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

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Abstract

This study takes a qualitative look at the interplay between women's leadership and newsroom socialisation and the news agenda as experienced and understood by women editors at the *Mail & Guardian,* through a process of interviews with women editors, supplemented by a brief look at the publication when referenced during the course of the interviews.

This study confirms previous research that suggests that an increase of women in the newsroom is not enough to address issues of gender representation in newsrooms and news representation. Although at the *Mail & Guardian*, this study indicates that the appointment of a woman editor impacted 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 and not gender alone.

In summary, this research 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 both within the socialisation of the newsroom and translate into a higher level of gender awareness and sensitivity in newspaper's gender representation.

To my daughter Namile,
whose mommy started her thesis while she was still too
young to remember
and who still encourages her mommy to go and 'finish her project'.

And

a big thank you to my supervisor
Anthea Garman,
who told me my writing was terse and cryptic.

Also a special thank-you in recognition of the women at the Mail & Guardian who took time from their busy schedules to talk to me about their experiences as women in the newsroom.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation / thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Name of Candidate

signed the 31rst day of May, 2006.

Appendix

Please Note

The following appendices have had any names of actual people and publications removed to respect the requests of those interviewed not to reveal names during the course of this research.

Similarly, given that the *Mail & Guardian* is a small publication, the titles of the respondents have also been removed as it would be easy to identify the interviewees.

Those replacements are indicated by square brackets.