

Sonderling (1997:98) asserts that primary sources are divided into two categories: documents and relics. He describes documents as original source material and eyewitness documentations that were made with the intention of being kept as historical records. According to him, relics are a form of information that was not intended to be preserved for historical research purposes, for example, the financial records of a company (1997:98).

Secondary sources are defined as information written about a certain period that is to be found in a textbook or a journal. It is usually easier to find secondary sources of information for historical research. However, in the case of this study, primary sources were more freely available than secondary sources, as no academic studies have thus far been done on the history of this particular press club (see Chapter 2 for this discussion).

For this research, I therefore used primary sources as sources of information. I obtained written permission from the NPC (see Appendix A) to make use of its limited archives, consisting of minutes of meetings, newsletters, speeches and statements. One box with files containing hard copy minutes, newsletters, speeches, statements and other documents dating from 2010 until 2013 was housed at the secretariat; it is now housed by this researcher in an official new archival system for the purposes of the NPC. It is unfortunate that the existing archive does not include documentation from 1978 until 2009.

The current secretariat confirmed to this researcher that all previous documents were disposed of by previous executive committee members.

This implies that there is no archive from the first three decades of the NPC – in other words, also the two decades when the club was known as the PPC. I have, however, received two documents from former and founder Press Club members in which they have documented some personal accounts from the founding years. This information, however, is still scant and cannot make up for the years of archival evidence that has been lost through the disposal of documents as described above.

Documents from 2012 onwards are stored electronically at the secretariat on a hard disk. To date, still no official archive is kept; these are just the working documents of the organisation. I received an electronic copy of the complete set of documents from the secretariat in 2017, and an update on these documents in 2018. These documents contain concise minutes of meetings and short descriptions of decisions taken by the executive committees of the NPC from 2012 until 2017.

In the next section, I will describe the second method, namely semi-structured qualitative interviews.

4.6.2 Semi-structured qualitative interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were proposed for this study as this interview method would allow the interviewer to cover a list of topics, rather than a set list of questions that must follow in a specific order (Babbie, 2010:320).

Du Plooy (2009:198) states that other than in a structured interview, in a semi-structured interview there is interaction between the interviewer and interviewee.

Babbie (2010:320) describes the qualitative interview as a conversation in which the “respondent does most of the talking”. The interviewer will guide the conversation and pursue specific topics.

In the case of this research, the semi-structured interview style was applicable, as not all questions could be answered by all interviewees, and I did not wish to presume that all the interviewees would answer questions in the same manner. The questions asked were also dependent on the interviewees’ different types of involvement with the Press Club. Some interviewees were founding members and could only answer questions about the founding

and earlier Press Club years. Other interviewees only joined the Press Club in recent years, and therefore were better informed about, for example, the name change and/or controversial Newsmakers.

Babbie further states that because of this conversational style, questions asked in the interview must be worded carefully so as not to influence the outcome of the interview. He warns that the interviewer must “listen, think and talk almost at the same time” in order to conduct a meaningful interview. Follow-up questions must be framed according to the answer of the previous questions (Babbie, 2010:320). The interviewer must also carefully direct the conversation to ensure that specific topics and questions get covered (Babbie, 2010:320).

Ten interviewees were interviewed. They were selected by purposive sampling because of their specific involvement with the Press Club, some from the time of the founding of the club, onwards. Due to the limited archives, it was fortunate that it was possible to secure interviews with founding members of the PPC who were able to recall the founding years and the first two decades. Unfortunately, some have already passed away.

All interviewees selected served on the executive committee at a specific point in time. The individual reasons for selection are noted after each name:

- Antoinette Slabbert, chairperson from September 2012 until June 2013 (elected after Yusuf Abramjee resigned before the election of a new executive committee);
- Ben Rootman, founding member, chairperson from 2003 until 2007, and part of the secretariat from 2000 until 2018;
- Doreen Gough, founding member and honorary member since 2012;
- Jos Charle, chairperson from 2013 until 2016 and current chairperson;
- Martin van Niekerk, part of the secretariat from 2000 until 2018;
- Muriel Hau-Yoon, first secretary of the PPC until 1985;
- Reynold Thakhuli, current executive committee member and Press Club member since 1999;
- Roy Devenish, founding member and honorary member since 2012;
- Tok Grobler, founding member and chairperson from 1982 until 1983;

- Yusuf Abramjee, the first chairperson of colour, chairperson from 2000 until 2003 and from 2009 until September 2012.

In the next section the ethical considerations of this research will be discussed.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Just as there are ethical standards in society, there are ethical standards to be upheld in the social research community, notes Babbie (2010:64). He writes that a researcher has an ethical obligation to the social research society and to her participants. Also, findings must be analysed in full and correctly, and limitations of the research must be noted (Babbie, 2010:84).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, I have been closely involved with the NPC, since 2008, as an executive committee member, as well as a recent former chairperson (2016 until 2017). Most of those years I served on the portfolios of Public Relations Officer, Social Media Manager, Deputy Chair and Chair. I have also worked closely with the secretariat, and on occasion stood in for them at meetings or press club events. For the purpose of this study, this close involvement with the press club was to the advantage of this study as I know the inner workings of the press club, having served on the executive committee for ten years.

Besides declaring my own involvement in the subject of study, it is also important to declare the status concerning ethical clearance for this study as a whole. I namely received signed permission to use the archives (albeit very limited) of the NPC, as obtained from the chairperson and executive committee (see Appendix A).

All interviewees signed the informed consent form (see Appendix B) in which it was stated that their participation is voluntary, and confidentiality is not required as no participant shared private information. It also stated that the information gathered in this study may be released for the use of the NPC.

I applied for, and received, ethical clearance (low risk) from Stellenbosch University to interview the interviewees according to the terms set out in an informed consent form (see Appendix C).

4.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was applied for this study. The qualitative research approach, the historiographical research design and the research methods, historical research and semi-structured interviews were discussed.

This methodology was applied to answer the research question: what is the history of the NPC since it was founded as the PPC in 1978, and the three sub-questions regarding the founding, name change and Newsmakers. The chapter also reflected on ethical considerations for this study. The following chapter will document the results from the historical research and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the information gathered during the research for this study. It will attempt to answer the key question of this study, as stated in the previous chapter:

- What is the history of the National Press Club since it was founded as the Pretoria Press Club in 1978?

It will also aim to answer the three sub-questions, namely:

- Why was the Pretoria Press Club founded?
- Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?
- How were Newsmakers selected since 1980 to 2017?

5.2 Founding of the Pretoria Press Club

The Pretoria Press Club (PPC) was founded in July 1978 in Pretoria, with a membership comprising of mostly journalists and news photographers (National Press Club, 2018a). In 2002, more than two decades later, the name was changed to the National Press Club (NPC) (De Vente-Bijker, 2012:120).

5.2.1 Introduction

This section will focus on the founding of the PPC and on the reason why it was founded.

5.2.2 An idea is born

The idea to start a press club for journalists came from Bernardi Wessels, Pretoria Bureau Chief of the *Rand Daily Mail* (Devenish, 2016; Hau-Yoon, 2016; Grobler, 2017). This has also been confirmed by Groenewald (2016)² who writes that in June 1978, after the adjournment of Parliament [for winter break], Wessels had the idea of establishing a press club similar to the Washington Press Club in the USA. According to Groenewald (2016), Wessels' idea was that this club should serve the local media as well as the international correspondents based in Pretoria.

Wessels served overseas in Washington as a correspondent and came back to Pretoria with the idea that Pretoria should become like the Washington of South Africa (Devenish, 2016). According to Hau-Yoon (2016) Pretoria was and still is the legislative and diplomatic capital of South Africa, and the “heart of the country’s foremost thought-leaders”.

Wessels broached the concept of establishing a professional forum for the media fraternity with the editor of *Pretoria News* at the time, Andrew Drysdale (Groenewald, 2016; Hau-Yoon, 2016). Drysdale fully supported the idea (Hau-Yoon, 2016) but did not want to be involved. Wessels also asked him if he could make his secretary available to assist, but Drysdale told Wessels that he needs a neutral company to handle the secretariat and suggested that he, Wessels, approach the media firm Complete Communication Services (which later evolved into Afrikom Strategic Communications) as they, according to Drysdale, were neutral and trustworthy (Groenewald, 2016; Hau-Yoon, 2016). A neutral secretariat meant that it was not connected to a specific media house. The owner, Joh Groenewald, was then approached by Wessels and “wholeheartedly” endorsed the initiative. Groenewald was also a former editor (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Groenewald told Wessels that the Cape Town Press Club (CTPC) tended to be criticised by the newspaper industry because non-journalists were granted voting rights, had been elected as committee members and influenced the workings of the press club (Groenewald, 2016:1). Groenewald suggested that editors nominate one member of their editorial team for the committee. He further suggested that only full-time journalists would be able to become members of the PPC and that other interested parties such as media liaisons could be associate members without voting rights (Groenewald, 2016:1).

² Groenewald drew up a document with information about the founding of the PPC and its first meeting. This information came mostly from the office diary of Muriel Hau-Yoon (Complete Communication Services) in 1978.

Grobler (2017) asserts that in the beginning only full-time journalists were allowed membership and that media liaison and other industry related persons were only permitted to join the press club later. However, Van Niekerk (2016) points out that an informal list of early members of the PPC, as supplied by Pedro Diederichs (2016), includes both journalists and media liaison professionals.

Wessels accepted Groenewald's idea and asked the latter if he could gather such representatives, as he knew many journalists, and further asked him to be the club's secretariat (Groenewald, 2016:1). Devenish (2016) states that Wessels then "coerced" everyone at the *Rand Daily Mail*, and other journalists he knew, to join.

