

https://dspace.org/

Women making headlines: influences of women editors on newsroom socialisation and the news agenda

Luimes-Sindane, Wilhelmina Henrietta

2008-02-22T09:06:16Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/4486

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Women Making Headlines:

Influences of women editors on newsroom socialisation and the news agenda

Wilma Luimes-Sindane

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts

Johannesburg, 2006

Chapter One
WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NEWS

"Some leaders are born women." *(unknown)*

The role of women has traditionally been that of the homemaker and caregiver. But while those roles are still very important, women's position and influence in society is changing. Free to enter any industry women desire, they now occupy many positions that were previously exclusively reserved for men. The media industry, like many other fields has a history of male domination (Lewis and Boswell 2002) and many newsrooms are still male dominated around the world. In the South African context, research indicates that the trend is similar (Gallagher 2001:166) and that despite the progression of women in many fields previously dominated by men, women continue to be strikingly absent in the newsroom, a trend also reflected in news media coverage (Lowe-Morna 2001:25). Although the numbers of women entering the media industry have markedly increased, women still fill only a small proportion of management and leadership positions in news media (Lowe-Morna 2001:25). Similarly, studies of news coverage indicate that there is disproportionately low coverage of women, and when women appear in the news, they are most likely to be in a photograph (Lowe-Morna 2001:23). When women's voices appear in news coverage, they are most likely to be quoted as a homemaker, sex-worker or beauty contestant (Curphey 2003). In the past, coverage like this was likely to be overlooked, however, in a post-apartheid and young democratic South Africa, where the fight for human rights is still very much a part of the prevalent discourse, the equality battles of race and gender are very relevant and at the forefront of public agenda (Vale 2004:46). In this context, as women assume positions previously held exclusively by men in the media industry, the question then arises, what is the potential of women's leadership to influence a publication and to alter the newsroom environment and the news agenda?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDIA

Media messages are continuous, come from a variety of sources and affect society in different ways. Their potential influence on society has not been fully understood or measured completely. The influence of news media is summed up in Bernhard Cohen's observation that the "news media may not be successful in telling people what to think, but

they are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about" (Mccombs 2004:3). Thus the influence of media is more apparent in not the actual views of an individual, but in what people deem significant as "media can set the agenda for public thought" (Mccombs 2004:3). The ability of media to influence and impact society brings to the forefront issues of accuracy and fairness in news messages and asks the question: what are the consequences of media when their representation is inaccurate and stereotypical?

According to gender activist Lowe-Morna, "Media is one of the most powerful tools on earth today for shaping the way people think" (2001:33). This potential influence is one of the reasons that gender activists and other members of society are concerned about, and active in, the development of media content.

Similarly, media can influence how something is viewed or perceived. As a result, consistent stereotypical representation can set a norm or a value that can affect public opinion (Mccombs 2004:87). Numerous studies have "discussed the ways that personal views are influenced or shaped by information obtained through mass media, particularly in the way news is framed to convey a certain tone or attitude. In the same way that views can be shaped by what is available in mass media, views can be swayed by what is not seen in mass media" (Armstrong 2004:140). This 'packaging of messages' can be defined as 'attribute agenda setting' and Mccombs states that similar to this 'packaging', "people also frame objects, placing varying degrees of emphasis on attributes of persons, public issues or other objects when we think or talk about them" (Mccombs 2004:87). If the representation of women in media is inaccurate or not representative of women's social positioning, it can potentially influence the way society thinks about gender issues. Given that a number of studies have indicated that women are most likely to be portrayed as beauty contestants, sex workers or homemakers (Curphey 2003), news media tends to frame women in a 'stereotypical package' that can potentially impact the way society characterises women.

Recognising the importance of combating the misrepresentation of women in media, there is a theory that suggests that the simple advancement of women within the field of media is the answer to fighting against the stereotypical representation of women (Gallager 2001:166). Thus through the promotion of women, publications would accordingly make the change towards a more reflective and accurate picture of women's roles in, and impact on, society.

However, the relationship between the promotion of women and gender representation has been found to be more complex. According to Baehr and Gray:

> The assumption that there is a direct correspondence between more working women in the media and the representations produced has proved over simplistic. It fouls on two major counts. Firstly it does not take into account the institutional and professional constraints on women working in a male dominated media industry. Secondly it fails to recognise a more complex concern with the language of representation and the need to identify a specific women's perspective or aesthetic which could radically transform – rather than simply adapt to – discriminatory structures and practices within the media industries (1996: 166).

This raises the question, what effect do women have upon the publication and the newsroom environment when they are put into positions of influence? Does female leadership of a newspaper publication have the potential to alter the coverage of women's representation in news? By focusing on a South African newspaper with a newly appointed woman editor *(Mail & Guardian*), this study takes a qualitative look at the interplay of women's leadership with newsroom socialisation and culture, and news production and processes.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has prioritised gender issues in a number of areas, including in government, by creating a platform by which gender issues were debated and making a commitment to increasing the number of women in public office. The period of transition to democracy put human rights at the forefront of the public agenda, and activists and others utilised this opportunity to ensure the inclusion of gender issues. Similarly, South African media monitoring organisations took their lead on gender representation issues from a number of international initiatives such as the Global Media Monitoring projects of 1995 and 2000 in which South Africa took part (Lowe-Morna 2001). Although the global one-day analysis has its limitations, the large number of countries represented provided a global overview on the representation of women in media. Subsequently, South Africa has been involved in a number of studies and initiatives focusing on gender issues and upon the education of journalists in this field. Projects such as *The Gender in Media Handbook* edited by Lowe-Morna, The Gender and Media Symposium run by the Gender Commission 1997, and studies such as those conducted by the Media Tenor and Media Watch among others have contributed to a better understanding of how South Africa is positioned in relation to other countries (Gallagher 2001:166). South Africa also established the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), an independent body that reports

back to parliament annually on gender issues in the country. The Commission initiative was established in terms of the South African Constitution and is funded by government. The majority of South African research to date, however, has had roots in gender activism and focuses primarily upon gender representation in media through organisations such as Media Watch, Media Tenor as well as others. (Gallagher 2001:166).

Within the media industry women are "edging towards balance [in numbers], [although] few women are advancing to senior or management levels, giving them limited control over how news is defined and on hiring and promotion practices" (Lowe-Morna 2001:25). Despite this increase in numbers "women are still not being promoted to senior decision-making posts in proportion to the overall role they play in the [news production] process" (Carter, Branston and Allan 1998:2). Similarly another study states "throughout the world women were virtually absent from top executive positions, and at the lower levels, women were segregated into lower paying clerical occupations. The few women in news positions typically handled traditional 'women's' features and less important assignments (Steeves 1993:43). This traditional breakdown of roles within the newsroom is considered by these theorists to be instrumental in reflecting and maintaining the gender status quo through the stereotypical portrayal of women, as well as limiting women's ability to advance into more influential positions.

WOMEN AS NEWS SUBJECTS

Studies, such as the Gender and Media Baseline Study (2003), indicate that there are patterns that have evolved in the media and their representation of women. According to Lowe-Morna, "Women invariably feature as sex objects or as victims of violence in the media. Ironically although women constitute the majority of media consumers, little attention is paid to what they would be interested in knowing" (2001:3). Often it is what is omitted from the media, rather than what is covered, that reveals news media are not as unbiased and objective as they claim to be. Studies suggest "Women are seldom portrayed as politicians, newsmakers, experts, business leaders, and a host of other roles in which men regularly feature – even where women have broken into non-traditional jobs and social roles" (Lowe-Morna 2001:31). If media are an unbiased reflection of society, why is it that "when a woman's words do make their way into the news, she is most likely to be a beauty contestant, sex worker or a homemaker" (Curphey 2003).

A sixteen-month study conducted by the Media Tenor South Africa in daily media found that, of 76 149 people represented by more than five lines of copy in media, "Only 14.2% were female" (Media Tenor SA 2002). Despite an increase in women journalism graduates the numbers of women in the newsroom remain "heavily under-represented" (MISA and Gender Links 2003). These imbalances are expressed elsewhere as well. According to Armstrong, "generally speaking, the portrayal of males as sources and subjects in contemporary media has continued to be more than twice that of females" (2004:139). The lack of women's representation in the newsroom is also reflected in stereotypical coverage, as the media tends to under-represent women in media coverage, again contributing to stereotypical gender perceptions.

Similarly, what the media omits from coverage tells an interesting story. The trend globally is:

> Increasing opportunity for women. Access to education has become easier and women are being employed increasingly in non-traditional jobs. The wage gap has also closed considerably. This does not translate into equality of outcomes. The world over, women are still a tiny proportion of those in decision-making positions and of those who own property, capital, land, technology and all the other means of wealth creation (Lowe-Morna 2001:21).

