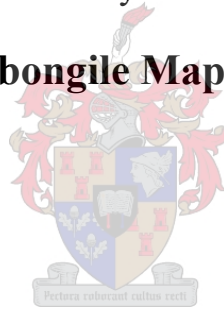


**An exploration into the role conceptions of
investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane,
and Scorpio**

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Journalism in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
at Stellenbosch University

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March 2021

Declaration

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Abstract

The normative role of investigative journalists has evolved from merely informing the public to actually getting involved in societal struggles through exposing and reporting on corruption and abuse of power. In South Africa, this evolution is supported by a strong investigative media culture and a conducive legislative framework – at least since the dawn of democracy. However, in the past few years there has arguably been a change in how local journalists are treated by people in positions of power, as well as the public. Open hostility, as well as physical and cyberattacks on investigative journalists pose serious threats to press freedom and have the potential to negatively impact the role journalists play in society. It is therefore worthwhile to describe how investigative journalists view their role in society amidst these types of challenges. The aim of this study is to explore how investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view their role in democratic South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 journalists at these investigative units in order to address the research problem. Journalists were asked how they understood their roles and what they thought their social responsibility was. The interview data was analysed within the framework of normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory. The central theoretical departure point of this study is that investigative journalists describe their role according to specific normative guidelines and expectations. Through thematic analysis of the interview data, seven themes were developed which captured, amongst other things, how the journalists describe their roles, how they view the relationship between public interest and social responsibility, what threats they face and what skills are needed for the future of investigative journalism. In the final instance, this study concludes that investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio understand their role in democratic South Africa to be shining the light on state secrets and abuses of power. Despite the challenges they face, these investigative journalists still regard public interest as a key determinant of whether or not to investigate. By holding the powerful to account, advocating for social justice and exposing corruption these journalists understand that their work benefit taxpayers, and the most vulnerable members of society, and ultimately contribute to the welfare of society.

Opsomming

Die normatiewe rol van ondersoekende joernaliste in Suid-Afrika het verander van bloot openbare bewusmaking tot daadwerklike deelname aan samelewingstryde deur korrupsie en magsmisbruik bloot te lê en daaroor verslag te doen. In Suid-Afrika word hierdie verandering onderskraag deur 'n sterk ondersoekende mediakultuur en 'n bevorderlike wetgewende raamwerk – ten minste sedert die aanbreek van demokrasie. Die afgelope paar jaar was daar egter 'n verandering in hoe plaaslike joernaliste behandel word deur mense in magsposisies, sowel as die publiek. Openlike vyandigheid teenoor, sowel as fisiese en aanlynaanvalle op ondersoekende joernaliste hou ernstige bedreigings in vir persvryheid en het die potensiaal om die rol wat joernaliste in die gemeenskap speel negatief te beïnvloed. Dit is dus nuttig om te beskryf hoe ondersoekende joernaliste hul rol in die gemeenskap beskou te midde van hierdie soort uitdagings. Die doel van hierdie studie is om te ondersoek hoe ondersoekende joernaliste by News24, amaBhungane en Scorpio hul rol in 'n demokratiese Suid-Afrika sien. Semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is met 13 joernaliste by hierdie ondersoekeenhede onderneem om die navorsingsvraagstuk aan te spreek. Joernaliste is gevra hoe hulle hul rol verstaan en wat hulle dink hul sosiale verantwoordelikheid is. Die onderhouddata is binne die raamwerk van normatiewe rolkonseptualisering en sosiale verantwoordelikheidsteorie geanaliseer. Die hoof- teoretiese wegspringplek vir die studie is dat ondersoekende joernaliste hul rol beskryf volgens spesifieke normatiewe riglyne en verwagtinge. Deur tematiese analise van die onderhouddata is sewe temas ontwikkel wat vervang, onder meer, hoe die joernaliste hul rol beskryf, hoe hulle die verhouding tussen openbare belang en sosiale verantwoordelikheid beskou, watter uitdagings hulle het en watter vaardighede vir die toekoms van ondersoekende joernalistiek benodig word. Ten laaste kom hierdie studie tot die gevolgtrekking dat ondersoekende joernaliste by News24, amaBhungane en Scorpio hul rol in 'n demokratiese Suid-Afrika sien as een wat die lig skyn op staatsgeheime en magsmisbruik. Ondanks hul uitdagings hou hierdie ondersoekende joernaliste steeds openbare belang voor as 'n kernfaktor van die besluit om ondersoek in te stel of nie. Deur diegene in magsposisies tot verantwoording te dwing, maatskaplike geregtigheid voor te staan en korrupsie te ontbloot verstaan hierdie joernaliste dat hul werk ten voordeel is van belastingbetalers en die mees kwesbare lede van die publiek en uiteindelik 'n bydrae maak tot die welsyn van die samelewing.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my supervisor, Dr Marenet Jordaan, for all the guidance from the beginning of this journey. Without reason or justification, Dr Jordaan believed there was an executable academic study in my idea. There can never be enough words to express my appreciation. In isiXhosa we say *Maz' enethole*.

I want to say thank you to my editor, Ms Magriet Pienaar. When I approached her with the project, it took her just one minute to decide. I deliberately hid from her that I am a second-language speaker of English. All the work Magriet did is highly appreciated.

I want to thank my manager at work, Mr Brent Simons, who – without knowing whether I had leave days to commit to my studies – just kept approving the leave applications. Mr Simons was so happy for me to complete my Master's and his joy reminded me of my mother Ms Landule Maputi in so many ways.

I want to thank Prof Lizette Rabe. I never really thanked her way back in 2003. Prof Rabe never tired of reminding me the departmental motto: “Sibu, *Plane et Probe*.” In no smaller measure I want to thank Dr Gawie Botma, the course co-ordinator, for all the email exchanges, guidance and encouragement.

I want to thank all my study participants, who were so generous with their time and so insightful about investigative journalism. Confidentiality determines that I do not mention them by name.

In no particular order I also want to thank the following people for their invaluable contribution to my study: Ms Elizabeth Newman, Ms Marleen Hendriksz, Mr Simphiwe Tsawu, Mr Sakhile Mokoena, Mr Mava Lukani, Mr Lihleli Busakwe, and Mr Yonda Nxawe.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research problem

South Africa has had a well-developed media and investigative journalism culture of exposing public-sector corruption. The President announced the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate allegations of massive corruption (South Africa, 2018). The Public Protector report on state capture, which stipulated the establishment of such a commission, acknowledged investigative journalism as the basis for all corruption complaints lodged with the Public Protector's office (Desai, 2018; Madonsela, 2016). Most corruption in South Africa is exposed through investigative reporting (Grootes, 2016). It was investigative journalism that exposed the email correspondence detailing how family friends of a sitting head of state, and some cabinet members, had become involved in corruption – what became known in South Africa as #GuptaLeaks (Corruption Watch, 2018). Examples of stories of corruption are many and can be found across state-owned entities, provincial governments and local municipalities.

However, the investigative capability of South African journalists appears to be under threat given the assaults that have been directed at journalists over the past few years (see, for instance, Reporters Without Borders, 2019). Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees media freedom, but this does not seem to prevent attacks targeted on journalists. Governments in the Global South struggle to co-exist with the media, and, according to Rodny-Gumede and Chasi (2016), have found ways to curb press freedom. Forbes (2005:2) agrees: “Investigative journalists, who because of their manner of worming out hidden information, are often criticised by politicians and others with power.”

Politicians and Twitter trolls call investigative journalists names such as whore, *sifebe*¹ and slut; racially labelling especially white journalists is sometimes a preferred method of assault (see Friedman, 2019; Njilo, 2018). Hostility directed at investigative journalists came to the fore when prominent politician Julius Malema, the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), banned Pauli van Wyk, an investigative journalist at Daily Maverick, from party events. The ban was extended to certain media houses, like Daily Maverick, amaBhungane, and *Rapport*, and their journalists were labelled the enemy (Moloko, 2019). Van Wyk

¹ *Isifebe* is an isiZulu derogatory word used against a woman to insinuate that she has multiple sexual partners or is of loose sexual morals.

published a series of investigative reports on the EFF's involvement in the VBS Bank corruption scandal, in which pensioners from Limpopo were robbed of their life savings (Corruption Watch, 2018). Daily Maverick journalists were denied accreditation to the EFF's December 2019 elective conference in Johannesburg, and a number of other journalists had their accreditation cancelled.

The hostility from politicians extends across the political spectrum in South Africa. Investigative journalist Piet Rampedi claimed he was followed after the publication of details around donations Cyril Ramaphosa received for his campaign to become African National Congress (ANC) president (Newzroom Afrika, 2019). A similar pattern occurred when investigative journalist Jacques Pauw's house was broken into and his computer stolen while he was writing a book on former President Jacob Zuma's secrets (Desai, 2018). The trend of aiming hostility at investigative journalists arguably extends to government. It was apparent in 2010 when the governing ANC introduced the Protection of State Information Bill, which has the objective to regulate and protect state information. Work on the bill, also dubbed the Secrecy Bill, stopped in 2013 after Zuma sent it back to Parliament (De Vos, 2018).

The attacks also manifest as physical threats and violence. Sometimes they are perpetrated in cyberspace, which Rodny-Gumede (2019) characterises as the worst form of assault. According to UNESCO's report on the state of the media globally (2018), digital safety remains a pressing concern, as arbitrary surveillance and tracking "put journalists and their sources at a great risk". Openly threatening journalists has arguably become normal in South Africa, as happened with veteran eNCA journalist Karima Brown whose residential details were shared on Twitter. Holleran (2015) defines cyberbullying as coordinated attacks on journalists that are sustained on social networking spaces and may include smear campaigns, trolling², intimidating sources, online threats of violence, and online sexual harassment. Cyberbullying is not a South African phenomenon. Cyberbullying of investigative journalists occurs everywhere, and according to Duffy (2019), many journalists are familiar with receiving threats online in response to their reporting. Haffajee (2019) writes: "The online abuse has become so commonplace that taking it in and blocking is part of the daily routine". Rodny-Gumede (2019) agrees and notes that it's mostly female journalists who are attacked through cyberbullying.

² Trolling is a reference to a behaviour on social media, especially Twitter, where a person posts provocative comments or responses online by rubbishing other people's thoughts. This can be done with factually correct statements or even inaccurate statements depending on what is intended to be achieved.

Cyberbullying and cybermisogyny, including threats of physical violence often of a sexual nature, are the ugliest forms of sexism used to try to intimidate and silence female journalists. (Rodny-Gumede, 2019)

Cyberbullying manifests in various ways, including through trolling investigative journalists, sometimes by famous people and sometimes by other investigative journalists. Investigative journalists attack each other on cyber platforms in a manner that not only weakens the credibility of the profession but may have the effect of undermining investigative work, as reflected in a tweet by @pietrampedi, commenting on Van Wyk's investigation into the systematic dismantling of South Africa's tax revenue collector:

In pursuant of a #RogueUnit driven smear campaign, @PauliW, one of the youngest members of the cabal & trusted attack dog, spent the entire 2016 accusing me of being on the SSA payroll. She did not bother producing proof. She's now with donor-funded @dailymaverick @brankobrkic. (@pietrampedi, 2019)

Daniels (2017) says the fighting among journalists allows for "crude ideological obfuscation", citing how journalists of ANN7 and the *New Age*, and some SABC journalists, are "totally involved in an onslaught of discrediting opponents" of Zuma's faction in the ANC. Fake news gets muddled with real news, leaving the public unsure what to believe and giving politicians the edge (Daniels, 2017). The impact of journalists fighting each other is such that, according to Van Dalen (2019:6), journalists become openly partisan and practise different journalistic values. "At the same time, journalism can no longer be seen as a single institution since outsider journalists position themselves in opposition to mainstream journalists," states Van Dalen (2019:6).

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that investigative journalism is a field in which hostility, assaults and attacks are to be expected (see Chapter 2 for further details). The frequency with which the attacks occur, especially involving journalists doing investigative work on corruption in South Africa, raises several questions: What do investigative journalists understand their role to be and how do they feel about their role in society? How do investigative journalists describe their place in a democracy? How do continued attacks on investigative journalists influence what they do? The study aims to answer these and related

questions by conducting interviews with journalists at three prominent South African investigative journalism units, namely News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio.

1.2 Preliminary literature review

An overview of the literature reveals that the media's watchdog role ascribes to journalists the responsibility of holding power to account (Burns, 2000; Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004; Waisbord, 2002). The watchdog role implies guardianship which, according to Carson and Farhall (2018:1900), is a normative function that liberal democratic theorists ascribe to news media. This view is in line with Forbes's (2005:2) assertion that investigative reporting is an important public service because journalists see civil servants involved in corruption as betraying what is good in society. Investigative journalists have an obligation, according to Burns (2000:24), "to act as scrutineers of everyone and be the tribunes of the people". Kruger (2017:30) believes journalists must counteract manipulative and coercive techniques that are used by powerful interests.

There is no uniform definition of investigative journalism in literature, but scholars (Ettema & Glasser, 2007; Houston, 2010; MacFadyen, 2008) define investigative journalism as rigorous, adversarial and intended to fulfil a watchdog role. MacFadyen (2008:138) contends that evidential standards are higher in investigative journalism than in normal newsroom practice thereby making it more demanding of its subjects. Ettema and Glasser (2007:491) share this view: "Investigative reporting can be journalism at its most politically vigorous and methodologically rigorous." Houston (2010:45) defines investigative journalism as "fiscally conservative, probing waste, fraud, and abuse in government agencies". The emphasis on rigour and vigour signifies intensity required in order to play watchdog in society; a role Yusha'u (2009:157) says requires a distinctive effort beyond reliance on leaks or secondary sources of information. However, a survey of Nigerian journalists found that journalists did not view investigative journalism any different from journalism (Yusha'u, 2009). This finding is contrary to what most of the literature has established in defining investigative journalism as different from ordinary journalism.

The distinctive character of investigative journalism requires better socio-economic conditions, which are not prevalent in some countries in the Global South. The lack of finances is among the major challenges that hinder media houses from practising investigative journalism. Forbes (2005:50) explains: "Economic realities have had a direct

and negative impact on the quality and proliferation of investigative stories in Africa.” Investigative journalism practice requires socio-economic conditions that, according to Gerli, Mazzoni and Mincigrucci (2018:23), currently exist in the Anglo-American context. The reference to Anglo-America is important because socio-economic conditions, to which Gerli *et al.* (2018) refers, not only determine ability to execute investigative projects, but also journalistic independence. Typical socio-economic related challenges, as Ismail, Khairie Ahmad, and Mustaffa (2017:4) explain, include lack of financial resources to cover such issues as litigation, too little budget to pay investigative journalists, and lack of access to information. Technological advances – what Waisbord (2002:377) refers to as industrial changes in the news media – are more apparent as a challenge in countries characterised by socio-economic challenges. The challenge usually manifests as a lack of access to required technological resources.

The lack of finances has prodded investigative journalists, according to Houston (2010:48), to look for financial support from non-profit organisations. It is donor funding from these organisations that has led scholars to question journalistic independence, especially in developing countries. Saldana and Mourao (2018:299) state that “investigative journalism is not exempt from external influences, especially in developing countries”. Ettema and Glasser (2007:494) concur and say independence cannot be justified if journalists accept and conceal private interests.

Wasserman (2008) posits that the challenge for small and midmarket operations is to find new mechanisms to provide financial resources to investigative journalism. However, Rosenthal (2012:28) cautions that balancing the interests of funders and independence of journalists is tricky because the public will always perceive bias. The financial challenges do not make the role of investigative journalism less meaningful and it will always have a future, according to Houston (2010):

The issues are how will investigative journalism be defined, how will it maintain high standards and quality, in what forms and with what methods will it thrive, and how will it be financed.

A thorough search on academic databases reveals there is a lack of academic literature discussing the challenges listed above from the perspective of South African investigative journalists themselves. This study addresses this gap in the literature by exploring how

journalists at the investigative units of News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view and describe their role.

1.3 Definition of key terms

1.3.1 Investigative journalism

The study contextualises the definition of investigative journalism within the broader definition of journalism. Vos (2018:4) defines journalism as the “socially valued and structured work” of crafting and distributing news. Shapiro (2014:561) proposes a functional definition and says “journalism comprises the activities involved in an independent pursuit of accurate information” and presentation. According to Ahluwalia and Miller (2019:625), for democracies to function, the practice of journalism must operate without fear or favour. Cancela, Gerber, and Dubied (2021:3) write that journalism is arguably undergoing profound reconfigurations in contexts often deemed hostile. Although investigative journalism is surrounded by “definitional uncertainty”, it is a form of advanced reporting that requires more enhanced skills than ordinary journalism practice (Cancela *et al.*, 2021:2). Investigative journalism is characterised by its resolve to discover concealed information. According to Blevens (1997:258), most definitions of investigative journalism emphasise independent discovery by the journalist. Three distinguishable attributes are commonly ascribed to investigative journalism: originality, revealing secrets, and the public interest (see, for example, Abdenour, 2018; Blevens, 1997; Borins & Herst, 2019). The amount of detail, methods of investigation, and adversarial nature set investigative journalism apart from normal journalism practice, hence De Burgh (2000:23) calls it analytical journalism. Greenwald, Bernt, and Roberts (2000) define investigative journalism as per its normative roles of exposing wrongdoing, correcting injustices and bringing about reform. Investigative journalism is an expensive form of journalism, undertaken to expose corruption and collusion between state officials and private interests. This study defines investigative journalism as a special kind of journalism that rigorously pursues truth, seeks social justice, and demands accountability.

1.3.2 Journalistic role conceptualisation

Journalistic role conceptualisation refers to how journalists view their role both as professionals and as society’s activists. It also encapsulates how this view influences the way journalists do their work and their day-to-day decision-making. Standaert, Hanitzsch and

Dedonder (2019) define journalistic role conceptualisation as sets of ideas that journalists use to describe their role in such a way that it becomes meaningful to society.

1.3.3 Social responsibility framework

This is a theoretical framework that ascribes a responsibility to the media, but also commits the media to reporting in a socially responsible manner. According to Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White (2009:24), social responsibility calls for interventions designed to supplement or control media activities.

Different versions of social responsibility as it applies to the media have been espoused that have varying degrees of strength. A minimalist version expects the media themselves to develop self-regulatory mechanisms of accountability, based on voluntary promises in response to demands from the public or the government. (Christians *et al.*, 2009:24)

1.3.4 Cyberattacks

Cyberattacks are the form of attacks that manifests on the internet. This form of attacks is not restricted to journalism but may be used to target and frustrate the work of journalists.

Albahar (2016:995) defines cyberattacks as a “wide range of nefarious activities” done by exploiting information and communication technology (ICT). According to Albahar (2016), the intention of cyberattacking is to cause extensive damage at tremendous speed. The interest of this study is in the assault cyberattacks cause to journalism. Bossetta (2018:100) says social media platforms are useful vehicles to launch cyberattacks against journalists, and that actors easily “construct fake social media profiles to interact with targets”.

1.4 Problem statement

Physical and cyberattacks on investigative journalists pose serious threats to press freedom and have the potential to negatively impact the role journalists play in society. It is therefore worthwhile to describe how investigative journalists view their role in society amidst these types of challenges.

This study explores how investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view their role in democratic South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

journalists at these investigative units. The interview data was analysed within the framework of normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory.

An understanding of investigative journalism from the perspective of people who practise it enhances our understanding of what investigative journalism is and the role that journalists play in democratic South Africa.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The central theoretical departure point of this study is that investigative journalists describe their role according to specific normative guidelines and expectations. A combination of the concept of journalistic role conceptualisation and the normative framework of the media's social responsibility is used as a theoretical guide for this study.

As explained in Section 1.3.2, normative role conceptualisation can be defined as a conceptual framework that guides professional roles and stipulates expectations from the perspective of the investigative journalist. Burns (2000:24) points out that journalists believe they have a special role as “scrutineers” of all and everyone.

According to Hanitzsch and Ornebring (2019:110), “normative roles of journalists are socially negotiated and sensitive to context”. This researcher agrees, and would add that normative role conceptions are a relevant aspect of journalism as they reveal how journalists in a given society view their role. Normative roles guide journalists to not just investigate for the sake of investigating, but to take into consideration social reality, as well as the value a society attaches to an issue. It could therefore be argued that journalists view their normative roles as influencing and enabling the journalistic decision-making process.

The concept of journalistic role conceptualisation is complemented by the use of social responsibility theory. Fourie (2017:112) states that “the media's social responsibility is to produce and distribute a diversity of content”. According to McQuail (2010:171), social responsibility theory “moves from the premise that the media accept it have an obligation towards society”. Social responsibility theory obligates the media to play a responsible role in society. Furthermore, as alluded to by Nerone, Berry, Braman, Christians, Guback, Helle, Liebovich, and Rotzoll (1995:77), journalists take it upon themselves to elevate their standards in providing citizens with the news and guidance they need to govern themselves.