5.2.3 The first official meeting

Within weeks, Groenewald had convened a founding meeting of senior editors from each news organisation in Pretoria to discuss the goals and structure of such a forum (Hau-Yoon, 2016). This meeting included representatives from *Beeld*, *Hoofstad*, *Oggendblad*, *Rand Daily Mail*, SAPA, SABC and *The Star* (Groenewald, 2016:1). Hau-Yoon (2016) explains that the editor or the news editor of each media organisation in town could nominate a senior representative to serve on the committee. This committee met monthly to propose speakers, approve membership applications and oversee the finances.

On Wednesday, 12 July 1978, the first meeting of this committee took place in the Kaapse Wyn-Taphuis, a cellar restaurant in Pretoria on the corner of Vermeulen and Van der Walt Streets. Every representative had to pay for himself during this lunch meeting (Groenewald, 2016:1). Wessels was elected as the first chairperson (Grobler, 2017).

Muriel Hau-Yoon was appointed as the secretariat and took minutes of this first meeting. She worked as a public relations officer for Complete Communication Services (owned by Joh Groenewald) (Groenewald, 2016:1). Her job as the secretariat was to handle the administration of the newly founded press club. This included the convening of committee meetings, taking of minutes, handling of finances, liaison with guest speakers, arrangement of events, co-ordination of activities with committee members, processing of membership applications, updating of the membership data base, compilation and sending out of newsletters to members, arranging the AGMs and annual audits, and general administration and handling of queries (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Sakkie van der Merwe, the representative from *Hoofstad*, was appointed treasurer, and together with Hau-Yoon drew up a budget and bought a file to keep minutes, and later another file, to keep all newspaper clippings about the press club (Groenewald, 2016:1). The second meeting took place on 10 August 1978 at Complete Communication Services, who also sponsored the refreshments (Groenewald, 2016:1).

Devenish (2016) argues that the election of the representatives on the committee was a democratic idea and that in extension of this representativeness, it was decided that the chairmanship would rotate. However, he argues that this led to some media organisations, like the SABC, dominating the chairmanship of the executive committee for years as representatives from the SABC served as chairpersons for several years (Devenish, 2016).

The Constitution was finalised in early September of 1978 and distributed per post to members, and from there onwards to each new member. The first newsletter was distributed on 19 September 1978 (Groenewald, 2016:2). The first press club event was held on 27 September 1978 in the Boulevard Hotel, Vermeulen Street in Pretoria. This event was attended by 80 guests (Groenewald, 2016:2). On 12 December 1978 Wessels and other executive committee members arranged the first sponsorship for the PPC with the chairperson of e during a lunch at the Burgerspark Hotel (Groenewald, 2016:2).

By December 1978 the PPC had 179 members in total. This included 52 members from *Pretoria News*, 9 members from the SABC, 7 members from the *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 members from *Oggenblad*, 7 members from *The Star*, 17 members from *Hoofstad*, 4 members from *Citizen* and 19 members from *Beeld* (Groenewald, 2016).

The first duty of the first executive committee was to arrange high profile speakers to address the club every month (Grobler, 2017). Unfortunately, it was not possible to retrieve the names of all the first committee members and the different portfolios. The only information available is that Wessels was elected as chairperson, Van der Merwe as treasurer and Hau-Yoon as secretariat. Grobler and Devenish also served on the first committee.

According to Hau-Yoon (2016), the PPC grew in stature with each speaker. She explains that it grew to such an extent that, although they first started by having to “cajole” speakers to address the club, as the club grew in prominence and gravitas, senior politicians and other Newsmakers started approaching the club to use its platform (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

In 1980 the first Newsmaker award was introduced. The Newsmaker of the Year Award became an annual highlight on the calendar of the press club (Grobler, 2017). (This aspect of the PPC will be discussed in section 5.4.)

5.2.4 The reason for the press club

Wessels's idea with this press club was to have a forum for journalists, like the Washington Press Club, where speakers of note would be invited to come and share their ideas. It was "not meant to be just a place to get drunk" (Devenish, 2016).

At that time there were press clubs already in Cape Town (as noted earlier) and in Johannesburg (Devenish, 2016). Hau-Yoon (2016) adds that the only viable press club in South Africa was the Cape Town Press Club (CTPC). According to her, several attempts had been made to resurrect the Johannesburg Press Club (JPC), but somehow those efforts fell flat, despite the fact that Johannesburg was and remained the business and commercial hub of South Africa. The Durban Press Club had also had limited success (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Devenish (2016) states that the problem with the CTPC was that it were entirely run by Public Relation Officers (Devenish, 2016). He argues the CTPC met at the Café Royal in Cape Town and it was basically a press club for PR's (Devenish, 2016). He states that, therefore, the idea for the PPC was to establish a monthly meeting place where journalists *per se* could meet. Newsrooms of *Beeld*, *Hoofstad*, *Oggendblad*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *Sunday Times*, *The Star*, *Sunday Express* and *Pretoria News* were located close together in the Pretoria CBD. There were also a number of radio stations based in Pretoria, as well as the SABC (Devenish, 2016; Gough, 2016).

Hau-Yoon (2016) agrees with Devenish that the PPC was not "just meant as a place to get drunk". She describes the reason for the founding of the PPC as follows (Hau-Yoon, 2016):

"The press club was meant to be a serious forum to elevate the professional status of journalists across the print and broadcast spectrum, and to create a news platform for the thought leaders and newsmakers of the day."

Rootman (2016) worked as a journalist for the SABC in Pretoria when the PPC was founded. He believes the PPC was founded with a strong social reason: a place for people to socialise and network. However, also Grobler (2017) suggests that the PPC was not just a place “to socialise and drink”. He notes that it was founded for two reasons: firstly as a platform to exchange ideas, and secondly to network. According to him the initial idea was more to establish a shared platform for journalists, and that the socialising and networking aspects evolved later (Grobler, 2017).

In the beginning the executive committee arranged a speaker once a month to come and address the PPC, where members could interact and ask questions. The new executive committee, elected by the club, went “through a lot of effort” to get high calibre speakers to address members (Grobler, 2017).

Wessels had “grandiose” ideas for the PPC including owning its own building, similar to what several overseas press clubs have (Devenish, 2016). This idea never fully realised. However, the press club had several places in the city, like the Boulevard Hotel (1980s) or Court Classique (in the past ten years) that they have frequented and called home through the years, but it never owned its own building (Rootman, 2016; Devenish, 2016).

The spectrum of journalists that joined the newly founded PPC included journalists who worked for the conservative SABC, to the very liberal *Rand Daily Mail*, and everyone in between (Grobler, 2017). He notes that despite these differences the journalists all knew each other and worked together. Grobler recalls hours and hours that they sat outside the Union Buildings waiting together for results of government meetings during the Apartheid years (Grobler, 2017).

There was a sense of community amongst the journalists in the city, people liked to mingle with likeminded people. The PPC was therefore a logical outcome of this media community (Grobler, 2016; Rootman, 2016). This community also included journalists from all races, despite it being the late 1970s, a time of Apartheid in South Africa (Charle, 2016; Devenish, 2016; Gough, 2016; Hau-Yoon, 2016; Rootman, 2016; Grobler, 2017).

5.2.5 No Apartheid at the PPC

The PPC was founded during a time when South Africa was still ruled by the Apartheid government. However, during the interviews it became clear that the PPC had no restrictions

on membership. The only requirement to become a member was that one needed to be in the media industry (Devenish, 2016; Gough, 2016; Hau-Yoon, 2016; Rootman, 2016; Grobler, 2017).

As stated above, there were two categories of membership: full membership for full-time journalists and foreign correspondents, and associate membership for government spokespersons, diplomats, news facilitators and society's "leading lights" (Hau-Yoon, 2016; Grobler, 2017).

As stated above the idea for the press club came from Bernardi Wessels who was at the time Pretoria Bureau Chief of the *Rand Daily Mail* newspaper. The *Rand Daily Mail* was a newspaper critical of the Apartheid government in South Africa (Wright, 2013). According to Wright (2013), as a newspaper it became known for its "courageous and liberal" journalism. This newspaper was also the first newspaper to include more news from the townships into its editorial content (Fourie, 2010:40).

It is important to mention this context, as this could give an indication of the values and beliefs of Wessels when he founded the PPC. Membership at the PPC was open to journalists from all races from the time of the founding of the press club (Charle, 2016; Rootman, 2016). Hau-Yoon (2016) states that there were "absolutely no restrictions" on membership (based on race): "The PPC was probably one of the first multi-racial, multi-lingual bodies in the city." Gough (2016) asserts that the membership was open to all, but whether many of them joined, was another matter.

Charle (2016) states that they (himself included) were just a handful of black people who were members at the time, but there were no restrictions prohibiting journalists from joining the club. According to him, a group of black journalists founded the Black Pretoria Press Club in the city in the late eighties, although he cannot remember the exact date or year of the establishment (Charle, 2016). He also belonged to this club. With the changes in the country in 1993/1994, that club decided that such a body would be out of place in the then "new South Africa" and was then disbanded. Charle also experienced first-hand that for such a club to survive, you need a strong secretariat (Charle, 2016).

Grobler (2017) asserts that this open membership was just an extension of the general feeling that existed among the journalists. According to him journalists were not isolated in the workplace and all races worked together as journalists. He states that there was plenty of good interaction as they worked together. According to him the PPC was perhaps ahead of its time with this open membership, but the members of the PPC were already "in another

frame of mind” (than that fostered by the Apartheid ideology), perhaps due to the exposure they got as journalists (Grobler, 2017). Grobler (2017) further states the PPC acted like a neutraliser, it improved the quality of journalism, and it created a “feeling of belonging” amongst the journalists.

