CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The theories presented in the previous chapter suggest that there are various issues to consider when asking news media to report comprehensively on topics related to PMTCT and specifically women’s health. My research questions, stated in the Introduction, question the extent to which news media in South African can be a media for development, and facilitate the human development of women’s health in the realm of PMTCT. The methodology chapter discusses the means to which my research questions were empirically explored. I describe in this chapter how I engaged with news content and relevant stakeholders to this case study, how I began to form responses to my research questions (presented in the next chapter) and the challenges I faced in collecting and analysing my data. The outline of my methodology chapter is as follows:

- The qualitative approach used for my research analysis;
- My methods of data collection and why this particular data is relevant to my research questions:
  - Selected newspaper content
  - In-depth interviews with selected stakeholders;
- My method of data analysis:
  - thematic content analysis; and
- The limitations in using this methodology with recommendations for further research.
4.1 The value of qualitative methods

The research questions are focus on descriptive and explanatory information about media’s position in development. I want to know what news media coverage says about women’s health in the realm of PMTCT, and what this implies for media as an institution in a developing country. In addition, I am sensitive to the contextual information on this particular case: the socio-economic and political issues of PMTCT, and the implications this has on women’s health and women’s development. Thus my research questions call for a qualitative discussion.

Qualitative methods emphasize the need to understand a social problem, process, or interaction based on the perspective and experience of “insiders”, participants, or stakeholders in the interaction (Greenstein, 2003). David Silverman (2005, p. 9) states that “qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail…’detail’ is found in the precise particulars of such matters as people’s understandings and interactions.” However, the obvious limitation to this is that a small sample size can hardly be generalised into the bigger population. Meaning that one example of media cannot depict how and why media functions in their entirety in a developing country. I will discuss this in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

Jensen states that qualitative sampling often consists of two major steps: “First determining the relevant context and meaningful events, which, next are singled out for meaningful study” (2002, p. 238). Thus unlike many quantitative methods, qualitative
data collection are not based on random sampling. Therefore a combination of “convenience” and “theoretical” sampling is appropriate for this methodology (ibid). Convenience sampling, describes the ability to gain entry into institutions or organisations, which would provide the convenience of physical and social accessibility to such an arena (ibid). My selection of particular newspapers and prospective media practitioners and health professionals was largely due to my ability to access these through my involvement with the “HIV/AIDS and the Media Project” in the Journalism Programme at Wits.

Jensen states that “theoretical sampling” samples “critical cases… in order to explore a theoretical category” (2002, p. 239). The theoretical category explored in my research is media in development, as discussed in the previous chapter. A pivotal critique of theoretical concepts concerned with media in development is that it has neglected women’s development and women’s participation in media and development debates (Steeves, 2003). My case study is a critical sample that explores what conventional theoretical discussions of media and development have left out.

The qualitative data will be produced through thematic content analysis (TCA), which is observation of themes within texts proceeding to identify generalised and significant patterns or subject matters throughout the texts (Boyatzis, 1998). Sue van Zyl states that TCA “is essentially a method of making qualitative data ‘digestible’ and putting raw data into presentable form” (“Thematic Content Analysis Seminar”, 16 May 05). The TCA of newspaper texts allows for investigation of prominent discussions covered through the
selected material as well as the silenced voices and concerns of PMTCT and women’s health in South Africa. The additional TCA of in-depth interviews provides various perspectives on the tensions and challenges of this case study and broadly media’s function in society, particularly for the improvement of women’s health in the arena of HIV/AIDS and PMTCT.

The collection and analysis of data in this form, discussed in the next chapter, has enabled me to firstly, critically examine news media coverage and the implications this has on the improvement of women’s health in South Africa and to explore different viewpoints on this coverage, and secondly to frame this derived data within the discussed literature and theoretical paradigms about a media for development.

4.2 Data Collection

The data collection consists of (a) gathering the texts of news articles from two prominent national newspapers in South Africa: *The Star* and *Weekly Mail and Guardian*; and (b) interview texts from media analysts and journalists in addition to health practitioners who have relevant and extensive experience with PMTCT and women’s health in South Africa.
4.2.1 News articles pertaining to recent discussions around PMTCT

As noted in the Introduction, newspapers are viable sources for understanding media in society. Besides the “convenience” of newspapers one of the strengths of this method is that newspapers provide a source of data that can be easily available and verified by others (Greenstein, 2003).

