Gender transformation and media representations: Journalistic discourses in three South African newspapers

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite apparent feminist advancements within contemporary South Africa, media representations continue to reproduce discourses that inhibit processes of gender transformation. As such, the media represents an important site of continued struggle over gendered meanings and power. While prolific research on gender and the media has been undertaken, there is still a need in South Africa to explore the ways in which media professionals themselves perceive their role in generating gendered media texts. This research therefore aimed to unpack media professionals' perceptions of gender transformation through their work. Furthermore, given the perceived limitations of certain approaches to gender and the media in South Africa, feminist theory conceptualised as "progressive" was applied in the study towards strengthening engendered media production research. The study involved a thematic, critical discourse analysis of newspaper texts and interviews with journalists and editors from three weekly news publications. The study revealed a high level of discursive contradiction in gender representations, especially in the tabloidised newspapers. Gendered meanings were effected through different discursive devises, namely complicit, advocate and spatial discourses, which played out variously within different spaces of the newspapers. In particular, gender transformative representations of the "private" sphere lagged significantly behind those related to the "public" sphere. In addition, important negotiations over gendered meaning were being undertaken in the more "informal" newspaper spaces, such as columns and jokes pages, often neglected in news media research. The interviews further highlighted lags in feminist trajectories pertaining to the "private sphere", with liberal-inclusionary feminist conceptions of gender transformation, focused on women's public participation, predominating. With a few exceptions, progressive feminist perspectives, moving beyond numerical representation towards greater attention to symbolic, relational and integrated understandings of gender, were generally lacking. In addition, many participants conveyed a largely positivistic discourse of objectivity through the media. However, various discursive strategies through which social transformation values were imbibed into newspaper texts were identified, and the research highlighted potential discursive opportunities for gender transformative change. The central strategy identified was the need for the development of a progressive gender lens and the decentralisation of a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm within the media and broader society.

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Origins, Impetus and Inspiration for the Research

South Africa is undoubtedly crossing through a period of concentrated and vital change. Emerging from an expansive period of interconnected racial, class and gender inequality into a new democratic dispensation, it represents in many respects a case of "unfinished revolution". South Africa can be said to have undergone a revolution in terms of the change and quite radical shift in policy, law, various structures and also discourses that has taken place in recent years. Of course, to call it a case of "unfinished revolution" is not to suggest that any transformative changes are ever uncontested or finite. Rather, it is to highlight the ways in which substantial transformative change and substantial legacies of inequality can still be found side by side. The social and material legacies of South Africa's history continue to challenge diverse agents to try to understand, strategise around and act in addressing these inequalities. While early discourses of social transformation may, in some respects, have focused on the nexus of class and race relations in South Africa, gender is increasingly being acknowledged as a key issue in addressing a wide range of social problems, from poverty and development to widespread manifestations of violence and crime.

Indeed, South Africa is recognised by many as one of the most progressive, forward-thinking countries when it comes to gender, if viewed through the lens of its new policies and laws. Yet, despite the truly revolutionary accomplishments that have been made in terms of equality laws and structures, lived experiences continue to shout about the ongoing impact of untransformed gender relations on numerous areas of life. Some advancements have been made, while other issues stagnate or even regress. For example, more women are in leadership positions in South Africa's government than in most other governments in the world (Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership, 2008). Yet at the same time, South Africa maintains the highest rate of rape in the world (see for example United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2001), women are sexually assaulted for wearing short skirts in public[1], and HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly, especially among young women (Pettifor et al,

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[1] One incident was prominently covered in the South African media, sparking intense debate, and various other cases subsequently also emerged. See for example http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-02-19-outrage-over-attack-on-miniskirtwearing-woman or http://www.actionaid.org/kenya/index.aspx?PageID=2527 [last accessed: 27 July 2009].

2005). Clearly, the trajectories of gender transformation represent advancements and lags, accomplishments and limitations, and certainly ongoing challenges.

A passionate gender studies student, this research was my first foray into the field of media studies and indeed feminist media studies. Catalysed by a series of personal confrontations with media representations, the concept for this research was born out of my own observations about these apparently uneven gender transformation trajectories reflected in the media, leading to questions in my mind about how the media fits into the South African gender transformation picture, and what it may tell us about the state of gender relations in South Africa today.

Some of the representations in the media that caught my eye seemed so starkly in contrast to, so unfathomable in the context of, the widely heralded progressiveness of gender policy and strategy in the new South Africa. While the legacies of poverty and violence in the lives of women, massive issues facing South Africa, were issues I had been acutely (and uncomfortably) aware of, suddenly the media as a potential social agent in gender transformation processes became of interest, in part because I perhaps in the past had naively assumed that the media industry would have been largely transformed by now. I am not sure precisely why I may have assumed this. However, I do remember thinking that it seemed logical that the media would aim to produce representations that were neither racist nor sexist, as it is a very visible and publicly accountable entity in South Africa, especially in recent years due to its often-articulated central role in building the new democracy as well as the multitude of policies and public dialogues I am aware of that rally against discrimination in media representations. Yet, what I saw were not only subtle manifestations of sexism in the media but in my view some very blatant ones too. It was perplexing to me that certain forms of sexism in the media may not be tolerated, while others seemed to be accommodated quite openly.

I remember a television advertisement (for a product I cannot accurately recall) portraying half-women, half-doll-like creatures in tight leather regalia, on their hands and knees scrubbing the floor of a ship to the sounds of music, while their behinds gyrated in the air in a disturbingly performed and plastic way. The male protagonists in the advertisement (or was it just a powerfully implied male gaze?) looked on with distinct satisfaction. Not long after I saw this advertisement, Jacob Zuma was accused of rape and the newspapers

scrambled to cover the story of "Khwezi[2]". But what was portrayed in many of the newspapers I saw was not so much the story of Khwezi - of a possible rape victim in a situation radically amplified by the status and position of the man she was accusing - but of Zuma and how this charge could negatively affect him. I wondered why and how the discourses communicated in so many newspapers could show such a high level of discursive sympathy (complicity?) with Zuma and so little concern over the potential victim, could frame the rape charge as a thorn in the side of an emerging political power (as a party political issue) rather than as a potential case of grave injustice against a victim (a gender political issue), or at least as a catalyst for discussion around the faces of patriarchy. These issues of course exploded even further in the media as the salacious details of the "night in question" emerged and were dished out in the papers with varying levels of gender-sensitivity. As the story unfolded, representations became less sympathetic to Zuma on the whole and more fractured over time. Still, these instances raised serious questions for me about the role of South Africa's media in gender transformation processes.

The media, in South Africa and elsewhere, can be viewed as a site of social and political struggle, of contested meaning making and of collective identity formation (think, for example, of the role of the media in building nationalisms, "imagined communities"[3]). As such, and as I will elaborate on in this thesis, it can be regarded as an epistemological project, part of broader contestations over voice, meaning and power that constitute wider epistemological milieus. As Foucault's work (for example Foucault, 1972; Foucault 1973) suggests in terms of discourse, the media (a medium and manifestation of discourse) both tells us about and constitutes social realities and power.

Gender itself has increasingly been recognised as a critical constituting force in the production and reproduction of both social and material inequality. A vast body of knowledge engaging with conceptions of gender has been generated and contested over the years, aimed at understanding, contextualising and addressing the gender inequalities that so profoundly shape societies. Critical issues emerging locally and internationally have further underscored this need. Widespread and highly gendered patterns of poverty, rates of gender based violence that some have asserted are tantamount to a form of gender war, and the increasingly recognised role of gender relations in fuelling the spread of HIV/AIDS,

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[2] "Khwezi" was a nickname for the woman who accused Zuma of rape, used mostly by her supporters and sometimes in the press.
[3] A term used by McClintock (1991).

to name but a few examples, have highlighted the links between social constructions of gender and tangible manifestations of oppression. In South Africa, various academic, research and development projects have been directed, influenced and driven by gender concerns (although with varying degrees of genuine commitment and success), but there are still areas of great concern, of gaps and shortcomings in engendering processes of transformation. The media is one area that, while indeed having received attention in terms of gender, continues to present challenges and to call for further attention, particularly in the context of tenuous processes of gender transformation, and the shifting and changing identities forged in the post-apartheid context. As a site of meaning making, of epistemological expression, it is an important part of current and potential transformation processes.

In many senses, South Africa's revolution is still ongoing, and in terms of gender a multiplicity of anecdotes, documented research, statistics and daily events show how this revolution still needs pursuing. In the context of the historical legacies I have mentioned, a commitment to gender transformation is not a simple but an extremely complex and nuanced endeavour. As such, it requires a more complex and nuanced approach and, as I will present in this thesis, this is what I have tried to contribute to through this research. For example, in South Africa there has tended to be a focus on gender equity, but gendered social relations and structures that remain a strong force in limiting various forms of social and material transformation also need further attention. This, then, is the context of my research - the *need* for more *comprehensive gender transformation*, the *opportunities and challenges* presented by *contextual and historical issues*, and the *importance* of considering the *media critically* as an instantiation and tool of unfolding epistemological trajectories and, therefore, also gender transformation in South Africa.

1.2   Approach and Aims of the Research

My approach to gender studies, or the gender lens through which I tend to understand these issues, has been greatly impacted upon by my undergraduate and postgraduate schooling at the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, as well as further mentorship as a postgraduate at the University of Pretoria. This schooling has instilled in my research paradigm quite a politicised perspective: a feminist political imperative to look at how unequal gender relations can be positively transformed. In addition, my schooling has

infused into my research paradigm a critical approach, the valuing of self-reflexivity and a social constructionist rather than positivistic view of research as necessarily impacted upon by location and subjectivity. In terms of gender, perhaps fortified by the complex engendered social environment in which I was raised (South Africa, with a tapestry of varied gender relations issues), I have come to view gender in a relatively nuanced and multi-faceted way, as more than just "women" and instead as a dynamic set of relations and identities, leading to numerous forms of, and powers assigned to, *masculinities* and *femininities*. This perspective has been further explored and expressed throughout this thesis, but these foundational perspectives act as the cornerstones to the concept and approach of my research.

As I have mentioned, I entered this research process with little to no theoretical understanding of the media or media studies. As such, I have aimed to explore and incorporate more knowledge around this into the existing (and developing) feminist approaches I use. Various understandings of the media's role in shaping societies have been theorised, some of which I discuss later in this thesis. I have taken a critical feminist epistemological perspective of the media, incorporating and considering many of the different theories from a range of fields but from another, feminist- politicised angle. In terms of the range of factors shaping the production of media texts, I have also drawn on media theory, feminist media theory and wider gender studies theory in an attempt to briefly map some of the complexities of the production of media texts for the purposes of this research. The importance of media representations, as well as the ways in which they operate, continue to be prolifically debated and researched, and through this research study I have aimed to further this project from a feminist perspective within South Africa, particularly by concentrating on facets of the gender-media dynamic that I perceive to be thinly addressed to date.

Firstly, a common concentration in South Africa on *gender equity* issues relating to the media has been replaced in this research with a concentration on more qualitative aspects of the representation of *gender relations* and *gender constructions* in the media. In addition, while significant work has been undertaken on gendered media production processes - exploring the implications of organisational culture and professional practices with a bearing on the constitution of media products - the ways in which *media professionals themselves* perceive *their roles* in gender transformation processes in South Africa still requires

research. Various factors interact to constitute the news production process, and journalists' perceptions and applications of agency within these complex news production environments have also been explored in various ways. However, their perceptions and articulations of agency with respect to their journalistic roles in producing representations of gender within their work is still in need of further exploration, an area of inquiry I have aimed to develop through this research. I surmised that two dimensions to the creation of gendered texts would be how journalists understand gender, and how they regard their role (if they do regard it) in processes of gender transformation in South Africa. The research study, therefore, focused on journalists' understandings of their professional location within gender transformation processes in South Africa with the aim of exploring neglected dimensions of gendered media text production, namely articulations of journalistic agency around, and discursive understandings of, gender and gender transformation feeding into textual production processes.

In short, the aims of my research were as follows:

- To investigate how journalists understand gender and gender transformation.
- To explore how journalists understand their role as media producers in producing gendered texts, and therefore also their role as journalists in gender transformation processes in South Africa.
- To unpack these perceptions through discourse.

As mentioned above, I sought to address these aims in a way that could contribute to and deepen engendered media analysis in South Africa. The contributions I have aimed to make are built around - and shaped by - both existing accomplishments and perceived gaps in the field in South Africa, as investigated through a review of literature. For example, aspects of this research were in response to study approaches to the gender and media nexus, specifically in South Africa, that I perceived as disproportionately advancing issues around the numerical representation of women producing and being quoted in the media, as well as a prevailing focus on broadly defined "stereotypes" of women in the media. While offering valuable contributions, these approaches can, in my view, tend to frame gender relations in too simplistic terms, to implicitly homogenise women and men, and to reinforce a problematic "women" and "gender" synonym (whereby "gender" comes to refer primarily to

women, sidestepping crucial relational aspects of gender and indeed the importance of masculinities).

I have therefore aimed to redefine, as part of this research, the notion of "gender transformation" in relation to the media, and sought to link it to the discourses currently being employed by those working in the media. As a result of doing this, part of the contribution of this research was the proposal and application of a critical theoretical framework for approaching gender transformation in media representations (a *"progressive"* feminist approach), developed in part in contrast and challenge to a dominant but, in my view, limited gender transformation paradigm in South Africa (a *"liberal-inclusionary"* feminist approach).

I also aimed, as part of the feminist political project of transforming gender relations and understandings thereof, to reflect throughout and at the end of this thesis on some of the discursive opportunities for change, especially in light of the schism I observed between the discourses of gender activists/academics and media professionals. I believe that endeavours to effect gender transformation in the media in South Africa are underpinned by the need for further theoretical *and* empirical development, as well as the stimulation of debate and understanding among academics, media professionals and gender activists. This research has, at its heart, concerns over processes of gender transformation in South Africa. While the research study has not constituted a *direct* intervention into gendered media practices, it has had the objective of contributing to processes of gender transformation through the production of knowledge related to areas identified as requiring further theoretical and empirical attention. This, I hope, will inform further research as well as possible interventions to be undertaken in the future, and in so doing contribute to processes of change.

With these broader aims in mind, I tackled each component of the research with more specific aims, addressed in the Chapters of this thesis. First I developed a theoretical and contextual basis from which to approach the research, through an exploration and integration of feminist theory, media and communications theory and contextual issues in South Africa related to gender and to the press (covered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively). This secondary research constitutes a literature review as well as a theoretical contribution (particularly in the form of frameworks for "progressive" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism), which I applied to the primary research.

Then I developed a methodology, laid out in Chapter 5, informed by the background research and framing the empirical work that followed. The primary empirical research was then focused on three national weekly newspapers - each representing a different form of journalism and a different market offering - namely the Sunday Sun, the Sunday Times and the Mail & Guardian (a brief profile of each presented in Section 6.2). I first undertook a primarily qualitative, thematic, critical discourse analysis of four issues of each of the three newspapers in order to establish the kinds of gendered discourses characterising the newspapers and how these gendered meanings were discursively effected. These findings are presented in Chapter 6. Thereafter, I undertook individual interviews with journalists and editors as the core research component (presented in Chapter 7). These interviews were transcribed in full and analysed through the use of thematic, critical discourse analysis. Analysing both newspaper content and the responses of journalists and editors was very useful in terms of triangulating findings on gendered discourses. Placing these two broad components of the research into dialogue with one another as I went through the findings, I have also presented some considerations around the *implications* of these findings for gender transformation processes in South Africa and its media in the concluding Chapter (Chapter 8).

While it is difficult to locate this research strictly within a particular field, I hope that the theoretical and empirical contributions I have made can enrich both the fields of feminist media studies and gender studies more generally, particularly in the South African context. In addition to the implications of this research for feminist engagements with the media in South Africa, the findings presented in this thesis also suggest a link between engendered media discourses and wider feminist trajectories in South Africa, a link that reveals what one could perhaps describe as fault lines - limitations or weaknesses - in feminist trajectories. These, I will argue, need to be attended to if more comprehensive gender transformation is to take place and contemporary feminist accomplishments are to be meaningful in the long-run. In essence, what I have aimed to achieve through this thesis is to disseminate, support and strengthen the claim that gender transformation in South Africa - including in the media - needs to be looked at multi-dimensionally, and to move beyond the politics of gender inclusion to a more nuanced approach to gender politics, if real and lasting change in the lives of men and women is to be realised.

2   FEMINISM: A THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

2.1   Introducing Feminism

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know
that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate
me from a door mat or a prostitute" (Rebecca West, 1913[4]).

Feminism can mean, and has meant, a number of different things to different people. Held together by a central political project, interpretations of the exact significance, meanings and methods of this project do, however, vary widely. Feminist theory and politics have been foundational in the design, conceptualisation and implementation of this research, from the identification of the research problem to the writing up of findings. For this reason, it is fitting that a discussion of salient aspects and interpretations of feminism is the point of departure here. In this Chapter, I aim to provide a synopsis of some of the key developments in feminist theory with a bearing on the feminist frameworks and concepts that I have applied to the research at hand.

I have not attempted to comprehensively summarise the very prolific, divergent and continually evolving theories that are condensed under the term "feminism". Rather, my aim has been to flag some of the theoretical developments with particular bearing on the shape of "my" feminism, and by extension the application of this research. "My" feminist theoretical approach has evolved through the research process, and continues to evolve, and has been fundamentally shaped through tracing the footsteps of an array of feminist works and authors. Some of these key influences are therefore explored in this Chapter. In addition, through the process of reading and reflecting, both prior and subsequent to conducting the empirical research for this study, I have come to develop the concepts of "progressive" feminism and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism, specifically for application in this research but, I hope, also capable of making broader contributions to the field of gender studies and feminist media studies. Therefore, in this Chapter I trace some of the myriad influences on my application of feminist theory in this research largely via a discussion of these two concepts.

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[4] Commented in 1913, but also referenced by some scholars from a later, more formal, source namely West (1982).

As already alluded to, feminist theory has emerged as, and increasingly developed into, an extremely diverse and divergent body of knowledge. Feminist thought and action has pre-dated the emergence of the term "feminism", with writers and activists throughout history, in various different ways, "imagin[ing] a world where women were able to realize their potential as individuals" (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). When the term emerged, however, one of the political positions and strategies of women's movements was often an attempt to avoid dogma or a unitary position within the movement, as a challenge to conventional (masculine, patriarchal) ways of knowing (and dominating). As such, the social and political underpinnings of the spread and development of feminist thought formed the foundations for the multiplicity of positions under "feminism" that came to be cultivated, and *feminisms* as a plural term has been coined to acknowledge this diversity (ibid). In addition to this heterogeneity within feminism and women's movements, the pathways or trajectories of different forms of feminist thought have been uneven; in other words, feminist theory has been and is evolving not in a linear but in a more complex and contested fashion. These features of feminist theory further underscore the need for research such as this to explicitly chart important theoretical (and political) positions that inform people's orientation within the landscape of feminist knowledge.

While qualified statements as to the key concerns and principles of feminism are inherently problematic, broadly speaking feminist theory can be said to engage with an array of theoretical canons and approaches towards the recognition of, and desire to effect change in, the subjugated status of women (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992). Identification and explication of the sources of women's oppression forms a further theoretical thread (ibid), through the exploration of a variety of conceptions of relations between women and men as gendered beings (Mannathoko, 1992). Although drawing on a range of theoretical tools, feminism is also commonly distinguished by its categorical application of "gender" as an analytical tool. In addition, it is importantly distinguished by its *political* agenda; whereas women's studies can be said to constitute a body of knowledge analysing the condition of women in society, feminist studies direct such analyses towards changing these conditions, towards achieving gender justice (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). As such, feminist social science is, in many senses, "decidedly not disinterested or detached" (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992: 38). Instead, it is as much a political standpoint as it is a theoretical one.

2.2 Gender as a Tool of Analysis

Feminist theories and political imperatives are centred upon the idea of the significance of gender, as a social force, in shaping all areas of life - economic, political, cultural and more. The concept of "gender" is, however, also contested and differentially conceptualised. Theories and applications of the term "gender" can be said to both reflect and shape the trajectories of feminist theory and politics (Nicholson, 1998). The broader (and perhaps most commonly applied within the social sciences) conception of gender is that it denotes the social expectations of behaviour, competency and status assigned according to biological sex and distinguished as either "masculine" or "feminine" (Nicholson, 1998; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). As such, gender is viewed through a feminist lens as a key *social* variable within which humans think about and organise their social activity, as differentiated from *biological* sex (Mannathoko, 1992). The behaviours, competencies and statuses previously regarded as "natural" consequences of biological sex have thus been distinguished as discreet social characteristics (Nicholson, 1998). Simone de Beauvoir (1972: 295) captured the essence of this distinction when she said: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) further note that, importantly, gender theory recognises that these expectations and perceptions around masculinity and femininity are not merely *different*, but *hierarchical* as well, locating them within a matrix of power relations.

While this rudimentary distinction between gender and sex described above has had relatively wide acceptance in feminist theories, the complexities of the relationship between these concepts have been configured in different ways. Shulamith Firestone (1970), for example, locates women's oppression in the exploitation of their biological sex - particularly their reproductive abilities - and argues that women's only route to social emancipation is through emancipation from the functions of their sex. She therefore describes biology as the source of women's weakness, and advocates freedom from biology through reproductive technologies (ibid). Others have questioned the polarisation of sex and gender in feminist theories, arguing in various ways for the recognition of intimate linkages between them (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Haraway, 1991; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). This includes the argument that even what is identified as "biological sex" is so imbued with and produced out of social meaning that the social and biological can never be fully separated (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Haraway, 1991; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). The vectors through which biology is investigated and described, for example, are infused with

gendered social expectations (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Another argument is that social relations actually impact upon and change biological make-up, such as changes in levels of male or female physical strength according to the levels of strength that are socially acceptable at the time (Nicholson, 1998). Naomi Wolf (1990), for example, has argued that women in the west align the development bodies in accordance with ideals of femininity, such as being physically small, thin and relatively weak.

Despite prolific engagement with these complexities and the significant advancement of the distinction between sex and gender, however, the term gender is still often used nowadays to describe or denote implicitly innate, value-free and material (biological) categories (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Indeed, as will be further indicated in this research thesis, common conceptions of gender are often tightly bound up in essentialist, biological conceptions, centred on "sex". Through feminism, the term "gender" was popularised, but it is not always used in common parlance or policy to denote social dimensions. For example, many legal and statistical forms require people to indicate their "gender" as being either "male" or "female". Apart from the obvious assumption of dichotomy inherent with this, biological and social terms are used interchangeably, in effect discursively essentialising gender as a natural and inherent consequence of sex.

Distinctions around terms and theories related to "gender" and "feminism" remain important sites of contested meaning. However, at its foundations feminism is concerned with gendered power relations and forms of oppression, in both the empirical and political senses. Politics around the meanings of "gender" continue to unfold, with implications for feminist projects. As such, these conceptual politics will be borne in mind throughout the research thesis.

Having introduced some of the foundational concepts important in establishing a feminist starting point for research, what follows is a further exploration of feminist theory that aims to unpack and present theoretical approaches with particular relevance to this research. In the following section I present a discussion of feminist theory that aims to specifically provide a theoretical, and somewhat historical, context for the concepts of "progressive feminism" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism, concepts that I have developed as part of this research.

2.3   Diverse Feminist Topographies: Locating and Conceptualising Comparative Feminist Frameworks for the Research

2.3.1   A note on the significance of "progressive" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminisms

By way of broad introduction, the concept of "progressive" feminism involves theoretical contributions and areas of attention I regard as important towards strengthening and deepening feminist theory and, by extension, research. In particular, as the research process unfolded I felt that this approach could benefit feminist media studies, and gender studies focusing on the media, especially in South Africa. I call this approach "progressive" because it involves some more recent theoretical shifts and because, in my view, it draws closer towards unpacking gender relations in a way that can offer greater opportunities for comprehensive change. "Liberal-inclusionary" feminism represents an approach that, while I recognise as an important contribution to the study and politics of gender, I consider insufficient to fully address gender inequalities. It is an approach that emerged through the research as having an important impact on the shape of contemporary notions of "gender transformation" in South Africa and the South African media, notions I aim to challenge and contest as limiting transformation in some respects.

2.3.2   Liberal-inclusionary feminist approaches

Liberal-inclusionary feminism has been identified or framed here as a contemporary form of liberal feminism shaped in particular by certain contextual issues in South Africa. As such I introduce it here by way of discussing both liberal feminism and the inclusionary politics of gender in South Africa in recent years.

Because feminist ideas and actions have manifested so diversely in different historical and geographical contexts, locating and contextualising feminist approaches can be difficult, as well as problematic. However, liberal feminism, often associated with the "first wave" of feminism (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004; Tong, 1998), will be the point of departure for this discussion. It can be considered one of the earliest forms of modern, organised and *recognised* feminisms. In many senses, it is often written about as a kind of source, or starting point, for the "women's movement" as it has come to be known today. Of course, the

idea that there is one "women's movement", or one source or starting point for feminist thought and action, is certainly (and rightly) contestable. The significance of early western forms of liberal feminism, however, in my view remains in the sense that western liberal feminism both reflected and profoundly influenced many of the legal, institutional, social and economic changes to the gender order that have been charted in more recent history. As an influential feminist paradigm, it has informed policy and practice not only in the western world, but also in many different locations in different ways, and at a global institutional level.

Early liberal feminism, when it emerged, could be said to be revolutionary in many respects. However, it also came to be seen as highly limited and has been extensively critiqued from a range of different feminist positions. This, in point, indicates part of its significance today. As Tong has observed, "so much of contemporary feminist theory *defines itself in reaction against* traditional liberal feminism" (Tong, 1998: 2, emphasis my own). Although internally to liberal feminism interpretations and applications of liberalism are in flux (Tong, 1998) and, by extension, liberal feminism is not entirely monolithic, the broader approach has certainly played a significant role in challenging gendered patterns of labour and participation, particularly within public sphere labour markets, education systems and political spaces (ibid). This has been done primarily through a focus on legislative reforms to existing systems, and an assertion of women's equality *with men* (Tong, 1998; Walby, 1990; Mannathoko, 1992), in other words women's ability and right to participate in the (male) world through equal opportunity.

This focus had its roots in changing gendered labour systems in the west brought about by industrialisation. Tong (1998) locates one of the first recognised voices of liberal feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), within the context of declining spaces for women within the "productive" spheres of European life, associated with industrial capitalism. This process drew labour out of the homestead (where both productive and reproductive labour had taken place) and into an emerging separate public workspace, thereby creating and perpetuating a (highly gendered) gulf between "private" and "public" labour spheres. Mary Wollstonecraft's work (1792), however, reflected primarily a bourgeois married woman's perspective on gendered labour and inequality, and was contextualised by the impact of these processes on married bourgeois women, who suddenly found themselves with a dearth of productive activities (Tong, 1998). As such, Mary Wollstonecraft described women as "kept" - in their

homes, by their husbands, and out of the productive and physically active spheres that had now become "outside".

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) asserted women's equality with men in intellectual ability, defined in terms of "rationalism", and argued that the paucity of rational intellectual qualities in women was the product of a lack of equal opportunity with men to develop these qualities through education and participation in the public realm, rather than a product of women's innate intellectual inferiority. While this was indeed a radical assertion at the time, her critiques of inequality were largely limited to inequalities in access to education, as she argued in favour of such opportunities in order to eventually create "good" wives and mothers. "Make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers - that is, if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (Wollstonecraft, 1792: 306). This early work highlights the importance of participation and rights to enter male dominated public spheres, associated with intellect and value, within a liberal feminist paradigm. In this line of argument, too, already lies the source of one of the principle critiques launched against liberal feminism - that while it argues for reform in women's access to certain political and economic opportunities, it does not adequately address gendered division of labour, roles or statuses within the "private" sphere.

Wollstonecraft's (1792) emphasis on women's need and right to acquire the qualities of human "rationalism" and "virtues" also raised strong critiques against liberal feminist approaches, related to their tendency to equate male values with human values (Tong, 1998). She wrote that "women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of *half* being" (Wollstonecraft, 1792: 125, emphasis original). Feminists have argued against the weaknesses of such approaches from the perspective that they fail to attend to the oppressive androcentrism of institutions, values and social practices (for example Mannathoko, 1992; Walby, 1990) and that they legitimate linear modernisation approaches (Mannathoko, 1992). From this point of view, while Wollstonecraft's (1792) words were challenging in their suggestion of women's ability and right to work in male-dominated spheres, in another respect they can also be regarded as representing the internalisation, rather than the challenging, of patriarchal (and capitalist) notions of (hu)manity, education and values.

In the 19th Century, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill offered up influential texts on women's emancipation[5]. In addition to the public rights and labour domains they also focused on the "home front", attending to issues of marriage, divorce and child rearing. The principle means of liberation focused on were legal reforms in terms of certain rights and equal opportunities in the public labour market (Tong, 1998). The suffragette movement also began to emerge around this time, as the notion of women's right to public participation crystallised more and more in the public consciousness (ibid). During the time of abolitionist movements in the US, women's movements were also coming to the fore, although there was significant tension between the interests of these movements, with concerns that highlighting differences between men and women could dilute the message of racial inequality (ibid). However, while such issues did hamper certain efforts and silence certain voices in the western women's movement, women's considerable exclusion from and marginalisation within abolitionist movements also eventually catalysed some groundbreaking changes in terms of women's rights, for example those expressed in the terms of the Seneca Falls Convention (ibid). Again, the focus was on legal rights, political representation and public sphere participation of women.

Later on, in the 1960's, the rise of radical feminism created (or rather highlighted) some rifts in the women's movement in the west and threw a spotlight on the limitations of liberal feminist approaches, not only in terms of looking back at the limitations of first wave feminists but in terms of tensions between liberal and radical feminists of the second wave. As Tong (1998) observes, radical feminism became associated with Women's Liberation, while liberal feminism became associated with Women's Rights. This observation highlights the broader features of liberal feminism and its greatest challengers - in the case of the former, a focus on rights and reform to existing systems, and in the case of the latter a call to question the very heart and basis of existing systems, and to uproot them (Mannathoko, 1992; Tong, 1998; Walby, 1990). The well-known slogan of radical feminists of the 1960's that "the personal is political" also came to exemplify the shifting lens of feminist critique from the liberal feminist focus on "public" domains to a view of "private" domains as equally political, patriarchal and in need of challenging. Kate Millet (1970), for example, delved into the contentious issue of sexuality, underscoring the political (association: "public")

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[5] Various works can be included, but leading examples are Harriet Taylor Mill's *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1853) and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), published after Harriet Taylor Mill's death but known to be greatly influenced by her own work.

dimensions of the issue of sexuality, which had been largely relegated to the "private" (association: apolitical) sphere.

The tensions between radical and liberal feminists underscored some important questions about strategies for the emancipation of women as well as differences within the, quite homogenised, notion of "women" within the women's movement. For example Betty Friedan, author of the highly influential feminist text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was seen to shy away from the more "radical" feminist agendas such as those around issues of sexuality (Tong, 1998). This is perhaps surprising given the way in which her work threw light on women's oppressive lives within the "private sphere". Her attention within the women's movement was rather on achieving legal reforms and equal access to education and human rights (ibid). She opposed the idea of the United States' National Organisation for Women's public alignment with lesbians, which she considered at risk of significantly alienating mainstream society from the ideas of the women's movement (ibid).

This apparent internal contradiction in ideological stance and action is certainly not the only of its kind. Women's movements and individuals or groups within them have, in various places and at various times, sidestepped certain critical issues in this way. This could be either as part of a strategic approach (avoiding alienating those they wish to gain certain rights and recognitions from, or convince of a certain point) and/or as a function of the internalisation of certain gendered discourses that are perhaps more powerful than others, and therefore very difficult to challenge. In this case, a liberal feminist stance such as that taken by Betty Friedan could perhaps be viewed as operating to make changes to gendered discourses and structures that are more *pervious* to change, while issues around women's "intimate", "private" lives and identities remain a bone of contention.

Historically speaking, I will leave this account of early liberal feminism to step back and take stock of some of the key features of a liberal feminist paradigm. Tong (1998: 2) succinctly captures the broad strokes of liberal feminist approaches as involving the perspective that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints blocking women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world." It is focused, then, on:

- Equal participation with men in so-called public spaces rather than interrogating gendered culture within these spaces or challenging gendered roles and statuses within the so-called private sphere;
- Women's voice through representation via formal legal, political, educational and institutional routes, more than questioning the social construction of women's voices or the dimensions of voice beyond formal legal, political and educational matters;
- Reforming via legislation and representation in formal structures, rather than uprooting or overhauling the values underpinning society;
- A relative male/female dichotomy in terms of conceptualising gender, without much attention to intersecting factors such as class, race, age, sexuality and so forth.

Therefore, liberal feminism has been strongly critiqued as bourgeois, heteronormative and white and/or racist, as limited in terms of its potential for transforming oppressive power relations and as male-centric in its focus. Despite prolific critiques against it, however, this paradigm has survived into contemporary struggles for women's emancipation. This is in my view, at least in part, linked to the issues highlighted by the case of Betty Friedan's position on sexuality within the women's movement - a strategic and/or socially constructed inclination to focus on changes to the gender order to which society (men and often women) is more receptive. As Pilcher and Whelehan (2004: 49) note:

"This liberal position is broadly held to be the dominant, 'common-sense' stance on feminism, applicable to the majority of women who identify as 'feminist' in some way, but don't want to overturn the status quo in order to achieve better social conditions for women."

As I have mentioned already, this research process necessitated the development of an analytical framework through which I could view, and within which I could locate, feminist discourses and discourses of gender transformation. Liberal feminism, as I have introduced it here, offers much in the way of building such a framework, particularly given its contemporary applications. However, the South African context requires an adjusted and somewhat more nuanced conceptualisation than broader liberal feminist paradigms, not least of which because liberal feminism as I have described it emerged and developed out of a western context. Important historical processes related to the women's movement in

South Africa have impacted on the form liberal feminist paradigms take in this context. These processes are numerous and complex, but I will only aim to underline some key features of struggles for women's emancipation in South Africa over the past few years, those I consider having an important bearing on the shape of liberal feminist paradigms in South Africa today. I draw mostly on the work of Shireen Hassim (2006) on women's movements in South Africa, which gives a very comprehensive and layered account that is embedded in historical detail, and apply aspects of it to my own discussion here.

The title of Hassim's (2006) work on women's organisations in South Africa is already very telling (*Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa: Contesting authority*). There may be many different dimensions to the issue of contested authority, but particularly notable in her writing on women's organisations is that processes of identifying, defining and mobilising around the goals and strategies for women's interests is a complex and contested business, both in terms of interfacing with broader society and internally to women's organisations and movements. In South Africa, these contestations over authority were strongly influenced by apartheid and anti-apartheid struggles, as well as emerging and evolving nationalisms. Hassim (2006) charts some interesting trajectories for women's movements in South Africa in relation to the period leading up to the new democratic dispensation. I will, however, focus on the ways in which certain women's and feminist issues came to be addressed at the dawn of this new dispensation.

As Hassim (2006) notes, at the turn to democracy in South Africa women's movements both recognised the unique opportunities for advancing women's interests inherent in such a transitional period, and were sceptical of the capacity for true change through legal reforms and the formal vote, being focused on as the new Constitution and legislation for the country was being drafted. McEwan (2000), in her account of engendering citizenship in South Africa's new democracy, also highlights this sceptical awareness among women activists about the potential gaps through which women's interests under the new democracy could slip. She argues that this was influenced by the internationalisation of feminist communication and engagement, whereby women activists were increasingly "part of new global discourse around gender issues" (McEwan, 2000: 8). Many gender activists had heard of, or been in exile in, other countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe where the sidelining of women's interests in processes of post-independence nation building had been witnessed (ibid). Therefore, "the experience of other societies has shown that the

emancipation of women is not a by-product of a struggle for democracy" (McEwan, 2000: 9). In addition, women's own experiences within South Africa, for example as part of anti-apartheid struggles, were often experiences of being sidelined as wives and mothers of the nation, and of being treated more as supporters to the ANC than its leaders (Hassim, 2006; McEwan, 2000; McClintock, 1991)[6], so that the risks of marginalisation in the building of the "new" nation of South Africa were fresh in their minds.

As such, it was important that the period of transition to democracy be strategically approached to ensure that key changes and rights for women were ensured from the outset. Formal legislative and policy changes, especially around the representation of women in leadership structures, were therefore strategically pursued, despite the recognition that these changes alone would not lead to comprehensive change. As Hassim (2006: 173) observes, this strategy was born out of the knowledge that "transitions to democracy offer unique opportunities for women to influence how democracy is broadly conceived. The restructuring of a more inclusive political system provides an important context in which women can advance their particular represented claims". This led to an initial "intense focus on numbers - that is, measuring the extent of women's participation and a concern about the nature and quality of representation and participation" (ibid). In this way, the turn to democracy in South Africa was shaped by the knowledge and experiences of gender activists towards a strategic emphasis on women's participation in the public sphere, particularly in leadership and decision-making positions. This is still evidenced today in legislative and policy requirements for "gender quotas" for representation in structures of government and other public workspaces, with the President Thabo Mbeki calling for 50/50 representation of women and men in parliament, up from the previous 30% quota.

Of course, the notion of equal representation of women in South Africa depends on the notion of "women" as a distinct constituency (Hassim, 2006). In South Africa, this category was and is particularly contentious - conceptually, politically and materially - due to significant racial and class inequalities. However, while at the dawn of democracy women's movements generally were highly aware of these issues, again strategically it was considered important to promote "women's interests", specifically around certain key rights

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[6] Of course, this experience was quite complex and layered, more so than described here. This is just to indicate briefly some of the issues experienced in terms of tensions between women's movements and anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, and that the politics of nationalism within the ANC as well as other nationalisms in South Africa (such as Afrikaaner nationalism) had been highly gendered and not always in women's best interests.

to participation. These interests, related to ensured inclusion in decision-making positions, acted as a central point of common agreement among diverse women who, in many respects, were otherwise often in contention with one another (Hassim, 2006; Hassim, 2005). Hassim (2006: 173) writes the following in this regard:

> "[T]he idea that women, as a group, constituted an electoral constituency entered South African politics in the early 1990s. The interests that were seen to hold this constituency together, however, were narrowly defined in terms of a common exclusion from the processes and forums of public decision-making… The focus on 'getting women in' - that is, onto parity lists, to a large extent regardless of political ideology - held together a diverse range of women's organizations and gender ideologies in the period before the 1994 elections. Debate focused on mechanisms to achieve women's representation - most notably, the quota - rather than on particular interests of different groups of women".

This extract illustrates, in many respects, some of the common ambitions and challenges that have been discussed under "liberal feminism": a focus on representation in public spaces, especially through formal legal and policy reform, and the often strategic (and practical) focus on this as a common feminist interest that can "hold together" diverse groups of women in the face of contentious and complex gender politics. Interestingly, in Hassim's (2006) account of "liberals", in terms of their approaches to the issue of gender and representation, she in fact holds them to be against quotas which are viewed as problematic forms of state intervention and counter to the ethos of equality. Equality for liberals, according to Hassim (ibid) would involve the appointment of people solely on the basis of individual merit, not affirmative action. This highlights again the fluid and variously applied nature of the terms "liberalism" and "liberal" with regard to gender issues.

As such, for the purposes of this research I draw on both the account of western liberal feminism I have given and the South African account of post-apartheid gender equality strategies to conceptualise "liberal-inclusionary" feminism as an approach to gender transformation. With this term I refer to feminist approaches that broadly resonate with the key features of liberal feminism highlighted earlier, as well as the South African context of inclusionary gender politics observed by Hassim (2006). While Hassim (ibid) does point out that notions of "women's participation" in South Africa have indeed increasingly been

differentiated by class and race and addressed in a more complex manner towards the end of the 1990s, with a greater recognition of the politics and importance of difference among women, her account underlines some of the post-apartheid roots and historical legacies of gender politics and equality structures still seen today. Therefore, the "inclusionary" aspect of approaches to gender in South Africa is contested and representative of not all, but one, strand of feminist thought and action in the country. Nonetheless, I believe it is one that is significant, especially for this research.

"Liberal-inclusionary" feminism, then, is the term I will be using throughout the rest of this thesis, and one upon which I will build a comparative description of what I consider to constitute "progressive" feminism. As Tong (1998) has said in relation to liberal feminism, many other feminist approaches are defined in reaction to it. In this instance, the way in which I conceptualise "progressive" feminism is also done in relation and contrast to liberal-inclusionary approaches.

Other feminist writers in South Africa have indeed already pointed to the limitations of what Hassim (2005; 2006) has called "inclusionary" gender politics and strategies in South Africa. For example, Hassim (2006: 262) observes that the specialised institutional mechanisms, such as the "gender machinery", in South Africa set up to implement the deliberate inclusion of women in decision making have, in a sense, "shifted the issues of gender inequality out of the realm of politics and into the technical realm of policy making". In addition, she argues that the consequences of "the dominant focus on reforming the state is that very few women's organizations are dealing with issues of cultural norms and everyday practices, which may indeed limit the implementation and effect of legislative reforms (Hassim, 2006: 262). In this way, one may notice a similarity between Hassim's words and broader critiques of liberal feminism regarding the dearth of attention paid to gender issues associated with the "private" sphere and values born out of, and borne out in, cultural and social spheres beyond formal public spaces. Hassim's observations in this way also resonate with my own frustrations and concerns about so much gender equality and gender transformation discourse in South Africa today, especially very widely applied and shared public discourse. Indeed, the limitations of a focus on numerical representation of a homogenised category "women", without sufficient attention to subtler symbolic, cultural and social manifestations of gender and gendered power, could in my view lead to a very hollow form of gender transformation.

For example, a liberal-inclusionary approach implicitly assumes that women will represent all (or any) women's interests, without sufficiently considering how these "interests" will be understood and defined, or shaped by deeply unequal gendered processes of socialisation. It also assumes that putting women into top leadership positions within formal, public spaces will lead to transformation in all domains of life, and transformation for both women and men (who, after all, play an important part in the patriarchal order as well as any possible visions for a gender transformed future). I share Hassim's (2006) concern that technical policy approaches to gender transformation, for example through quotas on women's representation and state-provided "gender machinery", depoliticise gender inequalities and gender transformation processes, and displace attention away from the social *roots* of the gender status quo and the variety of (sometimes subtle, but always pervasive) ways in which women's subordination is played out in a variety of contexts. Like Hassim (ibid), however, I also recognise the immense direct and strategic importance of addressing issues of representation in public and decision-making spaces. As she argues,

"In itself the demand for parity is not problematic… normal processes of electoral competition cannot be seen as fair if they persistently produce the under-representation of the same subordinate groups in society" (Hassim, 2006: 260).

However, entrance into formal institutions such as those of the state is not enough, as critics of liberal feminism have asserted for many years. How this inclusion is constructed, the gendered culture within these structures and institutions, and critical engagement with them - including by civil society - are also crucial. At the same time, the social roots of gender inequality need to be addressed if gendered oppression is not simply to reorganise, re-manifest or be perpetuated merely in new ways. Without addressing the heart of gender inequality, namely deeply entrenched gendered social constructions and values, the public face of gender transformation may change but symbolic and material transformation in the lives of women and men will be weak and tenuous.

As McEwan (2000) notes, "political and legal rights are clearly not sufficient alone to transform deeply entrenched inequalities". McEwan (ibid) also highlights how citizenship built around affirmative action measures, as witnessed in South Africa, is one based more on claims to rights, which can tend to oversimplify issues and fail to do justice to the

complexity power. Rights discourses, she argues, have become part of South Africa's political culture, which prioritises political and civil rights. This in itself, I would say, has great merit given the stripping and deprivation of political and civil rights in South African history. Like McEwan (ibid), however, I consider underlying gendered power relations to be an important area in need of greater attention in discourses of gender transformation in South Africa. McEwan (2000: 15) has incisively observed that "[i]n 'modernising' states there is often a tug-of-war between private and public patriarchies, and this is likely to remain the case in South Africa for several generations" and that "citizenship in South Africa is inextricably connected to naturalised social roles, which legal rights and policy-making cannot easily dislodge".

In this way, one can see the significance of the way in which western liberal feminist paradigms and South African, context-specific struggles for inclusionary gender transformation have been playing out in this nascent democracy. Discourses of liberal-inclusionary feminism continue to impact upon the gender transformation context in South Africa as well as to be critiqued by various writers as insufficient to enable and promote root-level, sustainable and comprehensive transformation. What follows, then, is a discussion of some of the most salient contributions towards, and features of, approaches I have conceptualised as part of this research process as "progressive" feminist.

2.3.3   Progressive feminist approaches

"Progressive"[7] feminist approaches to gender transformation flow largely from critiques of liberal-inclusionary paradigms and take a more social constructionist view than liberal-inclusionary approaches afford. I have conceptualised progressive feminism based on these critiques and the contributions made to gender and feminist studies by an array of writers and researchers, far too many to include here. Therefore, the discussion that follows will include a small selection of works that illustrate the central themes, areas of attention and theoretical contributions made towards what I call progressive feminism.

At the outset, it is perhaps important to clarify that what I refer to as progressive feminism is not so much a widely recognised theoretical perspective (such as, for example, liberal or

radical feminism), but rather feminist theory I consider as moving beyond, and progressively improving upon, liberal-inclusionary paradigms as reflected in some of the work discussed above. It is, therefore, both a grouping of broad theoretical characteristics and developments made for the purposes of this research and, I concede, a concept that is value-laden, as the term "progressive" suggests. In a sense, this approach is framed by particular feminist theoretical orientations that, in my view, offer opportunities for more comprehensive understandings of gender issues and strategies towards the transformation of oppressive gender relations, including within the media. In fact, the need to conceptualise this approach for the sake of this research arose through initial scans of literature on gender and the media in South Africa, which raised some areas of concern for me in terms of way in which these issues were being dealt with in much of the literature. I came to feel that some aspects of gender transformation were being thinly addressed (more of which I discuss in Chapter 4), and from this concern originated the idea of a progressive feminist paradigm

Second wave, and especially radical, feminism in the west is by no means the principle source of my ideas of progressive feminism. However, it is worthy of mentioning here as, in the west, it was during the second wave that many turned their attention away from mere formal legal and political rights and towards the *social meanings* and *power dynamics* applied to sex and bodies (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Simone de Beauvoir's (1972) *The Second Sex* strongly influenced this move, and the broader shift towards social constructionism in feminism brought the concept of "gender" to the fore. Symbolic conflicts surrounding liberation struggles became as, if not more, important than struggles over equity (van Zoonen, 1994).

The slogan that in many respects came to characterise the Second Wave - that "the personal is political" - brought to the fore the imbeddedness of gender politics in all areas of life, not only the more "public" domains of unequal workplace participation and suffrage. Firestone (1970), Millet (1970), Rowbotham (1973) and later Walby (1990), among others, aimed to give emphasis and credence to the notion that the private is indeed political, as well as that the "private" and "public" spheres are deeply intertwined, by drawing attention to the ways in which patriarchy operates through social systems such as reproduction, sexuality, contemporary culture, economics and violence against women. This meant that the spotlight of social and political interrogation turned not only on so-called public spaces but, increasingly, on more intimate spaces and experiences such as sexuality, romantic

love, family, personal identity and values, as well as broader social systems such as economics and mass cultural representation. Even more radical was the suggestion that women's emancipation in all areas of life, including the political and economic, both impacted on - and was impacted upon by - gender politics playing out in more intimate spaces. Women's rights and women's emancipation became a *personal* matter, as the lens of feminist inquiry and critique penetrated and challenged conceptual boundaries that (as indicated earlier on) since the dawn of industry, especially in the west, had been imposed between "private" and "public", "productive" and "reproductive", "personal" and "political". One can say that these new insights into gender relations really began to challenge the patriarchal and androcentric foundations of broader concepts of "emancipation", "liberation" and "equality", for it could be argued that the initial intense focus on numerical representation and formal economic opportunities reflected the priorities of a male-centric conception and experience of power.

Radical, socialist and Marxist feminists began, in various ways, to chip away at the dichotomous delineations between these different domains, arguing (with different emphases and theories) in favour of the recognition of their dense interwovenness. Socialist feminists such as Rowbotham (1973), for example, identified "private" and "public" gender relations as intertwined, arguing that patriarchy is constituted of both economic and cultural systems of oppression. Constructions of gendered identities were also identified as linked to gendered division of labour, and gendered divisions of labour - including those within areas considered "personal" such as the family - as serving the broader, macro-economic interests of capitalism (Tong, 1998). Such theories have continued to be greatly developed by postcolonial, so-called "Third World" and other feminists delving into global economics and development (for example, Beneria, 2003; Bhavnani, Foran & Kurian, 2003; Enloe, 1989; Mbilinyi, 2001; Mies, 1986; Kabeer, 1994).

Radical feminists, such as Millet (1970) and Firestone (1970) also began to chart the various ways in which politics and power are mapped onto women's bodies - understandings of them, their treatment, their functions and assigned roles and values in society (Tong, 1998). Addressing issues such as suffrage and women's entry into the workplace, while still important, began to be seen as insufficient for transformation of the gender order to take place and, as Tong (1998) points out, rather than reform an existing system, many began to assert that the very roots and underlying causes of patriarchy, in all their myriad forms,

needed to be challenged and uprooted. These ideas form much of the foundation of progressive feminist thought as I come to define it here, by identifying the multiple layers of gendered-ness and multiple connections between the cultural, political, social and economic. They also highlight the ways in which power and oppression in the more material sense are connected to (or perhaps even imbedded in) power and oppression in the social and cultural - the discursive - sense.

Broadly speaking, debates over "women" as a central concept in feminist studies gained momentum with the expansion of a social constructionist perspective of gender, and also significantly contributed towards unpacking gender relations as various theoretical and political influences left their mark. What increasingly emerged were feminist paradigms that held gender to be relational, constituted by multiple factors, dynamic and shifting. As Waylen (1996) observes, the notion of "women" as unitary was increasingly questioned from the 1980's onwards, as the white, western, middle-class generalisations imposed on the category "women" were discerned, and the shortcomings of "women" as a homogenised category were identified.

Waylen (1996) identifies some key contributions to the challenge raised against the category "women" with relevance here. Among them is the influence of black, ethnic minority and "third world" and postcolonial feminists who critiqued feminist analyses as Eurocentric, ethnocentric and as sidestepping crucial issues of difference. Among these are feminist writers such as Angela Davis (1981), bell hooks (1984), Ifi Amadiume (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (1989), Changu Mannathoko (1992), Amina Mama (1995) Chandra Mohanty (2003; 1988) and Desiree Lewis (2004; 2002). These critiques have opened up numerous avenues for research and theorisation that challenge traditional western feminist approaches and necessitate far more nuanced and complex feminist understandings of gender, gender relations, power and oppression.

The scope and breadth of contributions by these feminists is wide and extremely difficult to summarise in any effective way here. Black, postcolonial, ethnic minority and "third world" feminists continue to powerfully challenge, and ask difficult questions of, feminists and the feminist project, underscoring not only the important influence of difference(s) on the manifestation of gender and gender inequalities, but also on the ways in which feminists have, can and should approach gender and feminist studies. Empirically, methodologically,

theoretically and politically, these challenges have been and continue to be key. Unequal access to the technologies and resources of knowledge production has shaped severe obstacles to production and dissemination of such knowledges. However, against these odds there have been numerous important contributions, and many more continue to be made today.

Mannathoko (1992), for example, has argued that the unitary use of the term "women" confers a false sense of homogeneity, as "gender roles" and statuses differ even within the same societies. In South Africa, for example, black women and even black men have been located quite differently within systems of power, patriarchy and capitalism than their white counterparts, and their gendered experiences therefore also differ greatly. A homogenous conception of gender, when viewed from this perspective, therefore belies the dynamic and multiply situated ways in which gender is constructed and experienced. Amina Mama (1995), in exploring black women's subjectivities, has pointed to the dynamic ways in which race, gender, class and the relationships between them are constructed and played out in individual subjectivities, showing that subjectivity involves multiple, and even contested, simultaneous and shifting positions. She also tracks some of the historical trajectories that have shaped these multiple positions and negotiated subjectivities. As such, she foregrounds an understanding of gendered experiences as constituted by various forces, and as located or situated in various, often complex, ways in relation to different people and situations (multiply-situated).