Despite the growing number of women in newsrooms, news media continue to perpetuate gender biases. At one level there is a failure to represent women in news. In addition to "appearing in a limited number of roles, women are simply missing in the media. They are much less likely to be featured in news stories and to be interviewed and asked for their opinion" (Lowe-Morna 2001:29). According to Gallagher, "Women's invisibility and under-representation in the news is linked to traditional news priorities. Much less space and time is allocated to education, health, social development, sexual and reproductive rights (in which women tend to appear as resources) than for politics and government (in which they tend not to appear)" (Gallagher 2001: 169). Other research shows that "Women were primarily featured in stories involving entertainment and received negligible attention in 'hard news' stories such as politics and international crises. Women were photographed twice as often as they were asked for comment" (Lowe-Morna 2001:23).

WOMEN AS NEWS CONSUMERS

As a result of historically-biased news selection, the choice of news stories has at some level defined issues pertaining to women as 'women's issues'. The question arises that, if women

make up the majority of the media consumers and just over half of the population, how did women become excluded from mainstream society (Davies, Dickey and Stratford 1987:201)? According to Lowe-Morna, "Dominant voices in society have defined what is news worthy and what is not, and those voices have seldom been female" (Lowe-Morna 2001:31). Similarly "Disregard and contempt for women (after all) are not all that inspire media; powerful class and race interests are at stake. The situation of women cannot be divorced from patriarchal capitalism and white imperialism since the system depends on women and black women to back it up" (Davies, Dickey and Stratford 1987:201). Media functions within an already existing societal power structure, and as a result they have, at some level, simply become a reflector of that structure as well as a facilitator of the maintenance of that structure. As a result, it is necessary to recognise that "the trans-national corporation, which with the support of national government and international lending agencies, constitutes the highest level of global decision making. Second given that assumption we need to understand how trans-national goals are supported by marketing and advertising which in turn influence editorial and entertainment content" (Steeves 1993:35). "It is issues of origin (context) and buying power that have a direct impact on media through advertising expenditure, which again have an indirect influence upon the content of the publication. It is within these structures of society where the power struggle is carried and thus, the domestic, personal or sexual dimensions of life are political" (Williamson 1996:26). Media functions within a context and is therefore influenced by factors such as the political environment and the economic system. Given the "increased trans-nationalisation and privatisation of communications, and hence increased need for profitability via advertising, it is more important than ever for feminists to examine the origins, functions and consequences of advertising in a global context" (Steeves 1993:35). Thus not only is the media industry plagued by a history of male domination, it is also influenced by political and economic factors. This tendency to represent those with economic influence in news media also gives a socio-economic picture of power held within society. And strikingly, the news media's omission of women in its coverage is partially a reflection of women's position of power [or lack of] in the society in which media operate.

WOMEN AS NEWS PRODUCERS

Studies conducted in Southern Africa, in 1999, found that women comprise about 25.6% of media practitioners in the region (Lewis and Boswell 2002). According to the Media Institute of Southern Africa, "less than 5 percent of media owners and managers in this region

are women" (Lewis and Boswell 2002). These figures suggest that women are still under-represented in the newsroom in positions of leadership. Measuring numbers alone however, is not enough to measure accurately the impact women are having, and women's leadership can potentially have, on newsrooms in South Africa.

It is proposed by a number of theorists that a simple increase of women in the newsroom would affect the news environment and therefore naturally address issues such as inequalities in gender representation. As "the increased presence of women in the newsroom will necessarily encourage substantive changes in news work practices: women, it is often argued are more inclined then men to endorse informal, non-hierarchical management structures and to support collectively based decisions making processes" (Carter, Branston and Allan 1998:3). However within the South Africa context, studies show that women are still poorly represented in the newsroom, especially in leadership and decision making positions (Lewis and Boswell 2002). By studying a newsroom headed by a woman editor, this research hopes to explore the idea that a woman in power has the potential to affect and alter the socialisation practices of the newsroom and impact the publication's representation in print, and therefore contribute towards a better understanding of the interplay between leadership, news values and representation.

A WOMAN AS EDITOR

The Mail & Guardian

The *Mail & Guardian* has been selected as a case study for this research due to its status as a reputable business and political newspaper comparable with other leading newspapers in South Africa. However, unlike the majority of other papers in South Africa, it is one of the newspapers headed by a woman editor along with the *Daily Dispatch* and the *Business Report*. Originally called the *Weekly Mail*, it was started on a small budget by a group of retrenched journalists after the closures of two liberal papers, the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Express* in 1985. In the eighties, under the apartheid states of emergency and heightened repression against media, it built up an international reputation as a vocal critic of apartheid and was known for its investigative journalism (Tyson 1993: 334). Started with the deliberate intention of writing about what was really happening in South Africa during the last decade of apartheid, over a "few beers" (Manoim 1996:2) by Irwin Manoim and Anton Harber, *The Weekly Mail* was soon branded as part of the alternative press (Tyson 1993: 334).

Currently, its newsroom is of particular interest, given that it is one of the limited number of South African newspapers headed by a woman editor, and has had relatively progressive politics and policies to which it has adhered, including a commitment to non-sexism (Manoim 1996: 48). Besides the editor, there are several other women who also hold influential positions in the *Mail & Guardian* such as the Managing Editor, the Training Editor, the Deputy News Editor and the Chief Sub-Editor.

The majority shareholding of the *Mail & Guardian* is currently held by Newtrust Company Botswana Ltd which is owned by Trevor Ncube.

Chaper Two
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

GENDER SOCIALISATION

As opportunities for women increase, more and more positions that were previously occupied exclusively by men, now have women performing their function. This transition often provokes questions regarding women's competency and suitability to perform these functions. Gender differences in work styles have preoccupied sociologists, who for decades have proposed various models to account for behaviours they see as sex-specific. One of these theories, utilising gender as a deciding factor, is labelled by some sociologists as the 'gender model'. Based on socialisation theory, the gender model is "broadly concerned with the manner in which individuals learn content (behaviour) and process in an effort to adjust to societal roles" (Rodgers and Thorson 2003:658). This process of socialisation creates "two cultures" by which men and women view the world and relate to it. It suggests that women, as a result of the socialisation process, establish their identity through interdependent nurturing relationships with others, and place a primary emphasis on family roles (Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996:1067). According to Rodgers and Thorson, "male and female journalists will have different reporting approaches because women as a result of their socialisation since childhood, will bring different values and interests and subsequently will adjust differently to their news roles" (Rodgers and Thorson 2003:658). Similarly, Bradoc and Gibbons state that, "male and female differences in language represent two cultures (Bradoc and Gibbons in Rodgers and Thorson 2003:660). This suggests that "the increased presence of women in the newsroom will necessarily encourage substantive changes in news work practices: women, it is argued are more inclined than men to endorse informal, non-hierarchical management structures and to support collectively-based decision-making processes" (Carter, Branston and Allan 1998:3). Given that studies have documented that the patterns in the way men and women approach tasks and view issues are different, it is legitimate to hypothesise that the input of women into a previously male dominated newsroom would have a significant impact upon the news environment. However, ideas of 'male' and 'female' behaviours are stereotypical constructs themselves. Studies that look at gender differences tend to categorise men and women according to stereotyped constructs deemed to be 'male' and 'female' characteristics. As a result the 'concepts' or 'measures'

used to identify 'male' and 'female' are socially constructed attributes belonging to each gender.

Socialisation studies have their roots in Social Learning Theory which claims that through a process of rewards and punishments, observation and imitation, people produce gender-typed behaviour (Meyers 1992:605). This suggests that gender differences are taught and acquired throughout one's life-time and that the major influence on the behaviour of men and women. Assuming that behaviour is gender-typed, it suggests that the way in which men and women approach their workplace is different, and that given the same job, they will perform in relation to their gender-typed positions (Rodgers and Thorson, 2003:660). Thus as journalists, "women would favour a more 'human' and involved approach to the news" (van Zoonen 1998:45). This theory suggests that individual behaviour is influenced and dictated by the socialisation of society that defines roles according to gender. Through the process of growing up, a girl would be taught to prioritise different ways of doing and thinking than those used by a boy. As a result, in the same job, their priorities and way of doing things would be different.

Socialisation studies have investigated gender differences and their impact on job performance in the newsroom. Studies conducted by Craft and Wanta found that women editors "tend to encourage positive reporting, or at least focus on the positive aspects of the story. They also tend to treat their [female] reporters on par with male reporters. They do not differentiate between male and female reporters when assigning beats as is apparently the case in male dominated newsrooms" (Craft and Wanta 2004:135).