While normative role conceptualisation refers to journalists' own understanding of their role, social responsibility is a generally acceptable normative expectation of what the media ought or is expected to do in society. The essential tenet in both theories is the role of the media in society. It is important to assess how investigative journalists view their role in a democracy, which, according to Hanitzsch and Ornebring (2019:105), is subject to "continual discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation". The study's theoretical framework is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.6 Research questions

This study addresses the problem statement set out in Section 1.4 by answering the following general and specific research questions:

General research question:

How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view and describe their role in democratic South Africa?

Specific research questions:

RQ1: What do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio believe are their rights and responsibilities?

RQ2: How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio describe their social responsibility in society?

RQ3: What challenges do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio face when doing their work?

1.7 Research design and methodology

Bhattacharjee (2012:35) defines a study design as "a blueprint for empirical research aimed at answering specific research questions". This study uses a qualitative research design to gain insight into how investigative journalists view their role. Dawson (2009:14) defines qualitative research as "exploring attitudes, behaviour and experiences through interviews". Mason (2002:3) states: "Qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data." Qualitative studies differ

from quantitative studies that place emphasis, according to Teer-Tomaselli (2008), on measurements and statistical data.

The study explores the views of journalists at three sites: News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio using a qualitative research design. The three sites were chosen because they have investigative units that employ dedicated teams of journalists. A short overview of the three sites is provided below.

1.7.1 Overview of research sites

1.7.1.1 News24

News24 is an online news division of Media24, one of the big-four media houses in the country (Ogola & Rodny-Gumede, 2014). The platform publishes in English and has a national footprint. According to News24 Assistant Editor Pieter du Toit (2019), the investigations team at News24 has four team members, all of whom report to an editor. The team is based in Johannesburg.

1.7.1.2 amaBhungane

amaBhungane³ is a centre for investigative journalism that publishes investigative stories. Formerly an investigations unit of the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper, amaBhungane became independent in 2013 to specialise as a centre for investigative journalism. Co-founder and Managing Partner Stefaans Brümmer (2019) says the investigative centre employs 11 investigative journalists, spread across the country. This investigative centre accepts donor funding (Global Investigative Journalism Network, n.d.).

1.7.1.3 Scorpio

Scorpio is a dedicated investigative unit of Daily Maverick, an online platform that also publishes general news. According to Managing Editor Janet Heard (2019), Scorpio employs a team of five investigative journalists. The team members of the unit are based in Johannesburg. Scorpio accepts donor funding for their investigations (Daily Maverick, n.d.).

1.7.2 Sampling, data gathering, and analysis

Purposive sampling allowed this researcher to speak to the investigative journalists who contributed to the advancement of the study objectives. Purposive sampling is described as the deliberate choice or identification of research participants, according to certain qualities

³ *amaBhungane* is an isiXhosa word for beetles, black insects that feed on maggots found in cattle dung. The insects usually get very busy when trying to find the maggots in cattle dung before it dries up.

they possess, with a potential to enrich data or a study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016:2). “As a researcher you only go to those people who in your opinion are likely to have the required information and be willing to share it with you,” states Kumar (2011:207). The study therefore sampled journalists who are actively practising at the three investigative units (as described in section 1.7.1).

The study collected data through the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for greater flexibility, in-depth search, and deviation from predetermined courses (see, for instance, Burns, 2000; Kumar, 2014; Wilson, 2012). Ethical clearance was provided to do the research and the interviews were conducted telephonically since personal contact with participants had been banned due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (see Addendum A). The outbreak, coinciding with the data collection phase of the study, forced Stellenbosch University to suspend all contact with research participants. Audio recordings of the interviews were saved on a password-protected mobile device. On completion of each interview, the audio sound was transcribed. The researcher also asked the participants whether follow-up questions could be sent and answered via email.

Qualitative studies are interpretive in nature and in their analytical approach to data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and contextualise the empirical data. Thematic analysis is a method used for analysing qualitative data in order to identify meaning. Thematic analysis can be applied across a range of theoretical frameworks and research paradigms (Clarke & Braun, 2017:297). Burns (2000:430) states: “The purpose of analysing the data is to find meaning in the data, and this is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information.” Ibrahim (2012:41) writes that thematic analysis provides an opportunity to code data into themes where patterns develop and become noticeable. According to Burns (2000:432), coding may begin while the data is still being collected. Trends in the data for this research were accordingly studied and closely analysed. Coding and thematic analysis are not the only way of analysing qualitative data, but, according to Flick (2007:101), are the most prominent ways.

1.8 Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1

The chapter outlined the nature of the problem as it regards investigative journalism in South Africa. Instances of investigative stories that brought malfeasance to the public glare were

recorded. This form of journalism is thorough and requires financial resources. The nature of the problem that the study investigates was laid out, as well as the methods that used to investigate the problem. The study explores the views of active investigative journalists of the role they play in society, given the challenges that their field faces in South Africa. This qualitative study uses normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory as theoretical frameworks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with investigative journalists at three research sites, that is, News24, amaBhungane, and Daily Maverick's Scorpio.

Chapter 2

This chapter demonstrates how investigative journalism attempts to reveal secrets and corruption. It shows that investigative journalism is a trade done or undertaken on behalf of ordinary people. The kind of undertaking that puts people at its core is described in journalism, as this chapter shows, as public interest. Journalists commit to pursuit of the truth in the public interest. Investigative journalism's excellence is situational and sometimes its practice can take an adversarial form. Socio-economic challenges have empirically been shown to impact on the quality of investigative journalism. In the Global South, donor funders have played an important role in funding this kind of journalism. However, criticism is often levelled against these donor funders. There are media houses that do pseudo-investigative journalism and report on fake news investigations; often investigative stories from these media houses happen without investigations having taken place.

Chapter 3

Normative role conceptualisation as a primary theory assists in understanding how journalists view their role. Theorising about journalistic roles has increased over the recent past, but the roles are diverse and not easily theorised. The study explores how investigative journalists in South Africa view their role, and moves from the premise that South African journalists work from the perspective of roles as reflected in social responsibility theory. Social responsibility theory is used to complement normative role conceptualisation. Social responsibility theory holds, among other things, that it is the duty of the media to educate society, but this responsibility ought to be undertaken in a responsible manner by a media that is free from any form of control. In South Africa, promotion of diversity could be used to measure whether the media is responsible and whether it is fulfilling its role as spelt out in social responsibility theory.

Chapter 4

The study uses qualitative approaches to understand how investigative journalists from the investigative units at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio, and their respective managers experience their social world. The three research sites were chosen because they have functional investigative units. The instruments used for data collection with the 13 participants (from a total of 20 contacted) were telephonic and email semi-structured interviews. The telephone interview method was further necessitated by the outbreak of COVID-19 which resulted in the country being put on lockdown during most of the data collection phase of this study. Confidentiality of participants was guaranteed and consent forms were emailed prior to each interview.

Chapter 5

Data presentation was done according to themes that were identified. The themes were used as analytical framework for the interview data. The interview data reveals that investigative journalists constantly think about their roles and that they are conscious of their social responsibility. Access to information in South Africa is still a challenge which hinders investigative journalists from fulfilling their social responsibility in line with the public interest. The lack of skills and the lack of financial resources compromise the quality of investigative journalism. Investigative journalists believe that ICT skills will be important for journalists in the future.

Chapter 6

This chapter summarises the study and provides brief summaries of the preceding chapters. It also attempts to answer directly the academic questions introduced in Chapter 1. The impact of the study on the body of knowledge is assessed, as well as the limitations of the study. Future study areas in the context of South Africa are outlined, including a possible extension of the investigation to the local sphere of government.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Undertaking a literature review is the basis for systemic and coordinated academic inquiry (Boote & Beile, 2005:4). A literature review takes place when the researcher examines the body of documented scholarly knowledge which is necessary before undertaking their own research. Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009:125) equate a literature review to building a foundation for research, of which the purpose is to demonstrate linkages and trends in future studies. A literature review must eliminate redundancy and bring about originality on the topics under study (Hart, 2018). Boote and Beile (2005:3) agree: “To advance our collective understanding, a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean.” In a similar vein, Hart (2018:30) believes the overall result of a literature review “is that the researcher will become thoroughly knowledgeable about a topic, and they will be ready to do research that advances knowledge on that topic”.

This chapter reviews existing literature on the subject of inquiry: the perspectives of investigative journalists on their role in a democracy. The history and the current context in which investigative journalism is practised in South Africa is briefly outlined. The literature review highlights challenges to, and current trends and developments in, investigative journalism. Specific attention is paid to the state of investigative journalism in South Africa.

2.2 Gaps in the literature

A thorough search on academic databases such as Google Scholar and the catalogue of the Stellenbosch University library has indicated that there is a dearth of literature on how investigative journalists themselves view and describe their role in society – especially within the South African context. The studies that were reviewed have shown that role conceptualisation is less often studied from the perspective of investigative journalists, and rather are part of the umbrella of broader journalism studies. The deficiency this gap in the literature exposes is that while investigative journalism has its specific challenges, the framework from which these challenges are investigated is broad and does not draw a clear distinction between investigative journalism and other forms and genres of journalism. A

clear conceptual basis for the role of investigative journalism, from a perspective of investigative journalists, is necessary and this is what this study attempts to achieve.

The normative journalistic role is often defined in terms of societal expectations and from the perspective of Western ideology, mostly that of liberal democracy (Wasserman, 2006:73). Hellmueller and Mellado (2015) concur that functionalistic definitions of journalistic role conception stress normative expectations. Most of the literature reviewed for this study indicates that there isn't always consensus on what the role of journalists is. Various surveys done on journalistic roles reveal that the journalistic roles are discursively constituted and that they evolve (Standaert *et al.*, 2019). In a survey of 20 British news workers, Konow-Lund (2019) found that journalistic roles are understood to be a hybrid of functions that involves reporting, coordination, and community engagement. Similarly, a survey of 1800 journalists in 18 countries found that journalists differ in how they see and understand their roles (Hanitzsch, 2011). Some journalists believe that their role is to attract wide audiences by providing the interesting news, others believe that their role is to monitor the authority (Hanitzsch, 2011). Journalists in this study across 18 countries state that journalistic roles denote the journalists' self-image of their social roles and functions (Hanitzsch, 2011).

In a study of journalists from 67 countries, Standaert *et al.* (2019) found that normative roles should be distinguished from enacted roles. This researcher agrees with this view, since, as Hanitzsch (2017) indicates, it is one thing to know what is expected of you, in terms of your journalistic role, and another to perform that role. Mellado (2019) argues that while normative roles define what journalists do in society as professionals, role performance is informed by context. At a normative level it is possible to talk about ideal types of roles but in practice this is impossible given the structure, culture, and political economy of news organisations (Mellado, 2019). Context relates to role enactment and scholars identify context as crucial to journalistic role performance. The context-sensitive nature of norms also explains why some journalistic roles are socially desirable in some contexts (Hanitzsch, 2017:4). In a comparative study of Chinese and US news reports, Guo (2012) found that the debate on normative journalistic roles and role performance cannot be understood as separate from the perceptions of news practitioners.

In reality, the perceptions, preferences, and intentions of the news reporters and editors are much more complicated. They do not necessarily act ethically, honestly, or rationally, either consciously or subconsciously. Moreover, journalists and editors influence the

packaging of news by determining not only what is to be included or excluded, but also how news is presented. (Guo, 2012:27)

Most normative roles of journalists are derived from a view that emphasises journalism's contribution to the proper workings of democracy (Hanitzsch, 2017:1). Demanding political accountability is important when one is to understand the role of investigative journalism in the context of journalistic role performance. The concept of journalists as watchdogs is arguably derived from the normative function of holding political power accountable. "Most of the roles advocated in the literature bear a close connection to citizenship and democratic participation," states Hanitzsch (2017:4). The media's journalistic role performance has not only led to resignations of officials but also raised political elites' alertness to negative news (Waisbord, 2002).

Despite the growing body of knowledge on journalistic role conceptions across the world, there seems to be a lack of literature on investigative journalists who find themselves in challenging situations in Africa. Lanosga, Willnat, Weaver and Houston (2015:268) state that although much is known about the practices of journalists, more research is needed on specific journalistic genres. The normative expectations of journalistic roles are still generalised within the broad field of journalism and are dominantly studied from the Western perspective, hence the emphasis on the surveillance of political power (Hanitzsch, 2017). This study seeks to establish how investigative journalists in South Africa view their role, under "turbulent" conditions, as characterised by Ibelema (2012). By doing interviews with journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio, this study thus adds to the academic field of knowledge on role conceptualisation in a very specific context.

In the next section, this study explores the different roles that investigative journalism, and journalism broadly, play in society.

2.3 The role of investigative journalism in society

2.3.1 Journalists as truth-tellers

Finding and telling the truth is an important function of the media. As representatives of society's interests, journalists need to report truthfully if they are to live up to a watchdog role (Retief, 2019). Investigative journalists should always seek to establish the truth,

especially where it is obscure to find (De Burgh, 2000). Kruger (2017) states that uncovering the truth is important for counteracting social imbalances that favour the powerful. In a survey of Nigerian journalists, for instance, Yusha'u (2009) found that journalists understand that the mission of investigative journalism is finding the truth. Similarly, a survey of South African journalists found that local journalists regard themselves as truth-tellers (Ndlovu, 2015). The search for truth and the scrutiny of public officials are fundamental for democracy to work, despite authorities working hard to suppress the truth and avoid scrutiny (Waisbord, 2002). Holding power to account involves journalists rigorously aiming to uncover the truth, in which way investigative journalists impact public life (Gerli *et al.*, 2018; Hume & Abbot, 2017). An inability to find the truth, as Waisbord (1997) puts it, makes investigative journalists less potent.

Scholars (Waisbord, 2018; Ettema & Glasser, 1998) note difficulties with the concept of truth in news reports, and profess that journalism needs to be anchored in facts. Ettema and Glasser (1998:95) state: "To meet the formal requirements of journalistic objectivity, investigative stories must always return quickly to the facts of the situation." Journalistic truth is source-based and, as a result, could contain different versions, some more accurate than others (see, for instance, Waisbord, 2018; Yusha'u, 2009). According to Kruger (2017), a number of other social pressures, like professional values, attitudes, and approaches, institutional constraints, and various actors seeking recognition, influence reporting, which could in turn influence how truth is perceived. A similar assertion is that the truth is not rigid, forever unstable, disputed, and challenged (see Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Waisbord, 2018). This view makes it even more important to explore how investigative journalists themselves describe their responsibility to find and unveil the truth – as this study does.

2.3.2 The public-interest role of journalism

In addition to telling the truth, journalists are also obliged to report in the public interest. Napoli (2014) states that the public interest is a well-established test in traditional media, not only as a professional norm but as an assessment guide that civic society uses to measure media performance. According to Wasserman and De Beer (2005), public interest is the foundation of the professional role of the media. They define professional role as including the responsibility to provide valuable news content to a greater number of the population (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005). Napoli (2014) states that the public-interest role refers to what interests the public, and declares that media governance is also central to executing the public-interest role. Napoli (2014:754) states: "A key aspect of the public-interest principle is

that it has traditionally contained both restrictive and affirmative dimensions.” Napoli (2014) describes restrictive dimensions as internal media standards used in deciding what or what not to publish in the public interest, while affirmative dimensions relate to serving the information needs of communities for a well-functioning democracy. According to Chin (2012:902), public interest depends on the modern public that he describes as “citizens who can actively and collectively discuss and act upon issues and events affecting their interests”. In a Chinese study of public service broadcasting (PSB), Chin (2012) says the basic principles underpinning PSB in Western liberal democracies entail serving the public interest by, for instance, enhancing and developing political, civil, social, and cultural citizenship. However, in the Chinese context, there are still disagreements about the public-interest role (Chin, 2012:900). This study demonstrates contestation on the idea of public interest in practice in state media. Schorr (2005) found the public-interest role of the news media is not seen as important by most Americans, since the news media is concerned with circulation, ratings, and profit. According to Schorr (2005:13), the concept of public interest is what the media uses to legitimise its role, despite evidence that it has primarily been serving “substantial private interest”. Andersson and Wadbring (2015) agree and state that because the news media operates within the market model, it is natural that media professionals will prioritise market orientation and their audiences. A similar observation is made in a survey of Norwegian and Flemish media managers, in which Syvertsen, Donders, Enli and Raats (2019:20) found that managers of privately-owned media perceive the public interest in news media as profit or a brand-value mechanism. On the other hand, according to Syvertsen *et al.* (2019:24), managers of publicly owned media attach societal value to the public-interest role of the media. Syvertsen *et al.* (2019) state that managers of publicly owned media believe there is still a strong legacy of civic responsibility that is seen as integral to media’s existence. The public-interest role is critical, as Gillers (2018:157) puts it:

Investigative reporting is a public good because its product – the story – is available to all, and use by one person does not diminish its availability (or value) to anyone else. All of journalism can be called a public good because truthful information about the world is good, but investigative reporting does more. It discloses public and private wrongdoing and can influence political choices.

Syvertsen *et al.* (2019) found that digitisation, internationalisation, and changing business models are influencing the way in which the public-interest role of the Norwegian media is practised and how the public perceives it. “Disruption places the existing media in a vulnerable position in which economic survival must constantly be at the forefront of managers’ consciousness,” state Syvertsen *et al.* (2019:12). The academic debate shows that public interest is a contested term and is subject to various interpretations.

Post-colonial Africa did not seem to emphasise public interest. According to Zaghlimi (2016:162), the media was largely placed under government control. The era was characterised by co-optation of the media, even the privately owned media. In Botswana, for example, the media became an instrument not only of the state but also of the ruling party (Mosime, 2015:51). The political leadership of Botswana believed journalists failed to realise that their duty was to first highlight government propaganda, as well as the evils of advertising and popular culture (Mosime, 2015:47). “In practice, the media was considered as the means and tool of the party to spread out ideologies to the population,” states Zaghlimi (2016:162). Arguably, strict control made the media fulfil the wishes of governments to the neglect of their public interest role. In post-independency Morocco, for instance, respect and submission were owed to the monarchy. The media enjoyed some degree of editorial autonomy from government control (Zaghlimi, 2016:162). Anglophone West Africa enjoyed the healthiest free press in Africa with the most experienced African journalists who had absorbed the British free press tradition (Shaw, 2009:16). It is therefore clear that media in post-colonial Africa differed by region in how journalists fulfilled the public interest role.

In South Africa, the ruling ANC wanted the media to accept a political interpretation of public interest as *national* interest. According to Wasserman and De Beer (2005:45), the South African media refused to accept national interest as an adequate description of their role in post-apartheid South Africa. The public-interest role is a challenging concept to define, as it erroneously assumes homogeneity of the public (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005). Exploring the conceptions investigative journalists have about their role should help reveal how they understand the concept of public interest, and if they reflect on it when they carry out investigative work.

2.3.3 The news media’s role in political processes

The responsibility of journalists to report truthfully and in the public interest is increasingly being linked to political accountability. Andersson and Wadbring (2015) state that journalists

tend to emphasise political information as a means to create an informed citizenry.

Investigative journalists, therefore, are arguably central to the political accountability role; they act as informers of the public when politicians betray the public's trust (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1). For the purposes of this study, the political role of the media is also explored.

A number of scholars have highlighted the news media's role in the deepening of democracy by holding politicians accountable (see, for example, Ibelema, 2012; Kaul, 2012; Waisbord, 2002). According to Waisbord (2002), the main value of investigative journalism to democratic governance is its contribution to increased political accountability. In addition, the media's role in the political system is to supply the public with information upon which to base important decisions when they exercise their power through voting (Kaul, 2012).

According to Robinson and Holbert (2018), the news media is a primary source of political information. The political role of the media is, firstly, educational by distributing information that allows for participation by the public in the political process, and secondly, holding politicians accountable by ensuring probity and protecting the interests of the people (Ibelema, 2012).

According to Kaul (2012), the media's involvement in the political process has had a positive impact on democracy such that it is better served. Waisbord (2002:381) states that information is a vital resource for the existence of a vigilant citizenry, especially for voting and participation:

With the ascent of media-centred politics in contemporary democracies, the media eclipses other social institutions as the main source of information about issues and processes affecting citizens' lives.

In a survey of Chinese journalists, De Burgh (2003) found that Chinese journalists have a passion for the type of journalism that scrutinises authority by investigating the failings of society. Investigative journalism, in particular, has come to be noticeable for its role in holding politicians accountable. Lanosga and Houston (2017:1107) state: "The crux of social responsibility for investigative journalists is the ability to spur officials to act on revelations about failures or wrongdoing in society." By sustaining denunciations of wrongdoing, investigative journalism has forced other institutions to act and that has resulted in heightened levels of accountability (Waisbord, 2002). The political role of investigative journalists is best encapsulated by Kaul (2012:35):

They identify problems in our society and serve as a medium for deliberation. They are also the watchdogs that we rely on for uncovering errors and wrongdoings by those who have power.

