

CHAPTER 8

The Journalism of “Returning”

Nathalie Hyde-Clarke, Head of the Department of Culture and Communication, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland; Docent of Media and Communication, University of Helsinki, Finland

The Marikana Massacre of August 2012 calls into question existing methods of South African news production during times of national crisis. This paper examines two diverse communication strategies that contributed to the problematic media coverage ahead of the shooting. It then considers the very different approach utilised by two media teams in its aftermath; referred to by the reporters as a journalism that required “returning” to the affected communities several times to better understand their socio-economic realities. Through the consideration of notions of Ubuntu journalism, it is clear that the individual exposure afforded in the wake of the crisis should have been better employed throughout. This would have allowed for a better public understanding of the dynamics involved, and the economic realities faced by those families on a day-to-day basis.

Keywords: crisis journalism, individual exposure, source subjectivity, Ubuntuism

Introduction

On 16 August 2012, South African police fired live bullets into a miners’ protest at the Lonmin mining company, killing 34 of those gathered there. Much of the television footage of what was briefly termed as the “Marikana massacre” (and then later “crisis”) was literally over the shoulders of the police. This was a poignant visual confirmation of the overall media coverage of the entire scenario from its beginning. There was almost no coverage from the miners’

or their families' perspective. Approximately 3000 men had gathered at Lonmin mines as part of a protest for better wages in order to improve their well-being and standard of living. Yet, due to communication strategies adopted by both the media and the miners themselves, the dire circumstances in which they lived were not conveyed to the public, who instead were presented with images of an unruly mass of protesters seemingly unprepared to negotiate. The coverage of this incident, and the failure of the media to provide critical and informed coverage of the crisis, has been heralded by many media analysts and practitioners as a watershed moment in South Africa, with the majority agreeing that "the media let us down" (Wasserman, 2013). This chapter considers how a lack of individual exposure¹ and subjectivity facilitated the crisis, as it did not create a better understanding of the miners' demands amongst the general public. It concludes by demonstrating how the post-crisis coverage, specifically a supplement titled *Fate of the Families* published one year later, incorporated these two significant elements, and by doing so, allowed for improved representation of the realities of the families affected. It may be argued that the use of more personalised narratives in order to demonstrate the plight of a community is in many ways compatible with the African media ethic of Ubuntuism.

Marikana 16 August 2012

The past decade has seen a growing number of wildcat strikes in the mining sector in South Africa, with many occurring between May and September each year. A wildcat strike occurs when workers take industrial action outside the organisation or approval of the relevant union. In August 2012, one such instance occurred at the platinum mine owned by Lonmin at Marikana, an area close to Rustenburg in northern South Africa. The dispute was originally covered by the national media as a labour negotiation for a wage increase that had escalated into a full strike as the trade union, workers and mine management failed to reach an agreement. There were sporadic outbreaks of violence that the media attributed to conflicts between the two established trade unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Association of

¹ Understood to be the use of personalised narratives to 'expose' or uncover facts or objective reality through the use of storytelling techniques (Steensen, chapter 2).

Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), and their members. This suggested that normal systems of negotiation had broken down, and it raised the question of legality. While labour laws uphold the right to strike, labour action must occur within traditional bargaining frameworks. Thus, the event was referred to as being a wildcat strike, and the police were called to the scene to establish order.

It was true that the workers were no longer operating under the trade union. Believing that the sparring unions were not actually representing their best interests, the Rock Drill Operators decided to appoint their own representatives and then drafted a memorandum outlining their poor working and living conditions justifying their request for a significant raise. It was triple their current earnings.² Without fully understanding the realities of those individuals and the families relying on them, such a large raise could not be justified by the media when reporting the demands to the public. It is at this stage that a more personalised narrative may have lent more urgency and clarity to the situation. These narratives may have included the following two points identified by Hayem (2015): the Rock Drill Operators often face the most danger in the extraction process due to their use of explosives; and secondly, due to high unemployment in the area, it is not unusual to find that miners are the sole source of income for their families. It is a high-risk position in terms of both personal safety and community welfare.

Despite the large and often vocal gathering (in terms of chants and singing), the miners' individual voices were noticeably absent in the media coverage. This has been attributed to two significant communication approaches adopted by the parties involved in the labour dispute responsible for representation. The first was the one adopted by the media. It may be traced to established international patterns of coverage of trade unions where greater emphasis is placed on industry and what big business thinks, rather than the plight of the workers. This will be discussed in more detail later.

