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## UNIT 2 NEWS SOURCES

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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Have you ever wondered how dozens of television news channels and newspapers manage to get enough news to broadcast round the clock or fill up all the pages day after day? This is made possible because news collection is not done randomly; instead it is a specialised activity that involves personnel who are specifically trained to track news developments and select 'news' from a wide variety of events that transpire in the world around us. Needless to say, news is dependent on news sources and the news organisations' ability to get the news out in a timely (news being a perishable commodity), reliable and presentable manner. At the same time, of the many events that occur not everything becomes news.

News therefore is a complex process that involves selection of events that are deemed 'news worthy'. This selection implies three things: one, that a certain class of people who we know as journalists and editors make the selection on our behalf and decide what we must read as news; second, it inherently means that certain people or sources have more access or privileged access to media than others and therefore become newsmakers and third, it mandates a routinised functioning of the media which presents stories in a specified format and in a factory-like content production to produce news 24x7.

In this unit, we shall discuss different aspects of news sources including the variety of news sources available to news organisations and the social 'construction of news'; the source-media relationship and organisational routines in media including the hierarchical distribution of work among a pool of trained reporters who use these sources to produce their daily staple of news.

The objective of this unit is to describe how new stories are produced while taking a critical look at the news sources used. The unit lists different news sources available to a news organisation / reporter while differentiating between them from the point of view of journalistic routines, ethics and practices.

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## 2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- enlist, select and compare different news sources;
- develop a broad understanding of the usage of various sources and describe their significance in the structuring of a news report; and
- identify stories that fulfill the journalistic standards of fairness, objectivity and unbiased presentation of ‘facts’.

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## 2.2 NEWS SOURCES

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News sources are people who journalists interview, talk to, quote, observe or meet to ‘construct’ a news story. They provide the basic information which is the building block of a news story. At the same time no two sources can lend the same meaning to a news story. Since the role of journalists is interpretational in that they infer an event for us, framing it or mapping it in a certain social or cultural context and thus making it intelligible to the audiences, the choice of one source over another is often ideological. Stuart Hall points at three aspects of the *social production of news*- first, the bureaucratic organisation of the media which produces the news in specific types or categories; second, the structure of news values which orders the selection and ranking of stories within these categories and third, the moment of the construction of news stories which implies contextualisation of an event by the media.

Hall argues that this process of identification, classification and contextualisation of events by the media is a social process made up of a number of journalistic practices. This process of *signification* that is giving social meanings to events ‘both assumes and helps to construct society as a consensus’ (Hall et al 1978). Consensus implies overall one perspective on events which is provided by the central value system of the society. Media are one of the institutions which are involved in organising and encouraging this broad consensus. Media’s mapping of extraordinary events is often the only explanation people get in order to interpret events and understanding the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of it.

### 2.2.1 News Agencies

The modern form of the press is linked to the rise and consolidation of the news agencies. News agencies are a steady source of news for media outlets. Each news organisation subscribes to a large number of national and international news agencies or ‘wire services’ to keep a close tab on all that is happening in different parts of the world where they can neither set their own bureaus or afford to send reporters. For example, maintaining a foreign correspondent in all the capitals of the EU throughout the year will be extremely expensive indeed out of reach for most newspapers or a TV channels based in New Delhi which would otherwise mean that they cut themselves out from news developments in these places. However, subscribing to Reuters or AP would

ensure a minute-by-minute update on every event that transpires in those countries with their vast network of reporters sending stories from the ground.

### **The rise and consolidation of news agencies and the cartels**

Early founders of news agencies such as Bernhard Wolff in Germany, baron von Reuter in England and Charles-Loius Havas in France started out just like any other business venture. They focused on regions and places where technologies of printing were available. In 1859, the big three formed a cartel or a ring virtually dividing the world into three parts for news collection: Reuters was to cover the British Empire, North America, and most of Asia and Egypt; Havas, the French Empire, the Latin countries of Europe, and South America; and Wolff, the remainder of Europe (Cuthbert: 1980).