Holding politicians to account as a journalistic role has opened the media up to criticism. Accusations of political bias have been expressed against journalists. Friedman (2011:110) states that highlighting too little that reflects negatively on the politically powerful can reflect media bias. Berger (1999) states that the news media does not, and cannot, stand outside the social relations within which it operates. According to Berger (1999), some sections of the South African media played a role in the production and reproduction of a racist authoritarian system of apartheid. Kruger (2017) suggests that there is a need to interrogate the link between democracy and the media. Kruger's view links with the objective of this study mainly to ascertain the understanding investigative journalists in South Africa have of their role in a democracy. This study also seeks to know what investigative journalists think their social responsibilities are.

2.3.4 The corruption-buster role of investigative journalism

In a study covering 43 countries, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) found that investigative reporting is an essential source of detection for corruption cases. Investigative journalism is among the most important sources for raising public awareness of corruption (OECD, 2018). The literature mostly defines investigative journalism as primarily a tool intended for fighting corruption. According to the OECD (2018), investigative journalism has not been utilised to its full potential. The OECD (2018) cites the investigative work that journalists did into the Panama Papers, an investigation that dug into financial-secrecy havens and published figures for the top-ten countries where intermediaries operate. The Panama Papers scandal represents one of the milestone successes of investigative journalism to reveal corruption of prominent figures in the Arab world, including heads of states (Al-Shami, 2019). In a survey done in the Arab world, Al-Shami (2019) described combating and revealing corruption as investigative journalism's main journalistic tool. Kaul (2012) states that it has led to the ouster of presidents and the fall of corrupt governments. Al-Shami (2019) says journalism in general and investigative reporting specifically play vital roles in raising awareness of corruption and

combating it. Investigative journalists are more willing to confront powerful interests to expose hidden vices and change society for the better (Lanosga *et al.*, 2015).

In a survey of 1347 Nigerian journalists, Oyebode (2017) found that the media is expected to play a leading role in exposing corruption. In another survey of Nigerian journalists, Yusha'u (2009) found that for corruption scandals to be known they need to be reported in the media. Yusha'u (2009) identifies the absence of legislative frameworks that protect whistle-blowers and journalists as a weapon keeping investigative journalism from achieving its goals.

Fighting corruption is even more important in a country like Nigerian where even the media is involved in corrupt practices, with some journalists accepting bribes (Yusha'u, 2009).

Legislative frameworks and the media's involvement in corruption are just some of the challenges that hamper investigative journalism. In the next section, some of the challenges to the role of investigative journalism in society are discussed.

2.4 Challenges to investigative journalism

In a survey of US investigative journalists, Lanosga and Houston (2017) highlighted the decline of investigative journalism as an international concern. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, the challenges contributing to this declining journalistic genre are classified into a number of categories that include the threat of litigation, economic challenges and budget constraints, violence aimed at journalists, restrictive legislative frameworks, and fake news and misinformation. According to Kaplan (2008), these factors have created a precarious state of affairs for investigative journalism.

In the following sections, this researcher describes each of these threats in more detail.

2.4.1 The threat of litigation

Investigative journalism holds the potential to embarrass and defame, and could result in criminal proceedings against those being investigated. The risk of exposure to litigious processes always exists. Because of investigative journalism's confrontational style, litigation has become an approach adopted by government officials and that makes life, as Mudhai (2007:538) puts it, nightmarish for most African media houses and their journalists.

According to Rosenthal (2012), investigative journalism will always be vulnerable to costly legal action. The negative financial impact as a result of exposure to litigation is a significant risk many investigative media houses cannot ignore (Ismail *et al.*, 2017). According to Ismail

et al. (2017), the prospect of litigation results in fear to publish, as well as self-censorship among journalists. The threat of litigation has direct relevance for the type of shoestring budgets that most media houses operate on. Similarly, Houston (2010) believes litigation discourages publishers and editors from publishing stories when a possibility exists that it may result in legal challenge. In a survey of Ghanaian journalists, Bisilki and Opoku (2018) found that the legal suits not only challenge the facts of investigative reports but often the methodology journalists used to gather data. The threat of legal action against investigative journalists is compounded by unfavourable legal environments and repressive statutes (see Section 2.4.4 below).

2.4.2 Economic challenges and budgetary constraints

The literature highlights economic challenges as not only capital required to fund investigations and salaries, but also reduced revenue from advertising. Revenue generation for many media houses is dependent on advertising. Attracting a great deal of commercial advertising can offer a solid base for news organisations to gain financial independence (Waisbord, 2002). In Eastern and Central Europe, news organisations are unable to do investigative journalism due to less-developed advertising markets and lower audience interest in reading the news (Stetka & Ornebring, 2013). The challenges are exacerbated when advertising spend is used to seek influence over editorial decisions, which often happens (Gerli *et al.*, 2018). According to Saldana and Mourao (2018), the pressure manifests as withdrawal of advertising or sometimes merely as threats of withdrawal, especially by government officials.

According to Lublinski, Spurk, Fleury, Labassi, Mbarga, Nicolas and Rizk (2016), the challenge brought about by the economic situation is more pronounced in African newsrooms. The difficulty which that brings to media houses is that it negatively influences professionalism. Some media houses are unable to remunerate investigative journalists who, according to Ismail *et al.* (2017), come with high salaries. It is difficult to sustain investigative work operations with tight budgets. The length of time it takes to complete investigative stories is a factor that stands in conflict with organisational profit goals (Abdenour, 2018). Investigations take long and media organisations do not have the budget to pay journalists who cannot produce stories on a daily basis (Ismail *et al.*, 2017). Oyedele, Lasisi and Kolawole (2018:440) state: “Naturally, poor remuneration of journalists, poor capacity building by the media houses and other social-cum-political factors are obstacles militating against investigative reporting in Nigeria.”

Lack of funding is more pronounced in countries in the Global South where, according to Gerli *et al.* (2018), transnational economic pressures characterise many economies. The 2008 global economic meltdown, coupled with other challenges, worsened the negative impact reduced advertising had on media operations (see, for instance, Rosenthal, 2012; Stetka & Ornebring, 2013). The fall in income led to the media reducing operational budgets. According to Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014), investigative work is often the first to be cut and preference is given to cheaper but more commercially lucrative advertisement-driven content, such as reality shows.

Media operations have evolved over the years from traditional platforms to embrace modern and technologically driven publishing. The changed business models meant that advertising revenue was, and would be, under pressure (Syvertsen *et al.*, 2019). Robinson and Holbert (2018) state that the change allowed digital technologies to erode the advertising revenue stream. A similar observation is made by Wasserman (2008) and Houston (2010), that online or web-based technologies resulted in advertising revenue decline for traditional media platforms, with media operations that require resources being adversely affected. Advertisers follow the audience and, according to Kaplan (2008), the migration to the internet has made investigative journalism arduous to conduct. Ndlovu (2015) states that South African media has encountered the negative impact of new digital technologies in accessing and publishing news, as audiences are moving to an online space where news is free. According to Duodu (2016), in countries where forms of regimes are totalitarian, the decline of advertising resulted in discontinuation of investigative reporting.

The disruptive effect of reduced advertising led to some media houses becoming dependent on donor funding in order to do investigative journalism. According to Mudhai (2007:538), the contributions of donors “help counter constraints imposed by limited resources”. Houston (2010) states that investigative journalists look for financial support from non-profit organisations. The dependence on income and its resultant influence on needy media platforms concerns scholars like Karppinen and Moe (2016), who argue that independence from external influences as a central ethical principle for journalism becomes compromised. Investments make investigative journalism a sponsored activity and not, what Saldana and Mourao (2018) call, “a neutral objective mirror of facts”.

A reliance on donors raises moral questions around the motives of the funders and journalistic independence. Financial dependence on organisations that uses investments to exercise control has the potential to compromise ethical conduct (Oyedele *et al.*, 2018). In

Nigeria, where investigative journalism would be virtually impossible without donor support from the West, donor-funded training of journalists is skewed towards advancing philosophies of foreign organisations (Oyedele *et al.*, 2018). Funders wanting to advance the interests of their agencies legitimises the concerns around external influence and, according to Yusha'u (2009), investigative journalism may exist theoretically.

2.4.3 Violence aimed at journalists

Rodny-Gumede and Chasi (2016) state that it is crucial to understand that journalism is conducted in a world that has not been cleansed of violence. Mudhai (2007) describes violence as manifesting through arrests, imprisonment and torture, physical harm, bombing of media premises, and harassment. Scholars agree that investigative journalism is a risky practice in the Global South and that violence aimed at journalists has remained widespread (see, for example, Borins & Herst, 2019; Ismail *et al.*, 2017; Mudhai, 2007; Saldana & Mourao, 2018). In a study on obstacles to investigative journalism in Nigeria, Mudhai (2007) characterises investigative journalism as extremely risky for media houses that are independent from governments. According to Ismail *et al.* (2017), the risks happen even before investigations start, as well as during, and after they have finished. Saleh (2015:2) concurs: "Journalists and other media workers in Africa are frequently attacked and killed simply for doing their jobs of seeking out and reporting the truth."

The violence against journalists is also perpetuated on digital and social networking platforms (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1), a challenge Jurrat, Lublinski, and Mong (2017) describe as "a growing trend". Cyberattacks are intended to intimidate journalists. Haffajee and Davies (2017) state that cyberattacks are common occurrences that are started, fuelled, and spread by a range of fake accounts, especially on Twitter. "Such attacks can easily be carried out by an individual or a group of individuals with computers, sitting safely in their living rooms," finds Albahar (2016:994). According to Albahar (2016:994), it is important to understand the unique dimensions of cyberspace in order to fully comprehend cyberattacks. Posetti (2018:115) concurs and states: "The intimate nature of these attacks, often received on personal devices first thing in the morning and last thing at night, further sharpens the impact." Among the host of manifestations of the attacks are the confiscation of journalistic work products, disinformation and smear campaigns, harassment and intimidation of journalists, website defacement, fake domain attacks, phishing attacks, and targeted surveillance (Posetti, 2018). According to Joseph (2019), cyberattacks result in self-censorship and are meant to instil fear. In one example cited, a prominent ANC Women's

League politician sent a journalist at Tiso Blackstar Group a gun etched with the phrase “Stay classy”. Cyberattacks are so prevalent in South Africa that editors launched an online tool designed to help journalists track perpetrators (Joseph, 2019:63).

2.4.4 Restrictive legislative frameworks

Government clampdowns and restrictive laws that seek to punish media workers hamper investigative journalism. The restrictive laws and the absence of laws protecting whistle-blowers have contributed to a lack of press freedom in most countries in the Global South (Ismail *et al.*, 2017). Although restrictive legislative frameworks are most pronounced on the African continent, enactment of these laws is used as a mechanism to curb investigative journalism throughout the world (Mudhai, 2007; Waisbord, 1997). Ismail *et al.* (2017) state that restrictive laws have been seen as responsible for stifling investigative journalism. Al-Shami (2019) agrees and says even the absence of laws that absolve journalists from prosecution is a hindrance to effective execution of investigative journalism in the Arab world. In Egypt, for example, the laws have not only restricted investigative journalism but have not provided protection for investigative journalists either (Al-Shami, 2019).

In an in-depth study of 16 Malaysian journalists, Ismail *et al.* found that without whistle-blowers, investigative journalism is an even more challenging task. Some countries’ use of national security legislation to threaten and gag whistle-blowers is used to conceal the truth from citizens and this curbs media freedom (Ismail *et al.*, 2017). Yusha’u (2009) also notes the absence of legal protection, and says Nigerian journalists have the passion to uncover investigative stories, but the lack of an independent judiciary deters journalists from investigating corruption. A comparative study of South Africa and Kenya found that the privacy and libel laws are new ways in which governments gag the media (Ogola & Rodny-Gumede, 2014). The Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill in Kenya and the Protection of State Information Bill in South Africa generated heated public debates, including protests and marches. These regulations, state Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014), are punitive and give power to the members of the executive to regulate publishable content in order to allegedly ensure “good taste”. When the bill failed to materialise in South Africa, the governing ANC proposed a state-led statutory Media Appeals Tribunal, which was to achieve what had been intended through the bill: regulating the functioning of the media (Ndlovu, 2015; Ogola & Rodny-Gumede, 2014; Rodny-Gumede, 2014). Ndlovu (2015) states that there has been concerted attempts to curtail post-apartheid media freedom.

The proposed legislation holds potentially detrimental consequences for media freedom in the country and is seen as little else than a smoke-screen created to prevent the media from scrutinising corruption and maladministration in government. (Rodny-Gumede, 2014)

2.4.5 The era of fake news and misinformation

Misinformation, pseudo-investigations, and fake news also challenge the role of investigative journalism in society. Zdovc and Kovacic (2007) describe pseudo-investigation as occurring when coordinated leaks that serve the interests of the source are written up and published without an independent investigation. According to Stetka and Ornebring (2013), pseudo-investigative journalism is a complicit act in which journalists do not seek to verify the facts. In an in-depth study of 60 journalists in the Western Balkans, Camaj (2016) found that sometimes journalists are coerced into activities of pseudo-investigative journalism by media owners. In Eastern and Central Europe, pseudo-investigative journalism information is leaked in revenge and published with political intentions (Zdovc & Kovacic, 2007).

The prevalence of pseudo-investigation coincides with the fake news era characterised by misinformation. Fake news is hoax-based stories whose content is also manipulated to perpetuate hearsay, rumours, and misinformation (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). “These false statements of fact typically are published on websites and disseminated via social media for profit or social influence,” state Klein and Wueller (2017:5). Financial and ideological considerations are noticeable as motivating factors for fake news to occur. Tandoc, Ling, Westlund, Duffy, Goh and Wei (2018) state that ideologically motivated misinformation and fake news is created to smear people who hold contrary beliefs. Fake news has become a weapon not only among individuals and institutions, but governments too (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016). Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) believe the prevalence of fake news is the result of the lack of demand for facts, partisan ideologies, and refuting of oppositional viewpoints. Khaldarova and Pantti (2016:892) describe fake news as propaganda:

Fake news often takes the form of propaganda entertainment...which is a combination of scandalous material, blame and denunciations, dramatic music, and misleading images taken out of context.

In South Africa, reputable media houses have been affected by the phenomenon of fake news and pseudo-investigations. The *Sunday Times* fell victim when it published unverified investigative reports about the existence of a rogue unit that had allegedly spied on politicians and operated a brothel at the South African Revenue Service, and the rendition of Zimbabwean nationals (Wasserman, 2020). The paper received awards for these stories, but subsequently apologised and returned those awards (Siqoko, 2018). In his apology, the editor of the *Sunday Times* wrote:

Were we aware of this parallel political project? The answer is no. But we should have joined the dots. We should have paused and asked more questions. This is our duty as journalists. Were we manipulated by our sources and some of those who were part of this parallel political project? Perhaps. Were we complicit in ensuring the achievement of their goal? No. But as a consequence, our stories might have given them grounds, reason and motive to achieve their objectives. (Siqoko, 2018)

Harber (2020:314) states that the spread of disinformation has made society vulnerable and has the potential to exacerbate the impact of catastrophic events. According to Wasserman (2020), the impact of misinformation in South Africa had been such that the media is not only the platform upon which political battles are fought, but has also become a contestant in the battles. The impact of fake news begs the question what the future role of journalists and the media is in the evolving South African society. This study explores how, and whether, South African investigative journalists feel their role is being threatened by the challenges as set out in the chapter. Scholars and media practitioners believe these challenges are a threat not only to investigative journalism, but journalism more broadly.

2.5 The future of investigative journalism

Houston (2010) and Gearing (2014) agree that the future of investigative journalism is online, and that this ought to influence the thought around investigative journalism practice. Houston (2010), for example, states that investigative journalism has drastically diminished in traditional newsrooms and instead expanded online. The internet has taken over the media's role as gatekeepers and agenda-setters (Harber, 2020:214). In a study based on 2015 Reuters Institute Digital News Report data from 11 countries, Fletcher and Park (2017) found that the

internet has changed news consumption patterns and that almost all traditional print and broadcast news providers maintain a presence online. According to Houston (2010:51), investigative journalism in the future will be about mining computer data, which necessitates collaborations with other professions, like computer engineers, software developers, and IT specialists:

These predictions and new realities are beginning to shape a part of the future of investigative journalism into mash-ups: journalists, computer scientists, and developers working together to seek large government data sets in order to detect favouritism, incompetence, and corruption through the visualisation of data.

Over and above the move online, various ways to bolster investigative work have been proposed. One solution for the challenges faced by investigative journalists is collaboration, such as that found in investigative journalists' associations like the Investigative Reporters and Editors, and the Global Investigative Journalism Network. These collaborations are advantageous and hold the potential to empower investigative journalists (Gearing, 2014). Arguably, the significance of collaborative investigations has manifested in the #GuptaLeaks and Panama Papers scandals (Al-Shami, 2019). Camaj (2016) states that the impact of inter-organisational ties is even more important in media systems that lack the degree of freedom and independence found in Western countries. In South Africa, initiatives exist to share investigative reports, not only with cross-border organisations but across media houses. Such a collaborative approach carries benefits related to the accessibility of content. However, not everyone is convinced of a collaborative approach. Wasserman (2018) is concerned that while global connectedness is celebrated, core issues of inequalities and power relations in journalism may receive less attention.

In a world characterised by malpractices and diminished state capacity to deal with corrupt practices, the impact and the maximised audience reach ensure that investigative journalism lives up to its normative roles. Collaboration, content sharing and the utilisation of the internet need to be enhanced so that investigative journalists attain what they think is their role in society.

The next section focuses on the challenges specific to the Global South.

2.6 Investigative journalism in the Global South

Comparable to the Global North, the journalism profession in the Global South is still hampered by a lack of job security and subjugation of journalists by powerful political actors. Other challenges include the lack of linguistic, gender, and race diversity, social protests, death threats directed at journalists, arrests and temporary detention, enticement, and poor salaries (Lohner, Neverla & Banjac, 2017). The state of the news media in the Global South is informed and influenced by experiences from the countries' colonial legacy (see Lohner *et al.*, 2017; Ogola & Rodny-Gumede, 2014). Post-colonial societies face particular problems related to past and present political contestations and socio-economic injustices (Rodny-Gumede & Chasi, 2016).

In a comparative study of structural working conditions of journalists in Serbia, Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa, Lohner *et al.* (2017) identified political ownership of media establishments as a challenge. Interference by political and other societal actors, such as advertisers, still occurs and limits journalistic independence (Lohner *et al.*, 2017:7). Developmental conditions which, according to Rodny-Gumede and Chasi (2016), include authoritarian bureaucracy and a secrecy culture, affect the quality and performance of media institutions. Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014) make similar observations and state that politicians tend to use the media for personal advancement to validate the new political order. In an in-depth Ghanaian study, Bisilki and Opoku (2018) found investigative journalism is still risky but that the nature of challenges is dependent on the specific country and the legislation around journalism. Although Ghana repealed most of its criminal libel and seditious laws when the current democratic dispensation set in, that did not guarantee media freedom (Bisilki & Opoku, 2018). This is a point Mugari (2011:145) alludes to when he says the control of the media through legislative means is worse in Southern Africa despite states claiming to practise media democracy:

With the exception of probably South Africa and Namibia, state capture or recapture of the broadcasting sector – directly or indirectly, via regulatory mechanisms – has ensured that the state is able to maintain its stranglehold on the sector.

In Latin America, preference is given to community media which has no investigative capacity but is used for populist purposes and in battles against leading commercial media by

politicians (Waisbord 2012). In a survey of investigative reporters from 18 Latin American countries, Saldana and Mourao (2018) identified media ownership as problematic, finding that some media owners have relationships with targets of investigative journalism. The challenge is worse when journalists investigate drug lords and corrupt politicians (Saldana & Mourao, 2018). Hughes and Lawson (2005) agree and state that Latin America's media is dominated by private oligopolies that often drown out civic duty in journalism. "In some cases, the country's entire media system belongs to a few powerful families who control the information flow and are closely associated with political groups," state Saldana and Mourao (2018:312). The result of this conflicted ownership has been that media exposés are met with tepid reactions from lawmakers (Waisbord, 2002). This challenge of ownership is over and above the generally acknowledged challenges like limited budgets and threats directed at journalists in the Global South.

In a study of the state of investigative journalism in seven Asian Pacific countries, Singh (2012) found that the legislative environment poses a risk to investigative journalism in the Pacific Islands news media structure. According to Singh (2012), the Fijian military regime has put in place legislation which made it impossible to practise ordinary journalism and which other island countries copied from Fiji. Samoa enacted the Publishers' and Printers Act, which makes it mandatory for journalists to reveal journalistic sources, a provision which stands in direct opposition to confidentiality of sources as provided for in the media's ethical framework (Singh, 2012). "Even without having to deal with hostile governments, routine, day-to-day reporting (let alone investigative journalism) can be a major challenge in the Pacific," states Singh (2012:91).

