

Conflict Reporting  
Strategies and the  
Identities of Ethnic  
and Religious  
Communities  
in Jos, Nigeria



# Conflict Reporting Strategies and the Identities of Ethnic and Religious Communities in Jos, Nigeria

By

Godfrey Naanlang Danaan

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## PREFACE

Worldwide, journalism is facing many challenges and the state of the profession in Nigeria is no different. Many of these difficult circumstances arise out of technological changes and financial pressures. However, as Dr Danaan's work demonstrates, the global focus on the pernicious impact of the digital era on journalism risks overlooking some other key questions, especially in relation to the reporting of sectarian and ethnic conflict.

Reporting on war and conflict has always presented journalism with both tests and opportunities. The nature of the tensions in Jos, Nigeria has had profound implications for the practice of journalism in that city in particular. In terms of understanding the pressures on reporting, Dr Danaan's work presents many insights into the personal and professional motivations of the journalists involved and his success in gaining interview access to a wide range of active reporters is to be praised. Only through an examination of and reflection on the working practices of these actors can we begin to comprehend the subtle and nuanced approaches deployed by all sides in any conflict situation. Interrogating their strategies and those of their employing organisations allows us to gain a greater understanding of the processes involved in news gathering and agenda-setting systems.

The suggested deployment of solutions-review journalism as an antidote to the mediatised conflict coverage uncovered by Dr Danaan's content analysis marks a significant contribution to the amelioration of subjective ethnic and religiously informed reporting. The traditional model of the war and conflict journalist as an 'eyewitness' is coming under increasing pressure in the face of the empirical evidence gathered by scholars such as Dr Danaan and this welcome development is enhancing our ability to situate the reporter as more in the eye of the storm than a neutral observer of it.

It is impossible to extract the humanity from a journalist and this aspect of the profession needs more thorough scrutiny if we are to appreciate and value the ongoing contribution to understanding war and conflict made by those who report on it. Dr Danaan's work and its emphasis on the particular nuances inherent in reporting on an ethno-religious conflict seeks to illuminate the intricacies of simultaneously being in a conflict zone as a reporter and being 'of' that zone as a human being. In that sense, solutions-

review journalism offers a powerful mechanism for identifying and preventing the escalation of conflict by journalistic strategies (both deliberate and unwitting) and for enriching all of our capacity to understand the nature of global conflict.

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## THIS BOOK

This book examines journalistic strategies in terms of the appropriation of media logics in the conflict frame-building process. Relying on three models: objectivity, mediatisation and news framing; the research interrogates the role orientations and performance of journalists who reported the conflict involving the 'indigenous' Christians and Hausa Fulani Muslim 'settlers' of Jos, a city in North Central Nigeria inhabited by approximately one million people. It provides empirical evidence of the strategies and the representations of ethnic and religious identities in the conflict narratives focusing on the most cited and vicious conflicts in Jos which occurred in 2001, 2008 and 2010.

Drawing on in-depth individual interviews with print and broadcast journalists resident in Jos (to understand their role orientations/conceptions), and the qualitative content analysis of two Nigerian newspapers of the 'Christian South' and the 'Muslim North' (to know their role performance in terms of linguistic choices), the study makes two major contributions that demonstrate the 'strategic' role of journalists in the conflict. First, it establishes that a number of strategies were used, including their choice of words to 'moderate' or 'water down' conflict and the implanting, reinforcement, and community-aided strategies, among others. Importantly, it discovers the neutral-to-goal-focused/pyramid strategy which presents a systematic frame-building process that alters the nuanced inverted pyramid news structure. This evolving strategy advances an understanding of journalists' framing of ethnic and religious identities. Second, it establishes that journalists share membership of their ethnic and/or religious community influenced by residential segregation of the city, internal and external pressures and exposure to violence. The study demonstrates large scale participation by journalists in the conflict resulting in the escalation of violence. Thus, mediated conflict research is revisited—placing media logics at the heart of the conflict. The research proposes Solutions-Review Journalism (SRJ) as a framework for conflict reporting and argues that a review process is necessary to measure impact.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides a guide to the thesis, highlighting the knowledge gaps and the phenomenon being investigated. At a glance, it discusses the study's theoretical and methodological contexts, summarises the contributions of the research and defines some concepts used in the thesis.