I selected two privately-owned national newspapers: The Star and the Mail and Guardian. The Star is a daily paper that provides general news to an accessible and general audience. It has wide-circulation with a readership that crosses all races, ethnicities, languages and income levels (see http://www.thestar.co.za). The Star also sees itself as daily that is able to involve readers and be a platform for debate. The Editor Moegsien Williams states in his online address to readers that, “The Star [is] a clear and present guiding light to a better, prouder, united South African society” (ibid). The Mail and Guardian, a weekly national paper, is Africa’s first online newspaper, providing access not only to readers across South Africa, but across the continent and the world. The Mail and Guardian is also one of the few newspapers in South Africa with a female editor, Ferial Haffejee, and prides itself on being socially conscious and is also seen as a development oriented newspaper, with political analysis and investigative reporting (see http://www.mg.co.za).
The newspaper articles were gathered from [www.samedia.uovs.ac.za](http://www.samedia.uovs.ac.za)\(^9\): a very reliable and accessible source for newspaper and periodical searches in South Africa. I began my retrospective analysis starting a couple of weeks before the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand and the Minister of Health statements at that conference on PMTCT issues to a year after: July 1, 2004 to July 1, 2005. This timeline produced a considerable amount of articles to analyse any coverage of women’s health within the realm of PMTCT.

The “samedia” searched produced 154 news articles for the *Star* and *M&G* between July 1, 2004 and July 1, 2005\(^10\). There were a number of words or phrases I attempted in this search but are not keywords that “samedia” recognizes, i.e. “mother-to-child transmission” or “PMTCT.” These exact keywords were used in the searches:

- “Nevirapine” - yielding 13 articles
- “women” and “AIDS” - yielding 33 articles
- “AIDS” and “babies” - yielding 9 articles; and
- “Nevirapine” or “Tshabalala M” or “TAC” or “women’s health” or “ARTV” yielding 99 articles.

These searches produced 154 articles; however, only 66 articles were used for analysis. After reading all the articles I noticed that they were not all news articles; some were editorials or comments and were not used for analysis. Also, there are a few articles about

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\(^{9}\) Access to the source is made possible through the “HIV/AIDS and the Media Project” in the Journalism Department at Wits and can also be accessed through Wits libraries.

\(^{10}\) The search also produced interesting cartoons. However this requires a specific method that can investigate pictures of this nature, and falls out of the scope of my research.
“women and AIDS”, and “babies and AIDS” that does not specifically talk about PMTCT and for this reason was not included in the final analysis.

For instance, these articles are “AIDS Barometers” from the *Mail and Guardian* which are periodical one-paragraph summaries on up to date statistics about HIV/AIDS in general. Consequently, after reading all 154 articles, based on headlines and subject matter, I choose news articles that spoke directly to my topic and had the most relevance to Nevirapine, PMTCT and women’s health in South Africa. This resulted in 66 newspaper articles: 51 from the *Star* and 15 from *Mail and Guardian*.

In addition, because *Mail and Guardian* is a weekly newspaper, there were significantly less stories pertaining to my topic then the *Star*. Since this is not a comparative study between the two newspapers, the amount of articles does not take away from these articles ability to be reflective and representational of the individual newspaper’s coverage on PMTCT issues in the timeframe selected.

### 4.2.2 Semi-structured in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the case of PMTCT and women’s health

One of the most widely used data collection methods in the social sciences is interviewing (Greenstein, 2003). Bauer and Gaskell (2000, p.39) state that qualitative interviews “provides the basic data for the development of an understanding of the
relations between social actors and their situation.” I selected this method to explore the perceptions and understandings of the function of media in the development of women’s health through the experiences of media practitioners and those health practitioners who have significant insight on PMTCT and women’s health in South Africa.

In a qualitative investigation, interviews are mostly open-ended and tend to focus on a small sample of respondents for in-depth investigation (Jensen, 2002). I aimed to conduct 8-12 interviews with (1) Media practitioners: including analysts and journalists and (2) Development practitioners or analysts. This sample of media practitioners was selected because of their experience as journalists who have written news articles pertaining to women’s health in the realm of PMTCT and media analysts who have valuable insight on how media engages with HIV/AIDS, PMTCT or women’s health issues in South Africa. Based on these experiences they were able to give first hand accounts of how the media handles women’s health issues as well as the broader challenges of covering such issues. They were also able to state what their opinions and perspectives on media’s role for the development of women’s health, in regards to HIV/AIDS and PMTCT.