It was a time of robust debate and Hau-Yoon (2016) describes an event that stood out for her from the early 1980s. This event is noted here to give some context to the time in which the PPC was founded:

The PPC held a conference on press freedom and transformation at the Boulevard Hotel. The liberal editor of an English newspaper knocked the Afrikaans media for supporting the Apartheid government. One of his [own] reporters promptly stood up during the debate and asked him if he was aware of the racially segregated toilets at his very own headquarters in Johannesburg. The next day, the toilet signs were removed, however she notes that the brave and outspoken reporter did not last long (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

As a person of colour Abramjee (2016) remembers the press club before 1994 as limited largely to white journalists. As a young journalist he knew the press club, but he never applied to be a member. He cannot remember whether it was because of his perception that it was for whites only, or whether it was just a “thing of the time” (Abramjee, 2016). However, when the press club announced Nelson Mandela as its Newsmaker for 1994, Abramjee phoned Ben Rootman, describing him as a high profile member working as the spokesperson for the Post Office, to enquire how he can join the press club. He states that black membership of the press club only grew steadily since 2000. This thought is supported by Thakhuli (2016) who notes that when he joined as an associate press club member in 1999 there were black members, but mostly older senior journalists such as Jos Charle and the late Patrick Hlahla. He agrees with Abramjee that black membership of the press club grew since then.

5.2.6 From a single idea to an established press club

On 10 October 1978 an editorial appeared in *Die Vaderland* stating that Pretoria did what neither Johannesburg nor Cape Town could do with success, namely that the capital city now has its own press club and “that so far things are going well”. The writer (presumably Dirk Richard, editor of *Die Vaderland* from 1972 until 1979 [Richard, 1985:136]) praised the new initiative and wrote that under the chairmanship of Bernardi Wessels, English and Afrikaans media people were working together for one goal: to protect and expand journalistic interests (*Die Vaderland*, 1978:10).

It seems there are several factors that contributed to the survival of the PPC. Hau-Yoon (2016) believes the initiative worked well in Pretoria, probably because of the fairly close proximity of the main news organisations (Hau-Yoon, 2016). Journalists would generally congregate at the Boulevard Hotel which became the nexus for most PPC functions, and a central venue where journalists would invite their news contacts for a drink at the pub (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Whilst committee members came and went, a stable secretariat helped to anchor the institution so that its fortunes were not aligned to or dependant on any one strong chairman or committee member (Hau-Yoon, 2016). She argues that one of the key success factors of any press club is a professionally strong independent secretariat. According to Hau-Yoon (2016) this was also the reason the CTPC survived. She further notes that:

Although the secretariat was heavily sponsored by Complete Communications in terms of professional and administrative input, the agency meticulously shied away from providing any strategic influence – leadership had to come exclusively from the committee (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Grobler (2017) agrees with Hau-Yoon that the more homogenous media community in Pretoria contributed and still contributes to the success of the club. He states that the media community in Johannesburg is much more fragmented. He further notes that the executive committee and the secretariat play “a very important role”. Chairpersons through the years have been “very dedicated to make the press club work”. According to him there is an

element of prestige to it, “which people like”. He lastly affirms the notion, as did Hau-Yoon, that you need a strong secretariat to keep the press club together.

The next section will explore the second sub-question of this thesis, namely: Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?

5.3 The name change from PPC to NPC

5.3.1 Introduction

The previous section discussed the founding of the Pretoria Press Club (PPC) in 1978. In 1994 South Africa became a democracy and the country entered a period of transformation. The executive committee deemed it “necessary” to keep up with changing times (Abramjee, 2016). After existing for 22 years as the PPC, the committee decided to change the name to the National Press Club (NPC) (Abramjee, 2016; Rootman, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

This section will focus on the name change from PPC to NPC in an attempt to answer the second of the three sub-questions. The information for this section was gathered from interviews. It is unfortunate that the club has a limited archive (as explained in chapter 4).

5.3.2 A time for transformation

In 2000 Yusuf Abramjee was elected as the first chairperson of colour for the press club. His mission was clear: to make sure the press club is for every one and to put the press club “on the map” (Abramjee, 2016; Rootman, 2016). He explains his modus operandi was to bring in the high profile Newsmakers, to move with speed, be on top of every media issue, and be the voice of the media (Abramjee, 2016).

Gough (2016) and Devenish (2016) both agree that when Abramjee became the chairperson of the club, the club entered a period of transformation. Devenish (2016) argues that before Abramjee, the chair was “basically an honorary title” and that Abramjee changed it into “a very active position”. Under the leadership of Abramjee the press club became more vocal about media issues and a popular neutral platform for Newsmakers to address the media.

Thakhuli (2016) affirms that Abramjee worked tirelessly in terms of getting sponsorships for the club, the hosting of events, and Newsmakers. He describes it as a vibrant time in the club's history. Members looked forward to go to press club meetings and there were many new members, as well as quality in the membership (Thakhuli, 2016).

It was during Abramjee's first tenure as chairperson that the club's name was changed. Abramjee (2016) asserts that the credit for this name change should go to Ben Rootman (at the time an executive committee member and part of the secretariat, today an honorary member of the club). According to him Rootman came with the suggestion to change the name to keep up with changing times (Abramjee, 2016). This was around the time when the City Council in Pretoria became the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Rootman, 2016).

Rootman (2016) recalls early in 2002 the executive committee held a Lekgotla (this is an annual strategic planning session for the executive committee of the club). He made a presentation at this Lekgotla to the committee to change the name from Pretoria Press Club to Tshwane Press Club (Rootman, 2016).

The presentation by Rootman led to a heated debate on this suggested name change (Abramjee, 2016; Rootman, 2016; Thakhuli, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

One of the committee members "exploded" and it became a "volatile" meeting. He shouted at the meeting that if the club wants to become the Tshwane Press Club, the name can just as well be changed to the National Press Club (Rootman, 2016). Rootman recalls the meeting fell silent and this started the debate on whether the club can be a "National Press Club".

Abramjee (2016) remembers there was a long discussion about whether the club can call itself the National Press Club when it is based in Pretoria. However, the notion was to duplicate the idea of the National Press Club based in Washington (it is named the National Press Club, but based in Washington). Abramjee (2016) says it was argued that Pretoria is the capital, and with this name change "membership is open to anyone and everyone across South Africa".

Thakhuli (2016) remembers some debated that by keeping the name PPC those living and working outside of Pretoria are excluded. Thakhuli further (2016) reasons the club wanted to have a common voice for every single journalist in South Africa. He echoes the thoughts of the others who remember the name change was actually inspired by the

Washington National Press Club. He asserts that it appeared that the PPC wanted to operate at the same level as this press club.

Devenish (2016) asserts that the idea for the club to be the National Press Club was not a new idea. According to him the idea was on the table since the founding in 1978. After his return from Washington as a correspondent, Wessels wanted to start a press club like the National Press Club in Washington. According to Devenish (2016) he had “grandiose” ideas, like the press club owning its own building. He also recalls talks with the CTPC at some stage in the early years to establish a working relationship. This is also noted by Groenewald (2016) in his notes on the founding of the press club, where he writes that in 1979 the club “established a relationship” with the CTPC.

Devenish (2016) remembers the idea to change the name surfaced a few times throughout the years. The reason then for calling it the NPC was also that Pretoria is the capital city. At one stage the club even wanted to register a trademark for the name.

Grobler (2016) agrees, and states the idea to change the name was on the cards a few times since the founding, but in the end they decided in those early years to keep the club exclusive to Pretoria.

5.3.3 The decision

It was finally decided at the Lekgotla to propose to the club’s AGM that the name of the club be changed to the National Press Club of Pretoria (Rootman, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

Although the committee at the Lekgotla agreed unanimously to make this change, when presented to the AGM two executive members raised concerns about the name change. The other executive committee members were astonished as they thought the committee already agreed to the name change (Rootman, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

However, the AGM agreed to the proposed change and the decision to change the name was made at the club’s annual general meeting on 25 April 2002. On 27 April the *Citizen* reported “Press Club goes national” (Momborg, 2002:9). Momborg (2002:9) reported that the PPC has been renamed the “National Press Club – Pretoria”. The article states that this decision was made at the AGM and that chairman Yusuf Abramjee said the

“club was recognised as a channel to announce matters of national and international interest”.

She writes that the club grew in members from other parts of the country, that the club must keep up with the changing times, and that it was “the next logical” step to become the National Press Club (Momborg, 2002:9).

Rootman (2016) states that the executive committee decided during a committee meeting in 2009 to remove the word “Pretoria” from its logo and correspondence. The NPC is, however, still registered as the “National Press Club – Pretoria” at the CIPC.

5.3.4 Criticism: only a decade later

Abramjee (2016) remembers that the name change sparked some controversy in the media fraternity at the time. Members of the media questioned the rationale behind calling the press club the National Press Club.

However, Van Niekerk (2016) points out, as the secretariat at the time of the name change, that there was little reaction after the name change. According to him it was only years later that members of the media used this name as part of criticism on the club’s activities. From time to time the club would be criticised for its name, but the criticism was “never serious” enough for the club to consider changing the name back (Van Niekerk, 2016).

This is supported by Thakhuli’s opinion (2016) as he states there was not much reaction to the decision. He recalls the heated debate took place within the executive committee but the decision was accepted overall after it was made.

The first published reaction to be found was in 2012. Chris Vick, at that time running a communications consultancy, published three columns in the *Business Day* criticising the NPC.