### **1.2 Background**

This study builds on existing efforts aimed at understanding journalists' framing of ethnic and religious identities which constitutes news, and how it escalates and/or de-escalates violence. Alubo (2009, p. 9) has defined identity as 'a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished from others'. It is the perception of people about themselves and how they view others with whom they live and interact in their social environment. Whether it involves social groups within local communities or people living outside their home country, the diaspora community, the struggle for social identity remains a subject which draws the attention of many scholars across disciplines. Ogunyemi (2007, p. 17) argues that 'one of the dimensions of representation is identity. The efforts by minority groups to take ownership of their representation in the public sphere are a form of exercise in identity formation and production'. This assumption suggests that people want to be recognised by their social status (e.g., ancestry, political or religious association) which distinguishes them from others in a given community. Thus, it often leads to social inequality. The handling of social identities in the media has received considerable attention in scholarship because journalists have the capacity to construct realities and shape attitudes (Mano, 2015; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, & Nagar, 2016). Studies have revealed that many journalists in Nigeria often align with conflict actors within their ethnic and religious communities by using enemy frames in their narratives (Gambo &

Hassan, 2011; A. O. Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Oso, 2011; Umechukwu, 2001).

This research examines the strategies of print and broadcast journalists who are behind the story of the protracted conflict in Jos. A number of factors (such as constant witnessing of violence, editorial policies, access to conflict areas, intimidation and trauma) account for this unprofessional conduct (L. Adamu, 2008). As such, literature on the coverage of the conflict suggests a robust journalistic reawakening that draws the attention of reporters, editors and news producers to the danger such action portends for co-habitation in the city (J. D. Galadima, 2010; A. O. Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Rasaq, 2012).

As a major step within the research, the study highlights the antecedents of Jos which descended from a city of tranquillity to war (Gofwen & Ishaku, 2006; Lar & Embu, 2012; Mangyvat, 2013). Its people have turned violent, with journalists bearing witness to the ‘extreme brutality’ that has led to many deaths (Krause, 2011, p. 10). The study examines journalistic strategies under this circumstance given that conflict reporting portends danger for the journalists who engage in it (Allan, 2013; Behrman, Canonge, Purcell, & Schiffrin, 2012). Since the eruption of violence in the area, journalists have consistently reported it, leading to global attention. Recognising that previous studies have ignored the influence of journalists’ exposure to violence on news reporting of the Jos conflict, and drawing from the constructivist epistemology, the current research has focused on the most vicious conflicts in Jos which occurred in 2001, 2008 and 2010 (Ishaku, 2012; Krause, 2011; Taft & Haken, 2015).

### ***1.2.1 Ethnicity, religion, conflict***

Ethnicity and religion are among the major causal factors of conflict across the globe; others being racism, cultural pluralism and xenophobia. These represent a diverse community in which social groups struggle for identity—a sense of being and belonging. Not only do these groups want to be recognised in their own right; they often resort to conflict, or even violence, when their expectations are not met (Shorkey & Crocker, 1981; Young, 2009).

The debate on the multidimensionality of conflict has been sustained over the years. While ethnic-racial determinists (e.g., Mano, 2015; Neuberger, 2001) have identified ethnicity and racism as major triggers to conflict, the multidimensional determinists (e.g., Kaigama, 2012; Hae S. Kim, 2009)

argue that a number of factors account for this. Conflict in Nigeria revolves around ethnicity and religion because there exists an ethnic majority and minority consciousness and a seeming religious fundamentalism (Dowd, 2014; Gbilekaa, 2012; Pate, 2011). Studies have revealed that ethnicity and religion are inseparable (Appleby, 2000; Fox, 2004). This is because 'religion is more than just a set of beliefs; it also encompasses community practices, socialisation functions, organisational structures, and a range of other features' (Neuberg et al., 2014, p. 199).