Chandra Mohanty (2003; 1988) has powerfully critiqued western feminism and the way in which it has framed (and continues to try to force into this narrow frame) women in the so-called third world, whose experiences, identities and encounters with gendered oppression not only differ significantly from western women's, but also differ significantly from one another's in many respects. Characterising western feminisms as imperialist, she argues that generalisations about, and domination over, so-called third world women (built upon and often serving the intellectual and social interests of western eyes) strictly limit and depoliticise understandings of gender and gender relations in majority countries and obscure the more complex net of power relations surrounding women in different contexts. Instead, she underlines the importance of detailed, context-specific research - this research would involve both in-depth and specific exploration, as well as wider and even global contextualisation, of the experiences and manifestations of power, gender and oppression

as they are diversely intersected with issues of class and race. These short examples highlight just a small few of the critical issues raised by postcolonial feminists that have significantly influenced the development of more complexly conceptualised and politicised feminisms. They call into question a unitary notion of "women", necessitate greater depth and detail in research and analysis than a male-female dichotomy can provide and call for high levels of reflexivity in deconstructing gendered identities and relations.

Another source of the breakdown of the homogenised category "women", according to Waylen (1996), was the influence of post-structuralist and post-modernist challenges to mainstream theory, developing parallel to feminist challenges to mainstream theory (Waylen, 1996)[8]. As Waylen (1996: 9) puts it, the "fracturing of the 'cartesian' unitary human subject and the self so beloved of rationalist enlightenment thought [was] to be replaced by notions of difference, plurality and multiplicity". As such, identity was re-conceptualised as complex and involving a variety of intersecting elements such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender (ibid). "There exists therefore a plurality of identities in the single subject" (Waylen, 1996: 9).

Similarly to the theoretical shifts catalysed and stimulated by black, minority, postcolonial and third world feminists, post-modernism and post-structuralism led to the increased recognition of the diversity between women (and men), and led to questions around simplistic earlier models that figured gender oppression primarily in terms of males oppressing females. This shift was also influenced strongly by Foucault (for example, Foucault 1972; Foucault, 1973) whose theories I address in greater detail later on. Suffice it to say here that he theorised the concept of discourse in a post-modern sense, linking it to the notion of a fragmented, multiply constituted subject (Waylen, 1996). This also had implications for the way in which the flow of power was conceptualised, with Foucault theorising a more complex flow of power than a simple oppressor/oppressed relationship (MacCannell & Flower MacCannell, 1993). He also contributed to the notion that discourses, because of fragmented subjectivities, can be contradictory, existing side by side even as they struggle with one another.

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[8] The influence between post-modern or post-structuralist theories and feminist theories worked both ways. Feminist critiques of positivistic approaches contributed to shifts in broader social theory while post-structuralism and post-modernism helped to develop feminist theory.

The study of masculinities also emerged out of and strengthened feminist theories advancing a relational, complex and multiply constituted view on gender. Writers and researchers such as Connell (2005; 2000a; 2000b; 1993), Segal (1993; 1990) and in Southern Africa Morrell (2002; 2001a; 2001b) and Ratele (2004; 1998) have challenged unitary notions of masculinity, advancing more complexly, historically and dynamically conceptualised gender identities and relations. Increasingly, feminist theorists too began to consider the importance of understanding masculinity, and its relationship to femininity, towards gender transformation. Writing on masculinities, Moore (1994: 149) highlights the importance of considering gender in a non-unitary and relational way.

> "[F]emininity and masculinity cannot be taken as singular fixed features which are exclusively located in women and men. We must agree to this if we recognize that subjectivity is non-unitary and multiple, and that it is the product, amongst other things, of the variable discourses and practices concerning gender and gender difference. Women and men come to have different understandings of themselves as engendered persons because they are differentially positioned with regard to discourses concerning gender and sexuality, and they take up different positions within those discourses".

This quote exemplifies key characteristics of emerging theories I call "progressive" - theories that emphasise gender, and the ways in which it is (actively, continually and differentially) constructed, as relational and constituted of multiple factors. Furthermore, Moore (1994) reminds us that constructions of masculinity are defined in *hierarchical* relation to femininity, underlining the notion that difference and power are inextricably woven into the constitution of gender. Lynne Segal (1993: 635) also notes, in reference to masculinity, that "[a] 'pure' masculinity cannot be displayed *except* in relation to 'femininity'" (emphasis original). Here again, theory on masculinities functions to emphasise that the performance and construction of gender is just that - a performance and construction, that therefore needs a correlation or relationship with an "other" to be actualised.

An important masculinities theorist is Connell (for example, 2000a; 2000b; 1993), who has identified the "patriarchal dividend", or the different, unequal advantages bestowed on different men according to their location within the hierarchical construction of hegemonic masculinities. Connell's work has had many implications but, for my purposes here, I will flag

the significance of this notion of patriarchal dividend which (although also critiqued) offers and supports the insight that "men" and "women" do not stand in dichotomous relationship with one another, but experience the gendered world and their gendered selves (including power and oppression) in accordance with socially and hierarchically constructed ideas of what masculinity and femininity are, and where they are located in relation to these social constructions and hierarchies of gender. All of this highlights the weaknesses of liberal-inclusionary approaches to gender transformation that not only sidestep crucial issues of difference, but also the ways in which gender and power is socially *constructed*, and marked by different and unequal ideas about masculinities and femininities.

Various emerging social theories have also gone beyond a concern with equality between male and female subjects, and linked gender to *processes*, *structures*, *institutions* and *practices*. This is illustrated in the works of writers such as Mies (1986), Kabeer (1994), Bhavnani et al. (2003), Beneria (2003) and Sweetman (2008), who argue for gendered conceptions and processes of development and economics. It also emerges in the work of Enloe (2007) who has, through feminist theory, linked gender to the institutionalisation and processes of militarism and globalisation, and Walby (1990) who has pointed to the ways in which patriarchy is manifest through institutions and governance processes. Of course, the significance of these gendered processes, structures, institutions and practices is very much connected with their implications for women's positions within societies (and the position of men who do not conform to hegemonic masculinities). However, these theories highlight the ways in which gender socially constructs, and is constructed by, the norms and values around processes, structures and practices. A relatively simple example would be the gendered nature of most corporate and business norms and values, from the valuing as professional of a masculinist work environment to a social and practical lack of space for reproductive activities to be integrated within a formal workplace career.

From this perspective, too, subjectivities are not *statically* positioned but *dynamic* and *oriented* differently in relation to different structures, institutions, processes and so forth, which are also gendered. Connell's (2005; 2000a, 2000b, 1993) theories on masculinity illustrate aspects of this theoretical shift. He notes for example that gender is configured at various levels, and is not isolated but oriented within, and in relation to, broader social and structural configurations (2002). Gender, in this view, is not only constructed at the level of individual life, but also in relation to, and interaction with, gendered ideological, cultural and

institutional configurations (ibid). Connell (1993) has, therefore, been vocal on the limitations of the traditional "sex-role" approach to gender relations, noting that this approach omits consideration of the importance of broader structures, institutions and power with which the engendered individual interacts.

The notion of not only women and men being gendered, but structures, institutions, practices and values as well, was already alluded to in de Beauvoir's (1972) influential writings. She critically identified the hierarchy of masculine values, processes and *ways of being* over the feminine, highlighting that femininity is generally regarded in terms of its "lack" of masculine traits, which are normalised (ibid)[9]. de Beauvoir noted, therefore, that society and its workings are, on the whole, deeply masculine and androcentric (ibid). This indicates a link between gender and the structural and institutional elements of society, which are created and governed in accordance with masculine values. As will be discussed further in relation to the media in Chapter 3, these ideas have been influential in highlighting the gendered nature of, for example, professional practices and organisations such as those of the media industry.

Again, I return to another work of Hassim's (2005) in conclusion. She advocates the importance of addressing the need for "transformational" rather than merely "inclusionary" feminist approaches in South Africa in a way that resonates in many ways with what I have described as progressive feminist approaches over liberal-inclusionary ones[10]. While she agrees that inclusionary feminist approaches may be necessary to create the broader conditions in which gender inequalities can be addressed, she also highlights the reluctance within these approaches to interfere with the structural underpinnings of gender inequalities (ibid). Transformational feminist approaches, she notes, employ the concept of "strategic" gender interests - a concept first introduced by Maxine Molyneux (1985) - towards not only addressing women's immediate, practical concerns but also longer-term, more fundamental issues such as the basis of gendered power relations and the interactions between political, social and economic spheres (Hassim, 2005). A transformational approach therefore aims to unpack, deconstruct and challenge gendered ideologies and relations at all levels, not merely at the level of public participation. As such, it has linkages with the ways in which I conceptualise progressive feminist theory here.

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[9] Numerous similar arguments have been made in relation to the media and the communications studies field as well, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Despite the various important theoretical developments I have outline above, a liberal-inclusionary paradigm still dominates in various arenas, including those of policy-making in South Africa. A relational analysis of gender, stretching beyond equity towards a deeper understanding of gendered power, structures and institutions as exemplified in the theories discussed above, underpins the feminist research undertaken here as will be evident throughout this thesis. Progressive feminist theory, then, is regarded as that which moves *beyond* the limitations of a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm towards a social constructionist perspective of gender as relational, multiply constituted and dynamic. It also includes theory that goes beyond concerns with numerical representation towards critically assessing the role of symbolic, socially constructed gendered representation, including the ways in which this operates in structures, institutions, practices and values. This concept of progressive feminism is also, in this research, linked to the way in which I have conceptualised - and apply - the notion of *gender transformation*. Whether applied broadly or with specific reference to the media, gender transformation, here, is understood as transformation of the gender order and status quo in a way that acknowledges, understands and builds strategies upon progressive feminist understandings of gender and how they impact upon patriarchy.

In light of these understandings, resistance to feminism, especially progressive feminist ideas that can challenge to the root very deeply entrenched social and cultural norms, is also an important area to point towards in a discussion of frameworks for understanding social change from a feminist perspective. The above sections have detailed developments and advancements in feminist thought. However, the trajectories of feminist thought and the changes they have brought and demanded have not gone unopposed. The section below therefore draws attention to some of the ways in which, or historical processes and frameworks through which, gender transformation has and is being challenged. This is, I consider, important to touch on in building a foundation of feminist understandings that will contextualise some of the further issues raised in this thesis.

2.4   "Mind the Gap Please": A Note on Anti-feminist Backlash

Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) note that anti-feminist backlash, at least as it came to be known in the west, was first most clearly observed during the second wave of feminism

concentrated in the 1960's. However, the period most strongly associated with the rise of what has come to be termed "anti-feminist backlash" was the 1980's and 1990's (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). According to Faludi (1992), the backlash phenomenon is not the manifestation of an orchestrated movement or plot to undermine feminist advancements as much as an amalgamation of social factors and actions, at times not consciously intended to undermine women's emancipation. Of the shape of anti-feminist backlash, Faludi writes the following:

> "The backlash is at once sophisticated and banal, deceptively 'progressive' and proudly backward. It deploys both the 'new' findings of 'scientific research' and the sentimental moralizing of yesteryear…The backlash has succeeded in framing virtually the whole issue of women's rights in its own language" (Faludi, 1992: 12).

In the above statement, the varied and even contradictory discourses employed to shape anti-feminist arguments are highlighted, as well as the way in which they can often strategically employ the discursive traits of feminism to turn it upon itself. Some of the arguments put forward within anti-feminist backlash discourses are that women themselves are suffering as a result of feminism, which is responsible for their contemporary problems (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). This is often supported by romanticised notions of the past (ibid), a fictional narrative of the "good old days" as characterised by gender harmony. Faludi (1992: 12) elaborates the following in this regard.

> "This counterassault is largely insidious; in a kind of pop-culture version of the Big Lie, it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women's position have actually led to their downfall."

The manifestations of and reasons for backlash are varied. Faludi (1992) explains it as a common reaction to changes in the status quo, which are regarded with distrust and seen as potentially threatening. Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) link it to attempts to hold on to resources and power granted by the gender status quo, not only by men but also by women, some of whom might feel that feminist advances could undermine the value assigned to certain "feminine" activities and domains, such as those of the household. In addition, Benokraitis and Feagin (ibid) argue that the gender order has historically been so firmly

institutionalised and socialised that people find it difficult to challenge or disassociate with old patterns of thought and behaviour. This, of course, has serious implications for a feminist project (such as a progressive feminist one) that aims to uproot and challenge deeply socialised and institutionalised values and practices.

Both Faludi (1992) and Whelehan (2000) have pointed to the media as an important contributing factor in earlier and contemporary anti-feminist backlashes. The mass media, according to Faludi (ibid), played a key role during the second wave in vocalising, disseminating and propagating anti-feminist messages, often reinforcing or even multiplying backlash sentiments. This has been exacerbated by the fact that the very people feminists were trying to connect to - women - were poorly reached through the media, which often portrayed feminism in less than flattering terms and represented the backlash in a way that "made it palatable" (Faludi, 1992: 101). However, Faludi argues that this was not an intentional move.

> "The press didn't set out with this, or any other, intention; like any large institution, its movements aren't premeditated or programmatic, just grossly susceptible to the prevailing political currents. Even so, the press, carried by tides it rarely fathomed, acted as a force that swept the general public, powerfully shaping the way people would think and talk about the feminist legacy and the ailments it supposedly inflicted on women" (Faludi, 1992: 101).

Faludi's (1992) work on anti-feminist backlash offers a number of interesting insights that can be applied, in various ways, to different contexts outside of the geographical and time periods they focused on. Of course, anti-feminist backlash cannot be pinned to a particular time or set of events and actors, and authors such as Whelehan (2000) have pointed to contemporary cultural perspectives on feminism, including "post-feminist" backlashes against it. Whelehan has, for instance, highlighted the reformulated ways in which anti-feminist backlash is manifest in contemporary culture, for example through "politically incorrect" humour that "legitimises the practice of superficial engagement with social realities and exempts one from the responsibility of engaging with less palatable ones" (Whelehan, 2000: 25). Feminist thought and action - and actions against them - have manifested in diverse ways in diverse settings throughout history, shifting in shape and tone according to context. If one views Faludi's (1992) insights from the perspective that there are many

processes or trajectories of anti-feminist backlash, some of which heighten and become more visible at certain times, one can begin to locate the materialising of various historical resistances to change. Faludi's historical and theoretical insights can also be considered in relation to the South African context, including her reference to the media as an agent in strengthening anti-feminist backlashes.

To me, anti-feminist backlash appears at times to take the form of a punitive reaction to gender transformation in defence of the status quo, as well as something which, in addition to seething beneath the surface, is fuelled into action by a variety of forces that lead to a social desire for nostalgic stability. Gender relations, at the centre of intimate relationships and already attached to powerful discourses that naturalise and even deify gender differences, provide an accessible focal point for enacting this desire in the context of social change. In a context in which rapid changes are occurring on various fronts, revoking changes to the gender order that challenge society may be employed to some extent to offset these changes. In South Africa, for example, the push to resist and reverse gender change has been linked to other social histories and contemporary experiences of change.

Lewis (2003) reflects on anti-feminist backlashes in Africa based on arguments around culture. She argues that discourses of "culture" built around what she calls "[f]ictions of undiluted African "culture", incorporating notions of authenticity and timelessness, serve to support patriarchal goals and interests (ibid). Importantly, historical experiences of and discourses around colonialism have consequently shaped backlashes against feminist advancements in Africa. In this regard she writes the following.

> "In recent years, the charge of 'Westernisation' has surfaced with special virulence against feminism on the continent. With the growth of the women's movement and feminist scholarship during the last decade, feminism has increasingly challenged nationalist agendas that deify the leadership and ideologies of elite men. Predictably, the backlash has invoked the idea that African feminists have betrayed, violated or contaminated 'culture'" (Lewis, 2003: no page number given).

The argument that feminism is just another embodiment of colonisation and the ways in which it has often been imbibed into people's consciousness (Lewis, 2003) is extremely

powerful against the backdrop of historical and ongoing struggles to free Africa from a crippling colonial legacy. In this regard, Lewis considers anti-feminist backlashes in Africa as a manifestation of mounting anxieties surrounding the preservation of identities forged and strengthened as part of the anti-colonial project (ibid).

> "The vehemence of the feminist backlash testifies to the anxieties of those who have long built their sense of themselves, their material interests, and their political power on extremely fragile claims to the collective voice implied by their defence of 'culture'" (Lewis, 2003: no page number given).

These anxieties are patent in prevailing homophobia in South Africa. As Lewis (2003: no page number) asserts, attacks borne against homosexuals "in the name of African authenticity are rooted in the fear, experienced by many men and women, who perceive their most closely held values and norms are imperilled." Fears surrounding the relinquishing of deeply forged identities and values are ignited by gender transformation agendas, such as the move to challenge heterosexism. Yet the forging of these identities and values, despite their appeal to discourses that naturalise them, involve invention, fired within the context of anti-colonial struggles. According to Lewis (ibid), contemporary scripts of "culture" in Africa often "illustrate myth-making processes in which masculine self-definition and values are central."

This echoes McClintock's (1991) assertions regarding the development of nationalisms in South Africa, which she identifies as invented, gendered and even dangerous in their implications. While much has been written and debated in South Africa surrounding the tensions between African "culture"[11] and gender transformation processes, expressions of backlash are not limited to black citizens. In this respect, McClintock (ibid) traces the historical emergence of both African and Afrikaner nationalisms to illustrate the social and political interests that shaped gendered expressions of nationalism, inextricably linked with the construction of contemporary African and Afrikaner "culture".

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[11] I use and continue to use this term within quotation marks specifically when referring to notions of culture associated with race, ethnicity, tradition and so on (as opposed to, for example, references to organisational or visual culture). I use the quotation marks to indicate a critical caution in its use, which is contested and, in my opinion, widely misappropriated, for example, as a synonym for race or an indicator of inherent, timeless values and practices.

It is important, however, to consider as Morrell (2002) does that reactions to gender transformation in South Africa are not only characterised by a backlash, but take many forms. Morrell (ibid) emphasises the enormous impact of differential experiences of class, race and colonialism in shaping these responses in South Africa. Racial and gender affirmative action has had a bearing on different men in different ways, depending of their location at the intersection of race, class and "culture". The backlash experienced among some men in South Africa is, according to Morrell (ibid), aimed at defending male privilege and stabilising powerful sources of identity and power, related in various ways also to racial politics and economics. These backlashes can take the form of limiting the gains being achieved by women or exploiting the counter-argument that men and boys are disadvantaged by gender transformation processes, or even the victims of reverse sexism (Morrell, 2002).

These backlashes have been expressed in the creation of various men's movements and organisations in South Africa that at times appropriate feminist discourses to argue the case of men's exploitation (Morrell, 2002). This re-appropriation of feminist discourses around sexism and gender oppression to support anti-feminist backlashes is evident in South Africa as much as it was in the United Kingdom and United States since the second wave. However, as Morrell (ibid) reasserts, men's movements and organisations that promote gender justice and transformation have also been established in South Africa, illustrating the diversity of responses to gender transformation among men. Similarly, one cannot assume a homogenous reaction to gender transformation by women; anti-feminist backlash and resistance to gender transformation in South Africa also includes women. For example, the 2005 National Gender Survey (Commission on Gender Equality, 2005) found that when asked if a woman raped after drinking was responsible for her own rape, more women (41.01%) agreed than men (33.39%).

As such, anti-feminist backlash in South Africa should be considered in the context of the relationship between gender, "culture" and historical trajectories impacting on race and class. Furthermore, as will be discussed later in this thesis, discourses resembling anti-feminist backlash are not always completely distinct or separate from those promoting gender transformation. Gender relations are complexly experienced and understood, and discourses around transformation are therefore also complex and uneven. However, it is

clear that contextually specific manifestations of anti-feminist backlash are important to consider in the South African context.

2.5   Conclusions

Some central theoretical frameworks and historical processes have been highlighted to introduce the principle feminist ideas arising from, and incorporated in, this research. Feminism as a political and theoretical point of departure is laced throughout this thesis, and in particular the concepts of liberal-inclusionary and progressive feminism have been outlined as a foundational roadmap towards exploring the issue of gender and the media, as well as methodologies related to gender and the media.

Having established a feminist lens through which to further view issues of gender transformation in South Africa, the following Chapter will attempt to answer the following question: why, in the first place, is the *media* important for gender transformation? Undertaking a research study on gender representations in the media follows from an implicit assumption that the media has some role to play in engendering and/or processes of gender transformation. However, such a widespread implicit assumption - that the media is important in shaping or at least reflecting gender relations - has been rigorously challenged and variously theorised.

Therefore, the Chapter that follows will briefly delve into the underlying motivation for this research, casting our eyes to theories surrounding the impact of the media on society. The following Chapter then also begins to unpack and discuss some salient theoretical issues related to the media industry context, or the site of media production. If media representations do indeed have significance for gender relations and processes of gender transformation, then how are these representations produced, by whom and what shapes them? This research aims to find out how media professionals view issues of gender and gender transformation, especially in relation to the kinds of representations they produce through the media. Behind *this* research interest is the assumption that media professionals have a role to play in producing engendered news texts. However, there are many different ways of understanding the context in which media representations are eventually produced, and some of the primary areas of research in this regard are therefore discussed in order to provide a context for feminist critiques of the media. The following Chapter thus provides the

link between a *feminist agenda* for the research and the research *interest in media representations* specifically. It concludes with the outlining of a rudimentary feminist epistemological understanding of the news media as a basis for this research.

3 THE NEWSROOM AND BEYOND: THEORISING THE MEDIA

3.1 The Media as Social Agent: Debating the Media's Impact on Social Transformation

How are we to understand the significance of media representations of gender? Feminist critiques of media representations have been very prolific, yet often the underlying assumption of the significance of media representations in creating, sustaining or challenging material and social inequalities is not always explored but, in some ways, taken for granted. Common to much feminist media research and activism related to the media has been an implicit structural functionalist media theory, embodying what Carey (1989) named the "transmission view" of communication. Described in its most basic sense, a transmission view of the media assumes a relatively unfettered one-way flow of influence from media text to media audiences and consumers, necessarily making the way in which gender, for example, is represented in the media very important in shaping gendered social norms, values and behaviours.

However, a general shift has occurred in media theory, including certain feminist media studies, towards more complex conceptions of media production and negotiation processes (van Zoonen, 1994). A view of media consumers as "passive, indiscriminate and morally malleable" (Segel, 1992: 6) and the media as "all powerful, dangerous and potentially hazardous to stable society" (ibid), has progressively been challenged by a "pluralist paradigm" highlighting mediations, negotiations and contestations occurring in both textual creation and reception processes (ibid).

When it comes to the question of the impact of the mass media on society, debate rages on between theorists and activists alike. It is interesting to note that while transmission views have for a number of years been effectively challenged in the halls of academia, discourses common to policy activists continue to echo assumptions embodied in the transmission view of communications. The potential implications of these contesting views can be conceived of as critical to the feminist invocation of media effects theories to launch a critique against prevailing gendered media representations. As such, a brief synopsis of central themes in the complex and controversial media effects debate follows. This synopsis will also provide

a platform from which to launch a briefly articulated and rudimentary feminist epistemological standpoint (drawn primarily from Africa feminist work) on media "effects" or importance, considered as lacking from most feminist media theory and of potential importance to activists.

Theories surrounding the impact of media representations involve, in the main, theories on the normalising and socialising impacts of media representations, agenda setting theories, and those theories challenging the assumptions of the one-way flow of influence implied in the former theories, highlighting audience appropriation and resistance of media messages. The latter pluralist paradigm will be limited here mainly to the frequently cited work of Stuart Hall (1980) on "Encoding/Decoding" media processes.

Theories stressing the media's role in normalising roles, behaviours and values, and socialising audiences via the expression of dominant meanings embodied in representations, can perhaps be no better introduced than through research on the effects of television on children. David Buckingham (2003), in his chronicle of this area of research, contends that the fervent attention granted to the impacts of media representations on children, in particular, can be attributed to the theme's invocation of moral and ideological assumptions about the social constitution of children and, by unspoken extension, adults.

Buckingham (2003) contends that deep-seated anxieties surrounding perceived undesirable social and moral changes may evoke the pursuit of causal explanations for such changes, as witnessed in the flurry of research aiming to identify the mass media's impact on phenomena such as increased or changing patterns of violence. Television is thus frequently cited as having a powerful influence on children's socialisation, the negative impacts of which characterise the majority of research (ibid). Most of this work has further been concentrated on the "stereotyping" of various social groups in media representations, notably stereotypes associated with gender, ethnicity and race (ibid).

Quantitative content analysis is widely used to evidence the proliferation of gender stereotypes produced and reproduced by the mass media, concentrating mostly on the dire state of under-representation of women in the media as well as their objectification as limited (sexual and/or domestic) beings (van Zoonen, 1994). Extensive data pertaining to these patterns in mass media products are available in many countries around the world,

and employed to raise awareness and lobby for change (ibid). However, as prolific as this data may be, it has been widely critiqued for its theoretical and empirical deficits (van Zoonen, 1994). The methodological approaches associated with this kind of research, it is argued, are flawed in their presupposition of a parallel between content and effects (Buckingham, 2003). Critics of this approach have drawn attention to the diverse socialisation factors that mediate the potential impact of the media (ibid).

Agenda setting theories offer an alternative approach to abstracting the role and impacts of media representations. These theories hold that, while the media may not be able to enforce upon audiences *what* to think, it can powerfully direct what audiences do or do not think *about*. Agenda setting theories are popular in analyses of media representations with party political content. As the media evolves into a near-ubiquitous communications body, so it increasingly becomes a "real" public space in which politics occur for the majority of people (Ross, 2002). Ross (ibid) adopts a position premised on agenda setting and priming, arguing that media content and representations "visibilise" certain political issues through repetition, to the effect that these issues come to be known as central in the eyes of the public.

Ross (ibid) also argues that the issues set as part of principle national and international agendas through the media privilege dominant socio-economic paradigms of patriarchy and capitalism, entrenching existing relationships of social, political, economic and cultural inequality. This, she further explains, is especially problematic given that journalists' insistence on their application of neutrality and impartiality masks their agenda setting capabilities and roles. Tuchman (1978), for example, has described the ways in which journalists' professional ideologies and values (such as objectivity) are strategically used in different situations to shape news stories. For instance, the use of "facts" to make "soft" news "hard" (or to legitimate it) enables news stories focussed on social issues to be forwarded strategically.

However, while agenda setting theories function as a useful alternative to socialisation and stereotyping theories (theories based in social constructionism), their implications cannot be wholly untangled from social constructionist approaches. By implication, agenda setting theories conceptualise omissions, marginalised issues or lacunae in media representations as powerful in constituting the omission, marginalisation or repression of certain notions of

"men" and "women" in society. As such, media representations are seen as, in a particular way, socially and culturally (re)constructing reality. Agenda setting theories also interestingly appear to recommend a view of media representation drawing from notions of "silencing", and by implication of "voicing", amenable to powerful feminist arguments around epistemology, as will be further explicated later in the literature review.

As a challenge to social constructionist theories, a number of theorists have aimed to unpack the complexity of potential media effects by examining audiences' reception of media messages. van Zoonen (1994), in an overview of feminist media studies, provides a synopsis of the thesis put forward by Hall (1980) in which the one-way flow of influence from media messages to audiences is challenged. According to van Zoonen (1994), Hall's "Encoding/Decoding" model holds that meanings are "encoded" into media texts by their producers, and then "decoded" by audiences. Critically, Hall argues that the processes of encoding and decoding are not necessarily symmetrical (ibid).

While the ideologies held within media organisations may be encoded into media messages, the decoding process is not exclusive; audiences' decoding of media messages will be influenced not only by the ideologies and discourses carried through or within media texts, but will be influenced by an array of social ideologies and discourses available to audiences (Omarjee, 2001). In essence, an audiences' interpretation of media messages can be divergent from the messages inscribed in texts at the point of production. However, while media texts are polysemic, decoding possibilities are *not infinite* (van Zoonen, 1994). "Encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decoding will operate" (Hall, 1980). Thus, van Zoonen (1994) invokes Hall to suggest that texts have a "preferred" meaning, which will commonly reconstruct dominant values.

"Encoding/Decoding" and similar theories offer a counter to theories and approaches maintaining the omnipotence of media messages. Implicitly, then, the media's role in promoting or inhibiting gender transformation is constituted as one input in a process of ideological and discursive negotiation over meaning. Audiences are posited as active participants in these processes of negotiation, drawing on multiple discourses to decode, and in so doing (re/de)construct, the meanings encoded in texts. Some theorists have derived from this a view assigning primacy to audiences' agency in interpreting texts. Others, however, have embraced the notion of audiences' agency as tendering a more

complex and nuanced understanding of media effects and consequently the role of the media, while maintaining the media's power in crafting an influential ideological and discursive arena in which its meanings are negotiated. Theoretical counters to notions of media power, and the media's "pivotal role in organising the images and discourses through which people make sense of the world" (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 11), also challenge the idea that the media is "trivial and manipulative" (Golding & Murdock: 13). However, as Golding and Murdock (ibid) point out, these counters are potentially at risk of colluding with "conservative celebrations of untrammelled consumer choice", removing encounters between audiences and texts from wider contexts and presenting decoding "moments" as instances of "consumer sovereignty" (Golding & Murdock, 1996: 13).

In my rendering the "Encoding/Decoding" model, attending to "moments" in meaning making (at production and reception), while offering very useful insights fails to account for *broader* battles over discursive and ideological power. The power inherent in knowledge production is linked and limited not only to such "moments" in the meaning making process, but is part of a broader intellectual, ideological and discursive context which can limit, challenge, reaffirm, inhibit or contest values and meanings in society. Thus, the macro-context in which values are contested and eventually constituted into the production of media products cannot be completely divorced from the context in which these products are interpreted. As will be discussed further in relation to news production processes ("coding"), the various levels at which discourses are drawn from, to create a particular product or meaning in a media text, interact considerably with one another, and cannot be wholly separated. The same, then, should be true for the process of interpretation and assimilation ("decoding"). As such, these "moments" of creation and interpretation are not distinct moments at all, but are so connected socially and culturally that the boundaries become blurred.

Hall's (1980) reference to media production as constructing the limits to decoding possibilities does indeed imply some of the limits referred to here in the autonomy of decoding processes, albeit apparently in reference to a "moment" in the making of meaning. This point, to me, also resonates somewhat with Judith Butler's (1997) rendering of discourse as the limits of acceptable speech or possible truth. Yet, it is not only the "moment" of reception or production that is key, but broader contestations over voice. These broader contestations are abstractly embodied in these discourses or possible truths, and the relationship between who produces the news, about whom and how have

epistemological implications in the broader sense: implications for power and voice, the inputs and outcomes of which are in part concretely manifested as oppression.

Having very briefly introduced some of the common arguments about the power of the media, and hence implicitly the possible role of the media in promoting or resisting gender transformation, how can the media's role be understood? If audience sovereignty in interpreting and re-appropriating media messages is upheld, then prevalent feminist critiques of media representation can be discarded. However, if the meanings of media messages are conceptualised as having an impact on the ways in which audiences discursively view, understand or value social and material phenomena, then a feminist critique of media messages that cherish dominant masculine paradigms and interests, and affirm values counter to the transformation of gender relations, are valid.

This Chapter now broadly moves away from debates related to audience "reception" and the influence of media texts, to the context of their production in the following section. However, as has been alluded to and will become increasingly apparent, the issue of the media's *impact* cannot be completely separated from the media's *production*. As such, an epistemological viewpoint linking media production to the media's role is gradually unpacked in the following two sections.

3.2   Into the Newsroom: Journalists, Journalism and the Media Production Context

Turning to the context of media production, it is important to briefly establish a basis for approaching the issue of text production, as I do, from a social constructionist perspective. Journalism as a profession has commonly been bound up in a largely "positivistic faith in empiricism, [resting on] the belief that the external world can be successfully perceived and understood" (Katembo, 2005: 60). However, a feminist inquiry such as this into journalists' viewpoints, discursive frameworks and understandings of their role in gender transformation rests on the notion of knowledge as *situated*, and an implicit critique of claims of "objectivity" in news production.

Understandings of knowledge as situated are by no means limited to feminist thinking. However, feminist theorists have commonly stressed the partiality and situated nature of knowledge production in response to mounting theorisation regarding the androcentricity of

written knowledge, particularly in history and science. Authors such as Narayan (2003) have also raised these feminist epistemological concerns through the added lens of North-South power dynamics. She joins other feminist theorists in asserting that mainstream theories and knowledge production in general are one-dimensional and flawed due to the exclusion of women and the inferior status ascribed to their perspectives and activities, particularly those of non-Western traditions (ibid). Thus, a scan of existing bodies of knowledge reveals common omissions and the assignment of values that are not neutral or total, but from a dominant masculine perspective.

This observation of the situated nature of knowledge and its role in relationships of gender domination has also extended beyond feminist critiques of male-dominated processes of knowledge production and into the realm of self-reflexivity. Feminists have turned the lens inwards, acknowledging the implications of their own positions and subjectivities in the production of knowledge. Mbilinyi (1992: 53) articulates critical feminist epistemologies as denying "the possibility of neutral, value-free science and knowledge".

> "The researchers are part of the world under study. Our [researchers'] conception of the problem under study, our construction of research instruments, our interpretation of data, are all effected by our multiple identities and discourses. The theories, methodologies and epistemologies adopted interact with our experience (empirical findings) in the world" (Mbilinyi, 1992: 53).

Thus, according to proponents of critical feminist epistemology such as Mbilinyi (1992), claims to neutrality – in any area of knowledge production - function to conceal the situated nature of knowledge production, perpetuating exclusions and assumptions of dominant hegemonic truth. Unveiling the discursive and ideological positions that inform knowledge production is thus constituted as a means to countering the perpetuation of selected "truths" that marginalise certain perspectives.

Foucault's (for example, Foucault 1972, 1973) work also points to a relationship between uttered "truth" or knowledge and the unconsciously appropriated discourses contained in people's social environment. Through his work on the "archaeology of knowledge" (Foucault, 1972), Foucault "attempts to identify the *conditions of possibility* of knowledge,

the determining 'rules of formation' of discursive rationality that operate beneath the level of 'thematic content' and subjective awareness and intention" (Best, 1994: 30, emphasis original). According to this rendering, knowledge is situated and drawn from broader discourses characterising particular social, political and discursive positions in history. Aspects of Foucault's work (and interpretations of his work) will be further explored in Chapter 5 under discussions of methodology. Suffice it to say here that, while interpretations of Foucault's work differ rather substantially (and while feminist appropriations of his work are a particularly significant locus of tension), a Foucauldian viewpoint would, arguably, in its most basic form affirm the situated nature of knowledge, and link knowledge to power.

Given then that knowledge is conceptualised here as situated, I will redirect attention to various sociological theories that aim to identify and understand the sources and systems of influence on the text production process. In particular, theories that aim to address these questions in terms of the *news* production context will be focused on. What discourses are operating within, upon and through the newsroom context, and at what different levels should the politics of knowledge production in this context be assessed?

A number of approaches taken towards understanding media texts perform analysis on a combination or all of the following levels: the micro-level, which looks at the individual's impact on the creation of text; the meso-level, focused on newsroom and news institutions' discourses and practices; and the macro-level, including the broader cultural, social, political and economic context shaping various levels of news-making (Steenveld, 2007). That there are numerous factors that impact on news production processes, many of which impact variously on one another as well, therefore makes the study of news production methodologically complex. The levels of analysis therefore often need to be treated as intertwined.

Some of the most common areas of interest within the analysis of these levels warrant a brief introduction here, having informed the manner in which the analysis for this research was undertaken. Each level and focus within it could yield detailed and complex research findings. However, while a comprehensive analysis of each level has not been undertaken in the case of this research, I have aimed to capture some of the salient elements of each through the particular lens of feminist inquiry. This has, to some extent, been a methodological imperative given the inter-relatedness of these levels of analysis as stated

above. In essence, the micro-level is taken in this thesis to encapsulate issues such as identity and agency as expressed through the discourses of journalists. The impact of the meso- and macro-levels (with particular relevance to the news production context) on individual articulations of agency and identity will be unpacked in slightly more detail.

Key theoretical contributions to news production analysis at the *meso*-level stem from the social organisational approach. Journalists' professional values and practices are seen as mediated by organisational and professional demands, ranging from the ideological to the practical (Katembo, 2005). Contained within this is the notion of journalistic professionalism, which is constituted of discourses that legitimate and marginalise various journalistic practices, values and approaches (Katembo, 2005). Common examples include the valuing of "objectivity" over "bias" and the hierarchical distinctions between "hard news" and "soft news".

The parameters of journalistic professionalism are deeply gendered. Professional journalistic culture with implications for the representation of gender in the news, according to de Bruin (2004), commonly include widely embraced gendered dichotomies such as objectivity versus subjectivity and detachment versus advocacy. These dichotomies, it is argued, serve to prize "objective" cultural values reflective of dominant gendered ideology (ibid). For example, claims of objectivity may serve to justify news stories framing violence against women as single news events, instead of attempting to contextualise or critique the prevalence of gender based violence in a misogynistic social environment, which would be considered advocacy and therefore "biased". Tuchman (1978) has also pointed to the ways in which the news media privileges "events" rather than "issues", therefore making it difficult for social issues (such as gender issues) to be addressed in the news, unless the journalist makes an effort to frame them around some identified "event".

So ubiquitous are these traditional[12] ideals espoused in the journalistic profession, that some feminist advocates of gender transformation in the media have invoked these very discourses to lobby for change in news production. For example, some have argued that current journalistic practices distort the experiences and contributions of women in society

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[12] From here onwards, I refer to journalistic approaches echoing characteristics described in this section as "traditional" journalistic and professional ideals or values (for example, those related to objectivity). "Traditional" will also be used to refer to approaches historically taken in mainstream, broadsheet newspapers, such as "objective" reporting. Because of the historical dominance of these approaches in the journalism profession, there is a need to broadly distinguish these approaches.

and should, subsequently, be altered to "objectively" or "realistically" reflect the diverse roles and contributions of women in society (see, for example, Opoku-Mensah, 2004; Gallego et al., 2004). In so doing, some feminist engagements with the media have discursively aligned themselves with the positivistic paradigm common in professional ideologies of journalism. This could perhaps signify the power of the positivistic discourse of objectivity in journalistic professionalism, or could perhaps also indicate a strategic attempt to find common ground with journalists at the meso-level of discourses of journalistic professionalism.

A theoretical approach to the *macro*-level of news production can be broadly referred to as the "cultural" approach. As opposed to a social organisational approach, a cultural approach stresses the shaping force of broader cultural traditions and systems (Katembo, 2005). From this vantage point, the media industry is considered not as an isolated social system, but rather within the context of much wider cultural discourses. The force of this trans-organisational and trans-professional cultural milieu places demands and constraints upon the products produced in the newsroom, which draw on the broader cultural symbols of society. Katembo (ibid) notes that a cultural account of news contributes towards understanding the ways in which journalists' rendering of what constitutes "news"' is often vague. As Katembo (2005: 62) explains:

> "Real events do occur. However, because events are not intrinsically newsworthy, they only become 'news' when selected for inclusion in news reports."

From a cultural perspective, these selections can be understood as shaped by the discourses of the society in which, and for which, news is produced. These cultural discourses can be so pervasive as to render them largely invisible. This could account for the oft-heard claim by journalists that they will know news when they see it.

I propose that both approaches offer an insight into the complex processes of news production at different levels. Organisational and professional discourses with particular bearing on the newsroom are significant, but cannot be entirely separated from the broader socio-cultural milieu. As will emerge in the research findings, discourses around news production reflect various links between individual, journalistic and broader social discourses (the micro-, meso- and macro-levels).

Another theoretical approach to the question of communications and organisational practices is represented in the work of Golding and Murdock (1996), who bring to the debate an analysis of communications production processes that blends often raised notions of cultural ideology and practice within media organisations, and economic dynamics. This approach addresses in part the argument that economic imperatives and pressures placed upon news producers to produce news that sells hinders their ability to create more progressive or transformative media representations. This argument has it that the issue of sales (and therefore the values and agency of the wider public or readership) dominates the content and style of media production. In addressing such arguments, Golding and Murdock (1996: 11) fuse the "symbolic and economic dimensions of public communications" in a political economy approach to news production, arguing that financing and organisational structures have consequences for the ways in which news is produced or the range of discourses and representations "feasible" for public consumption.

Political economy has been identified as linked to a number of shifts in the patterns of media production. For example, viewing news as a commodity in an economically driven market introduces the impact of consumer desires and expectations in shaping news coverage (Hamilton, 2004). Political economy, therefore, links economic pressures at the meso-level with the macro-level of cultural reproduction and broader social discourses. In addition, expectations of the media's function (be it entertainment, "objective" reporting of particular events or a forum for intellectual engagement with social and political issues, for example) will shape and constrain the types of cultural reproduction *expected* through the media, feeding back into the kinds of cultural reproduction undertaken towards economic imperatives. In this way, one can see the mutual interaction between macro- and meso-levels of news production.

While the traditional precepts of news production for journalists involve answering a series of questions such as what happened, to whom, where, why and when, political economy concerns are articulated through questions such as who the particular readership is, what they will consider important, if and how a particular readership will have access to the product, what advertisers will be willing to pay to reach such readerships and so on (Hamilton, 2004). Ideologies of press freedom can often obscure the economic drives of news production such as these, which are linked to the social values (and socio-economic position) of a particular readership.

In terms of the gendering of news production, political economy has played a key role in shifts in media form and content. One important example is the "feminisation" of news. Increased economic participation of women, as well as their location at the coalface of the "consumer economy" (the home), led to significant changes in the shape of media products, in particular the inclusion of "softer" news, human-interest pieces and additional features such as cooking and advice pages, thought to be of greater interest to women (Holland, 1998). The "page three" phenomenon, in the form of sexualised pictures of women, was also linked to political economy at the nexus of economic incentives and broader gendered discourses legitimating the male gaze on female sexuality as a form of consumption.

These theories suggest the need to recognise the complexity of news production processes, and the politics of knowledge production present at various levels. The role of professional ideology, organisational culture and broader cultural influences intersect and are intersected at the micro-level, namely at the level where a media practitioner (be it a journalist, editor or photographer) crafts a media product. As such, theories on journalistic agency can help to bring these diverse theories together in terms of the journalist's role in transformation processes. In the social, political, cultural and economic milieu that creates news production contexts, how do individual journalists eventually create particular news products?

Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller (1989) offer a theoretical perspective on journalistic agency in the South African press. Relying heavily on the work of Herbert Gans (1980), they argue for a perspective of journalistic agency that situates journalists as ideological actors operating in a news production milieu constituted by multiple internal and external "considerations" that must be negotiated in the production of news (ibid). According to Gans (1980), these "considerations" include individual locations within ideological frameworks, from personal values drawn from various social discourses to professional values drawn from discourses surrounding the role of news and journalists.

Echoing the work previously raised regarding journalistic and professional cultures, Gans (1980) argues that journalists "tend to identify ideology with allegiances at the extreme ends of the political spectrum". Thus, ideological positions are distanced from journalistic practice and are associated with the far left or the far right. As such, ideological positions among journalists *themselves* are often felt as "objective" if they do not appear to be that extreme (ibid). Journalists also tend to regard external realities reported upon as independent events (new, and thus "news") rather than part of an ideologically charged environment (ibid). Thus,

for something to be "newsworthy" and to constitute "objective" journalism, some event needs to "happen". Social conditions, trends and contextual analysis are thereby relegated to the margins of news reporting, and while current newspapers in South Africa appear to be incorporating a greater number of analytical features, these are usually situated within prescribed analytical sections of newspapers, distanced from the "real" news (events) dominating the front page. In other words, the perceived objectivity of news production speaks to the issue of journalistic agency and journalists' *perceptions* of their own agency.

Tomaselli et al. (1989) further indicate that these more internally oriented considerations interact with various external considerations that journalists have to negotiate. These include the tight time frames associated with news journalism, and the processes of information "filtration" within news media organisations (ibid). Tomaselli et al. (ibid) reject the notion of a series of authoritative "gate-keepers" systematically blocking and limiting the choices available to journalists regarding how and what to write about. Instead, they assert that the newsroom constitutes an ideologically laden environment in which journalists must *mediate* everyday events into an "acceptable commodity called 'news'" (Tomaselli et al., 1989: 22). While there are indeed often consequences for challenging the ideological and professional slant of media houses and authoritative individuals therein, they argue that the "considerations" perspective accords journalists mediated agency, seeing journalists as involved in discursive negotiations for consensus in order to push a particular news story and angle through the filtration process (ibid).

Seen in this light, the processes constituting news production involve various economic, social and political "considerations" drawn from micro-, meso- and macro-level discourses. Journalistic agency is not regarded in isolation. Instead, journalists are regarded as agents mediating the political, economic and social milieu of the newsroom, as well as their own personal locations, towards the production of the news. This occurs within broader discursive contexts briefly sketched above, including dominant (but constantly shifting) discourses related to the role of the press media in South Africa. As will emerge in the research findings presented later, evidence of these various considerations, and the tensions between them, came through and shaped (often contradictory) notions of journalistic responsibility and agency among research participants.

Interestingly, while these theories on journalistic "considerations" discursively emphasise the role of human agency far more than Foucault, the notion of complex interactions between different levels of influence (discourses) echoes a Foucauldian conception of the media's impact on society raised earlier. Foucault's concentration on the "*conditions of possibility* of knowledge, the determining 'rules of formation' of discursive rationality that operate beneath the level of 'thematic content' and subjective awareness and intention" (Best, 1994: 30, original emphasis) reflect a conception of news production processes as involving various interacting considerations or discourses that shape the kind of product that can eventually be produced.

Media text production is therefore a process mediated and influenced by an array of social, economic, cultural and political discourses. The following section attempts to briefly pull together issues related to the significance of media texts (their impacts) and to the production of media texts (knowledge production), proposing a way of understanding the role of the media in society and in processes of gender transformation.

3.3   Power, Voice and Knowledge Production: A Feminist Epistemological Conception of Print Media

In this section, I draw on a small selection of works concerned with epistemology and power to contribute to the deepening of gender and media debates. The work referred to here pertains not directly to media communications, but rather to knowledge production more broadly, and to the political act of producing knowledge within the academy as well as through other writings. This work sketches a broader context in which the power of knowing and being known are articulated and contested.

Jane Bennett (2000), in *The Politics of Writing*, compellingly expresses a view of the written text and the act of writing as fundamentally powerful, both personally and politically. While this work is by no means the only of its kind, it powerfully articulates much of what this research project is concerned with, and as such I will draw quite heavily on Bennett's paper. Writing and the act of knowledge production are, she asserts, a privilege, with the ability to reinforce domination or challenge it; to subjugate or transform; to construct accountability and visibility or to silence (Bennett, 2000). Turning to feminist concerns over patriarchal and

imperial biases in mainstream (resource-laden) knowledge production, Bennett (ibid) points to the fact that written histories highlight the issue of immense silences and lacunae in dominant knowledge production.

For example, she points to the work of Zeleza (1997), who has written on African historiography and related matters of engendered and North-South power relations around knowledge production. Histories regarded as canonical, according to Zeleza (ibid) are androcentric, full of silence around women and their experiences, and blind to the implications thereof. Numerous other feminist writers (for example, Hartsock, 1983; Moller Okin, 1989; Smith, 1987) have also drawn attention to the androcentricity of dominant modes of knowledge production, as well as the ways in which race and class power relations have intersected with patriarchy in shaping unequal knowledge production (for example, Hill Collins, 1989; hooks, 1984; Mama, 1995; Mohanty, 1991).

Knowledge production through the act of writing or text creation, then, is understood as carrying forward and denying certain voices and experiences. As has historically been the case, women's voices are those that are often negated, and one can look at the marginalisation of voice as layered with power through gender, race, class and more. The deeply interconnected nature of "representation" and "reality" also means that representation through text - knowledge production - has very real implications for whose interests are dominant or marginalised, heard or unheard, and this involves a cyclic flow of power in (re)constructing "reality". Histories as knowledge production, to which Bennett (2000) refers, are prime examples of this: "reality" is constructed through representation, through the production of certain knowledges, and in an unequal world that "reality" or "knowledge" (usually associated with "reality") will tend to be that of the dominant. This includes both the content and the methodology of the way in which that knowledge is produced.

Dorothy Smith (1987) has pointed to similar issues, looking at the power of texts as tools for the shaping and concrete expression of cultural and ideological incarnations, as well as power relations. She observes the following:

"*The relations of ruling* in our kind of society are *mediated* by texts, by words, numbers, and images on paper, in computers, or on TV and music screens…

Further, the ways in which we think about ourselves and one another and about society… are given shape and distributed by the specialized work of people in universities and schools, in television, radio and newspapers, in advertising agencies, in book publishing and other organizations forming the *'ideological apparatuses'* of the society" (Smith, 1987: 17, emphasis my own).

While Bennett refers primarily to the written text, she acknowledges that this is not the only communications form through which to construct known histories, values and power. However, she stresses the unique capacity of writing towards gender transformation. As she elaborates further in reference to knowledge production and history:

"Writing remains a politically vigorous means of constructing visibility, accountability, and the meaning of time. Many (different) feminist writers complement [the] conviction that in order to both imagine a world free of gender injustice, and to understand the intersecting vectors of racism and misogyny under current capitalist interests, access to knowledges of women's experiences in the past is crucial" (Bennett, 2000: 4).

Bennett's (2000) insistence on the critical role of knowledge production and knowledge producers towards engendered transformation is linked to the power of the written word to create visibility and stimulate critical interactions surrounding various experiences currently marginalised from mainstream knowledge production. She thus emphasises as part of the strategy to address these issues the need for indigenous knowledge production in Africa, stressing not only the participation of women in the processes of knowledge production, but the critical engagement of knowledge producers with the imaginative processes of reflection and voicing towards engendered transformation in Africa (ibid). The expression of marginalised interests and voices is, she argues, currently limited by the insistent "deafness" to diverse women's concerns, experiences and voices: a marginalisation that is institutionalised into publication and education industries (ibid).

While Bennett's (2000) work here refers more to academic (and personal) acts of writing, it raises a number of salient issues. Firstly, it sketches a broader context linking the wielding of social and economic power with the power to produce knowledge, and in so doing "voice" and "silence" (or be "deaf" to) various experiences and interests. It is not limited to certain

"moments" in the production or reception of texts, but stretches to a broader context of contested power through voice. In so doing it also links to Foucauldian notions of the "possibilities" of knowing. Secondly, while agency is upheld as central, and the written text is therefore not viewed as all-powerful over the minds of individuals and groups, the power of knowledge production is recognised in shaping social and material landscapes through promoting or inhibiting alternative voices to patriarchy.

Interestingly, she refers to the notion of "imagining" in relation to knowledge production, linking the idea of wider contexts of knowledge production and power with the "possibilities" of knowing. As Pereira (2002) comments with regard to the role of imagination in knowledge production, imagining is "the capacity to go beyond what is given, to fantasise, to create new possibilities that link what is desired with what is known, that will shape the content of knowledge production and its potential uses" (no page number, online). Written texts and knowledges that challenge mainstream or dominant knowledges, according to Bennett (2000) too, are important in enabling, drawing out and stimulating the imagining of alternative ways of being and, therefore, gender transformation. In the wider context of circulating, contested and negotiated representations, opportunities for voices that can imagine gender transformation to gain access to powerful means of expression, through the written text, are therefore very important.

