

Representation of the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry: an analysis of the British Press coverage of the debate that arose from the scandal

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## Abstract

The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal can be described as one of the biggest media scandals in contemporary times. The scandal, which resulted in the closure of a newspaper that had existed for 168 years, led to the setting up of the Leveson Inquiry and stirred up a debate on the role journalism plays and is expected to play in a democratic society. This thesis examines the representation of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. My central research question is “how did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?”

Most of the arguments on the media’s role in a democratic society are premised on normative theories of the press. The normative theories explored in this study are the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory and the ideology of social democracy. The framework for my analysis includes the notion of paradigm repair and the public sphere concept. Though numerous studies have been carried out on how the media represent debates on diverse areas of policy, there is still a dearth of scholarly literature on how the press cover debates on themselves. This study fills that gap using content analysis and some principles from critical discourse analyses.

My study sample comprises news articles on the debate that followed the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal in six of the top ten British national newspapers - *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror* and *Sun*; and covers the period from the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 (when hearing began at the Leveson Inquiry) to the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 (the aftermath of the Privy Council’s approval of a royal charter on press regulation). This two-year period falls within the time frame when media coverage of the journalism debate was at its peak. Based on my findings, I argue that for democracy to thrive, the public needs to play a greater and more pragmatic role in ensuring a democratic public sphere.

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## **Section 1: Introduction and literature review**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal turned the British political-media complex upside down. Newspaper editors, media owners, journalists, private investigators and even the police were placed in the spotlight for their malpractice. The phone hacking scandal came to light in 2005 when some staff of the *News of the World* were accused of hacking the phones of members of the British Royal Family (Keeble and Mair 2012, p.9; Davies 2014). The police report on investigations carried out between 2005 and 2007 declared that the crime was perpetrated by one “rogue” reporter, royal editor, Clive Goodman, and a private detective, Glen Mulcaire (Brock 2012, pp.171-172; Keeble and Mair 2012, pp.10-11; Jones and Norton 2014, pp.147-148). The report concluded that the victims were a handful of public figures (Keeble and Mair 2012, p.9; Lewis 2013, p.72; Davies 2014).

However, further investigations in 2011 revealed that not only was phone hacking widespread at the *News of the World* but that bribes were paid to police for information, and the voicemails of crime victims and their relations were intercepted in search of scoops (Christopher 2012, p.114; Keeble and Mair 2012, p.9; Davies 2014). The list of identified and alleged victims of the phone hacking contained more than four thousand names (Christopher 2012, p.114; Keeble and Mair 2012, p.14) including a murdered school girl, 13-year-old Amanda Jane “Milly” Dowler; victims of the July 7 (2005) London bombings and relatives of deceased British soldiers (Keeble and Mair 2012, pp.9-12; Davies 2014; Marsh and Melville 2014, p.147). The case of hacking into the phone of the murdered school girl, in particular, resulted in public outcry against the *News of the World*. News on the phone hacking scandal flooded front pages and headlines of the media worldwide; advertisers withdrew patronage from the newspaper and on the 7th of July 2011, the company announced the closure of the *News of the World*. The newspaper published its last edition on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 with the caption “Thank you and Good

Bye”, bringing to an end its one hundred and sixty-eight years of publication (Keeble and Mair 2012, p.12; Davies 2014).

The controversy did not end with the closure of the *News of the World* (also referred to as *NoTW* in this study). By 2014, there had been more than one hundred arrests linked to the scandal; 63 of them journalists, including Rebekah Brooks, the former chief executive of News International and Andy Coulson, a former *NoTW* editor who became the then Prime Minister, David Cameron’s spokesperson after his resignation from the newspaper during the first phase of investigations into the scandal (*BBC News* 2012; Ponsford 2014, n.p.). Andy Coulson resigned from his position as David Cameron’s spokesperson in the heat of the second phase of the controversy. He was among those who received jail sentences for their role in the scandal, while Rebekah Brooks and a few others were found not guilty (Davies 2014; *BBC News* 2014b; Ponsford 2014, n.p.).

Other casualties of the scandal include a number of high profile resignations. Among them were two top police officers, Sir Paul Stephenson who was the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and John Yates, the then Assistant Commissioner in charge of specialist operations. Both resigned from their duties because of their role, or lack of it, in the investigation of the scandal (Christopher 2012, pp.112-144; Davies 2014). News International (now News UK as part of a rebranding after the scandal - *BBC News* 2013b), a subsidiary of News Corporation and parent company to the *News of the World*, spent over £10 million for civil litigation settlement of claims from victims of the phone hacking, with unconfirmed reports of more than £100 million set aside for the settlement of more civil litigation actions (Hickman and Cusick 2011, n.p; Dean 2012, pp.437-438; Davies 2014). In the midst of the scandal, News Corporation (as then constituted) had to withdraw its bid for the complete takeover of BskyB (Keeble and Mair 2012, p.12). However, the bid was relaunched in 2017, through Rupert Murdoch’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox company (*Guardian* 2016b.; King 2016, n.p.). The BskyB bid will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

There were further allegations as well as confirmations that journalists from other newspapers (including papers in the Trinity Mirror group) were involved in phone

hacking and other unwholesome journalistic practices (Keeble and Mair 2012, p.13; Trinity Mirror 2015). It became clear early in the controversy that this was not just about the *News of the World* but the press industry. Very importantly, this scandal led to the setting up of the Leveson Inquiry and stirred up a debate on press standards. Much of the discussion centred on how the press should be regulated, if at all. A flurry of media attention presented the ensuing debate from different perspectives.

This study aims to analyse the media coverage of the debate on press reform that ensued from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. My key interest is how the media cover themselves and the consequences of their manner of coverage on democracy. The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry provided a veritable opportunity for an investigation into how the media cover themselves. I was concerned to find out whether the press served as a democratic public sphere during its coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. My research question is, therefore, 'How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?'. The way the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal debate was covered by the press is, therefore, taken as representative of how the British press cover themselves.

The body of literature on the media coverage of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry is still in its early stages. Much of what has been written is on the debate itself, and not on how it was covered by the press. There is still a dearth of scholarly literature on how this debate was covered by the press. At the time of this study, very little research had been done on the media coverage of this debate beyond the stage of the Leveson Inquiry. While studies that covered the debate up to that point have been very useful, so much has happened after the inquiry that is worth studying – Sir Brian Leveson has presented his report; the press presented their own Royal Charter which was rejected; the government has set up the Royal Charter on press regulation which much of the press rejected and they have set up their own IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation), etc. This study contributes to the body of literature on the

phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry by providing an in-depth and up-to-date analysis of the coverage of the debate. It expands existing knowledge on metajournalistic discourse (discourse about discourse on journalism) and makes available statistical data to back up arguments on how the media cover themselves.

The study of how the media cover themselves is important because of the susceptibility of the media to abuse their gatekeeping powers and the adverse effect this could have on democracy. Other institutions in society have little or no say on what or how much about them is published by the press. The situation is different for the press because since they have the power to receive and disseminate information, they can choose what information about themselves is made public, if any. This gatekeeping power of journalism gives the institution enormous powers which are prone to abuse when the media cover themselves.

The news media can use their gatekeeping and agenda-setting powers (explained in chapter 2) to influence decisions and opinion in favour of their position in a debate. They can also limit the information available in the 'free marketplace of ideas' by keeping silent on issues they do not wish discussed in a debate. This can reduce the information available in the public sphere (see chapter 2) from which policymakers can draw to make decisions about journalism. This can result in poor policy decisions on such a vital institution as journalism, which is widely believed to have the powers to make or mar democracy through its control of information. One way to sustain democracy is to hold the powerful in society to account. The media are powerful and as such should be held to account through regular analyses of how they cover themselves.

The study of media coverage of the press can serve as a media accountability system by stimulating the media to cover themselves based on democratic principles. Such studies can identify when the media are taking advantage of their power to control information, and make recommendations accordingly. It can equip the public with the knowledge of how the media cover themselves so that they know how to 'sift the chaff from the wheat' when they consume journalistic metadiscourse. The study of journalistic metadiscourse

also helps to highlight the importance of press coverage of media issues and the consequences the manner of coverage could have for democracy. Such consequences could range from denying some stakeholders access to public debates about press reform to the emergence of weak media policies that cannot guarantee a democratic press. This study investigates these, amongst others, in the coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. This debate is also referred to in this study as the press reform or media policy debate.

Many of the arguments in the press reform debate were based on lay and specialist normative theories of the press. This can be attributed to the fact that the debate was about press standards and normative theory relates to expectations on how the media ought to behave in order to be useful to society (McQuail 2010, p.14; Baran and Davies 2009, p.15). Consequently, the theoretical framework for my analysis will include normative theories of the press. Since Britain like most Western nations functions as a liberal democracy, my analysis of the debate is based on liberal ideologies of democracy, specifically, the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory and the social democratic theory (Siebert et al. 1956; McQuail 2010; Freedman 2014; Pickard 2015; Schlosberg 2017). These theories are relevant to this study on two levels: firstly, media coverage in Western democracies are often guided by these ideologies; secondly, previous studies show that arguments in media policy debates have drawn from these two ideologies (Harvey 2005; Pickard 2015).

Several scholars agree that journalism plays a vital role in the sustenance of democracy (McNair 2000; Franklin 2004, Hackett 2005; Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3; Herman and Chomsky 2008; Schudson 2008). To investigate whether the press fulfilled its democratic function (see chapter 2) in the coverage of the press reform and the extent to which it did this, if at all, I engage with the public sphere concept (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1990; 1992). The public sphere concept, as applied in this study, relates to the normative expectation that the media ought to be a democratic public sphere where all stakeholders of a debate can contribute to that debates, irrespective of their status (Habermas 1989). Normatively, that would require the press to give proportionate access to various

stakeholders in a debate; bring alternative views to the public sphere for discussion; and encourage deliberations including constructive criticism, amongst others. The question is 'do the media do these when they cover themselves?'

Many scholars say that has not been the case (Berkowitz 2000; Cecil 2002; Berger 2008; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). Previous studies on metajournalistic discourse pointed out that media coverage of the press is often characterised by certain paradigm repair strategies (Cecil 2002; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). The term, paradigm repair was used by Bennet et al. (1985) to describe "how journalistic self-criticism protects existing paradigms rather than confronts entrenched deficiencies and contradictions" (cited in Carlson 2015, p.4). The notion of paradigm repair has been employed by previous scholars to examine how the press cover themselves in relation to objectivity (Reese 1990; 1997); fabrications (Hindman 2005; Carlson 2009); reporting errors (Cecil 2002); paparazzi (Berkowitz 2000; Bishop 1999), scapegoating (Berger 2008); media scandal (Carlson and Berkowitz 2014) and press standards (Thomas and Finneman 2014).

Studies on journalistic metadiscourse identified 4 strategies employed by the media to protect an existing paradigm. They include the paradigm strategies of 'threat to the paradigm' or 'catastrophization', self-assertion also known as self-affirmation, minimization and individualization or localization (Reese 1990; Bishop 1999; Berkowitz 2000; Cecil 2002; Hindman 2005; Berger 2008; Carlson 2009; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). My investigation into how the press covered the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry sought to see if these strategies were employed in the coverage of the press reform debate. In summary, the theoretical framework for this study consists of the neoliberal variant of the Libertarian theory, the social democratic theory, the concept of the public sphere and the notion of paradigm repair.

The methodological approach used for this study is content analysis. It will be complemented with some principles drawn from Norman Fairclough's critical discourse

analysis. This study examines media coverage of the debate in six of the top ten British national newspapers (based on combined print and online readership figures for April 2011 to March 2012 – Source: NRS PADD 2012). The papers are *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror* and *Sun*. I decided to examine national newspapers because of their nationwide reach. Though an examination of other media platforms' coverage of the debate would be beneficial, I consider the newspaper a good starting point because of its place of significance in the debate (the scandal involved a national newspaper and the inquiry's focus was on the printed press). This research can be built upon in future studies in the form of a comparison between the printed press' coverage versus the broadcast or Web news coverage of this debate. The structure and approach of my research into the newspapers' coverage of the press reform are summarised in the next subsection.

## **1.1 Structure and approach to this study**

This thesis consists of nine chapters which are divided into two sections. Section one, consisting of Chapters 1 to 5, sets the foundation for the study. This section comprises this introductory chapter, three literature review chapters (Chapters 2-4) and one methods chapter (Chapter 5). Chapter 2, which follows this introductory chapter, reviews academic literature on normative theories of the press in a democratic society. The theories examined in this chapter are the libertarian theory along with its social responsibility and neoliberal variants, the social democratic theory, and the concept of the public sphere. Reviewing these theories gives us insight into different perspectives on how the press functions and ought to function in a democratic society. It covers issues such as the meaning and importance of democracy, the role of the press in a democratic society, the definitions of press freedom and the role of the media as a democratic public sphere. Chapter 3 examines normative theories of the press in relation to metajournalistic discourse. It examines the terms metacoverage, metajournalistic discourse and journalistic metadiscourse and reviews literature on the use of paradigm repair strategies in journalistic metadiscourse. This provides the framework for the

analysis of how paradigm repair strategies were used in the press coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal.

Chapter 4 provides background information on the Leveson Inquiry and key subjects of the press reform debate. The aim is to equip the reader with the basic knowledge needed to comprehend arguments relating to these issues in Chapters 6 to 9. Chapter 4 also provides a synopsis of previous literature on the Leveson Inquiry and the phone hacking scandal. This helps to demonstrate my study's contribution to the broad literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry, the press reform debate and journalistic metadiscourse. Chapter 5, which is the last chapter in section one, explains the methods used to arrive at my findings. Content analysis is supplemented by critical discourse analysis to provide comprehensive and valid answers to my research questions. This leads to Section 2 where the literature reviewed in Section 1 serves as the framework for the analysis of my findings.

The findings and discussion section consists of four chapters (Chapters 6-9). Chapter 6 discusses two of the five paradigm repair strategies examined in this study: the strategies of 'historicization' and 'threat to the paradigm'. This chapter reveals how these strategies were used in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate. Chapter 7 discusses how the strategies of individualization, self-assertion and minimization were utilised in the media policy debate. It also shows how blame was attributed for press bad behaviour in the journalistic metadiscourse. Chapter 8 shows how sources were distributed in the coverage of the media policy debate. In it, I discuss my findings on the hierarchy of importance accorded different issues of concern in the debate and the alternative views that emerged in the journalistic metadiscourse. The last Chapter (Chapter 9), highlights the key arguments and findings of this study and suggests possible areas of future investigation into how the media cover themselves.



## Chapter 2: Media Representation, Democracy and the Public Sphere

### Introduction

This chapter presents some of the theories and perspectives that will form the framework for this study. The aim of this study, as earlier stated, is to examine how the British press covered the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry; and the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy. Though my key interest is on how the press cover themselves; my primary concern is to find out whether the British press served as a democratic public sphere during their coverage of the press reform debate (see more on democratic public sphere later in this chapter). This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the relationship between the media and democracy. This includes views about the media's relevance to modern-day society, the meaning of democracy as it applies to this study, and the importance of democracy. These will provide some of the background information needed to understand later arguments in this study on the role the media are expected to play in a democratic society.

Most arguments on the media's relationship with society are premised on normative theories of the press and democracy (Christians et al. 2009, p.5). Similarly, many of the arguments on the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry were based on lay and specialist normative theories of the press and democracy (see below). These arguments were mainly inspired by the idea that the media are entrusted with information power and how this power is used has consequences for democracy (Stromback 2005, p.335). Therefore, in the second part of this chapter, I examine normative theories on the role of the press in a democratic society. The normative theories relevant to, and thus employed in this study include the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory and the social democratic ideology. The concepts of pure libertarianism and social responsibility are examined to give background information on neoliberalism and the concept of social democracy (Siebert et al. 1956; McQuail 2010; Freedman 2014; Pickard 2015).

To provide a theoretical foundation for arguments relating to the media as a democratic public sphere, I explore relevant conceptualisations of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; 1990; Fraser 1990; 1992; Thompson 1995; Dahlgren 1995). Specifically, Habermas' (1989) concept of a central public sphere; Fraser's (1992) conceptualisation of multiple publics and Ornebring and Jonsson's (2004) application of Fraser's (1992) concept of multiple publics are reviewed in the coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. 'Journalism as an interpretive community', a concept put forward by Zelizer (1993) is expounded to show that in debates about their profession, the press can function as an interpretive community, multiple homogeneous publics and individual unique voices. I begin with a review of literature on the media's role in a democracy.

## **2.1 The media and democracy**

Though the word 'media' is a collective term for major mass communication channels like television, radio, newspapers and the internet (Negrine 1989, p.iv; Carpentier, 2006, p.48), the use of the word in this study will in most cases be limited to the printed press. In this study, more often than not, 'media' and 'press' will be used interchangeably to refer to newspapers. The media have become a very important part of contemporary human affairs (Christians et al. 2009, p.57; McQuail 2010, p.162). Information on a wide variety of subjects ranging from lifestyle to political issues can be accessed through the media. Top of the scale of the media's relevance to society is its role in the sustenance of democracy (Christians et al. 2009, p.55). It has been argued that democracy cannot survive in contemporary society without the news media (Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3).

There is a wide consensus that the media ought to carry out certain functions in a democratic society (McChesney 1999; McNair 2000; Franklin 2004; Hackett 2005; Herman and Chomsky 2008; Schudson 2008). Though the views of scholars on the extent to which they do and ought to do this vary, many agree that one of the media's role is to check on government to see that they are accountable to society (Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3). The media are also expected to serve as the communication link between the

public and political leaders, often acting as the voice of the people as well as advocate of the oppressed and less privileged. That is why any threat to responsible journalism is viewed by many as a threat to democracy (Carey 1997, pp.191-192; Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3). In fact, some have stretched this to the point of arguing that democracy and the media are mutually dependent, that one cannot survive without the other (Carey 1997, pp.191-192; Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3; Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.3).

Several scholars posit that what legitimates the media is their role in the sustenance of democracy (Herman and Chomsky 2008; McNair 2000; Franklin 2004b, Hackett 2005; Schudson 2008). This view is, however, not without contestation. Some analysts have described the claim as both a “stereotype and a myth” (Merrill 2000; Graber 2003). The latter argument may hold water when viewed against the background that the media and indeed journalism exist in nations that do not practice democracy. In such nations, the media serve as an instrument of propaganda (Scammell 2000) and not as an agent of democracy. However, in today’s liberal democracies, the media play a vital role in the growth and sustenance of democracy.

The assertion by some analysts that democracy thrived in ancient Athens without the mass media and as such the mass media are not integral to the sustenance of democracy fails to take into consideration the fact that the population of ancient Athens was much smaller than the population seen in cities in most national democracies today (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2013). The electorate consisted of approximately 40,000 voters at its highest point (Pericles, cited in Dahl 1998, p.39; Finley 1973, pp.18-19, cited in Held 2006, p.18). This is very small when compared with modern democracies. For instance, in 2017, the population of India was about 1.3 billion and that of the United Kingdom, about 66 million (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division - World Population Prospects. The 2017 Revision, p.21). While small democracies like that of ancient Athens can survive without the mass media, it would be foolhardy to expect today’s large national democracies to function effectively without the media (Garnham 1992, p.365; Sproule 1997, p.90). Since, democracy is a broad term, it is important to clarify the type of democracy this study is concerned with. The next

subsection explains the type of democracy focussed on, in this study - the maximalist approach to democracy.

### **2.1.1 Democracy: The maximalist approach**

There are diverse definitions of democracy yet two major divides: the minimalist and maximalist definitions (Lipset and Lakin 2004, pp.19-22). While the minimalist definition focusses on democracy as a system in which adult citizens of a community have the right to vote in a leader of their choice (Lipset and Lakin 2004, p.19; Dahl 1971, cited in Chan 2002, p.10; Schumpeter 1942, cited in Saxer 2013, p.5), the maximalist definition goes beyond the political sphere to include social and economic values, such as freedom to receive and give information, freedom of association, equal opportunities and press freedom (Bowles and Gintis 1986, cited in Chan 2002, p.10; Lipset and Lakin 2004, p.20; Diamond 1999, cited in Ewald 2013, p.52; Ewald 2013, p.52). The maximalist approach is based on the idea that all aspects of society should be run democratically. In other words, democracy can be practiced in different domains of life, such as in the media, business, non-governmental organisations, meetings, families and schools.

Unlike the minimalist approach to democracy, which is based on the elitist view of Schumpeter (1943) where democracy is confined to an elite group voted into power by the people, maximalists see democracy as a system of government in which power rests with the populace, not only their right to vote in a leader of their choice but also their right to equal participation in public debates through which they could influence decisions that affect them (Cheema 2005, p.4; Held 2006, cited in Saxer 2013, p.5). As earlier stated, this study is concerned with the maximalist approach to democracy. Therefore, for this study, the definition of democracy as “governance by the people, for the people and of the people” (Lincoln [1863] 2009; Gunther and Mughan, cited in Christians et al. 2009, p.25), is interpreted as the ability of ‘the people’ (citizens) to take part in governance, not only by voting in the right leader, but also by taking part in public debates that can influence policy decisions (Held. 2006, p.1; Urbinati and Warren 2008, p.395; Gunther and Mughan, cited in Christians et al. 2009, p.25). In line with the

maximalist conception of democracy, this study evaluates the extent to which the coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal was democratic, if at all. My decision to assess democracy in media coverage is predicated on the idea that democracy is the best form of government (Dahl et al. 2003, p.29) and the fact that the media have the power to make or mar democracy. The view that democracy is the best form of government has been contested by some scholars. The following subsection examines some contestations about the importance of democracy. The aim is to make clear the reason for this study's focus on democracy.

### **2.1.2 Much ado about democracy**

Some philosophers like Plato (cited in Dahl et al., 2003) and Aristotle in his *The Politics* (2010 [335-323 BC]) have questioned the endorsement of democracy as the ideal form of rule. Towing this line, contemporary scholars like Merrill (2000), Graber (2003) and Barry (2011) argue that democracy is not necessarily the ideal type of government but that “every country must develop in its own way and provide a political system that best reflects the realities of its own culture” (Merrill 2000, pp.197-199). However, several empirical studies have identified democracy as a popular form of government (Dahl 1989; Mishler and Rose 1999; Norris 1999; Dahl et al. 2003; Dalton 2006; Ober 2008; Larry et al. 2013). Dahl et al. (2003, p.29) are among scholars who argue that democracy is “the best form of government”. Though the authors admit that “democracy is not an unmitigated blessing”, they contend that the advantages of democracy far outweigh its shortfalls. According to Dahl et al., democracy is important because it promotes human rights and helps to check enslavement (Ibid). Their argument is that in an age where freedom of the individual to speak, be informed, worship, and publish are recognised as universal human rights, democracy promotes freedom as no feasible alternative can (Dahl 1989, pp.88-89).

In line with this perspective, former UK Prime Minister, Winston Churchill said "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (Mishler and Rose 1999, cited in Richard et al. 2009, p.23).

What is interesting is that despite arguments for and against democracy, it is widely acknowledged that democracy has emerged the choice system of government in the 21st century (Orwell 1957, p.149; Held 2006, p.1; Christians et al. 2009, p.95; Frost 2007, p.39). Countries with strikingly different political systems have all claimed to be democratic (Held 1996, p.1; Manza and Uggen 2006, pp.17-18).

It is worthy of note, however, that there is a great difference between actual democracy and ideal democracy (Sartori 1987, pp.7-8; Dahl 1998, p.31). Actual democracy refers to the definite way democracy is practiced in a specific group while ideal democracy is normative. It is normative in the sense that it relates to expectations of how democracy ought to be. This may differ to some extent from the practice of democracy in different communities. Some scholars have argued that going by the definitions of democracy, ideal democracy is impracticable (Sartori 1987, p.8; Bobbio and Bellamy 1987, p.18; Wolff 2013a, p.11). Does this imply that evaluating media coverage based on normative theories of the press in a democracy is asking too much of the media? The following subsection attempts to answer this question by reviewing relevant literature on normative theories of the press in a democratic society.

## **2.2 Normative theories of the press**

Normative theories relate to expectations from citizens on how the media ought to operate in order to achieve or maintain prevailing social values (Baran and Davis 2009, p.15; McQuail, 2010. p.14). The media have been entrusted with the task of controlling information, a role which is integral to the success of any democracy. Scholars argue that since the public has entrusted this power to the media, with which it can call the powerful to account, set the agenda of public discourse and perhaps shape public opinion, the public has the right to make some demands of the media - a kind of implicit contractual agreement (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2003, pp.51-52; McQuail, 2003, p.7; Entman, 2004, p.62).

Normative theories make allowances for journalism to be analysed based on moral obligations. Many scholars accept that the overarching moral obligation of the press is to protect democracy (Carey 1997, p.332, cited in Schudson 2008, p.11). Consequently, normative theories of the press provide foundations for arguments on how the media can sustain democracy. Some analysts contend that normative theories promote ideals that are not achievable and as such ought to be abandoned (Hallin and Mancini 2004), but as Hardy (2008, pp.6-15) observed, empirical data from investigations into the media's role in society are often laden with normative values and as such normative theory should rightly form the framework for such investigations. As with democratic ideals, normative theories of the press may not be one hundred per cent achievable but they serve as ideal models for people to aspire to in order to achieve acceptable press standards (Wolff 2013b, p.11).

Siebert et al.'s (1956) four theories of the press are largely accepted as the maiden academic attempt at providing normative theories of the press. Siebert et al. (1956) advanced four theories namely the authoritarian, the Soviet communist, the libertarian and the social responsibility theories. These "theories" have come under heavy criticism due to their inconsistent conceptual framework, inability to provide acceptable universal press theories and failure to contain the diversity of media forms (Nerone et al. 1995; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Yin, 2008; McQuail, 2010). Despite these shortcomings, Siebert et al.'s (1956) normative models, and particularly their libertarian theory and its social responsibility variant, are still very much applicable to the study of the press in Western nations like Britain (Nerone et al. 1995. p.19; Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p.2; McQuail, 2010, p.176).

### **2.2.1 Libertarianism and social responsibility**

Arguments during debates on media policy are often premised on theories of the press. In Western democracies, such as Britain, participants in media policy debates (including the press, advocates of press freedom, policymakers, victims of press abuse, and campaigners for such victims, amongst others) propagate ideologies originating from the

libertarian theory and its social responsibility variant (Siebert et al. 1956; McQuail 2010; Pickard 2015). Though the libertarian theory and its social responsibility variant have been modified over the years, studying them in their pure forms will help us understand and identify them during debates about press reform. Much of the commercial press in Britain propagate ideas about media policy that draw from the libertarian theory (Nerone et al. 1995; Christians et al. 2009; Curran and Seaton 2010; Pickard 2015).

The libertarian theory advocates that the press should be a marketplace of ideas where diverse views can be aired without fear of suppression or oppression (Siebert et al. 1956, p.70). It posits that the press should be a medium through which arguments, opinions and evidences are presented to the public on the basis of which they can check on the powerful and make informed decisions (Siebert et al., 1956, p.3). The libertarian theory argues that the press should be autonomous and free from every form of state regulation because a state-regulated press cannot call the government to account (Siebert et al. 1956; Scammell 2000). A state-regulated press, it contends, will hamper efforts to expose corrupt politicians. It will serve as a clog in the wheel of journalists' efforts to equip the public with the information they need to contribute intelligently to public debates, vote-in good leadership, remove bad leadership and make informed decisions on other areas of life.

Libertarian theory warns that journalism cannot function as the watchdog of society without press autonomy. The theory posits that press accountability will be provided for by the media market. It argues that competition to gain readership will motivate the press to represent a wide range of views and perspectives in society (Hayek 1944, p.19, p.76; Siebert et al. 1956, p.71; Nerone et al. 1995, pp.18-19; Scammell 2000, p. xxxiii; McQuail 2010, p.176). This perspective assumes an active audience/readership whose patronage or withdrawal of patronage will compel publishers to serve the interest of the public (Biagi 2014, p.348). Though the libertarian theory claims to protect democracy through its watchdog and information roles, the theory has been criticised by several analysts for having negative implications for democracy (Picard 1985; Curran and Seaton 2010; Glasser 1986, p.93, cited in McQuail 2010, p.176; Pickard 2015).



Christened 'negative freedom' because of its resistance to state intervention (Picard 1985, p.35; Hocking 1947, cited in McQuail 2002; ; McQuail 2010, p.153; Berlin 1969, cited in Pickard 2013, p.343), the libertarian concept of press freedom has often been described as freedom for publishers to publish whatsoever they wish without any form of responsibility (Siebert et al. 1956, p.72; Curran and Seaton 2010; McQuail 2010a, p.176). Scholars have argued that the libertarian concept of press freedom serves the business interests of media owners and makes it easier for the press to encroach on the liberty of others (McQuail 2010, p.176; Pickard 2015). For these reasons, studies posit that this concept of press freedom unduly favours publishers and is more of a threat than a protector of democracy (McQuail 2010, p.176; Pickard 2015, p.4).

The libertarian claim that accountability will be provided for by competitiveness in the media market is questionable because history has shown that rather than ensure accountability, competitive media markets have instead triggered anti-democratic practices (Fenton 2011; Dawes 2013). Fenton (2011, n.p.) confirms that "markets do not have democratic intent at their core" because when markets come under pressure, ethics are brushed aside in pursuit of commercial profit. In defence of the libertarian 'market accountability system' claim, Bettig and Hall (2012, pp.16-17) argue that the role the media have played over the years in exposing journalistic scandals is proof that "the media market place is free and competitive enough to ensure that the truth generally prevails". Bettig and Hall, however, agree that such self-policing leaves serious gaps in press coverage of media issues. Increasing criticisms of the press gave rise to the notion of social responsibility (Ibid).

The notion of "social responsibility" was initiated by the 1947 Hutchins commission on freedom of the press in the United States of America (McQuail 2010, pp.170-171). The commission was set up in response to widespread criticism of the American press, and particularly its sensationalism, commercialism, ownership concentration, the alleged abuse of its powers, and the consequent need to ensure press accountability (Franklin 1997, 2002; Hartley 2011; Pickard 2015). In tandem with the philosophy of the social contract, the social responsibility model of the liberal theory argues that freedom to

receive and disseminate information should be accompanied by some form of responsibility to the public: what scholars refer to as 'positive freedom' (Berlin 1969; McQuail 2010, p.184; Pickard 2013; Pickard 2015, p.40). This responsibility, it states, should not only include the representation of comprehensive, factual and accurate reports, but should also include the promotion of public debates (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, pp.21-27).

Unlike the libertarian theory, the notion of social responsibility sees a place for government intervention in media accountability systems (Siebert et al. 1956. p.5; Biagi 2014, p.348). It posits that where the news media fall short in their responsibility to society, a public agency or government should be allowed to intervene to ensure press accountability. The Hutchins Commission (1947) puts it this way:

The media has an obligation to be socially responsible; to see that all sides are represented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility, it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it - (cited in Siebert et al. 1956b, p.5)

So, unlike the libertarian theory which sees no place for government intervention in ensuring press accountability, the notion of social responsibility welcomes external participation in matters of the press, if the press falls short of its responsibility to society. Though it agrees with the libertarian theory that press self-regulation and press freedom are integral to the fulfilment of the media's informational and watchdog role, its concept of press freedom differed from the libertarian perspective. Though many of the proposals of the Hutchins Commission (1947) were criticised and rejected by the commercial press, the Commission can be credited for an improved consciousness of the need for responsible journalism in the commercial press in several countries including the UK (Pickard 2015, p.187). The report of the Hutchins Commission served as exhibit or information for national and international debates on media policy, particularly, on the role of the press in a democracy. For instance, Britain's first Royal Commission on the press is recorded to have used documents from the Hutchins Commission as exhibits (Pickard 2015, p.188). One perspective views the notion of social responsibility as an

improvement on the libertarian press theory (McQuail 2010, p.184). For those with this view, the notion of social responsibility is a more public service oriented model of the liberal theory: one that makes room not only for the press but also for the public (Ibid).

A different perspective contends that the social responsibility model only led to weak reforms (Curran and Seaton 2010, p.338). Those with this view argue that rather than replace the libertarian theory, as claimed by some scholars, the social responsibility theory “essentially enabled a slightly tweaked libertarian model to continue to prevail unabated” (Pickard 2015, p.195). By the 1970s, a variant of libertarianism known as neoliberalism had become the hegemonic ideology in debates on media policy (McChesney 2001; Harvey 2005, p.2; Plehwe et al. 2006, p.39; Curran and Seaton 2010; Freedman 2014, p.62 -72; Phelan 2014). The neoliberal ideology remains rife in contemporary debates about press policy; as such it will form part of the framework for my analysis of how the press covered the media policy debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, especially the debate on freedom of the press. The next subsection gives a brief background information on the neoliberal press theory.

### **2.2.2 Neoliberalism and the press**

The neoliberal theory of the press took its origins from the broad concept of neoliberalism. The term ‘neoliberalism’ was formed by participants at the Walter Lippman Colloquium in Paris in 1938, in a bid to describe their desire to reconstruct classical laissez-faire liberalism (Plehwe et al. 2006, p.18; Jones 2012, p.6, cited in Davis 2016, p.29; Spencer 2016, p.3; Springer et al. 2016, p.569). It was defined by the colloquium as “the priority of the price mechanism, the free enterprise, the system of competition, and a strong and impartial state” (Livingstone 2013, p.436; Plehwe et al. 2006, cited in Springer et al. 2016, p.569). Key proponents of the ideology include Milton Friedman, Austrian School economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek (Plehwe et al. 2006, p.18; Davis 2016, p.29). In later years, it became associated with the free trade, deregulation and privatisation moves of former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

and former US President Ronald Reagan (McChesney 2008, p.16; Springer et al. 2016, p.144).

The ideology has gone through several modifications and cultural transformations since then (Hayek 1944; Friedman 1962; Harvey 2005; Plehwe et al. 2006; 2009). Neoliberalism in its contemporary form is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free market and free trade” (Harvey 2005, p.2). Freedom is a major feature of the neoliberal theory (Hayek 1960; Friedman 1962). Neoliberalism, which is a variant of libertarianism, aligns with what has been described as the ‘negative’ view of freedom where, as explained earlier, press freedom is interpreted as freedom from state interference. This contrasts with the positive liberty advanced by left-wing ideologists (Phelan 2014).

According to the neoliberal theory, the role of the state is to create a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive in businesses and that includes intervening to prevent market failure (Harvey 2005, p.2). Neoliberals believe that by intervening to save private businesses, the state indirectly caters for the needs of individuals in society because entrepreneurs are then able to offer jobs and other deliverables to society (Harvey 2005, Freedman 2014). The neoliberal theory posits that government involvement in business poses a threat to freedom, and that “the market, as a self-organising system in which individuals freely choose to participate, is best suited to guarantee freedom” (Mayes 2015, p.35). So, while the pure libertarian theory refuses any role for the state, the neoliberal theory (in line with the concept of social responsibility) approves of a small role for the state to prevent market failure (Freedman 2014, pp.62-63; Harvey 2005, p.2; Schlosberg 2017, p.5).

Neoliberalism in relation to the press refers to a situation in which “the media is conceptualised primarily in relation to economic activity” (McChesney 2001, n.p.; Freedman 2014, p.12). From the neoliberal press perspective, self-regulation is integral

to press freedom; the press must be self-regulated so as to have the autonomy it needs to call the powerful to account and fulfil its informational role in a democracy; the press should be commercially or privately owned because a “free enterprise is a pre-requisite for a free press” and only a free press can sustain democracy (Royal Commission on the Press 1949, cited in Curran and Seaton 2010, p.327; Cushion 2012, p.198; Springer et al. 2016, p.569; ); the press should serve the public interest (though what this means is contested; see chapter 4) and to this end, a small role for the state is acceptable, for example, in the making and implementation of laws that can prevent market failure and guarantee fair competition in business (McChesney 2001; Freedman 2014; Schlosberg 2017, p.5). Other aspects such as service and accountability, it contends, should be left in the hands of the media’s self-regulatory bodies and the market (McChesney 2001; Freedman 2014; Pickard 2015).

As earlier stated, the neoliberal conceptualisation of press freedom is hegemonic (commonsensical) in discourses about media policy (Plehwe et al. 2006, p.39; Phelan 2014). Studies claim that alternative interpretations of press freedom were marginalised or presented as illogical in the light of hegemonic neoliberal interpretations of what guarantees a free press (Putnis 2000; McChesney 2001, n.p. Curran and Seaton 2010). However, counter-hegemonic discourses labelling the neoliberal theory of the press as anti-democratic and calling for a more public service model, appear to be on the rise (McChesney 2001; Freedman 2014; Pickard 2015; Schlosberg 2017). Those with this view argue that the press should not be treated as a mere commodity but as a vital organ for democracy (Freedman 2014, p.12; Pickard 2015, p.4). They argue that the neoliberal press theory benefits commercial media institutions and only has a weak public interest value. It is for this reason and its ‘negative’ perspective of freedom that Pickard (2015, p.5) referred to it as ‘corporate libertarianism’.

Pickard (2015, p.4) is among scholars who advocate alternatives to the neoliberal theory. While reviewing past efforts at ensuring accountability in the American press, he (Pickard 2015) called for re-visitation of alternative proposals for press regulation that had been ignored or rejected by previous press inquiries. Pickard advances a policy framework

that “emphasizes media’s public service mission instead of treating it as only a business commodity” (Ibid). This perspective, according to him, assesses a media’s value by how it benefits all of society rather than how it serves individual freedoms, private property rights, and profit for a relative few. The alternative path advocated by Pickard (2015) is social democracy. Since, the social democratic ideology has emerged as a major challenger of the neoliberal hegemony in debates about press policy, the ideology will form part of the framework for my analysis of how the press covered the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. The next subsection provides a brief background on the ideology of social democracy.

### **2.2.3 The social democratic ideology**

Social democracy can be viewed as an ideology or as a political party (Moschonas 2002, pp.15-25; Pickard 2015, p.342). This study’s concern is social democracy as an ideology. Social democracy as an ideology emerged in the mid-twentieth century following decisions by Western socialists to revise their goals. One way they did this was to reform rather than abolish capitalism (Heywood 2017, p.123). Social democracy aims to correct the fundamental defects of capitalism and “pursue goals that reduce the inequalities that exist within the system” (Lightfoot 2005, p.17). It posits that capitalism is “a morally defective means of distributing resources, because of its tendency towards poverty and inequality” (Heywood 2017, p.123). The social democratic ideology contends that the defects of the capitalist system can be corrected through economic and social intervention (Miller 1998, cited in Craig 2000, p.836; Heywood 2017, p.123).

The social democratic theory sees the state as the custodian of the public interest and as such, it accepts state intervention in press regulation for the enhancement of democracy in press coverage (Meyer and Hinchman 2007, p.1; Heywood 2017, p.123). Proponents of social democracy are, therefore, critical of the ‘negative liberty’ advanced by the neoliberal variants of the libertarian press theory where press freedom is interpreted as freedom from state interference (Meyer and Hinchman 2007; Pickard 2015, p.4). They argue that the foundations of democracy become weak and unstable if accountability is

solely market-driven claiming that this could result in inequalities in society and go against fundamental human rights such as the right to privacy (McChesney 2001; Meyer and Hinchman 2007, p.1). Instead of leaving press accountability entirely at the mercy of the media market, social democracy advocates a conceptualisation of liberty that balances the liberties of all parties in a democracy, be they ordinary members of the public or corporate business owners such as media proprietors (Meyer and Hinchman 2007, cited in Pickard 2015, p.4). Social democracy's goal of promoting equality in a democracy by balancing the freedoms of all in society fits with the normative expectation of the media as a democratic public sphere where all stakeholders in a debate, irrespective of status, can participate in the debate without any form of marginalisation (Habermas 1989, p.4). The concept of the media as a democratic public sphere will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

Critics of social democracy argue that the theory is idealistic, vague, and sounds like a socialist compromise to capitalism or 'capitalism-lite' (Uluorta 2009, p.97; Derber 2011, p.131; *The Conversation*, 14 May 2016, n.p.). One of the major criticisms against the social democratic theory is that it underestimates the possibility of 'state intervention' to impact negatively on democracy (Humphreys 1996, p.107). However, as Humphreys argues, "special provisions can be made against any potentially negative effect" of state intervention on journalism's ability to enhance democracy (Ibid). In the same vein, Cushion (2012, p.198) argues that some level of statutory regulation can enhance rather than impede democracy.

There is, however, no denying the fact that measures to check the abuse of government intervention in press regulation have not always been successful (Humphreys 1996, p.107; Badsey 2013, p.67). The bottom line is that both theories have pros and cons. That is why it is important for diverse views and ideologies to be given proportionate space in media representations of press policy debates. A robust debate on media policy can result in the emergence of plurality of views including alternative views. Pickard (2015) recognised the need for alternative arguments on how to reform the press. He suggests what Curran (2011, pp.31-32, cited in Pickard 2015, p.228) referred to as public

reformism. However, his view of public reformism as with Curran's (2011), falls short in their exploration of non-statutory press reforms. The following subsection expatiates on public reformism and narrows down into what I describe as non-governmental public reformism.

### **2.2.3.1 Public reformism**

Public reformism, according to Curran (2011, p.31), seeks to improve the standard and viability of journalism through concerted action, such actions as could enhance the democratic performance of the media. Examples of such actions include strategies to promote a public interest culture among professional journalists; the public ownership and funding of leading broadcasting organisations; subsidizing minority newspapers; public action to support independent news production; and giving vouchers to citizens for annual donation to a news medium of their choice who has fulfilled some public interest function including offering free access to online news (Ibid).

In agreement with Curran's call for public reformism (Ibid), Pickard suggests that public media be strengthened to sustain the journalism that the commercial media no longer supports (Pickard 2015, pp.228 -231). Freedman (2014, pp.104 -106) also recognises the power of the public to reform the press and induce it to fulfil its role in the sustenance of democracy. According to Freedman, "developments like the internet have not only undermined the power of the traditional gatekeepers but have put in their place, a 'public society' to which there can be no meaningful resistance" (Ibid). Jarvis (2011) puts it this way:

Publicness is a sign of our empowerment at their expense. Dictators and politicians, media moguls and marketers try to tell us what to think and say. But now in a truly public society, they must listen to what we say (Jarvis 2011, p.11).

Despite the threat of oligopoly and manipulation of online platforms by corporate internet giants like Google and Facebook alongside other elite voices (Castells 2013; Freedman 2014, pp.106-111; McChesney 2013), the power of the public to serve as a



force for media reform is still very tangible. In his *The Contradictions of Media Power*, Freedman (2014, pp.25-30) acknowledged the power of the public to reform the press. One area of public reformism that has not been much explored is public reformism without government intervention. A major component of public reformism void of government intervention is “the willpower of the public”. Willpower is defined by McGonigal (2011, p.8) as “the ability to control our attention, emotion, and desires”. Riley (2011, p.3) views willpower as “the attitude of the mind which is directed with conscious attention to some action”. Willpower has often been analysed in terms of self-control: how to break bad habits such as overcoming addictions, eating less, sticking to your resolutions, etc. Most of these are things that relate to the individual’s self-development. This is what I refer to as ‘willpower as an internal force for self-development’.

But willpower can also be used to change societies (Baumeister and Tierney 2012). That is what I refer to as ‘willpower as an external force for societal development’. In line with the argument of some psychologists (McGonigal 2011; Riley 2011, pp.1-2; Taylor 2017) that willpower can be used to “create the life you want”, I argue that the public can direct their willpower to create the press they want. The saying “we get the press we deserve” (Gladstone et al. 2011; Boston 2015) makes sense when viewed under the lenses of willpower. It can therefore be argued that the public’s inaction and/or action has played a major role in the manner of press we have and can play a major role in what it becomes. The public has power to reform the press. That is not to say the public is the sole solution to all forms of degeneration in the public sphere. What it means is that the public can play a key role in ensuring an accountable press, the kind of press that can efficiently serve democracy. The public is not the helpless and powerless victim of press power as some have described them (Salter 2007; Cathcart and Grant 2012). The problem is that the public is yet to fully grasp the enormous power it possesses, one which can be used to effectively reform the press. As Tom Baistow pointed out:

There is no shortage of ideas, as the evidence of the Royal Commission showed. Only the will is lacking. If we don’t generate that among both public and parliament we shall end up with the press we deserve, but the press no real democracy can afford (Baistow 2016 [1970], p.56)

Baistow observed that “it will take considerable time and a conscious, organized effort to educate” the public to use their willpower for press reform (Ibid). McGonigal (2011) found that the brain can be trained for greater willpower. Similarly, Baumeister and Tierney (2012, p.1) show us that willpower is like a muscle that can be strengthened with practice. All these go to show that with adequate enlightenment, orientation and sensitization, the public can recognise their power to reform the press and use it effectively. The willpower of citizens can be used to purchase or not purchase newspapers; to visit or not to visit a news website; to boycott the patronage of a newspaper in diverse ways, etc.

There have been instances in the past, where the public has used its willpower to challenge press excesses or perceived misconduct. An example is the reaction of the public to *Sun* newspaper’s coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 96 football fans died (Scraton 2005, pp.62 – 74; 2016). In Liverpool, members of the public and non-governmental groups such as anfieldroad.com and the Hillsborough Justice Campaign (HJC) staged boycotts against *Sun* newspaper to protest the paper’s publication of false information blaming Liverpool football fans for the Hillsborough disaster (Anfield Road 2007, n.p.; *Contrast.org* 2017a; 2017b; Conn 2017, n.p.). Another instance is the public outcry against the *News of the World* for hacking into the voicemail of murdered school girl Milly Dowler, in addition to other acts of phone hacking (see Chapter 1). The public outrage and its publicity resulted in advertisers withdrawing patronage and the eventual closure of the newspaper in July 2011.

Non-governmental agencies can also choose to ban reporters of errant newspapers from covering their programmes especially where such programmes sell. An example is Everton Football Club who banned the *Sun* newspaper journalists from their football stadium, Goodison Park, and their Finch Farm training ground after one of the *Sun*’s columnists, Kelvin MacKenzie (it so happened that this same person was the paper’s editor at the time of the Hillsborough incident) likened one of their players, Ross Barkley, who is of mixed race, to a gorilla (Parveen 2017, n.p.).

In all the examples, public outrage drew apologies from the newspapers involved and touched one of their soft spots - their readership (Cozens 2004; Dudman 2009, p.27; *Guardian* 2017). In the case of the *News of the World*, they paid the ultimate price – closure. It would, however, be stretching willpower too far if it is used indiscriminately to frustrate newspapers out of business. As Baumeister and Tierney (2012, p.1) discovered, there can also be excessive use of willpower. Effective discipline is one that leads to change not destruction. Frequent closures of newspapers will not be beneficial to citizens, society, the economy, media owners, and even democracy. That is because it could result in side effects including job losses, a consequent increase in the number of employment benefit recipients, and reduced diversity in media platforms.

The need for adequate education on how such powers can be used by the public cannot be overemphasised. Non-governmental charities for public interest journalism, and journalism institutions, can develop a curriculum on how to train members of the public to exercise their power to check press accountability in an informed and productive manner. Care needs to be taken to see that such powers are not hijacked and abused by groups with selfish motives. I do not claim that public reformism will completely eradicate press excesses. What I argue is that sustained and well-managed pragmatism on the part of the public can keep the press in check to a considerable degree. As Stiegler (2013, p.139) puts it “With a vocal public who willingly air their grievances, news media are more likely to adhere to ethical standards of journalism”. The public can also develop themselves to understand how the press cover themselves (Ibid, p.138). This can enable them to recognise stories or arguments based on self-interest. An informed citizen can make a decision that can aid democracy just as ill-informed citizens can collectively work against democracy.

Use of public willpower offers a method of press reform that excludes two potential self-interested parties (the press and the state). Public reformism is only one among several options that can emerge from a debate on media policy in a democratic press. However, such options would rarely feature in media discourse about press reform if the media give limited coverage to alternative views and perspectives they consider as being against

their self-interest. Studies have shown that when the media cover themselves, subjects that are perceived as being against their interests are given a weak position in the hierarchy of access to the media (Christopher 2007, p.42). A similar argument posits that alternative views are marginalised and/or silenced in debates about the media (Casey et al. 2008, p.194; Savigny 2016, p.12). Not giving access to a broad spectrum of views can limit solutions proffered and result in poor media policy decisions. The following subsection expatiates on the problem of access to the press during public debates.

### **2.3 The problem of access**

In a democratic society, it is expected that all sections of society have access to the press because it serves as a major medium of information and communication. If individuals are to contribute to policymaking through participating in public debates, as earlier discussed, then all sections of society will need to have access to the press, especially when issues that concern them are the subjects of debate. Studies show that this has not been the case. The press has often been accused of giving more access to elite and official sources to the detriment of the less powerful in society (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010, p.270). Reference to "elite" sources here is not so much the politically powerful, as may have been the concept of Galtung and Ruge (1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010), but is what Harcup and O'Neill (2010, p.270) referred to as "the power elite". The power elite could be celebrities, policymakers and the press, amongst others.

The danger of favouring the debates of the "power elite" is that the views of a stratum of society dominate the media discourse while those of the less powerful are hardly heard. The "power elite" become the primary definers of the debate (Lang and Lang 1955, cited in Thompson 1998, p.57; Hall et al. 1978, pp.57-59, cited in Allan 2010, p.84). The primary definers define the trend of the debate because they often come high up in the news narrative and as such the rest of the debate may be a response to their argument or to their definition of the subject (Hall et al. 1978, pp.57-59, cited in Allan 2010, p.84). Ideas, interpretations and suggestions for press reform may thus be limited to those mentioned

by the primary definers. This can result in the media transmitting a narrow spectrum of views. As McQuail (2002, cited in Miller 2006, p.41) points out, the power of the press lies in its ability to choose what gets into the news and what is left out. This power of the press to determine what gets into the news is explicated in the next subsection through the gatekeeping theory.

### **2.3.1 The gatekeeping theory**

Kurt Lewin (1947; 1951) used the theory of gatekeeping to show “how food made its way from the grocery store or garden to the dinner table” (cited in Shoemaker and Vos, 2009, p.109). White (1950, cited in Shoemaker and Vos 2009, p.112) extended the gatekeeping concept to mass communication research. Applying this theory to news, Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p.1) pointed out that the enormity of information available to the media and the limited amount of space to transmit it, necessitated the need for the press to filter information in order to transmit a manageable quantity to the public. The process by which the media decide which stories among the lot to tell, which not to tell, who speaks about them (sources) and what versions of interpretation to relay to the public, is what is referred to as gatekeeping (Shoemaker and Vos 2009; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, p.3).

In the words of Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p.1), gatekeeping “is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day” (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, p.1). This process of selection can be based on cultural, economic and ideological factors (Ibid, pp.1-4). Examples of such factors include a newspaper’s political ideology, its ethos, ownership, business interests, etc. This endows the media with enormous powers because they have the power to decide whether to allow some arguments or sources into the news or whether to give them limited access or to keep them out completely (Rozell and Mayer 2008, p.328; Stiegler 2013, p.137). This gatekeeping power, if not checked, can be used in a way that gives the press undue advantage in their transmission of debates, especially debates about themselves (Van Heerden 1996, cited in Fourie 2001, p.205; Rozell and Mayer 2008,

p.328). Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p.122) demonstrated that gatekeeping can be used in the selection of sources.

The gatekeeping theory is closely linked to agenda-setting (McCombs and Weaver 1997; McCombs, 2004; 2014). Agenda-setting “is the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others” (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009, p.147). Agenda-setting studies have shown that media messages, depending on a number of political and social factors, can influence an individual’s action as well as determine his or her depth of knowledge on the issues represented (Negrine 1989, pp.3-4). Agenda-setting studies have “established that journalists and editors have great power both to shape the main topics of importance to audiences as well as the details of those issues” (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009, p.154).

My intention is not to argue for or against media effects but to highlight the fact that how the media cover issues is important because it could (depending on other social and political factors) shape the public’s perception and consequent action about an issue. In this study, the gatekeeping theory formed part of the framework for my analysis of how the press selected sources and issues of concern that passed through the gates into the media’s public sphere. This raises the question “What is the public sphere and what are the normative expectations of the media in a democratic public sphere?” The next subsection elaborates on the concept of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1990, 1992).

## **2.4 The media as a democratic public sphere**

### **Introduction**

Though widely criticised for its focus on bourgeois as well as its requirements of consensus and “the best rational argument”, Jurgen Habermas’ (1989) concept of the public sphere has formed the basis of several arguments in diverse disciplines including religion, law, literature, medicine, the social sciences and the media (Fraser 1990; Dahlgren 1995; Bauer et al 1998). The enabling factor is that the public sphere concept has various dimensions, interpretations and applications. This study is concerned with the mediated public sphere. Dahlgren (1995, pp.3-11) identified four dimensions to which the public sphere concept can be applied to media studies. They are the public sphere in relation to “media institutions, media representation, social structure and sociocultural interaction” (Ibid).

The dimension applied to this study is the public sphere concept in relation to media representation, but as Dahlgren noted, “all four [dimensions] interlock with each other and constitute reciprocal conditions for one another” (Ibid, pp.3-11). The representation strand of my thesis is not concerned with orientalism (Said 1985) or in-depth semiology (Saussure 1960, cited in Hall 1997, p.16) but with how “debates and discussions” are portrayed by the media (Dahlgren 1995, p.15). To establish a theoretical foundation for arguments about democracy and related issues in my findings section, I briefly examine Habermas’ concept of the public sphere (Habermas 1989 Dahlgren 1995); relevant critiques of this concept (Fraser 1992; Schudson 1992; Garnham 1992; Dahlgren and Sparks 1991; Dahlgren 1995; Ornebring and Jonsson 2004) and the public sphere concept in relation to media representation of debates on journalism.