Ibelema (2012), however, believes that conditions are changing and that the capacity of the media as watchdogs, especially in Africa, has improved considerably since the 1990s. Lublinski *et al.* (2016) similarly observe that freer media systems exist in Sub-Saharan Africa, but that they are dominated by political elites. The change in experiences varies from country to country (Rodny-Gumede, 2014).

In South Africa, the long history of colonial and apartheid rule has not provided ideal conditions upon which to find democracy and institutional arrangements that include a free press. The legacy of the past keeps influencing governance as well as social relations within which journalism takes place. (Rodny-Gumede & Chasi, 2016:111)

In the next section, this researcher briefly explores the current state of investigative journalism in South Africa specifically.

2.7 Investigative journalism in South Africa

According to Wasserman (2020:114), the South African media has not been immune to challenges that have impacted the global media landscape. The country is a curious case in the African and Global South media landscape, because of its apartheid history and the democratic dispensation that followed in 1994. Ndlovu (2015) believes it is the post-apartheid era that has produced the current realities experienced by the media. A sound understanding of the South African media ought to be located within the post-apartheid context. Such an understanding starts with the ideological orientation of the media, what Wasserman (2020) regards as the ongoing normative debates. Wasserman (2020:114) states that the political turmoil in the country is indicative of the current media landscape, which is characterised by uncertainty.

Although colonial and apartheid South Africa followed an authoritarian model of journalism in which the media was expected to report favourably on the state, ideological orientation to the state's policy of apartheid played a critical role in the practice of journalism. English, Afrikaans, and alternative media played very different roles during the apartheid era (Rodny-Gumede, 2015; Wasserman, 2020). The mainstream commercial Afrikaans-language media supported, or provided limited criticism of, the apartheid regime (Wasserman, 2020:456). Schaver (2017:8-9) states that alternative print media became closely associated with civil-society organisations and political groupings, and that the English-language white-owned press was used to voice opposition to apartheid:

Additionally, not all black newspapers were as radical as ANC-affiliated publications. *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Umt(h)et(h)eli wa Bantu* were less sympathetic to African workers and denounced communism and radicalism.

During the apartheid era, state-sanctioned violence and intimidation were consistently used against journalists. "State interference in the press was a very real threat," states Schaver (2017:11). Wasserman (2020:456) adds that repressive laws also hampered reporting. These historical aspects laid the foundation, according to Rodny-Gumede (2015:110), of how

people understand the role that news media plays in South Africa today. “It is still true that the news media in South Africa is fragmented and audiences are divided through socio-economic factors that dictate access and ideas around what is considered news,” states Rodny-Gumede (2015:110).

The advent of democracy in 1994 depoliticised the South African media’s role and brought radical changes to the freedom afforded to journalists to do their work (Wasserman, 2020:456). Gone were the days of racist conceptualisations of the audience as reflected in “black editions” of newspapers and in native or Bantustan news and newspapers that overtly carried an agenda of particular political ideologies and beliefs (Rodny-Gumede, 2015:110).

According to Wasserman (2020:457), the relationship between the media and political power is an important dimension of South Africa’s transition to democracy. South African media is free from state control. Its structural challenges relate to ideological orientation of the media’s role. Wasserman (2006:72) states that self-regulation means media institutions need to develop ethical codes that fit with the new order. Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014) describe the ideological differences as owing to the history and legacy of apartheid that “still permeates all facets of life including the media”. Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014) state: “At the top of debates post-apartheid have been how best to transform the news media.” Ndlovu (2015:116) posits:

Local journalism became ideologically the same, and its (perceived) hegemonic power over middleclass public opinion began to anger the equally hegemonic, but increasingly unconfident, governing African National Congress.

Teething challenges as highlighted in an in-depth study of 12 South African investigative journalists (Rodny-Gumede & Chasi, 2016) include lack of investment in reporting and external factors, like government interference. This interference manifests in criticism of the South African media as untransformed, having a concentration of ownership, and representing the voices of the few (see Duncan, 2003; Friedman, 2011). “The print media, on the other hand, is seen by the ANC and the government to be resistant to transformation because it is self-regulated,” states Duncan (2003). Botma (2011) ascribes this criticism to a possible expectation by ANC politicians that the English media would become overtly supportive of nation-building and socio-economic development after 1994, which never

materialised. “Maybe the ANC viewed the move of the media after apartheid to so-called independence and objectivity as a significant strategic threat to power,” states Botma (2011:83). According to Plaut (2018), some of the challenges are caused by the governing ANC which, instead of initiating reforms, had become angry with the media and lashed out at reports of malfeasance. Nevertheless, argues Plaut (2018:153): “The country still enjoys a relatively unfettered media – certainly by African standards. Excellent, independent journalism can be found daily in newspapers.”

The South African media is challenged by lack of diversity. Wasserman (2020) observes that while there is a decline in mainstream media there is an expansion of offerings in the broadcast and community print sector. According to Rodny-Gumede (2014), common criticism is that the South African media is elitist, racist and unpatriotic. In a study of political and current-affairs journalists, Rodny-Gumede (2014) found that journalists believe that there is a lack of diverse voices in the media. Diversity in South Africa is elusive to realise as it encompasses issues like language, ownership, and the actual content. Wasserman and De Beer (2005) observe that although ownership transfers meant a deracialisation of the industry at boardroom level, the market segmentation still reflects polarisations, as was the case during apartheid. “Diversity will be spoken about for a long time especially if it is defined more broadly than race,” state Wasserman and De Beer (2005:40). Friedman (2011) agrees, stating that since 1994 whites have retained significant decision-making power in the media.

The South African media was hit by the global economic downturn of 2008, a tsunami wave according to Finlay (2018), that led to journalists losing their jobs. Ndlovu (2015) states that declining advertisement revenue resulted in local journalism facing revenue hurdles. Senior journalists have been prime targets of retrenchments; this decimated traditional newsroom (Ndlovu, 2015). The retrenchment of senior journalists resulted in what scholars like Lohner *et al.* (2017) believe is the juniorisation of the South African newsroom. Lohner *et al.* (2017) state that newer journalists lack depth to comprehend local issues. The juniorisation of the newsroom has resulted in inaccuracies in reporting which has infuriated the current government and thereby necessitated a skills audit (Steyn & De Beer, 2004). Ogola and Rodny-Gumede (2014) agree: “A recurring public criticism of South African journalists has been that they do not have the necessary skills to cover the complexities of the South African transition.”

According to Plaut (2018), South African journalism is independent. Independence and excellence, as stated by Plaut (2018), are professional characteristics required of a media

system. The output of excellent investigative work by media houses, including the sites of this study, are indicative of the independence of the South African media. Harber (2018) contends that pockets of excellence in the investigative space are to be found outside the conventional newsrooms. Media excellence is complimented with industry-recognition awards like the annual Taco Kuiper Awards. Harber (2018:50) states that until the pseudo-investigations by the *Sunday Times* and the subsequent apology by its editor, “investigative journalism in South Africa soared to great heights”. The industry-recognition awards give insight to the state of investigative reporting (Harber, 2018).

Despite differences on the exact role of the South African media, and the lack of investment as exposed in Ndlovu (2015), the state of journalism in the country has remained largely healthy comparable to other African countries (Lohner *et al.*, 2017). The corruption-busting impact and the raising of awareness among the public by South Africa’s investigative journalism is evident from examples such as the #GuptaLeaks reports. According to Grobler and Joubert (2004), investigative excellence in South Africa manifests in the number of corruption-related stories media platforms publish. From a repressive and violent government in apartheid South Africa, conditions are becoming relatively conducive for investigative journalism (see Coronel, 2013; Wasserman & De Beer, 2005). “Certainly, since the late 1980s, there has been more investigative reporting in countries that have made a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy,” writes Coronel (2013:105). Wasserman and De Beer (2005) credit the transition from apartheid to democracy as a catalyst for the changed treatment of the media in South Africa.

Success from collaborations has been realised among the sites for the study, News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio, and massive corruption has been exposed. The South African media, for example, broke the Gupta wedding scandal, arguably the signature case study of public-sector corruption that involved senior government officials and ministers. A wedding party from India was allowed to land a private aircraft at South Africa’s Waterkloof airforce base, and proceeded to the Sun City resort where nuptials, paid for using state funds meant for a community project, were held (Davis, 2019). Harber (2018) notes that the #GuptaLeaks scandal had become probably the greatest investigative journalism coup in South African history. The successes of investigative journalism coincide with harassment and intimidation of journalists in South Africa. Finlay (2018) states that the harassment of journalists is serious in this country and that attacks are highly gender-based. The violent attacks on reporters

include threats to those covering contentious issues, and the weaponisation of social media (Harber, 2018:50).

Through semi-structured interviews this study seeks to understand how investigative journalists view their role in light of these specific challenges in South Africa, as well as general challenges as experienced in other countries.

2.8 Summary

This chapter explored existing literature on the role of investigative journalism, as well as the challenges faced by investigative journalists. Investigative journalism attempts to reveal secrets on behalf of the ordinary public. In addition, this form of journalism can be considered an adversarial form of journalism, with a huge number of challenges and risks. Commitment to the pursuit of truth in the public interest is the essence of investigative journalism. Excellence in investigative journalism is situational and dependent on the developmental context of countries. Most investigative journalism centres in Africa are dependent on donor funding. Socio-economic challenges in a country impact investigative journalism. Investigative journalism can be and is used by various interests to achieve predetermined outcomes. Publication of pseudo-investigative stories happens in the broader realm of fake news and often happens without investigations having taken place. The future of investigative journalism is one of collaboration and will take place online, which makes internet access sacred in the practice of journalism.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework that the study employs in exploring the phenomenon is outlined and discussed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

The Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS)⁴, an empirical, longitudinal study of journalistic roles in different countries, reveals that these roles are dependent on social contexts. Based on the publication list on the WJS website, research into journalistic roles has arguably increased significantly over the past few years. According to Witschge and Harbers (2018:107), this research is influenced by the roles attributed to journalists in society. Hanitzsch and Ornebring (2019:108) state that journalistic actors differ over who should define the role of journalism in society. Although research into journalistic roles has increased in general, research in this field is scarce in South Africa. This researcher would therefore argue that more work still needs to be done to arrive at the conceptions and performance of the professional roles of journalists in the local context.

This study uses normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory to seek to understand how investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view their professional role in South Africa. With this approach, this study adds value on empirical and theoretical levels.

Scholars are unanimous that theory should be a guide not only for the inquiry in qualitative studies but also the methods (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:17). From theory, researchers are able to build theoretical frameworks that allow for better understanding of social reality and phenomena (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). Grant and Osanloo (2014) contend that theoretical frameworks are “the foundation from which knowledge is constructed”. Theoretical frameworks offer researchers a guide that helps focus research (see, for example, Anfara & Mertz, 2015; Jansen & Steinberg, 1991). Adom, Hussein and Joe (2018:438) regard theory as a thread that keeps scientific inquiry together:

The theoretical framework guides and should resonate with every aspect of the research process from the definition of the problem, literature survey,

⁴ The WJS is a joint effort of researchers meant to assess the state of journalism around the world. Founded in 2010, the project’s objective is to help media practitioners and policy makers understand social functions of journalism in a changing world. For more details, see <https://worldsofjournalism.org/>.

methodology, presentation and discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions that are drawn.

In this chapter, the central theoretical departure point of this study is outlined. After revisiting the origins and evolution of the normative roles of the media, this chapter examines normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory as conceptual frameworks. Finally, this chapter explains how the two theories are combined to study investigative journalists' role conceptualisation in South Africa.

3.2 Central theoretical departure point

The central theoretical departure point of this study is that investigative journalists describe their professional role according to specific normative guidelines and expectations in order to articulate their social responsibility towards society.

The normative guidelines as articulated in social responsibility theory include holding those in power accountable. According to Forbes (2005:2), reporters play a critical role in development in emerging democracies. South Africa is an emerging democracy, which makes the role of investigative reporters even more important. Ettema and Glasser (1998:82) describe that critical role, particularly for investigative journalism, as “defending virtue by telling stories of outrageous vice”.

According to Gaines (2008:1), investigative journalists are the watchdogs who provide another layer of public confidence in the system of government. This study seeks to understand how investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio understand and describe their role and whether they believe they are living up to the expectation society has of them as watchdogs. Attention is also paid to whether these investigative journalists have other conceptualisations of their role in South African society.

3.3 Origins and evolution of the normative roles of the media

The normative roles of the media have their roots in the four theories of the media, as articulated by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963). The four theories are: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and the Soviet Communist theory (Christians *et al.*, 2009). Although mostly theorised based on political systems, the four theories provided “a welcome

stimulus to reflection about the media's role in society" (Christians *et al.*, 2009:3). The essence of the media's normative position is encapsulated by Christians *et al.* (2009), who state that the main obligations of the media are to reflect pluralism and diversity, to avoid offence to significant streams of opinion, and to promote cultural values. These roles legitimise journalism in society. It is through the manifestation of these roles that the public is able to evaluate journalists (Mellado, 2015). According to Hanitzsch and Vos (2017), early approaches described the central functions of the press as surveillance, correlation, transmission, and entertainment. Carson and Farhall (2018:1900) describe informing the public as a fundamental role of the news media in democracies. This traditional role forms the basis for what the media does; that is, providing citizens with the information they need to act and participate in political life (Hanitzsch, 2018:54).

Disseminating information and interpreting events have historically been observed to be the most typical roles of journalists (Tandoc, Hellmueller & Vos, 2013). Donsbach (2014) identifies the validation of information as a role, and says it makes the task of journalists even more important in society. "Without this function, society would be drowned in innumerable representations of reality – unable to comprehend and act," states Donsbach (2014:665). Mellado (2015:597) believes the way in which journalists deliver news information has a profound impact on shaping public and private debate. "In this sense, journalistic roles perform a double duty – they act as a source of institutional legitimacy relative to the broader society, and through a process of socialisation they inform the cognitive toolkit that journalists use to think about their work," states Mellado (2019:3). Hanitzsch (2017:4) outlines the surveillance role as a function of the news media, including observation, provision of information, participation in public life, commentary, advice and advocacy, and the provision of access for diverse voices.

According to Standaert *et al.* (2019:2), the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy requires radical new role orientations of journalists. "This is even more important at a time when journalism's social legitimacy and epistemic authority are being existentially questioned in a number of contexts," add Standaert *et al.* (2019:2). This researcher argues that it is not only a transition in political governance systems that necessitates new role orientations. Rodny-Gumede (2014) believes journalists should also be cognisant of changes in society that occur as a result of audiences becoming more diverse in terms of language, culture, and socio-economic background. According to Tandoc *et al.* (2013), such societal changes necessitate journalists' understanding of how public governance shapes their own

role. Changes that occur among audiences and political governance systems arguably influence the roles of journalists. “It seems necessary that journalists widen their societal role for three reasons: rapid acceleration of knowledge, libraries are no longer relevant as knowledge they used to contain is on the internet, and the new information technology empowers the citizens,” states Donsbach (2014:665). Acknowledgment of knowledge dissemination as a societal responsibility is in line with the evolving roles of journalism and journalism’s characterisation as a “knowledge profession” (Donsbach, 2014). According to Rodny-Gumede (2014:60), the new roles are a reality:

In their daily work, journalists face the issues of race and racism, poverty, illiteracy, the HIV/Aids pandemic and the social and political reality of these problems. This is a reality that necessitates a new role for journalism and the media organisation as a whole.

Tandoc *et al.* (2013:540) state that it remains impossible to identify any definitive role to describe what the main tasks of journalists should be. Normative media roles have been “summarised with pithy labels, such as watchdog, gatekeeper, disseminator, interpreter, opportunist, facilitator, and populist mobiliser” (Vos, Eichholz & Karaliova., 2019:1011). According to Hanitzsch (2017:5), normative roles need to be understood within the constraints of the relevant political, economic and sociocultural contexts.

In a survey of 85 Australian travel journalists, Hanusch (2019:195) found that the media is now increasingly providing guidance in a range of ways for individuals to shape their identities and lifestyles. The roles Hanusch (2019) identifies for journalists are: information providers, monitors of powerful institutions, cultural mediators, and entertainers. Tandoc *et al.* (2013) highlight roles of journalists as interpreters, disseminators, populist mobilisers and in adversarial roles. According to Tandoc *et al.* (2013), the adversarial role manifests when journalists support the use of unauthorised documents.

A brief outline of the media roles and functions is useful at this point of the study.

Wasserman (2011:21) states that contestation of the roles and responsibilities of the media in South Africa has continued into the post-apartheid era. Despite the divergent views of what journalists do, there has recently been a move towards a more unanimous outlook, partly due to the 2019 WJS project which aims to outline journalistic functions empirically. Christians *et al.* (2009) and Standaert *et al.* (2019) classify journalistic functions into four discernible

categories: monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative roles. According to Mellado, Hellmueller and Donsbach (2017:5), the classification of roles under the four categories might take different forms depending on the level of analysis applied to them. Hanitzsch (2017:5) describes the roles as follows:

- The monitorial role entails the collection, publication, and distribution of information of interest to audiences.
- The facilitative role promotes dialogue between different stakeholders in society and inspires the public to actively participate in political life.
- The radical role has the intent to provide a platform for views and voices critical of authority to support change and reform.
- The collaborative role supports authorities in defence of the social order against threats of crime, conflict, and natural emergencies.

This study also explores if and how these role classifications are relevant to investigative journalism in South Africa, particularly as practised by journalists from the investigative units at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio.

3.4 Normative role conceptualisation as theoretical framework

According to Hanitzsch (2017), cognitive role orientations comprise the institutional values, attitudes and beliefs individual journalists embrace as a result of their occupational socialisation. Normative role conceptualisation is therefore the understanding journalists have of their role as professionals. Standaert *et al.* (2019:3) define normative role conceptualisation not only as sets of ideas that journalists use to describe their role but also in how it positions journalism as a meaningful practice in society. In a comparative study that examined how citizens and journalists assessed journalistic roles, Vos *et al.* (2019) state that normative role conceptions give journalists an understanding of their social role, and guide how they conduct such roles. Ojala and Poyhtari (2018:169) state that journalistic role conceptions have been identified as significant in explaining actual news production. In an exploratory study of 56 journalists, Tandoc *et al.* (2013:539) found that “journalists must form some understanding of what their role is which then guides behaviour”.

Conceptions of normative roles can be formulated if there is clarity on how these journalistic roles are defined and understood. Normative role conceptions guide journalists in carrying out their professional work (Vos *et al.*, 2019). The conceptions journalists hold of their roles

are influenced by a variety of elements. In a study of professional identity and professional roles, Hanitzsch (2017:4) states that normative roles of journalists are generally derived from a view that emphasises journalism's potential contribution to the proper working of democracy. In a content analysis study of 760 tweets and a survey of the journalists who tweeted them, Tandoc, Cabañes and Cayabyab (2019) found that the way in which roles are conceptualised can be linked to audiences. "Journalists should ideally act as an advocate in situations where many members of the audience cannot either recognise or pursue their own interests in society," state Tandoc *et al.* (2019:859). In a study of Swiss newspaper journalists, Raemy, Beck and Hellmueller (2018) state that classic journalistic role conceptions are no longer sacrosanct and that basic principles of journalism, such as objectivity, are questioned.

The importance of normative roles lies in their regulation of journalists' behaviour through conception, as well as through enactment (Tandoc *et al.*, 2013). Hanitzsch and Ornebring (2019:110) state that what journalists do is socially negotiated and sensitive to the situations and locations journalists find themselves in. Journalistic roles are not only discursively constituted but are also negotiated in a nexus of relations between discursive positions (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017:122).

Journalistic roles are often theorised on two levels. According to Hanitzsch and Vos (2017:123), journalistic roles refer to a set of normative and cognitive beliefs within the institutional framework of journalism as well as how journalists perceive and practice those beliefs in the real-world. Mellado (2015:597) states that the distinction between thinking and doing is essential. Scholars like Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) draw a distinction between role conceptions and role performance, stating that normative and cognitive roles reside at the level of role orientations. Theorising about these journalistic roles depends on the level of analysis (Mellado, 2015:5). Role orientations are discursive constructions of institutional values, attitudes, and beliefs (Hanitzsch, 2017), and role performance relates to issues of structure, agency, culture, and political economy (Mellado, 2015). Normative role performance is situational and should focus on the connection between journalists' beliefs about the role of journalism and the actual practice of producing the news (Mellado, 2015; 2019).

