

**Reporting from ‘the field’:
Foreign correspondents and the international news
coverage of East Africa**

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ABSTRACT

There has been significant academic criticism of the international news coverage of Africa, but little or no first-hand research on the forces that create this news. This thesis draws on 51 semi-structured interviews and ethnographic work with practicing foreign correspondents in Sudan, Kenya and Uganda to explore the question: how can we explain and theorise the production of international news on East Africa?

The thesis argues that Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory, and its analytical toolbox of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus', can be meaningfully used to examine international journalistic practice. Field theory has been widely and productively used to understand domestic news production, but it has not yet been employed to empirically investigate journalistic production in the global sphere.

The analysis is presented in three sections, each of which focuses on a different 'layer' of the international news system: the global field, where newswires compete for clients and capital; the national field 'back home' where traditional, nation based news outlets are based; and, finally, the local and immediate site where foreign correspondents work.

Each of these layers is explored through an in depth case study of a major news producer/group of producers working in East Africa. The first and most substantial section examines the global journalistic field, and the position and practices of the Reuters newswire within this field. The second examines the foreign correspondents that report on Africa for print outlets in the UK. The final section presents two case studies of correspondents at work, negotiating a local news ecology: the election violence in Kenyan (2007-8), and the international coverage of the Darfur crisis. The discussion explores the fluidity between these three layers.

Each analysis section stands alone as an investigation of major news producers in Africa today, and the forces that influence their work. Together, they build the argument that field theory is a useful approach to conceptualising the contemporary global news system, as well as examining journalistic practices within this. The main strengths of the theory lie in its notion of habitus; the extent to which it can incorporate and explain change; and its ability to link macro level phenomenon with micro level practice. The theory is ideally suited to capture and study the way in which foreign correspondents negotiate a complex and fluid global news system.

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Introduction

For hundreds of years, Western explorers, military personnel, researchers and writers have travelled to Africa and sent home stories of the different and dangerous lands they found. In early reports, the continent was often represented as an unremittingly bleak and brutal place, whose inhabitants were uncivilised and ‘other’ to the people of Europe. Contemporary critics of the international news media argue that, centuries later, little has changed. Global news reports, commentators suggest, continue to present Africa in a negative light – highlighting disaster, simplifying and stereotyping ethnic groups, and championing internationally led rescue efforts (Franks 2005). Rather than a relationship of equals, Britain’s news media continues to represent her African former colonies in a paternalistic, negative and even ‘neo-colonial’ light with negative repercussions for trade, tourism, international relations, humanitarian responses, and on-going international perceptions (e.g., Mbembe 2001).¹

There has been significant commentary on the content of international news reports on Africa – but limited investigation into the processes that produce it. What agents and structures construct international news on the continent? What influences story selection, and the frames of references presented? Are such interpretations inevitable? The answer is: we do not know. There are no production studies of foreign correspondents at work in

¹ Indeed, it is hard to think of an African researcher who has *not* vehemently criticised the news media representation of their subject; or a post-colonial theorist who has not drawn attention to the pernicious repercussions of such narratives.

Africa, and a limited secondary literature on the subject. This lacuna is not limited to foreign news production in Africa; digging deeper, it becomes clear that academics have not paid close attention to the day-to-day of foreign news production, or regularly stepped into the field to analyse its processes.

Explaining and theorising news production is made more difficult still by the diffuse forces of globalisation which shape today's international reporting. Take for example, Mohamad Amiin Adow, a Somali journalist who lives in Sweden. Mohamad regularly flies from Sweden to Kenya to write news story on the conflict in Somalia for an American news outlet. His stories are edited in Nairobi and Atlanta, US, and the finished product is broadcast around the world – to over 100 countries that Mohamad has never visited. Transnational news figurations and cosmopolitan journalists like Mohamad are an increasing reality in today's global news system, where journalists hail from diverse backgrounds and negotiate the media systems of multiple countries to produce news. The news outlets they work for are, more often than not, global corporations with client bases around the world. In this context the “twin forces of globalization and localization have led to a liquid modern state of affairs” in which journalism ideologies, norms, and formats are rapidly and constantly shifting (Deuze 2005b: 450).

This thesis is a production study of foreign correspondents at work in this global media landscape. It draws on the ‘thinking tools’ of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory to study news producers in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan – examining how news leaves a local site, the multiple agents involved in its production, and the forces that journalists negotiate in their daily work. The enquiry is both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, it is the first piece of

research to examine the daily news practices of FCs in East Africa, and it contains the first newsroom ethnography of an international news bureau in Africa. In addition to their daily reporting practices, the results shed light on the processes that shaped the news coverage of the conflict in Darfur, and the post-election violence in Kenya 2007-8.

It is however, primarily a theoretical enquiry. It asks, how can we study, analyse and conceptualise the foreign correspondent at work? The literature review suggests that the 'thinking tools' of Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and field theory offer a helpful prism to analyse global news production. This framework is then developed and utilised over the course of the thesis, establishing the central argument that journalistic practice can be understood as the combination of a foreign correspondent's values, disposition and background (*habitus*) as it interacts with the capital, logic, and structure of the international journalistic field or, in the case of the handful of traditional correspondents working for an outlet in a specific country, a media field 'back home'. This general approach is shown to illuminate how foreign news is currently produced, and the forces that conserve or may transform these practices in the future.

The contribution of this thesis is thus twofold: the results are useful as both a specific descriptive task – one that increases scholarly understanding of the forces that have moulded representations of crises in East Africa; and, more generally, it contributes to the development of theory on global news production.

Thesis Scope and Definitions

This thesis is an examination of Foreign Correspondents (FCs) at work in East Africa. FCs are here defined as any reporter who was professionally engaged to produce news reports for dissemination in a second country. This definition is purposefully – and importantly – broad, so as to include the diverse agents who are important players in today’s foreign news production (further discussed in the background chapter). Today’s news emerges from diffuse sources, many of which, such as prominent bloggers or tweeters, are unpaid. However, this thesis consciously examines professional journalists – people who are paid by news outlets to produce news. In a recent survey of global media trends, Rasmus Nielsen finds that traditional media “continue to report more news and reach more people with news than any other kind of media organisations do. Revenues from legacy operations continue to underwrite far more journalism than revenue from new digital ventures” (2012: 5). Research finds that traditional media play a particularly significant role in shaping citizen’s perceptions of Africa (DFID 2000; Lader 2007; Scott 2009).

Within this group of foreign correspondents, the thesis’ focus is on print journalists working for newswires and newspapers. This is for a practical reason: in the first case study in Sudan, there were no international TV journalists present in the country. In order to retain consistency throughout the investigation, the research continued to focus on print journalists. More importantly, however, the background literature suggests (and their prominence in Sudan confirmed) that newswire journalists are the most important producers of day-to-day coverage of Africa.

What this thesis is not

This thesis is not a comprehensive account of the news ecology in East Africa. As noted, it does not address television or radio production; nor does it descriptively account for the position and practices of all the major text journalists in East Africa. Rather, it consciously chooses to focus on three specific sets of journalists and to ‘zoom in’ on their work. The discussion section draws these studies together to comment on the contemporary news system and its producers. However, the key focus remains, ‘how can we understand and theorise the practice of FCs’.

Thesis Outline

The background chapter sets the context for this thesis in two sections. The first section outlines the types of reporting that are produced on Africa and it highlights the impact of this reporting on local and international behaviour. The second part of the background chapter examines the main news outlets and journalists in East Africa that produce international reports. This section draws our attention to two important aspects of contemporary reporting: first, that news on Africa is primarily produced by newswires; secondly, that foreign news on Africa is more often than not produced by local-nationals, rather than international journalists. Both of these phenomena represent important breaks with historical reporting patterns.

The literature review explores how researchers have understood and analysed journalism practice in this context. It is shown that existing theories

are limited as they tend to examine only one site in the global news production chain; they often employ an old fashioned definition of who foreign correspondents are; they often incorporate a problematic notion of structural domination that obscures the role of individual journalists; and they heavily rely on inference, without examining practice itself. It is argued that, in order to conceptualise news production, we need more production studies of journalistic work, which can, in turn, feed into and develop theory.

The second section of the literature review proposes that the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu is a helpful starting point for this enquiry, as it is broad, versatile, and helpfully incorporates a notion of structure and agency, as well as a productive sense of power. To simplify the approach here: field theory posits that society is divided into semi-autonomous fields, which have their own internal logic. Individuals and organisations occupy situated positions within these semi-autonomous fields, based on the capital they possess. Negotiating the field in accordance with their individual habitus (disposition), individuals are engaged in a struggle to accumulate more capital, and valorise the capital they already possess. The combination of these factors produces practice. Or, in Bourdieu's equation:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}.$$

The literature review unpacks this equation, and outlines the key thinking tools of habitus, capital and field. Analyses of domestic news ecologies and journalistic production have made fruitful use of Field Theory (e.g., Benson & Neveu 2005; Schultz 2011). However, it has not yet been applied to foreign

news production. The third and final part of the literature review suggests that this is long overdue. In this section, the theory, or ‘thinking tools’ are discussed in light of international news production. In particular, it raises the question of how fields can be employed to study phenomena that occurs simultaneously at the global, national, and local levels.

The methodology chapter outlines the field sites, research methods employed, and the data analysis process. The central data for this thesis comes from semi-structured interviews with 51 practicing foreign correspondents in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, and a two-month newsroom ethnography in the Reuters Nairobi bureau. This data was supplemented and triangulated with additional methods: 32 secondary interviews; participant observation of news events; and a limited content analysis.

Parts II, III, and IV present the central findings and argument of the thesis. Together they argue that news practices can be understood by analysing the process through which position meets disposition, the field in which a news outlet is located, their position in this field, the capital they seek, and the position of FCs within these fields. Each of the three substantive chapters focuses on a different ‘layer’ of the international news system: the global field, where newswires compete for clients and capital; the national field ‘back home’ where traditional, nation based news outlets are based; and, finally, the local and immediate site where FCs work.

Each of these layers is explored through an in depth case study of a major news producer/group of producers. The first and most substantial chapter examines the global journalistic field, and it is framed around a field

analysis of the Reuters newswire. This chapter ‘locates’ Reuters in the global journalistic field, and explicates the processes whereby this position translates into journalistic practices, and how individual journalists negotiate this landscape. This is a key chapter in the thesis, and provides a substantive argument about the relevance and suitability of field theory to shed light on FC practice.

The chapter draws on ethnographic and interview data that was collected across a number of global sites, including: interviews in London with the Reuters African editor; two months of ethnographic data collection in the Reuters Nairobi bureau (most notably, observing the daily morning news meeting; and individually interviewing all the practicing FCs); interviews with Reuters’ ‘stringers’ (casually contracted journalists) working in Khartoum and Kampala; and interviews with former Reuter’s FCs.

The analysis shows how a news outlet’s values are derived from their position within a ‘global journalistic field’; and how a shift in this position can translate into new forms of journalistic practice. To briefly summarise: in 2008, the Reuters newswire, one of the most important news outlets reporting on Africa, merged with Thomson, a global information corporation. Through this merger, Reuters’ position in the global journalistic field was altered as it shifted further towards ‘the economic pole’.² In this new position, clients and subscription figures were more highly valued than journalistic accomplishments (although these were nice, if they helped secure new clients). Clients became the key ‘capital’ which the outlet struggled to secure

² Reuters has always produced significant amounts of financial news, but this merger was a key point in the strengthening of economic reporting on Africa, as discussed fully in the chapter.

and management explicitly instructed its journalists to report more fully on ‘news that moves markets’. Within a remarkably short period of time, this editorial decree had been absorbed into the habitus of the newsroom; in less than a year, journalists in news meetings suggested that ‘moving markets’ was a key value that made a story newsworthy (as they had, in the past, suggested ‘lives lost’).

Bourdieuian analysis helps to explain how and why, in just a few years time, the bureau was able to transform from a ‘hard news bureau’ governed by the logic of the journalistic field, to a financial news bureau, governed by the logic of the economic field. New entrants (newly hired journalists) immediately absorbed these values, incorporated them into their habitus, and reproduced them through their practice, in their quest to obtain professional recognition. (While existing journalists suffered from what Bourdieu term’s *hysteresis* – a disconnect between an agent’s dispositional habitus and the values of their environment). Journalistic production in the Nairobi Reuters bureau can thus be understood as the meeting of a journalists’ personal habitus (especially, whether they are an old or new journalist in the office) with the position of the news agency within the global journalistic field.

This chapter makes two contributions: first, it is an important empirical case, as the Reuters office influences a great deal of reporting on East Africa, and their practice of emphasising market news over political and humanitarian news has significant repercussions for global coverage of the region. Secondly this case study illustrates field theory’s benefits: showing how it helps to establish connections between macro level structures and micro level practice; illustrating how power structures are capable of change;

and how agents operate as either forces of conservation or of transformation. The chapter finishes by canvassing, in much greater brevity, the positions and practices of the other major wires with bureau in Nairobi – AP, AFP, Bloomberg and Xinhua.

Part III examines the national field ‘back home’ and it is centred on an analysis of UK foreign correspondents working in Nairobi. This chapter introduces the UK journalistic field, and the way it has historically been structured around outlets pursuing different profit-making strategies. The analysis section explores the foreign correspondents’ habitus, and how this interacted – clashed with, challenged, or reinforced – the values and priorities of their organisations.

Much of the FCs’ work practices, this chapter argues, can be explained with reference to the position of their news outlet in the UK journalistic field. The outlets can be roughly grouped into three main categories or positions, based on their proximity to the cultural or the economic pole (or in between). These positions are found to be associated with differences in the cultural capital and status of FCs at their outlets, and the degree of professional autonomy afforded to them in their work (and, through this autonomy, the extent to which their individual differences were able to shape news content). This chapter also discusses the connection between a national field ‘back home’ and the global journalistic field; in particular, we see that many of these newspaper FCs are news followers: they do not produce original news, rather, they play the role of gate-keepers who “glocalize” (Robertson 1997: 25) international news copy, and render it suitable for domestic consumption.

The final chapter examines how local environments – the immediate site where an FC is located – influences news content. This chapter is based around two case studies of both newswire and newspaper FCs at work. The first is an examination of the coverage of post election violence in Kenya (2007-8). This is the shorter of the two studies, as it examines the work of the FCs who have been introduced (and “placed”) earlier in the thesis. This chapter explores a significant clash that took place during the coverage of the violence between Western FCs in the Reuters newsroom, and the local-national stringers the newswire employs. These FCs disagreed on how the violence should be covered; ultimately, the views of the Western FCs prevailed, highlighting the strength of objectivity as a core value in the global journalistic field, reproduced and enforced through the structural hierarchy of the Reuters office. This case study also examines the permanent UK FCs in Nairobi, and how their outlet’s position informed the news coverage they produced on the crisis.

The second case study examines reporting in a more politically repressed environment: the FCs who work in Sudan, and their practices covering the conflict in Darfur. Political forces extensively dominate reporting in Sudan. The Government of Sudan has an extensive track record of persecuting journalists, through arrest, torture and expulsion, and preventing news of the Darfur crisis from leaving the country. In this context, local-national journalists are particularly vulnerable to government persecution (as Western journalists may simply leave the country). Local-national journalists stated that they felt persecuted by the government, and were deeply reluctant to write critical reports of the regime. A content analysis of local-national and

Western journalists' news reports on Darfur shows that this reluctance was reflected in practice. Local-national journalists (who – importantly – constituted the sole correspondents for both the AP and the AFP newswires) did not write articles that were critical of the Government of Sudan, or include sources in their reports that were opposed to its policy.

The case study in Sudan illustrates how an individual's background and agency is an integral component of news reporting. It shows that different journalists, depending on their background, are affected differently by factors in the field. The consequence of this finding is that a structural account of foreign news journalism (e.g., Pedelty 1995) can never wholly account for the news production processes. This reinforces the need to use approaches like field theory that can be sensitive to both economic and political forces, as well as the contributions of individual agents.

Each of these chapters makes an empirical contribution in their own right – showing how coverage of Africa reaches the international community, who the key actors are, and why news content looked the way it did. Cumulatively, they build on the overall argument that field theory, which incorporates multiple fields of analysis, offers a useful analytical framework to approach global news production.

Part I: Background, Literature & Methods

1. Background

The background chapter sets the context for this thesis in two sections. The first section outlines the type of reporting that is produced on Africa and it highlights the impact of this reporting on local and international behaviour. The second part of the background chapter examines the main news outlets and journalists in East Africa that produce international reports. This section draws attention to two important aspects of contemporary reporting: first, news on Africa is primarily generated by newswires; second, foreign news on Africa is, more often than not, produced by local-national journalists, and not international journalists. These tendencies represent an important break with historical reporting patterns, and show that news results from a combination of forces simultaneously local and global. These developments suggest the need for new forms of theorisation.

The International news coverage of East Africa

There has been considerable criticism of the international news media's representations of conflict in Africa. Commentators have noted deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of coverage – stories are infrequent, often relegated to the back pages, and their simplistic narratives tend to obscure a complex reality (see, for example, Allen & Seaton 1999). Concerns about this coverage come from two main sources: postcolonial theorists who,

emphasising the relationship between power and representation, reject the on-going “Othering” of the continent, and political communications theorists who doubt the ability of such articles to provide the level information and analysis necessary for the healthy functioning of democracy. This background chapter begins with a brief discussion of both of these critiques and considers the importance and repercussion of such coverage. The aims of this section are to outline the types of news that are produced (“that which is to be explained” by the remainder of the thesis); and, in highlighting the impact of such reporting, to re-emphasise the importance of considering its origins.

The “Dark Continent”

Discourse theorists, following Foucault, note that textual representations are imbued with power and that language has the potential to create, contain, and mould realities, both supporting and perpetuating oppression by the powerful (e.g. Said 1978; Spivak & Guha 1988). For these theorists, media texts – like any other cultural product – play a central role in the perpetuation of certain norms, values and stereotypes; these conceptual frameworks, in turn, inform behaviour and shape the world as we know it.

A so-called “Africanism” (Campbell 2007: 363) analogous to “Orientalism” is purported to be at work in representations of postcolonial Africa, reflecting and sculpting the West’s “apologetic concerns and exclusionary and brutal practices towards the others” (Mbembe 2001: 2). Others have identified and described the consistently negative international coverage as a form of “Afro-pessimism” (see De B’Berri & Louw 2011; Hawk

1992; Fair 1993; Ahluwalia 2000; Keane 2004; Momoh 2003). Through this representation, the African continent is rendered a passive object of colonialism, imperialism, military intervention and humanitarianism.

Two major trends, in particular, perpetuate this iconography of “dark”, “suffering” and “Other”: the simplification of ethnic identities, and an overemphasis on humanitarian narratives within stories. McNulty suggests ethnicity is almost always the default explanation offered by Western reporters covering conflict on the continent: “in response to a crisis the media portray the conflict as ethnic (i.e. a crisis not of our making, caused not by political or economic circumstances but by ancestral hatreds beyond our ken)” (1999: 271). In addition to its potential implications for international responses (see below section on the importance of coverage) such reporting may obscure a far more complex relationship between ethnicity, conflict, and identity, as ethnic divides may be constructed and solidified *through* conflict – and thus should not be confused with its causes (ibid: 276). Ethnic-based reporting has been widely identified and criticised in the coverage of Kenya (Somerville 2009), Sudan (Campbell 2007; Kleinman and Kleinman 1996; Johnson 2003), and Rwanda (Carruthers 2000; Dowden 2004), to name just a few.

International reporting on Africa has also been criticized for the prevalence of humanitarian-orientated articles – that is, whenever African stories *do* make it onto the international news agenda, they almost always focus on some form of humanitarian disaster, and champion internationally-led “rescue efforts”. As Keane writes,

Since the end of colonialism, Western correspondents have stood in front of emaciated Africans or piles of African bodies and used the language of the Old Testament to mediate the horrors to their audiences” (2004: 8-9).

Kleinman and Kleinman (1996) argue that, cumulatively, pictures and reporting of this kind – that emphasise discrete and decontextualized instances of suffering – naturalise humanitarian disasters and, importantly, obscure their often political causes. Such reporting is loaded with moral and political assumptions; the unstated idea is that Africans – generic and grouped – cannot defend their own, and must be protected (as well as represented) by others: “The image of the subaltern conjures up an almost neo-colonial ideology of failure, inadequacy, passivity, fatalism, and inevitability. Something must be done, and it must be done soon, but *from outside* the local setting” (1996: 7).

It is important to note that many of the “Afro-pessimism” criticisms of African news coverage are based on anecdotal or qualitative readings of news texts. Scott (2009) argues that commentators have a tendency to identify isolated instances of negative coverage and extrapolate from this across the entirety of media content. In his content analysis of UK newspaper coverage of Africa, Scott finds that the continent is neither as marginalised nor reified as many suspect; but, rather, that there is significant variation between the way different news outlets cover issues and events in Africa.

A Democratic Deficit

A second main critique emerges from political communications theory and argues that, in its coverage of African crises, the news media is failing to provide enough information, analysis, and plurality of views to fulfil the roles that democratic theories ascribe to it as the traditional “fourth estate”. Drawing on the theories of representative democracy developed by Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl, Pippa Norris establishes three key functions the news media ought to play within a democratic society: providing a civic forum for debate; acting as a watchdog on power; and supporting civil society (2000: 22-32). This is equally true when the media covers international issues: politicians should be held accountable; a variety of viewpoints represented; and, through the provision of information and analysis, (international) civil society supported, informed and potentially mobilised (see also McQuail 1994).

Democratic critiques of the news media are not new, particularly in relation to foreign reporting. In 1965, Galtung and Ruge recorded highly episodic coverage in the foreign news of several Norwegian newspapers, and recommended that there be “more emphasis on build-up and background material in the total media output” and that “journalists should be better trained to capture and report on long-term developments, and concentrate less on ‘events’” (1965: 84). However, commentators suggest that these issues are particularly pronounced in reporting on African conflicts (McNulty 1999: 270). The media’s ability to perform its democratic functions is seriously undermined by a lack of coverage, the episodic nature of reports, and articles that are dominated by simplifying journalistic “frames”. Citizens thus do not

see enough information to critique foreign policy in the continent.³ Missing from reports is the thematic and background information capable of placing events in their historical context, employing global comparisons, and discussing the implications of policy.

Importance of Coverage

International news coverage is important for a number of reasons: it has the potential to shape conflict on the ground, to influence international policy responses, and to contribute to long-term perceptions of the African continent.

Local impact

International news coverage is available to local elites and, to a lesser extent, the general public in East Africa through subscriptions, satellite, radio and the internet. In addition, local media in East Africa often reprint and re-run large quantities of coverage from international publications and wire services (International Media Support 2007).

During conflict and crises, international news coverage can become an important factor in the way a crisis evolves. For example, during the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/8, there was a local blackout on news, and a large portion of Kenyans received updates on the crisis via international channels, such as CNN, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and Reuters. These international

³ This criticism must be tempered by the fact that many citizens do not read, nor are they necessarily interested in, foreign news at all.

reports were often sensational, and drew heavily on ethnic rather than political explanations of the conflict. Several commentators have suggested that exposure to this international coverage directly stimulated fighting on the ground by increasing local fear, and entrenching the ethnic nature of the fighting (BBC 2008; Keane 2008; Ogola 2008; Somerville 2009). The BBC World Service Report (2008), for example, quotes Kenyan citizens who describe being exposed to international coverage of the post-election violence in their country in 2007-8, and becoming more fearful as a result. A further example can be seen in the international coverage of Darfur, which David Campbell (2007) argues directly fuelled the conflict by solidifying ethnic differences and feeding these images back to fighting parties, who became more entrenched in their positions (see also Waisbord 2008).

International impact

International news reports are also an important dimension of the foreign policy response to crises. Although the ability of the news media to influence policy – the so-called “CNN effect” – is fiercely debated, there is some consensus that the news media, by deciding which issues to cover, partially sets the public agenda, which in turn may influence the importance citizens ascribe to certain issues (McCombs 1981). Conversely, in instances where there is no coverage, there is little pressure on citizens, elites or institutions to respond (Hawkins 2002).

Theories of media framing further suggest that the news media adopts frames, which, by omitting some ideas and emphasising others, produce and

reinforce a certain way of understanding and viewing an issue (Entman 1993, 2003). This may have consequences for what is considered an adequate/necessary policy response within the international community (Dowden 2004: 288). When coverage is episodic, for example, it may draw attention away from the root issues and factors that shape conflict, towards immediate ‘band aid’ responses (Rossenblum 1994: 22; McNulty 1999: 271). In instances where issues are presented as atavistic, tribal, or horrible beyond comprehension, it may appear as if there is *no possible way* to respond. As Kleinman and Kleinman write, “our epoch’s dominating sense that complex problems can be neither understood nor fixed works with the massive globalization of images of suffering to produce moral fatigue, exhaustion of empathy, and political despair” (1996: 9; see also Shraeder & Endless 1998: 35). This is particularly the case when violence and conflict is presented as the result of ethnic conflict, which is supposedly “age-old and engrained” (Ignatieff 1997: 24).

Scholars have further suggested that the international news coverage may have repercussions for the aid industry in Africa. In a contract-centred aid world, news coverage helps to generate much needed revenues. NGOs want their work to be visible, and this attracts them to work at ‘higher profile’ crises, as well as encouraging some humanitarian practices, which are telegenetic, over others (Benthall 1993: 182-3, Curruthers 2000: 229).

Finally, and importantly, news coverage contributes to long-term international perceptions of Africa. Representations of the “developing world” have been widely criticized for their homogenisation of entire continents, and the extent to which they reinforce understandings of the “developing world” as

“Other” and in need of Western help (e.g. DFID 2000; Mbembe 2001). Not only does this have quite immediate consequences for tourism and trade, but it also supports and reinforces an asymmetrical power relationship with long-term consequences for the globe. Keane (2004) worries that a relentless journalistic focus on misery may damage Africans’ sense of themselves and their nations’ potential (see also Mbembe 2001; Spencer 2006: 85-6), while Roger Silverstone (2007) eloquently and importantly argues that these unbalanced representations preclude the “proper distance” needed to generate an empathetic and cosmopolitan concern for other citizens of the world.

Given the centrality of news reports to the ways in which crises develop, and to international perceptions generally, it is important to understand how these reports are written, and who or what influences their content. As Cottle writes in reference to simplistic ethnic narratives in the British press:

If such representations are to be effectively challenged and replaced by more representative images of the communities they purport to portray – including their conditions of existence and in all their cultural complexities – so we must know about the forces that currently produce less than ‘representative’ portrayals (1999: 191).

The next section identifies the main producers of international news coverage of Africa.

The Global News Landscape

Who and what news outlets produce the news reports discussed above? This second part of the background section outlines the contemporary foreign reporting landscape in East Africa, and the major outlets generating news. The purpose of this section is to identify the key players and organisations that will be examined in the remainder of the thesis. It is shown that the production of foreign news content is *collaborative*, *multi-sited*, and *global*, and that, in order to understand and explain news production, we must incorporate actors who are geographically situated around the globe, and come from a diverse set of backgrounds.

Traditional FCs in East Africa

In the first half of the twentieth century, foreign correspondents (FCs) were a fairly homogenous group: white, Western born and raised. These reporters – generally men – were trained as journalists in their home country, and sent abroad to report. This traditional model of foreign reporting – which Cole and Hamilton (2008) suggest was at its peak from 1930-1970 in the golden age of “Complete Correspondents” – was linear and state-based. Correspondents were trained and socialised in the news values of their home country’s media system – both its industry-wide news-values, and those of their specific outlet. They were familiar with their readership, and shared their cultural frames of reference. In the African sites these FCs reported from they were clearly outsiders (Cole and Hamilton 2008: 804).

Despite the clichéd notion of a dashing foreign correspondent in the field – far away from home and battling adversity to uncover the truth – the reality of day-to-day international newsgathering in East Africa is now considerably more mundane. The past thirty years have seen a systematic downsizing of the number of such foreign correspondents posted around the world (Hamilton and Jenner 2004; Constable 2007). Foreign news budgets were cut with the end of the Cold War amid diminished circulations and advertising revenue (Utley 1997). These cuts continued throughout the noughties, despite the events of 9/11, and the renewed interest in foreign affairs that accompanied Western military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. Jill Carroll (2007) reports that in just six years, between 2000 and 2006, there was a 10-30% decline in the number of American newspaper-sponsored foreign bureaus.

The decrease in traditional FCs has been particularly marked in Africa, where most outlets have no correspondents of any kind and rely heavily on newswires for their stories (Franks 2005). Today five UK newspapers have traditional, permanently posted correspondents based in Africa. These are (in order of circulation) *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Financial Times*. These outlets tend to have only one correspondent who is based in the hub city of Nairobi, from which they cover the entire African continent, although in some instances, this is supported by a second correspondent in Johannesburg.⁴ Working to cover the entire continent, these FCs are frequently desk-bound, and heavily reliant on outside

⁴ The American outlets are similarly represented in Africa: the largest elite newspapers have a permanent correspondent, most notably *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The LA Times*. Beyond these, only a fluctuating group of stringers work for American newspapers.

contacts and newswires for their story ideas, sources, and interpretations. Furthermore, the foreign news budgets at many of these outlets have been cut in recent years, leaving correspondents less resources to travel.

Commentators have expressed dismay at the shrinking pool of foreign correspondents posted abroad – assuming that this trend will lead to a decline in the quantity or quality of foreign news coverage (e.g. Utley 1997; Carroll 2007; Constable 2007; Russo 2010). However, as Hamilton and Jenner (2004) suggest, foreign news coverage has not dried up entirely; rather, it has started to come from more diverse – and cost effective – sources. New actors, including bloggers, parachute journalists, in-house journalists and local-national journalists now supplement, and often replace, the work of traditional foreign correspondents. The authors conclude that we are witnessing the evolution, rather than the extinction of foreign correspondents:

do these perceived declines [in traditional FCs] accurately measure the quantity and quality of foreign reporting that actually exists? We think not. The alarm, we propose, is based on an anachronistic and static model of what foreign correspondence is and who foreign correspondents are (2004: 303).

As Hamilton and Jenner note, parachute journalists are an alternative source of reporting in foreign news outlets. Parachute journalists are those who are based elsewhere (usually the outlet headquarters in a Western state) but travel to a country to produce news on a specific event – for example, the crisis in Darfur or the post election violence in Kenya. This is generally either done because an outlet has no permanent correspondent in the field and wishes to cover an event, or because a ‘high profile’ journalist from the paper is being

sent to produce a special story or supplement existing reporting (e.g. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* travelling to Darfur).

Parachute journalists are often singled out for criticism by media commentators and scholars for their superficial and sensational reporting (Erickson and Hamilton 2006; Mackintosh 1996: 54). The superficiality of their reports is said to result from numerous factors: they are unfamiliar with the country they are reporting on, and often do not know the history, context, or importance of an event; they are under tight deadlines; they may sensationalise what they find in order to justify the expense of their trip; and they have no trusted local sources. As a result of this last factor, they may end up depending on unreliable informants, or disproportionately seek out Western aid workers and officials, who share their cultural frames of reference.

Although parachute journalists are undoubtedly an important source of news, their reporting is sometimes given undue attention in the journalism literature. This is perhaps because it is seen to be so problematic. Generally, parachute journalists go in and out of an event, and provide ad hoc reporting. When they are absent (the majority of the time) a much more important set of agents provides the on-going coverage of conflict and crises, as well as general news: the newswires.

The International News Agencies

The most important producers of day-to-day international news content are the international newswires. Today the “big three” – AFP, AP, and Reuters –

are said to monopolize – or at least dominate – the worldwide flow of news (Biesla 2008; Boyd-Barrett 2000; Paterson 2006, 2007; Williams 2011). Together they are what Kevin Williams calls, “the basic organisational foundations on which the international system operates” and they employ the majority of all foreign correspondents working in the world (2011: 67). Newswires have always provided a great portion of foreign news for the print world: in Galtung and Ruge’s 1965 seminal study of foreign news content, for example, newswires accounted for 80-90% of all foreign news stories in Norwegian newspapers. However, the role of newswires is even greater today, as competing news sources have decreased (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). As the number of traditional foreign correspondents declines, newswires provide an increasing portion of foreign news for publications around the world.

The vast majority of news on East Africa is produced by these newswires, who have – by far – the largest reporter presence of any outlets in Africa. While each of the quality newspaper in the UK has one correspondent covering East Africa, the largest newswires (Reuters, Bloomberg, AFP, AP) have one correspondent (or stringer) in every country in Africa, as well as large bureaus in the regional hubs of Nairobi, Johannesburg, and Cairo. Because of their large networks of journalists, and their physical presence in every country, newswire reporters are often the only international journalists in the field when an important event takes place, and they often provide the only (professional/journalistic) first-hand account of events for news consumers around the globe.

These newswires are important agenda-setters for the world's media coverage of Africa. They provide news and information to Western FCs working in Africa who are desk-bound in hub cities (Schlesinger 2009: 27-8). The newswires are also agenda-setters for the coverage of Africa produced by domestic TV and newspapers around the world – both providing the raw copy for reports, and influencing which stories outlets believe they *should* cover. Larson studied network television in America (1979; 1984) and found that the presence of a newswire bureau in any given country was the most significant predictor of whether that country would feature in US network television news. Wu (2007) revisited these findings twenty years later, and found an even stronger correlation between newswire presence and US networks' website news coverage.

In the world of online news, the dominance of newswires is dramatic. While the number of original news producers is low, the internet has created space for the mass duplication and dissemination of these texts. Chris Paterson (2006; 2007) conducted a large-scale content analysis of website news stories using anti-plagiarism software to compare the content of news websites with the content of newswire stories. He finds that AP and Reuters are repeated almost verbatim across news websites, a trend that increased markedly between 2001 and 2006. Yahoo news increased its reliance on wire stories from 69% to 97%. More significantly, even the news outlets that audiences might assume produce original news content increased their reliance on wires. At CNN, newswire copy increased from 38% to 59%. Paterson notes:

In a typical result, for a 642 word CNN story on UN troops in the Congo, 553 words

existed in phrases (strings of five words or more) copied from Reuters, and 29 words existed in phrases copied from AP. This was, in other words, a virtually unchanged Reuters story published by CNN (although CNN did not identify it as such) (2007: 62).

At ABC, wire copy rose even more dramatically from 55 to 91%.

Paterson concludes that in the online news world, there are only four organisations that do extensive international reporting (Reuters, AP, AFP, BBC); there are a handful of outlets doing some international reporting (CNN, MSN, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and a few other large newspapers), and the remainder of organisations do no original international reporting. The most significant producers, by some margin, were the newswires Reuters and AP; Paterson concludes that:

discourse on international events of consequences within the global public sphere is substantially determined by the production practices and institutional priorities of two information services – Reuters and the Associated Press (2007: 63).

Global Audiences

Today's newswires are truly global in scope, in terms of both the clients/audiences they compete for, and the journalists they hire. Rather than producing news content for specific, nation-based audiences, newswires write for a global client base. Some – such as AFP, Xinhau and the BBC – are still heavily subsidised by their 'home country,' and may be shaped by political-media forces in these countries. However, others occupy a space truly divorced from territorial allegiances. Reuters, AP, and Bloomberg, in particular, pride themselves on their global client base and their writing is carefully crafted to appeal to a global readership, rather than a specific citizenry (Peterson 2001: 82; Read 1992). At Reuters and Bloomberg, the

majority of income comes not from media subscribers, but from financial clients who subscribe to 'live screen terminals' for up-to-the-minute financial information and news. These subscribers are located all around the world, and may not share any frames of reference with one another. As one correspondent at Bloomberg states,

If I was a foreign correspondent in a British newspaper working in, say, Sydney, I would always look for stories that fitted the stereotypes held by the British, such as the idea that people in Australia drink a lot or get eaten by crocodiles. But in the Bloomberg universe these clichés cannot be relied upon as a person in Malaysia, or a Malaysian person working in a London bank may not share the same reference points (Machin & Niblock 2010: 789).

The global media landscape represents a complex terrain of multi-vocal, multimedia and multi-directional flows, and these have enabled media companies to operate in increasingly transnational rather than national arenas, seeking and creating new consumers worldwide. Nationality scarcely matters in this market-orientated media ecology as producers view the audience principally as consumers, not citizens (Thussu 2007: 11).

Global reporters

One of the most striking trends identified by Cole and Hamilton (2008) in the 'evolution' of foreign news is the increased centrality and importance of local-national foreign correspondents: journalists who report on their home country for a global news audience.

Without the money to fund Western correspondents abroad, news outlets have turned away from this traditional hiring model, and are increasingly contracting local nationals who live on-site to file news stories. This trend can be seen in rapid changes in the nationality of journalists

providing foreign coverage for American outlets. At the start of the 1990s Kliesch (1991) reports that 63% of the journalists providing foreign news for American outlets were American nationals. Ten years later, a comparable survey found that only 31% were American nationals – reflecting cuts in American nationals posted abroad, and an increased reliance on contract journalists living in the news site (quoted in Wu and Hamilton 2004: 521). In late 2011, it was revealed that the BBC plans to radically reduce its number of Western correspondents posted around the world. In their place, the organisation will recruit local journalists to provide it with news content (Halliday 2011).

The importance of local-national FCs is particularly marked in Africa, where they are the main producers of content for newswires. The Reuters newswire, for example, has its East African headquarters in Nairobi and a network of 16 text journalists in countries around the region. Of these 16 journalists, 13 are local nationals: a Tanzanian national reports on Tanzania, a Burundi national on Burundi, and so on. Similarly, at the AFP newswire, 11 of 13 text journalists in the East Africa region are local nationals.⁵ Similar portions of local hires can be found across the international outlets of the BBC, Al Jazeera, and CNN. In each of these networks, the editorial leaders – generally based in regional hubs, like Nairobi – are Western-born and trained journalists. But the bulk of their newsagents – the reporters who suggest story ideas, decide if an event on their turf is worth reporting to their superiors, discover stories, and select the sources and views that will be represented, and contextualise events – are local nationals.

⁵ Interview with Andrew Cawthorne, Nairobi Reuters Bureau Chief (2/8/09); and John-Mark Mojon AFP News Editor (3/8/09).

A considerable body of empirical research shows that journalists from different countries and regions have divergent views regarding their professional role, and the purpose of their work (e.g. Weaver 1998; Hanitzsch 1996; MacLachlan 2000; Ramaprasad and Kelly 2003). In America, for example, Weaver and Wilhoit identify three main perceived journalistic roles: interpreting information, disseminating information, and acting as an adversary to government or business (1991: 120-122). Scholars argue that such a typology is inadequate in African contexts as it cannot account for the range of journalist role perceptions found in Tanzania (Ramaprasad 2001), Uganda (Mwesige 2004; Borlase 2012), Ethiopia (Dirbaba 2006), Ghana (Hasty 2006), or Egypt (Ramaprasad and Hamdy 2006). In these nations, interview and survey data reveals that journalists also value professional objectives such as: explaining government policy to citizens; giving marginalised people a voice; and creating a space for nation-building discourse.

These findings paint a complex backdrop for the work of local-national foreign correspondents. These journalists have likely been trained in the media system of their home nation, but they work for news outlets that emerged in a Western media environment, and which produce news for media systems around the world. Do local-national FCs find that their role perceptions clash with the agenda of their international employers? If so, how do they negotiate this clash? Do their existing values prevail – or does the new outlet succeed in re-educating them and ‘trumping’ their original values? These questions have not been explored in the academic research on FC

practices, which has focused on Western journalists who live or travel abroad to report (e.g. Hannerz 2004; Hess 1996; Morrison and Tumber 1988).

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In today's global news system, multinational journalists produce news across national lines, which is consumed by diverse groups around the world. The news processes described above have not yet been fully theorised by academics of the news media. Indeed, some authors suggest that the new global information order may be too diffuse and abstract to grasp analytically (Heikkilä and Kunelius 2008: 378). One thing is clear: these changes mean new approaches to news production are necessary. As Ekecrantz writes, we need:

[a] *de-nationalising* of media studies, a giving up of concepts firmly rooted in the figure of thought (or mental container) of the nation states and its inherited institutions and national myths...This is a historically new equation or paradox, calling for new alliances in media studies, both between and beyond disciplines and their national habitats." (2007: 175).

The literature review assesses how modes of news production in this new global landscape have and have not been analysed to date. The theoretical chapter then suggests a new framework for this endeavour.

2. Literature Review

How do foreign correspondents negotiate the complex global news system outlined in the background chapter? And how have researchers theorised and studied this production process? The short answer is: they have only just started. The first section of this literature review briefly surveys the research on foreign news production to date, highlighting lacunae in research and, in particular, the lack of research that can adequately describe the contemporary news system. The second, theoretical section, argues that field theory, proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and expanded by others, offers a promising starting point to explore foreign news production. This approach has been used fruitfully to illuminate domestic news production practices, but has not yet been applied to foreign news production. The final section explores how field theory can – and should – be expanded to incorporate global fields of journalistic production.

Existing research on foreign news production

To some extent, news reports reflect events as they occur in the world. However, these events are far from the “full story”, as there is always a range of competing events, sources, and interpretations that journalists and editors choose between (Gans 1979: 79; Gitlin 1980: 49-51; Schudson 2005: 173). Noting that news depictions of the world are neither “natural” nor purely accidental, social scientists have characterised the news as a “made” and

“constructed” cultural product, and focused their attention on the creative process and forces that shape this production (Schudson 2005).

What, then, shapes this creative process? Why are some pieces of information included in news articles and not others? Who or what decides the sources that are cited, and the statistics that are reproduced? There is a surprising lack of empirical research on the day-to-day nature of foreign news production and the practices of foreign correspondents at work. As Hannerz (2004: 12) notes, the bulk of the literature on foreign reporting consists of journalists writing about themselves, usually in colourful detail. This is most often done by journalists who consider their careers and associated personal lives to be marked by special interest. The outcome of this is a somewhat grand presentation of both the role and its occupant at the expense of more mundane and characteristic features of the occupation.⁶

There are two in-depth production studies of FCs at work that go some way to filling this gap. In *War Stories*, Pedelty (1995) examines war correspondents in El Salvador, while Morris and Tumber’s (1988) *Journalists at War* explores British correspondents reporting on the Falklands conflict. Both of these works are insightful and interesting, however their relevance to today’s reporting in East Africa is limited. First, each one only examines a single case study, both in South America – and extrapolation from these contexts to other cases (and continents) is problematic. Second, the authors focus on “traditional FCs” in their analyses – that is, Western-born correspondents posted abroad. As outlined in the background chapter, this

⁶ This is not to say that these accounts are irrelevant or without interest; Hannerz (2004) helpfully suggests that we approach them as a form of ethnographic data, which can provide insight into how FCs view themselves and their work.

group are increasingly a minority in the production of international news on Africa. Third, both were written prior to the explosion of the internet, and the emergence of technologies that have facilitated instant communication between audiences, editors and journalists through greater, more specific and more immediate feedback mechanisms. Finally, and significantly, these two case studies reach antithetical conclusions on the central issue of journalistic autonomy.

In order to write *War Stories*, Pedelty spent a year studying FCs in El Salvador – watching them work, travelling with them into the field, interviewing them, and reading their news texts. Drawing on this data, he argues that foreign correspondents have little or no autonomy in their writing, due to political/economic structural constraints and professional norms. Pedelty draws on Foucault’s idea of “discipline” – that is, an active, productive, and creative form of power – and argues that a number of “pleasures” (pay, promotion, notoriety, identity, and fantasy) compel correspondents to take part in the production of institutionally-favoured discourses (1995: 5-6). This “discipline” operates in combination with Louis Althusser’s notion of “industrial state apparatuses,” which Pedelty suggests are inherent in the organizational practice and political economy of foreign reporting: in the way that journalists are often embedded within the military, and the policing of journalistic access to elite sources.

These forces – or “disciplinary apparatuses” – structure the media world with the result that “reporters play a relatively small role in the creative process of discovery, analysis and representation involved in news production”. Journalists are, rather, “conduits for a system of institutions,

authoritative sources, practices, and ideologies that frame the events and issues well before they, the mythical watchdogs, have a chance to do anything resembling independent analysis or representation” (1995: 24).

Morrison and Tumber’s *Journalists at War* reaches quite different conclusions regarding journalistic autonomy. Rather than structures, Morrison and Tumber emphasise a “notion of the ‘journalist as person’...an individual with his own biography and sensibilities” (1988: preface, x). Noting that journalists’ experience, outlook, and career trajectory shaped the news they produced, the authors argue that individuals have an important influence on news production. Rather than operating as passive conduits for outside forces, or being *constrained by* overarching structures, Morrison and Tumber suggest that journalists *interact with* organisational routines and wider interests to produce news stories.

Morrison and Tumber cite the example of Ian Bruce of the *Glasgow Herald* talking to his editor on the phone. The editor complained that Bruce’s stories on the fall of Port Stanley sounded very bitter; Bruce (whose acquaintance had been badly wounded) replied, “That’s because I am f***ing bitter” (1988: preface, x).

The conflict between these authors – the question of whether and how journalists possess autonomy – echoes a deeper debate in the media literature regarding journalism autonomy, and is further discussed below.

Studying international news production “from afar”

In addition to these two production studies on FCs in the field, there is a growing literature that examines foreign correspondents “from afar”, and which provides important background for production studies. This research tends to draw on one of three key methodologies: content analysis, political economic analysis, and surveys. This research supplies helpful ideas for “what to look for” in ethnographies of the media; however, as argued below, they are not a substitute for insight gathered through on the ground production studies.

In content analysis, media messages are broken down and analysed for the frequency of certain themes, sources, or words that fall into pre-determined categories (see Krippendorff 1980). Galtung and Ruge (1965), for example, in one of the classic pieces of foreign news research, analyse the foreign stories that appeared in four Norwegian newspapers, and identified twelve “news factors” which helped predict whether a story (usually from a newswire) would be included in the day’s newspaper. Herman and Chomsky’s influential *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) (discussed further below) also employs content analysis to examine which foreign events are covered in the press, and how they are framed. The works of these authors have become touchstones in media literature. However, they provide limited insight into FC practice itself. In studying the pages of newspapers, Herman and Chomsky, and Galtung and Ruge, were primarily gaining insight into the “gatekeepers” of news, rather than the producers of news. Gatekeeping studies are premised on a model of news as a *one-way* flow of content that is filtered by gatekeepers in control of what ultimately gets through. That is, they start from

the “assumption that the information screened out of the system already exists in a transmittable format” (Lang & Lang 2004: 94); they do not take into account the fact that not all events become news. Such simple, one-way news flows have been widely discredited in light of new theoretical approaches that draw attention to the *emergence* and *production* of news in situ (ibid: 96). Simply put, we need to attend to the creation, production and emergence of news, rather than simply the selection within it (McQuail, 1994: 270; Curran & Seaton 1997: 277; Tunstall 1971: 24). Moreover, there are numerous news stories unexplained by Galtung and Ruge’s list, or Herman and Chomsky’s “filters”, and neither work helps account for how news values and practices might change over time or between contexts (Harcup & O’Neil 2001).

Content analysis can be a useful methodological tool – particularly given the development of new, sophisticated software. David Campbell (2007), for example, gathers illuminating data regarding the content of the news coverage of Darfur, and the similarities in its visual representations to those in coverage of other African crises. However, inferences still need to be made in order to use content analysis to shed light on production practices. At its best, researchers can employ sophisticated content analysis and data manipulation to identify *correlations* between news content and conditions of production; so, for example, a researcher could compare data such as Campbell’s across different types of news providers – tabloids, broadsheets, publicly-owned outlets – and reveal that each represent the Darfur crisis differently. This correlation may be a useful starting point but it is far from conclusive. It doesn’t establish a causal link: From these results, the

researcher may infer, but could not prove that media content is profoundly influenced by organisational factors. They could not rule out the possibility that other factors may be responsible for the observed phenomenon – journalists with certain personalities may be attracted to work at different outlets; some outlets may have no money to send a correspondent to the field; the Sudanese government may have just exiled their correspondent from Darfur; and so on.

A second methodology employed “from home” is political-economic research, in which researchers analyse ownership, laws, and regulations, and make suggestions as to how these may shape news content (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Croteau & Hoynes 2001; Hamilton 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988; McChesney 2003). Writing in the political-economic tradition, Herman and Chomsky (1988) famously articulated a “propaganda model,” which argues that the media stands in structured subordination to political and economic elites. This subordination is the result of a number of news “filters,” including media ownership, dependence on advertising, reliance on political and corporate sources, right-leaning think-tanks who disseminate ‘facts’ and media criticism, and the ideological environment. In this analysis, journalists are presented as passive agents, subjected to forces that “act upon them”. The propaganda model is, primarily, a critique of the media-industrial infrastructure in the United States. In its focus on domestic power structures, it does not pay much attention to the political and economic forces that operate on foreign correspondents in the field, and it only able to infer relationships between observed structures and practice (or text). Moreover, this work has since been criticised for its homogenous treatment of

“journalists,” its monolithic and static conception of power, and its understatement of the autonomy of individual journalists (Peterson 2001: 209).

Finally, there is a rich body of research based on surveys of foreign correspondents, their demographics, and news values (e.g., Hess 1996; Weaver 1998). These findings paint a complex and interesting picture of the work of today’s FCs – suggesting, for example, that journalists from different countries often have profoundly different role perceptions. However, survey data rarely provides answers as to how or why such a link operates in practice, and whether they may vary as the journalists change environments (Cole & Hamilton 2004). It cannot predict how values will shape practice or tell us, for example, what happens when a journalist from one country (with one set of values), works for a media outlet based in a second country (with a different set of values).

Supplementing and synthesising the above research, there is a growing number of generalist books that examine foreign news and journalists (e.g., Hess 1996; Carruthers 2000; Hannerz 2004). Again, these introduce a helpful range of important actors and phenomenon that could be explored in greater depth, but they do not, in and of themselves, shed light on the moment of production. Furthermore they too often focus on traditional foreign correspondents who, as we have seen, are no longer the most important producers of foreign news content. Ulf Hannerz, for example, in one of the major works of the last decade, determines his sample group with reference to a traditional definition of FCs:

I take the core group of foreign correspondents to consist of those individuals who are stationed in other countries than that of their origin for the purpose of reporting on events and characteristics of the area of their stationing, through news media based elsewhere (usually in the countries of their origin) (Hannerz 2004: 5).

In this way, Hannerz draws attention primarily to correspondents who cross national lines, neglecting the now majority of newswire correspondents who report from their country of birth. Generalist books have also tended to overlook the important role of newswires – perhaps, as Boyd-Barrett (2000) suggests, because newswires occupy a less romantic space in our imaginings, as compared with the rugged and dashing correspondents who appear in films and popular culture.

In the absence of comprehensive on-the-ground studies of foreign news reporting, discussions of African crisis reporting tend to be general, ad hoc and anecdotal. Take, for example, a typical discussion of the news coverage of the Rwandan genocide. Citing a journalist in the field, Carruthers (2000: 227) suggests a number of reasons why the Rwandan genocide was initially under-covered by international press: these include the fact that Rwanda was 1. Off the beaten track, 2. Dangerous, 3. There were other stories at the time competing for media attention, and 4. There is a perception that “one African story is enough” and the news press were already pre-occupied, in April 1994, with the first election in South Africa that marked the end of apartheid. In his discussion of the crisis, Dowden (2004) adds that, 5. There are conceptual difficulties for journalists depicting a conflict so horrific, and 6. That Britain had no colonial ties to Rwanda. Other commentators have suggested yet more reasons for neglect (Duncan 2007; McNulty 1999; Melvern 2006). While all of these factors did likely influence the coverage of Rwanda, it is unclear whether

some are more important than others (and if so, what the ordering is), how they interact, or how and whether they would be true in other contexts. It is likely, for example, that all of these six challenges would have been overcome if the international community had a vested interest, an existing fascination with the event, or a market audience they knew were interested. As Stephen Hess suggests, “when news organizations believe a story is important enough, foreign correspondents are allowed to find ways to overcome obstacles” (1996: 38). Or, as one senior editor comments in reference to the conflict in Darfur:

Yes Darfur is inaccessible, and yes it’s dangerous. Hell, it’s like trying to write a story on the moon. But let’s face it. If Michael Jackson’s wedding was in Darfur, people would have found a way.⁷

What is missing from the existing literature is the connection between journalism context and journalism practice, and this gap can only be filled by further production studies in the field, observing and analysing FCs as they work.

Hierarchy of Influences

There is a rich literature of production studies and ethnographic studies of domestic reporting practices, and these provide some insight into how ethnographic studies might be applied to international contexts. In an early summary piece, Gans (1980) proposed that there are three categories of theories that purport to explain the content of news stories – those that centre around: 1. journalists themselves 2. organisational/industry structures, and 3.

⁷ Sean Maguire, Reuters African Editor, speaking at “Darfur After Rwanda: Sudan’s internal crisis and the international response” conference held at Roehampton University, 16th May 2007.

factors outside the media world such as sources, technology, ideology and culture. These categories can also be expressed as three different levels of influence – the micro (individual journalists), the mezzo (news outlets, or the media industry as a whole), and the macro (external factors).

Although these categories have been contested and expanded on since their publication, they continue to provide a useful organising device for capturing competing explanations of news content. Gitlin (1980), for example, employs this categorisation in his book-length study of domestic reporting, and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) use it as the starting point for their important hierarchy-of-influence model. The following section gives a very brief overview of these factors, and where possible draws links to the existing literature on foreign news production.

The Micro level: Journalist-centred explanations of news content

Journalists have long been baffled by and resistant to scholarly explanations of news production that emphasise systematic or structural influences on news content. Such accounts tend to be very much at odds with journalists' perceptions of the news process as a messy, haphazard enterprise to which the contribution of individual journalists is central. As Mark Peterson notes:

journalists draw from an American cultural meta-narrative of the fiercely independent, intelligent, and brave male, who by virtue of those qualities is able to overcome insurmountable obstacles... flawed but persistent heroes (or, alternatively, as trickster figures) on a quest for truth in a landscape of obstructions, illusions and dangers (2001: 201).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996: 63-103) identify three intrinsic features of the individual journalist that may influence their work:

1. *Background*. A journalist's nationality, gender, class, and education, which may shape the way they perceive the world and negotiate sources. Sophia Peterson (1979), for example, suggests that nationality and cultural background continued to influence journalists working for *The Times* (London) over and above the values of their news organisation.

2. *Personal attitudes, values and beliefs*, which may influence the "angle" of their reporting. For example, there are many tales of "burnout" and cynicism in foreign correspondent's autobiographies. Peter Maas, for example, suffered a breakdown whilst reporting in Bosnia, and stated this meant he was "no longer curious about the war and...no longer believed that [his] reporting could make a difference" (in Seeger 1996: 89). He suggests that this shaped the news content he produced.

3. *Professional role-perception and ethics*, which determine what the communicator thinks is worth transmitting to their audience and how a story should be developed (Shanor 2003: 45). For example, whether a journalist thinks it is more important to 'hold powers accountable', or to analyse and explain events. In crisis reporting, a further dimension of role-perception is the extent to which journalists see themselves as having a moral role to play in the conflict itself. Martin Bell, for example, a former BBC war correspondent, argues for a "journalism of attachment", believing that journalists should include shocking stories and details that communicate the "real cost of war" to their home audience (1998: 21). An alternate ethical approach is "peace

journalism” – a mode of socially responsible journalism that aims to create coverage conducive to the resolution of conflict (e.g., Galtung 2000; Hanitzsch 2004; Waisbord 2008: 80; but cf. Fawcett 2002). These positions are generally at odds with mainstream news practice, which aims to objectively witness events (for example, Ward 1998).

4. *Skill level and professional ambition.* Ericson et al (1987) find that an individual journalists’ skills, aspirations and motivations may directly impact on news content; these come to bear on how hard they are willing to work, what their aims are in their work; and the resources they have to draw on. For instance, they influence how interested journalists are in promotions and therefore how likely they are to work in the institutionally-favoured ways necessary to that end. Skill levels refer to the resources that journalists have to draw on; these may particularly shape the work of FCs, who are required to negotiate difficult environments and must work creatively to access sources (Hannerz 2004: 46).

Organisation-centred explanations

Organisational theories do not acknowledge a particular role for individual journalists as influences on news content, believing, instead, that their practices and tendencies will be standardized within institutions (Schudson 1989: 273)

Organisational studies of the media began in earnest in the 1950s, emerging from sociologists’ studies of the newsroom (Breed 1955; influential works in this tradition include Sigal 1973; Epstein 1974; Elliot 1977). Such

studies often begin with the observation that there are high levels of homogeneity in the reporting of given news organisations. This homogeneity, organisational theorists propose, is caused by organisational routines that emerged to make reporting easier and more resource-efficient. Three organisational features are usually emphasised. First, the division of labour in the newsroom, particularly the division of reporting work between news “beats” and the hierarchical structure of staff. Second, the commercial agenda, which puts pressure on an organisation; influencing decisions about the staff, time, and resources that can be devoted to reporting. Finally, the socialisation of journalists into the values of the newsroom, which encourages journalists to internalise a number of profession-wide and organisation-specific values regarding newsworthiness, objectivity, and conventions of reporting such as sourcing elites and the inverted-triangle story structure.

Organisational explanations of news content tend to take for granted the physical presence of the journalists’ organisation. In the field, by contrast, foreign correspondents are often alone, thousands of miles from their newsroom and colleagues and may feel estranged from its norms and values (Hannerz 2004: 148). Although new technologies have made it possible for bureaus to monitor their foreign correspondents more closely than ever before (Cole & Hamilton 2007), reporters are still, ultimately, alone in the field.

Furthermore, journalists in the field need to be self-sufficient in their reporting, covering all aspects of their region, and take responsibility for their own travel and administrative support. In these circumstances, there is less opportunity for collaboration or the division of labour to influence reporting, and it is important to question the assumption that the news organisation is

capable of either the explicit or implicit control over their journalists that organisational theories suggest.

The Macro Level: External explanations of media content

Gans identifies a range of theories that attempt to explain news content in terms of factors external to the media world, including, variously, those that emphasise technology, economics, politics, ideology, culture, audiences and news sources (1979: 79). Of these external factors, the three that have received the most attention in recent scholarly debate are ideology, political economy, and culture (Schudson 2004).