The second was part of a communication strategy adopted by the miners themselves. A desire to be recognised, coupled with the decision to speak directly to their employers about their conditions, meant that the miners broke from the trade unions to broker a deal by themselves (Hayem, 2015). Aware that there was a danger that they would be perceived as renegades, it was

² At the time, the average salary was approximately R4000 (280€) a month.

decided to emphasise the fact that the workers themselves were united in their goal, and thus all mobile phones were switched off. This created what Tongia & Wilson (2007, as cited by (Walton, 2014)) describe as a form of self-imposed “network exclusion”: individuals were not allowed to use their own social networks to promote a collective cause, but rather the cause was strengthened through the unity of the group and its coordination. It was imperative to the workers that no single person stood out as the “face”. Even their appointed spokesperson remained anonymous and was referred to as “the man in the green blanket”³ by journalists wishing to attribute material to that source. The fact that many miners could not afford the airtime required to engage with social media online, nor had airtime for lengthy calls, helped the collective maintain that consent. Those who did try to break the silence had to resort to a free service of “please call me” texts to journalists due to their financial conditions (Walton, 2014). The situation was further complicated by the inability of the miners to adequately or eloquently express the reasons for the wage increase themselves, due to most having little formal education. This, combined with a poor grasp of English, limited their ability to address a larger audience. Had the miners been better informed as to how best to engage with the media, they may have rethought this strategy. It may have been effective in terms of demonstrating solidarity, but it was not that effective in terms of building empathy or mobilising support amongst the general public. Individual exposure that allows for personalised narratives has been shown to have more impact in this regard. Perhaps allowing the media the possibility of literally and figuratively engaging with the miners could have altered the frames employed, allowing for better representation and understanding of their daily struggles.

The chosen tactic also created more unintended complications. The miners were enacting a lot of cultural heritage as part of their chosen negotiation strategy. They emphasised oral tradition, rites and rituals. Oral traditions allow for the construction and dissemination of “shared experiences”, foundations that build a sense of community and belonging. Hayem (2015) notes that by making the decision to gather on the *koppie* (hill) close to the mine, the strikers were following the tradition whereby public meetings should be held in the sight and knowledge of all, so that all may participate or hear. It was therefore even more unfortunate that the closed channels of communication between

3 Later identified as Mgcineni “Mambush” Noki

the protesters and media observers did not allow for these cultural nuances to be explained to, nor by, the news media. The miners' perspectives and opinions were instead seen to be less-than-forthcoming, and therefore under-represented, almost to the point of being invisible as individuals. Instead of creating an image of unity, the lack of individual engagement or elaboration of the strategy used, created the image of an unruly "other" unprepared to reason or be rational.

With a few notable exceptions, the media described them as men made all the more dangerous by the fact that they were armed, backwards, "tribal" (they sang traditional martial songs, the same sung during the Mpondo Revolt, to stiffen their courage) and irrational, since they used the services of a *sangoma*, a diviner, to strengthen their bravery and protect themselves from bullets (Hayem, 2015, p. 5).

Why had the police elected to use such a violent response to the strike? In their book, *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and A Case to Answer* (Alexander, Sinwell, Lekgowa, Mmope, & Xezwi, 2012), it is proposed that the relationship between "big business" and the state has become so converged that a threat against one is seen as a threat against both. This brings us to the second communication strategy under discussion – the one adopted by the media. In a study of media coverage between 13–22 September 2012, Duncan (2013) found the following spread of news sources: 27% business or economic partners; 14% mine owners; 11% unions; 10% political parties; 9% government; 5% police; and only 3% miners. From these statistics, the media definitely aligned themselves more with official sources from the industry and government. Notably, even though the success of the negotiations had implications for the families reliant on those wages, only 13 of 162 articles had female sources. This was despite the fact that some of the families were more readily accessible for comment than the miners themselves. Most were settled in a community a short distance from the area where the strike took place. This meant that the very reason the miners were striking – better living conditions and wages to support their families – remained unexplored and the audience was ignorant of their plight. Duncan (2013) argues that this demonstrates "symbolic annihilation". A term coined by Gerbner (1972) referring to "the absence of representation, under-representation or distortion of particular social groups, with the intention of maintaining social inequality" (Duncan, 2013, p. 86).