Although a number of studies indicate that men and women approach their positions differently, it is possible that when a position becomes known as a 'man's job', the attributes that stereotypically belong to men become associated with the position. And thus the expectations of the behaviour that must be performed are based on a 'male' model. For example, research such as that conducted by Phalen, found that women in management are often pressurised to adapt certain management styles or structures that reflect stereotypical expectations of normalcy which have been based upon leadership styles modelled and utilised by men (2000: 233). Traditionally management has been male dominated and as a result, management methods and standards have been defined by men. By virtue of having that position, and doing things the way men would do them, management has become associated

with a 'male' method of doing things. Similarly, this fusion of characteristics into jobs is apparent in the newsroom. Studies indicate that many female journalists have found themselves adapting to the rules and expectations of this traditionally male environment, even verbalising their own success as being accepted as "one of the boys". An indication that the 'boys' are the invisible yardstick by which they are measured" (van Zoonen 1998: 33). Skidmore writes, "anecdotal evidence is that male dominance in journalism has produced a macho culture of news gathering – aggressive and domineering, but also one of male camaraderie and 'bonding' – which excludes women" (1998:207). This process has created an environment, and has set standards and expectations that are perpetuated by tradition, expectation and a sense of normality. Not necessarily a measure of efficiency, best practices, or success, these stereotypes are simply the reflection of a job that has previously been closely associated with men.

WORKPLACE SOCIALISATION

Although the process of gender socialisation is generally accepted as a normative process within a society, another theory proposes that workplace socialisation may supersede the generally accepted gender expectations and norms. Research conducted by Dodd-McCue and Wright, suggests that the "socialisation process of the workplace is stronger than that of society and therefore men and women with similar organisational socialisation and who do the same jobs should perform in accordance with the dictates of the work environment" (Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996: 1066). Within the confines of a previously male dominated environment, it is arguable that women's performance would be a reflection of the workplace environment rather than a reflection of their social upbringing as women. Therefore this theory proposes the socialisation process of the newsroom environment is a greater determinant of performance than society's expectation of feminine behaviour.

This theory, also referred to as the "job model", proposes that organisational structure and culture is the primary determinant of work practices regardless of an employee's gender. It suggests that "women who perform in the same organisation setting as their male counterparts" (Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996:1066), will conform, and so "women in male-dominated professions might develop the same values and attitudes as men in this profession" (Terborg in Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996:1067). If this theory is applicable, it suggests that women in this environment are more likely to perform according to the expectations of the newsroom rather than transform the day to day functioning of this work environment.

NEWS SOCIALISATION THEORY

Having focused upon two possible theories relevant to women working in the news media industry, there is another theory that might contribute to a better understanding of the newsroom environment, called 'news socialisation theory'. Similar to the job model, news socialisation focuses upon how journalists are socialised in their work environments. It states that there are expectations and norms that dictate journalistic codes of conduct which set the parameters within which a journalist is expected to conform and abide. News socialisation theory takes a focused look at the newsroom environment and has identified a number of socialisation processes that are newsroom specific. News socialisation theory will first be discussed looking at its general positions on newsroom behaviour, following which the discussion will take a closer look at specific components of news socialisation theory, such as objectivity and gate-keeping.

Thus news socialisation theory has found that the concept of "'news professionalism' controls the behaviour of journalists in two related ways. It sets standards and norms of behaviour and it determines a professional reward system" (Soloski 1997:142). Sociological studies of news production suggest that "social realities can be observed at the point of news production. This is where news sources, news reporters, news organisations, editors and the demands of professionalism, the marketplace and cultural traditions collect around specific choices of what news to report and how to report it" (Schudson 2000:175). These interactions create the environment and the culture in which journalists need to operate and succeed. These dynamics of a newsroom create a functional norm and a top-down organisational structure that "dictates decisions derived from audience marketing… Bureaucratic structures ensure conformity [and] reporters work from lists of stories approved by editors" (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:161). As an environment that has been strongly influenced by expectations that stereotypically are associated with men, the newsroom culture tends to reflect and value traditional methods of news production commonly associated with a 'male' way of doing things.

Regular exposure to a particular and specific way of doing things can shape behaviour because "people are social beings and they participate in patterns of action that they themselves did not create. They speak the language of their group and think as their group thinks. As individuals in a group they have established routines from an endless pattern of response to common situations" (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:105). The ability to adapt and

take on roles as the environment dictates tends to shape behaviour. Despite some research that initially suggests that "reporters engage in self-censorship when they have an eye fixed on pleasing an editor, [other] systematic socialisation research has not been as successful in this domain" (Schudson 2000: 185).

The news environment has been shaped by its male dominated tradition, and individuals continually exposed to a certain way of doing things tend to conform to expectations. If success is dependent upon meeting the expectations of a supervisor, the ability to enter and transform an environment while strategically maintaining a position that aligns oneself for promotion is most likely incompatible.

The pattern of expectation is summarised by Schudson who states:

> Journalists breathe a specifically journalistic air as well as the air they share with fellow citizens. The routines of journalists are not only social, emerging out of interactions among officials, reporters and editors, but literally emerging out of interactions of writers with traditions. More than that journalists at work operate not only to repair their social relations with sources and colleagues but their cultural image as journalists in the eyes of the wider world (Schudson 2000:193).

Research on professional practices have found "very little evidence of women performing differently from men in journalism, with the exception of women looking for female spokespersons" (van Zoonen 1994:37). This tendency for human beings to accommodate, adopt and perpetuate the status quo is illustrated by Allen who states, "journalists who claim to possess a privileged access to truth are failing to acknowledge that the codified rules of 'objectivity' are helping to lend justification to iniquitous social arrangements of discursive power" (1998:35). The justification for objective reporting in reality helps to perpetuate injustices, given that the journalist is not in a position to make a moral decision. It is often utilised as a reason to legitimise the status quo rather than challenge, question and debate.

Objectivity

Studies have found that in journalism "objectivity is the most important professional norm and from it flow more specific aspects of news professionalism such as news judgement, the selection of sources, and the structure of news beats" (Soloski 1997:143). Accordingly, Shoemaker and Reese state:

> If news values help gatekeepers select content for its appeal, other routines help prevent offending an audience. The routine of objectivity is a prime example and it can be viewed as serving a defensive function. Objectivity, although being the cornerstone of journalistic ideology, is rooted in practical organisational requirements. In this sense, objectivity is less a core belief by journalists than a set of procedures to which journalists willingly conform in order to protect themselves from attack. Their editors and publishers are equally concerned with jeopardising their own positions (1996:112).

While not surprised by the human quest of self-preservation by journalists, this tendency has put the media industry in a position where its production subtly legitimises the status quo and creates news that tends to conform to the expectations of those with societal influence.

More recently, however, the tradition of journalistic objectivity has found itself under attack and other studies have stated that "we cannot expect that a monologic conception of truth will always conform to the ideals of journalistic practice, for there is no essential reason for why this must be so. Indeed the end of objectivity may already be in sight" (Allan 1996:135).

'Professional journalistic standards' not only influence the news production process as a journalist, but affect the overall management of the newsroom as well. The role and positioning of the editor in the newsroom are also shaped by norms and expectations. Accordingly, "analysing these changing roles helps us to evaluate the autonomy and relative power of the editorial side of the paper. If the editor controls both the editorial and business sides of the paper, the relative power of the journalistic division is less" (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:162). The unique positioning of the editor is his / her multifaceted role. Despite being accountable for the publication insofar as what it produces, the editor also manages the business and the social aspects of the news environment. These roles sometimes reflect the inability of editors to walk the fine line between achieving editorial independence, making the publication a viable business venture and managing and socialising the reporters in the newsroom. These roles similarly add complexity to the editor's expectations of journalistic performance and affect the social environment of the newsroom itself.

Other normative newsroom practices, such as news selection, have also at some level been standardised. Research by Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig, has found that there are "no important differences in the classification of news items by female and male decision makers in news production. This undercuts the accepted belief that any future increase of female journalists

and editors will inevitably lead to changes in the priorities and content of news itself' (2003:17).

Studies on newsroom socialisation suggest that several influences, such as the concept of objectivity, shape journalists' behaviour. Similar to objectivity, gatekeeping is another newsroom standard that affects the production of news.

Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping refers to the "process by which billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day (Shoemaker 1998:57). Gatekeeping occurs within the "framework of the communication organisation, which has its own priorities but also is continuously buffeted by influential forces from outside the organisation. And none of these actors – the individual, the routine, the organisation or the social institution can escape the fact that it is tied to and draws its sustenance from the social system" (Shoemaker 1998:62). The process of news production is not simply an unbiased reflection of what is happening, where; it is a product of choices. The choice to be at parliament rather than the magistrates court impacts what stories will be produced. The process of 'finding' or 'uncovering' is a reflection of where it is thought news is happening. The choice to publish one article over another article is a reflection of what it is thought the news should be. The editor is considered to be the ultimate 'gatekeeper' and must make the "final decision about where, when and how messages will be published" (Donohue, Olien and Tichenor 1998: 95). The context in which the publication operates may provide a variety of constraints, "such as community pluralism, type of newspaper and form of ownership, which may affect the outcome of the gatekeeping process" (Donohue, Olien and Tichenor 1998: 95). Studies examining the gatekeeping process have found that "no conclusion could be drawn from the effect of gender on gatekeeping" (Bleske 1998:78).

