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JOURNALISM CULTURE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. To date, there has been no holistic study of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. A nine month ethnographic study was conducted to observe the journalism culture within six newsrooms focusing on three newspapers and three television stations. In addition, ninety-three in depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists who worked within those newsrooms to find out how they perceived and performed their roles and defined their own culture. Through these methods, journalism culture came to be understood as discursive field where numerous contradictory elements struggled, ebbed and flowed, such as a journalist's intention to uphold the public interest and their simultaneous acceptance of inducements and engagement in political clientelism to make ends meet. Other pertinent research findings show that that editors and investigative journalists felt the chill of media laws rather than regular journalists as they were either ignorant of the laws or did not care about them, relying on their editors to vet their work. These regular journalists felt the economic chill of advertisers and other financial contributors more than the legal chill, causing them to self censor their work. Risk of reprisals in the newsroom as well as by those they cover, were also identified as deterrents to reporting freely. Through this investigation into journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, a new professional milieu emerged: the controlled watchdog.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1:1 Background of the study

In the year 2000, I was a youth columnist for a local newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago. One afternoon, my editor told me that they were asked to change a story because the board of directors found that it could cause a problem for the newspaper, that the subject of the story might sue or pull advertising. My editor was given a choice, to toe the line and stay on with the company or to leave if they refused.

Unfortunately, this occurrence is not uncommon. Trinidad and Tobago is a small island and its size defines certain characteristics (Örnebring & Lauk, 2010). The population is 1.3 million (Britannica, 2022) and there are only six major media houses which print and broadcast original news daily that their journalists have gone out and covered: TV 6 and the Trinidad Express which are owned by the One Caribbean Media conglomerate, CNC3 and the Trinidad Guardian which are owned by the Ansa McAL conglomerate, the Trinidad Newsday which is owned by various individuals and run by a board of directors and Trinidad and Tobago Television, which is owned by the state. Even with this short list, an idea of the media landscape can be formed. With two conglomerates, the state and one financially fragmented media house operating in the same market and geographic location of the capital, Port-of-Spain, media ownership plays an important role in defining journalism culture. Financial priorities based on the ownership structure influence the news eco-system (Storr, 2016) inside of each newsroom and this in turn affects journalist role perception and role performance (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

As exemplified with the story of my editor, journalists also work in an environment of censorship, both coerced and self-imposed. There have also been raids on newsrooms, spying

on journalists and threats made to their lives (RSF, 2017), (RSF, 2016). Even though at the time of this study Trinidad and Tobago was ranked 31st on the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index¹ and journalists do not suffer the horrendous violence of journalists in Mexico², within the small borders of 80 kilometres by 50 kilometres, the close proximity to those they write about leads to fear of reprisals (Gibbings, 2021) which deters not just investigative stories but even general news coverage.

The media landscape is also defined by the outlying element of hybridity which is experienced as a consequence of colonialism and the influence of American media consumption. A mixing of biology, ethnicity and culture (Bhabha, 2004) in a geographically small, modern post colonial landscape where journalists simultaneously are determined to hold the government to account yet rely on advertising to pay their salaries and personal relationships to get inside information, define this culture and makes it unique in the global media landscape.

Added to this is the existence of repressive media laws such as the Libel and Defamation Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014), the Cybercrime Bill (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017), the Data Protection Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011) and the Interception of Communication Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010), which all contain provisions which can put journalists at risk of jail time or having to pay exorbitant damages if found to be in transgression of these laws whilst conducting their regular everyday reporting. These laws have been challenged by the media several times (Trinidad Guardian, 2016), (IFEX, 2018) and (Loop, 2018) as the lack of a public interest clause restrains their work.

¹ See <https://rsf.org/en/trinidad-and-tobago>

² Mexico has been named one of the deadliest countries for journalists with over 120 journalists being killed since 2000. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/22/mexico-journalists-deadly-cpr-press-freedom>

The initial inspiration for this research came from a hypothesis that media laws affected journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. This notion was based on a Caribbean wide project driven by the International Press Institute (IPI). In 2013, the IPI visited different countries across the region to advocate for the repeal of defamation laws, stating that their existence compromised the reality of a free press (International Press Institute, 2014).

However, as further preliminary research was conducted, a more pertinent question arose – What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? To even understand how media laws would affect that culture, knowing how historical, societal, cultural, economic and political elements affected the culture was indispensable. Therefore, the thesis was refocused to understand journalism culture holistically. Media laws are no longer the key element but rather one of the elements which define the culture in addition to a broad range of societal, economic, cultural, political and historical factors.

1:2 Scope of the study

The title for this thesis is ‘Journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago’. Within this small, unique, hybrid media landscape, the journalistic field is unique and has not yet been studied in this in-depth manner, especially in relation to all of the abovementioned issues such as political clientelism, coerced and self-imposed censorship, repressive media laws and fear of reprisals. This thesis will reveal the nature of these relationships and their impact upon the local journalism culture.

Within this study, role perception and role performance (Hanitzsch, 2017) are used to define how journalists see themselves, their role and how they must carry out that role in their particular newsroom. Of course, how journalists perceive their roles as well as how they

perform those roles depends on certain factors such as power distance which includes political clientelism (Storr, 2016) and parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), the level of interventionism, market orientation (Hanitzsch, 2007) and media logic (Chadwick, 2013) of the newspaper industry.

In a broader sense, the aim of this study is to help researchers, policy makers and practitioners better understand the journalism culture within the country, the environments journalists work within and the types of power structures they must navigate.

Therefore, in terms of scope, this thesis aims:

- a. To define journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago.
- b. To understand the nature of the job from the perspective of a working journalist, further grasping how they perceive their role and how they execute it.
- c. To foster a greater understanding of journalists and the environment within which they work.

When discussing the scope of this thesis, the wider impact of defining a model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago must also be acknowledged. Trinidad and Tobago is a British post colonial nation like many of its fellow Caribbean islands. Therefore, it shares a similar history as well as present day practices with regards to the systems of education, law and politics. Many of these islands also share similar population statistics as well as ethnic distribution, all key elements within the journalistic field. Therefore, defining a model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago might be more widely applied to Caribbean states with the same British post colonial history, positionality and development factors, providing opportunities for further comparison and study on regional and global levels as well as policy

creation in regards to press freedom. Going even further, this new model may even be applicable to other crown colonies outside the region with similar population statistics.

This will be expounded on further in the Conclusion chapter where contribution to literature and opportunities for further research are outlined.

1:3 Thesis Questions

This thesis seeks to answer the question:

RQ1: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

To answer this question two other research questions need to be asked:

- a1. What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?
- a2. How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?

1:4 Significance of research

Within the field of journalism studies, there is very little research published on the Caribbean, even less specifically on Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, most of the research on Caribbean journalism focuses on two things: economics and technology. However, investigation into what defines the role perception and role performance of journalists in a complete study has not been achieved.

Caribbean scholars speak about draconian and archaic media laws, media ownership, self and imposed censorship, a culture of secrecy and they do acknowledge that it has had an impact on journalists. However, most of this research has been done either as an overview which includes various Caribbean islands or has not been carried out in a qualitative or quantitative way with the goal of answering the question: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

This is the significance of this research and the gap it fills. Through a mixed methodology of dedicated ethnographic study - spent observing journalists performing their roles within the ecosystem of their media house - as well as the execution of thorough, semi-structured interviews, the answer to the thesis question was discovered.

By observing the effect of and speaking about the aforementioned draconian and archaic media laws, media ownership, self and imposed censorship, a culture of secrecy, proximity to locus of power, the impact of education, training and media regulation, this thesis has been able to establish a model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

1:5 Chapter Summary

There are 10 chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 1 introduces the research project, giving context and background, outlining the research questions and methodology and serves as a general foundation for the thesis.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework of this thesis. Within the section on journalism culture, this study explores the theories of the professional milieus of (Hanitzsch, 2011), the connection between media systems and politics as outlined by (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) as well as the hybrid theory hypothesis of (Chadwick, 2013). Bourdieu's field theory is utilised as a foundational concept in the understanding of the "journalistic field" (Bourdieu, 1993). In the media law section, the ideas of (Barendt, et al., 1997) on the direct and structural chill and the postulation of (Schauer, 1975) on the benign and invidious chill are utilised to establish a framework for the present day chilling effect in local journalism culture. More contemporary literature by (Fahy, 2017; Bedi, 2021) examine how social media regulations have a chilling effect on free speech and more expansive definitions of the concept are also discussed. The works of (Ledgister, 2016; Storr, 2016; Beckford, 1972; Deosaran, 1987; Lent, 1991) are discussed within the post-colonial theory section and are critical in forming a Caribbean understanding of the effects of colonialism on society today.

Chapter 3 consists of the literature review, discussing relevant scholarly literature on the pillars of the theoretical framework; journalism culture, post colonial theory and media law with a particular focus on the Chilling Effect. This chapter also reveals gaps within the literature and further analyses how this research fills those gaps.

Chapter 4 explains and justifies the choices behind the methodology of this research. This chapter also lays out the research design, sampling and specific mixed methods used to gather data. It also acknowledges my professional experience and training in journalism.

Chapter 5 discusses the media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. All of the elements that impact journalism culture like colonial history, the role of development journalism, media associations, media ownership, training, education, level of media freedom, regulation and media laws, are explored. A thorough knowledge of the media landscape is required to grasp the data gathered from the ethnographic study and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 6 focuses on media laws and outlines five cases that have made an impact on the local journalism culture.

Chapter 7 analyses the ethnographic data within the study. In this chapter, the theoretical framework and knowledge of the media landscape come together to deconstruct the data and make sense of the behaviour and comments of journalists in the study.

Chapter 8 details the dissection of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the journalists in the study. Within these interviews, themes begin to emerge which relate to the theoretical framework and form the basis of a definition for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 9 discusses the main findings, answers the research questions and presents the professional milieu of the controlled watchdog.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by presenting a summary of the research as well as the gaps in knowledge that have been filled. Recommendations for further studies are made.

1:6 Conclusion

Overall, this research is part of a greater conversation on media freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. While external organisations like RSF produce models and measurements from their own experience and points-of-view and promote an index which hopes to capture the world of journalism cultures and rank them on a scale of freedom, more nuanced and detailed elements which are critical to some of those cultures are lost, giving an inaccurate reflection of the media landscape.

In a country where a “culture of secrecy” (Storr, 2016) abounds, where everyone knows everything but refuses to go on record or provide official information despite freedom of access to information laws, the true level of media freedom depends on a complex series of variables which is underscored by an increasingly litigious government panicked by the change from developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019), to more independent coverage ushered in by deregulation.

Therefore, this study will offer two things: a definition of journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago and an unprecedented view into that present day journalism culture discussed and defined by the journalists who work within it, bound by the conditions described earlier.

When these elements have been fully understood, a truer idea of the level of media freedom can be ascertained and all stakeholders can work with more clarity and structure to enhance the

environment for journalists in a way that protects them from draconian laws, censorship and threats to life, thus improving and safeguarding journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2:1 Introduction

The theoretical framework is the foundation of the thesis. The theories presented are the pillars of the research.

Theory provides the language, the concepts, and assumptions that help researchers to make sense of the phenomenon that they seek to investigate. It enables researchers to connect the issues they are investigating to the existing body of knowledge in the area” (Kuada, 2012, p. 64).

Therefore the relation of the theoretical framework to the aims of this thesis must be stated. To recap, the research question which drives this thesis is:

RQ1: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

- a1. What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?
- a2. How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?

Therefore, in terms of scope, this thesis aims:

- a. To define journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago.
- b. To understand the nature of the job of journalism from the perspective of a working journalist, further grasping how they perceive their role and how they execute it.
- c. To foster a greater understanding of journalists and the environment they work within.

The theoretical framework of this thesis must support these aims.

From the research question, it has been established that the key area of research is journalism culture. To delve deeper into journalism culture, an understanding of the national culture and how it has shaped the history of journalism is indispensable. Therefore, the second research area which has to be addressed is the effects of post colonialism as the history and national culture of Trinidad and Tobago is defined by its colonial past. The third area is that of media law. Understanding the contention within the socio-legal aspect of journalism is an important part of defining its overall culture.

Therefore, the core theories which have been utilised in this thesis are Journalistic Role Theory, Post-colonial Theory and the Chilling Effect concept.

2:2 Definition, proponents and application of theories

2:2:1 Journalistic Role Theory

Within this thesis, Hanitzsch's definition of journalistic roles is employed. "By journalistic roles, we refer to particular sets of ideas by which journalists legitimise their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369). Four types of journalistic roles have been identified: normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017) and four professional milieus (Hanitzsch, 2011) are presented.

Proponents

Journalistic Role Theory has evolved from the early perspective of proponents like (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960) on the functions of journalism encompassing "surveillance, correlation, transmission, and entertainment", to the categorisation of "neutral" and "participant" roles (Cohen, 1963). Janowitz also proposed two categorisations similar to that of Cohen's role concepts, the "gatekeeper" and the "advocate" (Janowitz, 1975). The first major empirical

study of journalists in the United States, which was paramount to moving the field forward, was conducted by (Johnstone, et al., 1972). Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) carried on that work and their definition of “disseminator, interpreter, adversarial, and populist mobilizer” was adopted as a foundation for further studies (Weaver, et al., 2007).

In the 1980’s European scholars such as (Donsbach, 1981) and (Köcher, 1986) were pioneers in researching journalistic roles across countries.

The Worlds of Journalism study³ led by Thomas Hanitzsch which recruited researchers from twenty-one countries also investigated cross-national differences.

Application

While it can be said to have its origin in Institutional Theory, that is, the “meso-level variables such as norms, beliefs, values, practices, identities, called institutions, which mediate the relationship between macrostructures such as the economy, politics, law, or journalism, and the micro-level behaviour of actors” (Ryfe, 2006, p. 1), Hanitzsch has now taken the work beyond (Cohen, 1963), (Janowitz, 1975), (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996) and (Weaver, et al., 2007) by discussing journalistic roles as a “shared discourse” (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017), meaning that, “journalistic roles are conceptualised as discursive constructions of journalism’s institutional identity, and as a struggle over discursive authority in conversations about the locus of journalism in society” (Ibid).

³ The Worlds Of Journalism study is an academic project designed to assess the state of journalism in the world today, including journalism culture and the safety of journalists. See <https://worldsofjournalism.org/>.

Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1993) was also utilised as a foundation for this thesis to understand and observe how the ebb and flow as well as a struggle for power between various actors and elements, impact the culture and practice of journalists operating within the field. Bourdieu relates that "The field as a whole is defined as a system of deviations on different levels and nothing, either in the institutions or in the agents, the acts or discourses they produce, has meaning except relationally, by virtue of the interplay of oppositions and distinctions" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 185). Actions within and according to structures of power is not just a "field of forces" but also a "field of struggles" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 30).

As an analytical tool, Bourdieu's work introduced the concept of journalism as a field of different, relational elements. For this researcher, Hanitzsch's work built on that understanding with the development of "discursive constructions" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017) by introducing a process model which accounts for "four distinct conceptual categories—normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated roles" (Ibid). This process model is the frame utilised to examine the data collected from the ethnographic study as well as the semi-structured interviews.

To be clear, Hanitzsch's work on journalism culture and role theory is utilised throughout this thesis whereas the work of Bourdieu was foundational in introducing and understanding the journalistic field which Hanitzsch then builds on.

Journalistic role perception and role performance negotiated within a discursive field provided an opportunity to account for the many variables expressed in semi-structured interviews; variables which influenced the behaviour of journalists with their peers, their editors, media managers as well as external entities.

Consider these discursive elements:

- a. Trinidad and Tobago is a small island state with a population of 1.3 million (Britannica, 2022).
- b. Post colonial considerations: the republic was a British colony for one hundred and sixty years and gained independence in 1962 (Ibid).
- c. It is still a developing country. Political parties have been operating with the expectation of developmental journalism practices, as in, inherent support for government policies (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2018).
- d. Due to the size of the country, anonymity is not often possible and makes the job of journalists very difficult (Storr, 2016), (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2021).
- e. Market changes and deregulation have fostered a more diverse media landscape (Lent, 1991), (Storr, 2016).
- f. Private media ownership has been a factor in the self-censorship of journalists (Gibbings, 2021).
- g. Some journalists do accept bribes and are also partisan (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

These are just some of the elements within the discursive field that are relevant to the formation of a role perception and execution of the role performance of journalists. As stated earlier, Hanitzsch's model process contextualises and situates these elements within that field, proposing how they form or are formed by, affect or are affected by "normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated roles" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

For example, due to the small size of the country as well as the oral traditions (Storr, 2016) of the local communities, information abounds. However, due to fear of reprisals, it is very difficult to get people to go on record (T4, interview with the author, 2018). Even journalists

may be directly related to the subject of the story. Therefore, even though a journalist will conceptually acknowledge the part of role perception where a journalist adheres to objectivity and the pursuit of the truth, this element in the discursive field is dependent upon how many degrees of separation exist between the journalist and the subject of the story, as well as whether their safety from reprisal can be guaranteed. These factors affect their role execution. Within the semi-structured interviews, journalists were asked questions pertaining to their beliefs as to what a journalist should do (role perception) as well as their actual actions (role execution) and particular attention was paid to these points during the ethnographic study.

Hanitzsch's own research does have its limitations as the sample has yet to include Caribbean journalists. However, Hanitzsch's model provides the theoretical framework to be able to qualify and categorise discursive elements to form a deeper understanding of the research material. Also, the professional milieus that (Hanitzsch, 2011) outlines, provide an even greater opportunity to define the journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago. Utilising the theoretical framework to define whether a journalist is a populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent or an opportunist facilitator, a combination of or none of the above, was the main factor in being able to present the findings of this study in terms of a model for journalism in Trinidad and Tobago.

Utilising Hanitzsch's definition that role theory is defined by "particular sets of ideas by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Hanitzsch, 2007), allowed for the opportunity to understand journalists within their own jurisdiction, within their own agency. The "ideas by which journalists legitimise their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Ibid) was not measured against "notions of democracy" (Standaert, et al.,

2021). What journalists believed they would do, what they learned they should do through socialisation and what they actually did, was observed and measured holistically.

Using Journalism Role Theory, the initial aims of creating an outline for journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago and understanding the nature of the job from the perspective of a working journalist was achieved, allowing the study a further grasp of how journalists perceive their role as well as how they execute it.

2:2:2 Post Colonial Theory

Post Colonial Theory, is defined as “a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another...[where] one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control” (Kohn & Reddy, 2017).

Proponents

While there are many proponents of Post Colonial Theory, the works of Caribbean academics and authors were prioritised and utilised because this thesis focuses on the experience of journalists from Trinidad and Tobago, a Caribbean country. Each colonial territory would have experienced their occupation differently and would also have different present day societal impacts. Therefore, it was quite important to engage with the work of regional academics and authors on colonialism. In terms of proponents, the works of George Beckford (Beckford, 1972), Ramesh Deosaran (Deosaran, 1987), Jamaica Kincaid (Kincaid, 1988), Brinsley Samaroo (Samaroo, 2013), Hopeton Dunn (Dunn, 2014), FSJ Ledgister (Ledgister, 2016) and CLR James (James, 2018), were mainly relied upon.

In particular, Beckford's plantation model was central to unpacking the historic power dynamics responsible for the ownership patterns of the Trinidad Guardian as well as the present day aversion to challenging authority.

Wesley Gibbings, a Caribbean journalist with more than three decades of experience, is the previous president of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers as well as a founding member of the Media Institute of the Caribbean. In our semi-structured interview, (Gibbings, interview with author, 2018) shared his opinion on power dynamics, media ownership and how those elements affect local journalists:

[There is] an unwillingness to sort of devolve authority from a centre to the periphery. And it's everywhere...they're essential features of the operations that will always be there, be part of the culture of the place. They're all pretty authoritarian and cantered...there [is] a direct connection between the ownership structures and right down into the content.

Understanding this concept was a key part to framing a deeper understanding of the ethnographic discussions and observations as well as the semi-structured interviews.

Application

The colonial history of Trinidad and Tobago has shaped the national culture of the present day, including the journalism culture. Acknowledging the effects of colonialism and how they impact upon the role perception and role performance of journalists is a major part of understanding the relationship between the media and centres of authority.

The effects of colonialism is an important element within the discursive field of journalism culture. Pertinent to this thesis, the effects include an impact on systems of parliament, law, education, class and race politics, media market deregulation, journalism training and hybridity

(Bhabha, 2004). All of those facets are underscored by the plantation model (Best, 1968; Singham, 1968; Beckford, 1972) which is a pattern of authority and hierarchy evolved from economic organisation which encourages a social structure of “entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships” (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62). Understanding the effects of this plantation model assists in framing the behaviour of journalists, especially towards figures of authority which journalists must cover and hold to account.

Through the lens of this plantation model, particularly the frame of its consequent “psychological dependency” (Beckford, 1972, p. 79) on figures of authority, a profile can be built up to understand the core beliefs and values or, institutions, that a journalist within Trinidad and Tobago would have.

Caribbean countries emerged from a history of extermination, abduction, and abortion, a violent cutting off from original African and indigenous cultures. This four-hundred-year history has left the region with sociological and psychological effects that are visible today. It has produced complex issues of identity and a set of cultural practices that emerged through force and resistance (Storr, 2016, p. 134).

Of course, when exploring post colonialism, one must include anti colonialism, which is “ the struggle against imperial rule in colonised countries” (Elam, 2017, p. 1). How the people challenged their colonial experiences through a history of anti-slavery, amelioration and emancipation, has also formed a part of their national culture and by extension, their journalism culture.

This is why Post Colonial Theory is a pillar of this thesis. It provides the basic elements which give substance to Hantizsch’s normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated roles which account for the professional milieus that define the journalism culture. One theoretical approach is

buoyed by another to create a framework which allows this thesis to translate the data into categorical findings that answer the research question.

Another salient aspect which stems from the colonial history of the nation is the ensuing hybridity of ethnicities, cultures, religions and ways of life. Within this thesis, the work of Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004) meshes with Andrew Chadwick's work on Hybrid Media Systems (Chadwick, 2013) as well as his theory of media logic to make sense of the post colonial hybridity in society. Moreover, Chadwick's work also frames the political and economic elements which contribute to the hybrid media system in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, the influence of American pop culture and broadcast practices through new programming and cable television, played a key role in changing the media landscape. The desire for American broadcast standards were infiltrating the psyche of the general public, putting pressure on journalists and their media houses (Lent, 1991). The resulting hybridity as well as the pressure from the public are also elements in the discursive field which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the main functions of applying Chadwick's theory is to work with the paradoxes of the national culture.

Chadwick develops the term hybridity "as a conscious analytical strategy that enables us to read the details of social phenomena and avoid the social scientist's "boundary fetishism" (Chadwick, 2013, p. 15). If we indeed look at the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago as hybrid phenomena, where we understand that everyday, more and more hybrid interactions are occurring and influencing the national culture and in turn, the journalism culture, ignoring

boundaries or “dichotomous, essentialist, or simply less flexible orientations (Chadwick, 2013, p. 9), we can begin to fully understand the hybrid experience of local journalists.

Semi-structured interviews revealed that there are key paradoxes in the local landscape which shape journalism culture. For example, while citizens demand more investigative journalism, they are themselves unwilling to speak out and hold political elites to account and demand that their democratic rights are upheld due to a fear of reprisals (see full in-depth interview findings in chapter 8). In addition, even though “many journalists describe their relationship between the government and the press as hostile” (Storr, 2016, p. 137), certain politicians favour certain journalists and will only speak with them, providing select scoops and critical information. Therefore the dialectic, not the dichotomous, serves the exploration of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago more. This is why Chadwick’s work is so relevant to this thesis. It illuminates the socio-cultural antecedents (Gibbings, 2021) of the local culture.

2:2:3 The Chilling Effect

The definition for the Chilling Effect utilised in this thesis is based on Schauer’s interpretation.

Although an individual’s decision not to engage in certain behavior may be influenced by a wide range of stimuli, in law the acknowledged basis of deterrence is the fear of punishment-be by fine, imprisonment, imposition of civil liability, or deprivation of governmental benefit. Thus, it is apparent that an individual may be deterred or an activity chilled by the threatened operation of virtually any penal statute or by the potential application of any civil sanction. Indeed, these regulating rules are designed to have this precise effect (Schauer, 1978, p. 689) .

This deterrence represents how local media laws affect journalism culture.

Proponents

The Chilling Effect was first spoken of in (*Wieman v. Updegraff*, 1952) and became a term within the legal landscape before it became a part of academic vernacular. In terms of proponents (Schauer, 1978; Barendt, et al., 1997; Weaver, et al., 2004; Dent & Kenyon, 2004; Kenyon & Marjoribanks, 2008a.) are early advocates of the Chilling Effect. Schauer and Barendt's work on categories of the chill is utilised within this thesis as Schauer's (1978) typologies of the "benign" and "invidious" chill are a solid foundation for classifying the chill experienced in local media houses. This made it possible for the chill to be understood in terms of degrees of intention. Barendt's "direct" and "structural" chill (Barendt, et al., 1997) takes this foundation further by examining the implications within the newsroom which is a key step forward in the field of research. Weaver's work was a great guide to examining legal cases in Trinidad and Tobago and the work of (Dent & Kenyon, 2004) was extremely useful for learning how speech is chilled in different countries depending on the culture of litigation there.

More contemporary literature on the Chilling Effect was also examined as new jurisprudence on social media regulation has arisen, impacting the local media landscape. Bedi (2021) conducts a study to discover whether or not regulations have an impact on the content published online and also discusses the difficulties associated with measuring the actual Chilling Effect. Penney (2017) examines the impact of the Chilling Effect online, (Balkin, 2018) appraises how social media sites are participating in censorship in response to external pressures and (Fahy, 2017) looks at "how the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has responded to the argument that holding online news media liable for reader comments has a chilling effect on freedom of expression" (Ibid). While this research is focused on ECHR cases, it is relevant as a comparative basis for how jurisprudence is developing at an international level as these cases

have only just begun to surface locally. In addition, while the Chilling Effect has normally been heralded as a legal phenomenon, there is a much wider application of the concept within this thesis. The Chilling Effect in the context of this thesis is taken to mean ‘a deterrence from reporting’. The work of (Eide, 2019) points out “The emphasis on deterrence enables a broader approach to the chilling effect, i.e. as an effect constituted by a variety of institutions or groups/individuals, contributing to the exclusion or barring of people from the democratic exercise of their right to free expression” and that “threats and actions by non-government entities, may also cause deterrence.” As stated previously, in Trinidad and Tobago, media laws are not the only deterrents to carrying out journalistic work. As mentioned earlier, there is coerced and self-imposed censorship due to a fear or financial repercussions, as in advertisers - the monetary life blood of a corporate media model - pulling their business if these media houses do not comply with the desires. Contemporary Caribbean scholars (Gibbings, 2013) and (Storr, 2016) speak extensively about this non-legal Chilling Effect confirming its existence and manifestation in self-censorship. Fear of reprisals in terms of threats to life and limb or even being intentionally barred from receiving public services and goods, are also potential deterrents which journalists face.

It is important to note that the Chilling Effect concept was not given a stand alone section in the Ethnography or Interview Findings chapters (chapters 7&8) as the impact on local journalism culture is pervasive and has been broken down into sub sections like “Post Colonial Influence” and “Media Law” in the Ethnography chapter (chapter 7) and “Objectivity and Corruption”, “The Advertising Agenda: The Roots of Economic Self-Censorship” and “Media Law: apathy or ignorance?” in the Interview Findings chapter (chapter 8).

Application

The Chilling Effect is a term which has been utilised within the legal landscape for decades. Historically, media laws like libel and defamation have had a Chilling Effect on not only the journalism industry, but on everyday speech.

Schauer's typologies (Schauer, 1978) were useful when considering the cases like (Panday v Gordon, 2003)⁴ where, in consideration of this benign chill, former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday should have been dissuaded from calling former chairman of the Express Newspaper, Kenneth Gordon, a "pseudo racist". Also, a deterrence against this type of speech which carries tones of discrimination akin to hate speech, would be seen as desirable.

Schauer's second typology is that of the "invidious chill" (Schauer, 1978) which occurs when the Chilling Effect discourages freedom of speech and is not justified, appropriate or desired. In the context of Trinidad and Tobago's media landscape, this would occur, for example, when a media house is conducting an investigative story and they receive a pre action protocol letter citing exorbitant potential damages and the threat of criminal charges which then discourages them from publishing.

Barendt's work, 'Libel and the media: the Chilling Effect' (Barendt, et al., 1997), described a "direct" and "structural" Chilling Effect. Barendt's direct and structural chill deals with the actual level of "self censorship" media houses employ (Barendt, et al., 1997). A direct chill means that the journalist or editor decides to remove material from the medium in order to avoid libel litigation. Even the contents of advertising material could be restricted. The

⁴ Former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, whose grandparents were indentured servants from India, called Kenneth Gordon, a prominent black businessman and former chairman of the Trinidad Express newspaper, a "pseudo-racist". Gordon took the Prime Minister to court.

structural chill stifles content before it is even created. In this case, journalists and editors see too much risk in the action so they do not even consider pursuit, publication or broadcast.

Contemporary viewpoints by (Penney 2017; Fahy, 2017; Balkin, 2018; Bedi, 2021) on how regulations in the field of social media is chilling or not chilling free speech have also been explored. In Trinidad and Tobago, before 2018, there was no jurisprudence for online defamation or breach of privacy. Therefore, these scholars offered an important framework for marking and evaluating the evolution of new local legal precedents.

In addition, the Chilling Effect as a concept is being used in this study to define the other non-legal, environmental elements which operate in the discursive field and which censor the work of journalists: commercial pressures like the advertising agenda, societal and political violence, newsroom expectations and values and soft power dynamics. The thematic analysis of the interview scripts confirm this Chilling Effect as a main element which defines the local journalism culture. The Caribbean-focused work of (Storr, 2016) is applied to the data collected through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic study to further understand and contextualise how journalists experience the impact on their local culture. For example, in terms of economic censorship, (Storr, 2016, p. 139-141) says:

Journalists are also constrained by economic censorship, which has emerged under the pressure of advertisers who often pull or threaten to pull their advertisements as a means of controlling what stories are published in the news...Editors often tell their reporters to drop stories because they are working on major advertising campaigns, which indicates an indirect level of censorship. Essentially the pressures of advertisers are so great that editors, publishers, talk show hosts and producers, and other decision makers have developed their own form of self-censorship in order to avoid loss of revenue.

Many journalists in the study admitted their self-censoring habits due to their knowledge of the “unwritten rule” where:

If you write it free and fair like how [other media houses] will write it...you will get a call from head office tomorrow [saying] “we don’t like this story, what is this about...I wouldn’t even bother to go to my editors with this because it is what it is. I know the story is going to get buried... I don’t want to accuse anybody but there might also be fear of reprisals, so that is demotivating to journalists, especially those who believe in freedom of the press (C4, interview with the author, 2018).

The extensive work and experience of (Gibbins, 2013) as a practitioner and advisor also frames this concept from a real world perspective, allowing for a greater breadth of understanding during data collection.

Eide (2019) and (Noorlander, 2020) also provide a framework on the non-legal parameters of the Chilling Effect from an international point-of-view. “The chilling effect – an act of discouragement – has proven to be an effective way of deterring public intellectuals and other citizens from voicing their opinions in the public sphere,” (Eide, 2019, p. 227). This terminology was useful in establishing degrees of chill – from discouragement to deterrence – for the elements in the discursive field which define the non-legal Chilling Effect.

Therefore, as a concept, the Chilling Effect applies to several aspects of this research. It also allows for a more structured approach to pertinent questions in the semi structured interviews and analysis of behavioural points in the ethnographic study.

Aside from (Gibbings, 2013) and (Storr, 2016), these scholars do not have a Caribbean scope. However, their work remains entirely relevant to this thesis as application of the tenets of their work to a Caribbean ecosystem is not only possible but indeed what has been done. Moreover, their research has aided in filling a gap in knowledge about the Chilling Effect in Trinidad and Tobago.

Within this thesis, the Chilling Effect concept was central to establishing certain environmental elements in the journalistic field. Finding out how journalists perceived and experienced the Chilling Effect contributes greatly to answering the research question.

Therefore, the Chilling Effect concept becomes a multi purpose theory within this thesis, allowing a deeper investigation into journalism culture. It creates a basis for understanding the legal and non legal societal elements which induce self censorship in journalists and members of the larger society.

2:3 Ontological and epistemological position

This thesis takes both an ontologically idealistic and realistic stance. To expound, consider the self censorship employed by journalists within the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. Through ethnographic discussions and observations as well as semi-structured interviews, journalists admitted to self censoring due to a fear of reprisals such as the loss of their livelihood and even threats to friends and family.

This perception of an intangible threat hanging over the newsroom can be described as ontological idealism, as it is felt within the mind of journalists, in their constructed reality. However, as it has been felt by more than one journalist, throughout multiple newsrooms, it becomes ontological realism (Smith & Ceusters, 2010). It is something that exists in a shared reality by many people.

Epistemologically, interpretivism and pragmatism suit this research best. The research questions of ‘What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?’ and ‘How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?’ is context specific. To measure how the effects are felt, individual journalists have had to weigh in. Therefore, the answer is influenced by various people within the news ecosystem. Moreover, while some of the journalists interviewed did give examples of their work being pulled due to unwanted elite intervention, the innate knowledge of their work environment which causes them to self censor cannot be pinned down as a universal fact. It is made up of interactions, observations and story telling of past experiences (see chapter 8 and 9). While the action of self censoring is a fact which occurs constantly, why journalists self censor is much more difficult to present as a scientific fact. Some journalists who have never had their work affected still engage in self censorship merely because they have learned this behaviour from their peers.

Therefore, interpretivism works best within this thesis as it allows for individual subjectivity and expression which contributes to a shared reality that can be interpreted to answer the research question.

Pragmatism fits the scope of this research due to the triangulation of research methods.

Ethnographic observations and discussions, semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and case law analysis are all utilised to interpret and integrate different subjective data points.

2:4 Gaps within the theoretical framework

With regards to gaps in Journalistic Role Theory, normative journalistic roles have largely been associated with the Western ideas of holding power to account in order to maintain true democracy (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017). This has been one of the main criticisms of role theory, that the Western perspective does not represent journalism culture across the globe and is therefore limited in its application. One of the many gaps revealed when applying the Western perspective is that democracy is executed differently in different countries. Therefore, holding power to account demands different strategies and has to be negotiated differently within each journalism ecosystem. The way a journalist “[legitimises] their role in society and render[s] their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369) is up to the journalist in that society. For example, where developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019), might be seen as undesirable by journalists in one country, it may be upheld as the gold standard in another.

This work, as well as the research of (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986) revealed a lack of consensus for a standard set of occupational ideals, challenging the notion of a Western journalism culture. This thesis seeks to fill that gap by presenting relevant data on journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

With regards to gaps in post colonial theory, this thesis takes an epistemologically interpretivist stance, everyone’s experience of the effects of colonialism is viewed through a subjective lens. Therefore, there are not gaps as such but the “plantation model” (Beckford, 1972) and the subsequent historical “psychological dependency” (Ibid) might not be believed by the people enacting it. This is where the ontological idealistic and realistic systems exist in symbiosis. It is individually experienced but with so many people experiencing the same phenomena and

performing behaviour which confirms it, it becomes a shared reality.

In terms of gaps with the Chilling Effect concept, while the link between reputation and financial damages is established as a major part of the impetus for these media laws, there are other non-legal manifestations of the Chilling Effect, which affect journalists and their editors in different ways. This thesis seeks to divulge how the chill is felt on all levels in media houses and where the legal chill stands in the spectrum of deterrence. This is achieved through a methodology of ethnography, semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis of interview transcript and case law analysis.

The ethnography and interview chapters (chapters 7 and 8), fill this gap by expounding on the thoughts and experiences of journalists and editors.

2:5 Conclusion

Before I began fieldwork, the theoretical framework of Journalistic Role Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Chilling Effect concept informed which methodology would be best suited to the study and also emphasised certain key points to observe. By applying tested theories to the study, I was also informed on how to analyse and appraise the data as well as the possible ways to present findings.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3:1 Introduction : What is the purpose of this literature review?

The purpose of this literature review is to look at what has been said about the particular subject matter of this thesis and to examine how it applies to the research. This review will also look at gaps in knowledge within the literature as there is a paucity of data and literature on journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The title for this thesis is ‘Journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago’. To begin to answer the questions implied within this title such as, ‘What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?’ and ‘How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?’ an understanding of the different components of the research question had to be established. These components are Journalism Culture, Post-Colonial Theory and the Chilling Effect concept.

3:2 Journalism Culture

Within the geopolitical spectrum of the Caribbean, there are 28 countries. Of the list of 28 countries, 13 are independent (Caribbean Islands, 2021). That is less than half. As with any country in the world, each Caribbean territory has specific legacies of ownership which define the present day sociological landscape. Expectedly, there are marked differences between the English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Dutch-speaking and French-speaking islands. It is essential to also recognise that within each of these like subsets, there are key differences that separate them further. Therefore, journalism is practised and received differently in each island

based on a very specific history. The way in which journalism was practised when the country still existed as a colony, the journey towards independence, the after-effects of colonialism and how the notion of a free press was established, are all elements that influence how present day journalism is practised.

For example, the uniqueness of the journalism culture in a country like Trinidad and Tobago can be exemplified by identifying the circumstance that the relatively small population in conjunction with the historical plantocracy class structure on these islands precipitate a nepotistic climate where separation of media and government is arguably impossible (Sudama, 1979). This close-knit relationship directly influences the function and “scope of media in a democratic society” (Storr, 2016, p. 139). There are many other elements which influence journalism culture. However, these two historical and demographic elements coming together produces a hybrid circumstance which underpins many professional choices journalists make, some of which are discussed in the upcoming post-colonial section.

Hanusch (2008) posits that if we accept that journalism is a fundamentally cultural process, it is logical to theorise that journalism would be practised differently in various cultural contexts. Further to this, as some evidence from mainstream journalism suggests, the contextual practice is more in line with local cultural values (Ibid). This point has been acknowledged before, that journalism culture sits within the realm of the national culture. Therefore, national cultural values define those within the journalism profession.

The literature of Caribbean scholars Aggrey Brown (Brown, 1990), Wesley Gibbings (Gibbings, 2007), James Canute (Canute, 2012) and Juliette Storr (Storr, 2016), are central to this thesis as these writings aid in putting together the puzzle pieces of journalism culture within

Trinidad and Tobago as well as the wider Caribbean. Within the sphere of Caribbean journalism scholarship, there is comparatively less material to draw from than North American or European studies. Aside from this deficiency, topics within the realm of media and the Caribbean were mostly focused on media economy as well as how the emergence of new technology, particularly the internet, would affect the landscape (Brown, 1990; Surlin & Soderlund, 1991; Storr, 2016). Throughout this literature review, within the post-colonial and chilling effect sections, other foundational elements to the culture have been discussed. Therefore, this section will focus specifically on Journalistic Role Theory, rather than the behaviour which produces the cultural product.

To that end, the works of European and North American scholars such as David Weaver (Weaver, 1998b), Thomas Hanitzsch (Hanitzsch, 2007), Daniel Hallin, Paolo Mancini (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and Andrew Chadwick (Chadwick, 2013) were critical to this thesis. Questions which drive this analysis include: Do journalists share an ethical ideology within the profession? Are journalists aware of the ethical codes that govern their practice? How does their level of ethical awareness impact on their relationship with media laws? What influence does living within such a small population have on journalism culture? Has the advertising agenda trumped sound journalism? These questions are all related to the overarching research question. The literature of these researchers deepens the understanding of the existing models of journalism culture and outlines the strategy for this thesis to build one for Trinidad and Tobago.

Hanitzsch's (2007) work supports an etic approach looking at the concept from a global point-of-view. The work of Caribbean media scholar (Storr, 2016) allowed for the honing in to an emic observation of Caribbean journalism cultural norms.

As such, this thesis utilises the work of (Hanitzsch, 2007) as a starting point to establish a model for journalism culture. *Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory* has been invaluable in exploring journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago as the cultural markers which Hanitzsch outlines provide a basis for the investigation of this thesis. However, his model does have its limitations as the sample has yet to include a cross range of Caribbean journalists. As mentioned before, there are many points which might be cross-referenced with the twin island Republic and that was done where possible. Equally exciting are the points which cannot be cross-referenced as these points will establish what is entirely unique about journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago which as far as this research has established is under-studied.

Culture is a foundational concept of this thesis. It has been established that the point-of-view which shapes this research subscribes to the idea that a national culture encapsulates all other forms of culture. Therefore, as this study works specifically within the framework theorised by Hanitzsch, the working definition of culture will be taken from Hanitzsch (Hanitzsch, 2007), as it pertains to journalism culture.

According to Hanitzsch, culture is a “set of ideas (values, attitudes, and beliefs), practices (of cultural production), and artifacts (cultural products, texts)” (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369).

Hanitzsch goes on to say that at its core, the journalism culture is a set of ideas that when practised, allows the journalist to simultaneously validate their position and perpetuate continuous self-definition (Hanitzsch, 2007). As one of the core elements of this research is that Trinidad and Tobago is a hybrid society which is in a constant state of reflexive and

reactive self-definition, this idea connects well with that concept and is the first point of cross referencing between Hanitzsch's model and journalism culture in the country.

Within, *Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory*, Hanitzsch writes that journalism culture can be analysed from three main points-of-view: a cognitive level, an evaluative level and a performative level. "At the cognitive level, they shape the foundational structure on the basis of which the perception and interpretation of news and news work take place (e.g., the attribution of news values to events)" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369).

In applying this point-of-view to Trinidad and Tobago, it can of course be said that general ethical values contribute to the news values of the organisation. However, as differing media controlling boards might have different economic interests, this makes it difficult to pin down how journalism culture is processed at a cognitive level across the national industry.

Hanitzsch further utilises Deuze's work (Deuze, 2005, p. 446–447) to identify "five ideal-typical elements" which journalists across the profession share. These elements are that journalists (a) provide a public service; (b) are impartial, neutral, objective, fair, and credible; (c) ought to be autonomous, free, and independent in their work; (d) have a sense of immediacy, actuality, and speed; and (e) have a sense of ethics, validity, and legitimacy.

Granted that these criteria are applicable to journalistic cultures across a broad spectrum, it does not take into account a very significant possibility; in a developing country like Trinidad and Tobago where there are no specifications for a tertiary education to be a journalist, many people practising journalism do not care about these principles. Ethnographic and semi-structured interviews in chapter 7 and 8 revealed that for a certain subset of those employed in

the industry, their work is about earning a pay check. Therefore, the inherent significance of the position does not always register on individual radars depending on their personal motivations.

(Weaver, 1998b) does underscore that differences between national journalistic cultures persist [for example], differences in work roles and editorial control mechanisms. That is what this study illuminates through ethnographic and interview data. Through these methodologies, it seeks to fill the gap in knowledge about the fragmentation within occupational ideology of Caribbean journalism culture.

Juliette Storr's work, *Journalism in a Small Place: Making Caribbean News Relevant, Comprehensive and Independent* (Storr, 2016) is a core part of this literature review as her research speaks from a Caribbean perspective about the differences between the evolution and practice of journalism in the Caribbean, the United States and Western Europe. Storr's research was paramount in the media scene chapter, corroborating Lent's chronology of Caribbean media ownership (Lent, 1991). It was also key in establishing the socioeconomic and political factors which influence the national and media landscape. *Journalism in a Small Place* is a work which pays attention to the move from public media to commercial media as well as the influence of American journalism practices. Storr also examines the effect of "blogosphere, citizen journalism, professionalism, media regulation, technological convergence, and conglomeration" (Storr, 2016, p. xxii).

Storr's work covers the Caribbean but lacks granular details about the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. More nuanced details specifically about the country would have given more to consider for the research paradigm of this thesis. For example, saying that, "...these

challenges— commercial and technological— are perceived as threats to journalism. Because of the former, journalism is often seen as a commercial product more concerned with making a profit than being a pillar of democracy, while the latter is often seen as an encroachment on the exclusive rights of journalists to gather and disseminate information...” (Storr, 2016, p. 3), does not coincide with the opinions expressed by journalists in the ethnographic interviews that were conducted for this research. Perhaps the question to be asked here is, seen by who? Who sees “journalism as a product more concerned with making a profit more than being a pillar of democracy”? Is it the media managers, is it the journalists or is it academics and researchers who have appraised the media landscape in each of the individual countries?

Also, even though Storr accurately describes a backlash against journalism coming from “the increase in media channels and the attendant rise in profits, the homogenization of journalism, the rise of sensationalism and more entertainment-oriented reporting, as well as the blurring of boundaries between news and advertising”, it must be acknowledged that in the Trinidadian landscape, the main public criticism comes from the belief that journalists are politically biased and support one party over another. This is where the more nuanced study would have been useful. Therefore, this is the gap which this research fills. This thesis gives an in-depth examination of a Trinbagonian⁵ media landscape.

Storr’s research does contribute much to this thesis as she further outlines and confirms what Gibbings (Gibbings, 2013) posits in terms of the post-colonial relations defining interactions at every level: soft power dynamics also chills the media landscape. Gibbings commented that even though “journalists are rarely kidnapped, injured or killed in the Caribbean...many of

⁵ Trinbagonian is the word used to describe someone or something that is of the two islands, Trinidad and Tobago.

their stories die. Stories are ‘killed’ by the Chilling Effect of draconian legal sanctions and by small, closed communities, advertisers, and publishers who either do not wish to offend or are concerned about the protection of people and interests with which they are associated” (Gibbings, 2013). These points of culture are echoed in the chapters 7 and 8, the ethnography and interview chapters.

Storr also echoes Chadwick’s (Chadwick, 2013) notions within his work on hybrid media systems and societies saying, “The emphasis on the ethnic and racial identities, as well as the political affiliations, of media owners is important in a region still encumbered by its colonial past. Race relations and political clientelism are complex and complicated in these hybrid societies” (Storr, 2016, p. 12). The work of Chadwick functions as a framework for Storr’s cultural points to overlay, bringing it into a realm of applicability to a model of culture.

3:2:1 Objectivity

The overarching findings in Hanitzsch’s work stipulate that objectivity and impartiality seem to dominate many newsrooms across the globe. Objectivity is a central point to journalism culture. As aforementioned in the introduction section of this chapter, Objectivity is a core component of the role perception and role performance aspect (Hanitzsch, 2011) of this research. How local journalists perceive and negotiate objectivity set the tone for the milieu they most align with.

According to Hanitzsch, a word like objective is inherently complex and heralds a re-examination of the epistemological philosophy of journalism against other philosophical imperatives such as empiricism, relativism, and idealism. Objectivity can be explained with a “Philosophical or absolute sense of objectivity or with procedural sense of objectivity as a

method” (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 376). This concept can be clarified by breaking down the types of journalists into four further categories: Situationists, where ethical issues must be grounded in actual situations; Absolutists where rightness or wrongness of actions are weighed versus consequences; Subjectivists for whom the end justifies the means and Exceptionists who ascribe to universal principles but remain open minded to change. Basically, the difference between moral values and ethical ideologies is that the practice of moral values are very specific to the culture they exist within (Hanitzsch, 2007). An analysis of the data from the ethnographic study as well as the semi-structured interviews reveal where journalists locate themselves on that spectrum of objectivity, whether they are situationists, absolutists, subjectivists or exceptionists, proving Hanitzsch’s work to be quite valuable in its application to this study.

Hanitzsch’s work is also useful in providing a technique for establishing the normative classifications in journalism culture. For example, he postulates that globalisation brings together and streamlines journalism practices referencing the work of Weaver saying that in the compilation of more than 20 surveys of journalists all over the world, Weaver 1998 concludes that the “typical journalist” is young, male, college-educated, and comes from the established and dominant cultural group (Weaver, 1998b, p. 478).

This observation, which has been grounded in qualitative analysis, provides a categorical framework to base the examination of Trinbagonian newsrooms on when planning the methodology of this thesis. Ascertaining cultural derivatives of the “typical journalist” in the republic will allow a greater understanding of journalism culture because those derivatives; whether the newsroom is in fact comprised of “young, male, college-educated [persons who] come from the established and dominant cultural group”, define the positionality of the

practitioners and lead to the building of a working theoretical definition of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hanitzsch's work on professional milieus as well as role perception and role performance (Hanitzsch, 2011) was absolutely crucial to furthering that categorical framework. Hanitzsch presents four professional milieus which exist within the journalistic field globally that are defined by three categories: journalistic interventionism, distance to ruling powers, and their market orientation. These categories are: the populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent and the opportunist facilitator (Ibid).

These milieu's were examined to find out if they could apply to a country like Trinidad and Tobago. With multiple socio-economic influences stemming from the imposition of traditional Western media values through American TV culture and the colonial influence of the British, coupled with the constraints of a developing nation, the professional milieus of journalists within Trinidad and Tobago blur more static boundaries outlined in frameworks like Four Theories of the Press (Siebert, et al., 1984). This is why the work of Hanitzsch is used. It provides a larger basis for application and allows flexibility in its understanding of the changing nature of those milieus within the discursive field.

Utilising Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1993) as a foundation to understand the concept of a journalistic field, Hanitzsch's process confirms journalism as a field where roles are constantly negotiated which can contain both external and internal structures and elements such as other journalists, media organisations, politics, ownership, commercial factors and society at large. This theory concedes to an ebb and flow as well as a struggle for power between

various actors within the field and allows for the idea of culture and practice, being constantly changing elements, to be appreciated.

This aligns with Chadwick's (Chadwick, 2013) work on hybridity. Utilising Chadwick's distinctions between two basic modes of hybridity; diluted and particulate the Caribbean journalist can be seen as "genuinely new" (Ibid).

3:2:2 Hybridity

Chadwick's Hybrid Media Theory is key to establishing the evolution and inner workings of the local journalism industry. Moreover, the concept of hybridity is intimately associated with discourses on postcolonialism, a key theory in this thesis; unpacking hybridity within the dynamics of post-colonial theory is essential to understanding the basis of Caribbean society.

Hybrid Media Theory introduces a figurative space where none of the actors have definitive expectations. According to the work of post-colonial theorist Bhabha, "hybridity is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once. This turn in the effect of hybridity makes the presence of colonist authority no longer immediately visible" (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 44-45).

According to post-colonial theory, a decolonised population like the republic of Trinidad and Tobago develops a postcolonial identity that is founded on a scope of cultural interactions between different and fragmented identities (Ledgister, 2016). These new sociologically defined identities are imbued with different levels of power which play out in day to day interactions (Storr, 2016). Anti-conquest narratives take the form of modern resistance to colonial identity by integrating modes of resistance to the coloniser's culture (Ledgister, 2016). When applied to the Caribbean region, particularly the English-speaking territories, there is

something inherently ironic in this theory as the islands all retain the British systems of parliament, education and law.

Chadwick writes, “Hybridity alerts us to the unusual things that happen when distinct entities come together to create something new that nevertheless has continuities with the old” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 9). Using Chadwick’s work as a lens for Hanitzsch’s professional milieus, it’s application to the Trinidadian media landscape brings forth a new milieu where the main complexity about Trinidad and Tobago is that even though it could fit into a Western Liberal media system, where there is a system of multi-party democracy and the media is mostly controlled by private hands, repressive media laws and other threats to media freedom abound and there is no formidable regulatory body to ensure professionalism and prevent self-censorship. Ironically it is the support of advertisers which determines their journalistic independence. Even though the elements of local journalism culture do not fit well enough into any one of Hanitzsch’s milieu’s, they align with certain elements and can be formed into an entirely new milieu unique to journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chadwick also offers the concept of media logic which can be applied here to better understand Hanitzsch’s stance.

Media logic, which was first discussed by sociologists David Altheide and Robert Snow in 1979, “was originally developed to identify how the assumptions, norms, and visible artefacts of media, such as templates, formats, genres, narratives, and tropes have come to penetrate other areas of social, economic, cultural, and political life” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 23).

According to Chadwick, media logic provides a useful approach to understanding the power of media and the power relations within media. Media logic directs us toward an alternative path and approach, “one focused on studying how the discrete interactions between media elites, political elites, and publics create shared understandings and expectations about what constitutes publicly valued information and communication. The who, when, how, and why questions that inform the daily practice of political and media actors evolve over time to create a shared media culture based upon an underlying media logic” (Altheide, 2004, p. 294). This logic then shapes media culture as well as how the public perceives and processes politics creating a situation where parties interested in becoming influential must tailor their public strategies to fit the nuances of the media format required by that logic.

This is a rather interesting point as it suggests that the media wields more power than political elites. However, with potential jail time stemming from multiple pieces of legislation, such as libel and defamation, data protection, interception of communication and cybercrime, that power would be lessened considerably as threat of jail time and heavy fines temper criticism of elites, even if media logic determines that such critical information is publicly valued communication. This is a palpable example of how the Chilling Effect concept comes alive and how media law influences journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago..

3:2:3 Political Parallelism

The work of Hallin and Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) is also an important framework for researching journalism culture in the Caribbean. Although a common critique is the scope of countries in their study, European and North American newsrooms, this thesis argues that their tenets for classifying media systems are applicable globally and also that they work with Hanitzsch’s professional

milieu framework and Chadwick's hybrid media system theory to create a conceptual framework for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hallin and Mancini focus on the of the four dimensions which structure media markets: political parallelism, professionalisation of journalism, the role of the state in relation to media systems and media and the five dimensions of the role of the state which determine whether there is a type of democracy (consensus vs. majoritarian), type of pluralism (individual vs. organised), degree of rational-legal authority, and degree of pluralism (moderate vs. polarised) with reference to the political contexts of media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). From this, Hallin and Mancini define the three models of the political system: the Mediterranean or Polarised Pluralist model, the North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist model and the North Atlantic or Liberal model (Ibid).

Again the gap here is that none of these models are based on research on or within the Caribbean. However, as with Hanitzsch's milieus, the qualifying attributes of each model can be examined one by one and held up against attributes within the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. This is technique applied within the ethnographic and interview chapters to fully understand the data and form a new model based on findings.

However, Hallin and Mancini's concepts will be further introduced here, within this literature review chapter.

Political parallelism, refers to the "organisational connections between media and political parties or other kinds of organisations, including trade unions, cooperatives, churches, and the like, which are often linked to political parties," (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 28). According to

Hallin and Mancini the media had a symbiotic relationship with these organisations:

Through much of the twentieth century many media organisations were connected to such institutions, which funded and helped to distribute them and whose goals the media served in a variety of ways. These kinds of organisational connections have mostly died out, though we will argue that their influence can still be seen in the media institutions of countries where they were once strong (Ibid).

The concept of political parallelism can be seen at various levels of Caribbean society. The economic control of the plantocracy class has ensured that colonial power dynamics are still present and while in Trinidad and Tobago the media resents any form of government control, it needs the government advertising to stay afloat. This extends past the realm of government into businesses as well.

According to Hallin and Mancini, another, closely related component of political parallelism is the “tendency for media personnel to be active in political life” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 28), often serving in government or public offices or for the professional interests of journalists and other media personnel to be shaped by their political affiliations, in the sense that they work for media organisations with similar partisan view points or get professional opportunities “because their media organisations want to balance the representation of different political tendencies, or get the assignments they do because their political affiliations open certain political doors for them” (Ibid).

This is what Storr describes as political clientelism which happens often in Caribbean societies:

In these small, secretive societies, media systems are plagued by partisan politics, which presents itself in a variety of ways and influences the performance of journalists. This concept has been referred to in

the literature as political clientelism (Storr, 2016, p. 167).

An example of journalists who practice this are “Broadcast journalists who work for state-owned radio and television stations are often accused of political clientelism” (Storr, 2016, p. 169). However, whether they willingly engage with it, or are forced to in order to safeguard their job, should be clarified. Journalists interviewed in the Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) state owned media house were aware of various acts of power which changed the course of stories. However, several journalists were highly critical of this practice but could not speak up for fear of losing their job. This is further discussed in chapter 9, the interview chapter.

3:2:4 Professionalisation

For the second dimension of measuring media systems, Hallin and Mancini outline the debate on professionalism of journalism acknowledging the blurred lines between “professionalism” and “professionalisation” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 33). According to Wilensky, “The ideal type of professionalisation that has anchored most of the debate is based on the history of the classic “liberal” professions, above all medicine and law. Journalism departs substantially from that ideal type. One of the central criteria of this model is that the practice of a profession is “based on systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired only through long prescribed training” (Wilensky, 1964, p. 138)

Even though there is a code of ethics within journalism, it cannot compare to the codes within medicine or law. Formal “professional” training has become increasingly common, and does often play an important role in defining journalism as an occupation and social institution. However, it is clearly not essential to the practice of journalism.

Hallin and Mancini point out that “In the United States, journalism degrees are actually less common at the most prestigious news organisations – whose journalists in other ways fit the concept of professionalisation most closely – than those of less prestigious ones. Journalists in Spain, meanwhile, are much more likely to have journalism degrees than those in Germany, but this clearly does not mean that Spanish journalism is characterised by a higher level of professionalisation than German journalism” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 33-34).

In Trinidad and Tobago, formal training is not mandatory but journalists with degrees in their field are appreciated. At the Trinidad Express they do not hire anyone without a degree, that is, any degree. It does not have to be in journalism or communications as what is considered important is that “a journalist can think critically,” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018). A degree is considered evidence of that.

According to the system presented by Hallin and Mancini, autonomy has always been a central part of the definition of professionalism. They write that it is one of the “key reasons why many occupations try to “professionalise” themselves, to justify greater control over their work process” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 34). The autonomy of doctors or lawyers, for one thing, is based on the “esoteric” character of medical or legal knowledge. Journalists lack esoteric knowledge, though their strategic position in the flow of information sometimes provides a partial substitute (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 35).

Aside from a few historical moments and the special cases...journalists have rarely asserted and almost never achieved the right to control media organisations outright. Nevertheless, they have often been successful in achieving significant relative autonomy within those organisations. Or to put it in another way, control of the work process in journalism is to a significant extent collegial, in the sense that authority over journalists is exercised primarily by fellow journalists (Ibid).

When compared to the media system in Trinidad and Tobago, the criteria laid down by Hallin and Mancini is applicable to the professionalisation of journalism. Journalists do not have autonomy to make essentially influential decisions. That is left to the owner of the media house that employs the journalist. Within media houses like the Trinidad Guardian there is an editorial board that is parallel to the business board where owners extend influence. It is in the space of the editorial board that journalists can influence other journalists and steer the direction of the newspaper or broadcast station.

On that note, it can be observed that though journalists do not have autonomy to make decisions they can influence the public, including the doctors and lawyers who possess the esoteric knowledge which they lack and acts as a limit for them.

However, their autonomy can be negotiated when a journalist becomes an editor or head of a department. It can also be negotiated depending on what media house one works within and what the ownership pattern is. As an editor or head of department, the promoted journalist can make day-to-day decisions which impacts on the daily direction of their team. In certain newsrooms, investigative journalists are also given more autonomy compared to other journalists. However, for bigger decisions like the overall direction of the company, the board still rules those decisions.