Nigeria is among the 55 conflict-stricken Third World countries where factors such as ethnicity and religion have influenced the behaviours of social groups leading to perpetual conflict (H. S. Galadima, 2011; Hae S. Kim, 2009). Its multi-ethnic groups are tied to various religious organisations with Muslims and Christians constituting the majority. Some Nigerians converted to Islam in the period since 1804—most of them from the north—while Christianity was introduced in the southern part of the country in 1842 (Agbibo, 2013b). Both religious groups have had a large following across the country although each still dominates the region of its birth. When people are engrossed in religiosity to the extent to which religion is engrained in their lives, as it is in Nigeria (Dowd, 2014), it can 'contribute substantially to intergroup conflict' because there is 'incompatibility of values and competition over tangible resources' (Neuberg et al., 2014, pp. 198-199).

Over a century ago, the colonial administration of Lord Lugard formed Nigeria from two distinct constituents—southern and northern regions—which was a programme that failed to put the country on the path of progress. This arrangement, arguably, accounts for the country's ethnic and religious conflicts as the people had been, and still are, separated along these lines (Agbibo, 2013a; Danfulani, 2006; Gbilekaa, 2012). The same is said of Nigeria's neighbours in sub-Saharan Africa where conflicts of ethnicity, religion, racism and other social identities have ravaged many communities and destroyed their institutions (Mano, 2015; McCauley, 2014; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Research indicates that 'people of Africa have known histories, geographies, ethnic groups, languages, gender, skin colours and continental identities' (Mano, 2015, p. 7) which means that a variety of social groups exists on the continent. Hence, 'as long as people have different values and beliefs, they will see things differently' (Hamelink, 2011, p. 11).

Like many Nigerian cities with diverse inhabitants, Jos has a history of violent conflict. There was an outbreak of violence in the city on September 7, 2001 as a result of the clash between two rival groups—the 'indigenous'

communities: Afizere, Anaguta and Berom, and the Hausa Fulani ‘settlers’. The political space had been tense because the ‘indigenes’ resisted the purported subversion of their customary land by the Hausa Fulani, who were said to have ‘settled’ in their land during mining and trade activities (Ambe-Uva, 2010; Danfulani, 2006; Mangvwat, 2013). Both groups resorted to violence as an expression of their frustrations over the prolonged dispute, leading to the death of over 1,000 people and the loss of a huge amount of material resources (HumanRightsWatch., 2001). Another round of violence occurred in 2008, killing 700 people. Between January and March 2010, about 350 to 500 people were killed (Ajaero & Phillips, 2010; Obayiuwana, 2010). Although intermittent violence continued in the city and spread to its neighbouring communities claiming several lives, it was less vicious compared to the spates of attacks in 2001, 2008 and 2010 (Ishaku, 2012; Krause, 2011; Taft & Haken, 2015).

The ‘indigenous’ communities of Jos are predominantly Christians while the Hausa Fulani ‘settlers’ are mainly Muslims (Danfulani, 2006). Thus, whenever there was conflict between the ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’ it is perceived as a religious conflict. Both groups take advantage of their affiliations with religious communities to mobilise the adherents by implanting in them the notion that it is a religious war in which they were expected to participate in ‘defence’ of the faith. Orji (2011) explains that while the Jos conflict originated from the struggle for identity between the ‘indigenes’ and Hausa Fulani ‘settlers’, it assumed a religious dimension because both parties recognised the divide: the Christian ‘indigenes’ and the Muslim ‘settlers’. He maintains that

[...] the principal actors are adherents of the two dominant or rival religions in Nigeria. The introduction of faith into the Jos conflict has widened the conflict, making it possible for the conflicting parties to attract sympathy from a wider community than if the crisis had solely played out as an ethnic conflict (Orji, 2011, p. 488).