While carving out spaces for alternative and marginalised voices is critical, Bennett (2000) also addresses some of the limitations of a focus primarily on acquiring a "critical mass" of, for example, women's voices in knowledge production. She notes, "we all… have lived through configurations in which numbers meant very little for justice" (Bennett, 2000: 9). She argues that the undermining of gendered and racial oppression requires not only attention to representative numbers, but to the prioritisation of the promotion of diverse and marginalised voices that are able to be *critical* of the status quo, as well as scrutiny of the *institutionalisation* of the marginalisation of certain voices and perspectives (ibid). She acknowledges, however, that "there remains much work to be done on understanding the relationship between feminisms, difference, writing and transformation of injustice" (ibid: 10).

The centrality of writing and knowledge production to the wielding of agency is thus key. While representative numbers of women in media production is one step towards change, it is on its own an inadequate one. Instead, I would argue that a feminist epistemological view

necessitates the interrogation of the media as a site for "knowledge production", even if the boundaries and roles of this textual form differ from academic and other forms of knowledge production. As Smith has argued, "the very forms of our oppression require a deliberate remaking of our relations with others and of these the relations of knowledge are key". News print form, viewed from the perspective of it being a form of knowledge, is therefore constituted as a significant site in the remaking of gendered power relations.

Drawing too on the work of Bennett (2000), it is considered a site for the negotiation of meaning through which voicing and silencing (or deafness) is contested, both within the media industry more specifically and within wider contexts of voice contestation in South Africa and globally. This voicing and deafness has a bearing on the selection of salient topics for print news (agenda setting) as well as for discursive and ideological representations in print news, or "realities" portrayed and, therefore, partially constructed. While the "reception" of media messages may not be a one-way flow of influence from media text to the minds of audiences, its content, and the ways in which its content is presented, offers up ideas, implicit arguments or beliefs and hence "tools" of possible knowledge, or "ideological apparatuses" as Smith (1987) argued. These should reflect critical engagement with gendered relationships for audiences and producers of media alike (not always clearly distinguished either) to be able to dialogue in a potentially transformative way around salient issues of gender and power.

3.4   Conclusions

In this Chapter I have sought to contextualise the research question within major communications studies debates about the media's impact on broader society, and related debates around media text production. Looking at theories that attempt to explain the possible impacts and significance of media representations on social and (by implication) material status quos, it has emerged that while many critiques against the media (including those by feminists) often implicitly rely on the idea that the media is a powerful social agent impacting on and socialising members of society in a (gendered) way, many theories have been developed to, in various ways, contest the relative one-way flow of influence these understandings suggest. Far more research is being undertaken on audiences and the ways in which their agency, as well as other social factors beyond the media text, impact on their interpretation of texts and the meanings texts therefore could be said to diffuse into the

social milieu. I have also explored a related basis for the research, namely the idea that media texts are socially constructed rather than "neutral" or "objective" as common traditional journalistic discourses would suggest. This is part of underscoring the need for, and validity of, researching journalists and their perceptions in an attempt to discover something about how texts are constructed, as I do in this research.

Some important theoretical debates around the construction and deconstruction of meaning through media texts, therefore, have been raised, and I posit my own position as being one that is social constructionist and that acknowledges both assertions of media power and those of audience agency. However, my position is that it is also important to do this in a way that - in addition to looking at the specificities of, for example, the media industry - pulls focus back a bit to see how the *creation* and *interpretation* of texts are intimately interconnected. In order to elaborate on this briefly, a (particular interpretation of a) critical feminist epistemological perspective, drawn principally from critical African feminists, has been drawn on to tentatively sketch my own (constructed) position on the print media as an instance of knowledge production and voicing.

Print news, therefore, is understood here as one particular medium through which knowledge is constructed and disseminated, one that enables members of a society to *engage* with current issues and to *imagine* ways of being. It forms part of wider contexts in which contestations over voice (and power) are played out, contexts linking the sites of both the production and the interpretation of news texts; while specific contexts are shaped by different particular dynamics, how texts are produced and how they are interpreted cannot be full disentangled. Voice and power are central to understanding the contested terrain of knowledge production of which the media industry forms part, and I have argued in agreement with others, such as Bennett (2000), that there is a need for voices that critically challenge the unequal status quo in order to reconstruct knowledges towards new representations - part of new and possible "realities".

The following Chapter will move from these broader media and communications debates and theories towards more *specific* contexts, events and phenomena that have had a bearing on this research study in particular. Borrowing from a multiplicity of theories and sources, I situate the research in salient global and local South Africa contexts, exploring the politics of knowledge production via the print media in South Africa through a range of

lenses: the South African press's history and policy; shifts in press patterns globally and locally, with a special focus on tabloidisation and its implications for the press; feminist media studies as a contemporary field and common local and international feminist critiques against the media; and contemporary South African political and media-related events that left a notable impression on the research process and context.

4 THE STATE OF THE PRESS: LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT AND CRITIQUES

4.1 The South African Press: Politics and Political Economy in Historical Perspective

The historical legacies of apartheid arguably impact on every sphere of contemporary South Africa in some way. These historical legacies, wrought through the social, political and economic institutionalisation of unequal power relations, and the ways in which they were challenged, have left an enduring mark on the media industry and on gender relations in South Africa, both central contexts for this research. The South African press today is the product not only of wider global processes but, importantly, of the specificities of South African history and, essentially, the role the press came to play in the fall of apartheid. This section will outline some of the issues and historical processes framing the nascent democratic press in South Africa and, therefore, with implications for how print news professionals understand the role of the media in contemporary democratic South Africa.

Written accounts of the history of the South African press have, to date, largely considered contestations over media power through the vectors of national party politics and political economy. In particular, literature on South African press history has focused largely on racial dimensions, including racial oppression and resistance to apartheid ideologies. Gender dimensions are conspicuously absent in most accounts of South African press history, and the information there is on gender and the press in South Africa is focused on more recent changes since democracy, especially press ownership and employment patterns[13]. However, a brief overview of South African press history, while not adequately engendered, offers some insights into the ideological and institutional shifts that make up current discourses surrounding the role and position of the press in South Africa. Furthermore, they set the scene for reflection on current political economy dynamics with an impact on the shape of contemporary newspapers.

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[13] This is quite revealing as an indicator of some of the changes that have taken place since the introduction of the new democratic dispensation in terms of how inequality in South Africa is conceptualised. Where issues regarding race relations dominated in earlier accounts of media transformation issues, probably much in thanks for the concerted effort made by women's organisations in South Africa at the turn to democracy, gender as a factor and recognised indicator of inequality has over time been more normalised and institutionalised.

In their account of the political economy of the South African press during apartheid, Tomaselli and Tomaselli (1989) note that, while a number of African-owned publications existed at the turn of the century, almost all of these fell prey to economic and/or political restraints and suppression during the apartheid regime. As white-dominated ownership patterns grew, and the commercial opportunities inherent in the black African market were increasingly recognised, large white-owned media companies expanded, assimilating existing black African newspapers struggling to compete with the competitive power of white-owned press and their comparative political advantages (ibid). Political economy played a significant role in the kinds of voices emerging in the mainstream press, with white media (largely divided along ideological lines) broadly including English language liberal press linked to mining capital - and therefore tolerated to a degree by government - and a largely state-compliant Afrikaner nationalist press (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006).

Switzer (2000), however, notes that numerous print media forms challenging apartheid doctrines, including white-owned independent print media, were eventually closed down through political and economic pressures, or bought out by dominant media houses. While various forms of print media, from larger scale newspapers to small local newsletters, were appropriated by independent companies and opposition parties towards resistance, consciousness-raising and mobilisation against the apartheid regime, alternative press power was largely repressed in ongoing battles for political voice (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006). Alternative, anti-apartheid press "operated under the constant threat of state harassment or governmental control of different kinds" (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006: 61), with journalists being harassed or jailed and various publications being banned or censored "under a barrage of restrictive laws" (ibid).

The profound restrictions imposed on the South African press during apartheid provide a broad context underpinning the emergence of current concerns over the role of the media in South Africa, and are thus an important contextual characteristic to note. Furthermore, the pressures and struggles around issues of political economy, and their impact on the shape and ownership of print news in apartheid South Africa, resonate with various current theories on political economy and the modern press, both locally and internationally.

With the fall of apartheid, numerous changes were instigated at the levels of legislation and ownership. Strict legal measures to suppress press freedom were repealed, and both media

freedom and freedom of expression were entrenched in the Constitution, the adoption of which was viewed as the most vital legislative change with respect to the media (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006). To a large extent, self-regulation of the media replaced state regulation, with two watchdog bodies - the Press Ombudsman and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa - being established (ibid). Two large ownership transfers to so-called black empowerment consortiums (Johnnic and Nail) led to the first major changes in racial ownership patterns in the South African media (ibid). South Africa's media was also increasingly globalised, with one noteworthy development being the Irish Independent media group's acquisition of control of a series of newspapers (ibid).

The new dynamics of political economy playing out in the post-apartheid period, from those related to racial ownership (and readership) demographics to the globalisation of the South African press, also contributed to the rise of the tabloid press in South Africa from 2000 onwards. Wasserman and de Beer (2006) note that escalating commercial competition in both local and global media markets have led to what is often called the "tabloidisation" of the media, in particular the press. Hand in hand with these pressures and changes are also reductions in staff and the "juniorisation" of newsrooms (with newsrooms increasingly dominated by junior staff) (ibid). The indelible footprint that tabloidisation is leaving on the practice of journalism and the identity of the press will be discussed in the section that follows, and will also be explored further in relation to the research findings. Suffice it to say here that South Africa's press has seen (and continues to see) some critical shifts in political economy dynamics, born out of local and global transitions.

Ideologically and politically, shifts have also occurred. Jacobs (2003) argues that while the South African media did not *directly* lead to the break down of the apartheid regime, it played an instrumental role in shaping democratisation during the transition and consolidation period in South Africa. According to Jacobs (ibid), during the early period of transition the mass media emerged as a political actor in its own right and as an actor in shaping notions of democratisation and political transformation. These processes were further largely dominated by contestations over political voice, with political players holding great stakes in how the "new" South African media would take shape (ibid).

Increasingly, however, the media's role in promoting and enforcing state accountability and transparency came to be an important feature in emerging media transformation rhetoric,

along with profound considerations over racial ownership patterns (Jacobs, 2003). As transition processes progressed, the media was increasingly envisaged less as a political actor in its own right and more as a "cog in the machinery of democracy" in South Africa (Jacobs, 2003: 44). As a result, overt struggles for political control of the media were reconstituted into a focus on the need to constrain state control over media freedom (ibid). Jacobs (ibid) concludes that views of the media as a conduit for governments, political parties and/or citizens was largely replaced during the early political transition phase in South Africa by discourses constituting the media as an autonomous power or force *in competition with* other power centres, including political configurations.

South Africa's history of overt political, economic and social repression has laid the foundations for a deep concern with the democratisation of the media in South Africa. This has, in many cases, been harnessed by gender activists working with the media in arguing for gendered democratisation of media ownership and representation. However, while questions of racial (and, to a lesser extent, gender) ownership and the view of the media as a "watchdog" for democracy are still discursively powerful, the transition period from 1994 until now has not been characterised by a smooth progression towards an uncontested view of the media's role in the "new" South Africa.

As Wasserman and de Beer (2006) maintain, the media's relationship with the South African government has remained tenuous. One possible reason for this could be varying conceptions of (and discourses around) what the new Constitutional principles with relevance to the media guarantee and advance (ibid). Furthermore, historical relations of tension between the media and government have not yet been fully dismantled. The mistrust of the media that characterised the apartheid period has spilled over into the new government to a large extent, bolstered by concerns that the media continues to be dominated by the same white, middle-class males who controlled the media during apartheid (ibid). On the other hand, the media's historically based concern over the repression of press freedom also persisted into the new democracy. Thus, there is an inherent tension in the simultaneous *suspicion* and *desire to protect* the autonomy of the media, especially in relation to the state.

Interpretations of the media's role in transforming South Africa and building a strong democracy have also continued to be a source of disagreement. At the *Sun City Indaba*, a

landmark meeting held in 2001 between the cabinet and the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF), some of these contestations were highlighted. Discourses invoking the divergent interests of government and the press were embodied in a debate regarding the phrasing and understanding of the media's role in South Africa, namely as serving the "public interest" or the "national interest" (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006). In both discourses, the notion of a "greater good" appeared to be harnessed towards the normative promotion of particular media values and responsibilities, as well as particular interests (ibid).

The government expressed concern over the media's ostensible "reluctance to embrace the concept of national interest", while media representatives largely expressed concern that the concept of "national interest" was susceptible to masking (or legitimating) the exercise of power, particularly by the government (Wasserman & de Beer, 2006). In the end, the media's representatives did not accept the idea of "national interest" as a description of their role in post-apartheid South Africa, but continued to insist on their role being framed by the "public interest" (ibid). The following quote from a media representative at the *Sun City Indaba* encapsulates the media's struggle to remain within a watchdog role in South Africa, as well as the continuing tensions between government and media in terms of the media's role.

> "It is our contention that the use of the term 'national interest' in relation to news gathering and dissemination is too restrictive and can have a narrow political connotation. Journalists work in the public interest, which is much wider. Politicians of a ruling party may decide that there should be secrecy over an issue 'in the national interest' - where the meaning 'national interest' is defined by the politicians. Journalists work in the 'public interest', a sounder, much wider base that might override 'national interest'. Chapter Two of the [South African] Constitution protects the 'public interest'" (cited by Wasserman & de Beer, 2006: 67).

Such concerns over the role of the media repeatedly erupt into the public debate arena when stimulated by particular political events or statements by public figures. As the research process was unfolding, some key events in this regard were taking place in South Africa and strongly highlighted in the press. These events, which serve not only as prominent examples of contemporary continuations of the debate over the role of the press,

but also to highlight critical gender debates, will be discussed in Section 4.5 to contextualise the research period. Political, social and economic discourses characterising the media industry and public debate at large form an important part of the larger discursive milieu, and therefore also the possible parameters of journalists' discourses around their role in South African transformation. The historical legacies of apartheid – including the repression of the freedom of the media and wielding of the press for the ruling government's purposes – have shaped how the media's (and in particular the press's) role is understood and contested today, including by journalists. These contextual issues have, therefore, also been borne in mind when unpacking the research data.

4.2   The Changing Face of Local and Global Journalism: Tabloidisation in Perspective

South Africa is in many ways increasingly being absorbed into the global market and patterns of consumption. With this comes shifts, too, in the shape of the media industry. The notion of "tabloidisation" emerges in numerous debates and literary contributions to the contemporary field of media studies. Tied to emerging and strengthening political economics, tabloidisation is occurring in both minority country contexts (notably Britain) as well as many majority countries. Literature as discussed above has pointed to the growing popularity and prevalence of the tabloid press in South Africa, and the research data has highlighted that tabloidisation, as a multi-faceted phenomenon, has considerable relevance to the research at hand. This pertains to notions of journalistic professionalism in South Africa more broadly and to particular instantiations of gender in the media. Therefore, a reflection on some of the key features of tabloidisation, and critical considerations around it, will be valuable.

As Barnett (1998) cautions, the term "tabloidisation" is often used to denote several different features of media trends and output. The widespread use of this term can therefore potentially obscure its diverse meanings and manifestations (ibid). It should consequently be noted from the outset that the term can connote a variety of textual characteristics (in terms of style, content and format) as well as broader discursive trends or processes in the media, and is employed by academics, professionals and lay-people in various different ways.

The word "tabloid" originated from the name given to a painkiller that was sold in compressed tablet form, a name that was soon also applied to an emerging "compressed"

form of journalism that was easy to read (colloquial), simplified and in a more manageable format[14]. In terms of layout, the new tabloid had a smaller format, roughly 430 mm × 280 mm. The upsurge of sensationalism and celebrity gossip that tended to accompany this new format has been generalised as a tabloid trait, and the term "tabloid" often refers to this. However, other newspapers with more traditional style and content have also begun to use the smaller format for practical purposes (to make newspapers easier to read on public transport, for example), and the word "tabloid" therefore has also come to denote newspapers that have merely adopted the format. The term "tabloid" is therefore often used to refer to a particular format *and/or* particular traits in style and content. The processes and features related to style and content *associated* with the tabloid format are, however, the heart of the major debates around the role and trajectory of the media in society.

Connell (1998) presents the term "tabloidisation" as signifying "a series of processes that are transforming supposedly *rationalist* discourses into *sensationalist* discourses" (Connell, 1998: 12, emphasis original). He further asserts that a number of related processes are involved in tabloidisation, including a shift from a principally "*reporting* discourse" to a "*narrative* discourse" (ibid) and the "conversationalising" of news (Connell, 1998: 13). Traditional conceptions, values and conventions around reporting the news have therefore been made over towards a more story-telling-oriented approach. Journalistic values and conventions reproducing "impersonal and authoritative" discourses have also moved towards more personal accounts of events (ibid), for example through "human-interest" news pieces. Interestingly, Fairclough (1992) has suggested that this shift is not limited to the media but may be part of a wider social development, whereby a "conversational discourse" is being projected from the private domain into the public (for example, through the use of a conversational style in public documents such as presentations and reports). In any case, a conversational orientation in the media is strongly associated with tabloidisation, with "newsworthiness" being recast as more invested in the private sphere, and news discourses reflecting more personalised narratives (Connell, 1998).

Critiques against tabloidisation are manifold and tend to dominate debates (Barnett, 1998). However, some academics and media professionals have asserted that tabloid should not

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[14] Most academic work on tabloids focuses on the more complex arguments around tabloidisation, with little clear outline of lay uses and more format-related details of what has historically come to be known as tabloid. The information in this paragraph is thus drawn broadly from discussions with people and from the popular site Wikipedi.com, which I use cautiously here and have buttressed with academic work.

(as it has tended to be) be wholly dismissed as a debasement of journalistic integrity and the media at large (see, for example, Barnett, 1998; Brookes, 2000; Connell, 1998; and the interview findings presented in this thesis). In addition, some have argued that lamentations over tabloidisation reflect not just concerns over the state of the media, but mirror a wider array of social fears (Barnett, 1998; Brookes, 2000), sometimes making them important less in terms of understanding tabloidisation itself and more in terms of what they tell us about these social fears. Barnett (1998: 75) links apprehensive debates around tabloidisation to "a more widespread anxiety about our educational, political and cultural environment".

Fears about tabloidisation do, however, also tell us about the press itself: how it is defined and what its roles are seen to be. Barnett (1998) connects debates over tabloidisation to preordained conceptions of "good" and "bad" media texts based on particular assumptions around the role of the media in society. Brookes (2000: 195), for example, links what he calls the "panic" surrounding tabloidisation in part to the threatening of shared (and gendered) discursive "assumptions around a traditional, rational public sphere." In this way, tabloidisation is viewed as challenging or disrupting certain well-established social constructs, and the need to unpack critiques against it rather than rush to simplistic judgement is argued.

Debates around tabloidisation resonate with various discourses around social norms and values, journalistic practices, media roles and associated gendered constructs, Thus, I will turn to some of the critiques laid against tabloid. Barnett (1998) notes that a prevailing view of tabloidisation is that it represents a worrying instance of the "bad" crowding out the "good". This is located in tabloid's emphasis on ("bad") content such as entertainment, scandal, show business and sex at the expense of what is regarded as more serious and challenging ("good") news content such as current affairs, the arts and policy issues (ibid). Both the increasing volume and presentation of tabloid content, according to Barnett (ibid), are often regarded as a threat to, or a debasement of, "real" news. He argues, however, that the rise of tabloid content has not displaced conventional news, but rather added to it as the size and volume of media products surges, and that the presentation of tabloid news (employing simpler language and shorter formats) is not always necessarily inferior or hazardous (ibid).

Barnett (1998) contends that a purely sceptical perspective of tabloidisation often rests on mythical assumptions of a "golden age" in journalism. Tabloid could offer an accessible and non-elitist alternative to the kind of journalism that has dominated in the past (ibid). In fact, tabloid media can contribute towards making abstract social issues more memorable and accessible to audiences than conventional news (Sparks, 2000). In addition, Deuze (2005) has argued that there is a need to be sceptical of the tendency to homogenise and dichotomise "real" journalism and "popular" journalism. His research with journalists and editors in the Netherlands indicates significant discursive overlaps between the journalistic values, norms and ideals expressed in relation to both (ibid). Therefore, while tabloidisation has been thoroughly critiqued and associated with a move away from ideal journalistic professionalism, counter arguments have also been raised, urging critics to unpack this phenomenon with greater care and complexity.

One perspective of tabloidisation that critically unpacks the critiques laid against it links broader debates over tabloidisation with feminist media theories. Therefore, I will discuss it briefly here before moving on to feminist critiques of the media, noting that tabloidisation and the theories around it are linked to issues of gender representation in the media. Since tabloidisation as a phenomenon involves a variety of (conflicting) discursive shifts in the media, it emerges as an interesting factor in the production of gendered texts.

An important feature of tabloidisation is the way in which certain normative discourses surrounding what constitutes news have been challenged. Because of the new forms of news emerging as part of processes of tabloidisation, the distinction between "hard" (traditional) news and "soft" (tabloidised) news has been made. The latter has been increasingly incorporated into "news", but represents a changing set of values and norms about the nature of news. In this way, tabloidisation creates new - often hybrid - genres, formats, content categories and presentational styles that transgress traditional journalistic boundaries (Brookes, 2000). Most notably, traditional journalistic conceptions of the provision of information through the news have become blurred or integrated with the provision of entertainment (ibid), previously regarded (at least rhetorically) as a separate endeavour. The increased sexualisation and visualisation associated with tabloidisation and new content categories such as "human-interest", for example, represent a breakdown in established boundaries between the "rational" public sphere and "emotional" private sphere

(Brookes, 2000: 195). The binaries challenged by tabloidisation (and the very blurring of boundaries that forms the basis for many of its critiques) are also highly gendered.

The "rational" public sphere and "emotional" private sphere are respectively associated with masculinity and femininity (ibid). Therefore, issues around family and sexuality, for example, are consigned to the naturalised, "feminine" private sphere whereas "cultural", "masculine" interests such as politics and economics are consigned to the public sphere (ibid). Some of the very features brought into the media through tabloidisation are those associated with this notion of the private sphere, which have been marginalised in a gendered hierarchy of media norms and values. Viewed in this light, tabloidisation has in some ways brought aspects associated with the "feminine" into the public domain, or "feminised" the media.

This is potentially a source of optimism for feminists, who have decried the marginalisation of arenas associated with women. Glancing over prevalent critiques of tabloidisation, however, gendered hierarchies placing the "private" in the category of "soft" (lesser) news are apparently still dominant. However, this is not the only concern for feminists. The break down between public and private spheres, and the "feminisation" of the media, should not be taken uncritically as signifiers of gender transformation in the media. As will become apparent through feminist critiques of certain tabloid features in the literature (and the research findings presented later), the relationship between tabloidisation and feminist concerns around the media is fraught with contradictions.

For example, while Silveirinha (2007) positively links tabloid style to the feminist notion of "the private is political" - and therefore cautions against an instinctive patriarchal devaluation of "other" (tabloid) news - she also points to examples in which tabloid style trivialises gender issues such as gender based violence. Holland (1998) also considers feminist tensions around tabloidisation in her exploration of the rise of *The Sun* tabloid in the United Kingdom. She notes that a fissure exists in feminist readings of *The Sun*'s tendency towards sexualisation and the establishment of the "page three" phenomenon. In reference to the institutionalisation of the "page three" pin-up in *The Sun*, Holland (1998: 23) notes that "its message to men was age-old, but its message to women was that women are now free to be sexual… along the lines of, 'loosen up, discover sexual pleasure'". Yet, despite the ostensible emancipatory discourse of this message, Holland (ibid) reflects that it also

perpetuates the patriarchal male gaze and that "the sex remained male oriented." As she adroitly articulates:

> "On the one hand, sexualisation could be seen as a logical development of feminisation, continuing to draw into the wider debate issues of sexuality and sexual relations that had been hidden but which women themselves, not least in the feminist movement, now insisted were of public importance. On the other hand, there was a deep contradiction in the presentation. Although women were invited to enjoy themselves, to follow their desires and to drop their inhibitions, the divided address, accompanied by many a nudge and a wink, made it clear that *this* woman's pleasure is above all a pleasure for men. In this context, the visual is no longer associated with women and with a less linear style of understanding, but with a masculine insistence on the inalienable right to a lustful gaze" (Holland, 1998: 23, emphasis original).

Challenging gendered public/private dichotomies is therefore not an unproblematic trajectory towards a transformed media. It seems that in some cases new media forms are re-appropriated in the reproduction of deep-seated patriarchal values and interests. The narrative, conversational and personalised style of tabloid creates new vistas along which established news conventions can be renegotiated and certain gender concerns can potentially be addressed. However, as will become clear in the findings of this research, when it comes to gender, tabloidisation involves conflicting discursive orientations that can reproduce patriarchy just as well as they can challenge it.

The section that follows examines more closely the range of feminist critiques against the media - tabloid or traditional - that have been raised in the international and South African research arenas. It serves a dual purpose: first, to introduce some of the main arguments feminist scholars and researchers have made about the media in order to contextualise the research findings I present later on and, secondly, to provide a scan of the feminist media studies field, both South African and international, against which the location and contribution my own research findings can be seen more clearly as I present my methodology and findings in the following Chapters.

4.3 Challenging Representations: Feminist Critiques of Media Products

4.3.1 An international overview of feminist media studies

As early as the 1960's and 1970's, feminist authors Betty Friedan (1963) and Germaine Greer (1970) raged against representations of femininity in the mass media (van Zoonen, 1994). As feminist concerns in the Second Wave progressed beyond the parameters of gender equity struggles characterising early liberal feminist and suffragette concerns, the women's movement began to engage with the symbolic conflicts characterising women's liberation struggles (Thornham, 1998; van Zoonen, 1994), leading to increased attention to media and communication studies.

Feminist media research, without an orchestrated research programme to direct it, is highly divergent methodologically, theoretically and in terms of focus (van Zoonen, 1994). It is also an increasingly prolific field. The synopsis, presented here, of key arguments and ideas emerging from this field, both locally and internationally, will therefore necessarily be incomplete. However, I hope to present a broad sense of the field of feminist media studies, some of the major themes that have, to date, been addressed within the field, and my own impressions of how contemporary research on gender and the media within South Africa specifically fits into this broader picture in terms of it concerns, advancements and limitations.

Broadly speaking, feminist media studies can be said to be the study of the media through a feminist lens. It is transdisciplinary, in that this is undertaken via many different disciplines and fields (McLaughlin & Carter, 2001), such as media studies, communications studies and gender studies. Recently, it has flourished into a strengthening and ever more influential area of social enquiry, becoming a more distinct and recognised field (ibid). However, like all feminisms it has its methodological and political divergences (ibid). In particular, feminisms from the so-called "Third World" have delivered often-uncomfortable challenges to the field (which, if one scans the available literature, is still very much dominated by northern-based research and writing) in terms of methodology and feminist politics (ibid). They have also opened up new vistas of inquiry in the field and made important contributions. My own research has aimed to further this project by contributing to literature on gender and the

media within the global south, and South Africa in particular, although my location in relation to this project is quite tenuous (as I still represent a white - read: western - elite[15]). Suffice to say there, however, that there are various burgeoning new areas of research in feminist media studies that are delivering challenges to the field, locally and internationally, and it is becoming ever more prolific and diverse.

While there is progress in establishing feminist media studies as a recognised field (exemplified, for example, in the first international accredited journal dedicated to feminist media studies being launched in 2001), the boundaries of the field and what falls within and outside of it are still very mercurial. Even in my own experience, as I progressed in the research process I found it difficult to establish whether my work constituted an example of a gender studies project (with a strong African feminist influence from my undergraduate education) that focused in this case on the media or as an example of feminist media studies. This will, in many respects, unfold in the course of this thesis and I will be more explicit on the position I have come to towards the end. However, in assessing the field of feminist media studies it is important to stress at the outset that in many respects it defies very clear or definitive boundaries (as is often the case with feminist research which is inherently transdisciplinary). McLaughlin and Carter (2001) in outlining the emerging field of feminist media studies observe, however, that this is due not to intrinsic chaos but to the richness of the field.

> "As with the broader fields of communication studies and cultural studies, expansion in breadth and depth has meant that the definitional contours of feminist media studies have become much more difficult to identify" (McLaughlin & Carter, 2001: 5).

Looking at the literature, my own impression of the international field is that increasingly complex and more nuanced themes are being tackled, in many ways echoing aspects of what I have conceptualised as progressive feminist approaches. These include challenges to, and the unpacking of, often taken for granted concepts and dichotomies around "gender" and "feminism", and the gradual flourishing of approaches that go beyond liberal-inclusionary paradigms to ask questions about the construction of gender itself and strategic issues in terms of gender transformation at this level. Gallagher (2001) similarly observes

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[15] I will explore these tensions further in Chapter 5 as part of the outline of methodology.

that, while there has been with the emergence of feminist media studies a prolific and widespread use of more simple - "unsophisticated" - content analysis and analysis of sex-role stereotypes, and that while today there is still "a good deal of simple counting going on, mostly in North America", these approaches have been and are being recognised by critical communications scholars as limited. Indeed, she argues that "if the early years [of feminist media studies] were marked by the push of activism that contributed to a narrow empirical research approach, the subsequent coming of age of critical feminist scholarship has helped to pull activism away from simple criticisms towards more subtle and persuasive arguments" (Gallagher, 2001: 14). At the international level, then, feminist media studies as a field can be seen to be both difficult to draw distinct borders around and progressively engaged in deeper explorations into gender and the media.

In terms of major themes within the international field, through the literature review I undertook I distinguished three broad areas of research and writing. These include, firstly, methodological questions and critiques around the media and communications studies fields themselves; secondly, critiques of representations of gender in the media and; thirdly, gender analyses of the media production context and media industry.

Briefly, feminist critiques of communications studies, according to van Zoonen (1994), echo salient feminist evaluations of scientific study more generally. These include critiques of male-biased themes, theories and approaches employed in scientific study, claims of neutrality masking (masculine) hegemonic modes of thinking that prize dichotomies, and the devaluation of dichotomised aspects associated with women and femininity (for example, the "private sphere" or "soft news") (ibid). Thus, communications studies are viewed from the feminist perspective of their inherited patriarchal traditions and approaches, and it is advocated that feminist theory be applied to redress this bias in the subjects researched as well as the ways this research is undertaken.

In terms of feminist critiques of gender representations in media texts, van Zoonen (1994) has highlighted some of the most common themes in this area attracting attention from feminists in communications studies. The first is gender stereotyping and its role in gender socialisation. Feminist critiques based on socialisation/stereotyping theories are deeply concerned especially with the limited portrayal of women in the media. In this regard, the representation of women is often critiqued as being, firstly, sparse and, secondly, highly

limited in terms of the identities, roles and spaces they are represented in. For example, a common feminist critique of the media is that it tends to portray women in highly sexualised, objectified terms or as principally belonging in domestic spaces. Not just television and advertising but the press has also been growingly implicated in sexualisation stereotypes with the emergence of the tabloid press. Proponents of socialisation theories would argue that such stereotypes reinforce gendered norms and values, perpetuating narrow patriarchal constructs, expectations and roles, and socialising children into limited roles.

On the face of it, stereotyping and socialisation theories are social constructionist, clashing sharply with dominant journalistic discourses that are largely premised on a positivistic paradigm. However, as raised briefly earlier, there are feminist critics of the media who have drawn on a positivistic discourse to urge journalists to change the ways in which they approach news production, and the area of inquiry into gender stereotypes is particularly prone to this as well. This argument has it that journalists and many journalistic practices *distort* the lived reality of women, from their experiences to their contributions to society, which are far more diverse and far-reaching than represented in the media (see, for example, Opoku-Mensah, 2004; Gallego et al., 2004). As such, while critiquing journalism they also appeal to a particular journalistic discourse based on positivism in urging that news reporting be altered to "objectively" or "realistically" reflect the diverse roles and contributions of women in society.

As Allan (1998) points out, a number of feminists employing a discourse of "objectivity" maintain that good reporting is gender-neutral reporting, and therefore critique the adequacy with which journalistic norms and values are applied rather than critiquing these norms and values themselves. A related argument is also that the ability to be "objective" is essentially gender-specific (bid). Therefore, only women can really be justified in speaking for other women in the media (ibid). This makes greater numbers of women in the newsroom essential. A discourse appropriating the notion of "balance" is often employed in this argument, which advocates that "objectivity" or "balance" should be maintained by "ensuring that male values are counterpoised by female ones in a given news account" (Allan, 1998: 122).

However, critiquing gender stereotypes is, in my view, quite a limited approach, particularly when focused on a distortion argument. Distortion arguments assume that there is, in fact,

one particular gender "reality". Employing a positivistic paradigm, these arguments are in many ways antithetical to progressive feminist theories on gender and patriarchy (highly dependent upon a social constructionist foundation). In the first instance, difference makes this problematic, as this "reality" is shifting over space and time, and from different perspectives. This is not to suggest that these arguments do not have merit in pointing out that partial truths - discourses representing a particular perspective and therefore also set of interests - are commonly portrayed when it comes to the media. Most would agree that women do perform a variety of roles and take on a much greater variety of identities than are reflected in the media. However, from a critical feminist perspective I would argue that this should be viewed as an epistemological gap or form of marginalisation, rather than an instance of poorly applied "objectivity". Feminism and its call for the transformation of gender relations is, furthermore, an openly political endeavour driven by the desire to overcome inequality and injustice rather than to claim absolute truth. Furthermore, a discourse maintaining the essential distinction between male and female "objectivity" is not very helpful, in my opinion, as it tends to embody a dichotomised and essentialised construction of masculinity and femininity that denies the varied manifestations of gender. The corollary of accepting limited portrayals of women in the media is, therefore, not necessarily to suggest that a particular ("objective") perspective is possible.

Rakow (2001) touches on this issue in pointing out that there is a common assumption that the media can and should reflect "real women" rather than giving "inaccurate" portrayals. However, she cautions that these ideas are powerfully and frequently critiqued, although they remain persistent (ibid). Much earlier work such as that of Pollock (1977) has also emphasised the limitations of a focus on "false" stereotypes of women in the media, suggesting a more dynamic understanding of the media as part of processes of meaning making. The way in which I have aimed to address the research topic, as will become apparent, draws on these insights.

Other common themes in feminist media studies linked to the issue of gender stereotypes and socialisation (but theoretically divergent in many ways), according to van Zoonen (1994) also include the questions of gendered ideology and, to a lesser extent, the issue of pornography. These themes again raise not only the issue of male biased representation but also the notion that representation through the media has significant impacts on the roles and statuses of women on the ground, to the extent that pornography has been criticised by

some feminists as a form of gender based violence (ibid). As van Zoonen (1994: 21) asserts, "defining pornography as an act of violence raises questions on the nature of representation and its relation to social reality". The question of the "gaze" has also been integrated into feminist media studies, researched and theorised in different ways (ibid). The "male gaze" in particular has drawn much attention, although the female gaze - on men and other women - has also been looked at (ibid). In essence, what these issues have in common are the advancement of foundational feminist questions of often taken-for-granted representations of gender: from whose perspective/view/gaze is this being portrayed, in whose (power) interests and based on what assumptions about gender?

Ultimately, although feminist critiques of the media have been very varied in theme and approach, underlying most themes are the ideas that, firstly, media representations are still primarily androcentric and patriarchal (although the ways in which this is achieved may shift and small victories may be sporadically won for feminist ideals) and, secondly, that these gendered trends in media representations have an impact on how people become gendered and continue to live gendered experiences. Feminists disagree on the modes and precise impacts of these features, as well as the themes that are of particular interest to them, but these issues tend to be central. From a feminist epistemological perspective, one might say that media representations can be viewed as instances of knowledge production, with its attendant politics and ideologies. As discussed earlier in the literature review, feminist writers such as Jane Bennett (2000) have drawn attention to knowledge production as a critical point of social reproduction and potential transformation. From this perspective, then, the interest would be in how/if gendered representations are patriarchal and what possible impacts this may have.

Moving to the third major area of research, the context of media production has received growing attention in feminist media studies. Feminist critiques of the media, as with other areas of inquiry, have explored processes of knowledge and cultural (re)production to understand and address the root causes of patriarchal reproduction. Exploring the media industry has also been further fuelled by the observation that, as a profession, journalism has been largely dominated by men and that this is especially so in "beats" with a higher value assigned to them, such as politics and economics. Therefore, how gendered norms and values play out in the media industry have been looked at from various angles. This has extended in a number of cases beyond an initial focus on liberal-inclusionary concerns -

such as with women and men's employment, decision-making powers and ownership in the media industry - towards attempts to unearth how the processes, culture, norms and values of the industry are gendered and, therefore, create both gendered media products and gendered differences in the treatment of those who work in the industry.

Therefore, some of the major sources of the media's androcentrism have been identified as gendered ownership/control, employment and professional identity (Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998). In terms of ownership and control, it is often argued that male dominated media ownership limits the potential for gender transformed journalistic content and gender equitable control over it (ibid). Gendered issues around control of the media, and subsequent implications for transformed media products, are also linked to political economy. For example, Carter et al. (1998) note that corporate control over the media, driven largely by concerns around profit maximisation, often leads to the curtailment of alternative voices or dissent in the media. Concerns regarding the "bottom line", they claim, restrict the spaces given to feminist voices which are seen as "controversial" and therefore "potentially threatening to 'market-sensitive' news organisations and their advertisers" (Carter et el., 1998: 4). In this way, patriarchal patterns of ownership and control, and their relationship to market forces, are linked to the gendered forms of representation in the media.

Gendered employment in the media sector is also a point of concern for many feminists. Women's low numerical representation and occupational status within news organisations is often critiqued as a leading cause behind gender biased media products (Carter et al., 1998). Carter et al. (ibid), however, note that these critiques are problematically founded upon the common assumption that a critical mass of women in the newsroom (and, to a lesser extent, an elevated status for women in the newsroom) will transform gendered news practices, hierarchies and content, an assumption that has been strongly questioned (as discussed in relation to the distortion argument). In response to assertions of the inadequacy of a gender "critical mass", some researchers have turned to studies on the impacts of gendered organisational and professional culture embraced in the news industry and infused into the selection of news topics as well as their representation. de Bruin and Ross (2004) assert that the question of a critical gender mass constitutes a limited approach to transformation in news representations, given the *masculine values* through which journalistic values are constructed.

Organisational structures and practices, and professional ideals, both influence gender identities within the newsroom and reflect them (de Bruin, 2004). Through organisational and professional ideologies, it is argued, cultural interpretations of professional processes are inscribed and brought to bear on the practices of journalists (ibid). According to de Bruin (2004), these cultural interpretations are gendered, restricting ascribed values in journalistic practice to implicitly masculine ideals that are effectively taken for granted or naturalised as "objective" processes and approaches. This could mean, for example, that certain facts are regarded as inherently relevant to the news story and others not, and that the "objective" guidelines for distinguishing this are, upon closer inspection, historically born out of and expressing masculine or patriarchal interests. Gouws (2005) argues this point in an analysis of media coverage of gender based violence, with one especially illustrative example being of a rape and murder case reported in the news. In the news article, the facts that the coroner was testing the victim's blood for alcohol and drugs and that the victim was wearing a certain type of underwear were considered relevant facts for inclusion in the report. This, she argues, is a signal of patriarchal voice implicitly coming through in how fact selection is made.

Professional ideologies, processes and practices can also stunt or block "alternative" (feminist, anti-capitalist, black) voices from breaking through and being heard past those that are dominant and, therefore, also naturalised. For example, Erdman Farrell (1995) has pointed out that journalistic norms lead to limited perspectives on gender issues as events and issues are presented as relatively isolated instances of individual pathology or agency. In this way, she says, "the popular media have neither the language nor the vision to speak of systemic or cultural problems or solutions.. commercial media focus on individual resistance and individual deviance" (Erdman Farrell, 1995: 642). Therefore, she characterises the "media world" as one that "portrays women constantly but ignores the overall context of patriarchy, male domination, systems of radicalised inequality, and, above all, capitalism.. we are provided a very skewed and limited sense of what 'female agency' or 'free agency' are" (Erdman Farrell, 1995: 643). This is in part due to ideas about the perceived role of "news", such as relaying current information (read: events, not commentary on broader or underlying issues). Therefore, "feminist perspectives that go beyond individualism and self-improvement are difficult, if not impossible, to sell" (Erdman Farrell, 1995: 644).

Thus, it may be argued that attempts to transform or engender news reporting would necessitate, in the first instance, a *debunking of claims to total neutrality*, and an acknowledgement of the situated nature of news production. It would also require an assessment of the discourses that inform (men *and* women) journalists' approaches to news production. As Arthurs (1994) has noted in relation to the television media industry, having more women in the industry is not a sufficient measure to address patriarchy with the media organisations - instead, what is need is more women (and, I would argue, more men) with a *politicised* awareness of the modes of patriarchal reproduction, and the political will to pursue change.

This statement resonates strongly with debates between feminist approaches based on liberal-inclusionary and progressive paradigms. Equity - a critical mass of women to redress the dominance of men - in the industry and in different representations of women in the media is prized in some approaches while others prefer to look more closely at the construction of gendered values, norms and processes underlying the inequity in the industry and in media representations. Overall, a scan of the literature revealed that debates around the merits of both approaches continue to thrive, as does the counting of women and men and a good amount of literature on stereotypes. Still, importantly there is also a nourishing and forwarding of approaches that increasingly resemble progressive paradigms in the literature. The "international" field, however, represents different contexts very unevenly, due largely to unequal resources in knowledge production as well as contextual and historical specificities. As such, a look at the South African context and some observations of its location within the field follows.

4.3.2 Feminist media studies in South Africa

Through a scan of the South African field of feminist media studies and feminist advocacy around the media, I observed that the field has been importantly shaped by the historical trajectories of democracy and the women's movement in recent years. Initially, I was particularly uneasy about some of the foremost prevailing discourses regarding gender and the media in South African literature, discourses that appeared to advocate participation and emphasise "women" as a category at the *expense* of interrogating the meaning of gender, of the diverse ways in which gendered oppression is manifested, and of women's agency within these contexts. However, while these concerns over the South African feminist media

studies and advocacy field remain, for me, over time and through further reading around the women's movement and the press in South Africa, these characteristics were given more context and meaning.

As I have said before, the field (and what constitutes "the field") in South Africa, as with the international field, is difficult to delineate, and no less so to interpret. What I aim to do here, however, is to briefly flag what I perceive as important features and common discourses regarding studies on gender and the media in South Africa, to place them in some sort of context and to argue that there are areas in need of further cultivation, expansion and promotion, particularly with regard to progressive approaches to feminist media studies. This will also clarify to a greater extent why I felt my own research was necessary, and how I designed it to address some of the aspects of gender transformation and the media I considered to be thinly addressed to date.

There is quite resounding consensus among feminist scholars and activists in South Africa that the media is an important site of (gendered) social and political struggles (as well as a source of social and political leverage) and that it is, as of yet, not sufficiently transformed in terms of gender. A number of initiatives have been set up in the last decade to begin to study and advocate around these issues, such as the establishment of the Southern African Media and Gender Institute (SAMGI) in 2003 and Gender Links in 2001. SAMGI and Gender Links have been productive in building research data, arranging training, advocating within and beyond the media industry and establishing networks. However, as Opoku-Mensah (2001) has observed, from a scholastic perspective, especially, the field of feminist media studies is not well established in Africa.

> "Press' assertion about feminist theory 'taking off' in the field of communication research may hold true in academic institutions in the western world, however, in Africa, feminist media research is rarely undertaken. From a scholastic perspective, the academic discipline of feminist media studies is critically absent from most mass communication departments in Africa, or [it is] offered as a peripheral area of interest by some gender / women's departments and institutions in universities" (Opoku-Mensah, 2001: 26).

While this was written in 2001, before work by organisations such as SAMGI and Gender Links had begun to leave their mark (and, indeed, since which the academic situation is likely to have changed in some ways), overall this is also my impression from surveying gender and media studies in South Africa today. In addition, what studies and literature have begun to emerge and proliferate the field (academically but also in terms of advocacy) has been crucially shaped by discourses and politics of post-apartheid participatory democracy. Like feminist trajectories in South Africa (discussed in Chapter 2), gender and media work in South Africa has been influenced by the importance placed on the participation of women, particularly within public professional and decision-making spaces. A strategic emphasis, as well, this approach importantly aims to halt and change the domination of men in the media (as *sources* of the news as well as *makers* of the news) at the dawn of democracy when issues of representation are at the fore and the ground is fertile for the demands of women to be heard in the realm of public participation.

With the South African apartheid press as a backdrop, it is easy to see how assertions of the need to ensure a diversity of voices, especially of those marginalised in South Africa, becomes paramount within the media, especially the news media. And, as discussed earlier in relation to the work of Hassim (2006), asserting "women's" rights in this context has also been strategic amidst fears (and proof) that women can be left behind in democratisation processes and participation.

Literature provided by Gender Links (Spears et al., 2000; Lowe Morna, 2007a; Lowe Morna, 2005; Lowe Morna et al., 2003a; Lowe Morna et al., 2003b) and individual authors such as Opoku-Mensah (2001), Thorne, Pillay and Newman (1996) and Lewis (2002) has pointed to this emphasis. "Diversity" is a word commonly used in reference to the need to gender transform the media, from the perspective that certain voices have been marginalised and that, in the constitution of the new democracy, the media should be a platform that reflects and can be used by all constituencies in South Africa as part of their right to participatory democracy. From a feminist perspective, this should especially include women, and poor rural women in particular. Part of the focus on women's participation also pertains to access to the media and media technologies, access to material (and social, political, communications) resources being a huge issue in South Africa following the geographic, economic and infrastructural marginalisation instated by the apartheid government and in

light of the fact that women have tended to have even less access to resources such as these.

Some well-known studies informing feminist critiques of the media in South Africa have been particularly influential. The Global Media Monitoring Project studies of 2000 (Spears et al., 2000) and 2005 (Lowe Morna, 2005) on gender and the media in Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions, as well as the more recent Gender Media Baseline Study for South Africa and the Southern African region (Lowe Morna et al., 2003a; Lowe Morna et al., 2003b) have largely become the reference points for gender and media activism in South Africa. These studies primarily critique the low representation of women in the media, particularly the news, as producers of media products, subjects of news stories and sources in news stories. In the SADC region, for example, only 17% of news subjects were women in 1995, with a negligible increase to 18% in 2000 (Spears et al., 2000). The second Class Ceiling Study (Lowe Morna, 2007b) also points to low numbers and statuses of women in the newsroom, as well as the newsroom environment issues that perpetuate this.

Gender stereotypes in the media have also been critiqued through these studies, which indicate that "blatant" and "subtle" stereotypes still prevail in the media in South Africa (Lowe Morna, 2005). These studies primarily quantify news pieces according to "gender stereotypes". Gender stereotypes are largely held to be those depictions of women that "limit" the perceived roles of women in society (Lowe Morna, 2005; Spears et al., 2000). This includes the pervasive sexualisation and objectification of women, as well as a focus on women's domestic roles (ibid). Women, it is noted, are far more likely to be identified according to their familial status within the news, for example as wives and mothers (ibid). Furthermore, women are more likely to be constituted as victims in news pieces, further entrenching depictions of women that hold them to be vulnerable, submissive and/or emotional and irrational (ibid). In contrast, the studies revealed that men are depicted in ways that re-entrench their dominance in public spheres, their physical capabilities and their leadership roles (ibid).

The depiction of women remains the focal point for the majority of critiques on gender stereotyping in South Africa. "Gender" is therefore often applied (and thus interpreted) as a synonym for "women". While the reports reviewed do indicate certain gendered dichotomies

- implicitly constituting gender as relational - as well as representations of masculinity, critiques pertaining to gender and the media (in South Africa as well as internationally) are often still too silent on the notion of masculinities and their *interplay* with femininities. Where a focus on "gender stereotypes" prevails in qualitative assessments of gendered media representation, the relational, variegated and complex characteristics of gendered power are sometimes at risk of being sidestepped in favour of the identification of more overt and "traditional" gender stereotypes. Furthermore, it would be useful to discuss and interrogate the ways in which quantitative categories such as "stereotypes" were constructed, to determine what they may include and exclude.

It is my view that, to a large extent, gender and media critiques in South Africa dichotomise and homogenise "women" and "men" to a large extent, rather than probing "gender" as constituting social, economic and political identities that shift and vary across time and space. While issues of numerical representation and gender stereotypes are indeed important aspects of gender-equitable transformation, a fuller conception of gender transformation would entail a more complex questioning of gendered power. Furthermore, equitable representation cannot be seen as sufficient in addressing gendered epistemological concerns, as I have already discussed. While studies interrogating the numbers of women in the newsroom, their statuses therein and their experiences of the newsroom environment are also critical towards transforming the media industry from a gender perspective, it is my contention that theory pertaining to gender transformation in the South African media needs to be strengthened on some fronts.

This is not to say that this is not beginning to happen, nor that the work highlighted isn't extremely important too. Easily accessible, politically oriented data on gender and the media, such as that provided by Gender Links, is an important strategic step towards transforming what is still a very male-dominated and exclusionary industry. In particular, it seeks inroads into transforming the media through, I believe, discourses that are more pervious to change (namely those sympathetic to liberal-inclusionary ideas). In South Africa, too, a scan of recent literature does suggest that there is in fact a broadening of a progressive feminism paradigm in gender and feminist research on the media. For instance, more and more literature is beginning to look at masculinities and men as well. Particular areas of inquiry are also seeing this broadening more and more, in part I think because they

necessitate it. These include, most notably, research into gender based violence (GBV) in media representations and the representation and reporting of HIV/AIDS issues.

In the case of the former, analyses pertaining to representations of GBV in the media have become increasingly prolific, and these analyses have, to a large extent, made inroads into the deeper engendering of media analyses. Discourses legitimising GBV and the accompanying gendered "rape myths" seen as propagating GBV have been a particular locus of concern for gender analysts and activists (see, for example, Gouws, 2005). The role of current notions of journalistic professionalism in undermining counters to GBV is commonly critiqued (see, for example, Gouws, 2005; Omarjee, 2001). Isolated reporting of incidents, for example, is criticised as propagating the notion of rape as sensational news rather than the systematic violation and subordination of women (ibid), constituting an integral part of South Africa's social and economic milieu. As Omarjee (2001) points out, little contextual information is given in news reports to situate rape not only as an act of gendered power, but as part of a broader patriarchal context that allows for the prevalence of rape to go largely unchecked. These critiques of the media speak to the notion of gender as both social and institutional, as well as making inroads towards an assessment of gender in the media that integrates notions of "masculinities" and "femininities" through an assessment of gendered manifestations of power of men over women. It could be argued that qualitative research and literature such as this is highly important towards deepening understandings of "gender" beyond concepts such as "women" and "stereotypes". That theory pertaining to the sources of gender based violence has also been strengthened in South Africa has perhaps also contributed towards such media analyses.

HIV/AIDS and the media is emerging more recently, too, as an area of research that is providing (and requiring) increasing attention to how *discourses* in the media impact on wider social discourses and, by extension, actions. Research on HIV/AIDS, and the intersection between gender and HIV/AIDS, is a prolific area of research in South Africa and one which is testifying growingly to the social, and socially constructed nature, not only of the treatment of people with HIV by their communities (social stigma being a huge issue) but even their treatment by the medical fraternity, the development of AIDS from HIV and the contraction of HIV, issues previously primarily looked at through a biomedical lens.

With the broadening of social investigations and conceptualisations of a range of issues associated with HIV/AIDS more generally, and the deepening and sophistication of the analysis, research into HIV/AIDS and the role of the *media* is also requiring great attention to complex social variables, for example how constructions and discourses of masculinities and femininities through the media can inhibit or promote prevention strategies and condom use. It appears that, like GBV, HIV/AIDS is challenging gender and feminist media researchers to look beyond simpler configurations of "women" and "men", and of "gender" as a supposed synonym for "women", towards far more nuanced understandings needed to get to the root of these social problems. This is still an area in need of development, but it is also important to acknowledge that inroads are being made and, indeed, required by the most serious of social circumstances and issues facing South Africa today.