For FCs 'in the field' one of the most significant external factors is the local government (Hannerz 2004). Graber notes that political pressures on journalists may play a greater role in the initial selection of foreign news than domestic news, as correspondents are more or less in the hands of the authorities in the countries from which they are reporting (2005: 251). Governments mediate the context in which journalism is practiced, and control access to a range of sources.

In many African nations, the press is tightly controlled by repressive regimes willing to coerce and persecute journalists. It is important to note that these controls may not affect all FCs equally. Where governments forcibly intervene in news production, local-national FCs may face greater risks than Western FCs. Whereas Western FCs can return to their home country if things become difficult, local-nationals have nowhere to flee, and no foreign nation to appeal to that will intervene on their behalf. This may come to bear on the

level of risk that local-nationals are willing to assume in their reporting, and is an important issue that must be taken into account when analysing today's news production (Bunce 2011; Halliday 2011; Sambrook 2010).

In addition to local governments, a growing literature has identified Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) as significant influencers of FC news production. NGOs need publicity – particularly in light of the development of a “contract culture” in the aid world (Mackintosh 1996: 54) – and journalists, particularly parachute journalists unable to speak the language and with little local knowledge or access to sources, need the information and access that NGOs can supply. The resulting symbiotic relationship has been said to result in reporting that overemphasises humanitarian frames and interpretations of crises, thereby obscuring political and historical dimensions and inadvertently reinforcing the casting of Africa in terms of development, disaster and “humanitarian” concerns (Carruthers 2000: 229; Cooper 2011; Hammock & Charny 1996: 117; Hudson & Stainer 1997: 252; Mackintosh 1996; Styan 1999: 292).

A Third Way

In the majority of the journalism literature, academics (and most notably political scientists and sociologists) have placed emphasis on the macro and mezzo level, and the structures that *constrain* journalists. As Mark Peterson writes:

In most of the literature, journalists serve either as channels through which interested institutions speak, or as agents whose actions are over-determined by institutional constraints...Analysts taking such views effectively erase the agency of journalists as social actors and interpreters (2001: 201).

Over the past decade, however, academics have started to criticise rigidly structural explanations of news content:

This focus on structural constraint and institutional apparatuses of power occlude attention to the ways in which such structures are produced and reproduced by agents pursuing their own interests through practical actions according to culturally established values (Peterson 2001: 209).

Cultural approaches, and a small number of anthropological works, instead emphasise the agency of individual journalists and posit an explanatory role for their ability to negotiate and contest industry norms (Morrison & Tumber 1988; Peterson 2001; Zelizer 2005). Noting the rise of soldier journalists in Iraq, for example, Zelizer remarks that, “journalism changed by virtue of who inhabited its culture. It became, at least for a time, less authoritative, less reverent, in places more critical, more partisan and even ironic” (2005: 208).

Somewhere between individual and structural explanations of news content, news production studies have conceived of a “third way,” informed by the sociology of Antony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, in which objective structures and subjective experiences are not treated as competing explanations of the social world but rather as intertwined aspects of reality (Benson 1998: 467). Giddens (1979) articulates a theory of ‘structuration’ in which social systems are produced and reproduced through the decisions, behaviours, and interactions of individuals. Existing structures, or “sets of rules and resources” are both limiting and enabling- they order practice, restricting some potential expressions, but helping to set expectations, create meaning, and make systems coherent (1995: 203).

Similarly, Bourdieu acknowledges a role for both structure and agency and explores the nature of their complex feedback-feedforward relationship. Bourdieu suggests that in the social world there is neither structural dominance, nor autonomy free from structure, but rather:

[The field] is the site of actions and reactions performed by social agents endowed with permanent dispositions, partly acquired in their experience of these social fields. The agents react to these relations of forces, to these structures; they construct them, perceive them, form an idea of them, represent them to themselves, and so on. And, while being, therefore, constrained by these forces as regards their permanent dispositions, they are able to act upon these fields, in ways that are partially pre-constrained, but with a margin of freedom (Bourdieu 2005: 30).

Bourdieu developed a wider theory of social practice around his concept of structure/agency than Giddens and, in particular, he developed it in reference to cultural producers and the work of journalists.

Applied to media/journalism studies, these theories suggest that the structures that inform reporting are produced and reproduced by agents pursuing their own interests through practical actions (Peterson 2001: 209). This is the starting point for Bourdieu's field theory, which is employed as the theoretical framework for this thesis, and its production study of FCs in East Africa.

A second approach to news production that incorporates notions of agency/structure, and is very similar to field theory, is New Institutionalism (Sparrow 1999; Cook 2005). New Institutionalism sees the routines and practices that define journalism— balance, detachment, objectivity, the inverted pyramid style of writing, etc.— as institutions. They are “taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours that have become deeply embedded within the trans-organizational field of journalism” (Ryfe 2006: 138). There

are significant commonalities between this approach, and that of field theory: both are mezzo-level theories that trace connections between macro level factors and the practice of journalists; however, a key difference, is that new institutionalism generally places a significant emphasis on the nation state and political agents as a mediating device in the regulation of industries (Ryfe 2006). Benson, who notes this distinction (2006), sees it as a strength of new institutionalism; however, the emphasis on the state makes this approach difficult to operationalize to study trans-national and global journalism. The more flexible field theory – which also provides greater scope for the contribution of individual agents (Benson 2006) – is adopted.

3. Theoretical framework

“But Bourdieu is just a starting point, not a religion” (Guzzini 2006: 21)

How can we analyse the forces that shape news production, when they are diffuse and emerge from multiple sites? This section argues that the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu offers a helpful starting point for this enquiry. Field theory overcomes a number of the limitations identified in the literature on foreign news production (outlined above), and is specifically useful in relation to this thesis’ specific enquiry. First, field theory can incorporate and analyse multiple layers of influence, from macro external factors, through to micro behaviour, that were noted in the literature review. Second, by incorporating the notion of habitus, field theory, to some extent, bridges the structure and agency divide – suggesting that journalists may be capable of changing the system, as well as reinforcing and internalising its structures. Third, field theory has a productive (rather than static) sense of power, which makes it more nuanced than previous political-economic approaches. Finally, the notion of habitus draws our attention to the diverse backgrounds of FCs, which are an important component of contemporary foreign reporting.

Field Theory was developed in Bourdieu’s later works - most extensively in *Rules of Art* (1996). Field theory posits that society is divided into semi-autonomous “fields”, which have their own internal logic (e.g., the academic field, the political field, or the journalistic field). Individuals and organisations occupy particular positions within these fields, based on the capital they possess and seek. Negotiating the field in accordance with their individual habitus, individuals are engaged in a struggle to accumulate more

capital. The combination of these factors (placed in context) is what produces practice. Or, in Bourdieu's equation:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}.$$

In order to understand behaviour or practice within a field, Bourdieu states that it is necessary to examine: 1. How the field in question relates to other fields in society, and especially the extent to which it is dominated by political/economic forces or autonomous from these; 2. How the field in question is internally structured – including what capital is at stake, what the 'rules of the game' are, the identities of the key agents (both individuals and organisations), and how these agents stand in relation to one another; and 3. Individuals' 'habitus', that is, their disposition and values (Wacquant 1989: 40). These three steps incorporate Bourdieu's key, interlocking 'thinking tools' – field, capital and habitus – which together explain practice. As Benson summarises:

the social scientific study of journalistic production, why a certain story is chosen and written in a certain way, is a process of detailing the convergence of "disposition" (habitus) and "position" (structural location within a field) (1998: 467).

This section outlines these thinking tools in more detail. The following section assesses the uses and limitations of field theory as an approach for ethnographic enquiry. Although the literature on Bourdieu is considerable, and much of it divided, the limitations discussed here are those that relate primarily to the feasibility and methodological rigour of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools'. Bourdieu suggested that his framework be primarily employed to gather empirical insight:

There is no doubt a theory in my work, or, better, a set of *thinking tools* visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such...It is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work (in Wacquant 1989: 50).

Bourdieu's work is used in this spirit - as a springboard, to which we add the comments and contributions of other academics, and make alterations suitable to the empirical enquiry at hand. As Bourdieu commented, "a good theory makes its users 'auto-mobile'. It provides an engine to explore practical questions, to make sense of the puzzles of social life" (in Neveu 2007: 344). How then, does it help with the puzzle of journalistic production?

Field Theory and Journalism Studies

Bourdieu spoke specifically about journalism in a lecture entitled, "The political field, the social science field, and the journalistic field" (2005) and in his book *On Television* (1998). However, these texts are not comprehensive in their analysis of the media and the latter, in particular, has been criticised for its polemic content (Marlière 1998). Media researchers have developed, tweaked and applied field theory, drawing primarily on Bourdieu's wider oeuvre (rather than his media writing), to create a more comprehensive approach to media analysis. Rodney Benson has been a pivotal figure in this regard (1998; 2004; 2006; Benson and Neveu 2005), but many others have contributed to the theoretical project, developing the analytical tools, and using them to assess journalism practice (e.g., Champagne 1993; Couldry 2003; Dickinson 2008; Duval 2005; Hallin 2005; Hesmondhough 2006; Hovden 2001; Marchetti 2005; Mellor 2008; Neveu 2007; Schudson 2005b; Schultz 2011). Chalaby (1998) has described the "invention of journalism" and

the emergence of a journalism field in the UK, while Biesla (2008) has identified and plotted the development of a global field of journalism, in which the newswires are central players.

The Field

Bourdieu's field theory follows Weber and Durkheim in seeing semi-autonomous spheres of action within modern society. Each of these spheres, or fields, for example the journalistic field, religious field, or the political field, is a "microcosm, which has its own rules, which is constituted autonomously and which cannot be understood from external factors" (Bourdieu, 1998: 44). In order to analyse journalists' production, it is necessary to analyse the specifics of the journalistic field in which they work:

Part of what is produced in the world of journalism cannot be understood unless one conceptualizes this microcosm as such and endeavours to understand the effects that the people engaged in the microcosm exert on one another (Bourdieu 2005: 45).

Fields are a structured system of social positions, within which agents struggle over resources, stakes and access. In Bourdieu's definition, a field is, "A network, or configuration, of objective relation between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97). Fields have both an external structure – or set of relations – with other fields in society, and an internal structure, determined by the distribution of capital among occupants. Fields also have their own internal logic, and generate specific habitus and doxa (further discussed below), which are absorbed by a field's occupants, and reproduced through their practice.

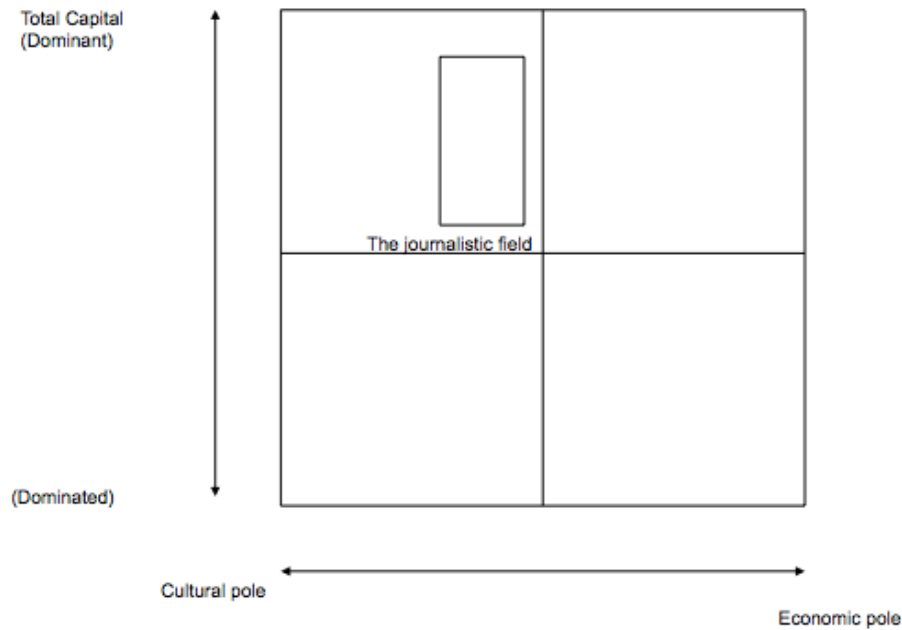
In Bourdieu's conception, all fields occupy a position in a larger 'field of power'. Generally speaking this 'field of power' is the whole social system, often described as, or assumed to be, synonymous with the nation-state.⁸ Within this larger space, fields vary as to how dominated (heteronomous) or autonomous they are. This is because forces and logics found in the 'wider field' may enter into and 'colonise' the internal logic of the sub fields. Researchers have explored, for example, the ways in which market and economic forces have come to dominate the journalistic logic, and how this varies between countries (Bourdieu 1998; Champagne 2005).

Fields, and their occupants, are further positioned by their proximity to one of two poles – that of *economic capital* (wealth, income and property) and that of *cultural capital* (knowledge, culture). These are referred to, in this thesis, as the economic and symbolic poles. This follows from Bourdieu's contention that families, groups and organizations tend to draw disproportionately from either cultural or economic resources in their struggle to maintain and enhance their positions in the social order (Swartz 1998: 137). As Bourdieu writes, "Like most fields, the journalistic field...is structured on the basis of an opposition between these two poles, between those who are 'purest' most independent of state power, political power, and economic power, and those who are most dependent on these powers and commercial powers" (2005: 41)

⁸ Whether the field of power is necessarily synonymous with 'the state' is a question that will be considered further below in some depth.

For Bourdieu, the entire social field can be visually represented as a cross, with cultural capital on one side of the horizontal axis; economic capital on the other; and total capital of any kind on the vertical.

Figure 1: The Social Field



Journalism is in the top half of this grid – that is, among the dominant, because it engages with agents who possess power, and has the ability to influence others (Bourdieu 2005). On the horizontal axis, journalism falls on the side of cultural production, together with the arts and sciences, as it is a field that is occupied with producing cultural, “symbolic goods” (Bourdieu 1998).

When examining journalists’ production (or any production) the first question we must ask is, is this field autonomous or is it dominated by

external forces? Bourdieu suggests that levels of heteronomy/autonomy can be quantified and assessed using a number of context-specific indices, which might include, for instance, market penetration, or rules and regulations imposed by the political field. In the case of a newspaper, this could be the proportion of its income that comes from the state, from advertisers, etc. The influence of one field on another may be subtle: it is important to investigate: are rules actually enforced? To what extent are the bill payers in charge? Forms of domination may be subtler than mere figures or ownership.

Bourdieu suggested that the journalistic field occupies an ambiguous and sometimes shifting position in relation to economic/political forces. Because of its 'mediating role', journalism has a unique mandate to enter into, explore other fields, and publicly share its findings, which allows journalism to actively influence relations of power in society:

it seems to me that for a number of years now the journalistic field has exerted an increasingly powerful hold...on other fields and, in particular, as regards symbolic productions, on the field of the social sciences and the political field (Bourdieu 2005: 41).

However, because of its potential influence, the journalistic field is often a target for economic and political actors who seek to dominate it in their pursuit of power. As a result, the journalistic field is characterised by very high levels of heteronomy – which is to say, it is dominated by other outside fields, and is not very autonomous (Bourdieu 1998).

The position of a field in any given setting is dynamic. This position may change as a result of forces external to the field – most explicitly, for example, in non-democratic countries, an oppressive government might crack

down, enact laws, and employ force to prevent journalists from operating freely – shifting the overall position of the journalistic field in the wider field of power, to one of subjugation. Less dramatically, a government might use its power to change the media landscape– for example, by introduce far-reaching libel laws; changing media ownership laws; ceasing to fund forms of public journalism; or moving from a situation in which the press has the freedom to self regulate, to one where the government or an external body regulates on its behalf. Such rulings have the potential to undermine the autonomy of the field as a whole.

Events within the journalistic field may also alter the overall position of the field in society. In *On Television* (1998), Bourdieu argues that the privatisation of the French Television Company TF1 had implications for the position of the field as a whole, moving it towards the economic pole.

Drawing on the concept of ‘field,’ Benson (2005) examines the journalistic fields in France and America, the extent to which these fields are dominated by outside forces, and how this domination shapes journalistic practice in both countries. In a similar vein, Champagne (2005) explores how the forces of the market, and ‘market logic’ have entered into and colonised the journalistic field in France, making news output more business-orientated. Benson and Champagne’s conclusions echo the findings of research in the political-economic and Marxist traditions of media analysis (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Croteau & Hoynes 2001; Hamilton 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988). While their findings may not be new, their approach is more sophisticated than in standard political-economic analyses, as it draws explanatory links from structures to practice, further outlined below.

Moreover, unlike political-economic approaches, field theory does not suggest that the media always supports existing power dynamics in society but, rather, that in certain conditions, it is able to contest and transform these. Such a capacity is particularly useful in times of flux in political-journalism relations.

Capital

Fields are internally structured around agents/organisations that possess capital. In Bourdieu's analysis, each field of practice can be understood as a competitive game or 'field of struggles' in which social agents take strategic actions in their quest to maximise their capital, and to valorise the form(s) of capital they possess (Maton 2008: 54). That is, Bourdieu considers all action to be interest-orientated; actors do not merely follow rules or norms - they are strategic improvisers who respond dispositionally to the opportunities and constraints offered by various situations (Swartz 1998: 100).

The distribution of capital in a field is not static because changes in the wider 'field of power' may influence what capital is valued; unforeseen events may 'change the stakes of the game'; and new entrants to a field may challenge or alter the distribution of capital. For example, Markham (2011) argues that journalists who have 'celebrity appeal' are more valued by today's journalists than they used to be, and this most likely reflects the encroachment of the 'economic logic' into the journalistic field.

The capital agents struggle for is not only or necessarily financial. One of Bourdieu's key contributions to social theory is his insistence that capital be defined as more than simple economics:

Bourdieu's purpose is to extend the sense of the term "capital" by employing it in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields. He is attempting to relocate the narrow instance of mercantile exchange away from economics into a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations of which the economic is only one (though the most fundamental) type (Moore 2008: 102).

At the broadest level, Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital (or "mercantile exchange") and symbolic capital (which includes sub-types such as social capital and cultural capital). The fundamental difference between economic and symbolic capital, in Bourdieu's system, is that in the former, the instrumental and self-interested nature of the exchange is transparent. Bourdieu defines economic capital as that "which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights" (Bourdieu 1986:47). Accumulating economic capital is a means to an end, such as profit, interest, a wage, etc. (Moore 2008: 103). Bourdieu contends this is also true of symbolic capital, but this fact is hidden; agents of cultural/symbolic production proclaiming themselves to be disinterested in economic capital obscure its instrumentalism.

In the journalistic field, a news outlet's economic capital is expressed via circulation, advertising revenue, or audience ratings, while symbolic capital is evident in prizes for journalistic achievements, and other prestigious professional or academic nods. This accounts for the tension, Benson writes, between culturally rich but often economically poor alternative or literary journalism (e.g. niche literary products); and culturally poor but economically rich market journalism (e.g. commercial TV news). News organisations that are able to accumulate both forms of capital (such as the *The Times* (UK) in the 19th century) are able to exercise symbolic power over the entire field and

play a crucial role in establishing or modifying the dominant “rules” of journalism practice (Benson 2006: 190).

Individual journalists also occupy structured positions, according to the capital they possess, both financial (e.g. their salary) and symbolic, for example, their experience, education, and reputation. The organization, like a field, is a space in which a game takes place; in this arena, individuals compete for personal advantage (Everett 2002: 60). Hierarchical positions are relevant whenever journalists interact; for example, in an editorial meeting, where there is conflict around whether a story is ‘newsworthy’ or not, the opinion of journalists with high capital will have more sway than that of a journalist with little. In this way, field theory posits, “where you speak from” is equally important, if not more so than, “what you say” (Schultz 2011: 86).

Field Logic and Doxa

The journalistic field has its own ‘logic’ or ‘rules of the game’, which are absorbed by agents. Some of the values become so deeply ingrained they need never be articulated, and Bourdieu calls these *doxa*, ‘a universe of tacit presuppositions’ that help to organise action within the field. Doxa are pre-reflective, shared, and unquestioned opinions and preconceptions; they are mediated within fields and they determine much “natural” practice (Deer 2008: 120). In Bourdieu’s words, doxa are, “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma” (Bourdieu 2000: 16).

Journalistic doxa are an important component of news production. The journalistic field produces a variety of values that are unquestioned (as well as others that are, but within a circumscribed range of possible answers). Markham analyses the discourse of war correspondents and suggests these journalists hold doxic beliefs about the importance of objectivity, autonomy, public service, neutrality, and timeliness (Markham 2011). Other important doxic values that shape journalism include the general notion of “newsworthiness” – that is, the idea that one event can be more “newsworthy” than another in an objective sense (Schultz 2011). Another is the idea that the news can be divided into ‘hard news’ and ‘soft news’, and that the former is more important. Journalists rarely question this distinction, despite the fact that it includes value judgments about the relative importance of various issues (Marchetti 2005).

The notion of doxa overlaps with organisational approaches to news production, which posit that newsroom socialisation encourages journalists to internalise a number of profession-wide and organisation-specific values and that guide their reporting. Where field theory differs is that it emphasises the link between doxic values and the structures that produce them: in particular, the competitive struggles between outlets within a field. Organisational accounts of the news are happy to note that notions of ‘objectivity’ shape practice: field theory is interested in how the notion of objectivity emerged as a value in the first place, and whose interests this serves (Schultz 2011).

Chalaby (1998), for example, traces the emergence of many prevailing doxic values of the journalistic field to the competitive struggles between

newspaper outlets in Britain in the late 19th century. His account of the emergence of the journalistic field illustrates key features of both how the journalistic field operates, and what its key values are; for this reason, it is briefly summarised below, before we move on to the final tool in Bourdieu's analytical box: habitus.

“The Invention of journalism”

In his book, *The Invention of Journalism* (1998), Jean Chalaby describes the emergence of journalism as a specialised and increasingly autonomous field of discursive practice from the mid-19th century. The formation of this field began in Britain with the repeal of the ‘taxes on knowledge’ between 1855 and 1861, a policy that led to a dramatic decrease in the price of newspapers, thereby increasing their potential readership.⁹

The repeal of the taxes made newspapers affordable, while growing literacy rates further increased their accessibility. Newspaper owners became engaged, for the first time, in widespread economic competition and differentiation in order to attract readers. The field began to attract entrepreneurs who were primarily interested in the business aspects of journalism: “The press was no longer animated by symbolic and political struggles, but more prosaically by economic competition for readers and profits” (Chalaby 1998: 37-38).

⁹ Up until this point, newspaper readership had been confined to the wealthy upper classes, and its content was primarily a by-product of public and political communications. Newspapers such as *The Times* filled their pages with reproduced political speeches, letters and analysis. The content was not specific to the journalistic field: the conventions that define the practice of journalism today were not yet “invented” (e.g., the norm of objectivity; the convention of the interview or ‘reporting events’).

Chalaby describes how these competitive struggles led to the creation of the journalistic field; its boundaries, key values and discursive practices. Industrialisation of the press led to increasingly large start up costs, and the boundaries of the journalistic field were delimited by this economic constraint (Chalaby 1998: 45). The industrialisation of the printing press was harnessed by newspaper owners who used it to disseminate their goods to larger audiences; with higher circulations, they could attract advertisers. Advertising revenue, and the economy of scale achieved through high volume production, enabled them to lower their prices even further. Small outlets and owners without capital reserves were pushed out of the market and precluded from entry. Curran and Seaton (1997) detail the demise of what had been a lively radical press, for example, that had printed political communications relevant to the working class.

Economic competition between leading outlets led to the central conventions that inform journalistic logics today: appealing to readers' interests, timeliness, and the key doxic concept of objectivity. By appealing to the first, popular interests, editors could expand their readership base. Chalaby notes that, although journalists still judged facts on their intrinsic importance, this criterion became gradually less relevant in the process of news selection: events began to be reported because journalists had a competitive advantage to gain by publishing them (1998: 82). Timeliness emerged as a norm as outlets strove to beat their competition to the story, to enhance their sales.

The mid- to late-19th century saw the emergence of the key value of objectivity that is a central – many believe definitional – component of

journalistic work (Boyd-Barrett 1998: 142). Chalaby suggests that objectivity should be considered as a cluster of norms, coalescing around three main ideas. First, the amalgam of neutrality, impartiality, fairness and balance (the latter two emerging more specifically in reference to broadcasting practices in the twentieth century); second, the notion of “retreatism” referring to journalist’s non-involvement in their stories’ narratives; finally, ideas of factuality, truth, accuracy and completeness. It is important to note that objectivity can mean different things in different contexts. Individual journalists, news outlets, and national journalistic fields may privilege and foreground different “clusters” within the broader norm.¹⁰ In particular, journalists vary as to whether they think objectivity is achievable, or if it is simply an ideal to which they strive.

One of the key factors in the emergence of the norm of objectivity was the need for newspaper and newswires to maximize profits and expand audiences: this compelled editors to appear unbiased (Splichal 1994: 73-8). Objectivity also helps journalists to gain credibility, and distinguish their work from that of publicity officers, political elites, and the personal narratives of literary authors (Chalaby 1998: 130).

Chalaby concludes that the conventions in news reporting are “the outcome of a long process of the rationalization of a discursive practice whereby journalists have progressively learnt to refrain from expressing their opinions and emotions”; factors like technological development and changes

¹⁰ It is a common observation, for example, that the American journalistic field has a stronger attachment to positivistic-objectivity than the French journalistic field, where there is a stronger tradition of subjective narratives (Benson 2005).

in law are important in Chalaby's account, but he sees their impact on discourse as being mediated by the internal rules of the journalistic field, and its competitive struggles, noting for example, that, "the industrialization of the field would never have progressed at this pace if stiff economic competition did not force newspaper proprietors to keep up with technological progress" (1998: 43).

Habitus

The last concept in Bourdieu's 'analytical tool box' is habitus. The key link between agency and structure is represented in Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which is, "a structuring structure, which organises practices and perception of practices" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Habitus is a set of dispositions, formed over an agent's lifetime of experience and socialisation (in family, school, professional experience and so on). These dispositions shape an agent's perceptions and practice. As Swartz puts in, "habitus evokes the idea of a set of deeply internalized master dispositions that generate action" (1998: 101). Agents "acquire" a habitus through their life, and it can be understood as the conscious or unconscious sum of all of their formative experiences – including class, education and family (Webb et al 2002: 58). Agents think and act in strategic ways, responding to their current circumstances; but at the same time they are influenced – almost driven – by the values and expectations of their habitus (ibid: 58). In this way, an agent's life trajectory affects (but does not determine) the decisions they make: While a person is conditioned by their upbringing and experience, and may act without

conscious knowledge of this pre-conditioning, Bourdieu does leave room for agency, such that life is not completely pre-ordained (Murrell 2011: 99).

In Bourdieu's conception, both individuals and fields have their own habitus (that is, base values, ways of perceiving, etc.). Agents participating in a field absorb its values; these values guide their future actions, and, through these action, they reproduce the logic of the field. In this way, the habitus of the individual flows from 'structures,' which they maintain and reproduce through their actions.

Habitus is dynamic, and an agent's habitus may change and grow as they absorb and develop a professional habitus. Journalists are sometimes said to have an early habitus (parents, childhood, school education), as well as a second, journalistic habitus (Bourdieu, 1984: 171). Schultz refers to this as journalists' "professional habitus", a mastering of a specific, professional game in a specific professional field" (Schultz, 2007: 193; see also Murrell 2011). Thus in journalism, says Neveu (2007: 339), it is common for a process of 'habitus transformation' to occur when a journalist enters the field – either for the first time, or when they change roles. Graduate entrants, for example, are often persuaded to 'unlearn' what they have been taught about writing in their undergraduate degrees (Dickinson 2008: 1388). Tim Markham notes (2011) that new foreign correspondents may have higher levels of enthusiasm and a greater concern with ethical values, partly because they are fresh out of journalism school, but that this falls over time, with journalists often becoming more cynical over the course of their professional trajectory.

A journalist's habitus, and the field they work in, are both in a constant state of flux. As a consequence, relations between habitus and field are ongoing, dynamic, and partial: they are not perfectly aligned, for each has its own logic and history. This allows for the relationship between the structure of a field and the habitus of its members to exhibit varying degrees of fit or mismatch. Where fields and habitus match perfectly, an agent may not even be aware that they are in a field, or playing a game. However, the field may change more rapidly than, or in different directions to, the habitus of its members and, in these cases, the practices of social agents can seem anachronistic, stubbornly resistant, or ill-informed – a situation that Bourdieu refers to as *hysteresis*, in which agents would feel like “a fish out of water” (Maton 2008: 59). When a person enters a new field whose doxa is not yet reflected in their habitus, their behaviour is bound to neglect some of the many taken-for-granted, unwritten rules of that field and they will consequently appear clumsy and ill-adjusted: a “Don Quixotean condition” (Leander 2006:8).

Habitus draws our attention to the individual traits and backgrounds of journalists, and their trajectory through the professional field. These factors are important because the habitus' of a fields occupants is one of the ways in which fields may be able to change. Bourdieu emphasised the role of class and education, as he felt that fields operated to reinforce patterns of domination in society. In the context of East Africa, nationality and background may be more relevant factors, as mentioned in the background section, with the increasing role played by local national journalists.

Benson (1998) notes that demographic changes in a journalistic field can be hugely influential, and that a rapid influx of new agents into the field may either challenge or reinforce field values. A large number of 'new' entrants may be transformative, as new entrants may try to distinguish themselves from the existing occupants (especially, for example, editors trying to find a market niche). On the other hand, new entrants may reinforce the status quo, to the extent that entry into a field requires acceptance of the basic 'rules of the game', which are powerful forces of inertia. In addition, where there are high levels of competition for places, and increased job insecurity, agents may tend towards conservative modes of behaviour (that is, doing what has been done before) to secure their positions. Thus, while the opposition of old-new has the potential to transform the logic of a field, it is only under certain conditions (Benson 1995: 101).

Field theory suggests a set of thinking tools, outlined above, can together help to explain and analyse practice. We now turn to the question of how these tools can be applied to understand practices within an international system.

International Fields

Bourdieu developed his concept of a field within the context and confines of the nation state (Wacquant 1989), but he remained open to the possibility that transnational fields could emerge – and perhaps already did exist, particularly in the academic world:

The existence of transnational fields (scientific ones, in particular) creates specific common sense that calls the national common sense into question and favours the emergences of a scholastic view of the world that is (more or less) common to all the scholars in all countries (Bourdieu 2000: 98).

Because of the centrality of the state as an institution conferring titles and legitimacy, and adjudicating over the development of national culture in many respects, it is probable that in most fields national boundaries will be very significant.¹¹ But, as Anna Leander argues:

there is no reason to assume that the boundaries of a field coincide with those of the state (or inversely that they do not). Whether habitus/field transcend national borders or not – and what role the state plays – becomes an empirical question. Fields and habitus have no built in ‘methodological nationalism’ (2009: 17-18).

Bourdieu’s insistence that fields are ‘relatively autonomous’ because actors agree to the ‘stakes at stake’ makes it possible to conceptualise fields as consisting of a range of actors, emerging from different national backgrounds, engaged in a struggle for recognition and dominance, in an arena which is not bound by national borders (Villumsen 2010: 11).

¹¹ Couldry (2003) believes the state possesses ‘meta-capital’ which enables it to arbitrate over the ‘currency exchanges’ of capital within its borders. Bourdieu is more ambivalent about the power the state possesses. In an early work on bureaucracy (Bourdieu 1994), he refers to the state as the unifier of power, and effectively equates it with the field of power itself. In his later writing on globalization, however, he riles against neo-liberal reforms, arguing that these have rendered the state impotent; “the logic of the pure market” undermines the nation “whose space to manoeuvre continually decreases” (1998b).

Media scholars to date have used field theory to analyse domestic news reporting practices. In these analyses, the journalistic field is located within a nation state, whose borders are contiguous with the 'field of power' - few or no factors from outside the state are considered. This has aided, in particular, cross-national comparisons of media systems. However, the delimitation of the journalistic field in this way is problematic. A range of phenomenon, discussed in the background chapter, have prompted media scholars to question the very idea of 'local' and 'global', and, indeed, the relevance of the state to news production. Put in Bourdieusian language, some of these factors are: 1. News outlets and journalists are engaged in on-going battles for capital that is located beyond the state. For example, the *Guardian* aims to be the number one website for news in the world (and, to that end, must compete with a variety of transnational websites, and outlets from other nations). 2. The powers that dominate national journalistic fields, and undermine their autonomy, transcend the state. This is particularly the case in terms of the global corporations that own news outlets. In New Zealand, for example, almost every print and magazine product is owned by O'Reilly or the Murdoch group (McChesney 2003). 3. Some of the most important players in a nation's journalistic field are from another nation, or are international. This includes both cross-national players (e.g. a UK or US outlet's news output may be exported to Kenya, where it is followed closely and may influence both the local journalistic field and the local political field), and truly international players, who have little or no territorial allegiance, for example, the Thomson Reuters newswires. 4. There may be instances of 'transnational habitus' and 'transnational doxa' or news values emerging in certain regions. For example, Firestone (2008: 437) describes correspondents in Brussels sharing a

cosmopolitan, trans-national orientation in their writing on the European Union. Mellor suggests there may be consistent doxa and discourses at work in a Pan-Arabic media field:

Researchers should analyse Arab journalists, particularly in pan-Arab media, as forming their own community, operating according to a shared set of rules and struggling to gain more power in their sphere (2008: 473).

These are only some examples. What is clear is that foreign news production cuts across borders, and is influenced by international, national and local forces. As such, to understand a journalist's practice – and especially that of a foreign correspondent – it is not enough to examine a single field, located within a nation state. At the moment of practice, agents are engaging in multiple fields, some of which are global in scope.

The global journalistic field

Biesla (2008) is the first author to outline the emergence of a global field of journalism in the sense in which Bourdieu uses the term. This field, Biesla posits, was established through the competitive struggles between international news agencies, which operate transnationally, and transmit their news to clients and audiences around the world. Drawing on Chalaby (1998), Biesla details the rise of Anglo-American journalistic norms in the 19th century – the commitment to positivism, separation of fact and opinion, reliance on elites and interviews - and shows how these came to structure the work of international newswires.

As they competed with one another to expand their networks, particularly after the end of World War II, the major newswires adopted a globalist approach to newsgathering:

A substantial effort on the part of the European agencies to gain international clients, develop their global infrastructures and cut back their dependency on other agencies was undertaken in the 1960s. This would lead, towards the end of the twentieth century, to the establishment of true supranational entities for the gathering and transmission of news (Biesla 2008: 358).

Today, the world's three major news wires – AFP, AP and Reuters – tell the news free from territorial allegiance to any one specific “home country”; Horvit (2006), for example, analyses the newswire coverage of the Iraq War and finds that, in their reporting, the wires did not privilege sources from their “home countries”: AFP did not quote more French officials; Reuters did not quote more British officials; and AP did not quote more US officials. Moreover, in analysing the tone and direction of coverage, Horvit finds the newswires' story content did not reflect the political position of their home countries towards the military action. Although the US was spearheading the war in Iraq, and the French were vocally opposed intervention, this was not reflected in the AP or AFP coverage; both had equal amounts of “neutral” news reporting. That being said, the newswires are not completely independent of regional influences. Although they are global in reach, and free from specific national affiliations, the international news agencies are characterized by the journalistic norms and values of the West: a function of their competitive position in the global journalistic field.

Today the international newswire market is tight, profits are low or absent, and newswires are locked in fierce competition to be first with the

news. Williams notes that, in this context, “rather than a set of news criteria, the values of news should be seen in terms of what clients and subscribers are willing to pay for. Giving customers what they want is crucial” (2011:78). One of the most significant implications of this customer-orientated approach has been, Williams and others suggests, a focus on news that is Western-centric: customers are based in the Global North, they pay for the news, and it is to them that the newswires cater. The focus on Western customers – and the fact that newswires export their news around the developing world, homogenising and skewing global discourse in this direction (Biesla 2008) - has long been a source of controversy. It sparked UNESCO’s New World Information Order (NWIO) debates of the 1970s (McBride 1980), and it continues to concern commentators today.

A 2006 report from CARMA investigated the international reporting of various crises around the world, including conflict in Darfur, and the Boxing Day tsunami in South East Africa in 2005. The report finds a “clear correlation between” the impact of the disaster on Western political and economic interests and the amount and nature of media attention paid to the disaster. It concludes that, “Western self-interest” is the “precondition for significant coverage of a humanitarian crisis” and that economics “is a better guide to press interest than human suffering” (2006:151).

One new entrant to the global journalistic field is starting to challenge the domination of this Western-centric reporting: the 24-hour news channel, Al Jazeera (Bergener 2005; Miles 2005; Figenschou 2011, Bielsa 2008). Al Jazeera tells the news from a Middle Eastern perspective, and in doing so, often “portrays a concealed reality: it displays the images of war and death

that no American television network will show; it gives airtime to the people who will be barred from appearing in any other network” (Biesla 2008: 362).

Al Jazeera represents an alternative to reporting told through a Western perspective. It does not, however, challenge the basic doxic value of objectivity that pervades and informs the global journalistic field. The channel was set up, “Explicitly embracing the media values of objectivity, accuracy and balanced, factual reporting, and modelling itself after the Western media tradition of the BBC (where many of its staff were trained) and CNN (the channel it seeks to imitate and compete with)” (Biesla 2008: 362-3). Or as Miles notes, Al Jazeera English was launched with the purpose of “communicating with the West in its own language” (2005: 412).

El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2003) have argued that Al Jazeera pursues a “Contextual objectivity” in its work - a form of reporting that appears objective to its intended audience, but subjective to those outside it. However, Berenger (2005) makes the important point that this is not a new phenomenon; Fox news and CNN, for example, both present news that is perceived to be truthful and fair by its intended audience (Conservatives and Liberals, respectively), but skewed and distorted by outsiders. Like any other ideological norm, objectivity is interpreted and deployed in ways that reflect the context in which it operates (see Freedman 1996).

Al Jazeera is an important new player insofar as it challenges the dominance of Western news values - it tells neglected stories, and caters to an audience located outside the developed West. It is nonetheless engaged in a strategic game within the global field whose basic rules were determined long

before its entry. Al Jazeera looks to the other major players in the field as its competition (and inspiration); it similarly provides news packaged to fulfil the needs of its audience; and it operates by the norms of the global journalistic field. Indeed, Bielsa (2008) notes that the narrative forms and values of Western journalism are today so pervasive, that their adoption is a precondition for successful participation in global news markets, as is evident even in the case of Al-Jazeera.

Boyd Barrett (2011) explores whether globalisation, digital developments, the emergence of alternative wires Al Jazeera and Xinhau, and the development of local national wires in the global south, have led to greater democratisation in the overall flow of international news. Although he sees some positive developments, he suggests that the problems identified in the NWIO debates of the 1970s still persist.

The global journalism field, outlined by Biesla (2008) provides a conceptual starting point for this thesis, which argues that this field is ripe for empirical examination. That is, exploring how specific agents and outlets practise news production, guided by their position in this field. Past scholarly applications of field theory to international and transnational phenomena in other disciplines suggest this would be a fruitful endeavour in relation to journalism.

International Fields in other disciplines

Field theory has been deployed to shed light on a range of transnational practices across a diverse range of disciplines including international

relations, gender studies, anthropology, and sociology. Didier Bigo (2002), for example, analyses security experts and practices in Europe and shows how a field of European “insecurity professionals” is establishing a high degree of hegemony over European security knowledge, especially in relation to immigration. The creation of this transnational field of “professionals in the management of unease” has removed traditional political control over what security means – problematizing the role of the state. Other international issues that have been explored with reference to habitus and field analysis include European integration (Kauppi 2003) economic policy in France, as altered by an “economic academic field” (Lebaron 1997); how national legal fields helped to create and develop an international human rights field, structured in a certain way (Masden 2007); and democratic peace and “cultural security” (Williams 2007). In sum, Villumsen writes that:

these studies demonstrate that inspiration from Bourdieu can provide insightful avenues for showing how certain practices uphold doxic understandings of the social world in large scale inter/transnational fields; how new types of agency can be brought into focus; and how concepts such as capital, social hierarchy and power struggles can form the basis for a reflexive study of the configuration of fields (2010: 7).

Indeed, Leander posits that it specifically aids international studies, as it encourages researchers to look beyond the ‘insider/outsider’ divide and the historic separation of international and national-level analysis:

One of the virtues of working with habitus/field in international studies is that these concepts provide a pragmatic and practice-orientated approach to the nature of the inside/outside dichotomy... (2009: 17-18).

Everett also emphasises field theory’s contribution to international studies, and its ability to link global and local phenomena:

The second important implication concerns the global and the local. For organizational researchers it is necessary to link these two levels in order to avoid reproducing a false antimony. One needs, that is, to acknowledge the fact that the global implies the local, and vice versa. Bourdieu provides one means by which this can be done (2002: 75).

Critiques and methodological challenges

Field theory is not without its critics. Commentators argue (among other things) that it is difficult to determine the borders of a field; that the notion of habitus is ambiguous and over-stretched; and that it undermines journalistic autonomy (see Jenkins 1992; Marlière 1998: 223). It is impossible to address the full depth of the literature here, but a number of points are discussed. The aim of this thesis is to find a starting point for ethnographic enquiry, rather than a comprehensive social theory. As such, the main criterion by which we judge field theory should be: can it illuminate and help explain journalistic practice? It is suggested that many of the critiques represent currently unanswered and un-researched questions, rather than issues that destabilise the approach as a whole.

One of the greatest challenges facing researchers working with field theory is identifying fields, and outlining their borders. As Lahire complains, there is no once-and-for-all answer to the question ‘what is literature?’ or ‘what is politics?’ (in Swartz 1998). This issue becomes even more complex at the international level where fields are “not as tightly knitted” as the smaller, national fields often associated with Bourdieu’s concept (Guzzini 2006: 4; see also Villumsen 2010: 11). Leander (2009) argues, however, that the blurred

nature of field boundaries is not a limitation but a strength of field theory. Because fields are ambiguous, the approach is adaptable to any context-specific analysis. Everett believes that reflexive researchers should welcome this challenge:

this concept [the field] forces the researcher to focus on the origin of concepts and problems, acknowledge social and linguistic constructionism, and consider the difference between a priori theoretical codified knowledge and emergent practical knowledge (2002: 73-74).

Academics have suggested a number of strategies for identifying fields. Villumsen (2010), for example, writes that researchers should first examine the “capital at stake” and then step back to identify and consider the actors who are struggling for this capital. Mellor (2008) likewise suggests that capital is central to identifying Arab journalism as a social field. While Leander (2008) suggests we move back and forth between theoretical definitions, and empirical research, to create a crosscheck of features agents in a field would possess. The question of how to identify a field is returned to in the methodology section that follows.

A related issue, particularly in studying international fields, is trying to conceptualise how multiple fields may relate to one another. In Bourdieu’s domestic analyses, semi-autonomous fields are structured in relationships of dominance and autonomy within a larger ‘field of power’. This field of power either does not exist or has not been adequately conceptualised at the international level:

Some guidance – in the shape of a better conceptualization of the ‘field of power’ or perhaps more realistically a multiplication of practical research strategies to accommodate the high level of complexity inherent in international relations – is

essential to the future development of habitus/field inspired work in international studies (Leander 2009: 21-22).

The difficulty of identifying inter-field relations has not prevented researchers employing field theory to analyse international fields to date and, as Guzzini suggests, it is only through further research and enquiry that a wider 'field of power' can be better conceptualised:

It is perfectly possible that the more unified vision of a field of power with its dominant elite does not well translate on a transnational/trans-societal level. And yet, that is actually an empirical question which awaits its answering (2006: 17).

A further critique of the field is that it does not pay enough attention to the role of political forces (Marlière 1998; Benson 2005: 92). In Bourdieu's model, the cultural logic of any given field confronts heteronomous power, conceptualized as the (singular, if complex) dominant power in the society at large (Benson 2005: 92). Most often, this external pressure is described as purely economic; but at other times, Bourdieu joins the economic and political. Benson and Marlière argue that the emphasis on economic forces, and the conflation of political with economic forces, obscures the unique contributions of political forces in shaping the journalistic field, and Benson suggests a reformulation of Bourdieu's spatial representation, such that one pole stretches between cultural/state-civic and economic/state-market (2006: 196; see also Couldry 2003).

However, again, Bourdieu has left some vagueness for a reason. The field is a 'thinking tool' for empirical research and Bourdieu takes a minimal approach, laying out the basic units of field theory, rather than going to great lengths to flesh out its specifics. Thus, while it may suit Benson's project (the

cross-analysis of journalistic fields between nation-states) to add this extra dimension of civic/state power, it is not appropriate for other explorations of practice – such as the one at hand, which looks at transnational phenomena. It is not Bourdieu’s intent to graphically represent all the potential forms of power – nor should it be. As Couldry writes, “The solution, surely, is to recognise that the diagrams of field theory are merely expository devices, and can be dropped if required by the complexities it seeks to analyse, without in any way undermining the theory” (2007: 212). This review suggests that we should maintain the basic concept of the field, note that the external forces that dominate fields may vary, and further assess the nature of this domination through empirical research. The nature of political/economic domination is returned to throughout the analysis chapters.

Habitus has also proven a highly divisive concept. Responses vary from suggesting that it constitutes the most comprehensive attempt to bridge the structural-agency divide (Crossley 2002: 168), through to the dismissive conclusion that it is “a failure, albeit an impressive and interesting failure” (Jenkins 1992: 91). Part of the problem is that the concept bears so much theoretical work and can also be difficult to define (Swartz 1998: 96, 109). Alexander (1995) suggests the notion of habitus is vague, and obscures the role of agency, rendering it:

more like a Trojan horse for determinism. Time and time again it is explained not as a site for voluntarism – for improvising within certain limits – but as the reflection and replication of exterior structures (1995: 136).

Van Hout and Jacobs agree, arguing that Bourdieu’s interest in power structures eclipses any attention to agency; they criticise field analysis of

journalism, and in particular that of Champagne and Marchetti (2005), as leading to analyses “in which journalists wander around like faceless and voiceless support actors against the background of a nation-wide drama” (2008: 66).

While it may be true that Champagne and Marchetti focus on structures, this reflects the stated aim of their investigation: the relationship between fields – in this case, between the scientific and journalistic field. That does not mean field theory cannot be applied to reveal the trajectory, and production practices of individual journalists moving within these fields. There is nothing intrinsically deterministic or structural about field theory. As Benson and Neveu write:

the notion of habitus expresses a reasonable hypothesis: that individuals' predispositions, assumptions, judgments, and behaviours are the result of a long-term socialization, most importantly in the family, and secondarily, via primary, secondary and professional education. Habitus is not unchangeable. In fact, it is constantly being modified...By incorporating temporality, habitus combats naïve assertions of structural determination (2005: 3).

Does Bourdieu really overcome the divide between structure and agency? Perhaps not. As Neveu writes, “I’m sure it’s not the last word” (2007: 343). But, for the time being, habitus provides a reasonable estimate of how individuals experience the world; how both journalists and academics account for the journalistic process; and how journalists contribute to, enable, and are constrained by, social structures. Moreover, if not the last word, habitus is still, as Bernstein argues, “something good to think with, or about” and alerts us “to new possibilities, new assemblies, new ways of seeing relationships” (1996: 136). The notion of “duality of structure” and reflexive sociology has become received wisdom in much of the journalism literature (Peterson

2001), as it has around the social sciences (Layder 2006).

A more immediate problem is that specific habitus may be difficult to identify and analyse, particularly where multiple fields are involved. Leander replies that this does not make habitus unworkable but, rather, that multiple habitus are a positive feature of the framework, because an agent's multiple habitus and dimensions may help account for change in a field:

It is precisely because agents are not solely and always following a habitus produced in the field that enables actors to be reflexive about their own situation, engage in struggles for redefining the rules of the game of the own field, and the boundaries of the field as such (Leander 2006:15).

Indeed, the multiplicity of habitus – the notion that agents have sets of dispositions from a range of their life experiences (rather than simply the ones produced in the immediate field of production) – is a helpful concept for capturing the multiplicity of identities seen in contemporary foreign correspondents. Local-national correspondents, for example, occupy a complex space – they are socialised in their home field, but engage with the habitus of international journalistic fields. Habitus helps us understand how these agents may be capable of changing the international journalistic field, because of their alternative dispositions, and how they may absorb the news values of the journalistic field through their professional trajectories.

Despite the above issues, some of which remain unresolved, Bourdieu's thinking tools have been positively incorporated into a wide range of theoretical and empirical literature. Field theory has been widely embraced and its productive use across a variety of disciplines speaks to its broad acceptability among academics (Warde 2004: 13). Media scholars, in particular, have proven eager to use, tweak and develop field theory to analyse

journalistic production (e.g., Champagne 1993; Couldry 2003; Dickinson 2008; Duval 2005; Hallin 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Hovden 2001; Marchetti 2005; Mellor 2008; Neveu 2007; Schudson 2005b; Schultz 2011). In short, Bourdieu is considered “good to think with” by an increasing number of researchers who are interested in the study of media and journalism (Dickinson 2008: 1386).

Field theory’s appeal lies in its broad scope and versatility: the concept of the field provides a means of simultaneously taking into account the external and internal, macro and micro, forces that shape practice. This is particularly welcome in media studies, where researchers have struggled to bridge the divide between macro-societal level approaches, and micro-organisational approaches (Benson 2006: 197). But field theory is more than a ‘catch all’. For Bourdieu, power is central to practice, and field theory directs our attention to power structures in society, and how these are reflected in, and created by, discourse; and – importantly – how these power dynamics are capable of change. Perhaps the warm reception owes most to the fact that, by incorporating both the sociological turn (which goes some way towards bridging the structure-agency divide) and the linguistic turn (with its productive sense of power), field theory reflects current social-scientific thinking on the world in a way that other approaches to media studies simply do not (Guzzini 2005).

Finally, field theory provides a promising point of departure for empirical research. Cottle (2003) suggests that field theory can be used to invigorate and motivate a “second wave” of newsroom ethnography, as it helps researchers draw links between observed behaviour, and wider power

dynamics in society (see also Schultz 2011; Dickinson 2008). It is to how exactly field theory can be investigated in a trans-national context, that we now turn.

4. Methods

This thesis uses the analytical tools of field theory to investigate the work of three groups of practicing foreign correspondents in East Africa. These are 1. The FCs at the Reuter's Nairobi newsroom; 2. FCs in Nairobi working for UK newspaper outlets; and 3. FCs in Sudan reporting on the Darfur crisis. These groups of FCs have been selected as they represent 'most different' cases: FCs working in very different environments. They are chosen to test the appropriateness and potentiality of field theory as a tool for understanding the practice of FCs. Following these analysis chapters, this thesis explores if and how field theory can best be conceptualized to understand international practice, and accommodate multiple fields.

Bourdieu was not prescriptive in what research methods should be used to investigate practice. In the introduction to *Invitation to Reflective Sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), Bourdieu articulates his philosophy of "methodological polytheism" whereby he recommends researchers employ any techniques that are relevant and practicable to the task in hand. This is not to say that anything goes, however:

Bourdieu insists that scientific rigor (not to be confused with scientific rigidity) is always the one key principle and that 'relativistic epistemological laissez faire' is entirely unacceptable (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 30).

Central to this rigor is Bourdieu's insistence on self-reflexivity, through which the researcher acknowledges the way in which their position in, and knowledge about, the world influences research claims. The following account

is an attempt to describe and reflect on the research process in a transparent manner.

Research Question

This thesis began with a simple, general research question: “What influences the work of foreign correspondents producing international news on Africa?” A survey of the research literature on journalism practice revealed conflict over the core issue of whether foreign correspondents have autonomy in their work; it also suggested a diverse set of factors, from the micro to the macro, that might influence FC practices, and a number of overarching approaches to understanding FC work: organizational studies, political economic studies, new institutionalism, field theory, and cultural approaches. The overarching research question became, “What theoretical approach can best explain the practices of FCs?”

Multi-sited field work

This research question was explored through three periods of (what can only be called) fieldwork in Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda, each of which drew on multiple research methods. At each of my research sites, I established a physical presence, sought out FCs for interviews, and observed them at work.

The central data this produced was 51 semi-structured interviews with practicing foreign correspondents, a two-month newsroom ethnography in the Reuter’s Nairobi bureau, and participant observation in all three countries. Across the research sites, I also conducted an additional 32 interviews with

secondary informants who had perspective on the work of FCs (primarily local journalists, former FCs, and key journalistic sources in politics and the aid industry). The majority of these (22) were conducted in Khartoum, where I sought to understand how an oppressive political regime might alter the landscape in which FCs operate.

The table below summarises the methods used in each site:

Table 1 - Methods used in Fieldwork

Location	Date	Interviews with FCs	Secondary interviews	Further Methods	
Khartoum	Aug-Sept 2007	9	22	Participant observ.	Content Analysis
Nairobi	July-Sept 2009	30	4	Participant observ.	Newsroom ethnography
Kampala	Aug-Sept 2010	12	2	Participant observ.	

Thesis genesis & development

This research began its life as a stand-alone project for an MPhil thesis. The first research site was Khartoum, Sudan, where research was conducted between August 5th and September 4th, 2007. The site was selected because, at the time of the research, Darfur had been described as the world’s “worst humanitarian crisis”, and the permanent correspondents covering this conflict were located in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. It thus provided a prominent case study to examine correspondents at work in Africa. The research produced original data, and I used it to interrogate existing theory on the practice of foreign correspondents.

Rather than a sample, the Khartoum fieldwork sought to investigate the total population of foreign correspondents¹². Through a combination of existing contacts, snowballing¹³, and triangulation with journalists' sources, a comprehensive list of nine foreign correspondents was made¹⁴. All agreed to be interviewed, and were observed in formal work environments. The FCs worked for the following news organisations: AFP, Ansa, AP, BBC, *New York Times* (two journalists) and Reuters (three journalists).

The Sudan data highlighted the role played by individual journalists. I saw countless examples of individuals initiating and shaping the news agenda. I noted that, with so few FCs in situ, these individuals, and their personal traits, were directly influencing the content of the world's news. Writing up this data into my MPhil thesis, I argued that, in the case of crisis reporting in Sudan, individual FCs had far more autonomy and influence than macro-level theories acknowledged, and that approaches such as Shoemaker and Reese's (1996), which suggest a hierarchy of influences, with individuals at the bottom, needed to be rethought in light of these findings.

The Sudan case study was subsequently developed into a larger research project - this doctoral thesis - examining the international reporting of Africa more generally. The larger project sought to compare and contrast the findings of the Sudan case study with reporting practices in other African sites. The question remained "what theoretical approach can best explain practice of FCs?"

¹² As noted in the introduction, a 'foreign correspondent' was operationalised as 'any journalist paid to produce news in English for a publication/outlet based in a second country'.

¹³ Snowballing is a technique in which interviewees are asked to nominate potential informants on the basis of their own networks (Devine 2002: 205).

¹⁴ A subsequent review of the lexis-nexus world news database found that only one stringer, who filed 200 words for UPI in this time period, was not captured by this approach.

To this end, two further research sites were chosen. The first was Nairobi, which was chosen as it is the hub for reporting on East Africa; it houses the regional headquarters of all the international news agencies, as well as the largest pool of permanent correspondents. Fieldwork was conducted in Nairobi between 25th July and 24th September 2009.

In Nairobi, the pool of FCs was much larger than in Khartoum, and interviewees were specifically targeted. In order to build on my Sudan research, I decided to maintain the focus on newswire and newspaper journalists¹⁵. I approached the bureau chiefs of major newswires, the FCs working in their offices, and leading newspaper correspondents (as defined by the lexis nexis database of “Major world newspapers”).

I interviewed bureau chiefs at the three major newswires AFP, AP, and Reuters, as well as journalists working in their bureau offices; for contrast to these “big three” wires, I also interviewed journalists at Bloomberg and Xinhua. Unexpectedly, the bureau chief at Reuters invited me to spend as much time in the office as I wanted and, granted this opportunity, I decided to conduct a two-month ethnography of the bureau (discussed below).

In Nairobi, I also interviewed a range of FCs working for newspapers in Europe and the US. UK newspapers are highly represented in Nairobi¹⁶, and I

¹⁵ The journalism literature suggests that there are a variety of additional pressures on TV journalists. Most notably, the need for compelling visual material that may constrain their story selection (Rossenblum 1994:139). This was confirmed by a variety of responses in this research; Malcolm Webb, for examples, a freelancer videographer in Kampala noted of being a camera journalist: “they have to be simplified around pictures I can get. That’s just the nature of the media. Some stories with significance you can’t tell. Land rights, for example. Unless people are evicted, you really can’t do it in this medium...I know it sounds crass but visual pain is better – a lost leg is better than inner turmoil.”

¹⁶ interview with Dana Hughes (ABC news), the chair of the Foreign correspondent Association of East Africa (FCAEA) in 3rd August, 2009.

was able to interview the FC working for each of the ‘quality UK dailies’ – *Daily Telegraph, Times, Guardian, Independent* and *Financial Times*; as well as FCs working for the *Economist*, and *Spectator*.

Uganda was chosen as a final research site, as it represents a “medium” sized foreign news pool (smaller than Nairobi, and larger than Khartoum¹⁷), and it provided a comparison to the heavily restricted media environment of Sudan. Fieldwork was conducted in Kampala between 22rd August and 20th September 2010.

In Kampala, I interviewed stringers working for the major newswires: AFP, AP, Reuters, Xinhau, Al Jazeera, and a number of freelance journalists who were in Kampala at the time.

Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda provide useful contrast for examining how correspondents work in different environments. They were not selected to work as a comparative study, however. International news outlets, such as Reuters and AFP have networks between all of these sites: they have large bureaus in Nairobi, and stringers spread around the region; newspaper FCs cover the whole region and travel throughout. As Cottle writes:

news production no longer takes place within any one organisational centre of production but has become increasingly dispersed across multiple sites, different platforms and can be contributed to by journalists based in different locations around the world or on the move (Cottle 2007: 8-9)

¹⁷ In Sudan, there were 9 Foreign correspondents; In Uganda roughly 25, and in Kenya 50+ [These numbers are estimates based on interviews with FCs in these countries, and communications I had with the Foreign Correspondents Association for East Africa (<http://www.fcaea.org/>)]

Rather than cross-case comparison, this research is better understood as a form of multi-sited research. Marcus describes this approach:

Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography (1995:105).