Recent research has revealed that once an ethnic conflict has assumed a religious character, the parties involved become more violent and efforts to broker peace between them do not yield many results (Isaacs, 2017). The research argues that it is because there is ‘an ethnically divided society in which religious boundaries overlap with ethnic boundaries. To be a member of one ethnic group, one must also profess a particular religious affiliation’ (Isaacs, 2017, p. 204).

A body of research shows that journalists play a significant role in intrastate, interstate and global conflicts and the narratives they produce are inflated

(Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010; Fahmy & Johnson, 2005; Gilboa, 2002; Novak & Davidson, 2013; Rodgers, 2012, 2013; Seib, 2013). Many conflicts in human history—World War II, the Yugoslavian conflict, the Cold War (Saleem & Hanan, 2014), the Rwandan genocide (McNulty, 1999; Rasaq, 2012), the Bosnian conflicts (Banks & Murray, 1999), the Ugandan war (Leopold, 1999) and the Russian–Georgian war of 2008 (Hummel, 2013; Nitsch & Lichtenstein, 2013)—were either incited or aggravated by journalists.

For journalists to exert such influence on society, their strategies to ‘put pictures in our heads’ (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3) must be well thought out and implemented. Although D. Barker (2007, p. 2) recognises that ‘the essence of good journalism is to [...] ‘tell it as it is’ without editorialising and sensationalising, in news columns [...]’, such strategies prevail due to the pressures on journalists, and because their ‘habit of ‘telling it as it is’ has been compromised’ (p. 25). Journalists often ‘devise a means’ of reporting violence because they are ‘required to communicate potentially distressing events in great detail to their audiences’ (Novak & Davidson, 2013, p. 313). Therefore, to ‘devise a means’ suggests a strategy necessary for communicating distressing events.

### 1.3 Rationale for the Study

Shank, Brown, and Pringle (2014) have identified five types of rationales which describe the role of research in the context of a broader scholarship. In their view, a phenomenon that is worth studying should address any or all of these conditions: **crisis**—the need to change the status quo for better results; **importance**—the essence of a given condition that cannot be ignored; **gap filling**—to provide what was lacking; **depth**—giving a broader picture by way of analysis, and **commitment**—explaining the unique attribute of the enquiry and justifying its essence in the study. The current research has met all of these criteria.

The researcher’s experience of news reporting in Jos during the early years of conflict, and his subsequent engagement in journalism teaching at the University of Jos where he conducted research and supervised undergraduate projects on media and conflict, were the motivations that heralded the current study. He once covered a conflict/disaster from where he reported the killings of some residents and the destruction of property. At that time, he realised that, for example, reports of one incident by many journalists did not reflect the actual violence; they were rarely reliable in terms of statistics of casualties and identification of victims and aggressors.

This was a common practice among conflict journalists who soon came under attack by their critics, especially human rights groups. Like other intrastate, interstate and global conflicts that have been blamed on the media (Cottle, 2006; Hamelink, 2011; Seethaler, Karmasin, Melischek, & Wohler, 2013; Stauber, 2013), journalists have been accused of inciting and aggravating the Jos conflict (L. Adamu, 2008; J. D. Galadima, 2010; Gofwen & Ishaku, 2006; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010).

These scholars have argued that journalists often take sides in conflicts based on pre-existing ties to warring parties, among other unethical practices. In that sense, a **crisis** had been established in conflict reporting which required an immediate remedy. There was the need for a journalistic rebirth or reorientation that would make journalists responsible and accountable. Drawing from the researcher's example that 'reports of one incident by many journalists did not reflect the actual violence' it is implied that some conflict journalists simply 'made up' their narratives based on their imaginations rather than facts. Unlike the ritual of framing that looks at a story angle on which emphasis is laid without necessarily interfering with the facts (Phillips, 2015), journalistic strategies suggest that truth is distorted (Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Perrin, 2011). This practice portended danger for journalism as a whole, and it needed to be checked so that the 'crisis' of hit-or-miss reporting could be minimised. Prompted by this myriad of journalistic flaws, the researcher set out to examine the circumstances in which bias or sensational reporting is conceived and actualised, especially in relation to 'indigenes' and 'settlers' as well as Muslims and Christians within a sustained conflict space.