WOMEN'S DISCONNECT IN THE NEWSROOM

The idea proposed by the job model and newsroom socialisation theory is that the expectations and standards of the newsroom are the most effective predictors of a journalist's behaviour. This would suggest that the socialisation process of the newsroom is strong enough to override any other contrary socialisation. However, in the cases of a strong male dominated socialisation ethos in a workplace, there is evidence suggesting that women

working in that environment feel a disconnect between their socialised role at work and their role in society.

The supposition that the entrance of more women into the industry will make a significant change in the media world suggests that there is a difference between how men and women approach their position either as a result of socialisation or biology. If this is the case, the idea that balanced gender representation can be achieved from within the field of mainstream media suggests that "female professionals can, and should change employment policies and content from inside the mainstream media" (Braehr and Gray 1996:165). The influence of the individual comes into play here as "journalists exercise many individual choices that have an impact on gender representation, from the selection of guests and interviewees, to interview locations and settings, to style of questioning, camera movement and voice-over" (Gallagher 2001:172). It is with an awareness of framing that journalists themselves can make a significant contribution to the framing of stories and their gender representation. Although the journalist does have a certain level of autonomy insofar as choices relating to a specific piece he / she is working on, other research argues there are other expectations and norms at play within the newsroom. The question then arises, that if an individual's success is dependant upon his / her relationship with his / her superior how much autonomy would be applied to the production process? If a journalist is required to produce an 'objective' piece that is then screened by an editor as usable or not usable, how much autonomy is practicable? And as a woman journalist working under a male editor and supervisor, how much impact can she have as an individual upon the publication or on the newsroom environment? Despite the relative influence of journalistic choices on a news story, research has found that "many female journalists feel a tension between the requirements of objective and detached, professional values and cultural demands one faces as a woman" (van Zoonen 1998:45).

Studies have found that "female journalists working in this predominantly-male environment are regularly pressurised to adopt masculinised forms of reporting which some find to be inconsistent with their own professional identity and thus alienating" (Allan 1998:131). Similarly, van Zoonen comments, that there appears to be a sense of identity discontinuity among women journalists in the past as "apart from reflecting their ideas about journalism, female views may also be seen as efforts to show that despite their professionalism, they are still very much 'true' women. This does produce a very awkward situation of course because conversely, they have to prove that despite their femininity they are good professional

journalists" (van Zoonen 1998:34). It would appear that masculinised workplaces induce this disconnect in female workers, which would suggest that there is a limit to how well workplace socialisation 'overrides' gender socialisation. It is the disjuncture between the roles of the work environment and the expectations of society that suggests that the socialisation processes of each role are in conflict with each other, and one does not necessarily socialise the other out of existence.

CONNECTING WITH WOMEN IN NEWS MEDIA

Given the amount of quantitative research done through media monitoring in South Africa this study has opted for a qualitative approach to gain more insight into the interplay between women's leadership and newsroom socialisation and the news agenda. According to Ezzy, "Qualitative research methods are particularly good at examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretation" (Ezzy 2002:3). Through a process of interviews with women editors at the *Mail & Guardian*, and supplementing that information with a review of the publication, this study is phenomenological in nature looking at the issues from the perspective of the interviewees, their personal experiences and understandings.

In this study, it is important to bear in mind that, although there have been numerous studies conducted and different theories proposed regarding women and media, one must take into consideration some of the limitations of research conducted. There is a notable omission in many of the studies on gender representation, namely, the recognition that women themselves are not a homogenous group. According to Steeves, "Power relations among men and women, racial and ethnic groups, various classes, and men and women living in rural and urban areas may vary considerably from culture to culture" (1993:34). In view of these differences it is important to note that "if women are under-represented or misrepresented in media content, this is doubly so for women who are not members of dominant national culture" (Gallagher 2001:106). Interestingly, in South Africa these biases are again mixed with racial stereotyping as "white women dominated in every topic except politics and government in which there was an equal balance of blacks and whites, and corruption, where black women were mentioned seven times more than white" (Gallagher 2001:107).

A LOOK AT WOMEN'S IMPACT

In a historically male dominated profession which has create its own socialisation processes these questions should be asked: in an environment that has created a culture of expectation and normalcy, what is the potential impact of placing women in the media industry and expecting change? What role can women's leadership contribute towards producing coverage that is less stereotypical in its representation? And how will the addition of women in management contribute to the newsroom environment and expectations of journalists?

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees working in the newsroom including the editor and those that report directly to her. The interviews looked at a number of gender-related issues within the workplace, such as: what influence the gender of the editor has upon the paper's gender representation, how the work environment is influenced by gender issues as a result of women's leadership, the process used to determine news selection within the organisation and what those working there feel the editor's role is, in regards to the paper's gender representation. Recognising that the influence of women is not limited to the editor in the newsroom, as women hold other strategic positions in the organisation, this study also looked at the contributing influences of other female staff such as news editors and section editors. The interviews enquired about their working relationships, their contribution to the production process and their roles in the newsroom, as well as their perceptions and experiences.

This study did not conduct a strict content analysis, but, in the course of the interviews particular stories and their treatment were raised as examples, these were referred to and used in the course of the study for discussion purposes. During the course of the interviews, all of the respondents indicated that they thought that the change from a male editor to a female editor did impact the publication insofar as its gender representation in print. Thus, this study informally considered a random selection of twelve front pages of the *Mail & Guardian (M&G)* prior to the appointment of a woman editor and twelve front pages post-appointment to see whether the perceived difference indicated by the women interviewed was apparent in the publication.

The interview questions were formulated by drawing from issues raised in newsroom socialisation theory as well as gender theory and although "Theories shape both how qualitative data analysis is conducted and what is noticed when qualitative data is analysed.

[By using such methods theories can be tested as to their validity or applicability]. The difference with qualitative analysis, however, is that the analyst is continually making a systematic effort to identify these sources of bias and to analyse that data in such a way as to modify and re-conceptualise their theory" (Ezzy 2002:4).

Given the influence of the researcher's philosophy upon the project it is noted that this study falls within the interpretative paradigm, which incorporates some fundamental assumptions. According to Garrick, they include the following:

> "Firstly, individuals are not considered to be passive vehicles in social, political and historical affairs, but have inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgements, perceptions and decision making autonomy (agency). Secondly, the belief that any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes. (Causes and effects are mutually interdependent). Thirdly, an acceptance of the extreme difficulty in attaining complete objectivity, especially in observing human subjects who confuse and make sense out of events based on their individual systems of meaning. Fourthly, the view that the aim of the inquiry is to develop an understanding of individual cases, rather than universal laws or predictive generalisations. Fifthly, the view that the world is made up of multifaceted realities that are best studied as a whole, recognising the significance of the context in which the experience occurs. Lastly, the recognition that inquiry is always value laden and that such values inevitably influence the framing, focusing and conducting of research". (Garrick 1999:149).

Thus in interpretative theory "knowledge is constructed not only of observable phenomena, but also by descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning and self understanding" (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit 2004:20).

Several open-ended questions were posed during the course of the interviews recognising that relevant information could be introduced by the interviewee that might have required additional enquiry on the part of the interviewer. Also, during the course of the interview, the interviewee was asked to highlight news stories that have brought gender issues to the attention of the public and the newsroom itself. These stories were then referenced in regards to gender representation and, if they highlighted key issues, were referenced in the discussion.

Chapter Three
WOMEN IN THE M&G NEWSROOM

Qualitative interviews with five influential women in management at the *Mail & Guardian (M&G)* newsroom consistently indicated that they considered the M&G to be 'other than' a traditional news environment (Appendices A-E). These five women hold the positions of Editor, Managing Editor, Training Editor, Deputy News Editor and Chief Sub-editor. At the request of those interviewed, names have not been included in the results, as some expressed concern about sharing sensitive information if their names were to be disclosed in the research.

According to news socialisation theory and the job model, the newsroom environment would have a strong influence upon journalist's behaviour through its expectations of 'good journalistic practice'. Standards of 'objectivity' and 'professionalism', constructs strongly rooted in newsroom socialisation theory, are also expectations within the *M&G* and influence the process of news production. During the course of interviews, the environment of the *M&G* was a regularly cited factor in the success of these women respondents, as well as a contributing factor to their career progression. The managing editor summed it up saying, "[the editor] started off as a trainee and 10 to 12 years later is the editor of the paper. So that is really the scope that this company offers one".

Contrary to research conducted on other newsrooms, the *M&G* is reputed to have a history with few examples of sexism in policies, story assignments or beats, and no tendency to breakdown news into 'soft news' and 'hard news'. Research conducted elsewhere by Steeves found that "the few women [who held] news positions typically handled traditional women's features and less important assignments" (1993:43). The expectation of journalists at the *M&G*, regardless of gender, was to report news and the assignments, according to the perceptions of one woman respondent, were not gender biased. The expectation of journalists, regardless of their gender at the *M&G*, created the opportunity for the women in the newsroom to experience writing and producing news at all levels. One freelance female journalist, based in Cape Town during the 1980's, held the paper's record for the most appearances in court for her contributions to the *Weekly Mail* (Manoim 1996:17). This is

indicative of the political sensitivity of the articles she was writing during a time in South African history when apartheid states of emergency restricted press freedom.