These agencies were organised early in the nineteenth century to quickly provide latest market reports to traders and business houses that needed them. There have been considerable shifts in the ownership patterns of news agencies from initial days of private ownership to the post World War period when it was realised that the news agencies should be owned by newspapers subscribing to their services and not by individuals. After the Second World War when most countries in Asia gained freedom from colonial rule many national news agencies were set up. As news agencies grew and expanded their potential for quick transmission of political news and information between different countries became apparent as was also realised that they could provide a bulk of information to newspapers. This made the business of news agencies very lucrative as many newspapers wanted to report about events from places where their correspondents could not be sent due to economic reasons.

The birth of the Associated Press can be attributed to attempts to break the European cartel and partly stemming from cultural and ideological reasons to reduce the *de jure* control of the cartels over news flow. By 1859, the AP was able to reorganise its business in the American region to get a near exclusive hold of the American territory signing a contract with the European cartel that each agency should create the news report in its own marked territory and provide it for the use of the other contracting agencies.

Reuters was the first news agency to set operation in India in fact Asia, more than a century ago in 1886 when it opened a branch in Mumbai. From here, it expanded its operations to other countries under the British rule. The opening of the Suez Canal and installation of a direct cable link between London and the East made a major difference in the speed with which messages could be transmitted. Reuter and its subsidiary agency, the Associated Press of India, had a monopoly in India until the Press Trust of India was formed by the Indian newspapers.

Press Trust of India (PTI) was incorporated on August 27, 1947 under the Indian Companies Act 1913. The story of the growth and evolution of PTI which is the largest news agency of the country is itself a saga of the growth of journalism in India (Raghavan, 1987). The PTI has an extensive news collection and distribution system in the country. The PTI website states the size of its operation that commands 90 per cent of new agency market share in India thus: Currently it employs more than 400 journalists and 500 stringers to cover almost every district and small town in India. Collectively, they put out more than 2,000 stories and 200 photographs a day to feed the expansive

appetite of the diverse subscribers, who include the mainstream media, the specialised presses, research groups, companies, and government and non-governmental organisations.

What happened in the U.S. in the 1920s was repeated in the 1970s, this time by the developing countries who found that under the monopoly control of the western news agencies the developing world could neither get fair access to news (being always under-reported) and was also misrepresented. These countries felt that only negative news about disasters, under development, poverty, malnutrition and other problems in their part of the world would be considered newsworthy by these cartels. As a result, the 1970s were impregnated by widespread rejection and protests against the international news flow imbalance between the core and the periphery (Hamelink, 1990).

This was also the time marked by UNESCO's *free flow ideology* which assumed that individual information access as supreme and a fundamental human right. The doctrine evolved from two UN declarations: first, 1946 UN Declaration on *Freedom of Information* which placed much significance to free flow of information between countries and second, the *UN Declaration on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which looked upon freedom of information as a fundamental human right as evident from the Article 19 of the declaration.

By the mid-1970s there was a growing demand for democratisation of information particularly from the Third World countries most of which got organised under the umbrella of the *New World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO), sometimes also referred to as *New International Information Order* which called for a 'new order' as a move away from the 'old order' of information imperialism. New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) discussions with powerful voices like those of Tunisia's Information Minister, Mustapha Masmoudi brought into sharp focus the imbalances in the international news flows between the developed and the developing world (Roach 1990, Musa 1990). All through the MacBride roundtables (culminating in the significant report, *Many Voices, One World*) which were commissioned by the UNESCO to address the North-South information imbalance, among a host of other disparities, as voiced by scholars and media persons in Asia, Africa and Latin America, there was a felt need to reduce the vertical, one-way flow of news and rely on local, indigenous sources including establishment of more regional news agencies.