My goal was to both understand the work of the FCs I interviewed / observed, and to connect their practices to wider phenomenon. This is particularly relevant for the newswires, who have stringer networks around east Africa. In Uganda, for example, I was able to explore the connections between the stringers in Kampala, and the bureau chiefs in Nairobi, who I interviewed the previous year.

Qualitative production studies

As the first section of the literature review argued, up close production studies of foreign correspondents at work are an invaluable method as they help to 1) mitigate the inference problem associated with studying foreign correspondents “from afar” and 2) remain open to the possibility that a multitude of variables interplay to produce the news. As Simon Cottle writes, “no matter how methodologically sophisticated some studies may be in terms of their approach to how meanings are produced within textual features and forms, these cannot substitute for ‘behind the scenes’ research into the informing contexts and processes of production” (1999: 191).

This research has employed a variety of qualitative methods to explore the context and processes of news production; most notably, interviews, newsroom ethnography, and participant observation. These methods, their suitability and limitations, and the details of the research are detailed below.

Semi Structured Interviews

The central data for this thesis comes from interviews with 51 practicing foreign correspondents in East Africa, and 32 secondary interviews with former journalists and journalists' news sources (full list in Appendix 1). Semi-structured interviewing is a qualitative method in which the researcher explores the perspective of informants through a series of partially-planned but flexible questions, allowing respondents to guide much of the conversation (Denscombe 1998: 113). This methodology can provide rich data about the world of journalists, as exemplified by Hannerz's (2004) overview of foreign correspondents and Morrison and Tumber's (1988) specific case study of journalists in the Falklands.

Before my first interviews, I constructed a guide list of questions (Appendix 2). These questions were devised to capture a wide range of factors identified in the literature as potentially influencing FCs in the field – including their background, news values, relationship with their editors, the commissioning process of their work, how they accessed sources, what drove them in their work, and how much autonomy they felt they had in their work.

On average, the interviews lasted 70 minutes. All of my interviewees had a professional familiarity with the interview process; indeed, journalists

have been active agents in shaping the norms and conventions that inform all interview practice (Puwar 1997:1; Williams 1980: 310). My informants were comfortable with the format, and were expressive and expansive in their answers. All worked in communications that employed English language, and consequently language translation was not an issue. The majority of interviews were recorded on a tape recorder, and later transcribed. Some were not, however, as a result either of 1. Poor sound quality, or 2. The preferences of the interviewee. In these instances, extensive notes were taken in a form of pigeon shorthand, and typed up immediately afterwards.

Limitations of interviews

Semi-structured interviews have limitations; respondents may omit details or exaggerate their accounts. Furthermore, as Bourdieu writes, there is an insurmountable break between practice itself and writing or talking about it; even where respondents give honest answers, these are subjective accounts, reflecting their already established sense of self (1990: 33).

I attempted to stay attuned to these limitations as much as possible; I asked questions from a number of directions, asked journalists to draw comparisons with other sites and outlets they had worked with, and to comment on the work of other FCs.

I also employed a variety of research methods to triangulate the FC's responses. Triangulation is a strategy in which the researcher employs "multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm the emerging

findings” (Merriam 1998: 204). To this end, secondary interviews, participant observation, and content analysis were invaluable.

Across the research sites, I conducted an additional 32 interviews with editors, local journalists, former foreign correspondents, and the prominent sources in the field that the FCs consulted (media spokespeople, diplomats, politicians, civil society leaders, and academics). These interviews asked the sources to comment on the foreign correspondents they worked with - their activities and practices, variation between them; as well as general conditions in the local environment – freedom of the press, access to sources and so on. The secondary interviews with journalists’ sources were particularly useful as they provided an alternative view of the journalists-source relationship, often identified as a central component and locus of news production (Schudson 2005; Bennet 1994: 23-29; Cohen 1963: 267). These interviews provided background ideas, rather than primary data and they are not often referred to in the analysis sections that follow.

Newsroom Ethnography

The second major method employed in this research was a two-month ethnography of the Reuters newswire Nairobi bureau. In ethnographic studies, the researcher immerses themselves in the subject site (the newsroom) to observe practice; the strength of ethnography is that it lets the researcher directly observe the correlation between journalistic practice, and their self-reported behaviour.

Newsroom ethnographies have generated considerable insight to journalistic practices, from how practice is shaped by routine and bureaucratic divisions of labour, through to the need to create order and defend professional boundaries (e.g. Epstein 1974, Schlesinger 1987, Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979 and Fishman 1980). Cottle (2000) notes, however, that newsroom ethnographies have not kept pace with changing social scientific understandings, technological adaptation, and the globalisation of newsrooms. As a result, as Paterson and Zoellner write,

the academy is left uninformed about production, especially in regard to production environments experiencing considerable change because of globalization, conglomerate control, convergence, multi-skilling and the digitization of production(2010:98).

The access for this ethnography followed from an interview with the Reuters Nairobi Bureau Chief Andrew Cawthorne, who kindly invited me to spend time in the newsroom. I jumped at the chance; access is routinely described as one of the most challenging aspects of the ethnographic method (Peterson & Zoellner 2010), and this presented an opportunity to study an important and leading newswire in-depth and first hand.

Over a two-month period, I sat at one of the “hot desks” used by journalists in the middle of the Nairobi newsroom. From there, I could see and hear the journalists as they chatted, collaborated, made phone calls and generally went about their work days. While in the office, I interviewed the staff on multiple occasions, both formally (which were recorded) and informally – over lunch, in elevators, making tea, and so on.

One of the richest sources of data during this ethnography were the morning news meetings, where the journalists summarised the big stories from around the region, and deliberated about their news agenda for the coming day. In these meetings, the journalists frequently articulated what they thought the most important news story was and why. I attended these meetings every day they were held, and took extensive notes throughout each on my laptop¹⁸.

While at Reuters, I also had the opportunity to sit in on a phone conference between the four regional bureau chiefs for Africa and the London editorial desk, which was helpful for gaining insight into the relationship between Nairobi and London.

One of the immediate challenges of ethnography is that it may lead the researcher to focus unduly on the observed environment, and not take into account external factors, for example the role of the outlet's managers, who are not physically present in the newsroom, or the role of media regulations that can't be seen. To try to mitigate this limitation, I sought out and interviewed Reuters editors and former editors based in London, as well as Reuters stringers in Uganda and Sudan, who held different perspectives on the work of the bureau. I also compared what I saw sideways – interviewing correspondents that worked at different outlets: the bureau chiefs at AFP, AP, and correspondents and stringers at Al Jazeera, Xinhau, and the BBC. I also read widely in the historical and social scientific literature on the Reuters

¹⁸ Using a tape recorder was impractical in the open space office; contributors often sat at a distance from one another, and there was a large amount of background noise.

newswire. Finally, analysing my data through the lens of field theory made me focus on the links between field position and practice, and this assisted in drawing my attention, over and over again, to the role of context and external forces.

A further important consideration in ethnography is whether the presence of the researcher alters the practices they observe – an inescapable issue in all research methods (Bernard 1995). I tried to be aware of this, and supplement my observations with interviews, and observe practices on multiple occasions. I also frequently asked my FCs whether practices and approaches were “normal”.

Participant Observation

In Khartoum, Nairobi and Kampala, I did considerable “participant observation”. This took two main forms - professional and personal. In the professional sphere, I attended a range of news events and press conferences to observe the journalists at work, and the way they interacted with each other and official sources. In a number of instances, I was able to sit in as journalists interviewed sources as part of their work.

Michael Agar notes that observation and interviews simultaneously or sequentially interact and reinforce one another as research methods (1996:158). This was certainly my experience in my field sites where, again and again, observations suggested ideas and tested the results of interviews, while interviews helped me understand the phenomena that I observed. As time progressed, I gained insight into the idiosyncratic and systematic

differences between informant accounts and actual events. In an early interview, for example, one of my journalist-informants commented that he did not think language barriers were significant in Sudan. At a press conference the next day, I observed a translation process that demonstrated a number of issues that raised doubts about this journalist's claim; this prompted me to explore the issue further with other informants and I discovered a wide range of issues regarding availability and quality of translators, and sensitivity of language issues in Darfur.

On the personal level, I also spent "down time" with a number of the correspondents: going out for drinks, dinner, and otherwise socializing informally. At times, my relationships with the correspondents became quite friendly. This had many advantages from a research perspective. First, the foreign correspondents often spoke more frankly about their work and life in a social environment. Second, it provided an opportunity to observe FCs interacting with one another (rather than a researcher), which provided a form of triangulation. Third, it meant that I was sometimes present when news events took place, and I could observe them unfolding. For example, I was spending the day with the Press Spokesperson for the British embassy in Khartoum when there was a bomb threat on the embassy. As a result, I was able to hear him take phone calls from a range of international correspondents, and note the different types of quotes these journalists sought. Finally, the friendship meant that I could easily ask follow up questions of my correspondents – to send a quick text to ask them about experiences of one of news events, for example, or to ask if I could look at

their email “pitches” to their bosses; if I had not been on friendly terms, it is likely this would have seemed badgering.

There are two main research challenges in doing participant observation – negotiating the insider/outsider perspective, and maintaining ethical standards (discussed at the end of this chapter).

Insider/outsider perspective

There is a long-standing debate regarding the research results produced by researchers that are “inside” versus “outside” the culture they are studying. The insider, it is argued, can easily build rapport with interviewees, helping reduce the observer effect, and achieve the “intimate contact” that Evans-Pritchard (1951) holds is essential to observe and understand social interactions. The outsider, by contrast, retains some degree of scepticism by not “going native” and instead having the *etic* perspective considered so valuable to ethnographic research (Miles & Huberman 1994: 216).

In both my participant observation, and my newsroom ethnography, I felt that my position was characterised by what Razavi (1992) calls a “partial insider” status. I was an outsider because I did not work as a journalist or professional communicator; I did not share the assumptions of the profession, and I did not live in the region. However, with a number of the informants, I did share a very similar background, education, and life experience. This was particularly the case with the British and North American journalists and spokespeople, some of whom had attended the same university and came from cities with which I was familiar. With the local-national FCs, I did not

share a cultural background, but I was familiar with the output of their news work: I was a member of the “imagined community” for which they wrote.

Being a partial-insider is a helpful position for investigating social phenomenon, as it helps build trust with informants, while maintaining some distance. It is important, however, to remain aware of your position regarding research subjects throughout the project. To this end, I kept extensive field work notes in multiple journals in which I reflected on my experiences and emerging understandings. It was also helpful, I believe, that I interviewed a wide range of FCs at different outlets and sites, meaning I did not go ‘native’ in any particular social milieu (although I needed to work to see underlying values that they had in common, that might not have been expressed).

One final method was employed in this research: content analysis.

Content Analysis

One of the methodological advantages of studying journalists is that the product of their ‘behaviour’ – news texts – is performed over again and is in the public domain, easily accessible to the researcher. Both before and after I conducted my field research, I immersed myself in news production from the region. This emersion gave me a sense for how the texts work, how their language was structured and some differences and similarities between outlets and FCs. It suggested a range of avenues for inquiry with journalists – why had this issue become a news item? How did you access this source? And during interviews, I often asked journalists about specific stories they had written.

It is also possible and practical, through content analysis, to run tests on the links between self-reported behaviour/values and practice. To this end, a final methodology employed in this research was a limited content analysis of the news written by the correspondents in Sudan. This was a ‘one-off’ method, employed in this case study to triangulate a rather remarkable interview finding; In Khartoum, the journalists at AP and AFP stated that they had no interest in writing “watchdog” journalism, or providing multiple view points in their stories as they were wary of the repercussions this would have for their safety. This was a significant finding, and I was very curious as to whether their sentiments were widely supported by and reflected in the work they produced. The details of this content analysis are contained in Appendix 3.

Ethical issues

A number of ethical considerations are raised by interviews with FCs, regarding consent, and the implications of being involved in the study.

Journalists are a helpful subject for ethically-minded research, as a number of potential issues are addressed by the norms of their profession. In particular, journalists have a clear set of conventions around ‘the record’ – that is, information that can and cannot be quoted and attributed to them. During interviews, my subjects would smoothly transition between making comments “on” and “off” the record: the first could be quoted and attributed, and the latter could not¹⁹. This is reassuring, as it makes it explicit that the

¹⁹ There is a third category of “deep background” which cannot be quoted in any way, or attributed to anyone.

interviewee is aware that they are participating in a conversation that is being recorded and could be used in research.

At the start of all interviews, the journalists were instructed that I was undertaking a post-graduate research project, that the results would appear in a thesis that could potentially be accessed by the public via the library as well as electronically, and potentially be published in academic articles. Having been informed of this, a small number of the journalists chose to speak off the record. Some did not wish to have their name or outlet appear in this thesis at all, and others were willing to have it appear, but wanted specific aspects of their responses to be “off the record”. Requests of this nature have been respected. As have any requests, during an interview, to go ‘off record’.

At the start of my newsroom ethnography in Nairobi, the journalists were instructed that I was in the newsroom as an observer and researcher – that I would be “hanging around” and sitting in on news meetings. They were told that they free to talk to me, but that they were not obliged to.

During the ethnography and participant observation, it was important for me to remind the participants I was a researcher to avoid “disguised observation” where informants are unaware they are being observed and recorded (Bernard 1995: 347-9). This was not difficult in most circumstances; the journalists would frequently point out my research status, suggest that I might be interested in what they were saying, and make jokes about my presence. At other times, I would ask specific questions that made it clear I was conducting research. In addition, many of the events I observed were matters of public record – for example, press conferences.

The journalists in this research have been very generous in speaking freely and frankly, and I hope they would agree I have depicted them, and their work, fairly.

Data analysis & theoretical development

The argument of this thesis developed as I moved between theory and data over the course of these three periods of fieldwork, and after my return. Assessing the total data, I reached the conclusion that field theory was the most helpful overarching framework for interpreting it, and explaining the practice of FCs. This was an emergent process.

Following my time in Sudan, I was attuned to the role of individual journalists and their agency in reporting; during my time in Nairobi, I became more aware of the need to incorporate the role of organisations that directed foreign correspondents. I saw that a theory explaining foreign news practices would need to incorporate both features. My time in the Nairobi Reuter's newsroom was particularly impactful in this regard, as I saw the role played by both strategic FCs, pursuing their own agenda, and the incentives and coercion of organisational structures. I also saw that field theory could help explain a major transition that had taken place in the organization, and had resulted in different news practices – how movement at the global level was trickling down, through organisations structures, into practice. Among the permanent FCs working for UK outlets, I noted that it could help explain both the incredible similarities in the FCs' professional outlooks, as well as the autonomy levels and conventions, and news stories that varied widely across the sample. I took these insights into my research in Kampala and, again,

found the tools of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' to be particularly relevant and insightful to the practices I observed.

At the end of this fieldwork, I again reassessed my data. Moving back to theory, I started to see that there were key questions that would need to shape my analysis. I noted that 1) field theory has not yet been used to analyse international journalistic practice and 2) it is not clear how multiple fields can best be conceptualized, when it comes to studying international phenomenon.

My data suggested that global newswires were engaged in a global field of news production; while the newspapers I investigated were primarily engaged in a national field 'back home'. These fields have been traced, at the conceptual level, by Biesla (2009) and Chalaby (1998) respectively. Foreign correspondents also engage with a further site - the local, immediate environment where an event occurs. This site contains a variety of obstacles noted in the literature review – oppressive governments, difficult logistics and so on. How these different layers operate together, and influence one another, became a key focus in my thinking.

Data Presentation

The data gathered in my research could have been presented in a variety of ways: as a cross-national, outlet comparison, or thematic comparison, to name but a few possibilities.

I have chosen to present the data in terms of 'fields' - presenting a substantive analysis chapter on the global and the national field in which outlets are based, and a final section examining the role of the local

environment. This follows the observation that one of the key challenges in field theory is exploring how these different fields and layers are connected.

Within each chapter, the analysis ‘zooms in’ on a small number of foreign correspondents, and explores their practice. Focusing on a smaller number of FCs – rather than trying to give a broad overview of all aspects of the news system in East Africa - allows the analysis to explore practice up close. This is helpful in any analysis of practice that attempts to provide ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1970) but it is particularly relevant to a field theory analysis, which Randal Johnson describes as an exercise of “radical contextualization” (1993:9) and where paying attention to a news outlet’s position, strategy and historical trajectory can be essential to analysis.

The first section explores the global news field, and the production of international newswires in East Africa. In the most substantive section of the thesis, I present a ‘field analysis’ of the Thomson Reuters newswire. The analysis draws on history and grey literature to place the outlet in its historical context, as well as ‘locate’ it in the global journalistic field. The analysis draws together data collected across the various sites of this research –editors in London, stringers in Uganda and Sudan - as well as the newsroom ethnography and interviews with the core group of journalists working in the Nairobi newsroom, who are at the heart of the study.

Reuters was chosen for this in-depth study because 1) they are a leading newswire, 2) I had fortuitous access to study their work and 3) they were in a state of flux at the time of the study, and offered an opportunity to observe how change takes place within a newsroom.

Following the Reuters chapter, the thesis examines the national field 'back home' where traditional newspaper correspondents were based. My sampling of FCs in Nairobi had produced a comprehensive sample of journalists working for the UK newspapers, and I decided to focus my analysis on these agents.

The final chapter assesses the 'local' through two case studies – the post election violence in Kenya, and the Darfur crisis in Sudan.

Part II: The Global Field of Journalism

This thesis argues that, at the most general level, there is a global field of journalism, in which news outlets compete for economic and symbolic capital. This economic capital takes several forms, for instance, income from news terminal subscriptions and international advertisers. Whereas symbolic capital takes the forms such as international news awards, being the first to break major stories, and syndication in prestigious news outlets. Few authors have used Bourdieusean language to discuss a global journalistic field as such, but there is an increasing consensus in media studies literature that a variety of global media actors operate independently from the nation state; and that, moreover, the news produced by these actors has important ideological and discursive similarities, which can be conceptualised and studied (Appurdurai 1990; Reese 2001, 2010; Berglez 2008; Volkner 1999).

This thesis argues that this global sphere is best understood as a field that can be empirically investigated using the analytical tools of field theory. Biesla (2008) has been the first to plot the emergence of this global journalistic field. She highlights the important role played by newswires in the construction of this field's boundaries, norms and discursive practices. As noted in the literature review, this field is characterised by its commitment to the norm of objectivity, and the extent to which – despite being global in scope and reach – it caters its news to Western-centric news clients.

This chapter examines the Reuters newswires as a key agent in the global journalistic field, focusing on the relationship between position in a

field, and journalistic practices. The chapter concludes by discussing briefly the position of the other major news outlets in the global field, and their reporting on Africa.

5. Thomson Reuters and the Global Field of news production

This chapter analyses news production at the Reuters newswire,²⁰ one of the most important outlets producing international news on East Africa. The chapter starts by following a Reuters news story, as it is generated in Uganda, passes through the Nairobi news bureau, and is disseminated around the world. This story raises a number of issues that are addressed in the chapter. The next section provides historical context for the Reuters newswire. This is followed by an analysis that draws on the tools of field theory to interrogate and explain production practices.

The chapter “locates” Reuters in the global journalistic field. It then examines its internal structure and dynamics, and investigates how individual agents (with their own life trajectory and values) move through this outlet, and produce news. This chapter develops the argument that there is a clear connection between a news organization’s “field position” and the practices of journalists within a newsroom. It argues that this connection is made through the translation of external influences into internal capital and prestige, which guides agents and transforms logic, or ‘ways of doing things.’ The chapter suggests that this link is particularly strong today, as technology provides editors with close to perfect information about what their audiences wish to read.

²⁰ The Reuters world service newswire is located within the Thomson Reuters corporation. These terms are used respectively, throughout.

Thomson Reuters is an illuminating case study for a number of reasons. First, because the newswire is an important player in the production of international news on Africa; thus, examining its production processes takes us a step closer to answering the question: what explains contemporary news coverage of East Africa? Second, the outlet is a very rich case for interrogating journalistic theory because, at the time of study, the organization was going through a major organizational transition. This provided a key methodological advantage: at times of change, the generally invisible values and routines guiding journalistic practices often become more obvious.

Finally, the newswire has a long and rich history, allowing us to explore how production processes and news values change over time. This is of particular interest and relevance to a field analysis. Robert Moore (2008: 105) writes that, although fields can be understood statically (synchronically) in terms of their structure, and relationships of positions, the most important feature of a field is that it is dynamic – it exists in and through time (diachronically) in the trajectories of position takings and strategies. Thus this chapter refers, at numerous points, to the ways in which Reuters has changed, and historical and dynamic connections between capital and production practices.

News production at a newswire involves multiple agents cooperating across space. This chapter begins by tracing the production and transmission of one story to illustrate the key players and factors involved. As Boyer and Hannerz (2006: 13) suggest, “following a story helps draw attention to the fact that, after a local interplay of interests and competences at the point of origin,

a story may bounce back and forth between stringers, bureaus and desks in different locations, involve competitions between parallel intermediary channels of news flow...before reaching its audience destination.” The story raises a number of questions for investigation, which are addressed in the analysis that follows.

A Reuters Story

It's 8am and Elias Biryabarema is at home in Kampala, drinking a cup of tea and scanning the internet for story ideas. As Reuters' only stringer in Uganda, he covers 'stories that impact markets' as well as general and political news stories. He's already done his most important task for the month – a round-up of Ugandan coffee and tea export figures; and he's looking for a new piece. Elias is paid by the story, and this is a strong incentive to 'find news'. He starts by skimming the internet looking at the local news outlets, as well as the news from the handful of foreign correspondents in Kampala. The Canadian who works for AFP has written a story about child soldiers in North Uganda; the Ugandan journalist who reports for the BBC, has done a story on a breakaway Ugandan pop singer. Elias thinks (no, Elias knows) that Reuters won't be interested in either of these stories: they don't have enough 'impact.'

An email flashes up in his inbox; it's from an opposition member of parliament in Kampala. Elias, who has lived in Uganda all his life, has had interactions with the man before – he even interviewed him while working as a journalist at Kampala's Daily Monitor. The email offers Elias an interview on his biggest on-going story: the discovery and potential excavation of oil in Western Uganda. Elias sends a quick email to the Reuters regional bureau in Nairobi:

“interview with minister on oil in Western uganda”. He hears back almost immediately: “File 150 words”.

It’s 10am in Nairobi, and Dan sits back in his chair at the Reuters East African bureau, pleased that Elias got in touch. The morning meeting has just finished, and the big story in East Africa today is Somali pirates. Sitting across from Dan, Sahro, a Somali stringer who’s on a ‘safety break’ in Nairobi, is ringing her contacts around Mogadishu for more information. Soon she will brief Dan, and together, they will write up the story. But Dan is concerned that the economic side of the file is soft today: too many pirates, and not enough market. He is relieved by Elias’s email: Elias is an excellent stringer, and Dan knows that he will email the story on time, and that it will require almost no editing before it goes into the system. Dan is confident (Dan knows) that the London desk will like the story, so he doesn’t think to run it by the bureau chief or deputy bureau chief.

At his interview in Kampala, Elias is happy that the Bloomberg correspondent is nowhere to be seen. As soon as he’s finished interviewing the Minister, Elias sends a quick ‘news flash’ to Dan in Nairobi. Fifteen minutes later, he sends an updated version with an additional quote from another politician. In Nairobi, Dan briefly edits these, and slots them straight onto the wire.

Tomorrow Duncan, the economic correspondent at the Nairobi bureau, will write a longer piece, taking Elias’ facts as the starting point, and phoning around for further quotes and analysis. The angle of the story will be: “what are the implications of this event for the markets?”

In London, the African editor can see how many live screen clients around the world are reading Elias’ oil story. By the end of the day, he knows that it’s been a very successful story indeed. For Reuters’ client base of investors, financiers, and

market analysts, this is big news, and it does very well for an African story. The figures will please his managers.

Later in the week, there is a Reuters pan-Africa phone conference, run by the African editor in London, and involving the bureau chiefs from East, West, North, and Southern Africa. The African editor tells Andrew Cawthorne, the Nairobi bureau chief, that the Ugandan oil story got “good play.” This is not true of the story on Somali pirates. Significantly, the oil story was a scoop on Bloomberg, who have fallen behind in their Ugandan coverage. As he hangs up from the conference call, Cawthorne curses. He knows what his bosses want; he knows how to deliver it – how to play this game – but he hates it. Cawthorne was trained in the old ways – he wants to shed light on corruption, and bring human stories to the world. Nonetheless, Cawthorne sends a brief congratulatory note to Elias – “good oil story.” He then returns to his own goal for the day: devising a plan that will convince his managers to let him send a correspondent to Eritrea, a country with great general news, but little market relevance.

Meanwhile, Elias’ oil story continues to spread. It is seen and used by FCs based in Nairobi and editors around the world. It is also ping-pong-ing back and forth endlessly in cyberspace, being copied and decimated by thousands of websites. In a year’s time, Elias’ oil story will be quoted in prominent academic articles on oil in Uganda (Anderson & Browne 2011; Vokes 2012). Despite the fact that Reuters has primarily refocused its editorial efforts towards its financial live screen clients, Reuters remains a ‘newswire of record’ and Elias and his colleagues play an important role in creating that ‘first draft of history.’

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Like most stories, the above description is partly constructed: I was in Uganda at the time it describes, and could not be in Nairobi/London as well. However,

I spoke with the FCs it discusses; and the account above conveys and represents comments made to me in interviews with the Kampala stringer Elias, Nairobi correspondent Dan, economic correspondent Duncan, bureau chief Andrew, and Somali stringer Sahro. It also reflects and draws on the many days I observed journalists going about their work in the Reuters Nairobi bureau (as well as in Kampala with Elias).

Elias' oil story includes a number of themes that are explored in this chapter (and the thesis as a whole). First, it raises some general points about the news ecology in East Africa. Elias – one of the foremost agents in the production of international news on Uganda – is not Western-born and -trained, but Ugandan, and this informs the work he does and the sources he has access to. Second, the story highlights the inter-connectedness of the media world, and the process whereby the work of a single correspondent provides the basis for so many others' work. Third, it highlights the extent to which practice is shaped by the available technology. Significantly, technology has provided editors with information they did not previously have about the exact desires of their news consumers.

In terms of Reuters' news production, Elias' story is instructive. The vignette shows the relevance of Reuters' 'news needs' – stories that serve financial clients – to its output. But to argue that such organizational priorities *determined* the news would be to understate the role of the correspondents. They – as we will see – are often engaged in a strategic game of their own, to which they bring varying levels of gamesmanship. Elias, for example, is a highly skilled stringer: his pitches are more readily accepted than many other stringers working around the region. Elias is paid by the

story and he has an expensive wedding coming up; as a result, the world will likely hear more from Uganda this year. A purely structural approach to news production would not take into account the often personal, and strategic nature of news generation.

Elias' story also raises questions. It points us towards issues that demand further enquiry, if we are to understand news production processes: how does Elias *know* what his editors are looking for? How does Dan, the news editor, *know* what his managers are looking for? Why was oil the most important story? If Bloomberg is Reuters' main competition, and financial clients the most important, what role is there for general news at Reuters? How do journalists like Cawthorne balance the news needs to his employers, with the stories he is passionate about pursuing – and to what extent is it possible for his will to prevail? These questions, and a number of others, are explored in this chapter – the first newsroom ethnography of an international newswire bureau in Africa.

Reuters: a history

This section draws on secondary literature to provide a brief history of the Reuters newswire²¹. As well as providing context, this account illustrates how a newswire can shift its 'position' over time, and how shifts in this position

²¹ In particular, this account draws on Donald Read's (1992) official history of Reuters, *The Power of News: The History of Reuters*; Graham Storey's (1951) *Reuter's Century*, the first history of Reuters, covering the newswire's first 100 years; the personal account of Sir Roderick Jones, the managing director from 1916-1941 in *A Life in Reuters* (1951); two historical articles by Dr. Peter Putnis (2008 and 2010); Tunstall and Palmer's (1991) *Media Moguls*. And the more journalistic account of Reuters later years by Mooney and Simpson (2003), *Breaking News: How the Wheels came off at Reuters*. As well as a number of books and articles by Oliver Boyd Barret and Terhi Rantanen (both together and separately), the foremost scholars writing on the role and nature of international newswires.

impact the types of news production that are valued by the organization's management. In particular, this section draws attention to the way in which Reuters has juggled two competing goals over its long life: its desire to be a 'newswire of record', and its desire to make a profit through the provision of economic services. In this history we see that, at several points, the relative priority of these two goals was reversed; when this happened, the relative prestige and status – what Bourdieu would call 'cultural capital' – of the journalists working at Reuters shifted accordingly. Plotting these transitions is the first step to understanding the relationship between field and capital. This history also details Reuters movement from a national wire, to a newswire of Empire and finally, in the later half of the 20th century, to one of the most important players in a globalized sphere of production.

In the beginning

The Reuters news agency began its long life not in journalism, but as the provider of financial information for bankers. In 1851, Paul Julius Reuter, a thirty-five year-old German-born immigrant, arrived in London from Aachen, where he had been running a stock price information service (using, famously, a fleet of carrier pigeons). Reuter's vision was to use the new telegraphic cables being laid around the world to transmit news and information to paying clients. He opened an office in London's financial centre and began to transmit stock market quotations between London and Paris over the new Dover-Calais submarine telegraph cable, providing the earliest quotes for continental markets to clients in the London Stock Exchange. The information provided to Reuter's financial clients was soon expanded to include economic

news: details of market prospects, as well as major political news that was likely to affect markets.²² In Bourdieu's terminology, Reuters began its life as the producer of economic, rather than symbolic products: it provided information to clients outside the world of journalism – and measured its success in terms of revenue.

In 1858, Reuter secured the first newspaper client for his telegraph service – the *London Morning Advertiser*, to whom he promised to deliver, “earlier, more ample, more accurate, and more important information from the Continent” than they were receiving through their own telegraphs (Read 1992: 22). After much persistence and salesmanship from Paul Reuter, *The Times* agreed to pay for a Reuters subscription, and the other newspapers in the UK soon followed. Having secured his clients, Reuter set about producing the news that would satisfy them, and 1858 saw the first provision of general news reporting at Reuters. As the agency expanded its client base, staff were hired around the European continent to write updates on all forms of breaking news. This included a number of ‘scoops’ that began to establish Reuters’ reputation for speed and reliability.

As cables were laid around the world, the wire followed, and soon Reuters news was being sent around Europe, across the Atlantic channel, and throughout the British Empire to media, diplomatic, and financial clients. By 1861, the outlet provided telegraphs containing news updates to and from over 100 datelines. This included datelines on the African continent, which Reuters

²² In its coverage of the Crimean War, for example, Reuters did not report updates on individual battles (as the British newspapers did), but rather, only conveyed big movements that could impact markets and commodities (Read 1992, Storey 1951: 15-16). This ‘news bundle’ – a mix of financial data, as well as details of market-relevant events – is a similar formula to the one used by Bloomberg today and, increasingly, Thomson Reuters.

covered from the early 1860s, at first using steamer boats between Cape Town to Portsmouth. Many of the great scoops, on which Reuters' reputation was built, originated in Africa: it led the world in its coverage of the Boer Wars; and in 1885, the wire had what Donald Read dubs the "scoop of the decade", when it reported the death of General Gordon in Khartoum fourteen days before it was confirmed by the British foreign office (1992: 102).

As Reuters built its base of media clients, the organization became a producer of symbolic goods; it moved into the journalistic field and further towards the cultural pole, producing journalism for other journalists and news consumers. This does not mean that Reuters became less profit orientated; as Read notes, Paul Reuter was never primarily a reporter: he was an entrepreneur, who happened to live at a time when information was valuable (1992: 5). In order to obtain media clients, however, it was necessary that the newswire be governed by the logic of the journalistic field: to produce news that newspapers (rather than financial clients) wished to consume. In other words, Reuter was producing a symbolic product, but one whose capital could be made economic.

A Newswire of Empire

For its first 100 years, Reuters was a national and imperial institution: the news agency of the British Empire and it told its news from a British perspective (Read 1992: 1). The wire had a close, symbiotic relationship with the British government, and Reuters was actively involved in supporting British foreign policy objectives.

During the Boer war, the wire suppressed news that was considered detrimental to the national interest (Read 1992: 65). Similarly, during World War I, Managing Editor Roderick Jones deemed it his duty “to place the Reuters international network at the disposal of the government for the fullest possible dissemination all over the world of British and Allied intelligence” (cited in Putnis 2008: 141). The wire sent official allied communiqués to neutral countries, and Boyd-Barrett notes that these were “barely distinguished from the regular service” (1980: 118).

In its early history, Reuters’ journalists were predominantly English; the organization’s headquarters were in London; the UK newspapers were considered to be its most important clients; the agency collected news that would interest British readers. At this time, the Western-bias in Reuters’ reporting was explicit, consistent, and encouraged. A memo sent to correspondents in the Far East in 1906, for example, advised that British deaths should be reported over local deaths:

The murder of even an obscure missionary should always be chronicled. On the other hand, the murder of one Chinaman by another under the most atrocious circumstances is invested with little or no interest in European eyes and can therefore be ignored (quoted in Read 1992: 104).

In 1915, Roderick Jones commented, “as a British agency, when we are dealing with international affairs we naturally see them through British eyes.” Thirty years later, Managing Editor Walton Cole told the Royal Commission on the Press that “our criterion” for news was that which might interest *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Glasgow Herald*, and the *Scotsman* (Read 1992: 126). That is, British readership was the guide to selection of stories.

Early Experimentations with economic services

Despite its expansion and fame, the Reuters newswire historically made little profit. During World War I, the British government stepped in to finance Reuters' transmission costs, and it contributed to the material expansion of communication facilities (Boyd-Barrett 1980: 118). In 1916, the Government helped keep Reuters afloat by providing a large loan to restructure the agency as a private company. This came at a cost to the newswire's autonomy; as part of the restructuring, the government – through the foreign office – was granted the right to appoint a shareholder who had veto rights over board of director decisions (Putnis 2008, 2010). This situation persisted until 1925 when the Press Association (PA), owned by the UK's provincial press, bought a majority stake in Reuters.

After World War I, the newswire experimented with a variety of money-making ventures. Since the Victorian era, Reuters had used its telegraph network to sell a private telegraph service, and run a remittance business (Storey 1951: 119). But a new employee, Fleetwood May, realised that a fuller service could be offered, and that Reuters was “wasting” its networks by not tapping into the deep commercial interest for information from around the world (Palmer 1991: 54). In 1920, a new service of “industrial, commercial, and financial messages” was launched, to be known as the “Reuters Trade Service” – first as a weekly print bulletin, and later as a full commercial wire service, providing information on stocks, markets, and commodities. This gathered a successful following and by 1928, the commercial side of Reuters was cushioning losses on the general news side.

From this point onwards, economic services were an essential component of Reuters' business model, but were initially of secondary importance relative to general news provision. This was reflected in the allocation of budgets, the prestige associated with certain jobs, and the hierarchy of staff (Read 1992: 160). Around the world, Reuters news bureaus contained both financial and general news journalists – yet the bureau chief jobs always went to General News men, and greater status followed from general news production:

Reuters financial journalists were very much the poor relations of their colleagues on the general news desks, regarded by some of the older World Desk hands as little more than glorified clerks. They were a proud lot, the general news men, and, indeed, had every right to be so. They were responsible for the world's most respected news service (Mooney & Simpson 2003: 101-102).

Financial services were not a part of the organization's perceived *raison d'être* and were only undertaken as a means of funding general news collection. As the Reuters General Manager Christopher Chancellor told his board, "the Commercial Service is run for the sole purpose of subsidizing the news service. If it ceased to show a profit we should discontinue it" (quoted in Read 1992: 257). It was not until the late 1960s, and the introduction of the Reuters Monitor, that profit again become an end in itself at the newswire (Read 1992: 257).

Trust Principals and global expansion

During World War II, the wire continued to struggle to cover its costs. In 1941, the British national newspapers bought a 50% stake in Reuters from the Press Association, and created the 'Reuters Trust Agreement,' through which they

agreed to regard their shareholdings “as in the nature of a trust rather than as an investment”; and pledged to ensure Reuters’ “integrity, independence and freedom from bias” in return for cheaper access to its news. The Trust Principles are:

1. That Reuters shall at no time pass into the hands of any one interest, group or faction;
2. That the integrity, independence and freedom from bias of Reuters shall at all times be fully preserved;
3. That Reuters shall supply unbiased and reliable news services to newspapers, news agencies, broadcasters and other media subscribers and to businesses governments, institutions, individuals and others with whom Thomson Reuters has or may have contracts;
4. That Reuters shall pay due regard to the many interests which it serves in addition to those of the media; and
5. That no effort shall be spared to expand, develop and adapt the news and other services and products so as to maintain its leading position in the international news and information business.

This agreement re-emphasized the priority of news production over and above financial profit-making and its structure provided a framework for a post-1945 period in which the newswire enjoyed financial security, independence from the threat of state intervention, and continued legitimacy and prestige. This enabled Reuters to expand its services within and beyond media markets (Boyd-Barrett 1980: 113).

It was during this time that Reuters was arguably as near as it would ever come to the cultural pole of the journalistic field. As a Trust, Reuters had a clear and explicit mission statement to produce quality journalism, as judged by other news-producers; and these principles were protected and promoted above profit considerations.

From the late 1950s, Reuters began receiving subsidies from the British Government to fund news on Africa. The British foreign office wanted there to be a “strong and expanding Reuters in Black Africa,” where both Reuters and

the FCO considered news production to be uneconomic (Read 1992: 327). It agreed to pay a large fee in exchange for news provision on the continent. These subsidies funded the newswire's production of news that general or financial clients might not be as interested in. It was not until 1980 that these subsidies were cut in full.

It was around this time that Reuters began to evolve from a newswire of the Empire to one with a global outlook. In 1967, the newswire ceased a cooperative news sharing agreement with the Dow Jones and Associated Press, and began to compete fully for the American domestic market. At the same time, the wire's major customers were becoming increasingly international, and expected Reuters to serve them throughout the world. The content of reporting changed to reflect an expanding client base and, by the mid 1960s, Reuters was no longer reporting with the British press foremost on its mind. Rather, "it aimed to produce an internationally acceptable file, with world, regional and national variation" (Read 1992: 372).

During the mid 1960s Reuters' general news services were prolific and far-reaching. Subscriptions included nearly 6,500 daily newspapers in 112 countries with an aggregate daily circulation of 276,479,000 copies (Read 1992: 291). Despite its impressive reach, general news reporting was still generating losses. In 1967, Reuters tried to turn this around, and launched the General News Desk (GND) with the aim of making general news profitable:

It was intended to reinforce the position of the general-news services in comparison with the rapidly growing economic side. [General Manager, Gerald] Long was...himself a former general-news journalist, and he hoped that the new structure would help general news to hold its own within Reuters by enabling it to make money (Read 1992: 291).

The GND was a failure and struggled to make money from the start. Reuters cut its general news staff numbers, but it could not generate more revenue by charging more for its general news provisions: it was already charging more than competitors AFP, AP and UPI. In 1968, the general news loss for the year was approximately £100,000 – while Reuters Economic Services continued making profit. Inflation and rising communications costs magnified the problem.

In 1973, the GND profit-making experiment was abandoned. In its place came Reuters World Service (RWS), which, it was accepted, would operate at a loss. The manager of the General News Department, Brian Horton, resigned. By 1978, the annual loss on general news was £7million (Read 1992: 292).

The arrival of Monitor: A new Reuters

During the 1960s and 70s Reuters experimented with computerized distribution of economic information. In 1973 they capitalized on the potential of the new currency exchange industry, which emerged following the end of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system: Reuters launched the Reuters Monitor Money Rates service (often called Monitor for short).

Monitor came to include the first ever interactive database, in which clients worldwide could contribute their foreign exchange and money rates and other information, all of which would instantly be made available to

subscribers (Bielsa 2008: 357).²³ In 1981, a new dealing service was launched through which subscribers could also make financial transactions.

The Reuters newswire had led the development of a more integrated communication sphere. It now shaped the development of a globalized financial order. As Peter Jobs, former managing director of Reuters described the achievement:

Using such systems the experts in the banking industry could take a real-time look at national predictions, and by taking a speculative view of the future, start to use fast information flows to discount what might happen in the following hours, days, weeks or months. I think it is arguable that in this very specialized and highly focused area, we were amongst the first to exploit the freedom to alter and adjust the known values of the world (quoted in Read 1992: 398).

By the mid-1990s an estimated one-half of the world's daily foreign exchange trades (\$US 1.2 trillion in value) took place on and through Reuters screens (Bartram 2003: 388). Tunstall and Palmer (1991: 60) write: "Marshall McLuhan's global village has arrived, but the village houses are financial houses and the villagers are dealers".

Monitor's success led to a massive increase in Reuters' profitability. At the end of the 1960s Reuters' annual turnover had been less than £9m: by the end of the 1980s it was just under £1.2bn, while pre-tax profits had grown from a mere £200,000 to close to £300million (Mooney & Simpson 2003: 33).

²³ The market opportunity had been created with the 1971 Smithsonian Agreement under which the United States ended the fixed rate for the dollar that had been held for 13 years. This led to the generalized free floating of currencies in a market where there was no physical market-place since trading was conducted by telephone between banks in noisy and chaotic trading rooms. Reuters charged the banks that put their dealing rates into the system and charged the clients who traded on them in a classic marketing coup that was the foundation for its financial success. In a further development in 1981 the Reuters Dealing service allowed dealers to complete foreign exchange transactions (for a fee) on the Reuters screen instead of having to read the rates on the screen and complete the deal by telephone. (Bartram 2003: 387).

Monitor led to a radical shift in what the majority of customers received from Reuters: 90% of clients were now located in the world of finance, and they chiefly received ‘information’: financial data and economic news (Read 1992: 397). These clients bought the terminal to provide them with data and to trade. As part of the package, Reuters also provided clients with economically-relevant news that put the data in context. Scores of economic journalists were recruited to produce this financial journalism along with thousands of technical, marketing, and sales personnel. General news became a smaller and smaller component of overall production and the collection, processing, storage, retrieval, and distribution of data supplanted news as the agency’s chief activity (Palmer 1991: 58).

With the launch of Monitor, Reuters once again shifted position in the journalistic field: this time, making a significant move towards the economic pole. Bourdieu argues that producers at the economic end of the pole are directed by outside influences. Rather than being governed by the logic of journalism, they are more likely to allow external forces to determine what constitutes news and how it should be produced. This was the case at the post-Monitor Reuters, where business clients became an important driver of news-commissioning decisions. The shift also altered the distribution of cultural capital within the organization – economic journalists became more esteemed and important to the news production process:

In all previous decades the general-news journalists had regarded themselves – and had generally been accepted – as superior to those who worked in the economic services. This attitude was becoming harder to sustain as Reuters began to prosper because of the increasing profits made by the latter (Read 1992: 332).

This caused widespread resentment among older hands (Bartram 2003). Boyd-Barrett et al. (1998: 49) called this “a case of economic Roundheads and general news Cavaliers fighting to be au fait with each other’s requirements, skills and publics”. Or as Bartram, a former senior journalist at Reuters, writes:

I would characterise this as a state of unarmed hostility that lasted for some years... It involved the fear of losing power and authority, a concern that journalistic standards were falling, a visceral belief among some that economic news was not real news and an unwillingness to accept the changes that became inevitable because of continuing financial losses (2003: 389).

In 1977, Reuters undertook a “media study” to investigate how news reporting at the wire should be structured. The most important change to come from its findings was the merging of the existing general news services and the Reuters Economic Services into a new, all-encompassing Reuters World Service, a change that took place on January 1, 1980. At bureaus around the world, editorial teams were merged; journalists who had exclusively written business news for financial clients were integrated into newsrooms with journalists who had exclusively written general news stories for media clients. In London, the two editorial teams had enjoyed having their own floors and rarely interacted: they were now expected to work along side each other.

Pagel (a former economics correspondent) was promoted to Editor in Chief – this was seen by some as a ‘victory’ for the economic journalists at the company. Indeed, the manager for the Asia region wrote, “expressing the fears of some journalists that Reuters was ‘progressively opting out of the news-gathering business’” (Read 1992: 334).

Although Read states, in Reuters' official history, that general news was strengthened, not weakened, by the introduction of the Monitor, many disagree. Williams points out that the general news teams abandoned detailed coverage of regions which could not provide a lucrative market of subscribers; there was a decline in human-orientated stories, with a focus on 'major stories' only; the provision of services for economic clients came at the expense of other news considerations; and the collection of economic data was seen as distorting news priorities (Williams 2011: 80). In the mid-1980s, several senior members of Reuters news operation left, some to launch a new British daily newspaper, *The Independent* "in disgust" at the "increasing subordination of Reuters' news operations to financial services" (Alleyne 1995: 82).

By the end of the 1980s, about two thirds of Reuters' UK editorial reporting staff were primarily economic journalists. Functions were not strictly divided, however, and journalists in many bureaus around the world, particularly the smaller ones, were expected to be adept at reporting both business and general news (Mooney & Simpson 2003).

In 1984, Reuters became a public company, tying the organization even more closely to the market, and further integrating it into the world of business and commerce (Williams 2011: 77). Reuters reigned supreme as a behemoth of terminal and data provision throughout the 80s as it continued to develop a range of non-news products and financial services. Although its revenue and share prices took a hit in the stock market crash of 1987, they quickly recovered. Reuters' revenue surpassed that its closest competitor, Dow

Jones, and its general news provisions continued to enjoy the same respect and reputation outside the company it always had (Mooney & Simpson 2003).

In the 1990s, however, Reuters grappled with a variety of organizational problems and, significantly, *Bloomberg's* entry into the news market.²⁴ In addition to live screen terminals and financial services offerings, Bloomberg launched a news services division in 1990. Faced with this new competitor, Reuters' performance started to falter. Among other issues, Bartram (2003) identifies the fact that Reuters' products had become too numerous and complicated; the company was slow to release new products; it didn't understand its clients needs; and its marketing was poor. Many of these failings, Bartram believes, were attributable to the fact that the newswire had lost its innovative spirit. Bloomberg, by contrast, was willing to experiment, had exceptionally good marketing, and a strong-minded and stubbornly ambitious leader in the form of Michael Bloomberg. By 1994 Reuters was *following* Bloomberg.

In 2001, Tom Glocer was appointed as the CEO of Reuters, becoming both the first American and the first non-journalist to lead the organization since Reuters was founded. In his first year Glocer sacked 2,800 employees; Reuters reduced its dividend for the first time and then announced its first financial loss since the company was floated. In 2002, share prices fell to an all-time low of £1.48 – down more than 90% per cent from their peak of £17 at the height of the dot.com boom a mere two years' prior (Bartram 2003: 396). In 2003 Reuters announced a further 3,000 job cuts amid continued

²⁴ For a full account of Reuters' downward spiral over the 90s, see Mooney and Simpson's (2003) *Breaking news: how the Wheels Came off at Reuters* and Bartram's (2003) article, "News Agency Wars: the battle between Reuters and Bloomberg" in *Journalism Studies*.

disappointing financial results.

The Merger

With a remarkable reputation and good infrastructure, but facing financial crisis and a falling market share, Reuters became a ripe candidate for a takeover. In 2007, Reuters merged with Thomson, a Canadian information giant with headquarters in the US, making the newswire part of an even more global company. Thomson was primarily engaged in the data and information world (rather than the news world) and the merger enabled it to compete seriously in all regions of the world.²⁵ The merger was designed to combine Reuters' global markets data business with Thomson's expertise in legal and accounting information management, with the clear and articulated aim of beating rival information giant Bloomberg (Sturgeon 2012; Wachman 2011). The newly-formed Thomson Reuters (TR) came to hold a 34% share of the financial information market, thereby overtaking Bloomberg, who held 33%. The focus on competing with Bloomberg marked a departure for Reuters, who had historically seen its main competitors as the other general newswires: AP, AFP and (the now defunct) UPI (Boyd-Barrett 1980).

This merger set a three-year-long restructuring process into motion, which integrated Reuters into the Thomson corporate structure; general news provision came to represent an even smaller portion of the company's activities. Although general news continued to be produced under the "Reuters" name, it was slotted into the "markets" division of the TR

²⁵ Thomson's financial-information division was relatively weak in Asia and Europe, Reuters's strongest markets. Meanwhile, Reuters aimed to grow in the North America, Thomson's home market (Patrick 2007).

corporation. There was a refocusing of editorial policy, which prioritized meeting the news needs of financial clients above creating media-orientated general news – another change aimed at beating Bloomberg. One of the clearest articulations of the nature of this shift comes from Sean Maguire, the International News editor, who commented,²⁶ “For a long time we were ‘reporter-led’. And then we thought, if we want to be focused, we need to be ‘journalism for customers’”.

News production at the wire today is being made *for* clients – the vast majority of whom are in the financial world – rather than by and for the news media.

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This summary of Reuters’ history has drawn attention to the dynamism of the news organization over time. In particular, Reuters’ movement from a company providing financial stock information, to a newswire of record – famous for breaking news and daring scoops – and then back again, with an economic refocusing in the wake of Monitor’s release. These represent movements between what Bourdieu would describe as the cultural and economic poles of the international journalistic field.

It has also shown how, with these movements came shifts in the relative prestige different journalists enjoyed within the company. In short, it has started to plot the connection between the organization’s position and its internal distribution of capital. The following section moves from the long view to a rich description of the contemporary moment. We start with the

²⁶ Sean Maguire, Reuters International News Editor, speaking at the Nuffield Media Seminar, Oxford University, Friday October 15, 2010

organization's current 'position' in the international field, before zooming in on Nairobi, and the work of a specific set of journalists. The main analysis traces the way in which Thomson and Reuters merger – the most recent shift in the journalistic field – has been translated into particular forms of journalism production.

Thomson Reuters today: Position in the Global Field

Thomson Reuters competes in a global field. The newswire is owned by a multi-national company and is listed on the New York, Toronto and London Stock Exchanges. Its news production draws on a very global staff: the Reuters editorial team is dispersed around the globe, with major hub bureaus in Hong Kong, London, and New York guaranteeing the agency's editorial team is 'always awake'; US financial reporting is produced by a team of reporters in Bangalore (Schifferes 2007); and the journalists who produce the news come from over fifty countries. Most significantly TR's client base – the revenue-generators the company pursues - is located in a global sphere. As early as 1995, only 16% of Reuters' revenue was coming from the UK, making it the most international and global of all the newswires (Biesla 2008).

The move towards global-orientated content, as we saw in the history section, has been a gradual process, that has unfolded since World War two. By the time of the Falklands war, in 1982, Reupke, the Editor in Chief, was able to say of the wire that it was, "no more concerned with the British national interest than with that of Argentina" (Read 1992: 385). This was the first major conflict in which Reuters did not report with the British audience foremost in mind. This was in contrast to the way the wire covered the Suez canal crisis, for instance, when journalists were explicitly instructed to be objective because "the British public were divided on the issue" – indicating that this home readership was the organization's primary concern (Read 1992: 398). Today the organization prides itself on the internationalism of its content. As the Thomson Reuters website states: "Free from national or

regional bias, we strike a unique balance between informed reporting on the ground and editing with an international perspective. Our news coverage is rich with facts and context that speaks to readers everywhere”.

Although TR’s clients and journalists are based around the world, it is important to note that they are concentrated in the developed world and its centres of finance. This has significant implications for the Reuters news file because, as we shall see, the wire is very client-led in its reporting practices – such that the news is produced to satisfy these – predominantly Western – clients. As Macdowall, the former news manager, commented: “If we cater primarily for the West it should not be because of ethnic or cultural bias but because we pay most attention to the needs of those clients who pay most for our services” (Read 1992: 396).

Importance

Within the global journalistic field, Thomson Reuters is a very important player: it is one of the “big three” international news agencies responsible for the vast majority of the world’s international news content (Williams 2011). The news division has journalists and clients in almost every country, and the organization estimates that its news is read by over a billion people each day in 19 languages.

Despite its renewed emphasis on economic reporting, Reuters’ general news provision continues to be very highly regarded by its traditional media clients. For example, *Daily Telegraph* editor Alec Russell comments that Reuters “remains the first agency that we consult,” and that, “it exercises

better judgment in what is a news story and what isn't" (quoted in Mooney & Simpson 2003: 118). In interviews, the UK newspaper correspondents in Nairobi all commented that Reuters produced the most consistent and plentiful coverage of Africa. AP, many noted, had "fallen off the map" in terms of its news coverage of Africa. And, while AFP was said to sometimes produce good news, this was perceived to be sporadic.

As well as providing more ample coverage, Reuters' content is more trusted than that of the other newswires. Mike Pflanz, African correspondent at the *Daily Telegraph*, for example, commented that, "We have a kind of unwritten policy that you can trust the BBC and Reuters as one of two sources in a story. AP we can't, AFP we can't". Beyond the media world, Reuters' is equally well-regarded; it is perhaps the most respected newswire in the world and is perceived to cover all events of significance as they occur around the globe.

Bourdieu suggests that news outlets can possess two forms of capital or legitimacy: financial capital, which is legitimacy gained via circulation and market revenue; and symbolic capital, which is legitimacy gained through peer respect and recognition (discussed below). Historically, only a handful of news organizations have possessed both forms of capital: this was true of *the New York Times*, or *The Times* (UK) in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and is true of Reuters today. Given both forms of capital Reuters has been powerful enough to influence the norms of the journalistic field it operates in: "Throughout its history, Reuters has been a significant definer of the nature of news, in particular news that is transmitted internationally,

through its relations with clients and other news agencies” (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 2001).

The Economic /Cultural Pole: A Tale of Two Capitals

Having read the above history it may seem perplexing that Thomson Reuters maintained Reuters’ general news production activities: they are, after all, expensive and time consuming. There are two main explanations for this. First, general news has value to data clients (who yield the bulk of TR revenue). General news helps terminal subscribers place financial information in context and it is widely perceived by TR’s clients to be a valuable service. Mooney and Simpson report that, “Customer surveys show customers citing news as the most valued part of the Reuters product offering, and loyal clients say it has undoubtedly helped stem the tide of cancelations” (Mooney & Simpson 2003: 118). As Donald Read writes, “the availability of general news on screen, which had been reported and edited with the needs of the economic-services subscribers in mind, gave the company’s non-media products an extra competitive dimension” (Read 1992: 400). It is for the same reason that Bloomberg provides its terminal subscribers with sports, entertainment, and (limited) general news (Bartram 2003).

Second, general news is a source of symbolic capital – that is, respect and esteem in the eyes of the public and potential clients – for Thomson Reuters. Over its 160 year reporting history, Reuters has built an enviable reputation: its name is, many believe, synonymous with reliability, impartiality, accuracy and speed. As Graham Storey wrote in 1951:

Reuters' real value was its name. The reliability and impartiality of the little news-gatherer who had founded his Office in 1851 was the Company's greatest capital. It could not be expressed in figures, and was hardly ever expressed in words (1951: 59).

Reuters' symbolic capital is a profitable asset for the corporation. Its reputation for accuracy and speed is invaluable to TR as it tries to sell financial data services. This is presumably why it is so regularly appealed to in TR's branding and self-descriptions. For example, the website reads, "The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles were adopted in 1941 and include the preservation of integrity, reliability of news, development of the news business and related principles. Today, these principles are fundamental to our entire business,"²⁷ and the 2011 Annual report, printed on the website, states: "We serve the world's professionals... We provide them with the news, information and software to do their jobs". Of these three products (news, information, and software), news is the least often provided, yet the first listed.

Producing general news helps Thomson Reuters maintain the symbolic capital of the Reuters name. This symbolic capital can then be transformed, through branding and marketing, into economic capital.²⁸

²⁷ The idea of the Principles belonging to 'Thomson Reuters' rather than Reuters is rather ingenious. Not only were the principals adopted by Reuters 66 years prior to the merger with Thomson [and at a time when Reuters was owned on a non-profit basis by the newspapers of Britain] but the merger actually took place in spite of the trust principals, which stated that no individual or organisation was to hold more than 15% of the company – the newly merged company was 53% owned by the Pearson Family (BBC 2007).

²⁸ Bourdieu notes that almost all forms of capital are transferable to economic capital – but with varying degrees of liquidity (that is, the speed with which they may be transformed into other forms of capital) and convertibility (the extent to which they may be exchanged for other forms of capital) (McCall 1992).

Hierarchy of Capitals

It is important to note that at a profit-orientated company, economic capital will generally take precedence over symbolic capital. Economic capital is an immediate end in itself. Symbolic capital (branding/reputation), on the other hand, is valuable primarily a means to an end – generating profits for shareholders as it is transformed into economic capital. The relative ease with which symbolic capital can be profitable varies over time and between contexts.

In Reuters' early days, the newswire's symbolic capital was easily transformed into economic capital – by providing reliable, accurate information, Julius Reuter built a reputation that directly enhanced his ability to sell news subscriptions.²⁹ Media clients were Reuter's source of income and small profit. At this time, symbolic capital was – in Bourdieu's terms – highly transubstantiated (Moore 2008: 102). Today, newswires do not make money from selling the news, and the symbolic capital such activity generates only leads indirectly, if at all, to economic capital.³⁰

The liquidity of symbolic capital at Thomson Reuters today is debatable. If general news helps TR sell subscriptions to data monitors then we must ask: *to what extent?* If Reuters' reputation helps the outlet increase its long-term profits via branding then: *how much profit?* These questions have troubled the accounting department at the newswire ever since Monitor's

²⁹ Paul Julius Reuter understood the benefits of this symbolic capital, and he undertook a range of early branding activities to this end. For example, clients received their news at a substantial discount, if they printed it with the Reuters name attached; the company's scoops and successes were widely advertised (particularly when the Queen had personally requested to see the telegraphs); and Reuters' reporters were encouraged to be socially active in the highest echelons of society around the British Empire (the equivalent of celebrity endorsement).