With regards to the role of the state in relation to media systems, this dimension emphasises the power the political system retains in forging and influencing the structure of the media system. The following are utilised to measure this dimension; censorship or other types of political pressure; endowment of the media with economic subsidies; ownership of media-or

telecommunication-organisations; provision of regulations for the media such as laws and licensing; and the state as an information source and “primary definer” of news (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Several of these variables have been discussed within other sections on the literature review. For example, censorship, self-censorship and fear of reprisals have been discussed enough to ascertain that this is a definitive variable within the media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. Ownership of the media will be traced from the colonial times and its impact on present day journalism culture stated in the post colonial section of the review. The provision of regulations for the media such as laws and licensing also forms an important part of this thesis where media laws are appraised to define how they affect local journalism culture. It has been established that laws like the Libel and Defamation Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014), the Cybercrime Bill (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017), the Data Protection Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011) as well as the Interception of Communication Act of 2010 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010) which carry exorbitant fines as well as the threat of jail time, restrict media houses on several levels. As for the state as an information source and “primary definer” of news, TTT has been identified as a state owned media house which has been known to control the flow of information. Moreover, the culture of secrecy, restriction of information, lack of access to officials and the difficulties with the FOIA process is a major source of frustration and demotivation for journalists.

With regards to the endowment of the media with economic subsidies, this does not happen within the local media landscape. Only TTT is funded by the government and while the government pays for advertising in other privately owned media houses, they do not contribute

subsidies.

Therefore, with regards to the five dimensions of the political context of media systems: the role of the state, type of democracy (consensus vs. majoritarian), type of pluralism (individual vs. organised), degree of rational-legal authority and degree of pluralism (moderate vs. polarised) (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), Trinidad and Tobago is a hybrid post-colonial democracy with its own political context that is different to the Mediterranean, North/Central Europe or the North Atlantic.

3:3 Post-colonial Theory

Post-colonial theory is included within this literature review because it is an important part of the theoretical framework of this thesis as it is at the core of present day Caribbean culture (Storr, 2016) and is therefore at the core of Trinidad and Tobago culture. The effects of colonisation shape national culture today on every level. Journalism culture sits within national culture. Therefore, exploring and understanding the impact of colonial history and its present day implications is crucial in order to fully grasp the ethnographic data and semi-structured interviews within this study. Why journalists say the things they do, think the way they do, perceive the world and their profession in the way they do and perform their duties, springs forth from their national culture and colonialism underpins that culture. From race relations to the culture of secrecy, from power dynamics to media marketplace practices, all of these elements influence how journalists perceive their role and perform their job. There is a colonial imprint on all aspects. Storr acknowledges the impact of colonialism saying:

The small states of the English-speaking Caribbean were forged by a history of extermination, piracy, colonization, slavery, indentureship, geography, and state control models of economic, social, and political development. This historical trajectory has also been influenced by various internal and external influences, many of which—globalization for example—continue to complicate the region’s development. These inherited characteristics permeate all levels of Caribbean society; it is therefore not surprising to find them in the present-day practice of journalism and the coverage of everyday life. (Storr, 2016, p. 32-33)

The other aspect of post-colonial theory that is relevant to this thesis is hybridity. Homi Bhabha, who is renowned for his work on post-colonial studies writes extensively about the concept of hybridity (Bhabha, 2004). Writers such as Rex Nettleford have also written about the inevitable consequence of hybridity and “creolization” (Nettleford, 1979) of a population, brought together in a geographically small place which is particularly relevant to the case of the Caribbean region. For a literature review of post-colonial theory and hybridity, it was important to ensure that research in these two areas was also connected to journalism. Juliette Storr (Storr, 2016) writes about the post-colonial influences on and consequent hybridity within journalism culture in her book *Journalism in a Small Place: Making Caribbean News Comprehensive and Relevant* and I explored many of the references she cited within her work.

The work of Caribbean and international writers and scholars such as Stuart Hall (Hall, 1978), Jamaica Kincaid (Kincaid, 1988), Ewart Skinner (Skinner, 1990), Paul Gilroy (Gilroy, 1993), Marwan Kraidy (Kraidy, 2005), Brinsley Samaroo (Samaroo, 2013), Hilary Beckles (Beckles, 2013), Hopeton Dunn (Dunn, 2014), FSJ Ledgister (Ledgister, 2016) and CLR James (James, 2018), was reviewed and aided in understanding Trinidad and Tobago’s national culture on a deeper level and also established a theoretical framework for application to local journalism culture.

When applying Bhabha's work to this thesis, this discussion of cultural hybridity already rests on a biological and ethnic hybridity within the country. The theory of "opposing perceptions and dimensions" which allows the colonised to form a hybrid identity based on the in-between of the coloniser and their own otherness can be taken further in a modern context. In the independent, post-colonial era, through biological and ethnic mixing, this hybrid identity has expanded past just the coloniser and the other since the 17th century⁶. It has expanded to include many others, leading to a further mixing on all levels.

Within Trinidad and Tobago, the population breaks down into 35.4% of people from East Indian descent, 34.2% of people from African descent and the other 30.4% are of mixed heritage including Indigenous Trinidadian (Amerindian; Carib and Arawak)⁷ Chinese, Arab, and European (Index Mundi, 2021). Languages spoken include English, Creole, Hindustani, Spanish and Chinese (Ibid). Religious festivals of Diwali, Eid-ul-Fitr and Christmas are celebrated countrywide. The melting pot of cultures, religions and ways of life have all mixed into one national identity with many different aspects and expressions as "hybridity is an ongoing condition of all human cultures with no zones of purity because it is an ongoing process of "borrowings and lending between cultures" (Raab & Butler, 2008, pp. 2-3). For a personal example, my father was East Indian and practiced the Hindu religion, my mother is a mix of Carib, Spanish, Venezuelan, Scandinavian, Irish, African and Chinese. She practices Christianity. I have practiced both religions and indulge in aspects of East Indian, Venezuelan

⁶ In Trinidad and Tobago, 1604 is the first record of slaves being brought to the island. See https://natt.gov.tt/sites/default/files/pdfs/Our_African_Legacy_Roots_and_Routes.pdf

⁷ The Indigenous people of Trinidad and Tobago are called Amerindians. There were two groups on the island called the Caribs and Arawaks. The historical teaching is that the Arawaks were exterminated by the more warlike Caribs who have now mixed in with the general population. See <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Resources/Subject-Guide/First-Peoples>

and Indigenous culture but all under a strong national identity where to be a hybrid is to be Trinidadian. Aside from this organic hybridity of birth, I was educated in the Caribbean, North America and now the United Kingdom, as are many people from Trinidad and Tobago, further adding to hybrid cultural sensibilities.

Another aspect of hybridity in Trinidad and Tobago relevant to this thesis is the impact of broadcasting from the United States which advances Bhabha's theory into the realm of external influences. After deregulation occurred in the late 80's, cable television from the United States flooded the market and the airwaves (Lent, 1991). This influx of American culture through music, television and cinema is of particular importance when considering journalism culture. As Storr says, "...the influence of American culture is pervasive throughout the region, American models, ideas, or theories of how journalism and communication should function in democratic societies..." (Storr, 2016, p. 193). Moreover, as journalists strive to produce content for a modern and global audience, new ideas and methodologies emerge lessening the "dogma of cultural imperialism" (Storr, 2016, p. 195). However, historical structures complicate the situation as "These "authoritarian-leaning" systems, mostly present in government, politics, religion, economics, and culture, leave democracy stranded between the forces of colonial tradition and globalisation" (Storr, 2016, p. 197). This also happens within the media landscape.

This juxtaposition of living within British post-colonial paradigms while being influenced by modern American media choices and methodologies is a rich nexus which is reflected within the ethnographic data and semi-structured interviews. With a historical hybrid cultural blueprint in Trinidad and Tobago, a hybrid model of journalism culture was inevitable. This will be further discussed later in the chapter within the media hybridity section.

As this thesis is focused on journalism culture, a complex definition which explores the intricacies of post-colonial theory relevant to different mother countries and colonial geographies will not be used. Rather, a simple definition which gives an overview of the concept will be employed. According to (Kohn & Reddy, 2017), Post Colonial Theory, is defined as “a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another...[where] one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control”.

As stated in the theoretical framework (chapter 2), when exploring post-colonialism, one must inevitably include anti colonialism, which is “ the struggle against imperial rule in colonised countries” (Elam, 2017, p. 1). How the people challenged their colonial experiences through a history of anti-slavery, amelioration and emancipation, has also formed a part of their culture. As Storr writes:

Caribbean countries emerged from a history of extermination, abduction, and abortion, a violent cutting off from original African and indigenous cultures. This four-hundred-year history has left the region with sociological and psychological effects that are visible today. It has produced complex issues of identity and a set of cultural practices that emerged through force and resistance (Storr, 2016, p. 134).

However, “in the case of the British Caribbean, the paradox is that in the mid-nineteenth century most British colonies, which had been internally self-governing, handed over legislative power to the imperial government out of fear that the black majority would gradually gain access to the suffrage,” (Ledgister, 2016, p. 4) This is what leads Kincaid (Kincaid, 1988) to critique the association of some Caribbean countries with an epic act of resistance like Haiti⁸.

⁸ A series of uprisings, beginning in 1791, led to the abolition of slavery in the colony of Saint-Domingue in 1792 and the complete overthrow of colonial rule in the territory by 1804 thanks to the efforts of the formerly enslaved

According to Storr, Kincaid found post-colonial territories “lacking in many areas because the people seemed to be willing partners in their own subjugation [through]...their deference and subservience to the tourist dollar, political and economic elites, and a British past,” (Storr, 2016, p. 132). This is a widely used social quip, “the revolution never came” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018) which is part of “the enduring trait of ambivalence common throughout the region. This is expressed in the internalisation and resistance of cultural dominance.” (Storr, 2016, p. 32). In consideration of the consequences of anti-colonialism, it is clear that there are several layers to resistance which manifest within the national culture, influencing how journalists perceive themselves, their country and how those perceptions influence how they perform their duties. The work of (Kincaid, 1988; Storr, 2016; Ledgister 2016) and others has allowed for an understanding and an analysis of those layers which enriched ethnographic discussions and semi-structured interviews.

To examine this type of context further, this section of post-colonial theory will be examined through the areas that are most relevant to journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. Even with this simple definition of post-colonialism as “a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another...[where] one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control” (Kohn & Reddy, 2017), examining the national culture of Trinidad and Tobago through a post-colonial lens can be an entirely different thesis. To avoid unnecessary verbiage, the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule has to be examined specifically in relation to the media landscape and journalism culture. Therefore, the areas that

led by such figures as Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe. Saint-Domingue became independent as Haiti. The Haitian Revolution marks a turning point in the history of colonial struggles (Ledgister, 2016)

will be analysed are: power dynamics; the culture of secrecy and fear of reprisals; and race relations.

3:3:1 Power dynamics

The area of power dynamics is a complex one. It includes hierarchy, proximity to power as well as the historical economic control of the plantocracy⁹. It also includes race relations but that will be appraised separately due to its further complexity.

Scholars such as George Beckford (Beckford, 1972), Hopeton Dunn (Dunn, 2014), Juliette Storr (Storr, 2016) and Kathy-Ann Waterman Latchoo (Latchoo, 2020) were key to understanding the historical dependency model from the colonial era manifested in present day Trinbagonian society.

Beckford's (Beckford, 1972) plantation model dependency theory, where post-colonial relationship structures follow a pattern of interpersonal relationships largely reflecting the authority patterns which evolve from economic organisation, speaks to a culture with "entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships" (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62). This "psychological dependency" (Beckford, 1972, p. 79) aligns with Kincaid's (Kincaid, 1988) discussion on "willing" subservience, further pointing out that it is "a central issue that a social-psychological approach remains salient for a further understanding of social interaction" (Beckford, 1972, p. 79).

Part of this understanding includes the knowledge that, within the newsroom ecosystem, there is both a reverence and resentment of authority. Demands from media managers and media

⁹ This is the name given to the ruling class during colonial times.

house owners are acquiesced to, even when journalists are uncomfortable with those dictates. Despite the psychological inclination of subservience and dependency as well as the economic structure to maintain the status quo of that dependency, there is a resentment of elitism. Ethnographic and semi-structured interviews revealed that journalists in all six newsrooms carried some sort of resentment for their managers which was magnified, in some newsrooms, when speaking about the overarching owners of their media house. Some of this was based on the colour of the media manager but several references were made to the economic status of those in management and the fact that people on that level did not care about the lowly journalist in the newsroom.

As Caribbean scholar Hopeton Dunn explains:

Despite the abolition of slavery in the British Empire by 1838, the composition of West Indian society remained highly stratified, with a large base of poor and dispossessed peasants, groups of mixed-race ‘mulattos’, pockets of indentured Indian labourers and a small group of white British settlers focused on extracting and repatriating to London, Manchester, Glasgow and other British cities the profits generated by enforced West Indian labour (Dunn, 2014, p. 939)

This stratification can still be seen in Trinidad and Tobago today. The hierarchy of present day Trinbagonian society has not changed much since colonial times. Even though capitalism did usher in opportunities to achieve financial success, locals did not employ a sweeping revisionist approach to institutions after independence from the British in 1962. “Instead they took the institutions of democracy, which developed in the tutelary period, and kept them going” (Storr, 2016, p. 6). For example, Trinidad and Tobago still retains British style parliament, systems of education and law and the state is allowed “to retain considerable power in the decision-making process” (Ibid). Also, “the majority of the wealth still remains in the hands of white oligarchs.”

(Storr, 2016, p. 9). One difference between Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean islands is the arrival of Syrian and Lebanese migrants in the early 1900's who are now a major part of the economic elite in Trinidad and Tobago, owning businesses in textiles, manufacturing, housing (NALIS, 2021) and most relevant to this thesis, the Ansa McAL conglomerate. This conglomerate owns Guardian Media Limited, responsible for the Trinidad Guardian Newspaper, CNC3 television station and six radio stations (Ansa McAL, 2017).

The news coverage which journalists produce is greatly affected by this post-colonial hierarchy based on the psychological dependency of the plantation model. "The centralised structure of the political systems in these countries [which is a remnant of colonialism]...allows the state to retain considerable power in the decision-making process," (Storr, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, it is quite difficult for journalists to cover political elites for several reasons. A principal rationale is that even though deregulation and commercial advertising have allowed for more than the one source of advertising revenue, state advertising is still the lion's share of revenue for media houses in Trinidad and Tobago (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018) and governments have used this to their advantage, threatening to pull advertising if certain stories are made public. This is covered more extensively in the media landscape chapter. The reference here is to demonstrate how governments still retain the power to cripple media houses.

In addition, the state news channel, Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT), which was the first channel in the country, still controls government messaging. As recently as July 2021, the government of Trinidad and Tobago told a reporter that the media access to a certain news event would not be given to any other media house besides TTT. After much public criticism,

the communications minister said that he was “joking”. However, this was not the first time that TTT was the only media house given access to an event (Loop, 2021).

Another reason journalists find it difficult to cover elites is the Chilling Effect of certain media laws. Scholars corroborate that the landscape is chilled from laws which were created during colonialism such as the Libel and Defamation Act. These laws restrict the ability of journalists to investigate and publish their findings freely as often, with certain stories, they receive pre action protocol letters carrying threats of exorbitant damages and possible jail time. There is also a deterrence to covering stories which would put them in danger of losing their job or even come to physical harm. This deterrence is based on an innate knowledge of the workings of the media house and society in general. The legal and non-legal Chilling Effect concept is discussed in depth in the next section of this chapter.

3:3:2 The culture of secrecy and fear of reprisals

The work of Juliette Storr (Storr, 2016) and Justice Waterman Latchoo (Latchoo, 2020) were most relevant to establishing how the culture of secrecy and fear of reprisals applies to modern day journalism culture.

In 1999, Trinidad and Tobago passed a Freedom of Information Act, which came into effect in 2001. Jamaica implemented an Act in 2002, St. Vincent in 2003, Antigua and Barbuda in 2004, Saint Lucia and the Cayman Islands in 2009, Bermuda 2010, Guyana 2013 and the Bahamas in 2017. Barbados, Grenada and St. Kitts have drafted bills (Latchoo, 2020, p. 181). The work of Waterman Latchoo (Latchoo 2020) presented a Caribbean perspective on when this type of legislation came into effect across the region and aided in understanding its impact

on the media landscape. For example, it has been twenty years since the Act came into effect in Trinidad and Tobago. However, journalists are still not able to access information freely.

While having an Act in place is an accomplishment, the execution and enforcement of the legislation is, to say the very least, difficult. A recently conducted study by the Media Institute of the Caribbean (MIC) shows that despite the existence of the Act within these countries, journalists are still constrained and have extremely challenging experiences with 43.2% of respondents saying that access to sources is generally controlled and 54.05% saying that there is a degree of censorship happening when pursuing an investigative story (Media Institute of the Caribbean, 2021).

When considering the difficulty of the process of getting information, Caribbean journalists also contemplate the culture of secrecy and fear of reprisal that pervades our post-colonial culture. Storr writes:

Perhaps one of the most debilitating aspects of Caribbean culture is the need for secrecy and silence. This aspect of the culture...was inherited from the colonizers and has been compounded with the reverence for authority and the cult of the leader. Secrecy and silence are the norm. Thus, in effect the people of the Caribbean collude with political and economic elites in their own exploitation. Their silence gives consent and allows outdated laws to remain in effect. (Storr, 2016, p. 132)

Results from the MIC survey shows that 89.19% of journalists who took the survey found that there is a culture of secrecy among public officials which inhibits their willingness to provide information to the media. With a history of covert decision making by plantation elites and colonial laws such as the Official Secrets Act still in effect in countries across the region, members of government, especially the civil service “are the senior public servants who see it

as their God-given duty to guard against the press getting this information.” (Storr, 2016, pp. 106-107).

If journalists are not able to access information freely, then how can they be expected to perform their duties to the best of their ability? Some journalists in the MIC study have said that they just do not bother to even make requests anymore (Media Institute of the Caribbean, 2021). This lack of access to information which is a hand-me-down from the colonial past has a definitive impact on journalism culture.

Before freedom of information laws came into being, journalists developed a close relationship with their sources, as they provided a consistent way to access trustworthy information. This is a practice which still continues today as obtaining information through official channels is often a challenge. However, in small societies where there are little to no degrees of separation, it can be challenging to maintain a completely ethical and unbiased approach when a journalist or their source might be related to the person they are inquiring about. This can compromise the objective and democratic approach of the media and has its own set of complex ramifications on journalism culture.

This closeness also presents another issue. “Caribbean societies have very strong oral cultures...and still rely on interpersonal storytelling to disseminate information.” (Storr, 2016, p. 78). Therefore, the oral tradition ensures that information flows freely on a community level where everyone knows what’s going on with a particular matter. However, as reported in the interview chapter of this thesis, one major frustration of journalists is that community members refuse to go on record due to a fear of reprisals. One of the journalists in Storr’s research, David Ellis, concurred also pointing out that the “fear of victimisation...is a reality in this small

environment which the journalists themselves live with,” (Storr, 2016, p. 95). Indeed, journalists also suffer with a fear of reprisals, even leaving the country to avoid threats to their life.

Therefore, this culture of secrecy and fear of reprisals which have been inherited from colonialism are still forging the shape of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago today.

3:3:3 Race relations

Perhaps one of the most relevant effects of colonialism on national culture is race relations. As aforementioned, race relations are an extension of the complex power dynamics and hierarchical practices of the colonial past. Therefore, reviewing the literature of scholars like Ramesh Deosaran (Deosaran, 1987), John Lent (Lent, 1991), George Beckford (Beckford, 1972), Hopeton Dunn (Dunn, 2014), Juliette Storr (Storr, 2016) and F.S.J. Ledgister (Ledgister, 2016), is key to this study.

During the colonial period, after slavery ended in Trinidad and Tobago in 1838, indentured labourers were imported from India. The indentured system guaranteed wages to the Indian labourers, already a luxury previously enslaved Africans did not have. Deosaran (1987) explains that their interaction, also defined by “perceived differences” (Despres 1967) was transformed into an “antagonistic” (Smith 1965) political and economic relationship, initially utilised by colonisers as a divide and rule tactic. This simplified explanation of the tensions between the dominant ethnic groups of Trinidad and Tobago, which is further analysed in the media landscape chapter, is to affirm the connection between the historical race and class tensions of the plantation model to present day journalism culture. From this explanation, it is important to take forward an understanding of the psychological roots of these tensions in order

to fully grasp the comments of journalists during interviews as well as their actions during the ethnographic study.

For example, media houses within the country are regularly accused by politicians and members of the public of being partisan. It is paramount to understand this confirmation bias based on these historical tensions and also appreciate how politicians have treated the media. After independence, political parties continued to exploit colonial divisions to rally votes and politics evolved into a tribal call (Deosaran, 1987), with the People's National Movement representing for Afro-Trinidadians and the United National Congress representing for Indo-Trinidadians (Congressional Research Service, 2018). This tribal approach to politics massively shapes and influences national culture. Therefore, journalists are also impacted by this tremendous cultural facet within their post-colonial society.

Another factor which has defined post-colonial race and class tensions and greatly influenced the evolution of the media landscape is how ownership of media houses was established within the country. The work of Lent explains that "When foreign corporations sold their Caribbean properties, invariably, it was to large local businesses (or the government); no one else could afford them. The result in such transactions was that although the nationality of the owner changed, the social class he belonged to and served did not" (Lent 1991, p.48). The playing out of this business enterprise over the 20th century has a direct connection to how present day journalists perceive and perform their roles. The conglomerate structures and power dynamics of these business ventures come alive within the ethnographic study of the various newsrooms. Definitive psychological influences from ownership structures are a part of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

3:3:4 Media Hybridity

At the beginning of this chapter, hybridity was discussed as a critical part of post-colonial theory. The work of Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004) was appraised and applied to the Trinbagonian person being a hybrid in terms of biology, ethnicity and culture. Moving into the realm of hybridity in journalism culture, this thesis commented on the juxtaposition of living within British post-colonial paradigms while being influenced by modern American media choices and methodologies, positing that this circumstance presents as part of a hybrid model of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The work of Andrew Chadwick (Chadwick, 2013) is particularly important here. His work on hybrid media systems was extremely relevant in order to locate the media logic of the Trinbagonian model.

In his work *The Hybrid Media System* Chadwick develops the term hybridity “as a conscious analytical strategy that enables us to read the details of social phenomena and avoid the social scientist’s “boundary fetishism” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 15). If we indeed look at the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago as hybrid phenomena, where we understand that everyday, more and more hybrid interactions are occurring and influencing the national culture and in turn, the journalism culture, ignoring boundaries or “dichotomous, essentialist, or simply less flexible orientations (Chadwick, 2013, p. 9), we can begin to fully understand the hybrid experience of local journalists.

For example, Storr relates that:

Journalists are wary of politicians, civil servants, and other elites suing them and are constrained by cultural expectations to conform. Self-censorship has become a more effective means of control than

state-sanctioned laws. Ironically, these restraints have coincided with an increased demand from citizens for more investigative journalism. Journalists in the Caribbean work in small political systems that are centrally controlled, mostly by the prime minister or president. This makes it challenging for journalists to obtain information or provide criticism of a government's performance. Many journalists describe the relationship between government and the press as hostile (Storr, 2016, p. 137).

Within this quote, there are several paradoxes which would not be tolerated with a more dichotomous approach. For example, while citizens demand more investigative journalism, they are wary to hold political elites to account themselves and demand that their democratic rights are upheld. In addition, even though “many journalists describe their relationship between the government and the press as hostile” (Ibid), some politicians will only speak with certain journalists, providing them with select scoops and critical information. Therefore the dialectic, not the dichotomous, serves the exploration of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago more. This is why Chadwick's work is so relevant to this thesis. As underscored in the theoretical framework, it illuminates the socio-cultural antecedents (Gibbings, 2021) of the local culture.

Chadwick's drive to utilise media logic as a method to explore the various connections between different elements echoes Bourdieu's journalistic field theory (Bourdieu, 1993) where different elements become part of the process of that logic and inevitably change its expression just the same as they would in the journalistic field. Chadwick writes that “Hybridity alerts us to the unusual things that happen when distinct entities come together to create something new that nevertheless has continuities with the old.” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 9). Using Chadwick's work as a lens for Hanitzsch's elements that define journalism culture when all three components— institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies—are discussed in ethnographic

discussions or semi-structured interviews, the hybrid nature of the local journalism culture can be clearly seen.

According to Chadwick, “Newness derives from the particulate recombination of prior elements” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 18). Storr writes that “The Caribbean is a third space, fashioned out of Old and New-World ideologies. In such a space, old ideas have been refashioned into cultural artefacts to create an identity called “Caribbean.” (Storr, 2016, p. 195). It is within this third space, this post-colonial stage, this hybrid area that “Caribbean journalism should be understood, as a blend of American, British, and local values —a hybrid practice” (Storr, 2016, p. 115).

3:4 The Chilling Effect

In this section, literature discussing the Chilling Effect concept is prioritised.

Journalists are rarely kidnapped, injured or killed in the Caribbean, but many of their stories die. Stories are ‘killed’ by the Chilling Effect of draconian legal sanctions and by small, closed communities, advertisers, and publishers who either do not wish to offend or are concerned about the protection of people and interests with which they are associated. (Gibbings, 2013)

From this one quote, (Gibbings, 2013) has defined the legal and non-legal Chilling Effect in the local media landscape. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Chilling Effect concept has become associated with media laws like libel and defamation. As seen from the above quote, “draconian legal sanctions” (Gibbings, 2013) chill the environment journalists operate within. However, it is also paramount to acknowledge that the Chilling Effect goes past the legal landscape in Trinidad and Tobago.

While the media landscape can be chilled by the “cumulative impact of the Data Protection Act with an Information Commissioner of unchecked power; the Cybercrime Bill 2017 with no public interest exemption, the Sedition Act that criminalises journalistic reporting; the Interception of Communication Act which criminalises the receiving of phone calls from prisoners; the Proceeds of Crime Act, which was used to enter, search and seize property at the Express; and the partial retention of criminal libel laws...the Government’s aborted attempt to amend the Freedom of Information Act to reduce the public’s access to public information and the continued failure to deliver legislation to protect whistle-blowers,” (Trinidad Express, 2021) there are other elements which chill the profession of journalism.

Gibbings speaks about “small, closed communities” (Gibbings, 2013). Indeed, size is a key factor in defining the characteristics of a particular media system. Scholars such as Lino Briguglio (Briguglio, 1995) along with Eliawony Kisanga (Briguglio & Kisanga, 2004), Manuel Puppis (Puppis, 2009), Henrik Örnebring and Epp Lauk (Lauk & Örnebring, 2010) and Juliette Storr, (Storr, 2016), have debated the effects of size on journalistic values and modes of operation. In the context of Trinidad and Tobago and the Chilling Effect, “small, closed communities” (Gibbings, 2013) where everyone knows everyone and can be related to members of the police, government or criminal elements, complicate the ability of journalists to carry out their duties as they can be easily identified and located by the people they are covering. Ethnographic interviews in chapter 7 revealed that the knowledge of this proximity and the fact that they could suffer potentially violent reprisals or even repercussions from public service organisations, chill the work environment and journalists self-censor in order to preserve their safety and job security. In the words of Schauer, “Deterred by the fear of punishment, some individuals refrain from saying or publishing something which they lawfully could, and indeed should” (Schauer, 1978, p. 693).

More contemporary literature also adds another layer to considerations for the legal chilling effect.

There are many reasons why a story might not be published and the variables in the journalistic field (Hanitzsch, 2011) have an indispensable role to play with regards to consideration for publication. Moreover, each individual is influenced by and influences the journalistic field. Therefore, it is not only a legislative chill which impacts journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. The nature of the deterrents is much more complex.

The legal aspect of the Chilling Effect will be discussed first. To understand the concept of the Chilling Effect in the context of media law, the work of (Schauer, 1978) and (Barendt, et al., 1997) were the core theories used to understand and investigate the scope of this lived experience that journalists encounter.

3:4:1 Traditional forms of the Chilling Effect

3:4:1a The “benign chill” and the invidious chill”

Even though Schauer’s work focuses on the United States, he is hailed as an authority on the Chilling Effect and for plotting its legal origins from the *Wieman v Updegraff* (*Wieman v. Updegraff*, 1952) case in 1952 to developing typologies to classify varying degrees of the chill. Schauer identifies two typologies, the “benign chill” and the invidious chill” where the benign chill, also known as the “desirable chill”, outlines Chilling Effects which take the form of regulation which is actually desired. In the context of a country like Trinidad and Tobago which experiences heightened racial tensions within the political arena, the chill of the libel law should have dissuaded former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday from calling former chairman of

the Express Newspaper, Kenneth Gordon, a “pseudo racist”. Gordon sued and won the case with a judgement award of TT\$600,000 for damages (Panday v Gordon, 2003). Panday is the country’s first prime minister of East Indian descent and Gordon, who is of African descent, is a renowned journalist and media manager associated with press freedom (TT Law Courts, 2003). As stated above, race relations is a controversial topic, especially within the political sphere. Therefore, Panday’s comment, viewed within this context, can, as the judge ruled, be seen as having gone “far beyond that which is acceptable in any contemporary society” (Panday v Gordon, 2003). A deterrence against this type of speech which carries tones of discrimination akin to hate speech, would then be seen as beneficial, appropriate and desirable.

Schauer’s second typology is that of the “invidious chill” (Schauer, 1978) which occurs when the Chilling Effect discourages freedom of speech and is not justified, appropriate or desired. Schauer writes, “this can occur not only when activity shielded by the first amendment is implicated, but also when any behaviour safeguarded by the Constitution is unduly discouraged” (Schauer, 1978, p. 690). He also writes:

...Although an individual's decision not to engage in certain behavior may be influenced by a wide range of stimuli, in law the acknowledged basis of deterrence is the fear of punishment-be by fine, imprisonment, imposition of civil liability, or deprivation of governmental benefit. Thus, it is apparent that an individual may be deterred or an activity chilled by the threatened operation of virtually any penal statute or by the potential application of any civil sanction. Indeed, these regulating rules are designed to have this precise effect (Schauer, 1978, p. 689) .

In the context of Trinidad and Tobago’s media landscape, this would occur when a media house is conducting an investigative story and they receive a pre-action protocol letter citing

exorbitant damages and the threat of criminal charges which then discourages them from publishing.

Schauer's work *Fear, Risk and the First Amendment: Unravelling the Chilling Effect* (Schauer, 1978) was pivotal to developing an understanding of the Chilling Effect, to defining it and to exploring how the concept interacted with legislation, especially, "the critical role that the Chilling Effect doctrine has played in the formulation of the rules of privilege defining the categories of defamation, obscenity and incitement" (Schauer, 1978, p. 688). Applying this framework to a local context has allowed for relevant questions such as, how is the chill understood in the legal and media landscapes in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly when the prioritisation of familial and professional reputation is bound up with culture and class? This grasp of the various elements involved in the benign and invidious Chilling Effects also aided in the recognition of other non-legal Chilling Effects, which, as established, play a major part in the self censorship of journalists, impacting journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago in a definitive way.

3:4:1b The "direct" and "structural" chill

Barendt's work, *Libel and the media: the Chilling Effect* (Barendt, et al., 1997), develops the study of the Chilling Effect concept further by measuring and investigating the impact of libel law on the media by interviewing editors, journalists as well as their legal advisors. This thesis does the same with journalists and editors in Trinidad. Indeed Barendt's work set a precedent that real world impact was something that absolutely had to be measured in order for the concept to be validated. Observation and measurement of real world application is the only way to bring the theory of Barendt's work into a practical realm and answer the question of how this chill is understood and its impact on the journalism culture. For example, does the

chill affect regular journalists the same way it affects editors and media managers? Do journalists who cover sports and features feel the chill as intensely as those who cover news, politics and carry out special investigations? What type of chill is felt? Is it a legal chill or another deterrent from the other variables which arise from practising journalism in a small place?

While Schauer's typologies of the benign and invidious chill were useful in determining whether speech was justifiable and desired or emphatically not, Barendt's direct and structural chill deals with the actual level of "self censorship" media houses employ (Barendt, et al., 1997, p. 191) . As mentioned in the theoretical framework (chapter 2), the direct chill applies to material that is purposefully removed in advance of publication in order to avoid libel. This could happen even when appraising the contents of an ad which the media organisation was scheduled to publish or broadcast. The structural chill acts as an inhibitor to the very creation of any material or content, when journalists and editors see too much risk in the action and do not even dare to think seriously about publication on a particular person or subject. Schauer's typologies and Barendt's practical framework are observed within local journalism culture and have helped to understand and categorise the behaviour observed and comments made within the semi-structured interviews.

Barendt's work has yet more in common with this thesis as he emphasises the lack of academic scholarship on the topic saying, "The law of libel has been strangely neglected by legal scholars in this country. The Law Commission has also ignored the civil law of defamation, apart from its recent discussion of the availability of punitive damages. So, leaving aside the considerable interest of the media, only the libel Bar and solicitors show any concern with its fundamental principles and its reform" (Barendt, 1999, p. 100). Knowing that Barendt's research was

conducted with a similar paucity of available empirical data further qualifies the employment of his framework within this thesis.

The major criticism of Schauer and Barendt's work is that they examine the Chilling Effect concept within their own countries. However, this is entirely to be expected and respected. Similarly, this thesis focuses on Trinidad and Tobago because like the United States and United Kingdom, this country has its own unique characteristics, national culture and more specifically, journalism culture. However, their work remains entirely relevant to this thesis as application of the tenets of their work to a Caribbean ecosystem is not only possible but indeed what has been done. This is the gap which this research fills. Utilising the frameworks of Schauer and Barendt, this thesis is able to understand the Chilling Effect concept within Trinidad and Tobago on a deeper theoretical level and interrogate the reasoning behind its practical occurrences.

The work of Kenyon and Marjoribanks (Kenyon & Marjoribanks, 2008a.) was useful when looking at how libel and defamation influences the newsroom ecosystem. Kenyon and Marjoribanks (2008a) emphasised that in an ethnographic investigation into the Chilling Effect, appreciating the complex relationships between media organisations and those that would challenge them in a formal legal setting, is key. There is a history and societal disposition to consider which influences the reasons a claimant would file a suit. If we consider the case of *Panday v Gordon* as an example, "several events happened during the period 1996-1997 which culminated in the antagonistic relationship between the appellant and the respondent" (*Panday v Gordon*, 2003). Therefore, there is much more behind what happens in a courtroom than the suit at hand. These elements also influence whether the chill is benign, invidious, direct or structural. This emphasises the need for a socio-legal and socio-cultural approach to the

ethnographic investigation and semi-structured interviews. Acknowledging that there is an organic, ongoing relationship between the act of journalism, the cultural elements within the journalistic field which influence its execution and the legal context and history of the country and by extension, the profession, is paramount to unravelling local journalism culture.

For example, many interviewees admitted that the Trinidad and Tobago society has become more litigious in the last decade. This is supported by the growing number of libel cases filed as well as the increasing ceiling for awarding damages. This is potentially one aspect of a socio-legal factor that would chill the media landscape. However, consideration must also be given to the increasing encroachment of conglomerates and patterns of media ownership which deter journalists from pursuing stories that might damage the interest of the companies which pay their salaries. Where Glanville would argue that, “In the most extreme cases, defamation legislation is a thin cover for policing and punishing dissent” (Glanville, 2009, p. 3), in a place like Trinidad and Tobago where pre-action protocols have become a “rite of passage” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018) for journalists and newsrooms are raided with erroneously begotten search warrants (Trinidad Express, 2021), defamation legislation is seen and acknowledged as an ever present threat and not one of extremes. The work of Kenyon and Marjoribanks is therefore important in understanding the applicability and parameters of a socio-legal and socio-cultural approach.

As exemplified in the above paragraphs, there are many elements which can exude a Chilling Effect on the work of journalists and deter them from publishing. The work of (Schauer, 1978; Barendt et. al, 1997; Kenyon and Marjoribanks, 2008a.) have all contributed to creating a framework for understanding how that chill comes about and how it is felt by various members of the media organisation.

3:4:2 Contemporary literature on the Chilling Effect

As stated in the theoretical framework, more contemporary literature on the Chilling Effect was also examined as new jurisprudence on social media regulation has arisen, impacting the local media landscape. Bedi (2021) presents a theory on whether or not regulations have an impact on the content published online and examines the difficulties associated with measuring the actual Chilling Effect. The work of (Bedi 2021) is important on a comparative scale. Again, many researchers focus on the United States, the United Kingdom or Europe which is a gap in literature from a regional perspective as the Caribbean region is vastly different. The work of these scholars is utilised to reveal that. Penney (2017) also examines the effects of the Chilling Effect online through surveillance which was useful for contextualising the local transgressions of wiretapping from 2007-2010 by the Special Intelligence Unit (SIA) with a direct link to the Office of the Prime Minister (RSF, 2016) which is further discussed in chapter 5, the Media Landscape chapter.

Balkin (2018) examines how social media sites are participating in censorship in response to external pressures and (Fahy, 2017) looks at the evolution of jurisprudence within the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) by examining three cases focused on whether “holding online news media liable for reader comments has a chilling effect on freedom of expression” (Ibid). While this research is focused on ECHR cases, it is relevant as a comparative basis for how jurisprudence is developing at an international level as these cases have only just begun to surface locally.

Local Trinidadian judge, previous journalist and author of *Newsroom Law: A Legal Guide For Commonwealth Caribbean Journalists*, Kathy Ann Waterman Latchoo also provides a local

contemporaneous legal perspective on current requirements and responsibilities for posting online.

Articles from the Harvard Business Review (2013), AP News (2019), Quartz (2019), the Centre for Democracy and Technology (2021) were utilised to review more contemporary literature on the Chilling Effect concept as well as reports from the Council of Europe (2020) and the Open Society European Policy Institute (2021).

The Chilling Effect of content moderation on social media has been a topic of debate for scholars and other stakeholders for more than a decade in the United States and United Kingdom. It is an issue of great moral complexity as indispensable human values are being pitted against one another: upholding freedom of speech and expression versus preventing harm via hate speech and misinformation.

As the Centre for Democracy and Technology says, “Online hosts of user-generated content make millions of decisions a day about what content or accounts to allow or block, amplify or downplay, or otherwise manage. These editorial judgments are critical to online free expression because they create the distinctive speech environment of each service, shaping what users can say and what information they receive.” (The Centre for Democracy and Technology, 2021).

Indeed, as exemplified with the banning of Trump’s Twitter account after the January 2021 attack on the capital, “private companies that run social media sites and search engines are the main arbiters of what gets communicated in the brave new world of cyberspace. And despite their good intentions and their claims to a free-speech-friendly philosophy, these companies

employ “terms of service” that censor a broad range of constitutionally protected speech.” (Harvard Business Review, 2014).

In order to curb and control the situation in their own country, the Australian Parliament passed “some of the most restrictive laws about online communication in the democratic world in 2019. According to AP News, it is now a crime in Australia for social media platforms not to quickly remove “abhorrent violent material.” If violated, the punishment is three years in prison “and a fine of 10.5 million Australian dollars (\$7.5 million), or 10% of the platform’s annual turnover, whichever is larger.” (AP News, 2019).

An entire thesis could be dedicated to this debate but for the purposes of this study, a local context will be put forward. Trinidad and Tobago is not typically like the United States or United Kingdom in terms of cultural approach to freedom of speech and expression, hate speech or misinformation.

The importance of cultural context must be acknowledged here, utilising this researcher’s personal indigenous knowledge and experience. Picong is a Trinidadian word for comical banter, usually at someone else’s expense. This concept as a part of local culture has pre-empted serious offenses being escalated to court proceedings as it is also a local point of pride to be able to take picong. Moreover, in terms of hate speech and misinformation, Trinidad and Tobago is a multi-religious country and it is extremely rare for anyone to face open discrimination due to their religion. Also, one of the great benefits to hundreds of years of societal mixing is that, even though racism exists, it is not a strong focal point for picong because you would also be insulting someone you are related to. Also, as Trinidad is a developing country the average citizen would not utilise disposable income to go to court for

something like libel and defamation. There are more important legal battles to be fought. Calypso, one of the most well-loved oral traditions and a major symbol of our ability to speak freely, has established that it is a part of the local culture to criticise and mock those in power. Even the prime minister and other politicians do not react to picong, especially from members of the public. In this age of social media, there is a plethora of less than flattering memes, songs and posts about members of government which remain without litigation. Politicians currently reserve litigation for bigger targets like the media. Repression to freedom of speech and expression comes through media laws like the libel and defamation act. In terms of social media, platform governance and content moderation, lesser technologically developed countries like Trinidad and Tobago have not yet had the opportunity to build the infrastructure, jurisprudence or literacy for average citizens and journalists around the potential dangers of social media.

Trinidad and Tobago recently had its first experience with this.

In 2018, Trinidad and Tobago received its first ruling pertaining to libel and slander on social media. The full details of the case (*Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke*, 2018) can be found in *Legal Case Studies* (chapter 6). Claimants filed an action against their neighbour Janelle Burke who allegedly used her Facebook account to slander the family's reputation, saying that they were sexually abusing their children. This led to an interrogation by the Children's Authority in 2016 as well as public embarrassment, humiliation and a damaged reputation. Even though Burke acknowledged ownership of the account and she denied that she was the original poster of the content, Justice Frank Seepersad ordered her to pay compensation and the family's legal bill and advised:

The cause of action herein is premised in libel as a result of certain statements that the Defendant allegedly posted on social media about the Claimants. This matter is unique and important in that it raises for the first time in this jurisdiction, issues which relate to liability for publications via social media, namely Facebook.

From the onset it is important to note that we are legislatively ill-equipped to deal with issues which arise for determination in matters such as this one, as our laws have not been adequately updated to deal with the social media reality which now exists. 19th century laws as they relate to publication simply cannot regulate life in the 21st century (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018).

As (Reifler et al., 2023) observes, “Robust rules based in part on how citizens think about these moral dilemmas are necessary to deal with this conflict in a principled way, yet little is known about people’s judgments and preferences around content moderation.” If this is still the case in more technologically developed countries and based on the above comments from Judge Seepersad, we can begin to understand the juvenile stage of jurisprudence on this matter in Trinidad and Tobago.

In “The myth of the Chilling Effect” (Bedi, 2021) argues that “...because citizens fear sanctions, the same regulation ends up censoring, limiting, or restricting other potentially valuable types of speech”, Bedi also goes on to posit that “In the social media context, the chilling effect has little to no impact on the content of the message; at most, it subtly alters the specific style or tone used.”

However, (Latchoo, 2020, p. 43) advises that in Trinidad and Tobago, “Newspapers and magazines can be sued for articles on their websites as well as in the paper itself. Each “hit” is considered a new publication of a defamatory statement. It is, therefore, essential to remove an offending statement from the electronic archive as quickly as possible. Newspapers and other

publications that allow readers to post defamatory comments on their websites will also be held responsible.”

Therefore, the potential financial burden of this creates a definitive Chilling Effect, altering behaviour and challenging the theory of (Bedi, 2021) as a blanket concept.

Latchoo went on to advise, “You get no special dispensation, no favours, no exceptions when you defame someone on Facebook instead of in the newspaper, on the radio or television. Defamation is words which tend to lower someone in the estimation of right thinking members of society. Tweeting that a politician is corrupt, a teacher is a sexual predator or a woman is an unfit mother will get you in hot water the same temperature as if you publish the accusation in traditional media” (Trinidad Newsday, 2019).

During the ethnographic study of the Trinidad Newsday, I observed an editorial meeting where the editor-in-chief addressed this very issue, assigning one journalist to the task of monitoring the online comment sections for the paper’s articles. The editor-in-chief also dispersed a document on libel and defamation which contained specific social media guidelines citing the comments by Judge Seepersad on this case. The editor-in-chief was cautioned journalists about potential repercussions.

Even though (Bedi, 2021) advances a tested theory, it lacks the scope of application to societies like Trinidad and Tobago who are only now facing these types of legal issues.

Without reservation this court concludes that postings and information placed on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Viber and Whatsapp has to be viewed as publications and the common law test in relation to libel will apply to same. Such post are in a comprehensible form and they can be accessed and read by a potentially worldwide audience. (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018).

Therefore, the same potential for libel applies to a newsroom's online platform as it does to their physical newspaper or daily broadcast. In fact, that potential inevitably increases as the public has the new ability to post comments on those news platforms that can be "accessed and read by a potentially worldwide audience (Ibid).

Latchoo (2020, p. 43) stated that "Even if all you do is forward a defamatory email message or retweet a post, you are publishing the statement and can be sued for libel."

Fahy (2017) discussed this very issue in "The chilling effect of liability for online reader comments" by appraising three cases¹⁰ which the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) assessed in order to decide whether "holding online news media liable for reader comments has a chilling effect on freedom of expression."

Within the timeline of the three cases, the ECHR was found to be progressive in its stance on the matter, moving from a focus on "the apparent lack of evidence for any such chilling effect" to a stance that "accepts that a potential chilling effect, even without evidence, is integral to deciding whether online news media should be liable for reader comments." (Fahy, 2017, p.1)

According to the *Delfi v Estonia* case (*Delfi AS v Estonia* (2016) 62 E.H.R.R. 6 (Grand Chamber), "Estonian news website, Delfi.ee, published an article criticising a ferry company operating on the Estonian coast. A number of readers posted comments under the article, targeting a board member of the company" (Fahy, 2017)...Six weeks later, the board member asked Delfi to remove the reader comments, and sought over 500,000 Estonian kroons (around

¹⁰ The three cases: Cases: *Delfi AS v Estonia* (64569/09) [2015] E.M.L.R. 26 (ECHR (Grand Chamber)) *Magyar Tartalomszolgáltatók Egyesülete v Hungary* (22947/13) 42 B.H.R.C. 52 (ECHR) *Pihl v Sweden* (74742/14) (2017) 64 E.H.R.R. SE20 (ECHR)

£26,400) in damages. “Delfi immediately removed the comments, but refused to pay any damages. The board member then initiated civil proceedings against Delfi for violation of his “personality rights” and the Estonian Supreme Court ultimately upheld his claim, awarding €320.” (Ibid)

Delfi made an application to the ECHR arguing that “imposing liability had a chilling effect on freedom of expression” saying that “it would be forced to employ an “army of highly trained moderators to patrol” comments, and this would lead to them removing, “just in case”, any “sensitive comments”, and all comments would be moderated so they were “limited to the least controversial issues” or it could “avoid such a massive risk by closing the reader comments altogether.” (Ibid)

The Grand Chamber basically classified the comments as “hate speech” and “clearly unlawful contents”, and on this basis, held that it was consistent with Article 10 to impose liability for failing to remove this type of expression “without delay”, and, most importantly, “even without notice.” (Ibid)

Approximately seven months later, a similar issue arose and the ECHR held that imposing liability “may” have “foreseeable negative consequences” on the comment environment, and these consequences “may have, directly or indirectly”, a “chilling effect on the freedom of expression on the Internet” (*Magyar Tartalomszolgáltatók Egyesülete v Hungary* (22947/13) 42 B.H.R.C. 52 (ECHR), expanding its stance from the previous Delfi case.

The Court held that although the comment was “offensive”, it certainly did not amount to hate speech or incitement to violence (unlike in Delfi). Importantly, the Third Section held that

expecting the website to assume some comments might be in breach of the law would require “excessive and impractical forethought capable of undermining the right to impart information via internet”. (Ibid)

One year later, another similar situation arose (*Pihl v Sweden* (74742/14) (2017) 64 E.H.R.R. SE20 (ECHR)) with a blog posting on a non-profit association’s website. At the end, the ECHR ruled that if liability was imposed, it “may have negative consequences on the comment-related environment”, and thus a “chilling effect on freedom of expression via internet”. This chilling effect “could be particularly detrimental for a non-commercial website.” (Fahy, 2017).

In light of the above, it seems that the Court’s jurisprudence has moved away from the initial rejection of the chilling effect argument put forward in *Delfi* (*Delfi AS v Estonia* (2016) 62 E.H.R.R. 6 (Grand Chamber) and is now more accepting of the potential chilling effect. This is extremely relevant to matters in Trinidad and Tobago as the local legal fraternity often relies on the jurisprudence of countries that have already experienced these particular cases. Therefore, even with the current ruling in the case (*Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke*, 2018) and its Chilling Effect on the content moderation of local news websites, the ECHR ruling introduces the potential for a more expansive understanding of the liability of these media houses when third party commenters are involved.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4:1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and discusses the methods chosen to gather the data that answers the research topic: Journalism Culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

This thesis seeks to answer the question:

RQ1: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? To answer this question two other research questions need to be asked:

- a1. What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?
- a2. How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?

The theoretical framework outlined the key concept of the journalistic field (Bourdieu, 1993). As discussed, there are several elements ebbing and flowing within this field: other journalists, media organisations, politics, media house ownership, commercial factors, race relations, a culture of secrecy and repressive media laws. Therefore, a qualitative approach was decided upon. According to (Logie-MacIver, Piacentini, & Eadie, 2012), an investigation into the experiences and subsequent behaviour of a particular group of people where there is an attempt to understand those experiences and behaviour calls for a qualitative approach.

Three different qualitative methods have been employed. With a concurrent triangulation, cross referencing data was mandatory and made it possible to utilise the strengths of one or more

methods to prevent against any inherent weaknesses in another (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010). A mixed methodology allows for flexibility in overcoming the limitations of a single design method (Ibid).

The three methods employed are: ethnographic study, in depth semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis of media law cases. During the interview process, I used an interview guide which reflected certain themes that were inspired by the Worlds of Journalism Survey¹¹ on journalism culture. Additional themes emerged from the interviews which are discussed in chapter 9. During the interview process, questions were added that reflected those emerging themes. Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was applied manually. Interviews were conducted in the local language of Creole English and translated by the author.

To establish the parameters of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, it was necessary to explore how journalists defined culture and also how they applied that definition to their profession. As no research has been done on this specific aspect of the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago before, a list of questions (see Appendix A) were developed based on the Worlds of Journalism study survey where questions on role perception and role performance, already established in the theoretical framework as key elements of a model for journalism culture, were modified to fit the context of this research. This list of questions was delivered in a semi-structured interview in order to collect a range of experiences. These experiences serve as narratives in and of themselves, fleshing out the scope of the culture. They also offer patterns which can be recognised as cultural values.

¹¹ The Worlds Of Journalism study is an academic project designed to assess the state of journalism in the world today, including journalism culture and the safety of journalists. See <https://worldsofjournalism.org/>.

These interviews were conducted with journalists who worked in six active newsrooms; the Trinidad Guardian, CNC3, the Trinidad Express, TV6, the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday and Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG), now Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT). Editors and media managers were also interviewed. It was important to interview editors and media managers as their interaction with the journalism workflow is different from a regular journalist and therefore, their considerations of elements in the journalistic field like media laws, are different as well. Ninety-three interviews were conducted in total. Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to three and a half hours. In depth semi-structured interviews were chosen as opposed to surveys as they would allow for a deeper look at the way journalists process and perform certain notions and practices.

At one point within the design process of this study, a survey was considered. However, having been a journalist within this landscape, I felt that a survey would be too restrictive. Given that “a qualitative researcher seeks to define and interpret unclear phenomena through non-numerical methods of measurement that focus on meaning and insight” (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017, p. 924), questions such as the level of autonomy could not be answered with a simple scale. For example, even though journalists are given the autonomy to pitch and pursue a story, within the Trinidad and Tobago media landscape, whether or not their story makes it to print or broadcast depends ultimately on the advertising agenda, the ownership structure of the media house and how that defines its business associations. Therefore, a qualitative approach of ethnography and in-depth semi-structured interviews where the journalists could be observed exercising their autonomy in relation to their ecosystem, where measurements focused on “meaning and insight” (Ibid), was chosen over a quantitative approach. In addition, “the world is made of multiple realities rather than a static state; therefore, all realities are relevant and

valid” (Ibid). A static quantitative survey would not have been sufficient to represent the multiple realities of the journalists in the study. Allowing them to speak at length, descriptively about their experiences where they could feel “relevant and valid” was a more appropriate method.

Thematic analysis was utilised to explore patterns across the data. “Thematic analysis helps researchers understand those aspects of a phenomenon that participants talk about frequently or in depth, and the ways in which those aspects of a phenomenon may be connected” (Statistics Solutions, 2021). Considering that this is exactly the context and circumstance in which this data was gathered, thematic analysis is best suited to analyse that data.

Key words were identified within the interview transcripts which journalists used to describe journalism culture as well as certain themes such as economic censorship, race and class, education and training, the public interest, objectivity and corruption, fear of reprisals and overall perception of media laws. When the analysis on the interview transcripts was concluded, the results were analysed in order to ascertain a definition of journalism culture.

To further delve into this investigation, an ethnographic study was conducted. An ethnographic analysis of journalism culture calls for real-life contextual understandings of the particular time and place as well as multi-level perspectives of the journalists operating within the space being examined. A minimum of two weeks was spent in each newsroom to understand how the different elements in the journalistic field acted and reacted on a daily basis. With regards to the legal aspect of the Chilling Effect concept, observing daily considerations on defamation, data protection, cybercrime and interception of communication was paramount. This real life

context gave substantial depth to the content analysis of legal rulings on cases in Trinidad and Tobago, which was also another method design.

Cases were accessed through www.ttlawcourts.org which houses cases tried within the judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. The mixed methodology was also supplemented by my experience and training as a professional journalist¹² which I utilised in the design of the list of questions for the semi-structured interviews as well as the delivery of questions and interaction within the interview space.

4:2 Research Paradigm

The field of journalism in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean is severely under-researched. Therefore, there is no rule of thumb paradigm to draw from. Journalism is a field that engages multiple realities within its discursive field so it must be examined from different perspectives; historical, political, through race and class relations as well as within a contemporary context. It must be appraised from each of these points as a separate and intersecting entity.

The key component is the overarching research question: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? When the elements of the research question are understood, the research paradigm can be decided upon in conjunction with the methodology.

A research paradigm is “the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 3). I have chosen to employ pragmatism as the research paradigm as it is a “deconstructive model that advocates

¹² To date, I have worked in journalism for more than 15 years.

the use of mixed methods in research, sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality” (Feilzer, 2009, p. 10) and “focuses instead on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation.” (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 713).

According to Guba (1990), research paradigms can be characterised through their ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontologically, a pragmatic paradigm works well with an investigation of journalism culture because the research methods can yield opportunities for both subjective and objective approaches. Within this thesis, semi-structured interviews are subjective, as in, they are concerned with the expression of personal thoughts, opinions and experiences of the interviewee. Conversely, the legal cases analysed are factual and objective. Ethnography is both subjective and objective as even though the behaviour of the participant is objectively being observed, the potential for the researcher to allow their own subjectivity into the process must be acknowledged as a possibility.

Reality is what is useful and practical for the research. Three methodologies were used in this study; in-depth semi-structured interviews, ethnographic participant observation, as well as qualitative content analysis of media law cases. These will be discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter. The intention of naming them here is to consolidate why the philosophical paradigm of pragmatism is employed in the research.

Each method carries an inherent positivist and constructivist meaning and pragmatism unites them both. Epistemologically, reality is known through multiple approaches. To construct a true picture of the journalism industry in Trinidad and Tobago, mixed methods will be used to ascertain the full scope of the profession. If epistemological models are determined by their utility, pragmatism serves this thesis best. This paradigm also functions well in terms of

methodology. The mixed method design will produce data which will answer the research question. Real life issues might not be solvable with mono-methodological approaches, therefore, a pragmatic design which allows investigation through mixed methods is the best approach.

4:3 Access

On a previous trip to Trinidad in 2017 before the official trip when fieldwork commenced in 2018, I was in touch with journalists about the topic of this thesis and I conducted informal interviews with media personnel to ascertain its viability. As a former journalist in Trinidad, getting access to individual journalists who were previous colleagues was not difficult. In setting out to recruit journalists for semi-structured interviews, I tapped into these professional networks and also approached journalists on Twitter. Before I embarked upon field work in 2018, I sent messages to journalists I had no previous relation with, introduced myself and outlined the project and asked for an email address and phone number to send more information. If they replied, I used their contact information to send them details about the study and requested in person interviews. I also wrote to all of the main media houses requesting access to come in to conduct an ethnographic study for a period of two weeks. I explained that I would be asking their journalists for interviews, which they were free to give within or outside of their newsrooms.

The first media house, the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, was very accommodating and agreed without hesitation to the ethnographic study. The request to the second media house, the Trinidad Express, took a few weeks to process and several supporting documents had to be provided at the request of the Human Resources department. There was also a mandatory phone call by a representative of the Human Resources department inquiring further about the project.

Eventually access was granted. The third media house, TV6, is owned by the same conglomerate as the Trinidad Express so there was no issue in gaining access to that newsroom. With the fourth newsroom, CNC3, the request was sent to the Head of News who passed it to the Human Resources Department to be processed. Eventually access was granted. The fifth newsroom, The Guardian Newspaper, is also owned by the same conglomerate as CNC3, so there was no further issue with access.

The sixth and final newsroom, CMNG (now TTT) was difficult to access. My request for access was sent to the CEO, who did not reply to my request. Following advice from a colleague, I decided to send the request to the Head of News who did eventually grant access. However, the access was restricted in comparison to the other newsrooms. I was granted five days to do my research but was only allowed to be in the newsroom for four hours a day and was also told that I would have to get approval for every person I wished to interview and the Head of News had the right to deny access. In all of the other newsrooms, I was granted two weeks of unrestricted access for my ethnography and interview process. No limits were put on the number of hours per day I wished to spend in the newsroom and I also had the freedom to interview whomever I chose. In terms of the impact these rules at CNMG had on the ethnography; my time to observe the everyday workflow and interactions that contribute to my understanding of journalism culture was shorter than the other newsrooms and thus I felt that the time I had to do ethnographic observation was not enough.

These constraints compromised the thoroughness of research that could be done at CNMG as I was not able to spend as much time observing journalists working, interacting or reacting to various environmental stimuli, as much as I did in the other newsrooms. Also, as the nature of a journalist is to be out covering stories, the shortened amount of time I was allowed to be in

the newsroom was not enough to have the frequency or depth of ethnographic interviews I had experienced previously at different times of day in other media houses. Also, the fact that I was told that I had to gain approval for who I wanted to interview, greatly compromised the ethnography process as this tight control over my research process did not allow for the potential range of data gathering that I experienced in the previous newsrooms. This made me suspicious of the media house as one of the possibilities for the restriction was that they had something to hide. This effectively made me even more determined to hear what the journalists had to say and I pursued interviews with them outside of the newsroom but was not able to secure any. When the Head of News was not at the office, I asked journalists if they would be willing to be interviewed and carried on asking questions with the ones that had the time to spare. All journalists were briefed about my presence there via e-mail and also at an editorial meeting so I was encouraged by their willingness to speak on record despite the attempts to control their freedom to engage in the interviews. It is important to note that participants were very forthcoming and eager to share their experiences during the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

In January 2019 I returned to Trinidad for three months to appraise the new newsroom dynamics of Guardian Media Limited which recently embarked on their newsroom integration project, that is, combining their print product, the Trinidad Guardian with their broadcast division, CNC3.

The two newsrooms previously operated independently, the Trinidad Guardian working from the Chaguanas office in central Trinidad and the CNC3 team working from Port-of-Spain¹³ in the historic Guardian building. The print team was originally stationed in that building. In

¹³ Port-of-Spain is the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago.

January 2019, both news teams moved into a refurbished newsroom in the Guardian building to become one newsroom as envisioned by Managing Director Nicholas Sabga.

This amalgamation is the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago and has reshaped the landscape of journalism culture. I was granted full access to this newsroom. As a participant observer in this environment, I had the opportunity to see how individual newsroom cultures clashed, meshed, came apart and tried to find space in the new, localised journalistic field. I also had a front row seat to meetings when there were questions about media laws that could affect publication or broadcast. I spent three months in this newsroom attending meetings and training sessions at an editorial and management level and also observed the daily routines of the journalists in the newsroom. As I had already interviewed journalists from both of these newsrooms for my semi-structured interview process, I did not carry out further formal interviews. As new teething issues arose each day, journalists were willing to chat sporadically about their feelings on the process which contributed to ethnographic research.