The researcher also drew inspiration from the writings of former *Guardian* and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reporter Dennis Barker. For instance, his 200-page book *Tricks journalists play: How the truth is massaged, distorted, glamorized and glossed over* reveals the strategies employed by journalists in news framing. In it, he admits that 'journalists have tricks of the trade' (Barker 2007, p. 1). However, there is no research effort that examines these strategies by journalists reporting the Jos conflict. These journalistic practices aroused the interest of the researcher, who sought to understand the strategies that conflict journalists had adopted in their work and the interests they served, aimed at **filling the gaps** in the literature. For D. Barker (2007), his experience in journalism has enabled him to understand the way news is produced, which may be likened to the culture of making up stories, or the journalists' framing of fictitious figures of victims of the Jos conflict, as the researcher earlier observed. That



journalists employ certain strategies in news production underscores the **importance** of the subject which cannot be ignored. An understanding of these strategies in the context of the Jos conflict was necessary.

The study also emerged to examine the media coverage of small-scale violence (the Jos conflict, although it has been labelled as ‘genocide’, ‘massacre’, ‘bloodbath’) (see Danfulani, 2006; J. D. Galadima, 2010; Golwa, 2011; Krause, 2011) with the aim of controlling the media instigation that prevailed in large scale, well-known wars in places such as Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine/Israel, Sudan, Rwanda and Iraq. The focus on the coverage of the Jos conflict was not only borne out of the researcher’s desire to investigate the process of reporting by journalists in the protracted conflict but also to understand the nature of conflict that has been perceived ‘out of the ordinary’ (based on media accounts and literature), and to further establish its influence on the journalists. For example, Krause (2011, p.10) observes that Jos has experienced ‘years of violent confrontations and extreme brutality [...] Despite numerous peace efforts, tensions on the Plateau are at their worst today [...] The situation is so tense that residents fear that any minor incident could set the town ablaze again’. Given this scenario which implies that many journalists may have been caught up in this dilemma of reporting the conflict—witnessing the ‘extreme brutality’ and employing different strategies in the process—the research was worth undertaking. This **commitment** was appropriate in the prevailing circumstances.

Furthermore, like other small and large-scales conflicts on which volumes of literature abound, this study was initiated to support research efforts, in relation to media and conflicts. Having taught related courses at the undergraduate level the researcher’s interest in this evolving discipline has spurred him on to conduct this study in **greater depth**, aimed at mentoring younger scholars and developing a module for advancing media and conflict studies in Nigerian universities.

## 1.4 Statement of the Problem

Studies that point to the media’s poor handling of the Jos conflict are numerous (e.g., L. Adamu, 2008; Ambe-Uva, 2010; J. D. Galadima, 2010; Gofwen & Ishaku, 2006; Golwa, 2011; A. O. Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Rasaq, 2012; Zeng & Akinro, 2013), but all of them leave a great deal of the strategies employed by journalists in the conflict frame-building process unexplained. The current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature

thereby providing empirical evidence on these strategies and the representations of ethnic and religious identities in the conflict narratives.

Research on journalistic strategies suggests that ‘behind the scenes’ practices exist in journalism; that is, the unique approaches to the manufacture of news (Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Magen, 2015; Perrin, 2011; Rampazzo Gambarato & Tárca, 2016; Robinson, 2015). Journalists use different strategies to manipulate the audiences that their news content is targeted at in order to achieve certain goals (Carvalho, 2008; R. Coleman, 2010). Former Guardian and BBC reporter Dennis Barker argues that these journalistic strategies exist because the doctrine of ‘telling it as it is’ has gone out of fashion’ (D. Barker, 2007, p. 87). He implies that many journalists have come to believe that the universal principle of reporting which suggested that they report events ‘as they see them’ without interpreting or ascribing meanings to them is unattainable. He claims that journalists want their audiences to understand the angles from which subjects are identified in their reports, hence they devise different ways of communicating these.

