IF IT WASN'T FOR BLOGS, PODCASTS, AND TWITTER I'D NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON...
CHANGING NEWSROOMS, SAME SELF-CENSORSHIP

Is it as bad as we think it is?
AIMS

1) How has social media and digital technology changed the newsroom landscape?

2) What are the challenges newsrooms are now facing?

3) Have these changes opened up opportunities for unintended shifts in the news agenda?
METHODS

• Desktop research

• Interviews
  • 3 newsrooms

• Media content analysis
  • Two specific events over seven-month period in 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSROOM A</th>
<th>NEWSROOM B</th>
<th>NEWSROOM C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital unit within larger organisation</td>
<td>Print and digital newspaper</td>
<td>Digital newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly funded</td>
<td>Privately funded</td>
<td>Independently funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on ‘accuracy’</td>
<td>Emphasis on ‘impact’</td>
<td>Emphasis on ‘people’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS

All newsrooms use social media and digital tech (obviously)

• News gathering process
• Accelerated news cycle
• More “noise”
• Different forms of storytelling
• Merger of traditional roles
• Lose control over what is ‘sent’
• Impact on revenue generation

So much more information to sift through

Spread of misinformation

Less time to verify facts and sources

More responsibility per journalist

Invisible impact of digital platforms
Impact of revenue generation

NEWSROOM A
Publicly funded
“..money isn’t the issue. Our role is to inform..”
“The website is our priority. We will never be a social media first operation..”

NEWSROOM B
Privately funded
“..technology isn’t the constraint. Resources are..”
“What will get the most likes? Retweets? Shares?”

NEWSROOM C
Independently funded
“funding has freed us from some of the other editorial constraints”
“the audience want to engage in the way they want to engage”

Emphasis placed on social media and digital technology
DATA ANALYSIS

- Same seven-month period: May–August 2015
- 20 South African media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARIKANA COMMISSION OF INQUIRY</th>
<th>XENOPHOBIA ATTACKS IN 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>417 number of articles</td>
<td>459 number of articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1571 quotes in total</td>
<td>1854 quotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of 3.76 quotes her article</td>
<td>Average of 4.03 quotes per article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marikana Commission: Sources

Percentage of quotes (%)

- National Government: 38.37%
- Political Parties: 31.39%
- Justice System: 13.77%
- Unions: 5.00%
- Professionals: 3.07%
- Experts: 2.18%
- Other: 6.21%

24 quotes (of 1561) were citizens
Marikana Commission: Sources (cont.)

[Bar chart showing the percentage distribution of males, females, and other categories for different ethnic groups.]

- Black: 76 (Male 8, Female 9, Unknown 2, Coloured 2, Other 1)
- White: 9 (Male 2, Female 1, Unknown 1, Coloured 1, Other 0)
- Unknown: 2 (Male 1, Female 1, Other 0)
- Coloured: 1 (Male 0, Female 0, Other 0)
- Other: 0 (Male 0, Female 0, Other 0)
Xenophobia: Sources

111 quotes (of 1845) were citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage of Quotes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Government</td>
<td>27.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>17.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>15.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice System</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Xenophobia: Sources (cont.)

The graph above shows the percentage of sources (%), broken down by gender and race. The source breakdown includes:

- Male
- Female
- Other: Transgender, Transsexual

The graph indicates:

- **Black**: Male sources are significantly higher than female sources, with a percentage of over 70%.
- **White**, **Coloured**, **Indian**, and **Other**: The percentages for these categories are very low, with the majority being male.
WHAT DO WE SEE?

Increasing number of sources per article = GOOD

BUT

still dominated by voices of elite and powerful: political parties, government, men
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHIFTS

Similar pressures to old newsrooms:

1) Editorial policies: ‘Accuracy’ vs. ‘breaking stories’

2) Funding:
   • Newsroom A: public funding - susceptible to political influence
   • Newsroom B: private funding - susceptible to commercial and social
   • Newsroom C: independent funding - susceptible to social

Different pressures:

1) Audience now have a say in news they want:
   • immediacy, quicker turn-around
   • Social media shaping the agenda?

2) Invisible gatekeeper: digital platform and their algorithms shape how and when news is received by the consumer
Technology offers extreme value to newsrooms

Need to be aware of some of the setbacks it offers (e.g. social media dependency)

Many issues are perpetuated in this new system - could reflect the higher systemic level transformation is required
Full report to be released soon

For more information, contact:
Sarah Findlay
Project coordinator: Policy and Quality Unit
sarahf@mma.org.za
(011) 788-1278