³⁰ This is true across the media world, where even outlets with extremely high symbolic capital, such as *The New York Times*, struggle to convert their reputation into revenue.

release and particularly in the wake of Reuters' flotation: what value does general news bring to shareholders? As Mooney and Simpson write:

News is expensive to make, and it was often felt among management that it was making a loss. But at same time, estimates of what the news brought in were actually very high, because it was indirect – through subscriptions to the financial news services. News brought in profit, but it didn't look like this on paper (2003: 100).

In contrast to the ambiguity surrounding the value of general news, TR's Management *know* that business and economic news is income-generating because it is a core service, which informed their clients' subscription. General news, by contrast, is primarily a "value-added" product.

When the merger took place, the corporation's strategic goals and news provisions were refocused. The overarching goal came to be beating Bloomberg in the financial information market. To that end, economic news that could sell monitors became more important than general news, which only indirectly generates symbolic capital. This solidified what was already a clear hierarchy at the newswire, with economic news being privileged over general news production.

Reuters News Coverage of Africa

News about Africa accounts for 5% of all news that appears on the Reuters world service (Thomson Reuters Website 2012). Only AFP produces a similar amount of news coverage on Africa, owing to its former colonial ties in the region (Boyd-Barrett 1980: 178).

As noted throughout the History section, Reuters has gradually moved nearer and nearer the economic pole, with repercussions for the status of general news within the organization. However this shift was not immediately reflected in the practices of news bureaus in Africa. In the 1970s, when Reuters first released its data Monitor, African markets were of little or no interest to Reuters' financial clients. There was little in the way of foreign direct investment in the continent, and few international business journalists at any outlet gave African events much attention. Reuters' news provisions on Africa continued to focus on general news events – conflict, drought, and so on – and was largely funded through government subsidies.

In the late nineties and noughties, however, African markets were growing exponentially, and all financial news providers – including Bloomberg – were expanding their coverage of the continent. The population of Africa reached 1 billion, and consumption of goods and services on the continent was 35% higher than in India. Importantly, between 2000 and 2011, foreign direct investment rose from \$US 9.4 billion to more than \$US 60 billion (Bremmer 2012). Consequently, any news outlet interested in finance and business started paying more attention to the African continent.

It is against this backdrop that the Thomson-Reuters merger occurred and the associated focus on competing with Bloomberg in all corners of the world. As we will see, this led to a distinct change in reporting practices at Thomson Reuters Nairobi.

Reuters in East Africa

Reuters news coverage of Africa is compiled in four regional bureaus on the continent, all of which report to an African editor in London, who is part of the international news editorial team. Southern Africa is covered from a bureau in Johannesburg; North Africa from Cairo; West Africa from Dhaka; and, finally, East Africa from Nairobi. These bureaus have permanent correspondents in their offices, and a network of stringers around their region who are paid by the story to file news.

The Reuters East Africa bureau in Nairobi draws on an extensive network of stringers, to produce news on the 14 countries listed below:

- Burundi
- Comoros
- Djibouti
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Mauritius
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Seychelles
- Somalia
- Somaliland

Reuters has at least one stringer in each of the fourteen countries it covers in East Africa, with more in the countries perceived to be of greater financial or

hard news significance. In total, the bureau chief Andrew Cawthorne estimates there are 24 stringers in the text network, and a comparable number working on the TV and photo side. These stringers may initiate contact with the Nairobi bureau and pitch story ideas; alternatively, Nairobi may contact them and ask that they write stories or supply information or quotes. These stringers vary from those who work nearly full time, through to those who only file very occasionally. The busiest and most prolific stringer was Elias in Uganda, who filed a story most days. By contrast, the stringers in Djibouti and Burundi were rarely in touch, and would file stories perhaps once every two weeks.

Cawthorne estimates that the Nairobi office would compile, edit and produce 12 to 15 stories on an average day, with 5 or 6 stories on a slow day and up to 30 on a very busy day. Such high production days are rare, but not unprecedented – having occurred, for instance, during the post election violence in 2008-9. Once the stories have been written, they are put on the Reuters ‘wire’.

Reuters’ news on East Africa is produced by the live-time cooperation of journalists across different locations. Even a simple and straightforward story might involve journalists in three countries – a stringer based in one of the fourteen countries in the region; a journalist-editor in the Nairobi bureau; and a watchful international editor in London. These different regions/layers frequently interact as news stories travel from stringers through Nairobi to London, and are distributed around the Reuters network.

The Reuters bureau in Nairobi

The Reuters East Africa bureau is a modern office on the 12th story of Finance House in downtown Nairobi. Over the course of the period of observation, the number of journalists working in the office fluctuated as people came and went, covering stories, leaving and returning to Kenya. However, the office's core cast, made up of seven permanent correspondents and three stringers, were present, on and off, throughout the time. These 10 form the centre of this chapter's analysis.

With ten text journalists, Reuters is the largest newswire bureau in Nairobi. AFP and AP – Reuters' two biggest competitors for general news production – employ only half this number of staff. At Bloomberg – Reuters' main competitor for financial news, there are only two journalists in the Nairobi bureau.

The seven permanent correspondents include a Bureau Chief, a Deputy Bureau Chief, two economic correspondents, two general news correspondents, and a humanitarian affairs correspondent. This last correspondent sits in on meetings in Nairobi, but reports directly to a humanitarian affairs editor in London and his news is primarily published on Alertnet – a humanitarian newswire funded by Thomson Reuters' charitable arm, and primarily read by NGOs and aid practitioners. The permanent correspondents in the bureau have three main tasks: 1. Commission, manage, and edit stories from the stringer network; 2. Produce general and economic reporting on Kenya; and, occasionally (although infrequently, owing to budget constraints); 3. Travel around the region to report on larger stories. Bureau

Chief Andrew Cawthorne describes these journalists as multi-taskers who can ‘do everything’:

If there’s a huge conflict in Somalia, we can take copy off the phone and turn that into a story, and co-ordinate all the information. Or we can write a story here if there’s a big Kenya story. Or if there’s a massive story [in one of the regions], we can fly in and out. And we coordinate all the output from the stringers. So it’s a big mix here between independent reporting here, independent reporting around the region, when we travel, and coordinating our stringers, editing and pulling together things.

Of the three stringers at the Nairobi office – journalists who are paid by the story for their work – one covers ‘everything,’ one covers only Somalia, and one covers only the Kenyan courts.

In addition to the text journalists, there is a parallel network of TV and photograph journalists in the bureau, who also have networks of stringers. This analysis, as explained in the methodology section, focuses on the text journalists.

Full time text journalists at the Thomson Reuters Nairobi bureau

(July/August 2009)³¹

Position	Nationality
Bureau Chief	English
Deputy Bureau Chief	English
Chief Economic Reporter	Kenyan
Economic Correspondent	Kenyan

³¹ There were, in addition, four television journalists and two full-time photographers.

General News Correspondent	English
General News Correspondent	Kenyan
Humanitarian News Correspondent	Ugandan
Stringer (General)	Australian
Stringer (Somalia)	Somali
Stringer (Courts)	Kenyan

In July/August 2009 the bureau staff included individuals from a range of nationalities, with Kenyans making up the largest group. The journalists ranged in age from Jeremy, the twenty-something Australian stringer, to Andrew, the forty-something bureau chief. All were university educated. Approximately half had learnt to be journalists at the Reuters newswire, while the others had come to the agency from other journalistic jobs. Three of the ten were female.

The Office

At one end of the 12th floor, the Bureau Chief has his own office. Outside its door, there is a large, open-plan section with four large islands of desks. One of the desks is reserved for the ‘duty manager’ – called ‘slot’ – a rotating senior journalist who manages the communication with stringers around the region. The remainder serves as a ‘hot desking’ space, which the majority of

journalists work from. When I was in the office, I sat at one of these desks, at the centre of the journalistic activity.

At the other end of the 12th floor, there is a support staff area, where non-journalists conduct administrative work, as well as a common room area, where the journalists take their lunches and breaks, and where many of the interviews for this research took place. Outside the offices, next to the elevators, is a smoking area, where some informal discussions took place. Above the 12th floor is a mezzanine level where a number of TV journalists and those who work on Africa Journal are located.

Figure 2: The Reuters Nairobi bureau: hot desks where the journalists work



Figure 3: Reuters Nairobi bureau



Figure 4: View from the Reuters bureau on Liota Street, Central Nairobi



Atmosphere and intra-office relations

The Nairobi office is a busy, dynamic, and collaborative space. Journalists come and go, and there are often different people present from one day to the next. While most of the journalists have their own ‘beat,’ they frequently collaborate to negotiate stories, air concerns, locate sources, and work the computer system – talking out loud as they do so. It was very rarely quiet; journalists would yell out questions: “do I say degrees Centigrade or Celsius?” “how stable is Puntland?” “when is Clinton getting here?” and everyone would chip in.

The text journalists worked closely together and, although there were occasions of disagreement, I never witnessed a heated argument. Newswire bureaus do not have the same constraints on space that print outlets have – any story deemed ‘newsworthy’ could be slotted onto the wire; and this may limit the competitive tension often seen at other news outlets. In addition, a variety of typifications (Tuchman 1978) divide news into categories, which help to orientate work practices and support cooperation. When an issue/event occurred, it was generally clear to the journalists whose remit it was, and that person managed the coverage.

Moreover, the bureau journalists had a collegiality that was fostered through their shared exasperation with daily trials: negotiating difficult sources, rushing to meet deadlines, dealing with fiddly figures and – a consistent theme – chasing up unreliable stringers. On numerous occasions, the correspondents would make phone calls to stringers, only to hang up in exasperation as they discovered the stringer did not have a story/quote/photo that had been promised. One day, for example, it transpired that a stringer

who had promised to take photographs did not own a camera, prompting this outburst:

For hell's sake. After all this time, I've been talking to them – they didn't have a camera! Why have we been having all these chats about getting access? He doesn't have a bloody camera! This lady [in London] is going to be so pissed.

In the wake of such events the journalists exhaled, swore, muttered and – inevitably – made jokes. This exchange came after the chief economic reporter Helen struggled in vain to reach a stringer:

TV producer: I'm happy for you Helen, you're a strong woman – you can take a lot of crap.

Chief Econ: I'm going to die young.... Tea anyone? Going, going, gone...

TV producer: Yes, lots of milk and two sugars.

Chief Econ: You drink tea?

TV producer: Um, hello? I'm a Kikuyu.

The journalists were further brought together by a sense of pride in their work: in particular, they thought their news content was more nuanced, and sophisticated than that of visiting or 'parachute' journalists, who came to the region for short periods of time.

In interviews, the journalists articulated a strong sense of attachment to journalism as a profession. Most of the correspondents (and, in particular the general news correspondents) described feeling guided in their work by ethical concerns: they wanted "to witness", "speak truth to the world", and "communicate cultural differences". These desires were, however, regularly thwarted by a variety of limiting factors. First, the usual combination of word limits, shortages of time, and a lack of resources, which depress foreign

correspondents the world over (Hannerz 2004). Second (again an issue faced by many FCs, and discussed further below), their sense that the world did not necessarily care about the plight of the region they were covering, as witnessed in this exchange:

Cameraman: The oldest mountain gorilla in the world has just died! [laughter]. It'll get more hits than any of the other stories.

General corr.: Don't I know it, no matter how many are killed in Somalia.

Cameraman: We better get some pictures and bits.

Finally – but specific to working for Thomson Reuters – journalists were constrained by the need to produce economically-orientated stories for financial clients, and to frame and edit general news to suit these clients. Financial reporting – as we will see – did not fit neatly with the professional values of the general news journalists.

The journalists varied as to how cynical these obstacles made them. Some of the journalists were idealistic, and planned to change the world regardless; some turned to dark, existential humour – finding ways to laugh and feel detached from a messed-up world that had its priorities upside down; others were simply depressed. And, of course, any journalist could fluctuate between these three positions over the course of a single day.

Race in the office

At first glance the office appeared to be nationality-blind: local and international journalists worked happily side by side. The chief and deputy

chief were British, but the Kenyan correspondents were trusted to run news shifts and news meetings, and report autonomously. On numerous occasions, I witnessed a happy professional symbiosis whereby a Kenyan, Ugandan, or Somali journalist with greater local knowledge would facilitate the work of another journalist (be the other journalist British, Kenyan, or Uganda).

However, beneath this seemingly integrated surface, there were tensions. In particular, several of the local-national journalists felt that there was a structural bias towards promoting Western reporters. There was also a strong sense that the news was driven by Western news values.

The newsroom conforms to what Boyd-Barrett calls, a colonialist outpost model, in which expatriates are in charge, communications between expatriate communities and the mother country are privileged, and the 'whites' are surrounded by compliant servants. In 2008/9 the Bureau Chief, Deputy Chief and one of the senior correspondents were all English; the Kenyan national furthest up the ranks was senior economic correspondent, Helen Nyambura-Mwaura.³²

As a Kenyan journalist, Helen felt it had been harder for her to earn a permanent contract in the company (it took her seven years to go from being a stringer to having a salaried position – and this followed a death). However,

³² Boyd-Barrett's (1980) survey of news agency journalists showed there were many more locally-recruited journalists than expatriates in overseas bureaus, but that bureau chiefs were generally nationals of the agencies' home countries (i.e. Britain, America or France) or nationals of other Western or Commonwealth countries. Bureau leadership by expatriates was justified in terms of expatriates' presumably better sense of the news interests of media audiences back 'home' and their native command of the main language of distribution. Non-local journalists dominated top positions and had editorial control over their bureaus. Boyd-Barrett (2000) concludes that, in its original form, the bureau conforms to a colonialist outpost model.

she felt that things had improved somewhat over the last five years, with Kenyan journalists becoming more involved in the editorial process and paid more comparable wages:

This place used to be a white British boys' club. They were running everything. And I don't mean they were the journalists – there were Kenyan journalists – you can hire however many people you want to collect your news – but the bureau boss and the salary scales, it was all heavily based on the white boys' club. Kenyans weren't being paid as much, they weren't given responsibility or allowed to make decisions.

Although things may have been better than before, several of the local journalists nonetheless felt that the TR newsroom continued to be structured around Western leadership with local journalists less likely to receive promotions or be given responsibility. One of the local journalists commented,

Reuters is horribly racist. There is a glass ceiling that makes it very difficult for Africans to do well. There are no African bureau chiefs or deputy bureau chiefs. It is much harder to get onto staff, to get promotions, to be given opportunities. If you [a white New Zealander] came here, it would be easy for you to get on staff. But as an African, you aren't given very many opportunities to be promoted.

This journalist felt that Helen, the chief economic correspondent, would make an excellent deputy bureau chief but that she was unlikely to get this promotion. Helen, on the other hand, did not think a promotion was unlikely, but suspected that if it did occur it would not be merit-related:

And you know, I've heard people say I might be promoted. But I don't know – it's affirmative action. It's so that they can say – 'look we've got an African woman running our Nairobi bureau!' I don't know if I want that.

The News Day: Routine and order in the office

Although no two days in the Nairobi bureau were identical, the news day is organised around a number of routines, and there is a high level of order beneath the surface dynamism and flux – a common and consistent finding in newsroom ethnographies (see Becker & Vlad 2009 for an overview). The

workday is divided into three shifts, each of which is managed by a duty manager ('the slot'). The slot sits in the middle of the newsroom and handles incoming emails from stringers containing story ideas. They also make commissioning decisions – sometimes autonomously, and sometimes with input from the bureau chief or deputy chief. Finally, the slot handles questions from stringers, chases up late copy, and edits incoming writing so that it can be put onto the wire.

There is always at least one journalist in the office 24/7 but the busiest shift runs from 9am to 4pm. Generally, the bureau chief or deputy bureau chief is in the office at this time, as are 4 journalists, give or take. Typically, the newsroom begins to quiet down as the afternoon wears on. Between 3 and 4pm, a new slot comes on duty, and there is a handover. The bulk of journalists work office hours, and leave after 5 or 6pm. A skeleton crew works the night shift.

Between 9.30 and 10am most mornings, the slot convenes a news meeting to keep the journalists informed of the day's upcoming stories and tell them what has happened overnight. For those that I attended, the slot provided the overview of the important stories from around the region, generally starting with what they perceived to be the most important news story, and working their way down. This often led to conversations about what news *should* be pursued, which provided rich data for this analysis. At the end of the review, the slot would run through the Kenyan beats – courts, commodities, markets, etc. The news meetings varied in length from 1min to 30mins, with an average duration of 12 minutes.

A fairly representative meeting that took place in my presence included discussion of: conflict in Somalia; the upcoming visit of Hilary Clinton; the economic team's coverage of a Safaricom launch, and an initiative piece (that is, a story not related to an event but, rather 'generated by the journalist'), on tourism growth. It is important to note that much of the journalists' work was not brought up in these meetings. Many tasks – particularly on the economic side – were so routine that they did not need to be discussed.

The style and length of the meetings varied significantly, depending on the day, and who was working slot. Kopi, a general news reporter did things 'by the book': she insisted on a start time of exactly 9.30am, and she tended to go through all of the regions, and the news that stringers had sent in, regardless of its predictability. Duncan, an economic correspondent, placed a far greater emphasis on economic news stories in his round-up than other journalists. Dan, one of the general reporters, seemed to have no interest in the meetings at all. Of the 10 mornings when he was working slot, he convened only five morning meetings – the remaining five days were the only occasions in the observation period when meetings did not take place. Dan's meetings were also considerably shorter than the other journalists; and he presided over the shortest meeting I observed, which lasted less than a minute, and ran as follows:

General Corr.: I have nothing that you'd be interested in. Duncan is away at central bank. From Madagascar, there's some politics from Richard.

Human Corr: It's a holiday in Uganda, so nothing from there.

General Corr: That's everything then.

This was not, of course "everything," considering what was coming in from stringers around the region. Even on a slow news day, there were figures,

information and, according to Cawthorne's estimates, at least five general stories. Dan's approach reflected his belief that much of the news was straightforward and did not need to be discussed.

After the news meeting, the journalists go back to work. There is very little in the way of overt instructions or directions in the office: from an observer's point of view, the journalists seem naturally aware of what they should be doing. One of the primary reasons for this is the division of news collection into news beats with clear boundaries, and the fact that there is usually only one or two journalists (at most) from each beat in the office.

The journalists spend the rest of their day developing and writing stories, and looking out for new story ideas. This involves occasional trips out of the office to attend events and chase sources. However, the bulk of their work is done from a desk: following online news sources and social media; contacting stringers when events have taken place; ringing sources for quotes and, of course, writing and re-writing. The bulk of news reporting is 'spot news' – that is, coverage of events that have just taken place. However, where their news day allows, the journalists occasionally do enterprise, feature, and background reporting.

Organised news events in Nairobi further structure the news day: there are regular press conferences, publications of figures and reports, company launches, and so on. The regularity and cyclical nature of important economic events, like the release of figures and indicators, ensures the economic journalists' news days are particularly regulated and ordered. The Kenyan stock exchange, for example, has a morning and evening index, and these are

monitored and examined every day for significant variance;³³ at the end of every quarter, journalists examine investment figures and company profits reports; and there are monthly reports on tea, coffee, and other major exports from the region. Basic infrastructure is also important – water, electricity, and so on – and journalists cover the regular meetings held by the boards who oversee it.

On the general news side there are also organized events – for example, Hilary Clinton came to East Africa while I was there; the United Nations and a variety of East African organisations hold press conferences and issue reports; and elections around the region are an important on-going source of general news. However, a great deal of general news comes from unpredictable events. While I was in the office, the largest on-going story in the region was conflict in Somalia – a news story that would occasionally and unexpectedly flare up – as when four Al Shabaab agents attempted to blow up an army barrack in Sydney in August 2009, and the world’s news spotlight briefly shone on the country that had trained them. A year before I visited, the events leading to the biggest story of these journalists’ lives took place entirely unpredicted: the post-election violence in Kenya. When such important events take place, organisational divisions are put to one side: it’s ‘all hands on deck,’ and the journalists work around the clock.

³³ Even the nature of monitoring them is regulated. Very roughly speaking, a change of 4% between the morning and evening figures was considered significant enough to warrant a news piece.

News Beats and newsworthiness: the stuff of news

As part of the process of routinisation, journalists make use of different news categories and typifications in order to reduce the contingency of news work (Tuchman, 1978). The Nairobi office divided its news production between three beats – economic, general, and humanitarian news. News within these beats could be further divided into categories, such as ‘spot’ versus ‘enterprise’ and ‘hard news’ versus ‘soft news’. This section examines the main ‘types’ of news that fell into each category, and comments on the criteria journalists professed to employ in judging newsworthiness.

Economic news at Reuters

Economic reporting is a distinct, specialist area of reporting with its own conventions. Economic news stories at TR come in three main forms. The first is the mere conveyance of information – for example, changes in the stock market, or descriptions of commodity export figure. These changes are often reported in a very formulaic fashion. Indeed, Bloomberg sometimes uses computer software to automatically generate these reports (Bartram 2003). Whether or not these ‘informational’ stories constitute ‘news’ is a debatable matter. These stories are reported as a matter of course, rather than as an exception – and this is antithetical to general news norms, which, roughly speaking, equate news with things (culturally-determined to be) out of the ordinary (Peterson 2001). Or as Tuchman writes, news work, “thrives upon processing unexpected events, events that burst to the surface in some disruptive, exceptional (and hence newsworthy) manner” (1978: 111).

The second form of economic reporting relates to events/issues that are taking place that have market relevance – for example, the launch of a new company, the closure of another; the rains coming early and affecting the crop; and so on. These stories are covered by the economic correspondents using the same conventions that govern general news reporting – the journalists attend press conferences, read reports, seek out and interview sources, and structure their stories according to the traditional inverse triangle.

This category of economic reporting overlaps considerably with general news reporting (discussed below). Many general news events will impact the market, and can be told from either a general news perspective, or from an economic news perspective. An important aspect of Reuters' coverage is that it has developed a form of 'specialty' reporting that falls somewhere between economic and general news. A key emphasis in this category is 'political risk': does this event raise or lower political risk (which is an important consideration for all investors in the region). For example, Reuters produces a lot of news on Kenyan politics because the Kenyan economy is the biggest in East Africa, and investors are interested in any event that will influence the riskiness of investment. These stories can be seen as either economic reporting, or as general news with an economic angle.

One of the noteworthy elements of economic reporting at the Reuters Nairobi bureau was that, in contrast to general news reporting, there appeared to be little controversy or debate around which stories should be commissioned. There was rarely debate about economic stories at the morning news meeting. One journalist described economic stories as "easier

to spot”, because they lent themselves to quantification: that is, you could always ask – what is the *size* of this business? what is the financial *value* of this industry to the country? How *many* businesses will be affected by this legislation? These were not debatable issues, so much as factual points. In other words, the newsworthiness of economic stories could be assessed and expressed in quantities, whereas general news decisions require the consideration of more ambiguous and subjective variables: *How important* is the fact that a woman in Sudan has been banned from wearing trousers? *How bad* is systematic rape? *How interesting* is the death of the world’s oldest mountain gorilla?

The third form of economic reporting is analysis, in which the journalists examine results, explaining changes and so on. This is the most advanced and interpretive form of economic journalism, and also the least common.

General News

At Reuters, the most important form of general news is what journalists call ‘spot news’: coverage of a breaking event. In East Africa, this included crises, conflicts, visiting celebrities, elections around the region, human rights violations, and a myriad of other topics. The ‘biggest’ pieces of breaking spot news, while I was in the office, were Somali pirates and terrorism, conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western leaders who were visiting the region, and the outcome of elections.

Spot news is distinguished from ‘enterprise news’ in which journalists actively seek out a story – this can take the form of features, backgrounds, or

human-interest stories. Today, Reuters has little or no interest in general enterprise reporting, and such stories are only written given extenuating circumstances, or when there is the luxury of time (i.e. almost never). In my time at the Nairobi office, journalists were not sent around the region unless there was big ‘spot news’ to cover.

When asked to “explain what general news is” the journalists in the Nairobi office were often at a loss: they “just knew”. They felt that newsworthiness was an intrinsic quality that an event either ‘possessed’ or didn’t. As Cawthorne described it, “it’s an intuitive thing, you just build it up. You build up the experience over years of being a journalist. You don’t need someone to tell you what’s a story and what’s not a story”.

Despite this supposed “intuitiveness,” the journalists frequently disagreed about what constituted general news, and morning meetings were filled with debates about whether an issue should be covered or not. Witnessing these exchanges, it was possible to get a sense of the values that seemed to be guiding decisions.³⁴

The first and most important criterion that the journalists referred to, and that consistently seemed to inform the news agenda was, “existing news attention” – that is, if a story had traction or prominence at other international media, Reuters would also cover it. When an American sea

³⁴ It is important to note that ‘news criteria’ or lists of news values are a blunt instrument for describing how journalists make news decision: criteria alone have weak predictive value, and they do not fully explain actual selection decisions. Gans suggests that we should think of them as considerations, rather than criteria (1979: 82-83) and Schultz (2011: 91) notes that, although they do not determine news, criteria are an important “resource” that journalists use to legitimate their news decisions, and are therefore interesting and important to consider.

captain was taken hostage off the coast of Somalia, for example, intense media frenzy followed; Cawthorne commented, “it’s all over the networks 24 hours, therefore our editors are demanding the stuff, therefore we’re providing it. And it becomes this self-fulfilling thing.”

A second major and repeated criterion was a link to key macro-level narratives, and particularly to those of interest and importance to the West – stories from the East African region were perceived to be more important if they had a connection to a ‘global story’. The most significant of these narratives at the time were the War on Terror (for example, Al-Qaeda links in the Somalia conflict) and the global financial crisis.

Further criteria the journalists mentioned included drama (for example, the capture of an American sea captain was specifically described as “cinematic”, and “like the plot of Rambo”); if something was unusually exotic or cruel (for example, the gruesome treatment of prisoners/vulnerable citizens, Sharia punishment, or attacks on Albino children); and human interest, although this did not come up very often at Reuters (compared with the newspaper correspondents in Nairobi, discussed in the following chapter). But it was occasionally cited, for example, in the case of the death of the world’s oldest mountain gorilla.

The reasons that journalists gave for why stories were *not* newsworthy were also illuminating. At Reuters Nairobi they included: stories that had been done before, stories that lack “significance” (called “fluffy stories”), and stories that too closely resembled public relations. There was also an informal

rule about airplane disasters: as a general news reporter told me, “we have a policy that we don’t cover attempted hijacks – or that’s all we’d do”.

Catering General News to Western Clients

One of the most consistent themes underlying all general news discussions was: what is the relevance of this event to our Western clients? All of the journalists in the office were aware that Reuters’ news provision was destined for a primarily Western audience and this informed judgments about newsworthiness. The most obvious manifestation of this was that stories were more likely to be commissioned and reported if they were about Western nationals. The Ugandan humanitarian correspondent commented, for example:

If a plane crashes with 8 people in it, and one of them is British, then that’s a story. Without the British person it’s not. And this is spoken out loud and acknowledged – that we just don’t do plane crash stories otherwise unless at least 12 people died...But add a British person, and that rule, for some reason, doesn’t necessarily apply anymore.

Cawthorne resisted the idea that Reuters was specifically a British newswire, but went on to say, rather illuminatingly:

We’re not British, it’s a total misconception. We struggle to tell people that. Sometimes a stringer in Somalia will say – oh, a British person’s been kidnapped, you must be interested. And we say, ‘no we’re as interested in a Frenchman, a Canadian’.

That is, Reuters is interested if the hostage is from Europe or North America. But, as was made clear through many discussions, Reuters was not particularly interested if the hostage(s) were from the Global South. When the

American sea captain was taken hostage in Somalia, for example, Cawthorne commented:

We were laughing here cause they've been taking hostages for years. And even when the whole world was glued on the saga of trying to release that American sea captain, there were 200 Filipino hostages that had been held there for months. No one was the slightest bit interested in them.

The influence of Western involvement was particularly powerful when it came in the form of elites. As the bureau chief commented:

Darfur captured the policy makers, the people in Hollywood, it became a cause célèbre. Mia Farrow. You know Washington was talking about it. 'Echoes of Rwanda'. I can see why, news-values-wise, it rose above the rest... Somalia occasionally rises above the rest. It will rise above the rest on Thursday when Clinton's here. So narrowing that down, the honest answer is, when a Western spotlight is thrown, when it's seen through a London or Washington or EU perspective, when they throw attention on it [that's what makes something newsworthy].

Following attendance at two months' worth of news meetings, it became clear that the involvement of Westerners was a tipping point that could make a story 'newsworthy'; as such, it was often appealed to when journalists assessed and justified their story selection. The following is an extract from one morning's news meeting (3.8.09), which gives a sense of this:

Slot: Today we have Somalia. There's this Malaysian ship that has been caught for several years, has been freed today.

Bureau Chief: What about the German ship?

Slot: Nothing

[general discussion]

Bureau Chief: Did anyone follow up on the tribunal?

Slot: Um, well there's another report from Human Right's Watch, but it's the same thing: the government system doesn't work.

Bureau Chief: I guess Clinton's going to raise that and we can do it then.

[general discussion]

Slot: In Ethiopia we've got the sentencing of this Ethiopian-Canadian guy who's accused of belonging to the terrorists. The Canadian government has said they'll ask for clemency if they issue the death penalty but not otherwise. So it seems likely he'll get life.

Bureau Chief: That's big news isn't it? Big hard, breaking news. I mean, his other pieces [from Ethiopia] are fluffy light stuff. This is hard. I think there's quite a lot of interest in this one.

Slot: Ok, I guess the Canadians are into it.

The extract gives an example of some of the ways in which international elites and international angles are used to 'lift' and rationalise news story decisions. We see, for example, that the bureau chief seems more interested in the German ship than the Malaysian ship. Next we see that a report from Human Rights Watch [an international NGO] being considered as a story. The slot is troubled by its lack of novelty, but it is acknowledged that when Hilary Clinton comes, anything she says (as an important Western elite) will be newsworthy, and so the story can then be covered. Finally, we see the discussion of the Ethiopian/Canadian who has been arrested. The slot recounts the details, but does not necessarily see the inherent newsworthiness of this event (perhaps because he is aware that Ethiopian nationals are regularly arrested on charges of terrorism, and that the desk does not consider this newsworthy). However, once the bureau chief, whose status is unquestionable, defines the event as "hard news" and juxtaposes it to other, "fluffy" pieces, the question is decided. The slot concurs, and makes reference to international clients, "I guess the Canadians are into it".

Humanitarian news

The final category of news is that which is produced on the 'humanitarian beat'. In the Nairobi office, working alongside the general news team, there was a humanitarian correspondent who wrote for Alertnet. He described his beat as: "stories about human suffering and the responses to this" and

estimated that he wrote an average of two stories a day, as well as a range of blogs and analysis pieces.

The humanitarian correspondent was not an official part of the news team – he reported to the Alertnet editor. Significantly, in spite of this, all incoming humanitarian stories and issues from around the region were still being directed to him. For example, if a major NGO released a report on famine or refugees it went to his email box. In short, the creation of this beat was a way in which Reuters filtered out – one might say, ‘outsourced’ – humanitarian issues from the general news agenda. Occasionally, if there were a very large humanitarian story, it would be put on the Reuters general newswire. This was only true if a substantive change had occurred or if particularly large numbers were involved, and the humanitarian correspondent generally had to fight very hard to have his stories “reach across” into general news.

The priority of financial reporting

Tuchman (1973) treats beats as practical schemes that are part and parcel of the process of social construction, but for Bourdieu the nature of the division is also – or even first and foremost – a question of power (Schultz 2007:195). The categorisation of news is a value and power-ordered hierarchy, and within each beat, there are differences in the relative valuation of some kinds of stories over others. This valuation reflects the position of an outlet in a wider journalistic field, and it also comes to bear on the capital of the journalists who produce the different kinds of news.

In the Nairobi bureau, there was a very clear and established hierarchy: economic news first, general news second, and humanitarian news a distant last place. This hierarchy was visible in a range of news practices in the newsroom, which are discussed below. It is shown that the hierarchy of newsroom practice mirrored the hierarchy of the kinds of capital valued by management. That is, news that served financial clients (economic capital-generating) was given clear precedence over general news reporting (symbolic capital-generating) in the bureau.

More initiative/enterprise financial reporting

Journalists in the bureau articulated a need for financial stories, even where no obvious ones existed. They were more inclined to pursue ‘initiative reporting’ on financial issues – for example, ringing their contacts in business, attending press conferences on the off-chance something interesting would happen, or searching through the business pages of local media for ideas. There was a pressure to include financial news as a substantial portion of the day’s file, as articulated in this exchange:

Slot: It’s not my fault that there’s no Kenyan financial news, is it? Should I make some up?

TV producer: No, ’cause then I’d have to cover it too. Do you really want to open that can of worms?

Slot: Let me put in a headline from *Business Daily* – that’ll make it look intelligent.

(Interaction with colleague, 20.8.09)

There were no instances over the observation period in which journalists expressed similar concern that they did not have enough general, political, or

humanitarian news. General features no longer held much currency, although features on business and markets remained acceptable. This marked a deviation from the otherwise cardinal rule that, “spot news trumps enterprise news”.

“Financial impact” used to select news stories

In morning news meetings, ‘impact on market’ was a key and repeated value, used to determine whether a general news story was ‘newsworthy’ or not. An economic angle could raise a story from being tiresome and old, to being worthy of reporting:

What’s that piece? tourism? We’ve done a lot of that recently...Actually, we’ve done it an awful lot - Tanzania, two on Ethiopia, Kenya. The desk is getting a bit tired of them, actually. Is it more econ focused? If it’s an econ focus that’s ok (Bureau Chief, morning news meeting 3.8.09)

In this example, financial relevance was able to ‘trump’ the news norm of novelty. Conversely, if the company or issue did not have market impact, this fact could be invoked as a reason to refrain from covering the story. For example, in one meeting, a journalist suggested covering a product launch at a local company, and their colleague responded: “no, I’m busy, and that company isn’t even listed”.

Notably, the markets were invoked as a means of arbitrating disagreements between journalists when they clashed about whether an event was newsworthy or not. In these instances, ‘impact on market’ was the key criterion used to settle the issue, while trading figures, market sizes, and so on

could be used to quantify an issue's newsworthiness. When the financial aspect of a story was brought to light, the argument was generally 'shut down' – suggesting that financial news criteria were 'beyond debate'.

Financially-relevant countries receive more coverage

The emphasis on markets meant that events or issues that took place in countries with larger markets were considered more newsworthy. As the Bureau Chief explained:

Why do we have so much about Kenya? Because it's the main financial centre. Even when there's no real news in a BBC sense, we have paying customers who are investing lots of money and they want to know what's the stock exchange doing? what's the currency doing? What's the political situation like, the political risk? That's why Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Mauritius are always there – we must keep up a flow of news for investors basically.

He later expanded:

Previously, we didn't used to dip into Kenyan politics. Now Kenyan politics is having a direct impact – instability in the government affects the price of stocks, the value of the currency, so editors have encouraged us to do a lot more on Kenyan politics for that specific reason.

In key countries – and in particular, Kenya and Uganda, journalists appeared to inflate their estimates of a story's newsworthiness – a small event taking place in Kenya was inherently more newsworthy than an equivalent event in Burundi. This was observable in news meetings in which journalists spent more time discussing events and issues in core market countries.

The editorial emphasis on core market countries prompted Cawthorne to recruit particularly 'good' stringers in those countries; Reuters spent more time and money making sure it had competent and professional stringers in

Uganda, Tanzania, and Mauritius, than it did for other countries. In contrast to the average stringer in the network, these journalists were fluent English writers and two had a business background. The presence of skilled stringers in these countries further reinforced their prominence on the news agenda, as the Nairobi-based correspondents were far more receptive to story ideas and copy from their ‘competent stringers’ regardless of a pitch’s newsworthiness. They knew the story would arrive well-written and would not require much editing. The copy from stringers in the more neglected countries, however, would need to be copy-edited and might contain inaccuracies.³⁵

Financial Frames Within General News Stories

The Reuters journalists did not just produce greater quantities of financial news compared to general news; they also presented general news through a financial lens. That is, general news was framed in terms of its impact on markets. As the humanitarian correspondent explained:

It’s not just more financial reporting, it’s financial aspects in all general news stories as well. So if 8 elephants die from the drought in a national park, we don’t just write about the deaths – we write about the deaths’ implication on tourism. So everything is being discussed and considered through a financial lens.

Or, as one of the general news reporters commented, “The big thing for general news is, ‘Political Risk’. And you shape things around that.”

³⁵ As Cawthorne comments, “if one of my good experienced guys is there, he’ll send the story perfect and it can go straight to London, and I don’t have to worry about that or think about that. They know how to write it, how to present the quotes and information, how to put in the background information and analysis. So it’s story perfect – that’s what they’re paid to do. Whereas if it’s [not a good stringer] I’ll have to say, ‘please ring the opposition for a quote’ ‘please tell me the background to this – you know what happened here two years ago, I haven’t a clue, please write it in’. I’ll have to tidy up the language. So it’s a lot of work”.

When discussing general news stories, journalists drew attention to financial implications and angles. For example, when discussing Somali pirates, journalists spoke about the impact this was having on international shipping routes and the increased price of Toyotas in Europe. When discussing the Kibera riots, journalists pointed to the ways in which these had interrupted train tracks and trade from Kenya, like flower exports from the Rift Valley.

Financially-orientated questions asked to sources

When the newsroom journalists contacted sources to obtain quotes, they often asked them to comment on the financial aspect of a news event – rather than, for example, its political, humanitarian or social impact. In August, for example, there were rumours that the staff at Nairobi airport were planning to strike over working conditions. The journalist covering the story rang a spokesperson and asked them to comment on the implications of the strike. In the conversation, the journalist focused almost exclusively on the financial ramifications:

So, you would say that this is a very important issue, with large economic implications... The strike will, for example, stop a business man from getting a flight to Mombasa? ... So it's more than just the lost earnings, isn't it – there'll be widespread implications for the economy (General news journalist on the phone, 11.8.09)

Throughout this conversation, the journalist expressed little interest in why the union might be striking, nor in the political context or implications of this strike.

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The previous section has sought to describe news production practices in the Nairobi bureau. We saw a hierarchy of news values in which economic news dominated general news production in a variety of ways. The next section seeks to explain and analyse why this was the case.

From Position to Practice: the Ascendency of financial news

From the previous two sections, we have seen that Reuters' position in the news field was reflected in the practices of its journalists, and the institutional prioritisation of economic news over general news. This section explores the question: how? Through what mechanisms does field position translate into journalistic practice? These questions are made more immediate – and interesting to journalism theory – by the fact that these news priorities had only emerged recently at Reuters Nairobi. Understanding how they could have come to change so quickly gives insight into how news values operate.

In 2006, Reuters Nairobi was a 'hard news' bureau, and its newsroom was primarily governed by the logic of the journalistic field. The journalists considered the best stories to be those about topics that affected people – ones in which lives were lost and governments toppled. In 2007, this started to change. By July 2009, the Thomson Reuters bureau was a bastion of international business journalism in East Africa. It reported on emerging markets and investment opportunities; it was primarily governed by the logic of the business world – a logic that consistently usurped journalistic norms. A newsworthy story was one that moved markets.

In separate interviews, and in countless encounters, the journalists in the Nairobi office identified 2007-8, and the merger, as a watershed year for the bureau's move towards economic offerings. A general news stringer in Nairobi, for example, commented:

I did a block of work here in 2007 and returned now [2009] for another brief stint. The change is very big. What was considered a great Reuters story then and a great story now is very different. Then the ideal story was a classic – you know, uncovering corruption in government, that kind of thing. Now there's much more

excitement about financial stories and numbers. It's a distinct change. And the other bits have gone out the window.

The Bureau Chief agreed with this assessment:

This used to be a very traditional conflict and disaster bureau, and it's going to a real economic focus...a big driver for us now is investor, investor, investor... We've been jointly re-orientating the file now, and telling people once again we're shifting. We want business-focused news, we want, how's the coffee sector doing? What investment opportunities are there for people? How's the IT sector?

A general news reporter also described a significant shift that sent the newswire in a distinctly new direction:

I was here before that major transition. When we were much more what we'd call "traditional reporting" – drought, famine, conflict... The ethos of Reuters 2009 is "news that is indispensable for business and industry".

TR journalists in East Africa continue to pride themselves on their hard news coverage. However, there has been a clear shift in emphasis and news priorities in the newsroom.

Three years is a very short period for a news organization to change its practices and values – particularly considering there was only a small staff turnover during this period. Ryfe's (2009) study of an American newsroom details the failed attempt of a managing editor to change a newsroom culture and encourage his journalists to pursue different stories. Ryfe's account discusses the journalists' confusion, frustration and, finally, moral indignation, in response to such pressure. Ultimately, they refused to follow the orders, and the newsroom was unchanged. Ryfe concludes that journalists have a deeply embedded set of professional values that transcend the practices of their individual news organisation (2009: 197). This finding is consistent

with the way in which journalists tend to describe their work; in selecting and pursuing news stories, they report feeling guided by intuition and a deep ‘gut feeling’. As one Danish editor told media researcher Ida Schultz, news criteria are, “somehow part of your spinal cord” (Schultz 2007a: 198). Or, as Michael Schudson writes, news values are “messy, unstructured, and rooted deeply in human consciousness” (2005: 188).

How, if these values are so deeply ingrained, and journalists so resistant to change, could they have evolved so quickly at Reuters? (And did they?) Exploring the transition at Reuters helps us to understand where news practices come from, and how they are connected to macro and mezzo-level factors of news production. This is one of the substantive contributions of this thesis. This chapter argues that the transition can be most clearly understood and explained by drawing on the analytical tools of field theory.

The chapter proposes that field position is translated into internal production practices. In 2007, the Reuters newswire merged with Thomson, a global information corporation. Through this merger, Reuters’ position in the global journalistic field was altered, as it shifted further towards ‘the economic pole’. It still produced general news, but it was more interested in meeting the news needs of financial clients, with an eye to profit, circulation, and revenue. General news was produced to maintain symbolic capital, but this was a subordinated goal. This change initially took place at the managerial level, but it filtered to journalists through a variety of communications, decisions, and new hires, which, ultimately, altered the distribution of capital within the organisation, and alongside this, the newsroom habitus.

Client driven news: A ‘dominated’ newswire at work

As was seen in the contextual section of this chapter, following the merger of Thomson and Reuters in 2007, TR’s corporate objective was straightforward: maximise subscriptions to the data terminal and related Thomson Reuters products with the aim of beating Bloomberg in the digital information market. To this end, Reuters’ news products were re-orientated to maximise ‘added value’ for financial clients (over and above Reuters’ traditional media clients). A secondary goal was to produce ‘hard news’ on big, breaking events, to maintain the reputation and symbolic capital associated with the Reuters tradition. Symbolic capital generated by general news reporting was still relevant – but it was very much subordinated to economic imperatives.

The journalists in the Reuters Nairobi office were aware that general news/symbolic capital had become less important in the corporation as a whole. As one of the general correspondents told me:

In 2007, those changes [the move to economic reporting] were already starting to happen but the feeling was very much, ‘our income is generated by our clients’ desire for financial reporting but the reason they take our financial is because of our journalism and our hard hitting reputation, so we must work to maintain that image’.

That is, general news was still seen as a key factor in generating revenue (the symbolic could be transformed into economic capital). But, as the journalist went on to say:

Now, it’s changed even further, and I think the sense is very much, we do the financial journalism for its own sake, that’s the important bit we do. It speaks for itself, and the other stuff has fallen by the wayside a little bit

Or, as the bureau chief in Nairobi more succinctly stated:

they're [managers] just looking at the bottom line. This whole investor-driven news is purely financially driven for them, making more money for shareholders. There's no greater goal.

The hierarchy between these two kinds of capital has been clearly communicated to all journalists in the TR network, and as the Nairobi deputy bureau chief told me, it has changed the practices of reporters in their daily work:

We're still providing video, pictures, text for media clients, i.e. newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV stations around the world. But the stories we would focus on, *prioritise* more, are the ones which have more interest to the real-time clients [those with live update screens providing financial data].

The most important stakeholders— the people who have the power to define what exactly news is and what it should consist of at TR – are the corporation's data screen clients. TR engages in extensive market research to find out exactly what types of news these clients want to consume. Importantly, editors (and corporate managers) in London have access to almost perfect information on the stories that their clients read: Reuters has comprehensive analytics on the view-count of every story published, and where these views come from. In addition, TR conducts regular customer surveys, and solicits qualitative feedback from clients through interviews and emails. As the Deputy Bureau chief notes:

We get quite a lot of feedback from the clients – what do they like in the Africa file? What do they want to see more of? Which of the countries are they looking at most? Which sectors? And we get feedback on specific stories, too... It's just a constant dialogue, really.

Or, as the humanitarian reporter notes of the client-management relationship:

They had meetings with clients and asked, 'what do you want?' and they really want to know about companies, and bureaucracy and corruption – basically, they want us to do their due diligence for them.

Finally, the TR sales team feeds information back to the management team about what offerings might incentivise new clients to join; and exit data gives insight into the factors that prompt existing clients to defect.

This data informs the direction the desk takes when it makes resource decisions, issues instructions to journalists, creates policy, and makes hiring and firing decisions. For example, faced with a request for an additional journalist in Eritrea, the editorial team can look at the statistics, and see that only a small portion (say, 0.01%) of their clients have ever read a story on Eritrea. These statistics may not determine their answer – but they will certainly inform it. The ‘story play’ statistics are also passed directly on to the journalists (discussed below) and have a direct impact on the stories they choose to report.

In this manner, technology helps to close a significant gap in the news production loop – that between journalists and their audience – or, in Reuters’ more business orientated schema, that between *management*, *product development*, and *client*. Managers know, with a high level of precision, what their clients want to read; and the corporate-managerial team can choose to use this information to direct their editorial team.³⁶ Significantly, the editorial

³⁶ This ethnography has not studied the relationship between TR corporate and Reuters editorial. However, comparing editors’ comments with corporate mission statements suggests that there is little divide between the two groups. TR corporate is orientated around producing news that clients wished to read – and this view was echoed by Sean Maguire’s words (former African editor, and current international editor), that he aimed to produce, “Client-led news”. This is something of an anomaly in the news world, where editorial teams (generally made up of senior field journalists) tend to characterize themselves as being in deep conflict with their financial, business departments (generally made up of business graduates and MBAs) (see, for example, Underwood 1995). One of the reasons for this is TR’s clear and total domination by the world of business. The second reason – which would be interesting to explore further – may be the comprehensiveness of the information that TR management/corporate team have access to. In 1980, Gans suggested that one of the key factors that protects editorial autonomy from the interference of news outlets’ profit-orientated business departments, is that neither the journalists nor the managers quite know what their audiences want to read/view; as a result, “journalists are not under constant

team also shares in this knowledge, and use it to manage their journalists, as we shall see.

The following section details the major ‘feedback loops’ through which the London editorial team communicates and instructs its journalists in Nairobi, and the ways in which they encouraged, cajoled, incentivised, and disciplined their journalists into producing more financially-relevant news copy.

Instructions and feedback: London Editorial → Nairobi bureau

The editorial team in London provides feedback and explicit instructions to the journalists in Nairobi through multiple channels. The most formal feedback loop was the once weekly conference call between the African editor in London, and the four regional bureau chiefs based around Africa. In this meeting, the bureau chiefs would take turns detailing their biggest stories, and the African editor would offer feedback on what played well, and where the bureaus should focus their efforts.³⁷

The conference calls were a space in which the London editors could clearly communicate organisational priorities; which were, invariably, more and better financial news stories. In the 13th of August conference call, for

pressure to increase firm income, partly because they do not know how” (1980: 83). In the wake of internet analytics, this is no longer the case at almost any news organisation in the world. This issue is further explored in the section on newspaper correspondents, for whom maximising ‘hit counts’ is an increasingly necessary goal.

³⁷Interestingly, these meetings suggested that TR East Africa was actually the least financially orientated of all the bureaus in Africa. The Southern and North Africa bureau chiefs, in particular, detailed stories that were almost exclusively focused on finance, markets and commodities [This is supported by the internal emails which are sent around showing the biggest stories in each region].

example, the most senior general news correspondent was standing in for the bureau chief. When asked to detail his bureau's stories, he listed conflict in Somali and political disorder in Madagascar.³⁸ The African editor did not comment on these general news stories but, rather, moved straight on to praise a financial story not mentioned by the journalist: "editorial really like the IT story from Mauritius – the idea of IT guys on the white sands, not in Bangalore. It's a great slant to explore". In this conference, general news was rarely touched on at all; and bureau managers were asked to focus on financial news production. The need to produce more financial stories was further reinforced to bureau chiefs in constant emails and phone calls (discussed below).

Pleasing senior managers is a clear and consistent pressure in all organisational work (e.g., Breed 1955). The editors in London determine promotions, salaries, and the allocation of resources. Journalists are strategic agents and, generally speaking, crave positive recognition from their superiors and professional success. The journalists' dependence upon praise incentivises them to write in ways their institution approves of (Pedelty 1995; Breed 1955).

This was no less true at Reuters Nairobi. Cawthorne may not have always agreed with the editorial/corporate priorities (more on this, below) but he was very good at incorporating their dictates into his management of the bureau and stringer network. The chief economic reporter describes the initial stages of the Nairobi bureau's transition, for example:

³⁸ I listened in on these phone conferences via speakerphone with the permission of all the journalists involved.

in 2007 there was the move towards the economic news at Reuters. That was huge and very official. There was nagging, and reiterating all the time. Andy [Cawthorne] had to say, over and over, what are the economic implications? How does this change investment or political risk? If it doesn't, we don't want it.

That is, Cawthorne stated, restated, and restated again that there was a new determinant of newsworthiness at work in the office: events should be assessed relative to the extent to which they had “economic implications”. As he went about commissioning stringers Cawthorne communicated to them that the organisation would now only be paying for the very biggest of general news stories and that they really wanted more stories on things that moved the market. Ntale, a correspondent for CNN in Kampala who worked casually for Reuters in 2008, just after the merger, described receiving very explicit instructions:

They're so business inclined. You have to look for business news, always – international business in terms of numbers and impact. The most important thing is – ‘What are the new opportunities for investment’. That was always the opening for us. This sector, that sector, how things were opening up. I'd get a call and be told ‘do an in-depth piece on this sector – go and talk to these guys – these analysts.’ There was always a lot of direction.

The stringers were very fast to act on these new instructions. They are only paid when their stories are accepted, and are therefore very strongly incentivised. The chief economic correspondent noted they were faster to adjust than the journalists in the office. By submitting ‘appropriate’ stories, the stringers reinforced the editorial shift ‘from below’³⁹.

³⁹ There was of course variance among the stringers, and how quickly they learnt these values; just as there was variance in the extent to which they grasped general news values. The ‘problem of stringers’ is explored more extensively in later sections.

“Constant Refrain”

Outside the formal meeting between editors Africa-wide, the London office had many additional opportunities to communicate with the Nairobi bureau. It was able to reach the desk manager, bureau chief, slot, and entire journalistic team every day, at any time: through phone, email, the internal server Coyote; and, most readily, through Gmail chat, which the journalists were always logged into. As the deputy bureau chief notes:

We have this constant refrain – either in direct communication with the editor – or we have this daily note that goes out – a lot of people looking at what was good, what was bad. We have conference calls with the editors. We’re constantly being told what the priorities are, and where. We’re told where they want us to focus. And we’re getting the direct feedback from clients.

In these communications, the priorities were also clear: financial over general news reporting. This dialogue sometimes included explicit instructions to produce a specific story (“do a piece on clean energy in Tanzania”; or “we need some background on doing business in Rwanda”). Alternatively, it might include requests for more stories on a theme (“we want to focus on compliance a bit more”).

The London editors also forwarded client feedback to the journalists; and importantly, they sent out a daily email with the details of the previous day’s ‘story play’. These ‘play’ statistics had a direct and profound influence on the work of journalists in the Nairobi office who referred to them when discussing, debating, and legitimising their story decisions (for both economic and general news), as illustrated in this morning news meeting interaction between the slot, an economic reporter and a general news reporter (GN) (13.8.09):

Slot: The Puntland president and another official, I think the Minister of the State, are blaming each other for the Pakistani killings yesterday.

GN: [Splutters] Well, we'll take that!

[Pause]

Slot: Yes?

GN: Didn't you see the play from yesterday's story?

Slot: No

GN: Well it was huge. And if two officials are blaming each other for the killing, it's an obvious day two story.

Slot: Okay

GN: Push for anything you can from Somalia, from anyone.

In this manner, information from clients is provided directly to journalists, and influences their news decisions – or at least, the way they justify their news decisions. It is a clear mechanism through which values external to the journalistic field (i.e. the information needs of business clients) were able to enter into it and influence decision-making processes. Through exposure to these figures, as well as feedback from London, journalists built a sense of what clients and 'the desk' (their term for the editorial team in London) wanted.

Resource decisions

The London editorial team is responsible for a variety of resource-allocation decisions, which are made with financial news clients in mind. The Nairobi team would contact London with proposals for travel, or requests for a new correspondent/stringer. The journalists in the office all felt that, if the end was a financially-relevant story, the funding was more likely to be granted. For example, travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo was more likely to be

approved for a story on minerals than a story on a humanitarian issue, such as mass rape. David Clarke, deputy bureau chief, commented that these resource decisions clearly conveyed the editorial position: “obviously, priorities come up when you want to send someone, and costs come up. They have to make a call, and you get a clear idea of what their priorities are”. These priorities were, Clarke elaborates, the needs and desires of TR’s live screen clients.

Praise and censure

An important element of the London-Nairobi feedback loop was praise and censure. Congratulations from within the institution bestow a form of symbolic capital, enhancing the prestige of the journalist who receives them. Journalists who wrote stories that got ‘good play’ were congratulated – often in public emails. This praise was primarily given for stories on issues that were important to the market. As Cawthorne commented:

What’s a great story for Reuters? A story that moves the markets. That’s a story that people get congratulated for now... Whereas [with general news] there’s less interest for them, there’s much less internal congratulations for those stories.

A journalist – in the bureau, or a stringer around the region – could also be openly censured by email for missing a story. Criticism was particularly forceful when a journalist missed a story that Bloomberg covered, or were slower to cover a story than Bloomberg. Elias, the Ugandan stringer, described the importance that Reuters placed on beating Bloomberg in the following exchange:

Interviewer: So when you’re getting feedback from Nairobi, do they want you to be competing with Bloomberg maybe more than they do, say, AP?

Elias: [Laughter] Oh yeah. Number one competitor: Bloomberg. Number two competitor: Bloomberg.

Number three competitor: Bloomberg. They are. If they beat me, I am in trouble. Bloomberg, Dow Jones. But really, Bloomberg.

Interviewer: So they're not as concerned about AFP, AP?

Elias: No. Bloomberg, Dow Jones.

Interviewer: So when you're in a press conference, and you see a Bloomberg guy, you're really running as fast as you can.

Elias: Yeah, racing. I get in my car, and I rev up to about 120 [laughs]. Yeah yeah. You really have to work fast, and try to put out stuff before he will. But if you can put it out in the same minute, fine. If one minute ahead of him, better. If one hour ten minutes – you'll be a hero.

The rivalry with Bloomberg made the journalists feel as though they needed to work longer and harder at their jobs, a sense that was consciously fostered by the managers (see also Bantz 1985). This pressure led journalists to produce stories that did not necessarily 'fit' their news values, for fear that Bloomberg would cover them, and they would be censured for missing a story. As Helen, the chief economic reporter commented:

the threshold is low because of Bloomberg, they're our big competition with financial news. And because they run all sorts of stories – very small-scale stories, that's helped us get things past our editors. Things we would definitely have passed on in the past, we're now producing because they do it.

New hires, new posts, and promotion of economic journalists

One of the most significant ways in which management influences the values of a newsroom is through its hiring, firing, and promotion practices. Researchers looking at journalistic fields have particularly emphasised the importance of new entrants, who (because they bring new habitus and dispositions to their work), have the potential to radically alter – or reinforce – the values of an organisation or field (see for instance Benson 1998: 468;

Benson & Neveu 2005: 6). Marchetti for example, in discussing the development of specialisms in the French journalistic field, writes:

Perhaps more than any other factor, the massive arrival of new generations of journalists has contributed to the transformation of specialization, especially those subfields in their formative stages (2005: 73).

At Thomson Reuters, a new generation of economic reporters was being hired across the African continent. As Cawthorne stated:

More and more. All around the region. As people go and jobs open up, it's the people with economic specialties who get the jobs. We're evolving. So we're becoming much more economically specialized.

These hires were being made with the explicit intention of building an economic file that could compete with Bloomberg's. As Clarke noted:

The priorities will be to expand the economic coverage – especially the competition around here and in the gulf is with Bloomberg – it's getting a lot more intense, and they're adding staff here there and everywhere.

Between 2007 and 2009 many of the Nairobi office's HR decisions reflected the need to bolster the economic file. In Uganda, Elias was recruited from a position as a business journalist at Kampala's *Daily Monitor*. In the Nairobi office, a Kenyan was recruited to serve as an additional economic reporter (while no general news staff were added). The 'Chief economic reporter' position was created (there was no equivalent 'Chief of general news') and a new Deputy Bureau Chief, David Clarke, was appointed with a pedigree background in finance (he studied Economics at Cambridge and worked at *Euro Money* and Bloomberg before joining Reuters). While I was in the office Clarke was interviewing for the role of Bureau Chief and was awarded the position following the end of this research.

These staffing decisions were made because the individuals concerned already possessed the professional habitus that Reuters was looking to expand in order to compete with Bloomberg. As Cawthorne noted, “the last couple of years, we’ve made this shift to investor-focused news and David fits that mould, he comes from that background”. Clarke’s personal journalistic values were clearly aligned with those of the ‘new Reuters’; he did not need to look for financial angles in stories; he *saw* the news in these terms. When I asked what he thought was the “most important” story in East Africa, he replied: “How the global financial crisis is impacting the biggest markets in the regions – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mauritius”. I asked him whether general news was still important, and he replied by pointing to the financial implications of general news stories. More than any of the other journalists in the office, David used “we” in discussing Reuters’ work – suggesting a comfortable overlap of values, approaches and practices.