A later study (Rodny-Gumede, 2015) found that of the 162 news articles from 12–23 August 2012, 151 mentioned violence in connection with the miners, in comparison with 46 in connection with police. The general consensus seemed to be that the police were acting “decisively” and had been left with no alternative but to respond with deadly force in order to disperse the illegal gathering. The news frames in place leaned more towards conflict than peace, based on existing patterns of coverage of labour disputes. Any desire the miners had to present their arguments from a “subjective” perspective (Hayem, 2015), in this case to be understood as a collective argument informed by their own perspectives and realities in order to create empathy or understanding, was thwarted by the lack of representation in the media.

In terms of labour disputes, there is a trend in news media coverage to rely on official sources and to have a pro-business bias. This is in part due to the larger pool of resources industry and government can muster in order to manage, and in many ways dominate, information flow to news organisations (Schudson, 2002). They also employ people schooled in public relations and communication strategy. The same is not always true of worker’s organisations, even more so when workers elect to represent themselves. Marikana was a tragic testimony to those established news routines. Operating in an area far from their headquarters in Johannesburg, and unable or unwilling to solicit the knowledge of local community media, journalists generally relied heavily on police sources. They did not seem to account for the reality that official sources are as much agenda-setters and exhibit agency to suit their own purposes as those who stood on the other side of the “picket line”. Without understanding the local context, South African journalists mirrored parachute- and pack-journalism seen mostly amongst foreign reporters arriving to cover African crises:

This shows how dislocated reporters are from what is happening on the ground in communities in South Africa; they only cover communities when there is violence (Cowling interview on 17 February 2014, cited in (Rodny-Gumede, 2015))

The lack of critical inquiry became so embedded, that once shots were fired, the media present at the scene failed to “see” what was happening in front of them: the second killing field a few hundred metres from the front line of the police. Eventually uncovered by academic analysts (Alexander, Sinwell, Lekgowa, Mmope, & Xezwi, 2012), it was clear that a second line of police had

been operating further along the road and had fired indiscriminately into fleeing miners running from the front line. In this situation, the established journalism practice of relying on official forces for more "factual" information was flawed. Arguably, the media used these facts as though they were value- or agenda-free (Duncan, 2013). This simply is not the case. The Marikana massacre effectively demonstrates why individual exposure that allows for more subjective reporting may be increasingly important in order to mobilise a better public understanding of specific socio-cultural contexts. It is therefore interesting that it was precisely this approach that was adopted after the crisis.

Revisiting Ubuntu in the wake of Marikana

Recently, the term "*Ubuntu*" has become something of an international buzz word. While some may associate it with Linux software programmes, for many, it heralds from a traditional African ethic which states: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other persons). It is the latter that forms the focus of this research. It highlights that it is indeed possible for media coverage to focus on the daily realities of an individual in order to build understanding of a community, without in any way compromising the ability of the journalist to gather facts and critically analyse them. The tenet originates from Bantu-speaking people in Sub-Saharan Africa and stems from the belief that the individual should act in and through the interests of the community. It is important to note that the views of what is "moral" fluctuate over time, and as such it is a flexible and fluid term among a specific group who identify those needs based on the situation and environment. Essentially, it is an African philosophy that appeals to many, as it suggests qualities such as valuing community, friendship, social harmony and respect for others (Metz, 2007).

Questions are often raised about whether this philosophy may be considered to be an African media ethic and implemented accordingly. While theoretically promising, the debate has many nuances as to its relevance in the contemporary newsroom. In some literature, this principle is aligned to or associated with Western normative theories, such as communitarianism or social responsibility. In its most beneficial guise, it calls for empathy with, and a perspective "from", the people. Chasi & Omarjee (2014, p. 230) state that in addition to being viewed as a "collectivist approach that does not privilege the concerns of individuals, the argument is that *Ubuntu* enables individuals to

address existential concerns that have a bearing on how they live life". As a form of communal journalism (Skjerdal, 2012, pp. 644-645), *Ubuntu-ism* suggests that media practitioners should start by acknowledging that they are first and foremost members of a community, secondly they are journalists or representatives who speak on behalf of or within that community, and thus with that knowledge, act accordingly. *Ubuntu* is not a practice *per se*. It is seen as a guiding principle. Interestingly, there is little consensus as to whether objectivity is relevant or not in this approach. It is more about the meaning behind the purpose of the journalism: the voice of the public or citizen is therefore a vital source for the media.