Historically in the *M&G* newsroom it would appear that there were few divisions between male and female journalists and a policy of non-sexism had been adopted (Manoim 1996: 48). Started with the intention of reflecting the realities of South Africa during the height of many states of emergency, the *Weekly Mail*, as it was called then, consisted of a skeleton staff of men and women, who often produced the paper and handled the delivery routes (Manoim 1996:17).

The small and flexible nature of the *M&G* created an opportunity for women to assert and prove themselves in the newsroom. This culture offered women a valuable opportunity to progress in their careers and to gain valuable experience as news journalists and managers of news.

The *M&G* newsroom was cited by one of the respondents as a factor in her success. She stated, [at the *M&G*] "I have always been promoted and as a woman have always been accepted, I have always been given advantages, and chances to progress in my career". These sentiments were supported by the others interviewed, one adding "I think the *M&G* is better for women" [than other newsrooms], and another saying "I think we are quite lucky at the *M&G* because we really don't have too many gender bias issues. I think people who are discriminatory on the basis of gender are in the minority and they soon find that that sort of thing is just not on." Finally, one respondent commented that there was not too much policy around gender that needed to be changed.

The *M&G* as a newsroom was conducive to the advancement of women, in the opinions of those interviewed, as all of the women cited their performance as one of the factors in their success, along with their relationship with their superiors. Research conducted in 2001 found that "although women were entering the media field, few women were advancing to senior or management positions, giving them limited control over how news is defined and on hiring and promotion practices" (Lowe-Morna 2001:25). This would suggest that the environment of the *M&G* was more conducive to women's advancement and development than other newsrooms. One respondent, who recently joined the *M&G* newsroom, stated that if there had not been "a woman editor in this office, I'm not sure that I would have gotten to where I

am so quickly". Research conducted by Baehr and Gray (1996) claims that the simple addition of women into the news environment "does not take into account the professional constraints on women working in a male dominated industry". This idea was confirmed by the respondents who all acknowledged the contribution of their supervisors to their success. It is important to note that this dependence upon supervisor relationships for promotion can also be a constraint, if management is sexist.

When mentioning the environment of the *M&G*, the 'division' of the editorial department and the advertising department was regularly cited as a strong characteristic of the newsroom. One woman said, "We have a big tradition of a Chinese wall between advertising and editorial, which is defended vigorously". In the course of another interview, it is mentioned that sometimes, the *M&G* will write supplements, or choose topics in their supplements that will attract advertising, but never in relation to their news coverage. This suggests that the M&G now recognises the importance of independent news, but does produce some parts of the paper with the financial bottom line in mind. Each individual cited the division between the editorial and advertising department with one person saying, "We have never backed off in the face that we might lose advertising, because we have lived our entire existence in the *M&G* and the *Weekly Mail* losing advertising". This comment was a reflection of the *M&G*'s past as an anti-apartheid newspaper. Each of the women interviewed perceives the editorial and advertising departments as independent from one another and feels relatively protected from external factors that could potentially influence their process of news production.

The editorial independence, cited by all of the women as a feature of the *M&G*, sets it apart from media research conducted by Williamson (1996:26) which found that "issues of origin (context) and direct buying power have a direct impact on media through advertising expenditure, which again can have an indirect influence upon the content of the publication". The language of journalists consistently contains discourse about their editorial independence, despite factors that could potentially suggest otherwise. It is a language that is commonly associated with the socialisation process of the majority of newsrooms, and it would appear that it is a language that is prominent in the culture of the *M&G* newsroom as well.

OBJECTIVITY

Like concepts such as editorial independence, studies have found that objectivity is the "most important professional norm" and that these norms, or professional standards dictate and influence how news production and selection operates (Soloski, 1997:142). During the course of the interviews, all of the women stated that objectivity was not attainable, but was still something to strive for. Four out of the five interviewed replaced objectivity with other measures such as balance in a story and whether the story gives everyone affected a chance to state their case. Other suggested alternatives to objectivity were a self-awareness of one's own socialisation and its impact on one's work, ethical decision-making regarding a story, accuracy and fairness. One stated that the *M&G* newsroom environment was one of open debate and that everyone in the newsroom has a chance to comment on work belonging to each other as a means to ensure more balanced news reporting. The concept of 'objectivity' in research conducted by van Zoonen (1998) found that female journalists struggled with the professional expectations of objectivity and detachment. One of the respondents said, when asked about the concept of objectivity, "It's quite arrogant as well, you know. I'm a journalist and I'm objective. How fascinating, nobody else in society is, why should you be so special?" Although the concept itself sparked questions and debate, its expectation still governed the journalists insofar as what they wrote. It was held up as an ideal and a standard to which reporters should ascribe, but only fell short of. This understanding of 'objectivity' is strongly in agreement with news socialisation theory that states 'objectivity' is a powerful tool utilised in the newsroom to influence journalists' work.

A WOMAN'S IMPACT IN THE NEWSROOM

With the appointment of a woman editor at the *M&G*, it is the perceptions of women who work in the newsroom that the social conditions of the newsroom have been altered as a result. All of the women interviewed (excluding the editor) indicated a positive change in the newsroom environment with the appointment of this woman editor. Cited as being more 'gender aware', more 'attuned to family issues', it was said that she improves communication and subtly frees people up from stereotypes previously held. She has created a more 'open door policy' in the newsroom and introduced a more progressive management style. It is said that she has high expectations of everyone and everyone tries to do their best and to adhere to high values, high standards and that it is perceived that women now have the chance to progress and reach the top. Others have said that under the current editor there are fewer cliques in the newsroom. It is easier to address problems as communication is very open in

the newsroom. The editor herself states that she runs a "flatter newsroom than her male colleagues", implying there is less hierarchy within this newsroom when compared to other newsrooms. These perceptions of the changes in the newsroom support research conducted by Carter, Branston and Allan stating that "women are more inclined to endorse informal, non-hierarchical management structures and to support collectively based decision making processes" (1998:3). With the appointment of a woman editor, according to the perceptions of those interviewed, the environment of the newsroom has changed. The comments made regarding her management style support the theory that behaviour is strongly rooted in gender and that women can influence and alter the media industry from within the newsroom. However, it is important to refer to the perceptions of the M&G as a 'non-typical' news environment. This also suggests that this newsroom environment may be more receptive to change than a newsroom rooted in older, more established practice. The features of the changes mentioned can be associated with stereotypically female characteristics, but are they a factor of the individual's gender or are there other influences that could be contributing to the change? The question arises, are these changes characteristic of women? Can it therefore be argued that women can alter the environment due to their gender socialisation process or are there other influences at play within the newsroom?

When asked how their gender influences their management style, the women cited things such as: less authoritarian, more empathetic, greater communication and encouraging more dialogue around how they want things done, rather than telling employees what to do because of any 'I'm the boss philosophy'. Others mentioned being more compassionate, taking a more holistic approach, considering things like personal issues, having a more collective and co-operative work style. Another respondent commented that, as a woman manager, it is important to build a relationship actively with the men being managed and cited the importance of being fair and always acting within the 'rule of law'. This concurs with research suggesting that behaviour is gender typed, and that the way in which men and women approach the workplace is different (Rodgers and Thorson, 2003:658). It is interesting to note that the women in the *M&G* newsroom do characterise their own management style as being more "feminine", and perhaps under a women editor, they feel more empowered to do so as women's leadership is viewed with high esteem. It is possible that the socialisation process under a woman has altered a number of expectations traditionally associated with newsroom culture such as the 'expected' characteristics of leadership.

Two of the interviewees suggested that women in general should be more aware of gender issues by virtue of being women. This supports research conducted by Baehr and Gray (1996:166), that an increased number of women in the workplace will influence the process and production of news, and by van Zoonen (1998: 45), who suggests that women favour a more 'human' approach to the news. Two other interviewees strongly disagreed. In responding to the question of whether simply increasing the number of women in the workplace would have a natural impact on representation, one responded, "That's crap. I don't believe it is a natural thing by virtue of being a woman. If you look at the magazine industry for example, mostly run by women editors and the number of mags that openly endorse things like botox treatment, implants…Is that a positive portrayal of women?… I think it takes an awareness and consciousness of issues and politics in order to do those things. And it is not a case of osmosis or natural occurrence". Another interviewee said, "I have worked in places where, women in power have made absolutely no impact because they have been male clones. They didn't bring anything different. You know, you can't blame them because they have modelled themselves on men." "I would rather have a progressive man than a non-gender aware woman". This perspective supports the research of Dodd-McCue and Wright (1996:1066), proposing that women with similar organisational socialisation and do the same jobs as men will perform in accordance with the expectations of the environment, and that "women in male dominated professions might develop the same values and attitudes as men in this profession", although in this case, this theory does not seem to apply to the current leadership of the M&G. This would suggest that perhaps there are other influences impacting leadership besides simply gender. If a number of women adapt, and lead with characteristically masculine leadership qualities, and a number of women utilise their own method of management, strongly rooted in stereotypical feminine characteristics, it suggests that perhaps gender is not the predominant determinant of behaviour. It indicates that there are other characteristics that contribute to a person's ability to lead.