### **2.4.1 Habermas and the public sphere**

Habermas conceptualises the public sphere as an arena where people meet to discuss societal concerns and through their arguments influence political decisions (Habermas 1989, pp.1-4; Habermas 1989 [1960], cited in Fraser 1990 p.57; Garcia-Blanco et al. 2009). According to Habermas, equality was brought about by a complete disregard for status because decisions were not based on societal standing but on the best rational argument (Habermas 1989, p.4). Habermas (1989, pp.32-41) observed that in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, coffee houses, salons and clubs sufficed as meeting points for these public deliberations, but in modern democracies, discussions in salons (coffee shops and bars) rarely carry the same weight due to the large numbers of people that make up most political communities today. This places a premium on the role of the media as a democratic public sphere: a public space where citizens can debate issues that concern them (Benhabib 1992, pp.81-87; Ornebring and Jonsson 2004, p.283). The media's role as a democratic public space, where citizens have equal access to the public sphere, is at the core of my examination of the public sphere concept.

According to Habermas' (1989, p.83, cited in Calhoun 1992, p.137) account of the "golden age of the liberal public sphere", discussions were centred on issues of common concern and citizens were able to set aside individual preferences and arrive at a consensus based on "the common good". As Fraser (1992, p.137; 2010 p.145) puts it, "in the process of their deliberation, participants are transformed from self-seeking private individuals to a public spirited collectivity, capable of acting together in the common interest". However, from the late 19th century, the public sphere began to degenerate and commercialism began to override public interest within this public space (Habermas 1989, p.184; Dahlgren 1995, p.34; Street 2011, p.56). Facilitators of debates in the media's public sphere became more concerned about 'what interests the public' rather than what was 'in the public interest' with the goal being to increase readership and attract advertisers. This degeneration manifested itself in different ways, one of which was the trivialisation of news content (Franklin 1997).



One aspect of trivialization of news examined in this study is the representation of public debates as infotainment (information plus entertainment). Here, debates are represented with an element of drama (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010) and in a shallow, sensational, and entertaining manner. The result was that citizens became a consumer audience, mainly interested in consuming dumbed down information while the media assuaged this appetite by inundating this space with trivial news content (Habermas 1989, p.164; Habermas 1989, cited in Calhoun 1992, p.3). Infotainment, can be detrimental to democracy because it promotes ignorance by presenting to readers, sensational news rather in-depth analysis of public debates (McManus, 1994, p.24; Franklin 1997, p.4). As Barber (1999, p.582) points out, public ignorance is detrimental to democracy because a citizenry without sufficient information may not be able to adequately evaluate the alternatives before them and could, as a result, advocate policies that are harmful to society.

This study argues that the commodification of the public sphere is more complex than previous studies have shown. Most studies on the media as a public sphere have focussed on the media representation of others and not of themselves (see Chapter 1). As such, scholars did not take into consideration the commodification of a public sphere in which the deliberation relates to the facilitator of the sphere. The result was that commercialism was limited to prioritisation of gains made from advertising ("selling customers to advertisers"), adopting paywalls and direct product sales (Picard 2004, pp.54-58; McQuail 2010, pp.222-224), whereas in the media coverage of debates on journalism, commodification of the public sphere can go beyond the aforementioned to the prioritisation of the media's personal interests (giving priority to the 'sale' of the newspaper's argument to the public). In this case, the media's personal interests can override 'what interests the public'.

However, this still has indirect links to satisfying advertisers: having enough readers to market to advertisers. Studies have shown that British newspapers make more money from advertising than from the sale of hard copies of their papers (Franklin 2008, p.2), What the papers 'sell' to advertisers are consumers; the target audience of the

advertisers. Commercial newspapers need high readership figures to attract advertisers (Klaehn 2010, p.28). High readership figures will not only secure the profit they make from the sale of the newspapers but more importantly, preserve the patronage of advertisers (Ibid). Thus, Habermas sees advertising as one of the causes of the degeneration of the public sphere (Habermas 1989a, pp.189-193). He argued that commercial interest merged with private interests, including the interests of policymakers, to turn the public sphere from a democratic forum for public debate into a capitalist haven where prioritisation of profit, be it for media owners, advertisers or the political class, became the order of the day (Habermas 1989a, pp.189-193).

Job constraints can also lead to the degeneration of the public sphere (Shoemaker and Reese 2013). The pressures brought on journalists by the constraints of their job has been blamed for some of the excesses of the press (Sigal 1973; Gans 1979, cited in Shoemaker and Reese 2013, p.140). Examples of such constraints include limited time of production made worse with the introduction of the 24/7 news routine, financial constraints, and more remarkably the emergence of digital journalism (Shoemaker and Reese 2013, pp.140 - 142). Scholars assert that the coming of the internet has transformed journalism and poses a threat to its continued existence (Allan 2006, pp.2-4; Franklin 2008, pp.630 - 641; Shoemaker and Reese 2013, pp.140 - 142). Some even predicted the “the death of the print media” (Allan 2006, pp.2-4; Franklin 2008). The move of *Independent* newspaper from print to online intensifies that argument (*Independent* 2016).

While ‘the extinction of the printed press’ remains a contested view (Pavlik 2001; Franklin 2008), there is no doubt that the coming of digital journalism has led to the drop in the readership of print newspapers, a consequent drop in sales of newspapers and the exodus of both readers and advertisers to online platforms (Franklin 2008, pp.631-632). The competition resulting from these, some argue has increased the lure of subterfuge as a means of news gathering; the aim being to get scoops that sell. Though the online news had not surfaced at the time Habermas wrote *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989), it can be argued that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pressure brought on the printed press by the emergence of digital

journalism facilitated the degeneration of the public sphere. The consequence of this for democracy is that providing a democratic platform for public debate is no longer its primary concern. The risk is that in this form, the public sphere can destroy rather than enhance democracy. As part of my investigation into how the press covered the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, I scrutinised newspapers in my study sample to find out how blame was attributed for the degeneration of the contemporary public sphere which culminated in the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal.

There are a number of issues with Habermas' concept of the public sphere. One of the problems is that it is not clear whether Habermas was referring to a historical situation or a normative ideal (Dahlgren 1995). Several scholars have argued that there never existed a public sphere with Habermas' ideal (Dahlgren and Sparks 1991; Schudson 1992; Dahlgren 1995). Those with this view contend that right from the period of Habermas' ideal public sphere, there had always been in the public space, trivial and dumbed down discussions with commercial interest overriding the public interest. This study sides with the argument that Habermas' concept of the public sphere is better employed as normative. Even at that, there are a number of issues that need to be put in the relevant perspective before the concept can be effectively applied to media representation of the press. The next subsection explores modifications of the public sphere that are relevant to this study.

#### **2.4.2 Rethinking modifications on the public sphere**

Several scholars have critiqued and modified Habermas' concept of the public sphere. Examples of such modifications are Fraser's (1992) alternative publics and "subaltern counterpublics" where equality is hinged on multiple rather than a single comprehensive public sphere; Chantal Mouffe's (2005a, 2005b) agonistic public sphere which argues for contestations ('radical' discourse) in place of 'consensus building through rational discourse'; and Bennet and Entman's (2001) policy sphere which refers to the aspect of the public sphere that relates to media representations of governmental policies and decision making. The above list is not exhaustive and this study does not attempt to

examine all criticisms of the public sphere. It will only concern itself with arguments that are relevant to this study.

In Habermas' concept of the public sphere, the recurrent theme is that in a democracy, citizens, no matter their status, should have unrestricted access to debates in the public sphere, especially debates on matters relating to their welfare. Bearing in mind that discussions in such a forum are capable of influencing political action, such involvement empowers citizens to play some role in democratic governance, thereby fulfilling, in part, the definition of democracy as government of the people, for the people, and by the people (Lincoln [1863] 2009). Ironically, much of the critique of the public sphere has focussed on how Habermas' ideal public sphere falls short of this democratic standard (Fraser 1992; Bennet and Entman 2001; Butsch 2007; Mouffe 2005a; 2005b).

Fraser (1992, p.117-118) queries four assumptions of Habermas' concept of the public sphere. They are the assumption that it is possible for participants in "a public sphere to bracket status differentials and to deliberate as if they were social equals"; that "a single, comprehensive public sphere" is more democratic than multiple and competing publics; "that discourse in the public sphere should be restricted to deliberation about the common good"; and that "a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation" from the state. Fraser (1992) argues that while Habermas lays claims to universality in his ideal public space, his focus on a single public - the bourgeois, excludes some sections of the public such as women who were at the time excluded from public debates (Fraser 1990, pp.58-60).

Fraser contends that rather than eliminate inequality, bracketing a single public endorses inequality by denying diverse groups and interests, a voice within the public sphere; the result being that the interests of the marginalised groups or persons are overlooked (Ibid, p.77). Fraser's argument is that democracy is enhanced not with a single comprehensive public sphere but with "arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics" (Fraser 1992, p.122, cited in Butsch 2007, p.5). She referred to these competing publics as alternative publics and 'subaltern counterpublics'. They are

alternative in the sense that each sphere is a “homogenous group rather than a diverse deliberative body” (Warner 2002, cited in Butsch 2007, p.18) and ‘subaltern counterpublics’ because they are discursive spaces where members of subordinate social groups can introduce counter discourses (Fraser 1992, pp.123-125).

Her use of the word “contestation” to describe debates between multiple publics links to another critique against Habermas’ concept which is that discourse in the public sphere should not be restricted to “deliberation about the common good”. Along with scholars like Benhabib (2002), Mouffe (2005a; 2005b) and Fraser (1992 p.129; 2010, p.140) says the common good is difficult to determine; the interest of publics may vary; and the demand for consensus may only keep out of debates, issues that may later be recognised as being of public interest. As an example, Fraser (1992, p.129) points to the fact that the issue of violence against women was in the past regarded as a private interest and not “for the common good”. It was an issue to be discussed in family settings and not in the public sphere, but feminists forming a “subaltern counterpublic” kept up debate about domestic violence which lead to its eventual acceptance as a matter of common concern.

Fraser (1992, pp.129-131) contends that there should be no limits to the issues and arguments that gain access to the public sphere. According to her, “what will count as a matter of concern will be decided precisely through discursive contestations” (Ibid, p.129). For Fraser, contestations (in arguments, alternative views, etc.) rather than a consensus remain closer to the democratic ideal (Ibid). This shifts the focus from Habermas’ deliberative model of democracy (where deliberation leads to a consensus within the public sphere) to a participatory model where the focus is access of all concerned to the debate within the public sphere. Consensus can then be reached by policymakers based on the knowledge gathered from informed contestations in the media’s public sphere. This study applies the concept of multiple publics to press discourse as explained in the following subsection.

### 2.4.3 Rethinking dimensions of multiple publics

Taking a cue from Fraser's (1992) alternative publics and "subaltern counterpublics" where equality is hinged on multiple rather than a single comprehensive public sphere, Ornebring and Jonsson (2004) applied the concept of multiple public spheres to the press. In their application of the concept, the tabloid press can serve as an alternative public sphere to mainstream media (by mainstream media, they refer to major media outlets such as major newspapers, radio stations and television stations). According to the authors, the social media, specialised journals and other media outlets outside the mainstream news can serve as counterpublics from which non-elitist groups can counter dominant elite discourses. I refer to this group as "public sphere as platform". I add that the public sphere as platform may or may not be a counterpublic.

In their view, participants in a media discourse can also be an alternative public sphere if the participants differ from those who normally dominate the media discourse (Ornebring and Jonsson, 2004, p.286). I will call this "public sphere as people". Ornebring and Jonsson also argued that a public sphere can be alternative when "other issues than those commonly debated in the mainstream are discussed - or that issues not even debated at all in the mainstream are discussed in the alternative sphere" (Ibid). I will call that "public sphere as issues". Their fourth mediated alternative sphere model is somewhat duplicitous; it comprises of "ways or forms of debating and discussing common issues than those commonly used in the mainstream media" (Ibid). I will call that "alternative methods as public sphere".

This study adds to this portfolio: the public sphere as discourse. This agrees with Warner's (2002, pp.413-415) argument that the meaning of "public" cannot be limited to Habermas' elucidation of 'the public as people' – the discussants. Warner (2002, p.414) established that public can also refer to the discourse. In this case, the sphere can be 'a public'; a body of discourse, a perspective in a debate, common interest on an issue, and such like. This study engages with the concept of the public sphere both as platform and as discourse. It examines 'public sphere as platform' in the sense that it explores how the

media as platform (mainstream press in this case) serves as a democratic public sphere. It examines 'public sphere as discourse' by investigating publics within discourse. Having discussed the importance of the media platform as a democratic public sphere earlier in this chapter, I now move on to explore theories and concepts on the public sphere as discourse. Based on Fraser's (1992) conceptualisation of multiple public spheres, I argue that there can be several discursive publics within journalism's interpretive community. I will pause here to explain the notion of journalism as an interpretive community because the concept will be applied to further discussions on multiple discursive publics.

#### **2.4.4 Journalism as an interpretive community**

Zelizer (2004, pp.12-15) conceptualises journalism as an interpretive community, a notion she borrowed from Stanley Fish's explanation of interpretive communities in relation to literary text (Fish 1980, cited in Zelizer 2004, p.13). An interpretive community consists of "people engaged in common activities and common purposes who employ a common frame of reference for interpreting their social setting" (Berkowitz and Terkeurst 1999, p.127, cited in Carlson 2015, p.3). Interpretive communities affect how a phenomenon is interpreted (Zelizer 2004, pp.13-14). Applying this to journalism, Zelizer (2004) argues that a person's view of journalism will be affected by the person's background, perspectives or the field in which he or she works. To explicate further, Zelizer (2004, pp.30-32) compared interpretations of journalism by journalists with that of academics. As an example, she used five metaphors to show that the way each group talks about journalism is influenced by their field of work (Ibid).

Zelizer pointed out that while journalists use metaphors like '6<sup>th</sup> sense' (nose for news); container (space, news hole); mirror (that reflects reality – though contested); child (as in 'put the news to bed', meaning complete the circle of news production or cast the news); and service, to talk about journalism, a journalism scholar is more likely to discuss journalism in terms of it being a text, a profession, an institution, as people, and as a set

of practices (Ibid). She observed that neither account is comprehensive because each of them only tells part of the story of what journalism represents, pointing out that their interpretations were influenced by their background, in this case, their field of work (Ibid). This concept presents journalists as a united front - one interpretive community in the way they perceive and describe their profession (Berkowitz 2000, cited in Carlson 2015, p.3).

Viewing Zelizer's explanation of interpretive communities from the lenses of Fraser's (1992) conceptualisation of multiple public spheres and Ornebring and Jonsson's (2004) extension of that concept to the press, I argue that though journalists have a shared understanding of their practice, which can make them function as one interpretive community, journalists can also function as multiple interpretive communities in discourses about journalism. Newspaper classification, ownership patterns, and business model are examples of factors that can give birth to multiple publics within journalism's interpretive community. This study, therefore, argues that in debates about journalism, there can be multiple homogeneous public spheres with each homogeneous sphere standing as a united front on an issue of common concern. I refer to such multiple spheres of homogeneous discourses created within a journalistic community as sub-interpretive spheres.

Multiple sub-interpretive spheres can arise from differences and similarities in the press' interpretations of journalistic paradigms such as press freedom, objectivity and news in the printed format. The demarcation may or may not be along the lines of media outfits because they are spheres of discourses. The homogeneity of a sub-interpretive sphere does not preclude disagreements on certain issues within each homogeneous public. For example, though feminism features as a homogeneous public sphere, there are still different schools of thought among feminists (Barnett 1998, pp.121-173; Tong 2014, pp.1-6). Their uniting factor would, therefore, be a high degree of similarity in their expressions on an issue of concern.



In studies where homogeneous publics emerge within an interpretive community, a confederation pattern of analysis can be employed to fish out both collective and individual patterns in the coverage. Confederations are “loose governing arrangement[s] in which separate republics or nations join to coordinate foreign policy and defense but retain full control over their domestic affairs” (Jillson 2013, p.63). Applying this to media studies, I define ‘confederation pattern of analysis’ as a pattern of critique that allows analysis of media content both in groups (for example, a group of newspapers) and individually (individual newspapers). This allows room for the identification of unique trends and styles within discourse. Using a confederation pattern of analysis, this study analysed newspapers in groups of discourse (sub-interpretive spheres) when they were united for certain causes and individually in areas where they had unique differences. I take the position that in the media coverage of press policy debates, democracy is enhanced not with a single comprehensive discursive media public sphere, but with a situation that makes room for contestations among diverse competing discursive publics (Fraser 1992, p.122, cited in Butsch 2007, p.5).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided some of the theoretical framework for my analysis of the media representation of the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. I explored previous literature on the relationship between the media and democracy and established that the media play an important role in the sustenance of democracy in contemporary society. I explained that this thesis is concerned with the maximalist approach to democracy where democracy goes beyond citizens’ involvement in voting-in their political leaders to citizens’ participation in governance through their active involvement in public debates. I gave my working definition of democracy as “governance by the people, for the people and of the people” (Lincoln [1863] 2009; Gunther and Mughan, cited in Christians et al. 2009, p.25). Here, “the people” refers to the public; their ability to take part in governance through active participation in public debates, etc.

I pointed out that many arguments in the press reform debate were based on normative theories of the press and democracy. These arguments were mainly inspired by the idea that the media are entrusted with information power, and that how this power is used has consequences for democracy (Stromback 2005, p.335). Therefore, I examine normative theories on the role of the press in a democratic society. One of the normative theories relevant to, and thus employed in this study, is the libertarian theory. Its social responsibility variant was examined to provide background knowledge for the eventual use of the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory (Siebert et al. 1956; Hayek 1960; McQuail 2010; Freedman 2014; Pickard 2015). The concept of social democracy was also examined as a challenger of the neoliberal hegemony in debates about media reform.

I pointed out that while social democracy's goal of promoting equality fits with the normative expectation of the media as a democratic public sphere, the possibility of state intervention, which it supports, to impact negatively on democracy cannot be overlooked (Humphreys 1996, p.107). I argued that alternatives, including non-governmental alternative solutions, can emerge from a democratic public sphere where all stakeholders have proportionate access to the press. One such alternative is a form of public reformism that is void of government intervention. The neoliberal and social democratic ideologies will form part of the framework for my analysis of how the press represented the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal (see Section 2).

I noted that the ideological positions of the various newspapers can reflect in their arguments, the strategies they used in coverage, their areas of focus in the debate, areas of neglect, the amount of space given to different subjects of the debate, sources used, interpretations of media reform efforts, etc. Relevant conceptualisations of the public sphere were also examined with special focus on the media as a forum for public debates (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1990; Thompson 1995; Dahlgren 1995). I examined Habermas' (1989) concept of the public sphere where public sphere was defined as a space for deliberation on issues of common concern, such deliberations as could influence political decisions (Habermas 1989 [1960], cited in Fraser 1990 p.57).

This chapter also examined Fraser's (1992) idea of alternative publics and "subaltern counterpublics" where equality is hinged on multiple rather than a single comprehensive public sphere. She emphasized that within the public sphere, contestation rather than a consensus is closer to the democratic ideal. Ornebring and Jonsson (2004) applied the concept of multiple public spheres to the press. They identified four alternative publics which include public sphere as people, platform, issues, and alternative methods. To these, I added the public sphere as discourse. In this case the sphere can be 'a public': a body of discourse, a perspective in a debate, common interest on an issue, amongst others. Based on Fraser's (1992) conceptualisation of multiple public spheres, I argued that there can be several discursive publics rather than one comprehensive discursive public sphere in journalism's interpretive community. My reference to interpretive community was based on Zelizer's (1996) concept of interpretive community. This study posits that democracy is enhanced not with a single comprehensive discursive public sphere, but with a situation that makes room for contestations among diverse competing discursive publics (Fraser 1992b, p.122, cited in Butsch 2007, p.5).

In summary, the normative expectation is that the media should serve as a democratic public sphere (be it public sphere as discourse, people, platform, issues, or alternative methods): one that gives voice to all parties involved in a debate irrespective of their argument or their status in society. The exclusion or marginalisation of any segment of the population [of those involved] from a debate will run contrary to "democracy's claim of universalism" (Dahlgren 1995; p.36). Normatively, the type of space or amount of coverage given ought not to be based on the media's self-interest. The media ought to remain a free marketplace of ideas when they represent others as well as when they represent themselves. The following subsection explores previous literature on how the press cover debates about themselves.

## **Chapter 3: Metacoverage, Metajournalistic Discourse and the News Paradigm**

### **Introduction**

Having established the role of the media as a democratic public sphere, this chapter takes a closer look at a public sphere in which the media is both the subject of debate and its facilitator. Other institutions have no say on how much critical commentary on their operations should go into the news, neither can they determine who criticises them, what they say, how they say it, or when they say it. The media, on the other hand, have the rare privilege of not only determining how much critical commentary on their operations gets into the public sphere for discussion, but they are also the interpreters of such criticism. How has critical discourse on the press been interpreted by the press over the years?

To examine this, I begin by scrutinizing definitions of metacoverage. I conclude that subsection by stating my working definition for metacoverage that serves as a springboard for my exploration of relevant terms such as metajournalistic discourse and journalistic metadiscourse. Studies have shown that journalists manage critical discourse on themselves with the use of paradigm repair strategies (Bennet et al. 1985; Carlson 2012b, 2015). The notion of paradigm repair is, therefore, examined. The literature on paradigm repair will provide the framework for my analysis of the strategies employed by the press in their coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

### **3.1 Metacoverage**

Metacoverage can simply be described as self-referential coverage (Esser et al. 2001). The term, popularised by Gitlin (1991, p.122 cited Carlson 2015, p.10) and D'Angelo and Esser (2014), is often used to refer to the increasing trend of journalists covering

themselves during political campaigns. (Buchanan 1991; Gitlin 1991; Stempel 1991; Kerbel 1994; Tankard and Sumpter 1994; Johnson et al. 1996; D'Angelo 1999; Lichter et al. 1999; Kerbel 2000; Esser et al. 2001). Esser et al. (2001, pp.16-17) defined metacoverage as the news "media's self-referential reflections on the nature of the interplay between political public relations and political journalism" (cited in Young 2010, p.14). I argue that limiting metacoverage to self-referential coverage of the media during political campaigns is constrictive.

The word 'meta' is a Greek preposition meaning 'with, after' (Liddell et al. 2015 [1883]; Dixon 2014, p.165). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it came to be used as a prefix in English and can be seen in words like meta-thorax, metaphor and metabolic (2014, pp.165-166). It also metamorphosed into the term "self-referential". As Dixon elucidates, "one current use is that a *meta-X* is an "X" describing an "X" (Ibid). Examples are meta-data which means data about data (Baca 2008, p.1) and meta-cognition meaning cognition about cognition (Beran et al. 2012, p.98). Considering the composition of the word metacoverage ('meta' and '[media] coverage') plus the fact that self-referential media coverage is diverse, I contend that metacoverage can adequately serve as an umbrella term for all forms of self-referential coverage by the media. Therefore, my working definition for metacoverage is that it refers to all forms of self-referential coverage by the media.

Based on my working definition, metacoverage can focus on diverse themes and take place on various media platforms. For example, metacoverage can be on politics, the environment, media scandals, media advertisements and media critique programmes such as Newswatch. It can take place on different platforms, such as on television programmes, news websites, news broadcasts, magazines, or on the pages of newspapers. This study is concerned with metacoverage on news or journalistic platforms: what Deuze (cited in Brin and Drolet 2009, p.271) referred to as journalism about journalism. The textual content of such coverage is known as journalistic metadiscourse (Deuze 2003, cited in Brin and Drolet 2009, p.271; Thomas and Finneman 2014). This should not be confused with what Carlson refers to as metajournalistic discourse. The following subsection clarifies the difference between journalistic

metadiscourse and metajournalistic discourse. This clarification will help the reader understand the use of both terms later in the study.

### **3.1.1 Metajournalistic discourse**

In the term 'journalistic metadiscourse', the 'meta' or 'self-referential' status is conferred on 'journalism', i.e. journalism about journalism (Deuze 2003, cited in Brin and Drolet 2009, p.271; Thomas and Finneman 2014) but in Carlson's conceptualisation of metajournalistic discourse, the "meta" status is placed on discourse, i.e. discourse about discourse on journalism or simply put, discourse about news (Carlson 2015; Carlson 2014 cited in Alexander et al. 2016). Carlson (2015, p.2) defines metajournalistic discourse as "public expressions evaluating news text, the practices that produce them or the conditions of their reception". According to Carlson (2015), metajournalistic discourse can take place on journalistic (internal) and non-journalistic (external) sites. By this definition, metajournalistic discourse will include debates or discussions on journalism in public fora, journalism journals, the news, TV shows, etc. As Carlson pointed out, metajournalistic discourse can include comments by both journalists (insiders) and non-journalists (external actors). For example, journalistic work on journalism can also include comments by government functionaries, victims of press abuse, and ordinary members of the public who are not journalists. Going by Carlson's definition of metajournalistic discourse, Brin and Drolet (2009, p.271) 'journalistic metadiscourse' would form an aspect of Carlson's (2012, 2014) conceptualisation of metajournalistic discourse. Since this study deals with journalists' coverage of journalism, I will provide more discussion on this aspect of metajournalistic discourse.

### **3.1.2 Metajournalistic discourse on journalistic sites: journalistic metadiscourse**

The term journalistic metadiscourse will, henceforth, be used to refer to the discursive field of metacoverage on journalistic sites. This field of metadiscourse includes

journalists' self-referential coverage of diverse sorts including press controversies, scandals, performance, practices, debates on journalism, government policies on journalism, and press promotions. According to Carlson (2012b, pp.268-269), journalistic metadiscourse "reveals attempts by journalists to articulate, negotiate, defend, and even obscure their cultural, social and political significance". Through journalistic metadiscourse, journalists make attempts to define and defend the boundaries of journalistic practice, assert the legitimacy of the profession and shape its reception (Ibid).

Previous studies argue that journalistic metadiscourse is highly defensive and characterised by a lack of self-critique (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016). A number of reasons have been given for this trend of journalistic metadiscourse. Notable among them is commercialism, particularly the fear of losing profit due to a reduction in advertising revenue, readership, sales, views and/or patronage (Haas 2006; McQuail 2010, pp.222-224). As will be elaborated upon in the next subsection, the press has been accused of vehemently opposing anything that it perceives poses a threat to its commercial viability. Journalistic metadiscourse that is averse to self-critique limits the information available to the public to contribute knowledgeably to debates on journalism.

As previously discussed, a key function of journalism in a democratic society is the provision of sufficient information that will enable the public to make informed decisions. A public sphere that lacks self-critique would portend some risks to the health of democracy. Ironically, journalism's defence against external criticism is often hinged on its democratic role in society. However, Dahlgren (1992) points out that this claim does not always translate into the text of journalistic metadiscourse. Previous studies on journalistic metadiscourse identified certain recurring strategies used by the press to cover themselves when the boundaries of their profession are called to question due to acts of deviance by members of the profession. These recurring patterns of press coverage are referred to as paradigm repair strategies (Bennet et al. 1985b; Thomas and Finneman 2014). In the next subsection, I elaborate on paradigm repair strategies and

how they featured in previous studies on journalistic metadiscourse. I examine paradigm strategies because parts of my findings section will analyse how these strategies were used, if at all, in the coverage of the press reform debate. Becoming acquainted with the paradigm repair strategies used in journalistic metadiscourse will add to our understanding of how the press covered the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry.

### **3.1.3 Paradigm repair**

The term paradigm repair was used by Bennet et al. (1985) to describe “how journalistic self-criticism protects existing paradigms rather than confronts entrenched deficiencies and contradictions” (cited in Carlson 2015, p.4). It refers to a situation in which metajournalistic discourse is used to protect press standards and values from scrutiny (Carlson 2012b, p.267). The notion of paradigm repair was drawn from Kuhn’s (1962) work which linked creation with paradigmatic allegiances. Kuhn (1962, cited in Reese 1990, p.392) stated that “paradigms provide examples rather than explicit rules” such that the paradigm is learnt “by engaging in the discipline”. As stated in Chapter 1, the notion of paradigm repair has been employed by previous scholars to examine journalistic metadiscourse on press “deviancy” in relation to objectivity (Reese 1990); fabrications (Hindman 2005; Carlson 2009); reporting errors (Cecil 2002); paparazzi (Bishop 1999; Berkowitz 2000); scapegoating (Berger 2008); media scandal (Carlson and Berkowitz 2014); and press standards (Thomas and Finneman 2014).

One news paradigm that is of importance to this study is the perception of the journalist as a crusader; one who uses the weapon of “the pen” to fight for justice for the less privileged; the voice of the voiceless and the provider of information to the public that enables them to hold the powerful to account - the watchdog of society. Franklin (1997, cited in Frost 2007) breaks this self-perception (and to some extent public perception) down into six norms which are: journalism is a quest for truth; journalism is independent of government; newspapers are pluralistic organisations; journalists are independent of



economic pressures; journalists are watchdogs, and journalism creates a public sphere with the bottom line being that journalism is central to democracy.

Closely linked to the 'crusader image paradigm' is the 'press freedom or press autonomy paradigm'. Press freedom is critical to journalism's fulfilment of its crusader or watchdog role (see Chapter 4), particularly, freedom from state interference. From liberal neoliberal perspectives, if journalists must call politicians to order and expose corruption, they must be independent of government (Deuze 2005; Schudson 2005; Waisbord 2013). They are also allowed to use clandestine means to obtain information if that information is in the "public interest" (see Chapter 4 for more on public interest). This freedom enables the press to carry out investigative journalism as well as fulfil other watchdog and informative roles that will help enhance democracy (Waisbord 2013). The British press would frown at any effort or perceived effort to rob it of its autonomy and would likely employ metajournalistic discourse to protect the freedom of the press and repair its image as a crusader.

This view of the journalist as a crusader is not without contestation. There are several instances where journalists have been accused of abusing their freedom (McQuail 2003, p.81; Squire 2005, p.254). Scholars have contested the image of the journalist as a crusader based on these lines: journalists do not always tell the truth; their relationship with government is collusive; they are not independent of economic pressures because competitive markets cause them to throw ethics to the wind; they are not watchdogs but lapdogs; they are not pluralistic and do not serve as a democratic public sphere (Franklin 1997; McQuail 2003, p.81); (see Chapter 2 for more on the media as a democratic public sphere).

Previous studies show that oftentimes when public outrage against press "deviancy" leads to the setting up of a press commission, steps taken by such commissions to check the abuse of press freedom have been interpreted in journalistic metadiscourse as a "threat to press freedom" and by extension, a threat to democracy (Frost 2007; Putnis 2000; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.327-338). Reese (1990), Cecil (2002), Carlson (2014)

and Thomas and Finneman (2014) examined how journalists' metadiscourse followed certain patterns when they perceived threats to their paradigm. In line with Eason's (1988, cited in Carlson 2015, p.4) argument, these studies showed that the journalistic-metadiscourses were defensive rather than self-critical.

In his study about how journalists in the US responded to perceived threats to the objectivity paradigm, Reese (1990) examined three types of paradigm repair. They are "(a) disengaging and distancing the threatening values from the reporter's work; (b) reasserting the ability of journalistic routines to prevent threatening values from 'distorting' the news, and (c) marginalising the man and his message; making both appear ineffective" (Reese 1990, p.390). Cecil (2002, p.46) talks about a type of paradigm repair "in which the logic of journalism is reasserted in response to an outside challenge". Referring to it as paradigm overhaul, Cecil (2002) found that while criticising challenges to the "objective news paradigm", journalistic metadiscourse overhauled that paradigm, "reasserting objective news without altering or even questioning its underlying assumptions (Cecil 2002, p.47). He pointed out that "no changes were deemed necessary" (Ibid). The journalist(s) who were accused of deviant behaviour were described as a few "bad apples" and "the problem was "solved" by simply purging the reporters from the ranks" of good journalism (Ibid).

In this way, the journalistic metadiscourse sought to repair its paradigm by localising the bad behaviour and asserting the profession's importance and achievements without considering making amendments to the paradigm. Alternatives to the paradigm were labelled deviant (Ibid). The process by which journalists strive to build walls to isolate deviant journalists from the 'noble profession' have been described as boundary maintenance (Ibid, p.50). In addition to maintaining its boundaries through journalistic metadiscourse, the news organisation responds by either correcting or eliminating the bad apple(s) responsible for the mistake (Bennett et al. 1985; Reese 1990, cited in Cecil 2002, p.50). Cecil (2002, p.50) emphasized that "the individual reporter, editor, and producers; not news organisations or the news paradigm itself, tend to receive the blame for breaks in the paradigm".

While individualization (also, ostracization, localization or bad apple) strategy has proved useful in the analysis of paradigm repair, limiting paradigmatic markers to individualization of deviancy restricts the tools for analysis of paradigm repair. As Carlson (2012b; 2014) observed, paradigm repair interpretive strategies can also include extensions of deviancy from the individual to the general. The general can include a news organisation; a class of newspaper, for example, the tabloid; a media platform or even the whole media. Using as an example, the media coverage of the demise of two US regional newspapers, *Rocky Mountain News* and printed *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, Carlson (2012b, p.267) demonstrated that paradigm repair can include situations where the perceived problem of an individual newspaper is interpreted by the press as a reflection of the challenges faced by all newspapers. Here, the perceived threat to the printed press paradigm was “repaired” by re-asserting the “importance and superiority” of the printed press over other forms, especially online news forms. Carlson referred to this extension from the individual to the general as “second – order paradigm repair” (Ibid).

Another case for expansion of paradigm repair to include generalizable interpretive strategies can be found in Carlson (2014) where the deviancy (phone hacking) of an individual newspaper, the *News of the World* was interpreted by both journalistic and non-journalistic actors as a manifestation of the deviancy of all printed press in the UK and the Valerie Plame’s case where the misconduct of Miller was translated as the deviance of the press (Carlson 2012a, pp.111-137). Carlson (2014, p.392) described this extension of deviancy from the individual to the general as “synecdoche deviancy”, a term he borrowed from the figure of speech; synecdoche, which means using part to represent the whole. He says, “with journalism, this may refer to efforts to extend a scandal from its immediate context to incorporate a broader set of news practices – such as using a scandal at one tabloid newspaper to extend to the whole of tabloid newspapers” (Ibid). I argue that both individualized (ostracization, localization) and generalizable (synecdoche) deviancy can emerge from the same incident and could occur at different stages of, for example, a scandal.

Synecdoche deviancy in journalistic metadiscourse is often triggered by scandals in which the press is the culprit. Examples of such scandals are the Valerie Plame's case of 2003; the Pulitzer Prize-winning "news" story in the *Washington Post*, written by Janet Cooke about a non-existent 8-year old heroin addict, published in 1980; the Time magazine cover "photo illustration" of O.J. Simpson at the time of his murder trial in 1994, with darkened skin tone; the "Rathergate" - a scandal in which the CBS anchor-man Dan Rather was accused of using fake documents in a report on George W. Bush dodging National Guard duty (Bettig and Hall, 2012, p.16); and more recently, the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal. Scandals can encourage public discussions on sensitive and controversial issues (Lull and Hinerman 1997, p.1). According to Lull and Hinerman, contemporary media scandals provide "a clear and compelling entry point for criticisms of the media in society" (Ibid). In the case of the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal, the controversy generated important questions relating to how the media cover themselves and the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy.

In line with Carlson's argument for the use of the notion of paradigm repair to study synecdoche deviancy in journalistic metadiscourse, Thomas and Finneman (2014) used paradigm repair to study the media coverage of the Leveson inquiry, an offshoot of the phone hacking scandal (see Chapter 4 for more on the Leveson Inquiry). Their study sample consisted of "editorial comment in mainstream national daily and Sunday newspapers on the Leveson Inquiry from its inception to the conclusion of its hearing phase". Using the media coverage of the hearing stages of the Leveson Inquiry as its study sample, Thomas and Finneman (2014, p.172) summarised interpretive patterns used in previous analysis of metadiscourse into four main strategies:

1. Catastrophization – [also, "threats to the paradigm"].
2. Self-affirmation (affirming journalism's value to a democratic society) - [also known as self-justification, self-assertion or re-assertion].
3. Minimization (downplaying the significance of the phone hacking scandal and therefore questioning the legitimacy of the inquiry and other measures aimed at checking press irresponsibility).

4. Localization (localizing the damage to the community to acts committed by a handful of members).

Localization is also known as ostracization, individualization and the bad apple interpretive strategy. Localization is a type of deflection strategy. The press can use different strategies of deflection to exonerate themselves of blame by deflecting it to others. Deflection strategies are also referred to in this study as self-exoneration strategies. From their findings, Thomas and Finneman (2014, p.172) concluded that the journalistic metadiscourse during the hearing stages of the Leveson Inquiry revealed “an institutional ideology that is quick to assert rights but largely resistant to notions of attendant responsibilities”. Though the authors categorisation is very relevant to this study, their categories do not make room for durational modes of interpretation (Ibid).

According to Zelizer (1994, cited in Cecil 2002, p.51), journalistic metadiscourse takes place on two planes: the local and the durational modes of interpretation. While the local mode of interpretation is concerned with the immediate occurrence and how it is made meaning of in journalism’s interpretive community, the durational mode of interpretation “offers a historical perspective, a discussion of past occurrences, which is often reinterpreted to fit into a more localized frame”- (Ibid). Journalists discuss past stories such as Princess Diana’s death and paparazzi (1997); the topless princess photo (2012); the Watergate scandal (1970), etc. and talk about how this fits in with the present occurrence and what that means for journalism and democracy. Such discussions are often used to reinforce the boundaries of journalistic practice. This is what I will refer to, in paradigm repair studies, as the strategy of historicization (White 2004, p.98; Mumford 2009, p.72).

Historicization is a term I borrowed from dramatic theory where German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) used it to describe the following theatre scenarios:

Distancing (contemporary) phenomenon by placing them in the past

Presenting events as the product of historically specific conditions and choices  
Showing differences between the past and the present and evidencing change  
Showing similarities between the past and the present and urging change  
Revealing received versions of history as the views of the ruling class  
Giving air to suppressed and interventionist histories  
Presenting all versions of history as serving vested interests - (Brecht, cited in Mumford 2009, p.72).

Historicization becomes a paradigm repair strategy when similar techniques as those outlined by Brecht are employed by the press in an attempt to repair its paradigm (Ibid). The concept of paradigm repair strategy assumes that the press would only protect its paradigm(s); but the press can also challenge journalistic paradigms (Carlson 2012a). Interestingly, the strategy of historicization can also be used to challenge an existing paradigm. In such a case, it is not a paradigm repair but a paradigm challenging strategy. The strategy of historicization can, therefore, be defined as an interpretive approach in which history is used to strengthen or explicate contemporary meaning-making in journalistic metadiscourse, in an attempt to protect or challenge a journalistic paradigm.

In journalistic metadiscourse, historicization is mostly (though not exclusively) located in the opinion sections of newspapers where it is used to strengthen diverse arguments. Historicization would most often express the newspaper's position in an argument. For instance, newspapers that propagate the neoliberal ideology can use the strategy of historicization to warn against state intervention in press regulation while those advancing social democratic perspectives can use the strategy to stress the need for state intervention. Historicization can be used to either call for or oppose press reform. It can also be used as an element of drama; to assert the media's importance; or to affirm that the press has gone too far too often. Historicization is a broad paradigmatic approach that can embrace other paradigm strategies such as self-assertion and individualization. Adding the strategy of historicization to the four paradigm repair strategies - the strategies of threat to the paradigm (catastrophization), self-assertion (affirmation), minimization and individualization (localization; Bad Apples), enabled me to investigate both historical and local modes of interpretation in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry.

### 3. 2 Conclusion

This chapter explored literature on media coverage of the media. It began by calling for a review of the definition that limits metacoverage to the increasing trend of ‘journalists covering themselves during political campaigns’ (Buchanan 1991; Gitlin 1991; Stempel 1991; Kerbel 1994; Tankard and Sumpter 1994; Johnson et al. 1996; D’Angelo 1999; Lichter et al. 1999; Kerbel et al. 2000; Esser et al. 2001). I argue that the term should embrace all forms of self-coverage by the media. Going by that definition, this study falls within the category of metacoverage in the field of journalism; what Franklin (2009) described as journalistic metadiscourse. I explained that journalistic metadiscourse is what Carlson (2015) referred to as metajournalistic discourse on journalistic platforms. This chapter discussed how journalists use paradigm repair strategies to protect press standards and values from scrutiny.

I noted that the term paradigm repair was used by Bennet et al. (1985) to describe “how journalistic self-criticism protects existing paradigms rather than confronts entrenched deficiencies and contradictions” (cited in Carlson 2015, p.4). Finally, I explored the paradigm repair strategies that will serve as a framework for this study. The strategies include ‘threat to the paradigm’ (warnings of attacks on journalism); self-assertion (affirming the importance of journalism to democracy); minimization (downplaying the significance of the phone hacking scandal and questioning the legitimacy of measures aimed at checking press irresponsibility); individualization (localizing the damage to the community to acts committed by a few journalists) and historicization (using history or collective memory to repair (or challenge) journalistic paradigms).

Having explored literature on theories and concepts that will serve as the framework for this study, the primary focus of the next section will be to provide some background information on the Leveson Inquiry and the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. The information is intended to help the reader comprehend my analysis of how the debate was covered by the press; including how the paradigm strategies were used to represent it.

## **Chapter 4: The Phone Hacking Scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the Press Reform Debate**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter examined the theoretical framework for the analysis of my findings. This chapter facilitates the comprehension of my analysis by providing background knowledge on the Leveson inquiry and key subjects of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. Key subjects of the debate include press freedom, the public interest, public trust, privacy, press regulation and media ownership. While discussing the issue of media ownership, I explore literature on the concept of political economy in relation to media ownership. This will provide the premise for arguments on whether media ownership concentration impacted on the coverage of the press reform debate. This chapter also provides a snapshot of existing literature on the phone hacking scandal and the debate that followed it. The aim is to place this thesis within the broader literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson inquiry, the press reform debate and metacoverage. All these will equip the reader with the background knowledge needed to understand the analysis of my findings in Chapters six to eight.

#### **4.1 The press reform debate**

As a consequence of the phone hacking scandal, the UK press became the focus of a heated public debate (Keeble and Mair 2012; Davies 2014). Many questions were asked and several answers offered. The press had behaved badly and needed to be tamed (The Leveson Inquiry Report, p.195, para.1.1-1.4). But how? Who guards the guardian? How can the press regain its trust? What does this spell for democracy? These were some of the questions asked, as politicians, journalists, the police, the judiciary and other citizens deliberated on how to ensure a viable press: one that can sustain rather than destroy democracy. Thus, the media became an arena to discuss some of the tensions in the field



of journalism. In this section, I give some background information on the key issues that dominated this debate, beginning with the subject of press freedom.

#### **4.1.1 Press freedom**

Press freedom refers to “that degree of freedom from restraint which is essential to enable proprietors, editors and journalists to advance the public interest” (Royal Commission of the Press 1977, cited in Frost 2007, p.43). It is essentially the creation of an enabling environment for the media to express opinion or publish articles without censorship. The history of press freedom in the United Kingdom is largely linked to the struggle against state suppression (Curran and Seaton 2010, p.1). Significant among the steps to press freedom in the UK were the abolition of the Court of Star Chamber in 1641, the end of press licensing in 1694, the Fox’s Libel Act of 1792 and the repeal of the ‘taxes on knowledge’ (tax on advertising, stamp duty, tax on paper) in the period 1853-1861. Studies claim that the press only became free at the tail end of these reforms (Ibid).

Some scholars argue that true freedom came when the press became financially independent and no longer depended on the government or political parties for subsidies (Roach, cited in Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.1-2). At the time of this study, press freedom in the United Kingdom was based on the human right to free expression. The right to free expression in the UK as spelt out in the Human Rights Act of 1998 was derived from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Article 10 of the ECHR states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. The right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interest of national security, territorial integrity or public safety.

This Article protects the right to express as well as receive opinions and information. Freedom of expression is the foundation of a good number of democratic rights. For instance, it empowers the public to express their views in debates that could influence policy decisions. Freedom of expression, and by extension freedom of the press, also enables journalists to investigate and expose corrupt practices by the powerful in society. Examples are Bob Woodward's and Carl Bernstein's exposure of the Watergate scandal (Bernstein and Woodward 1974; Foerstel 2001); the BBC's *Panorama* exposure of abuse of patients at Winterbourne View in Bristol, UK (*BBC News* 2011), and the role played by *Guardian* newspaper in exposing the extent of phone hacking at the *News of the World* (Davies 2014). Thus, freedom of expression is integral to the sustenance of democracy and good governance.

It is worthy of note that freedom of expression comes with responsibilities for all concerned (Human Rights Act 1998). For democracy to thrive, each beneficiary must not overstep his or her bounds in freedom of expression. The state must not censor the press needlessly and must protect the right to freedom of expression by the media. This is very important if the media is to fulfil its role as the watchdog of society (checking on the powerful to ensure they are accountable to society). The media must be free to access relevant information from public office holders, private organisations and other people in positions of authority, and should disseminate the news gathered to members of the public (Frost 2007, p.40). The right of members of the public to express their views on this matter should also be protected. Protection of press freedom by the state must be accompanied by a commensurate protection of the right to freedom of expression by individuals. The press, for its part, must respect the citizens' right to privacy.

However, as mentioned earlier in this study, the press has often been accused of abusing its freedom by way of invasion of privacy and defamation of character. Many have asked whether "the media have gone too far, too often" especially since the death of Princess Diana in August 1997 (Sartore 2000, p.49; Beveridge and King 2001, p.88; *BBC News* 2005) and more recently, with the hacking of the phones of some members of the public by the *News of the World*. Article 10 (2) of the 1998 Human Rights Acts has some

guidelines in place to check the abuse of freedom of expression. There are laws in place for the protection of the freedom of others. For example, the law on defamation allows the award of compensation if a person's reputation has been dented (e.g. Cameron Diaz and the *Sun*, 2005; see *Guardian* 2005, n.p.). There is also a law against the interception of private communication through covert means such as hidden cameras, computer hacking etc. (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000). These laws, though not solely for the press are being used to ensure that the media do not overstep their bounds in the exercise of their freedom. However, the media can be exempted from obeying these laws when their actions are in "the public interest" (Beales 2012, p.86). This is where the controversy lies: what constitutes the 'public interest'?

#### **4.1.2 The public interest**

In democratic societies, the duty of the press is often articulated in terms of "the public's right to know" (Frost 2007, p.37). For instance, if government officials are misappropriating funds under their control or a business outfit is defrauding its customers, the press has an obligation to let the public know about it. If the only means of getting this information is through covert means, then the media would not be considered as having broken the law by using such means. That is because the news gathered was in the public interest (for the benefit of the public). Journalists are, by the Editors' Code of Practice (Beales 2012, p.86) and by law, allowed to indulge in some otherwise unlawful acts when they are being done in the public interest.

However, this 'public interest' clause that journalists fall back on has often been "used and abused" (Leveson Inquiry 2012). Over the years, the public interest has come to mean things that are of interest to the public; in other words, things that satisfy the public's prurient interests and thereby boost the sales, viewership or readership of the news product (Frost 2007, p.37). The debate is on where to draw the line in the public interest defence. So, what is the public interest? The meaning of the term is fluid and has been the focus of a good number of journalistic debates. In fact, the Editors' Codebook (Beales 2012, p.86) says "...the public interest is impossible to define. So, the code does not

attempt to do so.” What it did instead was to list out what it described as “a non-exhaustive list” of what is in the public interest. They include:

- ❖ Detection or exposure of crime or serious impropriety;
- ❖ Protection of public health and safety;
- ❖ Prevention of the public from being misled; and
- ❖ Upholding freedom of expression.

The *Guardian's* Editorial Code (Guardian Media Group 2011, p.4) is not much different in its explanation of what is meant by the public interest. The *Guardian* updated its editorial code (including the section on privacy) in the aftermath of the phone hacking scandal and came up with a list of principles on what can be classified as being in the public interest. The list which was drawn up by Sir David Omand, the former head of security and intelligence at the Cabinet Office states thus:

There must be sufficient cause – the intrusion needs to be justified by the scale of potential harm that might result from it.

There must be integrity of motive – the intrusion must be justified in terms of the public good that would follow from publication.

The methods used must be in proportion to the seriousness of story and its public interest, using the minimum possible intrusion.

There must be proper authority – any intrusion must be authorised at a sufficiently senior level and with appropriate oversight.

There must be a reasonable prospect of success; fishing expeditions are not justified - (Ibid).

The guideline acknowledges that much of journalism is essentially intrusive and urged its staff to avoid invading people’s privacy unless there is a clear public interest in doing so. The newspaper stressed that “proportionality is essential, as is proper prior consideration where privacy issues may be involved” (*Guardian* news and media editorial Code, August 2011, p.4) The list of guidelines on the public interest by the press, though helpful in checking the abuse of the public interest, still leaves a lot of room for controversy. It is not in all cases that a journalist can correctly ascertain “the seriousness of story”. For example, while the use of long focal lenses to take shots of a topless princess in a private holiday environment is obviously not a serious story (and not in the public

interest), it is not that clear to ascertain whether a journalist ought to be prosecuted for hacking the phone of a Member of Parliament, if he claims that he had reasons to suspect that the MP was involved in a criminal offence but only found out his suspicions were wrong after intercepting his phone messages? Similarly, while hacking telephone messages is a criminal offense, the public interest defence would have protected a journalist if, for example, Milly Dowler was found alive through information received from hacking into her voicemail.

Although, it would be reckless to suggest that all covert investigation carried out by journalists should be excused based on freedom of speech and the public interest, it is worthy of note that some stories of major public interest have been exposed by means of long focal lenses, deceit, bugging devices, false identities, trickery, and even computer hacking. An example is the exposure of patterns of serious abuse at the Winterbourne View care facility which was revealed through secret filming by BBC *Panorama* (*Panorama* 2011).

Scholars have queried the press' claim that it is impossible to define the public interest (Petley 2013a; Harding 2012a). For instance, Petley (2013a) argues that the claim is born out of "self-interest and self-regard". Petley posits that it is "perfectly possible to define the public interest (Ibid, pp.19 -42). By showing how the *BBC*, the *Guardian*, the judiciary, the Freedom of Information Act and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delineated and applied the public interest, Petley exposes the wider press' reluctance to define the public interest. According to Petley, the reason for this reluctance is because "certain newspapers tried to defend their thwarted attempts to intrude into people's privacy on the grounds that" that their actions were in the public interest (Ibid). Much of the debate on the public interest relates to invasions of privacy. How to strike a balance between protection of privacy and press freedom is one of the controversial issues in the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. The following subsection gives background information on privacy and its conflictual relationship with press freedom. The information is intended to facilitate an understanding of how the press represented issues of privacy and press freedom during the press reform debate.

### 4.1.3 Privacy and press freedom

Since the death of Princess Diana in 1997, there have been arguments in the UK about the extent to which the press report on the private lives of people (Petley 2013a, p.59). Aggravated by the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal, these arguments sought to answer the question 'how far can the press go in publishing private information about individuals and how far can the individual go in claiming the right to privacy?' Privacy is recognised both legally and philosophically as a basic human need (Barendt 2002, pp.14-15; Mill [1859], cited in Petley 2013a, pp.59-60; Frost 2015, p.93). In the words of Barendt, privacy is important because:

It provides a space for individuals to think for themselves and to engage in creative activity, free from observation and supervision...personal relationships could not develop if the participants felt that every move was watched and reported... Privacy is an aspect of human dignity and autonomy. It enables individuals to exercise a degree of independence or control over their lives. Privacy therefore entails rights to be alone and to keep confidential correspondence and other documents, and to ensure that intimate activity is not filmed or reported (Barendt 2002, pp.14-15).

Frost (2016, p.93) points out that human dignity requires the ability of people to control information about themselves. He argues that if individuals are to have a right to dignity, then they will need a right to respect for privacy. Respect to privacy is a fundamental human right (Human Rights Act 1998; Barendt 2002; Petley 2013a; Frost 2015) tailored after the right to respect for private and family life, guaranteed by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Human Rights Act 1998 states:

Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. There shall be no interference by public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interest of national security, public safety or economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedom of others – (Human Rights Act 1998, Chapter 42, Schedule 1, Article 8).

This means that a person whose privacy is invaded has the legal right to sue the culprit for invasion of privacy. Invasion of privacy refers to an intrusion into the private life of another person, without a justifiable reason (Human Rights Act 1998). Invasion of privacy can be applied to different forms of private information dissemination including internet privacy, data collection and workplace monitoring. Although, there is no clear-cut privacy law in the UK, there are ways in which privacy is protected (Fenwick 2007, p.991; Fenwick et al. 2007; p.171; Hoffman 2011, p.148). The most popular is the law of breach of confidence, which allows for the protection of confidential information (Crone 2002, p.89; Kenyon and Richardson 2006, p.154). Other laws used to protect privacy include laws on defamation, malicious falsehood, trespass and nuisance.

There are also statutes that protect privacy in certain situations. These include the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions 2012, p.10). Many scholars (Kenyon and Richardson 2006, p.154; Fenwick 2007, p.991; Hoffman 2011, pp.137) have argued that there may be a need for an outright privacy law in the UK but the courts appear to be reluctant to create one based on the argument that existing laws would suffice. Supporting this view, the report of the 2012 Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the House of Lords on Privacy and Injunctions states:

A privacy statute would not clarify the law. The concepts of privacy and the public interest are not set in stone, and evolve over time. We conclude that the current approach, where judges balance the evidence and make a judgment on a case-by-case basis, provides the best mechanism for balancing article 8 and article 10 rights (Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions 2012, p.5).

The application of this right to privacy relates basically to non-public individuals who feel that their right to privacy has been infringed upon. Often, celebrities are not granted protection because they are considered to have voluntarily placed themselves within the public eye (Frost 2007, p.91; Kenyon and Richardson 2006, p.154). For instance, in the case of *Ferdinand v. Mirror Group Newspapers*, Rio Ferdinand, a one-time captain of the England national football team, took legal action against the *Sunday Mirror* for infringing

his right to a private life and misusing his personal information. In this case, Ferdinand's public image and role model status meant there was a public interest in the newspaper's disclosure, sufficient to justify the publication, and Ferdinand lost the case. Though many celebrities have sought damages for privacy infringement, only a few have won their cases (Frost 2007, p.91; Kenyon and Richardson 2006, p.154). Naomi Campbell won her privacy case against Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN).<sup>1</sup> The judgment left the Mirror facing a total legal bill of more than one million pounds (*BBC News* 2004; Gibson 2004). The European Court of Human Rights later ruled that the legal cost *Daily Mirror* had to pay was too high and that a balance be struck between privacy and press freedom (Halliday 2011, n.p.).