Reuters Nairobi’s new hires began to change journalistic practices in the office. Both David and the new economic journalist Duncan ‘did things differently’ from the other journalists: they wrote news that was more orientated towards economic issues: both seeking out economic stories, and emphasising economic frames in general news stories they wrote. Importantly, these new entrants had an impact on the organisational culture, and their presence and interactions with colleagues changed the way things were done. This was most visible when the new entrants were acting as ‘slot’ and running news meetings.

In a typical morning news meeting, the slot would begin by discussing the big stories around the region, usually focusing on general news. Towards

the end of the meeting, the slot might say something brief like, “have we got commodities?” and Duncan (economic correspondent) or Helen (chief economic correspondent) would simply nod, or occasionally elaborate if there was a particularly important shift in the figures. Because the market/commodity reports were done regularly, such questions were a matter of routine rather than opportunities for discussion.

When Duncan, the economic correspondent, was running the news meeting things were decidedly different. Duncan would start meetings with the market reports. He did this even though, as the chief economic reporter points out to him in this extract (from 27.8.09), these were not always of interest to the other journalists.

[Meeting starts]

Slot (Econ): Right. We've got the corporate results. And there's a new entry to the Tata story.

SE: Yes, it's something about capacity doubling over the last 30 days.

Slot: What do they do?

SE: They're a wholesaler. We can talk about this later, I think it's boring for everyone else.

Slot Tea records are high for 2nd week running. Coffee crop estimates for the season.
[To Helen] When does that season start? September?

Bourdieu suggests that agents do not simply work to accumulate capital, they also seek to valorise the forms of capital they possess. This provides a compelling interpretation of Duncan's behaviour. By convention, the other journalists tended to start their meetings with what they perceived to be the most important story. This was sometimes made explicit – on 4.8.09 for example, the slot began the meeting by saying, “So the big story is obviously

Somalia and the Australian thing”. By starting meetings with the business results, Duncan moved his work to the top of the agenda – just as the Thomson Reuters management would likely want him to do.

Within the news meetings, as they discussed whether a story was newsworthy or not, Duncan and David were both more likely to refer to economic considerations. The arguments and legitimations they presented for stories tended to revolve around “impact on market,” “size of company,” “extent that a strike would disrupt businesses,” and so on. By referring to these criteria, the terms of debate were shifted towards market-derived criteria, and away from common journalistic logic.

Another way in which the new hires altered practices at the office was through training and peer to peer feedback. Duncan was active in training stringers – most notably, the courts stringer; he also taught Frank, the humanitarian correspondent, how to use the data software, because he thought it would be “good for his career”. Duncan provided a great deal of feedback to stringers around the region. In these ways, he disseminated his values to those around him, and reinforced the new values of the newsroom.

The Distribution of Capital

Bourdieu emphasises that newsrooms are hierarchical, structured spaces, where journalists stand in relation to one another in terms of the economic and cultural capital they possess. At the start of this chapter, the journalists in the office are listed according to their formal, hierarchical position (which correlates with their economic capital, i.e. salary). Formal hierarchy and pay

are not the full story, however: journalists also possess cultural capital. In the journalistic field, cultural capital can be measured in terms of experience, perceived quality of writing, prizes, achievements, and so on. However, the qualities and achievements that lead to cultural capital within particular organisations differ – and reflect those organisations’ positions in a wider journalistic field. For example, at a tabloid newspaper, a journalist may accumulate cultural capital through their ability to write sensational stories that cause outrage and upset – this skill would not lead to cultural capital at an elite literary magazine.

The distribution of cultural capital plays an important role in newsrooms. A journalist with more cultural capital is held in higher esteem - they might get more time on a story, or the best photographer to accompany them on trips, or the most interesting interview (Schultz 2011). High capital individuals also have more influence in newsroom decisions. As Schultz notes, an experienced journalist saying “now that’s a good story” will have more sway in an editorial conference than an intern saying the same thing (2011: 86). High capital individuals generally also enjoy greater autonomy in their work. This was seen in how the different journalists ran the morning news meeting. For example, Dan, the general news correspondent, did not always hold news meetings when he was working slot. He explained this to me one morning, commenting, “When I’m on slot, I tend to make the decisions by myself. I’ve been here long enough that they trust me and I’m prepared to defend my decisions.” This is an example of someone who holds high cultural capital operating with higher autonomy. If a more junior correspondent was working

slot, they would hold the meeting as a matter of course – they would not have the authority to run the shift as they saw fit.

In the Nairobi office, cultural capital was primarily derived from a journalist's ability to 'perform' – that is, to do their job to a high standard under immense pressure and tight deadlines. In the Reuters Nairobi office, a journalist with a Pulitzer would not necessarily be prestigious and respected – for that they would also need to be capable of writing a story on the price of wheat in under twelve minutes.

At Reuters, being able to 'perform' had two components. First, knowing 'what the desk wants' – that is, being aware of the Reuters news values and being able to discern whether a story or event was "newsworthy" according to this schema. The journalists seemed to think this was a core – if not definitional – aspect of what it meant to be a good journalist; for example, they would make statements like, "I'm a good journalist – I know what the desk want" or, "Yes, I'd say I'm good at my job – I know what London is looking for". Second, in order to 'perform', a journalist needed to be able to write a story that met the organisation's standards: these include terms of speed, accuracy, and writing conventions.

Having these two abilities made you a master in the field. As Dan, the general news correspondent stated:

I spent 2½ years on the foreign desk and I think it definitely made me a better field journalist – 'cause I know what the desk wants. I know how they operate – I can send them the right news, in the right format.

Capital redistribution and its implications

Agents stand in structured positions; but these positions are not stable – they reflect shifting capital in the organisation/field/social space. The merger of Thomson and Reuters and the resultant downgrading of the status of general news altered the distribution of capital in the newsroom. First, it became clear, through all of the various feedback loops detailed above (praise, censure, email instructions, new hires and promotions), that the economic beat and (by extension) the economic journalists were more important to the organisation than were the general news journalists. Second, and more subtly, the merger devalued various forms of cultural capital that had structured the newsroom in the past. For example, some of the more senior journalists in the office had been covering conflict in East Africa for the past twenty years. Their experience, insight, and skill they had accumulated would be valued at an organisation that privileges hard news reporting – that reporter might be seen as indispensable and potentially promoted up the ranks. But it is not so valued at an economic-orientated outlet. Those journalists who were ‘old hands’ held certain respect in the eyes of their peers but this was no longer translatable into financial capital or organisational mobility; and, as new recruits with new values increasingly populated the organisation, even the respect they commanded decreased.

Finally, the London news desk wanted different news stories in 2009 than it had in 2007. This meant that some of the journalists who had developed their sense of news values under the old regime struggled to adjust. Those who did not adjust appropriately lost cultural capital as their ability to ‘perform’ fell. For example, one of the senior journalists had been working in

the office for several years, and had developed their sense of newsworthiness under the old regime. With the merger came a sudden shift in the determinants of newsworthiness, which was difficult to take on board:

I actually found that very hard to adjust to, really quite hard. I didn't adapt well to the change. I still have the older news values, and this story would come along and I'd say, 'that's not news'.... I'd been taught not to care about these stories.... When I started, I didn't care about the markets. Nobody did. Something small like that would come along and we'd say, who cares, it's not important. Now the things we would have called rubbish are being taken by the desk.

Not being able to predict what the desk would take lowered this journalist's cultural capital.

Such capital redistribution serves to further reinforce habitus change in an institution. Agents with an 'appropriate habitus' (i.e. one aligned with the organisation's) are more likely to be promoted, to command authority and respect, and to have autonomy in their work; because of their prestige, they speak from a more important position. Notably, in Reuters Nairobi, those journalists who felt they did not intuitively understand the new regime of news-values would defer to their peers who did. This was particularly relevant in the case of the two economic journalists. The chief economic reporter noted that she did not always 'get' what the desk was asking of her, whereas Duncan, her junior, did:

Duncan had only just come, and he found it very easy. He was ambitious and he wanted to produce lots of stories and get approval. So he just went for it. ...Me and Duncan still disagree on stories. I'll say it's not a story, he'll say let's do it, and the desk will lap it up. I'll think something is a story and they won't want it. He gets it more than me. I really don't know if I can change this, and learn the new ways.

Helen knew that Duncan's values were more 'aligned' with the needs of the desk than her own, and so was inclined to defer to Duncan's opinion. Despite his more junior position, Duncan's cultural capital – in particular, his ability to perform – gave him status. This meant he was listened to more, and, granted this status, was able to reinforce the economic orientation in the newsroom.

Finally, it is important to note that journalists are strategic agents. When the privileged capital changes, journalists may retrain and reskill themselves in certain techniques and practices. One journalist in the office, for example, was looking into studying Economics part-time at the University of Nairobi. If journalists retrain, they acquire an economic habitus that further reinforces change in the office.

The factors outlined above – directions, praise, new hires, resource decisions – led to a reshuffling of capital, which reinforced the shift in the practices and values of the newsroom. I asked Cawthorne if he thought the general news correspondents would start intuitively writing economic news, without having to be told. He said, "I think they've got it already, actually". And, as seen above, in news meetings and in their daily work, the journalists did routinely evoke finance/the markets as important criteria for assessing newsworthiness; they actively sought out business news; and they would cut general news before they cut financial news. In short, there was an increasing consensus that economic news was a priority in both talk and practice. As the general news correspondent commented:

People are always disagreeing in media organisations. At the end of the day, it's quite a subjective business. So you will disagree with editors, they will disagree with your calls. But in the last few years, I think it's become more uniform. And since this merger with Thompson, there's a lot more focus. People disagree over things, but not too much.

Did this mean that the general news journalists had experienced a transition in their core news values – those that Schudson (2005: 188) describes as “deeply rooted in human consciousness”? No, they had not. The journalists had simply become more strategic in their work, and a great deal more jaded, as the final section of this analysis illustrates.

Habitus Disconnect: Strategy and Game playing

How did individuals negotiate the change in habitus at the Reuters Nairobi office? Of the ten journalists in the office, only the two discussed above – David and Duncan – had a habitus that seemed to fit, seamlessly, with that of the ‘new Reuters’. Both of these journalists had learned their trade in a business news setting: their early professional socialisation occurred in a similar environment to that which prevailed at the new Reuters: they did not need to un-learn their training or news values. However, the majority of journalists in the office were experiencing what might be described as ‘habitus disconnect’ – that is, a disjunction between their professional news values, and those of the news organisation/field in which they operated. Bourdieu calls this state of affairs ‘hysteresis’⁴⁰.

These eight journalists were recruited prior to the editorial shift and had been trained in Reuters’ ‘old values’. Unusually, one of the journalists

⁴⁰ The word hysteresis is rather melodramatic and perhaps misleading. I have tended to refer throughout to ‘habitus disconnect’, as it implies difference rather than failing.

experiencing a disconnection was the bureau chief.⁴¹ Cawthorne describes himself as a “correspondent of the old school.” He was educated at Cambridge, trained at a local newspaper in Yorkshire, and was a hardened correspondent, following twenty years of general, political and conflict reporting around the world. When asked, “what is a good news story?” Cawthorne described two forms of journalism he aspired to, both of which had the ultimate goal of “shedding light”. In the first category were stories on injustice, and he cited a story he’d written on the exploitation of indigenous people as drug mules in Mexico. In the second category were human interest stories that were “intrinsically interesting or funny or inspiring” – but that also shed light on a wider issue – and he gave the example of a man in North Ethiopia who built a coffee machine from the munitions of a battle field. Telling these stories brought him great personal and professional gratification.

Cawthorne felt very strongly that these stories – what he considered to be “journalism at its best” – no longer had a place in the TR newsroom:

The thing I find sad is that both those categories of stories don’t now fit into the Reuters philosophy... Less and less we’re doing it. There’s less resources for them, less interest for them, there’s much less internal congratulations for those stories... I know that Reuters don’t really care – either of those stories, Reuters wouldn’t care about either of them.

As a result of the shift in Reuters’ news values, he had become increasingly cynical and unhappy in his work:

I love journalism and my colleagues but have no love for the company. None for the corporate point of view at all... I’d change tomorrow, but there are other considerations – my family security and things. But yeah, I’ve thought of leaving hundreds of times.

⁴¹ The fact that Cawthorne was still the bureau chief perhaps illustrates just how recently these changes were made. Not long after this study, he left Nairobi Reuters, and Clarke was promoted to bureau chief.

Cawthorne is driven by both economic and cultural desires. He needs to pay his bills and wanted to be seen as successful and competent within the organisation; but he also sought professional satisfaction and recognition from peers, commenting, “I’m much happier now when my mate from *The Guardian* says, ‘wow that was a hell of a story’. That I respect much more than our internal stuff.”

How did Cawthorne juggle these two, often competing, goals? The answer is: strategically. Cawthorne employed a variety of tactics in order to be able to pursue his own news interests within the framework imposed by the Reuters organisation.

Cawthorne was required to emphasise the financial news that his managers and clients wanted to read, and he managed his correspondents and stringers accordingly. He also oversaw an incredibly successful transition in the bureau’s values and practices. However, Cawthorne also worked to pursue his own interests, as distinct from those of the organisation. He used ‘market impact’ as a legitimisation strategy in order to obtain resources and space to follow his own general news interests. For example, he described having “won” a battle with his manager to get a new stringer sent to Eritrea. I asked him why he thought management had agreed to this:

Bureau chief: Well, you know, Eritrea is a player in the region. It’s always been a player. I told them about how we had to be there if things blew up – if the regime collapses or another war starts.

Interviewer: But even then, with the financial emphasis?

Bureau chief: Oh yes, well there’s also a lot of interest in the gold and mining there. So I made sure to tell my bosses all about that – that was the card I played.

That is, Cawthorne began by appealing to the cultural and symbolic side of news production – the desire to ‘be there’ and be the first when something big happened. But, in the face of resistance, he “played his card” – by appealing to the news value that trumped all others – impact on market. Demonstrably, Cawthorne understood the newsroom, and his position within it, as a strategic game.

Cawthorne would also make use of resources that had been allocated to financial stories to pursue his own general news interests. For example, one of the forms of journalism he felt was most important were human-interest stories that resulted from having spent an extended period in a country ‘looking around’. These were the stories that had the least value in the new Reuters, as they had neither financial nor general news impact. To free resources for this work, Cawthorne would ‘piggy back’ them onto financial events:

So, there was a conference in Ethiopia, we send someone there and then for 10 days we tell them to disappear, ‘Go – I don’t want to hear from you’. So we keep a little bit of tradition, but we have to be a bit more crafty.

Again, Andrew’s sense that his work involved strategic negotiations in which he needed to be “crafty” is emphasised. If he had been up front about his desire to send a correspondent to Ethiopia for a general news story, it is likely the management would have said no. But if he could get an accomplished piece written by a stringer who was ‘there anyway,’ Cawthorne knew it would likely be published, although it was not initially approved.

Cawthorne would also take advantage of existing interest in a story to cover related issues that he felt were important, on-going or neglected. Pirates

in Somalia, for example, had been taking hostages for several years prior to 2009, but when Andrew and others pitched these stories, Reuters wasn't interested: "we were writing it, it just wasn't getting published. We have no say on what gets published". But when the pirates captured an American captain, the news story exploded around the world:

The satisfying thing there is that we feel we can take advantage of the fact it's suddenly in the spotlight... we can insert information into that. I was writing that story, and high up I was saying, high up in the story I would make the point, 'it has taken the capture of an American hostage to throw a spotlight on a long running saga and little notice has been taken of the 200 other Filipino hostages...'

In these instances, the stories had traction because clients were already interested, and Cawthorne seized on such opportunities to insert copy that reflected his own news interests.

Cawthorne's professional habitus was similar to Dan's, the general news correspondent, who was also trained in a traditional British media field. Dan was most interested in traditional general news stories and getting professional admiration from general news peers (he particularly relished beating his friend at AP to the story). Like Cawthorne, Dan had adapted similarly to the new Reuters; he also worked strategically to insert what he felt were important issues and content into stories; and understood this as a 'game':

So if we're covering drought in Uganda, it's no longer: this woman had to walk for 300 km with a child on her back, personalising the plight and so on. We're much more: this is what's happened, this is the implication for markets, wheat prices, political stability, exports and so on. But of course you can be sneaky, and put some of the other things in.

The humanitarian reporter was also “sneaky”: he would find the humanitarian story he wished to cover, and then work backwards to find its financial angle:

pretty much every singly thing does have a financial component so it's ok – you can look for it and find it. Say people die in CAR, deepest Africa, well, there are probably minerals there, some sort of financial component. And that's just what we do now.

Finally, the journalists had identified ‘favourite editors’ to target in London: those who were trained in the ‘old way’, who might – just might – be more inclined on a slow news day to respond to appeals for resources and time to write general news. As the chief economic correspondent comments:

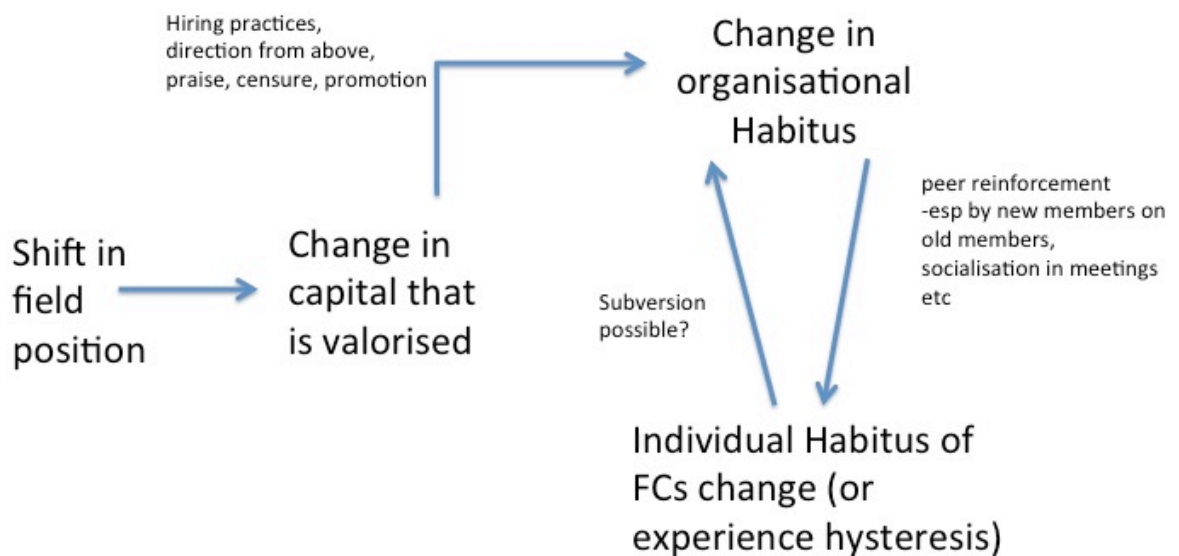
Sometimes you can argue for your story, there's that grey area, and you can say to the London editors, ‘this is important because...’... You have some opportunity to do that. And everyone has their favourite editors who give them more scope. But you can only fight so much.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that journalistic practices are directly connected to a news outlet's ‘position’ within a journalistic field. In the first, historical section, the chapter started to plot the connection between ‘position’ and the internal distribution of capital within Reuters. When the organisation moved, over its long history, from stock information provider, to hard news leader, and then returned to financial news, the internal structure of the company (the international distribution of capital) was altered: Journalists rose and fell in prominence and prestige within the company depending on the capital the agency sought from without. In 2007-8, the implications of Reuters' long journey towards the economic pole – that started with Monitor's introduction in the 1970s – finally reached the bureaus of Africa. The focus of editorial

behaviours changed, and financial clients were prioritised. This was communicated to the journalists in Nairobi through prolific and consistent communication channels; resource decisions; praise and censure; and news hires and promotions – all of which created incentives for more financial reporting. Cumulatively, these techniques shifted the distribution of capital within the bureau. Journalists that possessed the appropriate ‘new habitus’ held more prestige and autonomy in the newsroom. Those who did not experienced discomfort and dissatisfaction. The altered capital operated to reinforce the changes. A rather crude flow chart of this process is helpful for illustrative purposes:

Table 2: Field Theory and the dynamic news organisation



It is not novel to suggest that journalists provide the news that their audiences wish to read. A political-economic analysis of the Thomson Reuters outlet could have established this much. Field theory adds two further elements to such an analysis: first, it shows how these macro-level influences operate (that is: how they are translated, through internal capital and practices). As Neveu writes, concepts such as habitus and capital can help to “shed light on how the whole social structure is present in the tiniest interactions and routines in the newsroom, an element underrated even by the subtlest of interactionist contributions” (Neveu 2007, 344).

Secondly, it draws our attention to the creative contribution of individual journalists; and shows that these are not always aligned with those of news organisations. There is a long history of journalists being ‘sneaky’ and ‘strategic’. Wolfe (2005), for example, writes about journalists in Soviet Russia using subversive tactics to communicate a subversive view within the organisationally accepted Communist rhetoric (see also Lauk & Kreegipuu 2010). My use of ‘subversive’ here is not political per se, I refer to these authors simply to point out that the role of the individual can be relevant and important, even in the most seemingly controlled, regulated and structured of environments.

Notably, this analysis has suggested that, while journalists can change their practices, they find it very hard indeed – if not impossible – to change their core values. For many of the general news journalists, their work days could be better considered as exercises in ‘game playing’ and performance.

Implications: international news content

It seems likely that TR will further solidify its commitment to economic reporting in the future. Since the merger, all new hires have had an economic background. If this trend continues, as Cawthorne and Clarke predict it will, the bureau will consolidate its economic habitus. In addition, should markets and foreign direct investment and development indices in East Africa continue to grow as projected, the appetite for international business news on the region will only grow.

On the one hand, this trend seems troubling. Although Reuters has orientated its production to serve financial clients, its news copy is reproduced by media outlets around the world, disseminated widely on the internet, and is an important leader for other news producers in East Africa. When these outlets follow Reuters, they are being led away from the logic of journalistic norms, and towards the ethos and logic of the market. This has implications for the topics that media audiences will be exposed to.⁴² As we saw in this study of Reuters, the wire focuses on issues pertaining to ‘political risk’ and less on issues pertaining to human lives. Readers will see more on industrial action, mineral prospecting, and so on. These stories, and the framing of these stories through financial lenses, may diminish audiences’ exposure to complexity, and the political and humanitarian dimensions of issues. Aidan Hartley gives an example from his time as a correspondent in Jerusalem, when Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, was assassinated:

⁴² It will not, in all likelihood change which countries receive coverage; one of the most consistent findings in studies of international news is that coverage is strongly correlated to a country’s financial relevance (e.g., CARMA report 2006). That is, even at the more ‘pure’ journalistic outlets, coverage tends to correlate to the countries that investors have the greatest interest in. The impact is more likely to be on the topics covered about these countries.

I was standing in the office of the *Financial Times* correspondent and we were looking at the markets. And there was a blip of 1% in the markets. The FT correspondent said, 'This has just become a story about the markets – this is not a story about politics'. And that is just not true. Politics in that region are complicated, emotional and they're intense. The repercussions of that assassination are on-going. To boil that down to a financial story – it just doesn't reflect the reality or importance of the event.

Furthermore, as Cawthorne points out, some of the most important forms of journalism – background and human interest – the stories that he believes connect people and fosters global empathy – will not be produced under a new economic regime (indeed, they are hardly produced today).

One interesting, and potentially positive aspect of this shift, however, is that economic reporting is less inclined towards sensationalism, hyperbole, and Afro-pessimism – some of the most commonly voiced criticisms of the international news coverage of Africa. Keane writes, for example, that he is tired of

hearts of darkness coverage that reduces every African problem to questions about tribalism or native corruption and refuses to recognize sprouts of hope where they exist. (2004: 8-9).

Economic journalism avoids this Afro-pessimism in a number of ways. First, as we have seen, economic editors are not particularly interested in humanitarian issues. Second, business journalism is structured around a specialised form of discursive practices that are geared towards conveying information: it has little to no room for biblical narratives, metaphors or sensational, emotional statements. Third, economic journalism is more 'colour-blind' than general news journalism. Evaluating whether to write on a business launch in Kenya, a journalist will consider the size of the business,

likely impact on the sector, potential export prospects, and so on. They will not give as much weight to whether this business is owned by a Kenyan, Chinese, or British investor. In this regard, economic reporting has less inherent Western bias than was seen, for instance, when the general news journalists discussed whether they would report on a plane crash or not. Fourth – and this seems a particularly welcome addition – business journalism focuses on growth and business opportunities. In this sense, economic reporting actually produces ‘positive news’ on Africa. It highlights, among other things, indigenous solutions, the spread of technology, the emergence of new sectors, and local entrepreneurs. These are the “sprouts of hope” (2004:8) that Keane suggests are currently missing from the international news discourse.

Finally, the rise of economic reporting at Reuters in particular may help pave the way for local-national journalists to ascend to management positions. Economic reporting is more predictable than general news reporting. It seeks to fulfil information needs rather than entertain, shock, or move a Western client base. As a result, it is easier to quantify the importance or relevance of an economic story, without being familiar with a client’s normal cultural points of reference.⁴³ Boyd-Barrett (1980) notes that one of the justifications for the “colonial model” of bureau structures is that, Western journalists are purported to have a greater understanding of their home audiences. However, this understanding is less necessary where reporting is economically driven. In short, the more TR abandons its commitment to general news production,

⁴³ General news, as Peterson (2001) writes, is premised on the notion that an event is out of the ordinary; to determine that an event is out of the ordinary, one must have a cultural frame of reference in mind.

the easier it will be for a Kenyan to reach the top of the newsroom hierarchy. Cultural capital in the office today, we saw, is largely derived through an individual's ability to predict what stories the desk/clients will like, and deliver these stories. Any journalist with a background in economics, a keen understanding of the global economy, and ambition, has the potential to deliver this news.

6. Positioning the Newswires

The given analysis of Reuters has suggested that there is a global journalistic field in which agencies can be ‘placed’. This position, and the capital the outlet seeks, informs news practices. This section briefly surveys the other major newswires working in Africa, and their place in the global field.

These news wires would all merit full field analyses of their practices in reporting Africa. However, we are here limited to a brief discussion of two questions: where can they be ‘positioned’ in the global journalistic field, and to what extent are they guided by its doxa in their reporting on Africa? The section draws primarily on interviews with bureau chiefs in Nairobi, FCs working in these bureaus, and interviews with stringers in Uganda. The purposes of this section are to further illustrate the connection between ‘position’ in the global field and journalistic practise and to broaden the research beyond Reuters for comparison and consideration.

Bloomberg: news production at the economic pole

Bloomberg is a financial newswire positioned closer to the economic pole than Reuters. Like Reuters, Bloomberg’s primary product, from which its substantive profits derive, is a terminal that provides clients with data and information about stocks and markets. In 1990, Bloomberg introduced a news service to accompany its terminal. This was done for two reasons: 1. Michael Bloomberg believed that news would make his terminals more competitive – reducing Reuters competitive advantage in the live screen market; and 2. News would help to raise the profile and branding of the company (Bartram

2003). To this end, Bloomberg followed an aggressive policy of allowing client newsrooms worldwide to take a Bloomberg terminal free of charge, providing that Bloomberg was credited with a certain number of stories in their papers. Media outlets were incentivised to do this, as it would give them access to Bloomberg's terminal and its financial figures; in return, they would be committed to printing Bloomberg stories – a policy that Kadlec has called: “unhealthy pressure to give Bloomberg the notice it craved” (quoted in Bartram 2003: 391).

Michael Bloomberg has explicitly stated that the journalistic division is an auxiliary to the real business of selling the Bloomberg terminal: “The reason we have the news is to get people to lease our machine” (quoted in Craig 2001: 10). The distinction between Reuters and Bloomberg is that the latter does not have any paying media clients that it needs to satisfy.

The Bloomberg correspondent in Nairobi estimated that 75% of his workday was spent on business related news. The remaining 25% was general news, but this was always developed and presented through a financial lens. For example, he would write about an election in the region – but this would be done in order to shed light on investment stability. Asked whether he ever covered humanitarian issues such as famine or refugees crises, the Bloomberg correspondent replied:

Sometimes I report on famine because food security is important to markets...it's interesting to our commodity dealers. For example, maize dealers. Food security might really affect things for them. It could affect the price of maize.

Here, the FC clearly illustrates the extent to which Bloomberg is located on the economic end of the pole, with their values and production practices shaped

by factors and considerations that emerge outside the journalistic field. The news value of famine is understood in terms of impact on markets, rather than a more traditional journalistic approach, which might draw attention to human side of the story, geo-politics, the environment and so on.

Bloomberg is not the first outlet to occupy this position, as we have already seen; when Julius Reuters first founded his newswire, it reported exclusively on news that was relevant to financiers. Graham Storey describes financial reporters at this time, echoing the words of the Bloomberg correspondent today, “it is merely the bearing on the market that matters. A potato disease is reported from Eastern Germany: the concern is only for the effect on prices” (1951: 15-16).

Bloomberg is not always considered to ‘belong’ to the journalistic field – commentators note that its news is an auxiliary, and its content is created for financial clients (Craig 2001). However, Bloomberg does engage with, and provides news for, the global journalistic field. Firstly, it provides free terminals in newsrooms, which traditional media outlets may draw upon (indeed, which media outlets may be coerced to draw upon). Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, it competes with Reuters; as we have seen, this competition has pushed Reuters into providing more financial news in the desire to retain its competitive advantage.

AP and AFP: news production towards the symbolic pole

Further towards the symbolic pole than Reuters are the two general newswires, AFP and AP. The Associated Press is a not for profit cooperative

owned by its contributing newspapers, radio and television in the United States; its news production is orientated around the news needs of its media clients (who also own the organisation). AFP – formerly Havas, the oldest newswire in the world – was reformed into an independent civil entity in 1957 under French statutes. It operates under commercial rules, but a large portion of its income comes from subscriptions (effectively, indirect subsidies) from the French Government. These subsidies, to some extent, ensure the financial viability of the newswire. Statutes prevent government or private interest's intervention into the wire's editorial policy that, according to its statutes, “mandate absolute independence and neutrality”. AFP is governed by a network of senior journalists and, like AP, produces news almost exclusively for a media clientele.

AFP is widely seen, alongside Reuters, as the ‘other’ leading newswire in Africa. This is commonly explained by the fact that AFP has colonial ties to Africa, and a history of strong reporter presence (Biesla 2008).

AFP had considerably more resources for its reporting on Africa than the AP. While AFP has an office of 5 or 6 journalists in Nairobi, AP has only 3. AFPs stringers around the region are also paid considerably better than those at AP. One AP stringer, for example, reported receiving only 10 US cents per word for his stories; he wrote ten or fifteen stories a month – and with an average length of 100 to 200 words, his monthly pay might be as low as \$100 US. The AFP stringer was paid at least double this. This lack of resources meant that AP struggled to attract and retain professional, trained stringers in their network, as they could earn more working elsewhere: as English teachers, local reporters, and at other international outlets. In multiple sites,

FCs suggested that the AP stringers were less professional than other journalists; in interviews, the AP stringers in Uganda and Sudan both suggested that they would be equally happy working in other sectors, and did not feel a strong pull towards journalism itself.

Interviews with the bureau chiefs and other FCs/stringers at AP and AFP confirm that the work of these newswires is orientated around general news production, and crafted to appeal to other media producers. Unprompted, many drew a sharp distinction with the work being done – even by general news journalists at Reuters. As the AP bureau chief commented, “If I wanted to go work at Reuters, I’d have to read up on economics, on commodity markets”. Both the AFP and AP bureau chiefs noted that they had room and support to write feature-length general news stories in a way that Reuters journalists did not.

At these more symbolic agencies, the big stories were described by the journalists as “traditional news stories” – and they listed news-worthiness values that would resonate with readers of Galtung and Ruge (1965): drama, importance, impact, and so on. One AP correspondent succinctly summarised: “Anything that goes boom, basically, we’re interested in it”. A stringer at AFP commented: “The big things are: something bad happens, like fighting or killing; natural disasters; humanitarian things; and targeting of journalists and visitors and things”. Both bureau chiefs stated that Somalia was their biggest story.

Notably, neither AP nor AFP were strongly informed by ‘story play’ statistics, as Reuters was. They wrote, they believed, the stories that were important, with less regard to their audiences. And, as they were the ones ‘in

the field,' they felt that their international editors gave them space to make these decisions. The AFP stringer in Uganda, Ben Simon, described his wire:

John-Marc, the news bureau chief, seems to make his decisions as if AFP is a public service – and he tries to do the stories that it *should* do. When he's thinking about what to cover, he's thinking, "does this *belong* on the wire?", not, "will editors pick this up?"

Malcolm Webb had worked as a stringer for AFP in Kampala, and agreed with this sentiment: "I think they're trying to do something a bit different – journalism with integrity". He believed being state-owned gave AFP latitude in its work, and that the wire did not monitor who read its stories: "they don't know who their clients are, which is nice". This was also the case at AP, although resource constraints meant that not all stories could be covered.

Interviews with these journalists also suggested that these outlets were guided in their reporting, as the literature notes, both by the Western doxic value of objectivity, and by Western-centric news values. The journalists in Nairobi, for example, all rejected the notion of peace or development journalism; the prevailing sense was, 'we write what is important – we should not try to change things, simply report them'. There was also a consistent emphasis on stories that had international dimensions, or a Western orientation – an emphasis particularly jarring to local nationals working in the offices. Mustafa, for example, a stringer at AFP, felt that the capture of the American sea captain in Somalia was not news-worthy. However, a great deal of resources were committed to covering it:

Locally, it wasn't important. It wasn't a story. I mean, "An American captain has been in a lifeboat!" – that's not a story. It's not news. Twenty people were killed that day, you know. That's when I realised the international community weren't serious – they're not serious about Somalia. It was like a movie for them.

Xinhua: The New Entrant?

Outside Bloomberg and the 'big three', an important but often overlooked newswire has risen to prominence, particularly in its coverage of Africa: Xinhua, the official wire of the People's Republic of China. Xinhua's presence in Africa is significant – and growing. In half of Africa's countries, they have a bureau with a Chinese national salaried correspondent, and a stringer who writes in English (Xin 2009).

Xinhua is not always taken seriously by media commentators, who point to its track record of silence on important, controversial events, and its lack of timeliness and clarity in reporting (e.g., Balfour 2003). This perception has made it difficult for the wire to find an international audience of willing subscribers, despite offering its terminals to media clients at half the price of AFP and AP, note Stone Fish and Dokoupil (2010):

The challenge is finding an audience for “news” that is best known for its blind spots. The typical Xinhua sentence is thick on the tongue...and often inaccurate by design. In Xinhua's world, the Tiananmen Square massacre never happened, Falun Gong is an evil cult, and the Dalai Lama is the Guy Fawkes of Tibet.

Assessing journalistic practices at the wire, Xin (2008: 58) finds that journalistic codes “remain less important in comparison with political correctness in the Chinese context, particularly in terms of reporting politically sensitive events.” The former head of the wire, Tiang Congmin, has also acknowledged this limitation, noting that because of “historical setbacks and popular perceptions, credibility of our news is doubted to a certain degree” (quoted in Times of India 2007).

In many ways, Xinhua's current structure resembles that of the 'Big Three' prior to their global expansion in the later stages of the twentieth century; that is, when news production at Reuters (and the others) was substantially funded by domestic clients and, catering for these clients, it was more inclined to cover events with the political sensibilities of the home public in mind – what Read (1993) describes as a newswire of Empire. Xinhua's primary audience are in China, and it still reports with these clients foremost in mind.

However, Xinhua is increasingly moving into a global market; it displays what Xin (2006) describes as a globalising tendency. This refers to both a change in the business structure (funds for the agency no longer come entirely from the Party) and the gradual adoption of the reporting norms of the global journalistic field; in the late 90s, the wire started to push its journalists to cover events with greater timeliness; and it stated its commitment to the norms of objectivity (Xin 2006). Xinhua's trajectory appears to support Biesla's claim (2008) that adopting the rules of the global field appears to be a precondition of successful entry, as was the case in Al Jazeera.

This globalising tendency was noted by Daniel Ooko, the English language correspondents in the Xinhua Nairobi bureau. When Ooko started at the bureau in 1999, he describes the newswires as highly dominated by political considerations. News was selected only where it had relevance or interest to Chinese audiences and, significantly, it did not operate by Western norms of the journalistic field: most notably, the notion of balance or adversarial reporting. Ooko stated that he was specifically told he could not

mention opposition political parties, or rebel groups anywhere in the East Africa region who contested the legitimacy of their African state.

These restrictions had been relaxed over the past decade, however. Ooko describes the wire's "news interests" as those things "which can affect the region or have international implications and importance". He believes that issues no longer had to have a specific Chinese relevance in their content, although he notes that if an issue or event directly involves China then they are "definitely more interested in the story – they want me to pay special attention". He also described more freedom for critical and oppositional reporting.

Ooko's sentiments were not shared by Samuel Okir; a Xinhua stringer in Kampala, who had been working for the wire since 2009, and felt that his news work was significantly censored. He felt that Xinhua did not want stories about opposition parties, or any forms of political protest.

The difference these FCs describe may simply reflect their perspective – Ooko had seen the wire relax over a decade, while Okir had come to it with fresh eyes, and a background in the freer press in Kampala. They may also be a reflection of Okir's bureau chief in Kampala being more cautious in his work. In either case, there appeared to be at least some limitations on the freedom of reporting these stringers could pursue.

The issue of 'field membership,' and whether Xinhua belongs to the global field is considered further in the discussion section of the thesis.

‘The Problem with Stringers....’

The wires discussed above all have bureaus in Nairobi, and a network of stringers around East Africa. The Nairobi bureau are in close communication with their international editorial teams, and from the interviews, it appeared that the internal values – the capital that is valorised within these bureau – is in line with the position of the outlet in the global journalistic field. For example, business knowledge and accuracy with figures was seen as a core component of cultural capital at Bloomberg; an appropriate sense of ‘newsworthiness’, and professional competencies in producing fast, engaging text were core cultural capitals at AFP and AP. At the more politically dominated newswire Xinhua, emphasis seemed to be placed on both newswriting and diplomacy skills.

In addition to their Nairobi bureau these wires contract stringers around the East African region, and these frontline producers are not always closely monitored from the headquarters. There is a significant gap in the news production loop between the bureau and their stringers in the field. As we saw in the analysis of the Reuters newswires, a constant frustration for bureau FCs was managing stringers who varied in terms of their ability to produce appropriate, timely news.

The management of stringers was a major challenge at all of the newswires and it was particularly – and consistently – an issue when it came to stringers operating in countries with greater political oppression. These

issues are explored extensively in part IV of this thesis, which looks more closely at the influence of the 'local site' (through its provision of stringers, and obstacles such as oppressive regimes) and how this influences international news content. First, however, we turn to the other 'distribution field' – FCs working for outlets that are located in a field 'back home'.

Part III: The National Field ‘Back Home’

In addition to the global field of journalism, a second distribution field is relevant to the production of foreign news: the national field ‘back home’. Traditional news outlets based within nation states hire FCs to report on foreign events; these news reports are generated to facilitate the news outlet in their strategic positioning in a home field.

This chapter considers one particular home field – the UK. It is based on interviews with all six of the permanent FCs in Nairobi who wrote for print outlets based in the UK. State based, journalistic fields have been widely explored using field theory by scholars who have taken it for granted that media systems emerge within national contexts. This section, however, places that national field within a wider context – we see how it follows and reflects the logics of the global journalistic field, and how this field’s emissaries abroad – the outlet’s FCs, go about their work. It shows how the outlets, in a competitive field, combined with the habitus of agents, produces practise. The analysis of the UK field starts with a vignette; a snap shot of the FCs at work in Nairobi.

7. UK Newspaper correspondents in Nairobi

It's morning in Nairobi and around the suburbs, a handful of permanent newspaper foreign correspondents are waking up and starting their day. Most of them don't have an office, so they work from their kitchen tables or a nearby Java café. Once seated, they open their laptops and attend to the first task of the day: checking the international newswires for story ideas.

Barney at the Financial Times is one of the few correspondents with an office. He sees the Reuters story on oil in Uganda and decides to follow it up. He emails a brief pitch to his editor. Two hours later when the “yes” comes, it doesn't take long to turn the facts from the newswire into a longer story, with slightly more analysis: he makes a phone call for an additional quote, and adds some background information. The Wall Street Journal correspondent might have done the same thing but she's out of the country on holiday, so there will be no African stories in her newspaper this week.

Jonathan Ledgard, the correspondent for The Economist also reads the Reuters oil story with interest. He's one of the only FCs with the luxury of time, and he plans to write a longer, analysis piece on resource limitations around the region. He reflects on the interconnectedness of the world's troubles, and he emails his editor – a man with a PhD in African studies – to start a conversation on the topic.

Mike Pflanz, African correspondent for The Daily Telegraph, is at home, his dog curled up at his feet. He's interested to see an AFP story on child soldiers in Uganda. He wonders whether he could successfully pitch it to his editor and decides no – it's not a 'big' story, and there are no British people

involved. Then he notices an article on AllAfrica, an online amalgamator of news from around Africa. The story is about a baby rhino that has been named Obama because its rhino mother is American and its rhino father is Kenyan. Before Mike finishes reading, he knows it's the story he will be writing today. And he wants to bang his head on the table.

Introduction and Chapter Outline

This chapter explores the production of news on Africa by UK newspaper correspondents in Nairobi. It investigates a number of questions raised in the vignette above, including: what were the journalists looking for when they scanned the international newswires each morning? Were they guided by personal interest, news values, the needs of their organisation, or a combination of all three? Why was Pflanz attracted to child soldiers and dismayed by the Obama-rhino? Why did he feel powerless to write as he wished?

This chapter begins by introducing the UK journalistic field, and the way it has historically been structured around outlets pursuing different profit-making strategies. It then describes the FCs working in Nairobi, and their average work-day. The analysis section explores the foreign correspondent habitus, and how this interacted – clashed with, challenged, or reinforced – the values and priorities of their organizations.

Much of the FCs' work practices, this chapter argues, can be explained with reference to the position of their news outlet in the UK journalistic field. The outlets can be roughly grouped into three main categories or positions,

based on their proximity to the cultural or the economic pole (or located in the middle). These positions are found to be associated with differences in the degree of professional autonomy afforded to FCs in Nairobi. An FC's autonomy, this chapter suggests, is linked to the field position of their outlet, as well as the position of the journalist within the organisation.

In the literature review we saw that the two major production studies of FCs (Morrison & Tumber 1988; Pedelty 1995) reach opposite conclusions on the question of journalistic autonomy. Journalistic autonomy is the ability to make story decisions and write without input from editors. Pedelty suggests that the personal contributions of FCs are minimal; while Morrison and Tumber state that foreign news output reflects the qualities individual journalists. This chapter suggests that both may be right for different subsets of FCs: FC autonomy shifts in relation to field position. "Freedom," as Bourdieu wrote, "is not a property that falls from the sky; it has its degrees, which depend on the position occupied in the social games" (Bourdieu 2005: 43-44).

All of the outlets discussed in this chapter emerged in the UK journalistic field, and their headquarters and editors are based in London. However, these outlets increasingly compete – through their websites, and through global distribution of their print products – in a global journalistic field. The extent to which the UK 'home field' is relevant to their production is discussed throughout this chapter.

The UK Journalistic Field

As noted in the literature review, journalism started to emerge as a semi-autonomous field of production in the UK in the mid-nineteenth century. The repeal of the taxes on knowledge led to a drop in the price of newspapers, which made them accessible to a greater number of people. This attracted entrepreneurs to the newspaper business, who launched outlets to make profit, and who started to 'take positions' in the market.

Today there is a polarisation in the UK press, between what are commonly referred to as 'tabloid' newspapers and 'broadsheet' (or 'quality') newspapers. This distinction reflects the different historical strategies outlets chose in their pursuit of profit: some went high volume-low cost – expanding readership and revenue from cover sales; others went low volume high cost – fostering a selective, elite readership from which higher advertising revenue could be generated (Thompson 1989).⁴⁴

Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) was a pioneer of the first strategy: in a number of his papers - most notably the *Daily Mail*, launched in 1896 - he employed a range of populist techniques that would lift circulation and cover sales. These included an emphasis on celebrity and society news, illustrations, sport, and sensational material: crime, the bizarre, natural

⁴⁴ Advertising space is not a homogenous commodity: its value depends upon the characteristics of a newspaper's readership. The more wealthy the reader, the more valuable the advertising space. As a result, it is not always in a newspaper's interest to increase its circulation if this 'waters down' the demographics of its readership. Mander describes how *The Times* built its circulation in the 1960s, for example, and notes that this actually undermined its profits: "From 1967 to 1969 *The Times*...sale(s) shot up from 270,000 to 450,000 – a remarkable achievement. But its higher sales made it no more attractive as an advertising medium...adding to the readership just watered down the essential target group and increased the cost of reaching it. A reversal of policy changed the situation with a consequent dramatic improvement in profitability. The circulation is back down to 300,000" (Mander 1978: 75).

disasters, accidents and melodrama, and some politics with a populist overtone (Chalaby 1998: 167-8).⁴⁵

By 1904, the distinction between the two groups of newspapers was marked. Chalaby suggests it continued to grow over the twentieth century: both quality broadsheets and tabloids became more homogenous, and the differences between the two became more obvious (1998: 169).

In the twenty-first century, UK newspapers have a digital element – most of them are ‘digital first,’ meaning news content often appears on the website before it gets printed – and the ability to appeal to audiences, which was historically an art, has now become much more of a science. As journalist Glen Stanaway comments, “the internet lets us measure precisely, virtually every minute, story popularity...the web forces us closer to our readership. Feedback is instant” (quoted in Este et al 2008:17). Editors can use this feedback in a number of ways: for example, making popular stories more prominent on the website, and commissioning similar stories in future.

One of the most significant tools of the digital era is Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). SEO refers to any techniques that make news stories come up more often and nearer the top in internet search engines’, like Google’s, results. SEO involves attempting to pre-empt the algorithms used by search engines, and changing the format of news stories accordingly. For example, including hyperlinks in text, and altering story headlines, introductions and keywords, so that they are in line with what an audience would be likely to search (Dick 2011). To give an example – an SEO technician

⁴⁵ This is not a criticism; as others have suggested, tabloid newspapers have a clear progressive potential, by focusing on issues ignored by elite media; they also provide an alternative space for public engagement (Örnebring and Jonsson 2004).

would want to change the headline “Gotcha,” which *The Sun* famously used for a story about the Falklands War, as this is not what someone searching for news on the topic would input into Google (Richmond 2008).

The extent to which SEO techniques are employed has varied across the UK press market. Some papers, in seeking to increase web hits, have made extensive use of SEO techniques such that their “journalistic output is increasingly written not for the benefit of audiences per se, but for those popular search algorithms which determine ‘relevance’” (Dick 2011: 462). At the ‘quality’ end of the press, however, editors seem to be exercising caution, and the desire to protect their brand’s reputation acts as a counter-weight to commercial imperatives (MacGregor 2007; Dick 2011). Or, as MacGregor comments “social and organisational context rather than technology alone shape the way these online professionals react to their new tool” (2007: 280).

This supports Chalaby’s contention (2008) that technology does not impact the journalistic field directly but rather, that its impact is mediated through the competitive struggles of the field. The internet has given newspaper companies new ways of reaching readers but also further intensified competition for audiences’ attention and for advertising revenues, forcing every title to think about their positioning and how they remain distinct and relevant to their readers (Nielsen 2012: 27).

Today, British newspaper readership is in crisis. Circulation numbers have declined across every demographic (Williams 2010: 224) and almost all newspapers face severe financial constraints. Few outlets have found ways to transform their internet presence into revenue. *The Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times* and *Economist* are the only outlets in this study that

consistently generate profit – the remaining three, *The Independent*, *Guardian* and *Times* suffer significant annual losses. The others make considerable annual losses and are only maintained through alternative ownership models; *The Guardian* is owned by a charitable foundation; *The Independent* by an independently wealthy individual who absorbs its costs; and *The Times* is cross-subsidised by other media in the News International conglomerate.

The role of foreign news in the UK journalistic field

‘Tabloid’ and ‘quality’ newspapers produce foreign news for different reasons. In the more populist newspapers, who aim to increase circulation, foreign news is primarily included only where it may help engage and entertain audiences; in particular, there is an emphasis on ‘soft’ news stories, as well as a focus on the funny, exotic, and strange (Scott 2009).

At the quality newspapers, foreign news serves two purposes. First, these newspapers purport to report on the important happenings of the day and, to this end, must cover ‘important’ foreign events. In 1854, when *The Times* commissioned its first professional foreign correspondent, William Russell Howard, to cover the Crimean War, Manager Mowbray Morris stated: “The public...has long been accustomed to look to *The Times*...for the truth in all things, we disappoint a reasonable expectation when we offer nothing better than reports from other journals, however authentic” (quoted in Knightly 2000: 3). Second, the inclusion of foreign news plays an important symbolic role. The presence of foreign news – particularly with a by-line from

one of the newspaper's own correspondents – signals the newspaper's elite status, and its symbolic value.

UK Newspaper coverage of Africa

As seen in the background section of this thesis, academics have strongly criticised the international news coverage of Africa, and many of these attacks were aimed at UK newspapers (e.g., Brookes 1995; Johnson 2003: xiv; Campbell 2007; Wainaina 2005; Somerville 2009). The UK newspapers have been accused of covering Africa sporadically, simplistically, and employing frames that are paternalistic, negative, and that reify the continent.⁴⁶

In the most recent content analysis of the UK newspapers' coverage of Africa, however, Martin Scott (2009) shows that these criticisms must be contextualised. Comparing the UK newspapers' coverage of Africa to their coverage of China, as well as to local African media outlets' coverage of the continent, he concludes that the UK newspapers are not as 'bad' as many suggest. Scott (2009) compares the character of coverage of Africa in six different UK newspapers, and shows that, far from being uniform, their content varied substantially. Most notably, there were differences in the breadth/depth of stories in tabloids versus quality newspapers. He concludes:

The results of this investigation strongly indicate that, as the main differences were between tabloids and broadsheets, it is the audience demographic rather than the politics of the paper that is of primary importance (2009: 555).

⁴⁶ The UK press is not exceptional in this regard; similar criticisms have been directed at the foreign news coverage in newspapers around the world from the seminal writings of Walter Lippman (1922) and Galtung and Ruge's (1965) to the present day.

One of the key differences was that the tabloids had a greater tendency towards soft news than did the broadsheet newspapers, and omitted op-ed, review sections, or longer features. Of the UK quality papers, Scott also finds key differences between the stories in *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* and concludes that the latter more closely resembles a tabloid in its news coverage of Africa. *The Daily Telegraph* had shorter stories that were more frequently focused on soft news, and it did not include political debate or analysis for African topics.

The Foreign Correspondents

All five newspapers from the UK “quality press” had foreign correspondents based in Nairobi who covered East Africa for their newspaper. In addition, *The Economist* magazine had a foreign correspondent in Nairobi. Published once a week and distributed around the world, *The Economist* is a weekly news magazine and not – as it calls itself – a ‘newspaper’. However, the sample looked to capture all UK print foreign correspondents working in Nairobi, and it is therefore included in this analysis.

Table 3: Full Time UK print FCs in Nairobi, August/Sept 2009

Correspondent	Outlet	Owners
Mike Pflanz	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	Barclay Brothers
Tristan McConnell	<i>The Times</i>	News International
Xan Rice	<i>The Guardian</i>	The Scott Trust
Dan Howden	<i>The Independent</i>	Alexander Lebedev
Barney Jessop	<i>The Financial Times</i>	Pearsons Group
Jonathan Ledgard	<i>The Economist</i>	<i>The Economist Group</i>

Of the six correspondents listed above, two – Jonathan Ledgard for *The Economist* and Barney Jessop for *The Financial Times* – are East Africa correspondents. This means they cover a region of approximately 11 countries. The remaining four newspaper FCs (at *The Guardian*, *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Times*) are responsible for the whole of their outlet’s coverage of East, West, and North Africa, while a correspondent or regular stringer may assist with Southern Africa.

The News Day

The UK daily newspaper correspondents spend the majority of their time in Nairobi, covering events from their home desk or office.⁴⁷ They are expected to

⁴⁷ *The Economist*, a weekly publication, followed a different routine, and is briefly discussed at the end of this section.

report on the important and relevant events taking place across a wide, varied, and complicated region. In order to do this, they rely on the eyes and ears of others – and the most reliable and accessible of these are employed by the newswires.

The journalists started their day by reading the news from Reuters, AFP, and AP, as well as the BBC website. After these outlets, the FCs might check local media, social media, websites and blogs, their email alerts and, occasionally, consult their contacts. All the correspondents described this process in very similar terms. Mike Pflanz at *The Daily Telegraph* comments:

So that's what I'm doing at the start of the day – checking the wires, the newspapers around Africa, a few websites and blogs that I think are good.

Xan Rice at *The Guardian* states:

Story ideas...I get them from the wires, the local press, just generally spending time on the internet. Sometimes I do initiative reporting, but not that often, and it's much harder if you're not in a place

Tristan McConnell at *The Times* tells a similar story:

I get up in the morning and check the news wires and BBC. I should check the local press more, but I don't so much. I see the wires and think, is there anything we can expand on there?

Even when the FCs cover events in Nairobi, their immediate environment, they often rely on the newswires. One correspondent noted that he would not attend Hilary Clinton's press conference in downtown Nairobi, for example, even though he was writing a story on her visit: it would take more than half a day to attend (by the time he had crossed Nairobi, passed

security, waited for her to arrive, listened to the talk, and sat through the questions). Instead, he planned to read the press release and take quotes off the wires.

By mid-morning, having identified a story or stories of interest, the newspaper FCs would send an email pitch to their foreign news editor, outlining their idea(s). The email pitches were very short – usually between one and three sentences per story. As Tristan comments:

When I'm pitching to *The Times*, it's really just a sentence. Like, "Clinton's coming, she'll meet the president, there should be something there" and they'll say, "cool, do it, 700 words".

The foreign editors in London took these pitches – and those from their other FCs around the world – to a morning editorial meeting where they made commissioning decisions. They emailed the Nairobi FCs with a "yes" or "no" and a word limit. There was usually no conversation or 'back and forth.'

From time to time the foreign editors would contact the FCs with a story suggestion or instruction, but this was less common. When it happened, it was usually because the foreign editors had seen something on the newswires that the FC had overlooked.

Once the FCs received the green light, they would sit down to write. For a shorter story, this was a quick process. The journalists might take the newswire story and then seek an additional quote, whether from diplomats, politicians, NGO spokespeople or, for colour, local citizens. For a longer story, the journalists tended to canvas a wider set of sources and add analysis to the piece.

The length of the story commissioned would vary by topic and newspaper, from a short news brief of only 80 or so words, to a longer story of 500-800 words. Several of the FCs would write a longer version for the outlet's website, which could be truncated for the print edition. These stories would generally be submitted by the end of the Nairobi work day, around 5pm, at which point they would be sub-edited and formatted in London. The FCs all noted that their stories were checked for language – but were only rarely altered in their angle or substance.

As the day wound down, the correspondents would keep an eye on other media, make plans for the following day or upcoming travel, or work on other projects.

The newspaper correspondents varied in how much they travelled around the region, but for most it fluctuated between once a month and every six weeks. These trips would often lead to longer feature pieces and initiative reporting.

Jonathan Ledgard at *The Economist* had a different and more leisurely news cycle because he was writing for a weekly, rather than a daily, publication. He wrote more initiative pieces than the other FCs, and also travelled more. He tended to submit only one story per week, and had more time to develop ideas, canvas sources, and write analysis.

The Foreign Correspondent habitus

The foreign correspondents working for UK print outlets had a remarkably similar background. All were white males aged between their late twenties and early forties, who had worked and been socialised into their professional roles as journalists in the UK prior to becoming foreign correspondents in East Africa. Wu and Hamilton's (2005) survey of foreign correspondents finds that this specialist group of journalists tend to be highly educated, experienced, and successful in their respective outlets. This was certainly the case in Nairobi: all the FCs were university-educated; half had been to Oxbridge, and the remainder to Russell Group universities in the UK. Many were involved in creative and successful side projects from setting up news websites and producing award-winning documentaries, to writing well-received novels. Aidan Hartley, who has been a foreign correspondent and freelancer in Kenya on and off for several decades, comments:

You have to remember the calibre of people in the press corps here. Educated, with a history of being committed to social issues. Probably they still generally have a liberal temperament, an international background, they're linguistic. Whatever happens, they will fight to get their copy into the story.

The FCs in this sample had all worked in the region for between two and five years. This meant, in their own opinion, that they were ideally suited to their news work. They felt that they had been around long enough to "learn the ropes" and develop contact networks, but not so long as to become jaded, disinterested, or inured to the issues facing the region.

The FCs possessed a foreign correspondent habitus and they believed in the core values of the UK/global journalistic field⁴⁸. At the broadest level, this included a commitment to objectivity in some form, and the belief that news events had inherent amounts of ‘newsworthiness’. There was relative consensus that news could be defined as those things/issues/events that (a) represented a change in the status quo, and/or (b) had an impact on people.

The FCs also shared a similar perception of their professional role as journalists. When asked about the purpose of their work, their responses echoed the three main roles identified by Weaver and Wilhoit’s survey of journalists (1991: 120-2): disseminating information, acting as an adversary to government or business, and interpreting information. In particular, the journalists commented that their job was to “witness” important events and changes and, in doing so, hold people accountable. Mike Pflanz, at *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, stated:

I want someone who consistently buys *The Telegraph* to trust that, when they see a story with my name on, they feel that it’s something they should look at – at least briefly – because it’s something of importance out of Africa.

Pflanz went on to explain his understanding of ‘news of import’ as stories that revealed abuses of power and issues that had a clear impact on human lives and wellbeing such as conflict, famine, and environmental damage.

The second main purpose the journalists identified was to “explain things to people back home”. This entailed more than simple dissemination; the journalists wanted to forge connections, highlight similarities, and

⁴⁸ As noted in the literature review, the core values of the UK and global field are effectively identical.

contribute to a sense of global citizenry. As Tristan McConnell at *The Times*, commented:

The point of being a foreigner in Africa is that you can capture the scenes and explain them to someone at home. People think it's this exotic, incomprehensible place and it's not. And to treat it like that is to de-value it.