While studies conducted by J. D. Galadima (2010), A. O. Musa and Ferguson (2013) and Razaq (2012) deserve acknowledgement because they focus on identity politics and enemy framing in conflicts in Nigeria (which include the Jos conflict), they have not produced any evidence on the strategies journalists adopted in reporting the conflict between the Christian ‘indigenes’ and Muslim ‘settlers’ in Jos. This research recognises that ‘journalists utilise a number of tactics [...] so as to minimise possible risks to their proclaimed reportorial integrity’ (Allan, 2013, p. 14). Rather than investigate how these strategies of framing the ‘reality’ of the Jos conflict evolved, scholars have ignored this important frame-building process in which the ‘strategists’ (journalists) are participants. Exploring this phenomenon would go a long way in filling this gap and advancing conflict reporting research.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The following questions shall guide this study:

1. What factors influenced the practices of journalists who reported the violent conflict in Jos?
2. How have journalists’ experiences of violence affected their framing of news on the conflict?

3. What strategies did journalists employ in reporting the Jos conflict?

## **1.6 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this research is to understand the strategies journalists employed in news framing of the Jos conflict and the circumstances under which they made on-the-spot reporting decisions.

## **1.7 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research include:

- To examine the factors that influenced the practices of journalists who reported the violent conflicts in Jos;
- To establish the extent to which journalists' exposure to violence influenced their framing of news on the conflicts;
- To explore the strategies journalists employed in the framing of news on the conflicts;
- To recommend ways by which journalists can contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Jos.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

### ***1.8.1 The Frustration-Aggression and Peace Journalism Theories***

The Frustration-Aggression (FA) theory and the Peace Journalism (PJ) theory were examined to provide the foundation for understanding the nature of violent conflict involving rival social groups (the Christian 'indigenes' and the Hausa Fulani 'settlers') on the one hand, and the non-objective journalistic practice that offers an alternative to war journalism as propounded by Johan Galtung (1973) on the other. Both the FA and PJ theories were used to establish the context of the research rather than frameworks for investigating journalistic strategies.

### ***1.8.2 Objectivity, Mediatism and News Framing Theories***

This study was, therefore, is anchored on three journalistic models: objectivity, mediatism and news framing, all of which examined the

topic from the constructivist worldview situating conflict reporting in the realm of the making of meaning (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion).

Although journalistic objectivity has long been criticised by constructivists because the act of reporting is patterned on subjectivity—selecting and interpreting codes (Crotty, 1998; Poerksen, 2008), it is revisited in this research to discover the extent of ‘distance’ journalists maintained from the Jos conflict which they reported on, or what, otherwise, prevailed in the circumstances. The controversy that defined the objectivity discourse in the last few decades is unresolved: ‘journalists position ourselves as being outside the news while also situating ourselves at its centre’ (Kitch, 1999, p. 116). Thus, there is a seeming ambiguity in this two-phase scenario of ‘being outside’ the story being reported and ‘at its centre’ simultaneously. Previous research has probed this assumption: ‘How do journalistic realities arise? Do journalists simply record events, or are they inevitably involved participants?’ (Poerksen, 2008, p. 295). These questions were further explored in this research.

The mediatisation theory, which is still being debated because of the absence of a unified definition, is understood in this study in terms of journalistic strategies—the logics that define news frames (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014; Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2015; Hepp & Krotz, 2014; Livingstone & Lunt, 2014; Lundby, 2014; Nie, Kee, & Ahmad, 2014). It holds that in every human endeavour, there is media involvement (Ekström, Fornäs, Jansson, & Jerslev, 2016). The logics employed in the reporting of the Jos conflict were examined.