Some analysts have argued that the high legal cost is an impediment to freedom of expression (Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions 2012b, p.5). The defunct *News of the World* was required to pay Max Mosley damages of £60,000, along with a proportion of Mr Mosley's legal costs (Mosley v MGN [2008] EWHC 1777) while Mirror Group Newspapers spent £160,000 defending Rio Ferdinand's case (Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions 2012, p.34, para.130). According to the Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions (2012, p.333), "excessive costs limit the ability of newspapers and broadcasters to respond to threatened legal action and can result in them not challenging an injunction on the ground of cost" (Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions 2012, p.36, para 138). The high cost of libel cases, some critics argue, serves to stifle freedom of expression in public debates thereby "restricting comment and leading to premature or unnecessary settlements of defamation actions" (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2012, p.333).

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell v. Mirror Group Newspapers: Miss Campbell sued MGN for a breach of her privacy after it published a report about her drug addiction with a photograph of her leaving a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in King's Road, Chelsea. In March 2002 (a year from the month of publication), the model successfully claimed breach of privacy and the High Court ordered £3,500 damages from the Mirror. Though an Appeal Court judgement overturned the High Court ruling in October 2002, ordering her to pay the paper's £350,000 legal costs, in May 2004 the House of Lords overturned the Appeal Court's decision, reinstating the High Court judgement and damages, based on breach of confidentiality and breach of duty under the 1998 Data Protection Act.



There is also the argument that high legal costs would impede investigative journalism and restrain the press from fulfilling its watchdog role in society, a situation which they say is detrimental to the survival of democracy (Beattie 2012, n.p.; Hume 2013a, p.27). Meanwhile, huge fines of up to one million pounds are one of the plans made by the British government to tame an “irresponsible press”, as contained in the recently instituted Royal Charter on press regulation. The Charter states that a new regulator for the press will have powers to fine errant newspapers up to the tune of one million pounds (DCMS and Miller 2013b). Ironically, the press’ own new regulatory body, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) also proposed and included fines of up to one million pounds as part of its penalties for “serious or systemic’ wrongdoing” (IPSO 2016a).

There are also concerns about the impact of high legal costs for members of the public who need to claim their right to privacy. There have been complaints that only the rich, including celebrities and political office holders, have access to privacy protection because of the high legal costs involved (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2012, p.332). The issue becomes “what is the best action for the government to take (or not take) to protect both the right to privacy and freedom of the press?” The Leveson Inquiry discussed high legal costs both on the part of journalists and on citizens. Its proposals on these costs formed part of the issues of contention in the press reform debate. The press reform debate also featured arguments on the impact of media ownership on press standards, particularly, its effect on the press’ ability to fulfil its role in a democracy. The following section x-rays key arguments on the relationship between media ownership and the sustenance of democracy. The issue of media ownership is not only important as a subject of the debate but also as a factor to consider in the analysis of its coverage. Knowledge of the key arguments will help us understand the debate as well as enable us to comprehend the aspects of my analysis of media representation that relate to media ownership.

#### 4.1.4 Concentration of Media Ownership

The concentration of media ownership refers to a situation in which the bulk of the mass media is increasingly being controlled (in terms of shares) by a small number of persons or organisations (Fourie, 2001, p.112; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.75-76). Studies have revealed that there are increasing levels of concentration of media ownership in most Western democracies (Doyle 2002, pp.2-6; Baker 2007, p.3; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.75-76). This is the result of big media industries buying up smaller and weaker ones who were unable to survive the economic downturn in the media industry (Bagdikian 2004). The aim was often to take over their resources and thereby increase financial gains, readership/viewership and, invariably, power. From about the 20th century most Western democracies began to identify this growing media concentration as a threat to democracy (Baker 2007, p.3) and a number of them adopted policies to check the trend. These policies, which were aimed at supporting press diversity, took the form of competition laws or subsidy arrangements for weaker/potentially viable media (Ibid). This was, however, insufficient to stop the trend in concentration of media ownership. A look at the ownership of the newspapers in my study sample will give us a picture of the level of media ownership concentration in the UK. This information will also be useful in my analysis of the coverage of media ownership in Chapter 7.

The *Sun* newspaper is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News UK which also owns *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and the *Sun on Sunday* newspapers (News UK, 2015). The *Daily Mail* is owned by Viscount Rothemere owner of DMG Media (formerly Associated Newspapers), a subsidiary of DMGT (DMG Media 2017a). DMG Media also owns the *Mail on Sunday*, *Metro*, *Wowcher*, *Jobsite* and *Jobrapido*" (Cole and Harcup 2009, p 85; DMG Media 2017b). Though the owner of *Daily Mail* delegates substantial management of the paper, including the management of its content, to an editor in chief", who at the time of this study was Paul Dacre, the paper has not functioned much differently from newspapers without that level of apparent detachment in terms of commercialisation (Cole and Harcup 2009, p.85). The *Daily Telegraph* belongs to the Telegraph Media Group (formerly, the Telegraph) which is owned by the Barclay Brothers (Cole and Harcup 2009, pp.87-

88; Telegraph Media Group 2017). The Barclay Brothers, David and Fredrick Barclay also own the *Sunday Telegraph* (Telegraph Media Group 2017).

The *Daily Mirror* is owned by Trinity Mirror. As at 2017, Trinity Mirror was Britain's largest newspaper group with more than 150 newspaper titles across the UK and Ireland. Its portfolio of newspapers includes the *Sunday Mirror*, *Daily Record*, *Sunday People* and *Sunday Mail* (Cole and Harcup 2009, pp.85-86; Trinity Mirror 2013). The *Daily Express* belongs to Richard Desmond's Northern and Shell company which also owns *Sunday Express*, *Daily Star* and *Daily Star Sunday* alongside three magazines: *OK!*, *New!* and *Star* (Cole and Harcup 2009, pp.85-86; Trinity Mirror Media Brands 2013; Plunkett 2016; Northern and Shell 2017). And the *Guardian* is funded by the Scott Trust Ltd, owners of Guardian Media Group (GMG). During the period covered by this study (2011 - 2013), they owned *Guardian* newspaper and its Sunday title, the *Observer*. Though Guardian Media Group sold its regional media business to Trinity Mirror in 2010 (Davoudi 2010), it still has "a diverse portfolio of business investments" (Guardian Media Group 2015, n.p.). The Media Reform Coalition summarised media ownership figures in the UK:

70% of the UK national market is controlled by just three companies (News UK [former News International], Daily Mail and General Trust, and Trinity Mirror), with Rupert Murdoch's News UK fully holding a third of the entire market share.

55% of national radio listenership is held by the BBC's channels, however news content for almost all commercial radio stations is provided by Sky News, giving them 43% of the national audience share for radio – (Media Reform Coalition 2014)

In a more recent report, the Media Reform Coalition stated:

Just three companies dominate 71% of the national newspaper market.... When online readers are included, just five companies dominate some 80% of market share. In the area of local news, six giant conglomerates account for 80% of all titles while the 50-plus publishers have less than 20% of the remaining titles (Media Reform Coalition 2015).

Surprisingly, despite the increasing rate of concentration of media ownership, it did not take a prime position in the debate at the Leveson Inquiry leading to it being described

by the Media Reform Coalition as “the elephant in the room” (Media Reform Coalition 2014). It is widely acknowledged that concentration of media ownership is dangerous to the health of democracy (Doyle 2002, p.6) because it can result in “abuse of political power by media owners or the under-representation of some significant viewpoints” (Ibid). One way to scrutinize key arguments on press ownership is to explore its political economy.

#### **4.1.5 Political economy of the press**

Political economy, in its original usage, referred to a critical approach to economic analysis “that addressed the production and consumption of resources used to sustain human existence” (Hardy 2014a, p.4). There are different forms of political economy analysis (see Hardy 2014, pp. xii – xiv; Freedman 2014, p.24). The focus of this study is on critical political economy (CPE). Critical political economy “refers to approaches that place emphasis on the unequal distribution of power and are critical of arrangements whereby such inequalities are sustained and reproduced” (Hardy 2014, p.6). This locates it within the territories of the social democratic ideology (see Chapter 2). Its goals can be traced to “classical democratic theory’s insistence that democracy is based on informed, participating citizenry” (Ibid, p.8). It asserts “that such political culture can only be generated by a more diverse, democratised media system” (Ibid).

CPE challenges the neoliberal political economy of the press (Hardy 2014, p. xiv) by questioning the ability of corporate-owned media to enhance democracy. CPE, henceforth referred to simply as political economy, is often associated with left-wing socialist views of capitalism (McChesney 2008, p.13) while right-wingers are more likely to be sympathetic towards the neoliberal tradition of political economy (Springer et al. 2016, pp.65-70). In this subsection, I give background information on the key debates on media ownership by comparing the political economy critique of media ownership with its neoliberal counterpart.

#### **4.1.6 Political economy of media ownership: CPE and neoliberalism**

In media studies, political economy refers to a critical approach to media analysis that investigates “how media and communication systems and content are shaped by ownership, market structures, commercial support, technologies, labour practices, and government policies” (McChesney 2008, p.12; Murdock and Golding 2005, cited in Freedman 2014, p.24; Freedman 2014, p.24). The key focus of the political economy analysis is to ascertain whether media structures serve to promote or undermine democracy, and to explore and recommend ways of ensuring a media structure that enhances democracy (Hardy 2014). Lazarsfeld and Merton ([1948] 2004, p.236, cited in Freedman 2014, p.50) highlighted “the importance of investigating mass media in relation to specific economic structures in which they operate.

Lazarsfeld and Merton argued that “the social effect of the media will vary as the system of ownership and control varies” (Lazarsfeld and Merton [1948] 2004, p.236, cited in Freedman 2014, p.50). The political economy critique theorises that democracy is threatened where there is a concentration of media ownership (Lazarsfeld and Merton [1948] 2004, p.236, cited in Freedman 2014, p.50). It argues that when only a few people own much of the media, it could result in the dominance of a few voices in debates in the media’s public sphere (Freedman 2014, p.51). The media content could be tailored to suit the ideology of the owner and where the owner has a high percentage of the media, his or her views become the most heard, giving his or her perspective undue advantage over others (McChesney 2004, p.224).

An example is the case of Italy’s former Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi (Baker 2007, p.18). Without any connection to organised political parties in Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, one of Italy’s richest individuals at the time, formed his own party – Forza Italia, and used his massive media power (his media at the time controlled about 45 per cent of national T.V along with important print media) to propel himself into the position of Prime Minister in the 1994 and 2001 elections, heading Italy’s longest-lasting government since World War II (Ginsborg 2004; Baker 2007, p.18). In terms of debates on media policy, the

political economy critique would argue that concentration of ownership could limit the chances of having a democratic public sphere because the perspectives of the few owners may dominate the journalistic metadiscourse.

On the other hand, neoliberal analysts argue that though media ownership is oligopolistic, the quest for profit will compel media owners to target diverse consumers and, as such, one owner may not necessarily transmit the same perspective via all his media outlets (Doyle 2002, pp.12-14; Schlosberg 2017, p.5). An example that fits into such an argument is Rupert Murdoch who owns both *The Times* newspaper, a quality newspaper, and the *Sun*, a tabloid. Although both are right-leaning newspapers, they serve different target audiences.

Neoliberal analysts contend that diversity of ownership will not axiomatically translate into diversity of media content (Doyle 2002, pp.12-14). This is because where different media organisations depend on the same source for their news content, the perspectives may be from a narrow spectrum of sources. For example, where many media organisations depend on copy from news agencies, press releases and public relations material for news, they end up churning out the same messages (Davies 2009, pp.58-60; Carlson 2012a, p.98; Harcup 2014, p.53), making news content from diverse media very similar (Marr, cited in Franklin 1997, p.5; Ritzer 2015). The argument here is that emphasis should be placed on ensuring diversity of media content not ownership.

The political economy analysis also sees as anti-democratic, the increasing media ownership mergers and convergence in most liberal democracies, such as in the US and the UK. Media convergence refers to a situation in which one media group operates different forms of mass media, e.g. broadcast and print, either through cross-media ownership acquisitions or other forms of expansion (Doyle 2002, p.3). The political economy critical tradition argues that these mergers could result in conflicts of interest because some news organisations may find it difficult to give a comprehensive and fair report about a media outfit that it is affiliated to (Christopher 2007, p.42). For instance,

The *Sun* newspaper may have found it hard to report freely about the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal because Rupert Murdoch owned both titles.

Conflict of interest resulting from a concentration of ownership can also result in large sections of the press using their gatekeeping powers to limit or exclude from journalistic metadiscourse issues that they consider to be against their owner or his interest. For instance, the issue of concentration of media ownership could receive minimal attention from debates on media policy because it may be perceived as being against the corporate interest of media owners (McChesney 2008; Bachrach and Baratz 1962, pp.948-952, cited in Freedman 2014, p.66). This agrees with Mill's (1959, p.18, cited in Freedman 2014, p.33) argument that [media] power can be exhibited not only in action, but also in failure to act. Previous studies have argued that the issue of concentration of media ownership has remained off limits in journalistic metadiscourse (McChesney 2008; Freedman 2014, p.73).

The neoliberal ideology of the press assumes that media owners are not involved in daily supervision of the content of their papers. For instance, *Daily Mail's* owner claims that he "delegates substantial management of the paper, including the management of its content, to an editor in chief" (Cole and Harcup 2009, p.85). However, studies have shown that newspaper proprietors do interfere with news content either directly or by employing staff they believe will toe their line of argument (Cole and Harcup 2009, pp.27-28; Curran and Seaton 2010, Chapter 5) or even by nominating their children as chair and members of the board. The level of treatment or lack of treatment of the issue of media ownership in journalistic metadiscourse may differ from media outfit to media outfit depending on their structure – their revenue or ownership model (see Chapter 7).

For instance, commercially owned press may respond to issues of ownership differently to non-commercial media. This calls for attention to be placed not only on the plurality of ownership but also on diversity in ownership structure. Media organisations who feel threatened by bigger media conglomerates could call for more robust policies to guarantee plurality in ownership. From a neoliberal perspective, the aim would be for

government to intervene by ensuring fair competition among media owners. While this could be classed under social democracy because it attempts to enhance democracy by ensuring plurality of media ownership, Freedman (2014, p.72) argues that it can also be neoliberal when the aim is to protect business not democracy.

From the neoliberal perspective, the 'lack of plurality' critique of media ownership has become obsolete with the coming of the internet (Compaine 2000, 2001, 2005; Benkler 2006, cited in Hardy 2014, p. xiv; Jarvis 2009, cited in Freedman 2014, p.6). Scholars with this perspective claim that "objectionable concentration" no longer exists because digital technology has made it easier for citizens to set up news websites, blogs, twitter and other online platforms from which the public can source information (Compaine 2001, 2005; McChesney 2008, pp.16–18; Jarvis 2009, cited in Freedman 2014, p.6; Schlosberg 2017, pp.36-39). In their view, regulation of ownership beyond that which is currently provided is not necessary (Baker 2007, pp.87-88). Those with this perspective reject current popular worries about concentration of media ownership, contending that the internet will break it up and eliminate any need for regulation aimed at ensuring diversity in ownership (Compaine and Gomery 2000; Anderson 2009, cited in Freedman 2014, p.13).

But political economy critics contend that even though the internet (social media, twitter, Facebook, blogs etc.) plays a role in promoting diversity in general media content, when it comes to news, people still rely more on mainstream media (Lee-Wright et al. 2012, p.151). This argument supports data from empirical studies which reveal that readership of news on the internet is much higher on the mainstream media websites than on other websites (Ofcom market data research 2012). For instance, *Mail Online* was the most visited website in the world in 2012 and its readership has continued to increase, since then (comScore, cited in Greenslade 2012a; Turvill 2016). It can, therefore, be argued that the 'old' media owners are also very powerful in the 'new' media. According to Baker (2007, p.99), the contributions of the internet "are different from or are complementary to, and may often be in part dependent on the more traditional performance of the mass media". As mentioned in Chapter 2, scholars have raised an alarm that there is a growing concentration in the ownership of corporate online websites, such as Google, Amazon and



Facebook, and have expressed fears that concentration of media ownership is being reproduced on internet platforms (McChesney 2008, pp.18-19; Freedman 2014, pp.113-114; Schlosberg 2017, p.4). Freedman puts it this way:

Far from diminishing the importance of media moguls and tech giants, announcing the death of gatekeepers or lauding the autonomy of the public, we should be investigating the way the [media ownership] power is being reconstituted inside digital landscape (Freedman 2014, p.107).

Political economists contend that the internet does not eliminate worries concerning concentration of media ownership and that media-specific laws and regulatory policies are still needed to check ownership concentration (Baker 2007, pp.99-101; Freedman 2014, p.12 -13). Currently, in most Western democracies there are policies designed to promote plurality of media ownership but in some countries, such as the UK, critics argue that the anti-monopoly measures on media ownership are too weak to guarantee plurality of media ownership (Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.328-338). They argue that British anti-monopoly rules would need to be further strengthened to enable plurality of media ownership (O'Carroll 2012; Freedman 2013). Neoliberals counter these arguments by insisting that an active audience plus press self-regulatory bodies would suffice to ensure that the media serve the public interest and are accountable to their readers (see Chapter 2). But as the Leveson Inquiry demonstrated, the then-existing press regulatory body, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) was not living up to expectations in its role as regulator of press misconduct.

Contributing to the debate on how to better regulate the press, Freedman (2013b, n.p.) argues that changing the culture of the UK press requires much more than “better codes and a more forceful means of persuading newspapers to play by the rules...but will involve a challenge to an ownership structure that has placed the press in the hands of a tiny group of oligarchs and moguls”. As discussed earlier in this study, Alan Rusbridger, the then editor-in-chief of *Guardian* newspaper also warned of the danger of not giving adequate attention to media ownership. He advised the inquiry to consider the

"significant dangers to democracy" of media power being concentrated in too few hands (O'Carroll 2012).

From the literature examined in this subsection, it can be argued that the structure of media ownership can impact on news content. The structure of ownership can determine what concerns are allowed in through the gates of the public sphere and what is denied access; who gets to speak and whose voice is marginalised; and how issues are represented in journalistic metadiscourse. This information will be useful in my analysis of how the debate on media ownership was covered by the press. I am of the view that arguments about how to achieve plurality of news content ought to go beyond advocating plurality of owners and one pattern of ownership to diversity of ownership structure (e.g. diversity of revenue generation models). This study investigates the impact of the structure of ownership on the way the debate on press reform was covered by the press. Another major issue of concern in the press reform debate was the issue of how the press should be regulated, if at all. In the following subsection, I explore literature on press regulation in the UK. This will provide the background information needed for the comprehension of arguments relating to press regulation later in this study.

#### **4.1.7 Press regulation: who guards the guardian?**

The setting up of an inquiry on press standards with a mandate to propose an effective press regulatory system, did not begin with the Leveson Inquiry. For the past seventy years, a number of commissions have made proposals targeted at ensuring an accountable press. These include the 1949, 1962 and 1977 press commissions along with two Calcutt Committees (Royal Commission on the press 1949; Royal Commission on the press 1962; Frost 2007, pp.225–235; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.327–328; Harcup 2014, p.46). The commissions which were triggered by press misconduct resulted in what some scholars described as weak reforms that could not guarantee a democratic press (Frost 2007; Curran and Seaton 2010, p.338). So, with the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry came a perceived opportunity to correct seventy years

of an apparent ineffective press regulatory system in Britain (Leveson Inquiry executive summary 2012, p.3, para. 1).

The British press operates a system of self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to a system where an industry sets up a body to “control standards in the industry” (Frost 2007, p.214). Such a body serves as a way of proving to their consumers that they are maintaining high standards. However, this does not appear to have worked well for the British press. Many people have condemned the ethical standards of the press in Britain (Frost 2007; Curran and Seaton 2010; Petley 2013a; 2013b). There has been a barrage of accusations on invasion of privacy, inaccurate reporting and other forms of malpractice (Pratt 1979, pp.97-98; Spark and Harris 2010, p.193).

Some have called for statutory regulation of the British Press (O’Malley and Soley 2000, p.178; ; Frost 2007, p.236; Curran and Seaton 2010, p.334). Statutory regulation is a system of regulation that is set up by law and supported by government (Frost 2007, p.250). The British press has continued to oppose statutory regulation of the press. The Council (which became the Press Council from 1963) was reluctantly set up in 1953 following threats of statutory regulation resulting from harmful journalism practices (Curran and Seaton 2010, p.334). Further threats led to the setting up of the Code of Conduct for journalists and after fresh threats the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) was set up in 1991 (Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.334-335). The PCC was described by many as “lacking teeth” (effectiveness) and ambition (Bertrand 2003, p.145; Curran and Seaton 2010, p.335; Leveson Inquiry 2012, p.555, para.3.34).

Lord Justice Leveson in his inquiry into the practices, culture and ethics of the media declared that the PCC had failed in its responsibility as a self-regulatory organ of the press (Leveson Inquiry executive summary 2012, p.12, paras.41-46). Several commentators agree that the PCC failed as a regulator (Bloy 2012, pp.19-20; Carney 2012, p.323). The PCC’s investigation of the phone hacking scandal at the *News of the World* is a case in point (MediaWise 2010, p.3, para.3.01). For instance, when Clive Goodman, the *News of the World* Royal correspondent, and Glen Mulcaire, a private detective employed by the

newspaper, were jailed for phone hacking, the PCC investigated the use of subterfuge, phone tapping and compliance with the Editors' Code of Practice.

The PCC's report was widely criticised as a "whitewash" (Bloy 2012, p.18). Andy Coulson resigned as Editor of the *News of the World* and, on that basis, it was concluded that he was no longer answerable to the PCC because its jurisdiction covered only journalists working for publications that subscribed to the self-regulatory system. Later, it took the courts to cross-examine and find Andy Coulson guilty of plotting to intercept voicemails between 2000 and 2006. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison (*BBC News* 2014b). Lord Justice Leveson proposed that the PCC be replaced by a new independent regulatory body underpinned by statute (Leveson Inquiry executive summary 2012, paras.41-46). The PCC was closed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 and the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) which describes itself as "the independent regulator for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK" began on the same day (PCC 2017; IPSO 2016a). The PCC website described IPSO as a replacement of the PCC (PCC 2017). IPSO was not underpinned by statute (IPSO 2016a).

Lord Justice Leveson's recommendation led to the setting up of the Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press in 2013, following negotiations and heated debates involving the three main political parties in the country at the time (the Conservatives who were in a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, and the Labour Party), Hacked Off (a campaign organisation representing victims of press abuse), and representatives of the press (*BBC News* 2013a; Halliday and Sweney 2013, n.p.). A final version of the government's Royal Charter was published on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 and approved by the Privy Council on 30 October 2013 (Article 19 2013; *BBC News* 2013d; DCMS and Miller 2013a, n.p.). The new independent regulator cannot be amended without the approval of a two-thirds majority of the House of Lords and the House of Commons (DCMS and Miller 2013b, pp.5-6, para.10). On the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, IMPRESS became the first press regulator to be recognized by the Press Recognition Panel of the Royal Charter on Press Self-Regulation (IMPRESS 2016; *Press Gazette*, 25 October 2016).

This subsection has provided brief background information on press regulation in the UK. This information is intended to facilitate an understanding of my analysis of how the press covered the debate on press regulation (see Section 2). The next subsection examines highlights of the Leveson Inquiry, especially, aspects that are relevant to this study. Though my focus is on how the press covered the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, it is also important that the reader understands the content of the debate. A knowledge of the content will promote an understanding of how it was covered. Many of the arguments in this study relate to the Leveson Inquiry and, as such, a basic knowledge on the Leveson Inquiry and its proposal on press regulation will also help us better understand this debate.

## **4.2 The Leveson inquiry**

The Leveson Inquiry was set up by the British government on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 to investigate the role of the press and the police in the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal (National Archive, Leveson Inquiry 2012). The scope of the inquiry, however, went beyond the scandal to include broader issues of press and police accountability. The two-part inquiry was triggered by public outrage against the *News of the World* for its involvement in wide-scale phone hacking, particularly, the hacking of the mobile phone of the murdered school girl known as Milly Dowler (Leveson 2012, p.3, para. 1; see Chapter 1). This study is mainly concerned with the debate that arose from the first part of the inquiry (the second part was yet to take place at the time of this study). The inquiry which began on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 had as its mandate, an inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press, particularly, its relationship with the public, the police, and politicians. Henceforth, I shall simply refer to this part of the inquiry (Part 1) as ‘the Leveson inquiry’.

The Leveson inquiry has been described as “the most concentrated look at the press” the UK has ever known (Leveson 2012, p.3, para.3). In a space of about nine months, 337 witnesses gave evidence in person in addition to about 300 whose statements were read into the record (Ibid). Among them were victims of press abuse, newspaper reporters,

management and proprietors as well as police officers and politicians. The inquiry's report which was released on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2012, contained proposals for future press regulation of the UK. I do not attempt to capture all information in the 2000-page report but will highlight those aspects that are relevant, as background to this study.

#### **4.2.1 The Leveson proposal: press regulation**

In the inquiry's report, Lord Justice Leveson recommended a system of press regulation referred to as independent self-regulation. This system requires the establishment of an independent regulatory body which should promote high standards of journalism and protect the rights of individuals. In the words of Lord Justice Leveson, the independent self-regulatory body should:

Set standards, both through a code and in relation to governance and compliance...hear individual complaints against its members about breach of its standards and order appropriate redress while encouraging individual newspapers to embrace a more rigorous process for dealing with complaints internally; take an active role in promoting high standards, including having the power to investigate serious or systemic breaches and impose appropriate sanctions; and provide a fair, quick and inexpensive arbitration service to deal with any civil law claims based upon its members' publications (Leveson 2012f, pp.14-15, paras.56-57).

The appointment of the chairman and members of the independent regulatory body should be independent (Leveson 2012f, p.15, para.58). This, he said, can be achieved through the establishment of an independent appointments panel which can include one current editor but should have a substantial majority of persons who are independent of both press and government (Ibid). However, it should include a sufficient number of people with experience of the industry, such as former editors and senior or academic journalists (Leveson 2012f, p.15, para.59). Those who cannot serve on the board are serving editors or members of the House of Commons or the government. The appointment process should be fair and open (Ibid).

According to the Leveson Report, funding for the new regulatory body should “be agreed between the regulatory body and the industry with security of funding over a reasonable planning period” (Ibid). This ought to take into account, “the cost of fulfilling the obligations of the regulator as well as the commercial pressures on the industry” (Ibid). This system would also require the setting up of a Code Committee whose role would be to advise the new regulator on the promulgation of a code of practice for the industry. This committee, according to the inquiry’s report, should include serving editors and engage with the public to review the code (Leveson 2012f, p.15, para.60). The report also suggested that the new regulatory body be encouraged to deal with complaints even where there is an option of legal action (Leveson 2012f, p.15, para.61). It is also to issue warning notifications to the press on behalf of persons who become “subjects of unwanted press intrusion, and ensure that newspapers are held accountable for all material they print” no matter from where it is sourced (Ibid).

Lord Justice Leveson recommended that the new independent self-regulatory body provide guidance on interpretation of “the public interest” (Leveson 2012f, p.15, para.62). This service will include offering “voluntary pre-publication advice to editors” in need of guidance on how to interpret “the public interest” in a particular case, before they take a decision on whether to publish the story (Ibid). This service is to be carried out without notifying the subject of the story (Ibid). The new independent self-regulatory body is also expected to create a whistle-blowing hotline as well as ensure that member organisations include a “conscience clause” in their employment contracts with journalists (Leveson 2012f, p.16, para.64). The “conscience clause” is meant to protect journalists who feel that they are being compelled to do things that are “unethical or against the code” (Ibid).

To encourage publishers to sign up to an acceptable self-regulatory establishment based on the inquiry’s guidelines, Lord Justice Leveson recommended that the independent regulatory body be given the power to provide an arbitration service that would be recognised by the courts (Leveson 2012f, p.16, paras.66- 67). Members of this arbitration

body, he suggested, should be retired judges or senior lawyers who are experts in media law and whose charges would be paid by the media outfit concerned (Ibid). They are to resolve disputes through cross-examination, striking out frivolous claims while resolving those with merit. The aim is to provide an incentive through the costs of civil litigation (Ibid).

The inquiry also recommended that if a publisher denies a claimant the opportunity of a cheap and fast arbitration because of his refusal to belong to the regulatory system, then the Civil Procedure Rules could give the court permission to deny that publisher its costs of litigation even if he wins the case, because resolving the issue could have been cheaper for all parties involved if the publisher had signed up with the regulator (Ibid). On the other hand, if a newspaper that refused to subscribe to the new regulatory body is found guilty of infringing the rights of a claimant, such a newspaper would be subjected to payment of exemplary damages (Leveson 2012f, p.16, para.68).

Similarly, if a claimant takes advantage of his or her financial power and compels a newspaper who is a member of the self-regulatory body into a litigation, that newspaper would have the right to argue that “having provided a recognised low cost arbitral route, that claimant, even if successful, should be deprived of costs”, because they refused the cheap route to justice offered by the proposed regulatory body (Leveson 2012f, p.17, para.69). Of all the recommendations made by the inquiry, what emerged as the most controversial was its suggestion that the proposed independent self-regulatory system be underpinned by legislation (Brock 2012; Cathcart and Grant 2012; Dodd and Hanna 2014; Hume 2013a; Leveson Report 2012f, p.17, para.70;). This became the nucleus of a number of arguments that followed the release of the Leveson Report and the subsequent formation of a Royal Charter on press self-regulation. The following subsection gives a synopsis of the existing literature on phone hacking and the Leveson Inquiry to make clear the contribution of this study to the broad literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and journalistic metadiscourse.



#### **4.2.2 The phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry: the broad literature**

This subsection is an exploration of the broad literature on the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. This snapshot of the relevant literature will demonstrate the need for this study. As stated in Chapter 1, the body of literature on the media coverage of the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry is still in its early stages. One reason for this is that at the time most of the works were written, the debate was still ongoing, and even at the time of this study it cannot be said to be completely over. The second part of the inquiry which is expected to examine the relationship between the press and the police is yet to take place, and there are doubts that it will (*BBC News* 2016a; Rigby 2015). So, the press reform debate which followed the phone hacking scandal cannot be said to be completely over. And a lot more has taken place since previous literature on the controversy were written. This study aspires to provide a more up-to-date and detailed version of the analysis of its coverage.

The existing body of literature on the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry comprises of debates on how to regulate the press (Bloy 2012; Brock 2012; Carney 2012; Freedman 2012; Keightley and Punathambekar 2012; Hume 2013a; Turner 2012; Cathcart 2013b; Fletcher 2013; Greenslade 2013d; Winston 2013; Schlosberg 2017); how this debate was covered by the press (Thomas and Finneman 2014; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Ramsay 2013; 2014; Freedman 2014); how journalism is and ought to be taught in the UK's Higher Institutions of Learning (Cathcart 2011; Petley 2012, pp.529-538; Harding 2012b) and narratives of the scandal and the Leveson Inquiry (Davies 2014). Analysts in related fields of practice have also written about the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry but mostly as a small part of a wider discussion (Phillips and Whannel 2013; Curtis et al. 2013).

Most of these works are based on views that have not been subjected to empirical studies. Only a few empirical studies have been done on how the media covered the phone hacking scandal and/or the Leveson Inquiry (Ramsay 2013; 2014; Carlson and Berkowitz

2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). At the time of this study, not many studies on this subject (media coverage of this debate) had gone beyond the stage of the Leveson Inquiry. While studies before the end of the inquiry are very useful, so much has happened after they were written that is worth studying – Sir Brian Leveson has presented his report; the press presented their own Royal Charter which was rejected; the government has set up the Royal Charter on press self-regulation which much of the press rejected and the press has set up its own IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation).

This study fills the gap in the body of literature on the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry by contributing to the currently scanty body of literature on the media coverage of the debate. It also provides statistical data to back up arguments on the study and adds to the theoretical framework on metajournalistic discourse. In the following segment, I take a closer look at the existing literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the ensuing debate. By examining how similar and different they are to this study, I intend to highlight this study's contribution to the body of literature on journalistic metadiscourse and particularly, its contribution to existing literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the press reform debate. In the following segment, I take a closer look at the existing literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the ensuing debate. By examining how similar and different they are to this study, I intend to highlight this study's contribution to the body of literature on journalistic metadiscourse and particularly, its contribution to existing literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the press reform debate.

The literature on how ethics are and ought to be taught on journalism courses across universities in the UK, which was often tagged "Teaching after Leveson" (CathCart 2011; Harding 2012b; Petley 2012, pp.529-538), disclosed that ethics was only a minor part of the accredited courses in the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) curriculum. It demonstrated that journalism students in UK were taught to know their boundaries in terms of press regulations and media law but were not necessarily taught ethics in detail. The concern of this aspect of the phone hacking scandal and Leveson inquiry literature is to examine whether teachers of journalism in the nation's

universities played a role in encouraging or averting such press misconducts as exemplified in the phone hacking scandal. The literature often proffered changes to how journalism is taught in Universities across Britain “after Leveson”.

For instance, after the seating of the Leveson Inquiry, Harding (2012b) carried out an empirical study on the teaching of journalism studies in the UK. The study which was done under the auspices of the NCTJ was aimed at finding out the views of stakeholders (including academics and media executives) in the industry on the teaching of journalism prior to the phone hacking scandal. Most of those interviewed were dissatisfied with how it had been done in the past and agreed that there is need for a change (Ibid). This, they argue, would require placing premium on the teaching of ethics in journalism courses across the UK. The study also showed that there was a wide consensus among stakeholders that revelations at the Leveson Inquiry on how ethics had been taught in journalism courses across the nation’s Universities dented the integrity of the teachers in particular, and the profession in general. Though a few academics expressed fears that the debate on ethics would lead to the stifling of good journalism, majority posited that “ethics do matter and matter a lot.” (Greenslade and Harding 2013, n.p.). Harding’s (2012b) recommendations included a mid-career ethical training for all journalists. Though how ethics are taught on journalism courses has implications for democracy; the literature differs from my study in the sense that the object under scrutiny is media studies practitioners and not practicing journalists.

Some practising journalists authored works on the scandal and the Leveson Inquiry but their focus was mostly on the narrative of the scandal or on the debate, not its media coverage (Dacre 2011; Keeble and Mair 2012, pp.6-15; Davies 2014). In line with Thompson’s (2000, p.36) observation that journalists and participants of scandals with some form of insider knowledge write books and articles that “retell the stories of particular scandals” from different points of view; The *Guardian*’s Nick Davies (2014) wrote *Hack Attack: How the truth caught up with Rupert Murdoch*; a book which gives an insider account of how the scandal at *News of the World* unfolded. Using the first-person narrative, Davies tells how he got wind of the unlawful activities that went on at *News of*

*the World* and how along with some lawyers, MPs and celebrities, he was able to hold *News of the World* and its owner, Rupert Murdoch to account (Ibid).

His work, which drew from exclusive interviews with private investigators, journalists, politicians, police officers and staff of the newspaper, tells of the unlawful activities that went on in the newsroom of *News of the World* (Ibid). Davies (2014, p.76) described in detail how private investigators hacked phones for journalists; how they listened to live calls and bribed the police for information. The work also tells of how News International (now News UK) attempted to cover up the extent of its involvement in phone hacking with lies and money; how press regulators shirked their responsibility and failed to call the newspaper's erring staff to account and how corrupt police officers broke official secrecy rules for money (Davies 2014). The author also narrates how politicians in power gave Rupert Murdoch privileged access to government allowing him and his staff to intimidate anyone who stood up to them (Ibid).

Davies' (2014) publication differs from this study in the sense that it is only a narrative of the controversy and does not show how the media covered it. This study acknowledges the relevance of this narrative to the body of literature on the scandal and does not attempt to replicate this effort. So, unlike Davies (2014), my work does not deal directly with the scandal but with the press reform debate that arose from it and how this debate was covered by the media. However, a basic knowledge of the scandal story will help the reader grasp the essence of the debate. So, a brief narrative of the scandal was given in the introductory chapter.

As earlier stated, a number of books in related fields of practice have also been written about the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry but mostly, as a small part of a wider discussion (Curtis et al. 2013; Phillips and Whannel 2013; Edward 2014; Marshall et al. 2014; Smartt 2014). For instance, Marshall et al. (2014) in their book, *Crime, Justice and the Media* gave the phone hacking scandal as an example of secondary victimization. This is a one-page explanation (Marshall et al. 2014, p.147) of media involvement in secondary victimization using the phone hacking as an example. It explained how victims

of phone hacking such as the murdered school girl, Milly Dowler; victims of the July 7 (2005) London bombings and celebrities were all sufferers of secondary victimization. Here, the scandal literature served as a tool for studies on the criminal justice system. In the field of law in particular, the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry have formed parts of larger discussions on Human Rights, privacy and defamation (Smartt 2014 pp.110-111).

There have been a few works written on how the media covered the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and/or the Leveson Inquiry. Very relevant among them are Thomas and Finneman's (2014) "Who watches the watchdogs? British newspaper meta-discourse on the Leveson Inquiry"; Carlson's (2014) "The emperor lost his clothes': Rupert Murdoch, *News of the World* and journalistic boundary work in the UK and USA"; and Ramsay's (2014) study on "How newspapers covered regulation after Leveson". As with this study, Carlson (2014) employed the notion of paradigm repair to analyse journalistic metadiscourse. By comparing the US press coverage of the phone hacking scandal with that of the UK, Carlson (2014) was able to show the differences in how the two countries used boundary work to articulate appropriate practices through their definition of deviant behaviour. He examined stories from 10 days - from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of July and the 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2011. The first five-day sample occurred after the announcement by News International (now News UK) on 7 July that it would close the *News of the World* in reaction to the scandal while the second five-day sample followed the 19<sup>th</sup> of July testimony of Rupert and James Murdoch before a parliamentary committee. From a total of 184 stories, (127 stories from the UK sample and 57 from the US) his study identified paradigmatic deviations between the UK and the US press understandings of appropriate journalistic norms and practices.

Thomas and Finneman (2013) skipped the phone hacking scandal to focus on the press coverage of the Leveson Inquiry. Also using the notion of paradigm repair, the authors explored how British newspapers covered the Leveson Inquiry from the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (the day David Cameron announced the inquiry's formation) to the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2012, one month after the end of the inquiry's hearing phase. Their study of 141 opinion articles

was aimed at showing how the press views its role in a democratic society. It revealed that the British press has “an institutional ideology that is quick to assert rights but largely resistant to notions of attendant responsibilities” (Ibid, p.172).

One point of departure between my study and those of Thomas and Finneman (2014) and Carlson (2014) is that their studies did not go beyond the Leveson Inquiry. While their studies are useful contributions to the body of literature on the media coverage of the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, their studies did not cover the period after the Leveson Inquiry which includes reactions to Lord Justice Leveson’s report and the setting up of the Royal Charter on press regulation. In addition to exploring news coverage of the media policy debate beyond the Leveson Inquiry, this study added one more paradigm repair strategy, historicisation, to Thomas and Finneman’s (2013) four paradigmatic strategies (catastrophization, self-affirmation; minimization and localization) to make allowance for the use of durational modes of analysis in the study of journalistic metadiscourse (see Chapter 3).

It is one thing to say something is paradigmatic but the extent to which it is paradigmatic also matters. For example, Carlson (2014) and Thomas and Finneman (2014) pointed out that the press asserted its usefulness (the strategy of self-affirmation); my study goes beyond that to show the extent to which the press asserted its usefulness, by providing statistical data (see Chapter 7), thus providing more details in form of data on the level of application of some paradigmatic strategies. In terms of the unit of analysis, Ramsay’s (2013; 2014) studies came closest to mine. That is because their study covered approximately the same period. His works (the second is a continuation of the first) began from July 2011 when the Leveson Inquiry was set up by the then Prime Minister David Cameron to 29 November 2013 after the sealing of the Royal Charter on press regulation. Unlike my study, the research examined every national daily’s (‘19 main UK national daily and Sunday newspapers’) coverage of the journalism debate within the period (Ramsay 2013, p.25; 2014, p.12). So, it had a larger sample size of about 3,500 news articles across both studies but a smaller scope of analysis, focusing mainly on the provision of statistical

data, description of the tone ('negative' or 'positive' coverage) and framing of press regulation (Ibid).

My study adds to all three studies (Ramsay 2013; 2014; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014) by providing both statistical data (content analysis) and in-depth analysis using principles drawn from critical discourse analysis (see Chapter 5); covering a wider scope of the debate while using the notion of paradigm repair; and adding to the theoretical framework on metajournalistic discourse (paradigm strategy of historicisation). By so doing, this study grows the body of literature on metajournalistic discourse, the notion of paradigm repair and the coverage of the media policy debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

### **4.3 Representation of media policy**

From the perspective of this study, media policy does not refer to how an employee of an organisation should deal with the press but to "all law and regulation dealing with an information production chain that includes information creation, processing, flows and use" (Braman 2004, p.153). Media policies in modern democracies are diverse with a single nation having different media policies for different sorts of media. For instance, in the UK, policies for the broadcast media differ in some ways to those for newspapers, and policies for newspapers differ from those for social media and so on (Freedman 2008, p.15; Psychogiopoulou 2012, p.231). Since this study deals with the British press, my focus will be on media policies in relation to newspapers. And because the media coverage of policy in some areas such as media ownership have been discussed in previous subsections in this chapter, I will only focus on the areas that have not been covered in this study.

As stated previously, newspapers in Britain are self-regulated. The Editors' Code of Practice sets guidelines that the press is to adhere to and failure to do so attracts penalties (see section on press regulation earlier in this chapter). There are also policies such as

the competition rules instituted by the government to check for unfair competition in media ownership (see earlier in this chapter). All these policies are put in place to ensure that the press fulfils its function in society which, as explained in Chapter 2, includes ensuring an informed citizenry, providing a democratic forum for public debates, introducing relevant topics to the public sphere for deliberations and by so doing enhancing democracy.

The inherent tendency for the press to either enhance or damage democracy makes the development of media policy that can guarantee an accountable press, vital to every democratic society. That is why when there is a perceived or potential abuse of press power, calls are made for inquiries or commissions to be set up to investigate the press practices with the purpose of calling the press to order where necessary. Such calling to order could result in the making or reforming of media policies. As previously stated in this chapter, there have been a number of such inquiries at different peaks of perceived press excesses in British history, the most recent being the Leveson Inquiry (2011 - 2012).

As earlier stated, unlike other industries which cannot determine what the press leave out or focus on during debates about their policies, the press cover the debate on efforts to reform their own policies and serve as the gatekeeper to the public sphere of such debates. The press decides what to let in, who to allow to speak and how the various subjects of the debate, such as press freedom and media ownership should be interpreted. The tendency in such situations is for the press to give disproportionate access to its interpretations in the debate, to the detriment of the arguments of other stakeholders (Christopher 2007, p.42). Studies have argued that the commercial media give limited or no coverage to issues they perceive as not being in the commercial interest of their news organisation (Ibid).

Previous studies identified a lack of balance in press coverage of media policy debates in favour of the press' inputs to the debate and the advancement of their position on various



issues being debated (Stiegler 2013; Freedman 2008, 2014; Schlosberg 2017). As Callaghan and Schnell pointed out:

through agenda-extensions, journalists can actively limit the public's access and evaluate different policy platforms and thus diminish the quality of political dialogue. Such actions have the potential to inhibit pluralism by blocking out the preferred themes of interest groups, politicians and individual citizens (cited in Stiegler 2013, p.137–138).

Stiegler (2013, p.137) asserts that if the press must function as a democratic public sphere, “the public must not only be privy to debates surrounding its governance, but should have greater presence in those policymaking debates as well” (Stiegler 2013, p.137). Failure to do so will result in some sections of society being deprived of their participatory role of governance in a democracy.

Stiegler identified the need for more extensive coverage of media policy issues and observed that coverage of media policies often included the use of negative stories as infotainment (Ibid). He posits that such representations over-simplified the issue. My study of the press coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal sought to see if the findings of previous studies concerning press coverage of media policy debate were replicated in this coverage. Another feature of press coverage of media policy identified by previous studies is the interdependence between the media and policymakers which it is believed results in weak media policy reforms (Curran and Seaton 2010). The next subsection explores academic literature on the interdependence between policymakers and the media.

### **4.3.1 The interdependence of policymakers and the media**

As Putnis (2000, p.105) argued “the interdependence of politics and the media renders media policy making a particularly fraught and contentious process”. Previous studies have demonstrated that the media and policymakers depend on each other for a number of purposes. One of such purposes is for information (Gans 1979; Negrine 1989; O’Heffernan 1991, p.38; Franklin 2008; Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000, cited in Nitoiu 2015; Ericson et al. 1989 cited Somerville and Rice 2017). The media often use policymakers as their source of news (O’Heffernan 1991, p.38). They do this for a number of reasons including the fact that policymakers are regarded as credible sources, they are able to release ‘privileged information’ and they are a cheap source of newsworthy information. (O’Heffernan 1991, p.38; Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000; Nitoiu 2015).

Policymakers also use the media as a source of information and for communication of policies to the public (O’Heffernan 1991, p.38). O’Heffernan divided policymakers’ use of the media into four categories (Ibid). He said policymakers use the media “for immediate useful information”; “in the early stages of an issue to make a decision”; as “the only source of policy information” in times of crisis and as “critical information for policy making” (Ibid). It is important to note that policymakers’ uses of the media go beyond the making of policy to other more personal reasons, such as the promotion of their political image or popularity (Putnis 2000, p.105; Silverstone 2007, cited in Sanders 2008, p.38).

Putnis (2000, p.105) pointed out that policymakers (government and politicians) are not uninvolved parties in media policy creation or reform because “they crave media support; and their political fortunes are influenced by media reporting”. Collusion or mutual support between politicians and the media can reflect in media content and affect media policy reform. Politicians are known to have entered mutual agreements with media proprietors to give favourable coverage to their political party in exchange for media policies that favour the proprietors’ corporate interests. For instance, the Labour Party’s Tony Blair was said to have made an agreement with Rupert Murdoch before the 1997 general election in the UK, whereby his papers’ support for the Labour Party was earned

as a reward for cross-media ownership rules that favoured the media mogul (Franklin 2002, p.30). Franklin described the period as one “characterised by an extraordinary degree of non-decision making in media policy” (Ibid).

This reciprocal relationship between journalists and policymakers can be likened to Gans’ (1979, p.116) use of the dance metaphor, “it takes two to tango”. Gans observed that “the relationship between sources and journalists resemble a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources” (Ibid). This interdependence applies not only to politicians as news sources (see earlier in this subsection) but also in the form of mutual or implicit agreements between policymakers and journalists (Franklin 2008, p.30; Silverstone 2007, cited in Sanders 2008, p.38). Gans (1979, p.116) stated that “although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading”.

Studies have shown that the position of dominance in this ‘dance’ changes between the two, at different stages of the news cycle (Reich 2006, pp.497-514, cited in Franklin 2008, p.15; 2009, p.92). For instance, based on their study of journalists and their sources in Sweden, Stromback and Nord (2006, p.147, cited in Hjavard 2013, p.96) stated, “it was the journalists and not their political sources that lead the tango most of the time”. In my investigation into how the media represented the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, I explored reflections of interdependence between policymakers and the media within the journalistic metadiscourse. Evidence of such could mean that the media’s public sphere was used as a platform to advance self-interests and not for self-governance by ‘the people’.

#### **4.3.2 Media resistance to press policy debates**

In his analysis of press coverage of media policy debates in Australia, Putnis (2000, p.110) stated that efforts by politicians to reform the press were represented as political self-interest. According to him, during press reform debates, the press resorts to attacks on

politicians in order to present them to the citizens as lacking the legitimacy to reform the press. McChesney (2008, p.451) agrees. He argues that the press trivializes and denigrates attempts at curbing their excesses. This is what Thomas and Finneman (2014) described as the strategy of minimization (see Chapter 3). According to McChesney:

Large commercial media interests, which have a distinct self-interest in the outcome of media policy debates, use their media power to support their commercial aims. They have become an exceptionally formidable power, and the public has been effectively removed from any participation in these policy deliberations - (2008, p.451)

Media coverage of policy have been a combination of attacks as well as collusions between politicians and the press. Another way the media fights back at efforts to tighten checks on the press is by portraying institutions given the responsibility for such reforms as illegitimate or lacking the competence or moral justification to reform the press (Putnis 2000, p.110; Pickard 2015, p.177-189). In his coverage of media policy debates in Australia, Putnis (2000, p.110) said “the editor claimed, it was ‘doubtful whether the Commonwealth has the power to control the print media’, claiming incorrectly that this issue is not discussed in the majority report.” Putnis (2000, p.110) observed that the press’ argument was disparaging, “attacking the political intellect of the Committee”. Similarly, Pickard (2015, pp.177-189) found that the American press disparaged the Hutchins Commission and its report even before the report was officially released. He wrote “Indeed, in the weeks leading up to and following the report’s publication, it was disparaged in various media coverage as the product of a communist cabal endeavouring to subvert press freedoms” (Pickard 2015, p.178).

Previous studies have shown that the press gave indirect warnings to politicians that there would be casualties (political payback) if they go ahead with press reforms, especially where statutory regulations were proposed (Putnis 2000, p.105-110; Curran and Seaton 2010; Pickard 2015, p.177-189). History has shown that there have been casualties for persons or institutions that advocated stringent press reforms. For example, David Mellor, when he was National Heritage Minister (Now the Department for Culture, Media and Sports) in 1989 warned the press that they were ‘drinking in the last

chance saloon', in other words, the press had one more chance to improve their conduct or be slammed with a privacy law (Keeble 2008, p.136). He lost his job over a sex scandal revealed by the press in 1992 (Keeble 2008, p.136; Fletcher 2015).

This study explored the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal in search of signs of resistance to press reform in the journalistic metadiscourse. Resistance to press reform could affect the way media policy debates are covered and the way they are covered can determine the outcome of media policy. Considering the importance of the media to the sustenance of democracy, the emergence of media policies that can guarantee a democratic public sphere cannot be overemphasised.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored literature on the Leveson Inquiry, key subjects of the press reform debate, and the media coverage of policy. I stated that out of all the recommendations made by the Leveson Inquiry, the most controversial was its suggestion that the proposed independent self-regulatory system be underpinned by legislation (Brock 2012; Cathcart and Grant 2012; Dodd and Hanna 2014; Leveson Report 2012, p.17, para. 70; Hume 2013a). This became the nucleus of a number of arguments that followed the release of the Leveson Report and the subsequent formation of a Royal Charter on press self-regulation. While discussing key subjects of the press reform debate, I said press freedom was defined as "that degree of freedom from restraint which is essential to enable proprietors, editors and journalists to advance the public interest" (Royal Commission of the Press 1977, cited in Frost 2007, p.43).

I pointed out that journalists are, by the Editors' Code of Practice, and by law, allowed to indulge in some otherwise unlawful acts when the acts are being done in the public interest. I noted that it is difficult to define what is in the public interest. The Editors' Codebook (Beales 2012, p.86) said "...the public interest is impossible to define. So, the code does not attempt to do so." What it did instead was to list out what it described as

“a non-exhaustive list” of what is in the public interest. They include detection or exposure of crime or serious impropriety; protection of public health and safety; prevention of the public from being misled; and upholding freedom of expression. On privacy, I stated that privacy is recognised both legally and philosophically as a basic human need (Barendt 2002, pp.14-15; Mill [1859], cited in Petley 2013a, pp.59-60; Frost 2015, p.93). This means that a person whose privacy is invaded has the legal right to sue the culprit for invasion of privacy. As explained in this chapter, invasion of privacy refers to an intrusion into the private life and family life of another person, without a justifiable reason (Human Rights Act 1998).

The press has often been accused of invading the privacy of citizens. I explored arguments on whether privacy can be threatened by concentration of media ownership. I defined concentration of media ownership as a situation in which the bulk of the mass media is increasingly being controlled (in terms of shares) by a few individuals or organisations (Fourie, 2001, p.112; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.75-76). Studies have revealed that there are increasing levels of concentration of media ownership in most Western democracies (Doyle 2002, pp.2-6; Baker 2007, p.3; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.75-76). The popular view is that concentration of media ownership is dangerous to the health of democracy because it can result in abuse of political power by media owners or the under-representation of some political viewpoints” (Doyle 2002, p.6).

On media policy and its coverage by the press, I pointed out that the reciprocal relationship between policymakers and the press makes it hard for policymakers to advance a form of media policy that can guarantee a democratic public sphere (Putnis 2000, p.105; Franklin 2002, p.30). This collusive relationship between policymakers and the press which I likened to Gans’ use of the dance metaphor, “it takes two to tango...”, can affect and be reflected in the media coverage of policy. A snapshot of the body of literature on the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson Inquiry and the press reform debate helped to locate the place of this study in the broad literature. This study fills the gap in the body of literature on the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry by contributing to the currently scanty body of literature on the media coverage of the

debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. It also provides statistical data to back up arguments on the study and adds to the theoretical framework on metajournalistic discourse. Having examined the theoretical framework for this study in the last three chapters, the following chapter discusses the methodological approach used for this research.

## **Chapter 5: Research Aims and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explains and justifies the methods used for this research. The chapter is divided into five parts: the first section outlines and explains my research questions; the second section justifies the study sample and its unit of analysis. The latter also gives background information on the three classes of newspapers in the study sample (the tabloids, the mid-markets and the broadsheets). The data for this study was gathered through the use of Nexis UK; details of the data collection process can also be found in the second section of this chapter.

As stated in chapter 1, the main method used for this research is content analysis. Therefore, the third section explores literature on content analysis – its meaning, strengths and weaknesses, related studies that used content analysis and a coding scheme. Discourse analysis was used as a supplementary method to my content analysis. It helped to make my analysis comprehensive. The fourth section then gives a brief introduction of discourse analysis - what it means as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Studies similar to mine that used discourse analysis will also be examined in this section to enhance the reader’s understanding of how discourse analysis was used in this study. The fifth section concludes this chapter and leads to the discussion of my findings. All sections of this chapter explicate the process by which I arrived at the answers to my research questions.