It is important to note that *Ubuntu* journalism may mirror some aspects of quality feature journalism. Previously referred to by critics as "soft news" relegated to tabloids, glossy magazines and personal columns, there has been a tendency to dismiss this reportage as being "what might interest the public instead of what is in the public's interest, hence weakening the role of the news media in a democracy" (Franklin 1997 as cited in Steensen, 2011, p. 50). In recent times, however, there has been more support for, and interest in, *quality* feature journalism that uses storytelling techniques to draw attention to key news events using a more human angle to better engage readers in serious public discussions. While referring to the human aspect of the story, feature journalists are still able to separate themselves from that reportage. *Ubuntu-ism* builds on this further by employing the use of the individual's position within, and their relationship to, a community to better enunciate the hard facts that need to be addressed in order to enhance that community's or society's political, economic or social well-being.

Yet, it would be remiss not to note that there are also discussions as to how *Ubuntu* as a normative approach has been used to present an alternative national agenda in post-colonial South Africa (as discussed by Fourie, 2008). In these situations, it may be anti-Western in sentiment and thus not necessarily envisaged as a means to advance existing practices, but rather replace them. Skjerdal (2012) notes that Francis Kasoma captured a renewed determination amongst the continent's academics to review African journalism practices when he stated in 1996 that the greatest tragedy of African journalism was that it too closely mirrored the norms in the North. This sentiment has been carried forward as those media analysts argue that Western practices reinforce neo-colonialism, misinterpret local culture, and are at odds with African moral

philosophy. The difficulty is that as of yet, no suitable alternative has been identified.

There are real and immediate practical challenges to adopting the suggested approaches in the South African media. With reference to *Ubuntu* journalism specifically, the first is that the term *Ubuntu* has been occasionally misappropriated by government leaders in the past, who used it to suggest that critical reporting works against the interest of the community. Not surprisingly, this argument is usually brought forth during allegations of poor conduct or corruption. It is used as a shield against accountability or transparency, rather than a genuine belief in the growth and development of society. This naturally makes media practitioners sceptical of its use as a paradigm. Metz (2015) concurs that in such cases, the government is choosing to adopt a selective reading of *ubuntu*. He argues that exhibiting solidarity and having an empathetic awareness does not necessarily mean that all actions should only emphasise the positive. Instead, it is about actions that make the person, group or community better, or positions them better. In other words, positive and constructive criticism with the objective of improving the community has relevance. Investigative journalism is pivotal as it also highlights challenges to the community and areas requiring improvement.

There are also tensions as to which community is being served – the broader national one, the political one, or a specific cultural group. Some believe that *Ubuntu* in its purest sense may be better suited to smaller, more traditional communities and community media. This is another core challenge: journalists themselves do not understand what “*Ubuntu*” journalism would mean in practical terms. When interviewed by Rodney-Gumede (2015b), a sample of South African journalists responded in similar ways to these two examples:

I have no idea what is meant by *Ubuntu* journalism. What is *Ubuntu*? It strikes me as something people bring up from time to time to reinforce “othering” of African people (SABC respondent 2, as cited in Rodney-Gumede, 2015b, p. 120).

I recognise the need to rethink how journalism is conducted... I am not clear on what *Ubuntu* means in this context and what it would contribute (SABC respondent 7, as cited in Rodney-Gumede, 2015b, p. 120).

At the same time, most South African journalism programmes continue to educate media practitioners from the point of view that objectivity, and by

extension, detachment, is still the best path to obtaining truth or fact. While many agree that this perspective is flawed, most continue to see it as a necessary routine to maintain in the absence of any other suitable alternative. Until it becomes a tangible option with definite guidelines, *Ubuntu* does not meet those parameters. Yet, the ideal persists largely due to what is deemed a “powerful *human-centred concept*⁴ for an empathetic, communitarian engagement in seeking solutions to problems” (Chasi & Omarjee, 2014, p. 232). As has already been discussed, during the crisis, the decision by both miners and the media to depict the group as one collective had limitations that worked against the notion of individual exposure which could have provided better insights into the situation. It is therefore significant that the strategy adopted after the crisis, as part of a national recovery phase, more closely echoes the principles of Ubuntuism through the use of a personalised approach. This case study also addresses to some extent the concerns raised in the interviews above.

“Marikana – The Fate of the Families”

In response to the clear lack of “unofficial” sources (although, arguably people affected directly by an event should be considered “official” in terms of credibility), there were several attempts by South African media houses to rectify this gross oversight by paying tribute to those who had been killed. Two notable pieces stand out, in that they used extensive first person accounts and narratives from family members about the loved ones they had lost, and the impact this had on their own livelihood and future. Thereby these embody elements of individual exposure and Ubuntuism.