Development for my particular research is framed as women’s health within the context of PMTCT and Nevirapine debates, therefore health practitioners involved with PMTCT and women’s health seemed the most fitting. These particular health practitioners were selected primarily because of their first-hand experience with women’s developmental issues concerning HIV/AIDS and PMTCT. Also, because they are directly involved with
women’s health they share interesting viewpoints on what they think media can or should do to facilitate the development of women’s health in South Africa.

In addition, while there is an abundance of relevant stakeholders of media analysts, and health practitioners in South Africa that could have been interviewed, the sample was primarily based on convenience, referrals and contacts with certain organisations. Many of these people reside or work in Johannesburg, and were accessible through Wits Journalism Department. Unfortunately, there were some people who were out of the country and couldn’t be contacted or were unavailable due to very busy schedules. After numerous emails and phone calls to 20 health practitioners and media practitioners, there were a total of 11 interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Practitioners</th>
<th>Media analysts and Journalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Helen Struthers – Peri-natal HIV Research Unit (PHRU)</td>
<td>1) Libby Lloyd – Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Dr. Francois Venter – Reproductive Health Research Unit, University of Witwatersrand (WHO)</td>
<td>2) Tusi Fokane – Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Matthew Chersich – World Health Organization (WHO)</td>
<td>3) Warren Parker – Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) “Project Director” – PHRU</td>
<td>4) Kubi Sama – Genderlinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Philippa Garson – freelance journalist, with extensive experience with PMTCT, on occasion she writes for the Mail and Guardian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Jensen states that “in-depth interviewing with its affinities to conversation, may be well suited to tap social agents’ perspective on the media” (2002, p. 238). This is key because the researcher must understand that there is no such thing as complete knowledge or understanding and the participant can only offer his/her viewpoints and experiences. It is impossible for any human being to fully articulate all of the processes impacting upon an event or phenomena (Jensen, 2002).

Holstein and Gubrium (2004) argue for an “active interview” which I found useful when I was conducting interviews. They state that researchers and academics have come to realise that the “interview…is a two way conversation, interviewing is always unavoidably interactional and constructive – in a word, the interview is active” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 143). Throughout the interview process, respondents would inquire about my views on a particular topic. This created a comfortable space for meaningful and insightful discussion. Holstein and Gubrium call this a climate of “mutual disclosure” that allows for a conversation with “respondents in such a way that alternate possibilities and considerations come into play” (2004, p. 147, 151). The agenda and challenge of each interview is to have a discussion that will bring insight and clarity to the research topics.

The semi-structured format for the interviews, or “semiformal guided conversations” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 141) allowed for open-ended questions and flexibility, which created space for probing and further exploration while maintaining a clear list of issues that needed to be addressed (Greenstein, 2003). The conventional view on how to
conduct interviews is that the interviewer should ask non leading questions, and remain ‘objective’ allowing the participant to state his/her views freely (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Preparing a topic or “Interview Guide” (Appendix B) is important for this, even in an “active” and “open-ended” interview conversation, because it allowed me to frame my questions in non suggestive ways as well as prioritising the key research issues in the interview. The interview guide as a systematic instrument ensures that all major topics will be covered in each interview, which establishes consistency across the interviews (Merriam, 1998).

Tape recording is primary research instrument to collect interview data (Merriam (1998). Transcription of a tape recorded interview ensures that everything is preserved for analysis. Though some respondents are uncomfortable with being recorded, usually they are at ease after the interview has started. The process of face-to-face interviews is as follows:

- Request for interview through emails or telephone conversation, proceeding to set up time and place for interview session (most of the interviews were done at the workplace of the participants).
- At the beginning of the interview, it is important to familiarise the participant with my research objectives and ethical guidelines by going through my “Participant Information Leaflet” (Appendix A)

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11 The structure and layout of this form was devised by my supervisor Natalie Ridgard.
Each participant is given the opportunity to consent with the interview session being tape recorded and to decide whether or not they would like to remain anonymous (most participants declined anonymity).

Each interview lasts between 45-90 minutes.

Following the actual interview process, it was necessary to fully transcribe each interview, in a typed-out format. Full transcription provided me with complete collected data that then could be accurately analysed for themes and dominant concerns and issues within an interview and across interviews. (Because of the limited space, only paraphrased transcripts are included in the Appendix section).