#### **5.1 Research questions**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the main research question for this study is “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage



for democracy?” This central question was broken down into more specific questions for effective analysis. This gives us a total of 4 research questions. Research Question 1 (RQ1) is further broken down into three sub-questions:

**RQ1:** What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?

**RQ1.1:** What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?

**RQ1.2:** Were attributions of blame (e.g. localization, individualization) made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?

**RQ1.3:** “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the study sample?”

**RQ2:** What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?

**RQ3:** What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?

**RQ4:** What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?

RQ1 is concerned with the exploration of the paradigm repair strategies used in the coverage of the press reform debate. It guides me into an investigation of which paradigm repair strategies were used, how the paradigm repair strategies were used and the extent to which each was used, thus, providing insight into how the debate was covered by the press. The study of how the press cover debates about themselves is crucial to understanding the role the press plays and is expected to play in a democracy.

As stated earlier, an analysis of paradigm repair strategies used in journalistic metadiscourse provides, in part, the enlightenment the public needs to be able to intelligently consume journalistic metadiscourse. Such knowledge can equip members of the public with skills for self-governance because a public that knows how to identify self-interest or a genuine need for press autonomy in journalistic metadiscourse can play an active role in challenging the media to enhance democracy. Such an informed public can also advocate for policies that will promote rather than impede the press' ability to fulfil its watchdog role in a democratic society. Because bias can be implicit (Justin and Smith 2012, p.78), analysing strategies used by the press in journalistic metacoverage can bring to their consciousness areas of unacceptable levels of bias along with areas of strength and weaknesses. This can stimulate the press to improved coverage of themselves. Examining paradigm repair strategies in journalistic metadiscourse is one way of investigating how the media cover themselves and how the way they do it can affect democracy.

RQ1.1 focusses on the priority accorded to different arguments and concerns in the media policy debate. It prompts me to find out the dominant argument in each of the stories in the study sample as well as the overall view in the coverage. Finding out the issues that were the most and least prominent in the study sample helped me to evaluate how subjects of the debate, such as media ownership, press freedom and privacy were represented by the press. It was also used to confirm the hierarchy of importance accorded to each of these issues in the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal.

RQ1.2 seeks to find out if any person or institution was blamed for the phone hacking scandal and irresponsible journalism. This question stems from the assertion by previous studies (Cecil 2002, p.50; Berger 2010, p.2; Thomas and Finneman 2014, p.183) that when there is a media scandal, individual journalists or other news staff and not news organisations get the blame for the malpractice. This question triggers an exploration into how blame was attributed in the press coverage of the media policy debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. As argued in Chapter 3, attributions of blame can be used by the press to protect its crusader paradigm (see Chapter 3).

RQ1.3 is concerned with the way the press interpreted efforts at reforming its policies. This comprises an investigation into the rhetoric, words and phrases used to describe such efforts as well as the explanations given for the proposal of such measures. This question is predicated upon claims by aforementioned studies that efforts at curbing press excesses have often been interpreted by the press as a 'threat to press freedom', a 'slippery path to authoritarianism', the 'creation of a ministry of truth' and 'political self-interest', amongst others (Putnis 2000, pp.106-110; Christopher 2007, p.42). RQ1.3 prompts an investigation into how such efforts were interpreted by the press in their coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry. How the press interprets such efforts is important because it shows how the press represent themselves. For instance, it shows whether the journalistic metadiscourse was defensive or characterised by a lack of self-critique as argued by previous studies (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016)

RQ2 is concerned with how the media used sources of information in their coverage of the press reform debate. In a democracy, the normative expectation is that all stakeholders in a debate will have proportionate access to the public sphere. RQ2 is in response to claims that elite sources dominate the public sphere and that ordinary citizens and sources critical of the press are allotted a weak position of access to the public sphere (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010, p.270). This question guides me into an exploration of how the press used sources in the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry.

RQ3 requires a close study of the narrative structure of each story in the study sample to identify the importance accorded to various issues of concern in the debate. Studying the priority accorded to certain arguments and issues of concern in the debate is important because it helps me evaluate how well the media served as a democratic public sphere, a sphere where the hierarchy of importance of an argument is not based on status (who the debater is) but on the strength of his or her argument (Habermas 1989). For example,

it helps me assess whether the press gave priority attention to arguments that were in their self-interest or whether they accorded proportionate importance to arguments of diverse stakeholders in the debate. This line of enquiry follows accusations that the media use their gatekeeping powers to prevent arguments not in their favour from gaining access to the public sphere (see Chapter 2).

RQ4 prompts an investigation into how alternative views were treated by the press in their representation of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. Aforementioned studies claim that views that do not fall into mainstream arguments are either silenced or marginalised in the media's public sphere (see Chapter 2). As stated in Chapter 3, Cecil (2002, p.47) hypothesised that in debates about press reform, alternatives to news paradigms are often labelled deviant by the press. In a democracy, the normative expectation is that all views are freely expressed in the marketplace of ideas and that the press should go beyond facilitating debates to introduce relevant topics for discussion in the public sphere (Siebert et al. 1956, p.70; Habermas 1989, p.70-80). As stated in Chapter 2, stifling alternative views can narrow the options placed in the public sphere for deliberation and result in weak media policy reforms.

## **5.2 Research sample**

My study sample comprises all news articles on the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry, in six of the top ten British national newspapers (based on combined print and online readership figures for April 2011 to March 2012 – Source: NRS PADD 2012): two newspapers from each category of the main newspaper classification in the UK. My decision to do only two from each category is for the purpose of manageability, considering the depth of analysis and available period of study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I chose to look at national papers because of their nationwide reach. The national newspapers in Britain are categorised in terms of social class, although this classification does not always reflect reality (McNAir 2000, p.14). The categories are the broadsheets, mid-market and the tabloids (Williams 2009, pp.9-10).

These categories have different target audiences and diverse manners of coverage. This was taken into consideration during the analysis of my findings (Chapters 6-9). However, these categories were bypassed where a phenomenon cuts across paper classifications.

The broadsheets, also known as quality newspapers, deliver hard or “serious-minded” news content. They are regarded as “the most information dense of the print media” (McNair 2000, p.16). Their target audience consists of the upper and middle class, people “with higher levels of income, educational attainment and social status” (McNair 2000, p.16; Williams 2009b, p.9). They are often referred to as the elite titles (McNair 2000, p.16). The broadsheet newspapers include *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Independent*, *Independent on Sunday* and *Financial Times*. As previously explained, for reasons of manageability, this study will limit itself to only two of these newspapers - *Daily Telegraph* and *Guardian*. The choice of these two quality newspapers was based on their wide reach and consequent potential to impact society. The *Guardian* had the biggest combined (print and digital data) monthly readership for broadsheet newspapers in the year to March 2012 with a total of 8.95 million readers, followed by *Daily Telegraph* with 8.82 million readers (NRS PADD 2012; Halliday 2012). Both papers were, thus, the most read British national quality newspapers within the period of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. The role *Guardian* newspaper played in exposing the extent of the scandal adds to its importance in the sample.

Next in line are the mid-market titles which comprise *Daily Express*, *Sunday Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*. Their target audience is believed to be middle and upper working class people. There is some confusion with this classification because papers in this group were former broadsheet newspapers (The *Mail and Express* newspapers) which changed from the broadsheet to tabloid print format (McNair 2000, p.14). Some scholars use the term “red-top tabloids” to refer to the group commonly known as the tabloids, in order to differentiate them from the “broadsheets” in tabloid format. Representing the mid-markets in this study, are *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. Their Sunday editions, as well as the Sunday publications of all other newspapers in my study

sample were excluded from this study to reduce it to a manageable size. The *Daily Mail* also has great potential to impact society; it came next to the *Sun* as the paper with the second largest combined monthly readership across all classes of UK newspaper in the year to March 2012 with a total of 16.4 million readers (NRS PADD 2012; Halliday 2012). Though the *Daily Express* was far behind in readership figures (4.6 million readers, it serves as the only other mid-market newspaper, and examining it evens up the number of newspapers being studied to two newspapers per category of British national newspapers (Ibid). Providing an alternative newspaper per category of newspaper examined makes available opportunities to investigate whether a phenomenon was characteristic (or not) of a newspaper category.

The “popular” press, red-top tabloid or tabloid titles are at the end of the spectrum in terms of social status. They are known to have a high level of readership despite the fact that they publish less “serious” and more celebrity, sensational and entertainment-style news. At the time of this study, the tabloid newspapers were the *Sun*, *Sun on Sunday*, *Daily Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Star Sunday* and *People*. My study examines the *Sun* and *Daily Mirror*. The *Sun*’s reach is significant being that it had the highest combined monthly readership across all categories of UK newspapers in the year to March 2012 with a total of 17.8 million readers (Ibid). The fact that *Sun* newspaper belongs to the owner of the defunct *News of the World* strengthens its relevance to the study sample. It afforded me an opportunity to examine how one of Rupert Murdoch’s papers covered the misdemeanour of one of their own.

The *Daily Mirror*’s 10.6 million monthly combined-readership also made it a paper to be reckoned with; the figure makes it third in the ranking of overall UK national newspaper monthly combined readership in the year to March 2012 (Ibid). As previously stated, all six newspapers examined are among the top ten in terms of combined readership of national newspapers in the UK (Ibid). It is important to note that with the current trend of “tabloidisation” (the “dumbing down” or “going down market” of the more rational press to the sensational in order to attract a numerically larger audience), the lines are

blurring among these three categories of newspaper (McNair 2000, p.14; McQuail, 2005, p.568; Williams 2009, pp.9-10).

In summary, my unit of analysis consists of all news articles on the media policy debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry as contained in *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror* and *Sun*; from the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 (when the hearing began at the Leveson Inquiry) to the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 (the aftermath of the Privy Council's approval of a Royal Charter on press regulation). This two-year period falls within the time frame when media coverage of the press reform debate was at its peak in the UK (Macfarlane and Torpey 2012, n.p; *Independent* 2013). Although editorials are where the newspaper's opinions are often heard (Hindman 2003, p.671), I decided against limiting my study sample to editorials because as Wahl-Jorgensen (2008, p.67) pointed out, "in the British context...expression of judgements and opinions is frequently not limited to the op-ed and editorial pages, but increasingly pervades every section of the newspaper." Therefore, limiting the study to editorials risks leaving out interpretations of the debate that featured in the news section of the newspapers. My data, thus, included both opinion and news articles that captured the media policy debate which followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal.

### **5.2.1 Data collection**

My study sample was obtained from Nexis UK, an electronic archive service with full text access to all UK national newspapers. Using the search terms, "press regulation" or "press laws" or "public trust" or "media ownership" or "public interest" or "privacy" (anywhere in the text) and "Leveson" or "News of the World" or "phone hacking" (anywhere in the text), my search produced a total of 1485 news articles. A broad range of issues on the press reform debate including articles relating to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), the Press Standards Board of Finance (PressBoF), Hacked Off, the Royal Charter, and the Privy Council were represented in the result. After cleaning the sample by deleting repeats and unrelated stories, the sample was reduced to 870; 323

from *Guardian*, 199 from *Daily Telegraph*, 173 from *Daily Mail*, 28 from *Daily Express*, 96 from the *Sun* and 51 from *Daily Mirror*.

The large reduction in the number of articles from 1485 to 870 was largely due to the high number of duplicate articles in Nexis UK, especially with articles from *Guardian* newspaper where the results, apparently, contained articles from both their online and print versions, despite excluding websites through the search preferences. My study deals with written content only. Although a study on the visuals would also be interesting, that is outside the scope of this study. This study is quite broad and excluding visuals helped to make it a manageable project. Future study on visual metacoverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal would be a welcome development. As previously stated, this study's major method of investigation is content analysis. A literature review on content analysis is, therefore, explored in the next section.

### **5.3 Content analysis**

Content analysis is the systematic and objective analysis of texts such as can be found in newspaper articles, television clips, books, adverts etc. (Holsti 1969, p.14, cited in Stemler 2001, p.17; Neuman 2003, p.310; Mosdell and Davies 2006, p.98). In content analysis, textual components (example words, phrases, images etc.) relevant to the findings of one's research are counted, recorded and then calculated with the use of statistical methods (Krippendorff 1980/2004, cited in Zelizer 2004, p.115; Riffe et al. 2005, p.3). The understanding is that the results when analysed can provide answers to the research question(s). Content analysis is suitable for analysing huge volumes of texts (Mosdell and Davies 2006, p.98). This made it the most suitable research method for this study which deals with more than eight hundred newspaper articles.

In this study, content analysis was used to measure the distribution of sources, the hierarchy of importance accorded different issues of concern, the range of alternative views, the dominant themes in the coverage and the extent to which paradigm repair



strategies were used in the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry. Measuring sources enabled me to assess whether ordinary sources and sources critical of the press had a weak position in the hierarchy of access to the press. Using content analysis, I was able to identify the dominant theme in each newspaper as well as in the whole study sample; ascertain whether the press gave limited coverage to views that were critical of the press; measure attributions of blame and alternative views; and gauge the degree of manifestation of different paradigm repair strategies in the journalistic metadiscourse. Content analysis helped to provide statistical data on how the British press covered the press reform debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry. A coding scheme was designed to enable me to input the data for my content analysis.

### **5.3.1 Coding scheme**

Berelson (1952, p.18, cited in Richardson 2007, p.15) emphasized the characteristic of content analysis as an objective research procedure, free from the researcher's interference. This 'objectivity' requirement of content analysis also requires that the research be done in such a way that it can be replicated by anyone who chooses to do so (Altheide 1996, p.15; Hansen et al., 1998, p.91; Krippendorff 2004, pp.18-19). To take care of this requirement, a coding sheet was drawn up along with guidelines that helped to make the study replicable (see Appendix A). The coding sheet was tested and re-tested by two trained postgraduate student coders. Thirty stories randomly selected from the study sample were tested until the overall percentage agreement reached an average of 95.9 per cent with the lowest variable reaching 80 per cent agreement (see Table 5.1). Understandably, ID number, Newspaper, Length of Story, Page Number and two aspects of the Paper Section variables had 100 per cent agreement.

**Table 5.1 Intercoder Reliability**

<b>Intercoder Reliability Using ReCal2 0.1 Alpha</b>	<b>Percentage Agreement</b>	<b>Krippendorff's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Agreements</b>	<b>Number of Disagreements</b>
Reasons Against Cross-party Royal Charter	95	0.727424	28.5	2
Narrative Structure	95.67901	0.826353	28.7037	1.296296
Alternative Solutions	98.57143	0.816621	29.57143	0.428571
Reasons in Support of Cross-party Royal Charter	96	0.732555	28.8	1.2
ID Number	100	1	30	0
Newspaper	100	1	30	0
Page Number	100	1	30	0
Length of Story	100	1	30	0
Paper Section News	100	1	30	0
Paper Section Opinion Articles	96.66667	0.895944	29	1
Paper Section News Categories, e.g. Politics or Crime	100	1	30	0
Dominant Theme	80	0.733634	24	6
Category of Writer	93.33333	0.649852	28	2
Official or Unofficial Sources	94.12698	0.733729	28.2381	1.761905
Named or Unnamed Source	92.53968	0.730648	27.7619	2.238095
Frequency of Sources	91.74603	0.727857	27.52381	2.47619
Description of Measures Aimed at Checking Press Misconduct	93.7037	0.760385	28.11111	1.888889
Attributions of Blame	98.33333	0.830951	29.5	0.5
Description of Phone Hacking Scandal and Press Behaviour	94.81481	0.684412	28.44444	1.555556
Description of the Leveson Inquiry and its Report	97.5	0.586684	29.25	0.75
Total Average	95.9007485	0.82185245	28.7702245	1.2547751

Outside of these factual inputs, the variable “alternative solutions or arguments on how to tackle the problem of ‘irresponsible’ journalism” had the highest percentage agreement at 98.6 per cent. This was followed by the variable “Attributions of blame for

press irresponsibility” which achieved a 98.3 percentage agreement. The variable with the least percentage agreement was “dominant theme in the study sample” with an agreement of 80 per cent. The options for ‘dominant theme’ were reviewed and amended to include more specific and clearer options (see the coding sheet in Appendix A).

The variable “Frequency of sources”, an aspect of the variable “Source type and frequency” (see Appendix A) was just above the least with 91.7 percent (see Table 5.1). This shows that no variable had less than 80 percent agreement (see Table 5.1). The high level of percentage agreement across all variables (see Table 5.1) helps to guarantee that this research can be replicated, and where this is done similar results can be achieved. It also adds to the validity of the results of my content analysis. The calculations were made using ReCal2 0.1 Alpha (dfreelon.org). ReCal2 is an online reliability calculator for two coders which calculates intercoder reliability coefficients for nominal data and produces results for percentage agreements. The result of my intercoder reliability test as computed by ReCal2 was Krippendorff’s Alpha 0.822 (see Table 5.1).

Feedback from the coders prompted me to further clarify my guideline for coding. For instance, I clarified how the frequency of sources were to be counted and explained how coders should handle apparent overlaps (see Appendix B). For example, I explained the difference between ‘government spokesperson’ and ‘conservative spokesperson’. There was some ambiguity between the two because the Conservative Party led the government in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, at the time of coverage of the media policy debate. Yet during the media policy debate, the two Parties were rarely in agreement. Hence the need to identify views of the Conservatives that were different from those of the Liberal Democrats, and especially views that were made before any policy decision, which could be regarded as a government decision, was taken. A codebook explaining each variable on my coding sheet can be found in Appendix B. The coding sheet was designed in such a way as to provide answers to my research questions. The link between my research questions and my coding sheet is explained in the next subsection.

### **5.3.2 Content analysis structure: The link between my coding sheet and research questions**

My content analysis structure is a combination of models employed by GUMG (1976, p.244-256); Hallin et al. (1993, p.753), Chyi et al. (2011, pp.311-312) and Ramsay (2013; 2014). By using coding sheets to measure sources, alternative views, dominant themes etc., these researchers were able to find answers to their research questions. This subsection explains how my coding sheet helped to provide answers to my research questions. As previously stated, my central research question (RQ) is “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy.” Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that my central research question was divided into more specific research questions (RQ: RQ1 {1.1, 1.2, 1.3}; RQ2; R3; RQ4) for effective analysis.

The sub-questions for RQ1 were constructed in such a way as to enable them to produce data not only for the identification of paradigm repair strategies and the degree of their usage, but also for the analysis of other aspects of this study. The sub-questions were subsumed under RQ1 because much of the data is intended for the analysis of paradigm repair strategies. The way this was done is that the list of options for related variables were made to include paradigmatic markers as well as other arguments and subjects of the debate. The codes (list of options) for each variable were identified after a “long preliminary soak” of the stories in my study sample as suggested by Hall (1975a, p.15), and from previous literature on press coverage of media policy debates. It is important to note that a variable can provide data which can be applied to more than one research question, and the answer(s) to a research question can emerge from more than one variable.

RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?” was further broken down into three sub research questions as shown

earlier in this chapter. Answers to RQ1.1 “What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?” were sourced from Variable 15 of my coding sheet which seeks to find the “Dominant theme in the study sample”. By counting the dominant theme in each news article, I was able to identify the most prominent and least prominent arguments and issues in the study sample.

The codes for the dominant theme variable (Variable 15) included paradigm repair strategies such as “threat to press freedom” (see Chapter 3). The level of dominance of the “Threat to press freedom” theme revealed the degree of the usage of “Threat to press freedom” as a paradigm repair strategy in the journalistic metadiscourse. Other options under the dominant theme variable that relate to paradigm repair strategies include “achievements and importance of the press” for the strategy of self-assertion; “character smear: critiquing critics of the press” and “Against Leveson Inquiry” for the strategy of minimization; and “The press behaved badly” for the strategy of historicization (see Appendix A).

Answers to RQ1.2 “Were there attributions of blame made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?” were sourced from Variable 10 “Attributions of blame for press irresponsibility”. This variable provided data for the analysis of the strategy of bad apples, also known as individualization, ostracization or localization. The strategy of individualization, as stated in Chapter 3, refers to the ostracizing of a culprit of press misconduct by a news organisation or the media industry. The aim is usually to disassociate the news medium from the malpractice and attribute blame to the ostracized individual or news outfit. Variable 10 also helped me identify other individuals and institutions that received blame outside journalists and media organisations.

Answers to RQ1.3 “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?” were drawn from Variables 11-14 (see Appendix B). They provided data for aspects of all the paradigm strategies discussed in

this study. For example, under Variable 11 the description of measures as “threat to press freedom” relates to “threat to the paradigm strategy”, while retribution (alleged revenge on the press by corrupt politicians) relates to the strategy of minimization. In Variable 12, the description of measures as “slippery slope to licensing” of the press also relates to the threat to the paradigm strategy. Under Variable 13, the description of the Leveson Inquiry as “illegitimate and unfair” provides data for the strategy of minimization while in Variable 14, the description of the phone hacking as the work of a few bad apples provides answers to the bad apples or individualization strategy. In summary, Variable 8, as well as Variables 10 -15 provided data for the analysis of the various paradigm repair strategies in this study.

Answers to RQ2 “What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?” were drawn from Variable 7 “Source type and frequency” and Variable 18 “Category of writer(s) of the article”. As noted in the Chapter 2, diversity in news sources and content is integral to the sustenance of democracy. To gauge the level of diversity in the coverage of the media policy debate, I measured the types of sources used and the frequency of usage (see Appendix B). In this vein, sources used in the study sample including those quoted were recorded and counted (see Chapter 8). The result provided answers to RQ2.

Answers to RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?” were drawn from variable 8 “Narrative Structure”. As explained in the codebook (see Appendix B), Variable 8 entails the listing of arguments or issues contained in the narrative of a news story in the order in which they appeared. The use of the inverted pyramid style of writing in journalism means that journalists would, more often than not, place information they consider to be more important, higher up in a story, thereby forming a hierarchy of importance, with information considered to be most important at the top and the “least important” at the tail end of the news (Pottker 2003, p.501; Hoyer and Pottker 2005; Franklin et al. 2005, pp.121-122; Singh 2008, p.24; Conboy 2013, pp.150-151).

Although this format of news writing is being contested due to emerging patterns of news writing on online news platforms, particularly with the use of hyperlinks and in opinion article formats (Franklin et al. 2005, p.104; Conboy 2013, p.164), the inverted pyramid format of news writing still holds sway in the British press (Franklin et al. 2005, pp.121-122). For instance, to measure the importance accorded to the theme “press freedom”, I recorded the order in which “press freedom” or its equivalent appeared (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>) in the news narrative. This helped me to understand the hierarchy of importance accorded to that argument in each newspaper and in the whole of the study sample. This procedure was used to identify the arguments that were the most and least prominent in the study sample. Variable 15 “Dominant theme in the study sample” can be used to confirm the priority accorded to different issues of concern. Certain clues helped me to identify the dominant theme of each story. They included the headline of the story because headlines often contain the most important information in a news report (van Dijk 1991); the subject’s appearance within the first three paragraphs of the news narrative because as explained earlier, based on the inverted pyramid format of news writing, the important information comes higher up in the news narrative (Pottker 2003, p.501; Franklin et al. 2005, p.122); and the frequency with which the subject was discussed in comparison to other issues in the article.

Answers to RQ4 “What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?” were sourced from Variable 9 “Alternative solutions or argument on how to tackle the problem of ‘irresponsible’ journalism.” This study sought not only the alternative views within the study sample but also such views as could have been, but were omitted from the journalistic metadiscourse, for as Freedman (2014, pp.64 - 73) pointed out, deliberate silence on some views or issues by the press is a form of media power. Variables 1-6 (Newspaper, Date, Page Number, Length of Story, Paper Section and Summary of Report); Variable 16 (Headline) and Variable 17 (Name of Journalist/Writer) served as quick sources of information for interpretive analysis. Though content analysis has huge benefits, among which are its cost effectiveness, unobtrusiveness and replicability (Berelson, 1971b, p.18; Krippendorff 2012), the results it produces can be problematic because statistics from quantitative measurements can be interpreted out of

context (Richardson 2007, pp.15- 18). To take care of such shortcomings, discourse analysis was used as a supplementary method to content analysis in this study. The following subsections expatiates on how discourse analysis was used in this study.

#### **5.4 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is multifarious and so are its definitions (van Dijk 1998, p. x; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, p.1; van Dijk 1998, cited in Devereux 2007, p.174; Blommaert 2005, cited in Richardson 2007, p.21; Wodak and Meyer 2009, p.24; Gee and Handford 2012, p.5). van Dijk (1988, p.x; 1998 cited in Devereux, 2007, p.174) explains that discourse analysis allows the analyst to investigate the underlying meaning of words. Gee and Handford (2012, p.1) advanced this understanding by defining discourse analysis as “the study of language in use”. Discourse analysis (DA) is “the study of the meanings we give language” and what that does within a particular context (Ibid). This is based on the “understanding that language does not passively reflect our experiences” but can be manipulated (consciously or unconsciously) by the powerful to advance their interests (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, pp.271ff, cited in Phillip and Jorgensen 2002, p.63; Hymes 1981, p.9, cited in Cohen 2007, p.108). “Powerful” within the context of this study includes those with access to the media’s public sphere and those upon whom the public has conferred the authority to both introduce as well as coordinate discourses within this public space (Phillip and Jorgensen 2002, pp.2-3; Hall 1997).

As previously stated, there are different types of discourse analysis (Brown and Yule 1983; van Dijk 1998; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002; Devereux 2007; Richardson 2007; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Gee and Handford 2012; Fairclough 2010). Some are largely linguistic, some are more focussed on the construction of “themes or images” in texts while others are interested in linking language to social and cultural issues of contention with the aim of locating the resultant social consequences (Phillip and Jorgensen 2002, p.65; Gee and Handford 2012, p.1). The latter, which is known as critical discourse analysis is the type of discourse analysis relevant to this study (Phillip and Jorgensen 2002, p.60; Fairclough 2010; Gee and Handford 2012, p.5). Though discourse analysis is



not the main method for this study, some principles from critical discourse analysis were used to explicate my findings. Hence, the need to briefly discuss critical discourse analysis and how it was used in this study.

#### **5.4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis, hereafter referred to as CDA, is diverse (Wodak and Meyer 2009, p.5). Forms of CDA include the Foucauldian CDA and dispositive analysis (Jager and Maier 2009); the social cognitive approach (van Dijk 2009); the social psychological approach (Wetherell and Potter 1992); the discourse-historic approach of the Vienna School (Wodak and Meyer, 2009) and Norman Fairclough's approach to CDA (1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 2005). I used principles from Norman Fairclough's approach to CDA because unlike some models of CDA that focus primarily on linguistic analysis, Fairclough's CDA makes room for the analysis of power relationships in communicative discourse in relation to wider social and cultural structures (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, pp.61-88; Wodak and Meyer 2009, p.12; Leifeld 2016, p.39).

Fairclough's approach to CDA is beneficial for this study because 'how the press cover debates about press policy and the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy' involves investigating the distribution of communicative power between the press and other stakeholders in the media policy debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. The ability to analyse the communicative power distribution in journalistic metadiscourse in relation to wider social, economic and political structures helps to reveal how such discourses were shaped by such factors. Fairclough expects that by using his approach to CDA, people can contribute to social change along the lines of more equal power relations in communicative discourse (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p.258; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, pp.63-64).

One normative expectation of CDA is to promote democracy by pointing out non-egalitarian and non-liberal discourses so that steps can be taken to make discourses

democratic (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, p.88; Wodak and Meyer 2009 p.170). Though some aspects of van Dijk's (1988; 1998; 2009) approach to CDA can be useful in this study (e.g. its investigation into communicative power and ideology analysis), the systematic and well-developed analytical construct of Norman Fairclough's CDA and its emphasis on social issues as against Van Dijk's (1988; 1998; 2009) focus on the political gave it an edge in this study. In summary, Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical model (discursive, linguistic and social practice) makes his CDA a good supplement to my content analysis.

#### **5.4.2 Supplementing content analysis with CDA**

Since, CDA is only a supplementary method of analysis in this study, it was only used to elucidate the results of my content analysis and for the analysis of some findings on how paradigm repair strategies were used in the coverage. My findings were scrutinized and reflected on in search of words, linguistic devices and discursive patterns that could reveal underlying meanings. Fairclough's (1995a, 1995b, 2005) style of linking language use to social practice was also used to analyse my findings. For example, results from the coverage of the debate on media ownership was linked to the structure of media ownership in a democratic society. One unique feature in this style of mixed methodology is that there is no specific number of articles set aside as the sample for discourse analysis.

Feltham-King and Macleod (2016, pp.1-9) used a similar pattern of mixed methods when they used content analysis to supplement discourse analysis. Feltham-King and Macleod said "the flexibility with which they [the content analysis data] could be used in different contexts and at different times" was the feature that attracted them to this method (Ibid). Similarly, the flexibility with which I could use principles drawn from CDA to analyse the findings of my content analysis and some aspects of how paradigm repair strategies were used in the journalistic metadiscourse, at different relevant points in the analysis of my findings is a feature that attracted me to this method.

By supplementing discourse analysis with content analysis, Feltham-King and Macleod (Ibid) were able to measure “the extent to which various discourses were deployed across the data set and changes in usage over time”. Similarly, supplementing content analysis with critical discourse analysis allowed me to interpret statistics based on the context within which they appeared; enabling in-depth analyses and a comprehensive presentation of my findings. Supplementing content analysis with critical discourse analysis also enabled me to examine the construction, as well as find out the extent of usage, of different paradigm repair strategies. Having explained how CDA complements content analysis in this study, the following subsection elaborates on how some principles from CDA were used to analyse results from my content analysis.

#### **5.4.3 Usage of principles from critical discourse analysis**

Critical discourse analysis has been used by previous scholars to analyse debates about policy (van Dijk 1993, pp.249-283; Marston 2002, pp.82-91). For example, Marston (2002, pp.82-91) used CDA to critique policy debates about housing policy reform in the Australian state of Queensland while van Dijk (1993, pp.249-283) used CDA to investigate the patterns of access to (public) discourse for different social groups in his analysis of parliamentary debates about ethnic affairs. This study uses some principles of CDA that were also utilised by Marston (2002, pp.82-91). Following the lines of Fairclough’s three-dimensional analytical model (linguistic (grammar), discursive and social practice), Marston analysed public debates on housing policy reform (Ibid).

Marston explored the texts for linguistic devices loaded with meaning (Ibid). For example, he identified the use of direct address also known as “you-centeredness” (Fairclough 1995, cited in Marston 2002, p.86) and argued that the Australian government used this technique in their correspondence to existing tenants with the aim of positioning this group of tenants on the side of the government in the debate on housing policy reform. In this study, linguistic devices such as “you-centeredness” or direct address, metaphors, hyperboles and adjectives were scrutinized for underlying meanings as suggested by Fairclough (1992b pp.158-194). Identifying the usage of

certain linguistic devices helped to affirm the use of some paradigm repair strategies in the coverage of the press reform debate. For example, usage of doom-laden adjectives in the description of measures aimed at reforming the press helped to affirm the use of “threat to the paradigm” strategy.

On the discursive level, Marston (2002, p.86) identified the ‘us’ and ‘them’ pattern of discourse which attempted to portray the ‘us’ (government and existing tenants) as good and the ‘them’ (public service users) as bad. He also pointed out that interpretations were based on neoliberal ideology and that a moral discourse of ‘bad tenant’ was introduced to frame the policy problem. Marston stated that “CDA can be used to highlight silences in the text” (Ibid, p.88). In my analysis of the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, I explored discursive patterns including silences in texts as well as the ‘us’ and ‘them’ contrast.

In terms of social practice, Marston (2002) linked ‘language use’ in the debate on housing policy reform in Australia to the increasing influence of neoliberalism on the activities of the state. Similarly, I analysed texts in my study sample based on the social, economic and political conditions under which they were produced. Language use was also traced to neoliberal and social democratic ideologies. For instance, I linked the journalistic metadiscourse on media ownership to issue of media ownership concentration in the UK.

In this study, Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of analysis was not used chronologically but at various points of the discussion in the analysis of my findings. Despite its richness, CDA does have some weaknesses. Scholars have argued that the fact that there is no specific way of selecting the study sample for CDA makes studies done with CDA subjective and prone to researchers’ interference (Widdowson 1998; Blommaert 2005). This weakness is addressed in this study because CDA was only used to complement my content analysis. Consequently, all discourses analysed were drawn from the study sample for my content analysis which was chosen through a relatively objective method. Complementing content analysis with critical discourse analysis

enabled me to provide comprehensive and comprehensible answers to my research questions.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined and elaborated on the method used for this research. I explained that content analysis is the main method for this study; it was supplemented by critical discourse analysis. I stated that the overarching research question for this study is “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?”. I said this overarching research question was broken down into 4 research questions for effective analysis. They are RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”; RQ2 “What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?”; RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?” and RQ4 “What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?”.

My unit of analysis consists of all news articles on the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, in the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Express*, *Sun*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail*; from the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 when the Leveson Inquiry was set up, to the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014 and the aftermath of the sealing of the cross-party Royal Charter on press regulation. My study sample comprised 870 news articles; 323 from *Guardian*, 199 from *Daily Telegraph*, 173 from *Daily Mail*, 28 from *Daily Express*, 96 from the *Sun*, and 51 from *Daily Mirror*.

A coding sheet was used to input relevant data from the newspapers in my study sample. The coding sheet was drafted so as to provide answers to my research questions (see

Appendix A). A codebook was provided to help readers understand the questions on the coding sheet in such a way that if repeated, the research would produce similar results (see Appendix B). An intercoder reliability test involving two coders was performed. The result of my intercoder reliability test as computed by ReCal2 is Krippendorff's Alpha 0.822 (see Table 5.1). Critical discourse analysis was used to explicate the findings of my content analysis in order to produce an in-depth analysis of how the press covered the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry. My findings are presented and discussed in section two.

## **Section 2: Findings and discussion**

### **Chapter 6: Paradigm repair: threat to the paradigm and historicization**

#### **Introduction**

As mentioned in the previous chapters, this study seeks to find out how the British press covered the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy. My key interest is to examine how the media cover themselves. In this study, the way the press covered the debate that followed the *News of the World (NoTW)* phone hacking scandal is taken as representative of how the press cover themselves. My main concern is to find out whether the press served as a democratic public sphere in their coverage of the press reform debate. The theoretical framework for this study consists of normative theories of the press, particularly, the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory and the social democratic theory. The concept of the public sphere and the notion of paradigm repair also form part of the framework for the analysis of my findings.

The main method used for this research is content analysis. Discourse analysis was used to complement my content analysis, so that by way of triangulation the study can provide more comprehensive results. The results of my content analysis were generated from the coding of 870 news articles; 323 from *Guardian*, 199 from *Daily Telegraph*, 173 from *Daily Mail*, 28 from *Daily Express*, 96 from the *Sun*, and 51 from *Daily Mirror*. The data covers all stories, by the aforementioned newspapers, on the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, from November 2011 to November 2013. My findings are explained in three chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8). Using empirical data from my research, this chapter analyses how the press used the strategies of 'threat to press freedom' and 'historicization' to cover the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

The chapter is divided into two major parts. The first part shows how the strategy of “threat to the [press freedom] paradigm” was used to argue against press reform, particularly, the statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body (see Chapter 4). This was followed by an examination of discourses that contest the alleged threat to “press freedom”. The second part of this chapter analyses how the press used the strategy of historicization to cover the media policy debate. It will verify if, as stated in Chapter 3, historicization was used to affirm press wrongdoing, amongst other purposes. My analysis of the strategies of “threat to the paradigm” and “historicization” partly answers RQ1 which asks, “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”

### **6.1 Representation of the press reform debate: paradigm repair strategies**

In response to the argument of previous studies that media representation of the press is often characterised by certain paradigm repair strategies (Cecil 2002b; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014), I explored my study sample to see which, if any, paradigm repair strategies were used in the coverage of the press reform debate. As explained in Chapter 3, paradigm repair was used by Bennet et al. (1985) to describe “how journalistic self-criticism protects existing paradigms rather than confronts entrenched deficiencies and contradictions” (cited in Carlson 2015, p.4). Based on information gathered from my review of previous literature and my preliminary examination of the study sample, I identified two paradigms the press attempted to repair or protect during their coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. They are the “press freedom” and “journalists as a crusader” paradigms. The strategies used to protect these paradigms as discussed in Chapter 3 include catastrophization, historicization, individualization, self-assertion and minimisation. As stated earlier, this chapter presents my findings on the use of the strategies of catastrophization and historicization. In this subsection, I show how the



press sought to protect the press freedom paradigm using the strategy of catastrophization.

“Threat to the paradigm” and “threat to press freedom” are used interchangeably to talk about the press’ use of the strategy of catastrophization to protect its conceptualisation of press freedom. This strategy entails the media’s use of diverse techniques to raise an alarm that the paradigm under scrutiny (in this case, press freedom) is under attack. My findings revealed that rather than function as one interpretive community (Zelizer 1993) in their attempt to define press freedom, the press instead functioned as two sub-interpretive spheres. An understanding of sub-interpretive spheres and the confederation pattern of analysis is essential to the comprehension of my explanations. Therefore, the following subsection is devoted to explaining how the two concepts were used in my study.

### **6.1.1 Sub-interpretive spheres and confederation pattern of analysis**

Sub-interpretive spheres emerge from a situation in which journalism, rather than function as one interpretive community in their attempt to mark the boundaries of their profession (Zelizer 1993), instead function as multiple homogeneous publics (Fraser 1992). The multiple spheres of homogeneous discourses created within a journalistic community are what I refer to as sub-interpretive spheres (see Chapter 2). Multiple sub-interpretive spheres can arise from differences and similarities in the press’ interpretations of journalistic paradigms, such as press freedom, objectivity and news in the printed format. As mentioned in Chapter 2, sub-interpretive spheres may or may not be divided along the lines of media outfits because they are abstract spheres of discourses. In this study, however, the sub-interpretive spheres were divided along the lines of newspapers.

As stated earlier, I identified two sub-interpretive spheres: one comprises the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* while the other consists of *Guardian*

newspaper. This study found that the press coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal was often along the lines of these two sub-interpretive spheres. This grouping does not imply that newspapers in each of the two categories agreed on every point of the press reform argument. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the homogeneity of a sub-interpretive sphere does not preclude disagreements on certain issues within that homogeneous public. The categorisation of the sub-interpretive spheres in this study was based on the degree of similarity in their expressions and interpretations of key points in the press reform debate, particularly, their views on what constitute press freedom. To be able to analyse these newspapers' representation of the press reform debate as sub-interpretive spheres as well as individually, this study adopts a confederation pattern of analysis.

In Chapter 2, I defined 'confederation pattern of analysis' as a pattern of critique that allows analysis of media content both in groups (for example, of a group of newspapers) and individually (individual newspapers). This allows room for the identification of unique trends and styles within discourse. For instance, though the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* all advanced a similar interpretation of press freedom, the newspapers differed in their representation of *News of the World's* owner, Rupert Murdoch and the Press Complaint Commission, as we shall see in Chapter 8. Understanding my use of sub-interpretive spheres and the confederation pattern of analysis will help the reader comprehend my analysis of how the press used the "threat to the paradigm" or catastrophization strategy in their coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. The next section presents and discusses my findings on how the "threat to the paradigm" strategy was used in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate.

## **6.2 Threat to the paradigm: press freedom under attack?**

As stated in Chapter 3, previous studies show that when public outrage against press "deviancy" leads to the setting up of a press commission, steps taken by such commissions to check the abuse of press freedom have often been interpreted in journalistic

metadiscourse as a “threat to press freedom” and by extension, a threat to democracy (Putnis 2000; Frost 2007; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.327-338). Scholars claim that one of the ways through which it has done this, is by using the “threat to the paradigm” or catastrophization strategy to warn that measures designed to check abuse of press power were a threat to press freedom (Reese 1990; Cecil 2002; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014).

To identify the strategy of catastrophization in the press narrative, ‘threat to press freedom’ was included in the list of codes for Variable 11 “Description of measures aimed at checking press bad behaviour”; Variable 12 (a) “Reasons why the cross-party plan for press regulation should not be patronized by the press”; Variable 13 “Description of the Leveson Inquiry/its report or envisaged report”; and Variable 15 “Dominant theme in the study sample” (see Appendix A). As mentioned in Chapter 5, the codes for each variable were identified from previous literature on press coverage of media policy debates and through a ‘long preliminary soak’ (Hall 1975, p.15) of the study sample. The variables provide answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”; and particularly, an aspect of RQ1.1 “What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?” The aspect of RQ1.1 to be covered in this chapter relates to arguments or issues that were the most prominent in the press coverage of the media policy debate. The least prominent arguments will be discussed in Chapter 8. RQ1.3 “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?” is also answered in this chapter.

To ascertain the most prominent argument or issue of concern in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, a thematic variable was included in the coding sheet (see Appendix A, Variable 15). The thematic variable was divided into 24 codes including Threat to press freedom; Support for new press regulatory system formed by the press; Against politicians’ Royal Charter; Against press law/statutory underpinning;

Achievements and importance of the press; Against independent self-regulation of the press; Support for Leveson Inquiry; Enforce existing laws; 'Character smear' against critics of the press ('press' here refers to "free speech and press freedom" proponents); 'Character smear' against critics of the pro-Leveson and statutory underpinning argument; The press behaved badly; and Plans for press regulation were rushed, could be better.

Others are Privacy; Against new press regulatory system formed by the press; Support for politicians' Royal Charter; Support for press law/statutory underpinning; Media ownership; Support for independent self-regulation of the press; Against Leveson Inquiry; The politicians' Royal Charter may never work; Promoting supporters of the press; Promoting supporters of the pro-Leveson and statutory underpinning argument; The press is not to blame; and Other (see Appendix A). There were numerous codes because as the subject of analysis is a debate, different sides had to be represented; for example, the code 'Support for Leveson Inquiry' had to be balanced with the code 'Against Leveson Inquiry'.

To find out the dominant theme of each story, I read through the story to identify the key message of the article and used certain clues to help me to do so. They included the headline of the story because headlines often contain the most important information in a news report (van Dijk 1991); the subject's appearance within the first three paragraphs of the news narrative because, based on the inverted pyramid format of news writing, the important information comes higher up in the news narrative (Pottker 2003, p.501; Franklin et al. 2005, p.122); and the frequency with which it was discussed in comparison to other issues in the article.

The box (space) for the code that relates to the key message of the article is ticked. Where that option is not available, the box named 'Other' is ticked and the theme is written in the space provided to enable me to accommodate all themes, be they on my list or not. A code, e.g. 'Threat to press freedom', was only identified as the dominant theme in articles where it emerged as the key message. Only one code can be ticked for each news article

because each story can only have one dominant theme. The total of the dominant themes of all the stories in a newspaper sample was taken as the dominant theme of that newspaper. The total of the dominant themes of all newspapers in the study sample produced the result for the dominant theme for the whole coverage.

Table 6.2 shows that 'Threat to press freedom' was the overall dominant theme in the coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. It was the dominant theme in 20.6 per cent of the study sample, appearing in 62.5 per cent of articles in the *Sun*, 35.7 per cent of *Daily Express*, 25.5 per cent of *Daily Mirror* and 18.1 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* (See Table 6.2). It was only surpassed in *Daily Mail* by the theme 'Critiquing critics of the press'; yet it still managed to exceed *Guardian's* usage of the strategy, emerging in 13.3 per cent of articles in *Daily Mail* as against *Guardian's* 11.5 per cent of articles.

'Support for statutory underpinning' was the dominant theme in *Guardian* newspaper, appearing in 22.3 per cent of its sample as against 3.5 per cent in the *Daily Telegraph*, 1.2 per cent in the *Daily Mail* and zero per cent in the *Sun*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* (see Table 6.2). All other newspapers in my study sample advanced a discourse that was opposed to statutory regulation and that includes a regulatory body underpinned by statute (Embley 2012, pp.8-9; *Daily Express* 2012, p.18; Dunn and Well 2012, pp.8-9; Luckhurst 2012, p.25; Shipman, p.14). This resistance accounted for arguments 'against statutory underpinning' emerging as the dominant theme in 12.7 per cent of the sample for *Daily Mail*; 10.7 per cent for *Daily Express*; 9.8 per cent for *Daily Mirror*; 6.0 per cent for *Daily Telegraph*; 5.2 per cent for the *Sun*; and 4.0 per cent for *Guardian*.

**Table 6.2 Dominant theme in the study sample**

Dominant Theme	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Threat to press freedom	11.5%	13.3%	25.5%	18.1%	35.7%	62.5%	20.6%
Support for new press own regulatory system	1.5%	4.6%	3.9%	2.5%	3.6%	4.2%	2.9%
Against politicians' Royal Charter	2.8%	4.0%		3.0%		3.1%	2.9%
Against press law/statutory underpinning	4.0%	12.7%	9.8%	6.0%	10.7%	5.2%	6.9%
Press Achievements	0.6%	6.9%	2.0%	1.5%	7.1%	1.0%	2.4%
Against self-regulation of the press	0.9%	0.6%					0.5%
Support for Leveson Inquiry	10.5%		7.8%	2.5%	7.1%	3.1%	5.5%
Enforce existing laws		2.3%	3.9%	4.5%			1.7%
Critiquing critics of the press	0.6%	14.5%	2.0%	5.0%	3.6%	8.3%	5.4%
More dialogue needed	1.5%						0.6%
Privacy	6.2%	9.2%	9.8%	11.1%	10.7%	3.1%	7.9%
Against new press regulatory system formed by the press	2.5%			1.0%			1.1%
Support for politicians' Royal Charter	6.8%	2.9%	2.0%	1.0%			3.4%
Support for press law/statutory underpinning	22.3%	1.2%		3.5%			9.3%

**Table 6.2 Dominant theme in the study sample (Cont.)**

Dominant Theme	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Media owners/ownership checks are needed	5.0%	1.2%	2.0%	4.5%	3.6%	1.0%	3.4%
Support for self-regulation of the press	5.6%	1.7%	2.0%	9.0%	3.6%	2.1%	4.9%
Against Leveson Inquiry	0.6%	8.7%			3.6%	3.1%	2.4%
The politicians' Royal Charter may never work	2.8%	2.3%	2.0%	0.5%			1.7%
Promoting supporters of the press	0.3%	2.9%					0.7%
Promoting supporters of the statutory underpinning argument				0.5%			0.1%
The press behaved badly	0.6%	6.4%	11.8%	11.1%			4.7%
The press is not to blame		4.0%	5.9%	6.5%			2.6%
Other	13.3%	0.6%	9.8%	8.0%	10.7%	3.1%	8.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Support for or against statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory system underpinned several arguments relating to the 'threat to press freedom' theme in the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. This result partly answers RQ1.1 "What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking

scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?” The result demonstrates that ‘threat to press freedom’ was the most prominent argument and issue of concern in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate. It also shows that the ‘threat to press freedom’ strategy was used liberally in all newspapers in the study sample but more prominently in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*.

To find out how measures aimed at ensuring press accountability were interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, I created a variable for ‘Description of measures aimed at checking press bad behaviour’ (Appendix A, Variable 11). A list of ten codes was provided for this variable. The list includes ‘Independent press self-regulation’, ‘threat to press freedom’, ‘retribution’, ‘tough press regulation’, ‘state control/slippery slope to licensing of the press’, ‘regulation that delivers on Leveson’s promises’, ‘chilling effect on investigative journalism’, ‘draconian/punitive’, ‘other’ and ‘not applicable’ (see Appendix A, Variable 11). This was a multiple-choice variable. The codes are potential answers to the question posed by the variable. The frequency of appearance of each of the codes is counted for each newspaper in the study sample to provide data for the degree of its usage in the newspaper. The sum of the code for all the newspapers forms the total percentage of that code in the study sample. The results from Variable 11 are presented in Table 6.2.1.

Table 6.2.1 reveals that measures aimed at checking press misconduct were described as ‘Threat to press freedom’ in 27.8 per cent of the study sample, emerging as the most frequently used interpretation of efforts at reforming the press in the journalistic metadiscourse. The measures were described as ‘Threat to press freedom’ in 39.9 per cent of articles in the *Sun*, 30.8 per cent of *Daily Mail*, 30.3 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*, 28.9 per cent of *Daily Express*, 26.1 per cent of *Daily Mirror* and 20.2 per cent of *Guardian* (see Table 6.2.1). This result strengthens the finding that ‘threat to press freedom’ was the most prominent argument advanced by the press in their coverage of the media policy debate.



Table 6.2.1 shows that measures aimed at ensuring press accountability were also interpreted as ‘Independent press self-regulation’ (16.8 per cent), ‘Tough press regulation’ (13.4 per cent), ‘State control or slippery slope to press licensing’ (10.9 per cent), ‘Chilling effect on investigative journalism’ (10.6 per cent), ‘Leveson compliant’ (7.4 per cent), ‘Retribution’ (6.1 per cent) and ‘Draconian or punitive’ (5.6 per cent). Some of these codes will be expatiated in Chapters 7.

**Table 6.2.1 Description of measures to check press misconduct**

Description	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Independent press self-regulation	31.1%	6.9%	5.8%	7.7%	11.1%	8.5%	16.8%
Tough press regulation	12.4%	16.2%	10.1%	13.4%	20.0%	12.4%	13.4%
Chilling effect on investigative journalism	6.5%	14.6%	15.9%	15.5%	8.9%	9.8%	10.6%
Threat to press freedom	20.2%	30.8%	26.1%	30.3%	28.9%	39.9%	27.8%
State control or slippery slope to press licensing	8.6%	11.5%	11.6%	10.6%	17.8%	13.1%	10.9%
Draconian or punitive	3.9%	10.0%	10.1%	3.5%	4.4%	5.9%	5.6%
Retribution	3.0%	4.6%	5.8%	11.3%	6.7%	9.2%	6.1%
Regulation that delivers on Leveson’s promises	11.6%	5.4%	14.5%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Other	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	2.2%	1.3%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Though, the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* gave prominence to a discourse that kicked against statutory backing of a new press regulator, they largely supported the idea of ‘tough’ rules to check press irresponsibility (see Table 6.2.1). They contended that the press is capable of setting up its own regulator that would have tough rules as recommended by the Leveson Inquiry but without a statutory underpinning (Shipman 2013, p.16). In fact, all parties in the debate including the press, victims of the press, campaigners for victims and politicians advocated tough measures to check press misconduct. That accounted for the high frequency of the use of the word “tough” to describe measures aimed at checking press misconduct (see Table 6.2.1). It appeared in 13.4 per cent of descriptions of measures to check press misconduct and was used in 20 per cent of *Daily Express*; 16.2 per cent of *Daily Mail*; 13.4 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*; 12.4 per cent of *Guardian*; 12.4 per cent of the *Sun* and 10.1 per cent of *Daily Mirror*. ‘Tough press regulation’ was among the top three words used to describe measures aimed at checking press behaviour (see Table 6.2.1). It was only surpassed by ‘threat to press freedom’ (27.8 per cent) and ‘independent press self-regulation’ (16.8 per cent).

An analysis of the context within which the phrase ‘independent press self-regulation’ was used showed that all parties in the debate claimed that their proposal for press reform would guarantee independent press regulation (Mason 2012c, p.12; Brown 2013, p.2; *Daily Mirror* 2013b, p.8; Dunn 2013c, p.2; Seamark 2013, n.p.; Wintour 2013, p.9). However, the description was used more frequently in *Guardian* where it was often used to criticise the new press regulatory system formed by the press (IPSO) as not being independent enough to effectively check press excesses. As shown in Table 6.2.1, the phrase ‘independent press self-regulation’ appeared in 31.1 per cent of *Guardian* as opposed to in 11.1 per cent in *Daily Express*, 8.5 per cent in the *Sun*, 7.7 per cent in *Daily Telegraph*, 6.9 per cent in *Daily Mail* and 10.1 per cent in *Daily Mirror*. These finding provides answers to RQ1.3 “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?”.

As earlier stated, the code 'threat to press freedom' was also included in the variable entitled "Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should not be patronized by the press" (Appendix A, Variable 12a) as part of efforts to find out how, as well as gauge the extent to which, the "threat to the paradigm" strategy was used in the representation of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. A total of seven codes were created (see Table 6.2.2; also, Appendix A). All boxes that provided answers to the question posed by the variable were ticked. Multiple choices were made for this question and results were produced for each newspaper as well as for the whole study sample. To generate data for each of the codes including 'threat to press freedom', I counted references made to the code or its equivalent during arguments against the cross-party Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press.

Table 6.2.2 shows that 'threat to press freedom' was the most frequently presented reason why the press should not sign-up to the Royal Charter on press self-regulation. That reason was contained in 49.8 per cent of the study sample; followed by 'Slippery slope to licensing of the press' (19.9 per cent); 'The press is able to set up [its] own regulator' (16.4 per cent); [Signing up to the Royal Charter] 'could lead to bankruptcy of smaller newspapers' (7.6 per cent); 'Already too many curbs on the press' (5 per cent) and Other (1.3 per cent). As with the results on dominant themes, the 'threat to press freedom' argument featured prominently in all newspapers in the study sample but more prominently in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in *Guardian* newspaper. It was discussed in 59.3 per cent of articles in *Daily Telegraph*, 55.3 per cent in the *Sun*, 52.7 per cent in *Daily Mail*, 48 per cent in *Daily Mirror*, 41.7 per cent in *Daily Express* and 35.9 per cent in *Guardian* (see Table 6.2.2). This result provides more answers to RQ1.3: "How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the study sample?" It also shows us the extent to which the strategy of 'threat to press freedom' was used in the representation of arguments against the cross-party Royal Charter on press self-regulation.