Notable variations exist between countries concerning the emphasis journalists place on different roles (Ojala & Poyhtari, 2018:170). "Belonging to a wider framework of meaning – of a discourse – roles of journalists set the parameters of what is desirable in the institutional

context of journalism,” state Standaert *et al.* (2019:3). Hanitzsch (2017:1) states: “Normative roles encompass generalised and aggregate expectations that journalists believe are deemed desirable in society.” In a study of Chinese regional television reporters, De Burgh (2003:802) found that although news workers need to be responsive to audiences and advertisers, they believe in reports that put things right, that reflect what people really think, and are controversial. An in-depth study of 60 journalists in the Western Balkans by Camaj (2016) found that emphasis on journalistic roles are also influenced by their relationship with sources, interorganisational relationships, private or public ownership, and the political class. “The impact of interorganisational ties is of particular importance in media systems that lack the degree of freedom and independence observed in Western countries,” states Camaj (2016:232). Mellado (2015) proposes a number of topics from which journalistic roles could be categorised, including sensationalism, civic, service, and infotainment.

Criticism has been raised against normative role conceptualisation mostly around inadequacies in defining society as it relates to journalistic roles. Society is arguably too broad a term to use when defining normative role conceptualisation. Wasserman (2006:72) states: “Under the influence of the increasingly multicultural and postmodern character of contemporary societies, the liberal worldview and the role of the media therein have come to be reconsidered.” According to Standaert *et al.* (2019:2), much of the literature tends to pin journalism to the idea of democracy, despite the fact that journalism exists beyond democratic lands.

Journalism scholarship has, for decades, focused on the roles of journalists in the political context. Other forms of journalism, such as service, sports, or lifestyle news, have been marginalized in scholarly discourse and occasionally discredited as unworthy other. (Standaert *et al.*, 2019:2)

Hanusch (2019:193) agrees that a strong focus on normative expectations of journalism’s role has exposed a preference for certain kinds of journalism. Hanusch (2019:194) states: “Much research on journalistic roles continues to focus predominantly on traditional notions of journalism’s relationship with political life.” Although the media regards its normative role as informing the public, the reality is that the media informs “some citizens of only some realities” (Friedman, 2011).

The criticism against studying normative roles provides scope for research on all aspects, including what journalists, per genre and in all regions, view as their role and the practice of these roles. This study specifically investigates the genre of investigative journalism, which is under-researched in the South African context.

In the next section, an outline of social responsibility theory, which is the second applicable theoretical framework, is given. The section also explains how social responsibility theory fits into the study.

3.5 Social responsibility theory as theoretical framework

While normative role conceptualisation refers to journalists' own understanding of their role (see Section 3.4), social responsibility theory is generally accepted as a theory that ascribes media responsibility to society, self-regulation, and the media's role in society.

Social responsibility theory moves from the premise that journalists accept they have an obligation towards society in producing and disseminating content (Fourie, 2017; McQuail, 2010). This obligation makes mass communication essential to modern society (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963:74). "For social responsibility theory, it is the duty of the press to provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning," state Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:4). Social responsibility obligates journalists to not only fulfil their role but to do so in a responsible manner that protects society from harm. Nerone *et al.* (1995:77) propose that journalists take it upon themselves to elevate their standards while providing citizens with the news and guidance they need in order to govern themselves. This study seeks to find if News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio investigative journalists still regard these, and similar, obligations as applicable when it comes to their investigative work. According to Oosthuizen (2014:154), social responsibility is the most applicable theory to evaluate the South African media, whose functions include giving voice to the poor and the marginalised. Adherence to normative guidelines ensures that journalists follow ethical practices (Bruns, 2019). "Within the South African media context, social responsibility is still accepted as the norm," states Bruns (2019:34).

Social responsibility gained prominence when, according to Sanders (2003:151), the Hutchins Commission investigated the role of America's media after the Second World War. Metzgar and Hornaday (2013:257) state that the commission suggested that press freedom

should be connected to the media's performance of socially responsible work. The commission found that in an effort to ensure fairness and minimalistic interference from government, the media, over and above carrying out its role, should self-regulate (Sanders, 2003). "The press must remain free from government and business pressure and serve society instead," state Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:4). However, Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:13) critique the Western-orientated view of the theory and describe it as a neoliberal perspective that was satisfactory for the United States, but inadequate for social responsibility today. Metzgar and Hornaday (2013:256) label the Hutchins Commission "an intellectual exercise".

For the news media to live up to social responsibility ideals, it is critical that journalists reflect on what news information the public needs to make informed decisions about their lives. The media should serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism (Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004:3). The media's obligation to facilitate exchanges between those in power and members of society manifests in the facilitative role of the media (as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1). This study establishes how this role manifests within investigative journalism in South Africa. Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:4) state that it is the media's duty to provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. Social responsibility implores the media to support the democratic process (Oosthuizen, 2002:42). Christians and Nordenstreng (2004) emphasise that a representative picture of the members of a society is necessary. "The evidence is quite strong that mass media reports about topics inform public opinion and contribute in no small way to setting social and political agenda," states Altheide (2003:8). Journalism has an obligation to counteract manipulation (Kruger, 2017:31).

Social responsibility of the media remains relevant to most societies. In a study of transitional journalism in the Western Balkans, Andresen, Hoxha and Godole (2017) found, for example, that journalists and editors consider that, in addition to adhering to professionalism, the media should have the power to influence society. In their proposal of a new dual responsibility model for social responsibility, Adams-Bloom and Cleary (2009) suggest that there is a need to update the theoretical model of social responsibility and that such changes would be a natural progression. "Social responsibility has dramatically influenced thinking about the proper role of the American press and has affected news content decision making," state Adams-Bloom and Cleary (2009:3).

Louw (2015:144) questions whether the South African media, as part of its social responsibility, has adequately provided alternative policy-debate platforms. This researcher argues that this view is indicative of the relevance of social responsibility theory. In the social responsibility analysis of *Yizo Yizo*⁵, Pitout and Ndlovu (2001:20-21) confirm relevance as:

The social responsibility media theory – one of six normative press theories – has developed because of disillusionment with commercial and technological developments in the media which, among other things, have failed to meet the social and moral needs of society. This theory calls for the acceptance and fulfilment of certain obligations to society by the media.

The social responsibility of the media in a country like South Africa should include enhanced reporting on diversity. According to Kruger (2017), the social responsibility of South African journalism is critical and should bring marginalised voices into the national discourse. The concentrated ownership in South Africa's print-media landscape – largely limited to the big-four role players Media24, the Independent Media Group, Caxton, and Arena Holdings (formerly Tiso Blackstar) (Ndlovu, 2015) – influences the voices that get heard. As argued by Friedman (2011), a case could be made that the South African media serves the interests of the few to the disadvantage of the many. Individual journalists should make the extra effort to reach people in rural villages or settlements without roads and phones, and to include their views on important national issues (Kruger, 2017:33). Botma (2011:84) points out that an exclusive focus on the professional, elite mainstream press and Eurocentric discourses on the role of the media in society did not contribute much to empower a disenfranchised black majority. This researcher believes the concerns around social responsibility are valid, especially in media systems that are wholly privately owned and are only geared towards making a profit. It is noteworthy to also include the views of not-for-profit media organisations like amaBhungane and Scorpio.

Despite the apparent relevance of social responsibility theory to the South African context, scholars like Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:13) critique this theory as both a conceptual extension of classic liberalism and being too focussed on Anglo-American thought. Ostini and Ostini (2002:44) state that media theories often reflect Western idealism and champion a

⁵ *Yizo Yizo* is a late-1990s television series that detailed life as experienced in South African township high schools. The drama series dealt with such issues as drugs, weapons, learner-educator intimacy, and lack of parental involvement in public township schools. The award-winning drama series was flighted on SABC 1.

Western perspective of democracy. Adams-Bloom and Cleary (2009:2) state that although the paradigm shift has occurred, the theoretical writing on social responsibility has not kept pace with modern reality. “But the question remains: is this social responsibility theory so radically different from liberal theory, does it really embody new concepts or is it merely an evolutionary descendant of classical liberal doctrines into really so new in its purposes and goals?” state Nerone *et al.* (1995:82).

Despite the criticism and evolution, social responsibility theory remains an appropriate theory that explains and gives context to the role of journalists in society, which makes it suitable for a study that seeks to understand how investigative journalists view their roles in South Africa.

3.6 Combining role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory to study investigative journalists in South Africa

This study addresses two aspects of journalistic roles. Firstly, how investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio think of their roles, and secondly, from where these roles are derived.

The tenets and principles of social responsibility spell out the normative roles of the media as understood by journalists, and as expected by the public. Often in literature (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4), investigative journalism is portrayed as existing to expose public-sector corruption. However, the normative functions of the media extend beyond corruption to include reporting on broader social ills, as well as the educational or information dissemination functions of the media. Social responsibility as a theory would therefore have been inadequate for a study that explores views held by journalists themselves and how specifically investigative journalists understand their role in South Africa. Normative role conceptualisation is significant in the context of the practice of investigative journalism as it leads to formulation of thought, professional ideals, practice, *and* performance. Performance of roles is influenced by the conceptualisation of media functions as articulated in social responsibility theory.

The second reason that motivated the choice for the combination of the theories is the evolution of journalistic roles (see Section 3.3). Witschge and Harbers (2018:116) state that the newsroom no longer suffices as the sole place to define and locate journalism. Mellado (2019) cautions that not all journalists, media organisations, or news beats embrace the same journalistic role conceptions. The roles of investigative journalists as practised at the research

sites of this study should be understood in an evolving context, arguably different from the original theorisation of journalistic roles – under social responsibility theory. The discourse on journalistic roles is one important area in which the debate about the meaning and locus of journalism takes place (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017:123). According to Hanitzsch and Ornebring (2019:105), journalistic roles are subject to continual discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation. One of the questions raised, therefore, is whether journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio understand their role as having evolved or whether their understanding still fits the traditional conceptualisation of social responsibility. It is noteworthy to explore how South African investigative journalists view their role in a changed context. This researcher would argue that role conceptualisation should keep up with the evolution of the roles, since, according to Standaert *et al.* (2019:2), journalism's contribution increasingly extends into the realm of everyday life.

Thirdly, the lack of clarity on what constitutes professionalism in the field is another justification for the combination of the theories. Hanitzsch and Vos (2017:118) state that scholars tend to conflate the attitudinal and performative aspects of journalists' roles, as well as their normative and empirical dimensions. Tandoc *et al.* (2013:540) argue that normative expectations within the journalism space results in conflict about what exactly journalistic roles constitute. Understanding whether investigative journalists in South Africa describe their role as being professionals based on, amongst other things, their training, ethical conscience, or daily practices contributes to knowledge and guides future research.

This researcher would argue that combining role conceptualisation with a more traditional view of social responsibility theory is especially pertinent in a country like South Africa where journalistic role conceptions and social responsibility need to translate into an understanding of the issues around diversity and inequality as much they do exposing public-sector corruption and gross government failures.

The essential tenet of social responsibility is that journalists have an obligation to society. Critical for this study is whether investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio have an appreciation of this role. The theories are relevant to the study because not only do they attribute roles and responsibilities to the media, but they also determine and assess how investigative journalists in South Africa view such roles.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter the theoretical frameworks relevant to this study were defined and discussed. Normative role conceptualisation as a primary theory assists in understanding how journalists view their role. Theorising about journalistic roles has increased over the recent past, but in practice the roles are diverse and not easily theorised. This study explores how investigative journalists in South Africa view their role, and is based on the premise that South African journalists work from the perspective of their role as it is reflected in social responsibility theory. Social responsibility theory is used to complement normative role conceptualisation. Social responsibility theory holds, among others, that it is the duty of the media to educate society, and that this responsibility ought to be undertaken in a responsible manner by a media that is free from any form of control. In South Africa, promotion of diversity could be used to measure whether the media is responsible and whether it is fulfilling its role as described in social responsibility theory.

The next chapter sets out the methodology that was used to collect data for this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study is based on the premise that qualitative studies, as pointed out by Boeije (2010:6), “start with the assumption that individuals have an active role in the construction of social reality”. Brennen (2017) agrees and states that qualitative researchers understand that reality is socially constructed. This researcher concurs with the view that humans interact and experience their surroundings in a way that forms their reality and understanding of the world.

Qualitative studies differ from quantitative studies whose emphasis, according to Teer-Tomaselli (2008), is on measurements and statistical data. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005:4) state that in qualitative studies participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately than with quantitative methods. Using empirical data acquired through qualitative research methods, this study explored how investigative journalists from investigative units at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view their role in South Africa.

It must be noted that the methods applied in this qualitative research study were impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown that South Africans experienced from March 2020 (South Africa, 2020). Stellenbosch University subsequently suspended classes and research activity (De Villiers, 2020). That decision meant all human-contact data collection methods were forbidden to comply with lockdown regulations. Maxwell (2008:215) states that design decisions may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to new developments and a change in some aspects of the design.

This chapter defines the qualitative research design, and the methods used during data gathering. The study purposively sampled investigative journalists from News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio and used semi-structured telephonic and email interviews to explore how the journalists view and define their role. The chapter briefly outlines the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. A comprehensive description of the three research sites is provided, as well as ethical considerations noted while completing the study.

4.2 Qualitative research design

Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010:10) define qualitative research as a broad umbrella term that covers a wide range of techniques and philosophies. Qualitative research design, which Bhattacharjee (2012:35) defines as “a blueprint for empirical research”, is intended to understand the world not from specialised settings but through the experiences of individuals or groups (see, for example, Brennen, 2017; Dawson, 2009; Kvale, 2007; Maxwell, 2008). The design is the first component of the overall qualitative research cycle (Hennink *et al.*, 2010:10). Using a qualitative research design helps to produce contextual knowledge by acquiring “rich, nuanced, and detailed data” (Mason, 2002:3). “In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behaviour taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of these and how their understandings influence their behaviour,” states Maxwell (2008:221). According to Mack *et al.* (2005:4), qualitative methods are typically more flexible in that they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant.

According to Hennink *et al.*, (2010:10), a qualitative research project begins with the formulation of a research question. A qualitative approach allows one to identify issues from the perspective of the study participants.

Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations. (Maxwell, 2008:221)

The contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces (Mack *et al.*, 2005:3). Brennen (2017:4) characterises qualitative research as interdisciplinary, interpretive, political, and theoretical in nature. According to Brennen (2017:15), qualitative researchers ask questions, and search for meaning within relevant social practices.

Qualitative researchers understand that while words and concepts have important denotative meanings, they also have connotative interpretations that are important to consider. In their research they not only incorporate the denotative meanings of words but also embrace the variety of connotative meanings found within language. (Brennen, 2017:15)

Qualitative design helped this researcher explore the perceptions and experiences of investigative journalists in South Africa. Soliciting the perceptions of investigative journalists is in line with the theoretical framework of this study which relies on normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory. Qualitative methods are not only the most suitable to gather textual and perceptual data, but also empowered this researcher to formulate themes based on the real experiences of the participants.

4.3 Sampling process

4.3.1 Key considerations in choosing the research sites

The study focussed on News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio, media organisations that have functioning and fully staffed investigative units. All three platforms are digital publishers and have national and international footprints. It is worth noting that Independent Media Investigations Editor Piet Rampedi did not respond to the request for participation. *Noseweek* Editor Martin Welz's response was positive but the publication is a monthly magazine with no dedicated investigative unit as conceptualised in the study. Investigative television programmes and general news units were not considered due to their size and their practicality for the study. The profile of the television news practitioners doing investigative work did not correlate with the sample of investigative journalists which was purposively selected.

One of the research sites, amaBhungane, is purely a centre for investigative journalism, and publishes investigative news on its website, as well as in other publications. Two of the research sites, News24 and Scorpio, have a full complement of news teams and publish general news as well. The focus of this study was on the investigative units of these two research sites.

The investigative team members of the three research sites are geographically spread across three provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Gauteng, and are located mostly in the metros. News24's investigative team is based in Johannesburg, but its investigative journalists are sometimes required to travel. News24 and Scorpio publish work by freelance investigative journalists and other small media houses, while amaBhungane does not. It is noteworthy that News24's investigative journalists sometimes write general news for the platform, especially if the stories have the potential of being developed into investigative pieces. The investigative journalists at News24 are not restricted to investigative

journalism, especially if the general news stories require contextual and investigative background work.

At the time of data collection all the research sites were members of industry regulatory mechanisms like the South African Press Code and the Press Council. At the time of conducting the interviews, all the participants were permanently employed at the three research sites. Two of the participants are political reporters but contribute investigative articles to their investigative unit.

Permission for the study was received from the editors who lead the investigative teams. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003:30) state that seeking permission first from the most senior person who can grant access in an organisation is vitally important. “However well one gets along with others lower down in the hierarchy, one’s relationship with this person may be most indicative of how much access one will have or how long,” state Feldman *et al.*, (2003:30). The editors granted unlimited access to team members and indicated that this researcher should approach investigative journalists individually and seek their permission to participate. A focus on the importance of seeking individual permission ensured that no investigative journalists felt coerced to participate. Consent forms were emailed to participants once they had agreed to participate. Permission letters from the editors of the three research sites (see addenda C, D, and E) were sought and submitted to Stellenbosch University’s Research Ethics Committee. The university provided ethical clearance for the data collection process of the study in June 2020.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, strict adherence to lockdown regulations meant that the Cape Town-based participants were interviewed telephonically. Initially, this researcher had planned to do face-to-face interviews with Cape Town-based participants.

4.3.2 Purposive sampling

According to Devers and Frankel (2000:265), purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance the understanding of participants’ experiences or for developing theories and concepts. Mack *et al.* (2005:5) state that purposive sampling groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. The general research question for this study is: How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view and describe their role in democratic South Africa?

In order to address this question, participants therefore had to be employed at one of these three investigative units, and needed to contribute investigative news reports to the

investigative units. Kumar (2011:207) states that researchers select those people who in their opinion are likely to have the required information and would be willing to share it. The participants in this study were all willing to talk about how they viewed their role and also about what they thought social responsibility of investigative journalists is.

This researcher contacted 20 investigative journalists and investigations editors at the three research sites. A total of 14 investigative journalists and editors consented to participate, one withdrew from the study. A total of 13 interviews took place and were analysed. Participants were also approached via social media and instant messaging platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. “Potential participants are not essentially recruited through cold calls but can be contacted in other ways such as face-to-face, letters and emails and upon voluntary consent, engaged in a telephone-based interview,” state Cachia and Millward (2011:267). Three investigative journalists and two managing editors did not respond to the request for participation, despite repeated attempts to solicit their participation in the study. One investigative journalist withdrew from the study (see Section 4.4.3).

Mack *et al.* (2005:5) say purposive sample sizes are determined on the basis of theoretical saturation or a point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights. During the initial review of the study data, this researcher also noted the responses were producing similar themes. Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection (Mack *et al.*, 2005:5).

4.4 Data gathering

4.4.1 Semi-structured telephonic interviews

Cachia and Millward (2011:268) state that interviews are a well-established tool in qualitative research as they can be adapted to fulfil many different research aims. Kvale (2007:4) agrees that researchers get to learn about other people’s personal experiences through conversation:

In an interview conversation, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life. (Kvale, 2007:4)

Data was collected through semi-structured telephonic interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed for greater flexibility, in-depth search, and deviation from predetermined routes (see, for instance, Kumar, 2014; Wilson, 2012). Cachia and Millward (2011) state that the telephone is a widely accepted means of everyday communication in both business and private settings. The telephonic interviews were conducted even with the closely located Cape Town-based investigative journalists as a result of lockdown restrictions as described earlier in this chapter. Volg (2013:138) states that using the telephone suggests a greater sense of control over the communication process for participants. Cachia and Millward (2011) believe telephone interviews as a data collection method provide good quality textual data and that most people have some form of access to fixed telephone line or mobile phones. Volg (2013:134) states that telephone interviews for research purposes are on the rise because of low cost involved and good reachability.

Cachia and Millward (2011:268) state that even when a fixed set of sequential questions is used in semi-structured interviews, additional questions can be introduced to facilitate further exploration of issues brought up by the participants (see Addendum E for the list of questions). This researcher followed this advice, which means that during the interviews follow-up questions were asked when issues needed further clarification. Rabionet (2011) states that when introducing yourself as researcher during telephonic interviews, the protocol should include statements of confidentiality, consent, options to withdraw, and the use and scope of the results. Password protection and facial-recognition access ensured that only the researcher had access to and control of the data.

The interviews were scheduled over a period of 10 weeks. The strategy was to complete interviews with all investigative journalists from one research site at a time. Audio recordings of the interviews were made using a call-recording application on the mobile phone used. Participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded automatically. No participant raised an objection to the recording. The audio recording of each interview was stored with detailed, typed notes. The recorded interviews were manually saved using interview numbering on both a laptop and cloud-storage account. The same code number was used to save the transcribed document on the laptop. The significance of the data storage in the cloud is such that if the mobile phone were to be lost or stolen, there would be a back-up of the data collected in the interviews. The detailed, typed notes were also printed as a back-up.

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

This researcher had received permission from editors of the investigative units at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio to conduct the study (see addenda B, C, and D). Participation was voluntary and nothing was offered as reward or incentive. All participants signed an informed consent form which, according to Mack *et al.* (2005:9), is a mechanism to ensure that study participants understand what they are participating in. Informed consent is also one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for the researcher (Mack *et al.*, 2005:9).