Not all the literature in South Africa may be as easy to source and find, in many cases perhaps not as widely accessible due to resource limitations, and that therefore there are likely to be areas in which very rich research is being carried out into the media in South Africa, some of which I have not accessed in my searches to date. That said, the literature review I undertook did signal areas I feel are in need of development (and challenging), areas thinly addressed to date, and the potential usefulness of a framework through which to enrich and encourage gender and media research with the promise of enhancing and promoting gender transformation that is more comprehensive than a liberal-inclusionary focus can offer. As a result, this research aims to strengthen knowledge by linking critiques of gender in the media that move *beyond* the key notions of numerical representation and stereotyping, with journalists' views of their own roles within this. As will be presented in the methodology, I have designed the research in a way that seeks to promote analysis of gender in the media that is able to develop data that is "progressive" in terms of feminist approach and therefore capable of advancing understandings and changes that are more comprehensively transformative.

In conclusion, feminist critiques of the media in South Africa, and internationally, have taken many forms. This research has aimed to draw extensively on the established theory and, at the same time, contribute some new perspectives towards South African literature and research on the subject by looking at the available literature critically.

4.4   Institutionalising Change: South Africa's Gender and Media Policy Environment

Having looked at the research and literature pertaining to gender and the media in South Africa, as a basis for research it is also important to establish what the policy environment in terms of gender and the media is currently like. Critiques against the media are quite prolific, but what does policy actually require from the media industry in South Africa? In searching for this information, I found that it was both difficult to locate and quite sparse. The limited information unearthed in attempting to scope the gender and media policy environment in South Africa is, in itself, telling. While there is much literature on the need for (and suggested improvements to) policy, specific information on existing policy obligations with respect to representations of gender in the media is conspicuously limited, particularly in the case of the news press.

At an international level, obligations in respect of gender and the media were often referenced in terms of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) (Lowe Morna, 2001). CEDAW is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations, ratified by over a hundred nations including South Africa, to protect and promote gender equality and women's rights. This includes the elimination of practices and prejudices based on stereotyped notions of women and men's roles, as well as those that convey the notion of the inferiority of superiority of either sex. The BPFA, however, takes these concepts further by specifically identifying the media, and in particular the mass media, as having a special role to play in the promotion of gender equality. In Section J of the BPFA, gender stereotypes in the media and the equitable representation of women in media institutions are targeted as issues of concern for gender equality.

At a national level, policy on gender and the media appears to be both scattered and limited, often including brief clauses on - or tacit mention of - gender. The Broadcasting Code of Conduct and the Advertising Code, for example, have brief clauses on gender. However, for the purposes of this research, the South African Press Code of Professional Practice (2006) is probably the key policy document with reference to gender. In this document, gender is referred to Section 2, which deals with issues of discrimination in the media. In this regard,

the press code imposes the following policy obligations in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 respectively:

- "The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age."
- "The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter" (South African Press Code of Professional Practice, 2006).

Interestingly, paragraph 2.3 of the South African Press Code of Professional Practice (2006) imposes a further policy obligation with respect to race, to the omission of gender and other social stratifications, namely:

- "The press has the right and indeed the duty to report and comment on all matters of public interest. This right and duty must, however, be balanced against the obligation not to promote racial hatred or discord in such a way as to create the likelihood of imminent violence."

Therefore, gender issues, including those related to sexual orientation and preference, are importantly omitted in the policy obligation to mitigate media representations that promote hatred, discord or violence. This perhaps indicates a lag identified by some gender activists in the promotion of gender transformation relative to strides taken to promote the transformation of race relations in South Africa. In a South African study on gender and advertising, for example, it was revealed that the advertising industry in post-apartheid South Africa expressed a strong sense of responsibility to portray a racially integrated society, but no similar sense of responsibility to portray a gender equitable and transformed South African society (Lowe Morna, 2001).

Other than clauses with direct reference to gender, however, a number of clauses exist in the Press Code with significant potential for gender-aware interpretation. The notion of "public interest" as specified in the Press Code, for example, could easily be read through a

gender lens or read with a blindness to gender dynamics. In addition, the mention of gender in reference to the avoidance of discriminatory, denigratory or prejudicial representation, for example, is open to diverse applications according to the extent of gender awareness informing the interpretation made of particular media texts. Therefore, scope exists to apply current clauses in the Press Code towards the engendering of the press in South Africa, but little of the policy on ethics and the press explicitly identifies, emphasizes or defines the scope and nature of gender issues.

The print media industry in South Africa has set up the office of the Press Ombudsman and an Appeal Panel to mediate, settle and, where necessary, adjudicate complaints pertaining to newspaper and magazine publications. The office is funded by the newspaper and magazine industries. Its authority rests on the commitment of publishers and editors to respect its rulings and to adhere to the Press Code of Professional Practice. The Press Code is also being continually reviewed. Other than the Press Code, Lowe Morna (2001) notes that most media houses have some form of encoded editorial policy or guidelines. However, she adds that a random examination of some examples of these conducted at a Gender Links workshop revealed a prevailing of silence on gender issues in such policy documents (ibid).

Therefore, while having the potential to encourage transformation in some respects, the policy environment in terms of gender and the media in South Africa is quite limited and, importantly, is also relatively open to interpretation. Policy without deeper awareness or understanding of gender and gendered oppression will mean limited application. In this context, the perspectives of journalists is important in establishing some of the origins of the kinds of media texts being critiqued by feminists (as discussed earlier), as well as potentially identifying opportunities for change.

4.5 Contemporary Turning Points: Politics, Press Freedom and Feminism in South Africa at the Time of Research

4.5.1 Contextualising the research within contemporary events and debates

From the time the research proposal was developed and all the way through the processes of research, prominent and significant events were unfolding around gender politics, national

politics and the role of the press in South Africa. Many high-profile events dominating the media further spurred active debate and, in some cases, activism, both through and within the media industry and in society at large. Many of these issues also stimulated debate around the role of the media in post-apartheid, democratic South Africa. These events and debates have contributed appreciably towards the context in which the research was undertaken and were raised frequently by participants during the research.

This section aims to introduce these issues briefly and some of their salient implications towards contextualising the research. South Africa and its media are diverse and dynamic, reflecting a multiplicity of voices and a range of complex changes occurring in the post-apartheid context. As such, I concede that the events and debates I present here are selections made from a vast pool of potential contextual issues, and are not intended to be presented here as defining the South African context in any unmitigated or comprehensive way. They are, however, issues that I consider to be of great interest and significance to my research question in particular, as well as towards understanding the interview and newspaper content data.

4.5.2 Zuma, Zuma, Zuma: Three key dimensions to Jacob Zuma in the media

Jacob Zuma, currently president South Africa, was at the time of the primary research with journalists the former deputy president of South Africa and president of the ruling government party, the African National Congress (ANC). At the time of the research and just prior (roughly the period of 2006 to 2008) he was playing a significant role in South African politics not only in terms of the party politics themselves, but also in terms of national dialogues over the role of the media, and over gender issues in the country. He also controversially dominated much media coverage at that time, for his involvement in high-profile (and controversial) events widely covered by the media, the staunch criticism unleashed by him and his supporters on the media for its critical coverage of him and the voracious and, again, controversial forms of support shown by his supporters. These events not only bolstered his prominence as a politician, but have also, according to many, been revolutionising the South African landscape both socially and politically.

Events surrounding his person and career, as well as the broader issues these have raised, stimulated powerful debate and acted to further unify particular groups and powerfully divide

others. These events and debates around Jacob Zuma have been complex, and a detailed account of these in their entirety cannot and will not be given here. In addition, since the primary research has been undertaken and up until today, developments and changes continue to take place (for example, his inauguration as president), making an overview of Zuma's significance to the research very difficult to pin down as time goes on. However, focusing on the period the primary research was undertaken, those events around Zuma with particular bearing on the research will be raised as background information, especially as they impact on the ability to interpret many of the comments made by journalists and editors in this research[16].

In 2005, Zuma became involved in a corruption-related controversy when his former financial advisor, Shabir Shaik, was convicted on charges of corruption and fraud in which Zuma was implicated. The judge maintained that Shabir Shaik had had a corrupt relationship with Jacob Zuma, leading to Zuma's dismissal as deputy president of South Africa in June 2005. While Zuma himself had not yet been convicted of corruption related to the incidents constituting the centre of Shabir Shaik's trial, this controversy has rolled on politically and legally for three years before its resolution by the National Prosecuting Authority in 2009, when they dismissed Zuma's case after conceding that it had been compromised by political interference.

In 2006, Jacob Zuma was charged with the rape of a 31 year old family friend on 2 November 2005. The trial, which was conducted from March to May 2006, dominated South African press coverage, and several critical features of the trial came to symbolise some of the most divisive political and social debates around national and gender politics. Zuma was eventually acquitted of the charge. His supporters attacked the media as pre-emptively promoting a judgement of Zuma as guilty before the court could rule on the matter. Zuma accused a number of newspapers of using the trial to boost sales by sensationalising the story, and claimed that his constitutional rights to be treated innocent until proven guilty, as well as to dignity, had been violated by the media's coverage of the trial. He proceeded to sue publishers, editors, reporters, the cartoonist Zapiro and newspapers for their coverage and comment of him and his trial. Furthermore, the rape charge and the media coverage of Zuma were held by many supporters to be part of a political plot against him.

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[16] General information related to Zuma and the media in this section was drawn from a number of media sources, most notably including news articles from the Mail & Guardian online (www.mg.co.za).

The trial also aroused great debate and reaction among feminists and various people holding different perspectives on issues of gender. Part of the defence used in the rape trial, and considered in the ruling of the judge, was the dress of the complainant (who wore a *kanga*[17] on the night of the alleged rape, which the defence held to be sexually suggestive). Another involved the importance of Zulu "culture" in informing Zuma's actions (he claimed that, according to Zulu "culture", once a woman is aroused it is considered wrong for the man to cease sexual advances). In addition, the complainant's abusive past was advanced by the defence as a mitigating factor (that she had experienced and made accusations of rape numerous times before was taken to show that she was emotionally unstable and unable to distinguish adequately between consensual and coercive sex, including the suggestion that she may experience any sexual encounter as coercive).

The complainant's relationship to Zuma, who she claimed was like a father figure to her, was put forward by the prosecution as a power dynamic that had impacted on her ability to resist his advances, in addition to his high position in political leadership. Furthermore, the complainant's failure to "cry rape" (namely, to put up a serious physical fight against a rapist, flee from the scene of a rape as soon as possible and report the event immediately afterwards) was held by the defence, and eventually the judge, to signify a shadow of doubt over her claims of rape. The prosecution, on the other hand, tried to show that it was a common reaction of rape survivors to freeze during rape and take time to come to be able to face what had happened to them afterwards. Historical myths, stereotypes and debates around gender, sexuality, rape and power were therefore publicly fore-grounded during the trial.

The issue of HIV also came to the fore, with Zuma (who had four wives at the time) admitting that he had not used a condom, despite knowing that the complainant was HIV-positive. In court he said that, as a man, he knew his chances of contracting HIV were statistically lower than a woman's and that he had taken a shower after sex to mitigate HIV infection. These comments sparked outrage from various HIV-prevention groups (among others) and became the comments that came to exemplify Zuma's unfitness for office to those who did not support him. Zapiro came to regularly depict Zuma in cartoons with a showerhead above his head, which caused much outrage from Zuma and his supporters.

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[17] A colourful, rectangular cloth garment worn by women, and occasionally men, specifically in Eastern Africa.

Although recently he did agree not to use the showerhead as a fixture on Zuma's head, he has continued to weave showerhead depictions into cartoons involving Zuma.

Image 1: Cartoon of Jacob Zuma's "AIDS shower", Zapiro, Mail & Guardian Online, 12 May 2006

In the meantime, supporters of Zuma outside the courthouse accused the complainant of being part of a political plot to oust Zuma from power. Some burned placards with the full name of the complainant reading "Burn the Bitch", while others announced that the complainant should be grateful if Zuma had raped her. Both supporters and Zuma himself sang an apartheid struggle song *Lethu Mshini Wami*, literally translated as "bring me my machine gun", the discursive orientation of which, in the context of a rape trial, stirred up severe reactions from some quarters. Feminist groups responded strongly to these events, noting that many of the supporters who had said and done these things were women, highlighting the divide among women in South Africa related to issues of gender.

The trial raised serious debate around patriarchy, power, politics and the socialisation of both men and women. Motsei (2007), in a book reflecting on the various implications of the Zuma rape trial, articulates the impact these events had on her and, arguably, many others concerned with the gendered discourses arising during the trial.

> "It was on waking up to the headline 'Burn the bitch' at Jacob Zuma's rape trial
> on International Women's Day, 8 March 2006, twelve years into South Africa's

new democracy, ten years after the implementation of the new Constitution and fifty years after women marched to the Union Buildings to demand their rights, that the pervasive disrespect for women and women's rights were brought home" (Motsei, 2007: 18).

Motsei continues to reflect on the numerous gendered discourses that emerged in the trial, noting that they are not limited to Jacob Zuma himself, but are rather reflective of much broader patriarchal discourses articulated and subscribed to by men and women. In this respect, Motsei argues that not only should Zuma's suitability as a political leader be questioned, but also the prevailing discourses around gender, sex, "culture" and power that permeate South African society. As such, Motsei considers the Zuma rape trial as a potential turning point for South Africa.

"For me personally, Jacob Zuma's rape trial was both a form of victimisation and a moment of reawakening. Seeing him arrive in court and being ushered in with ceremonial pomp surrounded by an array of bodyguards in dark suits leaping out of a motorcade of luxury automobiles and running towards the court building, I wondered if Thomas Jefferson was correct when he said 'A people get the government they deserve'" (Motsei, 2007: 18).

Motsei's (2007) reflections convey the challenges and debates raised through the Zuma trial in terms of where South Africa stands with respect to gender transformation. As a new democracy with some of the most progressive gender legislation in the world, with a government represented by more women than almost anywhere in the world, and a national gender machinery aimed at promoting transformation, there is a sense that South African women have perhaps been lulled into a pre-emptive sense of security that the road to gender transformation is already paved. The trial provoked a response that could be viewed as challenging women and men to consider the nature and extent of transformation, and highlighting the need for gender transformation beyond parity.

Gouws (2004) notes that an unintended consequence of what she calls "state feminism" in South Africa (whereby feminist goals are implemented through state machinery) is the "apparent demobilisation of civil society". The Zuma rape trial reflected this phenomenon, and acted as a (potential) catalyst for greater activism around the foundational aspects of

gender relations (namely, how men and women are perceived, beyond official rhetoric or numerical representation).

The third key issue involving Jacob Zuma that evoked a flood of press coverage was the issue of the succession race and his appointment in December 2007 as the new president of the ANC. Grumbling dissatisfactions with the former ANC president, Thabo Mbeki, coupled with Zuma's growing popularity led to a succession battle dominated by the two, and saw the ANC increasingly divided. While the details around the succession race are in some respects sketchy (rumours of hand-greasing of ANC delegates or promises of prominent political positions in exchange for their votes abound), the ANC succession battle and Zuma's eventual triumph over Mbeki dominated the media and came to be viewed as a significant turning point for South Africa. The tensions between Zuma and Mbeki camps also continued to shape South African politics, leading to the ANC splintering and the formation of the Congress of the People (COPE) in 2008.

Image 2: Cartoon about the ANC succession race, Zapiro, Mail & Guardian Online, 7 December 2007

Many feminists and AIDS activists were dismayed at the election of a man who, despite his official pronouncements regarding the importance of gender transformation and the fight against HIV, had revealed in court that he was a polygamist who engaged in extra-marital sex without the use of a condom, with a woman half his age who he knew to be HIV positive, and seemed unapologetic about how this may affect his other partners. Gender

concerns around the succession race were further compounded by the fact that the ANC Women's League, who had previously promised to vote for a woman candidate to lead the ANC, eventually put Zuma forward as a candidate.

Confusion and fierce debate followed among women's groups as to the reasons for and implications of this move. These debates came to be quite prominent in the media at the time (see the cartoon by Zapiro in Image 3 below). On the other hand, Zuma supporters continued to claim that Zuma was still being unfairly targeted by the media and his opponents within the ANC, and that the Women's League had voted for whom they believed was the best candidate.
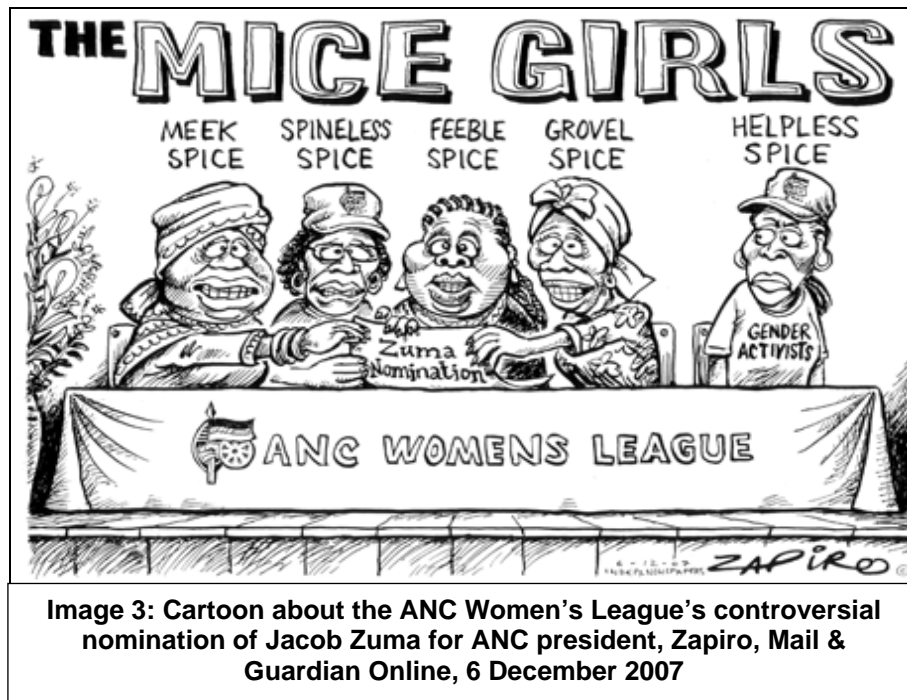
Image 3: Cartoon about the ANC Women's League's controversial nomination of Jacob Zuma for ANC president, Zapiro, Mail & Guardian Online, 6 December 2007

One commentator proposing that the media had dealt with Jacob Zuma with extreme prejudice had the following to say in an online contribution to a journalism website (journalism.co.za):

"Journalists, particularly editors, used every possible centimetre of editorial space to rubbish, ridicule and condemn Zuma. Not even the architect of apartheid or perpetrators of heinous crimes of humanity have ever evoked such a response from the media in South Africa. Every rule of fair play, objectivity

and balance is breached in the coverage of Zuma - and excused away by the minders of the profession under the banner of the "public's right to know" (Munusamy, 2007).

Accusations such as these have naturally stimulated a variety of responses and ardent debate in the media industry.

At the time of the majority of the interviews, the succession race in the ANC had not realised its outcome. However, the corruption and rape charges against Zuma were fresh in people's minds, as were the various allegations of media bias, his bumpy rise to power and the political relationship he had with Thabo Mbeki. Furthermore, the succession race and the ANC Women's League's vote for Zuma, coinciding with the annual 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children[18], formed the context of many of the newspapers reviewed for the research. I have already discussed some of the theories surrounding the role of the media in society, as well as the feminist basis for the research and feminist critiques of the media. The case of Jacob Zuma, at the time of the research, exemplified and illustrated the tensions simmering in terms of these very issues and debates in South Africa around gender and the media. They therefore provide an important context, one I will take up as they arise in the research findings.
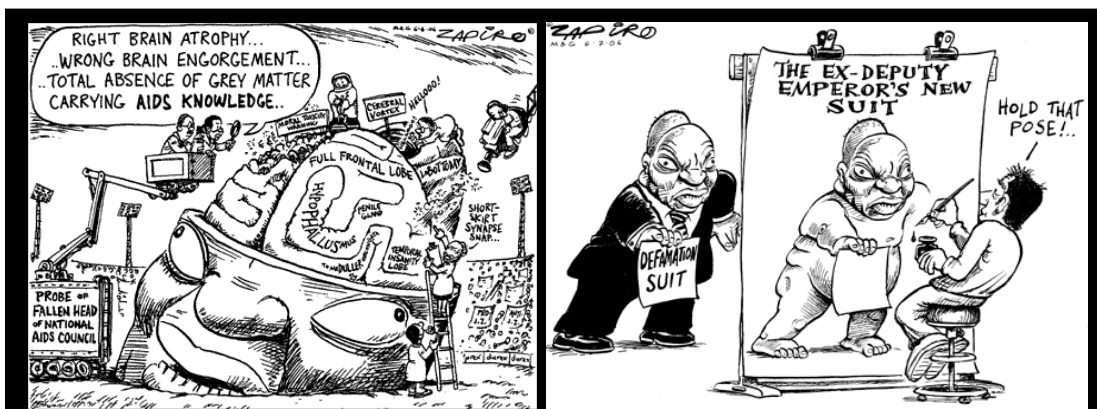
Image 4: Scathing cartoons about Jacob Zuma and his relationship with the media, Zapiro, Mail & Guardian Online, 7 April 2006 and 7 July 2006

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[18] From here onwards referred to simply as the 16 Days of Activism.

4.5.3 *Partiality, prejudice or public interest? Debates over the media's role in national transformation*

Issues related to the role of the media in post-apartheid South Africa have been quite prominent both in the media and within broader public and political debates. In addition to the accusations and legal action around media coverage of Jacob Zuma, a number of high-profile politicians and government officials have dominated headlines due to allegations and charges of corruption, fraud and various other acts regarded as unethical.

Some sectors of the South African media have taken an active role in these revelations, not only in critically covering such issues but also in investigating and uncovering them. Some parties have claimed that the media appears to be out to target particular individuals or political parties (a claim that has often fed back into politics, by framing certain political groups as victims of a smear campaign and fuelling caveats of a ruling political power centre that curbs opposition via counter-democratic means). Furthermore, some have claimed that the methods sometimes employed by the media industry to produce these stories are unethical or even unconstitutional. On the other hand, concerns that such accusations will be used to stifle press freedom have been strongly articulated. Both of these arguments re-emerge as strongly as they have spurred by recent events and, I would argue, due to their historical roots in South Africa's apartheid past, in which news coverage akin to propaganda was supported by the government and press freedom was suppressed.

The media's role as watchdog has been debated as a consequence. Furthermore, questions around the possibility, desirability and meaning of an "impartial" or "fair" media have gained prominence. The notions of media coverage in the "public interest" - what this means and how it could relate to notions of "national interest" - also continue to be debated. In this respect, some foreground the media's role as a critical watchdog, while others point to the need for the media to promote some kind of national cohesion (and, therefore, not aim primarily to critique and expose the flaws of government). As will become clear later, these very issues arose during the research. I will not delve into the precise details of these events or which media groups, individuals or political actors have made various arguments. However, in order to contextually frame the question of impartiality, prejudice and the notion of public interest in the media as background to the findings, I will just briefly say, here, that

these debates have impacted upon and reflected broader discourses around the role of the media.

One example of an event that was highly current at the time of the research and linked to these debates is the case of the Health Minister, Mmanto Tshabalala-Msimang. Her suitability as the minister of health was called into question when the Sunday Times newspaper (known for its investigative journalism) uncovered and published hospital records suggesting that the minister was an alcoholic who drank while staying in a private hospital, had been aggressive towards hospital staff and had later received what some believed was a suspiciously swift liver transplant. The Sunday Times became embroiled in a legal controversy around the constitutionality of the manner in which the private hospital records had been obtained, and around whether the confidential information warranted publishing as part of the "public interest".

At the time of my research at the Sunday Times, the mood in the newsroom was tense as the editor and one journalist awaited news as to whether or not they would be arrested on the grounds of illegally seizing and publishing confidential documents. The story, which was widely discussed both in terms of the revelations about the health minister and the implications for the role of the media as watchdog, caused a great stir in the media industry at large. The research context was therefore palpably impacted upon by events and debates such as these.

4.5.4   Crossing the invisible line: Setting the limits on "free speech" in the media

Another controversial incident unfolded during the research (although in this case after the interviews had been completed), which stirred up great debate regarding the media's role. This was the firing of the popular Sunday Times columnist David Bullard on 10 April 2008[19]. A highly controversial column by Bullard published the previous Sunday, entitled "Uncolonised Africa wouldn't know what it was missing", was subsequently described as extremely racist and counter to the values of the newspaper and the country, leading to the Sunday Times editor firing Bullard. Mondli Makhanya, the editor of the Sunday Times,

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[19] Information pertaining to this incident was gleaned from the internet, especially the websites of the Sunday Times (www.thetimes.co.za), the Mail & Guardian (www.mg.co.za) and the Business Day (www.businessday.co.za).

described the message expressed in the column as being "that black people are indolent savages" (Makhanya, Sunday Times, 13 April 2008).

In the following week's Sunday Times, the editor apologised for publishing the column and reflected on some of the implications of the column and his reasoning for firing Bullard. In addition, the same issue of the newspaper carried a page dedicated to letters submitted in both support of and opposition to Bullard's firing. After about a week, during which time media interest in the incident was very much sustained, Bullard issued an apology for the offence his column had caused, while also highlighting the role of a columnist as being to push boundaries through expressing controversial views. In his apology, he noted "I can't claim to believe everything I have written because some columns were written purely for sensation" (Bullard, Business Day, 18 April 2008).

For the purposes of this research, three aspects of these events were of particular interest. Firstly, while the firing of a columnist is more extreme than most instances of controversial columns being published, this incident shows some of the ways in which columns stir up public debate around very sensitive issues. Unlike news journalists, columnists have a great deal of leeway with respect to what they discuss and how, and are often valued for their ability to stir up public debate. In particular, as will also be discussed in relation to the findings for this research, spaces such as columns can provide a means through which to express some of the controversial private views held by members of the public, ones not acceptable if articulated in most public spaces. This is part of the reason the expression of these views can act as a catalyst for a furore of debate; columnists are in a better position than most in the media to articulate issues seething beneath the surface of acceptable public speech. As the Sunday Times editor noted in this case, Bullard's column triggered a surge of public support for and against the views contained in it, revealing some of the sharp divisions in the country. An extract from the Sunday Times editorial regarding Bullard's column highlights this.

> "It [10 April 2008] was a sad day, as some of the anger directed at the Sunday Times revealed a dark, ugly side of South Africa….. The outrage [by members of the public at Bullard's firing] was directed not just at the Sunday Times; it was directed at post-apartheid South Africa and all it represents….. What is disconcerting is that there are many people in our society who agree with what

Bullard wrote last week. *The Bullard matter allowed the opinions that are normally reserved for behind closed doors to come out into polite company.* This tells you that we still have a long road to travel in forging the united, non-racial nation that we set out to build in 1994" (Makhanya, Sunday Times, 13 April 2008, emphasis my own).

Secondly, while radio talk shows, the news and letters to newspapers extensively covered questions around the content of Bullard's column and whether or not the views he expressed warranted his firing, little was said in public debates about the fact that the column was published by the Sunday Times in the first place. However, in his editorial regarding the column, the editor did address this issue to some extent, claiming responsibility for the column's publication prior to Bullard's firing, and noting that "systems" in the newspaper were being looked at to ensure that such texts did not slip through the gate-keeping process. I raise this because this columnist was fired for the publication of a column that was (through action or omission) put into publication under the editor's control. The editorial responsibility to check and approve everything published in a given publication is very important (as also emerged in the findings), and this incident raises questions around agency and accountability in the media (relevant to the research question which probes the role of journalists and editors in creating gendered texts).

Thirdly, the Sunday Times editorial on the matter raised the significance of discourses related to free speech, and that these discourses are shaped and reshaped according to social values at the editorial level. As the editor himself noted, Bullard was given much space over the years to express through his column views that were not only very controversial, but also at times counter to the editorial stance of the newspaper. However, in this particular case, the editor said that Bullard had gone too far.

"The right to free speech is something everyone on this newspaper holds dear. We hold diverse views on different issues and would lay down our lives in defence of everyone's right to express themselves. Our pages are a testament to that. But we are NOT in the business of promoting prejudice….. Last Sunday he [Bullard] crossed the line" (Makhanya, Sunday Times, 13 April 2008).

Free speech as a media value is stressed here, while it is also made clear that this "right" to express "diverse views" has *limits* attached to it, particularly that such speech does not promote prejudice. The case of Bullard is therefore worth bearing in mind when going in to discuss the research findings. The identification of the line being crossed in terms of promoting or not promoting prejudice depends in part on the values of the newspaper and its editorial leadership, as well as the extent and manner in which certain social constructs are (or are not) seen as dangerous in this regard. This is significant to the issue of gender in the media. For example, in a context in which gender differences (and inequalities even) are often discursively aligned with biological sex, and therefore naturalised and legitimated, would an editor, a journalist or, even, members of the public view media representations of women as primarily mothers and men as primarily career persons as promoting prejudice or not?

In the case of Bullard, an increased discursive sensitivity appears to exist to the ways in which social constructs around race and Africa have, do and could fuel racism. Whether similar awareness is applied in terms of gender constructs in columns would, presumably, depend on the social currency of certain gender transformation issues, as well as the lens through which they are viewed by editors and other staff at media institutions. Thus, it is important to note that Bullard's firing raised questions around the discursive *parameters* and *limitations* of "free speech", and the ways in which particular social values constitute what qualifies within this. This case was well publicised and debated in various forums, but not all columns with potentially hazardous social implications and prejudicial discourses meet this kind of publicity or, indeed, these kinds of punitive measures. As such, it is an interesting event to bear in mind going into the research findings later on, as it raises a contextual issue around discourses of prejudice and the media in South Africa.

4.6   Conclusions

This Chapter has, essentially, introduced literature and current events that help to build a context for the research and the research findings presented later on. Many of these events and issues would be difficult to discuss in as much detail while presenting the research findings and discussions, and they have thus been introduced here to set the stage for later discussions. These contextual issues provide a starting point from which to explore the

views of journalists and editors, as well as to analyse the media texts themselves. They raise key debates around the press media in South Africa and abroad, its historical trajectories and its current modes of expression. They also raise questions around gender in South Africa and in the media in particular, through the lens of feminist critiques of the media, gender and media policy and the salient events with a bearing on gender politics in South Africa that have been widely covered by the media in recent years.

Stepping back, this Chapter has highlighted the fact that, when it comes to the role of the media in South Africa, debates rage on. History has played an important role in shaping discourses around the role of the media in South Africa, and current events have breathed new life into these debates. In terms of gender, too, this Chapter has shown that the feminist media studies field in South Africa has also been significantly shaped by South Africa's history, and that current events again have sparked debate around not only representations of gender in the media but broader attitudes around gender. In conclusion, I will argue that, in this fertile and extremely significant current context of thriving debate provoked into new life by South African politics, as well as of the continued shaping of the new democracy and the media's role therein (a process that is still ongoing), the research I have undertaken is important towards understanding how the media does and can play a role in gender transformation beyond women's inclusion in public spaces.

In this Chapter I have attempted to show that, while many factors are leading to increased complexity and nuance in feminist media studies in South Africa, and despite policy measures aimed at transforming the press, understandings of gender, its significance and the multiplicity of manifestations and impacts it can have still need to be strengthened. Drawing on the feminist frameworks I have outlined in Chapter 2, therefore, and following on from the theoretical and contextual historical background I have sketched regarding the media industry (generally and specific to South Africa), this research aims to be part of this project. Attending more closely to elements of gender transformation and the media in South Africa that, I feel, have not been sufficiently addressed to date and drawing on empirical research to delve deeper into the significance of the events and debates characterising the South African media landscape these past years, the research presented here will, I hope, build on understandings of the strides made and lags in the pursuit of more comprehensive gender justice in South Africa and its media than has been seen to date.

First, however, I will describe in the following Chapter the methodology that was applied in the research. The Chapters that have thus far been presented have highlighted the importance of feminist theory and politics in the undertaking of this research, as well as some of the main areas of interest. The following Chapter will, therefore, discuss in relative detail (in the tradition of feminist research) decision-making processes and theoretical inputs with a bearing on the shape of the empirical research and the way in which it has been unpacked, analysed, interpreted and presented.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

"Writing is hard: it involves confrontations with critique (from others, and often more harsh, from oneself), it involves co-operation with conventions, it requires engagement with public accountability, it demands a self" (Bennett, 2000: 10).

The act of writing is demanding. Research, generating knowledge(s) for wider consumption, also requires the kind of personal and public accountability to which Bennett (ibid) refers. In particular, critical writers (including feminists) have drawn attention to the ways in which knowledge production and the documentation of knowledges has reflected, and continues to reflect, particular situated perspectives and power relations. When combined (situated perspective and power), knowledge generation tends to represent another incarnation of the views and interests of the powerful. As such critical perspectives, including feminist perspectives, ask for greater reflection on the research and writing processes, for a much greater willingness to confront the self and wider audiences regarding the process of knowledge generation, and for more explicit explorations of one's situated position towards greater accountability, both "publicly" and "privately".

Here, writing about the methodology design and decision-making processes that have shaped this study and thesis is also important as part of this critical and feminist perspective on knowledge production. Like any other, this research and the writing up and (eventually) dissemination of it involves situated knowledge and power relations. It is, as are all forms of knowledge, oriented and contextual. Critical reflection and open discussion of the decisions and theories that informed the processes of my research are, therefore, maintained here as part of a broader feminist epistemological project, as well as the personal project of my own development as a researcher through thinking and writing. The research methodology is therefore presented with care and relative detail in the spirit of generating, as an outcome of the research, not only findings central to the research question itself, but also the development of deeper thinking around the act of research, especially research into gender representations and the media.

As already alluded to, methodology, here, is taken to refer not only to the *methods* applied in the proposed research, but to the *theory* informing the manner in which research is conducted and the ways in which theory will be applied in research processes (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). It is often difficult to pinpoint each and every theoretical influence on one's thinking and approach, but I will aim in this Chapter to make explicit the most vital influences and theoretical frameworks that have guided and crafted my research.

5.2   Feminist Epistemology and Ethics

Epistemological and ethical approaches to research are shaped both directly and indirectly by theoretical and political positions. These positions are ever-present (although dynamic and shifting) whether explicitly expressed by researchers or not. Furthermore, questions of epistemology and ethics are central to critical and feminist concerns over the research process (as mentioned above), underlying and constituting the foundation for many of the decisions that are eventually taken in relation to research. They are, therefore, a good point of departure for a discussion on methodology. Epistemology and ethics are presented *together* due to the especially close relationship between feminist ethics and feminist epistemological concerns. This section highlights, by way of introduction, some of the broader theoretical and political reflections that I have engaged with in this regard while designing and undertaking the research.

Critical feminist epistemology (and especially, among others, critical postcolonial and African feminist epistemology) demands of the feminist writer and researcher a profound engagement with both her (or his) social location and relationships of power connected to research and writing. The foundation for this requisite dimension to feminist research is the notion that all knowledge is situated (for example, Mbilinyi, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993, Stanley & Wise, 1990), and that patterns of knowledge production are an expression of power (Bennett, 2000; Mohanty, 1991; Zeleza, 1997; Zeleza, 1996). With regard to situated knowledge, Mbilinyi (1992: 53) asserts the following:

> "Critical feminist epistemologies deny the possibility of neutral, value-free science
> and knowledge. The researchers are part of the world under study. Our conception
> of the problem under study, our construction of research instruments, our
> interpretation of data, are all effected by our multiple identities and discourses."

Zeleza (1996) adds that knowledge production (emerging out of *situated* knowledge) is political and expresses unequal power relations and struggles over power, manifest both in the material and in the ideological. In this way, again, common positivistic notions of knowledge as neutral in terms of interests are challenged and knowledge production (feminist or otherwise) is viewed as a privilege, as power and as political.

> "Knowledge, as creed and commodity, as a proprietary privilege, reflects and reproduces the spatial and social divisions of power, old and new, material and ideological, between and within societies" (Zeleza, 1996).

This leads to a complex dilemma for feminists, of being in the political, privileged and powerful position to (re)produce knowledge (Smith, 1987), even if intended in the service of social and gender justice or to undermine the status quo of power. Part of critical feminism's response to this dilemma is an insistence, firstly, on **reflexivity** to throw these power dynamics and the social locations of feminists into light. Fonow and Cook (1991) assert that reflexivity constitutes reflection upon, and critical examination of, the very nature and processes of research. This kind of feminist commitment to reflexive research - keenly aware of and in conversation with issues of power and politics in the research process - has shaped many decisions around the methodology selected for this research.

As Luff (1999) has noted, feminist research can therefore involve an almost "autobiographical" account of the researcher's location, background, experiences and decisions in the research process. While I do not give an exhaustive autobiographical account in this thesis, I do reflect on key aspects of my own position and research process, respecting and aiming to effect a feminist stance that is always wary of notions of "objectivity" in research, and one that therefore aims to be transparent towards highlighting the constructionist and political dimensions in research processes and outcomes (ibid).

The research approach undertaken was, in the first instance, dominated by **qualitative** methods, located within a feminist sociological debate that has illuminated the benefits of qualitative methods and their triangulation with quantitative methods. Jayaratne and Stewart (1991) explore some of the debates pertaining to the roles of qualitative and quantitative research, pointing to the ability of qualitative research to delve into gendered experiences by moving, in certain ways, away from methods that predefine categories, responses and

potential research findings. Since engendered research probes concepts and issues largely marginalised from mainstream research, they note that qualitative approaches create the space for marginalised voices to emerge (ibid). Furthermore, taken-for-granted knowledge constituting predefined categories can be better challenged and unpacked through qualitative research (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). This, then, is not just a question of method but of epistemology, firstly in the political concerns that shape method selection and, secondly, since the decision to choose primarily qualitative methods derives from certain understandings of what (engendered) knowledge is and how best to seek it. The research undertaken here was informed by this understanding of open-ended, qualitative research as offering great potential to unearth unanticipated findings.

Mbilinyi (1992) furthers these issues around qualitative research by maintaining that gendered identities and discourses, as an achieved (rather than inherent) state involving continuous struggle, may be best unearthed through methods that embrace contradictions, inconsistencies, conflict and ambivalence. Mbilinyi (ibid) as well as Mama (1995) further theorise a subjectivity that is multiply constituted, where various gendered discourses drawn upon in subjective instantiations involve continuous shifts and negotiations. Mama (1995: 164), for example, described the conceptualisation of subjectivity employed in her research into black women's identities in the following way.

> "I have developed the idea of subjectivity as being the sum of all positions available to an individual: positions which are both psychodynamic and discursive."

This understanding, as well as the explorative nature of the research, led to the choice of principal research methods of data collection and analysis considered adept to unpacking and acknowledging *multiple* gendered discourses and perspectives, namely primarily qualitative methods.

While highlighting the value of qualitative methods within the historical context of gendered (and unequal) knowledge production legacies has been an important part of feminist projects, the role and position of quantitative research within feminist studies remains a contentious issue. Oakley (1998) understands this contention as part of a historical struggle between traditional, patriarchal ways of knowing (associated with positivism, in turn

associated with quantitative methods and enumeration) and feminist challenges to these. While debates around the value of qualitative and quantitative research have stemmed from and contributed to important challenges to patriarchal ways of knowing, Oakley (ibid) argues, however, that there is also a need to assess the role and value of all methods and to consider carefully how each are understood and applied rather than merely rejecting certain ways of knowing.

For example, while Jayaratne and Stewart (1991) point to common critiques of largely qualitative approaches that hold them to be at risk of greater researcher bias in the interpretation of data, various feminist researchers have often responded to this critique by invoking arguments denying the possibility of true objectivity, and opting instead for increased rigour and transparency of research decisions (see, for example, Mbilinyi, 1992). As such, as a broad approach to research qualitative methods have great value in what they can offer while also requiring rigour and care in approach. Similarly, while there has been a history of quantitative methods being appropriated within a positivistic, patriarchal discourse, various feminist researchers have been and continue to work on developing ways of applying quantitative approaches that reflect and integrate feminist arguments and values. Oakley (1998: 715) stipulates in this respect that "many of the supposed differences between qualitative and quantitative ways of knowing are not a matter of a hard-and-fast distinction, but of a continuum". As such, both approaches share the empiricism associated with quantitative research and the application of themes and interpretation associated with qualitative research, both of which need to be carefully assessed in relation to whatever research is being undertaken (ibid).

For this research, then, when piloting and applying a methodology I aimed to contribute to highlighting the value of qualitative research and to be aware of the potential problems associated with research approaches (including, historically, with quantitative approaches) while also looking to the research purpose and aims in determining what was appropriate for this study.

In terms of the **personal engagements between researcher and research participants**, a balance was attempted between, on the one end of the spectrum, considerable interaction between the researcher and the researched and, on the other, a more positivistic approach that attempts to keep the researcher from unduly directing or influencing the information

given by respondents. In essence, my approach was to focus on hearing journalists' perspectives rather than engaging in discussion and debate with participants about the issues. However, a certain level of engagement was viewed as inevitable in the research process and I chose rather to acknowledge these engagements than to attempt to sidestep them completely or obscure their existence. As Stanley and Wise (1993) point out, feminist research recognises the role of the researcher within the research process itself, rejecting the notion that researchers can make themselves invisible in the research process or that an impact on the research situation is completely avoidable. This epistemological rejection of a positivistic notion of complete objectivity is indeed threaded throughout this research thesis, in the detailing of the theory, assumptions, politics and decision-making processes that have informed my approaches. The methodology was designed with the understanding that researchers invariably frame the research experience and outcomes to some extent.

Power relations between the researcher and the researched are another common point of feminist epistemological and ethical concerns (see, for example, Mama, 1995; Mbilinyi, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990). This includes the recognition of, and attempts to mitigate, the unequal power relations generally inherent between researchers and researched in "traditional" research approaches. Cognisant of the feminist ethical and political concerns around such "traditional" models of research interactions, I attempted in my methodology design to build in appropriate spaces for research participants themselves to feed back into and influence the research process, particularly in the form of a post-interview questionnaire as discussed below. I also engaged with critical considerations around research in preparation for the empirical research.

I should also note, however, that in the case of this research the power dynamics were slightly different to those commonly associated with feminist research. Firstly, much work on feminist ethics concerns the power relations between researcher and women and/or other marginalised research participants. In this case, I was interviewing both men and women, and I was interviewing men and women in relative positions of power and privilege. The precise details of each participant's background and socio-economic status were not probed during the interviews, and there would undoubtedly have been huge variation among research participants in terms of past and current experiences of race, class, gendered identities and other bases for social inequality. However, as knowledge producers through the media and professionals at well-known and successful newspapers, it was relatively

safe to assume that they did not constitute a group of participants easily defined as particularly "marginalised". Of course, as I have mentioned, this is a broad view and variations would have existed between participants (some of which are raised later in the research findings), but suffice it to say here that at least in the socio-economic sense I was interviewing people in relative positions of power, and interviewing them in relation to their roles *within* this relative position of power (namely, their professional roles). As such, I needed to ask myself in what ways I would apply and be able to understand feminist ethics in relation to my own research situation.

Donna Luff (1999) writes on similar issues in her reflection of feminist ethical questions encountered in her own research with women of relative power and privilege, and women with anti-feminist perspectives. Writing on her research with women in the British Moral Lobby, Luff (ibid) engages in an apparently embattled dialogue with feminist ethics theories surrounding research. Her broad conclusion (although laced through with a sense of continued struggle with the issues) is that power is not simple, and that identities are not unitary, and as such that there is great variation and contradiction between and among women, as well as in different feminist research situations. She observes the "fractured and often contradictory subjectivities of researcher and researched", as well as the "fluctuating nature of power" (Luff, 1999: 687). As such, her research showed that "feminist research" and even "research with women" more specifically cannot be painted solidly with one colour, and that complexities and variations need to be accounted for in addressing feminist ethics in research, as they were in hers.

Luff (1999) also raises the fact that, while feminist research does and should aim to challenge hierarchies in research processes especially through avoiding the objectification of subjects (who are mostly women and therefore already subject to extensive objectification), objectification of research participants is perhaps not *entirely* avoidable. At the very least, this is because in the end the researcher (whether with the inputs of research participants or not) imposes a particular lens and analysis on the data, and frames the research outcomes through her or his approach (ibid). This is not a situation unique to feminist research, but one that does particularly challenge the aims and values of feminist research (ibid). Therefore, she argues that while the aims of feminist research ethics should be pursued, they can perhaps never be completely accomplished. They are, in this sense, therefore more a political process than a complete or sterile outcome. In my research, this

argument was significant because in trying to measure inequalities and power relations between myself and the research participants, and in trying to address them where possible, I kept coming up against limitations in my ability to mitigate against all unequal power relations and even to *identify* all potential power dynamics, especially among such a diverse group of participants. I needed to come to terms with a certain level of unavoidable, or even just at this point unidentified or unsolved, issues that would relate to power relations in my research. My attempt to apply feminist ethics is, as are others, imperfect and further complicated by the fact that the power relations between the research participants and myself were not easily pinpointed from a feminist ethical perspective.

Luff (1999) also notes that feminist research ethics can tend to be sceptical of the value and political imperatives of researching more powerful people. In the context of a dearth of attention in research to issues related to and impacting on women and their lives (and in particular research that enables equal participation of women in knowledge production), it is often argued that there is a need to research women, the "powerless", to redress this imbalance (ibid). In the first instance, however, it is quite important to avoid the assumption that can be inherent in such arguments, namely that there is a relatively homogenous group "women", conceptualised as (quite equally) powerless. Indeed, social inequality is far more complex than this, and many factors can impact on power and powerless, and even differently in different situations. As such, researching the less powerful and their experiences in patriarchal conditions will involve more than just research with "women". In addition, while the general point surrounding the need to study the "powerless" is significant, as Luff (1999) points out there is also a need to "study up", that is to research the "powerful". However, rather than *recreating* unequal power relationships by placing the "powerful" at the centre of social inquiry, feminist research can do this in a way that contributes to the feminist project through the application of a *critical* research paradigm in researching people in power. Critique, critical paradigms and an attempt to understand and conceptualise identities and applications of power can therefore be combined.

My own research was inspired in part by my curiosity as to why those in a powerful position, at least when it comes to the *media production* process, continue to reproduce gender constructs that appear to be limiting or even harmful, despite policy imperatives and, often, good intentions. I therefore needed to "study up", not just in terms of studying research *participants* identified as more powerful, but in terms of studying powerful *norms, practices,*

paradigms and discourses, within a powerful *industry*. As this research thesis will show, I aimed not to uncover individual subjectivities as much as I aimed to delve into dominant, subversive and marginalised discourses employed by participants in relation to their work in the media industry. In addition, the sample in my research and time constraints for interviews (on the part of participants) meant that I *couldn't* dwell too long on establishing nuances around the location of individual research participants within matrices of power in the industry or beyond it. Therefore, I have shied away from drawing comparisons between a relatively small pool of qualitative research *participants* in terms of power, and instead tried to draw focus back to look more at wider *discourses*.

Broadly, I understood the research participants to be, at least in the area the research was concerned about, in relative positions of power, and the research area more generally (the media industry as an inter-related cluster of cultural, social, political and economic entities) to be in a relative position of power. Thus, while I recognised that I was, indeed, in a privileged position in a number of respects as the researcher (for example, as the person whose decisions frame, direct and guide interpretation of the research), participants were also privileged and in the position to generate knowledge that was widely circulated in the public sphere. Through the interview process I also experienced power relations in this research context as non-linear: I felt less powerful in certain situations, as emerged clearly in my own discourse in certain interview transcriptions, and more powerful in others, such as during the writing up of research findings. Some reflections on these dynamics are included later on in this thesis. Suffice it to say here that, as part of a feminist position, the methodology *was* designed in order to mitigate undue domination of researcher over researched, *while* simultaneously the power dynamics in this research challenged dichotomous notions of researched/researcher power dynamics.

The following practical steps were also taken to ensure that the research was conducted with an awareness of, and commitment to, ethical issues:

- **Information regarding the research study and the ethical undertakings of the research** was sent to the newspaper editors and the journalists approached for participation in the study. Journalists were given time to consider the study (at least a couple of weeks) before any follow up was made with regard to their participation. The

correspondence clearly highlighted the fact that participation in the research was voluntary.

- **Signed consent** from all participants and newspaper editors in a position to grant permission for the research was sought and granted.

- Prior to the interviews, I read and engaged with theory surrounding research ethics, and committed to a **basic ethical code of conduct** I drew up for myself. This primarily involved considerations around working with research participants in a way that was trustworthy, did not unduly place pressure on them, allowed them to as openly as possible communicate their perspectives and was rooted in the spirit of granting respect towards and genuine interest in their views. While the research was steeped in a critical feminist theoretical tradition, I also considered it important to remind myself to remain open to new, unanticipated insights, and to really hear and engage with the perspectives of participants during the interviews, before critically interpreting them at a later stage. In other words, I did not want my theoretical orientation and background literature research to render me completely deaf to new insights and perspectives.

- All journalists involved in the study are referred to in this thesis **anonymously**, and wherever possible clearly identifiable characteristics have been omitted from the thesis. The views of participants have, as far as possible, also been integrated and presented in a way that **avoids responses being connected with specific individuals**. Exceptions to these rules were, however, situations in which critical information about participants needed to be presented in the thesis alongside responses. This was the case with editors, as identification of an editor of a newspaper, along with the time period of the research, would in any case already identify the participant. However, editors of the newspapers were consulted and I was able to name them in this thesis (also out of thanks to them for allowing their newspapers to be part of the study). I felt that anonymity would, in any case, be more of an issue for journalists than editors, due to their position within the newspaper and a probable reluctance to speak on the record on behalf of their publication (something the editor would be more entitled to and accustomed to doing).

- **Transcriptions were kept separate** from signed consent forms.

In summary, key epistemological and ethical issues were considered in terms of selecting a general research method orientation (namely qualitative), in considering modes of interaction between participants (observations around which are presented with the

findings), in attending to questions of power and power relations between myself and the research participants, and in being as reflexive as possible about my research decisions. The latter is explored further in relation to various decisions around the research below.

5.3   Selection of Media Institutions for the Study

The research targeted popular print news media. This denotes paper format newspapers, regarded "popular" due to wide national circulation relative to small local newspapers, with sales of at least 40 000 per issue. Newspapers were targeted for the research due to their potential role in knowledge production, setting agendas for national discussion and debate, and "voicing" the concerns and priorities of nations. I also considered them to be of interest as sites of widely and popularly disseminated knowledge production, particularly impacted upon by discourses of objectivity (de Bruin, 2004; Ross, 2002).

The research did not include a broader selection of print media forms (for example, magazines) in order to limit the sample for purposes of analysis. While it is recognised here that studies have revealed that newspapers as a media form in Southern Africa are not as widely used by women for news information as compared to other media forms such as community radio (Adhiambo, 2006), issues of *access* to various forms of media were regarded as separate issues from the research undertaken here, and newspapers (in particular weekly newspapers) were considered to be widely enough read to merit their importance as a news media form. My application of the concept of gender also involved the recognition that men's engagement with gendered media constitutes as important a part of gender transformation processes as women's, therefore negating the need to focus primarily on media forms targeting women. In addition, readership figures for the selected weekly newspapers (presented as part of the research findings) revealed that women did in fact constitute an important proportion of the newspaper readers.

Due to the in-depth qualitative research methodology undertaken with journalists, the sample of newspapers selected for study was necessarily limited. I therefore decided that the newspapers selected would need to be similar in various respects to restrict the variables that could be compared and contrasted in the analysis, while still including a range of different news reporting styles in the study. I eventually decided on weekly newspapers in

part due to their envisaged potential to engage more profoundly with current social issues, given the more dispersed deadlines and therefore the ability to more broadly select and cover weekly news events and generate analytical or topical news pieces. As one newspaper editor later put it, in contrast to weekly newspapers that more actively seek out stories over a period of time, "on a daily [newspaper]… whatever happens today should be tomorrow's news". While this quote only indicates one simplified dimension of the differences between daily and weekly newspapers, it draws attention to the interest I had in the possibilities for weekly newspapers to carve out a space for news agendas to be set and longer-term stories to be investigated and discussed.