**Table 6.2.2 Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should not be patronized by the press.**

Description	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Threat to press freedom	35.9%	52.7%	48.0%	59.3%	41.7%	55.3%	49.8%
Slippery slope to licensing of the press	51.0%	24.5%	6.1%	12.2%	0.0%	6.1%	19.9%
The press is able to set up own regulator	25.6%	18.9%	8.0%	6.2%	25.0%	17.0%	16.4%
Already too many curbs on the UK Press	2.6%	5.4%	16.0%	4.9%	0.0%	4.3%	5.0%
Could lead to bankruptcy of smaller newspapers	15.4%	4.1%	0.0%	8.6%	0.0%	4.3%	7.6%
Other	5.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Though there were opinion articles from all newspapers in the study sample that argued against the cross-party Royal Charter on press regulation, the editorials of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* advanced the argument that signing up to the Royal Charter on press regulation was a threat to press freedom because it was backed by statute (*Daily Express* 2012, p.18; Dunn and Well 2012, p.6; Johnson 2013a, p.22; McTague 2013, p.24; Phillips 2013, n.p.) while those of *Guardian* newspaper argued that a statute with the power to ensure that the Royal Charter on press regulation would not be easily overturned by politicians, is not the same thing as statutory regulation of the press (Toynbee 2013, p.29).

The *Guardian's* support for the cross-party Royal Charter on press self-regulation is more vivid in Table 6.2.2.1. Data for Table 6.2.2.1 were sourced from Variable 12b, entitled 'Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should be patronized by the press' (see Appendix A). The variable comprises five codes namely 'Independent self-regulation of the press', 'Leveson compliant', 'A good deal for both the press and victims of phone hacking', 'Puts an end to weak press regulatory reforms' and 'Other'. When a reason is offered in support of the Royal Charter on press regulation, the space provided by the related code is ticked. Though multiple choices were made for this variable, each code was only ticked once per news article. Results were produced for each newspaper and for the whole study sample. Table 6.2.2.1 revealed that there was a high degree of support for the cross-party Royal Charter from *Guardian* newspaper in comparison with all other newspapers in the study sample.

89.7 per cent of the description of the Royal Charter as a good deal came from *Guardian* newspaper. The *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* each had only 3.4 per cent of their articles describing the deal as good. There was no such description coming in the *Sun* and *Daily Express'* coverage (see Table 6.2.2.1). While content analysis helped to provide the statistical data for the extent to which the 'threat to the paradigm' strategy was used and contested, some principles from critical discourse analysis will help us delve deeper to find out the context within which it was used.

**Table 6.2.2.1 Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should be patronized by the press.**

<b>Reasons in support of cross-party Royal Charter</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total: percent within reasons</b>
Independent self-regulation of the press	71.1%	18.4%	0.0%	7.9%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
Leveson compliant	51.0%	24.5%	6.1%	12.2%	0.0%	6.1%	100.0%
A good deal for both the press and victims of phone hacking	89.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Puts an end to weak press regulatory reforms.	78.6%	7.1%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	7.1%	100.0%
Other	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	66.2%	16.2%	2.9%	8.8%	1.5%	4.4%	100.0%

In the sub-interpretive sphere comprising all newspapers in my study sample except the *Guardian*, doom-laden phrases such as “slippery slope to the licensing of the press” (Well and Dunn 2012, pp.11-12; Beattie 2013, p.26; Forsyth 2013b, p.15; Harris 2013, p.20; Letts 2013, n.p.); “damage to our democracy” (McKinstry 2013, p.14; Seamark, M. 2012, n.p.; Beattie 2013, p.26; Dunn et al. 2013, pp.6-7) and the loss of “300 years of press freedom” (Rayner 2012a, p.6; Chapman 2013b, p.14; Forsyth 2013b, p.15; Hodges 2013, p.10; Lyons 2013, p.10) were used to warn readers that any proposals for press regulation with statutory backing was a threat to press freedom.

The sub-interpretive sphere made up of *Guardian* newspaper denounced such warnings as a “false alarm”. It did this by deconstructing the arguments made by the other newspapers. For example, where other newspapers used headlines such as “Royal

Charter causes outrage as freedom of the press is cast aside after 300 years” (Brown and Little 2013, n.p.), the *Guardian* countered such discourses with headlines such as “Press freedom: a tug of war, not the end of 300 years of glorious liberty” (White 2013b, n.p.). The *Guardian’s* article read:

The chorus of mostly Tory editorial writers and columnists who have been denouncing any external constraint on their right to have a good time keep claiming that Britain is facing the end of “300 years of press freedom”. Stirring stuff, but not true. Why should we believe their dire predictions for the future when they can't even be bothered to get the past right? (Ibid).

The article went on to explain why it considered that rhetoric to be untrue. In step with *Guardian’s* apparent social democratic approach to press reform, the paper challenged neoliberal perspectives by describing the rhetoric of “the 300 years of press freedom” as one born out of the self-interest of media proprietors and their staff:

To judge from some of the more hysterical warnings in the rightwing press, 300 years (where do they pluck that silly figure?) are about to end. The warning has been reinforced by days in news reports, editorial columns, columnists by the dozen, reinforced again online and on Twitter. On days like today press freedom in most papers sounds like the freedom of salaried journalists to agree with the proprietor's view - the editor-in-chief Paul Dacre's in the case of the Mail (White 2013a, n.p.).

The *Guardian’s* argument agrees with scholars like Curran (2013) and Allan and Jukes (2015, p.31) who have queried the accuracy of the information that Britain has had approximately 300 years of press freedom. Their argument is predicated on the fact that the ‘taxes on knowledge’ (tax on advertising, stamp duty, tax on paper) were repealed between 1853 and 1861 (see Chapter 2).

All newspapers except the *Guardian*, regardless of their classification, advanced the warnings of threat to the paradigm but the tone of language was harsher in the tabloid and mid-market newspapers. For example, while the *Sun* newspaper (Kavanagh 2013a, p.8) used the headline, “PM a political dwarf: sleepy, dopey, grumpy” for an editorial that condemned the then Prime Minister David Cameron’s succumbing to calls for the Royal

Charter on press regulation to be underpinned by statute, *Daily Telegraph's* editorial (*Daily Telegraph* 2013, p.23) on the same issue had the headline "MPs cross the Rubicon on press regulation". The *Sun's* article likened David Cameron's spokesperson and the then Conservative MP for West Dorset, Oliver Letwin to a "tethered goat", described the then Labour leader Ed Miliband as "geeky" and a "Marxist-born lefty", the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown as an "ex-grunt" and Hugh Grant as a "faded showbiz luvvie". Of all the newspapers, The *Sun's* tone of language was the most demeaning. Use of 'demeaning language' will be examined more closely in Chapter 7.

The journalistic metadiscourse of all the newspapers except *Guardian* was often constructed to portray the public as the victim of any form of statutory intervention in press regulation. Linguistic devices such as hyperboles, 'you-centeredness' (direct address), sensational vocabulary and powerful imagery were employed to make the reader visualise the press as the crusader and the public as victims, while politicians, victims of press abuse and campaigners for such victims appear as villains. For example, an article in *Daily Mail* captioned "A rotten day for freedom" stated:

They want to ordain how we run your newspapers. They'll be coming after you next, mes braves. Thou shalt not think impure thoughts. Thou shalt conform and applaud the Westminster elite. All hail to The System. All must subscribe to egalitarianism. All must suppress their inner eruptions. Control, control: This is the impetus (Letts 2013, n.p.).

In this article, the linguistic device of 'you-centeredness' as described by Fairclough (1995, cited in Marston 2002, p.86) was used to persuade the reader to see politicians, victims of press abuse and campaigners for such victims as their enemies. This interpretation runs contrary to Lord Justice Leveson's claim (Leveson 2012, pp.14-15) that his proposal of a statutorily backed press regulatory body would protect the members of the public from press abuse. This finding agrees with Carlson's (2012a, p.113) claim that perceived threats to journalism are often interpreted in journalistic metadiscourse as threats to the public.



As with Putnis' (2000, pp.106–110) analysis of newspaper coverage of the media policy debate in Australia, echoes from George Orwell's *1984* were used to strengthen arguments against statutorily backed press regulation (Nelson 2012a, p.30; Beattie 2013, p.26; Dunn 2013c, p.2; Glover 2013, n.p). For example, *Daily Express* wrote:

In practice, statutory regulation would mean government censorship. Our reading matter would be vetted by official bureaucrats, accountable not to the public but to the politicians, Whitehall and probably even the European courts. We would soon be sliding down the road towards Orwell's Ministry of Truth, the sinister organisation that directed the press in the novel *1984* (McKinstry 2012, p.14).

Similarly, in its comments section, *Daily Mail* stated "But today MPs must put such petty bitterness aside. Labour and the Lib Dems should remember they are the heirs of Hardie, Orwell and John Stuart Mill - true giants in the fight for freedom and democracy" (*Daily Mail* 2013b, n.p.). These quotations also reveal the press' use of the 'us' and 'them' contrast (Marston 2002, p.86) to position the reader on the side of the press, thus creating an in-group (using 'We' and 'Our') with the policymakers as the outsiders and potential enemy.

Again, *Guardian* countered the other newspapers' arguments against statutorily backed press regulation including their use of echoes from George Orwell's *1984* and other scholars, as can be seen in these statements:

The Guardian, FT and Independent agreed with the parliamentary route [statutory underpinning]. It is unclear why Milton, Wilkes or Orwell would be happy to bequeath freedom of expression to the government of the day ... (Rusbridger 2013, p.26).

The public rightly snort in derision at high-flown cant about press freedom while scoundrels brandish quotes from Milton and Orwell as cover to let them bully as they please (Toynbee 2013, p.29).

All newspapers except the *Guardian*, used hyperbolic comparisons to advance the argument that a statutorily backed regulatory body would make Britain a totalitarian

regime like Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Saudi Arabia; and warned that even such regimes are appalled by Britain's decision (Johnson 2012b, pp.10-11; McKinstry 2012, p.14; Swinford and Mason 2012, p.6; Lyons 2013, p.10; *Daily Mail* 2013c, n.p.). A *Daily Mail* headline read "How even the Kremlin and Iran scorn Britain for shackling a free press – from New York to Sydney, the world condemns appalling and unimaginable gag on liberty" and an article written by the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson for the *Daily Telegraph* stated:

All my life I have thought of Britain as a free country, a place that can look around the world with a certain moral self-confidence. How can we wag our fingers at Putin's Russia, when we are about to propose exemplary and crippling fines on publications that do not sign up to the regulatory body? How could we have criticised the Venezuela of Hugo Chavez? (Johnson 2013b, p.24).

The *Guardian* newspaper also contested these warnings as can be seen in this example:

Then there was the *Sun's* claim that, if the press were subject to statutory regulation, Britain would, like Russia, Zimbabwe and Iran, have "state stooges . . . deciding what can or can't be printed in your *Sun*". It quoted a YouGov poll showing 75% of Britons thought that, under press regulation set up by parliament, there was "a risk" that politicians would try to stop newspapers criticising them. It neglected to mention that 63% did not trust the industry to set up "a fair system of press regulation ". The Mail's Richard Littlejohn argued - or, rather, screamed - that statutory regulation would lead to journalists who exposed tax avoiders being jailed (Wilby 2012, p.30).

This warning by the press of a 'threat to press freedom' if press regulation is underpinned by statute also surfaced during descriptions of the Leveson Inquiry in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate.

### **6.3 The Leveson Inquiry: threat to press freedom**

Knowledge of how the press represented an inquiry into its affairs, in this case, the Leveson Inquiry, is vital to an understanding of how the press functioned as a democratic

public sphere during its coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. To find out how the inquiry was represented by the press, I created a variable entitled 'Description of Leveson Inquiry/its report or envisaged report' (Appendix A, Variable 13). A list of 9 codes was generated for the variable. The codes include 'A threat to press freedom', 'Harmful to UK's reputation', 'A chilling effect on journalism', 'A fair deal', 'Solution to efforts at curbing press excesses', 'Other', 'Illegitimate/unfair', 'Anti-democratic' and 'Not applicable' (see Table 6.3).

All appropriate answers to Variable 13 were ticked for each news article. Multiple choices were made for this variable. References that were made to each description of the Leveson Inquiry on the list of codes for Variable 13 were counted for each newspaper to ascertain the degree of its usage in that paper. The sum of its usage in all the newspapers provided results for the extent to which that description of Leveson Inquiry was used in the whole study sample. Not all the codes for this variable will be examined in this chapter. They will be elaborated on at different points in this research when they become relevant. The aspect of this data relevant to this chapter is the code 'A threat to press freedom'.

The results for this variable show that 'A threat to press freedom' featured prominently as a description of the Leveson Inquiry. It was used to express concern that the Leveson Inquiry, especially its proposal for a statutorily backed press regulatory body (Leveson Inquiry 2012, paras.41-46), and to a lesser extent its suggestion that voluntary pre-publication advice be made available to the press to enable it to verify if a potentially controversial story is of the public interest (Leveson 2012a, p.15, para.62), were threats to press freedom. The strategy of 'catastrophization' was used to protect the press' (all newspapers in the study sample apart from *Guardian*) preferred system of regulation: one with no statutory backing or pre-publication advice.

Table 6.3 shows that the Leveson Inquiry was described as a threat to press freedom in 27.1 per cent of the study sample; in 38.0 per cent of the *Sun* newspaper's descriptions of the Leveson Inquiry, 33.3 per cent of *Daily Express's*, 28.2 per cent of *Daily Mirror's*, 28.6 per cent of *Daily Telegraph's*, 28.9 per cent of *Daily Mail's* and 20.5 per cent of *Guardian's*

descriptions of the Leveson Inquiry. The threat to press freedom argument was surpassed on Table 6.3 by “solution to efforts at curbing press excesses” which emerged in 28.4 per cent of the study sample. It appeared in 48.9 per cent of *Guardian* newspaper, 20.5 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 16.7 per cent of *Daily Express*, 15.8 per cent of *Daily Mail*, 13 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* and 8.7 per cent of the *Sun* (see Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3. Description of Leveson Inquiry**

Description	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
A threat to press freedom	20.5%	28.9%	28.2%	28.6%	33.3%	38.0%	27.1%
Harmful to UK's reputation	2.3%	3.9%	5.1%	7.8%	5.6%	12.0%	5.4%
A chilling effect on journalism	8.7%	17.1%	20.5%	26.0%	22.2%	15.2%	15.0%
A fair deal	12.8%	3.9%	2.6%	11.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Solution to efforts at curbing press excesses	48.9%	15.8%	20.5%	13.0%	16.7%	8.7%	28.4%
Illegitimate/unfair to the press	0.5%	18.4%	10.3%	3.9%	5.6%	15.2%	7.1%
Anti-democratic	3.7%	9.2%	10.3%	7.8%	16.7%	9.8%	7.1%
Other	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	1.1%	2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

While it is expected that *Guardian* would have a high percentage of references to the Leveson Inquiry as a ‘solution to efforts at curbing press excesses’ due to its preferred interpretation of press freedom which is in step with much of Leveson’s proposals, the high percentage of references to Leveson Inquiry as a ‘solution to efforts at curbing press excesses’ by the other newspapers looks contradictory on face value. An exploration of

the context within which those references were made, however, showed that the press, apart from the *Guardian*, in an effort to promote their proposed self-regulatory body, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), described it as Leveson compliant and, as such, a solution to efforts at curbing press excesses. This accounted for the seemingly contradictory data of the Leveson Inquiry being described both as a threat to press freedom (27.1 per cent) and a solution to efforts at curbing press excesses (28.4 per cent) in Table 6.3. It can be argued that all newspapers in the study sample except *Guardian* interpreted press freedom from the neoliberal perspective where press freedom is interpreted as freedom from state intervention (Siebert et al. 1956, p.70; Harvey 2005, p.2; Freedman 2014, pp.62-63; Pickard 2015, pp.4-5; Schlosberg 2017, p.5). The insistence by some in this sub-interpretive sphere that enforcing existing laws, such as libel and the competition rules is sufficient to guarantee an accountable press, also falls within the confines of neoliberal or corporate libertarian arguments (McChesney 2001; Freedman 2014; Schlosberg 2017, p.5).

I argue that the neoliberal concept of press freedom is a paradigm which the commercial press fought hard to protect rather than scrutinize to see if there is need for change or modification. As discussed in Chapter 4, the goal of propagators of the neoliberal press ideology may not be to promote investigative journalism or enhance democracy as the proponents' claim, but to serve the commercial interests of media owners by preventing stringent controls that will check the invasion of privacy and other means through which the press gets sensational stories that sell (McQuail 2010, p.176; Pickard 2015, p.4). The neoliberal interpretation of press freedom has been criticised for being too market focussed (McChesney 2001, n.p.; Freedman 2014, p.12). As Freedman (2014, p.12) and Pickard (2015, p.4) argue, the vital role the press plays in the sustenance of democracy warrants that it is not treated as a commodity. Pickard (2015) advocated a social democratic approach to journalism.

As explained in Chapter 2, social democracy propagates 'positive freedom' which welcomes state intervention in press regulation with the aim of enhancing democracy through the promotion of social equality (Miller 1998, cited in Craig 2000, p.836;

Heywood 2017, p.123). It can be argued that in the coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, the *Guardian* served as the social democratic challenger of the neoliberal press ideology which, arguably, governed the coverage of the debate by all other newspapers examined in this study. Whether or not *Guardian* was a selfless crusader speaking up for the voiceless; a left-wing press pitting up against some right-wing counterparts; a newspaper trying to protect its crusader image by advocating measures to regulate the press that it had no intention of succumbing to; a rival newspaper trying to keep afloat in a bullish media oligopoly or anything else, can be debated.

Having examined how the strategy of 'threat to the paradigm' was used in the coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal, the following section presents and discusses my findings on how the strategy of historicisation was used to cover the press reform debate. This section as well as the next provide answers to RQ1 "What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?"

#### **6.4 Historicization**

Historicization is one of the five paradigmatic strategies that formed the framework for my analysis of how the press covered the media policy debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. Historicization is defined in this study as the use of history to strengthen contemporary arguments (see Chapter 3). As a paradigm repair strategy, historicization can be used for diverse arguments that aim to protect existing paradigms. To identify paradigm repair strategies in this study, I included paradigmatic markers in the list of codes for related variables on my coding sheet. In the case of historicization, the strategy takes the form of a discursive pattern that can be identified not necessarily by the counting of words but in whole sentences, phrases and paragraphs (Zelizer 1994, cited in Cecil 2002, p.51). Therefore, principles from critical discourse analysis (CDA) were used to identify and analyse the trend in each newspaper in the study sample.

As previously mentioned, historicization can be used to affirm that the press has gone too far, too often. Congruently, my findings revealed that historicization was used to emphasize that the press got it wrong in the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. An example is an article by *Guardian* newspaper headline “what journalistic 'operators' got up to in the past”, an excerpt from Keeble and Mair’s book, *The phone hacking scandal: journalism on trial* (Greenslade 2012b, n.p.). While acknowledging press bad behaviour, the article highlighted the “scoop-getting exploits” of journalists in the 1950s -1960s which included “composing quotable quotes because interviewees were often inarticulate or tongue-tied”; “impersonating a pop group manager in a telephone call in order to trap an impresario suspected of taking back-handers when booking bands”; obtaining pictures from a police accomplice of a house on fire in which an elderly former actress died; and using the “services of an "earwigger", a person employed to listen in to police radio calls which was arguably an illegal activity” (Ibid).

All parties in the debate including the press, victims of the press, victims’ campaigners, the Leveson Inquiry and politicians accepted that the press had behaved badly with respect to the phone hacking (Moore 2011, p.13; Beckford 2012, p.21; *Daily Telegraph* 2012c, p.29; Doughty 2013, n.p.). Since the strategy of historicization, as used in this study, involves using past stories of press bad behaviour to make a point about a more recent press scandal, the related codes will include words used to describe press scandals. Since, the debate under analysis is an offshoot of the phone hacking scandal, I created the variable ‘Description of the phone hacking scandal and by extension press behaviour’ (see Appendix A). Drawing from my review of the literature on media scandals and a preliminary study of the news articles in the study sample, I made a list of ten codes.

The codes were made broad enough to provide answers not only for how the strategy of historicization was used in the coverage but also for other issues relating to how the phone hacking scandal was represented in the press reform debate. The codes are ‘Unavoidable’, ‘The work of a few bad apples in journalism’, ‘Anti-democratic’, ‘Bad journalism/Irresponsible’, ‘It is not new to journalism’, ‘Less serious than portrayed’, ‘Criminality’ and ‘Demonstrates the importance of a free press.’ ‘Other’ was added to the

list to provide space for options not stated on the list, and ‘Not applicable’ was added where the variable does not apply to the story, for example, if there were no descriptions of phone hacking in the news article.

**Table 6.4 Description of phone hacking**

Description of phone hacking	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Unavoidable	0.8%	2.3%	4.4%	1.7%	0.0%	2.9%	1.9%
The work of a few bad apples in journalism	10.6%	3.5%	6.7%	4.2%	16.7%	25.7%	8.5%
Anti-democratic	4.1%	1.2%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	2.1%
<b>Bad journalism/Irresponsible</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>39.5%</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>
It is not new to journalism	1.6%	0.0%	2.2%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Less serious than portrayed	21.1%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.9%	8.9%
<b>Criminality</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>
Demonstrates the importance of a free press.	0.0%	4.7%	6.7%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%
Other	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6.4 shows that the top three descriptions of the phone hacking in the journalistic metadiscourse were ‘Bad journalism/Irresponsible’ (40 per cent); ‘Criminality’ (33.2 per cent) and ‘Less serious than portrayed’ (8.9 per cent). The least used among the codes provided was ‘It is not new to journalism’ which was used in only 1.6 per cent of the study sample. Others were ‘The work of a few bad apples in journalism’ (8.5 per cent); ‘Demonstrates the importance of a free press’ (3.3 per cent); ‘Anti-democratic’ (2.1 per cent); ‘Unavoidable’ (1.9 per cent) and ‘Other’ (0.5 per cent) (see Table 6.4). Most of these variables will be expatiated in Chapter 7. At this stage, it will suffice to point out that these



results reveal a high frequency of condemnation of the phone hacking scandal and other acts of press misconduct in the journalistic metadiscourse.

This acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the press by way of the strategy of historicization may or may not be for the purpose of self-critique. As discussed in Chapter 2, journalists often exaggerate dramatic elements in stories in order to enhance their newsworthiness (Lull and Hinerman 1997, p.6; Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Frost 2007, pp.25-36; Hall et al. 1978, cited in Allan 2010, p.84). This agrees with Stiegler's (2013c, p.137) assertion that during the coverage of media policy debates, the press use negative stories as infotainment. It can be argued that historicization was used for infotainment in the press coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. The reasons could be to boost readership or could just be a subconscious urge to entertain readers. All six newspapers in the study sample employed historicization to affirm press bad behaviour (Sabbagh 2011, p.19; *Daily Telegraph* 2012b, p.29; Kavanagh 2012b, p.8; Forsyth 2012a, p.12; Phillips 2012, n.p.).

As previously stated, historicization can be used for diverse arguments. Another way historicization was used in the coverage of the press reform debate, outside acknowledging bad behaviour, was to argue that the present-day press is better than the press of yesteryear. For some, it was used to argue that phone hacking is not new in the sense of subterfuge being used for news stories. It was also used to call attention to the need to check the concentration of media ownership. For instance, the example from the *Guardian*, "what journalistic 'operators' got up to in the past" (Greenslade 2012b, n.p.), not only acknowledged press excesses through historicization but also used the strategy to affirm that the present-day press is, to a large extent, better than that of the past as well as to call attention to the problem of concentration of media ownership.

Though there was wide acknowledgement of press misconduct in the journalistic metadiscourse, a study of the context within which this was expressed showed that the underlying reason for such acknowledgement of wrong was often in defence of the press. This explains why despite the fact that 40 per cent of the study sample described phone

hacking as bad and irresponsible journalism; this view only emerged as a dominant theme (under the name 'the press behaved badly') in 4.7 per cent of the study sample (see Table 6.2). Historicization was used to argue for and against press reforms in the media policy debate.

#### **6.4.1 Historicization and press reform**

As discussed in Chapter 2, historicization can be used to strengthen arguments for and against press reform. In *Guardian* newspaper, historicization was used to strengthen arguments in support of press reform including a statutorily backed press regulatory body (Sabbagh 2011, p.19; Robinson et al. 2011, p.16). For example, a report by *Guardian* captioned "Leveson inquiry: Analysis: Calls for new laws after evidence that puts the out-of-control paparazzi in the frame" stated:

It was as if nothing had changed in the years since the *Sun*, the *News of the World* and *Hello!* announced they had stopped using paparazzi pictures of Kate Middleton after she was mobbed outside her house at the time of her 25th birthday in 2007 - or, of course, since Diana died trying to evade the photographers at high speed in Paris in 1997. ... It fell to Dr Gerry McCann, speaking the language of his profession, to propose a solution. He spoke of the need to change the law so photographs could only be taken in a public place with the consent of the subject... (Sabbagh 2011, p.19).

And in another example:

I don't think this is an industry that is interested in or capable of self-regulation. The history of the (Press Complaints Commission) undermines the whole concept of self-regulation (Davies cited in Robinson, J. et al. 2011, p.16).

On the other hand, all other newspapers except *Guardian* used historicization to strengthen arguments against press reform, and particularly, the statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body (Embley 2012, pp.8-9; *Daily Mail* 2012, n.p.; *Daily Telegraph* 2012b, p.29; Forsyth 2012a, p.12; Kavanagh 2012b, p.8). For example:

By contrast France, where these pictures have been published, has a constitutional right to privacy. Yet in practice, this statutory law of privacy protects the powerful but throws everyone else to the media wolves.... All this demonstrates the utter futility of attempting to impose further controls on the British press when it is impossible to regulate a media that is now global and instantaneous.... Further regulation of the press would do nothing to protect individual privacy in the Twitter and Facebook age but would merely hand yet another weapon to those who wish to control public debate (*Daily Mail* 2012, n.p.).

This divide in interpretation runs through much of the journalistic metadiscourse on the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, defying newspaper class divisions. In such cases, interpretations, it appears, were based on other, more powerful, interests: probably commercial interests, power of influence or principles. Arguments can be made for any of these.

In summary, my investigation into how the press used the strategy of historicization in their coverage of the press reform debate shows that although the press used the strategy of historicization to acknowledge wrongdoing, it served more as infotainment than a remorseful self-critique of the press. The issue of lack of self-critique in journalistic metadiscourse will be examined more closely in Chapter 7. Each sphere of discourse also used the strategy of historicization to buttress their paper's stance in the debate be it for statutory underpinning or against statutory underpinning. The *Guardian* newspaper also used it to point to concerns about concentration of media ownership. The problem is that where five newspapers out of six advance similar interpretations of the debate, then a force stronger than newspaper classification is behind it. That force needs to be investigated to see that it does not rob the press of its autonomy to function as a democratic public sphere.

If the force is commercialism, then arguments for plurality of media ownership would need to go beyond concentration of ownership to plurality of funding patterns or business models because different patterns of funding appear to produce differences in interpretations. The issue of media ownership and its possible impact on journalistic metacoverage will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 8. An examination of how the

strategy of historicization was used partly answers RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?” In summary, the strategies analysed in this chapter are ‘threat to the paradigm’ and ‘historicization’. Content analysis and some principles from critical discourse analysis were used to show how these strategies were used. The strategy of historicization was used to acknowledge press bad behaviour but served more as an element of drama in the journalistic metadiscourse. This affirms the argument of scholars who assert that debates are often presented as infotainment and with an element of drama, for the purpose of entertaining readers and boosting sales (Franklin 1997, p.4; McManus, 1994, p.24; Zelizer, 2009, p.126; Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O’Neill 2010). They argue that infotainment can be detrimental to democracy because it leads to the dumbing down of news and makes readers a consumer audience whose appetite is assuaged by such coverage, distracting them from active participation in efforts at reforming the press.

In this study, historicization was also used to back up arguments that the present-day press is better behaved than the press of the 1950s and 1960s. The *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* used the strategy to argue against press reform, thus protecting their conceptualisation of a free press. The *Guardian* used the strategy to support press reforms, thus challenging the other papers’ interpretation of press freedom. The *Guardian* newspaper also used the strategy of historicization to highlight the need for media ownership reforms. Since, historicization was not directly coded but analysed mainly through critical discourse analysis, the extent of its usage can only be inferred from related codes such as descriptions of phone hacking as bad and irresponsible or the theme ‘the press behaved badly’. Since, historicization often involves

the telling of stories about how the press had behaved badly in the past, a look at the statistical data for the frequency of usage of the code 'The press behaved badly' suggests that historicization may not have featured as a dominant strategy in more than 4.7 per cent of the study sample (see Table 6.2).

In answering RQ1, this chapter also provides some of the answers to RQ1.1 "What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?" The answer provided was for the arguments that were the most prominent in the press coverage of the press reform debate. The least prominent arguments or issues of concern will be discussed in Chapter 8. My findings revealed that 'threat to the [press freedom] paradigm' was the most prominent theme in the study sample. It was widely used across both spheres of discourse (*Guardian* versus the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*). However, it featured more prominently in the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers.

I argued that all other newspapers apart from *Guardian* advanced an interpretation of press freedom that fitted snugly within the confines of the neoliberal concepts of press freedom. Using diverse linguistic devices including hyperboles, "you-centeredness", adjectives and doom-laden rhetoric, it warned that statutory underpinning of a press regulator was a slippery slope to licensing of the press and, as such, a threat to press freedom. Using the sustenance of democracy as its defence, it kicked against statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body warning that a press regulatory body underpinned by statute would harm the reputation of the United Kingdom.

Using the strategies of 'historicization' and 'threat to the paradigm' it focussed on protecting the neoliberal concept of press freedom. A social democratic approach rejects this neoliberal variant of the libertarian press theory "in favour of a universal conception of liberty that balances the liberties of all parties" (Meyer and Hinchman 2007, cited in Pickard 2015, p.4). In contrast to the 'negative liberty' of "no state intervention" in press regulation propagated by the neoliberal press, proponents of social democracy advance

the concept of “a positive liberty” which contends that the freedoms of publics, audiences, and communities are as important as the individual freedoms of media proprietors (Pickard 2015, p.4).

It can be argued that *Guardian* newspaper adopted a social democratic approach in its coverage of the press reform debate, thus acting as the challenger to the neoliberal interpretations of the other newspapers. Its discourse included arguments that were in support of the press, were critical of the press, and were in support of campaigners for victims of press misconduct and of statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body. It is not surprising then that although “threat to press freedom” was widely used in the *Guardian*, it was not its dominant theme. ‘Support for statutory underpinning’ was the dominant theme in *Guardian* (see Table 6.2). The *Guardian* welcomed external participation in press regulation and was less journalism-centric. However, like all other newspapers in the study sample, *Guardian* also utilised the ‘threat to the paradigm’ strategy, with the aid of linguistic devices, to advance some of its own arguments. The *Guardian* provided an alternative discourse to that of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. The question, however, is if *Guardian*’s counter-discourse was in the public interest or was for the protection of its image as a crusader (see chapter 7), as the medium through which the extent of the scandal came to light. This question became more pertinent because of *Guardian*’s failure to indicate that it would sign up to the regulatory body underpinned by statute (as at 2017), the same body it had encouraged other press organisations to embrace.

This chapter also discussed answers to RQ1.3 “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?” It revealed that measures aimed at checking press behaviour were most frequently described as a ‘threat to press freedom’. The top three phrases used to describe measures aimed at checking press misconduct were threat to press freedom (27.8 per cent); independent press self-regulation (16.8 per cent) and tough press regulation (13.4 per cent). The frequent description of efforts at reforming the press as ‘threat to press freedom’ strengthens the finding that ‘threat to press freedom’ was the dominant theme in the study sample.

An analysis of the context within which the phrase ‘independent press self-regulation’ was used showed that all parties in the debate claimed that their proposal for press reform would guarantee independent press regulation (Mason 2012c, p.12; Brown 2013, p.2; *Daily Mirror* 2013b, p.8; Dunn 2013c, p.2; Seamark 2013, n.p. Wintour 2013, p.9). However, this description was used more frequently in *Guardian* where it was often used to criticise the new press regulatory system formed by the press (IPSO) as not being independent enough to effectively check press excesses. The phrase ‘independent press self-regulation’ appeared in 31.1 per cent of *Guardian* articles as opposed to in 11.1 per cent of *Daily Express*, 8.5 per cent of the *Sun*, 7.7 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*, 6.9 per cent of *Daily Mail* and 5.8 per cent of *Daily Mirror*. All parties agreed that tough press reforms were required to make the press more accountable, hence, the emergence of ‘tough press regulation’ as one of the top three descriptions of measures aimed at ensuring accountability. Having provided answers to RQ1.1 and RQ 1.3 in this chapter, the following chapter will provide answers to RQ1.2 “Were there attributions of blame made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?” It will also provide more answers to RQ1.1. In summary, it will reveal how the strategies of ‘Individualization, self-assertion and Minimization’ were utilised in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

## Chapter 7: Bad Apples, Self-assertion and Minimization

### Introduction

The last chapter examined how the paradigms repair strategies of ‘threat to the paradigm’ and historicization were used by the press in their coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. This chapter discusses how the strategies of individualization, self-assertion and minimization were employed by the press in their coverage of the press reform debate. Answers to how the press used all five paradigm repair strategies to cover the press reform debate will completely answer RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”

Answers to RQ1 will form part of the answer to the central research question (RQ) “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?” As stated earlier, my key interest is to investigate how the media cover themselves and the impact their manner of coverage could have on democracy. My decision to examine paradigm repair strategies as part of my investigation into how the press cover themselves is premised on the claim by previous studies that media representation of the press is often characterised by certain paradigm repair strategies (Cecil 2002; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). As explained in Chapter 3, the notion of paradigm repair relates to efforts by the press to protect news paradigms rather than critically examining them to see if there is a need for change (Bennet et al. 1985, cited in Carlson 2015, p.4).

As discussed in Chapter 3, journalistic metadiscourse that is averse to self-critique limits the information available to the public to contribute knowledgeably to debates on journalism. A public sphere that lacks self-critique would portend some risks to the



health of democracy. This study contributes to the body of literature on the press coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. It provides statistical data to back up arguments on the study and aims to enlighten readers on how the press cover themselves, hoping that this will challenge the public to a greater role in press reform. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the body of literature that attempts to stimulate the press to do a better job at serving as a democratic public sphere.

The theoretical framework for the analysis of my findings consists of normative theories of the press, including the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory as well as the social democratic theory. The concept of public sphere also formed part of the framework for this study. The main method for this study as stated earlier is content analysis. It is complemented with some principles from critical discourse analysis. This chapter will focus on the analysis of empirical data that provides answers to how the strategies of individualization, self-assertion and minimization were used in the coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal.

The chapter is divided into 5 sections and has 4 subsections. The first section demonstrates how the strategy of individualization was used to protect the press freedom paradigm as well as repair the crusader paradigm which had been badly damaged by the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. Section 7.3, entitled “Self-Assertion: the journalist as crusader,” shows the extent to which journalists affirmed their importance in the journalistic metadiscourse and the effect this had or was intended to have on the debate on press regulation. Section 7.4 expands this discussion by looking at the political economy of *Guardian’s* coverage of the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

Subsection 7.4.1. to subsection 7.4.4 discuss how the strategy of minimization featured in the journalistic metadiscourse. It emerged in discourses that cast doubts on the legitimacy of the Leveson Inquiry through allegations of conflicts of interest, revenge, lack of objectivity and neutrality, and through the use of the character smear technique. All

these paradigm strategies were geared towards protecting the neoliberal (also, corporate libertarian) interpretation of press freedom. The crusader paradigm emerged as a paradigm within a paradigm; it was subsumed under an overarching “threat to press freedom” paradigm. I begin by exploring the press’ use of the strategy of individualization in their coverage of the media policy debate.

### **7.1 Attributions of blame: individualizing bad apples**

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the paradigms that journalists often seek to protect in the event of a media scandal is the image of the journalist as a crusader, and one way they go about trying to repair this paradigm is by distancing themselves from the offender (Cecil 2002, p.55). This can be done at different levels or stages of the scandal coverage. The more commonly discussed in metajournalistic discourse is where an organisation distances itself from the journalist alleged to be at fault (Cecil 2002, p.55; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014, p.403; Dawes 2013, p.17). Such a journalist is often described as a ‘rogue’ reporter (Cecil 2002, p.55; Dawes 2013, p.17; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014, p.403). This ostracizing of the ‘culprit(s)’ emerged in the journalistic metadiscourse of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry at their early stages. News International as an organisation distanced itself from *News of the World’s* royal editor, Clive Goodman and private investigator Glen Mulcaire who were both given jail sentences for their role in the scandal (see Chapter 1). The owner, Rupert Murdoch denied knowledge and the emanating journalistic metadiscourse described the culprits as rogue reporters: a few bad apples that should not taint the image of a largely good press (Kirkup 2011, p.4; Collins 2012, p.28; O’Carroll 2012a, p.15; Satchwell 2012, p.42). For example, The *Sun’s* article stated:

So far as we know, despite the biggest police inquiry in history, the bad and sometimes possibly criminal behaviour that led to the Leveson Inquiry was confined to a tiny number of journalists. The innocent majority have been tarred by the inquiry.... And a tiny number of incidents of grotesque treatment of ordinary people were examined. They should be set against the huge number of cases of ordinary people who have been helped by the papers. Rogues are exposed, injustice reversed, wonderful, inspiring achievements are celebrated every day by papers such as this (Satchwell 2012, p.42).

To measure the extent to which this strategy of individualization was used by the press in their coverage of the press reform debate, I take a closer look at the table 'Description of phone hacking' (Table 6.4). In this chapter, I christened it "Table 7.1 Description of phone hacking: Bad apples" for easy reference during my analysis. The inclusion of the code "The work of a few bad apples in journalism" to the list of options for this variable helped me to measure the extent to which the strategy of individualization was used in the coverage of the press reform debate (Appendix A, Variable 14). I took note of ostracizing phrases such as "sections of the press", "parts of the media", "a few journalists" and 'a tiny number' the first time they appeared in the narrative of each news article in the study sample. The usage of such ostracizing phrases was only recorded once for each news article. The sum of its usage in a newspaper provided data for the extent to which it was used in the article and the sum of its usage in all the newspapers in the study sample provided data for the extent to which the strategy of individualization (bad apples, ostracization or localization) was used in the press coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal.

Table 7.1 shows that the strategy of individualization (also, ostracization or Localization of bad apples) was employed by all newspapers in the study sample. Though it surfaced in only 8.5 per cent of descriptions of phone hacking in the study sample, it was used profusely by the *Sun* newspaper where it appeared in 25.7 per cent of its descriptions of phone hacking. Despite being owned by the same proprietor as the *News of the World*, the *Sun* attempted to protect its crusader image and the neoliberal interpretations of press freedom by ostracizing the culprits. The paper described the phone hacking scandal and other acts of press misconduct as the failings of a few journalists as can be seen in this statement: "it is vital for our democracy that a free press is protected, whatever the failings of a few journalists" (Dunn and Well 2012, p.6). The strategy of individualization was used in 16.7 per cent of *Daily Express*; 10.6 per cent of *Guardian*; 6.7 per cent of *Daily Mirror*; 4.2 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* and 3.5 per cent of *Daily Mail* (see Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1 Description of phone hacking: bad apples**

Description	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Unavoidable	0.8%	2.3%	4.4%	1.7%	0.0%	2.9%	1.9%
The work of a few bad apples in journalism	10.6%	3.5%	6.7%	4.2%	16.7%	25.7%	8.5%
Anti-democratic	4.1%	1.2%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	2.1%
<b>Bad journalism/Irresponsible</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>39.5%</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>
It is not new to journalism	1.6%	0.0%	2.2%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Less serious than portrayed	21.1%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.9%	8.9%
<b>Criminality</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>
Demonstrates the importance of a free press.	0.0%	4.7%	6.7%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%
Other	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Though the setting up of the Leveson Inquiry and the mandate given to it to examine the culture, practice and ethics of the press demonstrated that the phone hacking scandal was regarded by policymakers and many outside the press as a synecdoche deviance (extension of deviancy from the individual to the general); synecdoche deviance (Carlson and Berkowitz 2014, p.392) was contested in the journalistic metadiscourse that followed the phone hacking scandal; and blame was often localized. So, unlike in the case of the media coverage of the demise of two US regional newspapers, *Rocky Mountain News* and the printed *Seattle Post Intelligencer* where the perceived problem of an individual newspaper was interpreted by the press as a reflection of the challenges faced by all newspapers (Carlson 2012b, p.267), here the flaw of the *News of the World* was localized and the journalistic metadiscourse warned that it should not be interpreted as the

problem of all newspapers. An example is this headline from the *Daily Express*: “Don't tar all of the press with the same brush” (Forsyth 2012b, p.17). This raises questions about the self-interestedness of journalistic metadiscourse.

As the Leveson Inquiry progressed, the individualization of the culprit advanced beyond persons to groups (Mason 2012b, p.10). Ostracizing labels such as “sections of the press” and “parts of the media” were used to refer to the tabloid press, especially, by the quality press (*Daily Telegraph* 2012c, p.27; O'Carroll 2013a, n.p.). They were also used by the mid-markets to distance themselves from press bad behaviour:

Indeed, this paper has long shared the public's distaste over the conduct of some sections of the Press and since the phone hacking scandal (exposed by a newspaper) we have helped draw up plans for a new and much tougher regulatory body (*Daily Mail* 2012b, n.p.).

The code “The work of a few bad apples in journalism” in Table 7.1 shows that though the strategy of individualization of bad apples has been identified by previous studies as a major paradigmatic marker (Cecil 2002; Carlson, 2011; 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014) and though it featured in all newspapers in the study sample, the strategy was only used in 8.5 per cent of descriptions of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and other acts of press misconduct in the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. This does not reflect minimal attributions of blame in the representation of the press reform debate. Table 7.1 shows that blame was also attributed to other institutions in society. The following section explains how blame was attributed to other institutions in the journalistic metadiscourse.

## **7.2 The political economy in attributions of blame**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the press can use different strategies to exonerate itself of blame while deflecting responsibility to other institutions. This section presents and analyses more of my findings on how blame was attributed in the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. It also discusses

the political economy of the attributions of blame. As explained in Chapter 4, political economy is the critical approach to media analysis that investigates “how media and communication systems and content are shaped by ownership, market structures, commercial support, technologies, labour practices, and government policies” (McChesney 2008, p.12; Freedman 2014, p.24; Murdock and Golding 2005, cited in Freedman 2014, p.24). I mentioned that the key focus of the political economy approach to analysis is to ascertain whether media structures serve to promote or undermine democracy, and to explore and recommend ways of ensuring a media structure that enhances democracy (Hardy 2014). Using the political economy approach to analysis as a framework, I examined the attributions of blame in the study sample to see if external factors, such as media ownership, market structures and technology impacted on the way blame was attributed in the journalistic metadiscourse. Content analysis and some principles from Fairclough’s (1992; 1995a; 1995b; 2005) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were used to demonstrate that attributions of blame in the journalistic metadiscourse may have been shaped by social, economic and political factors. To evaluate how blame was attributed in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, I created the variable ‘Attributions of blame for press irresponsibility’.

A list of eleven codes was drawn from my preliminary study of news stories on the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal and from previous literature on attributions of blame in media coverage. The list of codes includes ‘The Labour government’, ‘The Press Complaints Commission’, ‘Newspaper proprietors’, ‘Job constraints’ (e.g. financial challenges or time constraints), ‘Technology’, ‘Conservative government’, ‘Journalists’, ‘The criminal justice system’, ‘Commercialism’, ‘Other’ and ‘Not applicable’. I took note of instances where the press and other institutions or individuals were blamed for press irresponsibility in the study sample. Each code was ticked only once, the first time it appeared in each story. Multiple choices were ticked for this variable. In other words, attributions of blame can be made to more than one code in a story. The sum of attributions of blame is counted for each newspaper to gauge the frequency of attributions of blame to that code within that newspaper. The sum of attributions of blame for all the newspapers in the sample provided the data for attributions of blame in the coverage of the press reform debate.

Table 7.2 shows that journalists received the highest amount of blame for press irresponsibility (28.5 per cent) in the study sample. This agrees with the data in Table 7.1 which revealed a high condemnation of press excesses in the journalistic metadiscourse. As explained in the last section, this high amount of blame attributed to journalists in the journalistic metadiscourse did not translate into a high proportion of self-critique, except where the *Guardian* challenged the neoliberal interpretations of press freedom advanced by the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* as shown in Chapter 6. Interestingly, there were more attributions of blame to journalists in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in *Guardian* newspaper: blame was attributed to journalists in 51.6 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 46.9 per cent of *Daily Mail*; 40.4 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*; 24.1 per cent of the *Sun* and 20 per cent of *Daily Express*, as against *Guardian*'s 8.1 per cent of attributions of blame to journalists (see Table 7.2). The reason for this may be that while *Guardian* also advanced discourses that condemned the phone hacking and other press excesses as bad, and while it was also involved in ostracizing the culprit, it may not have been as involved in deflecting the blame to other institutions as the other newspapers.

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) came second in the hierarchy of attributions of blame receiving 25.6 per cent of the blame for press misconduct, the highest coming from *Guardian* (48.1 per cent of its sample). The *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers were also critical of the PCC but to a smaller degree. The PCC was blamed for press misconduct in 33.3 per cent of *Daily Express*, 17.2 per cent of the *Sun*; 11.9 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* and 8.6 per cent of *Daily Mail* (Table 7.2). All newspapers apart from *Guardian* and *Daily Express* were quick to make excuses for the PCC.

**Table 7.2 Attributions of Blame for Press Irresponsibility**

Attribution of Blame	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
The Labour government	0.6%	0.0%	3.2%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
The Press Complaints Commission	48.1%	8.6%	6.5%	11.9%	33.3%	17.2%	25.6%
Newspaper proprietors	20.6%	13.6%	12.9%	12.8%	6.7%	3.4%	15.1%
Job constraints	5.0%	1.2%	3.2%	0.9%	13.3%	13.8%	4.0%
Technology (e.g. Internet)	2.5%	4.9%	0.0%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
The Conservative government	0.0%	0.0%	9.7%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Journalists	8.1%	46.9%	51.6%	40.4%	20.0%	24.1%	28.5%
The criminal justice system	8.8%	17.3%	6.5%	17.4%	26.7%	37.9%	15.1%
Commercialism	3.8%	4.9%	6.5%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%
Other	2.5%	2.5%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	3.4%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The journalistic metadiscourse comprised of statements, such as ‘the PCC could not do much to prevent some level of press excesses because it lacked the power to do so’ (Ross 2012a, p.8; Winnett 2012a, p.18); “what is needed is strengthening of the PCC not a new press law” (Embley 2012, pp.8-9; Johnson 2012b, pp.10-11); “a new self-regulatory body should be/has been set up that makes up for all the weaknesses of the PCC” (Shipman 2013, p.16). The sympathy of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers for the PCC can be attributed to the fact that the chief executives or owners



of these newspapers were members of PressBoF (The Press Standards Board of Finance), the funding body of the PCC. The then Chairman of PressBoF, Lord Black of Brentwood, was the Executive Director of the Telegraph Media Group; Paul Dacre, Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, publishers of *Daily Mail*, was a former Chairman of PressBoF and at the time, one of its directors, Paul Vickers, Secretary and Group Legal Director of Trinity Mirror, publishers of *Daily Mirror*, was also one of PressBoF's directors (Companies House, Press Standards Board of Finance 2014, n.p.).

The *Sun's* sympathy towards the PCC was also expected as the *Sun's* owner, who was also the owner of the defunct *News of the World*, had often been accused of having a powerful influence over the PCC (Davies 2014, p.18). The then executive chairman of Rupert Murdoch's News International, Les Hinton who was also known as Murdoch's right-hand man (*Guardian* 2011), chaired the committee of editors that drew up the PCC Code of Practice for several years (Cole and Harcup, 2009, p.87; Davies 2014, p.18). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the owner of *Daily Express* titles, Richard Desmond, had pulled his papers out of the PCC following a rebuke from the body in 2008 (Desmond 2015, p.291; see Chapter 4) which may have accounted for the high level of condemnation of the PCC in its journalistic metadiscourse. Though Alan Rusbridger, the then editor-in-chief of *Guardian* newspaper was also a member of the PCC Code Committee, he resigned following his dissatisfaction with the committee's handling of the phone hacking scandal allegations (Davies 2014, p.130; Frost 2015, p.293). So, though all newspapers in the study sample agreed that the PCC had fallen short in its regulation of the press, the level of attribution of blame reflected each paper's political and economic relationship with the body.

'News proprietors' and 'The Criminal justice system' received the same proportion of blame (15.1 per cent each) for press misbehaviour in the journalistic metadiscourse. This makes them third in the hierarchy of recipients of blame for press irresponsibility in the study sample. This is interesting because 'media ownership' only appeared as a dominant theme in 3.4 per cent of the study sample (see Table 6.2). A close look at Table 7.2, however, shows that a high proportion of that blame discourse emanated from *Guardian* newspaper - 20.6 per cent as against 13.6 per cent from *Daily Mail*, 12.9 per cent from

*Daily Mirror*; 12.8 per cent from *Daily Telegraph*; 6.7 per cent from *Daily Express*; and the lowest was from the *Sun* – 3.4 per cent (see Table 7.2). Whether in defence of democracy or for the security of its media economy (more on *Guardian's* political economy in Section 7.4), *Guardian* newspaper attributed much of the blame for press misconduct to news proprietors and used such opportunities to advocate for checks on concentration of media ownership in the UK.

The Murdoch media empire was mostly, though not exclusively, used as an example of the negative consequences of the concentration of media ownership in the *Guardian's* opinion sections (Milne 2012, p.28; Toynbee 2013, p.29; Williams 2013, p.35). The paper's moral justification for its critique of the concentration of media ownership was the need to protect democracy by ensuring plurality of views in the public sphere and preventing abuse of media power. Very little was said about the need to ensure healthy competitiveness among newspapers, though that was of primary concern to the *Guardian* as we shall see later in this Chapter. The rhetoric was that democracy will be at risk if media ownership concentration is not checked. As can be seen in the headline "Comment: Ownership is the key to the corruption of the media: Murdoch's grip on British politics was the product of corporate control of the press. Ending it is a democratic necessity" – (Milne 2012, p.28) and in this statement:

The present level of media concentration is one of the reasons the phone hacking scandal erupted because the politicians were scared of News International and, as the evidence around phone hacking and Leveson revealed, News International was scared of nobody (Williams 2013, p.35)

All other newspapers (*Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*) were different in their representation of the debate on media ownership. They were less critical of media proprietors and less concerned about the concentration of media ownership as shown in Table 7.2. For example, *Daily Mail* newspaper used deflection strategies to redirect focus from newspaper proprietors and media ownership to the ownership patterns of the BBC and internet news websites as can be seen in the headline: "Google and BBC should face media ownership review rules watchdog" (Thomas 2012,

n.p.). The article argued that the real threats are technology, proprietorship of internet news websites and the dominance of the BBC. Unlike *Guardian* newspaper which urged the Leveson Inquiry to pay more attention to media ownership concentration, *Daily Mail* argued that media ownership is not within the inquiry's ambit and it ought not to have strayed into it:

... the inquiry has strayed 'into issues of policy, such as cross-ownership rules which weren't really appropriate for a judicial inquiry to determine. Those are policy questions for ministers and Parliament' (Martin 2012, n.p.)

Similarly, an examination of the context within which the issue of media ownership was discussed in the journalistic metadiscourse revealed that much of the press adopted an angle of discussion that tactically avoided the issue of concentration of media ownership: talking about media owners but rarely in connection to concentration of media ownership. Let us, for example, examine references to the defunct *News of the World's* owner, Rupert Murdoch by both sub-interpretive spheres. While *Guardian's* metadiscourse on ownership was very critical of Rupert Murdoch with regards to concentration of media ownership and its consequences, the *Sun* newspaper reported little on ownership and on Murdoch. It is important to note that the *Sun* is also owned by Rupert Murdoch (see Chapter 4). The paper's discourse on its owner was minimal and far from critical.

For instance, the *Sun's* report on Rupert Murdoch's appearance at the Leveson Inquiry was like a narrative (not critical) and a letter of apology from Rupert Murdoch (Grant 2012, p.12) while *Guardian's* report on the same event was very critical of the media magnate and accused him of "selective amnesia" (Greenslade 2012d, n.p.). The closest the *Sun* got to critiquing its owner was an acknowledgement by Rupert Murdoch that he had failed. To make the aforementioned story more sympathetic, the age of Rupert Murdoch was juxtaposed with his apology: "Mr Murdoch, 81, admitted that he failed to personally probe the scandal, adding: "I'm very sorry" (Grant 2012, p.12). It can be argued that the *Sun's* report was constructed to avert the anger of the public against the Murdoch Empire in order to regain their patronage. Considering the paper's tone of language towards the failings of other persons (and institutions), such as politicians and celebrities, it can be

argued that the *Sun's* representation of Murdoch and its minimal discussion on media ownership in the debate was the result of conflict of interests. This may have accounted for the minimal attribution of blame to newspaper proprietors in the *Sun's* metadiscourse (see Table 7.2).

Not all newspapers in the sub-interpretive sphere to which the *Sun* belongs were as sympathetic as the *Sun* towards Rupert Murdoch in their metadiscourse, though they were not as critical of the media magnate as the *Guardian*. Most of them gave minimal attention to concentration of media ownership, preferring to discuss Murdoch in relation to sensational issues such as “Murdoch’s chief” Rebekah Brooks’ love affair with another of his former staff, Andy Coulson which spanned two pages (1371 words – Nexis UK) in the *Daily Mirror* (Shaw 2013, pp.4-5). Rupert Murdoch was also mentioned by newspapers in this sub-interpretive sphere in relation to the unfolding of the scandal, the amount of trouble he was in, etc. but rarely in connection to an analysis of the consequences of concentration of media ownership (Flanagan 2012, p.4; McTague 2012, pp.10-11).

There were sympathies for Rupert Murdoch and even for the defunct *News of the World* in some of the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* (Glover 2013, n.p.). Of all the remaining four papers in this sphere (apart from the *Sun*), *Daily Mail* was more sympathetic towards the media mogul and his titles, at times defending him and criticising attacks on him by politicians, *Guardian* and the *BBC* (Slack and Doyle 2013, n.p.). The *Daily Telegraph* was closest to *Guardian* in writing critical comments about Rupert Murdoch. In all, the *Sun's* coverage of ownership and its owner agrees with arguments in previous studies that media organisations downplay and give limited coverage to views that are critical of their owners (Christopher 2007, p.42). This is a type of silent strategy, as if to say, “just don’t discuss it” or “give minimal coverage to the issue that is not perceived to be in your best interest”.