In his 1978 call for a New World Information Order, submitted to UNESCO's International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, Masmoudi identified more than a dozen specific areas of imbalances. These imbalances were seen as both the cause and effect of cultural imperialism of the media-rich countries toward the media poor. So the existing international media relationships resulted in increasing the gap between rich and poor states, because of the media poor states' incomplete access to information resources and the unabated volumes of Western media messages to which they were subject to. From initially focusing on the information imbalance created by the dominance of the news flows from a few transnational news agencies and companies, the debate advanced to consider the role of the overall role of communications structures and their social as well as cultural implications.

### 2.2.2 Wire Copies

Let us now see how the news organisations use these wire services or the wire copies to make news. Since the news agencies have to cater to very many nations who might have different stakes and interests in given news situation, the 'copy' made by them is mostly an objective statement of the facts as they occurred with minimum interpretation or commentary. The input department has several trainees at the desk and reporters who monitor at least 4-5 international and national news agency updates all the time to alert the news desk or the editorial if something significant happens. It is then taken up, 'cleaned', or more inputs added to it and readied to be placed in the bulletin or the newspaper. News agency copies are considered to be reliable and extremely authentic sources of news so the newspapers don't have to bother about checking the facts and usually tend to attribute the agency whose news is sourced.

Television channels subscribe to the audio-visual footage like by APTN and ANI in India which is sent along with the story and use the clips for their stories. For example, the New Year celebrations in different capitals of the world are procured from the clips send by the wires and could be edited together to produce one complete visually rich news package of how New Year's Eve looked like around the world since it is not possible or cost effective to send an organisation's own reporters in so many different places all for one night's coverage of the celebrations.

On the other hand, in the case of domestic coverage or news that occurs in the country, a news organisation would have the advantage of subscribing to copies from the PTI, ANI, Univarta, and a few other news agencies in the country besides being able to send one's own reporters who could reach the location in a few hours to provide live coverage. Generally, in case of important news stories, news organisations use wire copies as a buffer for the time their own reporters take to reach the location. After all, reporters lend more credibility and add the organisation's editorial perspective to the coverage besides being able to do live programmes and 'chats' with the anchor in the studio. Besides, reporters provide first hand accounts of what is happening, meet eye witnesses and create several stories around that one event making it exclusive to that newspaper or channel. It is this, that makes two news reports different even though the event was the same. Besides, for more newsworthy events with a greater national significance, reporters can be lined up for live discussions in each successive bulletin or can provide news updates so long as the story is 'developing' which could run into days. In that sense, a wire copy is often used as a first reaction and later the news organisations prefer to cover the events/ happenings in their own style. This is also why news is reporter driven or to put it in another manner- it is the reporters which make a news organisation.

#### Activity 1

Take a PTI story from its website and rewrite it by shuffling the sources and interview bites. Analyse which other sources could have been used in the story to make it more objective and balanced.

### 2.2.3 Reporters

Reporters and correspondents, as you are aware, are the backbone of any newspaper or a television news channel. They are literally the face of the channel

or the newspaper. In fact, today news has become so news person or 'reporter centric' that news channels and news papers market their brands in the names of their reporters.

Competent, well-known and experienced reporters are thus central to any news organisation which aspires to earn its readers' or viewers' trust and claim to practice high quality journalism. Reporting itself is a highly specialised and demanding profession that requires years of training and commitment to journalism. Young reporters work for shifts much beyond their stipulated time to learn the ropes of their profession. They have to sit with their editor for hours and patiently learn to report, make contacts and get skilled into the fine art and craft of reporting. They therefore have to learn to 'create' a news story which follows well established conventions of the narrative form (see Schudson 1982), language codes, hierarchy of sources and seamless editing that hides the frames in which meaning of the story is contained. Such socialisation in the newsroom is both covert and overt. Graham Murdock points out how the routinised and fixed way of presenting news within familiar frameworks has two important consequences: it 'recharges and extends the definitions and images in question' and it also conveys the eternal continuity and stability of the social structures and order.