I deemed it important not to restrict the sample to newspapers catering only for the most class privileged members of South African society, despite the fact that newspapers largely appeal to higher income earners due to affordability factors. I also considered it important to incorporate newspapers read by a variety of South Africans in terms of background, location and race[20]. Following South Africa's historical legacies, race and class remain highly linked in South Africa. During sampling I found that newspapers appealing primarily to a black readership, for example, tended to be those with a higher readership base in the lower LSM[21] groupings (denoting a lower income status). However, the nexus between race and class is shifting in South Africa (although narrowly and unevenly) as reflected in one newspaper for the study with both a higher LSM and a relatively high black readership. My sampling approach was aimed as far as possible at including newspapers with a range of readerships in terms of class and race to capture a diverse readership base. Sampling criteria were finally also based upon practical concerns such as geographic and language-related accessibility. Three weekly newspapers were selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- Since my first language is English, as well as the fact that discourse analysis was to be applied in the interpretation of data, only English newspapers were selected. This was

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[20] The contestability of this concept itself is acknowledged here. Race was identified and viewed as a factor in the research from the premise that, as La Veist (1996: 212) asserts, race "denotes a common socio-political history". While this extract reflects La Veist's concern with the use of the concept of race in health research specifically, it is worth mentioning that race is not assumed a biological category here, but is incorporated because of its historical relationship with issues of socio-economic and socio-political background.

[21] LSM, or Living Standards Measure, is a South African category created for research that aims to categorise the market into groups within different socio-economic positions. It is calculated broadly on household access to services and amenities (for example, urban or rural location, access to running water and sanitation) as well as household ownership of major technologies and appliances (for example, fridges, cellular phones and televisions).

to ensure that interviews could be conducted in a language with which participants felt comfortable and, importantly, that I could analyse the data effectively.

- The newspapers selected were all owned by different media groups.
- The head offices of each newspaper were based in Gauteng for the purposes of accessibility.
- Weekly newspapers were selected to limit the sample of the study to a particular news production deadline as discussed.
- Selected newspapers were as far as possible varied in terms of readership among low-income, middle-income and high-income groups, identified according to media readership reports.
- The newspapers represented as far as possible a spread of readership characteristics in terms of race, class and gender.

An outline of each newspaper and statistical information about these newspapers (reflecting these selection criteria) is presented in Chapter 6. I acknowledge at the outset that the sample presents certain limitations and that comparisons drawn between the selected newspapers were undertaken in a manner that was cognisant of the limitations of the sample.

5.4   Research Component One: Analysing Newspaper Content

5.4.1   Selecting an appropriate methodology

To support the principle research (based on semi-structured, open-ended, one-on-one interviews) a "scoping" of the content of the three selected newspapers was also undertaken in order to broadly achieve the following:

- Generate a brief description of the newspapers in terms of their general style, focus and market offering to provide general introductory information and profiles for newspapers; and
- Broadly identify some gendered discourses in newspaper texts in order to provide a background to, and data for triangulation with, the principle interview research. This includes the ways in which gender is constructed and through which voices, perspectives and spaces these constructions emerge.

As the research continued, the "scoping" phase of the research needed to be re-conceptualised as component one of the research, as it became less a small background information exercise and more analysis in its own right. Component two of the research (namely the interviews) still constitutes the "principle" research as it was undertaken in greater depth and detail in some respects, and attends more directly to the aims of the research (to examine the perspectives of journalists). However, the analysis of newspaper content has yielded important data, contextualising, triangulating and, indeed, giving more meaning and significance to the interview data than would have been possible without analysis of the newspaper content as well.

In designing a methodology appropriate to the objectives and scope of component one of the research, some difficult considerations emerged surrounding the merits of qualitative and quantitative research approaches within this particular research context. Initially, given that I wished to generate some broad, background information about the sample newspaper content in preparation for the interviews, I attempted to introduce content analysis for this "scoping" component of the research. However, after an unsuccessful pilot of this methodology, I decided on a more qualitative approach for this research. The theory, practical experiences and decision-making processes behind the changes in method for this research component are included in relative detail here, since the methodology selection process is viewed as a relevant and interesting case study of some of the dynamics of quantitative and qualitative methods for social research, particularly feminist research.

Initially, I planned to include a relatively large volume of newspaper issues for component one of the research (about 36 newspapers in total, including 12 issues of each of the three newspapers for the study). This was initially planned in the hope that the analysis of the newspapers' content could yield quite a sound *overview* of the newspapers' general discursive orientations. As such, I felt that a quantitative approach would be practical towards generating a relatively quick but broad picture of newspaper content within the confines of time available for this component of the research (and in preparation for the interviews). I therefore initially decided on content analysis, a method widely used in analysing media texts.

I designed a framework for the content analysis guided by as close as possible an alignment to the definition of "gender transformation" I have given earlier (Chapter 2). In particular, I

wanted to move beyond the counting of certain broad, traditional gender "stereotypes" (as exemplified in a number of studies already undertaken in South Africa) and instead to explore the feminist approaches or paradigms I had identified (in Chapter 2). Certain principle elements constituting the concept of gender transformation were extracted from the description generated in Chapter 2 (based on the progressive feminist paradigm) and categorised. Then, principle elements constituting broad approaches to gender issues critiqued in the literature review (namely those emanating from a liberal-inclusionary paradigm) were also extracted and categorised. These principle elements were then developed into a set of key questions to determine the general discursive orientation of the textual unit in relation to the approaches to gender issues. At one end of the spectrum, a very progressive approach to gender was conceptualised under "gender transformation" while at the other a highly liberal-inclusionary approach was conceptualised under "women's issues". In the middle, an approach conceptualised as looking at "gender relations" was defined, reflecting a move in certain respects towards a progressive feminist approach. Textual units (such as news articles) within the newspaper sample were then considered against the key questions underneath these categories ("gender transformation", "gender relations" and "women's issues") to determine their overall orientation in terms of approach to gender issue, and would be counted

Through the pilot, I attempted to discover whether certain sections in the newspapers, such as décor, cooking and television guides, could be omitted. However, my intention was to be as inclusive as possible to begin with, wanting to avoid assuming certain areas in the newspaper to be more or less gendered or important in terms of discursive content. Table 1 below presents the content analysis framework that was initially developed through the processes described above. The content categories are placed in captions to underscore the constructed nature of these categories.

TABLE 1: PILOTY QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY (COMPONENT ONE)		
"Women's issues"	**"Gender relations"**	**"Gender transformation"**
Conditions for categorization		
a) Articles fall into this category if they meet the	a) Articles fall into this category if they meet the	a) Somewhat different to the other two categories, articles

criteria set out below, all of which are linked by a common concern with women as a societal category by sex. b) Articles categorised here may also fall into the other two categories, since a focus on women in one section may precede engagement with the issues stipulated in the criteria for other categories.	criteria set out below, which are linked by a common move towards the identification of gender as a social construct. b) Articles in this category may also fall into other categories. In particular, it may be closely associated with the category of "gender transformation", which takes the criteria below to a deeper level.	will be counted according to their compatibility with each of the criteria set out below. Therefore, rather than counting articles in accordance with their total compatibility with the key criteria for gender transformation, they will be counted in terms of each individual component making up "gender transformation". b) This category isn't mutually exclusive from others.
Criteria for categorization		

▪ Relates *primarily to women* (i.e. as a societal group by sex).
▪ Relates to concerns over the position of women in society, especially in terms of *equity*, *numerical representation* and/or the *prevalence* of problems faced by women.
▪ Especially, but not limited to, popular current issues such as:
  o Women in business;
  o Women in politics;
  o Gender based violence;
  o Women's health status; and
  o Women's economic status.
	▪ Places "women's issues", or the position of women in society, *in relation to* men (and visa versa).
	▪ Displays consciousness of the *social embeddedness* of gender and gendering (beyond a concern with women as a societal category by sex).
		▪ Displays an awareness of gendered *power relations*.
		▪ Displays an awareness of gender as a *social identity* that is *multiply constituted* (intersects with other social variables).
		▪ Displays an awareness of gender as a *social identity* that is *not stable* or static, but shifting over space and time.
		▪ Displays an awareness of the gendered nature of *institutions, processes, approaches and/or ideologies*.

Early work on the subject of content analysis, such as that by Berelson (1952), describes content analysis as a research technique aimed at systematically, quantitatively and "objectively" describing communication content. Deacon et al. (1999: 17) expand upon this by asserting the following in respect of content analysis:

> "[Content analysis produces] systematic descriptions of what documentary sources contain. By counting how often particular topics, themes or actors are mentioned, how much space and prominence they command, and in what contexts they are presented, content analysis provides an overview of patterns of attention. It tells us what is highlighted and what is ignored."

Indeed, identifying issues or perspectives in the newspapers that were prominent, as well as those that were silent, was deemed very useful for this research. However, while not all content analysis rests on the assumption of "objectivity", the focus on the systematic, "replicable" nature of content analysis (Bauer, 2000) did not always function well within the context of my own research, and raised some issues for me with regard to the feminist approach I was taking. The scientific ambitions involved in the method's emergence (Deacon et al, 1999), in terms of bringing the "rigour and authority of 'natural' scientific inquiry to the study of human and social phenomena" (Deacon at al., 1999: 15), were a concern to me.

Deacon et al. (1999) and Bauer (2000) probe the notion of "objectivity" in relation to content analysis, noting that the researcher's inputs into defining the questions asked, the criteria used for counting and the conclusions drawn from the information unearthed, are significant. Therefore, the building blocks constructing any content analysis framework are, essentially, based on researcher decisions emanating from the reviewed theory, research objectives and hypotheses of that research project. In this way, they are actually highly situated and even qualitative to an extent, constituted within the parameters of the conceptual frameworks developed by the researcher.

I found that, within a relatively small sample and given the kinds of data I was looking for (related to discourses, fluid and overlapping), the building blocks of a content analysis framework for my research did indeed require qualitative input, and in this case to such an extent that a more qualitative approach would, in the end, be more effective to take. In

addition, while I had certain themes and issues that I was specifically trying to look at through the research (such as the concept of gender transformation), the parameters of these themes and issues were still relatively fluid and needed further exploring. In terms of content analysis, I felt that within the context of my research an effective content analysis would require a far more developed and quite complex categorisation framework (drawn up in accordance with a fair amount of initial qualitative research), a framework that was more established than the explorative nature of my research questions could allow.

"Content analysis is an extremely directive method: *it gives answers to the questions you pose*. In this regard the method does not offer much opportunity to explore texts in order to develop ideas and insights. It can only support, qualify or refute your initial questions" (Deacon et al., 1999: 117, emphasis my own).

Therefore, while a quantitative method may be useful in cases in which more fixed categories can be identified for analysis, my theoretical basis for the issue of gender transformation was perhaps too relational and integrated, and requiring of greater flexibility, to allow for such fixed categories to be successfully applied. The pilot of this method revealed that, in practice, content analysis of this kind would not be effective for my research. The piloting of the methodology was halted when I encountered the following main limitations:

▪ ***Textual "units" for counting could not always be identified:*** For example, some articles had relatively free-standing "boxes" with additional stories or information linked to another article, and I could at time not determine difficult where one textual unit began and another ended, instead finding that in the kind of research I was doing, seeing textual content in a more overlapping way was important.

▪ A similar issue was encountered in terms of determining **which sections to leave out**. Some sections (such as television guides) appeared to be appropriate for inclusion in a study on gender and others did not, depending on the type of newspaper. For example, while one newspaper demonstrated a fair amount of critical engagement with social aspects of representation through film and other media in their film and television reviews and guides, in other newspapers the film and television sections included very brief descriptions or blurbs of films that did not appear to have as much

gender relevance. Because the one newspaper had demonstrated that even film and television sections have the potential to engage with gender transformation issues, incorporating a fair amount of gender-conscious commentary, I did not want to exclude this section; it clearly "counted" as a section with relevance to the study. However, when moving to the other newspapers, including this section would lead to the content being counted being far more superficial and the textual "units" being very small. This would unfairly impact on the kinds of counts I would get from the different newspapers, and therefore skew the comparison of counts (which would not be equal). Again, the need for greater fluidity in what I was looking at created limitations in terms of coding and counting.

- Overall, as the numbers began to emerge, the **data did not add significant insights in terms of what I was aiming to understand**. Little was being added to my understanding of the newspaper texts due to the relative rigidity of counting. Using the previous example of film and television sections to illustrate this point, I found that if I included the television and news sections, I would be "counting" a huge number of relatively empty textual units in some newspapers compared to fewer, richer units in terms of analysis of gender transformation discourses in another newspaper, which could be better unpacked qualitatively.

- The framework **did not make enough room for alternative or problematic discourses**. I discovered that the presence or absence of different levels of gender awareness according to the framework was not the only issue, but that problematic discourses and silences also needed to be explored and highlighted. While in some respects silences can be enumerated, in this instance there was more complexity in discourse than a relatively simple framework could capture. For example, one newspaper repeatedly represented the act of a man hitting a woman as a "klap"[22], raising a problematic discourse that, although relevant to my study, did not fit into the framework I had developed. While I looked at improving the framework, I soon realised that short of converting my study into the development of a highly complex framework that could cover all the relevant issues emerging (a thesis in and of itself), applying a quantitative framework for this exercise unduly restricted the kinds of information that I could pick up on and reflect in this research component.

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[22] Afrikaans slang for "hit", which from my perspective and experience is laden with connotations of punishment by an authority figure over another. It therefore potentially has gendered significance.

- ***The number of textual units overall that fell within the three categories of framework I had designed was small.*** This is, indeed, an interesting and relevant finding, indicating that few articles within the newspapers could, according to the framework I had set out, be considered as engaging with gender issues at all. However, I felt that to continue counting these rare units, side-stepping other potentially interesting issues along the way that would be better explored qualitatively, would result in a method that would not yield data suitable for my research purposes.

While in some respects the potential limitations of quantitative methodologies were raised in this pilot, I do not completely reject the idea that quantitative research can be designed and appropriated in a way that can yield insightful and useful information. Indeed, with larger samples in which categories have been very well-developed over time (generally requiring an initial qualitative assessment in order to do so), patterns of attention and approach can reveal important information surrounding the orientation of larger volumes of texts, as well as potentially highlight power dynamics through the dominance of certain patterns. In addition, quantitative data can have strategic value in terms of having greater discursive currency towards motivating for policy change among many decision-makers. However, the pilot did reiterate the significance of qualitative inputs in constructing quantitative frameworks, and the importance of looking at the unique interests of a particular research study when deciding on a method. In this case, the limitations of content analysis placed too many restrictions on the depth and capability of analysis required to address my research interests.

Therefore, I moved towards a more qualitative approach, applying critical discourse analysis to a smaller sample to enable me to access more diverse, rich and meaningful information related to gender transformation. The shift to a more qualitative approach also led to a much deeper engagement with the newspaper texts, so that the initial "scoping" component of the research became more central to the research than initially envisaged. In addition to the qualitative analysis, however, I *also* incorporated very basic quantitative "counts" based on the framework I had developed, using enumeration to add a dimension to this phase of research while not centralising content analysis as a method. For these, I tried to incorporate many of the lessons learned in the pilot methodology.

5.4.2   Method applied

Twelve newspaper issues - four issues of each of the three newspapers selected for the study - were reviewed for component one of the research instead of the initial anticipated number of 36 issues. The sample is shown in Table 2 below. Consecutive newspapers were looked at, with the exception of the last edition for each newspaper, which was taken from a later date due to the disruption of the Christmas and New Year period on the newspapers[23].

TABLE 2: NEWSPAPER ISSUE SAMPLE FOR COMPONENT ONE OF THE RESEARCH		
Sunday Sun (SS)[24]	**Sunday Times (ST)[25]**	**Mail & Guardian (MG)[26]**
2 December 2007	2 December 2007	30 November 2007
9 December 2007	9 December 2007	7 December 2007
16 December 2007	16 December 2007	14 December 2007
13 January 2008	13 January 2008	18 January 2008

Parts of two additional SS newspapers were looked at qualitatively but not included in the counts of textual units with gender relevance undertaken (to be described below). These additional issues (12 August 2007 and 19 August 2007) were included qualitatively due to particularly interesting content in terms of gender, brought to my attention by the editor of the newspaper during my interview with him.

It is important to note that the first two issues of each newspaper were published at the time of the 16 Days of Activism campaign in South Africa. This campaign takes place annually from 25 November to 10 December and involves various activities towards awareness-raising around the issues of gender based violence and child abuse so prevalent in South Africa. It should also be noted that the sample was drawn from a time in which the "succession race" between Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma for the position as new party president of the ANC was taking place, as well as at the time of the Polokwane Conference, where much of this battle emerged. This period also included the nomination of Jacob Zuma

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[23] During this period, the newspapers were generally considerably smaller and some were based primarily on special holiday entertainment features.
[24] From here on, the Sunday Sun will be referred to as SS.
[25] From here on, the Sunday Times will be referred to as ST.
[26] From here on, the Mail & Guardian will be referred to as MG.

for ANC president by the ANC Women's League, sparking a furore of debate and comment by political players, leaders, civil society and gender activists, particularly in light of the ANC Women's League's earlier promise to nominate a woman for the post of ANC president. I raise this since these events had an impact on the amount and kinds of coverage of gender issues in the newspapers at the time of the research.

After an initial assessment of the newspapers, I decided that certain sections would be omitted from component one of the research. SS is a short newspaper generally without separate supplements. The business and careers sections are integrated into the main newspaper and were considered relevant to the study. No sections were therefore omitted in the case of the SS. The ST, however, is a very long newspaper with numerous separate supplements. Given some of the issues encountered in the initial quantitative pilot, as discussed above, some of these supplements were considered to be of less relevance than others, or in some cases not comparable with sections from the other newspapers. I therefore decided that the lifestyle magazine, entertainment guide magazine and travel sections would be omitted. The comment and analysis, and the business supplements, were included. With regards to the MG, while the film and entertainment section was potentially of interest as discussed earlier on, given the omission of such sections in the other newspapers and the large volume of very small textual units in addition to larger ones in this section, it was also omitted from the counting exercise (although I look at it briefly qualitatively). The rest of the MG was included, as it did not involve any distinguishable or separate lifestyle or travel supplements either.

Component one of the research was, as discussed, eventually a primarily qualitative exercise (discussed further down). However, rudimentary "counts" were also made to supplement the qualitative analysis and alert me to any potential inconsistencies in my overall impressions. Given the problems encountered with counting gendered features in textual units discussed above, these counts were intended to be used with caution and with cognisance of the limits of their contribution to the study.

Again, while undertaking these counts, the ultimately qualitative foundation for the counts was highlighted. The vast majority of counts required of me, the researcher, to make some sort of qualitative assessment as to whether or not a particular textual unit fitted in with a particular category, since the boundaries were seldom clearly defined. Furthermore, the

counts only indicated whether certain issues or features were raised in the newspapers, not whether these were "positive" or "negative" instances of gendered representation. The boundaries between "positive", "gender transformative" and "negative" gendered representations were also seldom clear, and various (often contradictory) discourses often existed side by side in single textual units. In addition, my observations of various other South African media studies in which gender representation is described as "positive" or "negative" had already been of methodological concern to me, in their assumption that this dichotomy was clear, based on consensus, and can be assessed quantitatively. Determining the actual relevance of gendered features, therefore, required the qualitative reflection and discussion undertaken.

In terms of the counts, the delineation of "textual units" was in many ways made easier through the omission of particular sections of the newspapers, and was taken to denote any bordered text. Therefore, for example, a small editorial block containing comment embedded within a larger news article would be taken to be a separate textual unit. Basic categories for counting were devised after an initial review of the gender-related content in the sample newspapers. As new features arose, I decided whether they could fit into the categories provided for, and if not the categories were either refined or new categories created. While my research interests guided this process, these categories were drawn more from impressions of the texts than imposed from the outset onto the texts.

This process led to the identification of a number of categories that indicated the coverage of either particular gender issues or particular gendered phenomena (such as gender based violence). It also led to the formation of the broadly defined category of "gender constructions". The latter was created to cover instances of *gender discourses* that were not necessarily found in textual units dealing with any particular coverage of a "gender issue" or gendered phenomenon. For example, a gendered joke on the jokes page, a sexualised image of a woman or a gendered stereotype arising in a sports column could be considered a gender construct rather than the intentional coverage of what would broadly be considered as a gender issue or phenomenon[27]. Almost all textual units that involved gender issues also simultaneously involved gender constructs, therefore falling under two categories. In some

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[27] I realise that this implies that gender constructs are completely separate from gender issues - this is not my intention. However, for the sake of making difficult distinctions among textual units, certain issues and events tend to be more widely associated with gender, and are here therefore defined as such, while others involve more subtle gender constructions related to a much wider range of topics.

cases, one textual unit could fall under three categories. Therefore, the counts indicating the number of textual units of "gender relevance" are lower than the sum of the counts for all other categories. The categories and their meanings are shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3: CATEGORIES FOR COMPONENT ONE COUNTS OF GENDERED TEXTUAL UNITS		
Category	**Meaning**	**Comments**
Gender relevance	All textual units identified as having gendered features, discourses or subjects.	These counts can indicate textual units falling under one or more other categories.
Women in leadership	Textual units in which the issue of women in leadership, particularly in the public sphere, is either raised directly as an issue or promoted through the emphasis of women leaders in the news. This includes, for example, women as community, political and business leaders.	While having this category was regarded as important, it was particularly difficult to count and my own qualitative assessment of each textual unit played a significant role. For example, it was very difficult to distinguish between cases in which women leaders were incidentally in the news and spaces created to emphasise the leadership capabilities of women. The counts should therefore be regarded with their highly qualitative, evaluative nature in mind.
Homosexuality	Textual units in which either issues around homosexuality are raised or protagonists of news stories are named as gay.	Textual units in this category can vary greatly in terms of the kinds of discourses conveyed around homosexuality. The very need for this category already points to the relative heteronormativity of the newspapers.
Gender based violence	Textual units in which either the issue of gender based violence is directly raised or in which instances or events of gender based violence are raised.	Textual units in this category can vary greatly in terms of the kinds of discourses conveyed around gender based violence.
Socio-economic "women's issues"	Textual units in which socio-economic issues with particular relevance to women are raised. This includes jobs most likely to be undertaken by women and	This category was particularly difficult to count, given the potential problematic elements of isolating "women's issues" as discreet. It was for this reason that the category was variously introduced and retracted during the analysis phase. Eventually,

	issues primarily or solely affecting women. Examples include female sex work, domestic work and mother-to-child transmission of HIV.	however, I found that there was a need to capture textual units that shared an emphasis on issues with particular relevance to women, especially in the context of the need address gendered inequalities in attention to certain spaces and issues associated with the social-economic. Therefore, I counted textual units in this category cognisant of the fact that, while the focus on women's issues is important towards addressing historical imbalances, none of these "women's issues" are ultimately isolated to a homogenous group of "women".
Gender constructions	Textual units in which the discourse used (whether visual or written) constructs men and women in particular ways. The exercise used to decide whether something counted as a gender construction was to ask: if an alien from a planet without different genders saw or read this, what particular social ideas would they get about men and women, and their positions/roles/values on earth? This could involve more overt or subtler assertions about women and men, boys and girls. Gender constructions are understood here to discursively assign both traits and values to masculinity and femininity, as well as to construct the relationship between men and masculinity, women and femininity, and masculinity and femininity.	Initially, two categories were made: constructions of masculinity and constructions of femininity. This was changed to gender constructions when my observations during component one of the research re-emphasised the importance of viewing gender in a relational way. Constructions of masculinity and femininity are seen as deeply entwined and dependent upon one another, and therefore need to be viewed in relation to one another.

I also steered away from categorising gender "stereotypes", since I view gendered constructions not necessarily falling under "stereotypes" to be important as well. I also felt that the notion of "stereotypes" implies a negative value judgement on the representation, therefore excluding other important discourses that may be positive or ambivalent. "Gendered constructs" as a concept therefore offered more room for the inclusion of representations with relevance to gender transformation. This category was extremely useful towards counting representations of gender not directly linked to "gender issues", such as those in jokes pages or columns directly addressing issues.

These counts also included certain visual images |

		considered to be expressing strong messages about gender. For example, a headshot of a person would not be counted but a sexualised image of a woman would be. Again, it was difficult to know which images to count, as almost all images could arguably convey some sort of gendered meaning or construction, and their inclusion was based on a qualitative assessment of their importance in this regard.

These counts were also divided into those that appeared in the "main news" section of the newspapers and those appearing in the latter parts of the newspapers. As already mentioned, these categories are intended as rudimentary guidelines for counts, which I have used cautiously given that textual units seldom fall clearly into one or another category. Similarly, the division between the more prominent news section of each newspaper and the rest of the newspaper for counting was intended to indicate broad divisions in the newspaper but made cognisant of the bleeding between sections of the newspapers and the varied ways in which the notion of "main news section" can be understood. The division I made for the research in this regard was based broadly on the size of the newspaper against which the number of pages regarded as dealing with the most "prominent" news could be assessed, as well as the rough division between the earlier sections of the newspaper that were dominated by news and reporting, and the latter containing more conversational spaces such as jokes, columns and letters.

Beyond the counts undertaken, I also chose to address issues related to the gender transformative potential of textual units through qualitative methods more adept to the kinds of complexities and nuances needed for the analysis. I felt that even the issues raised by the counts involved a great deal of value assignment in accordance with one's ideological and political point of departure, and should be tackled in a manner that allows for a more open exploration of this than a quantitative approach can afford.

The qualitative analysis of component one was framed by theoretical approaches to critical discourse analysis combined with thematic analysis (discussed in Section 5.6, as this method pertained broadly to both component one and component two of the research). It was focused on identifying and describing conceptions of gender transformation,

constructions of gender and the implied readership. Component one also aimed at linking various discourses to different spaces within the newspaper, and at identifying any inconsistencies or contrasts in discourses. The analysis for the newspaper content was undertaken - and is presented - prior to the detailed analysis of the interviews. In this way, the qualitative findings of component one could be more strikingly compared and contrasted with the interview data.

5.5 Research Component Two: Principle Research with Print News Journalists and Editors

The second component of primary data collection involved semi-structured, open-ended, individual interviews with journalists from the three selected newspapers. Initially, I aimed to triangulate interview data with focus group discussions. However, this was not feasible for editors who felt that they could not spare more of the journalists' time over and above interviews. Approximately seven journalists were approached for individual interviews from each newspaper. This was done after gaining the consent of the relevant editors, who also participated as key informants. Participants were selected through a process of going through newspapers to identity journalists, liaising with various members of the editorial staff regarding the prospective participants identified (for example, to verify which journalists were in full-time and in-house positions) and finally gaining consent to participate from those who were approached.

Some newspaper editorial staff gave me free range to identify journalists for participation in the study while others were more directive. In one case, only senior journalistic staff members were initially recommended to me despite my wish to hear from journalists in a range of different positions. The newspaper editorial staff were concerned that junior journalists would not represent the newspaper as well as senior staff, and although I explained that my intention was not so much to assess the *newspaper's* official position as emerging discourses through the voices of some of its journalists, I got the sense that the editorial staff wanted to select journalists for the study who would best reflect upon the newspaper and its approach. This was also understandable considering the recent controversies related to this particular newspaper, its investigative modus operandi and its relationship with the state at the time.

Another newspaper recommended mostly journalists with a particular interest in gender issues, and while I was still able to generate my own list of prospective participants, there was a sense that I should be talking mainly to those considered to have a particular interest and skill in the area of gender. I, on the other hand, wanted a range of perspectives not limited to those with a particular interest in gender issues. However, this response did indicate a subtle discourse conceptualising gendered perspectives as somewhat separate rather than integrated and omnipresent, and especially as held by those with an interest in gender. In other words, from this perspective primarily explicit views on gender are gendered, whereas I would regard a much wider range of perspectives gendered. My feminist understanding that all subjectivities, and therefore perspectives, are gendered (and as such that the discourses of all journalists would be of interest) therefore clashed somewhat with this discourse when it came to setting up interviews. The following criteria were used as far as possible in identifying participants:

- Only full-time, in-house journalists were approached to participate in the study. Therefore, columnists were excluded, as were free-lance journalists (with one exception being a free-lance journalist who had worked many years with the same publication and was interviewed due to a lack of in-house staff responding to the call for interview dates).
- A roughly equal spread of women and men was sought.
- A rough spread of different journalists in terms of age and, where possible, race was aimed at (the SS, for example, had no white full-time journalistic staff at the time).
- From reading the relevant newspapers, some journalists were identified if their work was seen to be reflecting discourses of interest in terms of gender, while others were randomly selected.

Individual interviews were guided by a broad set of prepared research questions but I was relatively flexible in terms of following interesting lines of question and discussion. The questions I designed were formulated with the explorative nature of the research in mind, aiming as far as possible to probe participants' own perceptions of gender and media issues rather than limit questions to rigid or pre-defined issues that I was interested in as far as gendered media issues were concerned. For example, one question revolved around the infamous Zuma rape trial (raised in Chapter 4), which was incorporated as a well-known

case study of the media's treatment of gender issues towards generating open-ended discussion with participants.

Much of the research on gender and news production processes to date has focused on organisational and professional practices impacting on the processes of media production (see, for example, Opoku-Mensah, 2004; de Bruin, 2004; de Bruin & Ross, 2004; Gallego et al., 2004), rather than analysing journalists' perceptions of their roles in engendered news media production. The key aims of this research were thus to answer the research question via a range of sub-questions pertaining to journalists' perceptions of:

- "Gender transformation";
- "News";
- "Gender issues";
- The role of the media in "gender transformation"; and
- The role of journalists in "gender transformation" through news production.

In addition, issues influencing or related to how the above perspectives would be shaped (such as organisational culture and professional practice) were also raised in the interviews to contextualise and further discuss what the participants had offered in terms of the above main areas of enquiry. These included, broadly, the following:

- The relationship between market factors and the shape of journalistic products;
- The criteria through which journalistic products and practices are judged as good or bad;
- The influence of newsroom characteristics and structures in mediating journalists' ability to shape their own journalistic approaches; and
- The relationship between journalistic notions of responsibility towards the "public good" or transformation and the value of "objectivity"[28].

Once the interviews had been completed, I distributed an open-ended questionnaire to research participants to allow for reflections and comments on the research process and the issues discussed. The post-interview questionnaire was designed, in part, to balance

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[28] Questions related to this were added after the first couple of interviews indicated the significance of these different ideologies regarding the role of the media to the research question.

relations of power in the research process, creating a space for feedback into the process for those who may not have raised concerns during the interviews. It also enabled me to better understand perceptions, thoughts and feelings around the research process towards reflection and refinement, and allowed participants to make retrospective comments pertaining to the issues discussed to draw my attention to any potential gaps in the interview.

I have noted earlier on (in Chapter 4) that a political economy approach has the capacity to unearth various issues related to journalistic practices, through unpacking certain characteristics constituting the news production milieu. Cognisance of these factors was integrated into the research, and did emerge in the interviews and findings. However, data collection was not directed in particular at unearthing and unravelling complex issues pertaining to political economy and print news production, focussing more on perceptions of gender transformation. Furthermore, while the research question focused primarily on the issue of "gender", this concept is intersected by numerous variables such as race and class, as indicated earlier. While it was not my intention to comprehensively assess the nature of these intersections, they are inherent to gendered discourses and manifestations, and as such have also emerged to a degree during the research process. I concede, however, the limitations of the extent to which these intersections have been interrogated in this research (this is further discussed in Section 5.7).

Given the permission to do so, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to enable deeper engagement with the content and discourse of interviews, and allow for themes and discourses not previously anticipated, or overlooked during the interview, to be captured for analysis. I also considered full transcriptions to be important towards capturing evidence of the kinds of interactions between myself - the researcher - and participants. For example, the transcriptions allowed me to identify moments in which certain participants or I were battling to express ideas or were confused about something. They also put participant responses into context, for example, allowing me to compare participants' responses in relation to the ways in which I had framed or worded the questions (especially since the questionnaire was semi-structured, and therefore not always applied in exactly the same way).

As part of a commitment towards ensuring that participants' voices came forward during the findings, and were therefore not discursively obliterated by the critical academic analysis I applied to them, numerous extracts from the transcriptions have been incorporated in the findings. In addition to the political reasons related to voicing, I decided to do so to better open the data up for scrutiny, rather than obscuring the data unduly via an over-dominance of interpretation.

5.6 Data Analysis Framework: Critical Thematic Discourse Analysis

5.6.1 Selecting a data analysis approach

In terms of data analysis, the research methodology incorporated both a thematic approach and salient aspects of a critical discourse analysis approach. These approaches overlap, and pertain to both the processes and theoretical approaches guiding the analysis. The presupposition underpinning my approach to data analysis is that the act of analysis is an interpretation of data that, while done through a framework of theory, is ultimately *one of several possible interpretations.* For me, a feminist agenda, a framework for the conception of "gender transformation" (including the notion of progressive and liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms) and various other theoretical inputs have worked towards constituting the final analysis. Therefore, salient theoretical conceptions informing the themes I identified as well as the ways in which I applied a critical discourse analysis approach are outlined below. I will not repeat the discussions in relation to the way I have conceptualised progressive and liberal-inclusionary feminism (also partly an outcome of the analysis as well as in input into the analysis) as I have in Chapter 2, but will focus instead here on wider theoretical bases for thematic and discourse analysis.

5.6.2 Incorporating thematic analysis

Thematic analysis constitutes a "poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, citing the ideas of Boyatzis, 1998 and Roulston, 2001). As such, a brief delineation of its conception and application for this research is important. In this respect, I draw heavily on Braun and Clarke (2006), who broadly introduce the method and pose key questions to researchers towards identifying the type of thematic analysis most appropriate for their research. As will become apparent here,

the type of thematic analysis I have undertaken both compliments the use of critical discourse analysis and is shaped by critical discourse theory.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be viewed as a foundational qualitative research method that is flexible and variously manifest. It broadly involves a method of identifying, analysing and reporting on patterns in a body of research data (ibid). Some researchers do not actually regard it as a method in and of itself, but rather as subsumed within other methods such as discourse analysis (ibid). Braun and Clarke (ibid), however, argue that this means that the processes and underlying assumptions involved in a thematic approach to analysis often go un-interrogated, and that expressly describing these processes and assumptions is important towards fostering a critical research community in which the work of fellow researchers can be evaluated.

As an example, Braun and Clarke (ibid) note that researchers frequently point to certain themes "emerging" from the research data, without describing the processes undertaken to identify such an "emergence". As such, they note that a "passive account of the process of analysis" is often undertaken and that this "denies the *active* role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80, emphasis original). Themes are not inherent to texts but rather reflect researchers' thinking and choices (ibid). This is not always made explicit by researchers, and as such Braun and Clarke outline key questions researchers can ask towards making their particular thematic approach to analysis clearer to themselves and to those who read their work. As will become evident, the answers to these questions are strongly linked to one another as they rest upon key theoretical orientations.

The first question involves what the researcher will take to count as a "theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme broadly denotes a patterned response or meaning, but the way in which it will be identified depends on the researcher's approach (ibid). For example, prevalence of a theme may be more important in one study than in another (ibid). In the case of my research, prevalence of responses or meanings is important, but not solely. Because of the largely qualitative nature of the research I have undertaken, combined with a critical discourse analysis approach, inconsistencies in responses (that may not be that *prevalent*) can also be considered *important*, with particular relevance to certain feminist theory with which the study is concerned.

Therefore, the "themes" identified in this research have been largely informed by the theoretical basis for the research and the research question at hand, which is sometimes strongly anchored in the prevalence of certain responses and sometimes not. For example, I have focused more (but not exclusively) on patterned responses related to gender issues in the media than to certain others that are peripheral to the research question. This is necessarily, therefore, a selective approach to identifying themes, which I consider to be inevitable given the many possible interpretations of "themes" that can be made for any set of qualitative interviews or newspapers. In this sense, then, when I refer to themes that "emerge" from the data, this emergence is considered against the backdrop of theoretical approaches and research objectives I have applied.

The second question pertains to whether the thematic analysis is aimed at generating a thick description of the information gathered during the research or a detailed account of certain, particular aspects of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This, according to Braun and Clarke (ibid), is important towards setting the parameters for the different claims the researcher can make. As has already been raised, my approach was to focus on particular aspects of the information gathered during the research, evaluated as most significant to the research question at hand. Therefore, instead of a thick description of all the data, particular aspects were highlighted and described in a more detailed and nuanced manner. As such, the findings of my research are framed as primarily concerned with gendered aspects of discourse rather than as a description of all aspects of the interviews.

The third question relates to whether the thematic analysis approach is largely inductive or deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The former denotes an approach to theme identification that is strongly embedded in the data itself (or at least, aims to be so as much as possible), in a sense endeavouring to be led by the data (ibid). This precludes any pre-existing coding framework (ibid). The latter approach is more theoretically based and involves a deeper analysis of data framed by the research question. As can be deduced at this point, my approach has been largely deductive, although this has not precluded unanticipated themes presented by the data, where related in some way to the research question. I worked broadly from the framework surrounding my research question and the theory I engaged with, which guided the coding process, but a number of themes I had not yet codified prior to the analysis were also identified through immersing myself in the transcriptions.

The fourth question involves choosing between semantic or latent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Looking at semantic themes involves describing the data and then considering the implications thereof (bid). Looking at latent themes involves a greater amount of interpretation at the level of theme identification, going beyond semantic content towards identifying the underlying assumptions, conceptions and ideologies theorised as having an impact on the semantic content itself (ibid). My approach involved identifying latent themes, an approach strongly associated with critical discourse analysis in its embeddedness in a social constructionist paradigm (ibid).

This leads into the fifth and final question pertaining to whether an essentialist/realist or constructionist epistemological approach is used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My approach is constructionist, lending itself to the identification of latent themes as well as a critical discourse analysis approach.

In terms of practical method, I have roughly applied the following key steps in identifying the themes for my research (based on Braun & Clarke, 2006):

- Becoming familiar with the data, or immersing myself in the data;
- Generating initial ideas about themes and coding these;
- Searching for themes in the text and coding them according to initial ideas;
- Reviewing the themes and refining them where necessary; and
- Defining and naming the themes.

All of this has been done in a way that relies on critical discourse theory (as well as initial and developing conceptions of gender transformation, progressive feminism and liberal-inclusionary feminism) in identifying themes. Various aspects of this theory are discussed below.

5.6.3   Incorporating critical discourse analysis

5.6.3.1 Choosing critical discourse analysis

The choice of a discourse analysis approach reflects an understanding of language as "an irreducible part of social life" (Fairclough, 2003: 2) and therefore of discourse analysis as a tool through which to explore social phenomena. Furthermore, the research question

involved issues around the production of written texts in the form of newspaper articles, and the perceptions of journalists in relation to these. It was therefore my understanding that discourse analysis, delving into ways of thinking through language, was an appropriate tool. I have drawn heavily (although not exclusively) on Foucault (1972; 1973) in conceptualising what is meant by discourse. I furthermore considered "critical" discourse analysis an appropriate research tool for application in a feminist investigation of discourse in relation to both social relations of power and the role of discourse in enabling or impeding social transformation.

As discussed above, I incorporated aspects of a thematic approach to the analysis. I therefore did not undertake a technical analysis of the linguistic structures of the discourse aimed at assessing the structural ways in which meaning was conveyed, nor did I undertake any detailed analysis of the discursive interaction between the participants and I (although some reflection is made on this). Instead, my analysis was concerned primarily with identifying the broader themes and social ideas to emerge in the interviews through discourse.

5.6.3.2 Defining discourse

A notion that has emerged progressively through the "linguistic turn" in twentieth century thought is that language, and the ways in which it is used, is not merely significant in conveying meaning, but also in creating it (Locke, 2004). This turn in thought transformed conceptions of language as "a medium for expressing meanings that pre-exist linguistic formulation" towards a conception of language as "a system that constitutes meaningfulness in its own terms" (Locke, 2004: 11). Meaning and reality are therefore not merely reflected through language, but shaped by it.

> "Language ceased to be the province of formal linguistics alone. It was reconceived as a social and political entity, the means by which what we know of the world can be created (rather than simply represented)" (McHoul & Grace, 1997: 13-14).

The view of language as both constituted by and continually constituting social life is the foundation of the concept of discourse. As Potter and Wetherell (2001: 200) put it, discourse

analysts would view discourse as both "constructive and constructed". Discourse, then, is a language practice regarded not only as a reflection of social life, but as a site through which social meanings are created, perpetuated and challenged, making it particularly important to the question of social and gender transformation. Discourse is not limited, however, to linguistic utterances, but can extend to ideologies, values and norms, and to ways of thinking, acting and believing (Locke, 2004. This draws attention to the various manifestations of discourse, broadly encapsulated by the idea of "language" but expressed through different forms of internal and external communication. It further denotes that discourse embodies ways of being and doing that are accepted or subscribed to, and that these include perceptions of roles in society.

Discourse, according to Foucault, not only shapes the world around us but also our social location within that world. As Lazar (2005: 143) puts it, "[d]iscourse, following Foucault (1972), refers to a set of related statements - manifested multimodally through the interplay, for example, of language and visual structures… that produce and organise a particular order of reality, and specific subject positions therein". This statement further highlights that the discourses that shape subjects are not random, but interconnected. Foucault often described discourse "in terms of bodies of knowledge" (McHoul & Grace, 1997: 26), recognising the interconnected nature of various statements as part of "well-bounded areas of social knowledge" (McHoul & Grace, 1997: 31).

Discourses are not created within a vacuum. Instead, the shapes these discourses take are largely determined by social structures and power relations, and even by the force of other existing discourses. Discourses reflect and represent conventions serving particular social institutions and power relations (Fairclough, 2003), and can therefore be understood as bodies of knowledge connected by the conventions, social agreements and power relations that constitute them. A number of utterances, therefore, can be identified as belonging to a particular discourse - a particular body of knowledge with its limitations in terms of the parameters of acceptable speech. This highlights one of the fundamental reasons for the growing popularity of discourse analysis as a social research tool: such an understanding of discourse implies that it can tell us about the social dynamics that shape our society. It can go beyond description to look at the latent themes, the social, political and cultural origins and implications of discourses (Remlinger, 2005).

Discourse can also be conceived of in this context as a *performance* through which meaning is negotiated. As Remlinger (2005: 116) points out, a performance view of discourse holds language to be "a socially constituted practice that shapes, challenges and changes cultural ideologies". As a performance, it is shifting and changing all the time in accordance with the context and objectives of the communication. The notion of performativity in terms of discourse has been integrated into the analysis of the data, drawing further on a conception of individual subjectivity as constituted by multiple social factors and influences (Mama, 1995) and as experienced and expressed variably in accordance with the dynamics of a given context. Finally, drawing on the work of Foucault, discourse is presupposed here as being discontinuous; discourses are viewed as constantly shifting, overlapping and intersecting (McHoul & Grace, 1997).

5.6.3.3 Discourse, power and social change

If language both reflects *and* constitutes meaning and reality through discourse, and if discursive processes are historically situated and ongoing, language can be viewed as a powerful tool through which to address issues of social and gender transformation. Furthermore, if discourses function to legitimate particular ways of being and doing, they can be regarded as highly significant to the feminist project of gender transformation. It is therefore regarded as appropriate to the research question to critically probe discourses towards an understanding of which ways of being and doing are negotiated and prized among print news professionals, and which ways of being and doing are perpetuated or contested in the textual products they produce.

However, the Foucauldian concept of the discontinuity of discourse and of discourse as a site of struggle over meaning, while implying a certain level of human agency, is not necessarily compatible with an agenda of gender emancipation (reliant on human agency to resist and change dominant discourses). The "theoretical coherence and practical viability of feminist emancipation" possible within a Foucauldian paradigm is a question that has long occupied feminists (Sopor, 1993:29). Given the heavy reliance on Foucault for the theoretical basis of this research, coupled with the transformation agenda upon which the research question was established, some of the tensions between feminism and Foucault are explored here.

Foucault has been widely appropriated in feminist work. However, numerous feminist writers have also launched from scathing attacks to theoretical struggles and negotiations with Foucault's work in the context of establishing its relevance, and desirability, within feminist thought. The possibility of the effective resistance to gender oppression, keenly linked to the question of agency, is one particular point of contention and ambivalence. Moi (1985: 95) has gone as far as to say that "the price for giving in to [Foucault's] powerful discourse is nothing less than the depoliticisation of feminism".

Why do feminists, such as Moi (1985) battle with the question of the amenability of Foucault's theories on discourse and power with feminist resistance? Sopor (1993) notes that in one sense Foucault's work theoretically frames power and domination as ubiquitous and inescapable. In this sense, she describes Foucault's as work that "desists 'progressive' talk" (Sopor, 1993: 36). MacCannell and Flower MacCannell (1993: 204) further assert that, for Foucault, "power is granted a neutral if not benign character… open to all even when it appears to be held by a few". This raises serious concerns among many feminists as to whether such a theory can, firstly, challenge power and domination if it is viewed as so inevitable and, secondly, identify certain groups of people as oppressed. If either one of these is not considered possible within a Foucauldian framework, can feminist work hope to appropriate it towards the goals of gender transformation?

Sopor (1993: 37), however, notes that the way in which Foucault's own discourse around power is articulated (with its derogative tone towards power), operates to "surreptitiously… invoke a desire which aspires to be free of this subjectifying machinery and its panoptical gaze". Foucault's own discourse, then, is implicitly critical of power. Foucault's work is also rich in conceptual tools towards understanding power and the socially constructed character of discourse and subjectivity. In essence, while Foucault appeals to feminists in the way that he foregrounds the issues of social constructivism and power in relation to discourse, his work raises concerns over whether, within this paradigm, there can ever be a discourse beyond that of the wielding of power, and therefore whether the notion of "emancipation" is in fact viable. Foucault's own scepticism over emancipatory theories (pointing to their own role in the wielding of knowledge and power) can perhaps be viewed not so much as a threat to feminism but rather as useful towards challenging feminists to critically reflect on their own institutional and discursive positions in the matrix of power (Grimshaw, 1993).

Consequently, the view among some feminists is that critical aspects of Foucault's work can be appropriated towards progressing feminist theory.

Feminists, therefore, have ranged in their interpretation of Foucault's work on discourse and power from irreducibly depoliticising in nature to fundamental towards identifying and challenging oppressive power. Many, myself included, have chosen not to try to definitively determine which ultimate position Foucault's work takes in this regard, but rather to appropriate valuable tools provided by his work towards analysing discourse and power, while maintaining as a goal the possibility of transformation. The tensions between Foucault and feminism on the issue of feminism's political agenda is discussed briefly here because of the intensity and persistence of the debate, which is seen as relevant to my appropriation of Foucauldian theory in a research study whose objectives are located soundly in a feminist project of gender transformation. It is also perhaps useful to note that Foucault himself, when confronted with the question of whether his work precludes a progressive politics, was also ambivalent (Ramazanoğlu, 1993).

For the purposes of this research, the issues of power, discourse and social change are approached from the theoretical perspective that, like Foucault, holds discourses to be strongly shaped by current discursive contexts, institutions and relations of power. As discourses, institutional forces and power overlap and interact, discourses are seen to be reinforced or challenged in a continuous negotiation over meaning and power. Similarly to Foucault, as well, I do not consider power in the shaping of discourse to be singular, homogenous or purely dominant. Power can emanate and express itself variably, drawing on a number of different discourses in different situations.

For example, a person experiencing and wielding power in one space or in an interaction with a particular person or institution may not experience the same power in another context. In my own research, I have felt both powerful and powerless as a researcher, a woman, a white person, a student, a young person and a middle class person in different settings. In some cases, in a single context power can be present in one respect but impacted upon by a sense of vulnerability or powerlessness in another. And even oppressed groups can assert agency, however limited, in accordance with their context. Therefore, I draw on Foucault to problematise black-and-white conceptions of power and oppression

within a feminist approach that acknowledges that oppression does exist and should be challenged.

Unlike certain readings of Foucault, however, I do not see domination as completely inevitable or the fact that power is fluid and variable as a denial of the fact that some groups of people suffer unduly under oppression and wield far less power than their oppressors. Furthermore, I view discourses as being subject to change through the application of agency. While an opening needs to exist for this to happen (for example, the availability of an existing discourse that can in some way be appropriated to form a new, more liberating discourse), and that without such openings transformation may not be possible, this research is premised on the notion that discourse can be transformed through an active and critical engagement with current dominant discourses. Therefore, the study of discourses of transformation has theoretically been premised on certain Foucauldian concepts of discourse as well as a feminist agenda.

5.6.3.4 Making discourse analysis critical

A feminist framework as a basis for research necessarily implies or entails a critical approach. Embedded in a political agenda to pursue social change and to challenge and transform power relations, feminist theory has both drawn upon, and contributed to, critical social theory in general. However, some of the key characteristics of a critical reading of discourse, in particular, will be briefly delineated here, and will be seen to overlap with feminism's critical approach. This is important because a "critical" theoretical foundation for discourse analysis, together with the feminist theory applied in the analysis, has inevitably impacted significantly on the research findings.

Locke (2004) points out that the word "critical" is a commonly applied epithet used to distinguish a particular approach in various fields. It is, however, used to signify different things for different people (ibid), making a brief description useful here. Drawing on Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, cited by Locke, 2004), Locke proposes that the following key theoretical presuppositions can be said to underscore a "critical" approach and have been theoretically influential in the critical discourse analysis I have applied:

- All thought (and therefore discourse) is ultimately arbitrated by historically situated relations of power;

- There is no such thing as fact transcending the impact of values or the "ideological inscription" of the context in which a discourse is constructed;

- Language is pivotal in the constitution of individual subjectivity, whether this is always consciously occurring or not;

- Society is characterised by oppressive power relations, most powerfully reinforced when these relations of power become internalised, naturalised and therefore "invisible";

- Power relations shaping discourse are constituted by many factors (gender, for example, would be intersected with class among other variables); and

- Processes of knowledge generation, including research itself, are also processes through which power relations are reinforced, reproduced or challenged, and self-reflexivity in the research process is therefore an important facet of critical research.

The points above raise the presupposition of an intimate connection between power and discourse, as well as of the socially constructed nature of discourse, within a critical discourse analysis approach. They furthermore highlight the way in which people are shaped by and expressed through language, which reveals both conscious and unconscious socially contextualised values and beliefs. As such, a critical approach to discourse analysis seeks to *uncover* these values and beliefs. Finally, the above points underscore the assumption within a critical paradigm that power relations shape society fundamentally and that these often go "unseen" due to the ways in which they are naturalised by discourse. A critical discourse analysis approach would therefore aim to challenge power relations by "visibilising" the assumptions and implications behind discourses. These critical conceptions of discourse have underpinned the analysis.

5.7 A Note on Studying Race and the Limitations of the Research

Some of the limitations of the research have been mentioned already in terms of sampling and the fact that I concede to applying a particular lens to the data in order to focus the research. However, perhaps one of the most important limitations of this research thesis that needs highlighting early on, in my view, is the fact that I have not attempted to undertake an analysis of the role of race or racial identity in constructing or impacting on gender, nor have

I done much analysis on issues *closely related* to the impacts of race relations and identities on gender, or gender identities on race relations. The racialised history of South Africa, of brutal and oppressive colonial and apartheid forces stretching over many years, has left an indelible and sustaining mark on both class and gender relations. These impacts continue to be significant, even as current-day South Africa continues to face significant social and political changes.