This first column attacked the press club for letting associate members serve on the executive committee and questions the relationship with the secretariat at the time, Junxion Communications (Vick, 2012a:11). In a second column, his attack was focused on Abramjee, as chairperson of the club, as well as all his other activities (Vick, 2012b:11). With this column it seems as if Vick wanted to focus on Abramjee, the chairperson at the time, rather than the NPC itself. However, in a third column, attacking the Cape Town Press

Club (CTPC) he again referred to the NPC as the “Pretoria PR and Press Club” questioning both the NPC and CTPC’s “ownership” and indirectly criticising the name of the NPC (Vick, 2012c:11).

Rootman, in his personal capacity, responded through a letter to the *Business Day* to the first column correcting some of Vick’s facts (Rootman, 2012:6). In the minutes of the AGM held at the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria on 29 March 2012, it is noted that Abramjee, chairperson, discussed the comments by Vick and said the press club welcomes debate and criticism, but “not these types of comments”. The executive committee, however, decided not to respond any further to these columns and allegations, instead to focus on continuing the job of running the NPC.

However, one year later, in 2013, the NPC was again under intense media scrutiny following its decision to name Our South African Rhino as Newsmaker of the Year for 2012. This will be discussed in detail in the next section, however, the criticism on the name of the NPC is applicable here and will be dealt with next.

In an article criticising the NPC for its decision on choosing Our South African Rhino, Newsmaker critics commented that the NPC cannot claim to speak for all of the media in South Africa, stating that being the “National” Press Club, the public by default assumes the NPC is representative of the media in South Africa. Boyle (as cited by De Waal, 2013) states “[t]he Pretoria Press club is quite frankly a luncheon type club” and they do not speak for the media in South Africa. Adding to this, Dawes (as cited by De Waal, 2013), commented he does not have a problem with press clubs, but “with the mandate that was assumed by the ‘National’ Press Club”, adding that press clubs can play a vital role in the media field in South Africa, however they do not represent the media in general. Basson (as cited by De Waal, 2013) echoes this, as he states he has problems with the name of the NPC. De Waal (2013) proposes that the NPC change its name.

Rootman (as cited by De Waal, 2013) commented on this, stating the name was changed in 2002, and that he is surprised the media only critiqued the name change in 2013.

Except for the criticism around naming Our South African Rhino as the 2012 Newsmaker of the Year, I could not find any other published articles criticising the name change of the PPC to the NPC.

5.3.5 In retrospect

Devenish (2016) asserts in retrospect (of changing the name in 2002), the club has never been able to make it a “National” Press Club with branches and structures throughout the country. He believes it was the right decision to change the name, however, it is difficult to make a “national” press club work. Gough (2016) agrees with this, and states that the club has members throughout South Africa, but that it is difficult to serve them like the club serves the members in Gauteng.

Thakhuli (2016) asserts it was a good decision for the PPC to position itself as the NPC. After the club’s name was changed, the dynamics of the club became bigger and the club transformed at a rapid pace. Transformation became visible in the growth of members from other racial groups (Rootman, 2016; Thakhuli, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

According to Abramjee (2016) it might have been a controversial decision, and the club might have been criticised, even years later, but he believes it was the right decision.

The next section will explore the third sub-question of this study, namely how Newsmakers were selected from 1980 to 2017.

5.4 The awarding of Newsmakers through the years

5.4.1 Introduction

The previous section discussed the name change of the PPC to NPC in 2002. The following section will discuss the last of the three sub-questions of this thesis, namely: How were Newsmakers selected from 1980 to 2017? In order to answer this question this section will focus on the founding of the Newsmaker of the Year award, discuss the criteria used by the executive committee on the selection of the Newsmakers through the years, briefly discuss a legal dispute about the term Newsmaker of the Year, and discuss four controversial, or difficult, Newsmaker decisions through the years. Firstly, I will list the Newsmakers of the Year from 1980 until 2017.

5.4.2 The complete list of Newsmakers from 1980 to 2017:

1980: PW Botha

1981: SA Weermag

1982: Dr Andries Treurnicht

1983: PW Botha

1984: RF Botha

1985: MG Buthelezi

1986: Louis Nel (Samora Machel was elected first, but then declared invalid, it will
discussed below).

1987: Pat Anthony

1988: Niel van Heerden

1989: FW de Klerk

1990: FW de Klerk

1991: FW de Klerk

1992: RT Goldstone

1993: MC Ramaphosa and RP Meyer

1994: Nelson Mandela

1995: The Springbok Rugby team

1996: Penny Heyns and Josia Thugwane

1997: Roelf Meyer and Bantu Holomisa (UDM)

1998: Springbok Rugby

1999: Thabo Mbeki

2000: Hansie Cronjé and the SA Air Force

2001: Big Brother

2002: The Rand

- 2003: Zackie Achmat and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)
- 2004: Charlize Theron
- 2005: Jacob Zuma
- 2006: Helen Zille
- 2007: Jake White and the Springboks
- 2008: Eskom and the Congress of the People
- 2009: Jacob Zuma
- 2010: Sepp Blatter and Danny Jordaan (2010 FIFA World Cup)
- 2011: Thuli Madonsela and Julius Malema
- 2012: Our South African Rhino
- 2013: Nelson Mandela
- 2014: Oscar Pistorius trial
- 2015: #Feesmustfall
- 2016: State capture, President Jacob Zuma, the Guptas and Advocate Thuli Madonsela
- 2017: The Gupta Leaks

5.4.3 Founding of the Newsmaker of the Year Award

The first Newsmaker of the Year was introduced in 1981, three years after the founding of the club (Hau-Yoon, 2016, Grobler, 2017).

The idea for this award came from Tok Grobler, and it became synonymous with the club and has since then been awarded every year and became an annual highlight on the club's calendar (Grobler, 2017; Rootman, 2016).

The difficult part throughout the years was to get the public to understand that this is not an "award" or honour for something done well (Slabbert, 2017). Charle (2016) writes the Newsmaker award is neither an accolade, nor is it criticism – the criteria simply are what or who makes news.

5.4.4 Legal dispute about the award's name

It could not be established exactly when, but somewhere since 1980 the PPC registered the term “Newsmaker of the Year” (and the Afrikaans term “*Nuusmaker van die Jaar*”) as a registered trademark of the PPC with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) (Lötter, 2018).

In 1995 the press club got an urgent interdict against the SABC not to use the term “Newsmaker of the Year”. The SABC’s actuality programme *Monitor*, together with Sanlam, wanted to award President Mandela and the Springbok rugby team as the Newsmakers of the Year for 1995 (Rademeyer, 1995; Smith, 1995).

In the court papers, chairperson at the time, Francois Lötter, stated that the term “Newsmaker of the Year” is a registered trademark of the PPC (Rademeyer, 1995).

The PPC further argued that it had established the term “Newsmaker of the Year” as a well-known trademark in South Africa and that the public associates this award with the PPC. The SABC argued that the term should never have been registered as a trademark as the PPC does not have the right to “bona-fide ownership” of this award (Rademeyer, 1995).

The high court ruled in favour of the PPC and *Monitor* changed the name of their award to the Sanlam/Monitor Newsmakers of ’95 (Smith, 1995).

Lötter is quoted by Smith (1995) stating that other organisations had tried to use the term in the past, but the club usually corresponded with them and settled the matter. However, the SABC told the PPC to proceed with a legal action. It was the first time the club contested this in the courts (Smith, 1995).

Today, several organisations and media houses use the term “Newsmaker of the Year” for awarding a Newsmaker of a specific year. A search on the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) database could not find a registered trademark for the “Newsmaker of the Year” term. I surmise that with the name change from PPC to NPC the registered trademark lapsed.

5.4.5 How Newsmakers are selected

From the interviews conducted it appears the decision making process has not changed much during the years. In earlier years committee members nominated and elected the

Newsmaker. There were no emails to correspond instantly with club members, so each committee member would caucus with his/her respective newsroom and put forward proposals (Hau-Yoon, 2016).

Later, members of the club were invited to nominate their Newsmakers via fax or post and the committee then elected the Newsmaker from those nominations. Today the secretariat, on behalf of the executive committee, invites members through email to submit Newsmaker nominations in December and early January each year.

Hau-Yoon asserts that in the 1980s the recipient was selected on the basis of the quantity of publicity generated by each candidate, as well as the significance or gravitas of the personality. Today the NPC (2018) describes the selection process in the most recent press release about their Newsmaker as follows:

This annual award, made by the press club since 1980, awards a [N]ewsmaker in a calendar year based on the amount of media coverage received[,] as well as the impact thereof. Nominations and motivations are received from members of the press club and a final decision is made by the executive committee of the club.

Rootman (2016) asserts that deciding on a Newsmaker was easier in the eighties than it is now. According to him the media field was less complex than it is today.

Antoinette Slabbert, executive committee member for most years since 2008 and a former chairperson, says the Newsmaker decision is often made on the grounds of recollections by the committee members of what made news in the previous year. The committee members would look at the nominations received from club members, discuss the past year, and make a decision (Slabbert, 2017).

Thakhuli took part in most of the executive committee meetings deciding on the Newsmaker since he joined the press club in 1999, and thereafter served on the executive committee for most of these years. He asserts that initially the executive committee informally looked back at the year that was, and at the nominations received. However, more recently the committee also used media monitoring companies to statistically, and more scientifically, look at the amount of news coverage the possible Newsmakers had during a specific year (Thakhuli, 2016).