The FCs all possessed what Bourdieu describes as *illusio*: a belief that the game (foreign news production) was 'worth playing'. They saw their journalism as important and meaningful.

Although the FCs articulated similar doxa and professional values, they still had their own specific professional interests and passions, such that their habitus were individual. Many of these had emerged long before they became foreign correspondents. Dan Howden, at *The Independent* for example, was a strong environmentalist and commented:

I took the Nairobi job, in part, because I'm very interested in environmental stories, and I wanted to write more on them. And most journalists have something like that which they want to pursue, an issue they're more passionate about.

Jonathan Ledgard at *The Economist* described himself as both an environmentalist and a feminist: he was drawn to stories about resource constraints, and girls' education. Barney Jessop at the *Financial Times*, described himself as passionate about "complexity, colour, and analysis", and he loved the challenge of dissecting complicated issues. The FCs' individual habitus informed the ways and degree to which they took advantage of their journalistic autonomy.

The Outlets and their field position

This section explores the practices of individual newspaper correspondents. It starts by ‘placing’ the FCs’ outlets in the UK journalistic field. It then assesses how the individual FCs – with their own habitus and values – negotiated their outlet’s demands, and the extent to which organisational versus individual traits shaped the news outcomes. We see that there was considerable variance between the outlets. While some FCs had the freedom to choose news topics and develop stories as they wished, others did not. This reflects, the analysis suggests, the position of their outlets in the UK journalistic field.

The outlets can be divided into three main groups, depending on the capital they pursued; that is, where they were situated on the economic-cultural pole. This position was correlated with the autonomy of the FCs, as expressed in the chart below.

	Economic pole	Mid-spectrum	Symbolic pole
Outlet(s)	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>Guardian, Independent, Times</i>	<i>Economist, FT</i>
FC Autonomy	Low	Medium	High

Working for outlets at the economic end of the pole, FCs must make their stories more appealing to a mass audience – and editors provide them with significant guidance and direction to that end. Towards the symbolic pole,

outlets cater to an elite clientele, and their FCs are given more freedom to pursue a range of news stories that may not be of interest to large swathes of the population. The FCs at mid-spectrum outlets fall somewhere in between.

Rhinos and ‘Brits in Peril’: populist-orientated foreign news at *The Daily Telegraph*

Of the outlets in this study, *The Daily Telegraph* (DT) was the closest to the economic pole, and it was the most guided in its content selection and presentation by populist interests. It is important to note that, in the UK, the DT would certainly not be considered a ‘tabloid’ – there are numerous newspapers much closer to the economic pole, whose sole intention is to appeal to large audiences and generate revenue through cover sales. However, these newspapers do not have permanent foreign correspondents in East Africa: they cover the continent via the newswires and the occasional casually-contracted stringer or parachute journalist if big stories emerge.

The DT has always been a profit-orientated newspaper; since its founding in 1855 (as *The Daily Telegraph and Courier*) the paper has been passed from one private businessman to another, and run with an eye to making money. In 2004, The Telegraph Group, which owns the DT, was bought by the Barclay brothers, David and Frederick. The Barclay brothers do not have a “mogul mindset” (Tunstall and Palmer 1991); they have not expressed any desire to own media outlets for political or personal reasons. Indeed, upon buying the paper in 2004, the Barclays indicated that even the

paper's Conservative position was up for review, in light of the greater goal of expanding readership, particularly among women (BBC 2004).

The DT strikes a balance between the two strategies of newspaper revenue-generation. It seeks to increase its audience share and revenue from cover sales, while at the same time maintaining a more elite (in terms of disposable income) readership, which ensures it can charge a premium for advertising. It is the most populist of the quality newspapers and also the most popular. In 2009, when this research was conducted, *The Daily Telegraph's* circulation was 744,151 – significantly greater than that of its closest competitor, *The Times*, with 563,262.

The DT has been a pioneer of populist initiatives within the quality newspaper market. The DT was the first UK newspaper to truncate the parliamentary column rather than reproduce parliamentary occurrences in full, and it led the field in introducing sport and celebrity news (Chalaby 1998). After an initial failure and subsequent change of ownership, the paper became so successful that it was able to boast “the largest circulation in the world” (Howse 2004). By 1870, it was selling more than a quarter of a million copies on average – significantly more than *The Times*.

In the nineties and noughties, the DT continued its pioneering approach as it developed digital news: it launched a website in 1994 – the first for a daily newspaper in Europe; and it developed a “newsroom of the future” orientated around screens that display live data on its website's most popular stories (Este et al 2008: 8). The DT was the first newspaper in the UK to appoint a search engine optimisation executive (Press Gazette 2010) and its

website hits doubled over a 12 month period (Este et al 2008: 20). A third of all traffic to *The Daily Telegraph* website now comes directly from search engines (Coles 2009).

Digital editor Edward Roussel states that, unlike most of their competition, *The Daily Telegraph* website operated as a business, right from the start. In this aspect, they hold themselves apart from the other quality papers in the UK:

If you look at *The Guardian*, it is owned by the Scott Trust, which is run to ensure the newspaper and website are adequately funded by cross-subsidies from the more commercially successful properties in the group; News Ltd is able to subsidise its newspapers and website from a range of different media properties. We have had to make money from the word go (quoted in Este et al 2008: 32).

Foreign News at the DT

Foreign news has historically been a strong feature of *The Daily Telegraph*, and during the 19th century, it published world-leading coverage of the African continent. Together with *The New York Herald*, the DT sent Henry M. Stanley into central Africa, where he traced the source of the Congo River. In 1884–5, the paper was associated with Sir Harry Johnston’s exploration of Kilimanjaro, and, in 1899–1900, with Lionel Declé’s journey from the Cape to Cairo (Ward & Waller 1907). Over the twentieth century, however, its foreign news coverage shrunk. Today, *The Daily Telegraph* is – along with the other British newspapers, an international ‘news follower’ rather than a ‘news leader’. As noted above, Scott (2008) finds that DT’s African news is generally “softer” than that of *The Guardian* – it includes more human interest and stories about animals than it does hard or political news.

The Daily Telegraph has also been singled out for criticism for its use of ‘ethnic narratives’ in describing African events (Somerville 2009). This would not surprise Tim Butcher, former African correspondent at *The Daily Telegraph*. In his book *Blood River*, Butcher recalls that when he was first posted to Nairobi, an old hand at *The Daily Telegraph* advised him: “there are just two things to remember in Africa: which tribe and how many dead” (Butcher 2008: 4).

Status and resources for foreign news today

Foreign news is low status at the DT, and this is reflected in the pay and working conditions of their correspondent in East Africa. Pflanz is the only permanent correspondent in Nairobi on a contract rather than a salary; moreover, for an 11 month period, Pflanz was the DT’s only correspondent in Africa – meaning he had to cover two or three times as big a region as the other UK newspaper correspondents.

The DT also had the lowest budget for travel, and Pflanz very rarely left Nairobi. Instead, he covered the region from his home in Nairobi and relied, more than the other correspondents, on the newswires for story ideas. Pflanz describes himself as a ‘news follower’ for whom events had already been filtered:

It’s filtered through the wires, it’s filtered through the BBC. One less filtered way, if you like, is Africa.com which aggregates as many online newspapers as it can. But even then, it’s filtered through whatever this day’s editor in Nigeria thought was going to be news.

Another indication of the low status of FCs at the DT is that they are rarely promoted to managerial positions. Of the DT's foreign news editors, only two of six⁴⁹ have ever worked in the field – both in developed areas. At *The Guardian*, *Independent* and *Times*, by contrast, the foreign news editors are all former foreign correspondents.

The content of news

The DT produces two forms of foreign news. As Pflanz described the categorisation: on the one hand it covers the “big stories” of the day – that is, the breaking stories that other news outlets are writing about; on the other it reports stories “that are clearly and immediately interesting to a UK audience.”

Existing News stories

The DT reports on the big events and issues that Pflanz calls “the running stories of the day” – for example, pirates in Somalia, corruption in Nigeria, and a woman arrested for wearing trousers in Sudan. These stories have ‘prominence’ as they have already attracted attention and gained traction through other coverage. The DT covers these stories to both perform their elite status (‘we cover all the important news’) but also – and primarily - to attract audiences.

⁴⁹ Pflanz's stories are used by both *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Daily Telegraph*. As a result, he engages with, variously, *The Sunday* foreign editor, daily foreign editor, deputy foreign editor, assistant foreign editor, the night editor, and the group foreign editor. Pflanz stated that only two of these editors have experience working overseas: the group foreign editor in Milan, and another in New York.

The DT reports on these ‘running stories’ in a way more explicitly aimed at appealing to a wide audience than do the other quality newspapers in Nairobi. A story is considered a success at the DT if it ranks highly on a Google news search. If a member of the public is trying to find information about, say, the woman in Sudan wearing trousers, the foreign editor wants Pflanz’s story to come at the top; Pflanz states:

the editor decides what’s sexy by looking at who is searching for what on Google. [...] twice a day, there’s an email that goes through to the foreign desk on the most searched terms on Google news...they get this thing in the morning. And a lot of editors would definitely respond to that... We need to show that there are 23 million users going onto *The Telegraph* website, and that you’re consistently one of the most found news and information sites for big stories. It’s all for higher advertising revenue.

The Daily Telegraph employs a number of specific strategies for ‘maximising’ their occurrence on Google news. The first is that they insert hyperlinks into their news stories and on the surrounding page – a common practice of news websites. The second – more controversial technique (Dick 2011) – is that editors at the DT encourage their journalists to insert keywords into their stories that a reader would be likely to input into Google. Pflanz describes this process:

So on Melbourne, the big story is the terrorist arrests, so the search terms would be “terror” “Islam” “Somalia” “arrests” “al Qaeda” “army” “suicides” these kinds of words. So any story about [the attacks] needs to have those terms high up – in the intro, at the start. And that’s what they [the editors] would term “sexy”.

This approach contrasts with the practices of the other members of the UK quality press. At *The Guardian*, for example, house style is said to “trump” SEO techniques (Dick 2011; MacGregor 2007). The approach taken by the DT is of concern to media scholars such as Currah, who worry that less popular

public-interest stories are ceding to “populist, click-friendly topics” (2009:48), and it is discussed further at the end of this chapter.

News with a British focus

The second category of Africa news at the DT are stories that the British public will find immediately interesting. As Pflanz comments:

The Telegraph, especially now, is far more interested in a story that has some resonance to some kind of British group. So if it’s not the moving story of the day, it has to be something that would instantly be of interest to somebody in Britain, who may not have any interest in Africa.

Pflanz saw these stories as coalescing into four main themes: 1. Stories about British people in Africa – the ‘Brits in Peril’ genre; 2. Local stories that will impact people in Britain – for example, local events that would lead to more immigration to the UK, or a rise in UK food prices; 3. Stories about celebrities (especially royalty) and, of course, 4. Stories about animals – preferably animals that are cute, unusual, or have ‘unlikely animal friendships’ with humans or other species. In short:

anything that involves the famous Great Britain shit. You know. The busiest year was 2007, there was a series of British diplomats kidnapped in Northern Ethiopia, a British girl kidnapped in Nigeria, David Cameron and the Tories came to rebuild a school in Rwanda. I went to Senegal on immigrants trying to go to the Canary Islands. That’s not necessarily British shit, but it could be British shit. And that’s peculiar perhaps for *The Telegraph*.

Pflanz felt the DT’s emphasis on British angles was in strong contrast to the stories written by the other correspondents in Nairobi:

Whereas *The Guardian* have a much more micro focus and believe that a story about a fisherman in lake Victoria who can get a better yield because of a new net or a light on his boat, and he came up with it himself – they’d give that 1800 words that would,

through him, tell a wider story. [But] *The Telegraph* would probably want, “Devastation of Lake Victoria’s fishing by xyz... Bird’s Eye fish fingers may disappear off the shelf, somebody warned yesterday”.

Habitus Clash

As may be obvious from the nature of his comments above, Pflanz did not agree with his outlet’s approach to covering Africa. Indeed, of all the FCs I interviewed in East Africa, he appeared to experience the greatest habitus disconnect between his journalistic values and those of his news outlet. Pflanz’s news values – his desire to write stories on ‘issues of import in Africa’, to act as watchdog of the powerful, and to humanise complex issues across cultural lines⁵⁰ – were at odds with the news values of *The Daily Telegraph*, which he felt were primarily geared towards entertainment, relevance, diversion, and quirkiness.

When his values clashed with those of his editors, Pflanz felt that the desk held all the power. There was, for example, very little room in the pitching process for Pflanz to negotiate or express his point of view; he sent the international editor a short email with a one-sentence story idea, which they would either except or reject outright:

If they don’t get excited about it in that one line – because it doesn’t fit in one of their small, pull-down shelf boxes about African stories, it’s very rare that they’re going to follow up on the communication to enquire what else might be in the story that they might be interested in.

⁵⁰ Pflanz’s habitus reflects the journalistic logic that he had absorbed as a trainee and junior journalist in the United Kingdom: First at a student newspaper, and then at a local paper – and he described himself at several points as “clearly a product of the British system”. His time at the student paper, which he felt was important to his socialisation as a journalist, had given him an interest in investigative reporting, and a strong sense of journalism as a watchdog of the powerful: “on the student paper, you did start to get a fizz when you knew you were onto a story about how the Vice Chancellor has replaced a guard company that cost £300 a year with one that’s cost £2500 and you’re – ‘oohh – corruption, bad people in big places doing naughty things’.”

In addition, Pflanz felt that because the foreign editors at the DT had not worked as foreign correspondents, they did not see the news through the same professional lens. This meant there were no ‘grey areas’ in which he could appeal to their ‘journalistic sensibility’ (i.e. of the sort that were described in the Reuters chapter).

Although Pflanz was not trained at the DT, he had learned, through his four years of exposure to its commissioning decisions, to predict his editors’ interests. That is, he had built up an “embodied cultural capital” – a sense of the selection principles implicit in a social milieu (Moore 2008:51). He felt confident about which stories his editors would be interested in:

today I have two stories in the paper – one is about a village in Ivory Coast which seventeen years ago, crowned Michael Jackson as their Prince of the royal line because a genealogical test somehow proved a link to these people ... The other story is about the first baby rhino born in Uganda in 28 years, whose name is Obama because his dad’s from Kenya and his mum’s born in America. I see them and I know instantly – that’s what the boss will want.

Pflanz generally pitched two stories to his editors each day: one that he thought was important, and one that he thought his editors would commission. The day I interviewed him, for example, he had pitched 1. Political tensions in Nigeria, and 2. Gorillas in Uganda with their own Facebook page (a pitch Pflanz described as, “an absolute sure bet”). The reply came quickly from the editors, “FB gorillas 300w”.

Earlier in the week, he had pitched: 1. Election riots in Gabon, and 2. Corrupt African leader spends millions on holiday in France. He successfully predicted that his editors would choose the latter. Pflanz felt that the structure

of his work – being a freelancer, and needing the money – meant he had to write stories other FCs did not. This was a considerable limitation to his potential autonomy:

I'd be interested to look at all the other FCs by-lines in Nairobi. I have a feeling that I'm one of the most regular contributors, because the others are able to say: 'Fuck off, I'm not writing a story about a Rhino in Uganda called Obama.' Whereas, I have to pay my bills.

Autonomy?

Was there any room for Pflanz's values to assert themselves in his news work? Yes, but only a very limited way. Although he needed to frame his stories according to the paper's interests, and insert the correct keywords, the tone, sources used, and some aspects of its content could reflect his interests:

The upside of it is that, as long as I do it right and they say go for it, there's a great deal of trust in the foreign correspondents to do it as the paper thinks it should be.

The tone of stories was, in particular, left up to the individual FC. This is one of the limited capacities in which habitus was relevant to the work of the DT. Pflanz noted, for example, that there were differences between what he wrote for the paper and the work that had been done by his predecessor, a white Kenyan, who Pflanz described as being “more angry about local corruption”:

he was consistently angry. About corruption, about the situation in Kenya and so on, and I think that bled into his reports occasionally. No bad thing - he had a great following - I really respect his really tightly written, kind of furious prose.

These stories were different in tone from those that Pflanz wrote, and highlight the fact that journalists, even at populist-orientated outlets, are not interchangeable.

Moreover, in terms of the DT's commissioning decisions, Pflanz was sometimes surprised. He regularly pitched the stories he was interested in, even though there was little hope the desk would take them; but, very occasionally, they would be chosen: "5% of the time, they'll surprise me".

There are a number of potential explanations for this. Symbolic production is still relevant to the DT (which is why they contract Pflanz at all) – the paper wishes to be seen, and maintain its position as, a quality newspaper. Second, the DT editors are human, and have their own idiosyncrasies. Third, there are slow news days. Because these factors create small windows of opportunity, the habitus of the specific FC is somewhat relevant. If Pflanz had a greater habitus overlap with *The Daily Telegraph*, he would not have pitched more serious stories, and they would not, on those rare occasions, have appeared in the paper.

In addition, Pflanz is a strategic agent: he would pitch the stories he thought were important in such a way as to increase their appeal to the desk. Like the journalists at Reuters who emphasised the economic slant of a story, Pflanz would highlight the 'British-angle':

If I'm trying to get them interested in a story that I think is very important, there are certain hot buttons that I have to press...So if I'm saying "Offensive by Al Shabaab kills 18 people, another 4,000 leave their homes" - that in itself should be news. But they won't take that. So it has to be almost couched in, "Fear of new wave of immigration into Britain as Al Shabaab digs in for long war against Western-backed government, fears that Al Qaeda links could blah blah..." So yeah: "Al Qaeda", "Immigration" "Britain under siege" – those are the hot buttons.

Pflanz had very limited opportunities through which he could creatively shape the DT's coverage of Africa – through the tone he used; more serious pitches (that would, every so often, get accepted); and through strategic insertion of more serious news, 'snuck into the paper' through framing that appealed to stereotypes. In general, however, the news at the DT was designed to appeal to a larger audience and their interests. Located towards the economic pole, Bourdieu would consider the DT a 'dominated' outlet – one where news decisions were primarily guided by logic from outside the journalistic field.

Mid-Spectrum papers: *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Independent*

Three quality newspapers could be said to fall in the middle of the economic-cultural spectrum: *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Independent*. These newspapers are not mid-spectrum with respect to the journalistic field of the UK – indeed, they are very much at the symbolic end of the press. However, of the outlets that have correspondents in Nairobi – an elite sub group – they fall in the middle, with more dominated producers on one side, and more symbolic producers on the other.

These three newspapers have distinct voices and political positions in the UK newspaper market. However, these newspapers are similar in many regards: they are located very near one another on the cultural-economic pole and they produce very similar – sometimes almost identical – African news. These newspapers, and their coverage of Africa, support the argument that the most important organisational differences between papers are not necessarily ideological or political but, rather, are derived from the capital those

organisations seek, and the extent to which they are ‘dominated’ by external forces.

The FCs at these outlets have commonalities with middle-brow art producers described by Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). Like these art producers, the FCs use their specific competencies to depict a wide variety of subjects, while simultaneously engaging in self-censorship that is driven by considering the likely interests of the average educated consumer (Bourdieu 1993: 126). The FCs at these three papers are more ‘free’ than at the dominated *Daily Telegraph*; but they are more constrained than in the ‘purer’ symbolic production of *The Economist*.

At these three news outlets, internet data is used to inform, but does not determine, editorial decisions. Murray Dick finds that this is the acknowledged role of SEO across the quality press, although there is significant resistance to its use in some quarters. It is acknowledged that in yielding to editorial (and stylistic) conventions of the paper over the SEO techniques, these organisations are losing out on traffic. But this is generally considered a price worth paying in order to preserve the brand, and maintain the news values of the profession (Dick 2011: 474-475).

At *The Guardian*, for example, Dick finds that search engine optimisation never trumps the style guide or in-house editorial decisions. If a topic is trending, the suggestion is only made to ‘move’ it up the agenda if it has a (perceived) resonance with *The Guardian*’s readers. Traffic is “on the table” but protecting the brand comes first (Dick 2011: 472).

Similarities

The similarities between *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Independent* are so great that foreign correspondents in East Africa have easily, and frequently, moved between them. Before he became the African correspondent for *The Guardian*, Xan Rice was the East African correspondent for *The Times*. Having moved jobs, he notes:

There was no big change in what I did, or the stories I wrote. There's not a big difference between them at all. They're both good, both pretty interested in Africa. The assumption is, I think, that *The Guardian* will be trying to do more development-type stories. But that's not really the case at all.

McConnell, at *The Times*, had written for several UK newspapers. He started as an occasional freelancer for *The Daily Telegraph*, an experience he did not enjoy. He then covered the Ugandan elections for *The Independent*; his description of how he got this job illustrates the fluidity between the newspapers:

Rob [Crilly] came to Kampala and it was during the elections. And we had a conversation, and said "do you want to do *Independent* or *Times*?" Rob wanted *The Times* and I was pretty happy with the Indo, so we did it like that, reported together.

McConnell then moved to *The Times*, experiencing little change in the process.

The similarity between these three newspapers is further illustrated by the extent to which their FCs have collaborated. In 2004, husband and wife Jeevan Vasagar and Meera Selva held the East Africa foreign correspondent jobs for *The Guardian* and *The Independent* respectively. The couple did a considerable amount of reporting together – in August 2004, for example,

they travelled to Chad and crossed the border into Darfur with a group of rebel fighters. On this trip the couple travelled together, visited all the same sites, shared the same translator, and spoke to sources together (interview, Selva 18.1.07). As could be expected, the series of reports they wrote were very similar: they focused on the same topics, used the same quotes, and even included the same human details to paint their scenes –the frayed logo on a pair of trousers, and the sad military salute of an old man.

Such extensive cooperation interestingly suggests that the newspapers did not see themselves as competitors when it came to the coverage of Africa; it certainly would not have occurred on a variety of domestic beats, where, as Schultz (2007) notes, ‘exclusivity’ is one of news commissioning decisions.

Foreign news Status and Resources

In contrast to *The Daily Telegraph*, foreign news occupies a higher status position within *The Guardian*, *Times*, and *Independent*, which is reflected in the resources directed towards its production. The papers’ correspondents are on salaries and, although all three noted that their travel budgets had shrunk, these were larger than Pflanz’s. FCs at these outlets were also more readily promoted up their editorial hierarchy. McConnell says of *The Times*, for example:

The foreign editor and deputy foreign editor have both been around...Also, the paper’s editor had been in foreign news, and there’s a real commitment at the paper to do foreign news. You need that. Other people, they have no idea what anything smells like. They don’t get it.

The FCs got to travel around the region once every four to six weeks but felt this was not enough to ‘discover’ as much original content as they would like.

Rice at *The Guardian* states:

Sometimes I do initiative reporting, but not that often, and it’s much harder if you’re not in a place. For example, I was in Kampala and I noticed this coffee shop... it turns out they’re the first local group doing entirely local traded coffee and they’re exporting it to Europe and things. So I wrote a story about that...But definitely, when you’re not on site, it’s much, much harder.

Autonomy

The three correspondents described higher levels of autonomy than Pflanz had at *The Daily Telegraph*. They tended to select news that they felt was ‘journalistically important’ and were particularly thankful that they did not need to include a British angle in every story. McConnell, for example, notes that:

What I like about *The Times*, is the story doesn’t have to have a British angle, it can just say: this is a news event because it’s newsworthy. I don’t have to go looking for the two or so British people caught up in the fighting.

Rice’s experience at *The Guardian* was similar:

I tend to submit ideas that interest me, and that is of interest to them as well. I’m not asked to do stories that I’m not interested in – you know, ‘Brits in peril’ types of stories. If I find something interesting, chances are, they will as well.

The correspondents did not, however, have the freedom to write whatever they wanted. In addition to the travel resource limitations noted above, the FCs had to pitch stories that would appeal, to some extent, to an ‘average educated reader’. The FCs’ pitches competed with those of correspondents in other regions of the world, and they had to be able to capture the interest of

their editors. The three FCs felt that their editors – by virtue of being removed from the region, and being saturated with news and information – were not necessarily interested in the most ‘important’ stories. Howden at *The Independent* noted:

Basically, editors have the attention span of small children. So a story has to either be counter intuitive or pretty bad and horrible, if it is going to be an immediately understood story.

McConnell felt that, in order to guarantee his story would be accepted, he needed to appeal to British cultural stereotypes: “in general, if I had to describe their [the editors’] interest, I would say stories that confirm people’s prejudices about the continent”.

An example of this was the level of interest his editors showed in a story about Lubna Ahmed al-Hussein, a Sudanese woman who was punished by whipping for wearing trousers:

The Sudan story – they loved it. I had pre-whipping, during whipping, post whipping. I had an email saying – “we need 700 words eve of whipping story”. That was them telling me what to write. But that was unusual; usually, I’m pitching my own stories.

It was clear to McConnell that this was not the most important story taking place in the region, yet between August and September 2009, he wrote seven stories on al-Hussein. In a similar vein, Howden describes an emphasis on countries that had ‘cultural significance’ to British audiences:

And of course, the bar is higher in different countries. If you want to write a story on Cameroon, it has to be the best damn story you’ve ever written. Whereas if you want to do a story on Zimbabwe, you just need to mention the name Zimbabwe.

Xan Rice generally found *The Guardian* to be better in this regard – that he had more latitude than the others to write stories that didn't speak to British cultural norms. However, he was limited in his coverage by his inability to secure resources to travel to (what the paper's UK readership would consider) more 'obscure' places: "For example, a story on CAR – we don't have money for it."

Habitus

There was greater room at the mid-spectrum outlets than at the DT for an FC's individual traits to shape the news. The FC's pitches had to interest their editors – but they were not restricted to the moving story of the day, or events that would amuse/interest a more mass audience. This gave them room in their pitching to pursue personal interests. Howden, for example, felt he was able to pursue his interest in environmental issues:

there's definitely scope to get that through. So when I make my news lists, those stories will be on them more often, I will be listing environmental stories as the most important things happening in the region.

In order to do so, however, the FCs did have to appeal to their organisation's norms in order to make such stories seem compelling. Howden noted:

You know about the prejudices and outlooks of your editors. And you have to work within their systems of language and meaning if you are going to push your own interest.

The FCs working for mid spectrum UK newspapers had more resources and autonomy than the dominated DT. Their stories may have needed to appeal to

the conceptual narratives familiar to their editors – and an educated audience – but they did not possess immediate mass appeal. As a result of this latitude, there was more scope for their personal traits and interests to influence news content, than there was for Pflanz at the DT. We now examine the final category of FCs – the symbolic producers, who had more autonomy still.

Trading in symbolic capital: *The Economist* and *Financial Times*

At the symbolic end of the spectrum are *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* (FT). Although the two publications are not nearly so alike as the mid-spectrum producers (more on this below), they were found to be similar in many of the key dimensions discussed throughout this analysis, namely: the levels of autonomy afforded to their FCs, the scope for the interests and values of individual journalists to be reflected in output, the resources they had available, the sorts of topics they pursued, and the audience they cultivated. At both *The Economist* and the FT, FCs were afforded a great deal of independence in their work and had wide scope to use their reporting as a means of exploring their interests. Both publications had greater resources available for African news than at the other publications in this study, including more people working on such topics and more generous travel allowances for their FCs. The two publications emphasised ‘hard news’ and targeted an elite and intelligent audience – neither felt there was any need to ‘dumb down’ their coverage or appeal to ‘the lowest common denominator’.

The two publications are, however, meaningfully different in several important regards. For instance, *The Economist* is much nearer the symbolic pole; it actively and self-consciously cultivates its status as an elite symbolic good. It does so in a variety of unique and perhaps surprising ways, including covering stories it does not think its readers are interested in, and actively restricting its potential readership. By virtue of *The Economist's* novelty, in these and other regards, the two publications are treated separately, rather than grouped together as were the mid-spectrum producers. As a clearer example of a highly symbolic producer, *the Economist* is examined in much more depth than *The Financial Times*.

Academics and autonomy at *the Economist*

This section explores news production at a symbolic-orientated news outlet – *The Economist*. We see that less attention is paid to a general audience's news interests, and that journalists have more freedom to pursue stories that are significant to them. As a result, habitus plays a very important role in shaping news content.

Few news outlets at the symbolic end of the pole are financially successful – most could not afford to have foreign correspondents posted around the world. However *The Economist* is an exception: it has carved a unique – and lucrative – niche for itself by catering to a global, cosmopolitan, and elite audience, to whom it sells a highly symbolic product. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital helps to explain a seeming paradox in *The*

Economist's production practices: that it can cater so effectively to its audience by ignoring them completely.

Background

The Economist, a weekly 'newspaper' (as it calls itself) founded in 1843, is one of the few financial success stories of symbolic production in the journalistic field: it has a circulation of more than 1.5 million, and makes healthy profits from cover sales and advertising. The magazine was founded to campaign against the United Kingdom's Corn Laws and promote the benefits of free markets. These Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, but the newspaper lived on to fight for the "classic liberal ideals of its founder" (Economist 2012). To this day, *The Economist's* self-proclaimed central ideological tenant is that free trade and free markets are beneficial (Economist 2012). Or, as one commentator stated, "its writers rarely see a political or economic problem that cannot be solved by the trusted three-card trick of privatization, deregulation and liberalization" (Stern 2005).

Originally a UK-only publication, *The Economist* has grown into a major international news magazine. Today more than four fifths of its circulation comes from outside Britain (Economist 2012). The magazine is edited in London, but has bureaus around the world, and is printed in seven locations.

Within its format (weekly news magazine), *The Economist's* rivals appear to be *Time* and *Newsweek*; however, for the sort of journalism it pursues, its East African correspondent, Jonathan Ledgard likens it to *The*

New York Times and their sister magazine, *The International Herald Tribune*.⁵²

The Economist is seen as extremely influential both inside and outside the journalistic field (Crook 2006; Hirschorn 2009; Sullivan 1999). As Paul Rossi, *The Economist's* publisher for North America, notes, “A lot of our readers are in very senior positions. We are one of the most thumbed magazines on Air Force One. We've reached CEOs and politicians and financiers around the world” (in Langfitt 2006). Ledgard notes: “*The Economist* is really important. Sometimes it scares me. I think we provide, for a wide class of business people and technocrats, the received wisdom on Africa”.

The symbolic pole

The Economist is nearer the symbolic pole than any other publication in this study. That does not entail that *The Economist* is not run for profit. One of Bourdieu's major contentions is that symbolic and cultural products are also part of the system of exchange; as Moore notes, he relocates “the narrow instance of mercantile exchange away from economics into a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations of which the economic is only one (though the most fundamental) type” (2008: 102).

The magazine's market niche – and its profit, is derived from providing ‘high brow’ news stories to a global elite. Its readers are highly educated and wealthy – a valuable demographic for generating advertising revenue. In

⁵² See also Kluth (2008): “I don't [think] that *Time* and *Newsweek* are our main rivals. They are not. We are in 208 countries. In each country we compete with magazines and newspapers, radio and television to some extent, and the web. In America, readers in our segment are more likely to read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*”.

2007, *The Economist* had one quarter the circulation of *Newsweek* but sold 22% more ad pages and generated three times as much circulation revenue per copy sold (Oberholzer-gee et al 2010).

Over the last three decades, *The Economist* has cultivated its elite readership through a highly successful campaign showcasing the emotional/professional/symbolic benefits of reading the magazine. The campaign consisted of a long running, varied series of billboards with short white sentences written on block red background; the signs contained playful double-entendres that flattered and cajoled elites into wanting to be a part of *The Economist's* readership. For example, "It's lonely at the top, but at least there's something to read"; "I never read *The Economist*. Management trainee. Aged 42"; and "Retire early with a good read". One billboard was placed on the roof of London buses and read: "Hello to all our readers in high office".

As Tungate (2004) notes, the campaign was an instant success: the billboards led to more readers, higher subscriptions, greater readership loyalty and, importantly, an increase in the 'right' readers: the number of 'A-Bs' (middle to upper middle class individuals) reading *The Economist* grew by 10% over the late 1980s and 1990s. By the noughties, nearly two thirds of *Economist* readers in the United States earned more than \$100,000 a year, and one in three was a millionaire. Between 1988 and 2000, its advertising revenue grew by 250% (Tungate 2004: 206); by the mid 2000s, *The Economist* was making pre-tax profits of £27m (Stern 2005). The 'white out of red' campaign, as it is often called, has entered advertising folklore and is

profiled in a number of case studies of marketing success (Tungate 2004; Miller & Muir 2004; Marcantonio 2006; Oberholzer-gee et al 2010).

So successful was the campaign that simply carrying *The Economist* has come to be a symbol of high status and prestige. As a result, *The Economist* is offered in Business Class, in exclusive clubs, expensive hotels and so on; and because it is offered in these places, it accrues further prestige. Indeed, the magazine – and its snob appeal – is infamous enough to have been parodied on *The Simpsons*.⁵³

News Conventions

The Economist's position at the symbolic end of the news continuum, informs the topics and kinds of news that the magazine focuses on. The magazine is specifically, conscientiously and consistently, elitist and anti-populist (Langfitt 2006). It has eschewed almost all of the populist developments of journalism in recent years: for example, it does not name any of its journalists (despite the culture of celebrity that has developed around individual journalists from *The Daily Mail* to the BBC); it has not changed its font since 1991; it has not experimented with layout since going all-colour in 2001; and, despite the rise of the internet, and the digitalisation of the world's news provisions, *The Economist* remains primarily a “print first” outlet⁵⁴ – every

⁵³ *Catch 'Em If You Can*, which aired 25 April 2004, features *The Economist* as part of an exchange between Homer and Marge Simpson while they are travelling first-class aboard an airplane:

Homer: Look at me, I'm reading *The Economist*! Did you know Indonesia is at a crossroads?

Marge: No!

Homer: It is!

⁵⁴ Hirshcorn (2009) notes that the magazine was “so unprepared for the Internet that it couldn't even secure theeconomist.com as its Web domain”.

Thursday night, its content is printed for hard copy distribution, and simultaneously uploaded to the web. As Crook (2006), a former correspondent comments:

While other publications whore themselves to Google... almost no one links to *The Economist*. It sits primly apart from the orgy of link love elsewhere on the Web.

One of *the Economist's* most unique conventions is the anonymity of its authors: news articles are published without by-lines. As a result, the magazine “speaks with one voice,” which many believe gives the publication a sense of coherence and consistency (Jones 2005). *The Economist* also neglects to quote its sources in the same way that other newspapers do, but rather, it integrates quotes into the writing. The net result of these two conventions is that *The Economist* appears to speak in an objective voice: immune from human subjectivity, a purveyor of timeless ‘truth’.

News Content

The Economist's position as a symbolic producer informs the stories that its editors commission. Crook (2006) writes: “In my experience, the editorial side of the enterprise spends little time worrying about what readers might want.” Kluth (2008), a California correspondent for *The Economist* supports this, commenting: “you would be surprised how little we worry about what other magazines might be up to.”

Most notably – and in stark contrast to *The Daily Telegraph* – *The Economist* tends to ignore the preferences of its own readers. The editors know from its website's hit counts which stories are read the most, but it

doesn't use this information in making editorial decisions. As Ledgard commented:

we have figures from our website – we know how many of our readers are interested in Africa. And if we reflected that – it's extremely low – we would write even less than we do.

The Economist has unusually high coverage of Africa. One of the most remarkable indicators of this is that it regularly carries more stories from Africa than the Middle East.⁵⁵ This was true even in 2009, when the US, UK, NATO, and the 'alliance of the willing' had military deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iran was considered a 'rising spectre.' Moreover, *The Economist's* coverage of Africa over the period featured a number of countries that are rarely covered by other English text outlets – Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon, to name a few examples.

These findings contradict the received wisdom in media studies from Gultang and Ruge (1965) onwards, that 'relevance' is a core predictor of news coverage. They also differentiate *The Economist* from the UK quality papers where, as *The Independent* FC Dan Howden commented:

It really depends on what's happening in the rest of the world – is there space for Africa? It's very low down the pecking order for international news. Ahead of it is Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq – consistently, and lots of others.

The Economist's commitment to African coverage can be expressed in ethical/journalistic terms. As Ledgard states, "editorially, we just believe that 1

⁵⁵ *The Economist* has a sub section of its magazine that includes stories on "Africa and the Middle East". Between September and December 2009, this section contained 45 stories from Africa and 42 from the Middle East (Ledgard stated in our interview that *The Economist* had more African stories than Middle East stories; I was so surprised that I followed the publication from the time of our interview until the end of the calendar year (See appendix 4). Counting stories is a crude measure: it does not take into account their length or prominence. However, these numbers do give an indication of the prevalence of African news in the publication.

billion people are important”. However, these news stories also help the magazine build its reputation as an important and exclusive news magazine – and this symbolic capital can be made into economic capital. That is, the commitment to covering Africa can be seen as one of the functions the magazine performs in order to maintain its elite position in the journalistic field and protect its brand.⁵⁶ As Jonathan goes on to say:

Also, yes, of course, branding is important and we're high brow. It looks good to have those stories on Africa, and the marketing guys love it. You know, "here's a story about Equatorial Guinea: that's great!"

A story on politics in Equatorial Guinea is anathema to readers' interest – even among the educated subset *The Economist* caters to. But Ledgard (and the marketing department) believe that readers of *The Economist* like it when there are stories in the magazine that they have no interest in reading. These stories showcase the exclusivity of the publication; they indicate that the magazine caters to readers who are educated and cosmopolitan, with catholic interests. Or as Hirschorn (2009) writes “*The Economist* signals its gravitas with every strenuously reader-unfriendly page”.

The Economist's position towards the symbolic pole is also reflected in the tone, format and conventions of its news reporting. Economic terms like ‘invisible hand’ and ‘demand curve’ are not explained; short phrases and terms in French are not translated. As Ledgard says, “we shouldn't be dumbing down for people. These people have A-levels and degrees. They could analyse *Lord of the Flies* – why do we need to dumb down to them?”

⁵⁶ This is an interesting distinction, and it may become relevant if conditions in the journalism market change; for example, if *The Economist* stopped making a profit. But in terms of the content of the magazine today, whether it abides by journalistic values for journalistic reasons, or abides by journalistic values for financial reasons, the news outcomes are the same.

However, it is not only the intelligence of *The Economist's* existing readership that informs such behaviour; such tactics are also signalling and screening devices designed to attract new readers: because the magazine wants educated and elite readers it produces news that only educated readers have access to.

Foreign news at The Economist: high status and high resources

By a variety of measures, Ledgard is the most 'spoilt' foreign correspondent in East Africa. Working for an elite, weekly publication, he has time to write and space to explain issues. As he notes:

Working at *The Economist*, I've been insulated from the nightmares of modern foreign journalism. All the time, these other journalists have clashes with the horrible populist agenda of their papers... And we don't have to dumb anything down which is an absolute luxury. And we have generous space. This week there's a page on the PM of Ethiopia, and I think that's quite generous.

The Economist only produces one magazine issue per week and this contains, at most, three or four stories on Africa. Behind this small number of stories are three full time correspondents – one in Cairo covering the North, one in Johannesburg covering the South, and Ledgard in Nairobi, covering East and West Africa. In addition, there is a full time African editor and, above him, a full time Africa and Middle East editor. With all of this, *The Economist* has, by far, the most human resources per story of any international news outlet covering Africa, and the magazine's well-paid, well-resourced correspondents generally produce less than one story on Africa per week.

These correspondents also benefit from generous travel budgets. Ledgard travels for two weeks in every month – more than any other

correspondent in the sample. Ledgard is the only correspondent who stated that the financial costs of covering a story were not an important component of the commissioning process.

Habitus

Foreign correspondents at *The Economist* have significant input into story decisions. Jonathan describes the magazine as having a collegiate environment in which commissioning decisions are made through deliberation and consensus, rather than flowing from the institutional hierarchy. Ledgard was the only correspondent who described commissioning decisions as a “conversation” with his editor. The collaboration meant that Ledgard had considerable influence on story content and development: there was significant room for his personal traits to influence output.

Ledgard had a high level of habitus overlap with *The Economist*. He had worked at the magazine for fourteen years, and shared its news values. When asked about the agenda of *The Economist* as a magazine, Ledgard often responded using “we” (“we prefer...” and “we choose...”), indicating a close fit between his values and those of his outlet. However, Ledgard also had a specific set of personal and professional interests unrelated to his socialisation at the magazine.

Ledgard has, for example, a deep concern about environmental issues. He describes himself as a “radical environmentalist” concerned with the finite resources of the world; indeed, Ledgard believed that the world’s population needed to be reduced. This led him to write a lead article, which he described

as “quite controversial”, about resource constraints and population growth in Africa: an entire page of this article was subtitled, “Malthus’s fears” (*The Economist* 2009). The story considered whether Africa would benefit from its population growth in the form of increased productivity. It was primarily a pessimistic account, that suggested Africa was more likely to experience conflict and “thuggery” at the hands of an increasingly dispossessed young male population. This story was written as a result of Ledgard’s personal concerns; he initiated the story idea and developed its content.

Ledgard is also deeply interested in women’s rights, stating, “I’m as much a feminist as it’s possible for a man to be”, and he has regularly written about the urgent need for more female education on the continent.

The production of such news content is a reflection of Ledgard’s interests – rather than a direct outcome of the outlet’s preferences. Ledgard’s editors are open to his suggestions and he has considerable freedom to pursue his own interests. Moreover, because the magazine is relatively free from the conventional populist pressures seen at other outlets, Ledgard is not held to account if his stories do not ‘play well’ with readers. This is a noteworthy freedom in the contemporary media system, where dropping revenues are forcing editors to watch their audiences closer than ever before (Este et al 2009).

Symbolic production at the Financial Times

The Financial Times has many features in common with *The Economist*, including the autonomy of its FCs and their capacity to shape content, the

resources available for African news, and the audience it targets. However, just as *The Economist* was seen to be novel in several regards, *The Financial Times* has unique features of its own that serve to further distinguish the two outlets.

Like *The Economist*, *The Financial Times* orientates itself to a global consumer; and it derives most of its profit from outside the UK. Its first international edition was printed in 1979. It now calls itself a “global newspaper”, and it is printed in twenty-two locations, and has five international editions (Financial Times 2013). The paper sees itself as being in competition with the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, fighting for an audience of cosmopolitan, commercial elite. The paper has a circulation of approximately 100,000 in the UK, and 400,000 abroad.

As a business newspaper, the FT is governed by slightly different conventions than the general news publications discussed above. It does not simply report on ‘anything of import’ to people, but devotes space to things that might have economic relevance. Jessop estimates that 30% of his writing focused on business and investment trends in the region, while 70% focused on general “hard stuff” – the “classic kind of geo-political journalism”. However, unlike Reuters, the FT is not driven by its business audience: the newspaper is not guided in its African news production by concerns for what a mass audience would find entertaining. Nor does the paper use web analytics to guide editorial decisions. This supports its placement at the symbolic, rather than the economic, end of the spectrum. Jessop states that, although there is a general weekly update on what has done well, “We don’t know how popular our stories are”. There is no feedback loop to convey how well a story

has done and he notes that story success figures are not referred to in commissioning decisions.

Like *The Economist*, the FT has high resources for African news: in addition to Jessop, there are full time correspondents in Johannesburg, Lagos and Cairo, all of whom are salaried employees. The paper has an African editor in addition to an International news editor. Jessop has a large travel budget, and every month tends to take at least one trip, over which he writes a series of in-depth articles.

In his reporting, Jessop's stated goal is to explain events, place things in context, and "move news stories forward": "There's not pressure to follow the day to day coverage. Although, of course, if there's a big flare up, that might happen... We put more effort and space to answer the 'why' questions".

Like *The Economist*, the FT is producing an elite, symbolic product for an elite clientele; the FT does not 'dumb down' its stories, as Jessop comments:

We don't appeal to the lowest common denominator in our coverage. We've not really done the horrifying and shocking stuff because we're not appealing to the "bleachers". But at the same time, we have to make sure it's not too "inside baseball" either.

In his day to day work, Jessop experienced a great deal of autonomy – he scanned the newswires for stories he felt were both interesting and important, and pitched these to his editors: His editors almost always accepted his pitches. Indeed, Jessop went so far as to state that, "If I had no guidance from the paper at all, I would still submit the same stories". This was in

contradiction to Pflanz at *The Daily Telegraph* who, when asked what news was, replied:

There is a difference between what I'm asked to cover, and what I think should be covered – and that's a distinction that every correspondent and journalist here would tell you.

The paper gave Jessop the autonomy to pursue the stories he was particularly interested in. Like Ledgard, Jessop had his own set of personal interests. He had studied geography at university, and was interested in the connection between people and their environment, something that he regularly explored in his reporting.

Like Ledgard at *The Economist*, Jessop had significant resources and autonomy in his reporting, and this contrasted sharply with both the dominated and mid spectrum newspapers. These symbolic producers both had far greater freedom to insert their own personality in their work.

Discussion

The Daily Telegraph's foreign correspondent in East Africa is a gatekeeper. He sifts through pre-existing news stories on the newswires and other amalgamators, and selects those that meet the news need of his newspaper. He writes these stories in a fashion that makes them appealing to his audience 'back home', and rank highly on Google news searches. There is very limited room for his own sensibilities to shape the news content – beyond tone, quote selection, and the rare opportunity to write a story he is interested in.

Most outlets produce ‘audience-led news’, but *The Daily Telegraph* takes this a step further: the content of their news is geared towards what a reader (who has not yet read the news) thinks that the news will be about. In short, stories are framed and pre-empted by audience expectations.

Pfalnz gave the example of an attempted terrorist attack in Australia orchestrated by terrorists from the Al Shabaab Somali network. This group may or may not have links to Al Qaeda. Yet, because audiences might search for the term “Al Qaeda” (the more famous terrorist network) – references to it will be made throughout the story. Left to their own devices, a foreign correspondent in East Africa might draw a link between the two networks – but it is unlikely that they would place it in a prominent position in the story. Peter Greste, foreign correspondent at the BBC in Nairobi, for example, commented:

I stay away from the Al Shabaab link to Al Qaeda. Because that’s only a small bit. And if we say that, everyone brings all of their preconceptions straight away to the story – files it away under that terrorist file in their head.

Pfalnz, by contrast, following DT conventions, will list it as a keyword, and may mention it in the title or opening paragraph. The net result is that *The Daily Telegraph* artificially inflates the association between Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda. The impact of this may be significant. Many commentators have suggested, for example, that the rationale for the Iraq invasion was a discursive “slight of hand”, whereby President Bush Jr. was able to impress upon the American people that there was a link between the regime in Iraq, Al Qaeda, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Kull et al 2003). In short, perceived associations may play an important role in public support for foreign policy.

More generally, this process would likely lead to news reports that support a dominant interpretation of events and leave less room for counter-narratives: as the story must be framed around what an uninformed reader would predict the news to be about (see Currah 2008). This undermines pluralist interpretations, which many identify as necessary for political deliberation (e.g., Norris 2000), and may reinforce stereotypes.

It is important to note, however, that soft news on Africa is not necessarily a “bad thing”; and reading African stories that are presented in an entertaining and engaging manner – as many of Pflanz’s are, because they are designed to immediately engage the reader - can have positive consequences. Scott’s (2009) analysis of African news coverage points out that outlets that focus on hard news – politics, conflict, and the like, present a more negative depiction of the continent than those outlets that include more soft, human news. When Pflanz writes a story about a Ugandan gorilla with a Facebook page who wants to be your friend, he opens up the possibility of a (in this case literal) connection between a citizen in the UK and events in the East African region. James Ferguson (2007) suggests that the West perceives Africa as a ‘shadow’, an absence, a space that technology and innovation have not reached. If these views prevail among the readers of a newspaper, it is no small thing to be telling stories in which the continent is presented as wired-up and technologically savvy. *The Daily Telegraph* and the more popular-orientated outlets have the potential to present an alternative – and human – perspective on lives in East Africa.

At the mid-spectrum and symbolic outlets, journalists had more resources and scope to produce enterprise reporting. They were able to

initiate stories, travel, and report on events of interest to them. The mid-spectrum producers were constrained, to some extent, by the need to write stories with ‘general appeal’, however, they were significantly more able to produce what they saw as ‘news of importance’ than the DT.

At these outlets, the habitus of the FC was clearly relevant. Because Howden was interested in environmental issues, readers of *the Independent* have been exposed to more stories on this topic. The role of individual FCs at the FT and Economist was even more profound. Ledgard and Jessop both had significant scope to select and explore topics. Whether this might be exceptional to the African context is examined in the discussion chapter.

The discussion of the different outlets, and varying work practices, starts to provide an explanation for how previous research has reached such different conclusions on the issue of journalistic autonomy. Pedelty (1995) suggested that foreign correspondents are little more than cogs in a machine, whose work is pre-determined by political economic structures, while Morrison and Tumber (1988) argued that individuality and the personality of FCs plays a role in news work. This chapter has suggested that autonomy is strongly linked to the position of an outlet in the journalistic field. Thus, we cannot make generalisations regarding the autonomy of foreign correspondents – they must be assessed within the context of their outlet, and the field in which it operates.

The role of the 'home field' in foreign news production

The role of the field 'back home' influences news production in a number of important ways. First, and most significantly, the 'home field' is the market in which news outlets compete and struggle for capital (economic and symbolic). The home field is particularly relevant for those outlets that are 'dominated,' as their news production is guided by a need to appeal to the UK audience in order to increase revenue.

At the mid-spectrum newspapers, stories did not need to have immediate appeal, but they could not be irrelevant in the eyes of a UK audience) At these papers, the home field is relevant to news commissioning in a more general way: in the concepts, stereotypes, and cultural narratives it references. Countries like Zimbabwe have more resonance in the public consciousness, and therefore have the upper hand in news commissioning over, say, the Central African Republic.

In addition, we have seen that the 'home field' plays a role in shaping the values of foreign correspondents, who had important habitus-shaping experiences in the UK, both inside and outside its journalistic field – through their studies, political development, and so on.

However, in a globalised world, the role of the 'home field' does not operate in isolation. As was clearly illustrated in this chapter, the majority of UK foreign correspondents are 'news followers' – they have neither the time nor resources to undertake extensive enterprising reporting. As a result, they follow the international news wires – and the local news organisations – that effectively provide the first 'filter' of events. Some of the UK FCs even

wondered out loud what value they added to their newspapers' coverage of Africa. One commented:

this is the problem: at some point they're going to realise. Let's see [looking through the newspaper website] ...1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6... 11, 12...13 – that's 13 stories on Africa, of which all but 2 are straight off the wires. So that's pounds they could have saved (off my stories) simply by taking these off the wires. They're going to work that out. And what are they getting extra? Let's see, this one, I interviewed this person, but so did the wires...so that's the same. This one, I interviewed this person and the wires didn't, so that's got value added... But it's not going to be long before they start realising.

Or as Xan Rice at *The Guardian* commented:

So how do I add value? Um, well, say Reuters have a story on Somalia quoting the information minister. I'll take that story then maybe add a little bit of background or context. If people are accessible, I'll call up for quotes... Sometimes I think, we shouldn't be trying to add value anyway. You know, that Somalia bombing story – why are we doing that? Why not just leave it to the wires?

As a result, it is impossible to explain foreign news production in the UK without taking into account the newswires, who are global producers that provide story ideas and help set the news agenda.

In addition, we saw that both the *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* orientate themselves towards global capital. Not only does their primary profit derive from outside the UK, but so too does much of their symbolic capital (“we're widely read on Air Force 1,” notes the marketing director of the *Economist*). As we have seen from this analysis, news content at these publications is geared towards a global clientele. These outlets suggest that historical tradition, and location of primary headquarters is no indicator of how an outlet is positioned in their news provisions. In short, these publications problematize the division between a global and a national field. This issue, and the problem of field membership is returned to in the

discussion section of this thesis. First, however, this chapter concludes by briefly commenting on the production of traditional print FCs in East Africa working for different national fields.

8. Producing news for other national fields

This research has not canvassed enough FCs working for other national fields to draw cross-national comparisons with UK FCs. In addition to the UK group, the fieldwork canvassed seven FCs working for traditional newspapers/magazines in Europe and the US⁵⁷. These interviews suggested many interesting ideas; for example, Sarah Childress at the *Wall Street Journal* describes being extensively monitored and ‘fact-checked’ by her outlet; but there is, of course, no way to know if this was a convention of her outlet, or reflected a convention of the US field more generally. Dr Arne Perras, correspondent for the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* based in Kampala, held a doctorate in African history; but it is unclear if this reflected a specific form of cultural capital valued by his organization, his journalistic field, or was a more accidental fact. There was only one female FCs in this sample, and she worked for a US outlets - but the significance of this is not clear.

All of these FCs were Western nationals; and all but one was born, raised and educated in the country they now report for. The exception was Max Delaney, an Englishman who freelanced for the *Christian Science Monitor*. This suggests that these traditional outlets continue to place a premium on their FCs sharing the nationality, and cultural frames of reference, of their audience ‘back home’.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Gentleman, *New York Times*; Sarah Childress, *Wall Street Journal*; Kaes Broere, *De Volk Krant*; Arne Perras, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*; Max Delaney, *Christian Science Monitor* (freelancer); Simone Schlindwein *Spiegel* (freelancer); Aidan Hartley, Channel 4/*Spectator* (casual freelancer).

These interviews suggested one interesting and consistent theme that is worth teasing out; many of these FCs described a similar pattern of character development from exposure to the local environment.

Time in the field

Tim Markham (2011) notes that new foreign correspondents have higher levels of enthusiasm and a greater concern with ethical values, and suggests that they often become more cynical while in the field. Markham suggests that there may be a chronological development across a profession, regarding how an individual's habitus changes over the course of their career (what he refers to as "structural aging") and queries whether, in professions such as war correspondents, there may be a point at which one's dispositions becomes "maximally aligned" with the rules of the field.

Interviews with FCs around East Africa support Markham's contention: many correspondents identified personal development in their style and approach to journalism, and that of their contemporaries. They described their initial arrival and first year on the job as a phase of both shock and idealism. Meera Selva, former East Africa correspondent for *The Independent*, believed that correspondents write "usual first-arrival stories" about refugee camps, conflict and famine. The tone of these pieces, she suggests, is shock and outrage, giving the hypothetical example: "UN fails to act as babies lie dying". Arne Doornebal, an FC in Kampala, describes a particularly Dutch version of this phenomenon:

You can tell a new Dutch correspondent. They'll be here and writing a story, straight away, about how flower growers are only paid \$50 a month, even though we pay loads

for their flowers in Holland...As I'm here for longer, I learn more and know more. I know how things are and aren't too shocked anymore.

After some time working in East Africa, journalists appeared to become more normalized to its troubles. This period may be what Markham (2011) suggests is the “maximal alignment” with the rules of the field, as the FC starts to witness events less emotionally. They also build up their contact networks, and knowledge (the importance of which is more fully examined in the following chapter). Dana Hughs, foreign correspondent for the ABC, felt that she wrote very different stories as a result of two years experience in Nairobi. Importantly, she felt that her experience gave her the confidence to negotiate with her editors, and she now fought harder to tell the stories she considered important. That is, by working in the field, she had accumulated cultural capital and status within her organisation: a position from which she could bargain and make claims.

The FCs described some journalists as passing into a third and more problematic stage. Xan Rice, *Guardian* correspondent comments:

Being here too long is a problem. In the first 2 years, you're learning the ropes, and you get better and better, knowing more and understanding. But after 5 years, you're not as fresh, and you become more selective about what you want to write, you've seen it before.

This was echoed by McConnell, who noted of a recently departed FC:

towards the end [he] lost his enthusiasm a bit, as you would after five years in this place. And he did very circumscribed stories - following the news agenda, Somali pirates, Darfur and so on.

In addition to becoming less energetic, and selective in stories, time in the field potentially altered a journalist's personal outlook. The FCs suggested that journalists might occasionally develop a deep cynicism or pessimism from their time in the region – which might be accompanied by anger. An NGO spokesperson described one FC she had encountered as “so suspicious of everyone - he'd accuse a chair of corruption”.

Conversely, time in the field might make an FC “too close to the story”. Aidan Hartley - born in Kenya, and educated in the UK - has worked as an FC in East Africa for several decades⁵⁸. Hartley has developed a strong emotional attachment to the region and its issues and, in this sense, his habitus was not “maximally aligned” to a journalistic field that valued objectivity and neutrality, as he well knew:

I am what the editors call, 'too close to the story' I'm not going to move on in 2 years. This is my home. And I am close to it. I want stories that have a big impact. I wouldn't use the word advocacy, but I'm attached to the story.

Time in the field may not impact all FCs in exactly the same way, but the above observations are notable. Significant changes in an FCs personal perspective may impact the tone of news that these journalists produce, as Morrison and Tumber observe of a UK FC in the Falklands war; his editor noted that his stories were “bitter” and the FC replied “that's because I am f*king bitter” (1988: prefaces, x).

As was seen in the analysis of UK journalistic field, even at the most dominated newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, FCs had latitude to employ any

⁵⁸ He was not specifically included in the main analysis of UK FCs section, as he was working as a very occasional freelancer when I spoke with him.

'tone' they wished in stories. Mike Pflanz noted that his predecessor, for example, wrote "tight, furious prose". At their symbolic outlets, there was even more scope for individuals to choose, develop and frame news content. In short, if an FC becomes an 'Afro-pessimist', only seeing negative traits and corruption around them, it may well be that their news content does too.

One of the benefits of adopting a field perspective is that it allows room for incorporating this personal perspective and trajectory into the analysis, through the concept of habitus. Given that Afro-pessimism (to stay with the example) has been noted as one of the most problematic narratives in the international news coverage of Africa, this seems an important and necessary inclusion.

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All of the FCs discussed above, and the newswire journalists from the previous section, engage with a local environment when they produce their news. It is to these factors that we now turn, in the final analysis chapter: the immediate, local site of production.

Part IV: The Immediate Site

There is a third and final space that must be analysed to understand the work of FCs in Africa – the local, immediate site where an event occurs. This is not only the site of the raw events that become the substance of news, but may also contain a variety of obstacles noted in the literature review that can influence foreign correspondents – oppressive governments, difficult logistics, and so on. This chapter considers the role played by ‘the local’ and asks how it should be conceptualised within a field analysis of FC work.