As stated in Chapter 4, Bachrach and Barataz (1962, p.948) pointed out that the exercise of power also involves “the ability to prevent potentially dangerous ideas from being raised” (cited in Freedman 2014, p.66). Congruently, all newspapers apart from *Guardian* used their agenda-setting and gatekeeping powers to keep out from the public sphere, discussions on concentration of media ownership. Freedman (2014, pp.72-73) stressed the need to identify forces that are responsible for silences that permeate media policy. Though some may argue that media ownership did not take a prime place in the Leveson Report and as such it may not be out of place to talk less about it in the press but as Hackett (2005, p.90) observed, the media should not stop at transmitting debates but should also initiate relevant subjects for discussion. The *Guardian* newspaper did this when it critiqued the sparse treatment of the issue of media ownership at the Leveson Inquiry.

The biggest disappointment in Leveson is how far he skates over the crucial issue of ownership. It matters very much that the law on competition was broken by Margaret Thatcher's participation in 1981 in a secret deal by which Times Newspapers came under News International's control. All Leveson's fine language about the need for future transparency is justified by the vaguest of references to what made it necessary in the first place. It surely matters a great deal that the greatest concentration of the British press was achieved by a backroom deal that gave News International such sway over British public life (Evans 2012, p.47).

As we shall discuss later in this chapter, the *Guardian's* coverage of the issue is also not free from query.

The way the press covered the issue of concentration of media ownership during the debate may be connected to their ownership patterns. As discussed in Chapter 4, all newspapers in the sub-interpretive sphere to which the *Sun* belongs are commercially owned and are involved in varying degrees of concentration of media ownership (Cole and Harcup 2009; News UK 2015; DMG Media 2017b; Telegraph Media Group 2017). The *Guardian* also has a stake in media ownership; this will be explained later in this chapter. Some proprietors of newspapers in my study sample also have publications in large and small quantities outside the UK (see Chapter 4). That possibly explains why even though

only three companies (the *Sun*'s publisher News UK, *Daily Mail*'s owner DMGT, and *Daily Mirror*'s publisher *Trinity Mirror*) own about 71% of Britain's national newspapers (Media Reform Coalition 2015), media ownership only emerged as a dominant theme in 3.4 per cent of the study sample (see Table 7.2).

It can be argued that commercial interests influenced the interpretations and discourses advanced by the press on the issue of media ownership. This confirms the hypothesis of previous studies that media organisations give minimal coverage to arguments that they perceive are not in their interest (Christopher 2007, p.42; Stiegler 2013, p.137). The consequence of this for democracy is that it removes from public debates the issue of concentration of media ownership, thus preventing opportunities for deliberations that can lead to the creation of policies to guarantee plurality of views and media ownership. It gives the press enormous powers that can be exploited for commercial gain to the detriment of larger society. Such powers can mean that citizens are at the mercy of media owners, and that includes their privacy, the information they receive, etc. because nothing against media owners is tabled for discussion in the public sphere. Freedman (2014, p.73) described such silences "as a socially constructed phenomenon that reflects the unequal distribution of power in society". Jansen (1991, p.134, cited in Freedman 2014, p.73) argues that "media policy silences" are constructing forces that attempt to "render the system of control of industrial capitalism extremely resistant to criticism". Such information hoarding can also reduce trust between the media and the public, especially when the public get to know of such omissions. It can also leave media owners unchecked and create in them a culture of impunity.

As previously stated, Table 7.2 also shows that "The criminal justice system" received as much blame for press irresponsibility as "News proprietors" (15.1 per cent). To find out how much blame was attributed to the criminal justice system for the phone hacking scandal and other acts of press misconduct, I included the code "The criminal justice system" in the list of codes for Variable 10 "Attributions of blame for press irresponsibility" (see Appendix A). I took note of mentions of attributions of blame to the police, the legal system or any other institution that makes up the criminal justice system.

The box allotted to the criminal justice system was ticked the first time any institution under the criminal justice system was blamed for press irresponsibility. There were a number of occasions where the phrase was used verbatim; the box was also ticked at such times. The number of news articles with the code 'criminal justice system' ticked in each newspaper provided data for the attributions of blame to the criminal justice system in that paper. The sum of the data on attributions of blame to the criminal justice system in all the newspapers in the study sample provided data for the amount of blame attributed to the criminal justice system in the whole sample.

Table 7.2 shows that the quantity of attributions of blame to the criminal justice system were more in the sub-interpretive sphere made up of the *Sun*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in *Guardian*. The *Sun* contained the highest percentage of blame for the criminal justice system than any other newspaper in the study sample (37.9 per cent). *Daily Express* followed with 26.7 per cent; *Daily Telegraph* with 17.4 per cent; and *Daily Mail* with 17.3 per cent. Attributions of blame to the criminal justice system were also found in 8.8 per cent of *Guardian* newspaper and in 6.5 per cent of *Daily Mirror's*. An examination of the context within which these attributions of blame to the criminal justice system were made, revealed that they functioned differently in each of the spheres of discourse.

*The Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* all used deflection strategies to re-direct blame for press misbehaviour to the criminal justice system, thereby exonerating themselves from blame and protecting their crusader and press freedom paradigms. These papers advanced the argument that phone hacking is a criminal offence that can be checked by existing laws. Ironically, newspapers in this sub-interpretive sphere are at the forefront of arguments against take off, of the second phase of the Leveson Inquiry which ought to focus on the relationship between the press and the police (Bond 2017). A possible reason could be that more investigation into the scandal may further incriminate the press. Howbeit, their trend of discourse accounted for the high proportion of descriptions of phone hacking as 'criminal' in Table 7.1, and it culminated in claims that the failure of the police to reveal the extent of the phone hacking

scandal revealed failings on the part of the criminal justice system rather than failings on the part of the press (McKinstry 2012, p.14; Luckhurst 2012, p.25), and that it was a vibrant press that exposed the extent of the scandal not the criminal justice system. An article written by a former editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard* and published by the *Daily Mail* stated:

Somewhere, Leveson lost his way in the course of his inquiry, which he allowed to roam untethered across the landscape for many months in a fashion quite unworthy of a competent judge. Above all, he fails to understand that the central issue, that illegal phone-hacking and thus gross breaches of privacy reflected not a lapse of Press ethics, but large-scale criminality. The only organisation that ever was, or ever will be, capable of investigating such behaviour is the police. It was Scotland Yard's failure to probe misconduct at News International properly in its review of the investigation in 2009 that allowed wrongdoing to continue for so long – (Hastings 2012, n.p.)

They said that based on these arguments, there is no need to change the status quo of press self-regulation, neither was there any need for the Leveson Inquiry (this was before the setting up of the 'Leveson compliant' IPSO):

THE absurdity of the entire Leveson business is that we never needed the expensive inquiry in the first place, for the behaviour of a minority of journalists was already against the law. The problem was not an absence of state regulation but an initial failure of enforcement by the police (McKinstry 2012, p.14)

As previously stated, this argument relating to the criminal justice system featured in 8.8 per cent of articles in *Guardian* newspaper but was interpreted differently. The *Guardian* used its editorial pages to critique the other newspapers' blame on the criminal justice system. It attempted to redirect blame back to the press by pointing out that the failure of the police force to reveal that phone hacking was widespread at *News of the World* was the result of an unhealthy relationship between the police force and the media (*Guardian* 2013, p.34).

It is worthy of note that the sub-interpretive sphere comprising all newspapers except *Guardian* did not totally absolve themselves of all blame. It was largely accepted in the



journalistic metadiscourse of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal that the media had behaved badly and that there was a need for press regulatory reform. For instance, in one of its opinion articles, *Daily Mirror* stated:

And we were dismayed Surrey police failed to pursue those working for the now defunct *News of the World* who, the force discovered, had listened to Milly's mobile voicemails. SCANDAL The excesses and criminal behaviour of parts of the media over the past few years created an unanswerable case for reform (*Daily Mirror* 2013a, p.8).

This was before it was discovered that *Daily Mirror* was also involved in phone hacking (Trinity Mirror 2015). A similar article from *Daily Telegraph* stated:

Regulation could not have prevented the hacking scandal; this was a criminal not a regulatory matter, but the PCC failed to draw attention to it after the event. So, no change is not an option. There must be effective regulation of the press. A new self-regulatory system must have powers to investigate wrongdoing and to summon journalists and their editors to give evidence.... Above all, it must be independent from government, Parliament and state (Luckhurst 2012, p.25).

However, there was to a small degree the discourse of total exoneration. This discourse absolved the press of all blame in the phone hacking scandal and argued that there was no need for press reform. Those who advanced such views argued that a little privacy invasion is the hazard of a free press (Hume 2013b, p.32). The purpose of these self-exoneration strategies (individualization, bad apples, Localization, ostracization or deflection) was, arguably, to repair the 'press freedom' and 'journalist as a crusader' paradigms, which had come into question as a result of the phone hacking scandal. My analysis of attributions of blame in this subsection provided answers to RQ1.2 "Were attributions of blame made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?" It also shows how the strategy of individualization was used in the press coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal.

My findings revealed that in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, blame was first accepted and then deflected to others including other journalists (a few

bad journalists), other media organisations (sections of the press) and other institutions (criminal justice system), among others. This made the wide acknowledgement of wrongdoing in the journalistic metadiscourse, and especially the high attribution of blame to journalists, appear hypocritical. This finding affirms the claim by previous studies that journalistic metadiscourse is highly defensive and characterised by a lack of self-critique (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Franklin 2013; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016).

One of the reasons for this manner of coverage may be the neoliberal perception of newspapers as being primarily for business. 'Journalism as a commodity' implies that everyone of its coverage will be weighed against its commercial value for the company. Anything viewed as not being commercially viable was therefore a threat to their viability and must be done away with. In this perspective, sustaining democracy is secondary. Democracy can only be enhanced if it is commercially viable. Anything that promotes business, even if that means colluding with political leaders in return for economic gain would, from this perspective, be protected. This agrees with Habermas' (1989, pp.189-193) conceptualisation of a degenerated public sphere where commercial interest merged with the interests of policymakers to turn the public sphere from a democratic forum for public debate into a capitalist haven where prioritisation of profit became the order of the day.

It is, therefore, ironic that 'commercialism' and political leaders (Labour and Conservative governments) only received minor attributions of blame in the study sample. Table 7.2 shows that political leaders received only 3.1 per cent of the blame for press irresponsibility; of that amount 1.9 per cent was attributed to the Conservatives (the government in power at the time of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal) and 1.2 per cent to the Labour government (the opposition party). Commercialism only received blame in 3.3 per cent of the study sample. No blame was attributed to commercialism in the *Sun* and *Daily Express* newspapers and it was only blamed for press irresponsibility in 6.5 per cent of *Daily Mirror*; 4.9 per cent of *Daily Mail*; 3.8 per cent of *Guardian* and 1.8

per cent of *Daily Telegraph* (see Table 7.2). This appears to be very much like the silent treatment given to the issue of media ownership.

Another area that received less mention than I expected was attribution of blame to job constraints of print journalism, especially the constraints brought about by the emergence of digital technology. Table 7.2 shows that 'Job constraint' and 'Technology' received only 4 per cent and 3.5 per cent of attributions of blame, respectively. Considering the decline in the sale of newspapers due to the flow of traffic of both readers and advertisers to online platforms (Allan 2006, pp.1-4; Franklin 2008, pp.631-632; Shoemaker and Reese 2013, pp.140-142) following the emergence of the internet (social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc.) and 24-hour news which is arguably a major cause of press irresponsibility, one would have expected a sizeable proportion of blame to go to the impact of job constraints on print journalism.

As Fenton (2011, n.p.) pointed out, ethics get thrown to the wind when the market comes under pressure. The debate that emerged from the phone hacking and the Leveson Inquiry would have been a veritable platform to discuss possible ways of tackling this challenge, but the focus of the debate was too narrow – a zero-sum game of statutory or no statutory underpinning of a new press regulator; most other arguments, including the warnings of threat to press freedom emanated from these. Thus, very little room was left for deliberation on other issues of concern. Carlson (2011, p.267) spoke of instances where rather than brainstorm on a future business model for the printed press, perceived threat to the printed press paradigm was “repaired” by re-asserting the “importance and superiority” of the printed press over other forms, especially forms of online news. The strategy of self-assertion is another way the media tried to protect news paradigms in their coverage of the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. How it went about doing this is the focus of the next section.

### 7.3 Self-assertion: the journalist as a crusader

Having examined how the press used the paradigm strategies of ‘historicization’, ‘threat to the paradigm’ and ‘individualization’ to cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, this section presents and analyses my findings on how the paradigm strategy of self-assertion was used to repair the ‘press freedom’ and ‘journalist as a crusader’ paradigms. The strategy of self-assertion refers to a trend in journalistic metadiscourse where the press repairs its paradigm by asserting its importance without taking steps to evaluate or make changes to the paradigm where necessary (Cecil 2002a, p.47; Carlson 2012b, p.267; Thomas and Finneman 2014, p.172). As previously stated, the term ‘paradigm repair’ was used by Bennet et al. (1985) to describe “how journalistic self-criticism protects existing paradigms rather than confronts entrenched deficiencies and contradictions” (cited in Carlson 2015, p.4).

To assess how the paradigm strategy of self-assertion was used in the coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal, I included the code ‘Achievements and importance of the press’ in Variable 15 ‘Dominant theme in the study sample’ (see Appendix A). I took note of instances where the press highlighted the importance of their profession or organisation within the narrative of the story. Where such occurred and where it was the key message of the article, I ticked the code ‘Achievements and importance of the press’. Only one box per story was ticked for this variable. This enabled me to measure the extent to which the strategy of self-assertion featured as a dominant theme within each newspaper. The total of its emergence as the dominant theme in all the newspapers in the study sample provided data for the extent to which the strategy of self-assertion was used in the coverage of the press reform debate.

For easy access, an excerpt from Table 6.2 is herein shown as Table 7.3 and entitled ‘Dominant theme in the study sample: self-assertion’. Table 7.3 shows that the strategy of self-assertion (written as Press achievements) was used by all newspapers in the study sample but emerged as the dominant theme in only 2.4 per cent of the study sample. It

emerged as the dominant theme in 7.1 per cent of *Daily Express* – the highest in the study sample, followed by *Daily Mail* (6.9 per cent); *Daily Telegraph* (1.5 per cent); *Daily Mirror* (2.0 per cent); the *Sun* (1.0 per cent); and *Guardian* (0.6 per cent). A look at the context of usage revealed that in most cases, the strategy of self-assertion was a sub-theme (not a dominant theme), used as a means to an end. In sub-interpretive sphere consisting of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*, it was often used to warn that the press would no longer be able to fulfil its crusader role if it was regulated by statute and that this would pose a risk to press freedom and ultimately endanger democracy. Such stories had as the dominant theme, issues like ‘threat to press freedom’ or ‘against statutory underpinning’.

**Table 7.3 Dominant Theme in the Study Sample: Self-assertion**

Dominant Theme	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Threat to press freedom	11.5%	13.3%	25.5%	18.1%	35.7%	62.5%	20.6%
Support for new press own regulatory system	1.5%	4.6%	3.9%	2.5%	3.6%	4.2%	2.9%
Against politicians' Royal Charter	2.8%	4.0%		3.0%		3.1%	2.9%
Against press law/statutory underpinning	4.0%	12.7%	9.8%	6.0%	10.7%	5.2%	6.9%
<b>Press Achievements</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
Against self-regulation of the press	0.9%	0.6%					0.5%
Support for Leveson Inquiry	10.5%		7.8%	2.5%	7.1%	3.1%	5.5%

For example, *Daily Mirror* used the strategy of self-assertion to accentuate the importance of a free press. In an article headlined “The key to a fair and free press is the difference between two Royal Charters” the paper wrote:

The *Daily Mirror* is committed to high-quality journalism in the public interest giving the working people of Britain a voice in the corridors of power. We are proud that the Mirror, by breaking the alibi of club doorman Levi Bellfield, helped put the killer of Surrey schoolgirl Milly Dowler behind bars (*Daily Mirror* 2013a, p.8).

By asserting its worth and stressing the importance of a free press, *Daily Mirror* attempted to garner support for the newspapers’ plan for a Royal Charter for press regulation, which was later rejected by the government (*BBC News* 2013c), while condemning the cross-party Royal Charter on press regulation because it was underpinned by statute. As previously stated, all newspapers apart from *Guardian* interpreted any regulation underpinned by statute as an impediment to investigative journalism and as such, a threat to press freedom. They argued that the achievements of the press would not have been possible under a regulatory system underpinned by statute. This article from *Daily Express* states this clearly:

His [Leveson] mission was not to ban hacking. It was to procure the end of investigative journalism (I will call it IJ) ... Needless to say the establishment loathes IJ with a passion and has lusted for years after a way of crippling it. Leveson, a pillar of the establishment like all judges, delivered the methodology. Subordinate all papers to the rule of a body whose controlling council would be chosen by (and subservient to) the political power. And that is what they have done. Without IJ you would never have heard of MPs embezzling your money through their expenses, which is why for the MPs of all parties who voted it through the new Act was such sweet revenge (Forsyth 2013a, p.17).

As with other discourses advanced by the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian* countered the arguments these newspapers made with the use of the strategy of self-affirmation (O’Carroll 2012d, n.p.; White 2012, n.p.) and then used the same strategy to repair its crusader paradigm. The *Guardian* newspaper attempted to repair its crusader image that had received a dent due to the revelation at the Leveson Inquiry that the *News of the World* did not delete Milly Dowler’s voicemail messages as the paper had claimed in its publication. The report to correct that mistake began by

praising *Guardian* newspaper as can be seen in the headline “Leveson report: Judge addresses *Guardian's* story on hacking of Milly Dowler's phone: Report praises paper's public interest journalism, NoW probably did not delete voicemail messages” (Booth 2012, p.15). The correction was only a sub-theme in that story. Predominantly, the story highlighted the bravado of *Guardian* in exposing the extent of the scandal, how correct the bulk of the story was and other heroic acts achieved by *Guardian* newspaper in the past. An excerpt from that report reads:

Leveson cited the *Guardian's* wider investigative work, including reports into the death of the newspaper seller Ian Tomlinson, offshore tax avoidance, allegations of Trafigura's involvement with toxic waste dumping in west Africa, British complicity in torture and the WikiLeaks files, where "it played a central part in ensuring that hundreds of thousands of documents which might have been dumped 'raw' on the internet were carefully analysed first and redacted to avoid exposure of vulnerable sources" (Booth 2012, p.15).

Both sub-interpretive spheres (*Guardian* versus the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*) employed the strategy of assertion (also, self-affirmation or self-justification) as sub-themes aimed at repairing the ‘journalist as a crusader’ paradigm. This section provides answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?” It can be argued that this quest to repair the crusader paradigm was more in the interest of the press than for the selfless purpose of comforting and reassuring the public that they have in the press, a defender, and a protector of democracy.

Going by the above argument, the quest of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* to repair their crusader paradigm may not be unrelated to a desire to protect their commercial interests. As earlier stated, all the newspapers in this sub-interpretive sphere are commercially owned. Commercial newspapers need high readership figures to attract advertisers (Klaehn 2010, p.28). Repairing this paradigm will help to retain the patronage of their readers, thereby enabling high readership figures which will not only secure the profit they make from the sale of the newspapers but more importantly, preserve the patronage of advertisers (Ibid). The situation is a bit

different for *Guardian* which is funded by the Scott Trust Ltd (Guardian Media Group 2015, n.p).

#### **7.4 The Political Economy of *Guardian's* Coverage of the Phone Hacking Scandal and the Leveson Inquiry**

In this section, I extend the political economy argument that I began in section 7.2 to *Guardian's* coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry. Having shown that the coverage of the press reform debate by all newspapers apart from *Guardian* may have been influenced by ownership, market structures and other political and economic factors, this section takes a closer look at *Guardian's* coverage of the press reform debate to see whether it served as a democratic public sphere and if it was in any way influenced by social, political and economic factors. Using content analysis along with some principles from CDA, I demonstrate that *Guardian's* coverage of the press reform debate may not have been free of self-interest.

As explained earlier, political economy, as used in this study, is a media analysis critique that investigates “how media and communication systems and content are shaped by” ownership structures, government policies and technology, amongst others (McChesney 2008, p.12; Murdock and Golding 2005, cited in Freedman 2014, p.24). I investigate the political economy of *Guardian* newspaper by examining the paper's ownership structure. *Guardian* newspaper is a subsidiary of Guardian Media Group (GMG) which is owned by Scott Trust Ltd, formerly Scott Trust until 2008 (Cole and Harcup 2009, p.77; Guardian Media Group, 2017, np.). Unlike other newspapers in my study sample, the Scott Trust is the only shareholder of Guardian Media Group (Forgan 2016).

The Scott Trust does not distribute dividends; its profits are ploughed back into journalism (Guardian Media Group 2015, n.p; Forgan 2016). Though Scott Trust Ltd is responsible for appointing the editor of the *Guardian*, it has a policy of not interfering



with the newspaper's content. The paper claims to safeguard journalistic independence and liberal values, and argues that its ownership structure (having no shareholder order than the Scott Trust) makes it more accountable to its readers (Forgan 2016). One line of argument is that the ownership structure of *Guardian* facilitated, amongst others, the role the paper played in exposing the extent of the phone hacking scandal (Chapter 1); its welcoming of external intervention in press regulation exemplified by its support for statutory underpinning of a new press regulator (Table 6.2); its support for the Leveson Inquiry (Table 6.2); its support for victims of the scandal; and its advancement of the arguments of victim's campaigners (see Chapter 6).

Comparing the journalistic metadiscourse of the two spheres, it appears *Guardian's* coverage of the press reform debate fits better into the image of 'the journalist as a crusader' and a selfless protector of that paradigm. However, that view has been contested. A different line of argument is that *Guardian* newspaper is not a selfless protector of the crusader paradigm for two main reasons. Firstly, *Guardian* newspaper is not as completely free of corporate interests as it appears (Klaehn 2010; Guardian Media Group 2015). The steps it took to expose the extent of the scandal and deflect blame for press bad behaviour may have been premised on its need to sustain readership and take up a powerful position in the media market. As Klaehn (2010, p.28) argued, *Guardian* "is very much part of the business world and establishment.... It is part of the competitive media industry and plays politics to gain clout and readership" (Ibid).

As previously stated, Scott Trust Ltd, funders of *Guardian* are owners of Guardian Media Group (GMG), a business enterprise (Ahmed, cited in Cook 2015, n.p.). Their portfolio of investments includes Ascential plc "a global business-to-business media company listed on the London Stock Exchange" (Ascential 2017). Though the company claims that its investments are there "to secure the financial and editorial independence of the *Guardian*" (Cole and Harcup 2009, p.77; Scott Trust 2016), it can be argued that *Guardian* may have felt threatened by Rupert Murdoch's media empire and the likelihood of it winning the bid for the remaining 60.9 per cent of shares in BskyB (it already owned 39.1 per cent of the shares) (*BBC News* 2010) and the detrimental effect that would have on

their paper's power and popularity. *Guardian's* publication of the *News of the World's* hacking of Millie Dowler's voicemail was done at the peak of negotiations on the bids. The paper's fears about its place in the media market can be confirmed from its publication headlined "*BskyB bid: Cautious Hunt set to reject approach from Murdoch*". The article stated:

At issue is whether News Corporation's buyout of BskyB would lead to the creation of a media company that with £7.5bn of UK turnover is so large that rival newspapers and broadcasters are progressively unable to compete. Objectors to the deal include an unlikely alliance of the owners of *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Guardian*, who argue that the tie-up would lead to a loss of "media plurality" in the UK (Sabbagh 2010, n.p.).

Let me pause here to mention that the focus of this analysis is not to give a moral judgement on whether or not it is right for Rupert Murdoch to take complete control of BskyB (see Chapter 9 for more on BskyB), but to show that it is possible that *Guardian's* coverage of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the debate that followed it could have been inspired by a neoliberal ideology (to protect its business from market failure) rather than a quest to liberate the masses and protect democracy. That may explain why *Guardian* did not sign up to the regulatory body underpinned by statute (as at 2017) even though it advocated for the press to sign up to it in its journalistic metadiscourse. It may also be that though other newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph* were not in support of the deal, they could not adopt "the crusader role" employed by the *Guardian* because they may have been practising the same dark arts as *News of the World* (as has been shown in the case of *Trinity Mirror*), or because it could affect their commercial interests in some other ways.

It can, therefore, be argued that in both interpretive spheres, the underlying motivation was neither a defence for democracy nor a reassurance to the public that, in journalism, they have a crusader who is there to protect them from opportunistic politicians but rather that the motivation was a move to secure their media economy. In this setting, profit is primary; democracy may or may not be a by-product (it could be if it generates profit). There were also instances in this study where the journalistic metadiscourse

downplayed the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, thereby, questioning the legitimacy of the Inquiry. We shall discuss this in the following subsection.

#### **7.4.1 Minimisation: The pizza charter**

Having examined the strategies of historicization, 'threat to the paradigm', individualization and self-assertion (see Chapter 6 and earlier in this chapter), in this subsection, I discuss my findings on the last of the five paradigm strategies examined in this study - the strategy of minimization. My findings on the 5 paradigm repair strategies provide answers to RQ1 "What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?" As explained in Chapter 3, minimization refers to a trend in journalistic metadiscourse where the media downplays a wrongdoing or an alleged wrongdoing as part of efforts to protect a press paradigm.

Previous literature on media coverage of media policy debate asserts that the mainstream newspapers trivialize and denigrate efforts at ensuring press accountability, in a bid to protect their self-interest (Putnis 2000, p.110; McChesney 2008, p.451; Stiegler 2013, p.137). It is this trivialization and denigration of attempts at reforming media policy that is referred to as the strategy of minimization. My findings reveal that the strategy of minimization was used by all newspapers in the study sample but featured more prominently in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. It manifested in a number of ways: 1. Playing down the cross-party Royal Charter on press regulation; 2. Playing down the Leveson Inquiry; 3. Playing down the scandal; 4. In a discourse of 'unfair' treatment of the press; and 5. Critiquing critics of the press' position.

Following negotiations that led to the final drafting of a Royal Charter on press regulation which saw the charter being underpinned by statute, the press (apart from the *Guardian*), obviously displeased by the outcome sought to undermine the decision by portraying the

meeting as unserious and unfair: 'Unfair' because, according to newspapers in this sphere, Hacked Off, the campaign group for victims of press abuse were invited to the meeting and the press was not (Forsyth 2012a, p.12); and 'Unserious' because, according to them, the meeting took place around 2am and they had pizza for refreshment. The emerging journalistic metadiscourse in all newspapers apart from *Guardian* undermined the meeting because of the resultant Royal Charter underpinned by statute. As if in collaboration, one with another, they all were careful to point out that the meeting was over a pizza meal:

- ❖ This week, the Queen will be told to approve a shabby Royal Charter, stitched up at a secret 2am pizza party in Ed Miliband's office by party leaders and Hacked Off vigilantes (Kavanagh 2013d, p.8 - *the Sun*).
- ❖ No wonder the *New York Times*, perhaps the world's most respected newspaper, opposed this state Royal Charter, agreed in a late night pizza stitch-up by politicians and a pressure group, with the press excluded (*Daily Mirror* 2013b, p.8).
- ❖ To date, there has been no compromise at all. The Royal Charter currently before Parliament is unchanged from the deal agreed by Mr Grant's friends over pizza in March (Slack 2013, n.p. - *Daily Mail*).
- ❖ But the useless article who, munching a pizza at 2am in a closed room with the above, gave 300 years of press freedom away with a whimper was David Cameron's "strategic adviser" Oliver Letwin, another Old Etonian and apparently, a born capitulator (Forsyth 2013b, p.15 - *Daily Express*).
- ❖ They were cobbled together late at night over pizza and Kit-Kats with no thought for the legal and constitutional issues involved (Mason 2013, p.27 - *Daily Telegraph*).

By playing down the meeting, the press sought to undermine the decision reached in that meeting and warn of the threat such a decision posed to press freedom and that it would ultimately prove harmful to democracy. As with most other arguments advanced by this sub-interpretive sphere, the *Guardian* newspaper condemned their coverage of the negotiations. *Guardian's* Columnist/City University Professor of journalism, Roy Greenslade published a rebuttal by the Hacked Off's Executive Director, Brian Cathcart in which Prof Cathcart dismissed the pizza charter story as "another silly myth". Cathcart stated:

The royal charter that was approved on 18 March was not thrown together late at night. It is based on the recommendations and findings of the Leveson report... He adds: "No pizza was served, or at least we saw none. We gave the view that our supporters, and notably the victims, would welcome the agreed cross-party charter ... "Parliament's royal charter was not thrown together; the press was not excluded from the process of creating it; pizzas were not served and Hacked Off was invited in afterwards to honour the prime minister's promise to hear the views of victims (Cathcart 2013 cited by Greenslade 2013c).

By labelling the meeting a pizza and kit-kat gathering, the press sought to de-legitimise the Royal Charter on press self-regulation by representing the negotiations that led to its final drafting as unserious and unfair. Another way the press used the strategy of minimization to advance their position in the press reform debate was by describing measures aimed at reforming the press as revenge. How they did this will be the focus of the next subsection.

#### **7.4.2 Press freedom under attack: politicians seek revenge?**

"Snub the press charter...it's a monstrous folly by politicians out for revenge: Boris slams gag on newspapers" is a headline from *Daily Mirror* that summarises the discourse of minimization we shall discuss in this subsection (McTague 2013, p.24). Studies have shown that attempts by politicians to reform the press have often been interpreted as "political self-interest" (Putnis 2000, p.110; McChesney 2008, p.451). In his analysis of press coverage of media policy debates in Australia, Putnis (2000, p.110) observed that a central theme in the coverage of media policy was the labelling of proposals for press reform as political self-interest.

To find out if the British press used this rhetoric of political self-interest or its equivalent in its representation of the media policy debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, I included the code "retribution" in Variable 11 "Description of measures aimed at checking press bad behaviour" (see Table 7.4.2). I took note of instances where proposals to reform the press were described as political self-interest or its equivalent

(for example, retribution, payback, revenge, etc.). The code was counted only once, the first-time political self-interest, retribution or their equivalent surfaced in a news article. The frequency of its usage in a newspaper provides the data for how this type of minimization strategy was used in that paper. The percentage of its usage in all the newspapers in the study sample provided results for the extent to which this type of minimization strategy was used in the whole coverage.

Table 7.4.2 shows that this strategy, which is referred to as “retribution” on the coding sheet, featured in 6.1 per cent of the study sample. Though this may seem small when compared with the use of some other descriptions, for example “threat to press freedom” (27.8 per cent), it is important to note that “retribution” is just one aspect of the strategy of minimization. Others will be discussed later in this chapter. “Retribution” was used most frequently in the *Daily Telegraph* (11.3 per cent of its sample) followed by the *Sun* (9.2 per cent); *Daily Express* (6.7 per cent); *Daily Mirror* (5.8 per cent); and *Daily Mail* (4.6 per cent). It appeared least in the *Guardian* newspaper (3.4 per cent). The result reveals that this minimization strategy featured more in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*) than in the sub-interpretive sphere made up of the *Guardian*. By representing statutory underpinning as a revenge tool, all newspapers apart from *Guardian* sought to de-legitimise the Royal Charter, the purpose possible being to garner public support in its debate against press regulation underpinned by statute.

This sub-interpretive sphere sought to undermine the Royal Charter by interpreting the move by politicians to underpin the Royal Charter with a statute as one born out of a revenge for the press’ exposure of the MP’s expenses scandal (Porter 2011, p.4; *Daily Mirror* 2013b, p.8; Forsyth 2013b, p.15) as can be seen in the headline “MP’s want revenge on press over expenses” (*Daily Mail* 2013a, n.p.). The MP’s expenses scandal came to light in 2009 when *Daily Telegraph* newspaper published uncensored leaked information from the MP’s expenses files that showed that some members of the British Parliament had misused their privilege to some allowances (*BBC News* 2009). The news sparked public outrage and led to resignations, prosecutions, repayment of expenses and

apologies by some MPs (Crace 2014, p.64). All newspapers apart from *Guardian* also argued that if the Royal Charter was backed by statute, “journalists would live in fear that if they angered MPs - by exposing another expenses scandal, for example - they could get revenge by making the rules even more draconian” (*Daily Mail* 2013a, n.p.).

**Table 7.4.2 Description of measures to check press misconduct: minimization**

Description	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Independent press self-regulation	31.1%	6.9%	5.8%	7.7%	11.1%	8.5%	16.8%
Tough press regulation	12.4%	16.2%	10.1%	13.4%	20.0%	12.4%	13.4%
Chilling effect on investigative journalism	6.5%	14.6%	15.9%	15.5%	8.9%	9.8%	10.6%
Threat to press freedom	20.2%	30.8%	26.1%	30.3%	28.9%	39.9%	27.8%
State control or slippery slope to press licensing	8.6%	11.5%	11.6%	10.6%	17.8%	13.1%	10.9%
Draconian or punitive	3.9%	10.0%	10.1%	3.5%	4.4%	5.9%	5.6%
<b>Retribution</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Leveson compliant	11.6%	5.4%	14.5%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Other	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	2.2%	1.3%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

This use of the retribution theme, in the press coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal, affirms assertions made by previous studies on how the press represent debates about themselves (Putnis 2000; McChesney 2008; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; Thomas and Finneman 2014). McChesney (2008, p.451) is of the view that such coverage is born out of the refusal of media owners to be accountable to authority. Media magnates possess enormous powers as a result of weak press regulatory systems, powers which even political leaders are wary of, because they can be used to mar political careers (Papandrea 2000, p.12, cited in Putnis 2000, p.105; 2008, p.451). Such “freedom” earns them not only money but also influence. Warnings of retribution or political self-interest serve as defence mechanisms to protect this enormous power. As previously stated, political self-interest is not the only form of minimization strategy used by the press in their coverage of the press reform debate. My study found that the sub-interpretive sphere made up of *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* attempted to denigrate the Leveson Inquiry, its report, and other proposals to reform the press, by promoting discourses that questioned the legitimacy and relevance of the inquiry. The next subsection examines how they used the paradigm strategy of minimization to do this.

#### **7.4.3 Leveson Inquiry: not objective, not neutral**

This subsection will provide more answers to the central research question (RQ) “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?” Specifically, it provides more answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?” Previous studies on the coverage of media policy debates argue that during debates on press policy, the press resists reforms aimed at making it accountable to the public interest, by portraying institutions given the responsibility for such reforms as incompetent, illegitimate or lacking the moral justification to reform the press (Putnis 2000, p.110; Pickard 2015, p.177-189). In the press reform debate that followed the



phone hacking scandal, such institutions include the Leveson Inquiry and its report as well as political leaders and the Royal Charter on press self-regulation.

To find out how the strategy of minimization was used to disparage the Leveson Inquiry (if at all), I added to Variable 13 on my coding sheet, the code, “illegitimate and unfair”. Some of the statistical data for Variable 13 “Description of Leveson Inquiry” were presented and analysed in Chapter 6 (see Table 6.3). So, in this subsection, I only focus on the code relevant to the strategy of minimization - “illegitimate and unfair”. The table is presented here as ‘Table 7.4.3 Description of Leveson Inquiry: Minimization’ for easy access. For the code “illegitimate and unfair”, I took note of instances in news articles where the legitimacy of the Leveson Inquiry was questioned. For example, I noted where the journalistic metadiscourse described the inquiry as unnecessary, unfair, a waste of resources or compromised, especially where such statements culminated in a call for the inquiry or its proposals to be abrogated. As with several other codes in this study, the emergence of the trend was only counted once, the first time it appeared in a news article. The total number of its appearances in a newspaper provided data for how much it featured in that newspaper, while the sum of the data for all the newspapers provided the statistical data for how it was used in the coverage.

Table 7.4.3 revealed that the use of this discourse of minimization that described the Leveson Inquiry as illegitimate and unfair featured in 7.1 per cent of the study sample. It was expressed more prominently in the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*: appearing in 18.4 per cent of *Daily Mail*, 15.2 per cent of the *Sun*, 5.6 per cent of *Daily Express*, 10.3 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 3.9 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* and 0.5 per cent of *Guardian*. This discourse of minimization questioned the objectivity and neutrality of the inquiry. One way it did this was by alleging that there were “potential conflicts of interest” involving some members of Lord Justice Leveson’s team of assessors.

This discourse questioned the fairness and impartiality of the inquiry based on the fact that three out of its six assessors had “direct or indirect links” with Common Purpose, a charity which the papers alleged had links to Hacked Off, the campaign organisation that

represented victims of press abuse and was advocating for tighter press control (*Daily Mail* 2012a, n.p.; Kavanagh 2013b, p.8). In an 11-page article (3030 words on Nexis UK – *Daily Mail* 2012a) headlined “A nuclear bomb that dropped on the press - and the motley crew who seized their chance.”, the *Daily Mail* attempted to establish that Sir David Bell, a member of Lord Justice Leveson’s team of assessors had links that meant there was a conflict of interest that should delegitimise the Leveson Inquiry. The detail of the alleged links is that “Sir David Bell is a co-founder of the Media Standards Trust, the group behind the Hacked Off campaign. He is also a trustee and former chairman of Common Purpose, a charity that runs leadership courses ....”

**Table 7.4.3 Description of Leveson Inquiry: minimization**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total</b>
A threat to press freedom	20.5%	28.9%	28.2%	28.6%	33.3%	38.0%	27.1%
Harmful to UK’s reputation	2.3%	3.9%	5.1%	7.8%	5.6%	12.0%	5.4%
A chilling effect on journalism	8.7%	17.1%	20.5%	26.0%	22.2%	15.2%	15.0%
A fair deal	12.8%	3.9%	2.6%	11.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Solution to efforts at curbing press excesses	48.9%	15.8%	20.5%	13.0%	16.7%	8.7%	28.4%
Illegitimate/unfair to the press	0.5%	18.4%	10.3%	3.9%	5.6%	15.2%	7.1%
Anti-democratic	3.7%	9.2%	10.3%	7.8%	16.7%	9.8%	7.1%
Other	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	1.1%	2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The other two Leveson Inquiry assessors are also linked to Common Purpose (Kavanagh 2013b, p.8). This conflict of interest discourse also accused Prime Minister David Cameron of not declaring he had links with Common Purpose in the register of ministerial interests until after the inquiry had been set up (Allen 2013, n.p.). By pointing these direct and indirect links to Common Purpose, the papers used journalistic metadiscourse to discredit the Leveson Inquiry, portraying it as partial and a conspiracy to stifle press freedom. This article from the *Sun* summarises the press' argument:

He [Sir David Bell] was a founder of Common Purpose, a shadowy organisation dedicated to curbing the Press. He helped set up the Media Standards Trust which virtually scripted Leveson proceedings, Hugh Grant's Hacked Off, and the disastrous Bureau of Investigative Journalism which led the BBC to falsely suggest Lord Alistair McAlpine was a paedophile (Kavanagh 2013b, p.8).

*Guardian* newspaper (Wilby 2012, p.30) carried a counter discourse relating to the allegations of conflicts of interest propagated by the other papers, particularly as it related to Sir David Bell. In an editorial with the headline, "Cameron's dilemma: the press can still ruin careers: Coverage of the Leveson inquiry proves why the press must be reformed, but also shows the risk involved in doing so", the *Guardian* pointed out that such treatment given to Sir David Bell by the press was what may likely lead to statutory regulation of the press (Wilby 2012, p.30). A similar article from *Guardian* with the headline, "Laughable Daily Mail 'investigation' smears Leveson Inquiry assessor" (*Daily Mail* 2012a, n.p.) described the discourse advanced by the other papers as "a classic example of conspiracist innuendo"; "a farrago of distortion with added vilification". It then went on to deconstruct the argument, interpreting it as "prejudice against the Leveson Inquiry" (Ibid).

The undermining metajournalistic discourse of lack or potential lack of fairness of the Leveson Inquiry also included complaints of unfair treatment of the press because law firms and business enterprises found to have been involved in clandestine activities were not brought before an inquiry or prosecuted as was being done to journalists (Slack and Doyle, 2013, n.p.). For example, an article in the *Sun* with the headline "You've nicked hackers ... now expose the buggers" lamented: "Our Serious Organised Crime Agency has

been sitting for years on proof that major law and drug firms paid ex-cops to bug private phones and computers; hacking is illegal - and universal. But the only people in the dock are journalists” (Kavanagh 2013c, p.8).

The journalistic metadiscourse accused politicians of spending too much time and resources on the Leveson Inquiry to the detriment of ‘matters of higher social and economic importance’. An example is an article published by the *Sun* with the headline, “Stop gagging the press and fix the economy; that’s what you tell MPs” (Wood 2012, p.6). This discourse spelt out the cost of the Leveson Inquiry and tried to convince the public that a huge amount of tax payer’s money was being wasted on an unnecessary course, for political reasons (McKinstry 2012, p.14; Pettifor 2012, p.19; Cameron 2013, p.27). The reasons for this “expensive gagging of the press”, the press argued, was to cover up the politician’s messy role in the scandal as well as stifle the press so that it could no longer challenge corrupt politicians; it was also described as an emotional response to public outrage over a criminal offense whose penalty had already been provided for in law, and, worse of all, their actions would (or had) dealt a terrible blow to press freedom:

Yet now that principle [press freedom] is under grave threat. Today, Lord Leveson finally issues his recommendations on the future of the press following his lengthy, £5.6million inquiry into media standards in the wake of the phone hacking scandal at the *News of the World* newspaper. ... That statutory framework is certainly what many politicians at Westminster want, since they despise the idea that rumbustious newspapers should be able to challenge their power and expose their wrongdoing. But any form of state control would be a disaster for democracy. ... THE absurdity of the entire Leveson business is that we never needed the expensive inquiry in the first place, for the behaviour of a minority of journalists was already against the law (McKinstry 2012, p.14).

In line with Putnis’ (2000, p.105) claim that the press uses its privileged position as the disseminator of information to “pay back” any individual or institution that opposes its position in media policy debates, this study showed that using the strategy of minimization, the press embarked on what can be described as a character smear of those who opposed its position in the debate. The next subsection is an analysis of how this was done in the press reform debate.

#### 7.4.4 Character Smear: Critiquing critics

“Critiquing critics of the press” was one of the minimization techniques employed by the press to promote their views in the press reform debate. It involved what can, arguably, be described as a character smear of persons with views opposed to those of the press in the media policy debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. To gauge the extent of its usage, I included the code “Critiquing critics of the press” (Character smear) to Variable 15 (Dominant theme in the study sample) of my coding sheet (see Appendix A). As with other codes in the dominant theme variable (see Chapter 6), I noted where the press made disparaging comments about individuals or institutions that were actively involved in advocating tighter press controls. Such remarks took the form of castigating the individual and pointing out that such a person was among those calling for statutory backed press regulatory body. Where such occurred and where it was the key message of the article, it was counted. As with other codes in the dominant theme variable, it was counted only once. The total number of times this occurred as the dominant theme in each newspaper provided data for how much it was used by that newspaper and the sum of its usage in all the newspapers in the study sample provided data for the extent to which this type of minimization technique was used in the coverage of the press reform debate.

An excerpt from the dominant themes table (Chapter 6), herein referred to as Table 7.4.4, reveals that this character smear technique featured in 5.4 per cent of the dominant themes in the study sample. It is concerning that this emerged as a dominant theme and among the top ten out of 24 dominant themes in the study sample. It was used most by *Daily Mail*, appearing as the dominant theme of 14.5 per cent of its metadiscourse on the media policy debate. Unexpectedly, “Critiquing critics of the press” came ahead of the “threat to press freedom” theme in *Daily Mail* (see Table 7.4.4). However, it can be argued that it acted as a feeder to the threat to press freedom argument. In the *Sun*, this character smear minimization technique came second among dominant themes in the paper’s coverage of the debate, just after the “threat to press freedom” argument. It also emerged as the dominant theme in 8.3 per cent of the *Sun*; 5.0 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*; 3.6 per

cent of *Daily Express*; 2.0 per cent of *Daily Mirror* and 0.6 per cent of *Guardian* (see Table 7.4.4).

This character smear technique was used to cast a shadow of doubt on the integrity and legitimacy of the Leveson Inquiry. For instance, the *Sun* newspaper revealed what it referred to as the “Loverson scandal”, and based on it, much of the press contested the legitimacy of the Leveson Report (Chapman 2013c, n.p.; *Daily Mirror* 2013a, p.2; Nash and Schofield 2013, p.2; McKinstry 2013, p.14). The “Loverson Scandal” came to light in April 2013 when the *Sun* newspaper carried a story alleging a love affair between David Sherborne, counsel to actor Hugh Grant and other victims of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, and Carine Patry Hoskins, one of Leveson’s team of advisers. The story disclosed that David Sherborne and Carine Hoskins spent a holiday together at the Greek Island of Santorini four months before the end of the inquiry (Nash and Schofield 2013, p.2). The pair later explained that they went on the holiday together to discuss the possibility of a future relationship and decided against it, but changed their minds after the inquiry. Lord Justice Leveson (and much later, the Bar Standards Board) excused the action of Sherborne and Carine saying it did not stand in the way of a credible report from the inquiry (Ibid).

The “Loverson scandal” was used by the press, with the exception of the *Guardian*, to delegitimise the Leveson report and call for a revocation of the Royal Charter. The emerging discourse warned that the relationship between a lawyer in Leveson’s team of advisers with the barrister representing campaigners for statutory regulation of the press shows the whole inquiry was not impartial but a “panto stitch-up”: a conspiracy to stifle press freedom. The papers then went on to call for the Leveson report to be scrapped, as can be seen in this headline from *Daily Mail*, “Calls for press regulation plan to be scrapped after revelations” (*Daily Mirror* 2013a, p.2)

**Table 7.4.4 Dominant Theme in the Study Sample: Critiquing Critics**

Dominant Theme	Guardian	Daily Mail	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Daily Express	Sun	Total
Threat to press freedom	11.5%	13.3%	25.5%	18.1%	35.7%	62.5%	20.6%
Support for new press own regulatory system	1.5%	4.6%	3.9%	2.5%	3.6%	4.2%	2.9%
Against politicians' Royal Charter	2.8%	4.0%		3.0%		3.1%	2.9%
Against press law/statutory underpinning	4.0%	12.7%	9.8%	6.0%	10.7%	5.2%	6.9%
Press achievements	0.6%	6.9%	2.0%	1.5%	7.1%	1.0%	2.4%
Against self-regulation of the press	0.9%	0.6%					0.5%
Support for Leveson Inquiry	10.5%		7.8%	2.5%	7.1%	3.1%	5.5%
Enforce existing laws		2.3%	3.9%	4.5%			1.7%
<b>Critiquing critics of the press</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

A similar article from the *Sun* reads “Press must withdraw from panto stitch-up” (Kavanagh 2013b, p.8). The discourse, particularly that of the *Sun* newspaper, employed demeaning language to belittle the parties involved in the ‘scandal’, Lord Justice Leveson and the Leveson Inquiry:

STROPPY Lord Justice Leveson was accused yesterday of being the “only person” who did not know his inquiry's barrister was having an affair with a rival lawyer. The *Sun* revealed in April how married mum-of-two Ms Patry Hoskins, was dating perma-tanned Mr Sherborne, who worked for alleged

newspaper victims. The snooty law chief, who refused to talk about press regulation told the Commons Culture Committee he had not heard earlier rumours about the fling - dubbed the Loverson scandal (Ashton 2013, p.6)

The amount of money paid to the lawyers was also highlighted, probably to attract public contempt and reduce the public's acceptance of the Leveson report, as can be seen in the *Daily Telegraph's* headline, "Leveson lawyer who had affair was paid £220,000 of taxpayers' money" (Swinford 2013, n.p.). Though the "Loverson Scandal" featured in the *Guardian*, it was not interpreted in the same way. The paper only went as far as mentioning that Lord Justice Leveson defended Carine Hoskins' involvement in the 'developing relationship' saying that it did not compromise the Leveson report because she only played a minor role such as proofreading the report. The paper also stated that Lord Justice Leveson showed disgust when he was questioned about it at the Houses of Parliament (O'Carroll and Halliday 2013a, p.17). There were instances where the reverse featured, and those who opposed statutory regulation of the press were given 'a good press' (Chapman 2013c, n.p.).

In summary, my investigation into how the strategy of minimization was used in the press coverage of the debate that followed the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal revealed that the strategy was used in varying degrees by all newspapers in the study sample. It manifested in the forms of press disparagement of the Royal Charter which they nicknamed the Pizza Charter; interpretations of press reform proposals as acts motivated by political self-interest; by de-legitimizing the Leveson Inquiry, describing it as illegitimate and unfair; and by using the character smear technique against supporters of stringent press reforms. This list is not exhaustive. This finding agrees with the assertion of previous studies that during the coverage of media policy, newspapers trivialize and denigrate efforts at ensuring press accountability in a bid to protect their self-interest (Putnis 2000, p.110; Christopher 2007, p.42; McChesney 2008, p.451; Stiegler 2013, p.137).



## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the strategies of individualization, self-assertion and minimization were used in the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. My findings revealed that the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate featured a blame game. Blame was first accepted and then deflected to others including other journalists (a few bad journalists), other media organisations (sections of the press) and other institutions (e.g. the criminal justice system), amongst others. Though there was a wide acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the press in the journalistic metadiscourse, the pattern was that condemnation of wrongdoing served as a springboard to deflect blame to others. This made the wide acknowledgement of wrongdoing in the journalistic metadiscourse, and especially the high attribution of blame to journalists, appear hypocritical. I argued that these self-exoneration strategies (individualization, bad apples, Localization, ostracization, or deflection) were used to repair the 'press freedom' and 'journalist as a crusader' paradigms which had come into question because of the phone hacking scandal. My analysis of attributions of blame provided answers to RQ1.2 "Were attributions of blame made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?"

As previously stated, another strategy examined in this chapter is the paradigm strategy of self-assertion (also, self-affirmation or self-justification). My study revealed that it emerged mostly as a minor theme designed to assert the importance of journalism within articles that stressed that a statutorily backed regulatory body would pose a threat to press freedom. Comparing the journalistic metadiscourse of the two sub-interpretive spheres (the *Guardian* on one hand; and the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* on the other), it appears *Guardian* newspaper's coverage of the press reform debate leaned towards a social democratic ideology but it can also be argued that the neoliberal quest for government to intervene to prevent market failure was its underlying interest. The coverage of the other newspapers was more neoliberal in approach.

On the use of the strategy of minimization, I showed that this strategy was used in varying degrees by all newspapers in the study sample. It manifested as press disparagement of the Royal Charter, which they nicknamed the Pizza Charter; interpretations of press reform measures and proposals as decisions motivated by political self-interest; by delegitimising the Leveson inquiry - describing it as illegitimate and unfair; and by using the character smear technique against supporters of stringent press reforms. The press' minimization of opposing views and their propagators in the debate affirm the assertion of previous studies that newspapers take advantage of their position as the facilitators of the public sphere, to trivialize and denigrate efforts at ensuring press accountability, in a bid to protect their self- interest (Putnis 2000; McChesney 2008; Pickard 2015). This finding provides answers to RQ1.3 "How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?"

My findings affirm the claim by previous studies that journalistic metadiscourse is highly defensive; characterised by lack of self-critique and based on an ideology that is quick to claim its rights and highlight its importance while refusing to be accountable to society (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Thomas and Finneman 2014, p.172; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016). In sum, Chapters 6 and 7 provide answers to RQ1 "What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?"

## **Chapter 8: Journalistic metadiscourse: access to the media's public sphere**

### **Introduction**

As stated in Chapter 5, the central research question (RQ) of this study is “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?” That question was broken down into four research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4) as shown in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 presented answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?” My findings revealed that the strategies of “threat to the paradigm”, historicization, individualisation, self-assertion and minimisation were used in varying degrees to cover the debate.

I identified two sub-interpretive spheres in the debate. They were the sub-interpretive sphere consisting of *Guardian* newspaper and the one made up of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. This study found that the two sub-interpretive spheres interpreted press freedom differently. The *Guardian's* interpretation leaned towards a social democratic approach which welcomed state intervention in press regulation for the purpose of making the press more democratic while the coverage of the the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* was indicative of the neoliberal ideology which was resistant to state intervention in press regulation. I mentioned that newspapers were analysed both as two sub-interpretive spheres and as individual newspapers to make room for different forms of interpretation in the journalistic metadiscourse.

This chapter presents more of my findings on the way the debate was covered by press, especially in the way sources were used. The findings presented in this chapter, provide

answers to RQ2 “What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?”, RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?” and RQ4 “What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?” To provide answers to these questions, I used content analysis to measure frequency of sources, hierarchy of sources and alternative views in the study sample.

My findings are discussed in three sections. The first section comprises three subsections. They include discussions of my findings on how sources were distributed among stakeholders in the journalistic metadiscourse. The press, policymakers, victims of press abuse and their campaigners are among the major sources that emerged in the journalistic metadiscourse. This section shows how the press took advantage of its gatekeeping powers to give more voice to arguments that it perceived to be in its interest, to the detriment of other stakeholders in the press reform debate. The second section examines the hierarchy of importance accorded to the various issues of concern in the debate. This section is divided into four subsections in which I analyse my findings on the hierarchy of importance accorded to subjects such as public trust, the public interest, and privacy. It demonstrates how issues not considered to be in the press’ interest are given a weak position of access to the public sphere when the press cover debates about themselves. The third section analyses the results of my findings on alternative views expressed in the study sample. I shall begin by discussing my findings on the distribution of sources in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

### **8.1 Access to the media’s public sphere: sources**

As explained in chapter 2, this thesis is concerned with the maximalist approach to democracy which theorises that citizens go beyond engaging in politics to being involved in the decision-making process of government (Rousseau 1950 [1762] pp.13-14; Pateman 1970, pp.10-11; Mill 1991 [1861] p.256; Putnam 2000, cited in Stromback 2005, p.336; Barber 1984, cited in Christians et al., 2009, p.103). They can do this by

participating in public debates on issues that concern them, thus providing diverse options from which policymakers can make informed decisions (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1992; Cheema 2005, p.4; Held 2006, cited in Saxer 2013, p.5). The normative expectation here is that the media should not only provide the information that the public needs to make useful contributions to debates, but should also serve as a democratic public sphere: a forum where various stakeholders in a debate can air their views without suppression (Habermas 1989, p.4).