News gathering requires certain acumen and as they say- 'a nose for news'. Cub reporters are usually groomed into specialised areas of news, which has resulted into what news organisations call the 'beat system' categorised into national, political, metro/ city, business, sports, legal, science and environment, education, health, and entertainment desks. In this division of work between beat reporters, special correspondents and the general reporters, each are trained differently and enter into very dissimilar relationship with their sources. This also implies that the beat reporter has to spend plenty of time in the field, building contacts with key persons who will eventually be his/ her sources often resulting in a relationship of mutual cooperation with their sources. At times, this even leads to co-optation of reporters by big corporate houses and powerful politicians. For example, a city crime reporter must have adequate 'contacts' in the Police department, the courts and locals who will then be his/ her informers in case some crime happens. While the reporter gets to file the story, the sources attain a proximity to the Press and get free publicity when quoted in the story.

Time is of supreme value in news. A reporter could be reprimanded for not covering an event in his/ her beat on time when other channels have already begun flashing it. Source proximity could play a crucial role in getting the information first. In a 'breaking news' culture marked by knee-jerk reactions, sensationalism and where news outlets are competing to be the first to report, the credibility and aptitude of the reporter who fails the time test is severely put under the scanner. This mad rush to be the first to 'break a story' can lead to instances of poor journalism when reporters fail to verify or cross-check what their sources are saying in the interest of time. This can lead to a serious violation of the principle of factual reportage. The consequence of making a wrong piece of information public can never be overstated.

After applying satisfactory checks and balances, the reporters 'cultivate' trustworthy sources who give them information from time-to-time. Some of these include: politicians, ministries, influential individuals, government officials, social activists, spokespersons, public intellectuals and even other reporters covering

the same beat in ‘rival’ news organisations. Besides press releases, handouts, video clips, corporate films and media events provide a steady inflow of news. Gans (1979) enlists six considerations that determine the suitability of a source to a journalist. These are: past suitability, productivity, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulateness.

Investigative journalism that results in ‘exclusives’, requires more time and tact in the field, chasing information that is not easy to unearth. Investigative reporters develop ‘contacts’ who can tip-off classified information or ‘leak’ information in public interest to spark off a nationwide debate which would otherwise be swept under the carpet. Often investigative reportage ends up questioning those in power, upsetting the status quo and asking uncomfortable questions driven by a commitment to bring the truth out in the ‘public sphere’ for a democratic debate on the issue. Investigative reportage can therefore be used as an effective safeguard against attempts by governments or powerful groups to manipulate information or create consensus on issues without its full deliberations in the public domain.

The problem is that most news organisations do not have the resources or the time to let their reporters go on such investigative trails for weeks before it can come out in the form of stories (Bhushan, 2013). The breaking news ethos has in that sense eroded many long held journalistic principles of accuracy and objectivity. The investigative news culture is fast withering away and giving place to sensationalism and entertainment oriented news. Another phenomenon that has had a far reaching impact on how news is gathered is the news organisations’ reliance on freelance stringers who are paid on per news/ story basis helping cut down the expenses of retaining full time reporters (Roy, 2011) besides providing geographical proximity (Gans, 1979).

**Check Your Progress 1**

- Note:** 1) Use the space below for you answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. Why are reporters considered to be the backbone of a newspaper or a TV news channel?

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2. Discuss the factors that have led to the withering away of investigative news reportage.

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3. Enlist the various sources that reporters use to build stories.

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### 2.2.4 Individual Sources

Most news organisations insist on getting government or established sources of information to add weight to their story. As discussed above, this is how media tend to reinforce the definition of the powerful few and impose a single meaning to the event. Stuart Hall's concept of the *primary definers* of news succinctly sums up this aspect of news. As a result of pressures of time and resource allocation coupled with the journalistic practice of objective and balanced reporting, reporters tend to get statements from 'accredited sources' i.e. accredited 'representatives' of powerful organisations who become what Hall calls the 'primary definers of the topics'.