I am still in touch with journalists in that newsroom who provide updates on how the integration process is progressing. It is also worth noting that as I had already worked with some of these journalists and then spent time conducting ethnographic research in 2018, they were quite comfortable, natural and forthcoming with their words and actions.

4:4 Methodology Techniques

4:4:1 Semi-structured interviews

Given that the research called for a study of culture, it was necessary to choose a method that allowed the expression of culture. I decided to utilise semi-structured interviews as this method

would not only allow different cultural expressions to be ascertained but it would also allow the comparison of responses utilising thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews to establish common beliefs and themes. Eighty-six interviews were conducted across the six newsrooms. Seven interviews were also conducted with media managers and journalism educators.

Please note that in the ethnographic and interview chapters, all journalists and editors are represented by an index system which will be shared upon request. This is to protect the identities of the journalists involved in this study. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Many journalists spoke about the fear of reprisals during interviews. Therefore, this decision has been taken to protect their identity across the board. In rare instances I have included the names of journalists who have extremely pertinent comments and view points, who did not ask to be anonymised. Also, I have left the names of those in editorial management as is, if they did not ask to be anonymised.

Also note that quotations from these ethnographic interviews and semi-structured interviews were utilised throughout this thesis in order to bring real life context to theoretical concepts. These quotations can be recognised by a reference, for example, (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

The list of questions which was designed for these interviews consisted of ten core questions (see Appendix A) which were structured according to personal experience, comparative experiences in newsrooms, national post-colonial culture, present day journalism culture and law. When the parameters of the interview were outlined, participants often expressed concern

at the amount of time required for the interview to be counted as valid for the research process. This was a time of forty-five minutes. However, participants often ended up exceeding this time requirement. Once they got comfortable speaking about their experiences, they relaxed into the process and volunteered more information. Interviews began with open-ended questions about their professional position, how the participant became a journalist as well as their daily life in the newsroom. This technique was used to get the journalist to relax into talking comfortably, building rapport and trust (Bryman, 2019, p.3). Then, follow up questions were asked with a more direct approach.

Wilson, (2003) and (Fisher, 2005) say that the main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates. Several participants described the interview as “therapeutic” because they felt it was an opportunity to vent about their experiences within the industry. As the scope of this thesis includes understanding the nature of the job of journalism from the perspective of a working journalist, further grasping how they perceive their role and how they execute it, I took the use of the word “therapeutic” to be a good sign. Some of the questions posed to the journalists focused on their jobs, how they felt about their editors and managers and if they had ever had any issues with getting their stories published. Questions about their work colleagues and the hierarchy were particular points of frustration for interviewees and this question would lead to a certain level of emotional engagement. Frustration with the workflow as well as work resources was another point which elicited the offloading of emotions.

As an interviewer, I was engaged in active listening (Forsey, 2010) and the participants were aware that unless they gave permission via their signature, their identity would remain

anonymous. From these points, I venture to surmise that they felt secure to share their intimate feelings and have a “therapeutic” experience. I made an inquiry into mental health support and each company confirmed that this service was available and its use encouraged by management. However, management representatives did say that it was a service rarely used. This use of the word “therapeutic” is considered a positive description as it indicated a level of openness and honesty in the face-to-face interview which is one of the reasons that in-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen as a methodology for this thesis.

Interviews were conducted in the same building as the newsroom, sometimes at the desk of the journalist, sometimes in the staff kitchen or dressing rooms. Due to the floor plan of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday which favoured an office setup, most interviews were conducted in the office spaces of journalists or at their desks. If they wanted privacy, the official interview room was utilised. A few journalists located in the open space of the floor plan were too busy to leave their desks and asked that I interview them while they were working under tight deadlines. At the Trinidad Express, interviews were conducted in the newsroom kitchen because the room was a significant distance from the newsroom and also maintained an unofficial closed door policy due to office guidelines about food preparation. Other interviews were conducted in the offices of senior journalists and editors and at the desks of journalists. At TV6, the newsroom workspace was notably smaller than other newsrooms, so editing suites were utilised for their privacy to conduct interviews. Typically, I occupied the editing suite for the full length of the interview with the interviewee. In a few instances, the interviewee and I were interrupted and asked to use a different suite if a journalist needed to utilise that particular space. At CNC3, many interviews were conducted in office spaces and the on-air talent make-up and dressing room. The suite for camera personnel was also used. At the Trinidad Guardian, interviews were mostly conducted in available meeting rooms or at the desks of journalists.

Interviews with certain editors and media managers were conducted in their offices. At CNMG, most interviews were conducted in the main editorial meeting room. The interview with the Head of News was conducted in their office.

Advantages

There are many advantages to employing semi-structured interviews. For example, questions were prepared ahead of time. Conducting interviews also aided in allowing the interviewee to become acquainted with me, the interviewer and increase their level of comfort level and consequently, their level of honesty. An example of this is when journalists described the process as “therapeutic”.

In-depth semi-structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data as well as encourage two-way communication. This coincides with the work of (Carlson, 2010) on member checking via certain mandatory criteria for quality assurance of the data. Within this chapter, there is a quality assurance section where all aspects of this quality assurance are discussed. However, for this section on the advantages of in-depth semi-structured interviews, member checking will be discussed briefly.

According to (Carlson, 2010), the researcher must ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Member checking allows the participant to check and approve the data they contributed. Interviewees were constantly asked to expand on and explain their statements in addition to being asked if they stood by their comments overall. Interviewees often asked further questions before replying to a question.

In addition to providing answers to the list of questions, this interview method has also provided a wealth of contextual information on journalists operating within their industry, their newsroom, as well as how they perceive and execute their roles.

Another advantage of in-depth semi-structured interviews is the fact that they can be conducted in locations which maintain the comfort of the interviewee, again prioritising their trust levels. In other words, the location in which an individual is interviewed may influence them to more easily discuss sensitive issues and express details in their own terms. As mentioned earlier, I initially intended to interview journalists outside of the newsroom on their personal downtime. However, each newsroom was generous enough to allow the option to their journalists to engage in interviews on the premises and even more importantly, journalists agreed or disagreed to do so.

However, there were journalists who refused to be interviewed in the office when I described the research project and read out some of the questions. The list did include questions on levels of autonomy, the advertising agenda, if they felt their work had ever intentionally been bypassed due to elite directives and media ownership. Even though these journalists did not officially state particular reasoning for refusing to be interviewed on site, they indicated what they felt was an obvious understanding of the situation, that is, that they were being repressed in some way.

This situation suggested two things. The first was that their expectation that I understood why they did not want to speak was a confirmation that they felt that I was one of them and they trusted me. The second thing this situation suggested was that these journalists felt a definite chilling effect within their own newsrooms.

The willingness or lack thereof of a journalist to speak on the premises was noted in my ethnography notes as suspicions of repression and control. What is also noteworthy is that answers of other journalists who were willing to go on record coincided with the general impression of the company and opinions of other journalists. For example, no one at the Trinidad Express indicated that they were nervous about giving an interview whereas journalists at CNMG (TTT) were either first vetted by management to give an interview, avoided giving an interview or were very enthusiastic to talk about their repressive experiences when I informed them that I was open to doing interviews off-site or approached them when management was not present.

Another useful function of semi-structured interviews is that it allows the actual language used by participants to be obtained which provides insight into their perceptions and values (Fetterman 1998). The freedom of expression that interviewees had would not have equated with a survey where options for responses are limited. This particular point also relates to my positionality in the research as I am Trinbagonian and I can understand the nuances of the Creole language and fully grasp cultural inferences. This was particularly useful when it was time to transcribe the interviews. O'Reilly (2009) advises that in order to be able to grasp people's perspectives, their relationship to life, and their vision of the world, researchers should go native by taking part in people's social lives. I am a journalist from Trinidad and Tobago researching the journalism culture of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago. I have not gone native. Rather, I am native. If I was a researcher from a different country, I would not be able to connect as thoroughly with the sample and the data gathered from it as there are particular perceptions and values communicated by turns of phrase, tone and historical and contemporary

references that only a native would fully and immediately grasp without the need for explanation.

Another major advantage of utilising semi-structured interviews as a method is that I was able to gain a deeper understanding of journalists in the local media landscape from the rich data gathered. Semi-structured interviews also function as a tool for confirming what is already known and provide the opportunity for learning (Keller 2019). Even though I have worked in the industry and do have knowledge of the culture and practices, I gained more knowledge and a deeper understanding about how other individual newsroom cultures are practised as well as how the history and evolution of journalism in Trinidad and Tobago, in tandem with post-colonial politics, has shaped the culture and those within it.

Within this research, the biggest advantage of utilising semi-structured interviews as a methodology was the opportunity to gather a large amount of data. The empirical data gathered from these ninety-three interviews is key to answering the overarching question put forward by this research; What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? The questions within the in-depth semi-structured interviews drew out answers which were paramount to defining journalism culture by getting participants to describe, in great detail, their lived experiences with elements in the journalistic field.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews as a methodology must also be acknowledged. As noted earlier, I began my search for participants by approaching journalists via Twitter as well as through old work networks. In the beginning I was concerned that I would not find a big enough sample of journalists to speak on the topic as it is a particularly sensitive

one. This could have compromised the ability to make general comparisons and find substantial patterns in the data. Some journalists did refuse to take part in the interview process.

Also, this method of semi-structured interviews is very time consuming. Overall, I spent more than 100 hours conducting interviews. It must also be acknowledged that it is also very exhausting. I was driven by the goal of making the most of the opportunity, carrying out ethnographic observations and also breaking to have these in-depth semi-structured interviews whenever the journalist agreed. As all journalists were constantly busy when they were on call, I grabbed the opportunity whenever it came up. Depending on the newsroom, I went in every day from 9:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. and left when the paper was put to bed. That was usually between 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. In the broadcast newsrooms, I left after the newscast which, depending on the newsroom, was from 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. Some newsrooms had post mortems. I stayed for the post mortem if that particular newsroom allowed me to and also if they had a post mortem. Therefore, on average, I was spending eight to twelve hours a day in the newsroom gathering data through both in-depth semi-structured interviews as well as ethnographic interviews and observations. While this was very valuable to the data gathering process, physical and mental fatigue became factors, causing the need to take a break in the middle of the study.

Another disadvantage of this particular method is the possible compromise in the quality of the interview due to bias from the interviewee towards the interviewer. Denscombe (2007) discusses research which demonstrates how people respond differently depending on how they perceive the interviewer, known as, the interviewer effect. In particular, “the sex, the age, and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount [and type] of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal” (Denscombe, 2007, p.

184). This problem is very dependent on the nature of the topics being discussed. It must be acknowledged that Trinidad and Tobago is a post-colonial nation with a multitude of creeds and races. It must also be acknowledged that as with all societies, sexism, racism and bigotry exist and that every person navigates these issues on a daily basis. In some newsrooms I was well received among upper management immediately because we shared similar international backgrounds in terms of education.

In other newsrooms, my secondary schooling came into a frank discussion of colleague preferences; that is that one interviewee bonded with me over our shared secondary school heritage whilst commenting on the prejudice of another colleague towards our alma mater who went to a different secondary school that has a history of competition with ours for national academic and sporting accolades. This secondary school prejudice has its roots in our colonial past and still affects interactions today. As I attended one of these schools run by a religious board, there are assumptions and stereotypes inherent which predispose an interviewee to receive me in a certain way and perhaps respond to my questions with positive or negative bias. Knowing that this was a possibility, I avoided speaking about my secondary school affiliation as much as possible and encouraged participants to focus on the topic of the research, assuring them that I was in the newsroom to hear all about their own experiences. However, it must be acknowledged that people do have unconscious bias. Therefore it is entirely possible that some of the participants did have a bias and changed their behaviour towards me without even realising it.

4:4:2 Ethnography through participant observation

Ethnography is typically face-to-face, direct research. It is the practice which values the idea that to know other humans the ethnographer must do as others do, live with others, eat, work and experience the same daily pattern as others. This approach is called participant observation and it remains at the core of all reasonable understandings of ethnography (Madden, 2009).

Participant observation aids the researcher in gaining insight into those being studied by being in the same social space. This was particularly important when considering the multiple layers of social and geo-politics in Trinidad and Tobago. While further discussion on this will be carried out in chapter 5, the media landscape chapter, it is important to note here that Trinidad and Tobago is a post-colonial country which retains a British influence on its systems of education, law and parliament. Also, North American influence has thrived through cable television and radio station coverage (Lent, 1991). Globalisation has involved massive movements of people, ideas, economies and systems and with these renewed flows, identity is malleable and is reflected in the local level of the newsroom through the people as well as the stories they produce.

Therefore, not only is the public mixed and generally exposed to global influences but journalists are even more so. Therefore, ethnography was paramount to gaining insight into their world. Every newsroom's culture was influenced on multiple levels, the main one being the particular disposition of their editor-in-chief or media manager with their background, age and experience and also, the culture of individual journalists. Systematically observing and participating in the lives of the group I studied was the best choice to study the culture in detail and find coherent strands to become evidential pieces of this research.

To understand the culture of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago, it was necessary to become intimate with the daily routines and interactions of journalists in their newsrooms. Observing day-to-day actions as well as the meanings behind these routines was key to establishing journalistic values, role perceptions and role executions.

With the exception of CNMG, a minimum of two weeks was spent in the five other newsrooms, qualifying this method as ethnography. I also spent another three months in the newsroom of Guardian Media Limited after they amalgamated the Trinidad Guardian and CNC3. According to (White, 2009) within an ethnographic framework, a researcher is intended to understand the normative cultural expressions of the participants. This meant going into the newsrooms of the daily national newspapers and television stations and analysing the thoughts and feelings which governed interactions, conversations, official and unofficial meetings amongst and between journalists, editors and media managers. Formal and informal interview methods were also used. “The researcher determines whom to interview and what questions need to be answered or clarified (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wolcott, 2009). Participants are asked questions as to how, what, or why to elicit their perspectives, thoughts, and opinions” (Fusch et. al, 2017, p 10). During these interviews, participants were asked questions about their newsroom, their cultural ecosystem, the advertising agenda, media ownership, levels of autonomy and understanding, interaction of media laws as well as the overall daily happenings. Participants were given all the time they wished to express their “thoughts, perspective and opinions” (Ibid).

The elemental theories which aid ethnography in this study are inductive and deductive theory. Inductive theory building can be described as “bottom up” theory building based on the observations and interactions ethnographers have in the field and the hypothesising it creates (Lodico et al., 2010). An example of this is the theory that journalists do not pay much attention

to the defamation law because editors-in-chief and media managers act as buffers when legal actions are filed. Deductive theory can be described as “top down” or general or grand theory, that is to say, the theories that the ethnographers acquire in educational institutions and against which they test particular theories they generate from fieldwork (LeCompte and Schensul, 1992) such as the theory that the “typical journalist” is young, male, college-educated, and comes from the established and dominant cultural group (Weaver, 1998b, p. 478) being tested against the fact that most journalists in the local media landscape do not have journalism degrees. The analysis of these theories is recursive or grounded analysis which aims to find a middle road between inductive and deductive theories, that is, between the particular and the general. One example of this is that media personnel want more press freedom. One of the key interview questions was whether the interviewee would want to repeal the defamation law and increase media freedom. This theory was tested and many of the respondents said that while they think more freedom is necessary, they would not trust the other journalists in the industry to not abuse that freedom.

Through being a participant observer, I was able to see these routines, beliefs and practices first hand. I was also able to understand them through the lenses of these theories.

Advantages and disadvantages of “going native”

Proponents of insider ethnographies argue that they have a privileged understanding of the situation, are less likely to misinterpret behaviours, can uncover valuable meanings, and easily gain trust and cooperation (Allen, 2004; Borbasi et al., 2005; Cudmore & Sondermeyer, 2007).

However, “going native” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and increasing one’s participation in the day-to-day routines and rituals can decrease the researcher’s ability to be objective. This

can also impact on the researcher's ability to truly see critical data as over-familiarity with the subject could render some elements of that data invisible. Simultaneously, the researcher's own beliefs fears, hopes and social meanings will form part of the data. There is arguably a certain advantage to being from within this industry but as the main instrument of data collection, a balance between "insider" and "outsider" status was imperative.

During the period of fieldwork, I adopted a stance of complete participation. In contrast to the (Gold, 1958, p. 219) theory, where "the complete participant interacts with people in situations in which it is possible to take a day to day role, but where their true identity and purpose are not known to those observed," I acted as an overt participant in the lives of these journalists. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that there are both covert and overt manifestations of indulging in complete participation and that is where "the putative researcher is already a member of the group or organization that he or she decides to study," (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p. 94). This approach was possible for two reasons. The first reason was that as I had worked within the industry. I was already known to some of these journalists and was considered an insider which they would reflect in their language during interviews with comments such as, "as you would know." The second reason is that when I explained my research aims and the methodology process to participants, I was given permission to execute that process by willing interviewees.

However, as predicted by (Hertz, 1997), one key issue with such overt participation was the difficulty between staying completely within the researcher role when the temptation to participate in day-to-day routines presented itself. For example, editors within different newsrooms would ask for my opinion on headlines or story choices. Fetterman (1998, p. 173) points out that, "Long-term residence helps the researcher internalise the basic beliefs, fears,

hopes and expectations of the people under study.” Therefore, whilst complete participation was the pathway to gaining the most information, it was extremely difficult to have complete detachment from the subjects I was observing especially as I already had shared beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations.

To counteract this issue of being “blinded by the familiar” (Hertz 1997, p. 97), I employed personal restraint and mental checks and in terms of a methodological approach, triangulation was employed. As detailed earlier in this chapter, triangulation is a method of data verification which was achieved by employing different methods of data collection and analysis, using the strengths of the different methods to overcome the weaknesses of the others. Within ethnography, “Participant observation will be defined as a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection” (Flick 1989, p. 157). This data triangulation is necessary to compare the validity of the data collected, confirm possible trends and maintain the ethical relevance of each of the methods employed.

Hammersley and Atkinson refer to a combination of these techniques saying:

“it may be possible to check the constructed validity by examining data relating to the same construct from participant observation, interviewing, and documents. What is involved in triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data per se, but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis. (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p 199)

Now that fieldwork is done, ninety-three interviews have been ascertained. In terms of verification through triangulation, “crosschecks” (Audrey 2013) needed to maintain precise

results and ensure validity of the data, have been carried out. The data gathered is profound and comprehensive. Due to the sheer amount of data from such a high number of interviews, trends and archetypes are able to be clearly identified in the ethnographic study, corroborated by findings in the in-depth semi-structured interviews through the thematic analysis of the of the interview transcripts.

Setting and Sample

Ethnography is the study of people “in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner without being imposed on them externally” (Brewer 2000, p. 10).

Therefore, within my study, I also included observation of the news production process, that is, from editorial meetings where story ideas were pitched to observing how journalists went about gathering information, composing the story and delivering it to their editors. In the television newsroom, the same observation process was followed, the one exception being, observation was also done when allowed, from the control room as the live news went on. Notes and observations were also recorded post news broadcast.

In terms of sample, I utilised purposive sampling as I wanted to identify people that had one core quality in common; the fact that they all work in the media. The newspapers chosen were the Trinidad Guardian, the Trinidad Express and the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday and three television stations were TV6, CNC3 and CNMG which has recently been rebranded to TTT, its original name from 1962, Trinidad and Tobago Television. These six newsrooms allowed media managers, owners and a good cross section of working journalists who were at different

stages of their career —rookie, intermediate and veteran journalists— to be included in the sample. Journalists from these newsrooms were selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding the research subject as they are working in the main hubs of journalism every day. Many of these journalists have observed changes to the government, the execution of law, as well as how those particular changes have affected the practice of journalism. Therefore, this sample achieves the goal of providing data for the research question.

Due to the comparatively low number of journalists in Tobago, a decision was made to avoid journeying there to conduct interviews. Even though Tobago is only ten minutes away by plane, I did not have the financial resources to rent a car and hotel for the duration of a study there.

Also, in Trinidad and Tobago, there are only a handful of radio journalists. Most of the news on air is taken from television or the newspaper and read by a newsreader. Moreover, as most of these radio stations are connected to conglomerates, they recycle the news which their print and broadcast divisions produce, not pursuing original stories. While journalists have crossed over from print and broadcast into the realm of radio, they do not continue to adhere to the definition of a journalist as defined by this thesis as they do not do their own news coverage or investigative reporting. Therefore, due to the scant number of radio journalists, a decision was made not to include these journalists in the ethnographic study.

Advantages

The main advantage of ethnography is the ability to collect rich data first hand. Ethnography gives the researcher the ability to witness the emotions of people in real time. Denzin (2009) points out that within the process of direct observation, the observer can gather information from the visual and auditory environment as well as through the body language of those being

observed. During the ethnographic process, I was given access to editorial meetings. I witnessed the attitude of journalists towards these meetings as well as individuals within these sessions. These meetings were very informative as they offered insights into co-working abilities as well as power dynamics within the newsroom.

Another advantage of ethnographic research is the discovery of new lines of enquiry. This was one major reason this type of methodology was chosen for this thesis. As mentioned before several times, this is the first ethnographic study of the journalism industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, there were many lines of enquiry to be pursued. This data is discussed thoroughly in the ethnographic chapter (chapter 7).

Disadvantages

One of the cons of ethnography is that it can be difficult to choose a representative sample as not everyone in the sample shares the same demographics. As mentioned in the setting and sample section, the people in the sample I chose have only one core quality in common; the fact that they all work in the media. Aside from the media managers and owners that I interviewed, all journalists were actively working in newsrooms. However, considering that one of the core questions I wanted to answer was how each journalist and each collective newsroom defined and practised journalism culture, the lack of commonalities presented complexities in the analysis as well as multiple potential contingent hypotheses.

Another disadvantage of ethnography is that it can be time consuming. I spent two weeks at five of the media houses and five days at CNMG. I took a one-week break in the middle of the ethnography. That is a total of twelve weeks, three months, that was spent gathering data

initially. After the amalgamation of the Trinidad Guardian and CNC3, I spent another three months in this newsroom. That is a total of six months of ethnographic observation.

Another key consideration that could result in a disadvantage of the ethnographic process is that the success of the undertaking heavily depends on the relationship between the ethnographer and their subjects. Having worked in the field, I knew several of the participants through a direct relationship or through the community. This was the same with their knowledge of me. Therefore, in this case, it was admittedly easier to go into a newsroom and establish a rapport with some journalists rather than if I had never worked in the industry at all. One of the trends that I noticed, which made a particularly great impact on the trust process, was how the editor-in-chief or head of news introduced me to the staff.

At the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday newspaper, the editor-in-chief sent out an e-mail to the staff letting them know who I was and why I was there. Judy Raymond, the editor-in-chief then took me around and introduced me to all of the staff members. This pattern was followed at the Trinidad Express through the Managing Editor and I was also introduced to staff at CNC3 and CNMG (TTT) by a member of editorial staff. Due to the fact that journalists did not see me as an unwarranted intruder, they were at the very least nonchalant and at most, welcoming.

At TV6, the Head of News was on vacation when I arrived so I had to introduce myself to everyone. I did notice looks of curiosity when I was in the newsroom that first day but by the third day everyone knew who I was through introducing myself and the project or by word of mouth, that is, with one journalist asking another. At the Trinidad Guardian, I was not formally introduced so there was also a lot of curiosity and I had to introduce myself to everyone. I did work at the Guardian in the past so this did give me some interpersonal leverage. Duch &

Rasmussen (2021) utilise the work of (Delamont, Atkinson, and Pugsley 2010) to posit that “handling roles, relationships, familiarity, and distance in fieldwork constitutes recurrent challenges to educational ethnographers. After overcoming the challenge of obtaining access to the field and the participants’ views, the researcher has to balance between different positions of familiarity and distance” (Duch & Rasmussen , 2021, p. 1). Again, if I was not Trinidadian and had not worked in the industry or had family members who still work in the industry, I would have had a much harder time getting accepted on the level which gave me deeper access and honest information from participants.

Another potential con of ethnography is that it depends on the openness and honesty of the participants. This was a particular concern for me at CNMG (TTT), where as I mentioned, restrictions were placed on who I could and could not interview as well as the amount of time I was allowed in the newsroom. The irony of the situation is that journalists were incredibly forthcoming about the negative aspects of their relationship with management and their less than ideal working conditions. Whilst most of the journalists I interviewed were very open about their experiences, there were some journalists who either outright refused to participate or avoided me on a daily basis saying that they did not have the time to sit for such a long interview.

Length of study is also one limitation of ethnography. Depending on the field, ethnography is known to be a long-term commitment. Researchers have been known to dedicate at least 12-18 months to field observation. Rapport building is key to establishing trust in the ethnographic process and according to (O’Reilly, 2009, p. 175), it can take some time. “One can’t afford to rush things, be too pushy and risk being alienated by one’s participant group, it is a ‘gradual building up of trust’. Managing this process can be difficult but it is essential to maintaining

the integrity of the research as well as respect for the ethnographer and the subjects under observation” (Ibid).

Subjectivity, which has been discussed in the in-depth semi-structured interview section, can be an advantage as well as a disadvantage. As I formerly worked in the journalism industry in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a certain amount of regard that was extended to me by journalists upon entering the different newsrooms. This worked entirely in my favour as it served as an automatic commonality between myself and the interviewees. However, “Intimate contact with participants raises issues of obligation, reciprocity and the formation of friendships and these human relationships impose serious responsibilities on ethnographers” (O’Reilly, 2009, p. 175). Riet (2012) argues that total detachment is “unrealistic”. Maintaining the proper distance both emotionally and physically had to be thought about and planned out in advance in order to avoid compromising the integrity of the data collected.

This was one aspect of the mental fatigue I experienced and part of the reason I had a break of a week in the middle of the study. I went through a process of defamiliarization and after I felt that I could treat the research subject as “anthropologically strange” (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p. 8) I returned to the study.

As mentioned in the section with in-depth semi-structured interviews, bias can also be both an advantage and disadvantage in the data gathering process. Also, bias might be conscious or unconscious. I can give one positive and one negative example of this in this chapter and will expound further in the ethnography chapter (chapter 7). At one particular newsroom, one journalist who worked there knew one of my family members and literally said that they were

agreeing to my interviews because of my relationship to this person. That bias worked in my favour as there was an inherent trust-by-association bias that I built on.

Conversely, when I was attending an editorial meeting with members of the same newsroom, I witnessed one of the main editors speaking down to two of their female colleagues and eventually, me. There appeared to be a gender-based bias with this person. When I asked others in the newsroom about this possible bias, it was acknowledged that this was not a new occurrence with this editor. Therefore, if we consider how this sexism can affect the research, it is possible that this editor was either not entirely forthcoming or just the opposite, too embellishing, which would have established a sense of dominance in our interaction. I did my best to be cognizant of this dynamic and made specific observational notes as to how this impacted the culture of the newsroom which will be discussed in further detail in the ethnography chapter.

4:4:3 How the theoretical framework supports the methodology: Hanitzsch and Bourdieu

Hanitzsch's work in journalism culture is one of the core frameworks of this thesis. The professional milieus of the populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent and opportunist facilitator (Hanitzsch, 2011) provided an opportunity for comparison and measurement. The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and ethnography were examined against the elements of these categories to deduce the parameters of Trinidad and Tobago's journalism culture. In a hybrid media culture like Trinidad and Tobago commonalities can be found with each of the above professional milieus but none are a complete match.

Within these parameters, there is the discursive field where more nuanced elements can be determined and thus employed as definitive factors in the journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Hanitzsch's work explains how elements within this field create and are created by "normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated roles" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

The concept and understanding of the discursive field was discovered through Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1993). This theory was utilised in practice to understand and observe the relational aspects between all of the different elements in local society which affected journalists, that came up in the semi-structured interviews and ethnography. Journalists described a daily struggle, a push and pull between various actors, internal and external ethical quandaries and particular circumstances and expectations that defined their day-to-day role performance. Bourdieu's work was employed as an analytical tool which allowed for the above elements to be conceptualised as a continuously relational field.

Bourdieu relates that "The field as a whole is defined as a system of deviations on different levels and nothing, either in the institutions or in the agents, the acts or discourses they produce, has meaning except relationally, by virtue of the interplay of oppositions and distinctions" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 185). Actions within and according to structures of power is not just a "field of forces" but also a "field of struggles" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 30).

The application of Hanitzsch's framework throughout this thesis was built on this researcher's understanding of Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1993). Hanitzsch's "discursive constructions" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017) and the process model with "four distinct conceptual categories—normative, cognitive, practised, and narrated roles" (Ibid) framed the data collected from the ethnographic study as well as the semi-structured interviews.

To be clear, Hanitzsch's work on journalism culture and role theory is utilised throughout this thesis whereas the work of Bourdieu was foundational in introducing the concept of the journalistic field.

4:4:4 Content analysis of media law cases

One of the main components in the journalistic field is the impact of media laws. A key part of the research is analysing the cases that were brought against media houses and/or individual journalists for defamation, data protection, cybercrime and interception of communication. The proliferation of cases, the sociological details of the claimant as well as the parameters of the claim are all significant forms of data that inform the research question.

As mentioned previously, there are four particular sets of legislation that this thesis prioritises; the Libel and Defamation Act of 2014 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014), the Data Protection Act of 2011 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011), the Cybercrime Bill of 2017 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017) and the Interception of Communication Act of 2010 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010). These sets of legislation have been cited in the media as dangerous to media freedom (Trinidad Guardian, 2016; IFEX, 2018; Loop, 2018). This is why the impact of these four Acts are the focus of this thesis.

Content analysis was utilised to examine the court rulings on cases pertaining to these media laws. Cases were accessed through www.ttlawcourts.org which houses cases tried within the judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. All searches for cases pertaining to the "Cybercrime" and "Interception of Communication" came back with no results. "Data Protection" came back with twenty-two results but none pertained to media houses. The search parameter "Libel and

Defamation” produced forty-four¹⁴ results. Further filtering was manually conducted in order to prioritise cases specifically pertaining to media houses. Eighteen rulings were then ascertained and examined with a focus on damages awarded to claimants to define the parameters of the economic chill of the Libel and Defamation Act.

4:5 Limitations of data collection

Access was one limitation of data collection. In the CNMG (TTT) newsroom in particular, I was initially not allowed to enter the building as desired, nor was I initially able to interview whomever I wanted. As CNMG, now TTT, is the only state owned television station in the study, getting access was particularly important, especially considering it was the only media house to place restrictions on the study.

Time and cost were other limitations. I spent two weeks in five of the newsrooms, as well as five days in the CNMG (TTT) newsroom. The mini-ethnography has been justified as appropriate for this research due to the timeframe available. Therefore time was a limitation in this thesis. In terms of the limitation of cost, even though I was in my home country and staying with my family, conducting the ethnography was costly as I had to go to the capital city on a daily basis where transportation and other variable expenses were incurred.

As outlined in the section on in-depth semi-structured interviews, another limitation was the possible dishonesty of participants. The word “dishonesty” is being used in two different ways here. The first incarnation of dishonesty is that within the in-depth semi-structured interviews, interviewees could have not answered all of the questions honestly. The second way

¹⁴ For the list of results, see: <https://www.ttlawcourts.org/index.php/advance-search?searchword=libel%20and%20defamation&ordering=newest&searchphrase=all&limit=0>

“dishonesty” is being used to describe the limitations of data collection is with the actual actions of the journalists. For example, At TV6, on the first day of my ethnographic study, one of the journalists made a comment about “behaving properly” in front of me to a colleague. This comment suggests that there was a hyper-awareness of my presence which influenced the journalist to act differently around me and also encourage their fellow colleagues, who might have already altered their behaviour, to do the same.

Physical and mental fatigue was another limitation to the data collection process. Earlier in the chapter I explained that one of the reasons I took a break in the middle of the study for one week was to maintain my mental and physical health. As explained above, I was in the newsroom for up to twelve hours a day, conducting multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews, some of which were more than two hours long. If I had not become fatigued, the study would have ended sooner, saving on time and cost. Therefore, personal fatigue was another limitation to the study.

4:6 Quality Assurance

Following (Guba, 1981) and (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) this study will address quality in terms of trustworthiness related to these criteria:

- Credibility: Assuring the “truth value” of the findings and accommodating the need to understand, in a holistic manner, a complex phenomenon;
- Transferability: Addressing the applicability of the findings but acknowledging that the research focus is the idiographic (i.e., the particulars of the case) rather than the nomothetic (i.e., lawlike generalisations);
- Dependability: Assuring the methods and methodological choices of the emergent research

design are documented for external inspection;

- **Confirmability:** Assuring the neutrality of the researcher to establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are a function solely of the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not of the biases, motivations, interests, perspectives, and so on of the inquirer.

Credibility was achieved through the usage of direct quotes from interviewees in the in-depth semi-structured interviews as well as from ethnographic participants. At the end of each interview, member checking was performed by asking if there was anything the participant wanted to add or detract. It was also made clear that the participants were welcome to approach me at any time with changes they wanted to make to their ethnographic discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews. This did happen with one participant who approached after the day of our in-depth semi-structured interview to add to a point they made after our initial discussion.

Even within this thesis, transferability and dependability are maintained by this very methodology chapter where a thorough description of the research design and data collection methods are clearly outlined for the reader to follow and judge applicability. In terms of confirmability, biases and perspectives were noted and searched for within the interview transcripts and ethnography notes.

4:6:1 Member checks

For qualitative researchers, member checking gives researchers the ability to validate the meaning of a participant's responses. Rather than depending solely on the word choice, the researcher can ask a clarifying question such as, "Is this what you meant?", in order to ensure

that there are no gaps in understanding (Carlson, 2010). This gives the opportunity for participants to agree and maintain what they initially stated as well as the chance to expand or retract responses (Houghton et al., 2013). Member checking is an important component to enhance the validity of the study results (Carlson, 2010). As mentioned earlier, member checking was carried out by asking participants if there was anything they wanted to add or detract from their in-depth semi-structured interview or ethnographic discussions. Clarification on statements during the interview were also sought and participants had a chance to change or confirm their words.

4:6:2 Audit trails

There are a range of approaches that can be utilised in qualitative analysis. Therefore, it is important to have a clear description of the research path taken from the start of the project, through its development and on to the reporting of findings. Documentation about the rationale of the decisions behind the research design and data collection as well as the steps taken to manage, analyse and report data need to be accounted for.

Lincoln & Guba (1985, pp. 309-310) cite (Halpern, 1983) categories for reporting information when developing an audit trail. These categories are, raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions and instrument development information. Keeping in line with these requirements, before the study began, requests for permission to carry out ethnography were sent out along with a brief about the research as well as how to get in touch with the university if more information was needed. Preliminary forms were given out to participants which they were asked to sign, confirming their agreement to participate in the in-depth semi-structured

interviews. A schedule was agreed upon with the media house before interviews and ethnographic observation began. During the ethnographic process field notes and theoretical notes were made. Observations on the trustworthiness and credibility of participants were also recorded. A personal reflection diary was also kept. Documents gained from newsrooms during the ethnographic process were also filed away.

4:7 Researcher's background, beliefs and biases

Background

I am a former journalist who began my career at the age of fourteen. I wrote a youth column for the Trinidad Guardian then progressed to broadcast journalism when I was seventeen at a local channel which is now defunct. I then moved to Toronto to pursue my Specialist in Journalism at the University of Toronto. While living there I produced documentaries, did work for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and ran training workshops for youth journalists. When I returned to Trinidad I worked as a broadcast journalist for five years and also had a career as a film producer. In addition, I worked as a freelance journalist, doing stories for the Trinidad Guardian during this time.

I recently worked for the largest global association of public broadcasters, the Public Media Alliance, as their features and projects journalist writing on various aspects of how public media is essential for the maintenance of democracy. I have also recently worked with the Media Institute of the Caribbean as a project manager investigating how Caribbean governments are spending Covid-19 grants and loans from multi-laterals and foreign governments.

Beliefs

When I began my journalism career, I witnessed my editor getting reprimanded because they refused to retract a story that included uncomplimentary details about a person of societal importance. This was my first notion that the media in Trinidad and Tobago was either corrupt or being controlled by members of the government or the corporate world. This shaped my professional ethos and emphasised the importance of integrity and transparency. To this day I believe in freedom of the press and I also believe in the right to privacy. I do not believe in the abuse of power. I believe that journalists have a responsibility to hold those in power accountable for their actions and also to put the interests of the people first. In my personal opinion, criminal defamation as well as civil defamation with no financial consideration for the economic viability of the media house is an unnecessary intimidation for journalists.

Biases

Due to the above beliefs, I run the risk of judging journalists that do not share the same views. Another compromise to my position is my personal history with the local media industry having worked within it and having two family members who did the same before my entry into the industry,

My mother, Heather-Dawn Herrera is an environmentalist and has produced a column on conservation and eco-tourism for the past twenty years. Initially, she worked for the Trinidad Guardian. She now works for the Trinidad Express. When I was a child, my mother would bring me to meetings with her editors. Therefore, they were familiar to me when I began my youth column at the Trinidad Guardian. I was acknowledged as “Heather-Dawn’s daughter” and accepted into the newsroom and allowed access to writers and editors decades older based

on this association. During my ethnographic study, I discovered that many of these mature journalists were still working in other newsrooms. When I came across them, they still acknowledged me as “Heather-Dawn’s daughter”. My mother was also awarded a formidable national honour, the Hummingbird Silver medal for her work in conversation, so she is also respected in the conservation and media fields. Her reputation was another positive element which captured the trust of the people I was investigating.

One of my brothers worked part time as a sub-editor at the Trinidad Guardian when he was attending the University of the West Indies. He worked as a sub-editor in the photography department. I would sometimes visit him at work and I got to know his colleagues, some of whom he has maintained contact with. Some of these colleagues were still working in the newsroom when I did my ethnography and identified the association with my brother when they agreed to do interviews, admitting that they would trust me based on this association. This definitely worked in my favour as I do believe that these particular journalists were more forthcoming and this benefitted the data collection process.

Also, as stated in the introduction of this thesis, I have been working in the media industry since I was 14-years-old. I first worked as a youth columnist at the Trinidad Guardian and have maintained a working relationship with this media house throughout the years. At seventeen, I worked as a producer, co-host and host of two television shows for a station, now defunct. I spent five years with the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival working as a journalist, eventually becoming a film producer and first assistant director. I then went on to make films and television commercials with local and international directors. I also worked as a broadcast journalist for an environmental organisation covering conservation efforts throughout the Caribbean and South America for five years. I started this research 16 years after I started that

youth column and have been building and nurturing connections in the media industry since that time.

My reputation as well as my associations with journalists in the industry made it easier to gain access to media houses to conduct ethnographic research. These elements also made it easier to gain the trust of interviewees as they felt, as expressed in various interviews, that I was one of them and could listen, empathise and be trusted to keep their confidence.

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I still maintain relationships with certain journalists in the industry in Trinidad and Tobago, including journalists who participated in the research. Data triangulation ensured that no personal bias affected the research. No raw data from the interviewing process will be shared with anyone. Only the data within the completed thesis will be made available for viewing.

4:8 Ethics

Before embarking on fieldwork, full approval was granted from the ethics committee of City, University of London. In Trinidad and Tobago, before beginning any sort of questioning, interviewees were given participant information sheets. The participant information sheet explained the project, how the participant's inclusion would contribute to the research and also included contact information for the journalism department at the university should any issues arise which the participant wanted to take to the department.

Once they had the opportunity to read the sheet, they were asked to sign consent forms. All participants were asked to grant written acceptance regarding their participation in the research, through a signed Consent and Briefing Letter.

I decided to keep all participants anonymous for two reasons; for consistency in the text and also because the industry is small and people are easily identifiable and there is no guarantee that they will not suffer abuse or loss of job and income. If one organisation found out that their journalists were disloyal to management, that might lead to a compromise internally and even with regards to that journalist's reputation throughout the industry.

Participants were reassured that their answers would be treated as confidential and anonymous and used only for academic purposes as well as only for the purposes of this particular research. Participants were not harmed or abused physically or psychologically, during the conducting of the research.

Chapter 5: Media Landscape

5:1 Introduction

This chapter will present the evolutionary and contemporary elements which exist relationally as an “interplay of oppositions and distinctions” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 185) in the local journalistic field. This “field of forces” and “field of struggles” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 30) is what has shaped journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

To give the necessary context and detail to this journalistic field, this chapter begins with an account of the evolution of journalism within the twin island Republic to establish the post-colonial parameters within which journalists now operate. It then expounds on the quality of media freedom in the industry and examines different points in history which have influenced the landscape. The chapter will then look at regulation and media laws, prioritising the different organisations which are responsible for regulating the industry in some manner. Then, the chapter will explore journalism education and training, giving the thoughts and opinions of those on the teaching side of the profession a platform to appraise the industry’s progress.

Cultivating a healthy understanding of what influences the journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago will facilitate a deeper appreciation of the sociological elements in the journalistic field. This understanding of the media landscape proved to be a valuable tool when analysing the ethnographical data and themes across the in-depth semi-structured interview responses. It gave context to decisions by media management and made sense of the attitudes of journalists when making day to day decisions by paying specific attention to what government is in power, what media house they work for as well as the stories that they chose to or, in some cases, were allowed to pursue.

Of particular note is the Caribbean's history with developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019) and the positionality of Trinidad and Tobago in relation to their Caribbean neighbours. Many countries within the region are yet to achieve “developed” status and look to Trinidad and Tobago for an example of journalism culture and media freedom. The parallel concept of development support journalism¹⁵ as well as how journalism can have a developmental effect without an explicit motivation to promote a notion of development, are also paradigms which have shaped the media landscape.

In Hanitzsch's work in the Worlds of Journalism Study¹⁶, a model for journalism culture within different countries is identified as a culture that is influenced by the society it evolves within. Hanitzsch identifies four specific cultural practices: populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent and opportunist facilitator (Hanitzsch, 2011). Understanding this media landscape will hone in on which of these categories journalists in Trinidad and Tobago align with the most. This discovery will aid in answering: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

5:2 Historical Context

The history of Caribbean journalism is indisputably prefaced by the history and evolution of Western journalism. This historical account of the evolution of the media in the region is paramount to understanding the modern day media landscape. As is the way with socio-historic

¹⁵ According to the FAO, the practice of Development Support Communication, DSC, is a multi-sectoral process of information sharing about development agendas and planned actions. It links planners, beneficiaries and implementers of development action, including the donor community. See: <https://www.fao.org/3/y4338e/y4338e07.htm>

¹⁶ The Worlds Of Journalism study is an academic project designed to assess the state of journalism in the world today, including journalism culture and the safety of journalists. See <https://worldsofjournalism.org/>.

trends, the class and racial politics of the colonial past determine certain points-of-view and attitudes which are perpetuated both inside and outside of the newsroom. The question of whether national culture influences journalism culture can be answered in part here as we can examine the levels of objectivity applied against inherited racism and classism.

In *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies*, edited by (Voltmer, 2005), the circumstances of burgeoning democracies are discussed. According to this discussion, in a country with a history of one-party rule, very particular circumstances will influence and shape the relationship between the media industry and government. Also, the State is always a central element, especially when adopting the role of promoter of national building and development, especially coming out of a colonial past. The work edited by (Voltmer, 2005) also posits that in countries like Trinidad and Tobago with deep chasms of religious and ethnic division, “nation building is still an unfinished project so that social integration and national unity appear as primary values above individual liberties and open debate” (Voltmer, 2005, p. 248). This idea is critical to understand the landscape of the society of Trinidad and Tobago as a young post colonial society trying to build a democracy. It is also key to identifying and understanding the roles of the government and the media during that time and moving forward to the present.

From storytelling and communication by word of mouth to handwritten pamphlets, to the invention of the transformative Johannes Gutenberg printing press in the 15th century¹⁷, the spread of information was defined by these methods of distribution as well as those who controlled them. Inevitably, after the appearance of newspapers in England in the 1620’s¹⁸ British colonists also established them in the Caribbean through the use of the printing press which came to the region in the 1700’s (Storr, 2016, p. 9). According to Caribbean media

¹⁷ See history.com/topics/inventions/printing-press

¹⁸ See <http://www.newsmediauk.org/history-of-british-newspapers>

scholar Juliette Storr, the printing press “was owned and operated by members of the white oligarchies found throughout these colonies, most of whom were British or American businessmen and women” (Ibid). In the 17th century, the English colonised St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Montserrat, Antigua, the Bahamas, Anguilla, Jamaica and Turks and Caicos. In the 18th century, the British secured the Cayman islands, Grenada, Dominica and Trinidad followed by St. Lucia and Tobago in the 19th century (Lambert, 2017). The printing press was utilised across these territories “as a smart way of circulating important news about socio-economic, political and legislative matters” (Storr, 2016, p. 13) or, in other words, used as an element of “subtle and overt control and orientation of popular expression” (Lent, 1991, p. 29). Howard Pactor’s work reveals that the first newspaper in the region was the Weekly Jamaica Courant. It was founded in 1718 by Englishman Robert Baldwin. In total, during this time, there were over 650 newspapers in the region (Pactor, 1990).

According to Michael Anthony, historian and author of the book *First in Trinidad*, Trinidad’s first English-language newspaper, the Trinidad Courant (1799-1822) was “very much a government gazette . . . Government notices, proclamations, and ordinances were very much in evidence” (Anthony, 1985, p. 50). The Trinidad Gazette (1822-1825), followed the same blueprint and was known as the mouthpiece of the British colonial regime, supporting imperialist rule and the accompanying status quo. Anthony writes that Trinidad’s first four newspapers which included the Port of Spain Gazette (1825-1897) and the Trinidad Standard (1838-1847), “all backed the Government and the land-owning class” (Anthony, 1985, p. 53).

Lent, author of the book *Mass Communications in the Caribbean* confirmed that the balance of power did not equalise after independence (Lent, 1991, p. 90).

Today within Trinidad and Tobago, the oldest surviving newspapers are the Catholic News, founded in 1892 and the Trinidad Guardian founded in 1917 “by a group of white businessmen”

(Storr, 2016, p. 11). Along with the Guardian, the Trinidad Express and the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday are the three main dailies in the country. The Trinidad Express was started in 1967 after independence by a group of local businessmen (Express, 2021) and has become the main competitor of the Trinidad Guardian. It is owned by One Caribbean Media, a company headquartered in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (One Caribbean Media Limited, 2021). Therese Mills, a black businesswoman who was a former editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Guardian, became the first editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday in 1993 (Newsday, 2018).

Continuing with the key points of the evolution of journalism in the Caribbean, a shift in the economic model of British colonies occurred in the 20th century (Storr, 2016). After Trinidad and Tobago gained independence in 1962, Britain, the mother country, no longer retained the sole trading monopoly over the new island Republic. The commercial interests of the region “shifted from a mercantile model to a more profitable capitalist model” (Storr, 2016, p. 5). This move to commercial ventures entirely changed the media landscape from a sociological standpoint. Also, as major events in the region received coverage such as the labour led civil unrest in Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica¹⁹, news from England and the existence and preoccupations of colonists in the region became less important and more island-centred news began to emerge. This trend continued to grow as more locals were hired at newspapers from the 1960’s onward, the number growing in tandem with the occurrence of independence in each island (Storr, 2016). While this signalled socio-economic progression and independence, the pillars of colonisation continued to influence each island territory. British systems of

¹⁹ In July 1934 there were riots on the central sugar estates involving over 15,000 labourers (Lisowski, 1992, p. 105). Then in 1962, the opposition political parties and the Trades Union Council (TUC) protested in the streets against the introduction of that year’s budget by the Jagan government (Ishmael, 2004). In 1938 in Jamaica, the labourers’ strike turned into riots which left 46 dead and at least 429 injured. Thousands were detained and prosecuted (Brereton & Yelvington, 1999, p. 226)

government, law, education and class ensured that they remained “bastions of the former colonial empires that created them for mercantile purposes” (Ibid).

Emphasising that one of the central components of this research is the question, ‘What is Journalism Culture in Trinidad and Tobago?’, what Storr describes here is central to one of the main sub arguments this thesis puts forward: the effects of post-colonialism as a key element of influence on national culture and inevitably, journalism culture within the islands.

Creating a contextual understanding of the tensions between the dominant ethnic groups of Trinidad and Tobago is important to be able to understand the ethnographic discussions and semi-structured interview responses. The psychological roots of class and racial tensions affect how journalists perceive and execute their roles.

While the chapters on ethnography and semi-structured interviews (chapters 7 and 8) will expound further on this upcoming point, it is essential to establish in this chapter that the power dynamics, racism and classicism of the plantation model (Best, 1968; Singham, 1968; Beckford, 1972) of the colonial period has infiltrated into the contemporary media landscape. President of the Media Institute of the Caribbean and radio station owner Kiran Maharaj identified political tribalism as a key factor which has maintained class and race divisions as political parties exploit these divisions to garner votes, pitting Indo-Trinidadians against Afro-Trinidadians (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018). An example which illustrates this tension is the case involving former prime minister Basdeo Panday and former chairman of the Trinidad Express, Ken Gordon where Panday, an Indo-Trinidadian accused Gordon, an Afro-Trinidadian of being a “pseudo racist”. (Panday v Gordon, 2003)²⁰.

²⁰ Prime Minister Basdeo Panday called former chairman of the Express Newspaper, Kenneth Gordon, a “pseudo racist”. Gordon sued and won the case with a judgement award of TT\$600,000 for damages (Panday v Gordon, 2003). Panday is the country’s first prime minister of East Indian descent and Gordon, who is of

In 1989 the estimated population of the 1,970 square mile twin-island state was 1.2 million, with 43% of African descent, 40% of East Indian descent, 14% of mixed ancestry and 1% of European ancestry. The category “mixed” represents people with a combination of Chinese, Lebanese, Spanish, African and other heritages (Jamaican Institute of Political Education and the Eastern Caribbean Institute for Democracy, 1990, p. 54). Today the population has increased to 1.3 million²¹. Caribbean Hindustani²², Spanish and patois are still spoken today. English is the inherited tongue of the previous colonial regime with a local dialect being the dominant language on these islands.

Dr Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago established the People’s National Movement and led the country to independence on August 31st 1962. Within the country, politics was “complicated by the tensions that exist between people of African and East Indian descent” (Jeter, et al., 1996, p. 180). These “tensions” have their beginnings in the time period after slavery was abolished. It was then that the British government decided to import indentured labourers to the colonies to replace the lost labour force. These labourers came mostly from India, with a smaller force hailing first from China. Between 1845-1917, approximately 143,900 Indians arrived under the indenture system to Trinidad (Deosaran, 1987). Europeans sought to keep Africans and Indians divided to avoid being overrun. When the indenture system was introduced on the island, “An entire alien, racial, religious and cultural sector was introduced into a West Indian island where an European minority was attempting to impose its culture on a subordinate African majority” (Brereton, 1974, p. 15).

African descent, is a renowned journalist and media manager associated with press freedom (TT Law Courts, 2003).

²¹ According to the Central Statistical Office, the population as of June 2021 was 1,328,019. See <https://cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/population/>

²² Caribbean Hindustani is a language which was spoken by the indentured labourers who came from India to Trinidad.

The indentured system guaranteed wages to the Indian labourers, already a luxury previously enslaved Africans did not have. Patterson (1975) argues that “socio-economic self-interest” affected the allegiance and identification of ethnic groups. As mentioned in chapter 3, the Literature Review, their interaction, also defined by “perceived differences” (Despres, 1967) was transformed into an “antagonistic” (Smith, 1965) political and economic relationship, initially utilised by colonists as a divide and rule tactic. It is important to note here the important concept of access to sources of income and the social perks of these economic rewards. There were psychological implications to this status quo²³.

Deosaran (1987, p. 63) notes how this “mould of social stratification exploits multiculturalism to perpetuate the status quo” is “one of the most enduring legacies of colonialism for Trinidad and the Caribbean as a whole”. During a study on discrimination in the private sector, it was found that “evidence suggests clearly that the 'whiter' the person the less formal qualifications were demanded of him in being hired into top or middle positions in private business organisations" (Camejo, 1971, p. 304).

The plantation model (Best, 1968; Singham, 1968; Beckford, 1972) is a pattern of authority and hierarchy evolved from economic organisation which encourages a social structure of “entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships” (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62). Beckford puts forward an argument which further strengthens the connection of how post-colonial tensions with race and class affect journalism culture. He argues that “psychological dependency” is an element of the plantation model and also stands as an obstacle to “change

²³ (Deosaran, 1987, p. 63) pointed out that:

- (i) The further removed a cultural group is from the source of socio-economic rewards, the greater the stress factors in that group's attempt to compete and gain access to such rewards.
- (ii) The further removed a cultural group is from the source of socio-economic rewards, the greater the pressures for deculturalization and the greater the likelihood that negative stereotyping would be used to justify that group's exclusion from social and economic rewards.

and transformation” (Beckford, 1972, p. 79). Wesley Gibbings, founding president of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers and co-founder of the Media Institute of the Caribbean confirms Beckford’s belief. In a semi-structured interview with Mr. Gibbings, he commented on how journalists function in relation to an authoritarian culture:

[There is] an unwillingness to sort of devolve authority from a centre to the periphery. And it's everywhere...they're essential features of the operations that will always be there, be part of the culture of the place. They're all pretty authoritarian and cantered...there [is] a direct connection between the ownership structures and right down into the content. (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2018)

In the pre-independence years, the class conscious politics of Captain Arthur Cipriani²⁴ and Uriah Butler²⁵ highlighted the complexities of the political landscape of the time. Both Cipriani and Butler were advocates of the working class which was made up of Afro and Indo-Trinidadians. Cipriani was a white Trinidadian and Butler and Afro-Trinidadian. In the last decades of British colonial rule, the privileges of the white upper class were being challenged more and more.

After independence, political parties continued to exploit these divisions to rally votes. Former parties included the East Indian National Association, the East Indian National Congress and the African National Congress; their names, clear demarcations of who they represented in society. As mentioned before, the People’s National Movement was led by Dr Eric Williams who was of African and French Creole²⁶ descent. Ryan (1974, p. 29) noted that when Dr Williams won the election: “In staffing the ministries and the Senate, the PNM tried as far as

²⁴ Captain Arthur Andrew Cipriani was a Trinidad and Tobago labour leader and politician. He served as mayor of Port of Spain, elected member of the Legislative Council, leader of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association and founder of the Trinidad Labour Party. See: <https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/arthur-andrew-cipriani/m0dmdg0?hl=en>

²⁵ Tubal Uriah Butler has been immortalized as the founder of the trade union movement in Trinidad and Tobago. The Labour Riots of 1937, led by Uriah Butler, that was the catalyst for the much needed change in working conditions. See: <https://www.natt.gov.tt/sites/default/files/pdfs/ButlerRevisedBoards11June.pdf>

²⁶ A person of African and French or Spanish descent.

possible to give expression to its multi-racial philosophy. Of the twelve cabinet places, two went to Moslems²⁷, two to persons of European stock, and eight to Negroes including one female. There were no Hindus among the PNM legislative team, and for the second time the Hindus remained unrepresented in the government.” This is significant as Hindus are specifically a religious sect originally from India and as established earlier, Indians came to Trinidad and Tobago as indentured labourers after slavery was abolished. As (Ryan, 1974) notes above, Hindus were being excluded from political life once again. Basdeo Panday, an Indo-Trinidadian lawyer and economist formed the United National Congress (UNC) political party in 1989 and went on to become the first Indo-Trinidadian prime minister in 1995. Historically, the PNM tends to receive its support from Afro-Trinidadians, and the UNC receives a majority of its support from Indo-Trinidadians (Congressional Research Service, 2018). These origin stories of political tribalism are the basis of the class and racial tensions in society then and now.

This explanation of the tensions between the dominant ethnic groups of Trinidad and Tobago has been detailed in order to affirm the connection between the historical race and class tensions of the plantation model to present day journalism culture. From this explanation, it is important to take forward an understanding of the psychological roots of these tensions in order to fully grasp the comments of journalists during interviews as well as their actions during the ethnographic study. Moreover, as media houses within the country are regularly accused by politicians and members of the public of being partisan, having this knowledge of historical tension as well as an understanding of how politicians treat the media is paramount to grasping how journalists perceive their roles based on how they are socialised in the newsroom.

²⁷ (Ryan, 1974) utilises the spelling Moslems. In British English, the spelling is “Muslims”.

As Gibbings and other media experts have discussed, another factor which has influenced the evolution of the media landscape is how ownership of media houses was established within the country. The playing out of this business enterprise over the 20th century also has a direct connection to how present day journalists perceive and perform their roles. The conglomerate structures and power dynamics of these business ventures come alive within the ethnographic study of the various newsrooms in chapter 8. It was confirmed that the psychological influences of ownership structures are a part of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, especially within the realm of self-censorship.

As established earlier, the printing press made its way to the Caribbean and in the 20th century, when brand new media operations were being established. Within Trinidad and Tobago, the best example of the continued power structure of the plantation model by a media house, is the Trinidad Guardian.

“In 1917, an adventurous group of pioneers took the bold step of setting up the Trinidad Publishing Company” (Trinidad Guardian, 2012, n.p.). By the 1960’s it had been sold to Canadian media magnate Roy Thomson who, at the time, “had over 400 businesses worldwide that were mostly media” (Lent, 1991, p. 34). While Thomson’s investment ultimately served the public, providing news and commentary, the very fact that he owned the Guardian served to maintain class and racial tension amongst the very public that the daily served.

(Lent, 1991, p. 48) explains that “When foreign corporations sold their Caribbean properties, invariably, it was to large local businesses (or the government); no one else could afford them. The result in such transactions was that although the nationality of the owner changed, the social class he belonged to and served did not.” Thomson represented the elite business class. By continuing to perpetuate their interests, he maintained the plantation model of those initial colonists who prioritised the interests of the plantocracy.

Exemplifying this further was the advent of the Business Guardian in 1997, a product of the Trinidad Guardian. It was the first of its kind in the country and discussed issues pertinent to that sector of society. “The Guardian sided very closely with established business and used disproportionate amounts of space to report events in the upper class minority. In all labour issues it comes out aggressively on the side of the employer class; in all political matters it displays a rigid conservatism” (Brown & Sanatan, 1987, p. 193). As detailed in the ethnographic and interview chapters (chapters 7 and 8), ownership by members of the business class influences the content journalists produce. Influence on their perceived roles also became apparent.

In an interview with the Trinidad Sunday Guardian editor at the time of his research, (Lent, 1991, p. 48) quotes the editor saying:

I never received any instructions from Thomson on policy. I was free. But I was always mindful of the fact that the owners were from the outside. Because of that, I should not do anything to affect their interests, and I should make sure their relationship with government was cordial. There were no official constraints, just my own good sense.

What this editor refers to as “good sense” is plainly self-censorship and connects to the “psychological dependency” (Beckford, 1972, p. 79) and “entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships” (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62) of the plantation model. It is a trend that continues to this day within the newsroom. Semi-structured interviews as well as ethnographic data in chapters 7 and 8 fully reveal how journalists self-censor in order to act out the “unwillingness to sort of devolve authority from a centre to the periphery” (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2018), as well as to avoid reprisals, a consequence of the Chilling Effect.

Lent's interview with the Sunday editor also revealed a key element of the evolution of the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago when the editor said, "I should make sure their relationship with government was cordial" (Lent, 1991, p. 48). This need to maintain good relations with the government reflects entrenched political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Storr, 2016) and is a direct infringement on the model of independent and objective journalism. This type of relationship has marred the present day work of journalists as the public has expressed concern about media houses favouring certain politicians based on these historical allegiances and obligations.