The chapter argues that in the context of international news production the local is best understood as a site or – following Cottle (2009: 310), a news ecology – in which FCs are based, and where they operate to further their strategic aims. The local site is not a ‘field’ in Bourdieu’s sense of the word, as it does not contain the capital that such news outlets strive for. They are not located or positioned here but, rather, have sent emissaries, or contracted agents on site, to further their strategic goals at home and in the global sphere.

This is not to suggest that the ‘local’ is irrelevant for international news work – far from it. The local site informs the extent to which outlets can smoothly operate, and achieve their strategic ends. It presents barriers and obstacles. Significantly, in the contemporary international news system, it also provides (and has socialised) many local national journalists who work as FCs for international outlets.

This chapter considers these factors through the analysis of two local sites. The first is a shorter case study in Kenya, featuring FCs we have already

met. The second is a case study of Sudan, widely considered a more difficult news environment. These case studies reveal interesting, and divergent findings. In Kenya, the local site had little influence on news reports, as these were closely monitored by managers at the outlets; in Sudan, however, there was little monitoring and a great deal of scope for the local site – mediated through the habitus of individual FCs – to shape international news content.

The chapter concludes by briefly commenting on other local news sites in East Africa.

9. Reporting the Post Election Violence in Kenya (2007-8)

This section explores how the news agencies and newspapers already profiled in this thesis reported on one particular crisis: the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007-8. It is a short case study, as the key actors, their outlets and the capital they pursue have already been introduced. The intention is to link positions and habitus, previously outlined, to specific news outcomes. The next chapter presents a final and more-lengthy case study, of FCs working in Sudan.

The Kenyan post-election violence provides an opportunity to explore how the values of an international journalistic field interact with local circumstances and, in particular, local journalistic values. During the violence, the local Kenyan media produced very different coverage from Western FCs. The Kenyan journalists working at mainstream Kenyan outlets wrote what could be described as “peace journalism” in their stories: they tried to draw attention away from conflict, and support the peace process as it unfolded. The Western journalists, by contrast, operated by the values of the global journalistic field – they sought to objectively ‘witness’ the conflict as it unfolded.

The conflict created a complex situation for the news bureaus in Nairobi that employ both Kenyan and Western journalists. In these offices, the Kenyan journalists I spoke with took a very different position on how the conflict should be reported than their Western peers. This clash of values offers a springboard for exploring the potential ability of local national

journalists to shape the news: do they have the power to challenge Western reporting modes, or do they reproduce the values of the system? It is shown that, in the end, the Western voices in the newswires dominated; this suggests that organisational norms – and those of the journalistic field – prevail over and above the dissenting opinions of local journalists (in this case study). Analysing how this took place in practice provides an interesting insight into the international and local relationship; ultimately, it shows the strength of the doxic norm of objectivity.

The Kenyan Journalistic Field

Kenya is often considered a regional leader in the freedom of its media; however, there remain a variety of political and economic barriers; Freedom House designated Kenya only ‘partially free’ and ranked it 96th of 175 in their (2009) Press Index. The Kenyan Constitution contains a Bill of Rights that protects individual freedom of expression, and this is generally seen to extend to media outlets. However, courts in Kenya have not established the supremacy of the Constitution over statutes that contradict its provisions, particularly with regards to media law (Odhiambo 2002:297). Freedom House (2009) notes that the “government routinely restricts this right by broadly interpreting several laws, including the Official Secrets Act, the penal code, and criminal libel legislation”.

Notably, during the election violence explored in this chapter, the Government enforced a ban on radio and television news broadcasts that

lasted from December 30, 2007, until February 4, 2008 (BBC World Service Trust 2008).

Kenya is a relatively easy and accessible country for international news outlets to set up their bureau. The large presence of FCs in the country is often attributed to its flight connections and international schools – as well as the presence of major international organisations, such as the UN's Africa headquarters. Expensive visas, crime and occasional threats from the Kenyan Government, however, have meant that some FCs consider Kampala a better base for the region (Hannerz 2004:57)

Significantly, Nairobi is one of the easiest cities in the region for the international newswires to recruit local stringers. English is widely spoken, there is a large population of university graduates and, increasingly, a strong tradition of journalism training; a number of universities and private institutions now offer post graduate certificates, bachelors and masters degrees in journalism.

Background: The post election violence 2007-8

On 30th December 2007, incumbent Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the Kenyan presidential election, amid widespread claims of vote-rigging from both local and international electoral monitors. Within the hour, supporters of Kibaki's opponent, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement, began rioting across the country and attacking Kibaki supporters. The violence began as an expression of outrage at the fraudulent elections but quickly became ethnically oriented, with Luo (Odinga's tribe) mobs venting their

anger on Kikuyu (Kibaki's tribe) neighbours: Kikuyu youths assembled to take revenge against any non-Kikuyu in their residential areas. Violence peaked with the killing of over 30 unarmed civilians in a church near Eldoret on New Year's Day. By the end of February 2008, post-election violence had left more than 1,200 dead and some 350,000 displaced.

The post-election violence had what the International Crisis Group (2008: 1) calls "a serious ethnic character" – but ethnic differences were by no means the sole cause of the conflict. Tribal groupings have long been politicised and manipulated in Kenya by elites, from their construction during colonial contact through to contemporary politics of ethnic nepotism and exclusion. Today, there is a widespread perception that the ruling party's tribal peers receive preferential access to state resources. In December 2007, these grievances combined with weak political institutions, the normalisation of violence, and conflict among elites to create the foundations of the crisis (Cheeseman 2008: 170).

News coverage of the post-election violence

The violence immediately captured the attention of the global news media. Unusually for an African news story, reports on the crisis reached the front pages of newspapers and were broadcast at the start of television and radio news bulletins around the world. Even more unusually, interest in the crisis

was relatively long-lived, and it continued to receive a high level of attention throughout January and into February 2008.⁵⁹

The content of international news coverage of the crisis has been fiercely criticised by both Kenyan and international commentators. Two critiques, in particular, have dominated the post-mortem analyses. First, it is claimed that the coverage exaggerated the scale and severity of the violence that took place. As one Kenyan reporter told the BBC World Service Report (2008: 14) investigators, “I watched the BBC and I thought this country was on fire. CNN was playing the same clip from Kibera as if it was a commercial. Part of what I saw was sensational [and created fear]”. The most dramatic exaggerations were seen in articles that employed the term “genocide” - comparing Kenya’s violence to the cataclysmic events of Rwanda in 1994, they reduced the crisis to an “atavistic inevitability”, and potentially stoked anger and fear (Somerville 2009). The international news outlets showed little restraint in broadcasting the most explicit images, including “burning houses, scared people on the move, and even people hacked to death” (Oriare 2008). In some cases, these images were presented without any explanation of their content, conveying the impression that the whole country was in a state of senseless anarchy.

Second, the international coverage was accused of employing tribal language that was incorrect and/or condescending. Keith Somerville (2009: 530) notes that in the UK media the election violence was presented almost exclusively as a product of long-standing tribal hatred, with little or no

⁵⁹ In the *Guardian* website archive, for example, a search of “Kenya” in October and November 2007, prior to the election violence, returns a result of approximately 50–60 articles/month. In January 2008, there were four times that number – with 202 articles. In February 2008, the coverage remained high with 113. By March, it had dropped again to 61.

reference to the political parties that caused much of the tension. The use of tribal language in reports concerned analysts who felt this framing generated misleading descriptions, gave insufficient explanations of the violence, and had pejorative and primitive connotations (Anderson 2008; Keane 2008; Somerville 2009). Finally, the use of tribal language concerned many Kenyan commentators who worried the language was inflammatory, particularly when international coverage became a crucial source of information for Kenyans after the government banned local radio houses from live broadcasting (BBC World Service Report 2008). Peter Oriare (2008) media professor at Nairobi University wrote:

Following the ban, most community radio stations merely relayed messages broadcast by BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera that showed violence taking place. The foreign media showed real time evictions of burning houses...When people saw their tribesmen being killed they did similar things to members of other communities living among them. Some stations relayed such gory stories they fuelled the post-election violence in unexpected places far from the epicentre.

Divergent approaches to reporting

In Kenya, the local mainstream media (TV, press, and radio owned by the two main media houses) adopted a very different, very reserved approach to reporting. Careful not to exacerbate the violence, journalists refrained from naming the different tribes involved in fighting, and chose to describe clashes as occurring between different “communities”. Speaking to the BBC World Service Report (2008: 8), Farida Karoney, a Kenyan reporter, states her outlet’s position: “Here at KTN, when we are reporting conflict we will not

refer to people by their tribe because we think that such tribal references will entrench feelings of hate”.⁶⁰

This local coverage contrasts starkly with the work of international reporters, and criticism of their practice is still articulated today. Kenyan journalists argue that the international reporters demonstrated little concern for the wellbeing of Kenya or Kenyans, and were simply trying to break another story for professional gain. Kenyan journalist turned academic George Ogola (2008), for example, writes:

It was not a desire by a section of the international media to tell the world the true story about the conflict that was slowly consuming Kenya. This was about a good story; it was about the exploitation of a people crying out for help.

Underlying this clash is a fundamental disagreement on what the role of the news media should be during a crisis. Kenyan journalists describe an important ethical obligation to the peace process itself, and argue that the media should not produce reports that are potentially inflammatory, whether they are intended for a primarily local or international audience. This position is sometimes referred to in communications literature as “peace journalism” or “conflict-sensitive journalism” (Galtung 2000; Hanitzsch 2004); and it is regarded as being in direct competition with traditional “hard news” reporting (Fawcett 2002). While traditional reporting values suggest that journalists should draw attention *to* important developments in a conflict, “peace journalism” suggests that journalists should draw attention *away* from any developments that could fuel fear or create further tension. Many traditional

⁶⁰ The Kenyan media were not completely homogenous in this approach. In particular, some vernacular radio stations were accused of allowing upset and angry callers to vent their opinions, without moderation and thus fuelling violence (IRIN 2008; Ismail & Deane 2008; Waki 2008). However, in the Kenyan mainstream media – which is highly trusted by the general population (Maina 2007) – the approach was uniformly reserved and restrained.

foreign correspondents are exceedingly resistant to peace journalism, as it challenges their core doxic commitment to objectivity. These journalists argue that feelings of attachment to and becoming involved in the peace process undermine the ability of journalists to objectively bear witness.⁶¹

The analysis that follows explores how key agents in Nairobi covered the election violence, drawing attention to fields, capital, and habitus.

Reporting the violence at Reuters

The Reuters Nairobi bureau chief Andrew Cawthorne explained that the decision to cover the post-election violence extensively and deeply, using all available resources, throughout December and January 2007-8, was a “no-brainer”. In addition to its clear political and humanitarian dimensions, the violence shook one of the strongest economies in the region and had significant implications for investment, tourism, and trade. It aligned perfectly with both the economic and symbolic aims of the Reuters outlet – a perfect example of the “political risk” focus and frame.

For the Kenyans in the Reuters bureau, the post-election violence was an extremely emotional and difficult time to be a journalist. They were at greater risk when they left the office to report, as they could be associated with one side of the conflict or another. Furthermore, many found newsgathering and writing challenging as the issues were so close to home and were hurting

⁶¹ For examples of this resistance, see the titles of Dan Loyn’s (2007) article in *Conflict and Communication Online*, “Good journalism or Peace journalism?” and Fawcett (2002) “Why Peace Journalism Isn’t News” in *Journalism Studies*.

the people and communities they cared about. Writing about someone else's conflict, even within East Africa, is easy; writing on your own is tough. The chief economic correspondent explained:

When you write every day, like we do – '15 people are killed in Somalia' – that's one thing and it's fine. But when it's your own country and your own people it's totally different. Totally and utterly different. It's too hard.

Making it harder still, many of the Kenyans in the newsroom had very strong political and personal feelings on the crisis itself, and they found it difficult to remain impartial. A senior television producer described the tension:

It was completely obvious that everyone was on different sides. I'm Kikuyu, and my mother rang me up in tears – my aunt's house was burnt down. So I'm angry, and I want to write a big critical rant about ODM. But then, another guy here is talking to me and his friend's house is burnt down on the other side...my job was to kind of try and find a balance between that but it was very hard.

Cracks emerged between those who supported ODM and those who supported Kibaki. The chief economic correspondent identified strong divisions among staff:

There was a really big divide in the newsroom. There were those who thought ODM and those who thought PNU was right. Basically, it was Kikuyu versus everyone else...We would have discussions about coverage, they would say, 'The election's been stolen,' and we would be saying, 'that hasn't been proven yet'...So despite journalist objectivity, we were all very emotional and taking sides.

Despite the strain of these divisions, she claimed they did not have an adverse impact on the stories: "We ended up being balanced, because of that split – everyone was saying to each other all the time, 'You have to put this side in'". Faced with conflicting stances towards the fighting, the local journalists appealed to the notion of balance to decide the content of their stories.

Journalistic impartiality is thus asserted as a resilient and internationally accepted goal. However, several of the Kenyan reporters echoed Ogola's (2008) complaint that the international coverage was sensationalist, self-serving and unsympathetic. Standoffish impartiality, the Kenyans thought, had to be tempered by a genuine concern with local needs.

International and local divides

Proximity to the crisis created a profound division within the newsroom between Kenyan citizens and internationals regarding how the violence should be covered; this reflected the difference of opinions that divided the local and international media in Nairobi more generally. The Kenyan reporters felt that international journalists should be more selective and cautious with what they covered, and more reserved in the language they used. This position represented a break in the Kenyan journalists' news values. In day-to-day reporting, all of the journalists in the Nairobi newsroom articulated the need to witness, stay objective, and not intervene or try to represent the news to achieve any particular objective. In writing on their own crisis, however, these journalists found their professional values less keenly than their personal investment in their country.⁶² The concerns of the Kenyan journalists in the Reuters newsroom were sidelined.

In general, the bureau chief thought that Reuters did a fairly good job of avoiding the worst of the tribal language in its reports and was fairly

⁶² This tendency has been noted by Hillel Nossok who, after investigating the international coverage of international news in the USA, Britain and Israel, concludes that, "when a foreign news item is defined as 'ours', then journalists' professional practices become subordinate to national loyalty." (2004: 343)

sensitive to the inflammatory potential of news content, “Every meeting we had, every story we wrote, we were aware of that [trying to avoid tribal language]”. However, he admitted that things could have been reported in a more nuanced way and, to some extent, that this reflected the fact that the Western journalists in the office dominated the editorial meetings and reporting decisions during the crisis: “We could have done better. Afterwards when we had a big discussion, that became clear”.

Cawthorne believes that the Kenyans in the newsroom were unusually quiet due to the traumatic turn of events. In addition, time pressures meant that there was little time to reflect or discuss the issues among the staff fully. Cawthorne and his team had given the issue a lot of thought after the event, and his reflections are worth quoting at length:

I couldn't fuck around – if you'll excuse me – when that was happening. I couldn't spend an hour to sit back and let's think about this and coax out people's ideas. I was like, um, a church is burning with 33 people inside, we need to urgently write about that. 'Is this echoes of Rwanda, isn't it echoes of Rwanda?' I mean, huge questions like that, and we were making split second judgments on them. And there, unfortunately, those hardened correspondents here, we tended to dominate here. I wanted to make the others speak up, and they weren't. Later on, they had a lot to say, an awful lot. And I berated them a little and said, 'next time, you speak up, speak up.'

Although Cawthorne states that he would have liked the Kenyan journalists to speak up, it seems unlikely that this would have made a big difference. It may, potentially, have decreased the hyperbole (Cawthorne did decide to compare the violence to Rwanda – an analogy that has since received considerable criticism from Africanists (e.g., Sommerville 2009)). It seems unlikely that the Kenyan journalists I spoke with, had they been

involved in this decision making process, would have agreed with the comparison.

However, it is also unlikely that consulting the Kenyan journalists would have altered the general frame in which the election story was told. Cawthorne and most of the Western journalists in the Reuters office have lived in Nairobi for several years; they are intelligent, educated professionals. From their years of reporting in East Africa, and their high level of engagement with local communities, they are perfectly aware of the ways in which Kenyan tribes have been manipulated by elites. They knew about the multi-level factors that were compounding and driving the conflict. The different positions taken by Western and local journalists were not based on information asymmetry; they were primarily based on an emotional/attachment asymmetry. Kenyan nationals, as one would expect, had a greater emotional investment in the story, and they wanted the optimal outcome for their country – for the conflict to be resolved, rather than represented at its worst in a way that might fuel fighting and resentment. These views, had they been articulated, would unlikely have been heeded, given the prevailing doxic norms of objectivity, and ‘telling the facts as they are’.

In any case the Kenyan journalists did not speak up, nor was there much opportunity for them to do so. Although, as was seen in the earlier analysis of Reuters, the Kenyans were normally highly involved in editorial decision-making and were valued and respected by their colleagues, they did not get much say on the coverage of the election violence for several reasons.

First, the shifts were being run and editorial decisions being made by the Bureau Chief and Deputy Bureau Chief, both westerners. There was, furthermore, a state of emergency in the newsroom and decisions were made swiftly, often without discussion or consultation; the hierarchies of management (with Western journalists at the top) became more visible, and the Kenyan voices were sidelined. Just as crucially, the Kenyan journalists' proximity to the violence became a liability in reporting 'hard' news to Reuters' clients, not an asset. According to the norms of the organisation – and its strong commitment to objectivity – their proximity contrasted unfavourably with the hardened distance of the traditional foreign correspondents.

AFP, AP and Bloomberg followed Reuters in reporting on the conflict in an objective way. Head of news at AFP, John Mac, felt that the local media had engaged in what he described as a “weird self-censorship”:

I think the intention was good at the time. They didn't want to add fuel to fire by, you know, fanning the whole tribal tension across the country by pointing fingers. And saying, well, these guys were Kailjan and these guys are not.

However, AFP did not consider that supporting the local peace process was part of their remit; and the wire did not entertain the idea of describing the violence in more attached terms.

The newswires' coverage of this crisis highlights the extent to which global newswires operate by the doxic norms of the global journalistic field. We now turn to examine how the traditional newspaper FCs covered the event.

The Newspaper FCs

As the representatives of their outlets on the ground, the newspaper FCs worked around the clock to deliver stories. Most wrote two or three stories every day but even so it was impossible to cover all of the conflict's multifaceted dimensions in Nairobi, let alone its varying manifestations around Kenya. These commitments tied most journalists to their desks, limiting the amount of first-hand research and observation they could do, and increasing their dependence on the newswires for breaking developments in the story. However, they still played a significant role in interpreting the crisis for an audience 'back home'.

The Daily Telegraph

Pflanz at the *Daily Telegraph* wrote extensively on the post-election violence. In addition, the DT contracted a second journalist to help him – the DT's former East African reporter, a Kenyan national, had returned to Nairobi to vote, and stayed on to report.

Pflanz's writing has been singled out by media commentator Keith Somerville as being noteworthy for its emphasis on, and simplification of, tribal identities. Somerville's (2009) survey of UK newspaper coverage of the Kenyan post-election violence in 2007-8 finds that, of all the UK newspapers, the DT was the most inclined to present the conflict in exclusively ethnic terms, with no reference to political context; indeed, he writes that the DT appeared "incapable of discussing what was happening in Kenya without

using the word ‘tribe’...Whether something inserted in London by editors or originating from the correspondent, stories by the journalist Mike Pflanz, in particular, reported the whole period of violence through a tribal lens” (Somerville 2009: 531).

Pflanz felt that these criticisms were unfair. He felt that the fighting was tribal, and that, moreover, he was being held to an unreasonable standard:

it’s only because everyone here thinks that when we say tribe, we mean some guy with a fucking bone through his nose. Ok, fine, some do – Fox news or whatever – but it makes me really angry because I don’t.

Notably, a key difference between Pflanz and the more symbolic producers was that he saw his obligations as being exclusively to people “back home”:

I understand the [local] sensitivity but I’m writing for people back home and I have to explain to them in a way they’ll understand. I’m not writing for here... I don’t know if I have to be ethically concerned with the local reception, when my audience is all abroad.

That is, when Pflanz approached his writing, he was more cognisant of a UK audience, and felt compelled to describe the conflict in terms that would be immediately accessible to them. This reflects the DT’s position, as a more populist-orientated paper.

Within this approach, there was still a role for personal input, especially with regard to the tone of articles. Pflanz’s notes that the former DT journalist who helped him with the coverage took a more “furious” tone in his work:

he went out very quickly to the West of Kenya and wrote, again, tightly written, furious slightly terrified prose about going through these road blocks....I didn't grow up here. I would have been able to write it, but I wouldn't necessarily have had the same compulsion to do it

The disposition of this FC – a Kenyan national, and one who was upset and angry at the fighting – was reflected, to some extent, in the DT coverage.

The Mid spectrum papers

At the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Times*, reporting on the crisis tended to be more mixed: violence was more regularly reported as “happening on ethnic lines” or as “political conflict, spurred on by ethnic divides”. In his analysis, Somerville (2009) finds that these three papers used the word tribe or some ethnic derivative less than half as often as the *Daily Telegraph*.

All three FCs at these papers stated that they thought the fighting could accurately be described as “tribal” in nature, but that because they were aware that people were sensitive to this terms – particularly locally –and so they tried to avoid it. In contrast to the DT, they felt that some of their ethical obligations were to the people around them, (or to politically correct representation more generally). Xan Rice at *The Guardian* noted for example, “I used ‘ethnic groups’ but only because I know people can be sensitive about the word tribe.”

Dan Howden at the *Independent* stated that, at his paper, “the instinct is to say, ‘it’s not tribal’ and to try – as much as possible – to be very non-colonial in how we present things”. He went on to explain:

Every country in the world is grossly sensitive to how they are portrayed abroad. And so what we do is have a talk, and listen to our FC, try and find a compromise, a reasonable way to present an issue. Then we often have a piece on why it is an issue, we try to explain the argument. We had Richard Dowden write a piece on why it's not genocide, why it's not the new Rwanda.

These journalists had less need to frame their news in ways that would be immediately interesting to a mass audience and were therefore more able to present nuanced pieces.

The Symbolic producers

They symbolic producers were given more space in their publications to report on the election violence. Barney Jessop at *The Financial Times* wrote that the fighting was taking place along ethnic lines, but had space to contextualise these tensions as expressions of other grievances. He was able to look at the issue from multiple angles, and analyse it within its historical context. Writing for an elite audience, he did not need to dumb down his interpretation, or try to make the story instantly appealing.

Ledgard, at *The Economist*, found it very frustrating that he could not write on the crisis immediately – that he had to wait for the weekly deadline at his publication. However, he used this time to research and explore an unreported aspect of the conflict:

I thought I'd write something that other people hadn't done on the Luoa. I went over to West Kenya and researched – what's the future of these people? – A more broad, analysis-type piece.

Like Jessop, Ledgard was also able to explore the implications and nuances of the crisis.

The symbolic producers were not necessarily ‘more engaged’ with the local sphere than the other newspaper FCs – but the status of African news at their outlets allowed them more space to convey its intricacies.

Conclusion

The post-election violence was an extreme and anomalous period for the reporters in Nairobi, and interactions during that time do not reflect day-to-day reporting processes in the Reuters bureau or for the UK print FCs. However, this case study raises a number of interesting and important issues regarding who exactly ‘speaks for Kenya’: it highlights potential difficulties Kenyans may face writing as ‘insiders’ on their own country; and the local criticisms that can arise of ‘outsiders’ that are perceived to be exploitatively pursuing their own professional gain.

Kenya is the most ‘monitored’ of the news sites in East Africa. Both the newswire bureaus and the newspaper FCs based in Nairobi are in direct communication with their outlet’s headquarters (as opposed to countries like Uganda that report to headquarters via Nairobi).

Significantly, there were no outlets in Nairobi where Kenyan nationals produced news by themselves for an editor based abroad. The only Kenyan FCs covering the crisis worked in the newsrooms of the newswires, where there were clear hierarchies and Western bureau chiefs; these hierarchies became more obvious during the crisis, where there was a state of emergency in the newsrooms. For the managers of these wires, a more empathetic or

advocacy-inclined position was inimical to the objectivity doxa of the global news field.

At the more symbolic newspapers, local sensitivities were taken into account to some extent; but for those wire agencies that were driven by the need to provide swift hard news, these sensitivities were dismissed.

In the coverage of the election violence, the 'local' did not have a significant impact on how international outlets selected or framed their news for an international audience. We see that, to a large extent, position drove production, with some scope for nuances in tone and angle, particularly at the more symbolic outlets.

10. FCs in Sudan and the coverage of conflict in Darfur

This section explores one final group of journalists: foreign correspondents in Khartoum, Sudan. In contrast to those in Nairobi, the majority of these FCs reported to editors based in other countries. The one exception to this rule were the correspondents at Reuters, who worked under a Sudan Bureau Chief. This chapter analyses the practices of these FCs, as well as how the immediate local site – and particularly one as difficult and dangerous as Sudan – influenced the news they produced.

It finds substantive variations in the coverage produced both between outlets and individual journalists and argues that these can be explained with reference to differences in journalists' habitus, which were able to gain expression because they had autonomy. In particular, it shows that the news produced by the Sudanese national FCs employed by AP and AFP- who were socialized in the Sudanese journalistic field and reported directly to editors based elsewhere – more often made use of only one source and portrayed the Government of Sudan much more favourably and prominently (in short, practiced much less balance) than did the Western journalists. The latter was also true of the Sudanese FC employed by Reuters, but to a lesser degree. This points to the important contributions of supervision and socialization to foreign news production in Sudan.

This section begins with a brief introduction to the Darfur crisis, its coverage, and the journalistic field in Sudan, before describing the FCs working in Khartoum and their average news day. It then explores the practice of these FCs through the lenses of field, capital, and habitus.

Background: The Darfur Crisis

Accounts of the Darfur conflict often read as follows: In 2003, rebel groups in Darfur took up arms and attacked government buildings in response to years of political marginalisation and neglect. The government of Sudan responded to this insurgency by contracting local nomadic Arab tribes – the ‘Janjaweed’ – to attack rebel villages. In the fighting that followed, millions were displaced and hundreds of thousands killed (Murphy, 2007: 316). In 2007, increasing rebel fragmentation, banditry and fighting between groups who had not previously fought made the conflict more complex still (Gettleman, 2007; UNMIS, 2007).

Observers in Sudan and in the international community have contested these ‘factual’ propositions. The government of Sudan (GoS) denies any military involvement in Darfur, and claims there have been only 9,000 deaths; the Save Darfur Coalition claims that the government is directly responsible for up to 400,000 deaths. Academic commentators tend to fall somewhere in between (e.g., Flint & de Wall, 2005) but even they are torn. Evaluating the crisis, Baldo et al. (2005) conclude that the conflict *did not constitute* an asymmetrical attack on civilians; Eric Reeves (2007), a Smith College professor, argues the opposite. The US administration called the

conflict government-sponsored genocide, the EU called it “tantamount to genocide,” while the UN described it as ethnically motivated but non-genocidal violence. The net result was that practically every feature of the conflict was contested, from its causes and scale to its ‘name’ and the actors involved (de Wall, 2007: *preface*, xiii). Journalists attempting to represent the crisis had little choice but to simplify and – more often than not, working with limited space – privileged one interpretation of events.

News coverage of the Darfur crisis

In March 2004, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, called Darfur the “world’s greatest humanitarian crisis”, a statement that coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide; within hours “the news that Darfur was the new Rwanda spread around the world” (Jones 2004). For the remainder of 2004 there was a high volume of news articles and documentaries on the conflict, a trend that continued throughout 2005, 2006 and 2007 as momentum grew. Darfur – a previously unknown region of Sudan – became a household name (Murphy 2007: 314).

A significant portion of this media attention was driven by the Save Darfur coalition – an organisation that Mamdani (2011) suggests was the most effective advocacy campaign since the Vietnam War. A large number of prominent Hollywood celebrities also spoke out about the crisis: among others, Mia Farrow and George Clooney. In the US, the Congress and Senate both passed resolutions condemning the crisis, and the President and Secretary of State denounced it as genocide. The European Parliament passed

a resolution condemning the conflict, and in the UK, Bob Geldof arranged a letter from Europe's intelligentsia decrying Western inaction.

Through elite attention, Western political involvement, and public awareness in the US and UK, Darfur became the moving story of the day – and this drove further coverage. As we saw in the Reuters chapter – and as noted by the other foreign correspondents in Nairobi – existing media attention is one of the strongest drivers of news. When some outlets are covering an event, others don't want to be left behind; and pressure to beat the competition creates a self-reinforcing news agenda.

Numerous commentators felt that the level of press attention on Darfur was excessive and diverted attention away from other important issues, both within and outside the country. Dr Annette Rehl, spokesperson for the UNHCR commented that “Darfur is sexy. And that's why they report about it.” Rehl felt that international attention to Darfur was precluding concern for, among other issues, one of the world's most protracted and neglected refugee situations: Eritrean refugee camps in East Sudan. Other NGO and IO representatives commented that the issues in Darfur, while serious, were not unique, and that many important conflicts in other African countries were being ignored at the time.

The international news coverage of the Darfur crisis has been heavily criticized: allegations included that it decontextualised and depoliticised the issues, exacerbated ethnic clashes, was simple and sensational, included misinformation, made false claims, used poor sources and failed to remain

neutral (Crawshaw, 2004; Quach, 2004; Blake, 2005; Knickmeyer, 2005; Morley, 2005; Pronk, 2005; Franks, 2006; Melvern, 2006; Campbell, 2007; Cathcart, 2007; Mamdani 2011). A Reporters Without Borders assessment showed that some journalists broke “basic rules of journalistic practice” such as the corroboration of facts, use of contrasting sources, impartiality and objectivity (2007: 13). Hemphill (2007) notes that when these mistakes occurred, they were reinforced and amplified as journalists copied them from one article to another. As of yet, no academic research has been done on the journalists in the field who produced these reports, or why they read the way that they did.

The Journalistic field in Sudan

Sudan is a more difficult country to report on than many in Africa⁶³: it is large, potentially dangerous, and the absence of reliable sources makes journalistic work challenging. In addition, a number of media routines that journalists take for granted are either missing or modified in the Sudanese mediascape. In Kenya (as in the UK and US), newsgathering is streamlined by organisations in and outside government, who hold press conferences, give regular briefings and issue press releases. These are packaged to fit journalistic formats and timed to coincide with deadlines; in effect, these powerful institutions subsidise the cost of gathering and processing the news in order to influence the way it is reported (Curran 2002: 150). In Sudan, these relationships are significantly less ‘streamlined’: Press conferences do

⁶³ Since this research was conducted, Sudan has become two countries, both of which are rather difficult to report from.

not occur very often, and when they do they allow little room for journalists to ask confrontational questions⁶⁴; press releases from non-government sources are rare for fear of reprisal; and government press releases are written in wordy, technical English such that journalists can't use them without making significant modifications.

Beyond these basic challenges, three factors are particularly important to news production in Sudan. First, the government of Sudan, who have a history of enforcing bureaucratic obstacles to prevent journalists from gaining access to events; regularly intimidate and punish both journalists and sources; and actively intervene in the production and distribution of news, for instance by seizing printing presses. Second, a shortage of sources who are willing to go on record – a problem that owes largely to fear of government censure, but that is further exacerbated by the difficulty of accessing even government sources and their own unwillingness to speak to the press. Finally, language barriers, which can limit access to sources and events – a serious issue in light of the shortage of translators in Sudan. These issues, and the extent to which they affected news output, are explored in greater depth below.

The Foreign Correspondents

In August and September 2007 there were seven foreign correspondents working in Khartoum, as well as two visiting “parachute” journalists from the *New York Times*. The number of journalists was particularly low over this period as an AFP correspondent was on extended leave, and two

⁶⁴ For instance, the Minister of Health once refused to comment on a cholera outbreak in East Sudan (Interview, Guiliano, UN-OCHA 17.08.08; Clark, UNMIS, 30.08.07).

correspondents, one from Bloomberg and one from Voice of America, had recently left.

Table 4 Foreign Correspondents in Khartoum, Sudan- August/September 2007

Outlet	Position	Nationality
AFP	Stringer	Sudanese
Ansa	Stringer	Sudanese
AP	Stringer	Sudanese
BBC	Correspondent	British
<i>New York Times*</i>	Correspondent	American
<i>New York Times*</i>	Multi-media	American
Reuters	Bureau chief	British
Reuters	Stringer	Sudanese
Reuters	Stringer	American

*The two *New York Times* journalists were temporary visitors to Sudan, passing through Khartoum on their way to Darfur. They were usually based in Nairobi.

At the time of this research, Reuters was the clear news leader in Sudan: the outlet had a bureau staffed by three journalists who worked full time; and they had significantly more resources for travel than any of the other permanent correspondents.

In contrast, the AP and AFP newswires only had one stringer each in Sudan providing stories, both of whom were casually employed – paid by the story. The Italian wire Ansa also had a small presence in Sudan, contracting a Sudanese journalist to work approximately one hour per day writing occasional stories.

The BBC had no representative during the first half of August, as the Government of Sudan had expelled their correspondent, Jonah Fisher. In late August, Amber Henshaw arrived in Khartoum to replace him.

No British or American newspaper had a permanent presence in Sudan. The larger news outlets had regional bureaus in Nairobi and would occasionally send reporters to Sudan. In addition, some newspapers had the names of local journalists who could provide copy if needed, although this was very rarely done. Mohammed el Fatih was on the books for the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, and English teacher Blake Evans-Pritchard⁶⁵ had registered with a number of British newspapers. However, these freelancers were only contacted if a very large story emerged that directly involved British interests.

August/September 2007 was also a quiet time in Sudan for visiting journalists. The only visitors were a husband-and-wife team from the *New York Times* –Jeffrey Gettleman and his wife, who are usually based in Nairobi, and were in Khartoum awaiting a visa for Darfur.⁶⁶ This was in stark contrast to other months of 2007; in late September, for example, when Ban Ki Moon paid a diplomatic visit, hundreds of journalists accompanied him, ‘parachuting’ into the country and the Darfur story.

Hannerz (2004) and others have posited that journalists in the field may develop a culture of their own that influences news reports. By spending time together, particularly in difficult environments, journalists may develop a

⁶⁵ the great-grandson of the Evans-Pritchard more famously associated with Sudan.

⁶⁶ These were the only journalists who made themselves known to local media workers, spokespeople, and the main hotel where journalists stayed. A subsequent search of the lexis nexis database reveals no other visiting journalists to Sudan wrote stories during this time.

sense of solidarity and shared values about what constitutes news and how it should be reported. In Sudan, however, the small number of journalists and the rift between local and international news values prevented this from happening.

The News Day

As news ‘generators,’ the journalists covered organised ‘diary’ media events and reports, as well as doing ‘off diary’ work – mining sources in government, NGOs, rebel groups, and so on, for information and potential stories.

AP, AFP, and the BBC’s lone journalists had to cover the whole of Sudan. This was a difficult task, and they often found themselves stretched trying to report on the major events taking place in Khartoum, let alone across Sudan – Africa’s largest country that included both what the UN-dubbed the “world’s largest humanitarian crisis” and the vulnerable and tense peace of Africa’s longest civil war.

The average news day in Khartoum was significantly more sporadic, ad hoc, and variable than in Nairobi. In the absence of organised media events, the journalists spent a significant portion of their time cultivating and speaking with sources; as well as travelling between events and writing. The most active journalists – those at Reuters – often worked from early morning until very late at night. But there was significant variance between outlets: the AP and AFP journalists followed a more standard office day, of 8am to 4pm.

Travel resources varied significantly between the journalists, with those from Reuters travelling the most. The Reuters Bureau Chief, Opheera

McDoom and her Sudanese stringer usually travelled to Darfur once a month. But the Sudanese nationals working at AP and AFP went only once a year: they had been a total of four and five times respectively over the preceding four years.⁶⁷

The ‘decision’ to write on Darfur

The FCs in Khartoum spent most of their time reporting on the crisis in Darfur. However, most did not think that Darfur was the most important issue in Sudan. Mohammed Ali Saeed at AFP found it perplexing that the international community was so interested in the story, and wondered openly if it was an attempt to draw attention away from Western involvement in the Middle East. Mohammed Osman at AP thought that the Darfur crisis had become “hyper inflated” while Opheera McDoom at Reuters noted that, although Darfur was important, attention to the crisis often came at the expense of news on the North-South conflict – which she felt was the longer-standing issue, with greater potential ramifications for the country’s future.

Although the FCs did not feel that Darfur was the biggest news story on their patch, the wire journalists noted that reporting on it took up approximately three quarters of their time, almost the whole of their travel budgets, and represented the majority of their news output.

As noted in the literature review and the ethnography of the Reuters bureau – African news stories become “elevated” when a Western spotlight is

⁶⁷ This is a notably low number, given the story in Darfur, as we see below, constituted approximately 75% of their working time; and all respondents noted that sources were reluctant to comment on the crisis, and that, without being there, it was difficult to access information.

thrown on them. Local issues are perceived (by FCs and editors alike) as inherently more newsworthy when they are linked to visiting Western elites, macro-level world events, and the politics and domestic events of Western nations (where the clients for these agencies are primarily based). The crisis in Darfur had all of these attributes.⁶⁸

Why did the FCs write on the Darfur crisis if they felt other issues were more important? As we have seen in previous chapters, a variety of incentives (and censures) encourage journalists to produce the news their editors want. The editors clearly communicated their desire for news on Darfur through direct requests and communications - these came in a general form: “what’s the update on Darfur?”. There was also specific, explicit criticism when the correspondents missed the stories their competitors covered. The AP and AFP stringers, in particular, described a great deal of pressure and numerous complaints from their bosses, as they were usually trailing the Reuters coverage. Some of sentiments commonly expresses by these two FCs included, “they [the editors] expect an update on every single event or issue in Darfur”, and, “they ring all the time with deadlines”. These journalists were further encouraged to link Sudanese news events to the crisis in Darfur, even when they were not obviously related; Osman describes emails from his bosses asking him to explain how a story on heavy rains and floods would impact Darfur, or what a visiting dignitary thought about Darfur, even if that was not her portfolio.

⁶⁸ To revisit Andrew Cawthorne’s comments from a previous chapter: “Darfur captured the policy makers, the people in Hollywood, it became a cause celebre. Mia Farrow. You know Washington was talking about it. ‘Echoes of Rwanda’. I can see why, news values wise, it rose above the rest”.

For the stringers who were paid by the story – four of the five – there was a strong economic incentive to appease their editors: they would only be paid if their stories were accepted. Moreover, if they failed to provide the stories their editors wanted, they could lose their job to another, more compliant journalist. The FCs were further incentivised by the cultural capital that covering such a big crisis could bestow: prestige and respect in the eyes of peers and the organisation. McDoom has received a swathe of awards for her reporting on Darfur and, in 2006, she was made Reuters Journalist of the Year. This recognition gave her personal and professional satisfaction; it also increased her cultural capital within the organisation, leading to greater autonomy and authority; and, in turn, the potential for greater mobility and pay. Abigail Hauslohner, who was just starting her career, was pleased to be gaining experience at the prestigious Reuters newswire, which she thought would enhance her application to Columbia University’s journalism school the following year. She was motivated by a desire to get a good reference from her employers.

As a result of these incentives and the journalists’ strategic nature, they produced the news that their editors were looking for.⁶⁹ In this way, the news values of the global field drove the story selection of newswire FCs in Sudan.

At the *New York Times*, the decision to cover Darfur, rather than other issues in Sudan, was similarly made ‘from afar’. Jeffrey Gettleman, the East Africa correspondent, was based in Nairobi but came to Sudan once or twice a

⁶⁹It is worth noting that this was not a difficult calculus for the journalists: they did all agree that Darfur was a newsworthy story that *should* be covered. They just probably would not have committed as much resources to the story, left to their own devices. In other contexts, the ‘power of these incentives’ may be more tested. For example, if a journalist is asked to write a story that they disagree agree with, they might stop to think, “do I really need this money?”

year. The decision to travel to the country was made by his editors; they consulted him but Gettleman noted: “It’s quite firm in the sense of, if they want a story or not, there’s not a lot of negotiating”. Gettleman felt that his editors were guided by domestic interest, international interest, and the fact that Darfur had ‘captured the headlines’ –rendering it a prominent issue that a leading newspaper like the *New York Times* simply *had* to cover:

It’s gotten to the point where there just is a dynamic there, there is a lot of interest [so we cover it]... It’s very hard to sink your teeth into another Sudan story, because there’s so much interest in Darfur. And our editors would like us to spend time, every time we come into Sudan, time and energy covering Darfur... the reality is, it’s the biggest story going and that’s where we want to put our resources.

Gettleman had a strong incentive to write the news his editors wanted because he had the privilege of working for one of the most well-respected newspapers in the world.

At both the wires and the newspaper, the journalists had fairly low input into the decision to write on Darfur. Story selection was made primarily by editors, considering the position of their outlet vis-à-vis their competition; echoing William’s suggestion that, “news should be seen in terms of what clients and subscribers are willing to pay for” (2011: 78).

Significantly, however, once the general topic ‘Darfur’ was agreed, all of the journalists had a great deal of freedom to write as they pleased. As Gettleman comments, “with the content itself – that’s very much up to me”; and the wires were happy, it seems, to accept almost any content on the crisis. Without consulting their editors, the journalists decided which sources they would use, and what angles they would adopt. This allowed for great variations in the content produced by different journalists.

The following section assesses the local site, and the obstacles it presented to journalists as they set about reporting on Darfur.

A Field of Obstacles

As mentioned above, three key factors make reporting in Sudan especially difficult: the Government of Sudan, a shortage of sources, and language barriers. This section begins by exploring each of these issues in detail. It then assesses the position and habitus of the different FCs, and how they negotiated these challenges. It is argued that obstacles in the field were relevant, but that their impact on reporting was mediated through the habitus and capital that the journalists possessed.

The Government of Sudan

The journalistic field in Sudan is highly dominated and restricted by political forces. In 2007, Sudan was ranked 140 out of 169 on the World Press Freedom Index.⁷⁰ The Government of Sudan has historically enforced severe limitations on all media in its territory – creating bureaucratic obstacles and arresting journalists that it deemed subversive. It has seized printing presses, stopped the distribution of newspapers, arrested, tortured, and murdered local journalists (Reporters Without Borders, 2007). In 2003 and 2004, the Government of Sudan refused permits to Darfur to all international journalists, and journalists who were discovered there were arrested and held by security forces. Several news commentators have identified this restriction

as the primary barrier to reporting, and the chief reason that coverage of the Darfur crisis was initially low (Bacon 2004; Jones 2004; Ludtke 2005). However, the impact of this policy was mixed. First, and most importantly, Sudanese nationals were not prevented from travelling to Darfur. AP, AFP and Reuters all employed Sudanese national journalists, and were therefore not affected by these restrictions. Second, it was possible for all journalists to travel to Darfur if they were willing to do so unofficially, entering Darfur through the Chad-Sudan border. Once the Darfur story 'broke' and became a global news story, the foreign correspondents based in Nairobi all became willing to make this trip, according to former *Independent* correspondent Meera Selva. This is a clear example of the way in which organisational priorities, rather than local obstacles, shape news production. As Hess writes: "when news organizations believe a story is important enough, foreign correspondents are allowed to find ways to overcome obstacles" (1996: 38).

The Government of Sudan relaxed its restrictions on access to Darfur in 2005 and recommenced granting travel permits to journalists. However, as Reporters Without Borders (2007) notes, officials still erected a variety of "bureaucratic fences" that made access to Darfur difficult, such as delaying permits and "losing" paperwork. In Darfur itself, barriers included holding journalists up at security checkpoints and making them return to the towns they had come from.

The impact of these barriers and restrictions varied, depending on the correspondent involved. The Government of Sudan issued visas and permits on a case-by-case basis and individual journalists could be blacklisted (RWB 2007: 2). Several commentators noted that government suspicion of

journalists – and the likeliness of them being placed on a blacklist – increased when journalists were not versed in local language or protocol. McDoom noted that, in order to generate trust with the Government of Sudan, journalists needed to be open and listen to the regime’s point of view. It also helped if they spoke Arabic and made it clear that they did not have an alternative agenda.

The most significant way in which the government impacted the international news coverage of Sudan was through its intimidation of journalists. But, as is discussed below, the impact of this intimidation also depended on the individual journalist in question; most notably, it was mediated via the individual journalist’s habitus – their nationality, background, and role perception.

Local-national journalists faced different and more serious risks than their Western counterparts. Western FCs had been held for questioning by the Ministry of Information, and were occasionally expelled from the country. In 2006, for example, two foreign journalists were arrested and then released after politicians from their respective nations – Slovenia and the US – intervened; and in April 2007, BBC correspondent Jonah Fischer was expelled for ‘hostile reporting’. Sudanese journalists, by contrast, were not so lucky. The 2006 annual Reporters Without Borders report for Sudan suggests “Sudanese journalists are easy prey for the government” – more than fifteen were arrested during 2006, despite the fact that censorship was officially lifted in July 2005, and one was murdered, “traumatising the whole profession, which was already living in fear of government crackdowns” (2007: 7; see also International Media Support 2007). The most persecuted group were

Sudanese journalists who worked for local Sudanese news outlets. But Sudanese foreign correspondents were also vulnerable; if they were arrested, they had no outside government to intervene on their behalf, and no prospect of a safe passage out of Sudan.

Reluctant Sources

Government repression also has a chilling effect on sources in Sudan, who are reluctant to speak with journalists. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in particular, are hesitant to support journalists, for fear of having their work suspended by the government. In August 2007, the UN-WFP was threatened with the prospect of its North Darfur programme being shut down because they assisted a journalist (Interview, Casella 28.08.07); and a child-protection NGO was made to publicly apologise for commenting on child malnutrition rates to Reuters (Interview, McDoom 09.08.07).

Constant persecution and threats to their humanitarian programmes made NGOs and IOs reluctant to assist journalists, either with logistics or information, and they refrained from engaging in assertive communications strategies. Annette Rehrl, media spokesperson for UNHRC commented:

It's not a clear censorship, but it's there. Some things are not issued or published. Because if we publish it, then our colleagues in the field have to suffer the consequences...we basically don't invite the media to come anymore. Because basically, the government came at one point and said that the humanitarian agencies would be responsible for whatever a journalist does. So we just said we would like to stop organized media missions.

Even off the record, the spokespeople were more reserved than in other contexts. Alun McDonald, the spokesperson for Oxfam, commented:

It's terrifying. You say something to a journalist off the record, and then you lie awake terrified, wondering, is that going to be printed tomorrow? Am I going to get a phone call and be told to leave the country within 24 hours?

Citizens are similarly reluctant to speak with journalists and the Government of Sudan is also a difficult source to access. In Khartoum, politics is often conducted on a personal basis with very little transparency, and access to government information requires some kind of "in". Mohammed El Fatih Sidahmed at the Italian newswire Ansa remarked:

If I want to double-check something from a government official here – say I want to call the foreign minister – unless I know him as a personal friend then he can answer my phone, otherwise no... It's the only way: very, very close personal contacts, otherwise you will wait and wait.

When government sources can be accessed, they may be unwilling to comment on issues before the central party has confirmed them.

In this context, journalists needed to have deep networks of alternative sources – and work hard to generate trust with informants, who may not always be willing to speak to them. The absence of official information meant that contacts and sources were particularly important in Sudan.⁷¹ Social capital became a more central aspect of reporting, as did having the will and inclination to seek such sources out.

⁷¹ International news organisations sometimes reprint articles that have run in the local press, making local journalists an important source of international news (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 2001). This was not the case in Sudan, however, where the quality and accuracy of local reporting was considered too low to be reprinted internationally; English is not widely spoken, there was little in the way of lively local media, and reports were heavily censored by the government (International Media Support 2007).

Language barriers

Almost every informant spoke at length about the importance of speaking Sudanese Arabic in order to operate as a journalist in Sudan. Those who spoke Arabic could directly communicate with sources; enabling them to build trust, grasp nuances in meaning, and collect data independently - without having to rely on a potentially unreliable translator. In the field in Darfur, being able to speak Arabic helped journalists to communicate with security forces at checkpoints, understand their questions, and negotiate their way out of trouble (RWB 2007: 5).

The importance of speaking Arabic was exacerbated by a lack of readily available, professional translators – English is not widely spoken in Sudan, and translators may be wary of getting into trouble with the regime. As Gettleman, the correspondent for the *New York Times*, commented:

I think it's harder here. People are very sensitive about security issues, and secret agents, and government officials following them. People are very reluctant to talk to journalists. In Somalia, you'll have people knocking on your door wanting to be a translator. Here that's not the case.

In addition to the fear of the government many translators in Sudan brought to their work, they often had role perceptions that went beyond mere literal translation. This was clearly illustrated on one occasion at a British Embassy press conference in Khartoum (16.08.07) when the translator took liberties with terms and a bilingual audience member stood up to complain. The translator then spoke to the audience in English:

The learned gentleman would like me to point out that the speaker did not say 'victims' but rather 'refugees'. However, in my opinion, the Darfurian refugees are victims and I translated it as such.

The distinction between refugees and victims may be subtle, but it is a significant one that was being drawn by the Government of Sudan on the one hand, and the rebels in Darfur on the other. Identity politics in Darfur are contentious and volatile and, as several commentators have noted, the creation and solidification of identity differences in the region have taken place – in part – through their expression in public discourse, including the particular terms journalists choose, or are led, to employ (Sharkey 2008; Campbell 2007; de Wall 2007). A journalist's comprehension of their informants' tongue may be central to grasping these subtle but significant nuances.

The Individual FCs – habitus and social capital in the field

The obstacles noted above – a difficult government, reluctant sources, and language barriers – had a clear impact on reporting practices, and made life more difficult for the FCs. However, the extent to which they shaped reporting practices varied depending on the individual journalists themselves. Two traits were central to production: an FC's habitus and the social capital they possessed. Habitus informed the way that FCs approached the task of reporting, while social capital provided resources they could draw on in this work.

The journalists can be sorted into three groups, according to these two traits. The first group, the Parachute journalists/New arrivals, had low social capital but a strong professional foreign correspondent habitus. They wanted to produce strong journalism, but it was difficult for them to do so. The

second group, the Sudanese FCs at AP and AFP, had high social capital, but did not possess the ‘foreign correspondent’ habitus and were not as interested in pursuing ‘watchdog journalism’. The third and final group, the journalists at Reuters, had both the inclination and capital.

Parachute journalists/New arrivals – The BBC and NYT

Parachute journalists who travel to Sudan and Darfur for brief periods of time have the lowest levels of knowledge and social capital with which to negotiating these obstacles. Parachute journalists and new arrivals in Khartoum do not have deep social networks to draw on, and most do not speak Arabic. Amber Henshaw had recently arrived in Khartoum to report for the BBC. She noted that, without Arabic:

Things you need access to like government officials- you can't. And that is something I'm worried about. ...[At Reuters] three of them speak Arabic. So they can go to these different events and things, whereas I can only go to this or that.

As a new arrival, potential sources were also less likely to open up. Gettleman at the *New York Times* commented on the difficulty:

Here, as a foreigner, and a conspicuous foreigner, you're being watched, so the people who you meet and work with may feel reluctant to share everything cause they feel that, after you leave, they might have to deal with the aftermath.

Parachute journalists often contract local fixers to help them with their work – local citizens who will assist the journalists with everything from organising transport to carrying out translations and, importantly, accessing sources (Murrell 2011; Palmer & Fontan 2007). Hiring a local fixer is effectively a way for a visiting journalist to purchase the social capital that they lack. Negotiating the field is still difficult – sources may still be reserved,

and reluctant to speak to the journalist; but the fixer alleviates some of the worst access issues.

With the support of good fixers, Gettleman was able to produce work that many considered high quality, agenda-setting journalism; several FCs in Nairobi commented that he was doing the “best journalism in the region” and in 2011, he received a Pulitzer for his troubles. Other parachute journalists were not as diligent however, and did not seek sources beyond the immediate vicinity of the Government of Sudan. A remarkable example of this, worth detailing, was the *Guardian*’s coverage of Sudan in March 2008.

The Guardian and the case of Dr David Hoile

In March 2008, *The Guardian*’s foreign editor, Simon Tisdall travelled to Khartoum, where he attended two events run by government sponsored organisations. He wrote a total of four articles, all of which are unusually positive about the regime, and only include government sources.⁷² On 13 March, for instance, Tisdall attended an event at the Sudan Media Centre, a state-run media organisation with links to the National Intelligence and Security Services (Spilker 2012). Afterwards he wrote the article “UN heading for Iraq-style disaster in Darfur, warn officials”, wherein he quotes two government officials, and – at considerable length – British citizen and consultant for the Government of Sudan, David Hoile. The claims of the regime are earnestly quoted. For example, “Western forces and their hostile stance have stalled peace in Darfur”; “AU-UN forces in Sudan are an attempt

⁷² (10.3.08) “Sudan rounds on Western critics”; (11.3.08) “Khartoum’s Boom”; (12.3.08) “Back to the future in Sudan”; (13.3.08) “UN heading for Iraq-style disaster in Darfur, warn officials”.

to subjugate the government”; NGOs are “bringing Europe's unemployed here to work”. No non-governmental perspectives are included in the story.

The articles Tisdall produced are noteworthy for their unusual reliance and positive portrayal of the Government of Sudan⁷³. This is a potential outcome of sending parachute journalists to a repressive media environment, where they lack social networks or the inclination to pursue alternative views. The stories are made more remarkable still by their reliance on David Hoile as a source, a British national, who was – or should have been – very well known to *The Guardian*, given they had published two articles in which they discredited him as a source, one of which specifically addressed his untrustworthiness on the matter of Sudan (Mayes 2001 and Pisdall 2003).

Tisdall’s stories show how parachute journalists are more vulnerable to the forces of the local field – an issue that may have been exacerbated, in this case, by the fact that Tisdall was the Foreign News Editor: He had high cultural capital and therefore benefited from the trust and deference of his colleagues. It is clear that *the Guardian’s* editors, had they been checking his work, would have questioned the use of Hoile or, at the very least, inserted a reference to his relationship with the regime, rather than allowing him to be presented as an independent expert.

Newsrooms are busy, and editors do not always have time to check articles, but this is a particular issue in foreign news production, where editors may lack background information (Hannerz 2004). Had Tisdall employed a

⁷³ The comments function on the Guardian’s website has, however, meant that the articles are surrounded by dissenting and critical feedback from the public; particularly the opinion piece, “Khartoum’s Boom” which can be seen at:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/mar/11/khartoumsboom?INTCMP=SRCH> [accessed 10/12/2012].

similarly controversial source in writing a domestic piece, a sub editor reading it would have had sufficient knowledge to question that choice.

Africa may be a particularly low priority beat in terms of fact checking; Gettleman at the *New York Times* stated that his reporting was examined by his senior editors, but not as thoroughly, by any stretch, as that of the correspondents writing on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Pragmatic locals – AFP and AP

A second group of correspondents had the social capital and networks of informants that would make adversarial reporting possible – but they did not have the inclination to do so. The two FCs at AP and AFP had high levels of social capital but they were not committed to “watchdog journalism”.

Mohammed Osman had worked as the AP correspondent in Sudan for 23 years, while Mohammed Ali Saeed had worked for AFP for 29 years. Through years of work, both had developed deep networks of local contacts. Both journalists felt that, as Sudanese nationals, they had more opportunity to cultivate trusted sources and to place events within their cultural context. Saeed thought that being Sudanese significantly improved his relationship with Darfuri sources, whom he trusted to ring him with information. Osman agreed; he described meeting a man at a tea stand one day, having a brief conversation, and then being immediately put in touch with a friend of his friend, a rebel leader in Darfur. While it may have been possible for a foreign national to make these connections, Osman felt it was far less likely as the levels of trust that spring from their shared nationality would be missing. The

two reporters also had relationships with political figures, who would answer their questions and provide them with quotes.

However, in spite of their high levels of access to the information necessary to write controversial, confrontational pieces, these two journalists varied significantly for the others in this study, in that they were not the least bit inclined in that direction. Neither the AP nor AFP journalist had what could be described as a ‘foreign correspondent habitus’. They had not been socialised in a Western newsroom; they had their first major jobs at SUNA – the national, government-run newswire of Sudan, whose main purpose was to relay official information – such that their professional values were more in line with the Sudanese field of journalism than the global one. When asked what the purpose of their work was, they answered that it was primarily to disseminate information: they did not think watchdog journalism or analysis were important features of their job.

On one occasion, after writing about a woman in South Sudan made homeless by government-authorized bombing, Osman was put under surveillance by the Minister of Information and prevented from reporting for three months. After this incident, Osman decided that he would no longer take risks that endangered his livelihood. This included any reporting that presented the Government of Sudan in a poor light, without the support of a major public source of information. It is important to note that this was a highly conservative position to adopt, given the proportion of sources in Sudan that would only provide information “off the record” for fear of government reprisal. Osman described reporting in Sudan as being about “following rules”, rather than the pursuit of “truth”, or any other ethical norm:

“Reporting here isn’t about courage, it’s about following the rules so you don’t get in too much trouble. So, for example, stories about the army have to come from the army, and use army sources”.

Both Osman and Saeed were fluent in English and competent journalists. They had developed professional skills as journalists, and absorbed many conventions of the trade – they described intuitively “knowing what a story was” without needing to be instructed, and knowing how to develop a story (finding sources, structuring the information, and so on). However, they did not necessarily possess what Örnebring (2009) refers to as “organisational professionalism” – the ability to work well within their outlet; to practise their work as their managers would wish. This was illustrated in the clashes these journalists had with their editors over work conditions and expectations. They often stated that the newswires asked too much from their employees; one commented that he felt “harassed” by his bosses. Common sentiments were: “I’m expected to cover everything”, “they expect a lot”, “they’re always news-hungry”, “they want me to beat the competition”, “they wanted me to find the news 5 minutes ago”, and “it’s much more stressful than working at a newspaper”. Another described his coping mechanism: he would “switch off”, – ignore his boss’s emails and leave the office early.