For example, in relation to race and masculinities, Ratele (1998) observes that the meanings of black manhood in post-apartheid South Africa are imbedded in history, shifting and inescapably contextualised and constructed through historical processes (economic, social, political). He also argues that analyses of blackness and black manhood tend to object black men, to the extent that he questions whether most theories on black masculinity are in fact "a spawn of white racism" (Ratele, 1998: 64) (a point to which I will return). Salo (2003) has also indicated in her research on youth and gender in Manenburg (a Cape Town township) that gender identities and values shift and change in accordance with various historical processes (both local and global), and in particular that local social and economic histories in South Africa have had a significant bearing on the construction of masculinities and femininities in South Africa. Issues of African and black "culture(s)", and the need to reclaim them after centuries of colonial domination, for example, continue to be heavily debated in terms of their gender implications. Some have accused certain African Renaissance discourses as being the guises of patriarchy and paternalism, and many have questioned whether any one "authentic" African "culture" can be seen to exist. These debates raise points of contention in terms of "culture" and gender that are fuelled and shaped by historical processes of racial oppression (discussed more in Chapter 2), and therefore highlight the need to consider gender and gender transformation in South Africa in relation to racialised history.

Constructions of gender among white South Africans, as Epstein (1998) has pointed out, have also been historically forged and are still strongly linked to various social, political and economic processes of apartheid. Violent nationalisms, the use of violence by the white patriarchal state and the shape of current day white masculinities have, for example, been linked (ibid). Focusing on white masculinities in South Africa (and emphasising their heterogeneity), Epstein (1998: 49) argues that "South African masculinities have been forged in the heat of apartheid and the struggle against the apartheid state, particularly (but

not only) the obviously coercive arms of the state". Epstein's (ibid) emphasis is both on the historical roots of gender constructs and on their ongoing propensity for discontinuity, for change with changing contexts. Others such as Morrell (1998) have also looked extensively into these kinds of issues, especially in relation to masculinities in South Africa, exploring the construction of gender identities and "profiles" as complexly intersected by a multiplicity of contextual factors including (constructions of) race. In this way, both past and present race and class relations and identities (to name a few) are key constituting forces in the construction of masculinities and femininities in South Africa.

Ifi Amadiume (1987) has also strongly argued not only that colonialism has had a significant impact on gender relations in Africa (a challenge to often-implied western assumptions of African societies as innately patriarchal) but that knowledge generation around people and societies in Africa homogenise gender relations and sidestep crucial historical shaping forces, thereby naming, labelling and producing knowledge around gender relations in various African locations through the (particular type of patriarchal) ideology of the west. As such, not only is historical context important in understanding gender relations, but it also impacts on the ability (and in most cases also the political will) of most researchers to *see* gender relations through anything other than dominant modes. This makes a range of perspectives in unpacking certain issues of representation in the media in South Africa very important, some of which I am not capable of.

The historical legacies that continue to shape race and gender relations will always demand important gender analysis as events and changes unfold. As some of this thesis does indeed show in relation to current political events, gender politics are today being powerfully, and critically, played out in the political, social and economic spheres - too many to count or include. Many of these carry with them echoes (or in many cases *shouts*) of the colonial and apartheid past, of race and class and notions of culture, whether African or Afrikaaner or any other.

So, given the significance of these issues, why have I chosen to largely sidestep them in my analysis? The reasons are two-fold: political and academic. Politically, as a white person I did not feel entitled to add my voice to the fray of white voices discussing, or more importantly interpreting and critiquing, what blackness means in terms of gender (or visa versa). The majority of images and texts I analysed for this study were of and about black

people in South Africa, and therefore while my analysis of South African newspapers representing a diversity of people necessarily included an analysis of texts including people of different races, from a political perspective I just did not wish to impose a (relatively ill-informed and experientially-impoverished) *analysis* of race and gender in South Africa's media. I did not want to, if at all possible, add to the objectification of blackness to which Ratele (1998) and Amadiume (1987) refer.

One may say that whether I try to or not, my analysis will carry whispers (or, again, shouts) of my white, middle-class background and perspective, situating my findings within this. I would not argue this point. However, short of leaving out all newspapers with readerships of different races and income statuses (to name a few areas of difference and inequality), research into the media in South Africa will cross paths with issues of representation and race. However, I chose not to focus on this in my analysis. In a sense, I opted out of attempting to undertake a deliberate analysis of race in the hopes that these issues will continue to be looked at by black South African scholars who are already addressing the dearth of black voices on these issues in processes and products of knowledge production. The second reason, briefly, is also related somewhat to the first. I do not believe that I have the expertise or knowledge, academic or experiential, to add anything of much value to analyses and understandings of the intersections between gender and race.

As such, I decided that I would not want to offer up a poor or half-baked analysis of these issues, leading me to largely limit my analysis to the trope of gender. Therefore, while this was a difficult decision (given that gender is constituted by many social and political forces, including race), I felt that my best offering would be to study constructs of gender in their myriad forms, acknowledging the diverse ways in which gender is constructed and manifested, while not seeking to identify *causally* what the impacts of various (and shifting) race relations, identities and legacies may be. I wish to acknowledge, however, that further such analysis of media texts by South African scholars, well-informed by and contextualised in South Africa's colonial and apartheid history, would yield some very interesting and important insights.

5.8 Conclusions

In this Chapter I have aimed to express and explicate some of the main theories, concerns and decision-making processes that have shaped the research. Broadly, a critical, feminist

and discourse-focused approach has been used, and described here. Although not repeated under methodology, however, much of the feminist theory, media theory and historical detail raised in earlier Chapters also had a bearing on the way in which data was interpreted and presented, on the methodology. Feminist theory and, in particular, the frameworks for understanding feminist paradigms that I described have shaped the ways in which I have understood the data, and visa versa (the data that I analysed also helping me to refine and re-define the rudimentary frameworks I had conceptualised prior to the analysis). Media theory, such as that related to political economy and the different levels (micro-, meso- and macro-levels) impacting on text production also, in a sense, forms part of the methodology as these theories combined with critical thematic feminist-oriented discourse analysis in the analysis of data, adding a lens and lending greater attention to certain issues.

This Chapter, and those preceding it, has therefore been aimed at gradually building a strong sense of where the knowledge I present in the following Chapters comes from - how it was interpreted ("constructed" even) and presented, and why. Starting at the premise for or attraction to the research question - a feminist standpoint - how do we understand feminism, and in what way do I apply it? I then asked specifically, why is feminist research interested in the *media*? How do we understand the media - its impacts on social life and how media products are created - and why are these understandings important to this research, especially from a feminist perspective?

Having looked at this, if feminists should indeed be interested in the media - if it has an impact on gender transformation - what have feminists already been saying about it and what have they been focusing on? I have explored the questions: how could I add to this and, in South Africa, are there any *particular* contextual and historical issues shaping the media, how its role and impact is perceived, how gender is portrayed and understood and what kinds of contributions I can make?

And finally, having established that the research is relevant and that there is room for growth in this area of enquiry, I have charted in this Chapter how the research was applied methodologically towards meeting the political and empirical objectives I have set. With this epistemological, theoretical and historical backdrop, the following Chapters will present the findings made for this research, findings that will variously reach back and touch on the

issues raised in the Chapters so far, and seek to add to them empirically and theoretically towards enhancing feminist media studies in South Africa.

6 GENDERED DISCOURSES IN DISCONTINUITY: ANALYSING NEWSPAPER CONTENT

6.1 Introduction

In trying to establish the kinds of discourses shaping print news professionals' approaches to representing gender in the media, I also needed to get a sense of what kinds of gendered products are being produced in the three newspapers. Asking print news professionals' perspectives on representation was something I considered important, as studying representations themselves do not tell us much in terms of why or how they were created (the discursive sources and sites of negotiation). However, I also realised that the perspectives I would be getting from participants would be oriented within the research situation towards meeting the perceived expectations of my research (contrasted, for example, with the ways in which these perspectives would be oriented towards an editor or fellow journalist), and that beyond this these perspectives could, in any case, translate in a variety of ways into the actual texts produced. Discourses are contested, negotiated and contextually oriented. Therefore, they could emerge and manifest differently in different situations, and the content of newspaper texts themselves can therefore not be predicted by what is derived from interviews. In fact, some of the most interesting insights into the research question, I felt, would be derived from the triangulation of data on newspaper content and interviews.

From previous research experiences, I also knew that gender is seldom articulated, experienced or understood on a day-to-day basis through the trope of "gender". As such, research on gender can often be greatly enriched not by only asking participants about gender, but by seeing how gender is manifested in their lives - indirectly - in different ways, including how they speak about gendered experiences that they may not identify as "gender" moments or issues. This is further entrenched by the fact that discourses surrounding what "gender" means will vary, and may well include only a certain limited set of issues from the subjective position of participants (compared with, for example, a different sense of what "gender" involves from the subjective position of a feminist researcher). Therefore, "gender issues" in media representation that may not come up in the interviews

could well come up in an analysis of newspaper content. Looking at newspaper content from a gender perspective would thus offer rich data for triangulation with interviews.

This Chapter is concerned with establishing key discourses in the content of the newspapers under study. First, I present a brief introduction of each newspaper in the study, including basic information pertaining to the age, ownership and editors of the newspapers at the time of the research, as well as a reflection on circulation and readership. My aim here is *not* to give a statistical analysis of the figures presented, but rather to reflect on some of the overall trends or interesting features as considered from a layperson's perspective. These are aimed at creating a broad sense of the market for each newspaper. Thereafter, an analysis of newspaper content is presented. This analysis has been framed by an attempt to advance what I call progressive feminist analysis of gender and gender transformation through media texts, as outlined in Chapter 2, and (as mentioned in Chapter 5) includes both rudimentary counts and thematic, critical discourse analysis.

6.2   Participating Newspapers: A Profile

6.2.1   Sunday Sun

The SS was launched in 2002 and is owned by Media24. As communicated during the interviews, the SS was launched in part in response to the emerging popularity of a new South African tabloid newspaper, Sunday World, owned by another media group. According to the interviews, Sunday World was having a negative impact on the readership numbers of the Media24 publication City Press. The SS was therefore created to tap into the market gap the Sunday World had brought to the industry's attention, and to compete within this market segment. Following the success of Sunday World and SS, a number of other tabloids were created in South Africa. The identity of SS as a "tabloid" newspaper is one that interview participants claimed as well. The editor at the time of research was Phalane Motale, the founding editor of the newspaper. During the latter part of the research period, however, the deputy-editor, Linda Rulashe, had stepped in as acting editor.

SS's readership figures have risen steeply in its time on the market, and at the time of the research it was the fastest growing newspaper in the country. Even during the empirical

research period, circulation rose rapidly. Between July and September 2007, circulation was at an average of 195,592 per month, and by the period of October to December 2007, this number had jumped to 401,132, a 105.1% increase. In the latest readership[29] figures received at the time of the research (for February to November 2007), SS's average monthly readership was just shy of 3 million, standing at 2 846 000. This readership figure should also be seen in the context of the immense growth in circulation for the SS in the latter part of 2007; the *readership* figure only shows a *yearly* average, but in the context of the very steep rise in *circulation* at the end of 2007, the readership at the end of that year would also most likely be significantly higher. Suffice it to say, however, these figures indicate that circulation is increasing swiftly and there is also a relatively high ratio of readers per newspaper bought.

Readership for the SS is very much concentrated on the black South African market, and many readers of the SS are first-time newspaper readers[30]. 92.59% of the readers of SS are black, with 4.64% coloured, 0.74% Indian and 2% white. 90.23% of readers are first language speakers in black African languages. While newspapers are generally a media form associated with higher LSM groups (in contrast to, for example, radio), the SS has a concentration of readers in the lower LSM groups 1-6 (66.9%), which includes households with very little disposable income and very little access to modern amenities and services. Only 8.82% of readers fall into the highest LSM category 9-10 compared to, for example, ST (29.87%) and the MG (40.04%). Similar trends can be observed related to figures reflecting monthly household expenditure. While SS's readership includes higher income groups, it is largely concentrated on lower-income groups, especially when compared to the other newspapers in the study.

While most readers of the SS reside in urban areas, a greater percentage of SS readers live in small towns and villages (38.4%) than readers of the ST (26.81%) or MG (14.35%). 58.05% of readers have either a matric[31] (41.71%) or a tertiary education degree (16.34%), with 41.95% of readers having completed some high school. 50.32% of readers are not working, due to unemployment (27.2%), retirement (4.01%), being a "housewife" (4.43%) or being a student (14.69%). The number of student readers is slightly higher than the other

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[29] Readership differs from circulation. It refers to the number of people who read the newspaper, whereas circulation refers to the number of newspapers sold.
[30] This information comes from both interviews and the website http//www.southafrica.info.
[31] Final year of high school in South Africa.

newspapers in the study, but the unemployment level is also significantly higher. These characteristics will be discussed later in reference to the findings of the interviews.

In terms of age, the readership of the SS is quite evenly spread between the three age groups spanning the ages of 16 and 49 years, which constitutes 88.68% of the readership. 11.31% of the readers are 50 years or older. The age group 16 to 24 years (26.91%) is proportionately higher than in the other newspapers (20.92% for the ST and 16.49% for the MG), while the over 50 years age group (11.31%) is proportionately lower than the other newspapers (19.84% for ST and 20.77% for the MG). The age groups in between differ by no more than 4%. The sense emerging from this, as will be reiterated in relation to the interview findings, is that the SS has a larger youth market than the other newspapers in the study.

Finally, in terms of sex, the SS's readership reflects a similar pattern to the other newspapers in the study, all of which have a roughly 60/40 percentage of male and female readers respectively. 41.46% of SS's readers are female and 58.54% are male. A summary of figures for the SS as well as the other participating newspapers is tabulated at the end of this Chapter.

The SS's readership reflects an appeal to market groups generally marginalised from mainstream popular print news, particularly in terms of class and urban/rural location. In addition, it reflects a relatively youthful market. This could perhaps be linked both to its low price relative to other weekly newspapers as well as its tabloid style, which incorporates more colloquial language and human-interest stories reflecting township and rural experiences more than other newspapers.

6.2.2   Sunday Times

The Sunday Times is, by a wide margin, the largest weekly and national newspaper in South Africa. The newspaper is over 100 years old, established in 1906 and owned by Johnnic Communications. With a recent circulation (for the period of October to December 2007) of 504 401, it is however being followed closely by the growing SS, which had a recent circulation of 401 132. Readership for the ST is just shy of 4 million at a 3 820 000 monthly average for the period of February to November 2007. This represents about 8% of

the South African national population[32]. While I could not access figures regarding what percentage of newspaper-reading South Africans read ST, 2005 figures show that 40% of adults in South Africa read newspapers[33]. This only pertains to adults, not to the national population, so that considered in this light the readership for the ST among newspaper-reading South Africans would be very high. The editor of ST was Mondli Makhanya during the time of the research. Prior to his appointment as editor of the ST in 2004, Mondli Makhanya was the editor of the MG.

The ST and the editor himself were embroiled in controversy during the time of the research resulting from the publication of provocative information regarding the Minister of Health (as mentioned in Chapter 4). This controversy, and the attendant legal issues for the newspaper and the editor, contributed to the atmosphere in which the interviews took place. I was also not able to get hold of the editor himself for permission to undertake the study, since he was extremely busy, and eventually went through the managing editor, Herbert Mabuza, who was put into contact with me through the deputy editor at the SS. The ST is known for its investigative journalism, and its front-page stories frequently set the news agenda for the week and stir national debate. According to a study by Media Tenor South Africa (2007) for 2006/2007, the ST was the most influential newspaper in South Africa when measured by the extent to which other media sources quoted it. This is an important indicator of agenda setting powers within the media, and can lead to the attraction of talented staff, advertising and news breaking sources who want their stories to be published in a widely influential publication (Media Tenor South Africa, 2007).

Racial demographics for the readership of the ST are quite spread, with 64.63% black, 8.87% coloured, 6.81% Indian and 19.69% white. In terms of the proportions of these figures to national demographics, while the majority of the readership is black, the black readership is still proportionately lower than the roughly 80% of the South African population that is black, while the white and Indian readership for ST is higher than the national average. The majority of ST readers (61.96%) also have a black African language as their home language. This is, however, considerably lower than the SS. 28.35% of readers are English (almost identical to MG's figures) and 9.69% are Afrikaans, both considerably higher than the SS's figures for the same languages.

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[32] The national population is about 47.9million, which I rounded off to 48 million. This figure was released mid-2007 and was found on the website www.southafrica.info.
[33] AMPS 2005RA, at http://www.markettree.co.za/south-african-statistics.php?statistics=newspapers.

The majority of readers come from urban locations (73.19%), a higher figure than the SS and a lower figure than the MG. Figures regarding average household expenditure indicate a correspondence between higher incomes and urban areas, and LSM categories are also based in part on rural/urban localities. The numbers of readers working full-time and those not working are roughly equal, at 44.71% and 44.01% respectively. Of those not working, 17.28% are unemployed, 8.14% are retired (the highest percentage for retired readers of all three newspapers), 12.12% are students and 6.47% are "housewives" (also the highest percentage of the three newspapers). In terms of education, readership was quite spread among the three categories of "some high school", "matric" and 'tertiary" as the highest educational level attained. Figures pertaining to a tertiary level of education (31.83%) were significantly higher than the SS (16.34%), but also significantly lower than the MG (48.61). Figures for household expenditure and LSM groups for the readership were also relatively evenly spread, hovering roughly between 20% and 30% each, except for the lowest LSM group 1-4 at 13.01%. This is perhaps not surprising given the relatively high price of the ST compared to the SS, which would make the ST comparatively inaccessible for people in the LSM group 1-4.

Readership by age shows a cluster of readers (59.24%) between the ages of 25 and 49 years old, and lower readership numbers (40.76%) among readers younger than 25 (20.92%) and older than 50 (19.84%). In terms of sex, as with the other newspapers in the study the approximate ratio of 60/40 percent to men and women respectively is maintained, with 42.54% of readers being female and 57.46% being male. The readership among women is the highest for the ST, but only marginally so.

Overall, the ST appears to appeal to a wide range of readers, in terms of race, class, age and gender. While it is out of reach for most in the lowest LSM group, it is interesting that it appeals to roughly the same number of readers in the highest LSM group (9-10) as the second lowest (5-6) which represent significantly different socio-economic positions and lifestyles. As will be discussed in the findings, the identity of the ST is one that is based on straddling a variety of locations and market segments, with various sections in this comparatively long newspaper appealing to different readers.

6.2.3   Mail & Guardian

Formerly the Weekly Mail, the MG was established in 1985 at what was known as the height of resistance to apartheid. It developed an international reputation as an apartheid critic, and was suspended in 1988. As discussed in the literature review, funding for "alternative" newspapers was quelled during the apartheid era and led to various newspapers folding. The Weekly Mail was one such newspaper facing closure, but avoided it by entering into a partnership with the Guardian of London. In 1995, the Guardian became the majority shareholder in the paper which was renamed the Mail & Guardian. In 2002, the Guardian reduced its shareholding to 10% and sold the majority (87.5%) to Zimbabwean entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube's company, Newtrust Company Botswana Limited. In 2004, Ferial Haffajee was appointed the new editor of MG, becoming South Africa's first woman newspaper editor. She is on the board of directors for Gender Links, which deals with gender and media issues in South Africa, and has become quite prominent as an expert and topical speaker on South African politics, the media, and various social issues on numerous radio and television shows. In March 2009, while this thesis was being finalised, she announced her decision to leave the MG to become editor of the up-and-coming newspaper City Press. She left MG at the end of June 2009, after helping to achieve the MG's highest circulation to date.

The MG's circulation and readership, while having increased, is still much smaller proportionately to the other newspapers in the study due to its niche market status, with recent circulation figures of 51 842. Similar to the other newspapers in the study, however, the ratio of readers to number of copies sold is relatively high, and readership for the MG stood at 467 000 in 2007. This represents roughly just under 1% of the national population, but in view of the roughly 40% of adults who actually read newspapers this would be a higher percentage among newspaper-reading South Africans. While its readership is relatively low compared to the other weeklies, the MG has been ranked as the second most influential newspaper in South Africa, following the ST, when it comes to other media sources quoting it (Media Tenor South Africa, 2007).

In terms of readership demographics, the MG has the highest percentage of white readers (26.77%) and the lowest percentage of black readers (60.39%) of the three newspapers included in the study. However, its readership is still predominantly black, with 9.85%

coloured and 2.78 Indian. The MG also has the highest percentage of readers in the highest LSM group 9-10 (40.04%) and the lowest percentage of readers in the lowest LSM group 1-4 (7.07%) of the three newspapers in the study. In terms of the latter, the purchase price of the MG would be one contributing factor as with the ST (as well as the fact that the MG's writing is known to be in a style that would tend to be most accessible to people with high levels of formal education). Similarly to ST, too, is the fact that there are still relatively high numbers of readers in the LSM groups 5-6 (24.41%) and 7-8 (28.48%). While the readership is clearly concentrated among higher LSM groups, it is indeed interesting to note nearly a quarter of readers are in one of the lower LSM groups (5-6).

Education related figures for readership are also linked to the higher economic privilege of MG readers compared to the other two newspapers in the study, with nearly half (48.61%) of the readers having had tertiary education compared to 16.34% for the SS and 31.83% for the ST. Only 17.99% of readers had not received matric. The MG also had the highest percentage of readers working full-time (62.1%) and the lowest percentage of unemployed readers (6%). In terms of students, the MG lagged slightly behind the other newspapers with 10.06% of readers being students compared to 14.69% for SS and 12.12% for ST. The readership percentage residing in urban centres was also the highest among the three newspapers (85.65%).

In terms of age, the MG readership is quite well spread, although like the ST the readership in the lowest and highest age groups was the lowest, with 16.49% of readers between 16 and 24 years, and 20.77% of readers over 50 years. Readers between the ages of 25 and 49 years constituted 62.74%. In terms of sex, the MG also had a roughly 60/40 ratio, with 59.96% of readers male and 40.04% of readers female.

Overall, the MG readership represents a privileged demographic in terms of class, linked to higher levels of education, urbanisation, household expenditure and employment. While the MG has the highest white readership of all the newspapers in the study, it is also the only newspaper out of all South African newspapers listed by AMPS with such high levels of black readership *correlating* with such high levels of 9-10 LSM and low levels of 1-4 LSM. With the Volksblad as the exception, all newspapers with as high a percentage of 1-4 LSM readership as the SS had levels of black readership at least as high as the MG. The MG is

thus unique in that it has both a high black readership and a majority readership with higher economic status.

6.2.4 Summary of Newspaper Profiles

The newspapers in the study represent a diverse range of readership demographics. The SS is associated with demographic characteristics linked more to the lower income groups, MG with a far more economically privileged readership and the ST with a more even spread in terms of class and income. Of course, these are broad summaries of the information provided, and a diversity of readers is linked to each newspaper.

All of the newspapers have a majority of black readers, but with the highest levels of black readership in the SS and the highest levels of white readership in the MG. As already discussed, while high levels of black readership are generally associated with higher levels of readership in the lower LSM categories due to South Africa's apartheid legacy (as is the case with the SS), the MG has both strong linkages to a class elite and to a black readership. While there was no information to indicate more directly the link between class and race readership percentages within the MG, it appears that more than any other newspaper the MG may be marketed to a black elite.

With regard to age, all newspapers had more readers in the 25 to 34 years and 35 to 49 years categories, and lower readership levels in the 16 to 24 years and 50 years and over categories. However, the SS had the highest levels of readership among the youth.

In terms of sex, there is a roughly 60/40 ratio between male and female readers respectively in all newspapers. How sex as a variable relates to other variables such as class, race and age within each newspaper is unknown, and as such there is little more to be gleaned from this figure. The figures for all three newspapers are summarised in Table 4 below. Having established a broad sense of each newspaper's market, Chapter 6 will look at representations of gender within the three newspapers, drawing on the theory and methodology discussed in Previous Chapters

TABLE 4: PARTICIPATING NEWSPAPER READERSHIP AND CIRCULATION FIGURES				
		Sunday Sun	Sunday Times	Mail & Guardian
Period: October to December 2007				
Circulation/sales		401 132	504 401	51 842
Period: February to November 2007				
Readers		2 846 000	3 820 000	467 000
Sex	Female	41.46%	42.54%	40.04%
	Male	58.54%	57.46%	59.96%
Race	Black	92.59%	64.63%	60.39%
	Coloured	4.64%	8.87%	9.85%
	Indian	0.74%	6.81%	2.78%
	White	2%	19.69%	26.77%
Age	16-24	26.91%	20.92%	16.49%
	25-34	30.5%	26.52%	29.55%
	35-49	31.27%	32.72%	33.19%
	50+	11.31%	19.84%	20.77%
First language	Afrikaans	5.06%	9.69%	13.92%
	English	4.71%	28.35%	28.69%
	Any black language	90.23%	61.96%	57.39%
Rural/urban location	Cities	61.6%	73.19%	85.65%
	Small towns/villages	38.4%	26.81%	14.35%
Working status	Full-time	36.37%	44.71%	62.1%
	Part-time	13.32%	11.28%	9.64%
	Not working	50.32%	44.01%	28.27%
	Housewife	4.43%	6.47%	4.5%
	Student	14.69%	12.12%	10.06%
	Retired	4.01%	8.14%	7.71%
	Unemployed	27.2%	17.28%	6%
LSM Group	LSM 1-4	22.03%	13.01%	7.07%
	LSM 5-6	44.87%	29.11%	24.41%
	LSM 7-8	24.31%	28.01%	28.48%
	LSM 9-10	8.82%	29.87%	40.04%
Education	Some high school	41.95%	30.39%	17.99%
	Matric	41.71%	37.77%	33.4%

	Tertiary	16.34%	31.83%	48.61%
Household expenditure	Less than R4000	44.73%	27.85%	17.13%
	R4000 - R9999	32.96%	29.37%	28.91%
	R10 000 - 15 999	13.77%	20.86%	19.91%
	R16 000 or more	8.5%	21.91%	34.26%

6.3   Gendered Discourses: Analysis of Newspaper Content

6.3.1   Broad Themes Emerging

While numerous other studies have been undertaken to assess newspaper content in terms of gender, this component of the research is distinguished, firstly, by its focus on the three newspapers involved in the study, secondly, the comparison and contrast between them and, thirdly, an attempt to move beyond quantifying broader gender stereotypes towards an assessment of the diverse manifestations of gendered constructs in the texts (a progressive feminist approach). As detailed in the methodology, a high level of interest was paid to variations, discontinuities and contradictions in gendered discourses, taken to be important signifiers of contestation and negotiation around the numerous discourses circulating at various levels of society. In this regard, this component of the research highlighted some powerful ambiguities in terms of the trajectories of gender transformation in South Africa as represented in the media.

It should be noted at the outset that the findings presented in relation to both component one of the research and component two (the interviews) have been grouped according to relatively broad themes. This has been done in part due to the extent to which smaller sub-themes continually overlap and interact with one another, making the separation of these sub-themes by headings likely to obscure these links and stunt the discussion. I have aimed, however, to highlight key sub-themes variously under broader themes as well as in the final and concluding Chapter.

By way of broad introduction, the analysis of newspaper content generated interesting findings regarding the often differential treatment and representation of **private/intimate gender relations** (for example, romantic relationships) on the one hand and **public gender**

relations (for example, women's political representation) on the other[34]. The former generally lagged significantly behind the latter in terms of gender transformative discourses. The analysis also highlighted the **diversity of spaces** available in newspapers, and the differences between what they can and do achieve in terms of discursive politics around gender. Different **discursive devices** were involved in constructing gender in various spaces of the newspapers, and through the research process I came to identify these discursive devices broadly as "advocate discourses", "complicit discourses" and "spatial discourses".

By **"advocate discourses"** I refer to the more overt forms of gendered discourses that openly support, promote or advocate particular gender relations and identities. **"Complicit discourses"** are those that do not openly advocate a particular position, but discursively comply with certain discourses around gender, whether those of the implied or assumed readership or of the sources quoted in the news article. The foundation of this "complicity" in discourse is an assumption that the views inferred in the language are shared by the readership. In news pieces, a complicit discourse is often presented on the surface as merely conveying the "facts", or the views of others, and is therefore a powerful discursive tool within the parameters of "news". **"Spatial discourses"** refer to the discursive meanings conferred not through language as such, but through the prominence, location and format given to particular topics, images or views. In other words, perspectives and values are inferred via the decisions made around the spatial positioning and prominence of certain voices. These discourses often operate in cooperation with advocate and complicit discourses, and act as powerful conduits for the overall gendered orientation of the newspapers. A single textual unit could involve two or more of these discursive devises, which often overlapped and worked in conjunction (or even contradiction) with one another.

The extent and nature of gender-related news content appeared to be significantly impacted upon by **current events and media campaigns**. For example, gender as a socio-political issue was more prominent during the duration of this research sample, at the end of 2007, due to the 16 Days of Activism campaign in South Africa (25 November to 10 December). There was a sharp decline in gender-related content in the final newspapers assessed at

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[34] I make the distinction between the "private" sphere and the "public" sphere cognisant of their inter-connectedness and even the gendered implications of reinforcing a dichotomy that many feminists have asserted reinforces the lesser value assigned to those spheres associated with the "feminine". However, while the distinction between the two is neither simple nor unproblematic, the data highlights a significant difference in terms of the treatment of more private and more public realms that consequently necessitates a simplified distinction here for the purposes of the research.

the beginning of 2008 when this campaign ended. While the sample was limited, the anecdotal evidence in this regard (that outside of gender-related media campaigns the media tends to be very silent on many important gender issues) are was supported by another South African media study (Media Tenor South Africa, 2006) as will be discussed later in greater detail.

The **style of the newspapers** had an important impact on the kinds of gender discourses emerging. **"Tabloidisation"**, as a key feature of two of the newspapers under study, was linked more often to discourses that **naturalised gender differences**, sometimes through the vectors of "culture" and religion. A "critical" newspaper style[35], on the other hand, was more inclined to employ discourses that politicised gender, focussing on socio-political and structural gender differences rather than essentialising them. Again, the style and associated discourses were not differentiated between newspapers only, but often between different spaces within the newspapers.

Finally, discourses emerging in newspaper representations flagged certain **broader discourses around gender and transformation**, linking the discourses in the newspaper to macro-level shifts (and tensions) in gender discourses. These often apparently contradictory or conflicting discourses appear, firstly, to reflect aspects of the *broader trajectories of feminism* in South Africa and, secondly, to suggest the **multiplicity of normative gendered discourses** being negotiated in contemporary society. The characteristics of the individual newspapers are described and briefly compared, reflecting further on these broad themes, below.

6.3.2   *From the Podium to the Bed: Gendered Discourses in the Sunday Sun*

6.3.2.1 *General style, content and discursive orientation*

A relatively short newspaper, the SS is about 40-50 pages long and in "tabloid" format. The newspaper style can also be described as "tabloid" (a label supported by the editors and journalists interviewed), with a concentration on celebrity and entertainment news. Local celebrity scandal and human-interest pieces are the "heart" of the news in SS (see image below). In particular, local black entertainment and sports celebrities (singers, television

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[35] What this means will be explicated in more detail in the findings related to individual newspapers below.

actors, soccer players and so on) form the main focus of celebrity news. Human-interest stories, on the other hand, centre largely on working-class, black South Africans, particularly those living in urban centres and townships. This is the discursively implied readership of the newspaper[36]. The appeal to working class readers is a relative anomaly in press markets, which are generally targeted at higher LSM categories due to the relative cost of newspapers compared to other media forms such as radio.

Image 5: Tabloid news content, Sunday Sun, 19 August 2007

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a tabloid format and a tabloid style of writing and content do not always co-exist. The SS, however, is both in a tabloid format and a tabloid style. In addition, that its nameplate is in red associates it with a group of newspapers termed "red tops" (such as *The Sun* and the *Daily Star*), known to be of a more colloquial writing style, dense with pictures and marketed as more sensational[37].

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[36] This readership is largely reflected in the readership demographics, but the *discursive* orientation is focused on here, therefore the use of the phrase "discursively implied". The "implied" readership is that which the newspaper's selection of issues and writers connotes, and is therefore not taken to necessarily mirror the actual readership demographics.
[37] Again, this information is drawn broadly from discussions with people and from the popular site Wikipedi.com, which I use cautiously here and have buttressed with academic work.

Considering the size of the newspaper, a variety of spaces have been created beyond those for news, including weekly sections for jokes, letters, the "Sun Babe" (or "page-three" pin-up pictures of young local women who have submitted their pictures for selection), opinion columns, sport, cars, careers/labour, consumer issues, the role model of the week and local churches. The space and tone of the celebrity news and weekly sections for careers, the weekly role model and cars section (most often in a price bracket at odds with the lower LSM readership demographics) convey an "aspirational" discourse; while the readership discursively implied in the newspaper is that of working class black South Africans, the spaces created and discourses employed promote and support the achievement of middle and "upper" class status.

Image 6: "Aspirational" discursive content, Sunday Sun, 19 August 2007

In addition, there is a substantial discursive emphasis on disparities between the "haves" and the "have-nots". The plights of working class people living in townships are often highlighted in human-interest pieces, and career/labour sections highlight issues around jobs such as domestic work and mining. The extract below is an example of one such discourse.

"Everyone fantasises about telling the boss and the bank manager where to get off. But for the other millions of us unfortunate souls, it is back to the grindstone" (Sunday Sun, 9 December 2007).

The various spaces created in the newspaper, including significant input from columnists and readers (in the forms of letters as well as human-interest stories brought forward by readers) create the sense that interaction with readers is an important element of the newspaper's identity and appeal. The discourse is colloquial and shaped by the local readership of the newspaper (for example, "*Jozi*" for Johannesburg", "*gogo*" for grandmother and "*bucks*" for money), adding to the sense that the newspaper aims to speak to its readership "where they are at"[38]. Human-interest pieces and those that reflect on the private struggles of both celebrities and "ordinary" readers add to the sense that the newspaper aims to personalise its content. These features mirror those associated with tabloidisation, involving shifts towards narrative, sensational, personalised and conversationalised discourses (Connell, 1998).

Interestingly, in addition to a discourse that stresses secular achievements, a strong religious discourse is present, with often-conservative[39] viewpoints being proposed through the vector of Christianity (examples of which will be discussed below). Significant room is given in sections of the newspaper made available for comment and opinion in this regard, from the letters page to a weekly column by Bishop Sibiya and a "Sun Churches" page. The gendered discourses manifested in these spaces were of considerable interest, echoing and reinforcing some strong anti-feminist backlashes advanced through essentialist religious discourses.

Overall, the newspaper reflected a variety of often-contradictory discourses, from those promoting gender equality, on the one hand, to those objectifying women and representing an anti-feminist backlash on the other. In some respects, the SS appeared to aim to promote spaces for women to be visibilised as leaders and career persons. On the other hand, of all the newspapers reviewed for this research the SS was also the most

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[38] More in this regard will be discussed in relation to the interviews.
[39] I am conscious of the variable application of this word, and am using it here to connote values broadly associated with conservativism, such as the valuing of nuclear family structures, heternormativity, anti-abortion views, conceptions of sexuality as belonging within the confines of marriage and so forth. What these conservative discourses entail, exactly, will be further elaborated through examples and discussion.

heteronormative, and most palpably reproduced "traditional" hegemonic masculine constructs.

6.3.2.2 Counts of textual units with gender relevance

The counts undertaken for the SS are presented in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5: RESEARCH COMPONENT ONE COUNTS FOR THE SUNDAY SUN			
	Main News[40]	Other	Total
Gender relevance	20	34	54
Women in leadership	4	4	8
Homosexuality	3	1	4
Gender based violence	2	10	12
Women's issues	2	0	2
Gender constructions	14	21	35

These counts are presented here quite briefly, as their particular importance from a gender perspective is mainly derived from looking at them qualitatively as well (looking qualitatively at the content and variation within each "count"). Thus, qualitative findings that enrich understandings of the significance of these counts will follow in the next section.

The counts shown above reflect an overall predominance of textual units of gender interest in the latter part of the newspaper given to opinion, comment, columns, letters, careers and so on. In particular, constructions of gender are particularly strong here. Interestingly, small textual units and "light" entertainment in the newspaper (such as jokes in the jokes column and letters from readers) accounted for a fair number of these gender constructions, indicating that they are often conveyed through "informal" spaces and not merely the "news" in newspapers. Gender based violence was also prominent as an issue in the latter part of the newspaper, although this also appeared to be linked to the 16 Days of Activism, since the first week in January (not falling under the auspices of the 16 Days of Activism) accounted for none of the textual units dealing with gender based violence.

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[40] In the case of the SS, the "news section" was identified as up to page 10.

Homosexuality in the sample newspapers was primarily covered in the news sections. Two of these involved male celebrities who denied that they were homosexual and one involved a transvestite who was planning to have a sex change. The one mention of homosexuality in the latter part of the newspaper was made in a religious column decrying laws allowing abortion in South Africa, in which same-sex marriages were briefly drawn into the argument as what the author perceived as another example of poor legislation passed by the new democratic government.

As discussed in the methodology, the category of "women in leadership" was particularly difficult to apply, and particular caution is therefore needed in assessing the significance of these counts. However, at a qualitative level I observed that there appeared to be a concerted effort in the SS to include and promote women as politicians, community leaders and sportspeople through various methods. These included, for example, using images of women regularly in the careers/labour sections of the newspaper and including women's sports features in every issue reviewed here (something neither of the other newspapers in the sample did). "Women's issues" counted here involved advice on labour issues with particular relevance to women, such as domestic work.

6.3.2.3 *Discussion and examples of discourses in the Sunday Sun*

As mentioned above, the increased representation of women in public spaces appeared to be part of the SS's deliberate endeavours through a variety of mechanisms including spatial discursive devises. While written texts are important, the overall visual messages of newspapers regarding the roles and statuses of women in different spheres can also be very powerful.

As will be discussed in more detail in relation to the ST, any gender transformative discourses at a language level can be symbolically negated to an extent by dominant visual representations that contradict them. In terms of gender equality in public spaces and leadership positions, the SS discursively represented women as operating successfully in these spheres through spatial discourses.

While complete gender parity in this regard did not appear to be in place, there were significant efforts visible in certain aspects of the visual construction of the newspaper and special features presented towards conveying women as active participants in the public

spheres of politics, industry, "the office" and so forth. The images below provide examples of this.

Image 7: Images of women in the public sphere, Sunday Sun, 9 December 2007 (top left), 2 December 2007 (top right) and 9 December 2007 (bottom)

On the other hand, however, gendered discourses surrounding the "private sphere" and the relations between men and women, for example, intimate or romantic relationships, marriage, sex and so forth, were far less progressive. This came through particularly in the more conversational, interactive and "informal" parts of the newspaper (such as columns and jokes) although it was also present in the news pages. Gender differences and conflict, in these discourses, were portrayed as natural and inevitable, and gender relations were represented as fraught, highly sexualised and, above all, framed by normative heterosexuality.

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In fact, constructions of hegemonic *masculinity* in SS were asserted with particular regularity and intensity through both activist and complicit discourses in news texts. Overall, I had the sense that when it came to articulations of gender *relations*, specifically, most of this was done with an implied male reader in mind, or at the very least with a readership (male or female) that internalised the power of hegemonic expressions of masculinity. Some of the most prevailing and problematic constructions of masculinity to be represented were the following:

- Men are highly sexed;
- Sex is a priority for men in their relationships with women;
- Men are highly predatory when it comes to sex;
- Men have no control over their sexual desires;
- Men cheat, and this is usually the natural consequence of sexual dissatisfaction caused by their (female) partners;
- Demonstrating (hetero)sexuality and sexual prowess is central to demonstrating masculinity;
- Men are naturally heads of households - to undermine this role is to emasculate them;
- Men are often victims of destabilised gender relations brought about by feminism;
- Men are often victims of women's manipulation and their emasculation of men;
- Men are not as naturally communicative as women;
- Men must be "macho" and not show sensitivity or emotion; and
- Men are the symbolic and practical leaders of the nation.

Some alternative discourses around masculinity did emerge, however:

- It is men who perpetrate gender based violence, and therefore it is men who should take responsibility in preventing it;
- Men should take greater responsibility in the domestic sphere when it comes to family;
- Men resist women's emancipation because of patriarchy, and need to recognise the importance of gender transformation for all.

In contrast, these were some of the problematic constructions of femininity that emerged:

- Women are temptresses;

- Women are manipulative and sometimes even evil;
- Women are discardable objects for sexual gratification;
- Women constantly crave, need and desire male sexuality - their sexuality is realised through (penetrative) sex with men;
- Women use men for monetary gain;
- Women talk too much and nag men too much;
- Beauty in a woman is important (and should be commended, even if she is in a public position based on leadership and intellectual abilities);
- Women are primarily responsible for marital bliss (if a man cheats/hits/hurts it is because she drove him to it); and
- Women are victims of gender based violence.

Again, some alternative discourses around femininity did emerge:

- Women are crucial leaders in their communities;
- Women are an integral part of the workplace;
- Women can be powerful and influential public figures; and
- Women survive and overcome injustices such as gender based violence and sexual harassment.

These statements represent simplified or condensed messages coming through in newspaper texts. Some examples of interesting cases of gender constructions will therefore also be discussed here.

Image 8: Complicit discourses of heternormativity, Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007

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The article shown in Image 8, posted on the fourth page of one newspaper issue in the heart of the celebrity news coverage, is an example of a complicit discourse of heteronormativity and of masculinity as demonstrated (and in need of demonstrating) through heterosexuality. In the opening line, we are told that the male music celebrity has "spoken out about the trauma of being labelled gay, when he says he is in fact straight". We are then told that the "hunky" celebrity was hospitalised and nearly attempted suicide due to "nagging questions about his sexuality". The article conveys his assertion that he can "prove" he is straight and quotes him as saying: "I would pull my pants down to show my manhood when people asked if I was a girl or boy or both".

While the journalist has not overtly stated that heterosexuality is "normal" or "natural", there are two interesting discursive forces at play here. One is that, editorially, such a story was selected. That the celebrity was not assumed heterosexual is framed as a tragic and unjust incident, and that he feels the need to publicly assert his heterosexual orientation is implicitly framed as newsworthy. Discursively, then, the mere selection of this as "news" is heteronormative and implies a masculine need to "defend" heterosexuality.

Secondly, while the journalist is drawing on the celebrity's own words, the text that does not directly quote him is complicit with his assertions. For example, to say that he has "spoken out about the trauma of being labelled gay" implies a level of agreement that it would (or should) in fact be traumatic. The heading employs the linguistic imagery of having "balls" to represent heterosexuality, discursively complying with the celebrity's stated conflation of the male sex with male heterosexuality. The celebrity himself employs the term "manhood" to represent his penis, and articulates sexual orientation as evidenced through physical sex ("when people ask if I was a girl or boy or both"). The heading, not directly quoting the celebrity, is discursively *complicit* in the way it also conflates physical sex with sexual orientation, naturalising and normalising heterosexuality. The images selected for the article - one of which is of the celebrity surrounded by young women - is also complicit in supporting the celebrity's concern that his sexual orientation be known.

Image 9: More complicit discourses of heternormativity, Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007

Another example of a complicit heteronormative discourse is in the article shown in Image 9, on the left side of the page, regarding a transvestite's plans for sexual reassignment. Again, language selection in the unquoted text complies with a heteronormative, homophobic discourse. Firstly, it is stated that Bheki is seeking a sex change and "is blatantly open about it", implying that it would be something one should be ashamed of. Secondly, subtle discursive mechanisms are also employed to patronise or undermine Bheki. For example, the journalist repeatedly refers to Bheki as "he", despite Bheki's quoted assertion that she identifies as a woman. This may be a common and even predictable approach given pervasive social and discursive resistance to the distinction between sex and gender (not to mention the serious levels of prejudice against, and misinformation about, transsexual people). However, whether a conscious or unconscious language choice, it discursively rejects Bheki's self-identification. This is a gender-political act. In addition, despite the fact that Bheki is quoted as saying she can no longer be classified as gay, the opening description of her is as "gay". The extract from the article below is also very revealing:

"'*Ke mme ha ke ntate* (I am a woman and not a man) and I behave as such' he emphasised to the Sunday Sun this week, with a voice thick as that of Barry White's" (Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007).

Again, Bheki's gender self-identification is condescended upon by following her statement about identifying as a woman with a tongue in cheek reference to a masculine voice. The subtext reads something akin to: "You say you are a woman, but really you are not." Interestingly, the journalist later expresses a somewhat different discursive orientation in asserting that "in a country where gay and lesbian issues are still largely taboo, especially among blacks, he has broken new ground by speaking openly about his procedure." This offers a good example of discontinuity in discourse, where the "official" line advocated is a more liberal one of diversity and tolerance, while another discourse, complicit with the implicit views associated with the readers, repeatedly emerges.

Moving to examples from the columns section, one weekly column, in particular, repeatedly drew upon highly hegemonic discourses of masculinity, particularly regarding sexuality. This column portrays (fictional or non-fictional) stories around township and rural life, with a tongue in cheek tone, colloquial language mixing local languages and a style that implies they are stories of men and for men. The story-telling style is suggestive of a fraternal setting, where men exchange entertaining tales of their adventures. There is a strong discursive implication that the reader understands the meanings of these stories, with the implied reader being, among other possible things, mobile, working class black South African men[41].

In terms of gender, specifically, pervasive discourses around masculinity centre on male (and female) sexuality. Masculinity is represented as highly sexualised, almost animalistic in the implied lack of control over or mediation of sex drive. (Hetero)sexual displays are figured as central to masculinity. As in the previous examples discussed, this is again often articulated through physical sex, with regular references to the size and functioning of male genitalia acting as metaphors for hegemonic masculinity ("balls", "manhood"). Male genitalia are also figured as "tools" through which to perform and prove masculinity. The extracts below provide examples of this.

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[41] This is my own impression, and is contestable.

"Pudikabeka started going on about how his wife always complained that his manhood had shrunk over the years….. Themba, the bloody rascal, even went as far as coaxing poor Pudikabeka to lay his tools on the table so that the men could decide if the wife had a fair case or not" (Sunday Sun, 13 January 2007).

"Hahaa, it was Christmas time again, and the miners were heading home to empty their balls after a long year away from wives, girlfriends, concubines, lovers and *heeeiii,* everybody" (Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007).

While women only play side roles in the stories portrayed, the ways in which feminine sexuality is constructed serves to symbolically accentuate and legitimate constructions of masculinity. In particular, of the columns reviewed, women were mostly portrayed as sexual objects. As objects, they were not always represented in an entirely passive way, but sometimes as sexually demanding and in an almost constant state of craving for the male sex. Despite a kind of agency depicted with regard to women's sexuality, in my opinion it does not emerge as an empowering discourse for women. Instead, the discursive implication is that women exist primarily as sexual objects through which men actualise their masculine identity. Furthermore, women's sexuality is framed as something that can only be actualised through heterosexual sex.

"Years later he fled to *Jozi* when a neighbour found him helping himself to her donkey. The old lady, a widow, got so jealous that the fit young man was wasting energy on a donkey that she hauled him into her hut and bonked him to a pulp" (Sunday Sun, 9 December 2007).

"And that's how, they say, he got his Ndebele name, because one lady from the tribe got such a good service from Mahlangu that she bestowed the name on the man" (Sunday Sun, 9 December 2007).

This emphasises the ways in which constructions of gender are shaped and reliant upon contrast with, and actualisation through, one another, making gender analysis that looks at masculinities and femininities in an integrated way important.

Overall, the sexual interactions between men and women are figured as narcissistic performances rather than part of a broader and more intricate set of relations. Even an account of what appears to be coercive sex is depicted with nonchalance.

> "Anyway, Mahlangu had this naughty habit of helping himself to the mamas who sell stuff at the train station. You see, the old ladies were not allowed to sleep at the station, so they had to keep Mahlangu warm. Hey, that Mahlangu, they say was popular with the old mamas." (9 December, 2007)

The above extract disturbingly portrays coercive sexual encounters - coercive in the sense that they are implied as a form of blackmail or exchange in a highly unequal set of power dynamics. Yet, the women are framed as being grateful for, or sexually benefiting from, these experiences, with the reference to the man as "popular with the old mamas". In this way, not only are the women objectified and implicitly urged to accept a patriarchal sexual dynamic, but their own sexuality is rendered not as autonomous, but shaped largely by male displays of heterosexuality. In other words, the meaning, value and function of their sexuality is implied as being to demonstrate and applaud male heterosexuality The story is told in a way that prides the male's ability to perform sexually and demonstrate his masculinity with the women. This column is an example of prevailing discursive orientations that centralise masculinity (and the demonstration thereof) as natural, sexual and essential. This is done in part through an appeal to a "memory" of days gone by ("those were the days"), and through a kind of cultural expression laced through with gender.

As I have already stressed in Chapter 5, I do not attempt to explain the intricate intersections of historicized notions and experiences of race, class and gender (critical constituting factors in gender relations in the South African context as elsewhere). However, an analysis of these texts could, I believe, be greatly deepened through the layering of an integrated race, class, "culture" and gender lens, well-informed by and contextualised in South Africa's colonial and apartheid history. I mention this again here because these columns in particular appear to invoke, imply or appeal to "cultural" foundations for the gender values depicted through the narrative, and the tales themselves are very much woven through with a sense of shared history and identity, located in colonial and apartheid migration and labour among other things. As such, a further analysis of issues of race, class

and "culture" as they interact with gender, of which I do not consider myself capable, would certainly deepen understandings of these discourses.

Moving on to another example, a weekly column by Biship Sibiya, while ostensibly quite different to the column above, also afforded some powerful examples of gendered discourses being reproduced in opinion sections of the newspaper. There are many examples to draw from, but I will limit the ones presented here to those related to the issue of gender based violence. Around Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism, several columns were published regarding the issue of domestic violence. While the SS included various news pieces and statements about the need to stamp out widespread gender based violence in South Africa, these columns re-appropriated anti-gender violence discourses to reframe men as victims and women as aggressors. The extracts below from the column entitled "Women must not be bent on pushing men too far" exemplify this.

> "Women's Month focuses on women, especially highlighting their plight in many
> different areas. However, women are not always the victims they are portrayed
> to be. More often than not, the woman is the aggressor, driving the man to
> resort to violence and abuse" (Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007).

Image 10: Religious column reproducing patriarchal discourses, Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007
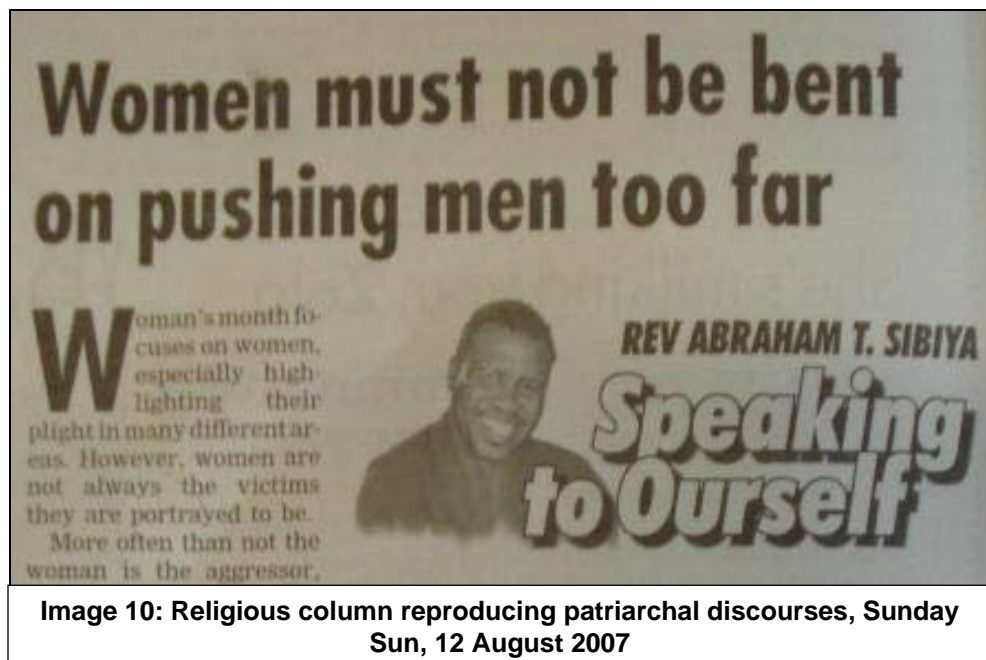
He continues to frame male aggression as natural and unchangeable, shifting the responsibility of gender violence onto the shoulders of women. Through naturalised gender constructs supported via biblical quotes and interpretations, Sibiya reasserts "traditional" gender roles as central to the prevention of gender violence. It is women's responsibility, he asserts, to play the (God-ordained) gender roles they were assigned towards harnessing masculine traits - such as aggression - to their advantage. In this way, patriarchal relations are represented as inevitable and natural, and women encouraged to work within their parameters to prevent violence perpetrated by men.