According to one respondent, the appointment of this woman as editor changes the newsroom environment quite considerably. She ads that "men don't feel quite as free to express themselves as they did before" and "that knee-jerk stuff [in reference to comments on gender] …doesn't really find a happy hunting grounds here anymore". It is "noticeable because when she goes on leave it will surge and when she comes back it will die down again." This

statement provides some interesting insight into the influence of power and the nature of sexism in the newsroom. Its ability to flare up and settle as a result of the editor's presence says that there are examples of sexism in the newsroom and that therefore sexism is part of the social culture of the *M&G*. Secondly, it also shows that the editor's presence and position in the newsroom have a very definite impact over what is socially acceptable, given her position of influence on those who report to her. It also indicates that sexism does not need policy, or a socialisation process. As long as there is one willing proponent of sexism who works in the newsroom, it is there and its potential to influence is determined by the position which that person occupies in the workplace.

Five out of five interviewees cited a number of sexist incidents they had personally experienced, not all of which happened at the *M&G*. One interviewee spoke of a demotion without consultation following her maternity leave in a newsroom that she worked for previously. Two respondents cited an incident where young women journalists felt that their stories were being sidelined by a previous editor at the *M&G*. Another mentioned that the idea of a boys club was much less prevalent at the *M&G* than in a [similar, strongly business-orientated newsroom] where she had been previously employed. One respondent cited times in which there have been conversations around why women 'should' or 'should not' be represented a certain way. One woman manager was told by a male colleague that her "management style is too soft and that she should use her temper and show people that she is angry". This example of stereotyped expectation has been documented in a study conducted by Phalen (2000:233) stating that "women in management are often pressured to adapt certain management styles or structures that reflect men's priorities [rather] than their own".

Four out of the five mention incidents of sexism in the workplace as an attack on their person. Depending on the respondent, the incidents vary widely in frequency and occurrence. One respondent cites very personal incidents such as having her femininity and her sexual orientation questioned, as well as other personal derogatory comments. Similarly she cites the differences in the way men respond to challenges from women. This respondent states that this type of sexism tends to be expressed in the form of a joke. Noticeably she distinguishes between professional sexism and personal sexism, saying "I think if you present yourself in a way that is not necessarily conventional… I mean I'm six foot two and not like meek and mild… you do get a lot of push back from people who have their own issues".

Similarly five out of five interviewees also regularly associated incidents of sexism in the workplace with older men and it is mentioned a total of seven times in various forms, both implied and stated outright. For example one respondent mentioned that "male members of the newsroom might talk down to you regardless of your background and your experience and whatnot. And they think of themselves as father figures". Another commented that it is possible to "come across a colleague who may be a bit more old school and is used to a bit more male dominated ways of doing things…" The editor also mentioned that "people tend to work at the M&G for a long time and you can't make the changes you want to make. [In response to the question, what restrictions are there on you, as the editor when you implement changes you think are necessary within the newsroom in regards to gender bias?]. One respondent summed up her analysis of the situation saying, "to be fair, for every one deconstructed misogynist, there is one very constructed and evolved new man. … More [incidences of sexism] with the older men, I find". During the course of the interviews, one woman raised an interesting point regarding the 'older male observations' by stating, "sometimes it is difficult to distinguish what we think is sexism, can also be an issue of age. Because normally when gender becomes an issue it is often with an elder… elder male".

POLITICAL AWARENESS

Four out of the five interviewees referred to the editor's political awareness of gender issues in the newsroom and the newspaper. The editor herself mentioned that she has been trained to look at gender issues and be aware of things like representation and sourcing. She also mentioned that she has had very strong women roles models such as Colleen Lowe-Morna, Gender Activist and currently the chairperson of the Gender Links Board, and Barbara Ludman, a former journalist at the M&G, who have influenced her. As a result, she takes gender issues into consideration. Three other interviewees also mention the editor's awareness of gender issues, twice in relation to the paper coverage and twice in relation to newsroom dynamics. This raises the question as to what impacts gender representation. Is it an individual's gender or perhaps a simple political awareness? Previously it was mentioned that some women in leadership sometimes take on management styles that are very masculine while other women do not. Could it be that a political awareness of gender issues is a possible explanation for the different approaches to leadership in previously male dominated environments?

IMPACTING THE PUBLICATION

One interviewee stated that by being gender sensitive, one has a level of consciousness and awareness of how headlines are written, pictures are used and as a result, she makes an effort to use women's voices and not stereotype women. As a result, she acts deliberately to "represent women as achievers, as successes… as being valid counterparts to the male expert voice". Articles, added another respondent, are often held back because "we didn't have comments or they did not reflect all sides of a story". With a woman, reasoned one respondent, there should be a higher level of sensitivity to stories that highlight gender related issues, and that, under a woman editor, the publication would feature more articles highlighting issues that relate to women. The paper, now with a woman editor, is said to be more "featurish". The editor mentioned that gender balance should be apparent in how women are represented, who writes the paper, what voices are in the paper, how issues are covered, what the paper looks like. She said that, although the paper may not always achieve the gender balance they would like, sometimes it is a reflection of who has the voice within society. Similarly, Gender Activist, Lowe-Morna (2001:31) states, "dominant voices in society have defined what is news worthy and what is not, and those voices have seldom been female".

One respondent stated that "she makes a conscious effort to put female voices, poor female voices and poor black female voices, workers voices…into the paper". In addition, the M&G according to one respondent "tends to take a more serious approach to gender issues and gender representation within the paper. The M&G prefers not to run articles specifically aimed at women, and acknowledges that their male and female readership are interested in the same things". This supports research by Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2004:17) which found that there "is no important differences in the classification of news items by male or female decision-makers in news production".

On the Front Page

The paper's appearance was mentioned both by the editor as well as another woman interviewed as one area where gender awareness should be evident. The second respondent stated that the current editor had made her more aware of gender representation in things such as pictures in the paper. So, a brief comparison was made between the front page of the *M&G* under the current editor and the *M&G* under the previous editor. Taking a random

sample of *M&G* publications released in 2005, giving the current editor about a year to influence the publication, and a random sample of the publication between July 2002 – June 2003, six months prior to the resignation of the previous editor, a brief comparison of front pages was done, reviewing its gender representation in headlines and pictures to see whether the difference would be apparent to an average reader. The current editor took over editorship of the paper the beginning of 2004.

Twelve issues were selected in each year and a *brief look* at gender coverage was done to see if gender representation differences could be noticed without an in-depth content analysis.

Summary of results

The number of pictures used in the sample 2002-2003, were 35 of which eight were of women who were pictured as being: one celebrity (stereotypical, low top, short skirt), one tennis player, two women in movie adverts, one politician, one face, and one face of a business women. The rest of the pictures were of men.

Seven editions had no pictures of women and two editions lacked any reference at all to women in print or pictures.

In the 2005 sample, out of 46 pictures used, 17 were of women, six were of images other than people and the rest were of men. The women were pictured as being: lawyers, journalist, fashion model, three celebrities, rural women, two politicians, one South African woman (dressed in SA branded clothing), one ballet dancer, one business woman, one award winner, one beach volleyball player (more stereotypical), face shot of Charlize Theron (noticeably not the movie star in the 'short dress' scenario), one professional woman and one picture of a woman dressed in a thong pictured looking into the shorts of her male counterpart.

One of the editions had pictures of only women (the September issue, August being women's month), one edition had one picture of a woman and the other pictures had other things besides people and one edition had no women featured on the front page.

Given that the front page of the M&G does not contain stories but only references to what is inside, titles referencing women or highlighting gender issues were recorded.

The 2002 – 2003 stories highlighted as listed below.

"The State has an AIDS plan, writes Manto"
"Don't be polite. It's time for sisters to make body hair hot"
"Accidental Babies: Never a man's fault"
"The madness of Queen Manto"
"Heavenly Creatures: The Women's picture reinvented"
"Lousy Dates: If you want to catch your man, don't play by the rules"
"Part of the deal: Coping with the other woman in marriage"
"Winnie is no conventional role model"
"James Bond has something to hide. He's a bit of a girl"
"Bridgette Radebe in a mining dispute"
"Myth of the gender divide"

The 2005 stories highlighted are listed below.

"Women who lead the Green Police"
"Fat Daddies, Old Mammas: Sex and Flab"
"Education for all. Naledi Pandor Speaks to Us"
"Motshekga scandal widens: Provincial Minister must Explain"
"Sis Dolly Radebe: She sang, she laughed, she made people cry"
"Women on Top at the CT International Jazz Festival"
"Is this God's Wife?"
"Why Ramos canned R4bn MTN deal"
" 'Trouble Women' cleaning up Nigeria"
"Being Mr. Charlize Theron"
"Thighs do Matter"
"Beijing Betrayal. Women Angry about the Lack of Progress"
"Shaik's New Service Provider"

Although both lists contain some stereotypical references to women, there are some differences. In the 2002-2003 list, 'mad Manto', 'unconventional Winnie' can hardly be considered labels free of gender stereotypes. Similarly, some of the other stories appear to

package women relatively stereotypically i.e. “It’s time for sisters to make body hair hot”, “how to catch a man”, “coping with the other woman”.