This initial framework sets the tone and parameters of the discussion on the given topic. In this way media reproduce the dominant ideas, the ideologies of the ruling class and are often in subordination to these powerful institutions in contradiction to the normative ideal of the press being a watchdog of society. Sigal (1973) in his study on sources of news in the case of *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* found out that the U.S. government channels dominated the news sources in these two papers. American officials contributed to a bulk of stories and were a sole source of 56.3% of the 405 single-source stories and 53.8% of all primary sources. Sigal (1973) rightly surmised that the routine channels for newsgathering therefore constituted 'the mechanism for official dominance of national and foreign news in the two papers'.

Besides the *institutional sources*, reporters often turn to subject 'experts', academics or known faces in a particular field to lend a new dimension to the story. For example a story on Women's Reservation Bill will usually consist of interviews of at least two women MPs representing two different political parties in favour of the Bill and may be another woman MP against the Bill. In addition to these 'government sources' the reporter must try and get a known women rights activists and a byte from the general public to flesh out the debate from different points of view. Just interviewing a couple of women MPs will make the story one-sided and narrow in its focus. Neutral sources that do not have a direct stake in the issue provide the much-needed balance, but are often last in the priority of sources!

### 2.2.5 Bureau Reports

Reports from several bureaus across the country and abroad are an important aspect of this routine of news gathering. At the level of the bureaus, the reporters are less inundated with assignments when compared with the head offices and therefore are able to spend more time in the field, even go for investigative pieces or specials. The logic behind setting up bureaus is geographical closeness—given that reporters from their own native states or region have a better understanding of the political, economic and cultural dynamics of the region and therefore are better placed to cover local news stories.

### 2.2.6 Online Sources and Social Media Platforms

New media and the internet have radically altered the way news is collected, disseminated and consumed. The significance of the internet as a source of news is very well documented in the literature on online news and social media. Newspapers and television news channels keep a track of what news items are posted on different news portals and websites on a daily basis. In the present

day digital world, Twitter (see Hermida 2010), Facebook and other social media platforms are emerging as instantaneous and popular sources of news with almost all politicians at national and international levels, political parties, organisations, celebrities, and newsmakers having their own twitter accounts and Facebook pages to directly connect with the public and to feed reporters with the latest information. The earlier debates on whether online sources are reliable or not and does online news count as journalism is rendered irrelevant given the heavy reliance of journalists on online sources.

### Activity 2

Visit your nearest Railway Station regularly for a week. Make detailed field notes everyday on all that you observe. After a week of observation try to find three story ideas that you would like to develop as news features. Taking each story at a time, look for your sources, take interview bytes from them and develop your stories complete with voice-overs and visuals that you think you will like to use for the three stories.

## 2.3 SOURCE MEDIA RELATIONSHIP AND ROLES

Studies on source-media relationship point to the exercise of political and ideological power especially by influential institutional sources which seek to dominate and define news stories. A sociological approach to understanding the field of journalism has been marked by two distinct and opposed positions- 'neo-Marxism' and 'pluralism'. Pluralists deny any dominant interest group in news production, seeing all as equal contenders and media as representing a multiplicity of views. The neo-Marxists construe media as instruments of hegemony in the hands of dominant ideological groups who determine and define the way issues are presented to the public and debated. No one position may be wholly applicable to the present day media ecology as it is case specific depending on the media structures and the political economic conditions under which media operate. But in most instances it has been seen that the powerful institutional sources end up being the primary news sources. Gans (1979) points out that news organisations are unique among commercial firms in that 'the raw material from which they produce the news is itself obtained without charge... they do not pay their sources. Consequently, the news media are especially attractive to sources that need publicity but not money'.