Slabbert (2017) agrees with Thakhuli that data from media monitoring companies are used, but rather more to verify the decision, and not to make the decision. An example of how such data is used can be found in the NPC's media release motivating the selection of the Oscar Pistorius Trial as the 2014 Newsmaker of the Year (National Press Club, 2014). In this news release the NPC used data from the media monitoring group Data Driven to motivate the selection of the trial as the Newsmaker:

“Media-wise the trial was bigger than the FIFA 2014 World Cup. Judge Thokozile Masipa's banning of blogging and tweeting of graphic evidence by pathologist Gert Saayman prompted 2 500 articles. In 24 hours news and social media hit over 106 000 unique inserts. Pistorius having retched in court was carried in 2 300 news articles. In nine days the press hit the 750 000 article mark,” says Charle. “Nothing could move the media attention away from Oscar,” says Tonya Khoury, Managing Director of the media monitoring group Data Driven Insight. “Media data was compiled from 6,2 million social media platforms including blogs, forums, social networks and commentary, 60 000 global online newspapers, 2 000 South African print publications and 66 radio and television stations” (National Press Club, 2014).

Slabbert (2017) asserts that some Newsmaker nominations perhaps had more coverage (bigger quantity), but others made more impact during the year. The executive committee will discuss and decide such possible impact by Newsmaker nominations. She argues the executive committee will then consider all of these to make a decision (Slabbert, 2018).

According to Grobler (2017) the selection of the Newsmaker has always been a fair decision, never a one-sided one. “A few people” [the Executive Committee] sit around a table and discuss different nominations, everyone has a different angle, and then a decision is made.”

Hau-Yoon (2016) agrees with Grobler, stating that although some committee members or sponsors tried to “muscle in” their personal choices, the committee generally reached consensus with their final decision.

Thakhuli (2016) asserts that in the past the Newsmaker often depended on who had the strongest motivation. However, looking back, he does not think any specific member would

motivate for a certain Newsmaker for the purpose of his own agenda. According to him there have been heated debates about Newsmaker nominations, but not to such an extent that one person influenced the Newsmaker selection.

Devenish (2016) refutes this viewpoint. He says that he does believe some executive committee members drove their own agenda with the Newsmaker selections, especially in the early years. He suggests “the SABC played a very strong role in the press club and the selection of Newsmakers” in those years.

He points out that in the beginning the Newsmaker was often a government minister. According to him it would be hard to defend the observation that the Newsmaker of the Year was often guided by external influences (Devenish, 2016). Gough (2016) agrees by stating “the ends justified the means”. She suggests for some editors it could potentially have been to their advantage to name a minister as a Newsmaker. In “those days” it was difficult for a journalist or even an editor or publication to get comment, and respect, from the government. Therefore, to name a minister as Newsmaker could be “beneficial” to you as an editor for your relationship with that minister (Gough, 2016).

Inside the executive committee, especially amongst the associate members, there is sometimes a hesitation to select a Newsmaker that is morally perhaps less acceptable (Slabbert, 2017). Slabbert states that the executive committee must guard against the debate “becoming PR orientated”. She asserts it is important for the club that this debate must stay news orientated, and states journalists should not shrink away from controversial decisions.

She refers to decisions to name two or more people together as Newsmakers. In some instances such a decision could be a compromise, and that the Newsmaker announcement lose its impact (Slabbert, 2017).

However, it seems that this debate has been part of the decision making process since the beginning, and it was not only the associate members who had these reservations.

Rootman (2016) specifically recalls one executive committee member where the committee debated the 2001 Newsmaker. The 9/11 bombings of the World Trade Center were nominated and one committee member, a journalist (full member), argued that the club cannot name “such a negative thing” as the Newsmaker.

Grobler (2017) states in the eighties there were lots of discussions about negative news when a Newsmaker was selected. According to him, when a Newsmaker was nominated that received a lot of negative news, some committee members would argue that you cannot

name someone or something as the Newsmaker when he/it made news headlines with negative news (Grobler, 2017).

Grobler (2017) asserts that other members, including himself, argued that politicians get more news coverage due to the nature of their work.

One of the earliest criteria for the Newsmaker was that it should be a South African Newsmaker. Initially, the 1986 Newsmaker was Samora Machel. This was however declared invalid and Louis Nel was announced as the Newsmaker for 1986. The reason stated in a news article was that the recipient must be able to “physically accept” the award at the Newsmaker function in Pretoria (Grobler, 2017; SAPA, 1987). According to him, the criteria that the Newsmaker has to be South African was discussed several times throughout the years, especially with the nominations for the 2001 Newsmaker, when one of the nominations was the 9/11 bombings of the World Trade Center in the USA.

According to Rootman (2016) the executive committee also had a policy that the Newsmaker could not be awarded to someone who was in jail, therefore Nelson Mandela only received the award for the first time in 1994.

5.4.6 Difficult Newsmaker decisions

The type of people or organisations who have been named Newsmaker of the Year varied from year to year and it has not always been an easy decision (Rootman, 2016; Grobler, 2017).

Grobler (2017) points out that the executive committee had a good balance of Newsmakers through the years. He specifically refers to the 1987 Newsmaker of the Year, Pat Anthony. She was a grandmother who acted as a surrogate mother for her daughter’s triplets, the first surrogacy case in South Africa (IOL, 2011). All the Newsmakers before her were politicians or connected to the politics of the time.

Gough (2016) suggests that not all Newsmakers “worked”. In 2004, when Zachie Achmat and the Treatment Action Campaign were announced as the 2003 Newsmaker of the Year, the NPC could not find a sponsor for the event. On the other hand, in 2008, when Jake White and the Springboks were named the 2007 Newsmaker of the Year, they did not bother to send anyone to the function to receive the award (Gough, 2017).

Oscar winner Charlize Theron was announced as the 2004 Newsmaker of the Year, but after several attempts over ten months her publicist simply responded that Charlize was not planning a trip to South Africa in the near future. The NPC sent out a statement to voice its disappointment and said that Theron's publicist does not understand Theron's following in South Africa (Graham, 2005).

Devenish (2016) asserts that in his personal capacity he was not in favour of the "National Party people" that were made Newsmaker during the earlier years. However, Gough (2016) says throughout all the years since the founding, no other Newsmaker provoked the same controversy as the Rhino (2012 Newsmaker of the Year).

I will now discuss four Newsmaker decisions (between 1980 and 2017), that was either difficult to make, or that provoked more reaction from the public than expected. They are

- Hansie Cronjé and the South African Air Force (2000),
- Big Brother (2001),
- The Rand (2002) and
- Our South African Rhino (2012).

I will discuss these four decisions separately in order to present more information regarding how Newsmakers were elected through the years, and the difficulty these decisions required.

It is unfortunate that there is such a small press club archive, and therefore no copy of the minutes of the meetings of three of the four executive committee meetings discussed above (the 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2012 Newsmakers) and the subsequent Newsmaker decisions made at those meetings. It is important to note that Abramjee was the chairperson at the time for the first three of these Newsmaker decisions.

2000: Hansie Cronjé and the South African Air Force

In January 2001 the executive committee, under leadership of new chairperson Abramjee, had an intense and robust debate about who the Newsmaker for 2000 should be (Van Niekerk, 2016). The committee made a shortlist of all the nominations and could not decide

between Hansie Cronjé and the South African Air Force (SAAF) as the Newsmaker. An intense debate about the two shortlisted nominations was held during the meeting (Van Niekerk, 2016).

Hansie Cronjé was nominated as Newsmaker of 2000 for making news headlines with his involvement in cricket match fixing and the SAAF was nominated for their risky rescue operations in the Mozambique floods early in 2000 (News24, 2001; Abramjee, 2016).

Van Niekerk (2016) further states Abramjee dissolved the meeting as it was clear no decision could be reached (Rootman, 2016). The committee met again a week later and finally conceded to name both Hansie Cronjé and the South African Air Force as Newsmakers. The order in which they were mentioned in the naming of the Newsmaker was not relevant as both were selected equally (Rootman, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

In the media statement by the PPC Abramjee states the award recognised the prominence of Cronjé's story and the impact it had on cricket. Abramjee "stressed that the news award was not a merit one and was not a token of regard to Cronjé's actions" (News24, 2001).

2001: Big Brother

In January 2002, the executive committee meeting in which the 2001 Newsmaker decision was made, was again a difficult meeting (Thakhuli, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

The 9/11 bombings of the World Trade Center were nominated amongst others. One of the other arguments, by a journalist (full committee member) was whether the club can name such a negative event the Newsmaker (Rootman, 2016). The committee also discussed its criteria that it must be a South African Newsmaker. It was, however, decided that the Newsmaker must be a South African person, organisation or event, and this disqualified the 9/11 bombings of the World Trade Center as a nomination (Van Niekerk, 2016).

The committee finally decided to name Big Brother, South Africa's first reality television show as the 2001 Newsmaker (Van Niekerk, 2016). This provoked a strong reaction with some of the PPC members, and Abramjee (2016) argues, that according to him, the Big Brother decision was the most controversial decision about a Newsmaker.

He asserts this must have been the year the NPC got the most criticism for a Newsmaker decision, with some critics stating there must be "something wrong" with the

press club for naming Big Brother as its Newsmaker (Abramjee, 2016). However, Abramjee (2016) state it was the right decision as the Big Brother reality series marked the “start of reality television” in South Africa (Abramjee, 2016).

Some members, like Gough, did not attend the function out of protest (Gough, 2016; Thakhuli, 2016). Devenish (2016), however, asserts that this specific function was one of the best Newsmaker functions to date. All the Big Brother contestants attended the function to receive the Newsmaker award (Thakhuli, 2016). It was also the biggest function in terms of sponsorship and income generated by the selling of tables for guests (Thakhuli, 2016).

2002: The Rand

The Rand was named as the Newsmaker of the Year for 2002. For the first time in history it was not a person or an organisation. Rootman (2016) explains there was no other logical choice for the 2002 Newsmaker, however, Thakhuli (2016) recalls that Abramjee nominated the Rand as Newsmaker and “everybody” in the committee accepted this nomination.