The media have often been accused of advancing elite discourses to the detriment of the less powerful in society (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010, p.270), thereby not giving equal opportunities to various stakeholders in debates that take place in the media's public sphere. It is alleged that inequality in communicative discourse in such a sphere is heightened when the media becomes the subject of the debate, riskily advantaging the press (see Chapters 2 and 3). How did this manifest in the media coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry? The results from my investigation into the frequency of sources used provided answers to RQ2 "What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?"

To find out how sources were distributed in the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate, I created the variable "Source types and frequency" (see Appendix A). A list of twenty codes was designed for this variable. The codes were drawn from my preliminary study of articles in my study sample as well as my review of previous literature on sources used in media policy debates. The list of codes includes campaigners for victims of the press (e.g. Hacked Off); the Leveson Inquiry; the Royal Charter; campaigners for press freedom; the press; press body (e.g. PCC, PressBoF, IPSO); newspaper editors; newspaper and magazine publishers; conservatives; police; Labour (Shadow) government; coalition Liberal Democrats; cross-party; Culture, Media and Sports; government spokesperson; other politicians; victims of press misconduct; ordinary members of the public; the judiciary and 'Other'. 'Other' was added to the list to provide space for options not stated on the list.

As stated in the codebook (see Appendix B), a source was defined as “any person, institution, or document to which the reporter explicitly attributed information” (Hallin et al. 1993a, p.754). A single source was coded only once for remarks in a single paragraph, but coded for each paragraph in which it was cited. For example, if a source was cited twice in one paragraph, it was coded only once, but if it was cited in two paragraphs, even consecutive ones, it was coded as being cited twice. Also, in an opinion article, the writer was counted when his or her views were being aired, but where he or she quoted other people or referred to what others said (not his or her opinion about what they said) the source referenced was counted.

Where options overlapped, I chose the most appropriate. For example, in the case of ‘Government spokesperson’ and ‘Conservative spokesperson’, where the speaker represents the view of the Conservative Party and not necessarily that of the coalition government (Conservative and Liberal Democrats), I recorded it as Conservative spokesperson. The types of sources and the frequency of their usage were counted for each newspaper to provide statistical data for how sources were used in a newspaper. The total number of sources for all the newspapers gave results for how sources were distributed in the press reform debate that followed the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal. A more detailed description of how this variable was coded can be found in Appendix B. My findings are presented in Table 8.1

Table 8.1 revealed that 46.1 per cent of news sources on the debate were press related; out of this number, 37.3 per cent were journalists (not editors), 3.7 per cent were news editors; 2.8 per cent were from press bodies such as the PCC and IPSO, while 2.3 per cent came from newspaper and magazine publishers (see Tables 8.1 and 8.1.1). Out of the remaining 53.9 per cent, policymakers (for the purpose of this study policymakers include the government, government institutions and politicians) made up 24.5 per cent of sources. 6.5 per cent of the number were Conservative Party spokespersons, 4.8 per cent were from the Labour Party, 3.8 per cent were Government spokespersons, another 3.8 were ‘other politicians’, 2.7 per cent were from the Liberal Democratic Party who were then in coalition government with the Conservatives; 2.2 per cent of sources were

from the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) and 0.7 were cross-party - a team made up of the three major political parties - Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Labour (see Tables 8.1 and 8.1.1). Sources related to 'press abuse victims' featured in 9.2 per cent of the study sample; 4.5 per cent were campaigners for victims of press abuse, while 4.7 per cent were the victims themselves. The categorising of these two sources was a little difficult because some prominent campaigners for victims, like Hugh Grant, were also victims of press abuse. From the statistics, we see that these three groups alone (press related, policymakers and press abuse victims) made up 79.8 per cent of the sources (see Tables 8.1 and 8.1.1).

**Table 8.1 Frequency of sources**

Sources	Frequency of sources	Percentage of sources
Campaigners for victims of press abuse	537	4.5%
Leveson Inquiry	827	7.0%
Royal Charter	97	0.8%
Campaigners for press freedom	495	4.2%
The press	4420	37.3%
Press body such as IPSO	331	2.8%
News editors	441	3.7%
Newspaper and magazine publishers	278	2.3%
Conservative spokesperson	776	6.5%
Police	253	2.1%
Labour shadow government	573	4.8%
Coalition Liberal Democrats	325	2.7%
Cross-party	85	0.7%
Culture, Media and Sport	255	2.2%
Government spokesperson	453	3.8%
Other politicians	454	3.8%
Victims of press abuse	559	4.7%
Ordinary members of the public	184	1.6%
Judiciary	263	2.2%
Other	252	2.1%
Total	11858	100.0%

Press regulation document related sources (the Leveson Inquiry and the Royal Charter on press regulation) made up 7.8 per cent of the sources (See Tables 8.1 and 8.1.1). The voice of the judiciary made up 2.2 per cent of the sources; and the police 2.1 per cent - same as a variety of other sources labelled as 'other'. Ordinary members of the public made up only 1.6 per cent of the sources. This agrees with previous findings which posit that ordinary sources have a weak position in the hierarchy of access to the media (GUMG 1976, pp.244-245; GUMG 1987, p.109; Allan 2005, pp.55-56; Boler et al. 2010, p.215).

**Table 8.1.1 Source types in related categories**

<b>Source Type</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Press related sources	46.1%
Policymakers	24.5%
Press abuse victims related sources	9.2%
Leveson and Royal Charter	7.8%
Judiciary	2.2%
Police	2.1%
Ordinary members of the public	1.6%
Other	2.1
Total	100.0%



This inequality in the distribution of sources was also identified in the category of writers of articles in the study sample. Understandably, newspaper staff wrote the bulk of the stories in the study sample, accounting for 91.5 per cent of writers of articles on the debate (see Table 8.1.2). What is of interest is the distribution of other contributors (writers) from outside the newspaper’s staff.

**Table 8.1.2 Category of Writers**

<b>Category of Writers</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total</b>
The newspaper’s staff/representative	88.2%	98.3%	94.1%	91.5%	92.9%	88.5%	91.5%
Campaigners for victims of the press	0.9%			1.0%		1.0%	0.7%
Victims of press abuse	0.9%						0.3%
Campaigners for the press	1.2%	1.2%	2.0%	0.5%		4.2%	1.4%
Representatives of associations	0.9%						0.3%
Former media executives	0.6%			0.5%	7.1%	1.0%	0.7%
A member of the public			2.0%	1.0%			0.3%
Government				1.5%			0.3%
Politicians	1.2%			2.5%		1.0%	1.1%
Business/corporate organisations		0.6%					0.1%
Academics	1.5%		2.0%	0.5%		1.0%	0.9%
Other media	4.3%			1.0%		3.1%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 8.1.3 shows that out of the remaining 8.5 per cent of contributors (outside the newspaper’s staff), 4.3 per cent were press related: 2.2 per cent were from ‘other media’ organisations; 1.4 per cent were written by campaigners for press freedom; and 0.7 per cent were former media executives (see Table 8.1.3). The remaining 4.1 per cent were shared among eight other contributors. Policymakers (“politicians” and “government”) made up 1.4 per cent of that amount making them another significant group used as sources (see Tables 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). Sources related to ‘press abuse victims’ made up 1 per cent of the amount: 0.7 per cent were campaigners for victims of the press and 0.3 per cent were written by the victims themselves (see Tables 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). Though this amount is less than the percentage of sources from policymakers and far less than the number of contributors that were press related, the victims of press abuse and their campaigners still emerged as one of the stakeholders whose voices featured in a significant proportion of the debate, accounting for 9.2 per cent of the sources and 1 per cent of contributors to the debate. Academics also came close to one per cent (0.9) (see Tables 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). Representatives of associations, members of the public and, surprisingly, corporate organisations each had under 0.4 per cent representation among sources used in the journalistic metadiscourse (see Table 8.1.3).

**Table 8.1.3 Category of Writers in groups**

<b>Writers</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Newspaper staff	91.5%
Press related sources	4.3%
Policymakers	1.4%
Press abuse victims related sources	1.0%
Academics	0.9
Representative of associations	0.3%
Corporate organisations	0.1%
Ordinary members of the public	0.3%
Total	100.0%

This result does not reflect a democratic public sphere. It agrees with arguments by previous studies that the media is dominated by a narrow spectrum of sources (Graber and Dunaway 2014). Here, the key actors in this narrow spectrum of sources were the press and victims of press misconduct while policymakers and campaign organisations took sides with either of the groups. While I share the view that the press were vital participants because the debate was about them, the policymakers were vital because they were the decision-making sphere, and the victims were vital because they had first-hand experience relevant to the debate, I argue that limiting the debate in the media's public sphere to this narrow spectrum of stakeholders risks leaving out large sections of the society that do not fall within these major categories but are inarguably stakeholders in the debate on press standards.

In a democracy, how the press should be regulated is a matter that concerns the whole of society and that ought to have been reflected in the distribution of sources. The risk to democracy here is that only a few sections of society dominated a debate on a matter that concerns all. One of the problems with this is that some sections of society may develop apathy towards the debate and not see it as a matter that concerns them. It can be argued that this narrow spectrum of sources reduced the diversity of views about press reform expressed in the media's public sphere and limited the options that were available to policymakers from which they made decisions on how to regulate the press.

### **8.1.1 Press-related sources**

The dominance of the media as sources within an already narrow spectrum of sources is a double cause for concern. The gap between press-related sources and other sources in the study sample (see Table 8.1.2) demonstrates how the gatekeeping power of the press can be used to their advantage (Lewin 1947, 1951, cited in Shoemaker and Vos 2009, p.1; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, p.3). As discussed in Chapter 2, gatekeeping refers to the process by which the media decides which stories to tell or not to tell, who speaks about them (sources) and what versions of interpretation to relay to the public (Shoemaker and Vos 2009; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015,

p.3). In this study, the press used their gatekeeping powers to see to it that their voices dominated the debate about press standards, particularly regarding arguments on how the press should be regulated.

In their use of press-related sources, a trend emerged in which newspapers reported the publications or transmissions of other media organisations about the debate: a situation that can be described as 'media coverage of media coverage of media issues' - a kind of second-level metacoverage. This press coverage of press coverage of press issues was done by the two sub-interpretive spheres, each using it to strengthen their own argument as well as counter opposing views in the press reform debate (Embley 2012, pp.8-9; Chapman 2013a, n.p.; Greenslade 2013a, n.p.). Headlines such as "*Times* editor says papers will go ahead with own regulator" (O'Carroll and Halliday 2013b, p.16); "The *Economist* call press regulation deal 'a shameful hash'" (Greenslade 2013b); "Now the *Economist* rejects rotten plan to shackle free press" (Chapman 2013a, n.p.) and "The *Spectator* says NO to the press regulator" (Greenslade 2013a, n.p.) are some examples of this second-level metacoverage. This pattern of coverage featured more in *Guardian* than in other newspapers in the study sample.

*Guardian* newspaper used this second-level metacoverage both to commend papers that were of a similar view to its position in the debate and to condemn those newspapers that were of a different view. For example, in an article headlined "Editors speak out on regulation" Neild (2013, p.8) in his report for the paper analysed the editorial sections of *Financial Times*, *Independent* and itself –*Guardian*, celebrating their views on statutory underpinning of the new press regulator and pointing out that all three [at the time] did not consider statutory underpinning as a threat to press freedom:

An editorial in today's FT said the failure to agree on a regulatory regime would threaten vital economic reforms and could result in a backlash. "What is now needed is a practical gesture of goodwill to break the deadlock and avoid a sweeping press law" it said. The *Guardian*, in its editorial, ... warned that by refusing to give ground on regulation, editors were gambling with the freedoms they sought to protect. The *Independent* said that the arguments against some form of statutory underpinning had lost perspective. "Even reasonable half-

way measures are characterised as press freedoms eroded and democratic principles laid waste," it said (Neild 2013, p.8).

In a similar article, it wrote "Finally, medals to the *Financial Times*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian* for holding out against ferocious peer pressure from the rest". Meanwhile, in another article headlined, "Will the press repent its nasty ways?", *Guardian* used this second-level metacoverage to condemn other media for arguing that statutory underpinning amounted to a threat to press freedom. The papers were used as sources in order to ridicule them and portray their arguments as lacking substance, as can be seen in this excerpt from *Guardian*:

I loved the heroics of Spectator editor Fraser Nelson, saying he'd never pay any fine from an "underpinned regulator": "Whether I'd go to prison or not is up to the enemies of press freedom to decide. At least it would make clear what they are proposing." ...Oh, the lofty rhetoric of the *Sun*, quoting from those they would have hounded at the time - JF Kennedy, Ralph Miliband, Adlai Stevenson, John Stuart Mill and Gandhi. But it has been sad to see some of the wiser commentators on the Times and Telegraph follow their masters' voice, warning that the end is nigh when they must know quite well that's nonsense (Toynbee 2013, p.29).

Similarly, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph* reported the comments of other media organisations, using the method to either advance or counter arguments. An example is an article from *Daily Mirror* which attributed the closure of the *News of the World* to inaccurate reporting on the part of *Guardian*:

...Roll forward five months and a much smaller story appeared on the front of The Guardian. The headline - "New inquiry into Dowler hacking launched" - gave little clue as to the revelation in the story, namely that the deletion exposé was wrong. The single-most stomach-churning element of the whole saga was, in fact, incorrect. It seems the messages had most likely been deleted automatically and not by journalists "thirsty for more" as the initial Guardian report claimed (Embley 2012, pp.8-9).

There were also headlines such as "Politicians in control risks media like Russia's, warns Lebedev" (Ross 2012a, p.8). Evgeny Lebedev, the owner of the *London Evening Standard*

and *Independent* newspaper (solely online at the time of this study) was speaking on The Andrew Marr Show on BBC1.

In summary, results from this study show that both spheres of journalistic metadiscourse took advantage of their gatekeeping powers to allocate disproportionate amounts of space to their voices in the press reform debate. About half of the total number of sources used in the study sample were press related. The press became the power elite with the dominant voice while the rest of society were apparently, at its mercy in the debate. Though it can be argued that there are various channels through which the public can participate in this debate, such as from online news websites and blogs that advance counter discourses, it has been established through previous research that considerable numbers of people still depend on the mainstream press for hard news content (Wall 2004, p.13, cited in Haas 2012, p.147; Haas 2012, p.148). Despite the dive in newspaper readership in the UK (Newsworks 2015), the national press represented by this study sample still has an average daily readership of 12.2 million which demonstrates the number of people in society consuming discourse from this doubly narrow spectrum of sources. The danger of favouring “power elite” sources is that the views and interpretations of a particular stratum of society dominate the media discourse (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O’Neill 2010, p.270). Interestingly, the views of the press were not only expressed by press-related sources but were also passed across through other sources as can be seen in the next segment on policymakers as sources.

### **8.1.2 “It takes two to tango”: the media and policymakers**

Policymakers play a vital role in media policy debates, in the sense that they are the decision-making sphere; they are the forum where contestations in the media’s public sphere can progress to the stage of a consensus and the stage where the debate can influence political action. In this case, the political action to be taken is a decision on how to ensure an accountable press. In Chapter 4, I explored the interdependence between the media and policymakers. I explained that for the media, policymakers are credible sources of information (O’Heffernan 1991, p.38; Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000; Nitoiu 2015).

This may have contributed to the relatively high frequency of the use of policymakers as sources in the press reform debate. Their power to make policy decisions also make the media dependent on policymakers for what they consider to be favourable media policies.

I also mentioned that for policymakers, the media serve as a means of information and communication with the public. As previously stated, policymakers' uses of the media go beyond the making of policy to other more personal reasons, such as the promotion of their political image or popularity. Here the media can make or mar political careers through their media coverage. So, while the media depend on policymakers for 'favourable' media policies, policymakers depend on the media for 'good' press coverage. Gans (1979, p.116) described this reciprocal relationship between journalists and their sources, in this case policymakers, with the dance metaphor, "it takes two to tango". As stated in Chapter 4, Gans was of the view that "although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading" (Ibid). Studies have shown that the position of dominance in this 'dance' changes between the two, at different stages of the news cycle (Reich 2006, pp.497-514, cited in Franklin 2008, p.15; 2009, p.92).

A closer look at the context within which sources were used in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry revealed that the press had the dominant position in their relationship with policymakers during the media policy debate. The press apparently used their gatekeeping powers to see to it that only policymakers who expressed support for their position in the debate featured as contributors of opinion articles on the debate in their newspapers. For instance, policymakers who were contributors to *Daily Telegraph* were largely in support of the argument that statutory underpinning was a threat to press freedom (Johnson 2012a, p.4; Mason 2012a, p.26), while those who were contributors to news articles in *Guardian* countered the argument that statutory underpinning posed a threat to press freedom (Lester 2012, p.30; Fowler 2013, p.24; Huhne 2013a, p.36). And in the articles, some policymakers virtually reproduced the newspaper's position in the debate. For example,

Boris Johnson, the then Mayor of London, wrote an article in the *Sun* titled “It's one of the glories of this country that we have free, exuberant media. They keep public life much cleaner & that makes Britain a wonderful place to live” (Johnson 2012b, pp.10-11). The dominant theme of that report was “against press law and statutory underpinning”.

On the other hand, an article written by a member of the House of Lords, Norman Fowler and published by *Guardian* newspaper expressed support for statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body (Fowler 2013, p.24). The fact that Norman Fowler, a former Conservative Cabinet minister and party chairman gained access to publish his view on the debate in the left-wing leaning *Guardian*, goes a long way to show that the primary criteria for access in this metacoverage, may have been tied to the position of the newspaper in the debate. It appears as if the press had said ‘you either dance to our tune or find somewhere else to publish your view’. This trend can, arguably, be described as collusion between politicians and the media.

Some politicians have been accused of supporting the arguments of the press in order to receive their backing in the elections which were not far off at the time. For instance, when it was revealed in 2016 that four newspapers (the *Sun*, *Independent*, *Mail on Sunday* and *Independent on Sunday*) were privy to information that the then chairman of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, John Whittingdale had previously been involved in a relationship with a woman he met on an online dating website who happened to be a sex worker, and had not published it, some press reform campaigners and the Labour Party alleged that some sort of deal may have taken place between this executive and the press (*BBC News* 2016b). John Whittingdale who was then the Conservative MP for Maldon and East Chelmsford denied any such deal with the press and the papers claimed they decided not to publish because he was not a minister at the time of the relationship and as such it was not in the public interest (*Ibid*).

There were also assumptions that Boris Johnson may have danced to the tune of the bulk of the national press in the press reform debate because he had an ambition to become the next Prime Minister of Britain after David Cameron and would, therefore, need the



support of this large section of the national press. Whether or not there was a deal between the press and John Whittingdale or even a personal move by Boris Johnson to seek the press' favour for political ambition, the fact remains that some politicians in both spheres largely reproduced arguments of the press in the debate. In this case, though it still takes two to tango, the press leads. It is worthy of note that while the Leveson Inquiry condemned the relationship between the press and politicians for being 'too cosy' (Leveson Inquiry Report Volume 4, p.1969; Winnett 2012b, p.11), the very coverage of the inquiry and that of the rest of the debate appear to have been shaped by a similar level of closeness.

The consequence for democracy here is that checks needed to prevent abuse of power by both the fourth and third estates of the realm gradually become eroded (Allan and Zelizer 2010, p.48). As discussed in Chapter 2, the press in a democratic society is expected to keep political and other powerful institutions in check by exposing corruption, providing information they need to make quality decisions and providing the masses with the relevant information they need to vote in the right political leaders. That is why a tango between the press and politicians poses a threat to democracy. It can, for instance, result in the emergence to power of a politician who though without the quality to lead, cosied up to the press or benefited its financial interest in some way.

### **8.1.3 Victims as “the stakeholders”**

Though the number of victim-related sources is far less than the number of press-and policy-related sources (see Tables 8.1 and 8.1.1), the victims of press abuse and their campaigners still emerged as one of the stakeholders whose voices featured in a significant proportion of the debate, accounting for 9.2 per cent of the sources and 1 per cent of contributors to the debate (see Tables 8.1, 8.1.1, 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). While I agree that this demographic is very important to the debate and ought to have been given more space in the journalistic metadiscourse, I argue that the construction of victims as 'the stakeholders' is further marginalisation of other sections of society.

One major problem with the construction of victims as ‘the stakeholders’ is its composition. A look at the victims used as sources revealed that they were mostly famous (well-known) people. They included persons whose life stories attained the status of newsworthiness because of their celebrity status or high public profile (Harcup and O’Neill’s 2009, p.168; 2010, p.270; 2016, p.2). Among them were actor Hugh Grant (Sweney 2013, n.p.), comedian Steve Coogan (O’Carroll 2012c, n.p.), singer Charlotte Church (Glover 2012, n.p) and author JK Rowling (Luckhurst 2012, p.25).

Another group of victims used as sources included persons who became famous because of their connection to a newsworthy event such as the Dowlers (Rayner 2012a, p.6), the McCanns (Beattie 2013, p.26), Christopher Jefferies (Allen and Evans 2012, n.p.), the 7 July 2005 London bombing survivor (Hill 2012, n.p.), or persons closely related to any of the two categories of victims (Cohen 2013, n.p.). So, famous people that have been hurt by the press were constructed as ‘the stakeholders’. That is of course a narrow spectrum of stakeholders of the British press. Though victims of crime such as the Dowlers and the McCanns have been described as ordinary people in some news articles, that is contestable. The debate can thus be classed as an elitist debate. Though it may be argued that the press would more likely invade the privacy of the rich or famous than the ordinary citizen in society, studies show that ordinary citizens are also affected by press excesses: an example is minority groups who are often stereotyped in the news. Such people ought to have been adequately represented in the debate on press standards in the public sphere.

Though the academic community made up nearly one per cent of the contributors, some were former journalists (for example, Professors Tim Luckhurst and Brian Cathcart), and it was mainly lecturers speaking in the press. The student population which form part of the 21 per cent of young adult readership (ages 18-34) of the national dailies in the country (NRS October 2015-September 2016, cited in Newsworks 2016; NRS 2016) had little or no input in the debate. The academic experts were on both sides of the argument, the social democratic views advanced by *Guardian* newspaper and the neoliberal ideology propagated by the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*,

*Daily Express, Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph*. The works of academics on the phone hacking and press standards were occasionally reviewed as part of expert analysis of the phone hacking scandal and press standards in general (Luckhurst 2012, p.25; Greenslade and Felle 2013; Greenslade and Harding 2013). This made them another recognisable voice in the journalistic metadiscourse.

People from other sectors of society such as those who have not faced any form of press misconduct should have also formed a relevant demographic as their views may be much more neutral in relation to how to balance the issue of privacy with that of press freedom. My intention here is not to belittle the importance of the victims of press misconduct to the debate but to argue that they are only one relevant demographic out of a number and that should have been reflected in the journalistic metadiscourse. There is the tendency that victims advocating for press reform can make suggestions out of anger and frustration at the press. Therefore, a mix of those that have experienced press abuse and those that have not been directly hurt would have made a more balanced group of stakeholders.

What emerged instead was a rhetoric or discourse that constructed the victims of press abuse as the only demographic that needed the service of an accountable press. As such, whatever proposal was going to be made by the Leveson Inquiry must pass 'the victims test'. Policymakers, the press and even the victims themselves all advanced this rhetoric as can be seen in this statement written by *Guardian's* Dan Sabbagh:

Victims have a veto. David Cameron, giving evidence, said that the test of the effectiveness of the Leveson Inquiry would be its impact on those who have suffered from press intrusion. "If families like the Dowlers feel this has really changed the way they would have been treated, we would have done our job properly," he said (Sabbagh 2012, p.11).

This portrayal of victims as “the stakeholders”, the only demographic to benefit from press reforms, was more pronounced in *Guardian* newspapers where several headlines contained a reference to the victims as can be seen in the headline “Leveson report: PM defies press victims: 1.30pm ... Lawyer for Milly Dowler's parents says PM has 'failed the Dowler test'” (Wintour and Sabbagh 2012, p.1). A similar headline from *Guardian* stated: “When Leveson reports, parliament must act swiftly.... We would be betraying the media's victims if we ignored its findings” (Miliband 2012, p.26).

This construction of victims as “the stakeholders” was also identified in the other newspapers in the study sample, although not with the same intensity, and it was used a bit differently - to critique arguments advanced by the victims’ campaigners as can be seen in the headline “Hacked off don't speak for victims, insists 7/7 father” (Cohen 2013, p.28). This construction of victims as “the stakeholders” may have accounted for victim-related sources emerging among the top three sources used in the study sample as shown in Table 8.1.1. Having examined how sources were distributed in the press coverage of the media policy debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal, the next section presents my findings on the importance accorded diverse issues of concern in the public sphere. As discussed in Chapter 2, primary definers define the mood of the news because they often come high up in the narrative and as such the rest of the news may be a response to their definition of the subject (Hall et al. 1978. pp.57-59, cited in Allan 2010, p.84). The next section presents my findings on the importance accorded diverse issues of concern in the public sphere.

## **8.2 Hierarchy of importance: issues of concern**

As discussed in Chapter 5, news writing is often done using the inverted pyramid style of writing where the most important information is placed higher up in the story with other information following in its hierarchy of importance (Pottker 2003, p.501; Franklin et al. 2005, p.122). Though this style of writing news is being contested (see Chapter 5), it is still the prevalent form of news writing. As such, it formed the basis for the method used to measure the importance accorded to different issues of concern in the debate. To gauge

the importance accorded to each issue of concern in the press reform debate, I created the variable “Narrative Structure”. This variable consisted of twenty-seven codes. The list was made broad and diverse to make room, as much as possible, for key issues in the debate. The issues were identified as key to the debate during my preliminary study of the sample and my review of previous literature on the coverage of media policy debates. The list includes comments against press laws/statutory regulation; comments against press reforms; press freedom; public trust; comments in support of a new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press; comments against politicians’ Royal Charter on press regulation; comments against self-regulation; comments against statutory underpinning and comments against the Leveson Inquiry.

Others are comments in support of press laws/statutory regulation; comments in support of press reforms; privacy; public interest; comments against a new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press; support for a cross-party Royal Charter on press regulation; comments in support of independent press self-regulation; comments in support of statutory underpinning and comments in support of the Leveson Inquiry. A category was formed for comments that can be regarded as neutral because they were important information relevant to the debate but not an argument for or against any position. Such codes begin with “comments on”. They include “comments on press laws/statutory regulation”; “comments on press reforms”; “comments on media owners/ownership”; “comments on new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press”; “comments on politicians’ Royal Charter on press regulation”; “comments on self-regulation”; “comments on statutory underpinning” and “comments on the Leveson Inquiry”. The code “other” is there to make room for any issues not included in the list of options. For each story, references to these subjects or their equivalent in meaning were counted and coded in the hierarchy in which it appeared in the story.

A subject or argument was counted (numbered) only once, the first time it appeared in the narrative. The frequency was not counted per paragraph but by subject of discussion. For example, a subject of discussion can feature in three paragraphs just as two subjects can be in one paragraph. Even where an issue featured in the first three paragraphs, it

was counted as one (first position). The second subject of discussion can, in such a case, feature in paragraphs 4-6, etc. The frequency at which issues occurred at the top of the narrative showed the importance accorded that issue in the debate. The position of occurrence of the issues of concern in the narrative was counted for each newspaper. The position of occurrence of the issues of concern in the narrative was counted for each newspaper. The sum of each code for all the newspapers provided statistical data for the hierarchy of importance accorded that issue of concern in the press coverage of the media policy debate.

My findings provide answers to RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?” As previously stated, the inverted pyramid style of news writing suggests that journalists would often put the issues they consider to be most important at the top of the narrative. In this study, “the top” is regarded as the first positions in the narrative structure. Therefore, in this section, I present findings on my investigation into how issues of concern were allocated space within this sphere of importance. The following subsection presents and discusses my findings on how issues were accorded importance at the top of the narrative.

### **8.2.1 Hierarchy of importance: Top position in the narrative**

Table 8.2.1 presents the issues that emerged at the top position in the narrative structure of articles in the study sample. It reveals that the top three subjects in the hierarchy of importance were press freedom (16.7 per cent); arguments against press law and statutory regulation (12.4 per cent); and public interest (6.9 per cent). The least in the order of importance within this category was “against self-regulation” (0.4 per cent) along with “[neutral] comments on statutory underpinning” (0.4). This finding agrees with the results of Table 6.2 which shows that “threat to press freedom” was the dominant theme in the study sample.

Though “press freedom” came up at the top of the narrative structure in the majority of stories in the study sample, the measure of occurrence differed from paper to paper. The results show that it featured more prominently in the sub-interpretive sphere made up of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*, appearing as the first subject of discussion in 22.5 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*; 20.9 per cent of the *Sun*; 19.1 per cent of *Daily Mail*; 18.2 per cent of *Daily Express*; and 15.8 per cent of *Daily Mirror* compared to 11.6 per cent of *Guardian* (see Table 8.2.1). It can be argued that this was because all the newspapers, apart from *Guardian*, gave priority attention to the argument that the statutory underpinning of a new press regulatory body, as proposed by the Leveson Inquiry and subsequently applied to the Royal Charter on press self-regulation, was a threat to press freedom. Though *Guardian* gave much space to countering that argument, its appearance at the top was not as frequent as that of the other newspapers. Again, this agrees with the dominant theme’s table in Chapter 6 (Table 6.2) where all the other newspapers gave more attention to the “threat to press freedom” argument than the *Guardian*.

However, Table 8.2.1 shows that “press freedom” was *Guardian*’s most frequent subject of discourse at the top of the narrative structure. Unexpectedly, arguments for and against statutory underpinning came second place in *Guardian*’s narrative structure each appearing at the top in 10.9 per cent of *Guardian*’s narrative structure. What this shows is that *Guardian* gave quality space to arguments for and against statutory underpinning. However, support for statutory underpinning was the dominant theme in its study sample, as was shown in Chapter 6 (see Table 6.2). As with most ‘neutral’ comments in the study sample, “comments on press law and statutory regulation” received the least amount of attention at the top of *Guardian* newspaper, appearing at the top in 0.3 per cent of articles. Though *Guardian* also claimed to be against full-blown statutory regulation of the press, arguments against statutory regulation were not given much space at the top of its narrative structure, appearing at the top in only 3.2 per cent of its sample as opposed to 26.3 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 19.8 per cent of the *Sun*, 17.9 per cent of *Daily Telegraph* and 17.6 per cent of *Daily Mail* (see Table 8.2.1). While this shows *Guardian*’s voice against statutory regulation was weak, it also confirms how averse much of the press was to statutory regulation.

**Table 8.2.1 Hierarchy of issues of concern: frequency at the top position in the narrative**

<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total</b>
Against press laws and statutory regulation	3.2%	17.6%	26.3%	17.9%	18.2%	19.8%	12.4%
Against press reforms	1.9%	2.2%	7.9%	0.7%	0.0%	2.2%	2.0%
Press freedom	11.6%	19.1%	15.8%	22.5%	18.2%	20.9%	16.7%
Public trust	1.0%	0.0%	2.6%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Support for new press regulatory system formed by the press	1.3%	2.2%	5.3%	0.7%	0.0%	2.2%	1.6%
Against politicians' Royal Charter	5.1%	6.6%	2.6%	2.0%	4.5%	5.5%	4.7%
Against self-regulation	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Against statutory underpinning	10.9%	2.2%	0.0%	4.0%	9.1%	3.3%	6.4%
Against the Leveson Inquiry	1.9%	10.3%	0.0%	1.3%	9.1%	15.4%	5.1%
Support for press laws and statutory regulation	1.6%	1.5%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Support press reform	1.3%	0.7%	2.6%	5.3%	9.1%	0.0%	2.1%
Privacy	7.7%	5.1%	2.6%	6.0%	4.5%	1.1%	5.7%



**Table 8.2.1 Hierarchy of issues of concern: frequency at the top position in the narrative (cont.)**

<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total</b>
Public interest	4.5%	5.1%	5.3%	12.6%	18.2%	6.6%	6.9%
Against new press regulatory system formed by the press	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Support for cross-party Royal Charter	5.5%	0.7%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Support for independent press self-regulation	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	4.5%	3.3%	2.7%
Support for statutory underpinning	10.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%
Support for the Leveson Inquiry	5.8%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	4.5%	2.2%	3.1%
Comments on press laws/statutory regulation	0.3%	12.5%	5.3%	2.6%	0.0%	1.1%	3.3%
Comments on press reform	4.8%	1.5%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%
Comments on media owners/ownership	2.3%	2.9%	13.2%	9.3%	0.0%	1.1%	4.1%
Comments on new press regulatory system formed by the press	1.6%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Comments on politicians' Royal Charter	1.6%	1.5%	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Comments on self-regulation	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Comments on statutory underpinning	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Comments on the Leveson Inquiry	2.9%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	1.5%
Other	2.9%	5.1%	2.6%	0.7%	0.0%	14.3%	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

“Arguments against press law and statutory regulation” even came ahead of “press freedom” at the top of *Daily Mirror’s* narrative structure (15.8 per cent compared to press freedom’s 26.3 per cent). However, it can be argued that ‘arguments against statutory regulation’ is a feeder to “the threat to press freedom argument” because the defence for arguing against statutory regulation is that it is a threat to press freedom. Though the subject of “media owners/ownership” was high up in *Daily Mirror’s* hierarchy of importance, emerging third place with 13.2 per cent of appearances at the top, the discussions were not on concentration of media ownership but were on the trouble that had befallen Rupert Murdoch, owner of the *News of the World*, and his staff as a result of the phone hacking scandal (see Chapter 7). This served more as infotainment, a dramatic narration of their ordeal. Some key issues in the debate did not gain entrance into this sphere of importance (top of the narrative structure) in *Daily Mirror*. They include arguments against the new press regulatory system formed by the press; support for statutory underpinning; and support for the Leveson Inquiry and arguments in support of an independent press regulatory system, along with some neutral comments (see Table 8.2.1). A close look at the issues that received no space at the top of *Daily Mirror’s* narrative structure reveals that they are arguments that are considered as not in the interest of the commercial press.

This trend of giving prime place in the narrative structure to arguments perceived to be in their interest, with little or no mention of opposing views within that sphere of importance was identified in the sub-interpretive sphere comprising the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. The *Sun* gave prime place (at the top of the narrative structure) to arguments “against statutory underpinning” (19.8 per cent) as mentioned earlier and “arguments against Leveson Inquiry” (15.4 per cent) with no mention of arguments against the new press regulatory system formed by the press; support for statutory underpinning and support for the politicians’ Royal Charter at the top of the narrative structure. The *Daily Express* had at the top of its narrative structure, arguments “against press law and statutory regulation” and issues relating to the “public interest” (18.2 per cent each). Though it is commendable that the “public interest” received much mention at the top of *Daily Express’* narrative structure, the interpretation

of what constitutes the public interest raises questions which will be examined more closely later in this chapter.

Arguments “against the Leveson Inquiry”; “against statutory underpinning” and in “support of press reform” also appeared at the top position in *Daily Express*’ narrative structure, each appearing at the top in 9.1 per cent of the paper’s sample. The emergence of “support for press reform” in this position confirms my finding in previous chapters that there was wide acceptance of the need for reform in all spheres of the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. It is worthy of note, however, that as with the *Sun*’s coverage, arguments “against the new press regulatory system formed by the press” and arguments in “support of the cross-party Royal Charter” did not feature at all in this sphere of importance. The fact that “press freedom”; “against statutory underpinning”; “public interest”; arguments “against statutory underpinning”; arguments “against Leveson Inquiry”; and “support for press reform” took up about 82 per cent of the top position of *Daily Express*’ narrative structure of news articles on the press reform debate meant there would not be much space left either for or against some key issues in the debate; for example, the issue of “public trust”. The issue of public trust will be discussed in the next subsection.

### **8.2.2 Issue of concern: public trust**

Despite its importance to democracy and the sustenance of newspaper readership, as established in Chapter 4, the issue of ‘public trust’ was among the subjects that received the least attention in the journalistic metadiscourse. Table 8.2.1 shows that it surfaced at the top of the narrative structure in only 1.3 per cent of the study sample; appearing in 4.0 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*, 2.6 per cent of *Daily Mirror* and 1.0 per cent of *Guardian*. It did not appear at all as the first subject of discussion in the *Sun*, *Daily Express* or *Daily Mail*. A closer look at the context within which the issue of public trust was used by the press revealed that the press rarely discussed its own need to build public trust but instead turned its readers’ attention to other institutions facing the same challenge. The journalistic metadiscourse contained instances where institutions other than the press

were criticised for the lack of public trust on their operations. An example is this article from *Daily Telegraph*:

NEW Labour's policy of "spin" and media "manipulation" has damaged democracy and undermined public trust in politics, Lord Leveson said (Ross 2012b, p.10).

Here, the Labour Party rather than the press received the blame for the public's lack of trust. Only few stories touched on the need for the press to build public trust (Huhne 2013b, p.28). The implication of this manner of coverage for democracy is that the problem of lack of public trust is not addressed and as such is not tackled. The need to pay more attention to the issue of public trust is given credence by the results of a survey carried out by YouGov which shows that only 7 per cent of the public trust newspapers to behave responsibly (Media Standards Trust 2009) while as much as 75 per cent believe "newspapers frequently publish stories they know are inaccurate" (Ibid, n.p.). Such a high level of lack of trust in the media can result in a breakdown of effective communication between the media and the public. As discussed in Chapter 2, the media plays a very important role in modern democracy. It serves as a medium for information dissemination and mobilisation to many in society. Where trust between the press and the public becomes eroded, people may lose faith in deliberations in the media's public sphere, no longer depend on the press for information or not take the content of their productions seriously. This can impact negatively on effective governance as well as on the political, economic and social wellbeing of any society.

The *Daily Telegraph's* coverage followed the trend of placing arguments perceived to be in their interest at the top of the narrative structure and those not seen as favouring their interests were placed, if at all, lower down the narrative structure. As shown in Table 8.2.1, "press freedom" and arguments "against statutory regulation" alone took up 40.4 per cent of the space at the top in its journalistic metadiscourse. Meanwhile, there was no mention of the argument "against the new press regulatory system formed by the press" and "support for the cross-party Royal Charter" at the top of *Daily Telegraph's* narrative structure, along with comments on self-regulation and the Leveson Inquiry. This trend of

placing the arguments perceived to be in the media's self-interest high up in the narrative structure while placing views considered as being against their interest lower down the narrative, demonstrates that the media give more quality space to arguments or issues they perceive to be in their interest during their representation of media policy debates.

This finding affirms the claim by previous studies that the gatekeeping powers of the media are prone to abuse when the media cover themselves (McQuail 2002, cited in Miller 2006, p.41; Shoemaker and Vos 2009, p.1; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, p.3). Table 8.2.1 shows that this was more prominent in sub-interpretive sphere made up of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* which are commercially owned newspapers, compared to *Guardian* (which is funded by Scott Trust Ltd). This manner of coverage can have an adverse effect on democracy because it privileges the voice of the press above those of other stakeholders in debates about media policy.

It is worthy of note that the issue of the "public interest" was given substantial space at the top of *Daily Telegraph's* narrative structure (12.6 per cent), making it the third issue of concern in the paper's hierarchy of importance. It was surpassed only by "press freedom" and "arguments against press law and statutory regulations" in *Daily Telegraph's* hierarchy of importance. As previously shown, it received more space at the top of *Daily Express* (18.2 per cent) but was only in the top space of 6.6 per cent of the *Sun*, 5.3 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 5.1 per cent of *Daily Mail* and 4.5 per cent of *Guardian* newspaper. Overall, it appeared at the top of the narrative structure in 6.9 per cent of the study sample. This finding is elucidated in the following subsection.

### **8.2.3 Issue of concern: the public interest**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the press had often used the public interest defence as an excuse to invade the privacy of people with a public profile and indulge in other clandestine activities. The controversy in defining what constitutes the public interest is

what prompted Lord Justice Leveson to propose an optional pre-publication advice service for newspaper editors (The Leveson Inquiry 2012, para. 62, p.15). Ironically, the journalistic metadiscourse on the coverage of the inquiry and the ensuing debate on press standards also faced the controversy of what exactly constitutes this public interest; even conflicting arguments were said to be in the public interest. This study revealed that both spheres of discourse (*Guardian* versus the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*) stressed the importance of journalism done in the public interest and this reflected in the journalistic metadiscourse. Newspapers in both spheres of interpretation laid claim to practising journalism in the public interest. Such claims were usually made when they felt the need to repair their crusader image (see Chapter 6 for more on paradigm repair).

For instance, when *Guardian* newspaper discovered it was wrong in accusing the *News of the World* of deleting messages from the voicemail of the murdered school girl, Milly Dowler, the story that attempted to acknowledge its mistake had as its headline “Leveson report: Judge addresses Guardian's story on hacking of Milly Dowler's phone: Report praises paper's public interest journalism NoW probably did not delete voicemail messages” (Booth 2012, p.15). The *Sun* did the same when some of its staff were arrested for allegedly making payments to public officials for stories (Kavanagh 2012a, p.12). Similarly, *Daily Mirror* while trying to promote the press’ Royal Charter on press regulation, which was later rejected, said “The *Daily Mirror* is committed to high-quality journalism in the public interest, giving the working people of Britain a voice in the corridors of power” (*Daily Mirror* 2013b, p.8). Journalism done in the public interest is one of the normative expectations of journalism in a democratic society. It is, therefore, not surprising that it emerged as one of the key subjects of the debate even though it received far less attention than the issue of press freedom (see Table 8.2.1).

The subject of ‘public interest’ served different purposes in the journalistic metadiscourse of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal. One way it functioned was as a reason for the press’ opposition to statutory regulation. For example, an article in the *Sun* stated:

“But let's not bring good journalism to its knees in the process by introducing state regulation that can and would be used by those seeking to stifle genuine wrongdoing that is firmly in the public interest – (Moore 2011, p.13)

The statement is one of many comments made to drive home the point that statutory underpinning would endanger public interest journalism. Similarly, it was used by *Daily Express* when it rebuked the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) for allowing itself to be “brainwashed by Leftist dogma”:

Shamefully, it [the NUJ] has joined the calls for statutory press regulation, arguing that the "right to free expression cannot be absolute" but must be "balanced by the public interest". To a Left-winger the "public interest" means the suppression of unacceptable opinions (*Daily Express*, 29 November 2012, p.14)

The *Sun* advanced the same argument in an article with the headline “Regulating the press is not in public interest ... it’s in the interests of politicians; 300 years of freedom under threat this week” (Hodges 2013, p.10). The article debunked claims by politicians on the left that their argument for the Royal Charter on press regulation to be underpinned by statute was because it was in the public interest. It stated:

And ask yourself if they really are pressing for media regulation because they think it's in the "public interest". The answer, of course, is it is nothing to do with the public interest. It is all about their interests. This week 300 years of Press freedom is in the balance. And it could end because our politicians want it to (Ibid).

The press also debunked claims by campaign organisations that their call for press laws was in the public interest (Hume 2012, p.6). It then went on to promote the discourse of the British press as an architect of ‘journalism in the public interest’, each paper or class of paper promoting itself as working in the interest of the public. The *Sun* quoted Tim Luckhurst, a Professor of Journalism at Kent University as saying "Popular newspapers are bold defenders of the public interest. It protects our liberties and holds power to

account. MPs should search their conscience and vote for freedom of expression unlimited by state intervention" (Dunn 2013, pp.6-7).

In summary, the press debunked the claims of all other parties in the debate to the pursuit of a form of journalism that would be in the public interest while maintaining that the journalism being practised by the British press was in the public interest. It can be argued that such arguments sought to maintain the status quo (Beckford 2012, p.21) but at other times it acknowledged that changes had to be made, but that such changes must be void of statute (Moore 2011, p.13). There were some counter-discourses in *Guardian* newspaper as can be seen in this story with the headline "Comment: What's all the fuss about the end of freedom of the press? The royal charter doesn't establish any regulation of the press - but the fourth estate still needs to re-establish credibility" (Huhne 2013b, p.28). The story stated:

Lord Leveson could not have been clearer on the surveillance, harassment and intimidation inflicted by the press on the families of Madeleine McCann, Milly Dowler, Sebastian Bowles, Holly Wells, Jessica Chapman and many others. This is nothing to do with exposing evil doings by the powerful, for which there are public interest exemptions. It is about selling more newspapers by destroying the lives of ordinary people (Huhne 2013b, p.28).

With this diversity in the interpretation of the public interest, a prominent space given to the "public interest" in each sphere of discourse will only mean promoting their own interpretation of "the public interest". This signals that the problem of "what constitutes the public interest" is far from over, or perhaps what is needed is a selfless interpretation of the "public interest" on the part of the press. I argue that it is time for the public to play an active role in determining what constitutes the public interest through their active involvement in public reformism. As explained in Chapter 2, public reformism seeks to improve the standard and viability of journalism through concerted action (Curran 2011, p.31). Considering the impact of irresponsible journalism on society, it is high time the public started playing an active role in defining what constitutes the public interest. For example, the public can become more vocal in criticising news publications that are not in the public interest; support newspapers that engage in public interest journalism and



withdraw their patronage from defaulting newspapers. One area where the “public interest” clause is often quoted by journalists is in defence of invasion of privacy. When can privacy invasion be in the public interest? The next subsection presents my findings on how the issue of privacy was represented in the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry.

#### **8.2.4 Issue of concern: privacy**

It is worthy of note that one of the major contentions in the press reform debate was how to strike a balance between the protection of press freedom and the protection of privacy. While campaigners for victims sought to protect privacy (O'Carroll 2013d, n.p.), much of the press channelled their resources towards the protection of their conceptualisation of press freedom (Hume 2012, p.6; Nelson 2012b, p.28; Forsyth 2013b, p.15). Table 8.2.1 reveals that while press freedom dominated the top of the narrative structure across newspapers in the study sample (16.7 per cent), as previously shown, the issue of privacy only emerged in that sphere of importance in 5.7 per cent of articles. This again shows how issues that are perceived to be in the press' self-interest receive greater attention and more quality of space in the media's public sphere.

To understand the analysis of my findings, it is important to know how privacy was coded. What qualified a statement to be coded under privacy included all mentions of the word privacy and statements that inferred that the issue of privacy was being discussed. This meant that not only statements for the protection of privacy were coded under privacy but also, statements against. So, what was being sought for during the coding exercise was how much the issue of privacy was debated within the journalistic metadiscourse. In this subsection, I discuss not only the quality of space given to the subject of privacy but also the way it was represented by each newspaper in the study sample.

There were similarities and differences in the way the newspapers covered the issue of privacy. All newspapers in the study sample appeared to have been against more privacy laws (Roberts 2011, n.p.; Embley 2012, pp.8-9; Forsyth 2012a, p.12; Kampfner 2012, p.29; Moir 2012, n.p.). Instances where this was demonstrated include the coverage of the invasion into the privacy of the Duchess of Cambridge in France (Greenslade 2012c, n.p.; Kampfner 2012, p.29) and the response of the French press to ex-IMF (International Monetary Fund) Boss Dominique Strauss-Kahn's alleged sexual escapades (Forsyth 2012a, p.12; Kavanagh 2012c, p.10). Newspapers in both spheres pointed to these as proof that proper self-regulation, not more privacy laws, was what the British press needed as can be seen in the *Guardian's* article with the headline "Proper self-regulation works better than the law to protect privacy". The article stated:

The court victory secured on behalf of Prince William and his wife certainly doesn't prove that the French privacy law is so good that we should have one here. Just the opposite (Greenslade 2012c, n.p.).

There were, however, some differences in the depth and treatment of the issue of privacy among the papers. *Guardian's* treatment of privacy consisted of analyses of academic works on the issue of privacy, news on incidents of invasion of privacy by the press, critical analysis of the Leveson Inquiry's proposals on privacy and discussions on regulations on privacy as contained in the Royal Charter on press regulation. Like all other papers in the study sample, *Guardian* newspaper was against the proposal of exemplary fines for papers who refuse to sign up to the new regulatory body even if the paper wins the case as can be seen in its article headlined "Tory and Leveson plans for exemplary privacy damages 'may be unlawful'" (O'Carroll 2013c, n.p.) but its opposition to it was not as intense as that from other papers. It felt the printed press could overlook that flaw in the Royal Charter and still sign up to it. One key distinguishing feature between *Guardian's* treatment of the issue of privacy and that of some other papers in the study sample was that it rarely used the platform of discussions on privacy to criticise campaigners for tighter privacy laws.

The *Daily Telegraph's* treatment of the subject of privacy was closer in form to that of *Guardian* newspaper in that its opposition to tighter privacy laws was not as intense as those of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. This may not be unconnected to the fact that *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph* are both quality newspapers. However, there was not much in-depth analysis on the issue of privacy in *Daily Telegraph* within the study sample. Most of *Daily Telegraph's* articles on privacy were in its news section (Adams 2011, p.17; Rayner 2012b, p.7) as if it deliberately avoided giving opinion on the issue of privacy. The few discussions on privacy were mainly warnings that privacy invasion by the internet was a bigger problem than that done by the printed press. An example is an article with the headline "It is the web, not the press, that must be brought under control; Lord Justice Leveson's desire to emasculate newspapers will do little to stop the rot" (Johnson 2012c, p.24).

The remaining four papers in the study sample, the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* were not that cautious in their approach to the coverage of privacy. The bulk of their stories on privacy were attacks against those who campaigned for tighter privacy laws, both celebrities and representatives of campaign organisations. Unlike the *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*, they minced no words in expressing their revulsion against tighter privacy laws and the people who propagate such arguments, as can be seen in this article from *Daily Mail* newspaper:

Sienna Miller is on the cover of *Vogue* this month and, if not actually invading her own privacy, then at least tiptoeing across it over five gorgeously scrumptious pages inside ... In the accompanying interview, Sienna talks about being the subject of sustained paparazzi interest.... 'Miller said; That level of scrutiny has a massive effect on me personally .... It was just a fishbowl.' Yet isn't it laughably hypocritical of her to dive naked into that very same fishbowl when it suits? ... Don't make me laugh. Sienna is handled with the kiddiest of kid gloves the interviewer wonders if Miller will marry fellow British actor Tom Sturridge, the father of her four-month-old child, but refrains from asking. She doesn't want to pry! Is this really what the British press has come to? What a joke (Moir 2012, n.p.).

Though as tactless with words as the other three (if not more), the *Sun* gave privacy very minimal coverage (see Tables 8.2.1). On all four fronts, there was little or no in-depth

analysis on privacy protection. The stories centred on their campaign against tighter privacy laws and news narratives on incidents of privacy invasion which, it can be argued, served as entertainment to their readers.

In summary, the treatment of the issue of privacy in the journalistic metadiscourse on the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal was largely shallow and characterised by a lack of self-appraisal. This finding confirms the claim by previous studies which say the press avoids or gives limited coverage to criticisms against themselves and that journalistic metadiscourse is characterised by a lack of self-critique (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Christopher 2007, p.42; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016). A similar argument (see Chapter 2) posits that alternative views are marginalised and/or silenced in debates about the media (Casey et al. 2008, p.194; Savigny 2016, p.12). The next section discusses results from my investigation into alternative views and how they were covered in the press reform debate. It provides answers to RQ4 “What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?”

### **8.3 The media policy debate: alternative views**

Aforementioned scholars have argued that alternative solutions that do not fall in line with popular views in the public domain receive minimal treatment thereby narrowing the options placed in the public sphere for deliberation. To find out if that was the case in the coverage of the journalism debate, I coded all views in the debate that were not mainstream arguments. So, for this study, arguments for or against statutory argument cannot be regarded as an alternative view. Alternative views were, therefore, views that were not common, were different from popular opinion or only featured occasionally. After a preliminary study of articles in the study sample (Hall 1975, p.15), I came up with the following alternative views: strengthen checks on media ownership concentration, enforce existing laws on crimes such as phone hacking, avoid all forms of Royal Charter, a cultural revolution of journalists and proprietors is key, some level of privacy invasion or a feral press is a necessary hazard of a free press, and do not expect too much from the

press (see Table 8.3). In the course of my coding, any view that emerged and fitted into that category was highlighted under the category 'other'. These were also taken into consideration in my analysis.

Table 8.3 shows that the most frequent alternative view in the study sample was “enforce existing laws on crimes such as phone hacking”. This appeared in 40.7 per cent of all alternative views in the study sample, occurring in 75 per cent of *Daily Express*, 66.7 per cent of *Daily Mirror*, 58.2 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*, 36.4 per cent of *Daily Mail*, 30.8 per cent of the *Sun* and 28 per cent of *Guardian*. The results show this argument was more advanced by the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. The next in line was the view “strengthen checks on concentration of media ownership”. This view followed with far fewer occurrences, with 14.4 per cent. It was advanced in greater proportion by *Guardian*, occurring in 24 per cent of articles in *Guardian*, 16.7 of *Daily Mirror*, 14.5 per cent of *Daily Telegraph*, 4.5 per cent of *Daily Mail*, 3.8 per cent of the *Sun* and not at all in *Daily Express*. The results suggest this argument may have been stifled in the commercial press due to a conflict of interest caused by concentration of media ownership (McChesney 2008; Bachrach and Barataz 1962, pp.948-952, cited in Freedman 2014, p.66). The alternative views that received the fewest representations were ‘cultural revolution of journalists and proprietors is key’ and ‘do not expect too much from the press’ appearing in 5.1 per cent and 5.6 per cent of the study sample, respectively.

One view that was not included in the list of alternative views but turned out to be an alternative view was that the process of getting a new press regulatory body was rushed and that with more time they could have arrived at a decision that was acceptable to all parties (Rusbridger 2013, p.26). Though this call for more time was included in the dominant themes table, it only appeared as the dominant theme, “more dialogue needed” in 0.6 per cent of the study sample and only in *Guardian* newspaper. Another such theme was that press membership to the new press regulatory body be made compulsory by law (Cathcart 2013a, n.p.). Though this view had the potential to prevent the Desmond syndrome (a media organisation refusing to join the press regulatory body - Desmond

2015, p.291; see Chapter 4), it was apparently, nipped in the bud and was not developed by any of the newspapers in the study sample.