Thus, the nature and function, as also the relationship of the source and the media, needs to be critically examined. In a classic study, Walter Gieber (1999) examines the socio-psychological forces which control the flow of news from source to reporter and finally the press. News is seen as a process of mediation in which the communicators (reporters on the one hand and sources, on the other) communicate or narrate an event to a community and in so doing assume the function of gatekeepers deciding what to communicate. 25 sources of news (like members of the civil society, activists and lobbyists for various political and cultural organisations) were interviewed by Gieber on what they thought their role as communicators were. The sources primarily believed in the 'cause' of the event and thought of themselves as educators of the community. The problem was that often the sources operated in an egalitarian frame addressing themselves to limited members of the public. Also the sources were at times critical of the press for being dominated by advertising which was why they often failed to identify with their cause.

Gieber then interviewed 22 reporters on what they thought their role as communicators entailed. Most reporters made a sharp distinction between their private and professional lives while they acknowledged their public role of writing a news story for mass consumption. The reporters were not as much concerned with the 'cause' as with the 'craft condition' of their profession. The craft orientation influenced everything including what event a reporter selected for news. For instance, s/he was not concerned about the fate of a story after it was sent.

The bureaucratic structure of the newsroom too had a tremendous influence on the work of the reporters. They were guided by their organisation's news policies that they had to adhere to at all times which led to professional guilt of not being able to do enough for the public. Gieber concludes that it became obvious from the study that what is news to sources is not necessarily news to reporters. The major source of disagreement between sources and reporters, according to the latter, arises from the difference in news evaluation. As a result the 'fate' of the story is determined by the demands of the reference group of which the communicator is a member, not by the needs of the community or mass audience.

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## **2.4 RELIABILITY AND CREDIBILITY OF SOURCES**

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Journalistic practice relies on factual information. A news story normally is made up of interview bytes or 'talking heads' who give their accounts or comments on an event. A journalist's job is to pad the story with these quotes interspersed in a logical sequence with voiceovers and visuals so that the event can make sense to the audiences. The sources in that sense are the building blocks of the story. The standard of objectivity often entails verifiability of information independent of sources' accounts. But in routine practice of fast pace news production reporters do not have the time or the resources to probe into the sources' informational world to establish the veracity of the facts independent of the source's account (Schlesinger 1978; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989).

Scholars have warned that journalism is increasingly accommodating funding and ownership patterns, work practices and routines that blur the distinction between fact and fiction, selling propaganda in the name of news. In such a scenario, many a times individual reporters find themselves torn between ethical principles they cherish, the foremost being truth telling and the pressures accruing from the corporate control of the press which dilutes such a commitment.

Government sources, party spokespersons, ministers, officials and bureaucrats are considered to be authorised sources of information and the best talking heads to give credibility to a story. The suitability of sources is adjudged through a process of bureaucratised institutional form of authority and knowledge in which editors and sometimes the management decides who will be given space in the news story and which institutions, communities and individuals will be denied such privilege. This is also partly how news maintains social status quo, representing political power as residing in formal institutions of the state and law enforcement agencies keeping the poor, the minorities and marginalised sections of society in the periphery. It is a clear categorisation between the haves and have-nots; the powerful and the voiceless.

In this process, news also tends to legitimise these institutions and the dominant power structures often neglecting civil society and oppositional groups which are represented as insignificant, worthless even illegitimate (see Golding, Murdock, and Schlesinger 1986). News sources are mostly pre-determined and decided by the established practice of calling certain known sources whose contacts and phone numbers are meticulously maintained. Reporters rarely make any attempt to look beyond the established protocol and even if they do want to they do not want to take the risk as it may not be accepted by the editors or bureau chiefs. Journalism therefore develops its own 'regime of objectivity' flowing from its own version of social constructionism (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

In the case of television news, visuals and footage from locations or showing the face of the eyewitness add credibility and a slice of reality to the story as the saying goes - seeing is believing. Besides, television story's construction also involves staging of sources complete with props, lighting, sound and realistic background to make the scene as close to reality as possible. The staginess of televised news involves controlled production and other contexts which can lend their own meanings to the event. Often the emphasis is on presentation than on the veracity of information. Moreover, with visual and high end graphics used in packaging less credible information or even false information are easily passed off as fact. Publishing news not attributable to any source or under the guise of unnamed or unidentified sources is indicative of low quality journalism which should be avoided at all cost.