Lent also interviewed the general manager of the Trinidad Publishing Company and the GM commented that he would have to address a decline in profits, saying that if the profits suffered because of a drop in advertising and circulation, it "was up to me as general manager to change the editorial policy" (Lent, 1991, p. 48). The government has always been the biggest advertiser for many media houses (Storr, 2016) and one way which the government of the day would express their dissatisfaction with the way they were covered was to withhold advertising and strangle the media house (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018). Again, this "change [to] the editorial policy" (Lent, 1991, p. 48) is not a principle of the typical Western journalism model which prioritises independence and objectivity. Therefore, when considering a model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, these circumstances must factor in.

In the 1970's Thomson sold off his Caribbean properties which included the Trinidad Guardian to McEneaney-Alstons, a conglomerate which was eventually transacted into Ansa McAL (Ansa McAL, 2017), another conglomerate who still owns the Trinidad Guardian today.

In the evolution of the media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, it was crucial to map out the colonial influences in terms of race and class as well as business in order to lay a foundation

for understanding the comments of the journalists featured in the ethnography and interview chapters.

5:2:1 The role of development journalism

While race and class tensions, patterns of ownership and political influence are critical elements of the evolution of the media landscape, it is also important to examine the changes journalists have gone through in terms of the type of journalism they practice.

Developmental journalism, (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019) the concept that the main role of the press in developing countries is to foster national growth, is a term that has provoked strong criticism from press freedom organisations around the world including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) (Fitzgerald, 1988). It is complex in its application within these developing countries as it can be simultaneously practised with development support journalism, journalism which unintentionally incites development as well as advocacy and constructive journalism.

Advocacy journalism (Kempf, 2007; Waisbord, 2008; Fisher, 2016) rejects the idea of objectivity and neutrality. Therefore, while promoting certain agendas may have progressed the country, post-colonial journalists in Trinidad and Tobago were engaging with a government steeped in race and class tensions with a prime minister who blatantly antagonised the press. As expressed above, threads of different types of journalism would be weaved into the role perception and role performance (Hanitzsch, 2011) of local journalists.

McIntyre (2015) defines constructive journalism as “an emerging form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology techniques to news work in an effort to create more productive, engaging stories while holding true to journalism’s core functions” (McIntyre, 2015, p. 9). According to the Constructive Journalism Project of 2017 journalism can function

as a watchdog and hold power to account “by fostering conversation, collaboration, consensus building and challenging power to be proactive in providing solutions...to enhance society” (Constructive Journalism Project, 2017).

However, concerns about this type of journalism were expressed at the World Editors Forum in both 2014 and 2016. Views that constructive journalism “risks watering down news and undercutting the accountability role of journalists” (World Editors Forum, 2016) and poses a risk “especially in contexts like new democracies (...), where governments often make demands for the media to support rather than criticise them” (World Editors Forum, 2014).

In Trinidad and Tobago, as priorities changed, so did the type of journalism. With the particular conditions within the island and the psychological inclinations of the population mentioned above post independence, it is important to acknowledge that applying a concrete label of developmental journalism requires a nuanced approach. For example, while journalists would be interested in nation building and economic development, which are directly connected with the priorities of developmental journalism, working within an ecosystem where political parties played to their own ethnic groups after independence would make it challenging to fully support government policies under the umbrella of nation building. Therefore support of government policies would not be across the board as needed to adhere to the practices of developmental journalism.

What academics have defined as developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019), when the concept was new is what influenced the type of journalism practiced directly after independence in 1962 and for many years afterwards. This section will detail that history and describe how it is also what politicians have come to expect. It will also explain how that expectation has caused much friction between the politicians and journalists.

The press was never totally on board with all of the government's policies as they clocked on to the fact that politicians would present their agenda in the name of development. Gibbings expressed this sentiment saying:

[From that time in Trinidadian politics, there is] the conflating of the state agenda with “development” and the view that supporting one means support for the other. So when a government changes, “development” starts to mean something different. This is the danger with the “development support” model. Because what do you mean “development”? (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2021)

Also, the press did not have an entirely civil relationship with members of the government.

Indeed, as expressed by the late Trinidad Express columnist Raoul Pantin, “Every single government since Independence in 1962 has locked horns with the Press, the worst offender being our first Prime Minister, that national icon and hero, Dr Eric Williams, who never was shy about his total contempt for the Press” (Pantin, 2005, n.p.).

Williams was the Prime Minister who brought this country through its first years of independence and he was well respected by many. However, as said above, his contempt of the press was never a secret.

Williams was known for his absolute no tolerance policy on criticism from the media. On April 22, 1960, “he publicly burned a copy of the Trinidad Guardian in the nation's capital” (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995, p. 128).

Then, in 1996, when the Trinidad Guardian ran the headline “Chutney Rising”²⁸ referring to a speech then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday made on the rise of Indian-style rhythms in calypso, it was also branded racist by him.

²⁸ Chutney is a form of Indo-Trinidadian music which fuses Bhojpuri folk music with Caribbean Soca and Calypso. The Guardian ran a front page photo of Prime Minister Panday with a glass (drink) in his hand under the headline “Chutney Rising”. Panday said that the headline was racist. After heated statements and exchanges

The Trinidad Express called out Panday's behaviour as "reprehensible" saying that "Mr Panday was seeing PNMism²⁹ and racism in a critical opinion and a particular headline. No reasonable person on a fair reading of either could reach these conclusions" (Inter Press Service, 1996).

The Trinidad Guardian responded to Panday's comments saying, "Any unwarranted attack on the editorial integrity of a newspaper is the opening salvo in the war to destroy some of our most cherished freedoms, including the freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Any decision to ban reporters from public events is an infringement of constitutional rights which, if implemented, must be vigorously resisted" (Inter Press Service, 1996).

In 1998, the media also took to the streets to protest the ongoing discrimination of the media by political members³⁰.

In 1998, Panday made a public appeal to his supporters to boycott the Trinidad Guardian who he had been having several entanglements with since the beginning of his tenure in 1996 (Inter Press Service, 1996). Panday had previously stated, "If a newspaper is working against your interest to achieve a better life, it is your enemy. No newspaper can survive without us. They all depend on us for survival" (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995, p. 136). From Panday's use of the phrase "working against your interest to achieve a better life," it can be extrapolated that journalists were expected to follow the development model and produce positive stories about his government's policies and plans to inform the population.

between then editor of the Guardian Jones P. Madeira and Panday, Madeira and a number of journalists left the Guardian. Madeira eventually formed another newspaper called "The Independent".

²⁹ PNMism is a term derived from the political party the People's National Movement (PNM), an party associated with Afro-Trinidadian representation.

³⁰ These protests were associated with the media fraternity's disapproval of the Green Paper. It is the only time in local history that the media has formally protested on the streets.

From this example, the conflating of the state agenda with “development” and the view that supporting one means support for the other, can be seen. This harks back to the comment by (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2021) that when a government changes, “development” starts to mean something different. This is the danger with the “development support” model because what do you mean by “development”?

A mere 36 years after becoming an independent nation, the same year that Panday made his appeal to his supporters in 1998, his ruling party, the United National Congress (UNC) introduced the new state-owned National Broadcasting Network (NBN) with the words, “The key objective of the (Panday) administration’s communications should be to persuade the population that the government cares, and is delivering benefits to the people” (Gibbings, 1998, n.p.).

Again, the principles of development journalism can be seen by Panday’s rhetoric. The desire that “that the media repeat the shibboleths of the ruling party which were scattered and incoherent. What was the government’s “development agenda”? Precisely what?” (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2021).

These examples explicitly demonstrate that politicians expected cooperation from journalists based on the historical legacy of colonial newspapers which served as mouthpieces for the imperial power (Storr, 2016). This paradigm has been an ongoing source of conflict between politicians and the media and has indeed influenced the way journalists perceive their values and perform their roles. Acknowledging the role that the concept of development journalism has played in the media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago as an element in the discursive journalistic field, fosters a clearer cognizance of what affects journalism culture within the country.

5:3 Media freedom

Within a country the level of democracy can often be gauged by the level of media freedom (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019). Within a journalism culture, media freedom is akin to Atlas holding up the world. If there is no media freedom, the obliteration of what it means to be a journalist and to have a journalism culture, is inevitable. Therefore, this section on media freedom is one of the most important parts of this thesis and one of the key elements in the discursive field which defines a new professional milieu and model for journalism culture. Examining the level of freedom that journalists in Trinidad and Tobago have or lack will illuminate the ethnographic and interview data collected and create an in-depth comprehension of why journalists believe what they do and perform their roles as they do as they expressed in their semi-structured interviews.

At the time of this study, Trinidad and Tobago is ranked 31st on the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) global press freedom index (RSF, 2021). This index is based on certain factors where “the media freedom situation is based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country and region” (RSF, 2002). While Trinidad and Tobago is acknowledged to have a good degree of freedom, RSF has noted the issues with government favouritism manifesting in a bigger piece of the advertising pie for certain media houses, as well as repressive defamation laws (RSF, 2021). Even though Trinidadian journalists do not experience the level of violence that for example, Mexican journalists suffer (RSF, 2021), there have been several incidents where journalists have been attacked physically (RSF, 2017). Moreover, the government has targeted journalists in more nefarious ways such as enlisting foreign companies to spy on phones and hack the email accounts of journalists (RSF, 2016).

It is important to keep in mind that this index, though based on a comprehensive list of 80 questions (RSF, 2002) that seek to ascertain information on the media environment within the country, media practitioners in Trinidad and Tobago have questioned the degree of relevance of the questionnaire and subsequently, the accuracy of the index. In a panel on Challenges to Press Freedom in the Caribbean (Media Institute of the Caribbean, 2021) Wesley Gibbings, President of the Association of Media Workers and co-founder of the Media Institute of the Caribbean, commented, “As with all other international measurements...now they are adding metrics for all these other things that tend to be a little less tangible and far more nuanced than the black and white estimates that one could make on a chart with respect to degrees of freedom, degrees to which such freedoms are being affected” (Gibbings, 2021).

This section on media freedom acknowledges the RSF index and also presents key markers to the media freedom landscape in Trinidad and Tobago to give that more nuanced insight into the “degrees to which media freedoms are being affected” (Gibbings, 2021).

5:3:1 Role of MATT

To open this discussion, it is important to acknowledge the role of the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) to have a clearer idea of its history of and ability towards advocacy for the country’s journalists. Ascertaining the level of trust journalists have in MATT, is an essential building block to understanding the journalism culture expressed within the industry. Do journalists have confidence in MATT? Do they trust the organisation to protect them and their interests? If they do not, what does that mean for the industry as a collective? Is MATT transparent and fully functioning? The answers to these questions influence the execution of roles by journalists within Trinidad and Tobago.

In the twin island republic, MATT promotes itself as “the leading industry body for journalists and media workers in T&T” (Trinidad Guardian, 2012, n.p.). Founded in 1986, their mandate identifies press freedom, advocacy, networking and public literacy as key elements of its purview (Ibid). In an article published in 2012 (Ibid), confusion about the scope of this purview was discussed. Previous president of MATT, Wesley Gibbings commented saying, “There is a general sense that MATT exists to generally promote the networking of local journalists, improving the practice of journalism and to promote press freedom” (Ibid). However, according to Gibbings, there are those who believe MATT functions in the same way as a trade union.

As the article states, even though MATT identifies as the “leading industry body for journalists...many journalists claim they have no idea what MATT does” (Trinidad Guardian, 2012, n.p.). Perhaps using words such as “promote press freedom” (Ibid), created certain expectations of MATT and has embedded it with certain values for which it was not entirely ready. The inaugural president of MATT, Andy Johnson originally intended for MATT to be a body in service of those who could be classed as “media workers” (Ibid). “We agreed at the time that people who were in public relations or related fields at the time were eligible for associate membership,” (Ibid) he said.

In this same article, then interim president Suzanne Sheppard, said that “In the past year MATT has spoken out and condemned the police raid on a media house...Some years ago, when a previous government put out a green paper that would have severely hampered press freedom, we were able to speak out and prevent that from happening” (Trinidad Guardian, 2012, n.p.).

Here is an excerpt from a semi-structured interview with a journalist about their thoughts on the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago:

...you can see that these are the issues that I have in my newsroom. This is a problem for me and [MATT] will take note of it. They might write a few letters on your behalf. But it is not guaranteed to go anywhere beyond that and that is the problem with MATT being the most vocal body on the cybercrime bill discussion because regardless of what is said or how well intended their intentions might be, it does not turn into anything fruitful and that is across the board [REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

Do journalists have confidence in MATT? Do they trust the organisation to protect them and their interests? If they do not, what does that mean for the industry as a collective? Is MATT transparent and fully functioning? These were the questions asked in the beginning of this section.

Semi-structured interviews revealed that journalists do not trust MATT to protect them or seek their interest and due to the lack of a robust membership, it is not functioning at optimum capacity. This is particularly salient in terms of how journalism culture is affected by media laws. As expressed by [REDACTED] above, "...that is the problem with MATT being the most vocal body on the cybercrime bill discussion because regardless of what is said or how well intended their intentions might be, it does not turn into anything fruitful...". It can be posited that the faithlessness in and cynicism about MATT has weakened the approach of journalists to media freedom issues, especially when it comes to repressive media laws like the cybercrime bill. It seems to be a cycle: a lack of belief in MATT leads to a lack of engagement and disappointment which further disenfranchises journalists from the pursuit of advocacy and allows for the prevalence of harmful media laws, which represses the journalists who lack proper representation from an association like MATT.

Recently elected president of MATT Ira Mathur also acknowledged this "fragmentation" saying, "Media workers are a hugely influential but fragmented community. We want to merge these silos and teach and support one another as a single community" (Mathur, 2021). However, Mathur also added that MATT "will be vigilant on legislation that potentially

criminalises journalists and strips us of protection” and that they “will continue the work of pushing back against obstruction of coverage of news and current affairs...committed to maintaining the solid fourth estate built by our predecessors as watchdogs to hold those in power accountable” (Ibid). Whether or not MATT will be able to carry out these commitments remains to be seen.

5:3:2 The Green Paper

In 1997, a paper titled “Reform of Media Law – Towards a Free and Responsible Media” that discussed the media and the way they operate was introduced by then Attorney General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997). The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago and other various media stakeholders called the paper a move to “muzzle to free expression” and identified it as a threat to media freedom (Inter Press Service, 1997). This was the first effort of this magnitude by the government to repress media freedom and it was the first time the media industry responded with such a concerted and vehement effort to maintain that freedom. Therefore it must be included as a watershed moment in the media freedom landscape in Trinidad and Tobago.

Here is an excerpt from the Green Paper which journalists found unacceptable:

The law should provide the media with machinery for access to information and for it to be encouraged to expose corruption and malfeasance, while at the same time providing the government with power to punish or stop media behaviour which imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric...The law in a progressive society must therefore permit healthy criticism of journalists and media organizations, just as it must allow criticisms of politicians and governments and powerful corporations (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997).

There were over 100 articles at the time commenting on the proposed Green Paper. A Trinidad Guardian article from May 1997 describes it as a “frightening proposal [which] simply means

that the government can arbitrarily determine “...that a news story, feature article, editorial or newscast “imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric” and proceed to close down the offending newspaper, or radio, or television station” (Hackett, 1997) (See Appendix B for article).

The same editorial goes on to outline another concerning proposal that, “journalists and newspapers shall endeavour to highlight and promote activities of the State and the public which aim at national unity and solidarity, integrity of Trinidad and Tobago and economic and social progress” or “journalists and newspapers shall avoid publications of reports and comments which tend to promote tensions likely to lead to civil disorder, meeting or rebellion” (Hackett, 1997).

This language is indicative of the principles of developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019), which first gained traction in developing parts of Asia and Africa. The Green Paper includes a quote from Mahatma Ghandi saying, “The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power but just as an unchained torrent submerges the whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997). Then editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Guardian, Owen Baptiste, called out the paper as an attempt by the government “not really to make the press free nor journalists professional, but to have them both responsible only to the government” (Editor & Publisher, 1997).

The Green Paper also came under criticism from various local, regional and international media groups. President of the Caribbean Association of Media Workers (CAMWORK), Barbadian journalist Bertram Niles pointed out that, in the realm of media freedom, the situation in Trinidad and Tobago sets the tone for the Caribbean (Inter Press Service, 1997).

“In some of these English-speaking Caribbean countries, intimidation is rife,” Niles says. “The media in most cases are not strong enough or varied or independent as in Trinidad and Tobago, so they look to you for leadership” (International Press Institute, 1997).

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Trinidad and Tobago did initially adhere to some of the principles of development journalism in its quest for nation building. When the media economy opened up and more media houses joined the industry and politics and advertising became a part of the industry conversation, media houses began to lean away from the inherent loyalty to the locus of power indoctrinated by the plantation model of hierarchy (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018). Therefore, reportage became a mixed model of government criticism as well as nation building. Even though the media had reasons to call out the government, they still acknowledged the efforts the government made to improve the country. It is worth posing a question here: if the government did not emphasise that the media had to “endeavour to highlight and promote activities of the State and the public which aim at national unity and solidarity, integrity of Trinidad and Tobago and economic and social progress” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997), would the media industry have just carried on doing this naturally as development journalism is in their culture and thus infiltrates even the framing of stories? It is interesting to consider this question in terms of media freedom. If the government did not push to get what they already had, would journalists have realised that they were already operating under a misapprehension? In terms of the investigation of this thesis defining what journalism culture is in Trinidad and Tobago, this is a particularly striking point to consider.

Another point of the Green Paper which raised concerns was the proposed appointment of a press ombudsman “empowered by statute to receive complaints of bias, incompetence, unethical behaviour or unfairness” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997). It was projected that this press ombudsman would possess more authority than an ombudsman in the

United States, because this person would also be a High Court Judge and the “wrongs over which (his) new jurisdiction would consist would be made civil wrongs. A Judge would have power to punish persons who disobey (his) orders” (Ibid).

In a media landscape where journalists got their training on the job, incompetence was par for the course for novices in the industry. However, “Trinidadian journalists were alarmed by the suggestion that perceived “incompetence” could become a civil infraction punishable by law. It is no secret that journalists in most Caribbean islands are underpaid and receive on-the-job training...trained personnel, an essential production requirement, are in short supply on Trinidad and most journalists receive inadequate and infrequent training” (Slinger, 1993, p. 31).

It should be acknowledged that the Green Paper did contain some provisions which proposed steps to the reformation of a portion of media laws, especially those based on archaic British equivalents. Emphasis was placed on the Libel and Defamation Act of 1846 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014) which essentially embodies the British law from that era. The Green Paper (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997) called for repeal of the Defamation Act and advanced for the abolition of criminal libel as well as the extension of the defences of qualified privilege, justification and fair comment which were not available under the existing law.

In the Paper, the government also sought to update the “Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act of 1955, and also suggested amendments to the “Cinematograph Act of 1936 (which) sets up a censorship system for films, but not for modern forms of electronic communications” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997). It was also suggested that any new laws should include “protection for journalists against punishment for contempt for refusing to disclose their sources of information” (Ibid).

However, media professionals felt that the restrictions on media freedom surpassed these proposed benefits. The debate over the Paper (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997) attracted the attention of international and regional bodies. Then director of the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU) Robin MacKichan requested a meeting with then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and also called for the Paper to be withdrawn. David de Caires of Guyana's Stabroek News, Harold Hoyte of the Barbados Nation and Oliver Clarke of the Gleaner in Jamaica also requested meetings with Prime Minister Panday to discuss the Paper (Trinidad Express, 1997) (See Appendix B).

An article published in the Jamaican media in May 1997 discussed the situation in Trinidad and Tobago citing an editorial in the Jamaica Observer which called for "...public support of a free press, describing the role of the media as "society's watchdog", and that undermining the press' ability to fulfil this role makes it easy for bad men to gain ascendancy. The paper placed its call "in the face of sinister attempts by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to circumscribe a free press in that country under the guise of demanding responsibility of the press". The editorial then concluded, "We expect that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will firmly tell their government where to get off (de Bourg, 1997) (See Appendix B for article).

The Green Paper (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997) was a major occurrence in the history of media freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. If journalists had not rejected the paper, the environment within which they now operate would have been more repressive and draconian. The journalism culture would have been completely different to what it is today.

5:3:3 Walkouts

Media walkouts have also defined the history of media freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. The ability to stand up to media managers taking editorial decisions that are not in line with one's

journalism values is extremely relevant to defining journalism culture as it conclusively outlines principles and standards which journalists operate by.

In this history of the media in Trinidad and Tobago, there have been two walkouts by reporters, all from the Trinidad Guardian. In all instances, the reporters have claimed editorial interference by the board in terms of executing the will of the political party in power. It is important to note that these walkouts happened at the Trinidad Guardian as this information will create great context within the ethnography and semi-structured interview chapters.

The first walk out occurred in 1996 when Jones P. Madeira, editor in-in-chief of the Trinidad Guardian left the post. This was referenced to in the last section under footnote 32, outlining the treatment of the media by former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday.

Panday had been critical of the Trinidad Guardian over an editorial entitled 'Chutney Rising' that sought to comment on the rise of Indian music in the country. Enraged over what he considered racial overtones in the editorial, Panday, an Indo-Trinidadian who had just taken office, told Trinidad Guardian reporters that he was cutting off their access to the office of the prime minister (Inter Press Service, 1996).

He also openly called on the owners of the newspaper to dismiss its editor-in-chief Jones P. Madeira.

According to a UNHCR Refworld publication, "In April, several senior staff members, including Madeira and managing editor Alwin Chow, said that the paper's owners, the Trinidad Publishing Co., had forced them to resign. Chow told CPJ that Trinidad Publishing, either willingly or under government pressure, sought to appease officials by ousting the journalists. The chairman of the publishing company denied Chow's charges" (Refworld, 1997, n.p.).

Later that year, Madeira (along with Alwin Chow who raised finance for the deal) established a weekly newspaper, the Independent, which was eventually sold to the Trinidad Express (Cruickshank, 2005).

The most recent walk out happened in 2013 when then editor-in-chief Judy Raymond was asked to absent herself from the newsroom for one month in order to work on a new editorial policy (Trinidad Guardian, 2013). This request came on the heels of several news stories that were critical of government ministers.

Dr Sheila Rampersad, Denyse Renne and Anika Gumbs, three senior journalists at the newspaper, left their positions in protest of editorial interference (Trinidad Guardian, 2013).

TV 6 reported that the situation began when the board of directors complained about the quality of certain political stories. The report cited particular pieces such as an “expose on a government Minister’s use of a leased Range Rover...which could also interfere with the government’s relation with the Guardian’s parent company Ansa McAL” (TV 6, 2013). The company which provided the Range Rover was Diamond Motors which Ansa McAL owns.

The television report published on the TV6 website goes on to say that this was not the first time editors and journalists have walked off the job citing political interference, also claiming management “is trying to enforce a policy that would see political stories that would reflect badly on the government, sanitised” (TV 6, 2013).

Rampersad, then public affairs editor at the Trinidad Guardian, stated that, “We were told on Monday by the managing director, Gabriel Faria that somebody will be coming to the newsroom to sit in and presumably to monitor and report back on our editorial meetings” (TV 6, 2013). Gumbs added that she and her colleagues completely stood by their decision saying,

“We were functioning as journalists should and we took the stance we did knowing full well that we are standing on principle and integrity (Ibid)”.

At the end of the TV6 report, there was an opinion poll open to the public which posed the question, “Do you believe that the government had a hand in the shake up at the Guardian newspaper?” 99% said yes, 1% said no (TV 6, 2013).

At this point, some commentary on these articles is a relevant addition as it is a true reflection of what the people of such a small island nation recognise and know to be happening in their media and political arena.

To further illustrate the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago, I have included some comments from the public on the situation. These comments were taken from an article published on the Global Voices website titled “Trinidad & Tobago Media Reshuffle Viewed as Threat to Press Freedom” (Mendes-Franco, 2012).

@HaydnDunn: Looks like press freedom in T&T is under serious attack!!! @samnanton RE Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago Press Release.

@LifeSupportTT: Power struggle, #Media want govt #advertising funds, Gov't want media coverage. Who has the upper hand? #moneymedia #socialmedia #freemedia

Wired 868: ...Trinidad Guardian editor-in-chief Judy Raymond did not even realise she was holding a political seat! Raymond was hired last year to help the Guardian bottom-line: Increase sales. However, Mr Live Wire understands she ran afoul of the company's motto: Stay close to the Government.

These comments have been included to show that the relations between the government, the media and the owners of the media houses are somewhat public and well known to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This in turn impacts on the level of trust in the media which inevitably

affects the journalism culture as journalists must navigate this public knowledge and attitude to cover stories from and interact with this same public.

These walkouts are potent examples of a refusal to transgress certain journalistic values which speaks volumes about the local journalism culture. The fact that these walkouts have all been executed by editors-in-chief or senior journalists also indicates that those at the helm of the media house often carry the most responsibility to uphold those values. This observation also resurfaces in the ethnographic and interview chapters (chapters 7 and 8) and is a core component in understanding local journalism culture.

5:3:4 Media ownership

Media ownership, another key element in the discursive journalistic field, is inextricably linked to the level of media freedom within a country. It is also linked to the levels of censorship and journalist practices during the execution of their role. Questions which inform the role media ownership plays in journalism culture are: How clear is the separation between management and editorial and do journalists have to consider the bottom line and the interests of stakeholders? As discussed before, media houses in Trinidad have different patterns of ownership and therefore, different levels of media freedom abound. This is a critical point to consider when thinking about journalism culture and examining the ethnographic and interview data.

As expounded in the methodology chapter, Trinidad's main media houses are Guardian Media Limited (GML), One Caribbean Media (OCM), Trinidad and Tobago Newsday and Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT). The Trinidad Guardian newspaper and the CNC3 television channel are owned by GML while The Trinidad Express newspaper and the CCN TV6 television channel are owned by OCM. With the exception of the state funded TTT, all other

media houses are privately run, their parent companies owning diverse, international, million dollar portfolios.

From the data gathered in the ethnographic and semi-structured interviews, the enthusiasm of journalists in the industry seems to be linked to who owns the media house they work for and how much of an influence that owner chooses to extend into the newsroom.

The state-owned broadcaster Trinidad and Tobago Television was once branded as CNMG.

“CNMG is in no way independent,” said one previous CNMG employee in a semi-structured interview (T4, interview with the author, 2018). “When we were there we were good in the beginning and then the government changed and then instructions started coming down that none of us wanted a part of...I think that was a credibility hit they never recovered from. At CNMG there is government interference which is the reason me and all my colleagues left because people in government would call the higher up...since the PNM came into power, there are people who are anecdotally understood to be financiers who are manoeuvring government image, reputation and perception problems” (Ibid).

One [REDACTED] journalist worked on a story which focused on a consumer complaint about a faulty fridge. Before the story could run, they got a personal call from the director of the company who also owns one of the other media houses.

They related his experience saying, “They directly threatened to pull all advertising, not just from [REDACTED], radio stations, they threatened to pull from the [REDACTED] group if the story ran and instead of our CEO standing up for us, the CEO buckled and did not run the story because for [them], ads were more important” ([REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

With major issues facing journalists all over the world, such as open violence, the dismantling of public media systems and the co-opting of independent, private media companies, expressions of soft power might not register highly on the scale of threats to journalists. However, in a small island state with no public media system, such influences are capable of strangling the only industry which can safeguard democracy and hold power to account. The self censorship induced by the direct and nuanced expressions of power by those in the strata of media ownership shapes journalism culture in a major way in Trinidad and Tobago.

5:3:5 Violence, Raids and Spying

In a small island state with high crime (Statista.com, 2021), some journalists have experienced a consequent Chilling Effect and have had to leave the country to protect their lives as well as their loved ones.

Kiran Maharaj, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association, is one of those who had to flee the country to safeguard her life and her family. In a semi-structured interview conducted for this thesis, she spoke about this Chilling Effect and self-censorship saying, “I think that our press has been conditioned...and I think it’s sad, from that perspective that we feel that we cannot do more investigative reporting because we feel that we will be subject to victimisation and threats to life. So...I think mentally we are not [a free press]” (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

A radio talk show host was shot and killed in 2019. According to Reporters Without Borders, “...his reporting was known to make politicians feel uncomfortable, and he had a reputation for seeking recourse in court against his opponents. He emboldened his listeners and colleagues to do the same” (RSF, 2018, n.p.).

Guardian photographer Kristian De Silva was first almost run over by a vehicle then assaulted by the driver as he tried to take photos of the main office of the private oil company A&V Drilling (RSF, 2017). TV6 journalists Phil Britton and Leona Nicholson were also attacked that same week while pursuing the same story. A Newsday photographer also reported a similar experience (Ibid).

In 2012, officers of the police Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau raided the office of the Newsday. According to an article by RSF, “Their target was the journalist Andre Bagoo who wrote an article about a dispute between Ken Gordon, the chairman of the Integrity Commission, and his deputy Gladys Gafoor” (RSF, 2016, n.p.).

RSF relates that two search warrants were issued by the commissioner of police, Dwayne Gibbs, without judicial approval as required by law. They commented, “These raids are a clear violation of the confidentiality of sources, a fundamental principle of journalism. This precedent causes considerable harm to the profession and could in future discourage journalists from seeking out information that is sensitive or in the public interest. The arrest warrants should not have been executed without judicial approval. Besides being detrimental to freedom of information, such action is illegal” (RSF, 2016, n.p.).

Eight years later, in March 2020, members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) invaded the offices of the Trinidad Express newspaper with a warrant to search the premises (IPI, 2020).

Despite protests from several editors at the Trinidad Express about the parameters of the warrant, the officers spent three hours in the newsroom. They searched the office of the editor-in-chief, Omatie Lyder for one hour, eventually seizing four flash drives (IPI, 2020).

The TTPS stated that it acted under the stipulations of Section 2 of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIUTT) Offences and Penalties Act, entitled “Tipping Off” (Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, 2019). This Act gives police the power to investigate a source who has “tipped off” any third-party. If the Trinidad Express is convicted as a Third Party under this Act, it could be liable to pay TT\$5 million.

A noted improvement from the raid in 2012, in January 2021, the Honourable Mr. Justice Frank Seepersad, Judge in the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago, ruled that officers of the Financial Investigations Branch (FIB) of the Police Service committed an illegality and breached the Constitutional rights of the Trinidad Express when it executed two search warrants at the media house in March 2020. The judge ordered that the State pay compensatory damages to the company as well as its legal costs (Trinidad Express, 2021).

Additionally, the PNM was accused of a highly unorthodox method of spying on journalists by illegally intercepting information through wiretapping from 2007-2010. The illegal wiretapping of phones of certain journalists, opposition politicians and prominent citizens was discovered to have been conducted by the Special Intelligence Unit (SIA) with a direct link to the Office of the Prime Minister (RSF, 2016).

According to RSF, multiple government regimes were involved. “The agency operated under the two previous administrations, led respectively by the United National Congress and Peoples’ National Movement, as well as the current government” (RSF, 2016, n.p.). Apparently the SIA was originally established to investigate arms and drug trafficking and then went on to monitor journalists and news media that were investigating certain cases (Ibid).

Clearly all of these transgressions against media freedom shape journalism culture. Indeed the Chilling Effect of violence, raids and spying is another important element which defines the discursive field. Journalists are not completely free to carry out their work and they modify their behaviour to comply with the circumstances of the industry. As Wesley Gibbings said in the panel Challenges to Press Freedom in the Caribbean, “Self-censorship has become routinized, built into news agenda and built into news values. It is in the substance of stories and within the framing of stories” (Gibbings, 2021).

5:4 Regulation

This section on regulation establishes the official bodies responsible for setting out codes which journalists are expected to abide by. This is not a section on media law. The Media Complaints Council (MCC), the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) and the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) are the main organisations which outline regulations for the media. The role of MATT was covered earlier in this chapter in the section on media freedom. Gaining a greater insight into how these bodies operate will create a better understanding of the overall industry and how these codes affect the local journalism culture.

It is important to establish that not all individual media houses have a code of ethics that journalists are trained on and asked to abide by.

During ethnographic research, the editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express gave a copy of a fifteen page booklet titled “OCM Statement of Editorial Principles and Operational Guidelines” that was created in 2008. A copy can also be found online (One Caribbean Media, 2008). This was the only media house that provided a copy of this type of guideline. Within the booklet, the thirteen sections covered are: Accuracy, Sources, Fairness, Privacy, Children, Standards of

Behaviour, Integrity and Independence, Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, Accountability, Transparency, Freelance and Other Relationships.

At this point it would be valid to ask a few questions: How do media houses function without an editorial code? Why do media houses not produce one? How are journalists expected to understand their roles and responsibilities without a code, especially if they have not been through a journalism program but rather, just taken “off the streets”?

The Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) was established in the 1990’s as a response to the coming together of radio media managers and owners. The industry had experienced a period of growth and interested parties saw the need to have a body that oversaw the application for licences, addressed challenges and provided solutions to issues of the day (TTPBA, 2003). The TTPBA was incorporated in 2003.

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief at the Trinidad Newsday shared her experience in a semi-structured interview saying, “...there is a TTPBA code of ethics which the TTPBA says applies to all its media houses. Most people who work in the editorial department of these media departments have never seen this code of ethics or don’t even know it exists. I was at the Guardian for several years before I discovered that it had style rules and a sort of code of ethics which is a wobbly thing written by George John in maybe the early 90’s. Everybody was supposed to get a copy when they came to work in the newsroom but that didn’t happen. I just came across his copy by accident” (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

This comment reveals that media managers and journalists have not been taking it upon themselves to educate their newsroom about the TTPBA code or develop their own internal code. In terms of journalism culture, it would seem that official editorial codes are taken for granted and good journalism is simply learned on the job.

Kiran Maharaj, president of the TTPBA emphasised the importance of the organisation in a semi-structured interview:

The Green Paper in the 90's was one of the reasons why the TTPBA was formed...It was at that time the publishers and broadcasters said we really need to protect our industry, we don't want the government to legislate and tell us what to do because then you clamp down on any freedoms of the media and by extension freedoms of citizens of the country and so the TTPBA was established to be able to present a case and say we can self regulate and with that they introduced the Media Complaints Council. The MCC, was introduced to be a self autonomous entity but funded by the TTPBA and the rules and regulations to keep things in context without interference from government and to do that in a way that was independent and objective (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

The Media Complaints Council (MCC) was founded in 1997 after the debacle over the Green Paper as a way to assuage some of the concerns outlined in the paper and hold the media accountable without having to seek legal redress in the courts. Their mission statement is “to help maintain public trust and confidence in the news media by promoting fairness, courtesy and balance and by creating a forum where the public and the news media can engage each other in examining standards of journalistic fairness” (Rampersad, 2012, n.p.).

However, the MCC has not had a completely uninterrupted tenure as a source of respite for parties with complaints against the media.

In a 2013 article by the Trinidad Guardian reposted by Communications Consultant Kris Rampersad, the MCC is described as having “almost died, but was resurrected a few months ago. The passing of an important person on the council contributed to the temporary demise of

the MCC...” (Rampersad, 2012, n.p.).

The MCC was tasked with enforcing the TTPBA code (TATT, 2014) but as mentioned above, it has not always been a functioning organisation. This raises a few questions: What recourse did the public have when the MCC was not enforcing the code? As the MCC has had problems in the past, what is the current level of industry confidence? Do issues with the MCC strengthen the call for media laws to remain on the books? Of note is that the MCC cannot impose fines on journalists they appraise.

In the semi-structured interview, (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018) went on to say that:

...if somebody complained to the media complaints council about something a media house had done, when the Media Complaints Council ruled on it, the ones that are members of the TTPBA would publish the ruling even if it was found against them but it's been dormant a lot of the time. I mean at one point it didn't have a full quota of members, it didn't have a chairman and they tried to resurrect it recently but I don't think it is doing very much...

However, at the point of resurrection in 2013, the MCC “was working on four cases, two against the print media and two against radio stations” (Rampersad, 2012, n.p.). Reports can be found in the media up to 2018 about the MCC working on cases (LOOP TT, 2018). So there seems to be very mixed feelings about the MCC and its ability to enforce the broadcasting code.

Regulation is a major part of a journalism industry. There seems to be a lack of knowledge about and confidence in the Media Complaints Council. This can be a possible reason why the public leans more heavily on recourses available within the courts to solve their issues with

different media organisations. Also, if journalists feel that there is nothing internally to hold them to account, this might also affect their own feelings towards their industry. This will be explored more within the ethnography and interview chapters (chapters 7 and 8).

5:5 Media Law

In the theoretical framework, the concept of the Chilling Effect of media laws was introduced. This section outlines the four laws as they stand today, the problematic clauses of these laws as it relates to the journalism industry as well as the potential financial damages and jail time. Quotations from the ethnographic study as well as semi-structured interviews are utilised in this chapter to allow for greater context and clarity of the subject matter.

Below is a table outlining the main four laws which have been identified as problematic to media freedom.

Law	Jail Time (Person)	Fine (Person)	Fine (Corporate Body)
Libel and Defamation	Under Section 8 - 2 years	Fine as the court directs	Fine as the court directs
Data Protection Act	Summary conviction - 3 years; Indictment (up to) 5 years	Summary conviction TT\$50,000; Indictment (up to) TT\$300,000	Summary conviction TT\$250,000; Indictment TT\$500,000
Cybercrime Bill	Summary conviction - 2 years; Indictment 3 years	Summary conviction TT\$100,000; Indictment TT\$500,000	n/a
Interception of Communication Act	Summary conviction - 7 years; Indictment 15 years	Summary conviction TT\$500,000; Indictment (up to) TT\$1,000,000	n/a

Table 1: Jail time and fines.

Trinidad and Tobago was a British colony, therefore its law, education and government systems are all based on the British system. Several of the laws established in the time of colonisation have not been modified to fit the context of an independent and modern Trinidadian society. As established in the methodology chapter, there are four particular sets of legislation that this

thesis prioritises; the Libel and Defamation Act of 2014 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014), the Data Protection Act of 2011 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011), the Cybercrime bill of 2017 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017) and the Interception of Communication Act of 2010 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010).

The 2014 Act is particularly important as the sections amended were part of an international drive by the International Press Institute to repeal defamation laws in the Caribbean (International Press Institute, 2014). Do note that this drive to repeal the defamation laws formed part of the inspiration for this thesis.

5:4:1 Libel and Defamation Act of 2014

The libel and defamation law of Trinidad and Tobago³¹ is based on Lord Campbell's Libel Act of 1843 (Campbell, 1881).

The Act remained unchanged for over one hundred years and it was only after the independence of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, that the Act was amended in 1976, 1979 and 2014 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014). However, it has not been abolished completely. In the United Kingdom, criminal libel was abolished in 2009.

In Trinidad and Tobago, Sections 4 and 5 of Lord Campbell's Act became Sections 8 and 9 of the modern Act, respectively.

Section 8:

³¹ For the full Act, see: https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/alphabetical_list/lawspdfs/11.16.pdf

If any person maliciously publishes any defamatory libel, knowing the same to be false, he is liable on conviction to imprisonment for two years and to pay such fine as the Court directs.

Section 9:

If any person maliciously publishes any defamatory libel, upon conviction thereof he is liable to pay a fine and to imprisonment for one year.

According to editors and media managers, sections 8 and 9 produce a chilling effect on journalism culture as the threat of damages prevent the media from pursuing certain stories.

The case *Julien, Kenneth v Marajh, Camini; Trinidad Express Limited* (*Julien, Kenneth v Marajh, Camini; Trinidad Express Limited*, 2014) is a good example of how the costs of a case can chill the media landscape. Trinidad Express Limited had to pay Julien TT\$625,250 for damages.

The Trinidad Express is owned by One Caribbean Media, a conglomerate based in Barbados, and was able to deliver this pay out to Mr. Julien. However, any media outlet not financially backed by a conglomerate would have been in jeopardy.

In terms of who can sue and who can be sued, “Anyone who has been made the subject of a defamatory attack may take legal action” (Latchoo, 2020). The only qualification is that the person be alive...Everyone in the defamation chain can be sued – the person who first uttered the remark, the reporter who wrote it, the newspaper or media house that published it, the printer who printed the newspaper and the distributors who sell it. Journalists, their editors and their newspapers or broadcast stations are usually named as co-defendants” (Ibid).

Managing editor of the Trinidad Express confirms this saying, “Also, it can potentially cripple a media outlet like Newsday which has a different ownership structure to us. If they get five

lawsuits in a year, they would probably go under” (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018). Moreover, while no journalist has been convicted³² of criminal defamation, jail time is a chilling threat.

In 2013, the International Press Institute (IPI) launched a mission to repeal defamation laws throughout the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago was one of their focus countries (International Press Institute, 2014). They worked with the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM) throughout the Caribbean. Then Prime Minister, Kamla-Persad Bissessar made a commitment to remove the “onerous legal restriction in the criminal law which imposes a one year sentence” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). This of course was subject to cabinet approval. In 2014, the Libel and defamation (amendment) bill 2013 headed to senate seeking to abolish Section 9, know as malicious defamatory libel.

While Section 9 of the Libel and Defamation Act was repealed in Trinidad and Tobago, leaving Section 8 intact with the potential or criminal court proceedings, still poses a problem for the media fraternity. In the same article IPI Press Freedom Manager commented that, “Civil courts are fully capable of redressing all kinds of defamation complaints. Until such further reform, the Libel and Defamation Act will still threaten the full exercise of press freedom” (Ibid).

5:4:2 Online libel and defamation

According to one Trinidadian attorney, with regards to libel and defamation on social media, “our legislation continues to be ill-equipped to deal with such issues which arise for determination; and so, in the absence of such legislation, heavy reliance has been placed on our court system to specifically address the use of social media and its real-world implications in

³² In Trinidad, in the 1970’s, Irwin Sandy, editor of the Bomb weekly, was charged with the offence but died before the case could ever come to trial.

an effort to curtail the risk of harm that the publication on such platforms may cause” (Walker, 2020, n.p.).

There is no provision or amendment to the current Libel and Defamation Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014) for social media. Within the Legal Case Studies chapter, full examples of the impact of online libel and defamation on journalism culture are discussed.

5:4:3 Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act of 2011³³ (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011) lays out directives about what is considered personal data, how it can be transgressed as well as the consequences for that transgression, which include heavy fines as well as jail time. According to the official Act, “The object of this Act is to ensure that protection is afforded to an individual’s right to privacy and the right to maintain sensitive personal information as private and personal” (Ibid).

The General Privacy Principles of this Act outline the core directives and are applicable to all persons who handle, store or process personal information belonging to another person, including journalists. Relevant to the investigation of this study are sections

- (C) knowledge and consent of the individual are required for the collection, use or disclosure of personal information;
- (H) sensitive personal information is protected from processing except where otherwise provided for by written law;

³³ For the full Act, see: https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/Alphabetical_List/lawspdfs/22.04.pdf

The highlighted sections (C) and (H) are particular points of concern to journalists as within the Act, personal information is considered to be (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011):

“personal information” means information about an identifiable individual that is recorded in any form including—

- (a) information relating to the race, nationality or ethnic origin, religion, age or marital status of the individual;
- (b) information relating to the education or the medical, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to the financial transactions in which the individual has been involved or which refers to the individual;
- (c) any identifying number, symbol or other particular designed to identify the individual;
- d) the address and telephone contact number of the individual;
- (e) the name of the individual where it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name itself would reveal information about the individual;
- (f) correspondence sent to an establishment by the individual that is explicitly or implicitly of a private or confidential nature, and any replies to such correspondence which would reveal the contents of the original correspondence;
- (g) the views and opinions of any other person about the individual; or
- (h) the fingerprints, deoxyribonucleic acid, blood type or the biometric characteristics of the individual;

“sensitive personal information” means information on a person’s—

- (a) racial or ethnic origins;
- (b) political affiliations or trade union membership;
- (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature;
- (d) physical or mental health or condition;
- (e) sexual orientation or sexual life; or

(f) criminal or financial record;

In modern times, the protection of one's data is critical. However, the Act has become a point of contention for the media and journalists as there is no public interest exemption for them if they require someone's personal information to report the news. Newsday editor-in-chief Judy Raymond commented on these restrictions saying, "I mean what will you fill the paper with if you have to ask everybody who is in a car crash or whatever if you can use their name and age and address and if they are in a coma in hospital, [that] is just ridiculous" (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

Journalists have also identified broad phrasing which could create issues for them. In a 2019 article, a Trinidad Guardian journalist, Mark Lyndersay explained in an article that, "In legislation which heightens the tension between privacy and the right to freedom of expression, needlessly broad wording and significant omissions make for troubling legal pitfalls" (Lyndersay, 2016).

The sections which highlight this "needlessly broad wording" can be found sections 92 (1) and 92 (2):

92. (1)

A person who wilfully discloses personal information in contravention of this Act,
commits an offence.

(2)

A person who collects, stores or disposes of personal information in a manner that contravenes this Act,
commits an offence.

Lyndersay (2016) further explains that "In section 92 (1) the act of "wilful" disclosure of information is identified, but the word is strategically re-moved from the next line, 92(2), which

identifies - a person who collects stores or disposes of personal information in a manner which contravenes this act - implying that the act of doing so inadvertently is not an exemption.”

However, exemptions for the public sector, limited exceptions for the private sector, the health and social services sector and for judicial proceedings are present in the act (Lyndersay, 2016).

In terms of penalties:

95. (1) A person who commits an offence under this Act is liable upon -

a) summary conviction, to a fine of not more than fifty thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of three years; and

(b) conviction on indictment, to a fine of not more than one hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of not more than five years.

(2) Where the offenses under this Act is committed by a body corporate, the body corporate shall be liable upon -

(a) summary conviction, to a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars; and

(b) conviction on indictment, to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars.

These potential penalties are a chilling factor to journalists and can act as a deterrent in the pursuit of news. This is the media law effect in the discursive journalistic field.

Ria Mohammed-Davidson, an attorney from Trinidad and Tobago was also quoted in Lyndersay’s article saying that she does not believe that the Act passes the legal test of proportionality (Lyndersay, 2016). Mohammed Davidson also expressed a concern for how authorities might pursue citizens with the “Information Commissioner, a sort of extra-judicial data-use policeman, knocking at their door demanding to review their records...Caribbean

societies are not rights based societies...We have no cultural basis for fighting for our rights. We have been taught to be respectful to power and to accept its authority” (Ibid).

This comment echoes points within the media landscape chapter about how colonial history has shaped national culture and by extension, journalism culture.

The attorney general announced that the Act would be reviewed in the first quarter of 2021. However, at the time of this study, no official announcements on amendments have been announced to date.

5:4:4 Cybercrime Bill

According to the Cybercrime Bill³⁴ introduced in 2017, “The purpose of the Cybercrime Bill, 2017 is to provide for the creation of offences related to cybercrime and for other related matters in Trinidad and Tobago” (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017).

While the protection of the public from cybercrime is necessary and welcome, once again, no special dispensation for the media has been made and Clauses, 8(1), 12 and 18(2) of the Bill (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017) essentially prevent the media from performing their duties.

Clause 8 (1):

A person who intentionally and without lawful excuse or justification accesses a computer system without authorisation, or by exceeding authorised access, and obtains computer data commits an offence and is liable —

³⁴ For the full Bill, see: <http://www.ttparliament.org/legislations/b2017h15g.pdf>

(a) on summary conviction to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars and imprisonment for two years; or

(b) on conviction on indictment to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars and imprisonment for three years.

(2) A person who intentionally and without lawful excuse or justification receives or gains access to computer data knowing the same to have been stolen or obtained pursuant to subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable —

(a) on summary conviction to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars and imprisonment for two years; or

(b) on conviction on indictment to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars and imprisonment for three years.

Clause 18. (1)

A person who uses a computer system to communicate with the intention to cause harm to another person commits an offence.

(3) A person who commits an offence under this section is liable —

(a) on summary conviction to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars and to imprisonment for three years; or

(b) on conviction on indictment to a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for five years.

(4) For the purposes of this section, “harm” means serious emotional distress.

Many national and international individuals, journalists and organisations have raised an alarm about this pending bill.

Curtis Rampersad, publications editor of the Trinidad Express Newspaper said that, “If it were to be enacted it would, in many respects I would say, it would herald the death of investigative journalism...It’s based on sharing information, it’s based on contacts, it’s based on sources that are familiar, it’s based on leaked documents,” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

“At the end of the day people have asked me in court, “well didn’t you see the disclaimer that this is private information?” My response was, “do you not know how these things work?” (Ibid)

The 2017, Reporters Without Borders letter to Dr Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago stated that this Bill “could impede the free flow of information” and “have a chilling effect on the freedom of expression” which could encourage “self-censorship in order to avoid burdensome and expensive litigation” (Reporters Without Borders, 2017).

Movement for Social Justice (MSJ) leader David Abdulah wrote to current Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi regarding the status of the Data Protection Act #3 of 2011, as well as concerns about Clause 8 of the Cybercrime Bill 2017 which is now before the Parliament.

He commented, “It is the view of the MSJ that Clause 8 of the Cybercrime Bill 2017 will result in the very same attacks on the freedom of the press and the scaring off of whistle-blowers to which you spoke in the 2011 debate on the Data Protection Bill. What is applicable then is equally applicable now and that that is to unleash a draconian state” (Loop News, 2018, n.p.).

Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express also commented saying, “I know it is going to affect investigative journalism...because we depend on a lot of sources and people sending us emails and confidential documents. I think the major thing for me is that if you are in receipt of an unauthorised e-mail, then you are in breach. I think that is the most...that is the death of investigative journalism” (Lyder, interview with author, 2018).

5:4:5 Interception of Communication Act

The Interception of Communication Act³⁵ was launched in 2010. It is an Act “to provide for and about the interception of communications, the acquisition and disclosure of data relating to communications, the acquisition of the means by which electronic data protected by encryption or passwords may be decrypted or accessed and other related matters” (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010).

In the Interception of Communication (Amendment) Bill 2020 (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010) which updates the 2010 law, the key directives in Section 5 state:

(i) In this Act

“communications” includes anything comprising speech, music, sounds, visual images or data of any description or signals between persons, between a person and a thing or between things or for the actuation or control of any apparatus, and whether or not done in real time;

“intercept”, in relation to a communication, means listening to, monitoring, viewing, reading or recording, by any means, such a communication in its passage over a telecommunications network without the knowledge of the person making or receiving the communication;

In terms of penalties:

6. Section 6 of the Act is amended —

(1) Except as provided in this section, a person who intentionally intercepts a communication in the course of its transmission by means of a telecommunications network commits an offence and is liable on—

(a) summary conviction, to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars and to imprisonment for seven years; or

³⁵ For the full Act, see: <http://www.ttparliament.org/legislations/a2020-13g.pdf>

(b) conviction on indictment, to a fine of one million dollars and to imprisonment for fifteen years.

Dr Roodal Moonilal, an opposition MP called out the Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi for fresh amendments to the Bill which would now allow stored data to be acquired. As stated in a news report covering the Parliament session, “stored data forms much of the information handed over to the press for investigation and publication” (TV 6 News, 2020).

Moonilal voiced his concern saying, “A voice note goes to a journalist...the journalist now faces legal consequences having that because that information is not just information as it was before, it is now evidence. This is a blatant and obscene attack on media houses, on journalists. It is jail for journalists with this piece of legislation” (TV 6 News, 2020).

Moonilal also pointed out that past information had hardly brought convictions. “A million interceptions, one million points of macoing³⁶ for this spy bill for which no one has been convicted and no one has been arrested” (TV 6 News, 2020).

The Bill also allows wiretapping “at places deemed prisons, including police station cells, detention centres and rehabilitation centres (as defined under the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Care and Nurseries Act)” (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2020, n.p.).

Independent Senator Paul Richards said that the Bill should state exceptions for reporters working in the public interest who may receive unsolicited information from prisoners. He noted that journalists could get caught up in negative situations when working on stories “regarding atrocities concerning prison inmates...[and] information may come to journalists regarding conversations in some legitimate form and they may have to work on this in the public interest” (Trinidad Guardian, 2020, n.p.).

³⁶ Maco is a Trinbagonian word meaning to mind someone’s business.

Al-Rawi sought to reassure journalists that they would have a public interest defence but no such clause has been added to the Act at the time of this research.

Opposition leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar also advised that, “Confidential journalistic materials and sources of journalistic information will be impacted on and of course, subject to being intercepted and then used against persons. I think that the right of a journalist is also another fundamental right not to disclose any sources but, if they are going to be intercepting your data, any telecom provider, they will be getting to you” (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2020, n.p.).

After the police raided the Express Newspapers in March 2020 and seized hard drives belonging to the editor-in-chief, the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) also called for “adequate legal protection of whistle-blowers and for public interest exemption clauses in several items of legislation, including the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) Act and the Interception of Communications Act” (Trinidad Express, 2020, n.p.).

5:6 The Chilling Effect of Media Laws

Within the last section, the laws and their consequences were detailed. Exorbitant damages and the threat of jail time have an “invidious” (Schauer, 1978) chilling effect on the work of journalists. As an analysis of eighteen local cases revealed, damages ranged from TT\$70,000 up to TT\$650,000 with the Libel and Defamation Act. The other three laws appraised in this chapter, the Data Protection Act, Cybercrime Bill and Interception of Communication Act also all outline exorbitant fines as well as threats of jail time. (see Table 1).

Even though no cases have been brought against journalists under the Data Protection Act, Cybercrime Bill or Interception of Communication Act, the possibility of going to jail for

fifteen years or having to pay TT\$1,000,000 upon indictment for the Interception of Communication Act or a fine of TT\$500,000 upon indictment for the Cybercrime Bill or going to jail for up to three years upon summary conviction or five years upon indictment for the Data Protection Act, is chilling. Comments by editors and media managers from semi-structured interviews and ethnographic discussions confirm this. Even for a corporate body like One Caribbean Media or Ansa McAL Limited, the threat of paying a fine of TT\$500,000 upon indictment of the Data Protection would be a serious deterrence. Moreover, for the Libel and Defamation Act, there is no ceiling. The law stipulates that the fine is “as the court directs”.

However, one finding of the ethnographic research and semi-structured interviews must be stated clearly here: most journalists interviewed in this study did not feel severely threatened by these laws.

Rather, editors, media managers and investigative journalists did. In all of the interviews conducted with editors-in-chief and heads of news, each of these newsroom leaders acknowledged the chilling effect of these laws.

Even when speaking about investigative journalists, one editor commented, “we have to manage their work because not all of them think about these things and expect us to lean on the experience of the editors for safeguarding and checks and balances” (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018).

What Rampersad is saying expounds further on the culture within these newsrooms when it comes to media laws. The editors are the protectors and the gatekeepers.

Here are some excerpts from journalists speaking about the laws that are also featured in the ethnography chapter:

“I think MATT [Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago] is hyping up the issue too much. They can make suggestions without making it look like the end of the world for journalists because how much information, how many stories are investigative or otherwise are based on a journalist depending on hacked information?” (G7, interview with the author, 2018).

“There is not a need to know the libel and defamation law intimately because we are just reporting everyday stuff,” they said. “When you’re just reporting every day stuff like a transcriptionist, the only way that you could fall short you may defame by omission when you don’t get a response” (G4, interview with the author, 2018).

“People usually sue for defamation against investigative reporters who deal with contentious issues. Unless you malign someone’s character, in most cases an apology and a correction within a reasonable time shall suffice” (T4, interview with the author, 2018).

Two more quotes from editors will be shared to emphasise the difference in perspective on these laws. Please note, they have already been utilised earlier within this chapter:

“If [the Cybercrime Bill] were to be enacted it would, in many respects I would say, it would herald the death of investigative journalism because it speaks in very, very certain and precise terms and this is obviously structured by people who know and understand how investigative journalism works, not just in Trinidad but everywhere” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

“I know [the Cybercrime Bill] is going to affect investigative journalism...because we depend on a lot of sources and people sending us emails and confidential documents. I think the major thing for me is that if you are in receipt of an unauthorised email, then you are in breach. I think that is the most...that is the death of investigative journalism” (Lyder, interview with the author, 2018).

To exemplify the financial chill which media managers feel, two excerpts from semi-structured interviews will be used here:

Yes because quite frankly, as I said, our companies are about making money...libel in any form or fashion may end up in a pay out and therefore, media houses tend to err on the side of caution...even if you have documentation, even if your story is air tight because of course, we have to give the other side an opportunity to speak...and if I have a damning story and they refuse to comment, it means one side of your story will be unbalanced...We write around, trying to avoid the obvious pay out of defamation so in that regard, I would say yes, we are extremely cautious about having to pay out money for libel. (Ward, interview with the author, 2018).

...one of the trends that I have noted in recent times, and it's a way of sort of suppressing good stories, is the use of the legal weapon, so to speak. So now I find that once a reporter reaches out to get responses, people who there are serious allegations are being made about, the first thing they do is they get a lawyer...even after you give them sufficient opportunity to respond, and the time and so forth and the procedure to story, there is a slew of pre action protocol letters and I find that there has been an increase in terms of parties wanting to take you to court, which is, which has become very expensive and very onerous on certain media organizations, very, very, very onerous and let's face it, big business, they have big pockets, very deep pockets and it's a form of intimidation. (M1, interview with the author, 2018).

As (Townend, 2014, p. 18) points out, “The chilling effect is not an objective or verifiable reality: it exists through protagonists’ perception of the law and its effects; this will vary depending on jurisdiction and the form of national laws, the resources available to the publishers and their prior legal knowledge and experience.”

The amount to which journalists are affected by these laws definitely depends on their perception of its danger as well their own role perception and execution within the culture of their newsroom. This is an element of journalism culture which the ethnographic data and semi-structured interviews reveal: the majority of journalists remain unconcerned by these laws whereas editors, media managers and investigative journalists are chilled by their existence. Therefore, the role perception and role performance of each of these groups is defined by their

own “perception of the law and its effects...resources available to the publishers and their prior legal knowledge and experience” (Townend, 2014, p. 18).

Kiran Maharaj, current vice-president of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association and radio station owner and manager posits that journalists are just not trained well enough to dig deep and so would not need the law as the execution of their job remains surface level (Maharaj, interview with author, 2018). Journalistic training is discussed at length further on in this chapter. The evidence from that section proves Maharaj to be correct in her theory. Therefore, this must also be considered when building a full picture of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Libel and Defamation Act has impacted journalism culture by influencing media managers to establish particular methods and protocols within newsrooms and throughout the company, not limited to the acquisition and maintenance of libel insurance and retaining legal counsel at all times, performing pointed training sessions on the matter, reacting in certain ways when journalists get it wrong and also constantly renegotiating how their journalists come into contact with, as well as take on the various power dynamics displayed when a libel suit is launched against them. I can give two examples of this negotiation of action for context.

In 2018, Chief Justice Ivor Archie launched a pre-action protocol against the Express newspaper (Trinidad Express, 2018) to prevent certain information coming out to the public. The media managers consulted with their legal counsel and decided to publish the pre-action protocol letter in their daily newspaper which referenced the information that the minister did not want revealed. The publishing of the letter was not illegal and achieved what they wanted to do with the information (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018).

The second example is the case of Conrad Aleong versus Camini Mahraj (Aleong, Conrad v Trinidad Express Newspapers Limited; Reynald, Craig; Maharaj, Sunity; Marajh, Camini,

2003). The lawsuit centred on a series of articles written by investigative reporter Camini Marajh and published between April 6 and May 4, 2003, which made allegations about Aleong's management of the financially troubled British West Indian Airways (BWIA). Mahraj, the journalist, was a star investigative reporter at the daily newspaper and the media managers agreed to go to court, backing their journalist all the way. In the end, Mahraj was found guilty of libel and the company had to pay TTD\$850,000 (Ibid). The \$850,000 award is the highest ever in Trinidad and Tobago in a case of multiple libel.