The first is an online compilation published by *City Press* and *Media 24 Investigations*, titled “Faces of Marikana”: 9 September 2012. The feature won a Sikuville Award for SA Story of the Year (Wasserman, 2013). At the time of the writing of this chapter, it was still accessible online (*City Press & Media24 Investigations, The Faces of Marikana*, 2012). It contains short stories of the victims as told by their families in the form of obituaries. In some instances, short videos accompany the text. In each, the person featured speaks in their own language, with English subtitles provided. The common theme is one of pride and dignity. Notably, although the journalists do provide some context as

4 My emphasis

to who speaks, the striking difference is that the source is prioritised and placed at the centre of the report. For example:

His father, Mboneni Ngxande, said it was difficult for the family to speak about their son, who was a rock-drill operator at Lonmin, as it was not acceptable in their culture to do so before a funeral. However, Mboneni said his son had a wife, a child of his own and two other children who relied on his wages from the mines. "He had warned us about the strike and raised fears that he might lose his job and have to come back home. He said he had no choice but to join in the strike because everyone was involved," his father recalled. "I really got worried because we kept hearing on the radio there was violence at Marikana and that people were dying," he said. News of his death came as an enormous shock as the Mphumzeni they knew was a peaceful person (City Press & Media24 Investigations, 2012, p. I).

There is also a slide show with a photo and brief description of each miner killed (City Press & Media24 Investigations, Multimedia - South Africa - Faces of Marikana, 2012). The images used are a combination of photographs taken from official documents (identity books or passports), or are typical family photographs taken by relatives and friends.

This online collection is an eternal memorial that can be visited frequently by anyone who wishes to remember and reflect. However, while the Internet provides the ability for such a memorial to become a national space, one must question the choice of the platform of delivery considering the technological access of the actual families involved. While effective in a collective sense, it could well be a cemetery that those affected families may not be able to visit.

The second case, and the one that will be discussed in more depth in this chapter, was a newspaper supplement published one year after the crisis by the *Mail & Guardian* in collaboration with OSISA (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa), titled "*Marikana - the Fate of the Families*": August 2013. The supplement appears online (Tolsi & Botes, 2013), and was also printed in a newspaper version that could be handed to families as keepsakes. This addressed the question of accessibility for those affected.

What makes this supplement noteworthy, is that it contains both byline and source subjectivity (as discussed by Steensen, this book), and the application of these two key concepts will be illustrated in the discussion that follows. In addition to these elements, it is also interesting that it was supported and resourced by what many consider to be a "quality paper" normally critical of

government policy and activities. Yet, in this case, the reporters do not adopt a typical interrogative role. Instead, in this supplement, the reporters write a reflective piece at the start, about their own role and the approach they adopted. This is then followed by personal narratives from one or two members of each family who receive half a page or a full page to talk about their personal feelings or situations faced one year after the killings occurred. These are almost entirely informed by the chosen spokesperson or people, and include many direct quotes:

Ntandazo used to send home R2000 a month and now, Nosakhe says, “There is no money to buy my children clothes” and by the middle of the month, “there is only salt and soup” in the kitchen (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, p. 16).

“There is no money going into the bank, I am just taking money out, but how can I say ‘No, I mustn’t withdraw money’ if the children fall sick, or we need to eat?” she asks. “I can’t buy red meat. I don’t buy sausages anymore. Or Tastic rice. I just buy the basics,” she says, longing for the time when her husband would take the family to a fast-food chicken outlet on payday. “We would get a six-piece meal,” she remembers. “Whatever drinks we wanted — and ice cream for Babalo.” These are luxuries now (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, p. 19).

All articles are accompanied by a stylised and professional photo of the person who speaks, captured by the news photographer in an artistic fashion, in their actual house or surroundings. A theme of bleakness or simplicity is common to all these images. It is blatantly clear to the audience that this is an impoverished community with limited resources and means in a semi-rural area. Occasionally, the piece is also accompanied by the only photograph the family has of the person. In many cases, this is often an official identity document photo – an image that rarely does a person justice, nor does it invoke any specific memories related to family, personality or that person’s interests for those who remain.