Three of the participants could not be met face-to-face, thus the interview was conducted via email or phone. For two participants, I emailed a copy of my “Participant Information Leaflet” as well as my “Interview Guide.” For these two participants they used the “Interview Guide” as a questionnaire and replied only to the questions asked in this form. Email interviews are rapidly increasing as a research method because of the “speed and immediacy” the internet can offer (Selwyn and Robson, 1998) as well as cost efficiency (travelling to an interview), and it allows for researchers to interview a person irrespective of their geographical location or time zone (Meho, 2005).

There was one telephone interview due to participant’s emergency cancellation of a face-to-face interview that lasted 55 minutes. I was unable to tape record this interview, as a result my method of recording was note-taking. Though it is not as thorough as a tape-recorded interview with full transcription, her responses were quite meaningful and
interesting for my study. Also, the participant gave verbal consent to use her name in my research report.

4.3 Data analysis: Thematic content analysis

My method for data analysis is qualitative thematic content analysis (TCA). I discuss in this section how I analysed my data collected from the newspaper text and interviews. I will discuss in length what my analysis produced in regards to my research questions in the next chapter.

TCA falls under the umbrella of “content analysis,” a method where researchers examine artefacts of social communication, be they written documents, i.e. newspapers, or transcripts of recorded verbal communication, i.e. interviews (Hansen et al, 1998). Content analysis is generally a quantitative method that is carried out by counting the occurrence of specific characteristics or dimensions of the text, providing a “systematic analysis of communication” (Hansen et al, 1998, p. 91). Conversely, there are qualitative forms of content analysis that are widely used among researchers: critical discourse analysis and thematic content analysis (Silverman, 2004). Unlike critical discourse analysis, thematic content analysis (TCA) is not in search of disguised meanings or ideologies of the media found in the texts of newspaper articles. Instead, TCA is an examination of the raw unstructured data provided in the text proceeding to conduct a
sensitive however general analysis of themes and common issues covered or ignored (Boyatzis, 1998).

In the next chapter, my objective is to present the themes deciphered in the TCA of interview texts and newspaper articles in order to address, challenge and show relevance to the existing literature and theory discussed in previous chapters. In this section, I will map out how I proceeded to thematise the raw texts of newspapers and transcribed interviews.

According to Richard E. Boyatzis (1998, p. 29), the researcher can develop themes and codes based on prior-theory, prior-research or data-driven approaches. I am using the prior-theory approach to guide the themes and coding processes while searching through raw material. In other words “develop [a] thematic code consistent with [the] theory” (ibid). Based on the literature and theory discussed in previous sections, for instance in Stein (2002), Finlay (2004) and Spurr, 2005), I started this process with “anticipated meaning”: knowledge about how and why media has covered PMTCT debates and women’s health in South Africa. Also because this research is an attempt to add to the discussion of media’s role in development the paradigms of development communication paradigm (Melkote, 2003) will also inform the analysis.

The critique of this “theory-driven” approach is that the themes are highly dependent on the researcher’s understanding of the theoretical conceptions, which can lower the levels of validity and prove difficult to establish sufficient reliability of these codes (Boyatzis,
1998, p. 33). This inherent limitation will be addressed by allowing review and revision of the themes to ensure that they are valid for both theory and the data. There are three major stages in theory-driven thematic content analysis (ibid):

(1) Deciding on sampling and design issues;

(2) Generating a code from theory and data, reviewing and rewriting the code, determining the reliability of the code; and

(3) Applying the code to raw information, determining validity, and interpreting results.

**Stage 1 Sampling and design:** The data collection yielded 60 articles from the *Star* and the *Mail and Guardian* and 11 interview transcripts. The sampling was explained in the previous section. Boyatzis encourages paraphrasing to condense a lot of information. The paraphrased interviews are included in Appendix C; which consists of: the participant’s job and relevance to my research, a summary of their responses and critical points in the interview.

**Stage 2 Develop themes and codes:** This stage is the most tedious and meticulous in terms of reading and re-reading the texts to decipher meanings and identifying reliable themes. It is important not to oversimplify or over generalise the text in the stages of thematisation to ensure that the authentic texture and depth of the texts remains (van Zyl, 19 Oct 2005). Thus it is important to have sub-themes that are more suitable to
specifically represent the text. There are three steps to reducing “raw information” into themes and codes, based on prior theory (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 44):

1. Generating a theme from theory: which includes using the theory and literature to guide thematisation while reading through the raw material. This involves extensive and detailed recording of the themes, and explanation of how it arrived at particular themes as well as finding the significant points that relate to the research questions. However, Denis McQuail (2000, p. 327) states that generating themes from theory poses a “risk of imposing meaning-systems rather than discovering it in the content” which can be more fully derived from a “data-driven approach” (Boyatzis, 1998). Thus, again, it is pertinent to review and rewrite themes in accordance with both theory and the data collected.