The references in the 2005 list to women leaders are neutral. i.e. Ramos, Pandor.
The other stories are of a less stereotypical nature such as women as leaders: the feature about women lawyers; women at Jazz festival; women cleaning up Nigeria; women as being involved in politics; Beijing Betrayal; And stereotypically reversed stories: Mr. Charlize Theron.
The story, “Thighs do matter” is rather stereotypical in nature.
Shaik’s New Service Provider is about a journalist hired to try to work on the public image of Shabir Shaik and Jacob Zuma, despite the possible dual interpretation of the headline.

A glance at the front pages shows a difference in the representation of women in the coverage from one editor to another in pictures and packaging of story introductions which is in line with the perceptions and feedback of the interviews conducted with the women editors in the newsroom. This supports the perception of women in the newsroom, who perceive a change in the publication as a result of the appointment of a woman editor. However, again it is important to reference the environment and history of the M&G, as it has always taken risks and was started with the intention of challenging press restrictions and writing about what was really happening in South Africa (Manoim 1996: 4). It was in the transition from the *Weekly Mail* to the *Mail & Guardian*, post-apartheid, that the paper became more of an economic venture than during its apartheid existence. However, it remained a publication that was willing to take risks, and the case of Charlene Smith is an example of the some of the more unconventional stories that the M&G was willing to publish.

The Charlene Smith Story

The initial story was an objective and chillingly real account of her rape that was published in the *Mail & Guardian*, April 1999. Its lead sentence started, “Every 26 seconds in South Africa a woman gets raped. It was my turn last Thursday night” (p.3).

Subsequently during the course of 1999, there were a number of references to the story in the form of editorial comment, letters as well as a follow-up article on rape statistics, incidentally written by Ferial Haffajee and an editorial written by Philip Van Niekerk.

Raised by one interviewee as an example of the Mail & Guardian's approach to gender issues it is noteworthy for a number of reasons. It portrayed rape as a very horrific and personal crime as opposed to writing statistics, quoting figures and data, in the typical 'newsworthy manner'. It was published as news.

By choosing to publish the Smith story the M&G has made a significant impact on how rape victims are treated. Some of the hospital policies have been changed, and counselling procedures altered to assist rape survivors more compassionately. The M&G subsequently published a follow-up diary written by Smith during the week of the trial.

The article is significant for this study as one that represents an example of the kind of chances the M&G are willing to take on their publication and reinforces [the editor's] stance that she has had a gender agenda as a reporter in her different positions.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA INDUSTRY

The respondents had a number of things to say about gender issues in the South African media industry. Five out of five stated that the media still needed much transformation and that there were still not enough women in influential positions. One respondent stated that generally "I think newsrooms are a lot less gender aware than we give them credit. I think there are still high levels of sexism." There was an agreement that there are more women in media now and more in middle and senior management, despite the fact that there was a general consensus that the media industry was not changing fast enough. All of the respondents said that they hoped there would be more women editors in future. One woman stated that, although the glass ceiling had been broken, she felt that this editor's case was more of a once-off than a general trend. These perceptions are supported by gender and media research in South Africa which reveals that women's representation in management and higher levels is disproportionately low, despite more women entering the field (Lowe-Morna 2001; Cater, Branston & Allen 1998; Steeves 1995).

Chapter Four
A DEEPER LOOK INTO WOMEN'S POTENTIAL IMPACT

It would appear that the history of the *M&G* has been conducive to the advancement of women in the media industry. Notably each of the respondents spoke about the inherited environment as a factor in their success, as well as their relationship with their superiors. It is important to note that the environment of the *M&G* is characterised as being unlike that of a traditional newsroom. This would mean that although the *M&G* played a positive role in women's development as journalists, it is not viewed as being a common characteristic of newsrooms in the industry. Similarly, it is important to note that the role of these women's superiors was positive in their advancement, but notably, if supervisors were male this position of influence could also be used as a means to frustrate the advancement of women in the media industry. The expectation of the *M&G* was such that it allowed women to take the initiative and bridge the gap that is testament to the progressive environment, as well as the liberal socialisation structures apparent within the organisation.

Maintaining a commitment to non-sexism from its start, perhaps the *M&G* newsroom was less prone to institute sexist policy than other newsrooms rooted in the old journalistic tradition. Although the newsroom is not entirely free of sexism, as sexism is a by-product of sexist colleagues, there is a general feeling that sexism is not widely accepted at the *M&G*.

Under a woman's leadership, this social expectation has altered again and there is more room for different styles of management and leadership and less tolerance for things like gender inequalities. It is important to note that, although many of the changes in the newsroom as suggested by those interviewed, such as freer communication, less hierarchy and 'softer' approaches to management issues, can be classified as stereotypical feminine characteristics, not all women in leadership display these characteristics. This would suggest that gender is not the only characteristic that influences management styles. Similarly, the job model suggests that the expectations of the workplace are a stronger indicator of work practices and behaviour and that in masculine workplaces, women will adopt styles similar to those of their male colleagues. There is some evidence to suggest that the women of the *M&G* have been exposed to a number of stereotypical expectations regarding their leadership and management styles. However, the *M&G* newsroom is perceived to be relatively adaptable and receptive to

change. Despite this perception however, expectations are that in future the position of editor will be taken up by a male candidate again.

Despite having cited the *M&G* as a liberal environment, the interviewees mentioned that many instances of sexism within the workplace involve older men. This could be a case of traditional thinking or it could be a situation of power and positioning within the newsroom. During the course of the interviews this concept of position came to light with the comment that now that there was a woman editor, "men are less likely to engage in knee-jerk sexism" and that when [the editor] was away, incidents of sexism increased. As a male journalist, under a woman editor, if his success is partially dependent upon his relationship with his superior, it would follow that sexism would not contribute positively to the maintenance of that relationship. However, it could be a useful tool to belittle colleagues and sideline them in the process, which could be one of the factors contributing to the under-representation of women in leadership roles in the newsroom, despite the increase of women in the media industry. Similarly, it can also provide a possible explanation for the disparity of frequency in the instances of sexism in the workplace from person to person. The socialisation process of the newsroom as a result is intricately dependent upon the combination of journalistic practices such as objectivity and news selection, as well as supervisor expectations. This balance between individual influence, "good journalistic practice" and expectations in the newsroom is where the history of the publication can greatly influence and strongly shape the socialisation culture of a newsroom.

Despite the proposed distinction between professional sexism and personal sexism to separate one from the other, evidence suggests that the existence of one is dependent on the other. Policies originate with the individuals who draft them and are a reflection of the beliefs of those individuals. As a result, there is little separation between the organisation and the people who make up the organisation when it comes to issues of discrimination. Therefore, the power of position has an impact on the culture of the newsroom. The positioning of the individuals creating the policies and implementing them, whether written and acknowledged, or unwritten, is a direct influence of how newsroom culture influences journalists' day to day functioning. Thus the question arises: is it legitimate to distinguish between 'personal sexism' or 'professional sexism'? And at what point does personal sexism become professional sexism? Does personal sexism on the part of one's superior constitute

professional sexism given his / her position and his / her influence on an individual's ability to succeed? Is this considered to be an effect of newsroom socialisation?

Incidentally, there are studies that indicate that "female journalists working in a predominately male environment are regularly pressured to adopt masculinised forms of reporting even though it is inconsistent with their own professional identity and thus alienating" (Allen 1998:35). Is this a case of newsroom socialisation, or is this an instance of superiors simply imposing expectations upon employees that are rooted in the tradition of male dominance, enforced by the power of positioning?

Although theory suggests that, as a result of the gradual increase of women in the media industry, issues such as women's representation will be addressed naturally (Gallagher 2001:166), the interviewees were split on this issue. Some interviewees stated that women in the newsroom do not necessarily, by virtue of being women, have a consciousness of gender issues. And some women lead with very masculine leadership characteristics. This brings into question whether women's leadership is characteristically stereotypical, or whether the changes perceived are a matter of individual management styles? Secondly, this suggests that perhaps the contributing factor may not necessarily be gender, but rather a political awareness and intention. Perhaps a 'gender agenda' could be endorsed by a progressive man. Interestingly the study gives some support to the idea that women in the newsroom will impact the publication on representation issues and gives some evidence to the contrary. It raises a number of questions regarding the complexity of the gender issue, the commonality of women and their impact in a newsroom environment and the potential influence of intent. This study suggests that an impact is more likely to be made by a politically conscientised individual with the intention of making an improvement on representation and newsroom socialisation. The idea that the promotion of women who are expected to endorse a gender agenda because they are women appears to be over-simplistic.