"There are violent men out there whose anger can drive them to kill. Wisdom will not push their buttons but will harness their strength to protect women rather than harm them….. So a woman must be careful not to dominate a man through the power of her tongue, especially when the man is not vocally disadvantaged. This is precisely why God commanded the woman to be submissive to her own husband. It was to avoid confrontation between these two formidable forces" (Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007).

To this effect, feminist ideals are fingered as the cause of gender violence, assuming gender violence was not a problem in a pre-feminist past. In this discourse, a natural, rightful gender order exists that, if challenged, debases both men and women. A return to this gender order is framed as being to the benefit of women, whose defiance against it has led to their own contemporary gender relations problems.

"Violence against women flared up when women, through movements like 'women's liberation', chose the aggressive route rather than submission. Our grandmothers were far wiser than the women of today. They knew how to keep a home warm and their men content. They knew how to channel man's aggression towards protecting them and their family rather than harm them. Today's women seem to be skilled in bringing out the worst in men. No wonder there is so much violence and abuse against women and girls… Women can make or break a home. God gave them qualities to build homes and make them the envy of many. But if they assert their feminine rights instead of applying wisdom, they will live to regret it" (Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007).

This caveat delivered to women through the vector of religion (appealing to an essentialised, timeless notion of gender relations) obscures the agency of men in perpetuating gender based violence as well as the unequal power relations that characterise patriarchy. This, in a sense, disarms and *re-appropriates* the hard-earned advancement of anti-gender based violence discourses in society, discourses that are interestingly reflected elsewhere in the SS. This intra-textual contradiction in discourse reflects the general lag in gender transformative discourses around the "private" sphere and intimate relations compared to those pertaining to the public domain and official public rhetoric.

In response to this column, the editor issued a disclaimer in his editorial, cautioning readers not to take Sibiya's column as a justification for gender based violence. The editorial position taken to gender based violence around the 16 Days of Activism was also that it should be eliminated. More regarding the editorial perspective on this matter will be explored in relation to the interviews, since this column was in fact raised by the editor as an example of some of the gender-related issues arising for the newspaper. Suffice it to say here that the SS has made space for these kinds of discourses, alongside discourses that figure gender based violence as an unacceptable injustice perpetrated against women. It should be noted, too, that while the majority of gender constructions were achieved through complicit discursive mechanisms (distancing them from more official newspaper rhetoric around gender issues) these columns demonstrate instances of advocate discursive mechanisms against feminism and women's liberation, and their inclusion is therefore of particular interest.

Another column by Sibiya furthered the construct of women as manipulative and abusive through the wielding of sexual power. As with the previous column, this column again explicitly states that gender based violence is unacceptable, before embarking on a tirade against women in which they are framed, again, as ultimately responsible for men's behaviour (such as infidelity). In this case, discourses challenging gender based violence were again re-appropriated towards the reframing of women as abusers and men as victims, equating instances in which women "deny" their husbands sex as instances of "diabolical" cruelty and "spousal abuse". Men's infidelity is asserted as men's natural and only reasonable response to this "abuse".

Interestingly, this column again frames problematic gender relations as the fault of women for turning against a God-ordained gender order, and the patriarchal context in which

women may resist, deny or avoid sex with their husbands is entirely sidestepped. The women's liberation movement is also fingered once again as the catalyst for skewed gender relations. The following extracts exemplify the constructions of femininity that are developed towards re-appropriating discourses against domestic violence.

> "Some women can be cruel and evil beyond any description. They can be so abusive that it would make Idi Amin look like a saint….. Somehow, through the ages, it has appeared as if such afflictions by women on men are trivial and of no consequence….. One of the weapons women have used to punish men is denying them sex….. The scars suffered by men because of such afflictions are countless" (Sunday Sun, 19 August 2007).

Image 11: Religious columns with discourses naturalising (patriarchal) gender differences, Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007 (left) and 9 December 2007 (right)

At least two other columns by different authors in the SS in the four-week scoping period engaged in similar discourses that naturalised gender differences, called on women to take responsibility for the afflictions in their relationships and depicted feminine submission and desire to please men as central to maintaining peace in heterosexual relationships. In addition, letters in the letters pages ranged from those decrying gender violence to those framing women in the same narrow, misogynistic terms.

As discussed in relation to the case of Bullard (Chapter 4), columns (and indeed letters pages) can be a space in which certain views not generally acceptable in public spaces ("politically incorrect" or counter to dominant public rhetoric) can be more directly articulated. Columns can therefore serve to highlight certain tensions between public rhetoric and

prevailing privately held views. As the firing of Bullard also showed, however, the discourse of "free speech" in the media, allowing for more flexible discursive boundaries imposed on columnists, is still reigned in or checked by the social currency of certain discourses, and the editorial values and understandings around certain social issues. In other words, greater flexibility is allowed for, but there *are* still limitations to what can be printed under free speech, and these limitations tell us something about both editorial and wider social values and perceptions.

Bullard was fired for "crossing the line" through racist discourse. However, what strikes me as a highly misogynistic discourse in some of the columns reviewed here has not been filtered out but protected under the right to free speech given to columnists. The editorial leadership behind the two cases is not the same. However, it is interesting to note this as an illustration of how the parameters set on free speech seem to reflect the different trajectories of values and understandings around social prejudice and power relations. From my perspective, a "gender lens" would see columns such as these filtered out in a similar way to Bullard's column, as an instance of the promotion of prejudice.

Highly gendered jokes - again depicting heterosexual gender relations as fraught and sexualised, and naturalising some of the same gender constructs discussed here - were also given significant space. The examples below are of three such published jokes.

> "A rape suspect went to a sangoma[42] to help him win the case. The sangoma made his penis vanish. He went to court and won the case because how can he rape if he doesn't have a penis to penetrate? He went back to the sangoma happy and full of joy and wanted his penis restored, but when he arrived the sangoma was dead!" (Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007).

> "A dying American soldier in a battlefield hospital in Afghanistan had a final wish: 'How I wish I could kiss the American flag before I die.' Extremely touched by the soldier's patriotism, the nurse says: 'I have a tattoo of the American flag on my butt. You may kiss it if you don't mind.' Soldier: 'Of course, I wouldn't mind. Thank you for fulfilling my last wish.' The nurse took off her panty and the dying soldier kissed the flag. Soldier: 'Thank you nurse. Would

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[42] "Traditional Zulu healer and respected elder" (http://wordnet.princeton.edu/).

you be so kind as to turn around so that I can kiss Bush too?'" (Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007).

"In the beginning, God created the earth and rested.

Then God created Man and rested.

Then God created Woman.

Since then, neither God nor Man has rested" (Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007).

Integral to the above jokes are many of the same discourses that have threaded through other newspaper texts including, in particular, the message that relations between men and women are largely grounded in (and limited by) sex, and are generally fraught. It is very concerning that in the first example, gender based violence is trivialised to this extent. The joke does not convey an interest in whether the rape "suspect" perpetrated the crime or not, and the victim remains invisible. The perpetrator's emasculation - as in a number of the texts already discussed, discursively equated with physical sex - becomes of central concern. His loss of ability to perform sexually is a focal point and the punch line of the joke over the possible rape. In addition, given that another article in the SS pointed to the fact that rape need *not* be perpetrated by penetration with a penis, it is concerning that a joke was published that employs a complicit discursive mechanism to suggest that this is beyond common sense.

In the second example, the performance of masculinity (in the laddish insistence of the soldier to sexualise and degrade the interaction with the woman) is once again prioritised as the core of the joke, and the woman rendered as the conduit for this. Finally, the third example echoes many of the discourses already discussed - discourses that naturalise a patriarchal suspicion of women, who are often framed as troublesome, and in this case again through reference to religious doctrine.

Interestingly, as can probably be ascertained from my *own* discourse in the paragraphs above, the jokes column was one of the most concerning and shocking to me. That columnists provoke and argue controversial perspectives was more predictable to me than the highly misogynistic discourses manifested in, and borne through, such a seemingly benign space as the jokes column. This was perhaps the most striking example of suggested complicity as a discursive mechanism, and represents the power of casually

articulated humour as a tool to express deeply-borne perspectives that may not be as utterable in other, more formal, discursive spaces. Furthermore, the jokes pages tended to paint a very dire picture of the relationships between men and women, a far cry from the pro-gender emancipation discourses articulated in editorial spaces and news on women's leadership.

This raises two difficult questions. Firstly, do these jokes in fact convey a trend in the perceptions of gender and gender relations held by readers, given that they are published in orientation to a particular assumed market and if so, what does this indicate about gender transformation trajectories in South Africa? Secondly, are these kinds of spaces that proffer an opportunity to reproduce discourses retrogressive to gender transformation the place in which inquiries into the role of the media should begin to focus? So much feminist critique and activism has been directed at the "news", yet it is in these spaces that many of the most interesting discursive gender politics are being played out.

After reviewing a series of gendered discourses I perceive as being problematic, let me also say that the "conversational" section of the newspaper *also* exhibited some alternative discourses that challenged these kinds of constructs towards gender transformation. The column represented in Image 12 below offered some challenges to constructions of hegemonic masculinity and was one of the most important spaces among the columns, jokes, and so on in which gender transformation was advocated.

In one article, indicated on the left, Botha attacks business entities for not doing more to fight gender based violence. The article indicated on the right, however, offered the most patent challenges to some of the dominant constructions of masculinity reproduced through the other columns reviewed in SS. Botha expresses outrage at an incident in which women were forced by men to wear skirts rather than pants. He accuses these men of being backward, and of representing a form of masculinity with which he will not associate himself. He also indicates that such displays of masculinity are counter to the goals and ideals of democracy.

Image 12: Columns promoting progressive gender discourses, Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007 (left) and 12 August 2007 (right)

In the discourses he employs, many of the discourses manifested in other columns of the SS are contested. By asserting that the perception and treatment of women as "perpetual minors" and as "in need of men's so-called supervision or guardianship" counters certain discourses emerging in other (mostly religious) columns, in particular one that contends that women need father figures, a role their husbands should provide. He also attacks the use of "culture" as a discursive vehicle through which to justify patriarchy, a hot issue in South Africa at present (as discussed to some extent in Chapter 2). Botha quotes women's views on the matter in the column, one of the only spaces in the columns in the newspapers reviewed where women's own counters to patriarchal discourses are voiced. He further quotes another man in opposition to the forced ban on pants for women, and frames his perspective as a proud manifestation of a different (more transformed) kind of masculinity.

Finally, Botha encourages anger and action against gender injustice, a significant discursive counter to the submission called for in Bishop Sibiya's columns. That this column is included in the same edition in which Bishop Sibiya argues that women are the abusers in relationships is a significant instance of discursive diversity and contestation. Where one discourse advocates submission and, at the most, feminine agency employed *within* the parameters of "traditional" gender constructs, the other (expressed by Botha) advocates loud voicing against such constructs. Of great interest, too, is the manner in which Botha employs complicit discursive mechanisms towards redefining masculinity. By referring to the men who tried to control women's dress as "such idiots pretending to be men", he too re-appropriates a popular discourse to further a new one; he appropriates the discourse of

naturalised masculinity (what it means to be a "real man") - so often applied towards masculine constructs of domination - to reframe masculinity in a new way. This column exemplifies the manner in which discursive tactics can be applied towards a variety of gender political positions. It further demonstrates that the columns space can create room for gender transformative discourses and dialogue.

However, while this column (named *Men2Men Talk*) is the only instance of the voicing of women's concerns over gender relations in the columns reviewed, all columns reviewed were written by men. This is not to suggest that men's voices in relation to gender transformation are not very relevant and important; they are indeed from a progressive feminist perspective. However, women's voices also need to be well positioned within the media from an epistemological perspective. As a powerful space for engagement, the columns may be a good area to attend to and cultivate in terms of gender transformation, both in respect to the power and room given to particular discourses and the voices offered up in these spaces.

As I have mentioned, the SS showed an overall high level of discursive contradiction and tension when it came to gender. At times, discontinuities in discourses between textual units were strikingly apparent when such texts were placed adjacent to one another, particularly when it came to discourses constructing ideal femininity. The simultaneous sexualisation of women and the liberal discourses asserting parity and women's rights, particularly within the public sphere, were of particular interest. This also raised questions surrounding the gender transformative capacity of the tabloid, for which the sexualisation of women, especially in the "page-three" pin-ups, has almost become institutionalised. Image 13 below is an example of this kind of contrast on a single page of the SS. The "role model of the week" on the left is a woman applauded for pressing sexual harassment charges against a high profile politician and seeing them through, despite enormous pressure exerted upon her to drop the charges. By making her the role model of the week, resistance to pervasive patriarchal discourses that hold a young woman to be sexually available to men in positions of power is encouraged. On the right side of the page, on the other hand, is the monthly winner of the Sun Babe, discursively repositioning women under the male gaze, and placing value on their physical and sexual desirability and availability (to men).

Image 13: Discursive contrast in gendered representations of women, Sunday Sun, 2 December 2007

The sexualisation of women was also symbolically and spatially juxtaposed with intensified attention to the issue of gender based violence around the 16 Days of Activism. Reporting on incidents of gender based violence was varied in approach. Some articles represented instances of the kinds of gender based violence coverage that has long been the object of feminist critique. The gendered discourses in these articles were generally achieved through complicit discursive mechanisms. Other articles employed advocate discursive mechanisms towards highlighting and condemning gender based violence. Two contrasting examples are provided in Image 14 below.

Image 14: Contradictory discourses on gender based violence, Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007 (left) and 16 December 2007 (right)

The first example is the small article on the bottom left of the page with the headline "Explosive love", which describes an attempted murder-suicide (in which the murder was not successful but the suicide was) in a trivialised manner. We are told that a man blew himself up with explosives after he "mistakenly thought he had killed his wife in a domestic tiff". We are also told that neighbours picked his body parts off the lawn. On one level, one could argue that the man is being mocked for his actions. On the other, however, the attempted femicide is made indistinct and the import of his actions are trivialised.

A common feminist critique of news coverage is that gender based violence is often normalised due to the discursive impact of journalistic norms and ideals that value "bizarre" and "unusual" news over "everyday" events (Meyers, 1997). Femicide, in South Africa, has arguably reached such levels as to be regarded by some media professionals as "everyday", and "bizarre" incidences in which sensational details (for example, those of flying body parts) and disruptions in common narrative trajectories (for example, that the woman survived and the man died) are therefore often selected for the news. This contributes to a discourse that normalises gender based violence. Linking the attempted femicide to a

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"domestic tiff" further plays down the act and normalises it (a "domestic tiff" being part of "everyday" life). Furthermore, the man's agency in perpetrating attempted murder is subtly obscured, and the framing of his death as the principle event in the news piece deflects from his actions and intentions of control over his partner. In Image 14 above, I have included the full page in which the article was located to show, too, the juxtaposition of coverage of gender based violence and a sexualised image of a woman representing a strong male gaze.

In the second example, on the right of the same page (Image 14), a new law enabling rape victims to compel their attackers to take an HIV test is reported on. To an extent, this article employs an advocate discourse by including information and perspectives that are not directly related to the new law being reported on, but that serve to place the law and the issue of rape in the broader context of advancing the rights of victims of gender based violence. It also employs more subtle, complicit mechanisms that imply consensus with the reader when reporting on the details of the issue. For example, we are told that after a "protracted" process the new law has "finally" been put into place. This opening statement immediately establishes the new law as overdue and progressive, as well as one that many would welcome. In addition, women's rights groups are quoted regarding the prevalence of rape in South Africa, and the journalist asserts that "the definition of rape was until now narrow and outdated". As such, discursive strategies of complicity and advocacy are employed to applaud the new law within a news reporting format. Again, I have included the advertisement for a penis enlargement product with the sexualised image of a woman alongside this news article to underscore the incongruity of discourses.

Overall, the discourses emerging in SS were highly contradictory. Intimate gender relations (for example, sexual, romantic and "domestic") were a particular source of conservative discourses with strong anti-feminist backlash sentiments. "Informal" and religious spaces were especially powerful conduits for these discourses. Many SS readers, according to certain research participants, are Christian. It is interesting to note, however, that the spaces created for religion in the SS subscribe to a gendered discourse with a particularly strong anti-feminist backlash, which is not necessarily inevitable in all religious or Christian discourses. While there are probably numerous readers who may agree with such discourses, these examples raise the question regarding to what extent discourses in newspapers can and should reproduce particular discourses circulating in broader society.

As will become evident with the other newspapers reviewed, these particular discourses are filtered out through the editorial process in other newspapers. While newspaper columns, letters pages and so are in place to stimulate debate, put forward controversial views and engage with readers' concerns, editorial gate-keeping plays a role in limiting certain discourses. The SS appeared, for example, to push forward visual and spatial discourses around women's right and ability to lead in public spaces. Is it just a matter of political economy, creating space for discourses shared by readers, or do ideological and ethical concerns at editorial level limit the extent to which this happens? What does the discursive tension in the SS tell us, firstly, about this particular newspaper, secondly, about tabloid and, thirdly, about broader feminist trajectories in South Africa? Some of these questions will be explored through comparison with the other newspapers in this Chapter and in Chapter 7, where editorial and journalistic perspectives and discourses are unpacked.

6.3.3   Investigations and Sensexualisations: Gendered Discourses in the Sunday Times

6.3.3.1 General style, content and discursive orientation

The ST is the most widely circulated national newspaper in South Africa, with a readership of over three million people. It is a large newspaper with a number of sections and inserts, ranging from the Business Times, to Lifestyle, Metro and the ST magazine. The newspaper is formatted as a broadsheet, but with the inserts in tabloid format.

The ST represents an instance of very mixed journalism. On the one hand, it is known for its investigative journalism aimed at uncovering, in particular, fraud and corruption among government officials and various other powerful people and institutions in South Africa. Its front-page stories are well known, and one study named it the most influential newspaper in South Africa as a result of these kinds of stories (Media Tenor South Africa, 2007). This journalistic approach resonates with the view of the media's role as a "watchdog", and as such as a distinct political actor (raised in Chapter 4).

Image 15: Content variety and colloquialism, Sunday Times, 2 December 2007

On the other hand, however, much of its content closely resembles tabloid, with sensationalised celebrity stories, human-interest pieces and stories framed by their appeal to the "bizarre" and "unusual". This tabloid style extends not only to content but also to the highly visual presentation, with many (gendered) images including those which, in addition to a small caption, form an entire textual unit or what I have called a "picture-story" (i.e. s story told through pictures, without prose accompanying it). In addition, the ST includes a range of both "serious" social commentary and education around critical social issues such as HIV/AIDS, and "light", entertaining features and snippets. This resembles what is sometimes dubbed "edutainment", incorporating a didactic but informal, conversational and light-hearted approach.

In Image 15, the divergence of content can be seen. This page contains an article regarding HIV/AIDS among children and makes suggestions on how to approach issues such as the treatment of HIV-infected children and how to discuss children's HIV-status with them. The article highlights thorny and challenging social issues, but also incorporates colloquial language in the headline and a cheerful image. At the bottom of the page, a playful news piece regarding the question of whether to greet with a kiss on one cheek or both is included. This illustrates the variety of stories contained in the ST, as well as the often-colloquial style.

While the front page investigative and political news pieces resemble a more "traditional" reporting style, the tabloid style of writing and presentation is also very influential in many parts of the newspaper. The way in which ST appears to attempt to straddle the polarities of what is perceived of as "hard" and "soft" (or tabloid) journalism is captured in one of the participants' descriptions of the ST style as "quali-pop", namely a mixture of "quality" and

"popular" journalism. While this assertion will be discussed in more detail in the section detailing interview findings, it is perhaps helpful to note here that this description of style resonates with debates around tabloid versus "real" journalism discussed in Chapter 4, and appears to represent an actively sought location at the interface of these styles of journalism, both of which have a particular readership appeal.

The implied readership of the ST is middle-class. This is largely predictable given the pricing of the newspaper and the demographics associated with newspapers on the whole. The discursively implied racial readership is quite spread, but very urban, and the Metro section is directed at a Gauteng readership in particular. An "aspirational" discourse resembling that found in SS is also present in parts, although aimed more at a middle-class readership discursively portrayed as aspiring to the upper echelons of upper-class-ship. Features and images portraying the lives of the extremely wealthy are frequently incorporated to this effect.

In terms of gender, like the SS the content and discursive orientation is relatively mixed, with textual features ranging from more progressive gender discourses to those exhibiting what I perceive as highly problematic gender constructions. Similarly to the SS, the latter often involved gendered constructions linked to the "private sphere", including inter-personal relationships and sex. In the range in between the two poles of quite progressive and quite problematic gender discourses, were also textual units that captured subtler issues around gender representation in the media. For example, some features raised important gender issues without adequately addressing them in terms of gendered implications, or framed them as (un-gendered) social-economic phenomena (to be discussed in more detail later on).

Sensationalist, tabloid-style pieces were often particularly problematic in terms of gender, employing a vast amount of (highly gendered) focus on sexual relationships. My impression was that while gender relations in the private sphere more broadly were not cast in a problematic way as was often the case in the SS (for example in the columns discussed), sexuality *in particular* was cast as often fraught, and central to the interpersonal relationships between women and men. This was true in particular of tabloid-style celebrity pieces. Romanticism between women and men was also portrayed (and is also a potentially interesting site of gender analysis) but outweighed by the sexualisation of relationships

between them[43]. Furthermore, while discourses embraced sexual diversity to a greater extent than those in SS - and did not suggest as strong an undertone of homophobia - they were still largely heteronormative.

As with the SS, the political coverage in the ST represents a more "traditional" reporting style and language, and there was no real discursive difference detected in the sample at hand regarding the way in which male and female politicians were represented. While I noticed some features in this regard, the sample size (even at a qualitative level) did not allow for any projections as to significance. For example, I noticed that one news headline mentioned a female politician by her first name (not the case with male politicians), but I was not able to determine in this sample if this was a common feature of coverage of women politicians or linked to the fact that she, like many women politicians in South Africa, had a long double-barrel surname that might not work easily in a headline. However, while I could not detect any particular gendered discursive orientations in the treatment of male and female politicians, political news coverage (as with the SS) was largely male-dominated. As will be discussed later, this could also be attributed to the dominance of male politicians in the political arena itself (despite the fact that South Africa has among the highest number of women in political posts in the world) as well as the particular political issues dominating the news at the time, namely the ANC succession race between male politicians Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki.

The ST, like the SS, represents an instance of diverse and often contradictory discourses, and problematic gender discourses clustered in (but not exclusive to) the more "informal", colloquial and conversational spaces in the newspaper. However, in contrast it is more secular, and gendered discourses are conveyed less through vectors of religion than through westernised discourses of sexual liberation and sexualisation. Importantly, unlike the SS, in the sample assessed no spaces were created, or allowed, for the use of overt anti-feminist messages. Instead, the lags in gender transformation in the ST were more linked to the visual culture of the newspaper, the gendered colloquial discourses of tabloid and, in some cases, the mere sidestepping or neutralising of gendered issues.

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[43] That is not to say that romanticism and sexuality are discreet, just that those articles that focused on romantic love were more concerned with the relationship and emotions within it as a whole, while articles about sexuality did not to nearly the same extent.

6.3.3.2 Counts of textual units with gender relevance

The counts undertaken for the SS are presented in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6: RESEARCH COMPONENT ONE COUNTS FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES			
	Main News[44]	Other	Total
Gender relevance	25	35*	60
Women in leadership	4	4	8
Homosexuality	2	1	3
Gender based violence	7	0	7
Women's issues	0	2	2
Gender constructions	18	32[45]	50

Tabloid style stories and images contributed to the predominance of textual units with gender relevance in the latter part of the newspaper. The "back page", containing celebrity gossip centred almost entirely on sex, was a prolific source of constructions of gender counted in the latter part of the newspaper. Gender constructs also entered here through readers' letters, particularly around the controversial issue of the Women's League's nomination of Jacob Zuma as ANC president.

The gender constructions in the main news section of the paper varied in part due to the varied spaces provided in the news section (which unlike most front pages of newspapers already includes letters, columns and short news snippets, for example). Therefore, these constructions were counted in forms such as a letter addressing sexism, an article on Jacob Zuma's wives, a gender stereotype of a swooning woman employed in a tongue-in-cheek column, a picture-story of a sex worker who offered to donate some of the proceeds of her work to charity and an article on celebrity marriage. As can be seen at first glance, these examples of gender constructions tend to be centred on the "private" sphere, including sexual and marital relations.

With respect to women in leadership, the counts above reflect a balance between the news section and latter sections of the newspaper. Two of these textual units were of particular

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[44] In the case of the ST, the "news section" was identified as up to page 16.
[45] In the last issue reviewed, the "back page" was missing. The number of articles with gender relevance and gender constructions was therefore significantly lower for this last issue, also impacting on overall counts.

interest, since they raised the wage and wealth gaps between men and women in South Africa. However, while they raised the fact that very few South African women are among the country's wealthiest, and that women still earn much less than men, they did not address the gendered reasons behind this.

The textual units involving constructions of homosexuality included two stories regarding gay celebrities or prominent people, one of whom was getting married and one who was said to have gone public with his sexual orientation. The last count referred to a gendered stereotype of homosexuality raised as part of another article. As with the SS, gay women were not portrayed in any of the textual units counted. While the discourses employed were rhetorically more embracing of diversity in sexual orientation and not openly homophobic, the very sparseness of the textual units representing gay relationships, as well as the fact that in one news piece "coming out" constituted celebrity gossip, represents a discursive feature in and of itself, and the resultant discourse is a heteronormative one.

6.3.3.3 *Discussion and examples of discourses in the Sunday Times*

Some of the most patent gender constructions emerged through the overall visual culture created on the pages of the ST. Scanning the images included in the newspaper, an overarching visual discourse is shaped, which largely signifies women as objects for sexual and visual consumption, and men as agents in public spheres such as politics, business and sports. The "back page" phenomenon, involving celebrity gossip, usually concentrated on sex, as well as various other entertainment and celebrity-related images, contributes significantly to this visual portrayal of women. Images as part of political coverage did include women, but images of men continued to dominate these spaces. Images of sports and business protagonists were predominantly male. Even the images of women in the business pages were of women as sexualised consumables, with the "back page" phenomenon incorporated into the Business Times as "The other back page".

Image 16: Gendered constructs of consumers and consumables in the business section, Sunday Times, 2 December 2007

Image 16 above shows three pages from the same edition of the Business Times, including the front page, back page and another page from the inner content of this supplement. The front page and back pages are dominated by images of young women in the role of implicitly consumable marketing attractions. On the front page it is as Victoria Secret lingerie models flown as part of a "PJ party" to a fashion show by Virgin Atlantic. On the back page it is as waitresses for a new restaurant, specifically employed for their role in (sexually) attracting heterosexual men to the establishment. Given that the context is a supplement on business issues, (young) women in these images are discursively portrayed as consumer items within the business market rather than as business people.

The pattern for the Business Times included sexualised images of young women on *all* back pages and three out of four front pages in the sample, thus rendering the bodies of women as vain and decorative attractions to the supplement itself. This further implies the readership's interests as heterosexual and male, constructing and reinforcing a "male gaze". In the main body of the supplement, images of men in business roles dominate. The powerful spatial discourse created through these visual patterns in one that dichotomises the roles and values of women and men as passive/consumed and active/consumer respectively.

That women are the main focus of picture-stories, and that this often includes stories centred on sex, goes towards reinforcing a discourse that holds women to be passive, silent, sexualised and visually accessible. The images below are of picture-stories, in other words, stories that are principally conveyed with the use of an image accompanied by a short caption.

Image 17: Picture-stories in the objectification of women, Sunday Times, 2 December 2007
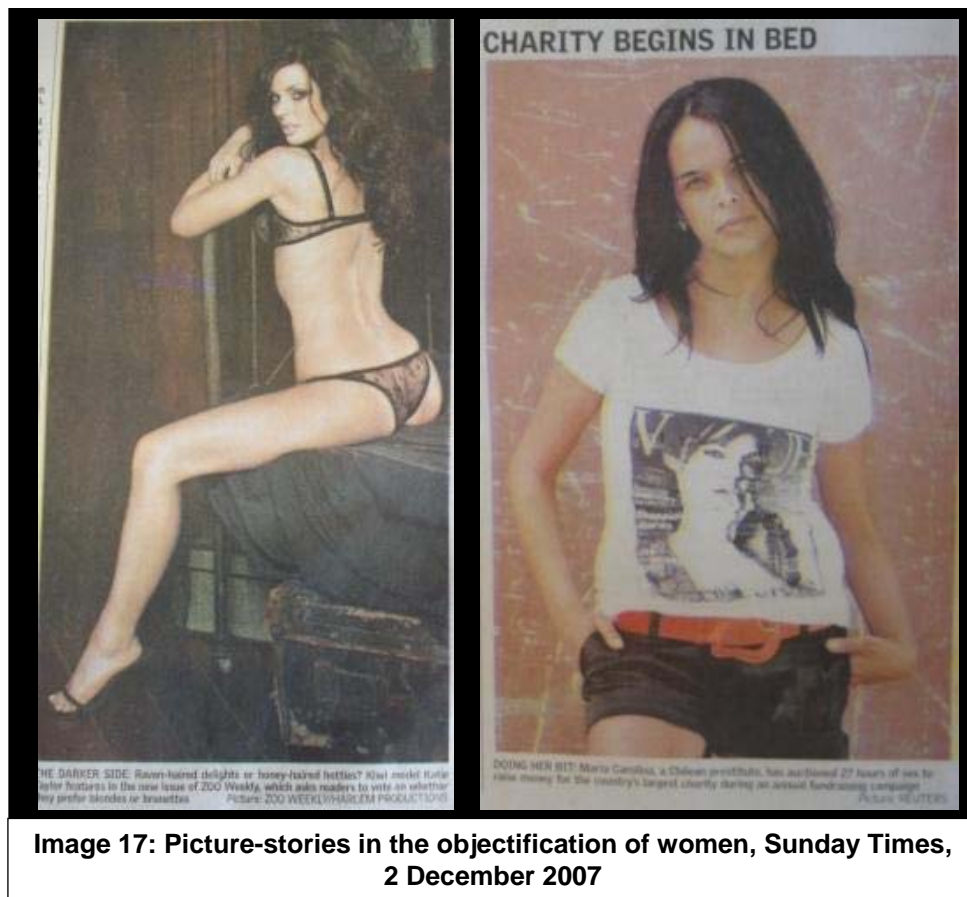
In the image on the left, the caption reads: "THE DARKER SIDE: Raven-haired delights or honey-haired hotties? Kiwi model Katie Taylor features in the new issue of ZOO weekly, which asks readers to vote on whether they prefer blondes or brunettes". In the image on the right, the caption reads: "DOING HER BIT: Maria Carolina, a Chilean prostitute, has auctioned 27 hours of sex to raise money for the country's largest charity during an annual fundraising campaign". In both cases, the "story" is constituted primarily of an image and limited text, framing these women as primarily for visual consumption. The discourses in the caption texts also affirm the notion of women as consumable. There were very few picture-stories involving men, but a good number involving women. This reinforces the notion that women (especially young women) are objects to be viewed without reference to a deeper context. The construction, performance and consumption of feminine sexuality, here, is also implicitly undertaken through a heterosexual male gaze, implicitly defining and reinforcing notions of masculinity as they do notions of femininity.

Other sources of overt gender constructions constituting women as principally sexual and visually consumable are complicit gendered discourses in tabloid-style articles. The colloquial language of the tabloid pieces is not only highly gendered, but framed in androcentric and heteronormative terms. Some of the words used to describe women and men on the back page of just one of the newspaper issues in the sample were as follows:

> **Women:** "sexy society darlings", "toy joy", "playmate", "girls", "buxom";
> **Men:** "playboy", "geek" (Sunday Times, 13 January, 2008).

In another issues were some of the following descriptions:

> **Women:** "stunning model", "beauty queen", "beauty", "busty Dutch lass", "model girlfriend";
> **Men:** "formula one ace", "track idol", "speed king", "randy tennis ace", "German multi-millionaire" (Sunday Times, 2 December 2007).

When listed like this, the gendered discursive orientation of the colloquial descriptive language used in these celebrity gossip tabloid pieces is quite evident. Masculinity is constructed as active, powerful and linked to material and public achievements. Femininity is constructed as centred on the value of beauty, sexualised and constituted in relation to

the relationship with men (as their girlfriends, playmates etc.). While these descriptions do also, to a certain extent, mirror the patriarchal structures and relationships between the men and women being reported on, the ways in which these relationships are *described* demonstrates a discursive *complicity* with these patriarchal relations, reinforcing the gendered constructs around men and women.

In these tabloid style articles, heterosexual sex is represented as the axis around which the relationships between men and women pivot. The sexuality of men and women are both portrayed through a heteronormative lens, but constructed in different ways. Male sexuality is linked strongly to the notion of sexual "performance", discursively portrayed as functional, aggressive and a necessary performance of masculinity (echoing with discourses contained in a number of SS articles). Female sexuality is strongly linked to physical beauty, unabated sexual desire and sexual availability. Many of these stories centre on women's sexual willingness and desire for their (male) partners, and men's ability to "satisfy" them sexually. In this way, too, femininity and masculinity are discursively portrayed as being actualised and performed *through* one another via heterosexual sex.

Unlike the SS, the sports pages contained very little on sportswomen. There were only three instances in which women were raised in the sports sections of the sample. One was with a yearly calendar supplement detailing the sports events for the year, which included women's sports events and images of female sportspeople. The second was a story of a man and a woman sportsperson who had entered into a relationship with one another. In this story, the sports prowess of the man is discursively centred over that of the woman, who is portrayed primarily as another acquisition of the sportsman. While the content of the article is largely centred on sport, the headline and images used for the article focus on the romantic relationship, and label the sportswoman as the man's "big catch". The image selected for the article shows the woman in a supporting, nurturing role, contributing to a more passive, supportive construction of femininity in relation to a more active, assertive masculinity. As with the SS, a sense emerges that discourses around personal relationships in the media lag behind other gender transformation achievements.

Image 18: The privatisation of women's public participation in the sports section, Sunday Times, 16 December 2007

Image 19: Trivialising gender in a sports column, Sunday Times, 9 December 2007

The third mention of women in the sports sections involves a column on the 2010 Soccer World Cup to take place in South Africa, discussed in relation to the question of how to deal with the matter of sex work at a time of huge tourist influx. Entitled "Evening classes for ladies of the night", this column was written in response to a suggestion made by a politician (Meshack) to meet with sex workers to discuss the implications of 2010 with them as well as the possibility of seeking other employment in time for 2010. The author then suggests in a tongue-in-cheek tone how sex workers can and should capitalise on the 2010 Soccer World Cup and grow their "skills" to accommodate foreign tourists. While the column is written with a great deal of irony, and a reasonable scepticism at Meshack's motives, the discourse employed eventually serves to undermine sex workers, to trivialise their work and circumstances in a country in which sex work is illegal, and to construct them as sex-hungry consumables in

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the 2010 market. That the writing is ironic does not, in my opinion, adequately dilute the patriarchal discourse that dominates. The excerpts below illustrate this:

"Never mind, Meshack, we know that deep down you think they're [sex workers] having fun, even when in the next breath you talk about retraining them for a 'better life'. Far be it from me to suggest that you are barking up the wrong World Cup tree, but this doesn't seem the time for well-meaning rehabilitative initiatives. The KZN sisters surely know a wad of deutschmarks when they see one. To pretend otherwise is to be condescending" (Sunday Times, 9 December 2007).

"This isn't the time to start talking about needlepoint classes and poverty relief funds when the prospect of lusty shirt-swapping and a little more with a happy Spaniard is in the offing. If Hadebe really wants to help, he could offer Cantonese lessons or night classes in the etiquette of asking a Bulgarian how he likes his scotch" (Sunday Times, 9 December 2007).

"I say let the sisters do what they do best" (Sunday Times, 9 December 2007).

The columnist continues to describe ways in which sex workers can prepare themselves to better pander to the needs, whims and egos of male sex tourists during the World Cup, in a way that trivialises the issue of sex work and complicity reinforces patriarchal power relations between clients and sex workers. The author mocks "condescending" attempts to encourage sex workers to gain "respectability" and is understandably sceptical of such attempts and their implications. However, he further undermines and condescends upon sex workers discursively rather than framing them as potentially empowered. In saying: "I say let the sisters do what they do best", an insincere camaraderie and identification is implied (a condescending discursive devise), as is the message that (female) sex workers are principally good for the sexual service of men.

While columnists work within a more flexible framework than other journalists, there are limits regarding what they are allowed to publish, as illustrated in the case of the firing of the ST columnist Bullard (discussed in Chapter 4). This is ultimately controlled by editors but, as

appears to be the case in the recent firing of Bullard, is also motivated by public responses to columns and the political currency of the issue at hand.

Despite the fact that such columns openly represent an individual's view, some very powerful discourses are conveyed in these spaces. The parameters of "critical" and "thought-provoking" are therefore set along some lines or values, and as such which columns are and are not published speaks to the social politics woven into the editorial filtration process. That this was the only article mentioning women in this sports section (together with the previous example mentioned) also constitutes a subtle spatial discourse through which women's "place" in sports is constructed around sexuality.

The above examples represent instances of relatively overt gender constructions. However, subtler and more internally contradictory discourses also emerged. For example, one prominent article covering the rape of a school girl, Jamie Paterson, during a house robbery frames the act of gender based violence in a way that denies or sidesteps its gendered characteristics. Below is an image of a quote from Jamie Paterson posted on the second page as the "editor's choice", with a brief description to contextualise it.

EDITOR'S CHOICE: *"I feel so much anger and hatred, an indescribable fury for what they did to us and how cruelly they treated us, as if we were not human. And how they damaged us all for the future." — Jamie Paterson, 17, on being raped during a robbery at her family's home. The rapist told her he was HIV-positive. The latest crime statistics show a 7% increase in house robberies* — Page 13

Image 20: Discursive sidestepping of gender dimensions through the framing of a quote, Sunday Times, 9 December 2007

That her voice emerges strongly in the story and is quoted here is encouraging from a gender transformation perspective. The cruelty demonstrated by the attackers, who also severely beat her mother while calling her a "white bitch", is indeed conveyed in the news piece as well. However, by raising house robbery statistics in relation to the rape as in the example above, this young woman's rape is framed as the consequence not of gendered violence, but as an almost logical consequence of increased house robberies. That rape and serious assault of women is part of a house robbery is therefore subtly discursively

accepted, and the gender relations that intersect with class, race and other contextual issues (as in this case) to fuel gender based violence are sidestepped. Framing the events as part of the problem of house robberies naturalises rape in South Africa to a certain extent.

The main article regarding Jamie Paterson's rape, on another page of the newspaper, also ends with a list of statistics on crime, including high-jacking, robberies, aggravated assault and murder, but again not rape. Once again, while Jamie Paterson's voice emerges strongly (linked in part to her incredible willingness and bravery to speak publicly about the rape) the event is framed as a violent robbery, not a gendered manifestation of power. The gendered nature of crime and violence in South Africa, indicated in the kinds of crimes committed and the role of gender in determining victims and perpetrators, is discursively circumvented.

In other examples, gender issues are raised but not really addressed. For example, the article below raises the issue of the gender wage gap, but does not in the end address or unpack the reasons behind it. The headline suggests that the gender wage gap is an important element of the article, but the only comments on this gap quoted are that it is "shocking" and that, in the field of architecture, the numbers of women and men are reaching a balance as are wages. This article therefore illustrates an instance of a gender equity discourse, but not a gender transformative one that seeks to understand the underlying gender constructions and relations that lead to inequity.

Image 21: Gender equity discourses sidestepping constructions underlying inequity, Sunday Times, 9 December 2007

Some textual units were discursively inconsistent *internally*. In an article speculating which of the women who are wives of Jacob Zuma would become "first lady" of South Africa should he become country president, Zuma and his polygamous lifestyle is mocked and ridiculed through the language and tone of the article. However, at the same time the issue of polygamy is trivialised and the notion that women's power is largely located in their personal relationships with men is subtly reinforced. The excerpts below illustrate this:

"Being Mrs Jacob Zuma is no walk in the park" (Sunday Times, 16 December 2007).

"The question on everyone's lips is: who will he take as first lady should he win the race for the ANC presidency and thereby land the job of president of South Africa?" (Sunday Times, 16 December 2007).

"The Zuma harem - well, part of it anyway" (Sunday Times, 16 December 2007).

Image 22: Tabloid humour and colloquialism as trivialising gendered topics, Sunday Times, 16 December 2007

Again, these excerpts convey an ironic undertone, and the article appears to try to undermine polygamy. However, for the sake of entertainment and humour some of the issues are trivialised and over-simplified. As was the case in some of the SS examples, the "entertainment" orientation of certain news articles can tend to trivialise social issues, especially those relating to gender relations and the "private sphere".

Another example of apparent internal discontinuity in discourse is a column in which a tongue-in-cheek, sceptical and disapproving view of women taking double-barrel surnames is taken.

Image 23: Internal contradiction and struggles over gender transformation meanings and strategies, Sunday Times, 13 January 2008

The column begins with a message of support towards and alignment with feminist ideas, including those informing the use of double-barrel surnames by women upon marriage to men, before continuing to suggest why their use is embarrassing and unnecessary to the feminist project.

"Look, I have read the likes of Simone de Beauvoir and other feminists. Some of my sisters have actually reminded me that feminism, like everything else, started in Africa….. Feminism should therefore be embraced by African women, I agree. I do understand that women should assert themselves strongly in this phallocentric, patriarchal society that we are all born into. One way of asserting oneself is through the language one uses in engaging other members of society. Another way of asserting oneself is through guarding one's identity jealously; yet another is by defying societal expectations as to how one celebrates one's individuality and identity. But there should be limits to that celebration of one's identity, methinks, especially if through celebrating one's identity one inadvertently opens oneself to ridicule" (Sunday Times, 13 January 2008).

He continues to explain, in particular, the logistical hassles of adopting a double-barrel approach to post-marriage surnames in the context of the African tradition to already combine surnames with a clan name. What is interesting about this article, in particular, is the interaction between the content and the headline: "Feminists will never have me over a barrel". While the headline suggests a resistance to feminism and an "othering" of feminists as a potential external threat, in the main content of the column the need for and validity of feminism in South Africa is trumpeted, alongside a discourse that undermines one manifestation of a feminist strategy of resistance. It therefore promotes, while at the same time subtly undermining, feminist strategies and holds them up to inspection as to their reasonableness.

He claims that "double-barrel surnames are not a manifestation of feminism; they are meaningless and pompous." The feminist motivations behind them and the patriarchal nature of current naming practices, alluded to in the beginning of the article, are thus subsequently trivialised and devalued in relation to, for example, the custom of incorporating a clan name. This discontinuity in discourse signifies some of the discursive struggles around gender transformation that can and are undertaken through the media, particularly through spaces such as columns and letters. Internal contradictions, often between advocate and complicit discourses, are a sign of this struggle over meaning and value in a changing society.

As mentioned in relation so the SS, annual campaigns such as Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism campaign lead to an increased number of articles on gender and gender based violence issues around these times (Media Tenor South Africa, 2006). In the case of the ST, while a higher *incidence* of mention of gender based

Image 24: Personalised voicing in representations of gender based violence, Sunday Times, 2 December 2007

violence was not observed during these three weeks than in the last issue in the sample in January, the campaign did lead to the publication of special articles on gender based violence at this time. A partnership between Gender Links and the ST around the 16 Days of Activism was undertaken towards the publishing of stories on gender based violence told from the perspectives of the women who had experienced it. These articles represented important instances of voicing, for the women whose voices were raised through the articles as well as more broadly in the highly personal voicing of gender based violence issues beyond the reporting of unusual cases.

In the context of political events highlighting gender issues, such as the ANC Women's League's nomination of Jacob Zuma for ANC president, some space was created to capitalise on the debate this generated. One particularly powerful piece on the issue was a column written by a woman (see Image 25 below). Interestingly, most regular columns (in all of the newspapers reviewed[46]) were written by men, and while it is not clear why this is the case or if it fluctuates due to the inclusion of columns by writers who do not write columns each week, this column offered an alternative voice to some of the gendered views being forwarded in other columns. It is also decidedly feminist, raising an interesting point around the potential role of columns in generating (pro- or anti-feminist) advocate discourses that challenge or reinforce complicit gendered discourses. Advocate discourses are less subtle than complicit ones, and can therefore also play a role in stimulating public debate more directly.

Image 25: Rare woman columnist discussing contemporary gender issues, Sunday Times, 2 December 2007

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[46] The MG did, however, bring in various women's voices in column-like form by including pieces from women outside of the newspaper itself.

While the language employed in much of the investigative journalism undertaken in ST tends to steer away from overt reference to gender and gender issues, the presentation of specific facts towards highlighting these can be a strategy towards wielding "the facts" and "the story" to promote awareness of gender issues. In the article below (Image 26), issues surrounding a belief in India that some children are "cursed" and therefore treated with shame, suspicion and often abuse, is investigated and explored. Here, gender issues are raised more critically than in other investigative articles reviewed, in the repeated consideration of the differential treatment of boy and girl children, and the particular vulnerabilities girl children face.

Image 26: Feature writing highlighting social and structural gender dynamics, Sunday Times, 13 January 2008

The article focuses more on religious and "cultural" beliefs as the source of suffering endured by these girl children than the gendered power relations and constructs that may fuel these practices and beliefs. However, unlike many other news articles on child abuse, this article ensures that, while the issue is not framed as solely impacting on girl children, some of the social and structural gender issues that make girls particularly vulnerable are highlighted. Employing a more emotive discourse than traditional news reporting would allow, the author has also used sarcasm to frame patriarchal abuses as unacceptable, and even ridiculous. Interestingly, sarcasm and irony is used similarly to the way it was in the column on sex work and the 2010 Soccer World Cup, but towards creating a discursive alignment or agreement with the reader on the need to undermine patriarchy.

"They are not permitted to marry and are only able to earn a few rupees as prostitutes. But even the cursed girls that stay in their extended families are sexual prey for all the men. Feelings of guilt? Sense of injustice? Whatever for?

It is the right of every man to abuse a woman of a lower caste without making himself impure" (Sunday Times, 13 January 2008).

Perhaps the framing of these issues as largely "cultural" and religious is also problematic, and a more direct engagement with the concept of gender as it impacts and is impacted upon by "culture" and religion could be made. However, this article aims to highlight gendered dimensions of child abuse, and is therefore an interesting example of gender transformation issues emerging in the press.

The ST contains a variety of journalistic approaches and spaces, from the controversial expression of viewpoints in columns to formal political reporting and the investigative reports that often lie in between in the continuum of overt and, on the other end, covert manifestations of situated knowledge. Overall, some of the tabloid style features (both visual and textual) are implicated in supporting aspects of a patriarchal culture in the newspaper. Particularly in entertainment and celebrity sections (but also penetrating into, for example, the business section), the male gaze is pervasive. As Mulvey (2003) discusses in relation to cinema, the male gaze reflects and reinforces a gendered sexual imbalance in which women and men are dichotomised as passive and active respectively. Mulvey (ibid) argues that not only does the male gaze place the female body at the centre of the gaze of sexual desire and commodification, avoiding a similar objectification of men, but that it also functions to enlist the reader (whether male or female, heterosexual or homosexual) towards viewing female sexuality through a heterosexual male lens. It is through such pervasive visual culture that gender constructs are widely assimilated, and written gender transformation discourses can be undermined by this kind of visual orientation. Furthermore, through the lens of this male gaze, both ideals of masculinity and femininity are defined as actualised in opposition to one another.

Therefore, while certain visual and textual features may be classified as "light" and "fun" among other things (as will be discussed in relation to the interviews), they shape a visual discursive culture that, although normalised, is an important issue for gender transformation. As such, the role of tabloidisation in gender transformation (or lack thereof) in the media needs to be interrogated. This is not a simple matter, given that tabloid features such as the rise of the human-interest story and conversational style are potentially powerful tools towards transforming the media. As has been evidenced in some of the examples described

above, conversational spaces in which people's views are expressed, emotions more overtly incorporated and colloquial, inter-personal language used, offer opportunities to both lash out at feminist ideas or to promote gender transformation. The values informing the limitations imposed on free speech and the spaces created for it in newspapers are therefore of great interest. As with the SS, some of the most interesting gendered features emerged in relation to these kinds of spaces. However, subtler gendered discourses were also highlighted in news pieces here, underscoring the role, for example, of fact selection and framing in engendering the news.

6.3.4   Carving spaces: Gendered Discourses in the Mail & Guardian

6.3.4.1 General style, content and discursive orientation

The MG is generally between 40 and 60 pages long, depending on whether or not the newspaper is running special issues or supplements. The newspaper includes various sections such as general news, African news and issues, international news, comment and analysis, a financial section, a business section and a "Friday" section covering entertainment features such as books, theatre and film. The layout is tabloid although the style is not. The style of reporting is more "critical" than the other newspapers covered, a term I use here to denote a journalistic style that engages more directly with social, economic and structural issues in framing, analysing and contextualising contemporary events. It also denotes aspects of what is referred to as a "critical" approach in the social sciences (discussed briefly in Section 5.6.3.4), in particular the social constructionist foundation for this approach and a consciousness of power relations.

Some of the stories covered are investigative, aimed at exposing corruption, fraud and other ethical and legal issues within South African politics, and in this sense the MG conforms to an extent to the notion of the press as a political watchdog. The news sections, however, often involve a form of commentary or opinion, rather than aiming only to present snippets of "factual" information in the style of "traditional" news reporting. In this sense, the MG's style often blurs the distinction between news reporting and comment and analysis. The excerpt below, from the "news" section, is an example of the mixing of opinion and news reporting writing styles.

"A casino might seem a perverse setting for a presidential hopeful to address anybody, let alone what purported to be a gathering of the KwaZulu-Natal legal fraternity in Pietermaritzburg on Tuesday evening. The Golden House Casino is a succinct answer to those who wonder what has gone wrong in our society. On that evening rich, poor, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, black, white, Indian, coloured, Pakistani were gambling there by 8pm on a Tuesday" (Mail & Guardian, 14 December 2007).

In addition to the commentary infused into news reporting, early pages of the newspaper (generally reserved for news reporting) incorporate a good deal of dedicated comment and opinion spaces related to current events, often written by various social and political leaders. For example, a number of women leaders were invited to share their views on the issues surrounding the ANC's presidential race in one of the sample newspaper issues. The kinds of stories covered in the MG also include various human-interest pieces, and while this in some respects represents a tabloidised approach to news, these stories are distinguished by their greater tendency not to be of bizarre or salacious events but rather of common social, economic and political problems experienced by non-celebrities, such as domestic abuse.

The discursively implied readership of the MG is middle-class, educated and largely urban. It is also suggested as largely liberal[47], secular and humanitarian, interested in issues such as poverty and violence, and the particular struggles of the third world in post-colonial contexts. In this respect, however, the discursively implied readership is not predominantly those who struggle with these issues in their own daily lives; issues such as poverty are framed as being experienced (directly) by a "them" rather than an "us". This is in contrast to, for example, the SS for which the socio-economic issues portrayed are framed more often as being experienced by a collective "we" of readers.

A good deal of space was carved out in the MG for the discussion of gender issues in the sample reviewed. I use the term "carved out", because spaces appeared to be consciously created to highlight particular gender issues and to capitalise on gender debates emerging through current events. These spaces were carved out through the addition of supplements,

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[47] I use this term here to denote a "leftist" orientation based broadly on human rights and diversity over state or religious restrictions on personal freedom. This could include, for example, the right to abortion and sexual orientation. I recognise, however, the potential complexity and diverse applications of such a term.

extra columns and the incorporation of special articles written by various politicians and leaders.