Niren Tolsi and Paul Botes, the two journalists largely responsible for the collection of material and representation of the families, were able to interview more than forty sources for the supplement. Of these, 72% were female – most of whom were wives, or the mothers of the miner’s children. All had relied on the victims as their sole source of income. Parents of the miners (28%) and siblings (9%) also discuss how in some cases they have had to step

in to help the wives and children left behind. It is a sad testimony of social and historical inequalities that few of the women affected have education beyond high school, and some even less than that. They are aware of their predicament, and many discuss the unlikelihood of finding employment to be able to support their families themselves. There are references to official sources, such as the Farlam Commission of Inquiry or lawyers, but these are in passing and form part of the person's narrative, as opposed to being primary sources themselves.

This particular supplement makes for a powerful message. While many of the families are now financially destitute, there are no calls for charity or advocacy. Their narratives are presented simply "as is": a glimpse of the very real challenges they face. This is a clear example of the individual's subjectivity presented and accepted as fact. This requires the reader to enter into an understanding of that reality of, and with, the "other", and that state is not questioned as being anything but their truth. Arguably, this may present a case of subjective journalism that does not dilute the "facts", and is more informative, than a reinterpretation of events by a reporter striving to remain objective or detached. The source is quite literally the "consequence expert".

Reflections on "returning" to the source

In the introduction, "What Happened to the Families?" (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, p. 2), the two journalists write about their experience, and how their role changed given the different impetus and focus. This approach falls well within Steensen's (2011, this book) definition of byline subjectivity, and also mirrors the core principles of Ubuntuism. The individual is not presented merely as a source by the one who observes and reports, but rather both source and observer are active participants in creating an understanding of that community's experiences and concerns.

The supplement starts with an explanation of what motivated Tolsi to request the assignment after attending one of the funerals:

The resignation of those tasked with attending to the dead miners' families highlighted the vulnerability of the families and their communities. It became important to understand the consequences of the Marikana killings on families and communities that were already marginalised and impoverished (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, p. 2).

There is thus an explicit intention to shift away from more conventional news gathering practices, to one that resonates with a conscious decision to use one's own voice or communication channels to contribute to a group's well-being or welfare (as described in the previous section). The two journalists speak of "documenting" experiences in an effort to "move away from mainstream media's snapshot pictures and easy headlines" that "requires being embedded in space and subject" (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, s. 2). This is a sentiment that almost embodies notions of the social responsibility model inherent in Ubuntuism, as is recognised in the statement: "We subscribe to a belief that journalism should be thoughtful, responsive, empathetic and relevant".

They note that the type of news gathering practices used for this media coverage is a "slow journalism". This time reference is in part due to: the sensitive nature of the conversations that needed to be handled delicately; that fact that interviewing all members of the surviving families is itself time-consuming; the poor infrastructure that made access difficult; as well as the need to allow time for reflection and contemplation when preparing the stories for publication. *City Press* reporter Lucas Ledwaba experienced similar infrastructure challenges when collecting the information for the *Faces of Marikana* website, and in fact, was unable to meet with some of them due to poor road conditions in rural areas. He posted a short video⁵ on YouTube highlighting the challenge of reaching one family in Lesotho.⁶ It is clear that there are both physical obstacles to information gathering in remote communities, as well as the journalistic practice challenges required for the profession to approach news about marginalised communities differently. These aspects should certainly be included in educational programmes, and discussed as very real concerns that should be anticipated and planned for when reporting in countries with such varying environmental and socio-economic conditions.

The task took eight months to complete, a rarity in the contemporary 24-hour news cycle:

It involves driving long distances into the deep recesses of rural South Africa — and getting lost, often. It has meant navigating the roles of traditionalism and patriarchy

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8JKEo5p9Bs>

6 Marikana is approximately an eight hour drive from Lesotho, which also demonstrates how far from home some of the miners had to travel to find work.

involved in a community deciding who gets to tell what stories, and in how grief is confronted. It has meant encountering the indomitable spirit of South African women often (Tolsi & Botes, 2013, p. 2).

Time is always an interesting component in contemporary news production. There is an inherent tension when it is discussed: one needs time to do due diligence when gathering information at a moment in history when time is no longer deemed a relevant factor to the audience due to instantaneous delivery mechanisms. There is some disjuncture between the need to be well-informed, and the need to know now. The two are not always compatible. In many instances, it is not unusual to find several types of coverage running simultaneously on news sites. There is invariably live coverage which can include regular updates and social media messages, and then there are slightly more (although not necessarily always) analytical pieces that are being updated on a less frequent schedule (in some cases, daily or weekly). This supplement points to another level of time: reporting that has taken one year to gather in order to provide a richness and depth of understanding not otherwise possible or achievable in the instances mentioned above. In this case, time must be deemed an investment and treated as such. As supported by what the journalists themselves admit, it is only once they are given this important resource of time that they are able to reap the benefit of sharing local knowledge and insight.