In the first example, media managers utilised their knowledge and experience of the claimant to gauge the situation.

In the second example, while the case hurt the “collective pocketbook” (Schauer, 1978, p. 698) of the company, the managers felt that it was paramount to stand behind their reporter. “What does that say if we don’t stand behind the work? If we backed down, then that would have sent a message to the powers that be that we are easily deterred and are not dogged in our pursuit of the truth,” Rampersad said. “Yes we took a hit but the other option was not acceptable” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

The work of the media may be chilled by “a simple attack on the pocketbook” (Schauer, 1978, p. 698). However, “a commercial publisher may be able to weigh expected gains against expected losses with some degree of precision” (Schauer, 1978, p. 697) as exemplified by the decision of the media managers at the Trinidad Express. “Expected gains” (Ibid) could be the interest of the public, the reputation of the journalist as well as the media house or the financial benefit from breaking such a story. It is pertinent to note that in a chilled atmosphere, the opposite of these “expected gains” (Ibid) are exactly what creates fear, tension and deterrence.

The very essence of a chilling effect is an act of deterrence (Schauer, 1978, p. 689). Clearly with the possible fines of the libel and defamation act, media companies without strong

management or deep pockets will be deterred. The Trinidad Express newspaper is owned by multi-million dollar company One Caribbean Media whereas the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday is independently owned and receives funding from a group of business persons.

According to Schauer (1978):

While one would normally say that people are deterred, it seems proper to speak of an activity as being chilled. The two concepts go hand in hand, of course, in that an activity is chilled if people are deterred from participating in that activity. Although an individual's decision not to engage in certain behaviour may be influenced by a wide range of stimuli, in law the acknowledged basis of deterrence is the fear of punishment - be it by fine, imprisonment, imposition of civil liability, or deprivation of governmental benefit. Thus, it is apparent that an individual may be deterred or an activity chilled by the threatened operation of virtually any penal statute or by the potential application of any civil sanction. Indeed, these regulating rules are designed to have this precise effect (Schauer, 1978, p. 689).

Schauer (1978, p. 689) goes on to say that the guarantee of freedom of speech is “based on the assumption, perhaps unprovable, that the uninhibited exchange of information, the active search for truth and the open criticism of government are positive virtues.”

At this point it is important to examine Schauer’s statement through a historical lens. As a nation in its comparative infancy, the rhetoric of political parties was birthed from a mandatory nationalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016). As such, journalists were expected to contribute to the building up of society through work that fostered public cohesion. This included resisting the urge to openly challenge politicians and expose corruption. This expected practice is exemplified in a quote from Basdeo Panday when the Prime Minister responded to weeks of strident criticism levelled against him, his attorney general, Ramesh Maharaj and information minister Wade Mark over a proposed discussion

paper on the reforming of laws affecting the media known as “Reform of Media Law – Towards a Free and Responsible Media” or the Green Paper:

I am making it unequivocally clear that nobody, but nobody, will attack my government and escape unscathed. Some people feel they have the right to free speech and that they can attack my government anytime they want and that I cannot respond. They have arrogated upon themselves to make checks and balances on the government. I want to know who they (are) checking and balancing for (Inter Press Service, 1997).

It can be gathered from the quotation above that the ex Prime Minister did not feel that the “uninhibited exchange of information, the active search for truth and the open criticism of government are positive virtues” (Schauer, 1978, p. 689). A statement like this coming from such an authority figure will definitely have an “invidious” (Schauer, 1978) chilling effect on journalists and affect the journalism culture through the way journalists perceive their roles and perform them.

Within the legal realm, another factor which adds to the chilling atmosphere of the entire society is that various members of the judiciary have been called out by the media for being corrupt. The most pertinent of these members is Chief Justice Ivor Archie who took office in 2008 and has had issues since 2010.

According to Loop News, in 2017, the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago (LATT) expressed concern over reports which suggested that Archie communicated confidential information surrounding the security of Supreme Court Judges, during a conversation with a friend affiliated with a private security firm (Loop News, 2017).

Loop News (2017) also related that Archie came under fire for issues surrounding the appointment and resignation of former Chief Magistrate Marcia Ayers-Caesar to the High

Court Bench. The legal fraternity also criticised him after reports that the Judicial and Legal Services Commission (JLSC), which he chairs, was acting unconstitutionally as it was operating with four members when section 110 of the Constitution mandates that the JLSC needs five people to operate.

Another important point to consider is the fact that at the time of this study, Archie is also the head of the JLSC, the agency that may be called upon to trigger Article 137 for his removal. He is also the head of the Appeals Court and, in the specific case that went to the Privy Council that he ultimately lost, the Appeals Court previously ruled in his favour (*The Honourable Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago Mr Justice Ivor Archie O.R.T.T. v The Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago*, 2018).

Schauer (1978, p. 695) refers to these “unknown biases” and posits that “personal prejudices of judge or jury and the adversary zeal of the litigants and lawyers may overtly or covertly work as a distortion of the fact finding process” (Ibid).

This type of behaviour from members of society who are expected to uphold the social contract and contribute to society by fulfilling their chosen roles throws off all sense of safety and propriety. If journalists cannot trust the judiciary and its employees, who can they trust? Therefore, this atmospheric “chill factor” encourages allusion to the suspicion that the “severity of the potential punishment magnifies the danger, and hence the fear, of an erroneous judicial determination” (Schauer, 1978, p. 696).

As mentioned earlier, journalists can be held liable under both civil and criminal law with regards to libel and defamation. According to reports by the Inter Press Association (Inter Press Service, 1996), editor Ken Ali spent five days in prison for contempt of court and reporter Sharmain Baboolal was fined after a High Court judge ruled that their newspaper said too much about the ongoing murder trial of a reputed drug trafficker. A report out of the Senate argued

that statutory privilege extended to publication of speeches made in Parliament as long as the report is “fair, balanced and contemporaneous” (Inter Press Service, 1996). On the first day of the trial police officers seized television cameras, removed film, and generally harassed newspaper cameramen who were taking photographs of lawyers and other leading figures in the case.

Whilst the editor did not receive jail time for libel or defamation, the jarring experience of being imprisoned for contempt of court also results in a “chill factor” throughout the industry.

Senator Diana Wyatt commented on the judge’s decision saying, “I am just wondering what is happening to my country when journalists are being jailed for doing what journalists do” (Inter Press Service, 1996).

This comment is a clear indication of the effects of such a decision. A direct deterrence to performing regular journalistic duties has occurred. Schauer also identifies this issue in his work pointing out that, “The possibility of imprisonment coupled with the stigma and disabilities which accompany a criminal conviction will most often lead an individual to view the criminal penalty as more harmful than a civil sanction” (Schauer, 1978, p. 689).

5:7 Education

At the time of this research, there are three major advertised sources of journalism education. The University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus (UWI Trinidad and Tobago) offers a BA in Communications (UWI, 2020), the Ken Gordon School of Journalism within the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) also offers a BA in Journalism (COSTAATT, 2018) and the School of Business and Computer Science offers a BA in Mass Communications (SBCS, 2020) as well as a BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) in Creative Media Production (SBCS, 2020). There was an attempt at a one-

year Certificate in Journalism course given by the University of the West Indies in 2011. The course was sponsored by Ansa McAL (UWI, 2011) the conglomerate that owns the Trinidad Guardian and CNC3. However, after members of the initial cohort of 30 students completed the program, it was not renewed.

These programs were all established in the last decade so before this, there was nowhere within the island a journalist could earn a certificate or degree in journalism. Therefore, for those who could afford it, they were educated in North America or the United Kingdom. Semi-structured interviews revealed that most foreign journalism degrees were held by the upper echelons of the media houses such as the editorial team. This is a crucial part of the puzzle to journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago. Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom all have different media models and their journalists have different role perceptions and role performance executions (Hanitzsch, 2011). Therefore, each member of the editorial department who was educated within a particular media model would inevitably bring their training and perspective from that model to the local newsroom creating an internal hybrid culture (Chadwick, 2013) unique to that newsroom.

Without a doubt, it was observed that each of the six newsrooms had distinctive nuances to the overarching culture and the editorial staff had a major influence on the energy, pace and tone of the newsroom.

Even though the level of education of the editorial team defines so much, the education level of the journalists within the newsroom is equally important as that same energy, pace and tone are grounded by their own news values. How those news values are formed, on the job, through a program or both, impacts upon the journalism culture, for example, with how these journalists respond to media laws. Depending on which of the aforementioned programs a prospective journalist enrolls in, they may or may not learn about media laws. If they do, then, when they

approach the newsroom, they perform their duties with these laws in mind. If there is a journalist that has not been educated about these laws and is functioning in a newsroom that did not have training, they might produce work that would put them in transgression of the laws.

Even though these three sources of education for journalists have given journalists more opportunities for formal education, both editors and educators are still critical of the quality of journalist graduating from these programs.

According to the UWI website, “The major in Communication Studies provides a broad introduction to the many fields of human communication. On completion of the major, students who wish to specialise in communication may pursue a career or graduate degree in communications, journalism, public relations, or related fields” (UWI, 2002).

Probing deeper into the course list (UWI, 2020), the degree does not specifically offer modules in journalism or journalism law. Therefore, for someone interested in working within the journalism industry, even though they may apply certain principles from the overall course to the job, this degree does not furnish them with the particular training they need to work within the field.

When the Gordon School of Journalism and Communications at COSTAATT was launched in 2011, the chairman of COSTAATT Alan McKenzie also recognised the need for training. McKenzie said there was a “demand for training in journalism and communications in the region and the school’s mission would be to lift media standards so that graduates could cope internationally in the media industry” (Trinidad Guardian, 2011).

5:8 Training

As established in the beginning of this section, there was no formal journalism education locally until approximately 40 years post independence. However, present day journalists talk about a golden age of journalism coming out of that time when professional standards were extremely high.

Joel Nanton, Chair of the Department of Journalism and Media at the Ken Gordon School of Journalism recalled his on the job training saying:

...Those old time editors, there was one who threatened to chop my fingers off, because I misspelt a politician's name, when I was just 20 years old...and screaming loud in the newsroom but I never misspelt his name ever again. So I feel yes, certainly, the standards have fallen...there was no training back then, except on the job training, and there were the older heads sustaining it, this is how to do it, get it right, we need to rework this, sit next to me..." (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018).

Nanton described the typical train of thought when hiring at the time saying, "You know, you earned your stripes, in the industry, by your experience, right? People came off the street, basically and it went back to that whole thing, you can write, you could string a few sentences together. Good. That's all we need. Now, we will teach you how to do it while you're on the job" (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018).

Normally a rookie journalist would start out covering the courts and then work their way onto different beats over time.

Nanton expanded on the introductory step saying:

Traditionally you started off in Magistrate's court...you go and you sit, and you learn the ropes and then you come back and report on what was said and the training in the Magistrate's court was real training because you had to just strictly report what was said in court. You couldn't do too much analysis or dig into anything. So that was the entry to journalism then just to report this, this was said, that was done, etcetera and then you moved on from there (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018).

This particular quote reveals quite a lot about the learned role perception and role execution of journalists from Trinidad and Tobago. If only being able to "strictly report what was said" (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018) and not being able or encouraged to "do too much analysis or dig into anything" (Ibid) is considered "real training" (Ibid), the elements of journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) are not being honoured. A regurgitation of facts is not journalism. One can argue that being assigned to the courts is a good place to practise accuracy and verification which do align with fundamental practices. However, this practice of a lack of questioning shapes the journalism culture into something superficial.

Within the ethnographic study of this research, questions about training were posed to every interviewee. These responses will be further expanded on within the ethnography chapter but for this section of the media landscape analysis, two quotes will be utilised to illustrate the overall key points: there is not enough training even though journalists do desire it; training is seen to be a costly undertaking and media houses can be averse to indulging frequently (based on the rate of new hires); and most journalists have not had proper media law training.

There's really a dearth of training for journalists...There's not a lot of training opportunities offered by companies, because it's hard for them to see the investment without the immediate return on investment and we tend to work in media organisations that are run by business people and not journalists. So they see money being spent and they don't necessarily see how that is yielding a benefit to them. Even though we will try to rationalise it, that you raise the bar, you know, you train one person, they're able to train their colleagues, the quality improves, and the viewership builds...The onus is really on the individual journalist to train themselves" (C4, interview with the author, 2018)

At the guardian, I'm trying to think of any formal training while I was there. As I said, from time to time some media houses will bring a lawyer from time to time who knows a fair bit about libel, or it might be a lawyer who is on the board who might not know anything about libel, who will give a session about libel once every two or three years, by which time a lot of people who went to it the first time would have left (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

As evidenced by the above quotes, financial investment by these media organisations is difficult to ascertain. The economics of the journalism industry, especially regarding the salary of journalists within Trinidad and Tobago is a major factor which shapes the journalism culture. According to practitioners and educators, the low salary which journalists are paid is due to their lack of a degree and experience when entering the profession. As there was no formal journalism program for some time, this was used by media managers to keep salaries at a certain level.

Nanton confirms this saying, "...there was a financial aspect to that because now you don't have to pay these people. These were not professionals with degrees. They didn't have to pay them huge salaries" (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018).

One journalist [REDACTED] related how they do their own hair, make-up and styling out of pocket:

The salaries that we do receive could never allow us to live comfortably. And that's because nobody, outside of probably the anchors, and managers, senior managers in the newsroom have their entire lifestyle that is taken into account. So we work in television, and our hair and makeup, we do it ourselves...([REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018).

Judy Raymond, Newsday editor-in-chief gave a further insight into the industry commenting:

...the media, especially newspapers, is labour intensive and do have high costs so they try to cut down on that by bringing in school leavers with no qualifications or people with degrees but no practical

experience. Journalists are selected on the basis of who applies saying I want to be a journalist and things like experience, contacts and aptitude for the job don't really come into it, they are basically self selected. In this country it's a profession that is treated like a trade like if you're a plumber or something and even then as an amateur plumber. So there is a huge gap between the expectations and actual competencies of journalists (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

While companies feel that this is better for their bottom dollar, journalists get jaded and become resentful, losing passion for their profession. Another journalist [REDACTED] lamented that the job had now become "just a wuk"³⁷ ([REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018) for them.

Anthony Wilson, an editor at the Trinidad Express said that, "...the salaries in journalism did not keep up with the salaries outside of journalism. And therefore, a lot of people came into journalism and spent three or four years if so much, and went back out and worked in the PR industry and government..." (Wilson, interview with the author, 2018).

In the long run, a journalist who is disenchanted with a low yield in return for their efforts will not produce to the best of their ability and the overall product will essentially suffer. Eventually, they leave the company and the industry altogether. This has made the turnover rate relatively high in the local journalism industry, also an element which impacts on the overall culture, to be considered within the discursive field.

Now that there are opportunities for journalism degrees, one would think that the industry has more qualified journalists so salaries would be higher, the quality of work would be better and the turnover rate would be less. Interestingly, this is not so. One [REDACTED] journalist [REDACTED]

³⁷ In Trinbagonian vernacular, "wuk" is translated to mean "work" but a "wuk" does possess a derogatory connotation that describes an experience which is not professional or courteous but is temporary and of a lesser value where one just wants to get paid at the end of the day.

described their experience with new colleagues who had been through one of the programs saying:

We take interns from COSTAATT. I think a lot of them do this because they think it's glamorous. Everyone wants to read the news on TV, that's number one. Number two, they lack critical thinking skills and it's only when they go into the (intern) program they recognize it. There is a complaint that there is no room to grow if you become a journalist. Number four, they don't have the passion (■■■■ interview with the author, 2018).

Newsday editor-in-chief Judy Raymond alludes to this gap between the knowledge of the graduates and their practices within the newsroom.

I'm also not particularly impressed with the quality or the people being produced by those institutions. I mean, I know people who have associate degrees, who were practising journalists, went to do an associate degree or whatever, in journalism and came out no better than they went in, some of whom then, were hired as teachers at the same institutions. So the quality of the people they are turning out and the people who are going in in the first place is I think the issue (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

One COSTAATT graduate who currently works for one of the six media organisations featured in this research commented on their experience saying:

I think that we've come a long way from not having anything, to having these programs but some of these programs are not necessarily practical...You spend three or four years doing a bachelor's and then you realise that the content of the bachelor's is not aligned to what really exists in the media industry, even though there are people who work in the media industry who are lecturers (■■■■ interview with author, 2018).

While Nanton acknowledges these issues, he still thinks COSTAATT has had an impact:

There's a real disconnect between the education and the programs and what obtains now in the industry. Traditionally, in Trinidad, we have never had an industry that sought people out from academia... I

believe we have had some impact because we have several people who I could point to working in the industry now who would have passed through the program (Nanton, interview with the author, 2018).

This section on the education available to prospective and active journalists within Trinidad and Tobago is meant to give a deeper understanding of the media landscape and journalism culture. Media practitioners are caught in a cycle: there were no programs so journalists were taking off the street and trained on the job – their lack of experience was an excuse to keep salaries low – this led to a high turnover rate so companies did not see the point of investing in training as journalists were unlikely to stay in the position – when programs were introduced, there was a disconnect between the theoretical and practical aspects and once again, journalists are left to being mostly trained on the job which allows media managers to keep salaries low – journalists are disillusioned and the cycle repeats itself.

This information is germane to establishing a model of journalism culture within the country and understanding the different elements within the discursive field. Now that this foundation has been laid, these aspects will be explored further in chapters 7 and 8, the ethnography and interview chapters.

5:9 Conclusion

This chapter on the media landscape in Trinidad and Tobago provides the foundation and context for the rest of this thesis. One has to have an understanding of the history of the media, the current media laws, as well as the catalysts for its current relationships with politicians, media managers, other members of society as well as each other in order to fully grasp what the journalism culture is. This foundation effaces any superficial assumptions or observations that could possibly be made in the ethnography chapter where data on the opinions and behaviour of journalists is analysed and constructed to propose a model for journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 6: Legal Case Studies

6:1 Introduction

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, the initial inspiration for this research came from a hypothesis that media laws affected journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. This notion was based on a Caribbean wide project driven by the International Press Institute (IPI). In 2013, the IPI visited different countries across the region to advocate for the repeal of defamation laws, stating that their existence compromised the reality of a free press (International Press Institute, 2014).

However, as further preliminary research was conducted, a more pertinent question arose – What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? To even understand how media laws would affect that culture, knowing how historical, societal, cultural, economic and political elements affected the culture was indispensable. Therefore, the thesis was refocused to understand journalism culture holistically.

The previous chapter, the Media Landscape, outlines the contentious media laws and discusses the concept of the Chilling Effect in relation to that landscape.

This chapter, Legal Case Studies gives real life examples of cases that could have and have had an impact on the journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

6.2 Landmark Cases

Below are five cases that have impacted the media landscape. The cases are summarised with comments from the ruling judge as well various societal actors who are positioned in the socio-legal realm.

Case 1: (Aleong, Conrad v Trinidad Express Newspapers Limited; Reynald, Craig; Maharaj, Sunity; Marajh, Camini, 2003).

In the case of Conrad Aleong versus Camini Mahraj (Aleong, Conrad v Trinidad Express Newspapers Limited; Reynald, Craig; Maharaj, Sunity; Marajh, Camini, 2003), Aleong felt compelled to sue based on seven articles and one editorial which alleged in essence, that his management of British West Indian Airways (BWIA) was corrupt.

The articles were written by award winning investigative reporter Camini Marajh and published between April 6 and May 4, 2003. Marajh, had a reputation as a formidable investigative reporter at the Trinidad Express. Therefore, the media managers agreed to go to court and argued the public interest. When the judge examined Marajh's work against the Reynolds principles, "[he] found that seven of the eight articles were defamatory of the respondent. He also found that the seven articles were not the products of responsible journalism to which the defence of qualified privilege applied" (Aleong, Conrad v Trinidad Express Newspapers Limited; Reynald, Craig; Maharaj, Sunity; Marajh, Camini, 2003).

Marajh interviewed Aleong for four hours but the judge discovered that "the most serious allegation against the CEO was not put to him" (Latchoo, 2020, p. 88). Marajh was found to be liable and the Trinidad Express had to pay TTD\$850,000, the highest ever in Trinidad and Tobago in a case of multiple libel.

Impact on the journalism culture:

To establish the impact of this suit on the media landscape and journalism culture, it is useful at this point to recall what Curtis Rampersad, managing editor of the Trinidad Express, said

about the Trinidad Newsday's vulnerability to libel and defamation suits. "Also, it can potentially cripple a media outlet like Newsday which has a different ownership structure to us. If they get five lawsuits in a year, they would probably go under" (Rampersad, 2018).

While the Trinidad Express is a part of the Once Caribbean Media (OCM) conglomerate and also has libel insurance, TTD\$850,000, is still a massive amount to pay for a media house, especially if there are multiple suits in one year.

As two media managers have commented:

So most companies err on the side of caution and decide either to not name the individuals involved, which means we couch the story a certain way, so we might say a PNM official or a member of the government or cabinet or whatever. We write around, trying to avoid the obvious pay out of defamation so in that regard, I would say yes, we are extremely cautious about having to pay out money for libel (Ward, interview with the author, 2018).

...one of the trends that I have noted in recent times, and it's a way of sort of suppressing good stories, is the use of the legal weapon, so to speak. So now I find that once a reporter reaches out to get responses, people who there are serious allegations are being made about, the first thing they do is they get a lawyer...even after you give them sufficient opportunity to respond, and the time and so forth and the procedure to story, there is a slew of pre action protocol letters and I find that there has been an increase in terms of parties wanting to take you to court, which is, which has become very expensive and very onerous on certain media organizations, very, very, very onerous and let's face it, big business, they have big pockets, very deep pockets and it's a form of intimidation. (M1, interview with the author, 2018).

The chilling effect of the potential costs of libel and defamation suits were part of the original inspiration for this thesis. Without belabouring the point, this suit which was the highest pay out for the media, stands as the bitter reminder of the type of damage that is possible to a media

house and acts as a deterrent to editors and investigative journalists to perform their perceived roles (Hanitzsch, 2011).

Case 2: (Ho, Therese v Simmons, Lendl, 2015)

In the case of (Ho, Therese v Simmons, Lendl, 2015), Simmons and Ho were in a relationship where both took intimate photographs. After the relationship ended, Simmons engaged in “revenge porn” showing these photos to several persons online without the permission of Ho. Consequently, Ho was exposed to public ridicule and embarrassment and sued Simmons seeking an injunction as well as damages due to breach of confidence.

The judge ruled that there was a deliberate breach of confidence which caused Ho ridicule, embarrassment and humiliation. Ho was awarded damages in the sum of TT\$150,000.

The reason this case is heralded as a landmark case is that this ruling was ground breaking in Trinidad and Tobago. Never before had a ruling like this been made in the country. Courts in this jurisdiction are not obligated to use breach of confidence to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, as they are in other jurisdictions of the world.

Courts in the United Kingdom are now obligated to apply the law in relation to breach of confidence in a manner that is consistent with that Nation’s obligations under the Human Rights Act 1988 and its obligations under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, no such obligation exists in this jurisdiction (Ho, Therese v Simmons, Lendl, 2015).

Justice Frank Seepersad evolved the jurisprudence on breach of confidence, particularly with intimate photographs in the online realm. Now, other victims of “revenge porn” may be able

to seek damages against a person who publicises their intimate photos and videos without their permission.

Judge Seepersad also pointed out that there is a lack of jurisprudence on privacy saying:

In this jurisdiction therefore no action can be founded based on the failure to respect the privacy of a person. Given the rapid pace with which the face and fabric of society has changed, and cognizant of the infinite reach of social media, it cannot be denied that the privacy of the person is under attack and there is dire need for the enactment of statute to afford protection for citizens' personal privacy" (Ho, *Therese v Simmons*, Lendl, 2015).

Impact on journalism culture:

In terms of the impact of this landmark ruling on the media landscape and journalism culture, while it is a fantastic advancement for those seeking damages for transgressions such as "revenge porn", the local landscape is one where journalists "need reliable sources to reveal important information. But where the leak concerns confidential material, the aggrieved can bring action for "breach of confidence" against the leaker and also against the journalist and the media organisation who published" (Latchoo, 2020, p. 162).

(Latchoo, 2020, p. 143) says, "In the civil arena, covert recording of personal conversations can amount to breach of confidence or misuse of private information, where one seeks to publish or expose the contents." For an investigative journalist, this can be a chilling factor in the pursuit of a story.

This new “breach of confidence” precedent could also be utilised in tandem with the Interception of Communication Act and Data Protection Act where the aggrieved could seek monetary damages or file for an injunction to prevent the information from being published or broadcast.

Case 3: (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018)

Claimants filed an action against their neighbour Janelle Burke who allegedly used her Facebook account to slander the family's reputation, saying that they were sexually abusing their children. This led to an interrogation by the Children's Authority in 2016 as well as public embarrassment, humiliation and a damaged reputation.

Even though Burke acknowledged ownership of the account and she denied that she was the original poster of the content, Justice Seepersad ordered her to pay compensation and the family's legal bill.

Judge Frank Seepersad's overview is as follows:

The cause of action herein is premised in libel as a result of certain statements that the Defendant allegedly posted on social media about the Claimants. This matter is unique and important in that it raises for the first time in this jurisdiction, issues which relate to liability for publications via social media, namely Facebook.

From the onset it is important to note that we are legislatively ill-equipped to deal with issues which arise for determination in matters such as this one, as our laws have not been adequately updated to deal with

the social media reality which now exists. 19th century laws as they relate to publication simply cannot regulate life in the 21st century (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018).

“Social media users must be forced to pay for the things they say if their posts are found to be defamatory. This precedent was set by High Court Judge Frank Seepersad who, in an 18-page judgement on Monday, ruled that a couple which was falsely accused of sexually abusing their children in a series of Facebook posts, would receive damages” (Loop News, 2018).

Trinidad and Tobago does not yet have common law which governs social media transgressions. Therefore, this precedent has opened the doors for people seeking reparations for online defamation.

Far too often, social media is used as a forum to engage in this type of irresponsible and cruel discourse. This state of affairs cannot continue unabated and the court, therefore, has elected to mould and apply the common law in a manner which gives some degree of protection to citizens,” Seepersad said in his findings (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018).

Without reservation this court concludes that postings and information placed on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Viber and Whatsapp has to be viewed as publications and the common law test in relation to libel will apply to same. Such posts are in a comprehensible form and they can be accessed and read by a potentially worldwide audience (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018).

Impact on journalism culture:

In terms of how this affects the media landscape, these platforms are “to be viewed as publications and the common law test in relation to libel will apply to same” (Child A and Child B v Jenelle Burke, 2018). Therefore, the same potential for libel applies to a newsroom’s

online platform as it does to their physical newspaper or daily broadcast. In fact, that potential inevitably increases as the public has the new ability to post comments on those news platforms that can be “accessed and read by a potentially worldwide audience” (Ibid).

(Latchoo, 2020, p. 43) advises that “Newspapers and magazines can be sued for articles on their websites as well as in the paper itself. Each “hit” is considered a new publication of a defamatory statement. It is, therefore, essential to remove an offending statement from the electronic archive as quickly as possible. Newspapers and other publications that allow readers to post defamatory comments on their websites will also be held responsible.”

The potential financial burden of this creates a chilling effect. During the ethnographic study of the Trinidad Newsday, I observed an editorial meeting where the editor-in-chief addressed this very issue, assigning one journalist to the task of monitoring the online comment sections for the paper’s articles. The editor-in-chief also dispersed social media guidelines citing the comments by Judge Seepersad on this case and cautioned journalists about potential repercussions.

Case 4: Central Broadcasting Services Ltd and Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago v The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago

As detailed in the media landscape chapter, in 2019, secretary-general of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS), Satnarayan Marharaj filed a lawsuit which challenged Trinidad and Tobago’s sedition legislation after the police services searched the premises of the media house Central Broadcasting Services after Maharaj made “incendiary statements” (Trinidad Guardian, 2019) on his programme “Maha Sabha Strikes Back” in April 2019.

Subsequently parts 3 and 4 of the sedition law, founded in 1920, were overturned (The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago v Satnarayan Maharaj, 2021). Justice Frank Seepersad found them “unconstitutional” and also that they “infringed on the rights of citizens to freedom of expression, thought and freedom of the press” (Trinidad Express, 2020).

Immediately following his ruling, the state filed 29 grounds of appeal. The Appeal Court then suspended Judge Seepersad’s order putting sedition back on the books.

Impact on journalism culture:

This insistence to keep certain parts of the sedition law functioning can be interpreted as an attempt by the government to repress key freedoms, especially as, according to Judge Seepersad, “the law cannot be reasonably justified in this sovereign democratic state” (Trinidad Guardian, 2019).

The Sedition Act is (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2016):

An Act to provide for the punishment of seditious acts and seditious libel, to facilitate the suppression of seditious publications, and to provide for the temporary suspension of newspapers containing seditious matter.

Where:

“publication” includes all written or printed matter, and every thing whether of a nature similar to written or printed matter or not, containing any visible representation, or by its form, shape, or in any manner capable of suggesting words or ideas, and every copy and reproduction of or extract from any publication;

“publish”, in relation to a seditious publication, includes publish the publication, either by itself or as part of a newspaper or periodical or otherwise than as part of a newspaper or periodical, for distribution to the public;

“seditious publication” includes every publication, whether periodical or otherwise, having a seditious intention;

“statements” includes words spoken or written or recorded electronically or electromagnetically or otherwise, and signs or other visible representations.

1) A person is guilty of an offence who—

- (a) does or attempts to do, or makes any preparation to do, or conspires with any person to do, any act with a seditious intention;
- (b) communicates any statement having a seditious intention;
- (c) publishes, sells, offers for sale or distributes any seditious publication;
- d) with a view to its being published prints, writes, composes, makes, reproduces, imports or has in his possession, custody, power or control any seditious publication.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), a person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction to a fine of three thousand dollars and to imprisonment for two years; or on conviction on indictment to a fine of twenty thousand dollars and to imprisonment for five years, and any seditious publication, the subject matter of the charge, shall be forfeited.

“Incendiary statements” (Trinidad Guardian, 2019) are open to interpretation as is “seditious intention” (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2016) and those interested in bringing actions against those in the media such as Satnarayan Marharaj and Central Broadcasting Services can utilise this outdated law to go against the freedom of the press enshrined under section 4 of the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2016) and as stated by Judge Seepersad, “[infringe] on the rights of citizens to freedom of expression, thought and freedom of the press” (Trinidad Express, 2020).

Case 5: (One Caribbean Media Group Limited; Trinidad Express Newspaper Limited; Omatie Lyder v The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago; The Commissioner of Police; Superintendent Wendell Lucas, 2021)

The following summary is taken from an article I wrote when working for the Public Media Alliance (Herrera, 2020):

In March 2020, seven members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) invaded the offices of the Trinidad Express newspaper with a warrant to search the premises. Despite protestations about the parameters of the warrant, the officers spent three hours in the Express newsroom and searched the office of the Editor-in-Chief, Omatie Lyder, for one hour. They seized four flash drives from Lyder. The officers were searching for information on a source used in article published the previous Sunday by the Trinidad Express which reported that three local banks had marked TT\$2 million in questionable deposits made by Acting Police Commissioner, Irwin Hackshaw. Hackshaw, who was the subject of the investigative story by Trinidad Express journalist Denyse Renne, was overseeing the same officers that went to the Trinidad Express to ascertain information on the source who participated in Renne's investigation.

This indicates a clear conflict of interest regarding the search, as the police officers who are investigating the source of the Express story would have been reporting to Hackshaw who was Acting Commissioner at the time.

The Trinidad Express filed for an injunction (Trinidad Express, 2020) to prevent any further searches at 23:00 on 11 March before high court Judge Kevin Ramcharan. This was granted at 12:30am on March 12th.

Lyder commented on the search saying that under no circumstances will she reveal any source, "Our sources are our lifeblood and we will protect them with all our journalistic integrity" (Trinidad Express, 2020).

Impact on journalism culture:

This is a landmark case because it is again a clear violation of freedom of the press and enforces a chilling effect when state organisations like the TTPS use their positions to forcibly enter and seize materials from media houses. Local and international organisations condemned the raid.

The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) said the actions of the TTPS was an “undisguised frontal attack on the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that guarantees free speech and press freedom” (Loop News, 2020).

The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) also denounced the raid. President Christopher Barnes said that the actions of the TTPS “was nothing short of intimidation and must be condemned of as a serious threat to the freedom of the press” (IAPA, 2020).

In January 2021, Justice Frank Seepersad ruled that the police raid on the Trinidad Express was unconstitutional (One Caribbean Media Group Limited; Trinidad Express Newspaper Limited; Omatie Lyder v The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago; The Commissioner of Police; Superintendent Wendell Lucas, 2021).

This has had a major impact on the media landscape and is “being hailed as a watershed moment for press freedom” (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2021). MATT commented on the ruling saying, “It is ultimately a win for every citizen of TT...It is a win for the public interest, a win for every journalist in the country and every media house, a win for whistle blowers and a big win for democracy” (Ibid).

6:3 Conclusion

These cases are meant to showcase the dynamic relationship between the legal and media landscapes as elements within the discursive journalistic field. Journalists are fighting against archaic laws, new legislation in the era of social media as well as constitutional breaches against press freedom by trusted state organisations. There is progress, where progressive judges recognise the importance of protecting journalists from unconstitutional transgressions and laws which must evolve. However, as was exemplified by the sedition case, the state within its own power is determined to roll back the judgements it finds unsuitable. Therefore, all of these elements chill the media landscape and affect journalism culture. This is the media law effect.

Chapter 7: Ethnography Findings

7:1 Introduction

Utilising the work of (Hanitzsch, 2017) which discusses journalism as a discursive field where roles are constantly negotiated within that field and which can contain both external and internal structures and elements, the local journalism culture can be framed. Within this field, there are components including other journalists, media organisations, politics, media house ownership, commercial factors, media laws and race and class tension. There is an ebb and flow as well as a struggle for power between various actors which impacts the culture and practice of journalists operating within the field.

Within this chapter, ethnographic data collected over a nine-month period is analysed and discussed within the theoretical framework of role orientation and role performance of journalists (Hanitzsch, 2017) within a discursive field. Particular elements within the discursive field have been chosen in order to explore the culture within news organisations in Trinidad and Tobago and answer the overarching research question of this thesis: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago? These elements in the discursive field are: journalistic roles, post colonial influence, media law, training and education.

Please note that in this chapter, all journalists and editors are represented by an index system which can be requested. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Many journalists spoke about the fear of reprisals during interviews. Therefore, this decision has been taken to protect their identity across the board. In rare instances I have included the names of journalists who have

extremely pertinent comments and view points, who did not ask to be anonymised. Also, I have left the names of those in editorial management as is, if they did not ask to be anonymised. Do note that all stand alone quotes by media managers, editors and journalists taken from interviews with me, the author of this study.

To date, as far as this research has explored, there is no official study on how journalists in Trinidad and Tobago perceive their roles and perform that role in relation to the various actors within the discursive field (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017). The “shared occupational ideology” identified by (Deuze 2005, p. 6) is one of the key elements that this thesis is trying to uncover with this ethnographic study. What are the commonalities between Trinbagonian journalists who come from different newsrooms, religions, ethnicities and educational backgrounds? Do these elements play a part in determining the execution of their roles? How has colonisation, media ownership in the Caribbean as well as the media influence of the United States, impacted the journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago?

An important note must be accounted for within this chapter with regards to terminology. Hanitzsch utilises “role orientations” rather than “role perceptions” or “conceptions” because the concept of “orientations” more precisely captures the attitudinal properties of normative and cognitive roles (Hanitzsch, 2017). Therefore, “role orientations” and “role performance” is the terminology which will be applied within this chapter.

Role orientation refers to the way that journalists understand their work and what is expected of them by their audience (Hanitzsch, 2017). This can have a strong influence on journalists’ professional behaviour and can explain differences between news cultures (Zelizer, 2005). Role performance is the way journalists execute their orientation.

Ethnography was paramount to gaining insight into the world of local journalists and the way they understood and executed their roles. During the study, it was observed that every

newsroom's culture was influenced on multiple levels such as the particular disposition of their editor-in-chief or media manager, the work experience of individual journalists, media ownership of the newsroom, the advertising agenda as well as the needs of the audience. Systematically observing and participating in the lives of the group I was studying was the best choice to observe the culture in detail and find coherent strands that could become evidential pieces of this research.

As expanded on within the theoretical framework, role orientations and role performance can be broken down into normative and cognitive roles and role performance encompasses practised and narrated roles (Hanitzsch, 2017). With regards to the normative roles with the six newsrooms, with the exception of the Trinidad Express, there were no editorial codes given as guidelines upon hire. However, with "situated learning" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 125) and "occupational socialisation" (Ibid), there were systems in place in each newsroom for news production. For example, at the time of this study, with the exception of TV6, all other newsrooms had editorial meetings on a daily basis. The Trinidad and Tobago Newsday had two meetings a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. At the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, these editorial meetings were attended by all of the heads of department. Journalists also attended to give updates on stories or to represent for their department if their editor wasn't present. There was an agenda. The first item was regularly to outline the lead stories of the day and then to give updates on stories that were in progress. The meeting would usually end with the choosing of a lead photo. During these meetings, editors were very frank with their opinions and positions on certain issues and people. This attitude encouraged journalists to also be open about their viewpoints and to ask questions about stories they were pursuing. This type of "occupational socialisation" (Ibid) which repeated itself every day speaks to the process of normative role orientation as it establishes institutional norms which occur from role internalisation and manifests in the news making process. For example, this internalisation of

the open door policy was proven time and again as journalists openly approached editors when questions or queries would come up.

At times, the normative and cognitive scripts struggle against one another within the discursive field. One example of this through “occupational socialisation” (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 125) is that of a journalist who commented on the culture shock of coming from the Trinidad Express to the Trinidad Guardian. Having worked for almost a decade at the Trinidad Express, “situational learning” (Ibid) would have been deeply embedded within that journalist. They ■■■ related that when they were at the Trinidad Express, the learned norm was that if an editor called, you would answer your phone. There was no negotiation on that. There was a respect for your editor and also a desire to get going as you had to keep ahead of the competition every day. The journalist commented “[The editor at the Trinidad Guardian] is calling them and people are not answering their phones. To me that is unheard of!”

The journalist also recalled a colleague who was sent out on assignment to the headquarters of one of the political parties. After a certain time, a story from a rival media organisation was posted online. When the editor called the assigned journalist, they said that they did not do the story because they could not find the building. The Trinidad Guardian journalist interviewed expressed frustration and amazement at this saying, “That was a culture shock! [At Express I learned] don’t come back unless you get the story. It was then I realised that this was not an anomaly but it is the norm here.”

In this instance, the normative and cognitive scripts are clearly in contention. The beliefs that this journalist internalised and adopted as part of their experience at the Trinidad Express were being challenged in the new discursive field at the Trinidad Guardian and there is a struggle between these values and the new occupational ideologies being instilled through socialisation in this newsroom.

As mentioned earlier, all newsrooms had editorial meetings except for TV6. There was an assignment sheet that was emailed to journalists and according to one producer [REDACTED] in the newsroom, “journalists talk throughout the day to decide what goes into the newscast but there is no formal meeting”. One journalist [REDACTED] who had come from the Trinidad Guardian to work in TV6 expressed confusion about the lack of editorial meetings. “Management does not have editorial meetings to develop thinking and ideas around stories...[this is part] of the newsroom culture I never understood.” Again we see the clash of normative and cognitive scripts instilled by different news cultures. What is interesting about this push and pull is that it brings attention to an internal expectation of certain news values. Values which are linked to how journalists see themselves and what they believe they do, also recognised as their performance orientation. Of course, as outlined by (Hanitzsch, 2017, p. 10), “the process of role enactment is highly contingent on the material and contextual conditions of news work. Journalists are not always—or perhaps even rarely—able to fully enact their occupational ideas when external constraints impose limits on their editorial autonomy”. This is what we see unfolding here as the lack of an editorial meeting acts as a constraint on this journalist and they adjust their professional role based on the new rules of this newsroom even though they aspire to more, based on their previous experience [REDACTED] interview with author, 2018).

This thesis strives to define journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago. Journalism culture can be defined a “shared occupational ideology” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6). This ideology is both static and constantly negotiated as, while this culture is constantly evolving through the struggle between discursive elements, those same elements possess values which journalists adhere to in order to perform their roles. In the Western countries, these elements are usually presented as an ethical code (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) where objectivity plays a central role. Trinidad and Tobago is in the Western hemisphere and has been influenced by news making processes in the United Kingdom and the United States (Silver, 1985). Having worked

within the local media industry, I can establish in this study that the Western news values as defined by Kovach and Rosentiel in the Elements of Journalism³⁸ reflect the occupational ideology which newsrooms attempt to follow. Again, it is acknowledged that these elements are all concepts which are established and challenged within the discursive field. What will follow are examples of how they go through this process when utilised by journalists in an attempt to perform their roles.

During my ethnography study at the CNC3 newsroom, I observed the unfolding of a story which revealed many aspects to the inner workings of the news production process and how ethical decisions are carried out.

A story broke that a body was found in the town of Arima in Trinidad. A rumour on social media speculated that it was the body of a former lover of the present Chief Justice Ivor Archie. Justice Archie had been in the media recently where journalists reported on trips with lovers allegedly using taxpayers' money (Trinidad Guardian, 2018). When the story broke and the rumour surfaced, one journalist from the Trinidad Guardian came to the CNC3 newsroom to speak with the television journalist on shift that afternoon who would have been responsible for preparing the story for the evening newscast. They spoke and compared notes and both agreed that they did not have confirmation on the identity of the body. The Trinidad Guardian journalist agreed that they would not write the story without any unverified information which reflected good newsroom practices and journalism values. CNC3 went to air and the package played with the voice over that an unidentified body had been found in Arima. No allusions to the deceased being linked to Justice Archie were made.

³⁸ See: <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/what-is-journalism/elements-journalism/>

The next morning, a story appeared in the Trinidad Guardian newspaper stating that the deceased was one of the men previously identified as being involved with the Chief Justice (Channel: The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper, 2018).

The day after, the Trinidad Express published a story clarifying that while the man linked to the Chief Justice has passed away, he did so at the hospital where he was being treated for a lengthy illness. He was not shot in the town of Arima (Trinidad Express, 2018).

I sought out the journalist [REDACTED] who wrote the story that was published, the same journalist who had been in the CNC3 newsroom two days prior. I conducted an ethnographic interview to find out what happened between the conversation with the television journalist and publication.

The journalist [REDACTED] explained that they did not want to write the story but was told by their editor that they had to:

So just as I told [the CNC3 journalist], we had no confirmation at the time. The police was saying that the person was unidentified and the rumour on social media was that this person was associated with Archie. There were no confirmed reports out of Tobago except the gentleman did in fact die but as for the circumstance we did not have any information, the circumstances, what time he died, so I didn't have any information to run. The office called me and told me no, we have to write this story. I told them no, I said to the editors..."guys we have no confirmation, I can't write this we will be sued".

Within this quote, it can be seen that the journalist [REDACTED] is doing due diligence by corroborating with their CNC3 colleague and striving to adhere to the discipline of verification (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). The fact that the editors are telling the journalist to write the story inclusive of the unverified information speaks to an occupational ideology as it is being shared and reinforced by more than one editor.

After the journalist [REDACTED] refused, they were called two more times by one editor in particular [REDACTED]. On the third call, that particular editor said that they received confirmation of the identity of the body in Arima and told the journalist [REDACTED] that they had to write the story. Even though the journalist [REDACTED] eventually agreed, they made their reservations clear saying:

When they called the third time it was around 8 o'clock in the night and [the editor] was like how [they] spoke to the person in Tobago and it's confirmed. I was like, "You sure it confirm?" He was like, "yea". [I asked] "Is this the man? Archie's friend?" [They said] "Yes it's confirmed." I said, "...I'm going to write this based on your confirmation, not based on anybody else's own... You are going to have to stand responsibility".

Within the ethnographic interview, the journalist offered to play back the phone conversation as they had recorded it. [REDACTED]

Within this example, a journalist is attempting to uphold cognitive values and is having their normative, situated learning, challenged. The editor [REDACTED] who exhorted the journalist to write the story was transgressing traditional news values and ethical boundaries, failing to follow a discipline of verification, uphold loyalty to the citizenry by engineering the publication of false information and also by going against the pleas of the journalist in their care.

There is also an indication of a deep distrust and combative attitude towards the company the journalist works for. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This journalist had their autonomy and trust directly challenged and betrayed. In terms of journalism culture, this is the same newsroom which was described earlier as having journalists not pick up their phones when editors called or failing to get a story by

finding the political headquarters of a national party. As the ethnographic interviews and observational data come together, a clearer picture of the culture comes into focus.

The journalist [REDACTED] who was told to write the story acknowledged the urge to compete but also pointed out the institutional lack of verification saying, “I think in their zeal to compete in their minds with the other newspapers, they are hunting for stories any way they come. They don’t care if it can be verified. They care to an extent but they go for more sensationalism.” This comment is particularly interesting as within the media landscape chapter, it was established that the Trinidad Guardian is well known for being a business oriented newspaper. This journalist’s observation suggests that the content strategy has had to evolve due to market forces. This is a definite cultural change.

Traditionally, the news cycle in Trinidad and Tobago follows a pattern of television and radio reports at 6:00am, 8:00am, 12:00pm and a major newscast at 7:00pm. Newspapers are put to bed by 7:00pm for their print run and delivered out on the streets for the early morning rush. In this new era of social media and 24-hour news cycles, local news organisations have had to compete with these new parameters and as can be seen by [REDACTED] comment, “I think in their zeal to compete in their minds with the other newspapers...more sensationalism...”, journalism culture, objectivity, role orientation and role performance are being impacted.

An observation on credibility will be included here. It is an accepted fact within the media landscape that the walkouts from the Trinidad Guardian (Trinidad Guardian, 2013; TV 6, 2013), detailed in the media landscape chapter, hurt their credibility with the public as well as other media organisations. The accusations of editorial interference compromised the integrity of the brand.

It is ironic in the thrust to gain more market share by scooping the competition on this story and linking it to the Chief Justice, the reputation of the media house actually suffered due to

the poor management and verification procedures within this story (Trinidad Express, 2018). Occurrences like this could also have an impact on sales. Credibility affects the survival and growth of media organisations (Visentin, et al., 2019). Therefore, within the realm of journalistic values, the public plays a role as a discursive actor by demanding accountability and truth from journalists. Their belief in how much the brand adheres to and upholds these journalism values, impacts a company's competitive edge which ultimately affects sales.

This point was one of the driving forces behind the integration of the Trinidad Guardian and CNC3 and their rebranding into Guardian Media. In a company strategy meeting, the media manager Nicholas Sabga gave company handouts about the vision and purpose of the organisation in an effort to begin thinking towards rebranding the news product. Within the same meeting, Sabga asked editors to define their purpose in relation to the company. The Trinidad Guardian was historically known as the "Guardian of Democracy", signalling the clear intent of the newsroom. Editor Julian Rogers described the depth of knowledge within the newsroom saying, "The businesss that we are in, reveals the wounds and needs of the population of Trinidad and Tobago". Subsequently Sabga emphasised that the rebranding "...needs to be inclusive. The man on the street needs to be engaged." He also pointed out that the identity of the news product was lacking both internally and externally. "A lot of people don't know what our purpose is," he said. "We are here to inform, inspire, educate and hold accountable. We need to make a social contract with the public and present a point-of-view, record history, we need to build trust with the audience. If we have no ideological buy in, we are dead in the water. We need to regenerate sales." Again, the public is identified as an actor with power to influence the field of journalism.

With regards to objectivity being a core element of journalism (Figdor, 2010), it is important to look at elements which journalists confront on a daily basis which have the potential to affect

their work. Within this study, the layout of the newsrooms formed an important part of the ecosystem within the newsroom. For example, the Trinidad Guardian and the Trinidad Express enjoyed open plan seating so that each department was within hearing range of the other, fostering greater levels of communication. At CNC3, their hub was concentrated with journalists and the media manager. Departments like sales and production were not located within that direct hub.

However, between 2016 and 2019, the Trinidad Guardian went through major transitions. As discussed in the methodology chapter, between 2016 and 2018, the print section of the Trinidad Guardian was moved to a different part of the country, onto the Ansa McAL compound. With the layout of that newsroom at that time, the sales department was beside the newsroom with no barriers. As established in the media scene chapter, Ansa McAL is the conglomerate which owns Guardian Media Publishing, the company which runs the Trinidad Guardian as well as CNC3. Therefore, up to 2019, journalists of the Trinidad Guardian were within earshot of the sales departments and as the field notes reflect, journalists seemed cautious about the level of access the sales department had to them. An interaction between a sales representative and a journalist was observed where the sales representative asked the journalist if they had done any write ups on a particular product. The representative also asked in the same breath if a write up can be done the next day. The journalist responded that the client should buy advertising space within the paper instead, as a story was done on the product that previous weekend.

It is a well established fact that commercially run newspapers and broadcast stations rely, for the most part, on money from advertisers to pay salaries (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2005). When conducting the ethnographic study at the Trinidad Express, it was explained to me by the head of production that the advertisements are the first thing laid out in the design of the paper. Then the remaining space is filled in with news stories. From this perspective, one can

see how paramount ads are to sustain the media house. Therefore, they become another element in the discursive field which influences the level of objectivity journalists and editors practice.

One example of the power of advertisements occurred during the same study at the Trinidad Express. The Arthur Lok Jack School of Business consistently advertised in the newspaper. The Express was running a series of stories about the founder of the business school, Arthur Lok Jack, being investigated for insider trading (Loop News, 2018). According to Express editor, Curtis Rampersad, the company unofficially threatened to pull their advertising budget and also issued a pre-action protocol letter to the Trinidad Express not to run anymore stories. The paper responded by refusing to curtail the investigative series and engaging their own lawyers to respond to the legal letter in a manner which made it clear that they were ready to proceed to court.

With this example, the newspaper was not willing to compromise its objective values to secure investment. This decision was made by the editorial team as well as the head members of One Caribbean Media in the country. Curtis Rampersad, publications editor of the Trinidad Express commented saying, “The only option is to fight it, you can’t give in because if you let it happen, you become a product that can be bought and sold” (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018). Editors, who function as the rudders of their newsroom, have the potential to extend a great amount of influence on that newsroom culture. This sustained action by the upper levels of the newsroom and the larger company allows one to posit that as an element within the discursive field, objectivity within this newsroom is both a normative and cognitive orientation as well as a practised role.

Points have been raised about the influence of editors in the newsroom. As can be seen with the Ivor Archie and Arthur Lok Jack stories, the way editors treat their journalists sets the tone for a newsroom and establishes them as trustworthy or untrustworthy, intelligent or inept,

worthy of following or worthy of doubting. These feelings towards an editor will impact on the cognitive and normative scripts of a journalist.

Within the ethnographic study, the ability and attitude of the editorial team as well as the distance between media managers and the newsroom were major elements within the journalistic field that determined the institutional culture. At TV6, a situation between an editor and a journalist unfolded which had a noticeable ripple effect on the other members of staff. An editor [REDACTED] called a journalist [REDACTED] to their desk to point out errors in their script.

The TV6 newsroom is L-shaped and is outfitted with see-through panels so that foot traffic can be observed. Both entrance doors were closed at the time of this occurrence. They were usually kept closed in order to prevent sound from travelling, as the broadcasting studio is close by. Therefore, everyone in the newsroom was able to hear this conversation.

Editor [REDACTED]:

Our job is not to regurgitate what people say, it is also to interpret. There is a format for news. A quote is not supposed to be five lines. You take what is newsworthy. There is a language for news.

The journalist (T3) nods and says that they will amend the script. The editor continues to point out errors.

Editor (T1):

“The police wants” not “advises”...Simple English you all can’t understand. I will say it in your face. You come and write a piece of crap here and you don’t explain anything – Learn! What you put at the end not making sense.

The journalist [REDACTED] became incensed and elevated their voice in response saying, “Well don’t ask me to write it!” They turned away and walked back to their desk amidst the editor [REDACTED] calling them a “fool”. The journalist responded by calling them a “fool” as well.

When things settled down, I approached the journalist ■ to ask how they were feeling about the situation and whether or not they were going to make a report to Human Resources for the language used by the editor. They said that they would not as they had no confidence in Human Resources to do anything useful in the situation. “That’s how it is here,” they said. “...you know we live in a banana republic”.

If this journalist believes that their editor cannot be held accountable, what kind of example does that set for them and the rest of the newsroom? This comment alludes to the impotence felt by this journalist to effect a change in their own environment as well as the expectation that the structures in place will always be there and there is nothing anyone in a certain position can do about it. It also suggests a belief that overall, that things will not get better as people have just come to accept the way things are even though they live in a democratic country.

The journalist then related an event where they were deliberately given the wrong name when putting a news packet together. They had asked for advice from a senior journalist and that senior journalist was the one that fed them erroneous information. When they reported it to the lead editor, the editor commented that these things happen all the time and that the journalist would need a steel spine if they want to make it in the media. “It’s a dog eat dog world here,” ■ commented. “I just want to come to work, do my job and leave. I don’t really care anymore. Before I would have gone above and beyond. Not anymore.”

This comment exemplifies the demise of certain normative and cognitive scripts which the journalist valued and practised in the past. Now, as a result of the environment and a lack of trust in their colleagues, they have rewritten their internal scripts, taking their cues from their editors, the leaders of the newsroom.

I approached other journalists for comments on the exchange and for their thoughts on the editor calling the journalist a “fool”. One journalist ■ was completely unsurprised saying,

“I’ve seen a lot of good journalists go due to this same thing.” When asked why the media managers have not stepped in and tried to improve relations in the newsroom, more than one journalist responded that the management has no idea about what goes on in the newsroom.”

If the six newsrooms under ethnographic investigation at the time of this study were ranked in terms of level of morale with first being the newsroom with the most enthusiasm for their work and sixth being the newsroom with the least, based on ethnographic observation for this study here is how they would measure up: TV6 (6th), TTT (5th), Trinidad Guardian (4th), Trinidad and Tobago Newsday (3rd), Trinidad Express (2nd), CNC3 (1st). Just two notes on this. The first is that the Trinidad Express and CNC3 are almost tied in their levels of morale and the Trinidad Guardian’s level of morale did rise after their integration with CNC3.

This comparison was introduced because in terms of journalism culture, it is important to acknowledge the impact of morale on the performance of the product (Keith, 2018). If journalists believe in what they do and they feel that their work is valued and they can feel that they are appreciated and rewarded for that work, it stands to reason that they will carry on with their work ethic due to a high level of morale.

However, if a journalist feels underappreciated by their managers or editors, as exemplified by the TV6 journalist being called a “fool”, then the news product will be affected as evidenced by the journalist saying that they just want to do their assigned work and leave for the day. Moreover, the overall newsroom culture will be impacted. However, there is one caveat. The question of why journalists do what they do. Is it because they believe in the principles of journalism or is it to their monthly paycheck? When journalists perform their roles, it might be under the pressure of having to work to get paid. In semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, journalists reveal how they truly feel about what they do. This will be discussed at length in

the following interview chapter. For now, an acknowledgement of that caveat is all that is needed.

Within the newsroom of Trinidad and Tobago Television, no media managers came into the newsroom when I was conducting the ethnographic study. As explained, I was only given five days to conduct my study and was only allowed to be in the newsroom for four hours each day. On the first day, I was also told that I had to get approval to do interviews of individual journalists and was introduced to journalists repeatedly with the instructions of, “you are free to observe”. Even though there were no media managers visiting the newsroom, the legacy of TTT being a state media organisation manifested in the level of control the head of news had over my activities in the newsroom and my limited access to journalists.

As mentioned earlier, at all of the other media organisations, which were commercially run, I was free to interview whomever I chose and was also allowed to stay as late as I desired to observe preparation of print runs as well as evening newscasts and their post mortems, spending more than 10 hours in the newsroom on these days. Even at the Trinidad Guardian which experienced walk outs due to editorial interference, I was given full and complete access.

At TTT, in semi-structured interviews, journalists revealed experiences where their stories were “killed” as they weren’t in line with the expected representation of the government. They also acknowledged that they knew the nature of the newsroom they were working within but related that their choices were few within the economic situation of the time. This will be discussed further within the interview chapter but I have mentioned these examples to illustrate again how attitudes towards management and the general company can affect role orientation, role performance and overall journalism culture.

7:2 Professional Milieus

When considering role orientation and role performance, it is important to examine professional milieus especially within the dimensions of interventionism, power distance and market orientation (Hanitzsch, 2011). As aforementioned, within the milieus of the populist disseminator, the detached watchdog, the critical change agent and the opportunist facilitator, there is space for a hybrid media culture like Trinidad and Tobago to find commonalities within each field. This is because milieus are “created by groups of journalists who have similar professional views” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 480). Journalists within the same news organisation can have very different approaches to their role and can have more in common with journalists outside of their department and even outside of their newsroom. Therefore, these professional milieus outlined by Hanitzsch “cut across organisational boundaries” (Ibid). In this chapter, the professional milieus most applicable to each newsroom will be established.

7:2:1 The Populist Disseminator

The milieu of the populist disseminator is described as having “a strong orientation towards the audience” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 484) with a propensity to furnish said audience with “interesting information” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486). However, this milieu also does not have a habit of reproaching the government. So even though there is an interest in serving the public through the provision of information which is engaging, the public interest is not upheld with respect to critically appraising government action. Their reporting methods are more passive than participatory.

Referencing Hanitzsch’s three-dimensional approach to defining differences within the professional milieus (Hanitzsch, 2011) market orientation must be considered here. Market orientation is “reflective of the two principal ways of addressing the audience, primarily in

their role as citizens or as consumers. Market orientation is high in journalism cultures that subordinate their goals to the logic of the market. Journalists who give priority to the public interest, on the other hand, emphasise political information and mobilisation as a means to create an informed citizenry” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 481).

Within Trinidad and Tobago, this ethnographic study revealed that journalists do indeed have a strong orientation towards the audience. This is because eyeballs equal advertising revenue so the needs, concerns and desires of the audience come first. This is not to say that journalists do not care about giving a voice to the voiceless and holding the government to account but rather that the knowledge of where their salaries come from is a key motivator for newsrooms. In the newsroom of Guardian Media, the integrated newsroom of CNC3 and the Trinidad Guardian, editors and media managers met to consider the online engagement numbers, to examine performance and trends and to execute a strategy to uphold the levels of engagement. There was also an executive producer for digital news content who was responsible for this type of work.

To reiterate a previous note, CNC3 and the Trinidad Guardian are owned by the conglomerate Ansa McAL. TV6 and Express are owned by the conglomerate One Caribbean Media. The Trinidad and Tobago Newsday is backed by a private group of business investors. Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG) now Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) is funded by the state. Five of the newsrooms in this ethnography are commercial newsrooms.

However, observations of various editorial meetings and newsroom conversations confirm that even though news is not publicly funded, it is gathered and reported with the public interest at heart. Definitely, commercial interests and profit play a massive role in the positioning and branding of the product. While this is a matter for the media managers and their board to direct,

journalists who work within the newsroom to cover daily occurrences are also aware that they are in competition with other newsrooms.

Therefore, even though journalists within this study were recorded to have an aversion to a participatory role in their reporting, which differs to the typical populist disseminator, it was also found that journalists did have a strong orientation to the interests of the audience when it came to issues with the government, matching this value within this category. However, this is where the common ground with this milieu ends.