Thakhuli (2016) remembers it was a heated debate. He argues that this Newsmaker was an example of one person having a strong verbal nomination that is then supported by other members (Thakhuli, 2016).

In the media statement Abramjee (2003) explains the decision as follows: “[T]he currency touched the lives of all South Africans, from the governor of the Reserve Bank to the most humble consumer” (Fin24, 2003). Abramjee motivates that the Rand made news headlines when it “was on its knees at the end of 2001”, and made front page news instead of staying on the business pages (Fin24, 2003).

In the statement the club further explains the Newsmaker choice as follows:

“It was written off by analysts, traders and the public for 2002, but by year-end it had recovered nearly 40% against the US dollar and was the world’s best-performing currency.

“It’s fall late in 2001 was non-discriminatory and ruthless in its effects; its rise in 2002 was as dramatic. The effects of the Rand’s surprising comeback are starting to be felt,

and will continue to benefit the country for months to come,” Abramjee said (Fin24, 2003).

The NPC gave special mention in the statement to one of the other nominations: billionaire Mark Shuttleworth and his trip into space that made headlines (National Press Club, 2002).

2012: Our South African Rhino

No other Newsmaker decision provoked as much attention and criticism as the 2012 Newsmaker: Our South African Rhino (Charle, 2016; Gough, 2016; Rootman, 2016; Thakhuli, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016).

Several nominations were received for the 2013 Newsmaker, amongst others Our South African Rhino, Outa/etolls, Marikana³ and Pippie Kruger (a burn victim) (National Press Club, 2013a:3). The committee members debated whether they should name Marikana or Our South African Rhino as the Newsmaker, however, it was not a robust debate as for the previous three cases (Thakhuli, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2016). The Newsmaker decision was minuted as follows (National Press Club, 2013a:3):

“The Marikana incident and saga was discussed at length, and it was decided that it would get a special mention at the Newsmaker event, possibly with a minute’s silence. The [R]hino as 2012 Newsmaker of the Year was decided upon unanimously.”

Thakhuli (2016) asserts there was a very good rationale and reasoning in the motivation for Our South African Rhino as Newsmaker. According to him Marikana was a strong contender for the Newsmaker, however, he notes that comparing Our South African Rhino and Marikana coverage through a media monitoring company, the committee saw both received the same amount of news coverage during the year (Thakhuli, 2016).

³ Marikana refers to a tragic event where 34 mineworkers were killed and 78 seriously injured by the South African Police after they opened fire on striking mineworkers at the Marikana mine in the North West Province (SaHistory, 2017)

Gough (2016) recalls some committee members felt that it would be in bad taste to name Marikana as the Newsmaker and then have a banquet to celebrate the Newsmaker whilst people lost their lives (Gough, 2016).

Thakhuli says part of the nomination for the Rhino was the motivation that the NPC had never before named something of South African heritage as a Newsmaker (Thakhuli, 2016).

On 18 January 2013 the NPC announced “Our South African Rhino” as the 2002 Newsmaker at a function held at emBARgo in the Court Classique Hotel.

The announcement was placed on the club’s social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. The NPC motivated its choice in a press release by stating that “rhino poaching has been in the news consistently the entire year and has evoked strong emotions”. It further refers to the high amount of rhinos poached in 2012 and the sentencing of a poaching “kingpin”, as well as an international accord that was signed to stop rhino poaching (National Press Club, 2013b).

The first reaction on social media came from former chairperson Abramjee. He criticised the NPC’s decision to name Our South African Rhino as Newsmaker, and subsequently, with this tweet, started an online conversation about the decision. His tweet read:

“@Abramjee: So the @npclub makes the SA Rhino the #Newsmaker of the Year. So who received the award? A rhino? Huh...” (Abramjee, 2013).

The next day Abramjee was quoted in a news article saying:

“The announcement came as a surprise and shock to me. I agree rhinos were in the news in 2012, but Newsmaker? Surely not,” Abramjee said. “There were a series of individuals, organizations and events that made the news. They include Marikana, Nkandla, Mduli, Outa, Cosatu and etolls” (SAPA, 2013).

These comments started a heated debate in the media with several articles written about the Twitter comments by different media personalities (Slabbert, 2017). She argues the reaction towards the decision was a “total overreaction” and driven by Abramjee (Slabbert, 2017). She explains her reasoning as follows: In September 2012, Abramjee resigned as chairperson of the NPC. In November 2012, he sent an email to Slabbert, as chair, and the secretariat of the NPC, suggesting that the NPC name Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe as the Newsmaker of 2012. He also suggested that the NPC move the Newsmaker function a few months forward (to November 2012). He also offered to find a sponsor for this function. This was a month before the ANC’s 2012 congress in Mangaung (Slabbert, 2017).

Slabbert discussed Abramjee’s suggestion with the secretariat, but she (and they) thought it was “outrageous” as a Newsmaker cannot be named before a year is over (Slabbert, 2017). They did not respond to this email suggestion (Slabbert, 2017).

Slabbert (2017) states that Abramjee phoned Rootman after the announcement to ask why he was not consulted in the Newsmaker decision (Slabbert, 2017).

She therefore argues that Abramjee’s reaction started the debate and that it got momentum with different opinions, some with bona fide reasoning, some not (Slabbert, 2017).

Abramjee states that he cannot remember all the details of the debate. He argues that, although he is one of the biggest supporters of the anti-poaching campaigns, he “made noise” as he believes Our South African Rhino was the wrong decision and that the lives lost at Marikana are more important than the lives of rhinos (Abramjee, 2016).

Prompted about the Motlanthe nomination he says “there was something, I cannot remember it now”. However, he notes that in the media environment journalists will argue and debate over issues. He further notes that the reality is “even bad publicity is good publicity”.

The strongest attack came from an opinion piece by Mandy de Waal, published in the *Daily Maverick* with the title “SA Press to the ‘National Press’ Club: ‘Not in our name’” which discredited the NPC as a media organisation. In this article De Waal (2013) quoted several editors and journalists who questioned the decision of the NPC, and also the authority of the NPC to make such a decision. She writes that the NPC is managed by “a couple of Pretoria-based public relations practitioners” and that the media fraternity in South Africa “cringed” by this newsmaker announcement (De Waal, 2013). De Waal closed her article request the NPC to “stop ‘representing’ us”.

These articles and the media outcry came as a surprise to the committee (Thakhuli, 2016). Thakhuli (2016) states he could not understand the reaction about the decision. However, he understood the argument from some that said with this selection an animal's life (poaching) is placed before a human life (breadwinners who died in Marikana). He reasons in retrospect that the NPC could perhaps have met the other voices halfway and announce two Newsmakers for 2012, as had been done in past (Thakhuli, 2016).

According to Devenish (2016) it might have been hard to understand the choice, but he also agrees it was the right choice. He asserts that once you make a decision, you stand by the decision.

Slabbert (2017) asserts that one cannot differentiate between a right and a wrong decision in this scenario. She argues it was a decision that was motivated, and it could be differed from. In retrospect, however, she does not believe it was the wrong decision.

Van Niekerk (2016) argues that the NPC and Slabbert as chairperson handled the criticism well. The debates continued in the media for a week and by the next Sunday the *Sunday Independent* gave both Slabbert and Abramjee each half a page editorial space to state their point why Our South African Rhino should or should not be the Newsmaker (Abramjee, 2013:15; Slabbert, 2013:15). Van Niekerk (2016) says it was the first time in the history of the club that such publicity was given to any Newsmaker decision.

Gough (2016) notes she voted for Our South African Rhino as the Newsmaker in the executive committee meeting, but considering all the arguments after the announcement she thinks it was the wrong decision to make at the time.

Van Niekerk (2016) and Rootman (2016) both agree with Thakhuli and Devenish that it was the right decision. Rootman (2016) says the decision met the criteria that are used for making the Newsmaker decision.

Grobler (2017), as a former chair, asserts he would not have chosen the Rand (discussed earlier), or Our South African Rhino as Newsmakers, but as a member he supported the decisions that were taken by the committees at the time.

5.5 Summary

This chapter provided the data gathered in the research for this thesis according to the main research question and the three sub-questions. Firstly, the founding of the PPC was

discussed. Secondly the name change from PPC to NPC was discussed, and finally, the Newsmakers from 1980 until 2017 were discussed.

In the next chapter I will discuss these findings in order to draw a conclusion.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, three elements of the history of the Pretoria Press Club (PPC), and later the National Press Club (NPC), were reconstructed to answer the central research question of this study, namely: What is the history of the NPC since it was founded as the PPC in 1978? The historical method was applied to gather these results. This chapter will discuss these findings and analyse this information. This will be done by dealing with the sub-questions for this study, as listed in Chapter 4:

- Why was the Pretoria Press Club founded?
- Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?
- How were Newsmakers selected since 1980 to 2017?

6.2 Why was the PPC founded?

To answer the first sub-question, I could draw for the most part on data gathered from interviews, as archival documentation was scant.

The PPC was born out of a single idea from an editor who experienced the concept of a press club in Washington as a correspondent during his tenure while there for his media house. The proposal to found a press club in Pretoria was well received and the first meeting was held on 12 July 1978 with representatives from various media houses, at the time divided according to the two language groups, English and Afrikaans, in the city. A neutral secretariat supported the press club from the beginning and contributed to its success. This meant the secretariat was neutral to the different newsrooms that joined the PPC, as an independent communications firm was appointed as the secretariat of the press club instead of assigning an existing secretary of one of the newsrooms for this task.