News framing theory was also utilised in this research because it explains how journalists make reporting decisions (based on their strategies) to produce realities. The theory emerged from anthropology and sociology and it is ‘a critical activity in the construction of social reality because it helps shape the perspectives through which people see the world’ (Hallahan, 1999, p. 207). The process involves an action to implant ideas in the audience, or put ‘pictures in our heads’ using a series of strategies (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3). Its adoption in this research was crucial as the journalists’ strategies were identified in the frames that made up the conflict narratives. It was used to examine valence framing—the direction of news (positive or negative angles to conflict narratives), semantic framing—the choice of phrases or words to achieve a certain goal and story framing—the central idea of the story (Hallahan, 1999).

The frameworks of these models have helped to explain the study from a constructivist point of view showing how journalists deployed a number of strategies in reporting the Jos conflict.

## 1.9 Methodology

The qualitative research method was adopted using two data collection tools: In-depth individual interviews (II), made up of 26 participants, and the qualitative content analysis (QCA) comprising 30 editions of newspapers. The choice of the research strategy and methods was to address the research problem appropriately given the nature of the investigation (Goldberg & Allen, 2015; Shin, Kim, & Chung, 2009). The first method probed the role conceptions of the journalists while the second examined their role performance in the conflict.

Two data sets emerged from this exercise and the analysis focused on the variety of strategies used in framing (including the types of frames) and the journalists' linguistic choices. The research design, process and methodology are explained in connected sequence in Chapter 5.

## 1.10 Research Philosophy

The study is a constructivist analysis of journalistic strategies. The social constructivist epistemology holds that human beings ascribe meanings to objects, or construct their reality as they experience their world (S. Coleman, Morrison, & Anthony, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Hutton, 2011; Kukla, 2000). It is described thus:

Meaning and our perceptions of 'reality' are socially constructed; our ideas about the real, in turn, influence our behaviour, including how we communicate with others. Through this process we define objects, enabling them to exist in a social context (Keaton & Bodie, 2011, p. 195).

It means that individuals derive meanings from their everyday interactions with social groups which could produce a variety of truths—largely based on experiences, beliefs and situations (Creswell, 2014). The journalists whose strategies were investigated shared their experiences of conflict to which they attached meanings. Also, the reports which were analysed were a construction of the journalists.

Apart from the epistemology, this study also discussed other essential components of the research philosophy—ontology and axiology, the former

being the idealist logic and the latter value-laden tradition (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Pathirage at al., 2008). The ontology describes knowledge while axiology refers to the values attached to knowledge. The philosophical stances underpinning this research have been discussed in Chapter 5 (see 5.3).

## 1.11 Contribution to Knowledge

The contributions of this study are summarised as follows:

- ***First empirical work***

This thesis is a standalone resource material which provides evidence on the strategies of journalists in reporting the Jos conflict. Not only has the study made discoveries on the journalists' 'strategic' role in the conflict which had been in the realm of conjecture; it makes a comparison of frames emerging from journalists working for the media on both sides of the divide. Anchored on constructivist reasoning which would help potential readers to decipher the meanings derived from the findings, the study promises to aid teaching and learning among conflict journalism educators and students who, before this exploit, had to grapple with the non-existence of empirical work on the topic.

- ***Expansion of 'mediatised conflict' literature: Neutral-to-goal-focused/pyramid strategy***

The discovery of the Neutral-to-goal-focused/pyramid strategy by this research provides another dimension to understanding the utilisation of media logics in conflict reporting. It is a systematic approach to the framing of news in which the substance of the story is embedded in a pyramid structure (ascending order) (see Figure 9-3). The evolving strategy of framing provides evidence which supports the orientation of key thinkers in the ongoing debate on mediatisation that media logics are at the heart of its scholarship (Lunt & Livingstone, 2016, p. 466; Nie et al., 2014, p. 363).

- ***Towards solutions-review journalism (SRJ)***

This research proposes a solutions-review journalism (SRJ) that would improve Johan Galtung's peace journalism and provide a roadmap for journalists who report violent conflict. This brand of journalism is emerging when the Solution Journalism Network (SJN) is exploring ways of