It is significant that the last comment of the journalists refers to the very group absent from the original coverage: women. It is a sad irony that the very people omitted during the crisis are key to the discussion after. In truth, their prominence to the "story" has not changed. The chosen narrative frame alters their centrality in the coverage. This again emphasises the flaws in the original approach: sources essential to reflection and contemplation were rendered invisible to the audience. By providing these figures with the platform to express their concerns and the challenges they face, the decision to opt for collective labour action outside the trade unions becomes more comprehensible to those of us unfamiliar with the specific context. Once more it appears that journalists following non-conventional methods of gathering information for a news report are more likely to listen to a range of sources, rather than adhering to a predetermined media narrative (Wasserman & Hyde-Clarke, 2016).

Conclusions

Yet, despite this chapter demonstrating that this specific case presents an improved model in terms of building public understanding of a community through individual exposure, the reality is that such an approach is unlikely to be adopted across all news genres. Critics of more community or resource driven journalism argue that aside from notions of Ubuntuism being idealistic, there are also the economic realities of the media industry, the competitive nature of news services and personnel that often result in scoops and sensationalist reporting that will continue to support the more commercially viable frames currently in use. Very few media houses can afford the luxury of time and personnel to compile reports of this nature during a crisis. Crises by definition are fast paced and sensitive to escalating factors. However, a good counterargument is that crises rarely appear from nowhere. Wildcat strikes are a common phenomenon in South Africa, and often affect the mining sector. As such, national news agencies should have large archives of information devoted to this subject, and to the communities involved. It would only behove agencies if they had better contacts and cultural knowledge of the communities affected. A similar solution has been suggested for conflict situations by those advocating for peace journalism in South African news (Hyde-Clarke, 2012; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012), the creation and maintenance of a “living” folder of source information may allow for better informed publics less likely to support conflict as a solution. It could be drawn on, as a situation starts to escalate towards a crisis. It should not be left to journalists to improve community relations after the crisis has occurred. It should be an ongoing endeavour.

In the end, we are left with more questions than answers. Does this case provide evidence that there is space for more reflective reporting in news media that is not the “exception” after a crisis, nor is relegated to opinion journalism spaces such as editorials or columns? Alternatively, does this case merely emphasise the need for more in-depth investigative journalism (as suggested by Duncan 2013), one that is compatible with the Ubuntu ethic?

Perhaps this case demonstrates that there is an interest amongst the media to explore alternatives to existing practices. Clearly, there should be an ability and flexibility of journalists to shift between different styles and formats to elicit different meanings. This suggests a reflexive journalist, one who has developed the necessary competencies to distinguish between groups and

group interests, and government policies or national patterns – and has the authority or institutional support to do so.

For the purposes of this chapter, this intent to change practices can be extended to describe and justify a “journalism of returning”: returning to substantiated investigative practices; returning to a community to understand it better in order to represent it better; returning to a crisis after a time of reflection and contemplation in order to avoid returning when another crisis occurs; and returning to the norms and values that are the core of social responsibility in the media. This returning to better understanding and representing a community or collective sits at the heart of the Ubuntu ethic. It suggests that while the journalist may stand *apart* from that community in terms of their own affiliations and interests, they must to some extent “expose” themselves as reflexive individuals to become *a part of it* to better serve, or at least, report its needs or reality. As is suggested in a number of chapters in this book, the journalist becomes the bridge between that community and the greater society – not at all a neutral space but an intentional point of crossing.

This argument does not necessarily point towards media advocacy or activism. Instead, it suggests that there is a need for a greater awareness of the responsibility inherent in the choice of content and delivery used in news reports. Journalists may not “speak” as a source, but they knowingly affect, or “have a voice” through their choice of sources, narrative or frame. The danger is that too often it appears that news reports follow patterns of broad generalisation and categorisation that tend to have a leaning towards the dramatic or conflictual to improve ratings while driving down costs. There is little evidence of mindfulness or contemplation in that pattern. If there is to be a shift in how collectives are represented through individuals, particularly in terms of how local communities are covered by national journalists, then there should be a correlated shift in the belief and assumptions of what constitutes the role of the media in society in relation to the communities it serves. A journalism of “returning” suggests better allocation of resources, time and some degree of critical immersion – but most importantly, “returning” requires critical contemplation and reflection.