**Table 8.3 Alternative views in the study sample**

<b>Alternative Views</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Daily Mail</b>	<b>Daily Mirror</b>	<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>Daily Express</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Total</b>
Strengthen checks on concentration of media ownership	24.0%	4.5%	16.7%	14.5%	0.0%	3.8%	14.4%
Enforce existing laws on crimes such as phone hacking	28.0%	36.4%	66.7%	58.2%	75.0%	30.8%	40.7%
Avoid all forms of Royal Charter	1.3%	36.4%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	8.8%
Cultural revolution of journalists and proprietors is key	4.0%	2.3%	0.0%	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%
Some level of privacy invasion is a necessary hazard of a free press.	9.3%	9.1%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	34.6%	9.7%
Do not expect too much from the press	0.0%	4.5%	8.3%	10.9%	0.0%	11.5%	5.6%
Other	33.3%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	19.2%	15.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## 8.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided answers to RQ2 “What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?”; RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?” and RQ4 “What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?” In relation to the distribution of sources, my findings revealed that coverage of the press reform debate featured a doubly narrow spectrum of sources; ‘doubly narrow’ because the range of sources was narrow and within the narrow spectrum, access tilted heavily in favour of press-related sources. Policymakers came next to the press in the hierarchy of access to deliberations about media policy in the public sphere. The media’s dependence on policymakers as sources can be attributed to the fact that they serve as credible sources of information, and because they have the power to make decisions on media policy.

The power of political leaders to make policy decisions on the media and the power of the press to either make or mar a political career make them collaborate with one another for ‘favourable’ press coverage to promote a political career in exchange for ‘favourable’ media policies that advance the interest of the commercial press. My findings revealed that newspapers used as sources political leaders who reproduced the paper’s views in the debate. The situation suggests a tango between the press and politicians in which the press played the leading role. Applying Gans’ (1979, p.116) use of the dance metaphor, I argued that in the case of the press use of sources during its coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, “it takes two to tango, but the press leads.”

This study found that victims of press abuse were represented as “the stakeholders” rather than “a stakeholder” of the debate. While acknowledging the importance of the victims to the debate, I contend that limiting the stakeholder status to those who have been hurt by the press results in a limited range of views and risks shutting down more neutral voices that could have enriched the debate in the media’s public sphere. I also

analysed how different subjects of the debate were covered and my findings revealed a trend in which arguments perceived to be in the media's self-interest were given more quality space (high up in the narrative structure) than those considered to be against their interest. For example, "press freedom" featured more frequently than any other theme at the top of the narrative structure while arguments "against self-regulation" and "against new press regulatory system formed by the press" were among issues that had the fewest occurrences within this sphere of importance.

I pointed out that this finding affirms the claim by previous studies that the gatekeeping powers of the media are prone to abuse when the media cover themselves (McQuail 2002, cited in Miller 2006, p.41; Shoemaker and Vos 2009; p.1; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, p.3). My findings revealed that this privileging of the press over other stakeholders in the media policy debate was more prominent in the sub-interpretive sphere consisting of the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in the *Guardian*. I argue that this manner of coverage can have an adverse effect on democracy because it leads to inequality in communicative discourse. The issue of 'public trust' also received only minimal appearances at the top of the narrative structure (sphere of importance), showing the need to give the issue of 'public trust' more attention in debates about press standards.

In this section, I also examined alternative views to solving the problem of press irresponsibility as contained in the journalistic metadiscourse on the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry and found that the call for existing laws to be enforced instead of the introduction of media reforms was the most frequent alternative made. The least frequent call made was that a 'cultural revolution of journalists and proprietors is key' to solving the problem of press irresponsibility. There was also a call for more time for dialogue towards arriving at a policy acceptable to all parties involved. I posit that the manner of coverage of the press reform debate did not encourage the exploration of these and other alternative views to press reform. This affirms the argument that alternative views are marginalised or silenced in debates about the media (Casey et al. 2008, p.194; Savigny 2016, p.12). The coverage facilitated a zero-sum game debate of "statutory" or "no statutory" regulation/underpinning and whether or not a statutory backed regulator would threaten press freedom. All other arguments fed these two positions. The debate



was too narrow and lacked robustness such that other options, for example, public reformism, were not explored as a means of achieving press accountability. I posit that this manner of coverage is toxic to democracy because it can mar rather than enhance democracy.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

### Introduction

This study has shown how the British press covered the debate that arose from the *News of the World* (also referred to as *NoTW*) phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. My key interest was to investigate how the press cover themselves (journalistic metacoverage) and the possible impact of their manner of coverage for democracy. The way the British press covered the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal was taken as representative of how the press cover themselves. My main concern is whether the press served as a democratic public sphere during the press reform debate that followed the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. Previous studies claimed that in the event of a media scandal, the ensuing journalistic metadiscourse is highly defensive and characterised by lack of self-critique (Carey 1974; Eason 1988; Lule 1992; Haas 2006, cited in Carlson 2015, p.9; Alexander et al. 2016).

Elaborating on this claim, Christopher (2007, p.42) argued that in press coverage of media policy debates, the press gives disproportionate access to its own interpretations in the debate, to the detriment of the arguments of other stakeholders. Issues not favourable to the corporate interest of the commercial press were either left out or given limited coverage while persons and institutions with opposing views were denigrated (Putnis 2000, p.110; Christopher 2007, p.42; McChesney 2008, p.451; Stiegler 2013, p.137). There is no gainsaying that such coverage promotes inequality in society and has the potential to damage democracy. The potential that journalism has to use its information power to either enhance or impede democracy makes the study of how journalism functions, and is expected to function, as a democratic public sphere, very important (Habermas 1989, pp.1-4; Stromback 2005, p.335; Christians et al. 2009, p.55).

Democracy feeds from people's participation in their own governance (Lincoln [1863] 2009; Gunther and Mughan, cited in Christians et al. 2009, p.25). That would, from the

maximalist approach to democracy, require citizens' participation in the decision-making processes of matters concerning them (Bowles and Gintis 1986, cited in Chan 2002, p.10; Lipset and Lakin 2004, p.20; Ewald 2013, p.52; Diamond 1999, cited in Ewald 2013, p.52). One way this is done is through citizens' participation in public debates within a democratic public space. Such a space is what Habermas (1989) referred to as the public sphere. The susceptibility of the press to exploit its power as the facilitator of the public sphere to extol its discourses above those of other stakeholders during debates about journalism, gives relevance to the study of journalistic metadiscourse (Putnis 2000; Christopher 2007; Stiegler 2013; Thomas and Finneman 2014; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014; 2015).

This study was based on the normative expectation that the media ought to serve as a democratic public sphere, a space in which diverse sections of a society can air their views on issues concerning them, without any form of marginalisation (Habermas 1989). Aforementioned studies contend that this has not been the case; hence the need to investigate how the press functions as a democratic public sphere during debates about itself. The study of journalistic metadiscourse thus serves as an accountability system to check abuse of this public sphere by the media. The *NoTW* phone hacking scandal provided an opportunity for the study of journalistic metadiscourse because it stirred up a debate on press reform that was widely covered by the press.

This study identified a gap in the body of literature on the debate that followed the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. It found that most of the literature was on the debate itself and not on its coverage, and that among the articles on its coverage, many did not analyse its representation beyond the Leveson Inquiry. Additionally, there was scarcity of statistical data to back claims about its coverage. This study has helped to fill that gap by providing a more up-to-date analysis of its coverage (up to the setting up of the Royal Charter on press self-regulation and immediately after) and making available statistical data to back findings on how the debate was covered.

My central research question (RQ) was “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?” This overarching question was broken down into four research questions:

RQ1: What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all? This question has 3 research sub-questions, which are:

RQ1.1: What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?

RQ1.2: Were attributions of blame (e.g. localization, individualization or ostracization) made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?

RQ1.3: How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?

RQ2: What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?

RQ3: What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?

RQ4: What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility and regulate the press, if any?

To answer these questions, I studied media coverage of the debate in six of the top ten British national newspapers (based on combined print and online readership figures for April 2011 to March 2012, NRS PADD 2012), two from each class of newspaper. For quality newspapers, I examined *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*; representing the mid-markets were *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*, and for the red top tabloid newspapers, I examined the *Sun* and *Daily Mirror*.

Using the method of content analysis, I explored how these newspapers covered the debate. For a more comprehensive analysis of my findings, my content analysis was supplemented with some principles of critical discourse analysis. The theoretical framework for the analysis of my findings included the neoliberal variant of the libertarian theory of the press (Siebert et al. 1956; McQuail 2010); the social democratic ideology of the press; the notion of paradigm repair (Bennet et al. 1985; Thomas and Finneman 2013; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014) and the public sphere concept (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1992), with special focus on the media as a forum for citizens' participation in public debates (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1992; Dahlgren 1995). The summary of my findings is presented in the next section.

### **9.1 Summary of key findings**

This study identified two spheres of discourse in the press representation of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. The spheres of discourse were referred to, in this study, as sub-interpretive spheres. The *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* made up one sub-interpretive sphere while *Guardian* advanced the second sphere of discourse. The sphere to which many of the newspapers belonged interpreted press freedom based on neoliberal ideologies which advocated press self-regulation without state interference. While the second sub-interpretive sphere consisting of *Guardian* newspaper welcomed state interference in the form of a statute-backed press regulatory body, arguing that minimal state intervention in press regulation to check press accountability would not result in a loss of press freedom. I argued that *Guardian's* style of coverage of the press reform debate leaned towards a social democratic approach.

Analysing my findings based on these two spheres helped to reveal the major division in the press' attempt to maintain, assert and/or renegotiate their professional boundaries through journalistic metadiscourse in the aftermath of the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal. I pointed out that this grouping of newspapers into spheres of discourse does not mean there were no differences among newspapers within the same sphere. It only means that

newspapers in the same sphere had similar interpretations on major issues in the debate. The uniqueness and difference in interpretation of each of the newspapers was also considered in the analysis of my findings.

### **9.1.1 Answers to the research questions**

The answers to my central research question (RQ), “How did the British press cover the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, and what is the implication of their manner of coverage for democracy?” can be drawn from the answers to RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. For RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”, my findings revealed that the press used five paradigm repair strategies to protect as well as repair its “press freedom” and “crusader image” paradigms. In agreement with the findings of Thomas and Finneman (2014), this study found that the press used the strategies of “threat to the paradigm” (warning of threats to journalism’s paradigms, also, catastrophization); “self-assertion” (affirming journalism’s value to a democratic society); “minimization” (downplaying the significance of the phone hacking scandal and therefore questioning the legitimacy of the inquiry); and “individualization” (localizing the damage to acts committed by a handful of journalists, also, bad apples, ostracization or localization) in their representation of the press reform debate. I also identified the use of the strategy of “historicization” (using history to explicate contemporary meaning [in this case, the press’ preferred meaning]). The details of how these paradigm repair strategies were used are summarised in the presentation of my answers to RQ1.1, RQ1.2, and RQ1.3.

In answer to RQ1.1 “What arguments or issues of concern were the most or least prominent in the press coverage of the debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry?”, my findings have shown that the dominant theme in the

coverage of the press reform debate was “threat to press freedom” (20.6 per cent). All newspapers examined in this study, apart from *Guardian*, used a high percentage of their space to warn that any form of state intervention in press regulation was a threat to press freedom. The strategy of “threat to the paradigm” was used to achieve this. Linguistic devices such as hyperboles, ‘you centeredness’ or direct address, adjectives and doom-laden rhetoric were used to spread the warning that press freedom was under attack. This affirms assertions that when media scandals lead to calls for further regulation of the press, the resultant debate is interpreted in journalistic metadiscourse as a threat to press freedom (Reese 1990, p.390; Putnis 2000, pp.106-110; Christopher 2007, p.42; Curran and Seaton 2010, pp.327-338; Carlson 2012a, pp.111-137). I also found that the least dominant themes in the coverage were “promoting supporters of the Leveson Inquiry and statutory underpinning” (0.1 per cent) and arguments “against self-regulation” (0.5 per cent). A close look at the dominant themes table (Table 6.2) revealed that arguments perceived not to be in the interest of the majority of the press, appeared less frequently as dominant themes.

The answer to RQ1.2 “Were attributions of blame (e.g. localization, individualization) made towards any person or group of persons for the cause of the phone hacking scandal?” is that the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate was characterised by a blame game. Blame was first accepted before the strategy of individualization was used to deflect the blame to other journalists or media organisations. The press also attributed blame for the phone hacking scandal to the criminal justice system, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), newspaper proprietors, politicians, technology, job constraints and commercialism. My findings revealed that though there was wide acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the press in the journalistic metadiscourse (40 per cent described the phone hacking as bad and irresponsible), acknowledgement of wrongdoing only served as a platform from which blame was deflected to others. This made the high percentage of attribution of blame to journalists in the journalistic metadiscourse, appear hypocritical. I argued that these self-exoneration strategies (individualization, bad apples, localization, ostracization or deflection) were used to repair the “press freedom” and “journalist as a crusader” paradigms which had come into question because of the phone hacking scandal. This

finding affirms the claim by previous studies that journalistic metadiscourse is highly defensive and characterised by lack of self-critique.

Similarly, this study showed that though the strategy of historicization was used to acknowledge press bad behaviour, it served more as an element of drama in the journalistic metadiscourse. This affirms the argument of scholars who assert that negative news is often presented as infotainment for the purpose of entertaining readers and boosting sales (McManus, 1994, p.24; Franklin 1997, p.4; Zelizer, 2009, p.126; Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010). Scholars argue that infotainment can be detrimental to democracy because it leads to the dumbing down of news and makes readers a consumer audience, whose appetite is assuaged by such coverage, distracting them from active participation in efforts at reforming the press (McManus, 1994, p.24; Franklin 1997, p.4; Zelizer, 2009, p.126).

In answer to RQ1.3 “How were measures aimed at ensuring press accountability interpreted in the journalistic metadiscourse?”, my findings revealed that measures aimed at ensuring press accountability were interpreted in the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* as unfair, illegitimate, unnecessary, a waste of resources, harmful to the reputation of the country and motivated by a thirst for revenge. This study showed that the strategy of minimization (see Chapter 3) was used to achieve this. It was used to denigrate people and institutions that advocated any policy perceived as not being in the interest of the commercial press. Among those delegitimised were the Leveson Inquiry, the Royal Charter on press self-regulation, politicians, victims of press abuse and campaigners for victims of press abuse. The press’ minimization of opposing views, along with the arguers of such views, affirms claims by previous studies that newspapers take advantage of their position as the facilitators of the public sphere to trivialize and denigrate efforts at ensuring press accountability in a bid to protect their self-interest (Putnis 2000, p.110; McChesney 2008, p.451; Pickard 2015).

Measures aimed at checking press behaviour were also represented in other ways. For instance, while contesting proposals to back a new press regulatory body by statute and



while warning that it will pose a threat to press freedom, the press described the proposed measure as a “chilling effect on investigative journalism”, “state control”, “slippery slope to licensing of the press,” a loss of “300 years of press freedom” and “draconian”. The penalty of fines of up to one million pounds to be paid by defaulting media, which was proposed by the Leveson inquiry and later included in the Royal Charter on press self-regulation, was described as “tough press regulation”. Ironically, the press later included fines of up to one million pounds in its own newly formed press regulatory body (the initial Royal Charter and later, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and described it as a “tough” measure, this time in a positive light in a bid to convince policymakers and members of the public that the body would ensure press accountability. It also described its new press regulatory system as Leveson compliant and as an independent press self-regulation.

From the descriptions, it can be seen that efforts at reforming the press were mostly portrayed in a negative light. The *Guardian* newspaper challenged most of these descriptions, and especially the claim that a statutorily backed press regulatory body would result in a loss of “300 years of press freedom”. *Guardian* attempted to prove, through an editorial, that the claim was factually incorrect (White 2013b, n.p.). This study showed that all parties including the press, victims of press abuse and their campaigners, and politicians all described their proposals for press regulation as tough, Leveson compliant and an independent press self-regulation.

In answer to how paradigm repair strategies were used in the coverage of the debate that arose from the *NoTW* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, my findings revealed that the strategy of self-assertion (also, self-affirmation or self-justification) emerged as a dominant theme in only 2.4 per cent of the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate. A close look at the contexts within which it was often used showed that it was mostly used as a minor theme designed to assert the importance of journalism within articles that stressed that a statutorily backed regulatory body would pose a threat to press freedom. By showing how the press used the strategies of historicization, threat to the paradigm, self-assertion, individualization and

minimization, I provided answers to RQ1 “What strategies did the press use to cover the media policy debate that arose from the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry; and to what extent was each strategy used, if at all?”.

The answer to RQ2 “What sources were used and which of them was most frequently quoted?” is that the press coverage of the media policy debate that followed the phone hacking scandal featured a doubly narrow spectrum of sources. I described it as ‘doubly narrow’ because the range of sources was narrow and within this narrow spectrum, press-related sources dominated the discourse. The sources used were categorised into press-related sources, policymakers, sources related to press abuse victims, Leveson and the Royal Charter, the judiciary, the police, academics, business organisations and ordinary members of the public (any individual not linked to a corporate body). The content analysis results showed that press-related sources were the most used (46.1 per cent) while ordinary citizens were the least used (1.6 per cent). I critiqued the representation of victims as “the stakeholders” rather than “a stakeholder” of the debate. While acknowledging the importance of the victims to the debate, I argued that limiting the stakeholder status to those who had been hurt by the press results in a limited range of views and risks shutting down more neutral voices that could have enriched the press reform debate.

In answer to RQ3 “What quality of space did the press give the various arguments or issues of concern in its coverage of the press reform debate that followed the phone hacking scandal?”, my findings revealed a trend in which arguments perceived to be in the media’s self-interest were given more quality space (high up in the narrative structure) than those considered to be against their interest. For example, “press freedom” featured more frequently than any other theme at the top of the narrative structure while arguments “against self-regulation” and “against new press regulation formed by the press” were among issues that had the least appearances at the top of the narrative structure.

I pointed out that this finding affirms the claim by previous studies that the gatekeeping powers of the media are prone to abuse when the media cover themselves (McQuail 2002, cited in Miller 2006, p.41; Shoemaker and Vos 2009; p.1; White 1950, cited in Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, p.3). My findings revealed that this privileging of the press over other stakeholders in the media policy debate was more prominent in the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in *Guardian* newspaper. I argue that this manner of coverage can have an adverse effect on democracy because it enhances inequality in communicative discourse. The issue of 'public trust' received only minimal appearances at the top of the narrative structure (1.3 per cent), showing the need to give the issue of 'public trust' more attention in debates about press standards.

In answer to RQ4 "What were the ranges of alternative views on how to check press irresponsibility, if any?", the alternative view that featured the most in the journalistic metadiscourse was "enforce existing laws on crimes such as phone hacking" (40.7 per cent). This argument featured more in the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* than in the *Guardian*. This was followed by the argument "strengthen checks on concentration of media ownership" (24 per cent). The latter featured in a greater proportion in *Guardian* newspaper, with the possible reasons being that commercial press owners may have had some form of influence on the content of their papers while *Guardian* may have taken up the media magnates to protect its media economy from business failure that could result from competition in the media market (Putnis 2000, pp.101-105; McChesney 2001, 2008; Bachrach and Barataz 1962, pp.948-952, cited in Freedman 2014, p.66).

The least prominent alternative view was a "cultural revolution of journalist and proprietors is key". The result could mean that not many trusted the press to embark on a cultural revolution that could curb press excesses. On the other hand, it could also mean that not many, even among the press, had the courage to advocate for 'no reforms'. One alternative view that came up in the 'other' (option not on the list) category was that the process of getting a new press regulatory body was rushed and that a better and more widely accepted deal could have been reached with more time (Rusbridger 2013, p.26).

Another alternative view that came up under the 'other' category was that press membership to the new press regulatory body be made compulsory by law (Cathcart 2013a, n.p.). Though this view could prevent the Desmond syndrome (a media organisation refusing to join the press regulatory body; see Chapter 4), it was not developed by any of the newspapers in the study sample. This affirms arguments by aforementioned scholars that alternative solutions that do not fall in line with popular views in the public domain receive minimal treatment thereby narrowing the options placed in the public sphere for deliberation (McChesney 2001, n.p.; Casey et al. 2008, p.194; Curran and Seaton 2010; Savigny 2016, p.12).

Unlike what Stiegler (2013, p.137) found with the coverage of net neutrality in 2010, the media policy debate that followed the phone hacking scandal received very wide coverage in the press. While the overall wide coverage is commendable, a close look at the number of articles from each newspaper reveals an uneven amount of coverage among the newspapers. The bulk of the articles came from *Guardian* newspaper (323 out of 870). It was followed by *Daily Telegraph* with 199 articles and *Daily Mail* with 173 stories. The *Sun*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* were not that liberal with their coverage of the press reform debate having only 96, 51 and 28 news articles on the debate, respectively. This shows that the extensive coverage of media policy issues is yet to spread across all newspapers. Having examined how the press covered the debate that arose from the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry, the following section discusses the outcomes of the debate, some of which can be linked to the way the debate was covered by the press.

## **9.2 Press reform: was the status quo challenged or maintained?**

As discussed in Chapter 4, previous efforts at press reforms included the formation of a number of press commissions including the 1949, 1962 and 1977 press commissions along with two Calcutt Committees (Frost 2007, pp.225–235; Curran and Seaton 2010,

pp.327–328; Harcup 2014, p.46). As with the Leveson Inquiry, these commissions were triggered by press misconduct. However, as Curran and Seaton pointed out, they only resulted in weak reforms that could not guarantee a democratic press (Curran and Seaton 2010, p.338). Thus, the Leveson Inquiry was seen as an opportunity to correct seventy years of ineffective press reforms in Britain (Leveson Inquiry executive summary 2012, p.3, para. 1).

This section compares the outcomes of previous press reform efforts with the outcomes of the press reform efforts that followed the phone hacking scandal to see if the status quo was challenged or maintained. While it is difficult to determine media effect and while outcomes can be as a result of a number of factors (Negrine 1989, pp.3-4; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009, p.147), studies have shown that how the media cover press reform debates can affect decisions made about media policy (Putnis 2000, p.102; McChesney 2001, n.p.; Curran and Seaton 2010, p.338; Freedman 2014, pp.61-88; Pickard 2015). For instance, Curran and Seaton (2010, p.338) blamed publishers for the failure of previous attempts to regulate the press because they used their publications to oppose “at every turn, every statutory reform of the press”.

Similarly, following the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal, the press used journalistic metadiscourse to oppose statutory reform of the press including the statutory backing of a Royal Charter set up to approve any new press regulatory body that meets its standards. Just as the Press Council was set up by the industry in 1953 following the threat of statutory regulation (Ibid, p.334), the press industry established IPSO (the Independent Press Standards Organisation) in 2014 as a way of escape from the statutorily backed cross-party Royal Charter (IPSO 2016a). By 2015, two years after the final version of the cross-party Royal Charter was published and approved by the Privy Council (*BBC News* 2013d; DCMS and Miller, 2013, n.p.), the Royal Charter on press regulation was yet to take off. IPSO was already up and running and over 1500 newspapers and magazines in the country had signed up to IPSO (IPSO 2016a). Interestingly, IPSO was utilised by the Royal Family (*Guardian* 2016a). The Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, made a complaint to IPSO after *Express.co.uk* and *OK!*

Magazine's website published some online stories and photographs about herself and Prince George (Ibid). Her privacy breach complaint was upheld by IPSO and the paper was made to publish an adjudication (IPSO 2016b; *Press Gazette* 2016, n.p.). However, it is worthy of note that despite its promise of fines of up to 1 million pounds to check press wrongdoing, as at September 2016, IPSO was yet to issue any fines to its members (Mayhew 2016a, n.p.).

There were, however, some challenges to the status quo in the sense that the government actually went ahead and set up a Royal Charter on press self-regulation backed by statute (*BBC News* 2013d; DCMS and Miller, 2013a, n.p.); this was unlike previous cases where the press were only warned to change or be slammed with statutory regulation (Frost 2007, p.236; Curran and Seaton 2010, p.334). Also, a new press regulator, IMPRESS, gained recognition from the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) of the cross-party Royal Charter in October 2016 (IMPRESS 2016; Sawyer and Willgress 2016, n.p.; *BBC News* 2016c) and over 60 publications have signed up to the regulator (IMPRESS 2016, 2017). However, the advantage IMPRESS was expected to have over other regulatory bodies that do not sign up to the cross-party Royal Charter is yet to be seen.

That is because section 40 of the Crimes and Courts Act 2013 which was the "carrot" meant to lure publishers to sign up to a Royal Charter-approved regulatory body was yet to come into force as at 2017 (Leveson 2012b, pp.16-17, para.68-69). Section 40 of the Crimes and Courts Act 2013 compels newspapers to pay the costs of legal action against them even if they win, if they have failed to sign up to a cross-party Royal Charter recognised regulator (Parliamentary Communications Committee on the Crimes and Courts Act 2013). As at 2017, none of the mainstream newspapers, not even *Guardian* signed up to IMPRESS, which was at the time the only Royal Charter-approved regulator (Mayhew 2016b). Can it then be said that the status quo was maintained? It may be too early to conclude because the debate is ongoing and more changes may still take place. Future research can examine this and the reasons for the eventual outcomes.

Meanwhile, Rupert Murdoch who lost his initial bid for the remaining shares of BskyB (he already owns 39 per cent) in the heat of the phone hacking scandal relaunched his bid in 2016, through his 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox company (*Guardian* 2016b; *BBC News* 2017). As part of rebranding after the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal, Rupert Murdoch divided his media empire into 21st Century Fox, comprising of his cable network programming, filmed entertainment, television, direct broadcast and satellite TV (21cf.com 2017); and News Corporation comprising of his print media (News Corporation 2017). 21st Century Fox was vying for an £11.7bn billion-pound takeover of the broadcast company (Dean 2017; *BBC News* 2017). The deal was cleared by the European Commission competition authorities but following a petition posted on the campaigning website 38 Degrees, which gathered over 300, 000 signatures (38 Degrees 2017; Sweney 2016, n.p.), the deal was referred to Ofcom, the communications watchdog, for a public interest assessment in relation to media plurality and broadcasting standards (Dean 2017, n.p.).

Ofcom reported that the deal could give the Murdoch family "increased influence" over news and politics in the UK and recommended a six-month review of the bid by the Competition and Markets Authority. The Culture Secretary, Mrs Karen Bradley responded by saying that though she was "minded to accept" Ofcom's recommendation the door was open for potential negotiations that could avoid a full inquiry. Consequently, Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox was given till the 14<sup>th</sup> of July to offer concessions to prevent further scrutiny (Ruddick and Sweney 2017). This means that as at June 2017, there was still a possibility that Sky could be completely taken over by Rupert Murdoch whose UK media portfolio also includes the *Sun*, *Sun on Sunday*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* newspapers. In 2016, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation also acquired Wireless Group, owner of the Premier League football radio broadcaster, TalkSport, through a £220million deal (Williams 2016, n.p.; Barnett 2017, p.52).

If Rupert Murdoch's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox's bid to take over Sky sails through, the media magnate would have expanded his media ownership in the UK, in the areas of radio (TalkSport), television (Sky) and newspaper (the *Sun on Sunday*) after the phone hacking

scandal came to light. Some analysts predicted that the phone hacking scandal was the downfall of the Murdoch empire (Lisner 2013) but evidence has annulled that hypothesis as his media power and influence has continued to increase (Barnett 2017). The question this raises is “Is the near silence on the issue of media ownership concentration in the journalistic metadiscourse of the press reform debate partly responsible for this continued increase in concentration of media ownership?”

Though it is not very easy to ascertain causality, it can be argued that the near silence on the issue of concentration of media ownership in the press coverage of the debate that followed the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal provided a favourable atmosphere for policymakers to continue mutual deals with the press (Gans 1979, p.116). This agrees with studies which argue that the interdependence between the press and policymakers results in weak reforms that make allowances for an increase in media ownership in exchange for “good” press coverage (Putnis 2000, p.105; Franklin 2002c, p.30).

As was the case with previous press commissions (Franklin 2002; Curran and Seaton 2010), there remains a cosy relationship between policymakers and the press. For instance, during Prime Minister Theresa May’s visit to New York in which she made her maiden speech to the United Nations, the Prime Minister who had just recently come into power, found time out of her busy schedule to visit the media mogul, Rupert Murdoch (Mason and Martinson 2016, n.p.). Within 18 months, from April 2015 to September 2016, “News Corp executives had 20 meetings with senior government representatives” in Downing Street (Mason and Martinson 2016, n.p.; Media Reform Coalition 2017). Meanwhile, James, one of Rupert Murdoch’s sons has been reinstated as chairman at Sky after stepping down in 2012 in the heat of the phone hacking scandal controversy (Barnett 2017, p.53) and Rebekah Brooks who also stepped down during the controversy was reinstated as Chief Executive of Rupert Murdoch’s UK newspaper arm, which is now known as News UK (Ibid, p.52). So, was the status quo maintained? With regards to the cosy relationship between policymakers and the press and the increase in media ownership concentration, it can still be argued that the status quo was maintained.



Another trend that was reminiscent of past efforts at reforming the press is that there appear to have been political paybacks (press onslaught against politicians that advocate stringent press reforms, e.g. statutory regulation [Putnis 2000, p.105; Pickard 2015, p.132]). For instance, David Mellor, when he was National Heritage Minister (Now the Department for Culture, Media and Sports) in 1989 warned the press that they were 'drinking in the last chance saloon', in other words, the press had one more chance to improve their conduct or be slammed with a privacy law (Keeble 2008, p.136). In what is largely believed to be a political payback, he lost his job over a sex scandal revealed by the press in 1992 (Keeble 2008, p.136; Fletcher 2015). Similarly, Maria Miller who was Culture Secretary during negotiations for a Royal Charter underpinned by statute was forced to resign from the role over an expenses scandal reported by the press (*BBC News* 2014a). Though the MPs expenses scandal first emerged in 2009, the problem with her expenses was only revealed by the press in 2014, after she began negotiations to underpin the press regulatory body with a statute.

It is concerning that despite its "crusader journalism", *Guardian* newspaper accrued huge financial losses during the time of its renowned Editor-in-Chief Alan Rusbridger who was the paper's editor-in-chief at the time of the phone hacking scandal coverage. The losses, reports say, contributed to his relinquishing plans to resume as Chairman of Scott Trust Ltd, owners of the paper (Rao and Chan 2016; Wolff 2016). This raises questions about the sustenance of the newspaper business in a democracy. Will newspapers with a democratic public sphere and quality content sell? Can what sells sustain democracy? Who funds newspapers that adhere to normative standards if the public fails to give them sufficient patronage? Does the public have a role to play in ensuring a democratic public sphere? These are questions that can be answered in future research. The wider implications of the findings of this thesis are summarised in the following section.

### 9.3 Wider implications of my findings

My findings have shown that rather than serve as a democratic public sphere where diverse voices can have proportionate access to the press reform debate (Habermas 1989), the press used its gatekeeping powers to advance its own views while limiting or preventing arguments it considered were against its self-interest from gaining entrance into the media's public sphere. It can be argued that this reduced the quality of the debate on press reform by inhibiting the kind of robust deliberations that produce plurality of views (Ibid, p.36). What emerged was a manner of coverage in which diverse paradigm repair strategies were used by the commercial press to give prominence to a discourse based on neoliberal ideologies where the press can only be self-regulated and where government must not intervene in press regulation if the press is free to hold power to account.

However, a social democratic perspective argues that some level of statutory regulation can enhance rather than inhibit democracy, if measures are taken to check abuse (Humphreys 1996, p.107; Cushion 2012, p.198; Pickard 2015, p.4; Heywood 2017, p.123). As discussed in Chapter 2, proponents of social democracy contend that the neoliberal conceptualisation of press freedom primarily serves the business interest of media owners who, they claim, use the "threat to press freedom" argument as a weapon against any form of regulation that restricts their ability to invade the privacy of public figures in search of scoops that will improve the sale and readership of their papers (Freedman 2014, p.12; Pickard 2015, p.4). Curran and Seaton (2010) described the aversion of the neoliberal press to statutory regulation as a struggle to maintain "power without responsibility".

This study documented that *Guardian* newspaper toed the social democratic line of argument in its journalistic metadiscourse, arguing that a little dab of statute to prevent the Royal Charter from being abrogated easily (the law establishing it cannot be repealed without a two-thirds majority from both Houses of Parliament) will not amount to a loss of press freedom. The fact that *Guardian* newspaper challenged the neoliberal

perspective shows that the press does not always function as one interpretive community when it goes about maintaining the boundaries of its profession. As previously stated in this study, the press functioned as two homogeneous publics which I referred to as sub-interpretive spheres.

While multiple spheres of homogeneous publics are closer to the democratic ideal as argued by Fraser (1992, p.129), the problem here is that the bulk of the press (five out of six newspapers in the study sample) advanced the neoliberal perspective as compared to one (*Guardian*) which advanced a social democratic view. While *Guardian* had a high volume of coverage of 323 out of 870 news articles on the debate, all of its stories only reached its print readership of 4.06 million between 2011 and 2012 (readership figures for April 2011 to March 2012, NRS PADD 2012). Even with its combined print and online readership of about 9 million, the reach of *Guardian* is beaten by the combined readership of the six newspapers: 20.5 million print and 49.4 million combined print and online readership (readership figures for April 2011 to March 2012, NRS PADD 2012). This shows the imbalance in the potential power of influence between the neoliberal and the social democratic press. The danger this poses to democracy is that propagators of the neoliberal perspective have an unfair advantage over the propagators of other views because their perspective reaches the bulk of the print readership. This promotes inequality in society.

This problem of unduly advantaging the press was worsened by the fact that the journalistic metadiscourse on the press reform debate featured a doubly narrow spectrum of sources, with the press dominating an already narrow spectrum of power-elite sources (see Chapter 8). This affirms arguments by previous studies which claim that the press gives more access to power-elite sources to the detriment of the less powerful in society (Galtung and Ruge 1965, cited in Harcup and O'Neill 2010, p.270). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the danger of favouring power-elite sources is that the views and interpretations of a particular stratum of society dominate the media discourse. The situation is worse when the press cover themselves as shown in this study, because this already narrow spectrum becomes dominated by the press.

This study documented that arguments perceived as not being in the interests of the commercial press were accorded a weak position in the hierarchy of importance in stories about press reform; alternative views were blocked out and paradigm repair strategies were used to protect news paradigms. All these combined to keep quality options out of the public sphere that could have provided effective checks on press power. What emerged was a zero-sum game of “statutory” or “no statutory” regulation as the solution to press irresponsibility. Several other options and alternative views were not explored. For example, despite its huge potential to do so, there was not much talk about how the public could help to reform the press.

While the length the commercial press went to protect its neoliberal perception of press freedom is disturbing, what is more concerning is the enormous gatekeeping powers in the hands of the press and its ability to use them to its advantage to the detriment of any person or institution that dares to rise against it (Rozell and Mayer 2008, p.328; Stiegler 2013, p.137). There is obviously a need for such powers to come under check because they have the potential to give birth to autocracy and inequality in society (Van Heerden 1996, cited in Fourie 2001, p.205; Rozell and Mayer 2008, p.328). Steps need to be taken to ensure that the press serves as a democratic public sphere because only then can journalism enhance democracy.

I recommend that measures to ensure a democratic public sphere come from within and outside the press. From within, the press needs to make conscious efforts to ensure that it serves as a democratic public space during debates on press reform. That means the range of sources should be more diverse to represent all sections of society; the press should not take undue advantage of its position as the facilitator of the public sphere to dominate the discourse; key issues of concern in the debate should be given proportionate space in journalistic metadiscourse; and the conceptualisation of “the stakeholders of the press” should be expanded to include more neutral voices outside celebrities and other victims of press abuse. Taking the position that the ownership structure was responsible for the emergence of two sub-interpretive spheres, this study

suggests that efforts to diversify news content should go beyond plurality of owners to plurality of ownership structure and business models.

However, I acknowledge that drawing up a list of recommendations for the press to follow does not axiomatically translate into a cultural revolution of the press. It will take the press to decide to become a democratic public sphere before it can adopt any of these recommendations. This study recognises the challenge in asking the press to serve as a democratic public sphere during debates about themselves because bias is inevitable and every organisation or industry may exhibit some level of bias in its own favour (Kieran 1997, p.57; Prasad 2002, pp.2-6; Elmessiri 2006, p.49; Maracle 1996, cited in Fleras 2011, p.73; Livermore 2011, p.50). However, the fact that bias is inevitable does not mean action cannot be taken to check bias in self-coverage (Niven 2002, p.1; Livermore 2011, p.50). That is why steps to make the press accountable should also come from outside the press. Many appear to have recognised this fact but have narrowed their gaze to the state as being the only custodian of the public interest (Meyer and Hinchman 2007, p.1; Heywood 2017, p.123). This study argues that it is high time the public took their place as major custodians of their own interest.

As previously stated, one media accountability system with huge potential to reform the press, yet is underexplored, is non-governmental public reformism. As explained in Chapter 2, public reformism seeks to improve the standard and viability of journalism through concerted action that can enhance the democratic performance of the media (Curran 2011, p.31). Non-governmental public reformism fits with the views of scholars like Stiegler (2013, pp.137) who posit that “audiences may well take it upon themselves” to cultivate the press they deserve. One of the strengths of this non-state intervention model of public reformism is that it excludes the key self-interested parties in media policy debates, the press and the state, from further efforts at reforming the press. This approach, which is explained in more detail in Chapter 2, entails the public using their willpower to challenge the press to behave responsibly. For instance, citizens can channel their willpower to purchase or not purchase newspapers; to visit or not to visit a news website; to boycott the patronage of a newspaper in diverse ways, etc.

In Chapter 2, I gave as an example, the reaction of the public to the *Sun* newspaper's coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 96 football fans died (Scraton 2005, pp.62 – 74; 2016). In Liverpool, members of the public and non-governmental groups such as *anfieldroad.com* and the Hillsborough Justice Campaign (HJC) staged boycotts against the *Sun* newspaper to protest the paper's publication of false information blaming Liverpool football fans for the Hillsborough disaster (Anfield Road 2007, n.p.; *Contrast.org* 2017a; 2017b; Conn 2017, n.p.). Such actions can become more organised and regular to check the abuse of press power. This non-state intervention model of public reformism is just one option among several that could emerge from a democratic public sphere.

#### **9.4 Limitations and suggestions for future studies**

This study was not without some challenges and limitations. One of such was that its data collection was limited to textual content only because my sample was obtained from Nexis UK, an electronic archive service which has full text access to all UK national newspapers but does not contain pictures. However, the study is quite broad and including pictures would have made it too large for the period available for the study. Some newspapers on Nexis UK, e.g. most stories in *Daily Mail* and some stories from *Guardian*, did not include page numbers in their stories. That impeded analyses based on page numbers.

The Nexis UK's output from *Guardian newspaper* was also a combination of both online and print versions even when websites were excluded from the search options. That may have accounted for *Guardian* having a huge sample of 323 stories out of 870 in the study sample. This was, however, taken care of as measurements per newspaper were mostly based on a percentage within the paper rather than a percentage of the whole sample. There were also limitations in terms of sample size. To make the sample a manageable size for the period available for the study, Sunday editions of the papers were excluded

from this study. Though Sunday editions included some interesting editorials on the debate, excluding them may not have had any significant effect on the findings because the sample analysed was large: 870. I could have decided to use only editorials but that would have reduced my sample to less than half of the present size (Nexis UK) and excluded many opinion articles that were hidden in news sections of newspapers. Newspapers are increasingly becoming interpretive even in the quality press. For the tabloids, it is a regular occurrence to mix opinion with facts, so I considered that leaving out the news sections would cost me several opinion articles.

Some studies have used framing analysis to study metacoverage. Though framing analysis could have also served, this study was already broad and diverse, and the methods used were able to effectively answer the research questions, so the use of framing analysis for an in-depth study of the journalism debate can be reserved for a future study. Also, because this study did not focus solely on paradigm repair strategies, the coding sheet was designed to be broad to cover all areas investigated. However, where the focus is to obtain statistical data for only paradigm repair strategies, a simpler coding structure with variables for each paradigm repair strategy can be explored.

This study consisted of samples from the printed press. Considering the wide readership of news from online platforms, possible research for future studies would be to investigate how online news platforms covered the debate. A comparative analysis between this mainstream coverage and the online coverage of the debate would be useful. Also, since this debate on press reform cannot be said to be completely over, further research can be done to cover future developments on the debate with particular reference to Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry (if it comes up at all) and the triggering of Section 40 of the Crimes and Courts Act 2013. An empirical study of how the broadcast media covered the debate that followed the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal would also be useful. And finally, having shown strategies adopted by the media in self-coverage, a study of how the public consumes journalistic metadiscourse would also provide an interesting area for further study.

# Appendix A

## CODING SHEET

### ID Number:

1. **Newspaper:  
Broadsheets:**

*Guardian*

*Daily Telegraph*

**Mid-Market:**

*Daily Mail*

*Daily Express*

**Tabloids:**

*Daily Mirror*

*Sun*

2. **Date:**

3. **Page Number:**

4. **Length of Story:**

5. **Paper Section (tick one in each category and if it is an opinion article, underline the category it belongs to, whether editorial, columns or letters):**

(a) News

Opinion articles: editorials, columns, letters to the editor

(b) Politics

Media

Front/Home page

Crime

Business

6. **Summary of report:**



7. **Source types and frequency:** Tick as appropriate where “O” refers to official sources; “U” for unofficial sources; “N” for named sources and “UN” for unnamed sources. Under column “F”, indicate the frequency of occurrence of the source type.

Source Type and Frequency	O	U	N	UN	F	Source Type and Frequency	O	U	N	UN	F
Campaigners for victims of the press (e.g. Hacked off, Media Standards Trust or MediaWise)						Labour (Shadow) government					
Leveson Inquiry (its document or spokesperson)						Coalition Liberal Democrats					
Royal charter (document)						Cross Party (a combined team of politicians from the three main political parties)					
Campaigners for press freedom						Culture, Media and Sports’ (Its secretary, select committee or spokesperson)					
The Press						Government spokesperson					
Press body (e.g. NUJ, PCC, PressBoF, IPSO – its document or spokesperson)						Other politicians					
Newspaper Editors						Victims of press misconduct					
Newspaper/Magazine publishers						Ordinary members of the public					
Conservatives						Judiciary					
Police						Other					

**8. Narrative Structure: in which order did these themes first appear in the article? Indicate with numerical figures. Each theme should only be numbered the first time it appears in the article. Not all themes may appear in an article.**

Comments against press laws/statutory regulation		Comments in support of press laws/statutory regulation		Comments on press laws/statutory regulation (that is neither for nor against)	
Comments against press reforms (e.g. introduction of exemplary damages)		Comments in support of press reforms		Comments on press reforms	
Press freedom		Privacy		Comments on media owners/ownership	
Public trust		Public interest		Comments on new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press	
Comments in support of new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press		Comments against new press regulatory system proposed or formed by the press		Comments on politicians' royal charter on press regulation	
Comments against politicians' royal charter on press regulation		Support for politicians' royal charter on press regulation		Comments on self- regulation	
Comments against self-regulation		Comments in support of self- press regulation		Comments on statutory underpinning	
Comments against statutory underpinning		Comments in support of statutory underpinning		Comments on the Leveson inquiry	
Comments against the Leveson inquiry		Comments in support of the Leveson inquiry		Other	

**9. Alternative solutions or argument on how to tackle the problem of ‘irresponsible’ journalism. Tick as appropriate.**

Strengthen checks on media ownership concentration		Cultural revolution of journalists and proprietors is key		Do not expect too much from the press	
Enforce existing laws on crimes such as phone hacking		Some level of privacy invasion or a feral press is a necessary hazard of a free press.		Other	
Avoid all forms of royal charter		Not applicable			

**10. Attributions of blame for press irresponsibility. Tick as appropriate.**

The Labour government		Conservative government	
The Press Complaints Commission		Journalists	
Newspaper proprietors		The criminal justice system	
Job constraints (e.g. financial challenges or time constraints).		Commercialism	
Technology		Other	
Not applicable			

**11. Description of measures aimed at checking press bad behaviour. Tick as appropriate (may not necessarily be in the exact words.)**

Independent press self-regulation		Threat to press freedom		Retribution	
Tough press regulation		State control/slippery slope to licensing of the press		Regulation that delivers on Leveson’s promises	
Chilling effect on investigative journalism		Draconian/punitive		Other	
Not applicable					

**12. (a) Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should not be patronized by the press. Tick as appropriate.**

Threat to press freedom	<input type="checkbox"/>	Already too many curbs on the UK Press	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slippery slope to licensing of the press	<input type="checkbox"/>	Could lead to bankruptcy of regional and local newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>
The press is able to set up a Leveson Compliant and independent self-regulator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

**(b) Reasons why the cross-party Royal Charter for press regulation should be patronized by the press. Tick as appropriate?**

Independent self-regulation of the press	<input type="checkbox"/>	A good deal for both the press and victims of phone hacking	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leveson compliant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Puts an end to weak press regulatory reforms.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>

**13. Description of the Leveson Inquiry/its report or envisaged report. Tick as appropriate.**

A threat to press freedom	<input type="checkbox"/>	A fair deal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Illegitimate/unfair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harmful to UK's reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Solution to efforts at curbing press Excesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anti-democratic	<input type="checkbox"/>
A chilling effect on journalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>

**14. Description of the phone hacking scandal and by extension press behaviour. Tick as appropriate.**

Unavoidable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad journalism/ Irresponsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	Criminality	<input type="checkbox"/>
The work of a few Bad apples in journalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is not new to journalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrates the importance of a free press in a democratic society	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anti-democratic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less serious than portrayed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>

15. **Dominant theme in the study sample.** Tick one only - the overarching theme in the news report. This can be identified from the headline, the subject's appearance within the first three paragraphs of the news narrative and the frequency with which it was discussed in comparison to other issues in the article.

Threat to press freedom		Privacy	
Support for new press regulatory system formed by the press		Against new press regulatory system formed by the press	
Against politicians' royal charter		Support for politicians' royal charter	
Against press law/statutory underpinning		Support for press law/statutory underpinning	
Achievements and importance of the press		Media ownership	
Against independent self-regulation of the press		Support for independent self-regulation of the press	
Support for Leveson Inquiry		Against Leveson Inquiry	
Enforce existing laws		The politicians' royal charter may never work	
'Character smear' against critics of the press ('press' here refers to "free speech and press freedom" proponents)		Promoting supporters of the press (press here refers to "free speech and press freedom" proponents)	
'Character smear' against critics of the pro-Leveson and statutory underpinning argument		Promoting supporters of the pro-Leveson and statutory underpinning argument	
The press behaved badly		The press is not to blame	
Plans for press regulation were rushed; could be better.		Other	

16. **Headline:**

17. **Name of Journalist/Writer (write "not applicable" where absent):**

**18. Category of writer (s) of the article:**

The newspaper's staff/representative	
Campaigners for victims of the press (example Hacked Off, MediaWise or Media Standards Trust)	
Victims of press abuse	
Campaigners for press freedom	
Representatives of associations	
Former media executives	
A member of the public	
Government	
Politicians	
Business/corporate organisations	
Academics and other experts	
Legal practitioners	
Other media	
Other	

## Appendix B

### Codebook

**Variable 1 - Newspaper:** The coder should tick the box by the name of the newspaper he or she is coding. This is for easy identification of the newspaper to which the story belongs.

**Variable 2 - Date:** Write or copy and paste the date the story was written in the space provided. It is often at the top of the news article (news articles were sourced from Nexis UK).

**Variable 3 - Page number:** Write the page number. It can be seen at the top of the article; where not stated, write 'not applicable'.

**Variable 4 - Length of story:** Write the length of the story. It can be found at the top of the article; where not stated, write 'not applicable')

#### **Variable 5 - Paper section:**

(a) Is the story a news (facts) article or an opinion article? Tick only one of the two boxes. You may find this information at the top of the page - above the article. You may just see 'News' or in the case of an opinion article, you may see 'Editorial', 'Leading article' etc. Where it is not clearly stated and you are certain it is an opinion piece, you can also tick this box.

(b) What category does this story belong to? Tick one box only. In this study, it is not out of place for most to come under 'media'.

**Variable 6 - Summary of report:** Write a summary of the story to give the researcher an overview of its content. This variable provides basic information about the news article being coded. This spares the researcher the trouble of going back to Nexis UK every time a general knowledge of the story is required.

### **Variable 7 - Source type and frequency:**

Tick “O” for official sources; “U” for unofficial sources; “N” for named sources and “UN” for unnamed sources. Under column “F”, indicate the frequency of occurrence of the source type. A source is defined as “any person, institution, or document to which the reporter explicitly attributed information” (Hallin et al. 1993a, p.754). An *official source* is a corporate body or an elite group/individual from which the information originated. An *unofficial source* is a member (or members) of the public that cannot be categorised as corporate, expert or elite. A *named source* is an identifiable person, body or document from which the information originated. An *unnamed source* is an unidentifiable person, body or document from which the information originated. *Frequency* refers to the number of times that source provided information in the article.

To gather data on the sources used and how frequently each was cited, a source should be counted ones in each paragraph. For example, if a source is cited twice in one paragraph, it should be counted only once, but if it was cited in two paragraphs, even consecutive ones, it should be counted as being cited twice. Also, in an opinion article, the writer can be counted when his or her views are being aired, but where he or she quotes other people or refers to what others said (not his or her opinion about what they said) the source(s) referenced can be counted. The source could be any of the given options on the table, e.g. press, campaigner for victims of the press freedom, campaigner for victims of the press, etc. It is not uncommon for a single source to dominate an article, especially, an opinion piece.

Where options overlap, choose the most appropriate. For example, ‘Government spokesperson’ and ‘Conservative spokesperson’. Where the speaker represents the view of the Conservative Party and not necessarily that of the coalition government (Conservative and Liberal Democrats), you can tick Conservative spokesperson. Prime Minister, David Cameron, or his spokesperson (e.g. Oliver Letwin or a source from 10 Downing Street) can fall into either of these groups depending on whether the view expressed is primarily a Conservative position or the final government stance on the



issue. Anything from the then Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, or her department should result in a tick in the box for Culture, Media and Sport.

**Variable 8 - Narrative structure:** This refers to the order in which the stated themes first appeared in the article (the news narrative). This should be written as a number. Each theme should be numbered only once - the first time it appeared in the article. Not all themes written in the table may appear in one article. The last column “comment on...” is only there in case there are no arguments for or against, but just a neutral comment. It is not out of place for these boxes to remain empty most of the time.

**Variable 9 - Alternative solutions or argument on how to tackle the problem of ‘irresponsible’ journalism:** Where alternative solutions or arguments on how to tackle the problem of ‘irresponsible’ journalism are offered, the coder should tick the appropriate option on the list provided. Where there were alternative suggestions in the story that were not provided on the list of options, the coder should tick ‘order’ and write the alternative suggestion beside the word ‘other’. That will enable the researcher to remember these alternative views. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable.

**Variable 10 - Attributions of blame for press irresponsibility:** Was any group or person blamed for press irresponsibility in the news narrative? The coder should tick as appropriate. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable.

**Variable 11 - Description of measures aimed at checking press bad behaviour:** How were measures aimed at curbing apparent press excesses described? The coder should tick as appropriate. They may not necessarily be in the exact words. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable.

**Variable 12:**

**(a) Reasons why the cross-party plan for press regulation should not be patronized by the press:** A list of options was provided for reasons why the cross-party (Cross-party refers to a combined team of politicians from the three main political parties) plan for press regulation should not be embraced by the press. The coder should tick as appropriate. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable. This section only becomes relevant after the three parties have reached an agreement. Cross-party agreement was reached in March 2013. Variable 8 caters for debates on the details of the Royal Charter on press regulation before the cross-party agreement was reached, and beyond.

**(b) Reasons why the cross-party plan for press regulation should be patronized by the press:** See explanations above and tick as appropriate.

**Variable 13 - Description of the Leveson Inquiry/its report or envisaged report:** How was the Leveson Inquiry, its report or envisaged report described? Tick as appropriate. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable.

**Variable 14 - Description of the phone hacking scandal and by extension press behaviour:** How was the phone hacking scandal and, by extension, press behaviour described? Tick as appropriate. Multiple choices can be ticked for this variable.

**Variable 15 - Dominant theme in the study sample:** What was the dominant theme in the news narrative?

To find out the dominant theme of each story, read through the story to identify the key message of the article. Certain clues can help. They included the headline of the story because headlines often contain the most important information in a news report (van Dijk 1991); the subject's appearance within the first three paragraphs of the news narrative because, based on the inverted pyramid format of newswriting, the important information comes higher up in the news narrative (Pottker 2003, p.501; Franklin et al. 2005, p.122); and the frequency with which it was discussed in comparison to other issues in the article.

The box for the code that relates to the key message of the article is ticked. Where that option is not available, the box named 'Other' is ticked and the theme is written in the space provided to enable me to accommodate all themes. Only one code can be ticked for each news article because each story can only have one dominant theme. The total of the dominant themes of all the stories in a newspaper sample was taken as the dominant theme of that newspaper. The total of the dominant themes of all newspapers in the study sample produced the result for the dominant theme for the whole coverage.

**Variable 16 - Headline:** Write or copy and paste the headline of the news. It is usually at the top of the article.

**Variable 17 - Name of journalist/writer:** Write or copy and paste the name of the writer of the news article. This can be found at the top of the article. Where no name is stated, simply write 'not applicable'.

**Variable 18 - Category of writer:** A story may be written by a staff of the newspaper or by other contributors, for example, other media organisations, a politician, a campaigner or an academic. A list of options is provided. Tick as appropriate. It is not out of place for most of the writers to be from the newspaper being examined. Some newspapers would specify the identity of the writer at the bottom of the page or within the story, especially when the article was not written by their staff.

The codebook, which is a summary of the guidelines I used for coding, will help the reader understand and interpret my research data. It will also make it easier for the study to be replicated.

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