This raises an interesting debate within the media industry. If by virtue of being a woman the assumption is made that a woman will promote a women's agenda, and this is not necessarily the case, this could also be utilised to create the illusion of change within the industry. An industry dominated by men and the male agenda could revolutionise its appearance and do nothing about its policies by promoting women who are less likely to utilise their position to

forward women's agenda. This would lead full circle back to the socialisation pressures of the newsroom and its expectations of women journalists.

Chapter Five
Some Final Thoughts

This study confirms previous research that states that the simple advancement of women in the media is more complex than a mere change in numbers (Baehr and Gray 1996:166) and that an increase of women in the newsroom is not enough to address issues of gender representation in newsrooms and news representation. Although the publication itself does indicate that, in this case, the appointment of a woman editor affected the newsroom positively on gender awareness issues and the publication itself in its gender representation, there are indications that this is a result of a number of factors rather than of gender alone.

Some of the women interviewed attribute these changes to the editor's gender and others suggest that this is a result of having a high level of gender awareness, training and being politically astute. It is notable that this editor sits on the Gender Links Board and is not the average woman newspaper editor (there are only three in the country), a sample hardly indicative of any norm at this point in history. However, it is important to note that changes made in regards to gender awareness are not simply the by-product of appointing women into newsroom positions. It takes a gender agenda to bring about change.

Influenced by journalistic practices and norms, as well as supervisor expectations, it is important to note that positioning of people with a gender agenda also affects their ability to influence the newsroom culture. It is through the interaction of expectation and journalistic practice that the performance of journalists are measured. Thus it is important to note that a newsroom culture is influenced by the history of the publication as a result of previous expectations, as well as people with the positioning who have an impact on newsroom socialisation and the potential to create change. The addition of women to a newsroom in and of itself is not enough, if they do not have positions of influence. The introduction of women into management positions is also not enough, if they do not have an awareness of gender issues combined with a gender agenda.

The study highlights a number of issues within the media industry. The first is that bringing women into the newsroom does not necessarily bring with it a change in a publication's gender representation by virtue of an increased presence within the newsroom. There needs

to be a certain level of awareness about gender issues and an intention to push women's agenda. Nor does simply increasing the number of women in a newsroom constitute a dramatic change in a publication's gender representation in print. Women's presence in leadership positions does potentially suggest that the history of that publication may have more consciously endorsed the advancement of women and provided the potential platform for women to take up leadership positions in the newsroom.

This study has dealt primarily with the impact of women in leadership positions in the M&G environment measured through their perceptions, and has only touched the surface of gender representation, as a full content analysis was beyond the scope of this research. It would be an interesting follow-up study to look at other women news editors in the county as well as delve into a full content analysis of the changes made in the relevant publications as a result.

This research has found that it is the combination of positioning, power and influence, with a gender agenda, intention and purpose, in an environment that is receptive to change, that will significantly contribute to changes within the socialisation of the newsroom and translate into a higher level of gender awareness and sensitivity in newspapers' gender representation.

WORKS CONSULTED

Armstrong, Cory L. (2004). "The influence of reporter's gender on source selection in newspaper stories". *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 81(1). Spring. pp.139-154.

Allan, Stuart. (1998). "(*En)Gendering the Truth*" In Carter, C., G. Branston, and S. Allan (1998) News, Gender and Power. New York: Routledge.

Bleske, Glen L. (1997). "Ms Gates Takes Over: An updated version of a 1949 Case Study". In Berkowitz, Dan. (1998). *Social Meanings of News*. California: Sage Publications.

Braehr, Helen, and Gray, Ann. (1996). *Turning it On*. London: St. Martins Press.

Carter, C., Branston, G., and Allan, S. (1998) "*Setting New(s) Agendas" in News, Gender and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Craft, Stephanie, and Wanta, Wayne. (2004). "Women in the newsroom: Influences of Female Editors and Reporters on News Agenda". *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 81(1) Spring. pp.124-138.

Creedon, Pamela J. (1993). *Women in Mass Communication*. London: Sage Publications.

Curphey, Shauna. (2003). *Women Push for Media Coverage in Southern Africa*. 15 September. Women's e-news.

Davies, Kathy, Dickey, Julienne, Stratford, Teresa. (1987*). Out of Focus: Writings on Women and the Media*. London: The Women's Press.

Dodd-McCue, Dianne, Wright, Gail. (1996). "Men, Women and Attitudinal Commitment. The effects of Workplace Experience and Socialisation." *Human Relations*. 49(8). August. pp.1061-1091.

Donohue, G. A., C.N. Olien and P.J. Tichenor. (1997). "Structure and Constraints on Community Newspaper Gatekeepers". In Berkowitz, Dan. (1998). *Social Meanings of News*. California: Sage Publications.

Ezzy, Douglas. (2002). *Qualitative Analysis: practice and innovation*. London: Routledge.

Gallagher, Margaret. (2001*) Gender Setting; New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy*, London: Zed Books.

Garrick, J. (1999). "Doubting the Philosophical Assumptions of Interpretative Research" *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* 12(2), March – April 1999. pp. 147-157.

Hackman, Michael, Furniss, Alison H., Hills, Marylyn J., Paterson, Tracey J. (1992). "Perceptions of Gender and Role characteristics and transformational and transactional leadership behaviours." *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. 75(1). August. pp. 311-319.

Henning, E, Van Rensburg, W, Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in Qualitative Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Lavie, Aliza, Lehman-Wilzig, Sam. (2003). "*Whose news: Does Gender Determine Editorial Product?*". European Journal of Communication. 18(1). March. pp.5-29.

Len Rios, Maria E., Rodgers, Shelly; Thorson, Esther, Yoon, Doyle. (2005). "Representation of Women in News and Photos; Comparing Content to Perceptions". *Journal of Communication*, 55(1). March 1, 2005. pp. 152-168.

Lewis, Desiree and Boswell, Barbara. (2002). "Gender and the Media," *Newsletter*. Vol. 11 December 2002, Cape Town: The African Gender Institute.

Lowe-Morna, Colleen. (2001). *Whose News? Whose Views?* South Africa: Gender Links.

Manoim, Irwin. (1996). *"...you have been warned". A History of the Mail & Guardian*. London: The Penguin Group.

MISA and Gender Links. (2003). *Gender and media baseline study, South Africa Report.* Cape Town: Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and Gender Links.

Mccombs, Maxwell. (2004) *Setting the Agenda*. Cambridge: Maxwell McCombs.

Media Tenor SA. (2002). February 1, 2001. www.mediatenor.com.

Meyers, David G. (1992). *Psychology.* Michigan: Worth Publishers.

Phalen, Patricia F. (2000). 'Pioneers, Girlfriends and Wives'. An Agenda for Research on Women and the Organisational Culture of Broadcasting. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 44 (spring 2000) pp. 230-247.

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., and Fico, F. G. (1998*) Analysing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Rodgers, Shelly, Thorson, Esther. (2003). "A socialization perspective on male and female reporting". *Journal of Communication*. 53(4). December 2003. pp. 658-675.

Schudson, Michael. (2000). "The Sociology of News Production Revisited (Again)" In Curran, James and Michael Gurevitch. Oxford University Press: New York.

Shoemaker, Pamela J. (1997) "A New Gatekeeping Model". In Berkowitz, Dan. (1997). *Social Meanings of News*. London: Sage Publications

Shoemaker, Pamela J. and Reese, Stephen D. (1996) Mediating the Message. *Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. Longman Publishers: USA.

Skidmore, Paula. (1998) "Gender and the Agenda: News Reporting of child sexual abuse". In Carter, C., Branston, G., and Allan S. (1998) *News, Gender and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Soloski, John. (1997). "News Reporting and Professionalism: Some Constraints on the Reporting of News". In Berkowitz, Dan. 1997. *Social Meanings of News*. London: Sage Publications.

Steeves, H. Leslie. (1993). "Gender and Mass Communication in a Global Context". In Creedon, Pamela J. (1993) *Women in Mass Communication*. London: Sage Publications.

Steiner, Linda. (1998). "Newsroom Accounts of Power at Work". In Carter, C., Branston, G., and Allan, S. (1998) *News, Gender and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Tyson, Harvey. (1993) *Editors Under Fire*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Random House.

Vale, Peter. (2004). "Gender Rights and Democracy in Southern Africa" in Landsberg, Chris and Mackay, Shaun. (2004). *Southern Africa Post Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance*. Cape Town: IDASA.

Van Zoonen, Liesbet. (1998). "One of the Girls? The Changing Gender of Journalism". In Carter, C., G. Branston, G., and Allan S. (1998) *News, Gender and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Williamson, Judith. (1996) "Women is an island: femininity and colonisation" in Braehr, Helen, and Gray, Ann (1996). *Turning it On*. London: St. Martins Press.

Young, Stacey. (1997*) Changing the Wor(l)d; Discourse, Politics and the Feminist Movement*, London: Routledge.