2. Reviewing and rewriting the code/theme: Once themes are identified, there is a process of comparing and contrasting themes across the texts to ensure applicability to the raw information. And again because these themes are mainly derived from anticipated meaning it is important to check the compatibility with the text.

3. Determining the reliability: This will determine how consistent the themes are throughout each text. Finally the themes are used to organise the investigation of meaning throughout the text for analysis, described in Stage 3.
Throughout this process I used highlighters to colour code the different themes throughout the text. This also helps to signify “hot spots,” which are salient features of the texts that speak directly to the research questions, as I will illustrate in the next chapter. Also, I used separate flash cards for each theme and sub-theme I deciphered, this helped me to be organised and made the presentation easier to write. In addition, because I am looking at two different sets of data: (1) newspaper articles and (2) transcripts from interviews, I used two sets of themes which will be explained in the next chapter.

*Stage 3 Validating and using the theme:* Validation refers to the accuracy of the themes in representing the texts they refer to (Silverman, 2005). The analysis will decipher and discuss themes that are commonly covered, as well as concerns that are often ignored, using a theory-driven approach. This stage also generates understanding of the themes in relation to the literature and theory in order to analyse the findings and discuss their implications to my research questions.

4.5 *Discussion of methods: The quality and limitations*

Based on my research questions and the discussion I wanted to have in response to these questions, I considered qualitative methods as particularly useful for a rich contextual analysis of media in development. However, the nature of a qualitative design also involves critical challenges, which I will discuss in this section.
Firstly, the qualitative nature of this methodology brings alert to serious questions of validity and generalisation: Is this study representative of, or telling the ‘truth’ about (Silverman, 2005):

1. All media practitioners or all health journalists in South Africa and their perspectives on PMTCT and women’s health;
2. The print news media in South Africa and its coverage of developmental issues in general; and
3. The media in other developing countries.

It was aforementioned that qualitative studies do not have the advantage of large data as collected in quantitative studies that could be looked as representative of a particular phenomena. However the small and in-depth analyses used in qualitative methods such as thematic content analysis (TCA) provide “comprehensive data treatment” (Silverman, 2005, p. 215). In order to provide a comprehensive treatment of this case study, it is imperative to search for anomalies and deviant cases or perspectives (Silverman, 2005, p. 215). This case of women’s health in the realm of critical debates around PMTCT is in itself a case that challenges previous conceptions of media in development. My case study brings to light a myriad of challenges that media face when providing a platform for such social change while emphasising the possibilities of a media in development for marginalised communities and concerns.
In addition, the objective of my research is not to discover ‘the truth’ about media in development or to find one way of media being an instrument for the improvement of HIV-infected women’s health. Instead, a primary objective is to discuss and provide various perspectives on how this can be attained in order to provide a working model for media in development, particular for women’s health in the realm of PMTCT. As I will discuss in the next chapter, there were numerous and often different views on how media can facilitate development and whether or not they have this responsibility.

Secondly, any form of content analysis applied in isolation is dangerous. Deacon et al (1999, p. 182) firmly state when referring to the limitations of textual analyses:

It cannot make safe assertions about the intentions of the text’s producer, nor can it validly infer the impact of the text on the readers, viewers or listeners. All such analysis can do is offer provocative and productive hypotheses about these processes.

Offering “provocative and productive hypotheses” is a major aim of this research. For instance, the analysis of newspaper texts about PMTCT issues in the last year are able to suggest the types of paradigms the print news media uses to cover women’s health in South Africa.

For further research I would also suggest comparative research analyses by comparing other developing countries that are also facing such pertinent concerns of PMTCT by analysing their media and this specific issue of women’s health and development. Even though it is out of the scope of this research, understanding the impact of media on
women’s health is critical. A suggested method would be to interview HIV-positive pregnant women who visit antenatal clinics and discuss how media has helped them in understanding their rights to proper health care.

Aspects of this study are very complex and multifaceted and one research report cannot investigate all of the various strata within a social challenge such as HIV/AIDS. As prevention and treatment methods aim to be more holistic including all members of the family and different age groups, the impact of media and broadly communication efforts that are aimed at increasing, for example, men and youth understanding of this devastating pandemic in their lives is valuable. Finally, all research is provisional and subject to subsequent studies that can challenge or refute the claims of such research (Silverman, 2005).