References

- Alexander, P., Sinwell, L., Lekgowa, T., Mmope, B., & Xezwi, B. (2012). *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana.

- Blaagaard, B. (2013). Shifting Boundaries: Objectivity, Citizen Journalism and Tomorrow's Journalists. *Journalism*, 14 (8), 1076-1090.
- Broersma, M. (2010). The Unbearable Limitations of Journalism. *The International Communication Gazette*, 72 (1), 21-33.
- Chasi, C., & Omarjee, N. (2014). It begins with you? An ubuntu-centred critique of a social marketing campaign on HIV and AIDS. *Critical Arts* 28 (2), 229-246.
- City Press, & Media24 Investigations. (2012, September 10). *Multimedia - South Africa - Faces of Marikana*. Retrieved from News24.com: <http://www.news24.com/Multimedia/South-Africa/Faces-of-Marikana-20120910>
- City Press, & Media24 Investigations. (2012, September 9). *The Faces of Marikana*. Retrieved from New24.com: <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/The-faces-of-Marikana-Part-I-20150429>
- Duncan, J. (2013). South African Journalism and the Marikana Massacre: A case study of an editorial failure. *The Political Economy of Communication*, 1 (2), 65-88.
- Fourie, P. (2008). Ubuntuism as a Framework for South African Media Practice and Performance: Can it work? *Communicatio* 34 (1), 53-79.
- Gerbner, G. (1972). Violence in Television Drama: Trends and Symbolic Functions. In G. Cornstock, & E. Rubinstein, *Television and Social Behaviour, Vol.1* (pp. 28-187). Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.
- Harbers, F., & Broersma, M. (2014). Between Engagement and Ironic Ambiguity: Mediating Subjectivity in Narrative Journalism. *Journalism*, 15 (5), 639-654.
- Hayem, J. (2015). Marikana: Analysing Miners' Subjectivity and the Crisis of Representation. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-15.
- Hyde-Clarke, N. (2012). Peace Journalism in South Africa: A Theoretical Discussion. *Communicare Special Edition*, 37(1), 23-26.
- Lynch, J., & McGoldrick, A. (2012). Reframing South African TV News as Peace Journalism: Interim findings from a field experiment. *Communicare*, 31(2), 78-98.
- Metz, T. (2007). Towards an African Theory. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 (3), 321-341.
- Metz, T. (2015). African Ethics and Journalism Ethics: News and opinion in light of Ubuntu. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 30 (2), 74-90.
- Muhlmann, G. (2008). *A Political History of Journalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Rodny-Gumede, Y. (2015). Coverage of Marikana: War and conflict, and the case for peace journalism. *Social Dynamics*, 41 (2), 359-374.
- Rodny-Gumede, Y. (2015b). An Assessment of the Public Interest and Ideas of the Public in South Africa and the Adoption of Ubuntu Journalism. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 30 (2), 109-124.
- Schudson, M. (2002). The News Media as Political Institutions. *Annual Review of Political Sciences*, 5, 249-269.
- Skjerdal, T. (2012). The Three Alternative Journalisms of Africa. *The International Communication Gazette*, 74 (7), 636-654.

- Skovsgaard, M., Albaek, E., Bro, P., & de Vreese, C. (2012). A Reality Check: How journalists' role perceptions impact their implementation of the objectivity norm. *Journalism*, 1-21.
- Steenen, S. (2011). The Featurisation of Journalism. What Feature Journalism Is, and How It Transforms as a Genre. *Nordic Review*, 32(2), 49-61.
- Tolsi, N., & Botes, P. (2013). *Marikana: Fate of the Families*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Mail & Guardian.
- Walton, M. (2014, October 22-24). *Pavement Internet and Digital Invisibility in the Marikana Massacre*. Retrieved from The 15th Annual Meeting of the Association of Internet Researchers: <http://spir.aoir.org>
- Wasserman, H. (2013). The Language of Listening. *Rhodes Journalism Review*, 111-113.
- Wasserman, H., & Hyde-Clarke, N. (2016). Crisis Communication Research in South Africa. In A. Schwartz, M. Seeger, & C. Auer, *The Handbook of International Crisis Communication Research* (pp. 251-258). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.