Participants were kept aware of their right to withdraw from the study, and that withdrawal of their input would be done provided the request is received prior to finalisation and submission of the thesis.

Consent forms were sent to each participant via email before every interview. In the case of the participants who preferred participation via email, the consent forms were sent together with the questions as attachments.

Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. It is worth noting that this researcher introduced himself as a student at Stellenbosch University, but also revealed that he is permanently employed at Parliament as a Principal Communications Officer. The intention of this openness was to reflect on this position in order to mitigate any concerns participants could have regarding full disclosure and the honesty of this researcher. The final thesis would be publicly accessible on Stellenbosch University's website.

4.4.3 Challenges to data gathering

In some instances, the researcher had to make follow-up calls and send messages via the social media accounts of some participants. Participants expressed appreciation for the study, but some indicated that finding time for the interview was a challenge. Some of the participants who were difficult to get a hold of on the phone were reminded about the invitation to take part in the study via email and WhatsApp.

Three participants asked to submit responses via email. This request was acceded to because one participant indicated a need for time to reflect on the answers (although this participant later withdrew). Email correspondence has become an acceptable data collection method for qualitative studies (see Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Burns, 2010; Hawkins, 2018). According to Hawkins (2018:495), email interviews save time and money in transcription costs. In the context of COVID-19 and the unreliability of mobile network coverage in South Africa, email correspondence was effective. Arrangements were made and questions were

sent to these participants' email addresses, but this was backed up by also sending the questions via WhatsApp messaging, in case of problems with email systems at their workplace.

Methodological risks and challenges encountered during the data collection phase of the study included the scheduling of interviews. Interviews were scheduled with participants via telephone calls, soon after the ethics review committee allowed the researcher to go ahead with data collection (see Addendum A). The scheduling process included multiple postponements, rescheduling and non-availability at the scheduled times. Some participants indicated the interviews clashed with workplace meetings, some of which had been scheduled at short notice, and some participants wanted to reschedule as a result of deadline commitments. Most of the participants worked from home in line with the aforementioned lockdown regulations. Connectivity and network challenges were encountered. Participants' mobile phones would make funny sounds, and phone calls would be cut off during the interviews. When connection was re-established, participants' line of thought was sometimes distracted.

An unforeseen challenge during data gathering occurred when one participant withdrew after agreeing to participate. The participant first cut short the telephone interview, asking that the questions be shared via email. This participant was afraid that other participants might know who said what if they were to read the final thesis. This researcher assured the participant that – in line with the ethical review process - anonymity and confidentiality would be ensured. The participant preferred giving email responses to have enough time to reflect on responses. The participant's actions were understood in the context of Volg's (2013:136) assertion that more intimate details could be revealed unaware despite the greater anonymity a telephone interview offers.

Another challenge came in the form of interviews with some participants not being recordable. A test was done prior and after the interview phase and calls were recordable in all test instances. This is evidence that an in-house encryption of voice calls was activated on the participants' mobile phones. One participant indicated that an application was installed on their phones as a protection mechanism against interception of private communications by the state agencies. This measure is also intended to protect interception of communication with sources. There is proof that the phones of investigative journalists, for example at amaBhungane, had been tapped (Sole, 2017).

4.5 Data analysis

Burns (2000:430) states that the purpose of analysis is to find meaning in the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and contextualise the empirical data collected during the data gathering phase of this study. Smith and Firth (2011:54) explain that thematic analysis is an interpretive process, in which data is systematically searched to identify patterns in the data in order to provide an illuminating description of the phenomenon. The data gathered from participants was non-statistical, and that informed the choice of thematic analysis. Evans (2018:3) describes thematic analysis as identifying patterns and themes within the data. In qualitative methods, thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition in non-numerical data whereby themes and codes that emerge from the data become the categories for analysis (Roberts, Dowell & Nie, 2019). “This approach allows data to be both described and interpreted for meaning,” state Roberts *et al.* (2019:1).

The interview transcripts were printed and handwritten comments were made. Summarised data, wherein similarities allowed for data coding, was also printed. Marshall and Rossman (2006:160) define coding as a formal representation of analytic thinking and generating categories and themes. This researcher chose key words that were common in the data during content analysis. The summarised data was also colour-coded in a Microsoft Word document template. Repetitive and common responses were identified, grouped together, and further categorised for synonymy. Trends and patterns were noticeable in the data collected. They will be elaborated on and closely analysed in Chapter 5. The colour-coded data later became the basis for formulating and developing themes. Cassell and Bishop (2019:198) state that the aim of template analysis is to create an analytic template in which data can be categorised. Coding and thematic analysis are not the only ways of analysing qualitative data, but are the most prominent ways (Flick, 2007:101).

According to Burns (2000:432), qualitative data analysis is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information. Thematic analysis enabled this researcher to examine the meanings that investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio “attach to their civic participation, the significance it has in their lives, and more broadly, their social constructions of it” (Evans, 2018:3). Roberts *et al.* (2019:1) state that the process involves the identification of themes relevant to the research focus. Evans (2018:3) agrees and states that in qualitative analysis the significance of a theme is reflected in the extent to which it speaks to a theoretical position or the research questions.

4.6 Summary

The qualitative research design employed in this study was discussed in this chapter. Qualitative approaches are ideal when seeking to understand how people experience their social world. The instruments used for data collection with the participants were telephonic and emailed semi-structured interviews. The telephonic interview method was further necessitated by the outbreak of COVID-19 which resulted in South Africa being placed in lockdown.

Participation was secured via the respective managers at the investigative units. At the time of the data collection phase of this study, all 13 participants were permanently employed at investigative units at the three research sites. Two of the participants were employed as political reporters who undertake investigative work for their unit. The three research sites were chosen because they have functional investigative units, and employ investigative journalists. Consent forms were sent to all participants. The confidentiality of participants was guaranteed.

One participant withdrew, citing time constraints. Data of 13 interviews was transcribed, saved on a laptop, and printed. The audio recordings were saved on a mobile phone and transferred to this researcher's cloud-storage account.

The participants enunciated a number of issues during the data collection phase which will be presented in detail in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the findings that were extracted from the interview data will be presented and discussed.

Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the data gathered through the semi-structured interviews. Broad themes were delineated as an analytical framework and they allowed for vigorous exploration of the views investigative journalists have of their role and what they think of their social responsibility. Before the themes are presented, the methodology discussed in Chapter 4 is briefly reviewed.

5.2 Review of methodology

Data was collected from investigative journalists practising their profession at three research sites. Fourteen voluntarily participated in telephonic and email semi-structured interviews that lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. This analytical framework allowed for themes to be developed. During the analysis process this researcher familiarised himself with the subject matter. The data collected was examined and, in line with qualitative research methods, the data conclusively proved to be non-statistical.

The identity of participants will not be revealed and responses are not linked to the participants' place of work. This is intended to maintain a high degree of confidentiality and anonymity as promised to participants during the interviews, as described in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.2. The participants were code-named P1 to P13, using a system only known to this researcher. Palys and Lowman (2012:279) caution against breach of confidentiality and say invasion of privacy may pose the greatest risk of harm associated with research.

At this juncture, it is important to describe the participants according to their job functions and experience. Two participants are managing editors, meaning that, over and above their editorial functions (which include investigative work, supervising reporters, and editing reports) they manage the affairs of the unit or publication. Two participants are editors. All participants have been news reporters before becoming investigative journalists.

According to Gibson and Brown (2009:3), presentation forces researchers to simplify data into a digestible form. The data was summarised and salient points for themes and discussion

became apparent. A colour-coding scheme was then developed using Microsoft Word. Repetitive words were observable and allowed for patterns to be identified. The themes developed from the data are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Seven themes identified during data analysis

Theme	Explanation
Theme 1: The role played by investigative journalists	Investigative journalists play a key role in democratic societies, like: keeping power in check, exposing corruption and, holding the public and private sector accountable.
Theme 2: The public-interest and social-responsibility value of investigative journalism	Public interest is defined as serving the people on whose behalf journalistic roles are undertaken. Social responsibility implies that the media has a function to fulfil in society. The interconnectedness of the two normative concepts is a key determinant in decisions journalists make regarding their role.
Theme 3: The prevalence of diversion and intimidation tactics	Diversion and intimidation tactics are moves or actions performed to distract the attention of society.
Theme 4: Access to information and media freedom in South Africa	Access to information means the ability to get the information of whatever nature for the purpose of journalistic work. Media freedom is the ability with which the media is able to publish without being restricted or sanctioned. Its connotation is that there is an absolute freedom of expression in a country.
Theme 5: Investigations' susceptibility to manipulation	Investigative journalists can be used. Sources have interest in how investigative stories are investigated and eventually published. This is referred to as manipulation.
Theme 6: Challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa	Challenges are any hindrances that impede a flourishing investigative journalism culture. In South Africa, these challenges mainly centre on lack of financial resources.
Theme 7: Skills and resources required for the future of investigative journalism	Investigative journalism requires specialised training and skills enhancement. This speaks to the ability to work with all kinds of data, and adjust to the digital world.

5.3 Presentation of findings

5.3.1 Theme 1: The role played by investigative journalists

Investigative journalists in South Africa are conscious of their normative role and the required ethical standards when carrying out their work. Participants describe their role in a way that aligns with the monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative roles described in Chapter 3, Section 3.3. Table 5.2 elaborates on this and is followed by a detailed discussion of these roles in the words of the participants themselves.

Table 5.2: Participants' description of their role

Role category	Description by participants
The monitorial role involves overseeing misconduct of government and business officials. Hanitzsch and Vos (2018:154) classify the functions under this role as: monitor, detective, and watchdog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold government, public administration, institutions, and companies accountable • Expose corruption and those who undermine good governance • Ask difficult questions of those who have power and influence • Check on the abuse of power
The facilitative role is similar to the collaborative role. According to Standaert <i>et al.</i> (2019), journalists may not explicitly support a particular political actor but may broadly embrace such things as national unity and government policies. Journalists typically frame this role in terms of educating the public (Standaert <i>et al.</i> , 2019:13).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show what you find to the public • Shine the light on what is hidden and has the potential to negatively impact development • Ensure the compact government has with people is fulfilled • Share truth and facts with the people • Equalise society by rooting out corruption • Encourage debate
The radical role is when journalists take an active stand to oppose. Hanitzsch and Vos (2018:155) say the role has an advocative-radical function and that journalists conceive of themselves as a mouthpiece of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard democracy • Oppose excesses of the state • Challenge corporate South Africa • Stop those who steal from the people • Protect citizenry from malfeasance • Advocate for social justice matters
In a collaborative role journalists act as partners and support development efforts. According to Standaert <i>et al.</i> (2019:5), journalists may be coerced into a collaborative-facilitative role but can also act voluntarily based on a shared commitment to goals set by the government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accountability and transparency, and good governance; help the public make sense of things • Ensure transparency in the democratic project • Tell what people do not know • Inform the reader

Most participants regard keeping power in check as the primary role investigative journalists play. P1 says society is structured and organised in such a way that there are people with power and influence, and people without power or influence: “How that power and influence are wielded affects everyone. When we find there is something untoward and people use their power unwisely or malevolently, then it is our job to show that to the public.” P10 believes that people who have power will always want to hide secrets. According to P10, the natural tendency of power is to function unhindered and in the dark: “They want to exercise power without oversight. Our job is to make sure that there is accountability in the exercise of power.” P5 says that it doesn’t matter whether it is a government official, captain of industry, policeman, or a nurse, anyone who has a public responsibility to execute but chooses to abuse the power and trust of the people leads to something that is worth exposing. “Investigative

journalism is about exposing the abuse of power so that there could be accountability. Often it is not for us to exert that accountability, it is for others that need to take it up, whether it is civil society or prosecuting authority” says P5.

The second role that participants identify is exposing corruption. P1 says power and influence can be bought: “Often it is said that corruption is a victimless crime; that people stealing public money are not stealing from someone but from government. It is not true, they are stealing the taxpayers’ money.” P2 points out that in South Africa public money and political power are very closely connected. “It is very often that you will find people who are accused of corruption are either politicians or people who are closely linked to the politicians.” P11 says what that means for poor people is a critical matter in South Africa:

Often, we fail to bring the impact of corruption into the picture. We should relay to the people why corruption is a problem, and what it means for them. Most of the investigative journalism that we do is about corruption and why it is necessary to expose it. (P11)

P6 says the role of investigative journalists is made doubly important when regulatory bodies like the National Prosecuting Authority, police, and the Hawks (the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigations) are not enthusiastic about investigating matters they are supposed to. P6 says regulatory bodies’ failure to act leaves investigative journalists with no option but to “shine the light” on corruption.

Despite widespread reporting on corruption, P4 says that stories in the private sector are not subjected to the same level of rigour as in the public sector. As P13 puts it, the idea that corporate corruption is underreported is not a fiction. According to P4, coverage is focussed on stories that will help the country achieve its goals.

We try to promote accountability and transparency, good governance in the interest of the country reaching its goals and aspirations that are spelt out in the Constitution. We see our role as having some kind of constitutional value in that arrangement. (P4)

The third role that participants indicate they play is ensuring that government is doing what it promised to do. According to P8, this is the social contract government has with its people:

Whoever is in government, we have to watch them. There are many interests that gravitate to power and some do not have the interest of the people at heart. Investigative journalists need to ensure that the contract government has with people is fulfilled in order for society to function. (P8)

P3 says in South Africa the role of investigative journalists is generally regarded as in opposition to the state.

This has roots in the anti-apartheid era. Although the media were supporting the government, there were good investigative publications like the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Vrye Weekblad*. During the advent of democracy, the media sort of continued in that role. (P3)

According to P13, investigative journalists' objective must ultimately be to battle everyday brutality in society. P11 agrees:

Against apartheid investigative journalists played a significant role. And when the new dispensation came in, there has been continuation on that trajectory; we drew from that tradition. Opportunities and conditions, yes, are open, but there are still a whole lot of challenges.

In the next section, participants' views of their social responsibility and the importance of public-interest reporting are unpacked.

5.3.2 Theme 2: The public-interest and social-responsibility value of investigative journalism

Wasserman and De Beer (2005:47) state that public interest is an elusive term because the public is not a homogenous grouping of people. Nevertheless, it is clear that various people benefit from investigative journalism. Investigative journalists undertake investigations on behalf of poor South Africans and South African taxpayers. P1 says investigative journalists see themselves as representatives of the poorest of the poor. Other words that participants used in connotation to public interest include "democracy", "poorest people", "public", "middle class", "taxpayer", "black majority", "government", "grass roots", "the Constitution", "whistle-blowers", and "sources". P4 says the media itself is a constituent part

of the public, and that their investigative unit has a social responsibility towards the media, which they fulfil by training investigative journalists.

The interview data reveal that members of the public, individually and collectively, belong to different institutions in society. Public interest therefore has many dimensions and, according to P1 and P13, is a broad concept. P13 says there is a particular need locally to expose corruption and the state's failure to provide basic services – “the extent of it and the reasons for it”. P9 says if investigative journalism fails to pick up wrong-doing, “it is *gogo* Dlamini who suffers”.

The cost is to South Africa, the cost is to you and I. Money was used for patronage, chartered-accounting companies were paid money that could not be used to build houses, provide water to schools. I always ask, if information already in the public domain does not get written about, whose interest would that serve; politicians will get away with things they should not. (P9)

Closely related to public interest, is the social responsibility ascribed to journalists. P2 says social responsibility starts with asking: “Am I doing the investigation for the right reason or am I doing it to target a person I feel is corrupt?”

If one crosses that bar and say I am investigating because it is important for the country, to the readers, and for service delivery, it becomes much easier to write and publish. (P9)

Most participants regard it as their social responsibility to report on and reveal when public funds have been misused. Participants consider holding government accountable as the social responsibility investigative journalists need to fulfil for the benefit of the poor. P12 says the looting of public funds contributes to high levels of inequality, poverty, and unemployment. P1 reflects that the protection of government resources from those who steal in order to buy influence and power amounts to fulfilling one's social responsibility.

Stealing from government means they are stealing the taxpayers' money. This is money that could be used to pay out social grants, improve health, schooling, and public transport. That's the cost of corruption. (P1)

P8 says if the media fails to fulfil its social-responsibility role, government and business officials would steal taxpayers' money: "If investigative journalists fail, we deprive society of their rights." P6 says a failure of journalism to shine the light on issues would make society suffer. According to P1, the interests of journalists cannot be separated from the interest of the country.

P4 says social responsibility means journalists have to approach the subjects of investigations with care: "Journalism can have an impact on people's lives, could affect their business and their jobs. We should put all the allegations to them, give them a chance to respond, and assess the evidence in a reasonable way." P6 says an investigative journalist has to be a hundred per cent certain that what they are publishing is unchallengeable "Tremendous harm is done to society by people who publish false investigative stories with profound implications," says P2.

Participants realise that social responsibility means that they should be responsible at a personal level. Social responsibility at a personal level takes various forms. According to P2, social responsibility means an investigative journalist cannot report on taxes if their personal taxes are in disarray: "You try and be a model citizen. You need to show people that we can try and make this country a better place if we all do good." Similarly, P12 says if investigative journalists "assess and restrain" if a story is likely to evoke emotions, they are fulfilling social responsibility: "I process large volumes of paperwork in a short space of time, speaking to reluctant sources out of fear to be identified and victimised. Journalists should assess these challenges." P13 cites another kind of personal social responsibility, saying that as a matter of practice enough time is allowed for people to respond to written questions: "The standard 24 hours seems a little aggressive to me. When comments and answers come back, you really have a duty to consider them seriously."

Participants regard it as their responsibility to challenge public officials by showing how sophisticated corruption has become in South Africa. P11 says all journalists should be activists but cautions that activism should not compromise the principles of neutrality and fairness: "Journalism has to keep above the fray of partisan debates."

5.3.3 Theme 3: The prevalence of diversion and intimidation tactics

The analysis of interview data reveals that intimidation of investigative journalists in South Africa is a diversion tactic that can be classified as occurring on three platforms: in cyberspace, as physical assaults, and in legal form. The platforms used, and the specific tactics employed, to try and intimidate participants are summarised in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Diversion tactics experienced by participants

Platform used	Specific tactics
Cyberspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyberbullying (female journalists mostly affected) • Email • Social media attack • Trolling on social media, especially Twitter
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation • Name-calling • Telephonic threats and outbursts • Robbed at gunpoint • Smashing of car
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawyers' letter • Threat to litigate

Participants say they are not at all scared for their lives because of these intimidation tactics. One incident of a physical nature was reported, in which an investigative journalist's car was stoned while carrying out investigative work. P10 says there have been sticky and dangerous situations for journalists in South Africa, but they had never personally felt scared:

“Intimidation and bullying had been received from the radical left parties like the EFF, and to some extent from the far right.” According to P10, intimidation and bullying are “unfortunate developments” and the EFF should accept that journalism is a “high-pressure game”. P1 says subjects of investigations divert attention because they are aware of the impact of media attention: “They choose to divert attention from issues so that the public is never aware of what allegations are against them.”

In addition, the interview data indicates that cyberbullying is used as a political strategy intended to threaten mostly female journalists. P10 says cyberbullying incidents peaked during the time when the #GuptaLeaks stories were published. Another diversion tactic used by the subjects of investigative stories, according to P13, is to circulate the questions they are asked to answer on social media instead of answering the investigative journalist. P6 says

investigative journalists are online most of the time and the toxic environment on social media platforms is not helping.

The balance of diversion and intimidation incidents on social media is mostly aimed against female journalists in this country and, according to P10, is “irritating”. P11 says the cyberbullying of female investigative journalists is sometimes demoralising and distracts investigative journalists from focussing on investigative work. According to P3, social media attacks directed at female journalists are another “form of sexism”, which South Africa is infamous for. P2 says sexist behaviour on the internet is concerning because social media is useful for tip-offs and follow-up stories that are “anonymously sourced”. P5 reveals that dealing with cyber abuse includes deactivating social media applications on their mobile phone.

In addition to social media attacks on female journalists, participants acknowledge that there is sexism in the field of investigative journalism. P3 says investigative journalism is male-driven: “This is not to say there are no female investigative journalists – there are fantastic female investigative journalists, but the field is very masculine.” According to P3, men are not even conscious of it when they act in a sexist manner. Sometimes it is easy to overstate social media bullying of female journalists, but according to P11, “sexism is structural” and “male colleagues perpetuate it”. P3 says women play a supporting role on investigations:

The perceived hardcore stuff is left for men to do. Sometimes they speak over your head and sort of downplay your role in the whole conversation. When out on stories, female investigative journalists sometimes get offered drinks just to downplay the work they are doing.