7:2:2 Detached Watchdog

As for the milieu of the detached watchdog (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485):

A defining characteristic of this cluster is the relatively high regard the journalists in this group pay to their social position as detached observer. It is this position from which they articulate their sceptical and critical attitude towards the government and business elites. Much more than in any other group, journalists in this cluster primarily see themselves as watchdogs of these elites. It makes sense that such a profile goes along very well with an emphasis on providing the audience with political information.

Journalists within Trinidad and Tobago were observed providing their audience with political information. This was a daily part of the news diet. To contextualise this, it is important to understand a few points about Trinidad and Tobago. There are two key topics which dominate the headlines in Trinidad and Tobago, crime and politics. With regards to murder statistics, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service reported that there were 539 murders nationwide in 2019, after 517 in 2018, 495 in 2017, 462 in 2016, and 420 in 2015, in a population of approximately 1.4 million people (TTPS, 2013-2022). According to the Trinidad and Tobago government, “gang and drug-related activities continue to drive the murder rate...Armed robbery, sexual assault and other violent crimes are also quite high” (IADB, 2016, n.p.).

Aside from gory, headline grabbing murder stories, political stories also dominate. The “antagonistic” relationship (Smith, 1965; Ryan, 1974) between the United National Congress (UNC), the historically Indo-Trinidad party and the People’s National Movement (PNM), the historically Afro-Trinidadian party, is a constant source of tension which also dominates the media. Constant insults and rebuttals are hurled at each other within the security of Parliamentary debates which fuel public bickering. In the media landscape chapter, the infiltration of racial tension into politics was explained so it will not be expounded upon further here.

With regards to professional milieus and the role of the detached watchdog, the motivations for providing the audience with political information is as important as the act itself. If journalists are only providing this information to further their own interests, it makes inclusion into this category moot. Therefore, based on the context outlined in the previous paragraph, within this ethnographic study, I posed a ‘chicken and the egg’ question. I asked journalists and editors in the newsroom: is it because crime and politics sell papers and garner viewers, that they are covered so much or are they covered to that extent because the public wants to know about these issues? What came first? What influenced the news agenda? Audience interest or profit? For example, while conducting the ethnographic study at the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, I was invited to go out to cover a government press conference. During this outing, it was explained that, as per usual practice, the government sends out press releases from various ministries to media houses. While this practice ensures that important stories are covered, it also creates a space for the government to “spam” journalists with their messaging. I also encountered discussions about this in other newsrooms. Except for the state media house, there was a pervasive attitude of aversion to allowing the government to impact coverage through information overload.

Part of what qualified the inclusion of this “chicken and egg” question into the study was my own experience as Trinidadian journalist. Members of my non-media social circles would ask me why there was such a proliferation of crime and politics and constantly expressed that they wanted to see something more positive on the front pages of the country’s newspapers. This personal approach also indicated to me that consumers felt that newsrooms often had the same exact lead stories. As I am aware that different social groups within society express concerns based on their own life experiences, I sought out the answer directly from the newsmakers.

Trinidad Express publications editor Curtis Rampersad reflected that:

We like bacchanal³⁹ and that sells in the media...that is our national culture influencing...and that ties in to our dominant political coverage, a lot of it is bacchanal...So substantive things may be said in Parliament or on a platform and what makes the content of the news is the picong⁴⁰, the insults and the allegations, so it short-changes the voter or the taxpayer who wants to know about issues or plans or solutions because those things aren’t as interesting in quotes or sound bites.

Editor-in-Chief at the Trinidad Express, Omatie Lyder, explained that the front page is dictated by what happens in society:

If something happens we must report on it. It is news. If someone gets murdered, we will not think that because we covered a murder the day before that we should not report on the most recent murder. Unfortunately, Trinidad has a high crime rate. Therefore, our headlines will have these sorts of headlines.

She went on to say that if an investigative story breaks, that will take precedence but all decisions are only taken after careful discussion and discernment of the editorial team.

³⁹ Bacchanal is used within Trinbagonian vernacular to indicate drama or scandal. It also refers to a party or celebration.

⁴⁰Trinidadian word for comical banter.

Rampersad, also noted that within the bigger culture of Trinidad and Tobago, the news diet of the audience has become oversaturated and this has resulted in a lower quality of reporting:

...we have become so caught up with everything that is going on from flooding to traffic to murders to politics to parliament sessions five days a week, followed by senate and joint select committees, that this is hardly journalism at its best, it may be coverage that is very good. If you want to consume news, there is a lot to consume. We cover the news but we miss the stories...People do their jobs and they do it well but we are just a country of nine-day wonders and we have allowed ourselves to embrace that.

In terms of the answer to the chicken and the egg type question, while Lyder says that news has to be covered, Rampersad's comment gives light to the nuance that the type of news determines the chicken or the egg stance. Crime is something that is black and white and has to be reported and must come first. However, the way the political news is reported, the picong emphasised by the bacchanalian sound bites, is attractive to the larger society which is culturally connected to this type of performance in politics (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018). Essentially, eyeballs equal revenue so the cycle reaffirms itself.

According to (Hanitzsch, 2011) the detached watchdog also gives "high regard to their position as a detached observer of events" (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485) and "see themselves as watchdogs of elites" (Ibid) with an attitude of criticism and scepticism. Also, even though this group is "opposed to the idea of supporting official policies" (Ibid) they are also the least likely to advocate for social change, influence public opinion or set the political agenda.

Through the process of ethnography, I have also noted some of these characteristics within the six newsrooms. As a backdrop to the way journalists see elites, particularly politicians, it is paramount to also understand how social proximity influences relationships. As referenced earlier, within (Hanitzsch, 2011), the differences between these professional milieus can be broken down to differences on three key elements; interventionism, power distance and market

orientation. In practice, the “detached watchdog” milieu in Trinidad and Tobago must consider the dimension of power distance. According to (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 481), “Power Distance refers to the journalist’s position towards loci of power in society. The adversary pole of the continuum captures a kind of journalism that, in its capacity as the ‘Fourth Estate’, openly challenges those in power.” As mentioned in the literature review, Trinidad is a small country with a population of 1.3 million. It is easily possible to be related to or connected to elites.

One journalist from TV6 [REDACTED] related that while the proximity to elites can be great in terms of getting sources, the closeness of society also works against people because they are afraid of being identified as the source:

It works in your favour in terms of getting information. There are not a million layers of government and bureaucracy... and that is the way it works in terms of the judiciary, police and doctors...but it makes it difficult to live up to one of the main tenets of journalism and that is attribution. People want to know where the information comes from and this makes it very difficult... people are so afraid of retaliation and victimisation because we are small, that they ask for anonymity...which comes back to our non action oriented society.

The Chilling Effect of the fear of retaliation is another key factor in the journalistic field within this country and as mentioned several times, aside from media laws, the Chilling Effect can manifest in post-colonial soft power dynamics and crime, resulting in a “non action oriented society”. It also goes back to the discussion of how our national culture impacts on the role orientation and role performance of journalists.

The same TV6 journalist [REDACTED] went on to relate further:

...it also complicates things when you have a family, you’re more afraid of taking risks. Also crime, the kind of out of hand psyche we have where people will just run amok because of whatever and they trip because of whatever, that also has a chilling effect, absolutely also has a chilling effect because people will just take things into their own hands...you could be personally targeted if you decide to go after a

story...People could find out where you live, they could find out where your child goes to school depending on how far they want to take it. So that is a disincentive in terms of being fearless and going after something.

Kiran Maharaj, past president of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) and founder of the Media Institute of the Caribbean, was asked whether or not Trinidad and Tobago has a truly free press. She noted:

I think yes and no. I think we are way more fortunate than a lot of countries but I think that our press have been conditioned, like I told you about the investigative reporting, I think we've been conditioned and I think it's sad, from that perspective that we feel that we cannot do more investigative reporting because we feel that we will be subject to victimisation and threats to life. So we are a free press if you want to write for work, but I think mentally we are not (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

Maharaj's comment about not being "mentally" free is critical. It speaks to the Chilling Effect on cognitive scripts which journalists have developed in connection to the practices of the larger culture within the country. Inevitably, this is brought into the newsroom and it affects the way journalists perform their roles. Self censorship determines interactions with persons of interest as well as the way the news product is framed, developed and sold.

Even though it was observed within CNC3, the Trinidad Guardian, the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, the Trinidad Express and TV6 that journalists were passionate about holding politicians to account, there were also comments of familiarity and an underlying cultural knowledge of the connections to these people in power. For example, there were active journalists who had been or were currently involved with politicians or attorneys working for their administration. There was also one journalist who was married to the son of the leader of the Jamaat al Muslimeen, a radical Islamist group who shot and injured President Robinson in an attempted a coup to overthrow the government in 1990 (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2021). When these journalists were observed in meetings and within their individual

newsrooms, they did not display bias but in one-on-one semi-structured interviews, other journalists spoke about their suspicions towards their colleagues. There were also suspicions about journalists who were not directly related to or involved with elites but rather seen to have a political bias which came out in their conversations in their newsroom or within the angles of stories they would pitch.

Trinidad Express publications editor Curtis Rampersad was asked about how the editorial team deals with these situations. He responded by emphasising that Trinidad is indeed a small country and that you can't stop people from having a life and meeting other people:

This is where editorial management comes in. You have to be able to manage your team. Yes you do want them to lean on their contacts for information but you must be strict about anything biased in their stories. Aside from personal involvement, of course there is the underbelly of journalistic practice. There are journalists who are supporting parties and who are doing the best they can to advance their cause. As editors, we do not let this pass. Aside from being unethical, it would compromise our reputation with the public (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

Rampersad's comment raises an important question. If editors are a last line of defence, what happens if an editor is compromised? In an ethnographic conversation with media managers at the Trinidad Guardian, this issue came up and it was revealed that due to this, one editor was managed out of the company.

These complex relationships that journalists have with elites due to social and geographic proximity further exemplifies the conflict of cognitive and normative scripts within the journalistic field. There is a negotiation between that line of complete detachment and objectivity and getting the story using the relationship they have built with sources. Therefore, in the milieu of the detached watchdog, while journalists within Trinidad and Tobago do normatively adhere to values of objectivity and are sceptical and critical of elites, they are also in constant negotiation with these values in terms of performing their roles.

One journalist [REDACTED] reflected on the connection between the national culture and journalism culture saying:

We are a corrupt society... what I have learned working with[in] media and working with media professionals, who are much more experienced in years of media service than me, I don't think anybody is truly objective, I think everything has a subjective element to it ([REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

Rampersad commented on the influence of the national culture:

Largely we don't have a culture of objectivity. There is a significant percent of media companies, journalists, owners, editors who are in bed together figuratively and literally (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

This larger conversation about the influence of the national culture on journalism culture again demonstrates the conflict and struggle between role orientation and role performance. Even though a journalist will attempt to adhere to the ethical code of their profession, reinforced by occupational socialisation, personal situations arise which challenge their learned responses.

In such a society where journalists believe that their national culture permeates their profession and affects their beliefs about their job as well as how they enact their responsibilities, it becomes apparent that normative and cognitive scripts are in constant conflict and each journalist will have to negotiate with their own ethical paradigms in every situation.

Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief at the Trinidad Express emphasised that journalists need to live with integrity in order to be taken seriously:

...we have to live a life of integrity and ethics...I always tell reporters, you know, we have no life. Because even if we are off duty and we are at a party, we can't be seen drunk, dancing rudely or anything, because we hold people to account for those things and therefore we have to be above reproach... (Lyder, interview with the author, 2018).

These values are more aligned with the “Western prototype” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485), of the detached watchdog. However, the role orientation and role performance that Lyder executes is a result of her own negotiation with those ethical paradigms. As the editor-in-chief of a newsroom she does exert a great level of influence on her staff and will therefore add to the discursive field and affect the normative and cognitive scripts of journalists who work with her. However, journalists within that newsroom are all struggling with their own societal influences and there is no quotient to determine what they will choose from one situation to the next.

The journalist [REDACTED] gave a window into such a circumstance:

I think people do get influenced, it may be a situation where somebody gives you something, it may be an opportunity or it may be a situation where that may be your contact and the person says, “Soldier, yuh car ain’t working good, forget that story nah, I go sort you out.” And I can get a car in the morning. I understand they have one journalist who that was the case and I can’t say I really blame [them] because in a society like Trinidad, what’s the point going up against the people, threats to your life, blackmail, what’s the point? I think we all strive to be objective but desperation, subjectivity will kick in...Although they speak about it when given the platform, I think Trinidadians are largely hypocritical and they are part of the system but when it’s cool to cry it down it, you do [REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018).

Hanitzsch’s detached watchdog milieu also determines that journalists in this category are “also opposed to the idea of supporting official policies” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485). In terms of supporting official policies, the discussion within editorial meetings across newsrooms revealed a responsibility to cover official announcements but, aside from TTT, there was a general aversion to blindly supporting a policy and as (Rampersad, interview with the author 2018) puts it, “...we criticise because we have a journalistic responsibility to people who buy papers”.

Within this category is the “prototypical western journalist” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485). This journalist is the “least likely to advocate for social change, influence public opinion and set the political agenda” (Ibid). While these values can be associated on the surface with journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago, once again examination of the motivation behind these values is as important as the adherence to such values.

There is a key element which plays a major role in the journalistic field and affects role orientation and role performance within this landscape and within this milieu. That is the component of self censorship. Wesley Gibbings, past president of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers and co-founder of the Media Institute of the Caribbean, who has been in the media industry for decades as a journalist, editor, trainer and manager, pointed out in an online workshop on press freedom that self censorship has become so routinised that it is built in to the very framing of stories and journalists do not even realise that bias manifests and influences the public in this way (Gibbings, 2021).

Self-censorship is par for the course. In fact it is routinised. It is built into the news agenda. It’s built into news values. In terms of media freedom...it is there in terms of how we frame the issues...It’s there in terms of us as private individuals because we are in small societies, we vote, we have our preferences, we have community pluses and minuses that we have concerns about. It’s there from the perspective of media enterprises that are businesses...You can have an inappropriately framed story, well told, that constitutes good journalism but what is important is the perspective and the lens that applies to the particular issue being covered.

(Gibbings, 2021) went on to reference the role national culture plays in influencing journalism culture:

We do not live in an environment where people really and truly believe in freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The obstacles are not only within the media institutions themselves but in the makeup of our societies. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the more candid, noisy, cantankerous countries

you can find in the world and yet self censorship and an inclination to get people to shut up is routine, we face that every single day. So it's a very difficult terrain to tread but it's a struggle that we need to engage...

Gibbings' use of the word "struggle" perfectly describes the conflicting scripts at work within the journalistic field. If these comments are applied to the professional milieu of the detached watchdog, it becomes apparent how the values associated with this milieu are compromised. It also emphasises how important the distinctions are, not only between what journalists think they do and what they actually do but also why journalists think they do what they do and why they actually do it. These underlying factors play key roles in the journalistic field and contribute greatly to defining journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago.

Even if we acknowledge the editorial team as the safeguard to the inherent biases of the journalists, the probability that editors will also fall prey to some of the same conscious and subconscious prejudice is realistic.

"Nobody really wants investigative journalism and that is because so many of our brittle institutions will collapse if we apply proper investigative journalism to them", (Gibbings, 2021) said in the online workshop. "It is an appropriate call, it is what we need but I think if we apply the principles of solid investigative, independent journalism to our condition as a region, there are institutions that are going to crumble and be under serious jeopardy."

Therefore, even though journalists within this study strive to perform their roles in a way which ensures that they are not engaging in advocating for social change or setting the public agenda, the way they frame their work might have an impact on their audience beyond or opposite to what they intended.

7:2:3 Critical Change Agent

The professional milieu of the critical change agent (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486) is “driven by interventionist intentions”. This dimension of interventionism is another key element that Hanitzsch insists is at the core of what divides these four main professional milieus. This journalist is described as being “critical towards government and business elites” with an “emphasis on advocating social change, influencing public opinion or setting political agenda, yet strongly opposed to providing public support for official government policy” (Ibid).

As established in the above discussion, journalists in Trinidad and Tobago are largely critical towards government and business elites, with the exception of the state broadcaster TTT. However, even though journalists have the public interest at heart and will cover events which affect the citizens, Trinbagonian journalists are not interventionist and do not often advocate for social change, influence public opinion, set the political agenda or normally provide support for official public policy. In some instances where there is an overt abuse of power, journalists will actively call out elites for their actions. Talk radio and blogs by individuals who refer to themselves as members of the media are the places where advocacy happens and the public can be influenced. However, as mentioned before, with the exception of TTT, this does not overtly occur within the main media houses in Trinidad and Tobago.

With regards to motivating “audiences to participate in civic activity (elections) and political discussion” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486), TTT, being the state broadcaster does fall into this category as even within the relatively short time I was allowed to observe in their newsroom, within the editorial meetings, there was a clear support of government events. Even in terms of the planning of election coverage, their coverage was focused on government representatives, not the opposition. However, when trying to work out who the channel could feature on a political panel, the editors did outline that the panel had to be balanced and representative of

the different parties in the running. One of the journalists [REDACTED] commented, “..why didn't they source Fitzy or Moonilal? That would have been a good piece of bacchanal.” Fitzgerald Hinds is a representative for the PNM government and Dr Roodal Moonilal is a founding member of the United National Congress. Hinds is known to be aggressive but both are known for stirring the pot and also for having a particularly antagonistic relationship.

7:2:4 Opportunist Facilitator

Within the final category, the Opportunist Facilitator (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486), journalists are defined as, “...constructive partners of the government” who “do not perceive themselves as detached observers that are most likely to support official policies and convey a positive image of political and business leadership and pay least regard to the political information function or the mobilisation potentials of journalism” (Ibid). Attending editorial meetings within the Trinidad and Tobago Television newsroom and watching their broadcasts confirmed that they were supportive of official policies and strived to convey a positive public image of government representatives.

Being close to political powers is another facet of this milieu. Journalists within all six newsrooms were close to the locus of power. However, CNC3, TV6, the Trinidad Guardian, the Trinidad Express and the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday were typically watchdogs of the government and elites. Even though this type of journalism is found in developing or authoritarian countries and Trinidad and Tobago is a developing nation, the unique history of the island, as explained in the media landscape (chapter 5), has cultivated journalists who, though working within the context of a developing country, are critical of the government and do not actively support government policies.

As can be observed from the analysis of these professional milieus, journalists within Trinidad and Tobago do not fit completely into any one category. There are key nuances which link them to all of the four milieus and it is through ethnography and semi-structured interviews where their role orientation and role performance can be observed, that the true nature of their culture can be theorised.

7.3 Professional milieus and the six newsrooms in Trinidad and Tobago

Below is a table which outlines the qualities associated with these milieus and how the six newsrooms relate.

Populist Disseminator	Newsroom
Audience orientation	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday, TTT
Not critical of the government	TTT
Non participatory role in reporting	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday, TTT
Detached Watchdog	
High regard as detached observer	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday
Less interventionist	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday, TTT
Opposed to supporting official policies	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday
Not likely to advocate for social change	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday, TTT
Not likely to set the political agenda	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday
Not likely to influence public opinion	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday
Critical Change Agent	
Interventionist	N/A
Critical towards government and elites	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday

Likely to advocate for social change	N/A
Likely to set the political agenda	TTT
Likely to influence public opinion	TTT
Opposed to supporting official policies	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday
Opportunist Facilitator	
Not detached observers	TTT
Partner with the government	TTT
Support official policies	TTT
Convey positive image of elites	TTT
Close to locus of power	CNC3, TV6, Guardian, Express, Newsday, TTT
Not a watchdog of government or elites	TTT

Table 2: The application of the four milieus to newsrooms in Trinidad and Tobago

As can be seen from this simplified table above, journalists within Trinidad and Tobago share qualities with all four professional milieus. CNC3, TV6, the Trinidad Guardian, the Trinidad Express and the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday share most values with the category of the Detached Watchdog. However, TTT is an outlier within the media landscape. They have most in common with the Opportunist Facilitator. When thinking about journalism culture, this is a particularly interesting point as journalists often work in several media houses throughout their career and several of the journalists interviewed within this study were previously employed at TTT. This begs the question, did these journalists carry their Opportunist Facilitator values into the newsrooms which mostly adhered to the Detached Watchdog milieu? This will be discussed further in the interview chapter where semi-structured interviews with TTT journalists, both within the organisation and those newly employed with another newsroom, revealed important cultural considerations.

When considering role performance and role orientation, the Guardian Media integration⁴¹ provides sound material for analysing a struggle between journalists from the two newsrooms as well as struggles within journalists in their own spaces. This integration was done with the goal of gaining a competitive advantage in the fast-changing media market. Even though legacy media had been the traditional way of getting information for decades, the introduction of media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram has forced media organisations to come up with new ways to compete for advertising dollars and audience share. Therefore, the management aimed to streamline the relationship between their print and broadcast services.

This had a direct impact on journalists with management reviewing their KPIs and reissuing contracts that reflected greater responsibilities such as print journalists taking on roles as multimedia journalists, producing content that could be used across print, web, television and radio services. Field notes recount that this amalgamation induced a culture clash, numerous power struggles as well as a paradigm shift. Bringing together journalists from the Trinidad Guardian, founded in 1917, an established, legacy media house with newer, younger, more tech savvy journalists from CNC3 launched in 2005, redefined journalism culture for Guardian Media Limited. This amalgamation has also established the media organisation as an outlier within the Trinbagonian media landscape.

One day, I was called aside by one of the editors [REDACTED] from the print section. He told me that integration will never happen, “as long as there are certain personalities in certain positions”. The editor then went on to explain that in the new media ecosystem, there were many people who were not happy with the new positions some of their old colleagues held, that is, colleagues

⁴¹ In 2019, Guardian Media Limited executed an amalgamation and integration of their print and broadcasting platforms by bringing CNC3 and the Trinidad Guardian into one newsroom along with the production and sub-editing departments.

from the same print section. Within the integration, these colleagues were called on to take up more than print responsibilities which sometimes resulted in them being in a “higher” position to their previous peers. This aspect within the print section suggested an undermining of the overall goals of the company as an institution within the journalistic field and also revealed the struggles of this journalist within their own space as well as within the larger organisation.

Hanitzsch outlines that “By enacting a specific journalistic role, or a bundle of roles, journalists—often inadvertently— take position in the discursive construction of journalism’s identity” (Hanitzsch, 2017, p. 10). This journalist who took issue with their colleague’s progression alluded to an unwillingness to fully enact their allotted role within the process of news production. However as said before, “the process of role enactment is highly contingent on the material and contextual conditions of news work. Journalists are not always—or perhaps even rarely—able to fully enact their occupational ideas when external constraints impose limits on their editorial autonomy” (Hanitzsch, 2017, p. 10). Upon embracing a new cognitive role due to a perceived constraint upon their autonomy, this journalist is prevented from enacting their normative role performance and instead indicates that they will at the very least not participate in the integration or at the very worst, actively disrupt the integration process of the two newsrooms.

Media ownership, especially in terms of the advertising agenda, is another actor within the journalistic field which includes a focus on objectivity. One journalist [REDACTED] at the Trinidad Guardian expressed frustration about the unspoken rules of working within a conglomerate.

Even here, our company is owned by a family and for instance, when we are writing the financials of the company, and it isn’t doing too well, not this company but the parent company, when they have made a loss or the profits are down, we can’t necessarily write it like that. We have to have to find the positive angle in it, they are investing in the future and at the bottom you write, profits from last year was this

and this year was this and you have to couch it in a certain way, it's an unwritten rule [REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018).

Editor-in-Chief at the Trinidad Express Omatie Lyder posited a theory about why their newspaper is more independent, even though they too are also owned by a conglomerate:

ANSA McAL, they as a conglomerate, more of their content...is influenced by their conglomerate activities slash their other community or business associations. If ANSA McAL's boss has something to say on the economy, it's there. I've paid attention to their radio newscasts and I often hear before their newscasts, ads from companies within the conglomerate...I think that's why we are more independent than them. That's why we are the most fearless (Lyder, interview with the author, 2018).

Trinidad Express publications editor Curtis Rampersad commented that:

There are media houses very much influenced by the corporate world. There are media houses that are very much influenced by state business and actively seek it out and I suppose have to be prepared to face the consequences of climbing into bed with an advertiser like that. There are others that take it on a case by case business, ultimately, I haven't come across an advertiser that I couldn't do without, at least not yet. (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

Recalling the incident with Arthur Lok Jack, he commented further saying:

It's a strategic partnership like any other," he said. "We aren't going to fold if we don't have Arthur Lok Jack. It's a deal between two parties who both have strengths and can leverage them and make some money off of it. What I think is important to note is that at the height of the Lok Jack issue, the company also took a four-page cover in the Express at premium price. It's not arrogance but at the moment I think the companies recognise that the media serves a purpose until you have better options. They kind of need us (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

The advertising agenda plays a huge role in how a journalist feels about their role. Media manager Nicholas Sabga, commented, "It's always been about circulation. Advertising is where the money comes from that keeps newspapers going."

According to journalists interviewed in the ethnographic study, the way media owners and corporate Trinidad and Tobago are so closely linked, results in pressurised situations that can be extremely “demotivating.” One journalist [REDACTED] commented:

It can be a simple question about the interface between your advertising department and your newsroom and the fact that especially in the newspaper business, your advertising content goes on the page before the editorial content ([REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018).

Journalists know where their pay check comes from and that knowledge compromises the execution of their roles.

One journalist [REDACTED] acknowledged the chilling effect of this interference, saying:

[There is a] chill in [the] newsroom, even more than the force of law and the threat of the use of law, are the corporate and political forces that bear on a newspaper or a newsroom environment. In the course of any day, a call come from upstairs, “Boy advertising say whoever it is call and they go pull their ads if we continue down that line...” ([REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

[REDACTED] went on to say that even when it does not directly involve the newsroom, it still affects how they feel about their work.

Then there are allegiances where the government tries to influence sometimes where there is a threat of pulling advertisements but that is a government to company level, that’s not on a journalist level but I mean it trickles down. It can affect the psyche of a journalist, [where they are thinking] “yea I’m on the straight and narrow and I’m pursuing the truth”, and then the company pulls a story that you’re doing because they get a call, “nah you can’t run that, you can’t run that.” Obviously you’re going to be demotivated, what’s the point then? ([REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

One TV6 journalist [REDACTED] commented:

I have seen other people in the newsroom get told not to publish because an advertiser was involved and I’ve also seen the request for details to be removed from a story because either the company was involved

or a rival was involved but the rival picked up the phone and called the CEO...Sales is basically selling a Morning Edition slot as part of their packages...many times you get people from sales forwarding you requests. Now they are kind of saying only if you have space or whatever because I think the push back from news has been like, you guy's cant, but then you still feel pressured because it's like, this is an advertiser, how do I say no?

This push back between the newsroom and sales is also an important consideration within the journalistic field. These pressures affect how journalists feel about their job, their level of freedom and their own ethical standing. There is constant struggle within the journalistic field which presents itself within a difference between role orientation and role performance. If a journalist wants to adhere to the “prototypical Western journalist” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485) values, there are numerous actors within the journalistic field in Trinidad and Tobago that will influence that journalist to perform their role differently to their orientation.

Another factor which needs to be acknowledged is that fact that even though these negotiations are happening constantly within journalists in their newsrooms, the product which comes out at the end of the day must be able to compete on the market. This means that there must be a display of objectivity and ethics in order for the public to purchase papers, browse internet sites or watch newscasts. As Media Institute of the Caribbean co-founder Gibbings clearly outlined in an online workshop, self censorship and biases can manifest in the subtlest of ways through the very framing of the story. Recalling his comments, “...You can have an inappropriately framed story, well told, that constitutes good journalism but what is important is the perspective and the lens that applies to the particular issue being covered” (Gibbings, 2021).

7:4 Post Colonial Influence

Throughout this thesis, the colonial history of Trinidad and Tobago and its post-colonial ramifications on society have been referred to repeatedly. This connects to the observation of

(Hanitzsch, 2011) that the way each country considers and applies their journalistic values depends on how it was introduced to those values, by whom and what indigenous cultural values are agreed or disagreed with. Within the media landscape chapter, the importance of the colonial history of Trinidad and Tobago was introduced. Every country's history has shaped the way it functions and serves its citizens today. The British last possessed Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. The country, despite having changed hands many times, ended up as an English-speaking, Westminster model, post colonial territory (Best, 1968). As a society which evolved from slavery and indentureship, the plantocracy model (Best, 1968; Beckford, 1972) has defined present day society not just in terms of retaining corporate power structures and economic patterns but also on a psychological level. Class structure, pigmentocratic considerations and racial tensions (Ibid) all form part of the national culture which affects the journalism culture. Therefore when considering how to define journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago, examining the post colonial influence is a key aspect of determining this.

Curtis Rampersad, publications editor at the Trinidad Express gave a cursory overview of how the history of journalism has unfolded since independence saying:

As the country changed initially, journalism struggled to keep up and was eventually overwhelmed. There was that golden age, a generation of journalists who were capable and excited about stories...From the 90's onwards you have several recessions and it changes the culture again and then you have several explosions of development and in some ways our media got caught up in that and lost our way. Media houses became integrated into conglomerates and were affected by all the good things in terms of the injections of capital you need to grow your media house but also all of the bad things like the influences and the impact that they could have (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

This reference to and respect of "golden age" standards from the pre independence era is pervasive and still influences journalism in Trinidad and Tobago today.

Similarly, with the previous British model of education still defining the present day landscape, Kiran Maharaj, President of the Media Institute of the Caribbean said, “I think it was my years in primary school that we had just started to introduce outside of the West Indian reader, the Oxford’s outline of English and the student companion...We also had critical thinking for secondary schools. They don’t teach that in secondary schools anymore” (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

One editor [REDACTED] at the integrated newsroom of Guardian Media did bring this point up in conversation saying that young journalists lack the simplest of skill sets and knowledge and when they would bring up their shortcomings, the rookies were unwilling to properly listen to the advice this older, more experienced journalist had to give.

The preference of foreign standards, induced by a colonial experience, even impacted audience expectations of local journalism. The introduction of cable television also affected the television culture as the signature style of the likes of CNN came through the airwaves.

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday commented on how the public’s expectations of journalism were informed by foreign news stations:

I think over the years as people had more access to overseas journalism, you know, when cable television came in and people got to see CNN and then as newspapers came online etcetera and people were able to read them, they had different standards of what journalism could be and they were kind of expecting local journalists to somehow be able to reach those kinds of standards...I think that’s one reason people expect investigative journalism these days. The Chamber of Commerce used to have a range of ads saying, “There are no local journalists,” by which they mean no one is doing investigative journalism. They seem to be under the impression [from what they see on CNN] that that is the only kind of journalism that counts (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

This colonial legacy of British standards coupled with the new American influence have been key factors in maintaining the values which allow journalists from Trinidad and Tobago to be included within the “detached watchdog” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485), category synonymous with the “prototypical Western journalist” (Ibid). However, it is important to note that, as previously introduced within the media landscape chapter, racial tensions, power dynamics and even patriarchal attitudes towards women were also a part of this colonial legacy.

One part of journalism culture that is linked to national culture and is influenced by the country’s colonial past is that of ethnic representation. Trinidad and Tobago is an extremely diverse country with at least six different ethnic groups settling and mixing throughout its history, including the indigenous peoples heritages (Jamaican Institute of Political Education and the Eastern Caribbean Institute for Democracy, 1990, p. 54). However, racial tensions have plagued the country since the time of slavery (Smith, 1965). These tensions present in an overt way within the political realm between the traditionally Afro-Trinidadian party the PNM and the traditionally Indo-Trinidadian party, the UNC (Ryan, 1974). Tensions also exist in more subtle ways, seen through the nuances of interaction between people.

There is a possibility that journalists are not aware of their internal biases and act out of cognitive scripts formed by their families or schools which they attended. Within Trinidad and Tobago there are schools which specifically function along religious lines. For example, the Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College will only accept students who are Hindu, that is only Indo-Trinidadian students. It should be noted that between the students who attend private religious based primary schools where parents and guardians must pay school fees each semester and students who attend government run public primary schools which are free to attend (Ministry of Education, 2022), students from these private primary schools normally outperform students from public schools in the national secondary school entrance exam and go on to religious

based secondary schools which also require some contributions by parents and guardians. Every year, these schools produce top students and earn the vast majority of scholarships and awards (Ministry of Education, 2020).

When I was in the CNC3 newsroom, I observed one editor who was approached by a journalist whose daughter had girl scout cookies to sell. This editor made a joke saying that she would not buy cookies from a “Convent girl” as she went to Bishop Anstey High School, a rival of St. Joseph’s Convent, known to rank higher in scholarships attained and also noted for its more affluent students. Afro-Trinidadian students numbered the majority of the student body at Bishop Anstey High School, whereas St. Joseph’s Convent was more ethnically mixed. This interaction was particularly interesting to find within the newsroom as it suggested that journalists do not leave their biases at the door when they attend work. They are a part of who they are and these elements of colonial race and class tensions are ever present.

This lack of objectivity can indeed be seen even in this seemingly harmless joke between two colleagues. This is how post colonial biases can infiltrate into the news product. Journalists allow their biases to influence the framing of stories and inevitably influence the ethical integrity of the news product as well as the psyche of the general public.

One part of post colonial journalism culture that was important to investigate was gender, particularly the treatment of female journalists. Of particular note is the present day irony that although women now outnumber men in the profession and have recently held more positions of leadership, female journalists are bullied online and in the public sphere and harassed about their relationships with their sources as well as the clothes they wear for broadcast. It is also important to contextualise the country as still operating within this patriarchal paradigm.

During the ethnographic study, I observed senior management doing quality control of newscasts and following up with consultants on establishing official dress codes for female

broadcasters. One CNC3 journalist [REDACTED] said that she had received comments from members of the public for showing her arms as well as wearing a dress that was considered too short for broadcast. The journalist expressed frustration and then referenced international stations like FOX News and NBC where female television journalists and broadcasters do not have to wear jackets and more formal attire. “This type of thinking is colonial,” she said.

When asked about the proliferation of women in the journalism industry, media manager, Kiran Maharaj, related her personal journey saying:

A senior editor told me to my face, “you’re a little schoolgirl, you will never make it,” she said. “The kind of stories you want to do you can’t because you’re a woman.” You feel it throughout [the society], you feel it in UWI [University of the West Indies]...I think that we tend to realise that we have to stand up for what we believe in and that Carnival culture⁴² is actually very empowering to a lot of us and that’s why we’ve been able to make it (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

During this ethnographic study, many female journalists related this type of patriarchal condescension by older men, telling them that they could not make it within the profession.

In terms of a colonially influenced national patriarchal culture, while this study was going on, the Prime Minister made several public sexist statements and members in his cabinet were being investigated for sexual harassment (Trinidad Newsday, 2019). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In one of his statements, Rowley stated that women were to be groomed like a “golf course” (Loop News, 2017). This statement was in response to criticism by the opposition of a \$3 million budgetary allocation for upgrading a local golf course (Loop News, 2017). Rowley compared golf courses to women saying, “...a golf course is like a woman. You have to groom her everyday otherwise it turns into a pasture.” In another statement on domestic abuse, Rowley advised women to

⁴² Trinbagonian women are very dominant in Carnival culture, speaking, dressing and dancing freely. Male and female Soca artists create songs which celebrate the empowerment and confidence of the country’s women.

“choose their men wisely” (Loop News, 2017) instigating that it is the fault of women for choosing abusive men. With the leader of a country influencing the public with his national statements, the legacy of patriarchy continues to live on in post colonial national culture and infiltrates into newsrooms, affecting journalism culture.

At the time of this study, a story broke about a woman who had been abused and fled her husband, who had reported her as being kidnapped as she did not inform him that she was leaving (Trinidad Newsday, 2018). There was a discussion in the newsroom about women in society and domestic abuse and why she ran away and whether or not she was justified. My ethnographic notes read:

This was interesting because the individual opinion of the editors came out and their personal gender politics was on display. Some felt that her story was not a surprise but felt that she would probably be under threat of abuse when she returned to her husband. Others felt that she deserved to be charged as she wasted police time as she did not actually get kidnapped.

This spectrum of nonchalant acceptance and blaming (Trinidad Newsday, 2018) of this woman returning to an abusive relationship demonstrates how the value of a woman is considered and that domestic abuse is no longer a shocking occurrence .

With regards to how male colleagues see female journalists, one CNC3 journalist [REDACTED] commented:

There are more women than men in the media, in terms of management positions. The editors of the top two dailies are females, Omatie Lyder and Judy Raymond. We had Shelly Dass before Julian Rogers...I know of some journalists basically sleeping around to get stories. All of the politicians hitting on them and giving them opportunities for stories as a result ([REDACTED], interview with the author, 2018).

Within several interviews, this accusation towards female journalists of “sleeping around to get stories” surfaced from both male and female interviewees in all six newsrooms. This issue will

be explored further through the responses to semi-structured interviews in the next chapter on interview findings (chapter 8).

At the Trinidad Guardian I also observed one male editor consistently speaking over another female editor in daily meetings. No one spoke up at the time. Within that newsroom, there was a general impression of that particular male editor. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] What is it

like to work under this editor, a person in authority, for a female journalist? The attitude of this editor might affect how female journalists perform their roles. It stands to reason that the role performance of this male editor, informed by his own colonial, patriarchal cognitive scripts, influences the behaviour and performance of colleagues and influences the overall journalism culture of the newsroom.

The legacy of colonialism is a factor that can't be ignored when considering journalism culture as it influences the everyday actions of journalists in their newsrooms.

7:5 Media Law

Understanding how media laws affect journalism culture is an important part of this study. The laws referred to in the list of questions posed to the journalists are the Libel and Defamation Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014), the Interception of Communication Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010), the

Cybercrime Bill (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017) and Data Protection Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011). Through ethnographic interviews and observation of newsroom practices, conversations and meetings, I was able to gather data to answer this part of the research.

The libel and defamation law is a focus for media managers and editors. Past president of the TTPBA, Kiran Maharaj, explained the changes within the media landscape and why the TTPBA felt strongly about needing to repeal the criminal defamation part of the law. Maharaj explained that even though no one had been arrested, changes in the number of media organisations and media personnel heralded a larger target, so to speak:

Remember you now have 37 radio stations, 3 dailies a couple weeklies, 10 local channels and a multitude of cable stations, so what you would have found was, we started to have journalists who were threatened...there was a proliferation of incidents where journalists were being threatened or being bullied on social media and so on and we realised there is the possibility here that somebody many want to go after someone for criminal defamation. So it was just the environment became very charged and we started to see all of this happening (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

Maharaj went on to ask the question several editors were also asking. “If [defamation] exists in civil court, why would you want to go to criminal court for something like this?” One incident involving Trinidad and Tobago Newsday journalist Andrew Bagoo presented severe concerns about the need for journalists to ensure they were protected by the law, instead of vulnerable to criminal charges. Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service raided the Newsday newsroom as well as Bagoo’s private residence attempting to get information on a “source of an exclusive story” (RSF, 2016). Shortly after this occurrence, the Data Protection Act was tabled where journalists could be charged if they were found to have gotten information in a way that was deemed illegal by the Act. As the nuances of this act were thoroughly discussed within the Media Landscape chapter, it will not be exhausted further here.

With regards to the Libel and Defamation Act, “It was because of the efforts of the TTPBA they did not adopt two or three of the sections,” Maharaj said. “So knowing that we were already fighting data protection and seeing the charged environment politically, we said we had to ensure we safeguard our journalists...because it exists in civil court [but there is] the part that remains [that] says that you have to prove intent...The position of the TTPBA and ACM is that if you’re saying it’s already hard to prove intent, then why don’t you just repeal the whole damn thing but for whatever reason that government didn’t want to.”

The TTPBA has not yet revisited the subject of repealing all of the criminal elements to the defamation law with the new government because cybercrime, interception of communication and data protection has taken precedence.

As mentioned in the media scene chapter, the Green Paper was heralded as the first formal attempt by the government to control the media. Trinidad Express publications editor Curtis Rampersad explained how that paper was the precursor to the current libel, data protection, interception of communication and cybercrime legislation that “herald[s] the death of investigative journalism”, threatening the ability of journalists to perform their roles.

Rampersad pointed out that attempts at media control are executed against a backdrop of political agendas, speaking to “the culture of the country” where the opposition will criticise the government for attacks on the media and do their best to defy legislation which will compromise media freedom. Then, the minute the opposition becomes the elected government, the story changes.

These frustrations and concerns of Maharaj and Rampersad emphasise how serious these media laws are and their potential impact on journalism culture. It also underscores how the Chilling Effect of such a restrictive environment can stunt the growth of investigative journalism.

Maharaj commented on this further saying that a freer environment would result in more defamation cases as journalists would not be intimidated to publish their findings.

Media owners and senior journalists, we have found that the level of investigative journalists in the Caribbean, generally is poor. The reason is, one might say we don't have journalists who could really write...I don't think that is all true. Journalists come from small island nations where everybody knows everybody and they have to protect their lives and I know that better than anybody else. We have had journalists who have had to leave here because of stories they've done. So if we had an environment where we had more freely practised journalism in the true sense of what it is, I'm sure that we would have a lot more defamation cases (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

Within this study, there was one thing which was quite shocking to discover. In many interviews journalists were either not aware or, or not concerned about these laws.

One CNC3 journalist [REDACTED] commented:

I think MATT [Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago] is hyping up the issue too much. They can make suggestions without making it look like the end of the world for journalists because how much information, how many stories investigative or otherwise are based on a journalist depending on hacked information?

Another TV6 journalist [REDACTED] said that there was no need to learn about the laws in detail:

There is not a need to know the libel and defamation law intimately because we are just reporting everyday stuff. When you're just reporting every day stuff like a transcriptionist, the only way that you could fall short you may defame by omission when you don't get a response.

A Guardian journalist [REDACTED] said:

People usually sue for defamation against investigative reporters who deal with contentious issues. Unless you malign someone's character, in most cases an apology and a correction within a reasonable time shall suffice.

The above comments could be reasons why most journalists are not bothered or aware of the media laws. It rarely affects them directly. Maharaj alluded to the fact that journalists just are not trained well enough to dig deep and so would not need the law as the execution of their job remains surface level.

Some of the journalists are aware of it...which is why MIC (Media Institute of the Caribbean) was developed to give training and encourage working in a safe environment...The point that has to be understood is that there are just certain parameters that have been built in our society and we have to start getting out of the box. And the other thing is that we have a lot more reporters than journalists...I always say that a reporter regurgitates, a journalist goes below the layers and starts to get people to think about things or see things they can't see on the surface so we tend to have more reporters than journalists (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

On the very first day of the ethnographic study at the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, there was a potential defamation issue on a social media platform. Comments were being made on a story and the comments were derogatory towards the protagonist of the story. Editor-in-Chief Judy Raymond distributed literature on the defamation law with case references that matched the particular situation. Raymond went through the document and then the editors discussed whether or not they should turn off the option to comment on the story as this would be controlling the reader's freedom of expression. The discussion ended with an agreement to police the website for these types of comments and to flag them up for review. One person was allocated to this. This active acknowledgment of the threat of defamation and the on the job training showed manifestation of the Chilling Effect as well as how the culture of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday newsroom has been impacted.

Outside of this example, the discovery that regular journalists did not know about, or were concerned with the media laws revealed a clear distinction within the local journalism culture. Within Trinidad and Tobago, it is the editorial team that are the safeguards against these media

laws. In a legal suit, it is often the company, the editor-in-chief, someone from the editorial team and the journalist named. The journalist has the full ethical and financial backing of the company and their seniors to protect them. For journalists within the One Caribbean Media (OCM) and Ansa McAL conglomerates, protection would be high compared to journalists from the Newsday which has significantly less resources.

One interesting point-of-view in the ethnographic interviews was that at times, the government itself might not understand the laws that are on the books already or they are in the process of enacting. Raymond described her experience at a Joint Select Committee where one minister revealed that he did not understand the extent of the law he was trying to enact:

I went to the second session that MATT had, the JSC on the cybercrime bill and it was only during that session that Paul Richards⁴³ who is in charge of a radio station and a senator said, “so wait, I could be voting for an act that could lock myself up!” because under that, if somebody leaks something to you, if something just lands in your email inbox and it is something that wasn’t supposed to be released, you are guilty and you could be locked up (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

Raymond went on to express shock at the level of ignorance of lawmakers:

...it’s kind of horrifying that some of these things can get so far without more of the politicians realizing that they are a very bad idea and that they may very well be struck down in court if it comes to that because as you know, freedom of the press is enshrined in the constitution...But yea, like in any other sector of society, parliamentarians don’t know a lot about the media and how they work and why they matter, I mean we had Colm Imbert⁴⁴ getting up in Parliament and say that he wanted the Integrity in Public Life Act⁴⁵ amended so that whistle-blowers would have to give their names and addresses because

⁴³ Paul Richards was a senator in the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament, serving from 2015 to 2020.

⁴⁴ Colm Imbert is an MP for the Diego Martin North/East area.

⁴⁵ “An Act to provide for the establishment of the Integrity Commission; to make new provisions for the prevention of corruption of persons in public life by providing for public disclosure; to regulate the conduct of persons exercising public functions; to preserve and promote the integrity of public officials and institutions, and for matters incidental thereto.” See https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/alphabetical_list/lawspdfs/22.01.pdf

somebody had made a complaint about him and he wanted to know who. I mean if they put that in the law nobody would every report anybody for anything (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

However, contrary to what Rampersad said about someone crafting the legislation in order to instigate “the death of investigative journalism” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018), Raymond maintains that it is not always malice and it is often ignorance which directs the actions of government officials. “A lot of times these laws are written copy and paste [from other countries] and people don’t ever look at journalism as an area that would be affected and I think that was very evident. It was evident with the data protection act and they just didn’t see how it would affect journalists” (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

There are of course journalists and media managers who agree with Rampersad and feel that the government uses these laws to influence journalism culture. One manager [REDACTED] said that, “Government, state enterprises for sure will think this is a great idea. As long as they are in government, the opposition will naturally object and cry because they are the opposition.”

Raymond also acknowledged this point saying:

All governments want the same thing. Every government that has come in, we have had threats by everyone, about the same things. I think it decreased a bit because we became more vociferous and we started to hire attorneys and we started to deal with it differently but every government that came in, under UNC, you had Green Paper, under People’s Partnership, you had data protection act, under the PMN, cybercrime was just laid and you have now PMN picking up cybercrime...their agenda is the same (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

Wesley Gibbings, Past president of the Association of Media Workers insisted that:

The best media law is no media law, if they are to exist, then they need to be on the more liberal side of the spectrum, so the guiding principle is that no expression should be criminalised. What the cybercrime and data protection laws do is that they criminalise certain sections of expression so that feature of it needs to not be there...all of these laws are basically saying shut up to what are really nuanced, complex

circumstances. You have to look at it from the standpoint of more expression being superior to less expression. So cybercrime legislation is a response to this thing that is among us that is relatively new and we are wrestling with (Gibbings, interview with the author, 2018).

As discussed before, the data protection act, the interception of communication act and the cybercrime legislation are relatively new challenges to media freedom within Trinidad and Tobago. As both Maharaj and Gibbings said, these are the challenges the media industry are “wrestling with” and it is making an impact on journalism culture through the reactions of media managers and editors to an increasingly litigious society. Through observation within the newsroom, I observed editors in all newsrooms checking the copy that their journalists submitted. Within the Trinidad Guardian and the Trinidad Express, sub-editors were expressly charged with the task of copyediting any stories that came to them before they were allowed in the paper. Editors would also have final sign off on pages before they went to print. With this system, editors aimed to catch legal, grammatical and factual errors.

In an investigative context where these laws are mostly applied, I observed Rampersad working closely with the assigned journalist to manage the content that would make it to print. If there was a contentious issue, there was a protocol to ensure that the information was sound and with the support of the team, the article would be published. At the Trinidad Express and Trinidad Guardian, investigative journalists would also have their stories vetted by a legal team to ensure that they weren’t in violation of media laws. Rampersad explained:

...if it is an investigative piece that will require the use of the Reynold’s principles in getting around that, usually if it’s contentious, you will write your story, maintain your sources and they will take the story and carry it to the lawyers before publication. So the lawyers will analyse it and say, you know it’s a little iffy, you need to get a response, you need to get that man on record or it might be a situation where they say you can’t write that, leave that out because you don’t have the basis or you don’t have the evidence. You may do all of the above but the person may still feel aggrieved and still sue you for

defamation but through consultations with lawyers, they know my client has been through this process.

The chain of command is that they go to the lawyers first (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

However, there is a danger to the integrity of journalism culture even within this system. One ethnographic conversation with a journalist after their story was vetted by the company's legal team revealed some dire concerns. The journalist feared that as the story was about a member of the judiciary, that there were people within the legal team that would alert the subject as to the pending investigative story. This again speaks to the proximity to the loci of power and how the nature and culture of the society does not encourage the safety of journalists and the integrity of their work.

As established previously, the difference in reaction between most journalists saying that they didn't feel threatened and editors saying that media laws were definitely a threat connects to personal level of knowledge of the law, the level of protection afforded by the newsroom and who could be at risk within the media house. The pre-action protocol letter was spoken about as being recognised as an official legal threat.

The parent company would of course be the ones cited on the letter along with the editor-in-chief, the journalist and if the claimant decided to go to court and won, then the company would have to pay. So, of particular note is the attitude of the parent media company to receiving these letters and how it impacted on the editors and journalists.

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday recalled her experience getting one of these letters:

Well people here are very quick to threaten to sue. I mean the first time that I was at the Guardian...as far as the managing director was concerned, we had done something wrong even to provoke the letter...I mean it was quite intimidating...It was bad enough being threatened by your own managing director who

wasn't supporting you...sometimes [journalists] are discouraged by their own managers from pursuing a story if they think it's going to cost the company money (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

This pre-emptive discouragement, the “structural chill” which (Barendt, et al., 1997) refers to, is counter intuitive to the journalistic code of holding power to account. Therefore, these actions by a media manager will also influence the journalism culture within that newsroom. From this example, it is clear that even conglomerates with strong financial backing are chilled by these media laws. It is also clear that media managers pass on this chill to their newsrooms. This results in a stunting of growth within the investigative department, which is exactly what Rampersad said would happen. Raymond underscored the situation of the individual investigative journalist saying:

...when you get the pre-action protocol you have to call in your own lawyers to look at the story, craft a response, say no the story wasn't defamatory, let him sue us or whatever...At the same time they are wanting you to have exclusive stories to bring thousands of readers to the paper, it's just a lose lose situation as far as journalists are concerned (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

Looking at the responses from journalists within newsrooms as opposed to the managers and editors, they felt differently about these letters. Journalists did not seem to worry too much that it would be followed through on. In fact, they considered it a rite of passage and shrugged the letters off as a “scare tactic”. “Pre-action protocols intimidate people all the time,” one Guardian journalist [REDACTED] commented. “The first thing you get when anyone is upset with a piece of coverage is a pre-action protocol letter. So they use legal channels to intimidate you or to get you to pull back off of something. I don't think most of these cases go anywhere. I think it's just a scare tactic.” Another journalist [REDACTED] insisted, “We used to call them lawyer letters...they were only used as a threat. The pre-action protocol letter is just lawyers getting rich off of silly people.”

One journalist [REDACTED] from Newsday also commented:

I can't say that looking at the content that's published that people are in any way hesitant to publish things that would rub somebody the wrong way. Particularly in the newspaper, they always publish things that make someone look bad because I think for those most part those kinds of pieces are backed up with enough evidence, documents that you can feel comfortable in going forward with it (■), interview with the author, 2018).

The stringent measures imposed by media managers and editors play a key role in protecting the journalists from the brunt of these media laws. However, editors recognise that the new laws are more dangerous than defamation and would bypass the need for a pre action protocol letter.

Raymond commented that:

There are particular clauses in the law that don't exist now that if they were to exist it gives you an automatic lawsuit," she said. "They are going to skip PAPs and go straight to court. People only send PAPs if they have an arguable case. With the new law they would simply be against the law. Something as simple as a source providing you information... becomes illegal (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

"It's no longer just about the libel chill but how journalists approach stories, access sources and access information from sources," (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018) commented. The proposed laws make it unlawful for journalists to go about their job. It makes it a crime for sources to deliver documents, field questions, clarify issues, so yes there is a definite chill...Publishers definitely have had several meetings and not just about the latest incarnation of the law but over the years so definitely an area of concern for editorial managers."

While it was a great surprise that most journalists did not know or were simply not interested in the libel and defamation law, it was a greater shock to discover that most journalists did not support full repeal of the libel and defamation law because they felt that Trinidadians could be

“malicious” and that being given too much power would not be a positive thing for the industry. This aspect of journalism culture is covered extensively through semi-structured interviews in the next chapter on interview findings (chapter 8).

The impact of media laws upon journalism culture is an important part of this thesis. These discussions held within this ethnographic study revealed how media managers, editors and journalists perceive the law and how they deal with it. With regards to journalism culture, journalists do not seem to have a serious regard for these media laws and it is the more senior editorial staff, the media managers and the legal team that field potential legal threats to the media house.

7:6 Training and Education

Part of the culture which unites journalists throughout the world and allows them to share journalistic values is training. Formal journalism training teaches the same techniques and ethical frameworks which form the basis of the “occupational ideologies” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6) of newsrooms. As mentioned in the Media Scene chapter, Trinidad and Tobago did not have a formal course or school for journalism until 2010. Therefore, if you did not have the funding or mindset to study regionally at the Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) in Jamaica or internationally, the only experience was on the job.

During one editorial meeting at the Newsday, I observed editors discussing headlines. One story dealt with the sexual assault of a minor. The headline suggested was, “Man held for sex acts with 17-year-old.” A 17-year-old cannot perform sex acts with an adult. It is rape. The onus is on the adult. The suggested headline placed partial responsibility on to the minor. This headline did not go to print.

On a different day in the same newsroom, a story about the influx of Venezuelan refugees came to light. The suggested headline was “Invasion”. This headline which actually went to print (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2018) is polarizing and induces xenophobia, hate speech and public panic. Whether it was the thrust to sell more newspapers with an alarmist headline, or a lack of training within these newsrooms on social issues and appropriate language, this has an impact on the wider population on how to treat with these issues and also reinforces sub par journalism standards within newsrooms.

The fact that the top editors of a newspaper were not better trained in dealing with major issues and the law and language surrounding those issues, does not connect with worldwide journalism values and duty of care. Kiran Maharaj, past president of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers Association (TTPBA) said:

It’s a very sad state of affairs. When I was president of TTPBA, I started to do a lot of training programs for working journalists and that was because I knew it didn’t exist and during my tenure...Then our region went through the dilemma of not being able to go CARIMAC and CARIMAC was the only facility, so, there was no career option. If you had a platform to train journalists in Trinidad, I think our culture would have been different (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

Maharaj went on to relate that because the media houses could not find people within their country to take posts, they started taking literature students, students who wanted to do social sciences and international relations. “That is what happened to fill all of the positions,” she said. “ It wasn’t the right thing to do but then you put them in there...so you just had a hole in the industry.”

According to Maharaj, the TTPBA then started to pick up the slack and started to train working journalists. The TTPBA partnered with the University of the West Indies (UWI), developed a

curriculum for a BA which took almost a year to put together. Maharaj proposed bringing in Fullbright scholars to teach. However, [UWI] did not go for it and according to Maharaj:

...you had the wrong people teaching. Twenty-five people registered for the class, by the end of the semester, six remained. All the money we invested, and it wasn't just TTPBA who invested. OCM invested, Guardian Media invested, my company invested, we all made large contributions and it just died, it just fell by the wayside (Maharaj, interview with the author, 2018).

This example speaks to the “non action oriented society” described earlier in the chapter by ■■■ linking the culture of the media industry to the larger national culture. One Trinidad Guardian editor ■■■ commented on this cultural habit saying:

We like a lot of discourse and have talks that don't really mean much. We rehash the same things over and over, we never really move forward in terms of solving anything and these are dynamics I have really come to understand because I am in the media and there are so many issues that are cyclical that have flare ups when it hits the headlines and then we have the same conversation again and then nothing changes and then we just wait for the next flare up. It takes too much for us to act. We are very bad at taking a stance on anything that translates into action. That's our culture unfortunately (■■■, interview with the author, 2018).

The College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) started a degree course in 2010 but according to one CNC3 editor ■■■, this course seems to be failing to produce satisfactory journalists:

We take interns from COSTAAT. I think a lot of them do this because they think it's glamorous. Everyone wants to read the news on TV, that's number one. Number two, they lack critical thinking skills and it's only when they go into the program they recognize it. There is a complaint that there is not room to grow if you become a journalist. Number four, they don't have the passion (■■■, interview with the author, 2018).

These comments allude to the need for solid on the job training as journalism education is insufficient. However, in some newsrooms, training is not a focus. One TV6 journalist ■■■ that:

In the time that I have been here, since 2011, I have not had training on the mechanics of good storytelling. There is also nobody here who checks your scripts. I don't get the impression that scripts are checked in the way where the writer is challenged in any way unless something is overtly defamatory. They are not checked where the writer can grow from the process, it's ok, no libel, no defamation, is this good TV writing? That's not what is being checked.

If journalists are not receiving satisfactory journalism education and are not being trained properly by their editors, their lack of skills as a journalist will inevitably have an impact on the standard of their newsroom, the journalism culture there as well as their ability to move up to a higher position within the company.

Curtis Rampersad, publications editor at the Trinidad Express addressed this issue explaining that:

...in Trinidad people become editors on the basis of having been good reporters. They haven't been given any training. It's a completely different job. You may be a great reporter, you have great contacts, you get stories quickly, you might even be able to write them well but that doesn't mean you can edit other people's copy, that you can come up with story ideas that are not on your beat. A lot of people being senior reporters are selfish and not willing to share their contacts but is not going to make you a good editor (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

Rampersad insists that to become a successful editor, one has to know how to manage people, offer guidance on how to improve a story, know how to administer discipline and also, which is particularly important, how to reward people, just by saying that is a good story:

Newspapers are now really only acquiring this type of approach. They have had HR people for a while, but in a lot of cases they don't understand the issues of the editorial department, what it needs, what

editors need to know that they don't know, and they just go about filling out forms or making lists of KPI's or whatever and not really giving editors any sort of, basically, tutorials in how to run a newsroom (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

This comment reveals that training is lacking on several levels, not just the level of the journalist entering the newsroom. If journalists become editors without sufficient management training, their staff will feel the effects and so will the news product.

Training on the intricacies of how to write a story, voice a television script, interview a politician are definitive elements of formal journalism training. Understanding media law is also part of that. Knowing this, one of the questions posed in the ethnographic interview was whether or not journalists received this specific training pertaining to the libel and defamation law.

To reiterate a comment from Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday:

...from time to time some media houses will bring a lawyer from time to time who knows a fair bit about libel, or it might be a lawyer who is on the board who might not know anything about libel, who will give a session about libel once every two or three years, by which time a lot of people who went to it the first time would have left (Raymond, interview with the author, 2018).

One journalist from the Trinidad Guardian [REDACTED] commented on the media house's legal training track record:

In terms of them teaching us the Reynold's principles, they have had workshops on it. But I think how they teach us journalism here, without saying it, or using the Reynold's principles or using that terminology, they teach us how to get around it from the get go, with trying to avoid these situations ([REDACTED] interview with the author, 2018).

■ went on to point out that even in their newsroom, even though everyone can be affected by defamation, the investigative reporters are the ones that get the most training.

I think everybody has a fair understanding but not a legal understanding. They may understand what not to do to get in trouble for defamation but in terms of defining it, you know, fair comment and these kinds of things, I don't think they would necessarily be able to define it in the legal terms...there have been talks, well checks and balances really but more so with investigative journalists generally speaking, the other reporters usually quote from documents ■, interview with the author, 2018).