The research showed the PPC served as a monthly meeting place for journalists and media relations practitioners, with a formal event once a month, and informal meetings daily after work at a specific meeting place, namely a specific bar. This underwrites the social

network theory that was applied for this study. The social network theory explores the notion that people actively network with other people within a certain space, in order to benefit from these new connections. However, there was agreement that it was not merely meant to be a social meeting place, but also to be used as a platform for journalists to raise the status of the profession, as well as to provide a neutral platform for high-profile speakers to address the media, as well as invite thought leaders to exchange ideas. The neutral platform meant speakers could address the media from the PPC's platform, free from political associations or connotations. As the PPC was founded during the Apartheid years in South Africa, this must have been a good alternative for speakers to consider. This second pillar of the PPC's founding underwrites the second theory that was applied for this study, namely the social responsibility theory, which states that the media needs professional bodies to uphold the standards of journalism.

Two years later, the PPC's first Newsmaker of the Year Award was introduced.

The club had two categories of membership, namely full membership for journalists, and associate membership for those working in media relations. Based on the interviews conducted for this study, the PPC was considered as being ahead of its time in actively promoting a multi-racial membership between journalists of different races and linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The promoting of a multi-racial membership in the PPC underwrites the principles of the social network theory, specifically, that journalists networked together, despite different racial, linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

Taking into consideration that I only had a limited number of founding members to interview, and an almost non-existing archive to research this topic, these findings regarding the history of the PPC is perhaps not entirely unambiguous and is likely to have been more complex. However, I made use of all the information and interview opportunities available to me, to ensure the most detailed background possible to ensure that the most accurate inferences could be drawn from the findings.

Considering Abramjee's (2016) comments that the club was "predominantly white" (before the year 2000), as well as Charle's (2016) information about the establishment of the Black Press Club (in the late eighties), and taking into consideration Gough's (2016) remarks that membership was open but "whether many of them joined was another matter", confirms that this matter is likely to have been more complex.

Within six months of its founding, the PPC grew with 179 members, attracted high profile speakers, and secured a sponsorship for the club. At first the PPC had to approach

high profile speakers to address the PPC, but as the club grew those speakers started approaching the club for possible use of its platform. It is clear that the idea became a reality and the PPC was a successful institution in Pretoria.

The research revealed that several factors have likely contributed to the success of the PPC. The homogenous media fraternity in Pretoria, with newsrooms located close together in the city centre, as well as a strong, stable and neutral secretariat, and dedicated chairpersons, all played a role in the press club's success at the time.

6.3 Why the name was changed from PPC to NPC

To answer the second sub-question, I could draw on several responses from my interviewees.

There was agreement that the PPC entered a period of transformation after electing Abramjee as the first chairperson of colour in 2000. He changed the portfolio of the chairperson to that of a very active portfolio, bringing high-profile newsmakers to Press Club media briefings, and ensuring the Press Club was more vocal about media issues.

In order to keep up with transformation in South Africa, it was suggested at a NPC Lekgotla in 2002 that the PPC should change its name. The proposed name "Tshwane Press Club" provoked strong criticism, and the name "National Press Club – Pretoria" was suggested as a counter idea.

The idea to name the club the National Press Club was derived from that of the National Press Club in Washington, as the press club is based in Washington DC, but is named the National Press Club. It is interesting to note that the idea to name the press club the "National Press Club" was on the table since the founding of the PPC, as it was argued that the name PPC excluded members of the media from outside of Pretoria (Thakhuli, 2016).

The name change to "National Press Club – Pretoria" was approved at the AGM on 25 April 2002. The NPC is still registered under that name, however, the executive committee decided in 2009 to remove the word "Pretoria" from its logo and correspondence (Van Niekerk, 2016).

My research revealed that the name change did not provoke much media attention, or reaction, in the years following the decision. However, in 2012 the NPC was, amongst other

things, criticised about the name National Press Club by Chris Vick in the *Business Day*. The next year, 2013, the NPC was again under scrutiny following the decision to name Our South African Rhino as Newsmaker of the Year. Subsequently, the NPC was again attacked in the media for calling itself the NPC. Considering these arguments, one can argue that the executive committee should not have dropped the word Pretoria from the name NPC.

Still, the name change from PPC to NPC was a visible transformation milestone for the club. Membership changed after the name change, as more black members joined the NPC. However, whether this was due to the name change, or because of the change in direction brought along by the new chairperson, Abramjee, is not clear.

There was general agreement among the interviewees that the name change was a good decision for the Press Club. It continued to host high-profile newsmakers that made news at national level. However, it was mentioned that the NPC is, in essence, still a Pretoria-based press club, even though it does have members throughout South Africa. Concerns were raised that the NPC never became a club with national branches, as most networking evenings and media briefings are still hosted in Pretoria.

6.4 How Newsmakers were selected from 1980 until 2017

To answer the third sub-question, news reports as well as interviews were used to construct how newsmakers were selected since its inception to the last year it was awarded.

The research revealed that the Newsmaker of the Year award was introduced in 1981 (for the 1980 Newsmaker). Since then, the Press Club annually named a South African person or organisation as Newsmaker of the Year.

The decision for a Newsmaker is made on the grounds of news value and impact within a specific calendar year and this is decided by the executive committee of the club. The NPC calls for nominations from its members and the executive committee meets in January every year to select the Newsmaker for the previous year.

It is argued that one of the challenges with the naming of a Newsmaker is that the public does not always understand that it is neither a reward, nor criticism. It is simply selecting who or what made news in the previous year, whether positive or negative.

The PPC registered the name Newsmaker of the Year as a trademark with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC). In 1996, the PPC took the

SABC's actuality programme Monitor and Sanlam to court for them wanting to award President Nelson Mandela and the Springbok rugby team as the Newsmakers of the Year. The PPC won the court case and the SABC changed the name of their award to Sanlam/Monitor Newsmakers of the Year. The name Newsmaker of the Year is not a registered trademark anymore, and it is suspected that the registration lapsed with the name change to the NPC.

From the information gathered, it appears as if the decision-making process was easier in the eighties – or rather, before technological communication and data harvesting. Committee members would make the Newsmaker decision based on their personal, non-scientific recollections of the news from the past year. It is argued that the media field is more complex today, with the advent of social media and online platforms, which complicates the decision-making process. In recent years the executive committee started using data from media monitoring companies to assist in the decision-making process. These companies provide information such as exactly how much coverage specific nominations receive during the year.

Analysing the comments from the different interviewees, it seems as if the press club tried to keep the decision for Newsmaker fair, however, concerns were raised that personal choices, or personal agendas, from committee members could have played a role in some instances. One such suggestion is the selection of the Rand as Newsmaker in 2002. It was suggested that a strong, more vocal nomination can convince the rest of the executive committee to vote for a certain newsmaker. It was also argued that politics, and possible favours to politicians, played a role during the eighties. This is reflected in the list of Newsmakers which includes many politicians/political selections in the early years of the award.

Furthermore, the research showed that there were several difficult Newsmaker decisions through the years. Most of these difficult decisions, discussed in the previous chapter, took place after 2000. However, it is likely that debates also took place in the years preceding 2000, especially considering the political climate of South Africa during the time. However, this could not be established as fact because data as evidence could not be collected nor drawn upon.

Analysing the specific four difficult Newsmaker of the Year decisions that were discussed in Chapter 5, it can be reasoned that the selection of the Newsmaker of the Year is a difficult decision, preceded by robust debate by executive committee members. Secondly,

it can be inferred that personal preferences, or agendas, can play a role in the Newsmaker selection as discussed above.

Interestingly, participants in the study mentioned that difficult decisions were more pronounced during Abramjee's chairmanship. Due to a lack of data from the 1980s and the 1990s, it is not possible to know if the decisions had always been difficult.

There was agreement, with the exception of Abramjee, that Our South African Rhino as Newsmaker of the Year for 2012 was the Newsmaker decision that provoked the most reaction. It is argued by some that perhaps, in retrospect, the NPC should have named Our South African Rhino a joint newsmaker with Marikana, the second contender, for 2012.

Concerns were raised that the criticism against this selection was started by the former chairperson, Abramjee. According to what I have researched, it can be inferred that perhaps, as a former chairperson, he felt he should have been consulted, or because his personal choice as Newsmaker was not selected. However, reflecting on his reaction to this Newsmaker, where he was not chairperson anymore, can raise questions about previous decisions and whether certain agendas were served.

Information collected for this study show that Abramjee brought sponsorship to the Press Club. One can possibly draw the inference that, perhaps, he argued in favour of certain Newsmakers with the knowledge, or expectation, that he would be able to secure sponsorship. Especially considering his comment that even bad publicity is publicity, this can be regarded as a disconcerting finding, as it would undermine the values of the NPC, and threaten the democratic processes of its executive committee.

Within the social network theory it is explained that a phenomenon can often be understood by examining the network and the interactions within. In this case, one can infer that the paradigm or background of the executive committee members could have influenced the Newsmaker decision making process.

6.5 Summary

This chapter examined and discussed the findings from the interviews and historical research as it was described in Chapter 5. The next chapter will be the final chapter of this thesis and conclude this research project.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Overview

As explained in the introduction of this thesis, this study sought to research three elements of the history of the National Press Club (NPC), following the Central Research Question, namely, what is the history of the NPC since it was founded as the PPC in 1978? These three elements are stipulated according to the sub-questions as stated in Chapter 4:

- Why was the Pretoria Press Club (PPC) founded?
- Why was the name changed to the NPC?
- How were Newsmakers selected from 1980 to 2017?

The findings of the research was described in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. In this chapter I will summarise the findings of the research with a synopsis of the different chapters, as well as a discussion on the contribution and limitations of this study, and finally, some recommendations will be made for possible further studies on this subject.