Opheera McDoom at Reuters felt that these journalists did not do work that could be described as ‘journalism’: “You’ll find the Sudanese here, they’re all the older guys that don’t do any real reporting. They’ll go to the press conferences and turn up late, take a couple of notes, go back and send it to the bureau”. Their workdays were orientated around attending organised media events, and reporting the official positions of various organisations and

politicians.⁷⁴ They regularly used press conferences (where challenges were not allowed and only the official government line was presented) as the only source of information for their articles.

The AP and AFP journalists were both Sudanese, and they explained their disinclination to write critical reports as a sensible reaction to the risks posed by the government of Sudan. However, the fact that the Sudanese journalist at Reuters in Khartoum *did* pursue watchdog stories and *did* have a professional and ethical sense of his work, suggests that socialisation is equally, if not more, significant than nationality.

High capital leaders - Reuters

The Reuters bureau had three journalists, all of whom held the professional values of the international journalistic field. They were all committed to the idea of objectivity, which they understood to entail neutrality and balance. All believed it was important to include multiple sources in their reporting. They noted that Darfur was a complicated and controversial crisis (as McDoom commented, “There are no good guys in Darfur anymore”) and that journalists had to seek out a variety of viewpoints.

These journalists described the purpose of their job as being to disseminate information, provide analysis, and act as a watchdog on power – the three components of the Western journalism role identity described by

⁷⁴ There were some lower-risk alternative pathways for Sudanese FCs to report on Darfur: by passing information on to other journalists in their news outlets, or by asking for their stories to be printed without a by-line. However the former did not pay; and the latter still posed a risk. One of the Sudanese correspondents described being wary of sharing too much information with his editorial desk – even ‘off the record’ – as he thought they did not understand the severity of the situation facing him in Khartoum, and he had been burned in the past.

Weaver and Wilhoit (1996). This last variable – the watchdog dimension of reporting – was felt to be particularly important. Indeed, some commented that, by omitting adversarial or critical elements in their reporting, many of the journalists in Sudan were not, by definition, practising journalism. As one stated: “If you’re reporting in a way that’s sympathetic to the government so that you don’t get booted out, then you’re not really doing your job”.

McDoom, the bureau chief, was a particularly strong character. Her specific habitus, including her background, personal situation, and professional values shaped Reuters’ – and the world’s – news coverage of Sudan. McDoom was educated in the UK and worked for Reuters in London for a year before moving to Cairo with the newswire. In 2004, McDoom visited Sudan from Cairo, realised that the Reuters stringer was not producing the work that could be done, and for a number of reasons – some of them personal – decided she would move to Khartoum:

It wasn’t a decision that was taken by the organisation really at all...I just said, “Look, I’m going to go.” The agreement was to just go for two or three months, but I knew I was going to stay, and packed up my whole flat in Cairo in twenty-four hours and moved here permanently, and never went back...it wasn’t ever a decision taken in an office.

After three years working in Khartoum, McDoom was highly integrated into Sudanese society. She spoke Arabic, had a wide network of professional contacts and friends and, in 2007, she married a local Sudanese engineer, in a wedding that was celebrated as Khartoum’s “society event of the year” (Fisher 2007). The fact that she spoke Arabic increased her ability to cover a wide range of events: “I’ve almost always been one of the only foreign ones who speaks Arabic. So I’m the only one that went to the Arabic press conferences”.

Her contacts both facilitated her reporting, and helped her to remain in a country that was often resistant to Western journalists:

I have sources absolutely everywhere in government, in military, everywhere. And I will always give them a call and say “this is what I’m reporting”, and ask, “What’s your side?” and give them time to get back to me. And I’ve been told by various people in security that’s one of the reasons I haven’t been kicked out is that I seek out those opinions and have transparency and I don’t have a hidden agenda. I speak Arabic and people can access me, and I give them access to me and I’m always talking to them. So the suspicion goes down.

McDoom’s contacts among the local and Western elites in Sudan gave her access to events other journalists could not attend. McDoom was, for example, the only journalist invited to interview a group of politicians visiting from Britain because of her good relationship with the Press Officer at the British Embassy (Interview, Talal Osman, 26.8.07).

McDoom had also built relationships and trust with NGOs and IOs in Sudan, who would provide information and leaks off the record. Hauslohner, the American stringer at Reuters, describes writing a story on a cholera epidemic in East Sudan: “The WHO [World Health Organisation] released information about it and Khartoum said “what cholera?” The government put pressure on WHO to retract the statement, and now they’re no longer issuing statistics and the news has been taken off their website”. After contacting an old and trusted/trusting source, McDoom obtained information off the record, and was able to run a verified story about the cholera. Henshaw, who had only recently arrived in Sudan to report for the BBC, did not have access to this source; as a result, she could only write about “potential dysentery” in the region.

McDoom's social capital led to qualitatively different news outcomes. Her writing led the agenda for international reporting on Sudan. Leon Williams, information manager at the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), noted that the Reuters position was often adopted and replicated by all the other news organisations and, because of this, "Opheera's nuances have a critical influence on coverage". Mohammed El Fatih Sidahmed, a freelance journalist for Ansa and an ex-Reuters stringer, agreed, stating, "they're all [the international news media] taking the same stories over and over. If Opheera gets it wrong, they all get it wrong". McDoom's articles resonated beyond the traditional media – they provided factual basis for Wikipedia articles (see for example, "Timeline of the War in Darfur") and were cited in blogs and websites across the Internet. She was also the dominant voice in Reporters Without Border's 2007 report on the Khartoum media scene, and the subject of a documentary being made about the crisis. McDoom was influential on visiting journalists and believed that, "pretty much every journalist that comes here speaks to me and uses my sources".

McDoom's traits and tendencies were not inevitable by-products of her organisation or its commitment to African reporting – they owed largely to individual habitus. Most notably, her initiative in moving to Sudan, and the extent to which she was embedded in Sudanese society, were personal decisions. McDoom notes that the Reuters correspondent who preceded her had submitted poor and infrequent reports. McDoom believes the stringer had neither the skills nor inclination to do the work:

The first time I came to Sudan, I came on holiday. And I reported every day, more in a week than our stringer had done in the last year. Which is when we realized that it's not so hard to write in Sudan. So she got the sack and we got another stringer and I started coming all the time and then moved.

Differences in Practice: a content analysis of reporting on

Darfur

The interviews results, outlined above, suggest that the FCs varied considerably in their practices and approach. In particular, the correspondents at AP and AFP described working in greater fear of the government of Sudan, and they had a different understanding of their role as journalists that, importantly, did not include a strong sense of their work as 'watchdog journalism'. A content analysis of the news these FCs produced confirms that these differences matter; the AP and AFP stringers produced news that was significantly less critical in tone, presented fewer competing viewpoints, and privileged the government of Sudan's position.

The full details of the methods used for the content analysis are included in Appendix 3 but can be briefly summarized: all available articles written by the interviewed correspondents on the Darfur crisis between 1 August and 31 October 2007 were analysed; the unit of analysis was the sources journalists used in their articles.

Exploring the sources the journalists cited can give us a sense of how local and Western FCs differed in their overall reporting. It is also a means of triangulation for the claims made in the previous section, in particular that the Western FCs, in pursuing the 'watchdog role' included more competing accounts and sources in their stories.

As noted in the appendix, there are many limitations to a content analysis of this kind. Most importantly: the sample group is very small and journalists writing for newswires are not always credited for their work. These factors mean that it is not possible to draw comprehensive comparisons or conclusions from this content analysis. However, it is still possible to use the sample to attempt, in a limited way, to close the gap between self-reported behaviour and actual daily practice.

Watchdog Journalism

As the interview responses suggested, the articles written by the Sudanese FCs at AP and AFP were less likely to perform a ‘watchdog role’ compared to Western FCs. Playing the ‘watchdog role’ involves refraining from passing messages from political actors directly onto to the public without also providing alternative perspectives/comment/analysis (Norris 2000: 29). The two Sudanese journalists – Osman and Saeed – were far more likely to write news stories that included only one source of information. More than 50% of AFP correspondent’s articles cited only one source of information – almost always the Government of Sudan or the AU/UN peacekeeping mission. These articles often appeared to be rewritten press releases, with little attempt to seek alternative perspective or comment. At AP this figure was considerably lower – only 16.7% of articles had only one source – but this was still notably higher than at other outlets (with the exception of the *New York Times*, for which the very small sample of three articles was skewed by the inclusion of a

short piece about an aid worker being kicked out of Darfur that cited the government’s position).

Table 5 - Proportion of articles with only one source

Nationality	Outlet	# Articles	# Articles one source	% of Articles one source
Sudanese	AFP	15	8	53.3
Sudanese	AP	12	2	16.7
Sudanese	Reuters	9	0	0
UK	Reuters	49	2	4.1
UK	BBC	6	0	0
American	Reuters	2	0	0
American	NYT	3	1	33

Sources used in articles

The Sudanese FCs at AP and AFP were also far more likely to use the Government of Sudan as a source, and to privilege its position within articles. In the AP correspondent’s work, the GoS was the most frequently cited source, accounting for 11 of 37 total sources used (29.7%); by contrast, the American Reuters correspondent did not cite the GoS at all, and it was only one (6.7%) of the sources used by the *New York Times* correspondent.

The Sudanese stringer at Reuters used slightly fewer government sources than his Sudanese counterparts at AFP and AP – suggesting that he had been partially socialised into the ‘Reuters approach’ to reporting. However, he continued to use more government sources than his Western

colleagues at Reuters and the *New York Times* – implying that he continued to be cautious of the government in his reporting.

Table 6 - Government of Sudan as percentage of sources used (a)

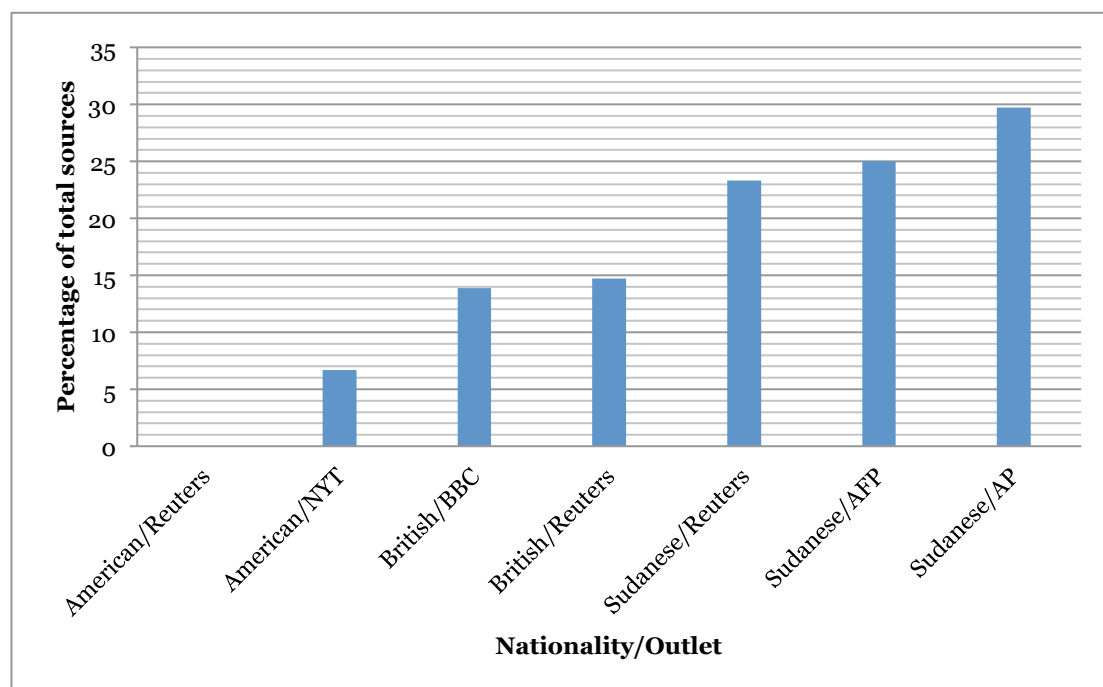


Table 7 - Government of Sudan as percentage of sources used (b)

Nationality	Outlet	<i>N</i> articles	<i>N</i> sources	<i>N</i> GoS sources	GoS as % of sources
Sudanese	AFP	15	23	6	25.0
Sudanese	AP	12	37	11	29.7
Sudanese	Reuters	9	30	7	23.3
UK	Reuters	49	225	33	14.7
UK	BBC	6	36	5	13.9
American	Reuters	2	6	0	0
American	NYT	3	15	1	6.7

Sudanese FCs at AP and AFP were also more likely to foreground the government of Sudan’s position, by placing government sources at the very start of their news articles. 41.7% of the AP correspondent’s stories began with a government source; this figure was 26.7% for those written by the AFP correspondent; and 22.2% for the Sudanese reporter at Reuters – again, this was more than the Western correspondents, for whom the percentages ranged from 0 to 14.7%.

Table 8 - Government of Sudan as Lead Source (a)

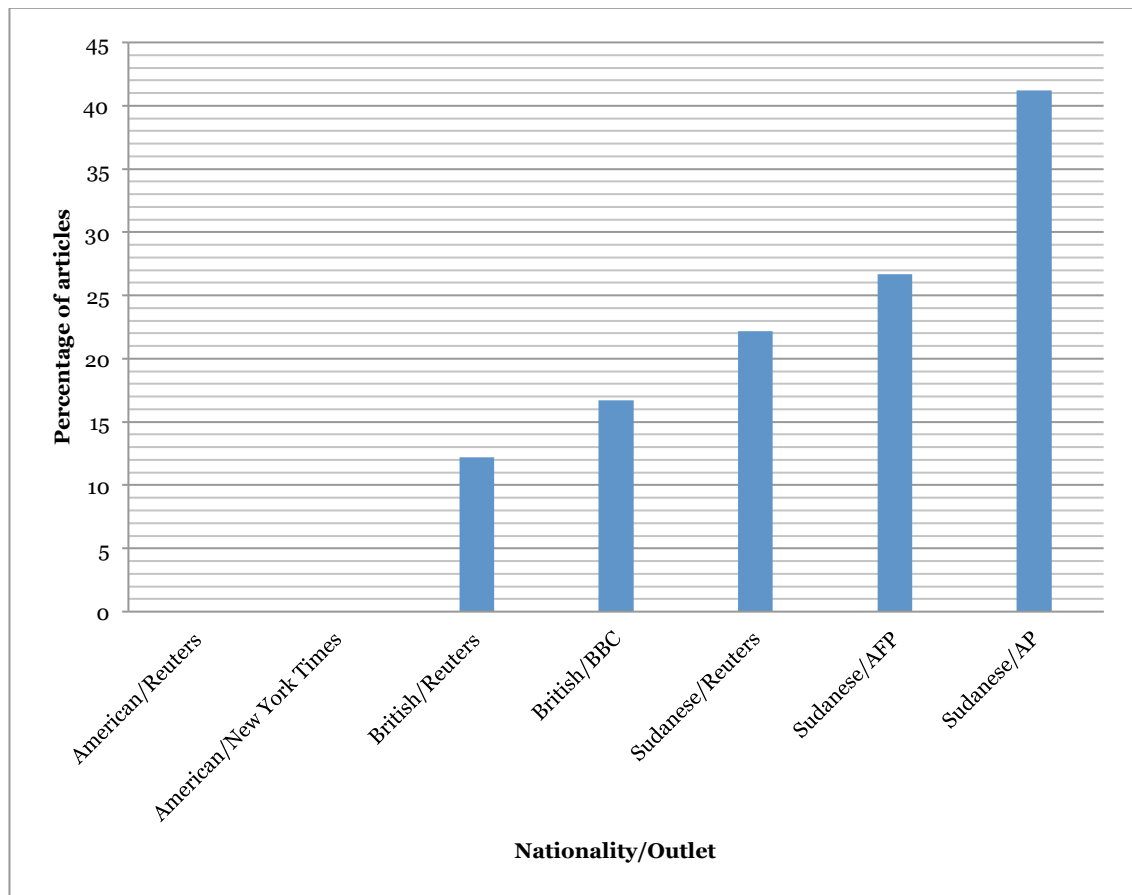


Table 9 - Government as Sudan as Lead Source (b)

Nationality	Outlet	N articles	N articles GoS as first source	% Articles GoS as first source
Sudanese	AFP	15	4	26.7
Sudanese	AP	12	5	41.7
Sudanese	Reuters	9	2	22.2
UK	Reuters	49	6	12.2
UK	BBC	6	1	16.7
American	Reuters	2	0	0
American	NYT	3	0	0

Finally, Sudanese FCs were also significantly more likely to draw on local Sudanese media reports as a source in their news article – local media constituted roughly 13% of the sources in both AFP and AP articles. McDoom by contrast, used Sudanese media as a source only once (out of 225 sources), and none of the other journalists, including the Sudanese correspondent at Reuters, used them at all. The local media in Sudan is significantly more censored than the international press and using local news as a source was often equivalent to reproducing the government’s position (Reporters Without Borders, 2006; International Media Support 2007).

Discussion

In contrast to Kenya, the ‘local’ had a significant impact on news production practices and output in Sudan. The local site presented significant obstacles,

which journalists noted influenced their reporting. As a result of their backgrounds, some of these obstacles were of greater significance to certain FCs than others: For instance, the Government of Sudan posed a greater threat to the Sudanese nationals than to the Western FCs, and the parachute journalists had less ready access to sources than did the other reporters. However it's important to emphasize that the impact these obstacles had on reporting practices were not by any means a given. The capital and skills journalists possessed made them more or less able to negotiate Sudan's difficult media landscape. More importantly, individual journalists' habitus determined the effort journalists invested to that end.

Because the Sudanese FCs at AP and AFP were socialized in the government newswire and isolated from their outlets, they did not have a foreign correspondent habitus, but rather held role perceptions and values more closely aligned with the Sudanese journalistic field. Their autonomy meant that these values were able to gain expression in the work such that they failed to play the 'watchdog role.'

Other local sites in East Africa

Sudan is a challenging environment to report on, but it is no means unique in the region. Eritrea, in particular, was widely noted by the newswire bureau chiefs in Nairobi as a difficult country to report from, with widespread government persecution of journalists. This made it incredible difficult for any reporter to work.

As Cawthorne noted:

In this region, Eritrea is the hardest. They let you in, but it's pretty light stuff. I met the president a few times, wrote about art, a dock they were building. The second I wrote the truth, about the gulags, well, I'd never get back and probably Reuters wouldn't get back for several years.

In other countries, issues emerged when local stringers were considered 'too close' to political leaders. One of the newswire FCs in Nairobi told what he described as an "apocryphal but true story: it's become part of our office folklore":

The stringer in Comoros sent us a list of Ministers. The cabinet had been reshuffled, and he sent through the names of the new Ministers. [Our editor] read the list...President, Vice President, Finance Minister and then – "Oh, Information Minister, that's funny, he's got the same name as our stringer. That's interesting". And so he called the stringer and said – "You must have made a mistake, or do you just happen to have the same name?" And the stringer says, "Oh no, it's me". He just sent in the list thinking he could be the country's Information Minister and carry on being our stringer....Obviously, huge conflict of interest.

In a similar vein, Andrew Cawthorne at Reuters commented that compromised stringers were one of the biggest challenges in his job: "Frequently. It's a major problem. A big, big major issue". He notes, for example,

We had a Rwandan stringer who was a close friend of Kagame. He was being fed a lot of information, which is good for reporting, but he also had them [Kagame and colleagues] saying, 'don't send this to your outlet' or 'do send this to your outlet'. Which is of course a problem for reporting.

There are two interlocking issues at play here. The first is the relative lack of media freedom in some of these countries. The second is the varying professional role perceptions, and skill levels, of the stringers themselves.

It is important to note that this second issue – professional role perception – is not causally linked to nationality, as noted in reference to the Reuter's Sudanese stringer in Khartoum. It may be more difficult to report as a local national in some countries in East Africa, but there were many who did exemplary work.

Local national journalists were, in some cases, the only people with physical access to an event. Somalia is often characterised as too dangerous for western correspondents to visit and work (as they are unfamiliar with the layout, can't speak the local language etc). As a result, the only *possible* source of information on the country come via local nationals (Seay 2012). Moreover, local national journalists often had better information, sources and language skills, than the Western stringers. As Anthony Borden comments, “a local journalist lives and breathes that society and by definition knows it better” (Borden 2009). The bureau chief of Reuter's Nairobi noted that this was the case with his Somali stringer:

She will say, ‘this is happening, this leader's been replaced by this leader in this town’. And I say, well, the fact that this Sheik has taken over this Sheik isn't very interesting to the world...And she'll say, ‘well actually it is important, because this leader is more pro-government’, or ‘they might want to introduce this type of new Sharia law’. And I think, oh, ok, so maybe that's important.

The varying professionalism of stringers was often the result of organizational priorities. Where a country was perceived to be important to a news outlet, recruiting a professional journalist – or sending one from the hub – became a priority. Where the country in question was considered more marginal, the stringers professionalism might simply reflect availability: was there an established and lively local media scene, with a range of journalists to choose from? In the absence of a lively local media scene, new outlets may find themselves contracting translators and teachers, with little or no journalism experience.

But there is also a strong element of chance; in particular – the choices made by individual FCs unconnected with their news organisation. As we saw

in the Sudan section, McDoom had initiated her move to Khartoum. These was another example of this in Kampala, where Ben Simons was one of the most professional stringers working in the AFP network. He was a Canadian trained journalist with a Masters degree in journalism from Columbia University, and he had worked in the region for three years. He was in Uganda – primarily – for personal reason. He had come to the country while at university, enjoyed himself, and decided to move back. The AFP string became available and he took it – replacing a (western) journalist who was significantly less professionally trained. Simon was widely considered, by all the FCs I spoke to in Kampala, as the leading FC in Uganda.

As the leading permanent journalist in Kampala, Simon played an important role in the international news coverage of Uganda, providing agenda-setting coverage. To some extent Simon's presence reflects the strategy of the AFP wire – for example, they pay more than AP; they may have prioritised Kampala over other news sites. However, he could just have easily decided not to move to Kampala, and the wire's Ugandan news would have been significantly weaker. In this way, individual habitus and career trajectory are a significant component of international news production, and must be taken into account.

Discussion: What is the role of the local site in international reporting?

The most obvious contribution of the local comes from the fact that it is the site where events take place: the local environment provides the raw data for news stories. However, it is important to remember that these stories are only

deemed newsworthy by Western-focussed international news outlets, pursuing their own strategic agenda.

Second, citizens, academics, and journalists from the local site can contest the ways in which issues are portrayed – challenging the values of the global journalistic field. In Nairobi these challenges were significant but ultimately weren't translated into practice. In other sites, where there is less monitoring of journalistic work, there may be more scope for dissent and divergent views to enter news content, as in Sudan.

Third, the local site contains what can be called 'obstacles to production'. In contrast to Kenya, Sudan has a very challenging journalistic landscape. The case study of the journalistic field in Sudan shows that a variety of local factors served as barriers to reporting – but that their impact varied, depending on the journalist negotiating them, and the cultural capital and skills they possessed. While some journalists had the resources, incentives, and inclination to negotiate the landscape, others did not.

Finally, and most importantly the local nation also has its own journalistic field. In Kenya, this field had little influence on practice because the FCs had been socialized through Western or international outlets. In the case of Sudan, however, two of the FCs had been primarily socialized in the Sudanese journalistic field and this had implications for their reporting.

Researchers of international news have not historically seen the need to take the values of the local journalistic field into account. The assumption is that foreign correspondents, trained in their 'home field', travel abroad; in this new site, they encounter obstacles and danger, and negotiate them to discover

the truth (Peterson 2001). Throughout this process, they do not engage with the journalistic values of the local field (with the exception of employing local fixers). Today, however, local national journalists are increasingly important producers of international news – and these journalists are often trained and socialised in the local journalistic field prior to taking on work as international stringers. Their habitus and professional values may be guided by values they learned in that environment. In particular, in a repressed media environment, local journalists may not have a strong sense of their work as involving ‘watchdog journalism’ – which results in different kinds of coverage.

Part V: Discussion and Conclusion

11. Discussion

The three previous sections have been intended to stand alone as analyses of specific correspondents at work. Their goal was to highlight the links between outlet position, habitus and practice, and use this to shed light on the forms of news these correspondents produced. Two important, theoretically driven questions have been raised in this analysis, however: the question of how different layers of fields are best conceptualised, and the issue of ‘field membership’. These questions are briefly discussed here before moving on to the conclusion.

Conceptualizing fields for international news production

This thesis has suggested that news outlets can be located in a field where they compete for economic and symbolic capital. These fields – the global (in the case of most newswires) or the national (in the case of most newspapers) is where outlets are positioned, according to the capital they possess. It is with the goal of accumulating capital in these fields that outlets produce news. The global or national field is, therefore, the overarching driver of news production. It provides the rationale and the resources for news to be made.

However, in order to produce news that advances their strategic goals, outlets employ FCs who are located in a local site, and who must negotiate this environment in the production of news. As a result, local environments play an important role in production; paying attention to only the global or national cannot explain practice.

It is tempting to place these fields in a hierarchy: global at the top, followed by national, and a local site at the bottom. This follows the observation that outlets in global and national fields pick and choose the local events that will be rendered ‘newsworthy’; guided by strategic and competitive purposes, these outlets select events from the local sites, with little regard to local perceptions of significance. It also follows from the observation that the global newswires are key agenda-setters for the nation based FCs.

However, to place them in a hierarchy is misleading; it erases the productive and important contribution that agents make in the local site. Indeed, as we have seen in this thesis, the local is an increasingly important source of influence on international news content.

It is more simple and elegant to approach the issue as we would any other field analysis: we should see news outlets as being positioned within a field (be it national or global); we should then seek to understand the position of the outlet within that particular field; and we should seek to understand the position of an FC within that outlet. The FC – being tested in a variety of ways by the local environment, and possessing varying resources to do their work – strategically operates to produce the news.

Who belongs to what field?

As noted in the literature review, one of the challenges of field theory is delineating who exactly should be included in any given field. The review suggested that the borders of the field should be analysed and determined as part of the research project itself, drawing on empirical data and appropriate context-dependent indicators. As Leander writes, “whether habitus/field transcend national borders or not – and what role the state plays – becomes an empirical question” (2009: 17-18).

This research did not seek to resolve the question of field membership prior to its investigation and analysis. As noted in the methodology section, it identified groups of agents and then questioned, from here, the field in which they operated. For the most part, this was a straightforward exercise. The global newswires Reuters, AFP, AP, and Bloomberg are in clear competition with one another to authoritatively represent the world, and gain global subscriptions; the capital they seek is located around the world, and their agents produce news for a global clientele. Because the news must appeal to such a wide range of readers, it is ‘liberated’ from national frames of reference. The national newspapers in the UK, by contrast, were primarily orientated around providing news to their domestic readership, and generating symbolic and economic capital in the UK field.

There were two ‘borderline’ issues, however. The first, does Xinhua belong in the global field? And the second, do the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* belong in a national or global field? If we take capital to be our key

criterion of field membership, as Villumsen (2010) suggests, Xinhua primarily belongs to a national or ‘imperial’ model of reporting, rather than a global one. It is, however, currently in a state of transition, as it experiments with its business model and increasingly expands its subscription base. The FT and *The Economist*, by contrast, appear to belong to a global field: their income is accrued through multiple sources, primarily outside the UK. In addition, their journalism, like that of the newswires, is largely free of the cultural narratives and referents of any one particular country.

However, as the analysis suggested, *The Economist* and FT can also be considered alongside the producers of the UK national field; they emerged as publications in the UK, and they still play a role in that national journalistic field. The business journalists at *The Times* (UK), for example, likely look to the FT as competition. And the *Economist*, as suggested, looks to compete with leading national publications in multiple fields, comparing itself to the *New York Times* in the US, for example. The simple answer is that, depending on the research project in question, and the criterion used to explore field membership, cosmopolitan or trans-national outlets can be considered as agents operating in both global and national fields. This fluidity will likely only increase if/when nation based outlets discover more reliable means to generate income through their (internationally available) website offerings.

It may be fair to ask at this stage, what value does field theory hold, if outlets can move so fluidly between fields? Surely this means the field itself has little explanatory value? There are a number of important responses to this question. First, it is important to note that the fluidity mentioned is primarily at the borders: throughout the study we have seen that core groups

of agents, adopting strategic positions vis-à-vis one another, create powerful norms of practice that prevail across fields.

Second, while it is the case that there is fluidity at the borders of global and national fields, and this may problematize research, it should be seen as a welcome and necessary component of the approach: it reflects the reality. The global and the national *are* fluid, as a burgeoning literature in media studies attests. And the conceptual frameworks that scholars have posed to describe the global arena all (necessarily) have porous borders, for example: ecology (Cottle 2003), scape (Appurdurai 1990), and möbius strip (Bigo & Walker 2007).

Moreover, and most significantly, the fluidity in field theory helps to explain change. Field theory suggests that practices change as agents move between fields; and they start to adopt new production practices, in line with the doxa of their new field/position. This can help us understand, for example, the fact that, as Xinhua expands its global client base, it has also, slowly, begun to incorporate the doxic norms and conventions of the global field into its journalistic practice – timeliness, objectivity, and so on (Xin 2006). It can also help explain why Al Jazeera has adopted a variety of objectivity conventions in its English language station, in order to better establish its place as a member of the global field (Biesla 2008).

The distinction is less clear in the case of the FT and *The Economist*, as the global and national fields in question are highly similar in their core values. As Biesla (2008) and Chalaby (1996) note, global journalism has

primarily been an Anglo-American invention, exported from the domestic to the global sphere by the international newswires.

Lahire complains that one of the problems with field theory is that borders are so porous, and there is no once-and-for-all answer to the question ‘what is literature?’ or ‘what is politics?’ (In Swartz 1998). This question is further problematized as we look to analyse multiple fields. But the only codified answer that one could give Lahire would necessarily reify the industries in question. Borders must be negotiable if we are to accept that all cultural industries and their occupants may vary over time. This does not detract from the insight one can gain from examining the core agents, and the way in which their competitive struggles for capital shape practice.

12. Conclusion

Binyavanga Wainaina, one of the most outspoken critics of the international news coverage of Africa, has written two satirical pieces in which he describes “how to write about Africa” (2005, 2012). His 2012 article describes, with some derision, how foreign correspondents live in Kenya:

Nairobi is a good place to be an international correspondent. There are regular flights to the nearest genocide, and there are green lawns, tennis courts, good fawning service. You can get pork belly, and you can hire an OK pastry chef called Elijah (surname forgotten) to work in your kitchen for \$300 a month.

Wainaina’s comments are in line with many historic and fictional accounts of foreign correspondents in Africa that depict generous salaries, large expense accounts, decadent diplomatic parties, and a pleasant poolside ex-patriot lifestyles (e.g., Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop*). But this characterisation is long outdated. Many of the FCs in this study earned less than \$300 US for themselves each month - never mind a pastry chef.

Mamdani (2009), in his work on the Darfur crisis, is critical for other reasons:

War may be serious business, but you would never know it from the casual manner in which African wars tend to be reported in the Western media. Africa is usually the entry point for a novice reporter on the international desk, a learning laboratory where he or she is expected to gain experience (2009: 19)

Such casual and sweeping characterisations of foreign correspondents are unhelpful. In addition to making FCs less willing to participate in academic research (not a small concern), they are misleading. The majority of the 51 foreign correspondents spoken to in this research were highly educated and experienced journalists. They were far from novices at their outlet: the

Reuters bureau chief in Sudan (a central producer of the news on Darfur that Mamdani is criticising) was awarded Reuters journalist of the year – from a pool of 2400 journalists around the world. Others in this study were Pulitzer winners, held PhDs in African history, had written award winning novels, and many had graduated from the world’s most distinguished journalism schools.

The most significant misconception, however, which flows through both the anecdotal commentary and the academic literature on international news production, is the assumption that foreign correspondents are Western nationals. This thesis has demonstrated that, while FCs working for traditional newspapers are Western-born and trained, the journalists working at newswires are frequently local-nationals, deeply embedded in their local culture. In the context of understanding international reporting on Africa, this is a significant lacuna. As we have seen, these newswires are the most prevalent news producers, as well as important agenda-setters for the Western FC correspondents who report on Africa from the continent’s hub cities.

Apportioning blame for ‘poor’ news coverage to individual FCs is also distracting. By focusing on the individual, such accounts neglect the important role of the news industry itself, and the competitive struggles that inform news production.

At the other end of the spectrum, a great deal of research on international news production has ignored the contribution of FCs altogether. Political economic approaches and structural organisational analyses have tended to interpret FCs as little more than conduits for the needs of their organization, political and economic elites (Peterson 2001).

This research has approached FCs in a different way, characterising their work as that of strategic agents, who possess divergent values and ambition (*habitus*), and have varying resources to draw on.

This thesis has argued that theory of Pierre Bourdieu offers the best range of analytical tools for explaining the work of foreign correspondents in East Africa. The analysis sections have examined three very different groups of agents: the FCs working in the busy, organisational structure of the Nairobi Reuters bureau; the FCs working alone for UK print outlets in Nairobi; and the FCs – both wire and newspaper FCs – working in a more challenging media environment in Sudan. In each of these environments, the tools of field theory were able to help explain why FCs did the things they did: why they chose certain stories, highlighted certain angles, and sought different sources.

These analyses sections suggested that field theory had three particular strengths, as compared to compared to other approaches to news production. These are summarised below.

1) The notion of habitus

This thesis has suggested that FCs in the field often have significant autonomy to shape news coverage. The chapter on FCs in Sudan, in particular, highlighted the role that individual FCs play, and showed that personal traits (background, relationships with sources, personal values) had a significant impact on news outcomes. In the chapter on UK newspaper FCs, we saw that individual FCs had scope to influence the tone of reporting; and, at the more symbolic outlets, they had considerable freedom to choose story topics and angles. Working within the organisational structure of the Reuters bureau, we

saw that FCs often work strategically, to forward their own interests, and write news that may not reflect their news outlet's priorities.

Significantly, we have seen that individuals' traits can lead to the production of news narratives that scholars have expressed concern about, and that were outlined in the background section: 'Afro-pessimism' and the democratic deficit. In Sudan, Sudanese nationals at AP and AFP were unwilling to write critical reports; subscribers to these newswires will not have received balanced reporting on the Darfur crisis. This was a result of habitus in practice. In the discussion of traditional UK print FCs in Africa, we saw that journalists often experienced a change in their world view; some became bitter and angry about the region, and this was reflected in the news they wrote.

Macro level and organisational approaches to news practice do not take the individual influence of journalists' into account. As Schudson writes:

Who are the journalists in news organisations who cover beats, interview sources, rewrite press releases from government bureaus, and occasionally take the initiative in ferreting out hidden or complex stories? If organisational theorists are correct, it does not matter. Whoever they are, they will be socialised quickly into the values and routines of daily journalism and will modify their own personal values 'in accordance with the requisites of the organisation' (1989: 273).

In a similar vein, political economic approaches focus on the elites who own, control and filter news content, and do not pay attention to the role of individual agents. Pedelty (1995), as we saw in the literature review, felt that FCs were little more than compliant conduits for the reproduction of the structural distribution of power, and made no creative input to news work.

These approaches to foreign news production cannot capture the variety, and importance of individual factors that this thesis has suggested play an important role in the construction of foreign news.

2) Field theory is dynamic

News outlets change over time as they shift their position in the field and produce new forms of news. This may result from external factors – such as the dissolution of the Bretton Woods fixed currency, that sparked the market for financial data, and led Reuters to start down the road towards financial news provisions. Alternatively, these changes may come from new entrants to the field; or outlets adopting new strategic positions. Field theory is not just able to incorporate this change, but is able to help explain it. This was most extensively illustrated in the chapter analysing the Reuters newswire, where field theory was employed to explain how a shift in the field position of the outlet had translated to different forms of journalistic practices on the ground.

Sociological accounts often depict journalists as deeply socialised into their value system, and resistant to change (e.g., Ryfe 2009). This thesis has suggested, however, that the habitus (of both an outlet and an individual) may evolve over time. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it has highlighted an important feature of news work: that FCs are strategic agents and, as a result, may ‘perform’ and produce news that is not in line with their underlying habitus. This performance may generally support organisational values, but the potential for misunderstanding, subversion, and ‘sneakiness’ remains.

3) Field theory incorporates a range of variables, and suggests relationships between them

Field theory is a helpful approach because it incorporates a wide range of variables that the literature suggests influence journalists at work. For example, the role of governments, news outlets' conventions, their audiences, and so on. Field theory incorporates these variables, but it is not simply heuristic: it also suggests relationships between the different factors and how they interact. This is a significant improvement on previous approaches to FC news production, particularly general accounts, which often simply list a range of variables. Blasi (2004) for example, in an article on peace journalism and FC production practices, suggests that international news is the result of:

1. Structural aspects of the media;
2. Conflict situation on-site;
3. Personal features of the individual journalist;
4. The political climate;
5. Lobbies; and
6. The audience.

A list of variables of this kind offers little insight into which might be the most important or how they might apply in different circumstances. A focus on where an outlet is positioned in the field, however, the logic of that field, and the capital held by various agents (as this thesis explored in relation to Reuters, and the post election violence in Kenya) can help to explain exactly how variables interacted to 'shut down' peace journalism in the office.

Significantly, field theory draws attention to the relationship between macro-level factors and journalistic practices; it provides insight into how these factors translate, through organisational position and the capital that is valorised, to journalistic practices.

African exceptionalism?

News on Africa is a specific sub set of international reporting, and serves a variety of purposes for the outlets that produce it. For some outlets, it is a means to gaining immediate economic capital through subscriptions; for others, it is a performance of elite status that helps to generate symbolic capital. The analysis suggested that the capital an outlet sought played a significant role in the nature of news they produced, the stories they included, and how they were framed. This was illustrated in the comparison of Reuters news with both Bloomberg (who are closer to the economic pole), and with AFP and AP (who are closer to the symbolic pole); it was also clear as we moved across the spectrum of outlets in the UK national field.

Outside Reuters and Bloomberg, with their base of financial clients interested in developments on the continent, most new outlets struggle to transform news on Africa into immediate economic capital. The most populist orientated news outlets rarely try: the tabloids do not have correspondents in Africa, even where they have the budgets to make this feasible. If they did not know before, internet analytics inform editors, with little room for doubt, that day-to-day news stories on Africa are infrequently read by their audiences.

Rather than economic capital, the traditional news outlets that produce news on Africa do this, primarily, for symbolic reasons. This research has only explored FCs reporting in an African context, and it cannot draw comparisons to other sites/regions. However, it is interesting to note that, at several points in the analysis, there were indications that the African news beat was seen to be particularly low status within news organisations – that it was not monitored closely, or considered a particularly important genre of news.

Examples of this included:

1. Less checking by editors. The FCs at the *NY Times*, *The Guardian* and others, noted that their editors rarely checked the content of their stories. They suggested that this was in contrast to other beats they knew about/had worked on. *The Guardian* and the case of Dr Hoile was particularly noteworthy for the extent to which it appeared to be 'African exceptionalism'.
2. More freedom to choose. *The Economist's* FC had a great deal of scope to develop his own interpretations of even quite controversial issues. Former writers at the magazine have suggested that there is more oversight of angles and opinions in other beats at the magazine (eg. who to back for President, gun control, what stance to take on gay marriage, how to describe social corporate responsibility (Jones 2005).
3. Less competition between producers in their African reporting. The FCs at the mid-market newspapers in the UK were able to travel together, and produce highly similar stories with the blessing of their editors.
4. The freedom of the AFP and AP stringers to write reports that were not in keeping with the values of 'watchdog journalism', otherwise embraced by these outlets.

One fairly compelling interpretation of these phenomena is that African reporting, for many of the outlets in this study – was produced for symbolic reasons; and that, even among symbolic products, it had low status. The simple inclusion of a story on Africa was an end in itself (signalling elite-ness); and the content of said story was negligible. This would suggest that, until

African news stories help newspapers and newswires sell subscriptions, they will likely be less valued, monitored and checked; and they will have less resources committed to their production.

This may seem a depressing observation to commentators concerned with the media coverage of Africa. However, this analysis has also (surprisingly, in some instances) suggested that there are 'spurts of hope'. There are some indications that the economic frame increasingly being employed by Reuters may lead to more positive narratives on the continent, including attention to opportunity, growth and potentiality. We saw that, even in soft news of dominated producers such as the *Daily Telegraph*, there was the potential for stories that humanized African events, and drew connections between international audiences and local citizens. We have also seen that the increasing centrality of local national journalists may, with time, be able to open the space for debate around the values of the journalistic field.

Limitations

This study has focused on foreign correspondents at work in the field. From there it has tried to 'trace back' the influence of field and position on their work. A more full field analysis would benefit from the inclusion of more views from editors, CEOs and strategists at the international and national level. In order to 'place' outlets, I have relied on mission statements, websites, circulation figures, and the perspectives of those who work for them. However, nothing substitutes from the immediate perspective of those who actively seek to position their outlets.

The analysis has consciously chosen to prioritise depth of analysis rather than breadth in many instances. This meant, for example, that the discussion of newswires other than Reuters was not given the attention it deserves. It was decided that the trade-off was worth making: that presenting a full analysis of one newswire at work, through a newsroom ethnography, would help to illustrate the real work-ability of field theory as a set of tools for guiding research, and for providing focus during an analysis. However, it would be highly beneficial to examine other important global news producers in more detail and – most importantly – the relatively new entrants, Xinhua and Al Jazeera. This would help to shed more light on how field theory operates at its borders, and how new entrants may start to challenge prevailing doxa; and through this, the potential for transformation of news narratives more generally.

This study has also not touched on some of the more theoretical issues that critics of field theory raise. In particular, it has not attempted to conceptualise a wider ‘global field of power’ in which the global journalistic field is located. Guzzini suggests this question can be addressed through further empirical study (2006: 17). This well may be the case. In the meantime, its absence does not necessarily undermine the productive insight that the notions of field, habitus and capital can generate. IR scholars, in a similar vein, have done significant work on international phenomena, without a clear consensus on the state of the international system. This thesis has also not addressed some of the more philosophical issues surrounding the notion of habitus (in particular, the nature of free will was considered as beyond the scope of this project). These are significant conceptual issues that remain to

be explored, including what can meaningfully be considered 'autonomy' and how we can trace the sources of habitus. Rather than address these issues, this research has sought to make use of the tools of field theory, and put them to work in an empirical study.

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Bourdieu suggested that the analytical tools of field theory should be defined and deployed anew for every empirical inquiry. It is hoped that one finding from this research will transcend the study in hand, however: that field theory, expanded to analyse global news production, can produce fruitful insight to journalistic practice.

Appendix 1: Full Interview Log

The interviewees are listed by geographic location and chronological order.

The 51 active FCs (at the time of research) are indicated with a * next to their name. For the purposes of this research, an FC is defined as “any journalist paid to produce news in English for a publication/outlet based in a second country”.

The analysis sections of this thesis “zoom in” on 25 of the below FCs: those working for the Reuters newswire in its Nairobi bureau, the permanent FCs working for UK newspapers, and all the FCs in Sudan.

Table 10 - Interviewees in Khartoum

Khartoum			
Date	Name	Outlet	Position
09/08/2007	*Opheera McDoom	Reuters	Bureau Chief
12/08/2007	Regine Penitsch	Khartoum University	PhD candidate
13/08/2007	Allan McDonald	Oxfam	Press Spokesperson
15/08/2007	Dr Annette Rehl	UN-HCR	Information Manager
16/08/2007	Dr Alfred Taban	Khartoum Monitor (ex Reuters, ex BBC)	Editor in Chief
16/08/2007	Fareena Alam	Q News	Editor
16/08/2007	Dr Rosalin Marsden	British Embassy, Sudan	Ambassador
17/08/2007	Maurizio Giuliano	UN-OCHA	Press Spokesperson
19/08/2007	Dr Mahmoud Sharaani	Sudanese Centre for Human Rights Studies	President
19/08/2007	Dr Hamid Osman	Omdurman Strategic Discussions Forum	Chairman
21/08/2007	*Mohammad El Fatih	ANSA, Daily Telegraph (ex Reuters)	Freelance Journalist

Sidahmed			
22/08/2007	*Simon Apiku	Reuters	Stringer
22/08/2007	*Abigail Hauslohner	Reuters	Stringer
24/08/2007	Simon Haselock	UN-AMIS / DFID	Media Consultant
25/08/2007	Abdella Adam Khalid	Freelance journalist	Journalist
25/08/2007	Talal Osman	British Embassy in Khartoum	Press Officer / Interpreter
25/08/2007	Izzadine Abdul Rasoul	The Citizen Newspaper	Journalist
26/08/2007	Mohamad Ali Fazan	Khartoum Monitor	Journalist
26/08/2007	Cecelia Goin	ICRC	Information Delegate
28/08/2007	Leon Willems	UN-MIS	Information Manager
28/08/2007	Emelia Casella	UN-WFP	Information Manager
28/08/2007	David Drew	Labour Party (Britain)	Member of Parliament
29/08/2007	*Amber Henshaw	BBC	Correspondent
30/08/2007	Dr John Clarke	UN-MIS, Resident Co-ordinator's Office	Deputy Head
30/08/2007	Justin Thundu	AMIS	Senior Press and Information Manager
31/08/2007	Blake Evans-Pritchard	Freelance Journalist	Freelance Journalist
09/01/2007	*Mohamad Ali M. Saeed	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	Stringer
09/01/2007	*Jeffrey Gentleman	New York Times	Journalist
09/01/2007	*Courtney Morris	New York Times	Journalist (multimedia)
09/01/2007	Aziz Ibrahim	Al Jazeera Arabic	Journalist
09/02/2007	*Mohamad	Associated Press (AP)	Stringer

Table 11 - Interviewees in Nairobi

Nairobi

Date	Name	Organisation	Position
02/08/2009	*Andrew Cawthorne	Reuters	Bureau Chief
02/08/2009	*Saruh Abdi Ahmed	Reuters	Stringer (Somalia)
03/08/2009	*Dana Hughs	ABC	Correspondent
03/08/2009	*John Marc Mojon	AFP	News Editor
04/08/2009	*Mike Pflanz	The Daily Telegraph	Correspondent
06/08/2009	*David Clarke	Reuters	Deputy Bureau Chief
06/08/2009	*Sahal Abdulle	Reuters	Stringer
07/08/2009	*Peter Greste	BBC	Correspondent
07/08/2009	*Ruth Nesoba	BBC	Correspondent (World Service)
09/08/2009	Guled Mohamed	Ex-Reuters	WFP media office
09/08/2009	*Mustafa	AFP	Stringer (Somalia)
11/08/2009	*Mohamad Amiin Adow	CNN	Stringer
11/08/2009	*Helen Nyambura-Mwaura	Reuters	Chief Economic Correspondent
12/08/2009	*Tristan McConnell	The Times (UK)	Correspondent
13/08/2009	*Jeremy Ledger	The Economist	Correspondent
14/08/2009	*Andrew Simmons	Al Jazeera English	Correspondent
14/08/2009	*Sarah Childress	The Wall Street Journal	Correspondent
14/08/2009	*Dan Wallis	Reuters	General News Correspondent
17/08/2009	*Jeremy Clarke	Reuters	Stringer (general)
19/08/2009	*Kaes Broere	De Volk Krant	Correspondent

20/08/2009	*Antony Marland	IRIN	News Editor
20/08/2009	Francois Grignon	International Crisis Group	Director, Africa Programme
21/08/09	*Barney Jessop	The Financial Times	Correspondent
27/08/2009	*Kevin Mwachito	BBC	Producer, International News
29/08/2009	Louise Finan	Care International	Regional Communications Manager
14/09/2009	*Dan Howden	The Independent	Correspondent
14/09/2009	*Elizabeth Kennedy	Associated Press	Bureau Chief
16/09/2009	*Patrick Muiruri	Reuters	Head of Television
18/08/2009	*Daniel Ooko	Xinhau News Wire	Correspondent
22/09/2009	*Eric Ombok	Bloomberg	Correspondent
22/09/2009	*Xan Rice	Guardian	Correspondent
22/09/2009	Mary Ann Fitzgerald	Ex-Financial Times	Ex Correspondent
23/09/2009	*Aidan Hartley	Various (Channel 4, Spectator, Reuters)	Freelancer
24/09/2009	*Frank Nyakairu	Reuters	Humanitarian Correspondent

Table 12 - Interviewees in Kampala

Kampala

Date	Name	Outlet	Position
25/08/2010	*Max Delany	Various (Christian Science Monitor, ex AP)	Freelance Journalist
25/08/2010	*Duncan Woodside	Various (France 24, Christian Science Monitor, AFP)	Freelance Journalist
27/08/2010	*Malcolm Webb	Al Jazeera English	Stringer
27/08/2010	*Simone Schlindwein	Various (die Tageszeitung, Spiegel)	Freelance Journalist

29/08/2010	*Ben Simon	AFP	Stringer
31/08/2010	*Godfrey Olukya	AP	Stringer
31/08/2010	*Samson Ntale	CNN	Stringer
01/09/2010	*Elias Biryabarema	Reuters	Stringer
03/09/2010	*Joshua Mmali	BBC	Correspondent
13/09/2010	Arne Doornebal	GPD (Dutch newswire)	Stringer
16/09/2010	Edward	Kampala Dispatch	Founding Editor
17/09/2010	James Nasamba Butoro	Government of Uganda	Minister, Ethics and Integrity
18/09/2010	*Samuel Okir	Xinhau	Stringer
20/09/2010	Dr Arne Perras	Suddeutsche Zeitung	Africa Correspondent

Table 13 - Interviewees in the UK

UK			
13/05/2007	*Sean Maguire	Reuters	African Editor
13/05/2007	Ann Parenth	The Independent	Ex-Editor
6/06/2007	Bona Malwal	Government of Sudan	Advisor to the President
20/06/2007	Dr Khalid Al-Mubarak	Sudan Embassy	Media Spokesperson
18/10/2007	Meera Selva	The Independent	Ex-Correspondent
27/10/2007	*Dorothy Byrne	Channel 4	Head of Programmes
12/9/2012	*Paige McClanahan	Various (Guardian, BBC)	Freelancer

Appendix 2: Semi-structured Interview Question Guide

Start Interview by explaining:

- *The scope and purpose of my research*
 - *What will happen with the research results*
 - *How long the interview will take [40mins+]*
 - *Establish whether they are comfortable speaking ‘on the record’ and if they are happy being recorded*
-

1. Basic information

- Nationality, age, education, journalism training
- Work experience
- How long have you worked in East Africa, and in what capacity?
- What is your current job description? [i.e. stringer, staff]

2. Quantity and subject of reporting

- How much news do you produce? Under what deadlines?
- What portion of it is on immediate location, versus other locations in region?
- What subjects/events/issues do you focus on?
- How much do you travel in the region? Do you report on other countries and events when you are not present?

3. Relationship with your organisation(s)

- How would you describe your relationships with your organisation?
- To what extent do you think your news values overlap with those of your organisation?
- How do you and your organisation decide or negotiate what stories to write?
- How much freedom do you feel that you have in terms of 1. What issues/events to cover and 2. how to develop a story?
- To what extent do your editors alter your work?

4. Relationships with sources

- Who are your most important sources of information? How would you describe your relationship with these sources?

- Is this the same as other media sites where you've worked?
- Are there sources that you can't use? Ones that are easier to access than others?

5. News Values

- How would you define "the news"?
- What traits do you think good news reports have?
- Where do you think your news values come from?
- Does your sense of newsworthiness vary from other journalists?

6. Professional role perception

- Why are you a foreign correspondent?
- Are you trying to achieve things in your journalism?
- Do you think of your subject matter in ethical terms?
- Whose work do you admire?

7. Journalist Culture

- Do you think there is a foreign correspondents culture in [this city/country]? If so, how would you describe it? E.g. collaborative? Competitive?
- To what extent do you think journalists here vary in terms of their professionalism? What about their news values?

8. Wider News Ecology

- How would you describe your relationship with the government of [this country]? does it shape your reporting in any way?
- How free do you think people and sources are to speak with you?
- How does the environment compare to other places where you've worked?

9. Relationship with audiences

- Are you familiar with your audience? Do you ever see data about the stories they read? Do your editors refer to your audience?
- Do you have them in mind when you write?

10. General

- Do you see yourself as an insider or an outsider in this region?
- What would you identify as the major barriers to getting your job done?

- If another journalist came and did your specific job, and had to work within the same context and constraints, do you think they would produce similar reports?
- Do you think there is a difference between the issues in East Africa that you see as the most important, and the kinds of stories that are covered in your outlet? the international news media more generally?

Is there anything we haven't touched upon that you see as important to news production?

- Any further comments you would make about working here as a journalist?
-

Closing points:

- *Thank you very, very much for your time.*
- *[If don't already have] Can I get your contact details, if I have any follow up questions, and to let you know the outputs of this research?*
- *Would you be happy sending me an example of your work that you are proud of [or any specific text that has been mentioned in the interview that might be interesting/helpful]*
- *Could you recommend any other FCs that I can talk to?*
- *Thank you again!*

Appendix 3: Content Analysis of News Articles by FCs in Sudan

All available articles written by the interviewed correspondents on the Darfur crisis between 1 August and 31 October 2007 were analysed. The Reuters, BBC and *New York Times* articles were located through searches of the respective website archives, which are easily accessible and searchable. AP and AFP articles, whose websites are more difficult to access, were obtained on the Lexis-Nexis database. News articles were selected for analysis if they were authored by an interview respondent, had a dateline in Sudan and had the word ‘Darfur’ in the title. The total sample group included 96 articles. Ansa articles are not available online and have not been included in the analysis.

Table 14 - Content Analysis Sample

Nationality	Outlet	N Articles	N Sources
Sudanese	AFP	15	23
Sudanese	AP	12	37
Sudanese	Reuters	9	30
UK	Reuters	49	225
UK	BBC	6	36
American	Reuters	2	6
American	NYT	3	15

News articles were quantitatively assessed for the sources they drew upon. Sources are an important component of news production, shaping angles and informing news content. As Schudson writes, ‘The story of journalism, on a day to day basis, is the story of the interaction of journalist with official’ (Schudson 1989: 271; see also Gans 1979). As one of the most fundamental components of reports, sources are a rich area of enquiry, and may suggest important differences between journalists.

The unit of analysis in each article was a news source – represented by either a direct or indirect quote. Every sources was coded as belonging to one of the following categories: Government of Sudan; NGO; UN/AU;⁷⁵ Darfuri

⁷⁵ The United Nations and African Union were jointly managing peace-keepers in Sudan, and their press releases and comments were often jointly released. Thus, they have been included as one category.

Rebel; Darfuri Tribal Leader; Darfuri Citizen; Analyst/Academic; Civil Society; Own Media; Sudanese Media; Other. The numbers of source cited, by category, were then tallied and compared by journalist nationality and outlet.

Several issues face a content analysis of this kind: first, the sample group is very small; secondly, journalists writing for newswires are not always credited for their work; thirdly, journalists may have supplied information to correspondents in other parts of their news outlet to be written up. These factors mean that it is not possible to draw comprehensive comparisons or conclusions from this content analysis. However, it is still possible to use the sample to generate data that provides a (limited) triangulation on the interview responses – to attempt, in a limited way, to close the gap between self-reported behaviour and actual daily practice.

Table 15 - Sources used by FCs (as percentage of total sources used by each FC)

Outlet	Nationality	N.	GoS	NGOs	UN/AU	Rebels	Tribal	Darfuri	Foreign	Analyst	Civil	Own	Sudan	Other
		sources					Leader	Citizen	Politician		Society	Media	Media	
AFP	Sudanese	23	25	4.3	39.1	13	0	0	4.3	0	0	0	13	0
AP	Sudanese	37	29.7	0	27	10.8	0	2.7	2.7	0	10.8	0	13.5	2.7
Reuters	Sudanese	30	23.3	6.7	20	20	10	10	0	3.3	3.3	0	0	3.3
Reuters	UK	225	14.7	5.8	23.1	20	1.8	6.2	13.7	4.9	6.2	0	0.4	2.1
BBC	UK	36	13.9	0	25	27.8	0	0	8.4	2.8	2.8	16.7	0	2.8
Reuters	American	6	0	0	16.7	33.3	16.7	16.7	0	16.7	0	0	0	0
NY Times	American	15	6.7	20	33.3	0	33.3	6.7	0	0	0	0	0	0

*All percentages are rounded to one decimal place

Further charts appear in the chapter, including the number of stories that contained only one source.

Appendix 4: *The Economist's* news coverage of Africa and Middle East

Table 16 - Country topic of articles appearing in the Economist's "Middle East an Africa section," 1 August - 31 December 2009

	Africa	Middle East
19/12/2009	Zimbabwe	Iran
	Sudan	Israel
	Egypt	
12/12/2009	Somalia	Iran
		Iraq
		Iraq
05/12/2009	South Africa	Iraq
	Equatorial Guinea	Israel
	Rwanda	
28/11/2009	Nigeria	Syria
	Namibia	Iraq/Iran
	Congo	
	Algeria and Egypt	
21/11/2009	Congo	Iraq
	Sierra Leone	Yemen
	Zambia	
14/11/2009	Zimbabwe	Palestine
	South Africa	Iraq
	Uganda	Hummus (Culture/ Middle East)
	Zanzibar	
07/11/2009	Guinea	Israel

		Iraq
		Iraq
		Saudi Arabia and Yemen
		Iran
31/10/2009	Tunisia	Turkey
	Africa	Israel
		Iraq
24/10/2009	Nigeria	Iraq
	Somalia	Turkey
	Botswana	Iran
17/10/2009 ⁷⁶	South Africa	Palestine
	Africa	
	Madagascar	
	Egypt	
10/10/2009	Kenya	Palestine
		Egypt
		Iran
03/10/2009	Africa	Iran
	Guinea	
	Congo	
	South Africa	
	Egypt	
26/09/2009	East Africa	Iraq
	South Africa	Israel
	South Africa	
19/09/2009	Uganda	Israel
	Zimbabwe	Iran

⁷⁶ This week's edition also included an article on Arab world, that referred to both the Middle East and North Africa

	Somalia	
12/09/2009	Africa	Yemen
	Zimbabwe	Palestine
	Zimbabwe	Emirates
05/09/2009	Africa	Iran
	East Africa	Lebanon
	Darfur	Iraq
Total	46	40

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