Even though training is needed, especially to firm up knowledge of the law, newsrooms are still unwilling to send their journalists for training due to high costs and the amount of time needed for such training. Through ethnography, the impact of a lack of training on journalism culture can be seen.

7:7 Conclusion

The information in this chapter is not exhaustive. A healthy amount of data was collected within all six newsrooms. However, the most relevant quotes and descriptions have been utilised to give the best portrayal of journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago through the framework of role orientation and role performance of journalists, post-colonial influence, media law and education and training.

The “path dependency” (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 101) traced here, that is the understanding of the journalistic field, has taken into consideration “how it got there, a location contingent on past moments that in turn govern the future direction” (Ibid). As (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 102) say, “If rolled back and started over, a different path would likely result. These fields have their own internal logics and tend to persist even when historical circumstances change.” This is the evolving journalism culture which has an “increasingly fluid [boundary] which is why this thesis called for the analysis of “multiple factors

simultaneously” (Ibid). There are some elements which stay the same, normative and cognitive scripts which are governed by “internal logics” (Ibid) and other “macro forces” (Ibid).

There are core components of culture which remain throughout time. The analysis and presentation of this ethnographic data aspires to establish those key pillars which included colonial history and its post colonial ramifications of class and racial tensions, the social and geographic proximity of everyone within the society and a culture of bacchanal.

The subsequent interview chapter is an addition to this ethnographic data as, through thematic analysis, it reveals why journalists do what they do through their role orientation and role performance. Semi-structured interviews show the cognitive scripts behind their observed behaviour as well as their impressions of their own industry and culture.

Chapter 8: Interview Findings

8:1 Introduction

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, the semi-structured interview is a key methodological process within this thesis. This chapter features data gathered from ninety-three semi-structured interviews conducted with journalists, editors, trainers, and media managers. As the list of questions (see Appendix A) for journalists interviewed for this thesis focused on Role Orientation and Role Performance, Post Colonial Theory and Media Law, this chapter relates the themes which emerged from those questions as these themes are definitive elements in the discursive field (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017) of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The following themes were revealed: innate values versus learned values; objectivity and corruption; race and gender; the public's interest and the public interest; the advertising agenda: the financial roots of (self) censorship; the need for resources: a comprise on quality; media law: ignorance or apathy?

These discussions are set apart from the ethnographic conversations as these were done after the official signing of a document that agreed to personal participation, not just observation. I have decided to allot anonymity to interviewees and utilise an index number system when referring to journalists. It is the same index system that was applied to the ethnography chapter and can therefore also be requested. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, the names of editors and media managers have been left in if they did not asked for anonymity and also because

their opinions are especially pertinent to this study. All stand alone quotes have been taken from interviews conducted with me, the author of this study.

The significance of conducting semi-structured interviews can be observed here. In a survey, respondents do not get the breadth of language to express their ideas which can reveal much more than a “yes” or “no” question. If a regular survey was carried out, it is likely that journalists within Trinidad and Tobago would have been categorised in the “detached watchdog” milieu based on the work of (Hanitzsch, 2011), utilised as a framework for journalism culture in this thesis. However, because these intimate interviews have been conducted, their thoughts, feelings and actions have revealed much more. Their language is examined within the context of the larger society as well as systems that govern their day to day lives. Consequently, a more accurate description of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago is determined.

A note on “role orientation”: In the next two chapters, “role perception” will be used instead of “role orientation” as the word “perception” was used more in the ethnographic discussions and semi-structured interviews with journalists, editors and media managers.

8.2 Innate values versus learned values

The theme of ‘innate values versus learned values’, emerged from questions on role perception and role performance, such as: ‘What does it mean to be a journalist?’ Note that through the pace and tone of the conversation, this question was modified to also include, “What does journalism mean to you?” Further probing to establish role perception included, “In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of a journalist?”

When approaching this research, I had a fair idea of what I would find as I have worked in this media ecosystem and have lived the journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. What was

surprising to find was the friction between the role perception and role performance of journalists. Using the word “friction” here is important as through the thematic analysis of these semi-structured interviews, it was found that this initial “friction” between innate values and learned values eventually becomes a rationalisation and acceptance that contradictory states of perception and performance are the norm. Role aspiration, based on innate values, does not continuously align with role perception, based on learned values, creating a friction, a state of contradiction in role performance. These semi-structured interviews reveal that journalists aspire to safeguard democracy, be a voice for the voiceless and hold power to account. However, they are also aware of how they fall short and also understand the reasons why: the size of their society, their macro-cultural acceptance of corruption, self-imposed and external sources of censorship, their proximity to those they cover (not just those in power) and their inability to escape the decisions of those who truly run their newsrooms—the individuals, companies and conglomerates which wield the power of money, position and association. All of these elements in the discursive journalistic field define the local professional milieu and inform this study on journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

When asked “What does a journalist do?”, this journalist [REDACTED] from CNC3 expressed their values saying:

...it is an avenue to help people, right? I always loved the idea of helping people and I get to have a conversation with people...you really get the human interest elements in it and that is why, that is where I think I can play an important role because I love the human interest [element].

[REDACTED] also expressed their thoughts on what they think a journalist should be:

I think the fundamental qualities, of course, being very objective, unbiased, fair in your assessment, being able to transcribe information and put it out in the public domain with a very neutral point of view, of course...and also being honest with yourself, be honest with your superiors with all with the people on the ground. Again, taking yourself out of the equation, it is not about you as a personality...just present

the facts as it is, do as best as you can to make sure you report both sets of stories. Right? And again, bring it back down to being as honest as you can.

It was only after I did the textual analysis of these interviews that I realised the difference between innate values and learned journalistic values. That journalist [REDACTED] expressed that they have “always loved the idea of helping people”, a desire that was formed before a journalism career was embarked upon. While this quality is complementary to being a journalist, it was not cultivated as one. Therefore, in terms of role perception and role performance, in the case of this journalist, their performance is partially based on their own natural qualities and their role perception is actually enhanced by this organic state of being.

I will take this opportunity to again emphasise the benefit of doing semi-structured interviews as within a survey, this data would not have been included as the question would have focused on what the journalist believes are professional values. As the local culture has a history of “learning on the job”, it would have been taken in context that the answers within the survey were indeed learned on the job and not a quality that the journalist is already in possession of. Upon reflection of my own experience, values of duty and education were instilled within me by my parents at an early age and reinforced by my siblings throughout our lives thus far. Therefore, I came to journalism with an innate sense of accountability and duty of service to the people. So in terms of understanding role perception and role performance, this nuanced facet of culture should be noted.

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Newsday spoke about the qualities of a journalist saying:

...the first thing that comes to mind is some intellectual capacity, a plausible manner and rat-like cunning. I would [also] say the ability to write plain simple English correctly, which is now very rare, unfortunately. But other than that curiosity, because if you are a general reporter, you can literally get

sent out to the moment's notice to cover absolutely anything and if you don't make yourself interested in it, you can't write an interesting story about it. So the reader is just not going to read it and it's a complete waste of everybody's time.

Of note is that Raymond was one of the only interviews that noted qualities like “cunning” and “curiosity”. This is particularly pertinent as Raymond is an editor and as discussed throughout this thesis, editors play an integral part in setting the overall tone of their newsroom.

However, like the previous comments featured, the qualities outlined, “intellectual capacity, a plausible manner and rat-like cunning,” seem to be elements within one’s personality that a person would possess before stepping into the job instead of qualities one would develop in the field, before a “shared occupational ideology” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6) would influence role perception.

The same questions were posed to journalists and editors at the Trinidad Express. From the interviews I conducted as well as my own personal experience in the industry, Trinidad Express editor-in-chief Omatie Lyder is known to be a well respected journalist and editor because she lives what she preaches. Inevitably, her ethos and way of running the newsroom creates a culture that is unique to the Trinidad Express.

In terms of qualities of a journalist, Lyder (2018) insists that journalists “have to be above reproach”. Considering all that has been revealed about local newsrooms, this seems like a lofty tenet to espouse. However, again, this speaks to the role aspiration of journalists as well as the expectation of what the role performance and execution should be.

[Being a journalist] I also think it's a privilege you can't abuse. Because I tell you, when people hear you're working...in a newspaper, they immediately look up to you and I think you have to live a life of integrity and with a code...and I always tell reporters, you know, we have no life. Because even if we

are off duty and we are at a party, we can't be seen drunk, dancing rudely or anything, because we hold people to account for those things and therefore we have to be above reproach.

These sentiments seem to align more with the values of the “detached watchdog” and outside of the cultural norms of the country and what has been said about the newsrooms within it. As discussed in the Media Landscape chapter (chapter 5) and earlier with the example of Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, the person at the helm of a media house will set the tone for the work and also the expectations of and for the journalists.

Another journalist [REDACTED] at CNC3 also described what they thought a journalist should be.

To me, a journalist is supposed to be somebody who is there to report on the facts, not make it up, not sensationalise it...the basic five whys...to be able to give that information timely, accurately, and knowing full well that if anything, I can trust that person going forward, no matter what happens, I can trust you for that information...before I came here, I did not feel confidence in journalists. In some areas, I still don't feel confident in them and that's why I wanted to try and change it.

Within this comment, that friction between role aspiration, role perception and role performance can be seen. There is the role aspiration to “to report on the facts, not make it up, not sensationalise it,” but at the same time, that journalist expresses a lack of trust and confidence towards journalists both before they were colleagues and even now as they are. This particular aspect of role perception is defined by a general impression of the media fraternity that was confirmed once this journalist became a part of it. This is an astonishing revelation. Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, like this journalist, expect journalists to not be entirely objective and trustworthy. Even after becoming a part of that industry, this journalist still cannot trust their colleagues to be objective—which was found to be a repeating theme within the interview analysis—yet continues to work within the same profession, wanting to “try and change it”. This definitely does not fit into the milieu of the “detached watchdog” (Hanitzsch, 2011) nor the milieu of the “opportunistic facilitator” (Ibid) proving the need for the

establishment of a professional milieu which accurately reflects journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Another journalist [REDACTED] from the Trinidad Guardian also defined their thoughts on what being a journalist demanded.

You should be trustworthy. You should have a critical mind. You should be well read and you must be informed at all times. But more than that, you must be able to create trust. You have to set boundaries...you must also respect yourself and understand that you don't have to sleep with people, sell yourself to get a story. You don't have to compromise the integrity...if you really love this job, it really comes from the heart and you have to be passionate about it...you just have to be very sharp and creative, very, very analytical...you have to have a very quizzical mind.

Personality traits such as being passionate, creative, analytical and quizzical are all qualities a person would possess regardless of the job they are in.

Therefore, if we were to consider that even though the increase in degrees available in journalism and communication has impacted on the number of “trained” journalists entering the newsroom, it still appears that a code of ethics is less central to this professional milieu and the ineffable rules of the “situationist”⁴⁶ (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379) individual are what define the journalism culture.

⁴⁶ Situationists are idealistic, but they are also relativistic, for they tend to reject moral rules and to advocate individualistic analysis of each act in each situation. Absolutists are also idealistic, but they feel that the best possible outcome can always be achieved by following universal moral rules. Subjectivists, like situationists, base their judgments on personal values and perspectives rather than universal ethical principles. However, unlike situationists they feel that negative behaviour is sometimes necessary to produce good. Finally, exceptionists allow moral absolutes to guide their judgments but remain pragmatically open to exceptions in so far as these help to prevent negative consequences (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379).

Of course, a code of ethics, which was only found in the Trinidad Express newsroom, is part of the fabric of that culture but it is not the dominant element which guides internal ethical decisions about each story.

The element of trust also comes up within the interview with [REDACTED]. The use of “should be” reveals ideal qualities of a journalist, speaking to [REDACTED] perception of the role. However, this perception is tempered with knowledge of the industry. [REDACTED] comment, “...you have to set boundaries...you don’t have to compromise the integrity,” demonstrates a core concern about the industry and its proximity to the locus of power (Gibbings, 2007; Hanitzsch 2011, Storr 2016) and those being covered.

[REDACTED] comments echo similar thoughts by Wesley Gibbings outlined previously in the Theoretical Framework (chapter 2) and the Media Landscape (chapter 5), relating to the wider conversation on power dynamics, media ownership and how those elements affect local journalists . Gibbings posited:

[There is] an unwillingness to sort of devolve authority from a centre to the periphery. And it's everywhere...they're essential features of the operations that will always be there, be part of the culture of the place. They're all pretty authoritarian and cantered...there [is] a direct connection between the ownership structures and right down into the content.

This means that even though journalists have genuine innate values to help people and hold power to account, they again display a friction between role aspiration, perception and eventual performance as those aspirational values are compromised by this learned and executed “unwillingness to sort of devolve authority from a centre to the periphery” (Gibbings, interview with author, 2018).

Caribbean countries emerged from a history of extermination, abduction, and abortion, a violent cutting off from original African and indigenous cultures. This four-hundred-year history has left the region with

sociological and psychological effects that are visible today. It has produced complex issues of identity and a set of cultural practices that emerged through force and resistance (Storr, 2016, p. 134).

Storr acknowledges the effects of colonialism as an important element within the discursive field of journalism culture. “The emphasis on the ethnic and racial identities, as well as the political affiliations, of media owners is important in a region still encumbered by its colonial past. Race relations and political clientelism are complex and complicated in these hybrid societies” (Storr, 2016, p. 12).

The impact is felt on systems of parliament, law, education, class and race politics, media market deregulation, journalism training and hybridity (Bhabha, 2004). This impact has its origins in the plantation model (Best, 1968; Beckford, 1972; Singham, 1968) which is a pattern of authority and hierarchy evolved from economic organisation which encourages a social structure of “entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships” (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62). Understanding the effects of this plantation model assists in framing the behaviour of journalists in relation to this friction between innate and learned values, especially towards figures of authority which journalists must cover and hold to account.

8:3 Objectivity and corruption

We are a corrupt society...what I have learned working with[in] media and working with media professionals, who are much more experienced in years of media service than me, I don't think anybody is truly objective, I think everything has a subjective element to it.

This is a quote from a Trinidad Guardian journalist [REDACTED]. Journalists were asked, “Do you believe journalists in Trinidad and Tobago are objective?” Within the interview, this question was also asked in different ways which included, “Do you think true objectivity is possible?” and “What about objectivity in the industry?”

The overarching findings in Hanitzsch's (2007) work stipulate that objectivity and impartiality seem to dominate many newsrooms across the globe. Objectivity is a central point to journalism culture and is assumed to be a learned value (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). As established in chapter 5, the Media Landscape, most journalists who are employed in the local journalism industry do not have a journalism degree and therefore learn on the job. Therefore, they learn the values of the newsroom they work in. The Media Landscape chapter and the Ethnography Chapter (chapters 5 and 7) both establish that there are various discursive factors in the newsroom and news making process which can compromise objectivity.

According to Hanitzsch, a word like objective is inherently complex and heralds a re-examination of the epistemological philosophy of journalism against other philosophical imperatives such as empiricism, relativism, and idealism. Objectivity can be explained with a "philosophical or absolute sense of objectivity or with procedural sense of objectivity as a method" (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 376). This concept can be clarified by breaking down the types of journalists into four further categories (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379):

Situationists are idealistic, but they are also relativistic, for they tend to reject moral rules and to advocate individualistic analysis of each act in each situation. Absolutists are also idealistic, but they feel that the best possible outcome can always be achieved by following universal moral rules. Subjectivists, like situationists, base their judgments on personal values and perspectives rather than universal ethical principles. However, unlike situationists they feel that negative behaviour is sometimes necessary to produce good. Finally, exceptionists allow moral absolutes to guide their judgments but remain pragmatically open to exceptions in so far as these help to prevent negative consequences.

Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) is the television station owned by the state. Journalists who work at the station expressed strong feelings about the level of objectivity practiced there but also revealed whether they were situationists, absolutists subjectivists or exceptionists (Hanitzsch, 2007).

■ from Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) had a long history in the field of journalism saying that “it means everything” as it allowed them to extend their talents and livelihood. They have seen many changes to the local journalism culture, connecting them to the changes in government, giving an idea as to the scope of objectivity within that newsroom.

...sometimes you cringe, because...if you're in a newsroom long enough, you hear instances of this, whether you want to call it interference or direct influence...but the bottom line is, my thinking is that you should be free to report...but you always have to be mindful, you have to be smart and understand, if you work for a public station, like this one is a government owned station, you always have to be mindful of how you portray the government...previously...certain people could not have been included in the news, certainly couldn't be in the first section.

■ is speaking about direct and overt censorship when they refer to the fact that “certain people could not have been included in the news, certainly couldn't be in the first section.” It is a known practice within the industry that TTT gives more airtime to the government than the opposition. The public, which has the right to be informed, does not receive multi-perspective coverage of issues and debates from the television station that their money goes towards keeping on the air. Considering the fact that one of journalism’s core principles is to uphold the public interest, some of the practices of this television station have been described to be in gross transgression of that. The clear lack of an objective and balanced approach to the news gathering and reporting process speaks to the journalism culture practised within this newsroom which journalists must decide to adhere to or not, based on their “procedural sense of objectivity” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 376). Storr describes this as political clientelism:

In these small, secretive societies, media systems are plagued by partisan politics, which presents itself in a variety of ways and influences the performance of journalists. This concept has been referred to in the literature as political clientelism (Storr, 2016, p. 167).

Storr goes on to say that, “Broadcast journalists who work for state-owned radio and television stations are often accused of political clientelism” (Storr, 2016, p. 169). However, as seen with the comment by [REDACTED], some journalists do not approve of what happens at the station.

Even though Storr advocates for journalistic independence saying, “To advance the key concepts of democracy—liberty, equality, community, communication, public opinion, popular consent—media must be free from state and self-censorship, physical and moral pressure, and political prejudice,” (Storr, 2016, p. 153) in such a small society where jobs are limited and it is inevitable that journalists will constantly come into contact with those they cover, journalists might not be able to afford to walk away from their jobs to safeguard their moral compasses.

In this study, it has been observed that with the other newsrooms, the values aspired to are not consistently executed with the role performance of journalists in those newsrooms. However, at this time within Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) journalists already know that the state broadcaster is not objective. Therefore, their role perception and role performance align. There is no surprise that pro-government coverage is expected of them. However, one journalist who moved from TTT to [REDACTED] did say that it was not always like this:

[TTT] is in no way independent...there is government interference which is the reason me and all my colleagues left. When we were there we were good in the beginning and then the government changed and then instructions started coming down that none of us wanted a part of but I don't know how bad it is there since but I think that was a credibility hit they never recovered from.

Therefore, it seems that the ethical paradigm of the “situationist” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379) is applicable here. Every journalist must decide where they stand with the organisation they work for, considering all aspects of the dilemma. From the above comment, one can infer that the level of control and influence exerted by the company depends on which government is in

power. With the regime change, the working environment changed and each journalist had to decide whether they would put up with the control or not.

Political clientelism (Storr, 2016), also known as political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) is something which editors are aware of and trying to manage. Trinidad Express publications editor Curtis Rampersad was asked about how the editorial team deals with these situations. He responded by emphasising that editors need to be responsible for their journalists.

This is where editorial management comes in. You have to be able to manage your team. Yes you do want them to lean on their contacts for information but you must be strict about anything biased in their stories.

■ also gave an insight into the political clientelism (Storr, 2016) in their newsroom and across the local landscape.

Trinidad is a unique political country...the political influence in the country is vast, you either have worked for or against, essentially, and depending on who you work for, who you know, you tend to get further than some people who don't right? Going from newsroom to newsroom, there's usually a couple who you can tell that they are swayed by one side, there were preferences towards this party. Some are better at hiding that than others. Some don't bother to hide it at all.

As discussed in the media landscape chapter, developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019), was an inevitable stage of development in the post colonial media landscape and as such, governments sometimes still expect journalists to act accordingly (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995). From these comments, we can posit that this is especially true for this state owned station. Again, there is the normalisation of behaviour through historical variables as well as observation and socialisation. The role perception of journalists within this media landscape is not the principled and ethical core of the “detached watchdog” (Hanitzsch, 2011). Rather, the

perception includes an expectation of corruption, political compromise and corporate influence.

At the Trinidad Guardian newspaper, editor Suzanne Sheppard, also shared an account of overt political alignment when asked about objectivity saying that:

We really try to but it is kind of not real...and what made that very clear was what happened post 2010 election. If you remember, that was when the People's Partnership⁴⁷ came in and all of a sudden...I mean, I was horrified by it. The number of journalists that suddenly got jobs in government as communications specialists, advisors and all of that to government ministers...and a lot of them were actively reporting in politics, actively reporting the campaign in a particular way...

This historic account suggests something far more nefarious happening, raised by Curtis Rampersad, publishing editor of the Trinidad Express, when he referred to the “underbelly of journalistic practice” in the Ethnography chapter. To recall, he said that “There are journalists who are supporting parties and who are doing the best they can to advance their cause” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

This confirms what Sheppard has expressed. However, what must also be considered is Rampersad’s insistence that at the Trinidad Express, “As editors, we do not let this pass. Aside from being unethical, it would compromise our reputation with the public” (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018).

It would seem that Rampersad is drawing a clear line that the Trinidad Express has a different culture than other newsrooms.

⁴⁷ The People’s Partnership was a political coalition of five different groups, led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar as a multi-ethnic contender against the People’s National Movement, led by Dr Keith Rowley, in the 2010 General Election. They won the election staying in office until 2015 when they were defeated in the 2015 election by the People’s National . Movement.

■ from CNC3 also describes “being very objective, unbiased, fair in your assessment” as key qualities every journalist should display..

...the definition of objectivity varies, I believe. I think we have a culture of convenience. Somebody is very objective, or we become fair and neutral to our convenience. I don't think we dig deep enough to understand objectivity. I don't think we dig deep enough to portray fairness... I don't think we dig deep enough to show two sides of the story...I think that culture of objectivity varies from media house to media house and from individual to individual.

This observation of the role performance this journalist speaks about here is in conflict with comments within the same interview, to the same question showing an internal friction between role aspiration, role perception and role performance.

But here in CNC 3, I still see us exercise a level of objectivity. If you could recall that “one percent”⁴⁸ comment that was made. I think we handled it. Well, I think we did not abandon our responsibility to report on it... Everything can be done with a level of objectivity...

A “level of objectivity” suggests that there is a sliding scale in the practice of this objectivity which can be applied according to the situation, as said, an objectivity of “convenience”.

By this comment, it seems as though this journalist is a “situationist” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379) where ethical issues must be grounded in actual situations. ■ did say, “I think that culture of objectivity varies from media house to media house and from individual to individual.”

⁴⁸ In Trinidad and Tobago, “one percenters” is a term used to refer to the Arab Lebanese-Trinidadian community. This community migrated to Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1920’s and have built several successful businesses locally and regionally such as Ansa McAL. Due to their economic success, they are known as “one percenters”, as in, they are the top one percent with respect to the amount of money they earn. This term is derogatory and is seen as hate speech. CNC3 is owned by Ansa McAL and when someone from the public made this comment about one of the media house’s board members, the newsroom reported on it, as C10 says, they “handled it”.

The working definition of objectivity in this study was cultivated from these very interviews. Therefore, it will be taken to mean the ability to be balanced and present multiple perspectives on the subject to the audience.

The journalist [REDACTED] goes on to say:

[In this newsroom] they could only exercise what level of objectivity that is afforded.

This comment resonates with a key point introduced in the Media Landscape chapter (chapter 5) and noted within ethnographic conversations in the previous chapter (chapter 7). That is, that journalists within Trinidad and Tobago are not free to perform their roles. Objectivity is “afforded” to journalists by the environment they operate within. There is a significant level of censorship happening within the environment that has its roots in a historic culture of secrecy (Storr, 2016), company policy as well as soft power dynamics (Beckford, 1972; Lent, 1991; Gibbings, 2021).

This culture of secrecy was imposed on Caribbean society by colonial powers. It has left an indelible mark on the psyche of Caribbean people who are, the examples of Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti notwithstanding, docile people resistant to change. Barbadian journalist David Ellis characterized this culture of silence as endemic to the region, and believes it influenced how journalists practice in the region (Storr, 2016, p. 94).

This culture of secrecy is also a socio-cultural factor which chills the work of journalists and compromises their ability to be objective as “these types of situations are tempered by the culture of silence and fear, the fear of victimisation, which is a reality in this [small] environment which the journalists themselves live with” (Storr, 2016, p. 96).

In addition, the culture of secrecy, restriction of information, lack of access to officials and the difficulties with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process is a major source of frustration and demotivation for journalists.

■ from the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday commented:

I think one of the reasons why people have, in some cases unrealistically high expectations of the media, is that there's a culture of keeping quiet...A lot of people would write letters to the editor to highlight some complaint they have, but would ask that their name be withheld so that they're not victimised.

This comment connects to another journalist's interview who also works at the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday. This journalist, ■ said that:

...I'm positive that was postcolonial, I guess my thought is that, the secret keeping culture we have here. Everybody knows, but nobody wants to see and that, I guess, finds itself in the newsroom as well, because we also sometimes know a lot. But we can't say that not because we don't want to but because of the backlash and if we can't prove it, we can't say it.

The Chilling Effect of the national cultural environment is displayed within this comment. It emphasises that it is not just the Chilling Effect of the law that impacts journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. It also essentially compromises a journalist's ability to be objective. The entire "secret keeping culture" and the fear of victimisation have become a normalised and accepted as part of the professional milieu.

The CNC3 journalist ■ also reaffirms a key facet that impacts journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, that is, innate and personal values that the individual possesses before entry into the profession, discussed in the previous section.

But as a young person always trying to be fair and honest...an authentic conversation even goes further than a culture of objectivity in the newsroom. I think if you have that embedded in you as an individual, and you bring that from where you are into the world of work...it's your moral compass.

This comment speaks to the point of personal values being the ultimate material that forms the journalist instead of a taught system of values which “college-educated” Western journalists have had the opportunity to learn (Weaver, 1998b, p. 478). This again confirms that Trinidad and Tobago cannot entirely fit within this the milieu presented by (Hanitzsch, 2011) and operates within an entirely different category.

In terms of objectivity, ■ from the Trinidad Express very nonchalantly advised:

We try to be objective...we achieve it sometimes...and then sometimes we just don't.

This comment shows the acceptance of the friction which happens internally between role aspiration, role orientation and role performance. ■ has accepted the dynamic environment and their role orientation includes the knowledge that sometimes, objectivity is just not achievable. They adjust their role performance to suit.

■ also commented on the fact that the press is not free. However, rather than assigning blame to the government or powerful elites trying to muzzle the press, they placed the responsibility on journalists, saying that they put themselves in vulnerable positions.

...they allowed themselves to get attached or to get too involved in that they forget their responsibility as a journalist...They get too involved in things that they know that they shouldn't...but the culture is such that anything goes and...money or status is more important than getting the job done. Once you allow yourself to get caught up and you know you are involved in things, you can never have a free press because of human influence in some way.

Once again, this comment reflects the friction journalists feel between their innate values and learned values. Journalists nurture role aspirations of serving the public yet they jeopardise their relationship with and interests of that same public by engaging in unethical relations with those they are covering.

In terms of objectivity, ■ from the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday touched on relationships with sources:

...journalists get attacked for, you know, supposedly getting involved with their sources...So there have been cases when, you want a political reporter to talk to a particular minister who they touch base with every day and all of a sudden, “Oh, I can't get him on the phone”. Or you want them to produce, you know, a big story about a topic and [they will say] you know, “I don't know anything about that”, or “no, that's not true”, always to that effect. So yeah, getting too close to your sources, because it's such a small place...that can be a problem.

Once again, proximity to the locus of power (Hanitzsch, 2011; Gibbings, 2018) plays a big part in the industry and determines the actions of a journalist and seems to be an accepted part of the culture.

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday also went on to expound on the power of the advertising agenda and how it often trumps objectivity saying, “I mean people think of bias etc in terms of politics. But in fact, the business side of things is a lot more insidious and worrying in some ways.” She continued:

...if you are covering something to do with a company that is doing something it shouldn't, or something that if you report it is going to make it look bad...a reporter will call the CEO and asked him questions, and the CEO will refuse to answer them one, and then two will pick up the phone and call the managing director of the paper and say, you know, one of your reporters called and asked me some questions and I didn't like the sound of them. Please just bear in mind that we spend x million dollars a year advertising in your paper, at which point the story depending on who the manager is, may be killed because especially now the paper can't afford to lose x million dollars a year in advertising.

This is also another example of the non-legal Chilling Effect. The government has always been the biggest advertiser for many media houses (Storr, 2016) and one way which the government of the day would express their dissatisfaction with the way they were covered was to withhold

advertising and strangle the media house (Rampersad, interview with the author, 2018). This issue is covered more intensely in the section on the advertising agenda in this chapter.

Within this chapter, there have been comments by journalists referencing their issues with company control filtering down from the board to the media managers to the editors to the journalists, chilling the actions of journalists and causing self-censorship in what stories journalists choose to pursue and the channels available for that pursuit.

■ comments, as a journalist from the Trinidad Guardian, have been quite impactful when considering this aspect and will be reiterated here:

Even here, our company is owned by a family and for instance, when we are writing the financials of the company...we have to have to find the positive angle in it...it's an unwritten rule...If you write it free and fair like how Newsday and Express will write it...you will get a call from head office tomorrow [saying] "we don't like this story, what is this about...I wouldn't even bother to go to my editors with this because it is what it is. I know the story is going to get buried... I don't want to accuse anybody but there might also be fear of reprisals, so that is demotivating to journalists, especially those who believe in freedom of the press.

While media laws are deterrents to newsrooms, the soft power dynamics which influence self-censorship seem, as Raymond (2018) says, "insidious and worrying".

With regards to objectivity, ■ from TV6 took a stance that diverged from the other interviewees:

...politically, we all despise everyone. So there is a bias and it is that we just don't like any of them...but it's not even a personal thing. It's just that because we've become so exposed to all the dirty secrets, we don't like anybody. I could say that for my newsroom, right? We have seen way too much to feel sorry for anybody.

While it was an anomaly to hear that this journalist did not think that journalists were taking inducements or trying to forward the agenda of their favoured political party, it was quite interesting to hear that the bias was against all politicians. Taken verbatim, this does not coincide with the code of ethics within the milieu of the “detached watchdog”, the sphere that journalists in Trinidad and Tobago would be closest to based on the work of (Hanitzsch, 2011), utilised as a framework for journalism culture in this thesis. However, with an understanding of Trinidadian politics and the levels of corruption that journalists must work around and within, this comment can be justified in context.

■ who works alongside ■ insisted that:

...objectivity is in the eye of the beholder... it is not a rigid entity with everyone [having] their own thoughts as to what objectivity is.

With this comment, ■ is affirming the “situationist” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379) ethical paradigm.

When asked if there should be a standard of objectivity, ■ replied:

It should be...It should be right and get all sides, it should be. That is not always possible because they are persons in our industry, with certain biases, and you can't deny that. We are not perfect, we pretend to be perfect, but we're not. We're not...because we are a small society, a lot of politics drive us.

Another journalist from the Trinidad Guardian ■ also defined their thoughts on objectivity in the newsroom, they affirmed what has been revealed thus far in the comments of the other journalists.

...we also have a culture of corruption and journalism is shaped by that...if you find somebody don't want a story published, they offer you money, or they could get you with nice gifts because the first thing they would say is [journalists] don't get much money...So that culture of corruption and bribery filters in to the field of journalism, you could be offered nice things.

■ comments reflect a pervasive idea that journalists do not trust their colleagues and know that they work alongside people who are, within the ethical standards of journalism, corrupt as indeed, inducements seem to be a core concern within the industry. ■ from the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday gave examples of situations that could be perceived as questionable, prefacing them with the idea that as Trinidadians “...we are a generous people and we like to give things away.” ■ continued:

...When Kamla Persad-Bissessar was Prime Minister, she used to host a Christmas party, a Christmas luncheon for journalists and when you leave, she would give these huge hampers with like chocolates and cookies and all sorts of Christmas goodies and it is an ethical dilemma for newsrooms on whether to take it or not. Now my take on it is that you know, if I take [a Christmas hamper] and I change the way that I cover the government, I have big problems in my life.

I was told that in most local newsrooms, there is a limit of TT\$300 as to the value of the gift you can receive. If it is over this amount, you must declare it to the editor. ■ comment alludes to the fact that if one has even a basic ethical code, one will not be tempted by a Christmas hamper. However, there have been bigger issues of contention amongst members of the journalism industry in Trinidad and Tobago, with some media houses calling out others for taking inducements.

One of these situations that ■ referred to was a trip which was sponsored by Sandals Resort. The resort invited various journalists to go on a press tour of the proposed site for the building of their new resort in Tobago. At the time, the legitimacy and the necessity of the resort was being questioned as the government was less than forthcoming about the details of the deal with Sandals as well as the environmental feasibility report (Trinidad Guardian, 2016). Nevertheless, members of the press were invited over and subsequently criticised for joining this press jaunt just to get a free trip and some wining and dining.

■ however, did not see an issue with the trip:

I don't see anything wrong with it...and they did report on it...if you actually produced work from the event, you fulfilled your obligation. I mean, there's a difference between PR and actual reporting and some people do PR, you need to do due diligence...

Again it would seem that objectivity is, as ■ suggested, “convenient” to the situation the journalist is working within. Also, the ability of the individual journalist to set boundaries both internally and externally is another element which influences this milieu. If, like ■ journalists are able to receive gifts, swag or be invited on all expenses paid trips and still maintain their ethical code, they are ahead of those who would be more easily swayed. However, the more pertinent question is whether or not the journalist should even agree to accepting any of those gifts in the first place. Where is the external boundary? How easy is it to go from accepting a gift and writing a PR piece about it, to accepting an inducement? At what point does the gift become an inducement?

■ opinions on the Christmas hamper and the Sandals trip is an example why public trust is so difficult to build in a society which practices “political tribalism” (Maharaj, interview with author, 2018). Within such a small society, the public becomes aware of these actions and doubts the very source of what is supposed to be ethical information within the country.

One point that I would like to pose for consideration is that, even though a journalist might be ascertaining and publishing information against a particular political party, they may be doing this to gain public points for their own party by calling out the other for transgressions. Therefore, they do end up holding the powerful to account and do actually act in the public interest. Therefore, even though their own political concerns were their main motivation, they also serve the public interest by extension.

■ spoke further about objectivity saying:

...we're supposed to be impartial. We aren't...and it really is dependent on sometimes who you work for, for who is in power. So politics plays a role there. Or being a friend of a friend, because a lot of the times we have situations where it is a news item, but we don't break it because somebody higher up decides, nope, we're not going to run that story. And we here in CNC3 and Guardian Media have done that a lot of the times, there are instances where I think we should be reporting on it. But we don't. And for those of us who do, we get in trouble.

Again, this “situationist” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379) ethical perspective arises in relation to the theme of self censorship. Even though journalists are not threatened outright, through “occupational socialisation” (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 125) their environment is chilled and they learn not to go for certain stories which again compromises public trust as well as their own freedom of speech. Therefore, their role perception, their “shared occupational ideology” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6) includes the Chilling Effect response of self-censorship. This is an element which defines the local professional milieu and inevitably, the journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

After the journalist explained that they would “get in trouble” for pursuing a story that was not desirable to someone within the company, I asked ■ whether or not their editors would stand up for their journalists. I wanted to know whether this censorship was just at the level of the journalistic pool or if it had infiltrated the editors within the company. ■ responded:

I don't think they do...and if they are, I don't think they do a good job of it. Because it shows that everything that journalists work for, really and truly comes down to nothing...all of the code of ethics, we stand for nothing really, because we fall very easily. Sometimes we just break under the pressure. This is what the company wants... So a lot of the times, things get swept under the rug and you would notice that other stations or the media houses will carry it, but we don't.

This journalist [REDACTED] is expressing a clear belief about their newsroom, that it does not sustain an environment where journalists are allowed to uphold a code of ethics. This is a key observation in terms of that landscape.

The theme of objectivity and corruption is a major element in defining the local professional milieu and defining journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. From the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, it is clear that journalists experience great friction between their innate values and their learned values. This friction is exacerbated by elements which make objectivity more difficult such as fear of reprisals, a culture of secrecy, a lack of training and education as well as meagre financial rewards for work.

As outlined in the introduction, these semi-structured interviews reveal that journalists aspire to safeguard democracy, be a voice for the voiceless and hold power to account. However, they are also aware of how they fall short and also understand the reasons why: the size of their society, their macro-cultural acceptance of corruption, imposed and self-censorship, their proximity to those they cover (not just those in power) and their inability to escape the decisions of those who truly run their newsrooms—the individuals, companies and conglomerates which wield the power of money, position and association. These are all defining characteristics of the journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

8.4 Gender and Race

Race and gender were also themes which emerged during the semi-structured interviews with journalists. Of particular note is that even though, as comments reflect in this section, women are subject to sexist attitudes and behaviours, Trinidad and Tobago proves itself to be an outlier achieving its status through a key contradiction: women hold higher positions than men across the media landscape. Out of the six newsrooms, four were led by women at the time of this

study: Omatie Lyder as Editor-in-Chief at the Trinidad Express. Judy Raymond as Editor-in-Chief of the Trinidad Newsday. Sharon Hamilton Cudjoe as Head of News at TV6, Sandra Maharaj as the Head of News at Trinidad and Tobago Television and Dawn Thomas, as the CEO of One Caribbean Media Limited, the conglomerate which owns TV6 and the Trinidad Express.

To begin this particular analysis, a quote from [REDACTED] from the Trinidad Guardian has been chosen as it distinctly reflects how men getting more opportunities affects the overall newsroom:

[There is a] huge gender gap...you find men coming into media houses and they are promoted faster or they're given better opportunities...whether it be for training or to cover overseas assignments, the company would only select male voices..[so] I asked...why aren't we being given the same opportunities as men? The response was that Venezuela is a very volatile situation...and the company felt it would have been better to not risk a female in that environment. [Then I asked] why are females not being given the same opportunities as men...when the situations are not volatile. One of the managers...said I touched a very sore point because they realised they had been unfair...and the next foreign assignment went to a female journalist and the other one went to another female journalist and then the other one went to another female journalist...we are capable of producing the same quality of content as the men.

To further this point, [REDACTED], a CNC3 male journalist admitted to getting special treatment by the female managers:

When I just started here, I was favoured by a previous set of [managers] and it was pointed out to me over the years and when I look back at it objectively, the opportunities I got, the opportunities for travel, for training and so on, were not afforded to other members of staff, so I would say, yes, I was and I think it was because of my gender because a lot of the females in that newsroom were treated very differently by that [REDACTED] head of news.

█ called out her managers and clearly stated her beliefs in that newsroom as well as our interview saying, "...we are capable of producing the same quality of content as the men." Even with female managers running the newsroom, women were not being given the same opportunities as men until it was blatantly pointed out. When even female managers reinforce a practice of more opportunities going to men than women, this results in an "occupational socialisation" and "situational learning" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 125) that men deserve these positions and opportunities more.

The decision by CNC3 managers to exclude female journalists from covering the "volatile" situation in Venezuela speaks to a generally accepted patriarchal mindset that women are weaker and lack the same abilities as men, needing to be protected. █, a TV6 journalist gave a comment which provides further insight to this paradigm:

[In terms of gender] I wouldn't call it discriminated against I would call it protected. We are part of a very violent culture...so for certain stories, they would prefer to send a man rather than send a woman...

█ acknowledges the cultural belief that women are weaker than men and must be "protected". However, even with this internal script, █ also wants to be recognised for their work and given the same opportunities as the men in the newsroom.

█ continues:

I get that you're trying to protect me, but I signed the same contract these men signed. So I'm prepared for whatever. [Now] I'm the go to person for everything. So it could be come hell or high water, I'm probably the person that's going to be there. So it's changed for me.

■ a female CNC3 journalist admits that there is a balance in terms of numbers and also that women are in more leadership roles so the landscape looks good for women.

I think it is balanced, because when you actually count how many female journalists [there are] as opposed to male journalists, I think we are even across the board. Well, as of recently weather, business is level. In terms of cameramen as well, photographers, we have that equality in terms of numbers...I think it is really based on the manager seeing that you have the potential as opposed to somebody else. So there's no real bias in [hiring] a woman instead of hiring a man.

Even with these numbers "even across the board", as ■ relates, there are still major struggles happening. ■ related how her personal relationship compromised her career.

I was involved in a very high profile relationship and that didn't turn out well but the scandal around all of that and who the person was, and because it was a political figure, kind of stymied my career and then you would find people would attack me based on that and as a female journalist. [If you are a] strongly opinionated person, they will, first thing they will do is attack your agenda and then attack you, your sex life and your personal life. And that's just what women face in the industry... I'm seeing how that has that stymied my career, because I would be put up to a particular, maybe the highest level of middle management but it wouldn't go beyond that because of the legacies...If it were a man, it would be completely different.

In terms of role orientation and role performance, women in the CNC3 newsroom see that men are treated differently and this becomes part of their role orientation. Seeing that they are at a disadvantage when compared to men, in terms of role performance they push harder to be recognised.

The way men and women interrelate, the types of stories allotted to a particular gender and the ability to rise up the ranks in a company, are all elements which affect the journalism culture.

Suzanne Sheppard, an editor at the Trinidad Guardian who has been in the business for decades also commented on the ability to progress based on her gender.

What I can tell you is that in terms of gender, based on my experience, and my capabilities that gender has played a part in the speed at which I've been able to move as I have gone through the ranks, and I've moved up and I've had opportunities, but I'm thinking that I would have had those opportunities, I would have more demand had I been a man. And I feel it even now. I'm the only female on the editor's roster and I can tell you, I have a voice now. But I mean, there is a level of a boy's club kind of thing.

This identification of a "boy's club" reflects that Sheppard has acknowledged this entity as part of the landscape and her role perception includes the mindset that there is a "boy's club" to navigate within the newsroom on a daily basis.

Men in the newsroom also carry perceptions about their female counterparts which infiltrate their role orientation and role perception and become part of the "shared occupational ideology" (Deuze, 2005, p. 6). One Trinidad Guardian editor [REDACTED] shared their beliefs:

I think they have to work just as hard, carve out their own identity...and I guess, the credibility and the ability to...I think their ability to get sources is...they have an edge because of our society where men would relate to someone flirting and I mean, that's a skill for women, if they could control that, they can use that to their advantage and get information without compromising yourself as a woman.

Despite observing that females have "an edge" in a largely heteronormative society, [REDACTED] comment "if they could control [flirting], they can use that to their advantage and get

information without compromising yourself as a woman”, suggests an inability to manage their own emotions, which is for all intents and purposes, sexist.

■ is an editor and is responsible for giving out assignments to the staff and also reviewing their work. Also, an editor is someone who can influence the direction of a story and general paradigm of their department and by extension, the newsroom. With this innate sexism underscoring their attitude and editorial decisions and interactions, it is clear to see how journalism culture is affected by gender beliefs and paradigms in Trinidad and Tobago.

■ from Trinidad and Tobago Television reveals that body shaming females is also a part of the role perception of their newsroom culture:

When I started to anchor...most companies have an idea of what they want their anchors to look like and [I was] taken off air, the person made a decision, they thought I was too...one instance, they thought my body shape, my body type and the clothes that I wore were too distracting.

■ also spoke about a similar experience with CNMG (now TTT) when she was employed there:

I was called to a meeting at HR at CMNG because I started to wear my hair curly. My hair actually fell out and I cut it and it was big curls and they told me I looked less serious and less like a journalist with a curly hair... soon after that, I would say I was replaced but I resigned knowing that I would be replaced.

These comments indicate that women in the newsroom are being discriminated against based on the way they look. The power to decide how journalists look on air rests with the company and the more this policy is practiced, like with the two instances above, the more this type of

behaviour becomes a part of the “shared occupational ideology” ” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6) and “situational learning” (Ibid) within the newsroom, shaping journalism culture.

■ from CNC3 related their experience of being told how to dress:

...we have a culture where people feel as if you're reading news, or if you're on TV, you have to be dressed in a shirt or jacket or something you have to be fully covered and you do not go on with something sleeveless...I remember my boss pulling me aside [to say] advertisers, sales reps are complaining and saying if you dress like that, nobody's going to want to advertise with, on your segment...you need wear a jacket, you can't wear sleeveless, you can't wear a dress...

The fact that “advertisers, sales reps [were] complaining” about what this journalist was wearing and saying “nobody’s going to want to advertise” speaks to the wider values of the society: that unless this woman is “fully covered”, the market, the public, will not respond well to her. Sales representatives are relaying the desires and priorities of advertisers and the advertisers are aware of the wants and needs of their markets. This is a definitive factor in the journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago and affects how journalists perceive and perform their roles.

While Lyder said that women have indeed reached the highest levels of the industry, she also acknowledged that women in journalism are generally, treated differently by members of the public:

There was an incident with [one of our female journalists] and [a man from National Quarries]. She did a story on National Quarries which he obviously didn't like and he did a hatchet job on her online, on social media, on Facebook and then for me he had my picture up and was insinuating that [she] and I are in cahoots and taking bribes...and that's just an example of what they do to the women journalists and

that is why I go back to the point that we have to live a very ethical life but even if you live an ethical life, they haul you over the coals so what do you do?

One male journalist [REDACTED] in this newsroom commented that “women may have the edge now, especially in this company”:

I think the thing the gender issue is very strong now and I do believe that the women may have the edge now, especially in this company because you just see the promotions and stuff like that and it’s all seemed to be closed door, closed door promotions. There are a couple times there are people I know who went for promotions and they were turned down and stuff like that. So basically women running this organization basically and they just keep replacing [them]...when one go they just replace [them with another] and stuff like that. I see that favour from the outside.

This comment reflects that this male journalist feels that women have made it within the company while his colleague [REDACTED] is fighting against being seen as a weaker journalist who must be “protected”. As said in the beginning of this section, at the time of this study, the Head of News TV6, the Editor-in-Chief of the Trinidad Express and the CEO of One Caribbean Media Limited, the conglomerate which owns TV6 and the Trinidad Express were all women. These individual perceptions and experiences of gender define the newsroom and confirm that this is a paradigm which must be renegotiated every day for every assignment.

However, even with women in these positions, bias that women aren’t as good as men, still exists. Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express related the reaction to hiring a woman on the sports desk:

I remember once when we had hired a woman in sport and the sports desk was totally up in arms because they could not accept that this woman, you know, would be able to do a good job and it turned out well...

These comments from men and women in different newsrooms about how female journalists are perceived and treated by their fellow journalists, as well as the public, reveal that there is there is bias against women in the local journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

Race and how it is perceived and interacted within the newsroom is also a key part of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. It defines part of the role perception and role performance of journalists. Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday comments:

I think there are certain perceptions and sometimes they work in your favour and sometimes they work against you. You know, people make assumptions about you and then they're quite surprised to discover that actually, you're a normal person, you have the same kind of problems that they have or the same kind of attitudes or whatever. I know that ethnicity is an issue in certain areas because I've had complaints about that from other people.

Whether your race “works in your favour” or “works against you” is an element which journalists must navigate within their newsroom and when being perceived by the public including those they cover and interview. Raymond is a white Trinidadian and revealed that she was discriminated against by her staff. This example suggests that journalists are profiled, within their own newsroom and this is taken further in the field.

■, an editor from CNC3 spoke of her experience while working at CNMG (now TTT) covering the general election:

CNMG invested heavily in that election and Hema was assigned to cover the UNC. Curtis Williams is a black man [and] was assigned to cover the PNM and I was assigned to cover the COP because I was neither well, or both. So that was a pretty blatant example...and they make no excuses about it. They were like, this is what we're doing. You're a mixed race person here, you're going to cover the COP and that's how we are going to infiltrate these parties.

As explained in the media landscape chapter (chapter 5), the UNC is an Indo-Trinidadian party and the PNM is an Afro-Trinidadian party. Hema Ramkissoon is an Indo-Trinidadian and Curtis Williams is an Afro-Trinidadian. There is clear profiling happening with these journalists by their own editors. CMNG has now been rebranded into TTT and is the same state broadcaster. As discussed previously, TTT skews towards pro-government coverage. Profiling in this manner is yet another layer which affects journalism culture in that newsroom and within the entire local industry.

■ from TV6 news also shared an observation about gender and race as they relate to public coverage:

“There's a tendency to underrepresent East Indian faces. I see that a lot...like if I look up the Big Question⁴⁹, in the newspaper, out of 10 faces that they shot in San Fernando⁵⁰ in Port of Spain and asked this question to, fewer than five will be East Indian... so, when you look at the faces and all newscasts, the faces are all, not all but most are of one race...We under include females and our coverage as compared to males, I think that takes, that takes an effort to combat, meaning you have to go out there and make an effort to find more East Indians and to find more women to put in your coverage...

⁴⁹ The Big Question is a section in the Trinidad Express where the opinions of the “man on the street” are featured. A journalist goes about the streets asking members of the public a “Big Question” based on a current story.

⁵⁰ San Fernando is a town in the south west region of Trinidad. See: <https://ontheworldmap.com/trinidad-and-tobago/>

Like many Trinidadians, ■ is mixed with several races. Their comments speak to gender and race bias across the national culture which influences journalism culture, validating the comments of female journalists in the above section.

■ from CNC3 also spoke about another important element that connects to the post colonial race relations section in the Media Landscape chapter (chapter 5) where it was emphasised that these plantocratic systems (Beckford, 1972) still have an impact on society and journalism today.

A lot of it is based on race and gender...and sometimes in some cases, money. So there's a lot of bias. There's a lot of people not being impartial and supposed to be and you just kind of lose faith in your own people...and it's from politics come straight down. You're talking about the corrupt politicians, but you yourself are corrupt.

In this instance, this journalist (C13) is referencing the political alignment and clientelism (Storr, 2016; Hallin & Mancini, 2004) with parties that represent certain ethnicities (Ryan, 1974; Congressional Research Service, 2018). However, as we can see by ■ comment, the media landscape within this newsroom is not objective and harks to the “political tribalism” spoken about by Kiran Maharaj, president of the Media Institute of the Caribbean in or semi-structured interview for this study.

As (Storr, 2016) relates:

The small states of the English-speaking Caribbean were forged by a history of extermination, piracy, colonization, slavery, indentureship, geography, and state control models of economic, social, and political development. This historical trajectory has also been influenced by various internal and external influences...These inherited characteristics permeate all levels of Caribbean society; it is therefore not surprising to find them in the present-day practice of journalism and the coverage of everyday life. (Storr, 2016, p. 32-33)

This study has also discussed the influence of ownership structures on class and race tensions. The work of Lent explains that “When foreign corporations sold their Caribbean properties, invariably, it was to large local businesses (or the government); no one else could afford them. The result in such transactions was that although the nationality of the owner changed, the social class he belonged to and served did not” (Lent 1991, p.48).

Therefore, the priorities of the owner of a media house can impact the coverage and there is the possibility of giving more coverage to one race, class or gender over another.

The experience of journalists with race and gender within newsrooms, their local industry and the country at large, is a key factor which defines how they perceive and perform their roles which in turn defines the journalism culture of Trinidad and Tobago. The themes which emerged from the semi-structured interviews, while more nuanced, give us crucial information about what journalists believe and why they do what they do.

8.5 The public’s interest and the public interest

As pointed out in the section on innate values versus learned values, journalists do have a desire to serve the public interest. However, the intimate relationship between some politicians and journalists as well as the reputation of the media house a journalist works for, compromise the trust of the public. In addition, journalists become demotivated when the public does not change its view point or improve their situation based on information revealed.

Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express commented that a journalist’s role is “to inform, educate”. However, within her role, she also questions whether or not the public is even interested in being informed:

...But do people want to be educated? Sometimes, I wonder...I am amazed at the opinions I hear...they're still not informed and don't know...The important thing is to have your finger on the pulse.

This lack of interest by the public is an element in the discursive field (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017) which can affect the role performance of journalists if they perceive that their work doesn't truly matter to the public.

■ from TV6 also lamented the short attention span of the public saying, "Trinidadian culture is one that is very laid back. It's very light hearted. It's also very short. It's a small attention span that we've developed over a long, long time." According to ■, this also affects the way journalists feel about the work that they do.

...what I've noticed is that unless we keep talking about certain things, or finding other ways to report on certain things, we forget and sometimes it means we forgot to 'cause we feel like no one else cares. So why are we running it down?

If a journalist is working for the public interest but they feel that they have a public who is not interested, this will inevitably affect their perception of their own role and subsequently their role performance. The public is an element which defines and is defined by journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. Within the discursive field, the public and the public interest are key actors. They can inspire or demotivate the media.

Credibility is an issue for the public which affects their ability to trust journalists and maintain interest in their work.

To reiterate ■ comments which emphasised trust:

You should be trustworthy. You should have a critical mind. You should be well read and you must be informed at all times. But more than that, you must be able to create trust. You have to set boundaries...you must also respect yourself and understand that you don't have to sleep with people, sell yourself to get a story. You don't have to compromise the integrity...

Again, this element of public trust comes up within the interview with ■■■. The use of “should be” reveals ideal qualities of a journalist, speaking to ■■■ perception of the role. However, this perception is tempered with knowledge of the industry as well as an inherent participation in national culture. When ■■■ says, “You have to set boundaries...you must also respect yourself and understand that you don't have to sleep with people, sell yourself to get a story. You don't have to compromise the integrity”, it connects to comments by other journalists about those in the industry who “sleep around” to get information which is one of the reasons why the public thinks certain journalists and their media houses are partisan.

Journalists are accused of being partisan, sleeping with politicians to get stories, extorting various people by leveraging their personal information and advancing their careers for political and business favours. Proximity to the locus of power, inducements and political clientelism (Storr, 2016) were discussed under the “objectivity and corruption theme”. All of these elements compromise the public interest.

A Trinidad Guardian journalist ■■■ related one particular situation involving a colleague:

I also know journalists who use their position to gangster the public⁵¹. I know somebody who was renting from [a prominent person]. [The journalist] was renting the apartment and didn't pay the utilities and when it was time to move out [they] didn't want to pay it and [they] told [the landlord] “I have information on you, I'll write you up in a story.” There are unscrupulous journalists who use this system of power...exposing somebody's private business to get rewards.

Journalists are supposed to give a voice to the voiceless, hold those in power to account and ensure that accurate and timely information gets to the public so that they can make meaningful decisions. This extortion is a gross abuse of power and if made public, could further erode confidence in the ethical abilities of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago.

⁵¹ The phrase “gangster the public” is colloquial language. It means taking advantage of the public.

Lyder admitted that the credibility of the industry has declined:

...I think our credibility and I'm talking generally here...the polls have shown that people have less faith in journalists and there was a time to be a journalist was the ultimate in terms of faith...when you're high on a pedestal, and a lot of things have happened over the years that made a drop in [the public's] estimation. You know, like you have journalists charged with crime, robbing people...

For a profession which depends on public trust, it is not difficult to see why the public remains sceptical.

█ from CNC3 gave further insight into the reasons behind the public's declining trust and interest in the media.

There has been a deterioration of the public's view from politics, politicians who, quite frankly, did not like how they were treated...It really did started with the Panday regime, where he was making statements as should the media be free to publish untrammelled lies half truths and innuendos then...there was this big statement he made, "do them before they do they do me"⁵² and things like that. There were a lot of statements that were made to...really bring the media down as much as possible. That, since then, has become a sort of whipping the media...the media has sort of become the bobolee⁵³ in that anytime a politician feels aggrieved because of the story has been published about him or her, there is this sort of attack and that...over the years sort of diminish the way people started looking at media.

█ did also acknowledge that the media has also "made some drastic mistakes over the last ten years that has...eroded that sort of trust that people have in us." As mentioned before,

⁵² In 1998, previous Prime Minister Basdeo Panday made a public appeal to his supporters to boycott the Trinidad Guardian who he had been having several entanglements with since the beginning of his tenure in 1996 (Inter Press Service, 1996). Panday stated, "If a newspaper is working against your interest to achieve a better life, it is your enemy. No newspaper can survive without us. They all depend on us for survival" (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995, p. 136).

⁵³ A bobolee in Trinidad and Tobago is typically a person who allows another to beat him up, misuse him or make a fool of him. See: <https://triniinxisle.com/2020/05/03/trini-phrase-boboli/>

CNC3 is part of Guardian Media Holdings which includes the Trinidad Guardian newspaper which ran the story about the body of the alleged ex-boyfriend of the Chief Justice being identified in a homicide (Channel: The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper, 2018). This was covered in the Ethnography chapter. The Trinidad Express posted on social media about the misleading story, calling the Trinidad Guardian out for “fake news” (Facebook, 2018). In addition, the Trinidad Guardian is the only media house which has had walkouts by journalists and public accusations of editorial interference by those same journalists (TV 6, 2013). Therefore, public trust in Guardian Media Limited has been affected.

The public’s interest depends on how journalists uphold the public interest. Given the above examples as well as the those from the “objectivity and corruption” section, it is clear that journalists in Trinidad and Tobago have both personal and professional ethical challenges and that this “deterioration of the public's view [of journalists] which ■■■ refers to, exists. However, ■■■ also emphasises that the public also lacks the proper understanding of the limits of the media and place blame wrongly.

A very serious part of it [is] because they can't understand....when you are dealing with the environment such as social media, where people are publishing things raw and uninhibited and unedited and the media now comes under media law and says we got to sanitize the thing, we cannot show this raw, we cannot publish somebody’s face without knowing whether or not legally this is accurate. People tend to say, “well, here it is on social media, but why it is the media houses trying to water this thing down? I can’t trust them, I will trust what I see raw.” So because of that lack of understanding. There's a sort of breakdown in terms of trust against the media.

Profits rely on circulation sales and online clicks by the public. If the public feels that they cannot rely on local media houses for trustworthy and unbiased information, profits will inevitably decline (Visentin, et al., 2019).

One media manager [REDACTED] who asked for their identity to be withheld altogether, confirmed this point:

I think there is an awareness that you need to provide a newsroom a high level of independence, because we have seen I think with the Guardian newspaper, when there was interference there, so, there was a walkout and then in the not too distant past, there was a second walkout again...and I think that media managements are very, very much aware that, it can affect your business because your credibility with the public and then if you lose credibility with the public, it affects the bottom line and so forth.

However, I did observe CNC3 making an effort to recover trust. During this study, I signed up to a “PRATT Chat” held by the Public Relations Association of Trinidad and Tobago discussing the relationship between public relations officers and journalists. The organiser, previous president of PRATT Nicole Duke-Westfield, appointed a panel of journalists to answer questions from their members as well as the wider audience focusing on what journalists need in order to get accurate and timely news out when public relations officers send them information. Within the wider discussion, an audience member asked about the relevance of the media, considering the advent of social media where the public could do their own research and receive updates and breaking news much quicker than the culturally established legacy broadcast news updates at 6:00 am, 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm. The then anchor for CNC3 news as well as Deputy Head of News, Golda Lee Bruce, responded that the new job of the media is one of “verification”. Lee Bruce emphasised how precarious trusting information on social media can be and insisted that local newsrooms are there to verify information for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure they have the most accurate and reliable information.

While announcing the importance of CNC3’s role in the verification of national news items in a room full of public relations practitioners could be seen as merely strategic, the one-on-one semi-structured interview with Lee Bruce revealed that she is genuinely interested in serving

the public and pushes back on certain demands from the board in her position as Deputy Head of News for the channel. As established in the previous ethnography chapter, editors and heads of department extend influence and shape the journalism culture of a newsroom. Lee Bruce's principles counteract the elements in the discursive field which have been associated with Guardian Media Limited, again emphasizing the friction which is continuously happening in each newsroom, showing that journalism culture is ebbing and flowing within the discursive field (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017), according to the actions of those within it as well as external to it.