Most participants highlight the challenge of legal threats made by subjects of investigations. Participants state that the legal threats are part of intimidation tactics, as they are hardly ever acted upon. P3 says investigative reports are hardly ever taken on review, either through open court or the industry regulatory bodies, despite threats to do so. According to P3, this unwillingness to go through with litigation is an indication that there is a degree of truth and accuracy in investigative reporting.

They hardly win these in court, but they insist on threats of litigation. If one looks at the cumulative costs that have been awarded against the media through courts, it has been miniscule. (P3)

The best way to deal with litigation and threats to litigate, according to P1, is commitment to your job and reporting the facts. P5 says there is no room for error in investigative journalism as it deals with “high-profile matters”.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Access to information and media freedom in South Africa

P9 says where there is no democracy, there cannot be investigative journalism; where there is no investigative journalism, there is no democracy since “the two go together”. South Africa’s legislative framework is conducive for investigative journalism and the media in general. However, participants indicate that there is difficulty with enactment of the legislation. This results in challenges regarding access to information. P1 says politicians do not believe in transparency. There are legal means to attain access to information, like the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). P3 says following this route takes long: “By the time the court process is finalised, there is no longer a story.” Furthermore, the court process is also costly, says P4. The Companies’ Act, according to P5, requires that tender information be uploaded to the National Treasury website: “The information is never there. When one launches a complaint with the CIPC⁶ that takes about a year to be adjudicated.” P7 and P13 highlight the difficulty of obtaining company records and financial information from private companies. P5 says gatekeeping by government spokespeople is a challenge: “The country needs much more transparency than there is from government and private entities.” P2 says despite the challenge of access to information, media freedom is an “exceptional thing” about South Africa. According to P1, investigative journalists operate in a free society, “free from fear that as a journalist I might suffer bodily harm”. P5 agrees that journalists in South Africa are very fortunate.

There is not that kind of culture of walking up to journalists and killing them in South Africa. There are those few times when we get trashed.

Female journalists have had nasty things said about them when they start to expose someone. What one can do, is try and be as safe online and make sure that they do not give away their source’s identities. (P5)

P12 says investigative journalism is a vital part of a democracy and cannot happen without a free media. P11 and P1 credit the ANC for media freedom, but say hostile individuals within

⁶ Companies and Intellectual Property Commission

government and the ANC want to subvert the idea of a free media. Yet, P9 believes the ANC has handled journalists far better than other liberation movements in Africa. P1 states that individual politicians try to shut down the debate and that those politicians do not respect the role of the media. P6 says South Africans should be weary of these individual politicians physically attacking journalists in the future. P11 says the country needs to be vigilant as there are “worrying signs”.

Participants decry a lack of legislative protection for whistle-blowers. P5 says the absence of laws protecting whistle-blowers is a challenge: “If a source gets harmed because they came out, that would be a lot of problems for us. The fear sources are living under makes getting information difficult.” P11 says without whistle-blowers there cannot be investigative journalism nor democracy: “Legislation is thin on protecting whistle-blowers and these are important people. There is a lot of thuggery in South Africa, things can turn quickly.” P2 says they take steps to protect sources by not speaking to them via an open telephone line: “We use encrypted applications to connect with sources and whistle-blowers in order to protect them.” P4 says investigative journalists always work with the assumption that conversations with sources are being eavesdropped on.

5.3.5 Theme 5: Investigations’ susceptibility to manipulation

Participants indicate that they are alert to the fact that investigative journalism is susceptible to manipulation. P2 says being used is a common occurrence, but the important thing is to find what motivates the source to speak: “Investigative journalists must make sure that the source’s agenda does not get in the way of foundational journalistic principles of fairness, accuracy, objectivity, right of reply, and independence.” According to P6, investigative journalism is like a forensic investigation and one needs to do a thorough job: “It is still journalism at the end of the day; the test used for news stories still applies. One has to be truthful, accurate, objective, and fair.”

P5 says there will always be outside influences for some reason or another. P4 says fortunes change and that people who once wielded power may become victims and in fighting back they may want to use the media in their political battles. P13 says investigative journalists have to assume everyone is lying. It is advisable to always insist on documentary evidence: “You deal with malicious leakers keen to take down rivals.”

This is where the social responsibility comes in. As a journalist you must know that you are being used, it is part of your work. People do not talk to journalists to be friends; they want their versions of the story published. (P2)

P2 and P13 say investigative journalists need to evaluate the motives of whistle-blowers and ascertain how the leaked information was obtained. P1 says investigative journalists have to ask questions and check answers for truthfulness; “that is our job”. P6 cautions investigative journalists to never take the word of just one person or one grouping. P2 underscores personal bias and says information has to meet the bar of public interest: “When you write, make sure personal views are flexed out, otherwise you will be accused of an agenda.” P7 agrees and says the media also has an agenda: “The true test is whether, given the same information, other investigative journalists could arrive at the same conclusion.” According to P4 and P5, journalists do have subjective views. This, P5 says, is mitigated by “involving the entire investigative team when discussing stories”.

Journalists have to be honest about bias. It is good to wrap one’s reporting in a wider discussion with our readers and the public, to explain where we are coming from, to kind of not pretend to be always objective. (P5)

P4 says journalists allow themselves to be used once they develop a close relationship with sources. P9 cites the *Sunday Times* publication of unfounded stories and subsequent public apology⁷ and says when investigative journalism serves certain agendas, it will suffer: “There is a solution and it is that investigative journalism should be in the public interest; it will stand scrutiny.”

5.3.6 Theme 6: Challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa

There are numerous challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa, some of which have already been highlighted as part of other themes discussed in this chapter. Many of these challenges originate outside the newsroom. It is apparent that most of the challenges that participants identify relate to the scarcity of financial resources. Participants say challenges

⁷ *Sunday Times* editor Bongani Siqoko apologised in 2018 for award-winning investigative stories published earlier. He described the stories on SARS, the rendition of Zimbabweans and the infamous Cato Manor killings as a parallel political project (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.5). Siqoko pledged to return the industry awards and monetary prizes.

are mostly institutional and similar to the general journalism challenges that are impacting the industry. According to P2, journalism is under severe pressure given the economic circumstances in the country: “Journalists have become less and less experienced because the salaries are small.”

Another issue that participants raise with regards to investigative journalism, relates to the business model of journalism. P1 says journalism business models have failed over the last decade. According to P1, that collapse became one of the biggest obstacles to investigative journalism. According to P10, traditional paper publications are being wiped out and there is no money for print business. P1 says that the business of media is dead because of its reliance on advertisers: “Advertisers have so many platforms from which to market on, they do not need newspapers. Media companies were unable to monetise their websites.” Rollwagen, Shapiro, Bonin-Labelle, Fitzgerald and Tremblay (2019) share this view and say the impact of the loss of advertising has been dramatic for the news industry. “As advertising revenue, formerly earned in return for news organisations’ investment, began flowing inexorably to Google and Facebook, legacy companies’ profitability fell precipitously,” state Rollwagen *et al.* (2019:465). Wahl-Jorgensen, Williams, Sambrook, Harris, Garcia-Blanco, Dencik, Cushion, Carter and Allan (2016:801) note a similar concern and say the outdated business model of journalism has resulted in the growing casualisation of the workforce and less secure employment in the media industry.

Some of the other challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa, as articulated by the participants, are summarised in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa

Challenge category	Detailed challenges
Lack of financial and human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced journalists leave the profession (voluntarily or through retrenchments). The financial position of most media houses are compromised due to decreasing ad revenue (see Section 5.3.7). • Lack of finances to support salaries that match the experience of investigative journalists and the period of time it takes to produce investigative reports. • Threats to litigate from subjects of investigations are costly for media houses. The use of lawyers, opposition to motions, and the time it takes to adjudicate matters require a lot of money in South Africa. • Lack of finances forces publications to shut down.
Lack of investigative skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative journalists require specialised technological skills to deal with data and IT systems used for data capture and storage. • Technical data analysis that requires training other than journalistic skills. Such data may relate to financial statements, financial flows, tenders, procurement, law, and climate change. • Poorly reported stories in which journalists get the information and use it as it is. These are single-sourced stories. Often, facts are not vigorously verified.
Threats to credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using allegations published on social media networks like Facebook and Twitter as news sources. • Reluctance of sources to inform investigative journalists out of fear of being identified and thereafter victimised. • Inability to verify online information. • The spread of fake news online, and the inability of an ordinary news consumer to differentiate credible investigative stories from fake news. • False information spread (publicly and privately) by prominent personalities. • Outright conspiracy theories.
Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely male-dominated investigative units. • Slow media transformation. Investigative journalists are portrayed on public platforms as representing certain sections of society and not the interest of the public in general. Lack of diversity in media ownership is also a challenge that politicians exploit in discrediting the work of investigative journalists.
Problematic relationships with sources and the subjects of investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acrimonious relationship with government. • Subjects of investigations are hostile. • Thuggery (crime). This is coupled with a lack of protection for whistle-blowers. • Intimidation of journalists that takes many forms.
Barriers to information gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials invoke <i>sub judice</i> rule on matters that had already served before a court. This is done in order to refuse to be held to account by the media. Sometimes officials use bureaucracy as a means to hide information or as a means to avoid giving responses. • Hiding information through government means, like classification of documents. Legal recourse to have this information declassified involves a costly court process that takes long. • Gatekeeping by government spokespeople by buying time for principals, blocking access to principals, push back and telling journalists what questions to ask. • The proposed Secrecy Bill.

5.3.7 Theme 7: Skills and resources required for the future of investigative journalism

According to the study's participants, investigative journalism requires a multiplicity of skills. P7 says a good working knowledge of several things, like the law, basic principles of accounting, ICT skills and insight into the dynamics of the country, are vital in forensic investigations. According to P8, all journalists, including investigative journalists, need to be knowledgeable on how to gather data online: "We need to get journalists online doing forensic research, being able to work with volumes of data. Online is a whole new world that today's journalists find themselves in." P8 suggests that a distinction should be made between investigations into political scandals and forensic investigations which may not necessarily require the same skills.

In relation to ICT capability, participants say journalists have no option but to adapt to the uses of technology. P5 highlights online security as something that investigative journalists need to adjust to: "Everything evolves around technology; we should learn to live digitally." P8 says adjusting to technology is urgent for older journalists who may have had to do investigative stories online. Investigations today could be completed without having to step out of the office, a situation the participant likened to working in a world that is not there (as opposed to the real world). P9 agrees and says in the olden days journalists never had Google or smartphones.

Another matter for the future that emerged from the interview data is the need to prepare journalists at local municipal level for investigative journalism. P2 says this is essential for the future of investigative journalism in South Africa: "Little attention is given to local municipality issues." P6 says there is a need to equip and train journalists working in community media to have an investigative state of mind: "The *Daily Dispatch* has always been doing investigative work. It is proof that if we go to local councils, more corruption will be curtailed."

P1 warns that there are many instances of corruption and wrongdoing and that investigative journalists cannot explore everything. There are too few investigative journalists, and too few publications that can carry out this work. According to P1, which investigative stories to do should be decided by judging the material difference a story will make in people's lives. P4 says the fewer investigative journalists there are, means corruption at local level goes unattended.

We do not have resources to cover these investigations. Bad governance and good governance start at the top. If the top sets a bad example, it filters all the way down. If you manage to produce some accountability at the top, that message will filter down. (P4)

P10 says the modern journalism requires media houses to build brands using content that readers can be proud of. P8 says there has to be a compact with readers if the future of investigative journalism is to be sustained. “Instead of chasing clicks, we must build brands. If you do the kind of journalism that depends on clips, you are bound to publish lies,” says P10.

5.4 Discussion of findings

This discussion of findings is located within the theoretical framework of the study, as discussed in Chapter 3. The central theoretical departure point of this study is that investigative journalists describe their professional role according to specific normative guidelines and expectations in order to articulate their social responsibility towards society (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2). The main question the study seeks to answer is: How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view and describe their role in democratic South Africa?

Vos (2017:43) states that normative roles help journalists make sense of complex events and interpret them for the reader. Participants in this study believe the long-term goal of performing journalistic roles is to protect citizens from malfeasance. Theme 1 reveals a shift in how investigative journalists conceptualise their role. The normative function of the media is informing the public, but these investigative journalists regard holding power to account as their primary role. Rollwagen *et al.* (2019) note a similar shift and say that people no longer need to rely on the media for information. Similarly, Ornebring (2017:75) notes the shift away from, foremost, informing the public and states that the professional role of journalists is also strongly linked to legitimation and justification of knowledge. Based on the analysis of the interview data, this researcher observes that the role of informing the public, as stipulated in social responsibility theory, is regarded as falling below the role of holding power accountable. The observation is encapsulated in Theme 1 in which the normative focus of

investigative journalists is described as keeping power in check, opposing abuse of power, shining the light on corruption and abuse of power, and demanding accountability.

Normative roles are important because they allow investigative journalists to look into what negatively impacts the public. The participating investigative journalists believe that when state-control mechanisms fail, it has an impact on the public. In Theme 1, the role of investigative journalists is regarded as not only to inform but also investigate, and uphold accountability. Participants believe investigative journalism in this way safeguards democracy, a normative function over and above functions as observed in social responsibility theory. According to Hanitzsch and Vos (2018:151), journalistic roles exist because and as we talk about them. This researcher therefore argues that the sentiment about safeguarding democracy validates the point about journalistic roles not being fixed.

How South African investigative journalists perceive their monitorial roles, as discussed in Theme 1, is consistent with McNair's (2009:244) view that "tough questioning, fearless criticism of falsehoods and mistakes, and readiness to go up against power, are essential attributes of journalism in a democracy". Accountability is classified in Hanitzsch and Vos's (2018) categorisation of roles as monitorial (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3). Investigative journalism is an accountability mechanism. In democracies, performing the role of holding power to account results in confrontation. McNair (2009:245) says those with political power have never been held more to account or been more closely scrutinised in both their public roles and private lives.

The normative and journalistic roles, as highlighted by investigative journalists, could be divided into categories as reflected in Chapter 3, Section 3.3. Vos (2017:52) states that the social formation of journalistic roles also involves the shape of the journalistic field. The multiplicity of the normative roles comes out in Theme 1 in which investigative journalists are described as conduits of exposing secrets that other people are trying to hide.

Investigative journalists do this by exposing information that the participating investigative journalists say is tested for truth, fairness, and due critical interrogation. Hanitzsch and Vos's (2018) categorisation of journalistic roles is reflected by Mellado, Hellmueller and Weaver (2017) who categorise the roles as disseminator, adversarial, populist mobiliser, and interpretive. These researchers regard the interpretive role as the strongest, and say social structures and cultural contexts are important in how journalists see their roles (Mellado *et al.*, 2017:27). This sentiment is observable in South Africa, where the amount of hostility, as reflected in Theme 3, determines and correlates with the type of normative role and category

that the investigative journalists think they play. Theme 4 reveals, for example, that there is reason to be concerned about media freedom in South Africa, and this view correlates with the role investigative journalists believe they play, namely to safeguard democracy.

According to Lohmann and Riedl (2019:217), the bond between journalism and democracy is a widely shared notion.

Investigative journalists' understanding of their role is a negotiation between different expectations among different society members (Mellado *et al.*, 2017). In understanding their role as including scrutiny of both the private and public sector, the investigative journalists confirm the media's watchdog status. This view, as reflected in Theme 1, is sometimes referred to as the media's watchdog role. Vos (2017) describes the media's watchdog role as holding a mirror to government and business. The participating investigative journalists believe if they fail in their watchdog role, members of the public will be deprived of their rights and the private sector will ride roughshod over people. This researcher argues that the watchdog status fits in with the monitorial role, and should anchor the normative role conceptualisation and normative role performance of journalists. This role is also important to perform with regards to the private sector in South Africa, where ownership patterns are "abnormally concentrated" (Buthelezi, Mtani & Mncube, 2018:2). Based on the analysis of interview data, this researcher observes that it is not in the interest of the powerful to be monitored. Analysis for Theme 1 reveals that the natural tendency of power and business is to function unhindered and without oversight. Performing the journalistic role requires an adversarial approach. McNair (2009:244) states that the adversarial role is widely regarded as a normative characteristic of journalism in a democracy. In South Africa, investigative journalists regard it as their normative role to make sure that power is exercised with accountability and oversight.

As stated in Chapter 3, Section 3.5, the normative roles of journalists are anchored in social responsibility theory; among them is the duty to interpret events. According to Vos (2017:44), the interpretive role addresses the intended impact of news. Investigative journalists view engaging, analysing, and interpreting complex events as another role they perform. The participating investigative journalists believe that they have a sense of duty to society to interpret what they refer to "as a puzzle" (P7). According to Petley (2012:531), new journalists should be asked to think about what their role as journalists would be and particularly the power that journalists have once they are actually working.

Theme 2 shows that in performing their roles, investigative journalists also fulfil a social function, which in literature has come to be regarded as social responsibility. Middleton (2009), for example, explains that social responsibility occurs at four levels: the audiences, government, proprietors, and the media themselves. This study is mostly concerned with social responsibility's insistence on acting in the public good. According to Merrill (1989:53), this kind of social responsibility is a challenge because finding a proper balance of perspectives, and knowing what is useful or beneficial and what is useless or harmful is an impossible objective. Merrill (1989:51) states that one must remember that society is not always right in its expectations or desires, and sometimes a journalist must make decisions based on their own values, not on what society seems to want. "So, the journalist must determine who has priority, or which responsibility is most urgent," states Merrill (1989:53). This view is confirmed by the thinking revealed by the investigative journalists that journalists are by nature liberal and idealistic.

Theme 1 and Theme 2 reveal that holding people accountable and social responsibility cannot be separated, as both constitute normativity for journalism. Another view that Theme 2 confirms, is that public interest and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive in the execution of journalistic roles. Investigative journalists in South Africa undertake investigations that are beneficial to poor people. The participating investigative journalists believe that the benefit is quantifiable in monetary terms and that a lack of accountability means losing money that could have improved services. This researcher submits that the benefits derived are the social-responsibility value of investigative journalism. Christians and Nordenstreng (2004:14) state that without commitment to this kind of social responsibility, the media as a social institution can be co-opted by professional privilege and self-interested power. This researcher argues that understanding and commitment to fulfil social responsibility in South Africa help investigative journalists to not be exploited and that they stick to the normative roles as detailed under Theme 1. In fact, investigative journalists are committed to the monitorial role of working towards exposing more corruption, even if that means being personally exposed to attacks. Jakubowicz and Sukosd (2008) caution that politicians will always seek to undermine the media and thereby compromise the vision of fulfilling social responsibility.

In similar vein, the participating investigative journalists caution that in taking on social responsibility, investigative journalists should avoid partisan debates. The view is corroborated by McNair (2009:239), who states that journalists should strive to be as neutral

and detached as possible. This researcher shares the view that neutrality should be a guiding principle and that the tendency should be to undertake journalistic function in support of the poor. A commitment should be made to protect the public from irresponsible reporting, but, equally, truthfulness must prevail in reporting investigations and findings. Theme 2 highlights that investigative journalists consider it their social responsibility to sustain democracy and encourage responsible citizenship. For example, the participating investigative journalists say that evidence should not be attained using unlawful means if one is acting to fulfil social responsibility. The investigative journalists, for instance, believe that journalists cannot report on the tax affairs of other people if their personal tax affairs are not in order. Merrill (1989:40) states that what is good for society is good for the journalist, and what is good for the journalist is good for society. McNair (2009:245) adds that issues of trust, personal morality, and honesty are important for responsible reporting.

Despite the challenges investigative journalists face in South Africa, investigative journalists still think about their social responsibility when performing investigative work. This is the context in which the participating investigative journalists understand threats. The occurrence of physical intimidation aimed against investigative journalists is consistent with views that investigative journalism is hostile (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1). Theme 3 shows that threats can be physical but also manifest in other ways. The participating investigative journalists, as also reflected in Theme 3, cite threats to litigate as frequent and mostly in the form of lawyers' letters. Wahl-Jorgensen *et al.* (2016:801) refer to the threats that the profession faces as "ever-increasing turbulence". "The risks and threats stem from geopolitical changes as well as a perceived loss of neutrality for journalists," state Wahl-Jorgensen *et al.* (2016:801). The participating investigative journalists say that the subjects of investigations are aware of what they are doing by threatening journalists and that such actions are intentional. These investigative journalists believe, for example, that litigation threats are used so that people can hide behind the *sub judice* rule, which is not provided for in the legal system in South Africa. Van Rooyen (2014) states that South Africa no longer has a jury system, and that the possibility of influencing lay people involved in a court case (the basis upon which the rule was used) does not exist.

Another form of threats manifest on social media platforms, targeting mostly female journalists. A study of 102 female technology journalists, found that the internet and social media exacerbate the problem of harassment (Adams, 2018). According to Adams (2018:851), sexist abuse is negatively impacting journalism and society. Theme 3 reveals that

this form of threat is pervasive in South Africa and that most of the participating investigative journalists are irritated by it. These investigative journalists are unable to explain why female investigative journalists are targeted, but acknowledge that this is a trend. This researcher observes from the interview data that the ferocity with which the work of investigative journalists is countered on social media, is an indication of the realisation that social media is an important way to reach and influence the public. This researcher therefore argues that because social media is a significant role player in communication intended to influence the public it will remain contested between journalists and politicians. The contestation is likely to result in manipulation of the media terrain, as identified in Theme 5.