7.2 Chapter summaries

7.2.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter explained the need for this historiographical study on the history of the NPC. It stated the aim of this research project, namely to study and record three elements, as stated above, of the history of the NPC since its founding in 1978. This chapter also introduced the literature review with relevant literature available on the subject, followed by an introduction to the theoretical departure points applied for this study, as well as the research approach, design and methodology that were applied.

7.2.2 Literature review

Chapter 2 contained a more comprehensive literature review. I found that the existence of detailed academic studies about the history of a press club, nationally or internationally, could not be established. There were, however, twelve academic articles and four books available on the history of press clubs. The lack of detailed academic studies confirmed the need for this historiographical study on the NPC. The term press club was also defined in this chapter. For the purposes of this study, it is regarded as an organisation which fulfils a social role as well as a professional role for its members. Besides discussing the founding of some of the oldest press clubs throughout the world, another aspect that surfaced and was discussed, was the exclusion of women from press clubs.

7.2.3 Theory

This chapter presented the social network theory and social responsibility theory as the theoretical framework for this study and argued why it was the most relevant theoretical points of departure. The social network theory attempts to answer the question of social order, namely how individual people network to create societies (Borgatti *et al.*, 2009:892). The social responsibility theory prescribes certain “key journalistic standards” that should be upheld by the media, including that the media should serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas (McQuail, 2010:170-171). This chapter further explored the term “network” and detailed several definitions of a network and how a network operates. The chapter also reflected on the different schools of network theory.

7.2.4 Research Methodology

The qualitative research approach, the historiographical research design and the research methods that were applied for this study, were detailed in this chapter. The research problem and research problem as well as the three sub-questions were stated. One of the advantages of the historiographical research design is that the researcher gets the opportunity to examine in different ways how a topic or events evolved over time (Berger, 1998:112). However, the limitations of this design were also highlighted. Furthermore, the chapter also detailed the

research methods, namely historical research and semi-structured interviews, that were used for the research. Finally, ethical considerations for this study were presented.

7.2.5 Findings

This chapter discussed the findings of the historical research and semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the founding of the PPC was discussed. Secondly, the name change, from PPC to NPC, was discussed, and finally, the Newsmakers from 1980 until 2017 were discussed.

7.2.6 Discussion of findings

The findings, as described in Chapter 5, were examined and discussed in this chapter. It was discussed according to the order of the three elements of this study:

- **Why was the Pretoria Press Club founded?**

This study comes to the conclusion that it was founded firstly as a network platform for journalists and media relations practitioners, and secondly a platform for journalists to raise the professional status of the profession. This underwrites both theories applied for this study. Firstly, the social network theory explores the notion of how individuals create societies through networking, as is the case with the PPC founded as a platform to network, with a media community that was created in Pretoria. The second pillar of the PPC's founding, to raise the professional status of the profession, underwrites the second theory that was applied for this study, namely the social responsibility theory which states that the media need professional bodies to uphold the standards of journalism.

- **Why was the name changed to the National Press Club?**

It was found that the PPC wanted to keep up with transformation within South Africa and open the club for members outside of Pretoria. The idea came from the US NPC in Washington. This finding is supported by the social responsibility theory which prescribes that the media should have professional bodies to uphold the professional

status of the profession. It was the responsibility of the PPC keep up with transformation in South Africa and ensures the continuation of the Press Club as the NPC.

- **How were Newsmakers selected since 1980 to 2017?**

Newsmakers are selected on the grounds of news value and impact within a specific calendar year. The decision is made by the executive committee of the club. There were several difficult Newsmaker decisions throughout the years and it was suggested that personal agendas could have played a role in some selections. Within the social network theory, by examining the network and the interactions within, it is possible to understand a certain phenomenon. With the selection of Newsmakers the background of the executive committee members could have influenced the Newsmaker decision making process.

7.3 General conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to research the history of the NPC since it was founded as the PPC in 1978. The founding, the name change, and the selection of Newsmakers were investigated for this purpose. This research found that the National Press Club was founded as a forum for journalists to network and to advance the profession by serving as platform to exchange ideas.

These findings were investigated through the theoretical framework of two theories, namely the social network theory and the social responsibility theory. The findings of this research project are supported by the theoretical framework that was chosen to research this subject. The social network theory underwrites the networking aspect of the NPC as it explores the notion of how individuals create societies through network. Secondly, the NPC founding purpose to uphold the profession is supported by the social responsibility theory which prescribes certain “key journalistic standards” that should be upheld by the media, including the founding of professional bodies to serve as a forum to exchange ideas and uphold the professional status of the profession.

7.4 Contributions, limitations and recommendations

With regard to the final contribution made by this study on the history of the previous PPC, and later NPC, this research can propose the following:

As far as I could determine, this study was the first detailed academic study on the history of a press club, locally, as well as internationally, and therefore, can be described as a novel contribution to the field of Journalism Studies. As mentioned in Chapter 2, after examining existing literature I could not find any detailed studies on the history of a press club based on an academic, theoretical approach. It is hoped that this media historiographical study on the NPC will contribute to the media historiography field and inspire further such studies.

Furthermore, this study provides never before recorded information on the history of the PPC and NPC. It is hoped that this will aid the NPC to better understand its role as a press organisation in South Africa, how it has developed through the past forty years, and to determine its direction for the future.

It is also hoped that the NPC will focus on the establishment of an archive in order to preserve information for future years.

Also, it is hoped that the NPC would consider drawing up a more detailed working policy document with principles according to which Newsmaker decisions are made, as it was clear from the findings that this is a challenging and difficult decision at times – indeed, a contested area in every meaning of the word.

With regard to limitations of the study, as noted in Chapter 4, one of the limitations of an historiographical study design is the availability of research documents. In this study the almost non-existent archive of the NPC was a huge limitation. The information about the founding years and the name change from the PPC to the NPC had to be gathered through interviews from the personal recollections, as well as a limited number of articles available on the SA media database.

Also, as discussed in Chapter 4, another limitation was my close involvement with the NPC, which could have led to possible bias. However, one can also argue that it could have been to the advantage of this research as I have a good understanding of the workings of the NPC. As academic researcher, I would prefer to accept this view, also taking into account that I attempted to maintain a scholarly distance at all times.

Another limitation was the lack of detailed academic studies on press clubs. Such studies could have given more direction, as well as depth, to this study.

Lastly, in terms of recommendations, from the findings in this study it became clear that membership of the press club during the Apartheid years was possibly a complex issue. Therefore, recommendations for further studies would include a study on the role and functioning of the press club during the Apartheid years in South Africa.

A comparative study with an international press club, such as the US NPC, to determine the difference between the functioning of a press club in South Africa versus a press club in the US, could also be recommended for future research.

Appendix A



• Tel 082 551 4853 • e-mail martin@nationalpressclub.co.za • www.nationalpressclub.co.za •
•po box 14176 hatfield 0028 •

01 February 2016

Dear Tanya de Vente-Bijker

Permission granted for research on the history of the National Press Club

We have received your request to research the history of the National Press Club since its founding in 1978. This request was discussed during our annual Lekgotla (executive committee meeting) on 31 October 2015.

We hereby grant you permission do research the history of the press club and its workings. We have a limited archive containing minutes of meetings and newsletters available, this will be made available for your research.

We acknowledge the fact that you will interview several former chairpersons, executive committee members and members in order to gather information for your research.

We wish you well with you research.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin van Niekerk".

Ben Rootman

Martin van Niekerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Rootman".

General Manager

Secretariat

Appendix B



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jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The history of the National Press Club

From the Pretoria Press Club to the National Press Club: Examining the history of the National Press Club over four decades.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tanya de Vente-Bijker under supervision from Prof Lizette Rabe, from the Journalism Department at Stellenbosch University. These results will be contributed towards a Master's Thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement with the National Press Club at some point since its founding.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research project is to investigate the history of the National Press Club. Founded as the Pretoria Press Club in 1978, this project will aim to study the founding of the club, the change from the Pretoria Press Club to the National Press Club, and the newsmakers appointed over the years.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in an individual interview

The researcher would like to interview you to gather information about the history of the National Press Club.

This will be done with a qualitative interview in which the interviewer (the researcher) will have a list of general questions and topics to be covered. The interview will be recorded and transcribed.

The interview will take place during a time arranged by both parties at a location arranged by both parties.

The interview will take between one and three hours, depending on your involvement with the National Press Club.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviewee should understand that it is necessary to research the both the good and the difficult times since the founding of the press club.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefit for the subject from this study would be that his/her participation in the history of the press club will be recorded.

The study will also be beneficial to the press club as its history will be recorded.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The subject will not receive any payment. Participation in the interview process will be voluntary.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is not required because the participant will not be sharing private information. Participation is voluntarily on the basis that confidentiality is not given.

The information gathered for the study may be released for the use of the National Press Club in its archive, to publish articles in the media about its history and any publications regarding the history of the press club.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact

Investigator: Tanya de Vente-Bijker. Tel: 072 267 0751. Email: tanyadevente@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof Lizette Rabe. Tel: 021 808 3488. Email: LRABE@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Tanya de Vente-Bijker in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to Amanda Visser and/or her representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. He was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C



UNIVERSITEIT-STELLENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot - your knowledge partner

Approval Notice New Application

23-Jun-2016
De Vente-bijker, Tanya TN

Proposal #: SU-HSD-002400
Title: The history of the National Press Club

Dear Ms Tanya De Vente-bijker,

Your **New Application** received on **06-Jun-2016**, was reviewed
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: 21-Jun-2016 -20-Jun-2017

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (SU-HSD-002400) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

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