8.6 The advertising agenda: the economic roots of (self) censorship

During the semi-structured interviews, journalists spoke about the need to censor their content because their media managers did not want to jeopardise their own business relations. Therefore, I asked journalists more directly about this Chilling Effect and how they felt the advertising agenda influenced their newsroom and culture.

Below is a series of quotes from a particularly pertinent interview with [REDACTED] from CNC3 which gives depth and context to the theme:

My [family member] was one of the people that walked out of the Guardian...because the head of the Guardian at the time, Jones P. Madeira had a headline called "Panday's Alarum" ...but basically showing Panday⁵⁴ creating alarm unnecessarily. Panday called the head of Ansa McAL⁵⁵ Anthony Sabga...and told him [the UNC⁵⁶ was] pulling all the government ads out of the Guardian. Anthony Sabga came into the Guardian...had a long meeting basically which stripped Jones P. Madeira of his free

⁵⁴ Basdeo Panday was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago from 1995-2001.

⁵⁵ Ansa McAL is the conglomerate which owns the Trinidad Guardian and CNC3, now amalgamated into Guardian Media Limited.

⁵⁶ The United National Congress (UNC) was the party led by former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday.

powers to report what he wants, at which point there was a walkout of the Guardian of a lot of journalists, my [family member] including.

I, myself, personally, both at Newsday and in the early stages of working here, have been basically told, more at Newsday, I was told plainly where I had to not go, not tread this line, not report on this simply because it was affecting advertisers who were threatening to pull out their ads and a little more here, not too overtly...there was a case where a certain story we were reporting hard on it and we were asked to pull back and be a little softer because advertisers are threatening to take out their money because the bottom line at the end of the day, the business owners of the company see it as a business, right? We as we see it as journalism. But the argument is that if you don't have the money to run the station, even your great journalism skills will amount to nothing. Of course, I don't agree with that at all, because I think strong journalism will sell itself.

[There was] a case where we [had too] many commercials...this was leading up to 2007 election...and the commercial content was so strong that at one point we had a [a one hour] newscast produced with 45 minutes of ads and we have 15 minutes [for news]...so stories had to be like real short and quick...after every story or two [there was an] ad...we were making a ton of money and company was happy, but the public was going mad. They were like what on earth is going on with the station? So as much as it worked in the favour of the company in the revenue, as much as we were told it was not jeopardizing our journalistic integrity in what we write, it was jeopardizing our integrity as a station in terms of what we put out because...we seem like a big commercial from seven to eight, with news in between.

comprehensive comments reveal a journalism culture that is majorly influenced by the advertising agenda. This study would venture to posit that media managers are more afraid of losing advertisers than going to court, confirming a pervasive non-legal Chilling Effect. describes advertising as “the lifeline of the media” acknowledging that it is what pays for the salaries of the journalists working in that organisation. Therefore, as says, “...the argument

is that if you don't have the money to run the station, even your great journalism skills will amount to nothing.”

In the words of ■■■:

...you can't bite the hand that feeds you. Many would be scared and intimidated to step on certain people's toes given the influence...We often deflect, we often step away from certain stories given that that particular corporation or particular entity, that particular business, has a heavy influence in the company.

Gibbings (2020) advised that the “survival game of Caribbean mass media involves adaptability to a number of phenomena...Among them is the opportunity weak financial positions present for the imposition of both state and private information agendas.”

In situations where state media remain a feature of the landscape, state media spend is more likely than not to be extensively diverted in support of such entities. In some cases, with an increased share of state advertising expenditure on the market there is the risk of employment of such resources as a tool to reward compliant editorial behaviour and to punish recalcitrance (Gibbings, 2020, n.p.)

Clearly, advertisers, both government and private, know that they have power and they utilise it in their favour. Juliette Storr calls this “economic censorship” saying that, “The sum effect is that the journalist is forced to drop the story, but the underlying problem is that the advertiser never directly tells the news agency to drop these stories in the first place....Essentially, the pressures of advertisers are so great that editors, publishers, talk show hosts and producers, and other decision-makers have developed their own form of self censorship in order to avoid loss of revenue” (Storr, 2016, p. 140-141). This is a palpable example of the non-legal Chilling Effect.

The Chilling Effect and censorship, which go hand in hand, have been discussed throughout this thesis, especially with respect to media laws and fear of violent societal reprisals. This “economic censorship” (Storr, 2016, p.139) is at the heart of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago and this professional milieu.

While CNC3 journalist ■ acknowledges this censorship, they offer an important caveat: that the integrity of the newsroom depends on the strength of those running it:

I've seen where people would say [I'm] so controversial, [they're] not gonna put an ad...I don't really care because I think people respect you more than people that do it, but I think it all depends on your head of department and how strong they are in terms of protecting the integrity but advertisers will always attempt to control the outcome.

■ from the Trinidad Express also agreed with the notion that the “bottom line” rules all. However, they also agreed with ■ comments that the leaders of the newsroom have the ability to safeguard the integrity of that newsroom:

[Advertising is] huge, huge, because at the end of the day, that represents bread and butter for most media houses and there are times when your houses may be forced to make a decision that may not really be the best, what they may make the decision to protect their bottom line but that's the reality of the industry....[but] I've [also] seen that with changes of government, articles that have been both negative and positive, the past administration and this current administration, if you do things that, I mean that are not right, we publish it right, regardless of the fact that you may have, you may be one of our biggest clients.

This comment is reminiscent of the situation⁵⁷ with the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business which consistently advertised in the Trinidad Express newspaper. The newspaper was not willing to compromise its objective values to secure investment. This decision was made by the editorial team as well as the head members of One Caribbean Media (OCM) in the country. Curtis Rampersad, publications editor of the Trinidad Express commented saying, “The only option is to fight it, you can’t give in because if you let it happen, you become a product that can be bought and sold” (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018).

In this example, the editors of the Trinidad Express had the support of their media managers at OCM. However, in [REDACTED] example, the board folded to pressure from previous prime minister Basdeo Panday and “stripped Jones P. Madeira of his free powers to report.” Then it was up to the journalists and they decided to walk out.

Examining this notion of the strength of management at an even more granular level, while OCM appears to have “stronger” media managers than Ansa McAL, [REDACTED] from TV6, which is owned by OCM, also observed that “... there would have been times that stories, management will call and say they want this story because it's a friend of theirs who's having this event and everything has to be pushed aside or abbreviated to accommodate that person.”

[REDACTED] also related a situation in the ethnography chapter where their story was pulled due to a call from one of the advertisers to management. They related his experience saying, “They directly threatened to pull all advertising, not just from [REDACTED] radio stations, they threatened

⁵⁷ The Express was running a series of stories about the founder of the business school, Arthur Lok Jack, being investigated for insider trading (Loop News, 2018). According to Express editor, Curtis Rampersad, the company unofficially threatened to pull their entire advertising budget and also issued a pre-action protocol to the Express not to run anymore stories. The paper responded by refusing to curtail the investigative series and engaging their own lawyers to respond to the legal letter in a manner which made it clear that they were ready to proceed to court.

to pull from the [REDACTED] group if the story ran and instead of our CEO standing up for us, the CEO buckled and did not run the story because for [them], ads were more important.”

This theme of the influence of the advertising agenda and the Chilling Effect of “economic censorship” (Storr, 2016, p.139) is a complex one. The time of year, the regime in power, the individual relationships between media owners and advertisers and the strength of media managers, editors and journalists all factor in to the discursive field and affect the role perception and role performance of journalists on a daily basis.

8.7 The need for resources: human and technological

In the Media Landscape and Ethnography chapters (chapter 5 and 7), issues of cheap, untrained labour came up as a major facet of the low quality of journalism being produced. In depth semi-structured interviews revealed that journalists were very frustrated with the lack of resources and detailed how their motivation was affected which resulted in a sub par product. Editors revealed that they were frustrated with the level of competence of journalists coming into their newsrooms.

Recalling the comments of Judy Raymond, Trinidad and Tobago Newsday editor-in-chief from chapter 5, the Media Landscape chapter, she said:

...the media, especially newspapers, is labour intensive and do have high costs so they try to cut down on that by bringing in school leavers with no qualifications or people with degrees but no practical experience. Journalists are selected on the basis of who applies saying I want to be a journalist and things like experience, contacts and aptitude for the job don't really come into it...So there is a huge gap between the expectations and actual competencies of journalists.

Kiran Maharaj, past president of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) also related that because the media houses could not find people within

their country to take posts, they started taking literature students, students who wanted to do social sciences and international relations.

Suzanne Sheppard, an editor at the Trinidad Guardian has been in the industry since the 1980's. Sheppard has seen many changes within the media landscape as a whole, as well as within all of the newsrooms she has worked within which are inclusive of TV6, The Trinidad and Tobago Newsday and the Trinidad Guardian. This appraisal of the hiring process and the people allowed to come on to the job, comes from decades of observation and experience:

I think in terms of even at the level of decision making, of the level of management, it has become much too much about the bottom line, and much less about the quality of reporting and the quality of the persons you bring into journalism preferring to go with the less costly option, rather than the quality person who will really deliver a package to you...that is what drives the decisions that you get at the boardroom level. Those who are responding to their shareholders and their owners have to drive for profits and it does cost us a great deal...people don't seem to understand the connection between what they're hearing now and decisions that were driven by profits.

Sheppard also said that local journalists attempt to “mimic” American journalists but that “...we [are] mimicking on a very superficial level....We're not really studying the art, the craft, of reporting of interviewing. So we get all of the frameworks, but we don't fill it. We don't populate it with substance and quality” (Sheppard, interview with the author, 2018).

The observations by Raymond and Sheppard that media managers are keeping the quality of journalists low so that they can turn a profit seems counter intuitive when trust in the media is also a contributor to profits. This lack of knowledge on the part of the journalist also impacts on the quality of storytelling.

When Sheppard was asked about the duty of a journalist in our semi-structured interview, she also spoke about the importance of research and going into the story to achieve a high level of objectivity and discussion:

It also is an important way of sharing information objectively...one of the things I'm trying to strive to talk to reporters about is that your reporting must make a difference. So you're not just reporting somebody died. How and why did they die? Can we have a conversation on how to avoid these kinds of tragedies?

She also gave the example of a story that broke at the time in which a woman was killed because her partner breached a protection order against him. Sheppard emphasised the need to go beyond what was being posted on social media and “shaping the conversation around what happened”.

So the thing about journalism is that we have an opportunity in the space we occupy, not just to report about that boyfriend, which in fact, anybody on social media could share, but it's going beyond those basic facts and opinions, and then shaping our conversation around what happened, why, where are the shortcomings? And how can we do it better? And how can we ensure that we don't have to write this kind of story again?

This deficiency in the depth of reporting is being called out and framed as being a big part of what could make an impact on society. ■■■ from CNC3 also shared their personal observations, noting that a lack of research and education can also cause bias:

...we don't go in depth. We don't really do in depth journalism. We don't do follow ups. We don't do the research before you go to the assignment and that's why I think we're lacking...We don't educate ourselves...You go your report, come back,...you don't really get a holistic view of the situation. You get a one sided [view] so in a way here is that bias, but I think it's just because of personality, it's because of people in their own selves. They become cultured in here where you don't need to research. You don't need to find out the backstory just report...So it's a downfall on the individual I find, [rather] than the profession itself.

Taking these comments into account along with the previous ones, it can be established that the lack of research is a part of the current journalism culture and the lack of willingness of media managers to spend money to develop the skill levels of their staff is a main factor in keeping newsrooms subpar.

In terms of resources, journalists also they expressed frustration with the planning of newscasts and a lack of equipment to get their work done. When asked why they were not being furnished with the tools to do their job, one journalist from TV6 [REDACTED] said that the company seemed to have no interest in modernising.

...we've asked for a drone forever, because TV storytelling now is in multiple dimensions. And you know, they haven't bought one. We paid a freelancer with a drone to do [a story] so it's not that it's impossible, but it's not really so much about an individual level for requesting things. It's more about their recognition that things need to evolve right and advance. The newscast is sterile with just everything we edited for the day. It has nothing live from outside. Nothing like that and do they understand how backward that is? I don't think so.

[REDACTED] from CNC3 offered an insight into the difference they experienced working for TTT and CNC3 and also echoed Raymond and Sheppard's comments about the bottom line, revealing that journalistic skills training is not the only thing media managers try to cut costs on.

[At TTT] resources were sometimes limitless. I didn't understand the difference between that kind of state resource and a place like this where profit is the thing. When I came here [to CNC3], I was just like, there is nothing to work with! It's best we just rub bricks together...we were under resourced, terribly. But the media managers make money. So why not? If they can keep the cost of production down and profit high? Why not? Why? Why would they give us every single thing that we need? If their, if their profit is being maintained, year after year...

■ from TV6 also voiced their frustration about the lack of resources, identifying that it is something that happens in newsrooms across Trinidad and Tobago:

...I do think that the culture is also backward in the sense that sometimes you don't have the resources that you need. For example, in sport...we want to go on an assignment [but] we can't get it because...we are short of cameramen. Right? And when you're short a camera person you miss out on the assignment [and] another organization could beat you to that story... but [there may come a day] when you may beat that organization because that organization would have also had that same shortcoming that you would have had on the previous day. So it's not hunky dory, in Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of the station.

In a semi-structured interview one media manager ■ was asked about this issue of resources, human and technological. They acknowledged the problem but identified the company's finances as the main issue saying:

Some of the big things obviously, is the fact is that there's a reduction in revenue, advertising revenue... and the question is how do you with dwindling resources, continue to invest in your resources because you've got to invest in people, if you want them to be able to do this sort of quality reporting, that can make a difference to the society. So you have to do that with a reduced spend. So that is a challenge on its own.

However, the comment from ■ was based on the beginning of their career at CNC3 and ■ from TV6 said that they were asking "for a drone forever", indicating that they were seeking resources before there was a "reduction in revenue". As ■ pointed out, "...the media managers make money. So why not? If they can keep the cost of production down and profit high? Why not? Why? Why would they give us every single thing that we need? If their, if their profit is being maintained, year after year..."

At an editorial meeting with the staff of CNC3 and the Trinidad Guardian, editors introduced the need to streamline the communication of assignments. Within this meeting, the topic of resources was a point of contention as the head of the department wanted to reallocate what journalists were covering certain assignments. An editor protested saying, "...you see what you just said about sending resources, you cannot do that because I cannot now compel a CNC reporter on assignment [to change]". This interaction echoes [REDACTED] question, "how do you with dwindling resources, continue to invest in your resources...if you want them to be able to do this sort of quality reporting...". This exchange in the editorial meetings suggests a continued struggle by staff to get management to understand the limitations of the newsroom. [REDACTED] did note this as an issue saying, "...they're really huge areas of dissatisfaction, right...it's the lack of communication between the management of the organization and the journalists on the ground."

A lack of resources in the newsroom, human and technological, is a facet that has become a known working condition even though journalists express distress and demotivation to their editors and media managers. This is an impactful element within the discursive field of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

8.8 Media Law: apathy or ignorance?

One of the components of this study is to investigate how media laws affect journalism culture. Within the semi-structured interviews, certain questions were posed to the journalists to find out what they thought of certain laws and in their observation, how those laws have affected their work. The first question posed was whether or not they were aware of the Libel and Defamation Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2014). After this was discussed, journalists were asked whether they felt that there was a libel chill across the

industry, whether these laws made them feel anxious, threatened or less comfortable in pursuing their daily activities. Journalists were then asked if they would be in favour of repealing the libel and defamation laws and also if they would agree with amending parts of the Cybercrime Bill (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2017), the Interception of Communication Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2010) and the Data Protection Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2011).

Overall findings show that while journalists knew that these laws existed and there was the threat of jail time as well as financial loss, they were not clear on the specific details of the fines and jail time. Within the thematic analysis, it became clear that the more a journalist knew about the laws, the more they acknowledged a chill, especially with regards to libel and defamation. As (Townend, 2014, p. 18) points out, “The chilling effect is not an objective or verifiable reality: it exists through protagonists’ perception of the law and its effects; this will vary depending on jurisdiction and the form of national laws, the resources available to the publishers and their prior legal knowledge and experience.”

The amount to which journalists are affected by these laws definitely depends on their perception of its danger as well their own role perception and execution within the culture of their newsroom. These were more educated journalists, court reporters, investigative journalists and editors. However, overall, the majority of journalists did not seem to feel that these laws were inhibiting any sort of media freedom. One journalist [REDACTED] admitted that they were “terrified of going to jail” and as a result, they assured due diligence in their work but comments to this effect were few.

As mentioned before, the editors and media managers were the ones who were acutely aware of the legislation and the consequences of transgression and knew that they were the buffer between their journalists and these laws.

Findings also showed that a cross section of journalists were not in favour of repealing the law entirely because they felt that local journalists cannot be trusted and they need to be kept in check by a system with consequences.

The next three subsections detail some of the responses.

8:3:1 Are you aware of the various media laws?

Here are a few comments from journalists about their level of awareness:

I can't say because you are educating me a bit on it, too so that is where I'm oblivious. — [REDACTED]

I've been [to] training you know, every now and again... [on] some training with libel and defamatory...[I] just read what they show you, when it comes into your domain. — [REDACTED]

I haven't [read the Act]. I should and I intend to. — [REDACTED]

There's workshops and training but the thing with the workshops and training, it's just like going to school. This theory is not the same in practice. — [REDACTED]

An editor will call and say listen, "you see this and see this particular line in your copy, this is libellous and that's how I have learned. — [REDACTED]

I've had one session in that internship. — [REDACTED]

Judy Raymond, editor-in-chief of the Express described in further detail the attitude of journalists, in reference to the chill of these laws:

I don't think it has affected journalists as much as it should have, in that a lot of them don't read enough, don't take those things on [and] haven't actually read assorted draft bills or Acts and don't know how it could affect them which is really appalling. I mean, I think if journalists got together and actively campaigned against these things that could make quite a difference.

Aside from formal journalism education which, as has been established, most journalists in Trinidad and Tobago do not have, media law training comes on the job. However, there are various constraints to achieving this. Raymond explained why journalists lack this knowledge:

I certainly think journalists need to be more aware of libel than they are...because the turnover of reporters is pretty high and because editors generally need a refresher from time to time...but of course, once that costs money management tends to not think it's a priority...

Training seems to be a major issue. More than raising and maintaining the general standard of news production, threats like libel and defamation could also be avoided. Head of News at TTT Sandra Maharaj said that she “would wish for better training for journalists.”

I think that is critical in developing our young journalists...I know, finances are always a constraint but I would like to see them be exposed to the wider world. So, you know, perhaps more opportunities for travel, for instance, opportunities to where we could have maybe linkages with international organisations like perhaps BBC or CNN or so where people can, can have that opportunity to go out into a bigger environment, see how they operate and then bring it back rather than we remain in our own little cocoon here... it's almost as if you're feeling that the country's stagnant and it's not moving even here because every time you hear...we looking at a slim budget, it all comes down to budget and economy.

Maharaj's comment reflects the financial issues which prevent journalists from receiving proper training, especially with regards to media laws. If they did receive proper journalistic training, it is possible that editors would not have to be relied upon as much. Raymond advised:

I mean, as I say, never ascribe to malice what can be explained by incompetence and I think most of, if not all the mistakes in the daily papers are the result of incompetence and not malice at all. I mean, you know, despite all the talk and conspiracy theories about which papers are PNM and which one is UNC and so on and so on, people printing lies to get readers...No...I mean, journalists are people too and they don't deliberately write lies about other people.

The interview excerpts from this section generally reflect that journalists do not do enough research nor are they aware enough of the various media laws and how those laws could affect them.

However, even some editors have not looked properly at the details of the law:

I haven't looked at it critically, lately. I think they're necessary though. — [REDACTED]

I haven't read the law, but I know what MATT has told me. — [REDACTED]

There's a level of ambiguity in my mind about it. — [REDACTED]

I don't think [journalists know about the laws]. Like they might not know the specifics...but I know they are aware that if they are found guilty, that there are consequences. — [REDACTED]

Even though they are being relied upon, these comments reveal that some editors do not have a full grasp of the laws. Therefore, if this is their role perception, it can be suggested that this influences the way their own journalists perceive the law and perform their duties in accordance.

8:3:2 Do you feel a chill within the industry caused by these media laws?

While the above comments reflect a blasé attitude towards these laws, journalists were personally asked if they felt a chill within the industry that affected their everyday work to the point of deterrence from pursuing a story. [REDACTED] commented:

No, I don't think it has any...There are so many cases right now that you hear about. But actually I don't really think it is deterring them from telling the stories...and I sometimes wonder if they all have court clothes and court money because of how close they walk that line?

[REDACTED], who works for the state media house, didn't feel that there was a chill due to the way their colleagues “walk that line”, even though “there are so many cases right now”. Perhaps, as

Raymond pointed out, the nonchalance of [REDACTED] colleagues rests in their ignorance of the laws or, the very relevant fact that they work for the state broadcaster.

[REDACTED] who also works for TTT who actually covered the story of the previous prime minister's repeal of Section 9 of the Libel and Defamation Act felt that the journalists at state funded newsroom, still exercised caution:

We are still conservative...so we will still try to avoid putting the names, especially older generations who've been trained a certain way and will not change. So people will be conservative about how they write things. But more and more, we're starting to see a name get tossed out, or, you know, details, more details than you would see in stories. [With the Data Protection Act and Cybercrime Bill] I'm very cautious – the way the bill is worded right now is cause for concern in terms of, you know, the contentious information and how you get information...it's not necessarily an attack on journalists, per se. But it opens the door for journalists to have to give up their sources which is not something as I am cool with. That is one of our privileges we should really fight for.

[REDACTED] who is more mature than their colleagues [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] said differently:

It is serious deterrent because essentially, it holds you liable for your work, for what you're doing...I've seen where people kind of inadvertently fall into that trap indefinitely and expose themselves and this is where training is so critical in our industry and there is a lack of training, is what could occasion something like that, and has in the past, and people, anytime they realise that they making a mistake, or they made a mistake, too late. Because once the infamy, once you press send, or the information is published, it's too late.

Even within one newsroom, there are different levels of knowledge and approaches to the media laws in Trinidad and Tobago. [REDACTED] who is one of the “older generation” that [REDACTED] describes takes it as a “serious deterrent”. Perhaps as they have been in the industry longer, they have seen the threats become a reality and are consequently more cautious, even when working at the state broadcaster. However, this variance of feeling in relation to the libel chill

within this one newsroom is a microcosm of the industry. In all newsrooms there were variances in the level of chill that journalists and editors felt. As discussed, this was based on experience, training, education and awareness of the media laws. This is relevant to this study as it shows that there is no concerted media law chill felt across the journalism industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

■, an editor at CNC3 echoed Raymond's comment that due to a lack of responsibility, journalists in Trinidad and Tobago do not feel a chill:

I don't think that there is any journalist in Trinidad who is afraid of going to jail for libel...it boils down to responsibility...I don't get the sense that they feel...individually responsible for the things that are published and in newspapers. I think that to a large extent they feel as though it's the media company's responsibility, even though lawyers say that it's theirs.

When Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express was asked about whether or not there was a libel chill in the local media ecosystem, she did not think that journalists were "sufficiently aware of what could be considered libellous" to feel that intimidation:

I find that they write a lot of libellous things that editors have to clean up because I handle the investigative desk and I have had to clean up a lot of things that could be seen as defamatory of the person, especially if you don't give them enough time to respond. So the judge will say, "Reynolds privilege...you should give people enough time to respond" and of course, "Is it in the public interest?".

So no, I don't think so. Not at the Express but I don't look elsewhere.

When asked if she thought the government or big businesses could utilise the defamation law to intimidate journalists and influence journalism culture, Lyder confirmed that "they do try". However, due diligence was noted as the key to avoiding any such pitfalls.

Experience and knowledge of the law is a key to challenging those that would use the law to intimidate journalists as CNC3 editor ■ has experienced.

I look at things editorially, if there is an issue...I did an interview where a particular candidate [REDACTED] [REDACTED] thought I misquoted him and I didn't and he said, I'm going to take this to Norman Sabga and I said, well go fuck yourself... but I know the defamation law like the back of my hand and I said let's go to court, I have time to waste. But that's how they attempt to do that. So you not only have the advertising pressure, you also have the political pressure, because we're such a small society.

The Chilling Effect of soft power dynamics are revealed by this candidate [REDACTED] [REDACTED] saying that they would go to Norman Sabga, head of Ansa McAL and chairman of the board that runs CNC3 and Guardian Media Limited. The fact that he could make that threat shows how easily the work of journalists can be chilled, influenced or effaced.

Irving Ward, an editor at the Trinidad Guardian took a different stance on whether there is a libel chill across the industry.

Yes because quite frankly, as I said, our companies are about making money...libel in any form or fashion may end up in a pay out and therefore, media houses tend to err on the side of caution...even if you have documentation, even if your story is air tight because of course, we have to give the other side an opportunity to speak...and if I have a damning story and they refuse to comment, it means one side of your story will be unbalanced...

To say that journalists still have to pull back "...even if you have documentation, even if your story is air tight..." seems contrary to journalistic instincts. This comment suggests a much higher level of anxiety amongst editors and media managers, at least within the newsroom of the Trinidad Guardian. Ward went on to say:

So most companies err on the side of caution and decide either to not name the individuals involved, which means we couch the story a certain way, so we might say a PNM official or a member of the government or cabinet or whatever. We write around, trying to avoid the obvious pay out of defamation so in that regard, I would say yes, we are extremely cautious about having to pay out money for libel.

Saying that, “We write around, trying to avoid the obvious pay out of defamation,” is a clear statement that journalists are asked to alter their work to avoid defamation. For this editor, in this media house, the Chilling Effect of libel laws impacts the news product and consequently, the overall newsroom culture, affirming again an important point in this professional milieu: the Chilling Effect is felt differently by different people across the local media landscape. It also re emphasises the contradictory nature of this milieu. Journalists are working to fulfil their watchdog role and hold power to account but they have to “pull back” due to the ineffable control exerted by the threat of media laws and financial loss to the company.

■ confirmed this chill as a media manager:

...one of the trends that I have noted in recent times, and it’s a way of sort of suppressing good stories, is the use of the legal weapon, so to speak. So now I find that once a reporter reaches out to get responses, people who there are serious allegations are being made about, the first thing they do is they get a lawyer...even after you give them sufficient opportunity to respond, and the time and so forth and the procedure to story, there is a slew of pre action protocol letters and I find that there has been an increase in terms of parties wanting to take you to court, which is, which has become very expensive and very onerous on certain media organizations, very, very, very onerous and let’s face it, big business, they have big pockets, very deep pockets and it’s a form of intimidation.

These comments confirm an extremely important point in the professional milieu of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago. As editors are also cultural agents, their awareness of these laws and the systems they put in place to not transgress those laws, is a major facet of local journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago. As said previously, they are the gatekeepers, they are the buffers, they are the safeguards between their newsroom staff and possible court proceedings.

8:3:3 Would you be in favour of repealing the Libel and Defamation Act?

Due to the lack of knowledge about the media laws amongst journalists in Trinidad and Tobago, when asked if they would want the law repealed, several hesitated as they did not know what they were speaking about and did not want to commit to an answer. Even editors like ■ from CNC3 was cautious about voicing their opinion:

I don't know. I'd have to find out [about] Grenada, why they repealed it and what were their reasons for repealing because it could be all politically motivated, you know, in order to win sympathy from reporters. So I don't know. I can't say.

■ who said “There's a level of ambiguity in [their] mind about it”, opted for more dialogue and consultation.

I feel as we'll be doing, maybe myself and the company justice but I feel though the laws are there for a reason. Maybe it could be revised, maybe it could be reworded, amended etc. based on proper dialogue, consultation, etc.

The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago has been lobbying for all of these media laws to be amended. As Raymond said, “...if journalists got together and actively and campaigned against these things that could make quite a difference.”

■ who was educated abroad and had more knowledge of these laws had a suggestion to share:

Some of our libel laws are actually a very stupid like there is one if you impugn the reputation of a woman...what nonsense! We have some dumb libel laws...The libel laws shouldn't necessarily be

repealed completely, but they definitely need to be updated and countries all over the world have updated them. As we like to do, we can wholeheartedly copy the UK version of the law, because we already used the Reynolds principle as part of our common law. So, you know, I don't see why we can't, we can't look at it in that way.

Sandra Maharaj, Head of News at TTT, shared an opinion that was echoed in the ethnography chapter. Some journalists do not believe that the libel law should be repealed because of the danger that journalists will intentionally libel people to further their own causes:

I think they're necessary though because you really don't want to allow people to be going carte blanche writing whatever, doing whatever and you are damaging people...because sometimes if we are left to do whatever we want, or write whatever we want, we will do that without concern sometimes for how it impacts on a person or a person's family, or a person's children, that kind of thing. So I think it's necessary to keep us as well in line to do our jobs in a responsible and fair manner. [With the other media laws] I don't think it has impacted us in a strong way as yet...I think there needs to be more discussion on these proposals...and I don't think those discussions are happening as regularly as they should to chart the way forward.

■ who also has solid knowledge of the libel law also acknowledged this danger but also felt that the Act is “draconian”.

I don't know whether they should [repeal the law], it's funny because everything is a balance...it kind of comes back to our responsibility and understanding the agendas of every single person. I think in the past the media in itself have put themselves in a position because we have published so many things that have been completely erroneous and for that I guess, it is a buffer, but I do think it's a little too stringent to allow for freedom of press and to allow free movement and that's why I think this bill is even more

draconian than ever. [Jail time] is almost dictatorial, you know, because if you don't have a free press, then what do you have?

Omatie Lyder, editor-in-chief of the Trinidad Express was also asked if she thought the libel laws should be repealed:

I agree that it should not be a criminal offence, but people should have a right to go to court on issues they feel offended by as we would do as journalists.

Lyder also posits that the journalists at the Trinidad Express are not “sufficiently aware” of the risks and also acknowledges that those in power do indeed use possible litigation as a deterrent to journalists. However, the question must be asked, if there is a threat but journalists are not aware of it, how much does it affect journalism culture?

The fact that most journalists did not prioritise a repeal of the Libel and Defamation Act confirms that they do not feel a libel chill in their positions. Rather, their concern is the potential corruption of other journalists should the law be repealed. This dynamic is an important discovery in the professional milieu of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9:1 Introduction

This chapter coherently and succinctly answers the research questions. It also summarises the findings in the ethnography and interview chapters in relation to key theoretical points to eventually present the milieu of the controlled watchdog shaped by the variables which constitute journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

For reference, here are the research questions in this study:

RQ1 What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

a1. What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

a2. How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?

At the beginning of this thesis, it was established that the key area of research is Journalism Culture with a focus on role perception and role performance. In addition, the need for an understanding of the national culture and how it has shaped the history of and present day situation in journalism was prioritised in order to delve deeper into journalism culture. Therefore, Post Colonial Theory also became a focal point. Finally, establishing the legal and non-legal Chilling Effect as an important part of the discursive field was also paramount to defining the journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

9.2 RQ1: What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

Considering the answers to questions a1 and a2 here which are detailed below, here is a working definition of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago:

Journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago is an organic field, shaped by the country's history of colonialism. Retrogressive race and class tensions which infuse the political landscape of the national society become weaponised by government and business institutions who are able to utilise the Chilling Effect to manipulate content through the revenue control of media houses and to a lesser extent, threats of litigation. Journalists feel this financial chill and employ self censorship to avoid reprisals and maintain the status quo. Editors are a key pillar within the culture as their sharp eye and all round knowledge prevents potentially litigious material from being published and broadcast. Their individual moral compass is what keeps the integrity of their newsroom intact when government and business advertisers ransom the media company's bottom line for control over content. As far as a shared set of ideas and an occupational ideology determining how journalists perceive and perform their roles, journalists generally strive to uphold the public interest but have also been known to look out for their own interests, compromising their objectivity and leading to an environment of mistrust between colleagues. The lack of education, training and resources also frustrate journalists, leading to general demotivation and disillusionment with their work.

a1. What are the various elements which define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

Elements within the discursive field of journalism culture include: the post-colonial soft power dynamics; race and class tensions (Ledgister, 2016; Storr, 2016; Gibbings, 2007; Best, 1968; Beckford, 1972) biological, cultural and journalistic hybridity (Bhabha, 2004; Chadwick, 2013), ownership structures (Lent, 1991; Gibbings 2007); the advertising agenda; the Chilling Effect of internally and externally imposed censorship (Storr; 2016; Gibbings, 2007); proximity to the locus of power in the form of political clientelism (Storr, 2016; Hallin & Mancini 2004) and those they cover; the Chilling Effect of media laws (Latchoo, 2020; Schauer

1978; Barendt 1997) individual corruption and the corruption of those they cover; the Chilling Effect of fear of reprisals and threats to livelihood, family and life; ethical paradigm (Hanitzsch, 2007), access to resources and technology; the strength and knowledge of their newsroom leaders; relationships with their colleagues; movement from one newsroom to the next; level of education and place of education; the public.

All of these elements define the role orientation and role performance (Hanitzsch, 2017) of journalists and form part of the overall occupational ideology of the controlled watchdog. This overview of the discursive field is a macro view of the elements which affect journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago (See image 1 below).

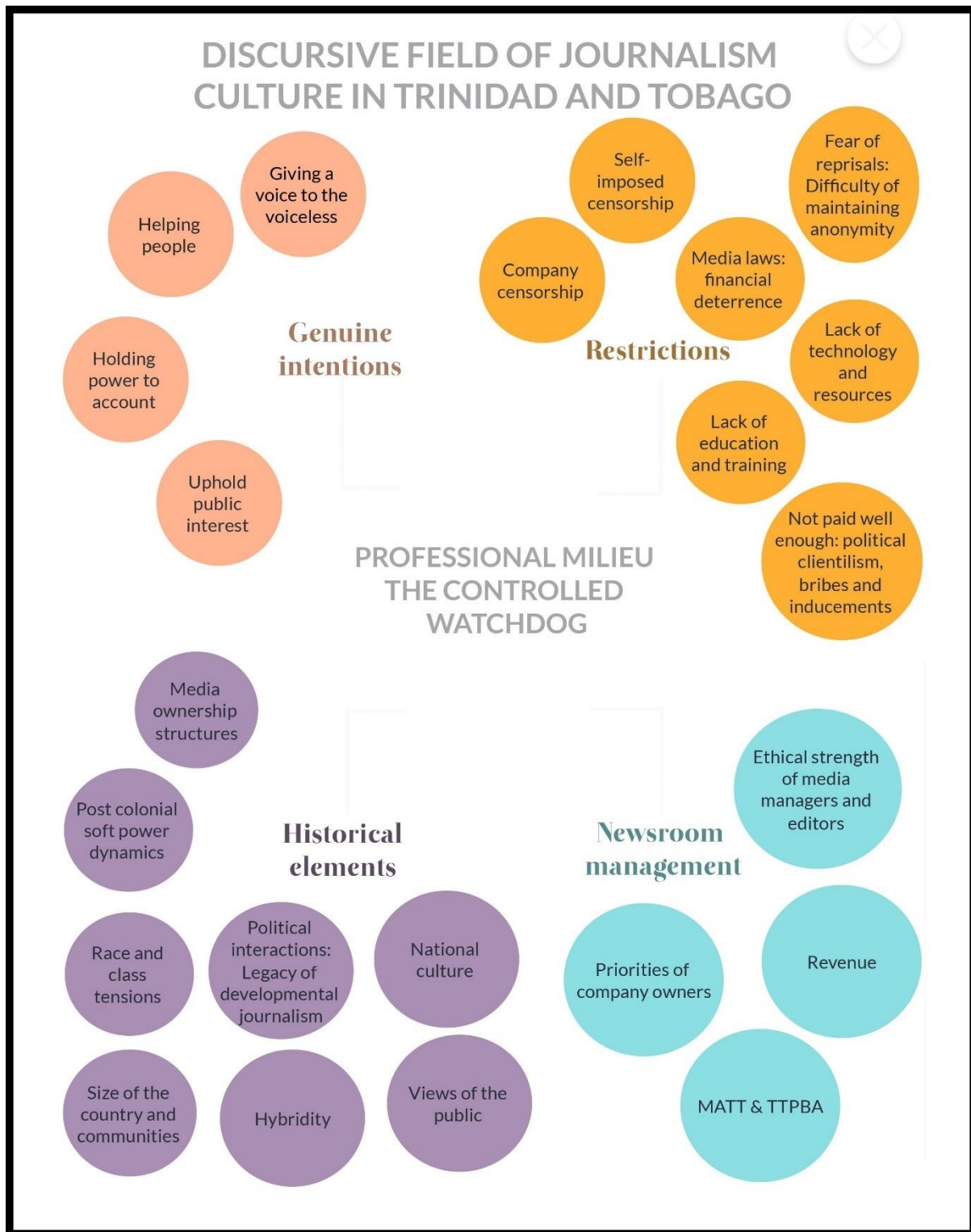


Image 1: The discursive field of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

One thing which becomes clear when considering all of the elements is that this is a milieu of contradictions. Journalists genuinely want to help people, give a voice to the voice to the

voiceless, hold power to account and serve the public interest but are constantly restricted due to internal and external censorship, fear of reprisals, a lack of education and training, media laws as well as limited resources. Frustration sets in and objectivity is compromised resulting in bribes, inducements and political clientelism (Storr, 2016).

Then there are allegiances where the government tries to influence sometimes where there is a threat of pulling advertisements but that is a government to company level, that's not on a journalist level but I mean it trickles down. It can affect the psyche of a journalist, [where they are thinking] "yea I'm on the straight and narrow and I'm pursuing the truth", and then the company pulls a story that you're doing because they get a call, "nah you can't run that, you can't run that." Obviously you're going to be demotivated, what's the point then? (■, interview with the author, 2018)

This helplessness that journalists feel echoes Storr's discussion of Kincaid's work where Kincaid found post-colonial territories "lacking in many areas because the people seemed to be willing partners in their own subjugation [through]...their deference and subservience to the tourist dollar, political and economic elites, and a British past," (Storr, 2016, p. 132).

The "entrenched dominant-submissive patterns of interpersonal relationships" (Deosaran, 1987, p. 62) left over from the plantation model (Best, 1968; Beckford, 1972; Singham, 1968) is a definite factor. ■ describes the conundrum:

...you can't bite the hand that feeds you. Many would be scared and intimidated to step on certain people's toes given the influence...We often deflect, we often step away from certain stories given that that particular corporation or particular entity, that particular business, has a heavy influence in the company (■, interview with the author, 2018).

These comments echo those made in an interview (Lent 1991) conducted with the Trinidad Sunday Guardian editor at the time of his research, twenty-seven years before this study. (Lent, 1991, p. 48) quotes the editor saying:

Therefore, within this professional milieu, though the role perception of journalists is influenced by post colonial psychological power dynamics (Beckford, 1972), present day journalists do challenge that state. Therefore, the role performance is a constant negotiation of these contradictory elements on a daily basis.

Through analysing the data in the ethnography and interview chapters, the journalists in the local media landscape align most with the ethical ideology of the situationist, where they “advocate individualistic analysis of each act in each situation” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 379).

This is particularly relevant as they negotiate the historic expectations left from developmental journalism (Golding, 1974; Sussman, 1978; Ogan, 1982; Shah, 1996; Storr, 2016; Rotmeijer, 2019) and present day political clientelism (Storr, 2016; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Previous Prime Minister Basdeo Panday is not the only politician to affirm the government’s position in relation to journalists saying:

“If a newspaper is working against your interest to achieve a better life, it is your enemy. No newspaper can survive without us. They all depend on us for survival” (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995, p. 136).

Late Trinidad Express columnist Raoul Pantin described how, “Every single government since Independence in 1962 has locked horns with the Press, the worst offender being our first Prime Minister, that national icon and hero, Dr Eric Williams, who never was shy about his total contempt for the Press” (Pantin, 2005, n.p.). Williams was known for his absolute no tolerance policy on criticism from the media. As mentioned in the Media Landscape chapter (chapter 5), On April 22, 1960, he publicly burned a copy of the Trinidad Guardian in the nation’s capital (Siewah & Rampersad-Narinesingh, 1995, p. 128).

However, even though this political aggression exists, journalists also lean into relationships

with politicians which are mutually beneficial. Suzanne Sheppard, an editor at the Trinidad Guardian recalled a situation where political clientelism was on full display.

...post 2010 election...that was when the People's Partnership⁵⁹ came in and all of a sudden...I mean, I was horrified by it. The number of journalists that suddenly got jobs in government as communications specialists, advisors and all of that to government ministers...and a lot of them were actively reporting in politics, actively reporting the campaign in a particular way...

According to Hallin & Mancini, another closely related component of political parallelism is the “tendency for media personnel to be active in political life” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 28), often serving in government or public offices or for the professional interests of journalists and other media personnel to be shaped by their political affiliations, in the sense that they work for media organisations with similar partisan view points or get professional opportunities “because their media organisations want to balance the representation of different political tendencies, or get the assignments they do because their political affiliations open certain political doors for them” (Ibid).

Curtis Rampersad, publications editor at the Trinidad Express confirms this saying, “Aside from personal involvement, of course there is the underbelly of journalistic practice. There are journalists who are supporting parties and who are doing the best they can to advance their cause...There is a significant percent of media companies, journalists, owners, editors who are in bed together figuratively and literally” (Rampersad, interview with author, 2018).

The concept of political parallelism can be seen at various levels of Caribbean society. The

⁵⁹ The People's Partnership was a political coalition of five different groups, led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar as a multi-ethnic contender against the People's National Movement, led by Dr Keith Rowley, in the 2010 General Election. They won the election staying in office until 2015 when they were defeated in the 2015 election by the People's National Movement.

economic control of the plantocracy class has ensured that colonial power dynamics are still present and while in Trinidad and Tobago the media resents any form of government control, it needs the government advertising to stay afloat. This extends past the realm of government into businesses as well.

Political parallelism, refers to the “organisational connections between media and political parties or other kinds of organisations, including trade unions, cooperatives, churches, and the like, which are often linked to political parties,” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 28). While Hallin and Mancini posit that this relationship is a thing of the past saying, “...These kinds of organisational connections have mostly died out...” (Ibid), this is not so in the local media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago.

Storr (2016) advises that “The emphasis on the ethnic and racial identities, as well as the political affiliations, of media owners is important in a region still encumbered by its colonial past. Race relations and political clientelism are complex and complicated in these hybrid societies” (Storr, 2016, p. 12) and “In these small, secretive societies, media systems are plagued by partisan politics, which presents itself in a variety of ways and influences the performance of journalists” (Storr, 2016, p. 167).

Bourdieu’s field theory (Bourdieu, 1993) was utilised to understand how the ebb and flow as well as a struggle for power between various actors and elements, impacts the culture and practice of journalists operating within the field. Bourdieu relates that “The field as a whole is defined as a system of deviations on different levels and nothing, either in the institutions or in the agents, the acts or discourses they produce, has meaning except relationally, by virtue of the interplay of oppositions and distinctions” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 185). Actions within and

according to structures of power is not just a “field of forces” but also a “field of struggles” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 30).

In the discursive field (Hanitzsch, 2017) of journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, journalists face these forces and struggles on a daily basis, constantly renegotiating and repositioning their “situationist” (Hanitzsch, 2007) ethics. Even though they have genuine intentions which connect to what has been established as Westernised milieus such as the “detached watchdog” (Hanitzsch, 2011), the journalistic field in Trinidad and Tobago is also full of other elements which create an environment where journalists are nevertheless, controlled, creating a new professional milieu which accommodates the power struggles between these actors and elements, the milieu of the controlled watchdog.

Hybridity of elements in the journalistic field marks the experience of local journalists. Chadwick writes that “Hybridity alerts us to the unusual things that happen when distinct entities come together to create something new that nevertheless has continuities with the old” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 9). Chadwick echoes Bourdieu’s theory saying that “Newness derives from the particulate recombination of prior elements” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 18).

Storr writes that “The Caribbean is a third space, fashioned out of Old- and New-World ideologies. In such a space, old ideas have been refashioned into cultural artefacts to create an identity called “Caribbean.” (Storr, 2016, p. 195). It is within this third space, this post-colonial stage, this hybrid area that “Caribbean journalism should be understood, as a blend of American, British, and local values —a hybrid practice” (Storr, 2016, p. 115).

The milieu of the controlled watchdog is new and evolving and uniquely Trinbagonian, uniquely Caribbean.

a2. How do journalists define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago themselves?

The two quotes below describe the friction this milieu must navigate to define their own culture:

I think the fundamental qualities, of course, being very objective, unbiased, fair in your assessment, being able to transcribe information and put it out in public domain with a very neutral point of view, of course...and also being honest with yourself, be honest with your superiors with all with the people on the ground. Again, taking yourself out of the equation...just present the facts as it is, do as best as you can to make sure you report both sets of stories. Right? And again, bring it back down to being as honest as you can (■, interview with the author, 2018).

We are a corrupt society... what I have learned working with[in] media and working with media professionals, who are much more experienced in years of media service than me, I don't think anybody is truly objective, I think everything has a subjective element to it (■, interview with the author, 2018)

Journalists in Trinidad and Tobago recognise a contradiction in their culture. Despite the best intentions for their work, they recognise that they are controlled and censored. They also recognise that political clientelism (Storr, 2016; Hallin and Mancini, 2004) exists and colleagues might have their own agendas. Hanitzsch advises that “Journalism culture can generally be defined as “a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 369). However, this notion has to be taken further within the media landscape of Trinidad and Tobago as doing meaningful work is not the only priority of journalists within the journalistic field.

With the Chilling Effect of the law and the advertising agenda, fear of reprisals, control from external sources, temptation of bribes, inducements and positions of power, doing

“meaningful” work is a concept defined by every individual journalist. Avoiding danger to limb and life is enmeshed with wanting to give a voice to the voiceless. Receiving an inducement or bribe like having their car fixed to drop a story, is embroiled with helping people. In the professional milieu of the controlled watchdog, “[legitimizing] their role in society and [rendering] their work meaningful” (Ibid) is achieved though a “situationist” approach (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 379) based on their “occupational socialisation” (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 125) when confronted with the friction between cognitive and normative scripts (Hanitzsch, 2007).

9:3 The milieu of the “Controlled Watchdog”

It has been established that each of the professional milieus of the populist disseminator, critical change agent, detached watch dog, opportunist facilitator (Hanitzsch, 2011), do not completely contain the elements of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore, an entirely new milieu is being presented to accommodate the cultural nuances and “shared occupational ideology” (Deuze, 2005, p. 6) of journalists in the local media landscape. This is the milieu of the controlled watchdog.

Milieus are “created by groups of journalists with similar professional views” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 480). The milieu of the controlled watchdog describes the overall qualities and professional views of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago. It takes into account the acknowledgement and hybridisation of news practices of the United Kingdom, United States as well as indigenous systems of news gathering, processing and presenting. This milieu also accounts for post-colonial power structures which influence everyday relations between members of society. It affirms that, while the role aspiration may be purely to serve the public interest and hold power to account, role performance will inevitably be affected by the Chilling

Effect of censorship through the consideration of the advertising agenda, company policies, proximity to the locus of power in each story, personal and professional corruption or fear of retaliation. Journalists know that they are not free to report, that there are internal and external inhibitions. Yet newspapers and newscasts are still published and broadcast daily. “Journalism culture can generally be defined as “a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 369). The thrust to do right by the people, to do meaningful work and hold those in power to account remains a guiding principle, even if the various levels of control are inescapable.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10:1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions and discusses the value and contribution of this thesis. A review on the limitations of the study will also be presented. Opportunities for future research will also be discussed.

10:2 Summary of findings

This study aimed to investigate journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago and determined that it is an evolving field, connected to and demarcated by its colonial past, manipulated by the tribalism of partisan politics and political clientelism, at the mercy of government and business advertisers but with journalists and editors who continue to fight to uphold the public interest. This is the professional milieu of the controlled watchdog.

10:3 Contribution to literature and opportunities for further research

Within the field of journalism studies, there is very little research done on the Caribbean, even less done specifically on Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, most of the research on Caribbean journalism focuses on two things: economics and technology. However, investigation into what defines the role perception and role performance of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago and “legitimate[s] their role in society and render [s] their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch, 2007 , p. 369), has not been achieved in a complete study.

This is the first study on journalism culture of this extent in Trinidad and Tobago. This is also the first time that a new milieu, the controlled watchdog, has been presented to encompass the qualities of local journalism culture in light of the fact that this Caribbean island does not fit into the same milieus as the United Kingdom or Britain even though there are values of the “Western prototype” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485), which are practised by journalists in the local landscape.

Through a mixed methodology of dedicated and extensive ethnographic study spent observing journalists perform their roles within the ecosystem of their media house as well the execution of thorough, semi-structured interviews over a nine month period, this thesis is able to present a comprehensive definition of the research question, “What is journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?” With this conceptual knowledge of journalism culture and the milieu of the controlled watchdog, there is the opportunity for future academic investigation into other key sociological points of this culture and milieu. Further theoretical writing can be executed to develop the field of journalism and communication research locally, regionally and internationally. For example, researchers can further investigate how actors within this discursive field will deal with the knowledge of their actions. Now that there is concrete research to support the claim that some media companies exert censorship on the journalists within their newsroom, this evidence can be used to discuss how the landscape can evolve further if the actions of these actors are properly addressed.

The finding that journalists are not generally concerned with the media laws, is a part of the culture which can now be traced and documented further. A closer look at the role of editors within the newsroom as gatekeepers and the last defence for their journalists provides another opportunity for future research as it would add greatly to the literature on journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is also the potential for the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) to utilise this data to lobby for changes to these media laws and other policies which affect journalists.

This new milieu of the controlled watchdog also provides a way for academics globally to engage with local journalism culture. Defining the professional milieu which Trinbagonian journalists fit into allows comparison and critique against other milieus on a world level. This has the potential to open doors to deeper conversations on research and policy making levels.

Also, as initially discussed in the Introduction chapter in the ‘Scope of the study’ section, the wider impact of defining a model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago in relation to other Caribbean states must also be acknowledged.

Like many other Caribbean islands, Trinidad and Tobago is a British post colonial nation. Therefore, there are historical similarities across these islands which have also influenced commonalities in present day practices with regards to the systems of education, law and politics. Moreover, the size of these islands and ethnic distribution are analogous and therefore predispose them to the same culture of secrecy, fear of reprisals, “psychological dependency” (Beckford, 1972, p. 79) of the plantation model and power dynamics found in Trinidad and Tobago. As this thesis has defined, there are all elements in the local journalistic field.

Based on the shared characteristics outlined above, this new model for journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago, the milieu of the controlled watchdog, can be extrapolated to other Caribbean British post colonial islands. The journalistic fields of these other islands are similar

enough to utilise the framework of the controlled watchdog and perhaps, with this theory as a foundation, they can even go on to theorise their own, more nuanced professional milieus.

The same British post colonial history, positionality and development issues can also be found in particular non-regional Crown colonies which are defined by similar factors of size and consequent proximity of social actors. Therefore, this new model may even be applicable to certain non-Caribbean crown colonies with similar journalistic fields with common elements such as population statistics and systems of law, education and politics.

The professional milieu of the controlled watchdog has many potential applications which can elevate this field of research.

In many academic projects, the Caribbean is usually a tag along within a more populous areas such as Latin America or Africa. This new professional milieu now proves that the Caribbean has a unique journalism culture, one that is unlike Latin America, Africa, the United States and the United Kingdom. Our history and subsequent sociological nuances are completely different and as a region we deserve to be studied independently in order to maintain the integrity of the research.

10:4 Limitations of the work

Of course, like any other academic study, this thesis has limitations. Access was one limitation of data collection, both on a regional level and on a local level. The Caribbean region is not homogenous with Spanish, French, Dutch and American post colonial territories and as such, the milieu of the controlled watchdog is not applicable across all of the islands. Future research

which accommodates perhaps all British post-colonial islands, would contribute to Caribbean journalism studies.

Furthering the topic of access, with the CNMG (now TTT) newsroom in particular, I was initially not allowed to enter the building as desired, nor was I initially able to interview whomever I wanted. As TTT is the only state owned television station in the study, getting access was particularly important, especially considering it was the only media house to place restrictions on the study. Therefore, in terms of future research, unrestricted access would afford the researcher a more thorough look at the behaviour of journalists through ethnographic observation.

Time and cost were other limitations. I spent two weeks in five of the newsrooms, as well as five days in the CNMG (TTT) newsroom. While the mini-ethnography has been justified as appropriate for this research, it was decided upon due to the timeframe available for this research. Therefore time was a limitation in this thesis. In terms of the limitation of cost, even though I was in my home country and staying with my family, conducting the ethnography was costly as I had to go to the capital city on a daily basis where transportation and other variable expenses were incurred.

Another limitation was the possible dishonesty of participants. The word “dishonesty” is being used in two different ways here. The first incarnation of dishonesty is within the in-depth semi-structured interviews as interviewees might have not answered all of the questions honestly. The second way “dishonesty” is being used to describe the limitations of data collection is with the actual actions of the journalists. For example, At TV6, on the first day of my ethnographic study, one of the journalists made a comment about “behaving properly” in front of me to a colleague. This comment suggests that there was a hyper awareness of my presence which

influenced the journalist to act differently around me and also encourage their fellow colleagues, who might have already altered their behaviour, to do the same.

Personal fatigue was another limitation to the data collection process. Due to mental and physical fatigue, I took a break in the middle of the study for one week in order to maintain my mental and physical health. I was in the newsroom for up to twelve hours a day, conducting multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews, some of which were more than two hours long. If I had not become fatigued, the study would have ended sooner, saving on time and cost. Therefore, personal fatigue was another limitation to the study.

10:5 Conclusion

This goal of this study was to define journalism culture within Trinidad and Tobago. Due to the unique elements of local media landscape, a new milieu which encompasses the various contradictory elements in the journalistic discursive field was proposed: the controlled watchdog. Journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago can be defined by this milieu.

This chapter has summarised the findings to support these conclusions and also discussed how these findings contribute to academic literature and scholarship.

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Appendix A

Interview guide for semi structured interviews

1. Can you please state your name and position at this media house?
2. What has been your journey as a journalist?
3. What does it mean to be a journalist?
4. Have you worked in different newsrooms?
5. If so, can you talk about the similarities and differences in newsroom cultures?
6. What is the level of autonomy you have with your work?
7. Have you ever felt like or been told you couldn't pursue or publish a story?
8. How would you define journalism culture in Trinidad and Tobago?
9. How would you describe the national culture?
10. Does national culture cradle journalism culture?
11. Do you think journalists in the local media landscape are objective?
12. Are you aware of the media laws that affect your work?
13. Have you ever received training on media laws?
14. Are you aware of the 2014 attempt to repeal the Libel and Defamation Act?

Appendix B

Clipping 1: A Trinidad Guardian article from May 1997 describes it as a “frightening proposal [which] simply means that the government can arbitrarily determine “...that a news story, feature article, editorial or newscast “imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric” and proceed to close down the offending newspaper, or radio, or television station” (Hackett, 1997)

Green Paper a frightening proposal MAY 16 1997

By JEFF HACKETT

MR MAHARAJ'S Green Dragon may be taking a fearful beating but it will certainly be wishful thinking to believe that it will put its dangerous tail between its legs and return to its dark lair.

There may have been little public support for his proposals for the reform of media law but I doubt whether he or Mr Panday is going to give up that easily.

Almost from day one, the Panday administration seemed to have a fatal fixation with the press—to put it in its place; to intimidate what it perceived as errant journalists; to fulminate against this newspaper or that television station.

Of course, it's nothing new.

The behaviour by some predecessor governments hasn't been much different.

In the Fifties, Eric Williams symbolically burned the *Trinidad Guardian* in Woodford Square and was generally inaccessible to local journalists, speaking only to the likes of English journalist Basil Davidson.

Williams may not have had the time or inclination to produce green or fuschia papers on the press, content to ignore journalists and also berate them at outdoor meetings and other PNM gatherings.

Mr Panday has spent a goodly portion of his time as an opposition politician urging either sugar workers or his political constituency not to buy this or that newspaper because of some real or imagined grievance.

Now that he is in power there is the possibility that he may just succumb to the temptation to go a step further in dealing with people who publish “lies, half truths and innuendos”. Perhaps, as the Green Paper suggests, by “providing government with power to punish or stop media behaviour which imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric”.

What a frightening proposal!

This simply means that the government can arbitrarily determine that a news story, feature article, editorial or newscast “imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric” and proceed to close down the offending newspaper or radio or television station.

Whatever happened to your favourite phrase, “rule of law”, Mr Attorney General?

And so this amazing Green Paper goes with suggestions that “journalists and newspapers shall endeavour to highlight and promote activities of the State and the public which aim at national unity and solidarity, integrity of Trinidad and Tobago and economic and social progress”, or “journalists and newspapers shall avoid publication of reports and comments which tend to promote tensions likely to lead to civil disorder, meeting or rebellion”.

Wow!

Maybe, I may just be guilty of one of these offences.

THE GREEN PAPER, however, does make some useful proposals about either repealing or upgrading press legislation but you get the distinct impression that these goodies are thrown near the dragon's mouth.

Governments are not really after journalists but media proprietors—businessmen who politicians intimately distrust and believe are involved in some sort of conspiracy, some “media behaviour which imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric”.

What better way to fix that than by posing the question in the Green Paper: “Should the Press and Broadcasting Act provide for independent scrutiny of significant changes in media ownership and for the veto of such change if its deemed contrary to the public interest in avoiding monopolistic tendencies in the media?”

MR MAHARAJ, himself, was closely associated with the Chookolingo group of newspapers for over 15 years, being, at one time its chairman.

These very newspapers, irreconcilable advocates of publish-and-be-damned journalism, during his time (and today) strongly resisted any official press interference.

Perhaps, Mr Maharaj could explain the reason for his paradigm shift?

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, some legislation that affects the press clearly needs to be repealed or upgraded primarily because they are antiquated or oppressive.

It does not mean that this gives the press any freedom to act in any unfair, unreasonable or insufferable manner towards the general public: the press is not given any new power nor is any stripped from the citizenry.

The Green Paper appears to appreciate this fact. The only problem is that it artlessly suggests that the manacles should be removed from the hands and placed around the ankles.

Nice try, Mr Maharaj.

MAY 16 1997

Clipping 2: David de Caires of Guyana's Stabroek News, Harold Hoyte of the Barbados Nation and Oliver Clarke of the Gleaner in Jamaica also requested meetings with Prime Minister Panday to discuss the Paper (Trinidad Express, 1997).

No response from PM to CPU

DIRECTOR of the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU), Robin MacKichan, is not certain whether the CPU will take up Prime Minister Basdeo Panday's suggestion that it submit written comments on the government's Green Paper on the media.

"I am not in a position to answer at this stage," he told the *Express*.

Panday on Friday suggested that the CPU, which has requested a meeting with him to discuss the Green Paper and which has also called for the document to be withdrawn, should submit its comments on the Green Paper to the Law Commission.

Members of the public have been invited to comment on the Green Paper and to submit the comments to the Law Commission, c/o the Ministry of the Attorney-General, Winsure Building, Richmond Street, Port of Spain.

MacKichan said he has not yet had any reply from Panday and could not respond to second-hand information about the prime minister's reaction.

Three Caribbean publishers have also written Panday requesting a meeting to discuss the Green Paper and the "war of words" which has developed between himself and CCN's executive chairman Kenneth Gordon.

They are David de Caires of Guyana's *Stabroek News*, Harold Hoyte of the Barbados *Nation*, and Oliver Clarke of the *Gleaner* in Jamaica.

De Caires, who wrote the letter, said yesterday afternoon he too had received no response as yet.

JUN 17 1997

JUN 17 1997

Appendix C

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