Theme 5 identifies the manipulation of investigative journalism as a challenge. According to Rollwagen *et al.* (2019:463), the potential influence can amount to subtle impediments to journalists' freedom to live up to their ideals. The participating investigative journalists point to the false *Sunday Times* "rogue unit" stories, saying that such reporting has the potential to compromise the trust people have in investigative journalists. This researcher argues that the influence varies according to the interests of those involved in leaking information. Theme 5 reveals that leaking information has to do with a feeling of victimhood and a change in political fortune. Wahl-Jorgensen *et al.* (2016) state that mainstream media news is dominated by elite sources, like politicians and their spokespersons. "This has not changed despite the emergence of social media and other technologies that facilitate and broaden participation," these researchers state. This researcher agrees with the participating investigative journalists that investigative journalists should approach their work with an open mind and that they need to find and expose the true agenda of sources.

This researcher believes media freedom is a complex phenomenon in South Africa. The country is relatively safe for investigative journalists, compared to other African countries (see Chapter 2, Section 2.7). The complexity arises because freedom of expression is upheld and constitutionally guaranteed, but, as Theme 4 reveals, some government officials seek to muzzle the media. Theme 4 reveals that challenges that besieged press freedom happened during Zuma's presidency. The participating investigating journalists cite the stalled Secrecy Bill and the ANC's proposed Media Appeals Tribunal. Plaut (2018:155) states that Zuma's attitude towards the media differed from those of the first two democratically elected presidents and that his approach to the media "mirrored the apartheid government". The participating investigative journalists believe the era immediately after 1994 came to be the foundation of the freedom that this country's media enjoyed. These investigative journalists

believe South African journalists should be grateful, because their freedom is not curtailed as is the case in other African countries (Plaut, 2018). Wasserman (2010:574) introduces an ideological angle to the press freedom debate, saying that critical intermediaries on the left are not convinced that press freedom is beneficial to the poor majority of South Africans. This researcher argues that press freedom should not be subjected to ideological arguments except for social responsibility, which investigative journalists fulfil to the benefit of the poor. The participating investigative journalists reflect that, although the media in South Africa still operates freely, there is reason to be concerned. Theme 4 reveals that the banning of journalists from events and the attacks on journalists led by organisations like the EFF and BLF⁸ (Black First Land First) threaten press freedom in South Africa.

Furthermore, Theme 4 reveals that the threats against and attacks on the media are coupled with a lack of access to official information. This researcher argues that a conducive legislative framework is a dichotomy, if the lack of access to official information remains a challenge. The participating investigative journalists indicate that PAIA and the Companies Act are often invoked to force government and private companies to reveal information. Theme 4 reveals that the lack of access to official information frustrates the work of these investigative journalists. The lack of access to official documents is coupled with the absence of legislation that protects the whistle-blowers. Almania (2017) acknowledges this challenge, saying the lack of legislation that protects the public limits investigative reporting. The participating investigative journalists share this view and say whistle-blowers are crucial to their works.

This discussion of the interview data was used to answer the general and the specific research questions of the study as reflected in Chapter 6.

5.5 Summary

This chapter presented a review of methodology. Discussion of the data gathered through the semi-structured interviews was done. Through this analysis, it became apparent that the participating investigative journalists are highly conscious of their normative roles. The presentation of interview data means that seven broad themes were developed. The themes are: the role played by investigative journalists, the public-interest and social-responsibility

⁸ BLF is a splinter movement founded by Andile Mgxitama after he was fired from the EFF.

value of investigative journalism, the prevalence of diversion and intimidation tactics, access to information and media freedom in South Africa, investigations' susceptibility to manipulation, challenges to investigative journalism in South African, and the skills and resources required for the future of investigative journalism.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore how South African investigative journalists view their role and responsibility to society. It focused on three specific investigative units, namely News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio.

In this concluding chapter, this researcher uses the findings from the semi-structured interviews with investigative journalists at these units to answer the research questions set out in Chapter 1. Firstly, chapter summaries are provided, followed by answers to the specific and general research questions. The limitations of the study are acknowledged and the contribution of the research to the academic field is described. Some suggestions are also made for future research.

6.2 Brief summary of the study

6.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The broad rationale for the study is premised on anecdotal evidence of the assaults directed at investigative journalists in South Africa. In Chapter 1, the research problem was delineated to focus on the roles and responsibilities of investigative journalists within this hostile climate. There is an apparent lack of academic literature on investigative journalism in the context of South Africa, despite the country's long tradition of investigative journalism. Key terms employed in this study were defined, including investigative journalism, journalistic role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory. An introduction was also provided to the theoretical framework (discussed in detail in Chapter 3). This chapter also set out the study's problem statement and the research questions related to the work of investigative journalists in South Africa. This approach set out for this study aimed to offer insights on the issues facing investigative journalists in South Africa from the perspective of the people who practise investigative journalism.

6.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

After a careful search on academic databases, it was found that there was a dearth of literature on how investigative journalists view and describe their role – especially within the

South African context. In order to indicate how this study would aim to fill this gap, the role of investigative journalism in society was examined, looking specifically at investigative journalists as truth-tellers who fulfil a public interest. The challenges that journalists confront when carrying out this work was also discussed. In countries in the Global South, investigative journalism challenges are mostly of a financial nature and are characterised by violence. This chapter also discussed the state of investigative journalism in South Africa's landscape.

6.2.3 Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

In this chapter the central theoretical departure point of this study was described thus: Investigative journalists describe their professional role according to specific normative guidelines and expectations in order to articulate their social responsibility to society. Therefore, the theories to study the phenomenon had to be aligned with the origins and evolution of the normative roles of the media. The concepts of normative role conceptualisation and social responsibility theory were combined as a theoretical framework to study what appears to be an under-researched phenomenon in the South African context.

6.2.4 Chapter 4: Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design to study and interpret humans' experiences of their social reality, i.e. how investigative journalists view and describe their role. Purposive sampling was used and 20 investigative journalists and investigations editors at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio's investigative units were approached. Data from 13 investigative journalists who participated in the study was collected using the semi-structure interviews. Key considerations in choosing the research sites were that the investigative unit needed to be staffed and functioning, but also that the media houses needed to be subscribed members to industry regulatory mechanisms like the South African Press Code and the Press Council. Semi-structured telephonic and email interviews were conducted. Methodological risks and challenges encountered during the data collection phase were outlined in this chapter. The use of thematic analysis was also explained.

6.2.5 Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings

Themes that were used as the analytical framework for the interview data were identified and discussed in this chapter (see Chapter 5, Table 5.1). The themes are: the role played by investigative journalists, the public-interest and social-responsibility value of investigative journalism, the prevalence of diversion and intimidation tactics, access to information and

media freedom in South Africa, investigations' susceptibility to manipulation, challenges to investigative journalism in South Africa, and skills and resources required for the future of investigative journalism. This chapter explained how, after a careful reading of the interview data, thematic analysis was done. Findings derived from the thematic analysis were presented and discussed.

6.3 Response to research questions

In this section, the findings presented and discussed in Chapter 5 are used to answer the specific and general research questions.

6.3.1 Specific research questions

The study aimed to answer three specific research questions as set out below.

RQ1: What do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio believe are their rights and responsibilities?

The investigative journalists believe that it is their democratic right to have access to official information and documents, and subsequently publish what is deemed to be in the public interest. However, most of the investigative journalists say that although investigative journalism is often dependent on access to official documents, access is sometimes denied. The investigative journalists also believe that journalists need to work in a free society, and that they should be free to publish information. They describe it as their responsibility to point out the connection between public money and political power, particularly in instances where power is abused. The responsibilities of investigative journalists include pointing out when government has not honoured its commitment to the public. According to investigative journalists, their responsibility is therefore to first report and then play a guardian role on behalf of society.

RQ2: How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio describe their social responsibility in society?

The investigative journalists believe that in the normative context, performing their monitorial and facilitative journalistic roles is a social responsibility. Investigative journalists

understand that they are fulfilling their social responsibility when they undertake investigations. Investigative journalists believe that the public interest and social responsibility are inseparable in the practice of investigative journalism. The public interest is a key determinant in decisions investigative journalists make. The interconnectedness of the livelihoods of people makes conducting investigations a journalistic social responsibility. Social responsibility as described by investigative journalists, therefore, is to reveal to the public what is hidden and that which negatively impacts people's lives. According to the investigative journalists, performing the normative roles constitute social responsibility. Investigative journalists believe that they need to contribute to democracy and the improvement of poor people's lives.

RQ3: What challenges do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio face when doing their work?

Although challenges besieging investigative journalism in South Africa are many, according to the investigative journalists these challenges mainly centre on the lack of financial resources. The investigative journalists say the scarcity of financial resources affects what they are paid, and the fact that many publications cannot afford to hire them. The financial challenges are further coupled with costs that are associated with litigation and the hiring of lawyers to defend legal threats. The lack of access to official documents is another challenge felt by investigative journalists. Although press freedom is guaranteed in South Africa, attempts are made to frustrate the availability to investigative journalists of necessary information. Linked to withholding information, according to the investigative journalists, is the manipulation of journalists by providing them with misinformation. Information is leaked with the intention to control what the investigative journalists describe as the narrative. The investigative journalists identify intimidation, physical threats, and lawyers' letters as other challenges. Intimidation manifests as attacks in cyberspace, especially against female investigative journalists. The absence of a legislative framework from which investigations by journalists derive legitimacy, is the reason some subjects of investigations are dismissive of the role of the media. Other challenges that are not newsroom-related include the absence of legislation that protects whistle-blowers in South Africa, and the lack of digital skills among investigative journalists.

6.3.2 General research question

How do investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio view and describe their role in democratic South Africa?

South African investigative journalists understand their role as encompassing holding power accountable, exposing corruption, and being advocates for social justice and representatives of the poor. Investigative journalists identify holding public officials accountable as their primary role and believe that they do this by asking difficult questions. Investigative journalists' belief that their role and responsibility is to hold the powerful to account relates to their view that they should check and report on abuses of power. In South Africa, there have been decisions by people in power that have resulted in great harm to South Africans and the South African economy, and yet powerful people are unwilling to explain their decisions. The need for accountability is not only placed on government officials but also extends to business people. In the course of performing these roles, investigative journalists come into conflict with public and private officials. The role of ensuring ethical and honest living by those entrusted with responsibilities is not based on any law, but rather a commitment to the public.

Exposing corruption is another role investigative journalists identify with. Investigative journalists who perform this role have brought to light the real value of investigative journalism to South Africans. This important function ensures protection of the public against malfeasance. The corruption-busting role of investigative journalists has been validated at the ongoing Commission of Inquiry into State Capture⁹, where revelations have been made that corroborate the work of investigative journalists over the years. The allegations of state corruption have been coupled with collusion with big firms that pocketed billions for their collusion. Investigative journalism has necessitated action from the law-enforcement agencies who failed to deal with corruption in the first instance. Investigative journalists also believe that safeguarding democracy is their responsibility. They do this by opposing excesses of the state and also advocating for social justice matters.

Collectively, these roles are performed to achieve the welfare of society by eliminating and reducing the accountability gap. If rigorously pursued, as has happened in South Africa, these

⁹ The Commission of Inquiry into State Capture was established after a recommendation by the former Public Protector to investigate the malfeasance of the state.

normative roles are beneficial to the public, because public funds are spent for the purposes they are allocated for.

6.4 Contribution of study

The study contributes to other qualitative studies on journalistic role conceptualisation. This methodological contribution delved into a specific genre of journalism, namely investigative journalism. The combination of theories can serve as a model of how different theories are applied in answering academic research questions. While normative role conceptualisation helped with understanding how investigative journalists think of their role, social responsibility theory spelt out what those roles are. The understanding derived was applied to investigative journalism, which is a specific field within a broader field in the South African context. The specific significance of this study is that it offers insights from a Global South perspective.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The study is exploratory and does not seek to generalise findings in the broader investigative landscape in the country. The inclusion of freelance or retired investigative journalists in the sample would have contributed insightful input and also broadened the perspective of the study. It would be interesting to hear many more voices on investigative journalism, but that was not possible for practical reasons. It remains a possibility for future studies. Intensive research on normative role conception in a country where the media's role is not clearly articulated, and is sometimes challenged, needs time, scope, and resources.

6.6 Overall conclusion

Investigative journalism is an effective and highly specialised form of journalism that strives to ensure accountability. It is noticeable that the roles of investigative journalists have evolved beyond informing the public. That evolution of roles, which investigative journalists are conscious of, resulted in them having to do much more, prior and post an investigation.

In South Africa, there are too few investigative journalists, but execution of the normative roles brings about a degree of credibility. People who threaten journalists rarely make use of

the relevant platforms available for resolving matters that concern the conduct of journalists. The lack of financial resources persists into the future, and that makes the need to adapt to technology more urgent. New business models are required to make the media viable, even if it means using new platforms. Despite the challenges, investigative journalists still regard public interest as a key determinant of whether or not to investigate. The media is free to publish in South Africa, but their freedom is not balanced with enabling legislation to access official information. In fulfilling their role, investigative journalists are therefore hindered by the lack of access to information. A legislative regime that protects whistle-blowers, whom investigative journalists describe as essential to investigative journalism, is also necessary. In the final instance, this study therefore concludes that investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio understand their role in democratic society to be shining the light on state secrets and abuses of power. Investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane, and Scorpio believe that their roles of hold the powerful to account, advocating for social justice and exposing corruption contribute to the welfare of society.

6.7 Suggestions for future research

This study has paved the way for further research into the role and responsibilities of investigative journalists in the Global South, and in South Africa specifically. It has also highlighted the need for more exploration into this specialised reporting field. Future research could, for instance, look at:

- Examining not only the post-colonial theories and the practice of investigative journalism, but also journalism studies in the context of digital tools used in investigative journalism;
- How media platforms at local level handle investigations that concern the local municipalities, and what kind of investigations they do and with what impact; and
- Aligning journalism training, particularly investigative journalism training, to the modern reality of unabated corruption. Areas of focus could be on basic financial literacy, understanding contracts, procurement, tendering and even criminal law, forensic data analysis, and digital studies.

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Addendum A: University ethics approval



NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

27 May 2020

Project number: 14564

Project Title: An exploration into the role conceptions of investigative journalists at News24, amaBhungane and Scorpio

Dear Mr Sibongile Maputi

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 30 March 2020 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
27 May 2020	26 May 2023

SUSPENSION OF PHYSICAL CONTACT RESEARCH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown measures, all research activities requiring physical contact or being in undue physical proximity to human participants has been suspended by Stellenbosch University. Please refer to a [formal statement](#) issued by the REC: SBE on 20 March for more information on this.

This suspension will remain in force until such time as the social distancing requirements are relaxed by the national authorities to such an extent that in-person data collection from participants will be allowed. This will be confirmed by a new statement from the REC: SBE on the university's dedicated [Covid-19 webpage](#).

Until such time online or virtual data collection activities, individual or group interviews conducted via online meeting or web conferencing tools, such as Skype or Microsoft Teams are strongly encouraged in all SU research environments.

If you are required to amend your research methods due to this suspension, please submit an amendment to the REC: SBE as soon as possible. The instructions on how to submit an amendment to the REC can be found on this webpage: [\[instructions\]](#), or you can contact the REC Helpdesk for instructions on how to submit an amendment: aplyethics@sun.ac.za.

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

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

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (14564) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

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.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

Addendum B: News24 permission

Sibongile Maputi

From: Pieter Du Toit <PDuToit@24.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 18 February 2020 12:38
To: Sibongile Maputi
Subject: Re: PERMISSION REQUEST TO INCLUDE IN THE STUDY NEWS24 INVEGATIVE JOURNALISTS

Permission granted — I look forward to assist you.

Sent from my iPhone

On 18 Feb 2020, at 12:27, Sibongile Maputi <smaputi@parliament.gov.za> wrote:

Attention: Mr P Du Toit (Investigations Editor News24.com)

My name is Sibongile Maputi. I am conducting a study on the role of investigative journalism in SA.

My working title is: Personal role conceptualisation: how investigative journalists in SA see their role. This is in partial completion for my MA Journalism thesis with the University of Stellenbosch.

The intended study will primarily focus on three sites: News24, DM's Scorpio, and Amabhungane. These are without a doubt the pockets of excellence over the years.

This is to request permission to use News24 Investigations Unit as one of the study sites. I am doing this well aware of the challenges of time and confidentiality for investigative journalists. Issues of time worried Adriaan but he said I should speak to you.

I am hoping to conduct telephonic interviews with the Joburg and Durban colleagues, and I do not anticipate to spend longer than 45 minutes with a participant. Of course this is subject to availability.

If permission is granted it will accompany the Thesis Proposal to be submitted on Friday.

The is required before the university vet the questions I will ask participants. The questions will centre on: personal experiences for investigative journalists in SA, the role of investigative journalism, and ethical challenges they confront.

Once the questions are approved, they will be forwarded to you and research participants ahead of scheduled interviews.

Your help is highly appreciated Pieter.

Addendum C: amaBhungane permission



amaBhungane
Centre for Investigative Journalism

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41 Salt River Rd
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7925

For the attention of Dr Marenet Jordaan

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that Sibongile Maputi is conducting a study on the role of investigative journalism in society. This is in partial completion for his MA Journalism thesis with the University of Stellenbosch.

This letter confirms that Mr Maputi has been granted permission to speak to me, Sam Sole, co-managing partner of amaBhungane, during 2020.

I trust this is in order

Regards

SP Sole

Addendum D: Daily Maverick permission



The Daily Maverick (Pty) Ltd
Co Reg: 2009/015341/07
3rd Floor, Workshop17
32 Kloof Street
Gardens
Cape Town
8001

11 February 2020

To Whom it may concern

This is to confirm that Stellenbosch master's Student Sibongile Maputi has been granted permission by the editor in chief Branko Brkic to speak to investigative journalists at Daily Maverick's Scorpio for the duration of 2020 – that is if they are willing to participate.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heard".

JANET HEARD
DAY EDITOR
CAPE TOWN

Addendum E: Semi-structured interview questions

The questions in respect of participants from News24.com, amaBhungane, and Scorpio:

How do you view and describe your role as an investigative journalist in democratic South Africa?

How would you characterise your role in the context of South Africa and democracy?

Can you mention, either as success or failures, that qualifies investigative journalists as watchdogs in SA?

Motivate why, investigative journalists should be regarded as serving public interest?

In the context of their role, how should investigative journalists handle pressure, from subjects of their investigations?

What adjustments has there be on how you do your work, as a result of how people react to your work?

What is your understanding of the acceptance towards the investigative work of journalists in SA today?

What do you believe your rights and responsibilities in SA are?

What do you consider to be impediments and hindrances to investigative journalism in South Africa?

How are these impediments impacting on your role?

How do you understand, and explain what seems to be targeting of investigative journalists in SA?

What test is used on deciding investigations, and how does it enhance your role?

What ethical challenges are investigative journalists confronted with when carrying out investigations?

How would you counter pessimism around objectivity and independence of investigative journalists in South Africa? If you could also address personal bias.

How should journalists react when they are called names, threatened or assaulted?

How can and how should investigative journalists guard against outside influences?

How can journalists ensure ethical conduct especially when deciding on stories?

What defence mechanisms are there for journalists' investigative work from outside influence?

Addendum F: Participants' consent letter



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear

My name is, Sibongile Maputi, and I am an MA Journalism student, at the University of Stellenbosch. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled:

An exploration into the role conceptions of investigative journalists at News24.com, amaBhungane and Scorpio

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study, seeks to establish how South African investigative journalists based at amaBhungane, Scorpio, and News24.com understand their role. But also seeks to establish what challenges these investigative journalists come across.

The study requires no information on your investigative work, and the subjects of such work.

The study is purely an academic paper that seeks to enrich future research into investigative journalism, from the perspective of South African journalists. Participation into the study is voluntary.

Data from the interviews will be handled with care. Codes, only understood by the researcher and the participant, will be devised and used to mark the input. This is to ensure anonymity in line with the confidentiality guarantee.

If for any reason, you wish to withdraw while data is being collected, you are free to do so. If this happens, your input will not be used and will be erased from the record and this will have no negative impact on you.

Your input is highly valued and will assist the future academic enquiry on this field.

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

Cell no: 081 052 6060

Work: 021 403 8041

Email: maputis@gmail.com

OR:

Alternative written consent template. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017

Addendum G: Declaration on language editing

I, Magriet Pienaar, hereby declare that I have personally read through the research assignment of Sibongile Maputi, and have highlighted language errors.

Yours sincerely

M Pienaar

28 February 2021