In the last couple of years 'fake news' has emerged as a major social issue faced by citizens and governments alike. As the phenomenon of fake news becomes more widespread with platforms like WhatsApp providing easy avenue for their ready dissemination, new technologies and tools are being developed to detect fake news and ensure that citizens can ensure the veracity of information they consume (Zhou and Zafarani, 2018).

The onus lies with both news organisations as producers of information and citizens as consumers of information to push for truth telling in the public domain. This will not only ensure the criticality of information in the public sphere and its concomitant strengthening of democracy (Saeed, 2013) but also serve to safeguard ethical principles that are definitive of journalism as we know it for the last 200 years.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- Note:** 1) Use the space below for you answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. How source media relationship involves an element of power?  
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2. How does the structure of a newsroom influence the work of reporters?  
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### 3. Why credibility of sourcing is important in journalism?

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#### Activity 2

Compare and contrast a news report on any political issue covered by two different newspapers. Identify the sources used by each and analyse the difference in the meaning conveyed.

## 2.5 LET US SUM UP

The unit discusses in detail the various sources that journalists use to report a news story. It recounts the history of the emergence and consolidation of international and national news agencies and how the wire copies have always served as a staple of news that feeds into newspapers and television. It further explores the other sources of information that reporters routinely turn to like interviewing individual newsmakers or reporting on events as they happen on the ground.

Official sources often find a privileged place in news when compared to the less powerful and marginalised groups and communities. In so doing, news has traditionally served to mirror and maintain the social structures and differences including the biases in society instead of challenging these stereotypes and domination that favour the rich and the powerful. This major shortcoming of news is complicated in a digital era where fake news and misinformation is being peddled in the name of journalism. It posits a real danger to the future of journalism and democracy making it imperative that we develop tools and fact checkers that can detect fake news early enough to prevent its wide dissemination.

## 2.6 FURTHER READINGS

Allan, Stuart, (2004). *News Culture*, 2nd Edition, Open University Press: New York

Gans, Herbert, (2004). *Deciding What's News*, 25th-anniversary edition, Northwestern University Press: Illinois

Saeed, Saima, (2013). *Screening the Public Sphere: Media and Democracy in India*, New Delhi and London: Routledge

Schudson, Michael, (1995). *The Power of News*, Harvard University Press: Massachusetts.

## 2.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

### Check Your Progress 1

1. Reporters are the building blocks and the face of the news organisations. Reporting on different beats, they provide exclusives, live coverage and

special reports which differentiate one news outlets from the other. Their contacts with news sources and in various departments of governments, ministries, local administration, police, locals, spokespersons, think-tank, activists and others provide the stories that fill up newspaper columns and news bulletins.

2. The breaking news culture, the clamour to be the first to report, financial constraints and cost cutting by news organisations and a general decline in adhering to ethical principles of journalism have contributed to the withering of investigative journalism.
3. Reporters use various sources such as personal contacts, politicians, ministries, influential individuals, government officials, social activists, spokespersons, public intellectuals and even other reporters covering the same beat in 'rival' news organisations. Besides press releases, handouts, video clips, corporate films and media events provide a steady inflow of news. They also check the wire copies in their beat and track major news portals and online sources to keep themselves updated with the latest developments

### Check Your Progress 2

1. Government and institutional sources have a privileged access to reporters which maintains the status quo in society and journalist hardly plays an adversarial role relationship with those in power and challenge the domination that favours the rich and the powerful.
2. The structure of the newsroom is generally bureaucratic and it also influences the work of the reporters. They have to adhere to their organisation's news policies at all times which impacts upon their work and many a time they are not able to do enough for the public.
3. The credibility of sourcing is important in journalism as fake news posits a danger to democracy and journalism due to misinformation. There is a need to develop tools and fact checkers to detect fake news and prevent its wide dissemination.