For example, the 7 December 2007 issue of the MG included a focus on various women's perspectives on the ANC's presidential race (particularly in terms of gender issues), from politicians to local activists. This was spread throughout the newspaper and featured prominently on the front page (see below). Women's voices, in this regard, were purposely fore-grounded in a political current events context in which male politicians had tended to dominate the news. This represents, in a sense, a liberal-inclusionary approach. However, unlike the SS whose liberal-inclusionary approach was relatively limited to showing working women visually and as new *subjects*, in this case the emphasis is on *voice*, epistemology: on who gets to shape how "news" (knowledge) is presented.

Image 27: Special issue featuring the voices of women leaders on the ANC succession race, Mail & Guardian, 7 December 2007

While the perspectives given through the voices in this and other spaces were diverse, reflecting discursive struggles over the meanings, manifestations and strategies of gendered politics, none of these messages were overtly anti-feminist. Instead, a political leaning towards gender transformation characterised the discourses emerging in the spaces created. Discourses reflecting a high level of (pro-gender transformation) engagement with and contemplation around gender issues were quite prominent. The only obvious exception to this rule was the sports section, which was devoid of sportswomen in the sample reviewed. A discourse highlighting the importance of women in leadership (mirroring liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms) was also quite prominent, but was buttressed by discourses that interrogated the assumption that having women in leadership necessarily

leads to gender transformation. Various discourses also deconstructed gender relations and identities within broader socio-economic and political contexts, challenging essentialised or naturalised gender constructs. In this way, liberal-inclusionary approaches were fortified or supplemented by critical and progressive approaches to gender transformation.

The nexus between gender and poverty featured quite strongly, with poor women's struggles, in particular, forming a focus in many of the engendered articles featured. Issues related to gender based violence and sex work were also particularly prominent. The focus on gender based violence was linked (at least in part) to the 16 Days of Activism, with special features and supplements around this issue incorporated in a way that supported the women in leadership discourse. For example, numerous articles on gender based violence reported on the perspective of women working in fields related to gender based violence, for example as policewomen, social workers and activists. The concept of patriarchy, with its attendant implications of power relations, was also one that emerged in numerous textual units, reflecting more overt applications of feminist discourse than the other newspapers. Patriarchal resistance was also discursively raised as a key inhibitor to gender transformation. In this way, there was a discursive recognition of the power dynamics and struggles inherent in gender relations.

Understandings of gender relations were also regularly underpinned by discourses that linked them to socio-economic and structural contexts, such as poverty, socialisation and legal frameworks. This is in contrast to some of the discourses emerging in the other newspapers in the study that naturalised gender relations, particularly those located within the "private sphere". Generally, the MG reflected less internal contradiction in gendered discourse than the other newspapers reviewed. The voices promoted, spaces created and images used - while indeed containing discursive struggles, contradictions and variations - tended in my view to be oriented towards a more cohesive gender transformation project.

Interestingly, as a researcher I found that it was initially more difficult to identify "gender constructs" in the MG than in the other two newspapers. I eventually came to understand this difficulty as linked to my own critical understandings of gender and gender transformation, which were more often reflected in the MG than in the other two newspapers reviewed. In addition, the language employed in the MG to describe gender relations was more familiar to me in the context of the theory built around my research. I realised that my

own discursive locations, including my particular academic training as well as the conceptualisations and constructions of gender I have built over the years, impacted on my ability to "see" similar constructions in other texts. In this regard, I observed first hand how the discourses we draw upon and prize in our own understandings of gender are, in a sense, naturalised to us, making alternatives to these easier to identify.

I also reflected that the very notion of a "gender construct" is generally used to refer to those socially constructed discourses around gender that are critiqued by feminists, rather than those that feminists themselves subscribe to. However, even the notion that gender is socially constructed, as opposed to natural or essential, is a discourse and a construct in and of itself, birthed and reinforced in particular social, political and discursive contexts. The notion of gender as socially constructed is the outcome of various discursive influences and struggles. This highlights the need to attempt to be as open and "transparent" as possible regarding the theoretical frameworks used in analysing texts for research. It also highlights the need to consider the discourses articulated by participants in the interviews and through the texts they produce from the perspective that their most fundamental understandings of gender may not be overtly or consciously articulated, since the discourses that frame these understandings are, to a large extent, quite naturalised and therefore self-evident to participants. This will be reflected upon in more detail in the findings related to the interviews.

6.3.4.2 Counts of textual units with gender relevance

The counts undertaken for the SS are presented in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7: RESEARCH COMPONENT ONE COUNTS FOR THE MAIL & GUARDIAN			
	Main News[48]	Other	Total
Gender relevance	8	37	45
Women in leadership	5	18	23
Homosexuality	0	0	0
Gender based violence	0	18	18
Women's issues	2	12	14
Gender constructions	5	25	30

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[48] In the case of the MG, the "news section" was identified as up to page 10.

The counts for the MG, as with the other newspapers, both reflect important discursive features and obscure others. As I have observed before, while the counts assisted towards confirming, challenging or highlighting particular qualitative findings, their functionality within this research is limited by the constraints imposed by attempting to "count" discursively diverse features that are often more varied, subtle and internally contradictory than a quantitative assessment can account for. For example, fewer articles with "gender relevance" were counted in the MG than SS or ST, and the last issue of MG reviewed (18 January 2008) contained none.

However, that fewer textual units of *gender relevance* were counted for the MG does not necessarily reflect a lag in gender transformative discourses, since many of the textual units counted in the former newspapers pertained to, for example, images that portrayed counter-transformative constructs (for example, sexualised constructs of women). Thus, while the MG sample contained a greater number of textual units that aimed to critically highlight gender issues, it did not have the greatest number of units with gender relevance. That the last issue of the MG did not contain any articles in which gender constructs or issues could be identified also does not simply denote non-transformative discourses given that gender constructs in the context of these counts could be both those that promote or inhibit gender transformation as I have defined it. Furthermore, as highlighted in the previous section, the way in which gender is portrayed in the MG is far more subtle, particularly to me, and it is often the case that problematic discourses are easier for me to identify than those that meet certain gender transformation expectations (for example, does one consider a *lack* of anti-feminist sentiment in and of itself a gender *discourse*?).

In terms of representations of homosexuality, no textual units were counted for the MG. This signifies a heteronormative discourse in the sample, through which representations of homosexual relationships are marginalised in comparison to representations of heterosexual relationships. This, to an extent, naturalises heterosexuality. However, while the other newspapers in the study contained a greater number of textual units representing homosexual relationships, these counts generally did not reflect positive discourses or those challenging heteronormative discourses, as illustrated in some of the examples given. Homosexuality in the MG was not represented in the context of "entertainment" or gossip, for example. Some may further argue that homosexuality need not (and should not) always be presented separately as an issue, but that acceptance of sexual diversity can be infused

in texts, which will in far subtler ways then demonstrate a *lack* of homophobia. There are thus a number of ways of looking at these features, in this and other newspapers, in more details, and again a larger sample (and more knowledge of queer studies) would go a long way towards better unpacking this issue.

The way in which the MG has carved out spaces through which to advance gender issues at the forefront of the media's attention is evidenced in the counts. The MG sample had the highest number of articles (18) related to gender based violence in the context of the 16 Days of Activism. It should be noted, however, that the SS followed closely behind with 12 articles on gender based violence, and because it is a shorter newspaper than the MG this count is also quite high. There were qualitative differences between the manner in which the MG and the SS represented gender based violence, as will be elaborated upon in the examples that follow.

In terms of the counts it is also interesting to note that, in the MG, none of the counts for gender based violence were provided by the news section. While it is important to remember that the boundaries between "main news" and the kinds of spaces following in the latter parts of the newspapers reviewed were not rigid, this to some extent supports my qualitative observation that, in the sample, gender based violence was treated by the MG as a broader social issue rather than presented in terms of isolated "news" incidents. This is linked to Meyers' (1997) assertions regarding the representation of gender based violence in the news, which she has critiqued as obscuring important features of gender based violence by presenting, as "news", primarily individual cases, often with a more bizarre or unusual element (for example, the case of a notorious serial rapist). In this way, she argues, problems such as rape are framed as isolated incidents rather than a pervasive gendered problem (ibid). The MG tended to engage with gender based violence through discussion, analysis and "common" and relatable human-interest stories rather than through the presentation of isolated and bizarre or unusual cases.

The counts for women in leadership, as a category, were by far the highest out of the newspapers reviewed. As already discussed, counts for women in leadership were particularly difficult to undertake and were ultimately determined on a qualitative level. However, the counts do reflect what appeared to be a concerted effort to include the voices of women in leadership. That it was women in various leadership and professional positions

dealing with gender based violence whose voices were fore-grounded towards highlighting issues of gender based violence is an example of this, as is the additional space carved out for various women leaders to reflect on the ANC presidential race. In this sense, not only does the MG appear to be creating spaces through which to forward a gender transformation project, but this project is constructed around a prominent gendered discourse regarding voicing; this, in my view, is a discourse that holds women's voices to be highly important in reflecting, promoting and changing women's position in patriarchal societies.

While other discourses do emerge in the MG to challenge the notion of women's voices being better able to represent and fight for women's position in society, the ways in which the spaces have been created signifies the strength of this particular discourse. It could be regarded as a strength and/or a weakness from a feminist perspective that primarily women's voices are forwarded in highlighting and challenging issues around gender relations.

Another feature covered with greater regularity in the MG than any of the other newspapers was "women's issues". These included issues such as the state of domestic work, sex work, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, and the nexus between the prevention of HIV among women and gender based violence. These were generally covered in special feature articles. Constructions of gender were also counted in many of these features, which regularly posited women's issues in the context of socio-economic and structural power dynamics.

6.3.4.3 *Discussion and examples of discourses in the Mail & Guardian*
Gendered discourses in the MG both engaged with and moved beyond liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms around women in leadership. A strong concentration on the issue of women represented in leadership was communicated through both spatial and advocate discourses. The space given to women, in particular, to comment on the ANC race is an example of a spatial discourse.

Each week the MG publishes about 10 contributions written by various individuals outside of the MG. In the context of the overall dominance of male voices in politics at the time period from which the sample was drawn, the decision to use these spaces primarily to share the voices of women represents spatial discursive strategies towards gender transformation,

centred on a discourse that prizes the importance of women's voices in gender transformation processes.

Image 28: Spatial discourses of voicing through special written contributions by women leaders, Mail & Guardian, 7 December 2007

These spatial discourses are linked to advocate discourses, in the sense that a very specific selection of contributions to the debate was made, a selection that included voices advocating gender transformation. Contributions by various women in this issue of the newspaper included a strong activist orientation around gender issues. This shapes these spaces within the MG around a strong gender transformation project. While variations exist between the conceptualisations of - and subsequent suggested strategies in answer to - gender relations, the overall message emerging is that women can and should take an active positions in politics, and that there should be concerted efforts work towards restoring political leadership in South Africa that is favour of comprehensive gender transformation. In other words, the strategies articulated were different but the overall political project largely cohesive.

Editorial space was also used to this effect. In an editorial contribution entitled "A pipe of patriarchy" (Mail & Guardian, 30 November 2007), the editor commented on the ANC Women's League's nomination of Jacob Zuma for ANC president. She drew attention to the arguments made in favour of the nomination, that the best candidate rather than just a woman candidate should be nominated, and critically assessed these arguments from the perspective of the historical role of the ANC Women's League to promote parity within the party. She then reflected on the gendered implications of the nomination.

"There is a risk that one of the most progressive policy proposals before the ANC conference will now come asunder. This is the proposal to bring equality in representation to the ruling party by enshrining the 50-50 principle whereby the party's lists should reflect equal numbers of mooted male and female candidates. If the [Women's] league does not drive this policy, it will falter on the alter of ego and ambition. What were they smoking? The pipe of patronage, position and careerism no doubt" (Mail & Guardian, 30 November 2007).

This excerpt reflects what I have called a women in leadership discourse premised in part on a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm. Various discourses that extend, and even challenge, this feminist paradigm in terms of gender transformation were, however, also included. In the week following the editorial above, a column by another author issuing a strong challenge to this paradigm was included, an extract of which is given below.

"Just as we need to question whether skin-colour affirmative action or economic empowerment are the best ways of bringing about redress, we cannot be expected to cow into submission because we might just walk into a male chauvinist template. To argue that by making its decision to back a man, the league has failed women who are under the yoke of patriarchy is to deliberately mix issues. The fact is that it is indisputable that patriarchy, as with all other forms of unfair distribution of power and influence in society, is an evil to be eradicated. It does not follow, however, that thinking a man would be the best person to lead one or another political party makes one indifferent to what is wrong with patriarchy" (Mail & Guardian, 7 December 2007).

Through this column, space has been made to deconstruct and challenge aspects of the liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm. However, the broader message regarding the need for gender transformation in South Africa remains, and was generally consistent throughout the newspapers reviewed. In addition to this challenge and deconstruction, numerous spaces were given to perspectives on the issue of the ANC Women's League's nomination of Jacob Zuma that reflected concerns over the *qualitative* aspects of this nomination rather than the quantitative aspects of gender parity.

Image 29: Discursively delving into issues of symbolic representation, Mail & Guardian, 7 December 2007

In all of the columns shown above (Image 29), the symbolic and practical gendered implications of the nomination of Jacob Zuma, in particular, were raised. His ability to lead and represent South Africa in terms of gender transformation in light of the public statements he made, particularly during his rape trial, as well as issues around his gendered lifestyle and actions (such as polygamous marriage, infidelity and unsafe sexual practices) are brought into question over and above the fact of his being male. These discourses are interested in symbolic, social and "cultural" representation in addition to numerical representation. In the excerpt below, the discursive linkages between the former kinds of representation and the issue of power are raised. In the context of asserting that the ANC Women's League nominated a leader who represented various patriarchy positions, one columnist wrote the following for the MG:

"If you operate within the paradigm of the big man, your words and actions will be 'unstrategic'. The battered women who return to their abusers see no alternative" (Mail & Guardian, 7 December 2007).

In this excerpt, a discourse that recognises the patriarchal power prevailing over the minds and actions of many women is forwarded, representing an understanding of gender relations that is social constructionist and critical (embedded in the notion of power relations). In my view, it represents an instance of deconstruction of the basis for more simplistic forms of liberal-inclusionary feminism.

Discourses constructing gender and gender relations, as I have mentioned, also frequently incorporated issues around socialisation, economics, gendered structural frameworks such as legal provisions and access to resources, and various other contextual issues. This, again, suggests a more social constructionist orientation than an essentialist or naturalised construction of gender as emerging in some of the discourses discussed in relation to the other two newspapers.

For example, in a feature article on sex workers in Johannesburg (see Image 30 below), the social and structural implications of criminalised sex work are raised to highlight causes behind gendered violence perpetrated against sex workers. While the plight of both male and female sex workers is raised, the unequal power dynamics between (predominantly male) clients and sex workers born out of social, structural and economic inequality and

prejudice are highlighted, and sex worker advocates are generously quoted. Titillating, sexualising and trivialising discourses around sex work noted in some of the articles in the other newspapers reviewed are replaced here by a discourse that interrogates the socio-economic context of sex work and employs activist language to describe it (for example, the use of the term "sex worker" rather than "prostitute"). Not only the voices of the activists quoted, but also the language used by the journalist, reflects this; it is an instance of complicit discourse supporting an activist paradigm around sex work.

Image 30: Complicit and activist discourses working together in a feature on sex work, Mail & Guardian, 30 November 2007

Various other articles reflect similar discursive orientations. For example, the article shown in Image 31 below (left) links the flat-lining economy in Zimbabwe to the rise of the sex economy there, a reflection and reinforcement of gendered economics. Another article shown in Image 31 below (right) questions the value of progressive policy and law surrounding issues of gender based violence in the context of the socio-economic vulnerability of women and a lag in implementation.

Image 31: Raising socio-economic and structural dimensions to gender issues, Mail & Guardian, 30 November 2007 (left) and 7 December 2007 (right)

Overall, advocate discourses around gender issues such as patriarchy in political leadership and gender based violence were quite prevalent, and more cohesive with complicit discourses around these issues. Furthermore, while not all articles framed particular phenomena overtly as gendered, the underscoring of various issues as linked to social, economic and political processes and inequalities effects a critical approach. This approach is also laced through with an apparent awareness of the role of gender in the matrix of social constructs. From this component of the research, it appeared that a deliberate feminist project is being advanced in the MG. The role of current events and gender campaigns in promoting gender transformation projects was raised again in the case of the MG, as it was with the SS and ST, through qualitative observations and counts. However, the MG in particular seemed to have capitalised on these events to forward gender transformation issues, in particular a woman in leadership discourse.

From my observations, gendered discourses in the MG reflected both a strong liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm and a more social constructionist, relational approach to gender, at times in separate spaces and at times blended in various ways. The discourses emerging were also quite critical, placing gender within a context of inequality and power relations. However, the MG caters for a niche, and quite elite, socio-economic demographic of readers. It also undertakes more in-depth comment and analysis than is common in most newspapers, particularly with respect to issues affecting African countries and the poor.

While the format is "tabloid", and the inclusion of a number of human-interest pieces reflects an aspect of tabloidisation, the style and discursive approach is decidedly not tabloid, but critical. As such, while the analysis I have undertaken reflects a closer alignment between the discourses emerging in the MG and those of my conception of gender transformation than the SS or the ST, it is important to bear in mind that the ways in which these discourses are shaped makes them, perhaps, largely inaccessible to broader readerships. Each newspaper needs, in this regard, to be viewed in the context of its market and the discourses that shape journalistic approaches to its market. Assessing the value of various types of discursive strategies in this kind of context could help to develop appropriate strategies for transformation.

6.3.5   Key Findings from the Newspaper Discourse Analysis

Perhaps the most significant finding made during this component of research was, firstly, the degree of importance that the **styles, norms and functions of various spaces** within the newspapers had on the types of gendered discourses emerging. These different spaces and the tensions between the discourses emerging in them raise valuable questions regarding the state and **trajectories of feminist thought and gender transformation** in South Africa and its media. Questions arose regarding the role of newspaper reporting styles (such as tabloid, investigative and critical approaches) in constructing gender transformation discourses and parameters, and therefore also the related issues of **political economy** and broader discursive advances in terms of gender and transformation, ones that arguably shape what readers expect from and appreciate in their chosen newspapers.

A second key finding was the extent and forms of **discursive contradictions** in terms of gender and transformation. While there was, at least in two newspapers, significant contradiction in terms of gender transformation discourses, this component of the research flagged a number of prevalent discourses related to gender and transformation, discourses that will be compared and discussed in relation to the interview data.

The term "newspaper" tends to conjure up notions of "news reporting", and its attendant connotations of "fair" and "unbiased" reporting of, principally, mainstream political or other national current events. However, the level and significance of spaces alternative to this

emerged as a key finding in this component of the research. In particular, columns, letters pages and various types of entertainment sections played a critical role in constructing the gendered orientation of the newspapers reviewed. In addition, I noted that these spaces were central in shaping the scope of, and opportunity for engagement with, diverse gender transformation issues and, in many cases, the perpetuation of patriarchal gender constructs. Normative values and conventions around humour, irony, colloquialisms and the armoury of "free speech" and opinion provided latitude in these spaces. Therefore, anti-feminist and misogynistic discourses, for example, had space to thrive in these sections where editorial decisions allowed this (as will be discussed further in Chapter 7). Activist discourses, whether for or against gender transformation, emerged particularly strongly in these spaces as a result. Gender constructs that would perhaps be unacceptable in other spaces are, in a sense, legitimated in these spaces.

While these more **"informal" and colloquial spaces** provided vast opportunities for constructive engagement with gender transformation issues (opportunities that were, indeed, taken up on numerous occasions), they also served to both actively reproduce and subtly sanction prevailing gendered constructs that inhibit gender transformation. Given that these spaces are provided for the presentation of diverse ideas - without the kinds of constraints placed upon, for example, front page news reporting - the causes behind the discursive contrasts between and within the different newspapers are of particular interest. For example, the SS's columns, jokes and letters pages contained a number of discourses that fervently attacked the basis for gender transformation as I have defined it, including overt anti-feminist backlashes. There were, in addition, columns and editorial pieces that promoted gender transformative ideals and practices. However, the kinds of backlash emerging in the SS did not echo, for example, the discourses emerging in similar spaces in the MG. Some of the potential causes behind these variations will be explored in relation to the interview findings.

From this component of research, it appears that these spaces are not completely "free" and "open" to diverse opinions, but that a **discursive filtration system** is in place, leading to disparities in the gender transformative orientation of the newspapers, even if these are internally contradictory. This appears to be linked to editorial policy and identified or assumed readership and market characteristics. I have noted, for example, that in spaces reflecting strong **tabloid style** influences, gendered constructs tended to be not only most

patriarchal, but based on **naturalised conceptions of gender**. In contrast, in a more **"critical" journalistic approach**, gender constructs tended to be based on **politicised conceptions of gender**.

The importance of the **overall visual culture of the newspapers**, as I have called it, also emerged strongly. I did not attempt to undertake a thorough or very theoretically informed analysis of visual culture. However, to get an overall sense of the visual culture when I realised the importance of images in relation to text I asked a useful broader question: what would a complete outsider to the human race determine about gender if all they had were these images before them? By asking this question, glaring evidence of patriarchal visual culture based on the sexualisation of women and femininity, the commodification of this sexuality and the persuasiveness of the male gaze emerged as especially linked to tabloid style. The pervasiveness of these kinds of images recalled to me Judith Butler's (2003) assertions on the performativity of gender. She argues that the repetition of a series of gender performances is the basis for, or the "sediment" of, the formation of concrete instantiations of gender and constructions around the possibilities of gender.

> "If the ground of gender identity is stylised repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Butler, 2003: 392).

In the case of the newspapers reviewed, the visual culture was also neither always internally cohesive (repeating only the same style) nor cohesive with other discourses borne through the news text itself, and a seamless identity was therefore not created. However, the kinds of visual, stylised repeating produced in the newspapers reviewed has significant relevance to the project of gender transformation in the manner suggested by Butler (2003), for the possibilities of gender transformation are shaped by what is repeated and how. The images in the newspapers were often very telling of underlying notions of gender relations, and present a set of gendered possibilities that are at times transformative but often not.

While the focus thus far has been on columns, letters, images and so forth, the more formal spaces of news reporting were not separated from processes of and negotiations around

gender transformation. **News reporting** avoided advocate discourses, but was implicated in the construction of **gendered discourses through strategies of discursive complicity**. I have highlighted some examples of this, illustrating for example the role of fact selection and story selection, and the language framing or buttressing the opinions and quotes of others. Spatial discourses were also important here, revealing gendered values and ideas by the very amount and kinds of space given to various news stories. I also demonstrated through the use of examples how some news reporting and investigative reporting reflected gendered discourses by merely sidestepping gendered issues, or framing them as un-gendered.

The kinds of gendered discourses identified were various. However, some were of particular prevalence and interest. I should note that these discourses emerged out of a particular historical context. Activist campaigns and particular political events dominating the news appeared to have a significant impact on the regularity and kinds of content and discourses emerging. Of course, the sample cannot justify broad speculations in this regard. However, that particular issues were raised more frequently is supported to a degree by another, quantitative study that showed the amount of attention given to women and issues such as gender based violence in the South African media were significantly affected by **current political events** (such as the Zuma rape trial) and **campaigns or special days** (such as Women's Day) (Media Tenor South Africa, 2006).

As has already been mentioned, **anti-feminist discourses** appeared, especially within the SS. Some of the examples I have raised in this regard resonate with Pilcher and Whelehan's (2004) assertions that anti-feminist backlash often uses the language of feminism itself to turn against its principles, a discursive strategy that was noted in relation to various columns reviewed. Discourses based on notions of progress as well as nostalgia surrounding a mythical notion of the "good old days" have in the past been used to thwart feminist ideals (ibid), and were noted in some of the examples given in this Chapter as well. This includes the blaming of feminism for women's contemporary problems, and the romanticising of traditional binaries of masculinity and femininity, which are naturalised as harmonious (ibid). As Faludi (1992) noted in reference to anti-feminist backlash in the United States of America, the media can play an important role in disseminating, and making "palatable", underlying tensions around transformation in the form of anti-feminist sentiments.

The strength and pervasiveness of anti-feminist backlash discourses in the newspapers reviewed came as quite a surprise to me. It should not, however, be viewed as a simple phenomenon or one that exemplifies the state of gender transformation. In contrast to these discourses were ones that overtly and subtly promoted gender transformation. Even in the SS where such discourses were more prominent, a strong liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm was also present, and spaces were created to demonstrate and promote women's diverse locations and contributions within society. This underlines the unevenness of feminist trajectories.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that particularly in newspapers in which the tabloid style was more prominent, **gendered discourses related to the "private sphere" of intimate personal and sexual relationships lagged significantly behind those related to the "public sphere"** in terms of gender transformative orientation. Liberal-inclusionary paradigms were strong in all the newspapers reviewed, and interestingly especially so in the SS, which contained numerous manifestations of anti-feminist backlash, and the MG, which appeared to adhere to quite a cohesive gender transformation project. When it comes to gender transformation discourses, the liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm appears to have the most social and political currency, particularly as it relates to (or perhaps because it relates to) the public sphere.

This indicates some interesting aspects of gender transformation trajectories in the media and arguably in South Africa more broadly. The discourses emerging in the newspapers reviewed reiterate the feminist idea that the personal is political, but also show that, when it comes to gender politics, more progressive discourses are accommodated by and promoted through the public domain while significant struggles and tensions related to changing gender relations are undertaken in relation to the private domain, often through informal spaces. The fact that tabloid style is characterised by a greater personalisation of news - making news more about people and their "private" or personal lives - is perhaps one of the reasons for what I would argue are less transformed gender discourses in these "informal", personalised spaces in tabloids in particular. If gender transformation trajectories related to the "private sphere" generally lag behind those related to liberal-inclusionary ideals, or the "public sphere", then tabloid newspapers in their greater focus on issues related to the "private sphere" can also reflect this lag in feminist trajectories.

Some of the common sites of discursive struggle - and often anti-feminist backlash - relate to the nexus between feminism and religion or "culture" (whether "African" or "Western"[49]). These nexuses represent critical locations of struggle over gender transformation, and it is therefore here that many impassioned discussions and powerful contradictions of discourse occur. The contradictions in discourse and the spaces they both play out in and relate to (news or opinion, private or public relationships, for example) therefore tell us something about the state of gender transformation and the diverse trajectories it is taking, necessarily involving ongoing struggles over meaning.

Overall, **tabloidised newspapers presented more discursive contradictions** in terms of representations of gender. In particular, complicit discourses and certain advocate discourses in columns written by independent columnists often contradicted the more formal, editorial stance on gender issues (which tended to be more progressive). On the other hand, in the case of the critical style newspaper the MG, there was more of a cohesive pro-gender transformation discourse. Here, the application of journalistic values of free speech and diverse perspective, when compared with the tabloidised newspapers, resulted in discursive negotiations more over the details of best practice and strategy for gender transformation than over the need for gender transformation and the debunking of the old (and current) gender order itself.

Finally, this component of the research raised an important question through the comparison and contrast of gendered discourses flagged from each of the three newspapers: in what ways can discourses shaped in the context of economic imperatives to "tabloidise" reflect and promote gender transformation as I have defined it for this research? And if so, how can this be achieved in a way that appeals to the professional and social expectations of journalists and readers? The MG's discursive orientation was most aligned to my conception of gender transformation, but caters for an economically elite and smaller niche newspaper market. Given this reality and the opportunities inherent in more tabloidised forms of journalism (whether dormant or already catalysed opportunities towards engaging in processes of gender transformation), how can gendered discourses be renegotiated and transformed in the print news media? These questions will be considered in the following Chapter, which throws more light on journalistic and editorial discourses towards better

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[49] There being no singular, agreed upon or unchanging African or Western culture, I put this between quotation marks. This can therefore refer to numerous interpretations or manifestations of cultural values and practices.

understanding the processes and perspectives that shape and inform the representations produced out of tabloidised and critical newspapers, especially in terms of gender transformation.

7 NEGOTIATING DISCOURSES OF VALUE: INTERVIEWS WITH JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS

7.1 Introduction

"There are more ideas on earth than intellectuals imagine. And these ideas are
more active, stronger, more resistant, more passionate than 'politicians' think.
We have to be there at the birth of ideas, the bursting outward of their force:
not in books expressing them, but in events manifesting this force, in struggles
carried on around ideas, for or against them" (Foucault, 1978: 707).

Discourses are not static bodies of knowledge but are evolving, negotiated, contested. Even dominant ideas are resisted, and different discourses can compete and negotiate with one another towards charting a way forward in thinking or practice. In part, I would read Foucault's reflection above as suggesting that ideas (strong social forces) are not just manifest in books, in formalised and written text, but also in live events, and that they are also not just manifest in final textual products, but in the struggles for meaning that precede and continue to be represented within these.

So, too, looking at newspaper texts as has been done in the previous Chapter, while also able to tease out certain struggles over meaning and offering examples of more distilled outcomes (compromises?) of the struggles over meaning, can offer only part of the story of meaning making. Interviews - live interactions and in themselves "events" characterised by meaning making - have been the primary source of information for this research, not only because through them I felt I would be able to more directly ask journalists about their perceptions and decision-making around gender and media texts, but also because, in the act of interviewing, contestations over meaning and processes of representation-creation are actively taking place. Interview participants are responding to both perceived and actual expectations around the research, to anticipated and unanticipated questions, to various considerations and conveying a slice of their position and location in relation to these. Interviews offer an opportunity to observe these processes.

Subsequent to transcribing and re-reading the interviews, I found this characteristic of interviews to be even more pronounced than expected. While the interview data (like any

other data) cannot - even in conjunction with the newspaper analysis - give a complete picture or construct a comprehensive causal theory surrounding how gendered media texts in the newspapers are produced, it does highlight very interesting and contextually relevant aspects of meaning making processes in the media. This is so especially when viewed against the backdrop of other, prolific research around the media industry, textual production, discourse and power, as well as the findings for component one of the research. In many respects, the processes of meaning making within the interviews offered some important insights into the struggles over meaning that may be taking place in the constitution of newspaper texts. The interviews cast light on particular areas of rich and vibrant discursive negotiation over value and meaning related to the media industry, journalistic professionalism, gender and the politics of social transformation in South Africa, and questions of agency (both journalistic and consumer). These meanings and values act as considerations for the constitution of the texts discussed in Chapter 6, underscoring the ways in which ideas around gender and news are both understood and negotiated.

First, this Chapter will provide a brief outline of the interview participants and any relevant methodological or contextual issues surrounding the interview participant sample. Second, it will highlight key observations regarding my interaction with the participants, touching mainly on those with significance to the way in which participants' responses may have been constituted, namely questions around how the interviews (and therefore the interview findings) were framed. The findings for the interviews are then presented separately for each newspaper, as was done in Chapter 6, under sub-headings created as part of the outcome of the research, representing broad themes emerging from the interviews. These include the newspapers' market and market appeal, narratives related to how news stories are identified and written, the role of the media, notions or understandings of gender transformation and gender issues, and discursive strategies employed by participants to negotiate the media's role, especially in a transforming society, in amidst these various considerations.

These themes are broad and representative more of areas of concern or relevance to the question than of the original research findings themselves. This is in part because the findings were so highly interlinked that I struggled to present the detailed interview data for all of the relevant newspapers via themes based on original findings. Therefore, I instead present the findings via these broad thematic areas, and build a discussion around the

original findings progressively as I address each area for each newspaper. This Chapter then concludes very briefly with an overview of the findings, before the final reflections are made in concluding Chapter 8.

7.2 Interview Participants' Profile

As discussed in the methodology, participants were approached on the basis of key criteria (such as their current status as in-house staff) and attempts to garner a spread of different participants. The participation of the newspaper editors was also sought. However, the process of acquiring permissions to conduct research at the different newspapers, as well as to formalise interview appointments, was in some ways a difficult one and impacted on the final participant profile. A summarised participant profile is tabulated below (Table 8).

TABLE 8: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT PROFILE					
Feature		**SS**	**ST**	**MG**	**Total**
Sex	**Female**	5	3	3	**11**
	Male	2	2	1	**5**
Race[50]	**Black**	7	3	1	**11**
	White	0	2	3	**5**
Journalistic experience	**5 years or less**	4	1	1	**6**
	More than 5 years	3	3	3	**9**
	Unknown	0	1	0	**1**
Position	**Journalist**	5	3	3[51]	**11**
	Sub-editor	0	2	0	**2**
	Deputy-editor	1	0	0	**1**
	Editor	1	0	1	**2**
Training in	**Yes**	5	2	4	**11**

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[50] I use these racial categories with a good deal of scepticism and caution given their tendency to bypass complexities in identity and force individuals into broad, poorly conceptualised boxes. Furthermore, it could be argued that I have further simplified these issues by using only two racial categories: "black" and "white". However, I felt it would make participants uncomfortable to ask them to name their self-identified race (as may be done in a quantitative study), and I also felt it would be ethically and practically problematic for me to apply more specific categorisations (such as "coloured" or "Asian") myself, according to what would be assumptions regarding appearance and identity. Therefore, I decided to use a more politicised conception of race here, with broader attendant associations of historical advantage and disadvantage, economically and politically. This is not intended to obscure diversity or the complexities of "race".
[51] One of these participants did not identify as a journalist or reporter as such, but more specifically as a "critic".

journalism[52]	No	1	1	0	2
	Unknown	1	2[53]	0	3
In-house staff	Yes	7	5	3	15
	No	0	0	1	1
Number of participants		**7**	**5**	**4**	**16**

In total, sixteen individual interviews were conducted, including seven at the SS, five at the ST and four at the MG. The number of interviews for the MG, in particular, was lower than I had hoped. I found it difficult to set up appointments for these interviews since I was not initially granted permission to contact journalists directly (having to go through an administrator at the newspaper); where I was able to contact journalists directly, it was easier to pin down dates for interviews. Many journalists were also very busy at work, and the nature of journalism as a profession meant that their schedules were not always easy to predict.

I should note that once contact was made with editors for permission to conduct the research, they happily granted permission to conduct the research. However, encouraging journalists to respond, either positively or negatively, to requests for participation was generally very difficult, as was garnering their commitment to dates for interviews. After nearly nine months of trying, I needed to finalise the principle research component. As such, at certain newspapers fewer interviews were undertaken than initially intended, and the profile of participants was somewhat altered due to issues of accessibility.

- One *contract* member of staff from MG was interviewed by phone. Since I had only managed to secure interviews with two journalists from the MG in nearly 9 months, I forewent the criteria of limiting the sample to in-house staff in this instance.
- The editors of the SS and MG were both extensively interviewed. In the case of the SS, the deputy editor (who was to become acting editor a few months after the interview) was also interviewed. However, perhaps in part due to the controversy and time-consuming legal issues surrounding the editor of the ST at the time of the research, I was not able to make any direct contact with him. I was also not able to

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[52] Note that this refers to training in a field relevant to their current position as journalists or, in the case of one participant working as an art critic writer, training relevant to his work. Those without such training may have training and/or degrees in other areas, having switched from another career without accessing journalistic training.
[53] While I did not ask these participants directly, the discussions held with them strongly suggested that they had training in journalism.

garner the participation of the managing editor, who granted permission for the study, in an individual interview. Instead, I was able to conduct interviews with two sub-editors at the ST.

- More women than men were interviewed. One reason was simply that more women journalists, in the end, responded to my request for interviews and committed to an interview date. Another was that, in some cases, staff at the newspapers assumed that I would be more interested in speaking to women journalists or journalists with a special interest in gender issues, who also tended to be women, and therefore put me in direct contact with more women. This is noteworthy in the context of some of my findings, illustrating a discourse that regards gender issues as being primarily women's issues, either through the assumption that gendered identities and experiences primarily impact on women and/or that women can best understand and articulate gender issues. While I did indeed identify and approach as many male journalists as female journalists at all the newspapers, the sample I was able to get in the end was constituted of eleven women and five men.

- Interestingly, one of the newspapers initially only wanted me to speak to senior journalists, feeling that they would represent the newspaper better than junior staff. All of the senior journalists they put me in touch with were, however, male. In the end, when a sub-editor realised this she put me in contact with more women journalists.

- As far as I could tell (from my visits to the newspaper and reading the newspaper), only black in-house staff worked at the SS at the time of the research, and as such only black staff were interviewed.

- Due to time constraints among journalists, leading to their reluctance to commit to long interviews, in some cases I agreed to ensure that the interviews would take no longer than thirty to forty minutes. Therefore, while some interviews were quite lengthy and in-depth, they did vary in length.

All in all, about eleven hours of interview data was gathered, and the average interview time was just over forty minutes. I should note here that some of the data for the interview with the MG editor was lost. This was the first interview conducted, before new digital recording equipment was purchased, and despite the fact that I used two different tape recorders simultaneously portions of the interview data from both was inaudible. I worked to retrieve as much as I could, and while I was not able to transcribe the interview in full, nor in as much detail as with the other interview transcriptions, I have reconstructed the data for this

interview through very careful repeated listening to the tapes and through my notes. In addition, I access an interview with the editor undertaken in 2004, which was available on the internet[54]. In this interview gender and media issues were also discussed. The information I use for this research participant is, therefore, carefully considered against these limitations, and in contrast with other participants in the study very few direct quotes are given for the MG editor in the findings, since I felt that only a few could be presented well within context. In addition, I sent extracts from the draft thesis in which the MG editor was referred to directly, for her to confirm that they represented her views accurately.

Overall, the interviews were transcribed with great attention to detail, for example including indications of different lengths of pauses, of where participants began to say something but stopped mid-word, of body language that was documented in my written notes and so forth. I have indicated all participants in the extracts provided in the findings as "P" and myself as "D". As I mentioned in the methodology, I wanted to where possible obscure the individual identities of participants, especially the journalists and even more so the more junior journalists, not wanting their comments to be recognisable. My experience at the one newspaper where I was referred primarily to senior journalists raised sensitivities around who should be in a position to represent the voice of the newspapers, and I did not want journalists, and especially junior journalists, to be put in a compromising position in this regard. Editors are referred to as editors, however, and so while they are not indicated in the extracts, their voices are deducible. As I have mentioned in the methodology, however, this was both more difficult to avoid and less of an issue than it was with journalists. The guidelines for transcripts (for example how pauses or words that were not easy to identify are indicated) see Appendix A.

7.3 Participation and Positionality: Interactions Between Researcher and Research Participants

As discussed in the methodology Chapter, feminist research theory commonly highlights the role of the researcher in shaping the outcomes of research (Stanley & Wise, 1993). A social constructionist perspective of knowledge production further indicates that no knowledge is articulated in a social vacuum, and researchers should therefore be as open as possible

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[54] Interview with Ferial Haffajee in 2004 by Ofeiba Quist-Arcton. Available online at http://portal.unesco.org/

about the research environment and interactions, in recognition of these as shaping forces. I will not be doing this in great detail, but will highlight some of the most salient observations I made during the course of the research.

The way in which I undertook interviews was neither to attempt to "remove" my social presence from the interview situation nor to engage in a fully two-way discussion with the participants. Instead, I tried to create a balance between these approaches, engaging somewhat with participants but also attempting not to bring my own perspectives on the issues at hand into the interviews to the extent that I would not be able to recognise their own initial interpretations of the questions.

Power relations between researchers and those researched are also a key concern for feminist methodologists (Mbilinyi, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990), in the context of historical relations of power in this regard, particularly in research related to groups with less access to social power, such as women. As mentioned in Chapter 5, however, my research did not closely or neatly follow this pattern of power relations. I considered myself to be researching, in some senses, "up" to people in positions of relative power and was mindful that it would be difficult for me to establish all of the differences among participants that may impact varyingly on power relations in the research process. As a researcher I felt both empowered and disempowered at different stages and in different ways during the research. My experiences in certain respects resonated with a Foucauldian conception of power as multiply-constituted and dynamic, with various factors mediating the flow of power in different spaces and at different times.

The participants in my research did not only have access to socio-economic power as educated, middle-class people, but also in their daily roles as producers of knowledge. The process of garnering the participation of journalists, fraught with delays, led me to feel quite helpless at times, as an outsider who could be granted or refused entry into their spaces. Most of the participants were also older than me, and experienced in their field, while I was a "young person" and a "student". As such, the power dynamic was sometimes shaped by a sense that the success of my research rested upon their willingness to voluntarily put time aside for me in amongst their own professional and personal priorities. Particularly in the first few interviews, my sense of vulnerability and uncertainty was evident in the transcriptions I reviewed, as I tried to connect with journalists within *their* own spaces and about *their* own

profession, about which I had little first-hand knowledge. The following extracts illustrate my initial sense of nerves and uncertainty in conducting interviews with journalists:

> "D: Uhm, you say, then I'm just wondering.. in the media industry is there sort of uh, I don't know if the word is right, hierarchy in terms of… are there certain beats that are considered more prestigious beats than others, or, or not really? Are they kind of equal?"

> "D: OK, OK. Uhm, and then, aah, I just wanna, to ask you, what is the, this is the, this is a question that is more geared towards, ja, uh editorial stuff, so I'll be asking the same of Mr. M, it will be interesting to hear different perspectives …
> P: OK…
> D: What do you think is the key market for this newspaper, how would you describe your market for Sunday Sun? What niche do you fill or…"

On the other hand, however, moments within the research process were characterised by a greater proportion of power on my part, particularly in defining, guiding and interpreting the interviews. Once interviews were set up, and I became more comfortable in conducting them, my role and ability to guide the parameters of the research process increased. Interview transcriptions correlate with my observation that, as the researcher, I have a significant impact in terms of directing what is discussed and how it is interpreted. This may not be done in a conscious effort to tightly control the research process, which I generally tried to keep quite open and geared towards unearthing unanticipated insights. However, it could simply be done through the act of either conscious or unconscious framing of the research aims and research questions for participants, as well as through the selection of theoretical frameworks through I chose to construct the questions and analyse the data.

In terms of framing the research situation, the way in which I introduced the research aims through emails and on the phone would already have set up expectations for participants, who could have interpreted the gendered theme of my research in various ways prior to entering the interview. Discourses are not isolated, but always oriented to a real or imagined audience, and shift in accordance with this. They are also shaped by the discourses with which they engage. As such, the focus and articulation of my research and the questions in

the interviews would have shaped responses in certain ways, and I have tried to identify these where possible.

For example, I was particularly interested in participants' awareness and treatment of gender issues through their journalistic work. However, many participants' conceptualisation of "gender transformation" was largely confined to the issue of women in the workplace. In other words, the term "gender transformation" tended to be interpreted as focusing on gender equality among those who make the news rather than gender transformative discourses within newspaper texts themselves. As such, I used various different terms, such as "gender issues", "women's issues" or "gender relations" to further probe their understandings of gender transformation. The use of these different terms evoked somewhat different responses, and the wording I used in the questions therefore emerged as important in framing and influencing the answers given by participants. The following extract illustrates the importance of the way in which I framed and articulated questions in shaping different kinds of responses from participants around gender issues:

"D: Um… (*Pause*) Alright. And I just wanted to know from you, what, what comes to your mind when you hear the words gender transformation? What does that mean to you?

P: It means [], uh, well.. for me it would mean, um, uplifting women. Um… because that has been the gender that has been, you know, previously disadvantaged. So it would just mean something that will put them in, in high positions, something that would put them in advantageous positions as well, and uh..

D: You mean specifically in terms of.. work? And careers?

P: Yes. In terms of work and careers and uplifting them business-wise as well.

D: And what do you think, um, more generally are the most important gender issues in South Africa at the moment, post-, post-apartheid South Africa?

P: Uh, it would be things like HIV and… how… mostly people who are infected are women. Um, it will be… u- uh… domestic violence and…. you know the other thing would be, you know, as much as we try to, to empower, as much as you know government is also trying to empower women, the other issue is, um, getting women to cope with maintaining the family life as well as their career

and.. you know just how to strike a balance, with, with those two different sectors."

Here the participant raises different issues in response to the questions on "gender transformation" and "gender issues in South Africa" respectively. At times, when interviewing participants, I also noticed their uncertainty about a question or at times even their possible interpretation of a question as subtly accusatory. Issues of social transformation can be quite sensitive topics, with most participants wanting to convey an equality-minded position. Some questions around gender issues - in the current discursive climate around gender - were sensitive in that asking them could be interpreted as implying that the participant was unaware of or insensitive to gender issues. In these cases, I then tended to rephrase the question to order to mitigate their sense of confusion or of being put "on the spot". However, while this was done for reasons related to research ethics, upon reading the transcripts I found that in many cases the way in which I rephrased questions towards reducing confusion or taking the pressure off participants often unintentionally framed the question even more narrowly, therefore limiting their responses. The extract below demonstrates this. The participant's immediate response that journalists don't think about the social issues being discussed in the interview created a tension in the interview, in the sense that it foreclosed many of my questions or that, should I continue along the lines of my draft questions, the participant may feel grilled about the position he was taking. My quick response was to mitigate this tension by suggesting, through a rhetorical question, that the social issues being discussed come up "naturally" in the stories written about, to which the participant then agreed.

> D: Is it something, I'm just trying to understand also, um.. in the journalism profession, this idea of being objective versus pushing forward certain issues, or or… []
>
> P: (*Overlapping*) We don't really think too much of issues..
>
> D: Does it just come up naturally? You come across it in your human-interest pieces…
>
> P: Ja.
>
> D: …It's not something that you pursue specifically, or...
>
> P: No, because then stories are dry and boring and horrible.

My role in framing the research situation and the participants' responses was something I attempted to be cognisant of when reviewing the data, and the transcriptions helped me with this. Some issues in this respect were picked up on early, and I tried to make changes towards my approach where I thought these were problematic. Others were only pinpointed after reading the transcripts later on, after the interviews were complete, and in these cases I tried to incorporate cognisance of this into the analysis I did. In particular, a common issue that came up was that at certain moments in the interviews I tended to dominate more in an attempt to get to the issues at the heart of my research, especially when participants interpreted my questions differently to how I had intended them. This is something that I felt was both interesting to the research findings themselves, reflecting diverse understandings of the questions based on my own and participants' discursive locations, and also important to reflect on as a researcher towards improving my interviewing skills.

I should note, however, that the flow of discursive influence, like that of power, was not one-way. Indeed, in re-reading the transcripts I found that I had often begun to employ the discourses used by journalists in the interviews, both consciously and unconsciously. I interpret this change in my own discourse as being towards achieving greater discursive cohesion with participants, to facilitate understanding between myself and participants, create a sense of rapport and allow participants to feel more comfortable in communicating their answers than if my social science discourse dominated the questions. This is an example of how discourses are continually shaped within interviews, as subjects employ different discursive strategies oriented towards the perceived audience.

One strategy I used to try to mitigate my control over the research and interview data was to distribute post-interview questionnaires to journalist participants to encourage feedback on the research process and give them an opportunity to make retrospective inputs into the interview data. The questionnaires were sent to participants by email, and framed as being an important way for participants to make any additional comments and for me, the researcher, to improve upon my research. The following questions were posed to participants:

- Did you enjoy the interview? What did/didn't you enjoy about it?
- Did you feel at ease and free to express your thoughts and opinions during the interview?

- Were the issues discussed during the interview interesting to you? How so?
- Is there anything we discussed during the interview that you would like to add to or clarify?
- What are your thoughts about the research I am doing?

Unfortunately, very few participants (three) responded to these voluntary questionnaires, which I sense was largely due to their reluctance to spend time on it. Those who did respond reflected satisfaction with and enjoyment of the interviews, and only a few minor additions to the interview data were given. After the interviews, a number of participants expressed directly to me that they had enjoyed the opportunity to be interviewed on their own thoughts and experiences, particularly since they were usually the ones to interview other people as part of their work. The following are extracts from the post-interview questionnaire responses:

"The opportunity to talk about what I do! That was enjoyable."

"It's not often the journo's [sic] do the talking, we are usually questioning other people."

"I think it is a subject worth researching and with the potential of producing interesting results."

"South Africa is in the process of changing and gender issues are the ones that need more attention."

"Any serious research into, and discussion of, issues in the media, is useful. Media freedom is constantly under threat in some way… I may only be a movie critic, but the critical spirit must remain alive in the media or we lose out on a key element of our democracy."

In summary, my interactions with participants raised the issue of researcher positionality, as well as the discursive strategies used by researchers and participants to orient themselves towards a particular perceived research situation. The interview process is a dynamic one, and what is articulated during an interview is continually being shaped and reshaped by

what went before it. The transcriptions were very useful in reminding me of this, as well as documenting it for incorporation into the data analysis. Therefore, while my research is not focussed on comprehensively identifying the interview dynamics, I have tried to incorporate recognition of these issues when analysing the research data.

7.4   Making News for the People: Journalistic Discourses from the Sunday Sun

7.4.1   Market and market appeal

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the SS originated in part out of the competitive need to carve a niche in the weekly tabloid market. As a relatively young newspaper, its market success has been significant, with rapidly rising sales and readership. Much of this success was ascribed by participants to the appeal, and indeed value, of tabloid style news to certain sectors of the market within a specific socio-economic and political context in South Africa. The value of tabloid, in this regard, was rendered variously as linked to:

- The marginalisation of contemporary and potential readers from mainstream media prior to the boom of tabloid, since mainstream media are seen to be elitist;
- Post-apartheid socio-economic aspirations where tabloids, through celebrity features, offer readers (especially black readers) a window into new and more affluent lifestyle;
- A socially weary readership in the wake of a taxing period of national transition, with tabloid providing lighter entertainment than the traditional press; and
- The need for media identification with readers' pervasive religious beliefs, a form of identification contrary to mainstream social, political and media rhetoric (which is more secular).

The value and role of tabloid was a particularly strong theme among editors interviewed, who endorsed and legitimated tabloid to offset critiques made against it.

The newspaper's key draw card for readers in terms of content was articulated as local celebrity gossip[55] or celebrity news. As one participant responded to a question pertaining to what SS readers consider the most important, valuable and interesting, "what our readers

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[55] Some participants did not agree with this term, arguing that it implied fabrication rather than fact-based stories, as will be discussed later.

want is scandal, 'cause you know those celebrities….. juicy stuff, juicy news, that's what makes news." As will be further discussed, this tabloid news focus has a particular set of legal, ethical and potentially financial ramifications, impacting on the way in which journalistic values are shaped and articulated by participants. As the SS editor put it:

> "P: It's far much more difficult to run a tabloid newspaper, in the sense that, um, it is more personality-driven than issue-driven. So, you you you… can expose yourself to….. defamation action, because….. our stories are based on people's lives."

While the principle draw card of the SS is celebrity scandal news, however, the SS is made up of diverse sections aimed at providing "a little bit of this and a little bit of that" to the readers. In this regard, the deputy editor noted that readers are drawn to different aspects of the newspaper, and that it is important to feature variety and novelty in terms of content, as well as regular sections to attract various readers.

> "P: I think that is one of the biggest challenges, ja, having, being fresh every week….. being fresh and interesting….. while also being predictable, because readers are very funny creatures, you may think you know them….. and then out of the blue your reader will surprise you one day and write in and tell you their favourite part of the newspaper is not that story that you investigated for three weeks….. they just write in and tell you 'my favourite part of the newspaper is the jokes page.'"

These different sections provide both more "serious" and more "light-hearted" ("fun", "relaxing") content according to participants, but with the focus being on the latter. The editors, in particular, highlighted the informative and advisory aspects of newspaper content (such as the careers page) in addition to the celebrity scandal based news. However, these informative sections are also shaped by a tabloid style, and even the general news section, according to the deputy editor, is tabloidised through for example a concentration on visual text and human-interest features. Note that the extract below, illustrating this point, also includes a kind of discursive countering of perceptions of tabloid as superficial and "fickle".

"P: So we are basically… um, a sort of paper that is more relaxed, obviously, not necessarily chilled out or fickle, we're still very much a newspaper, but we're generally very tabloid-driven, ja, picture-driven, um, personality-driven, that sort of thing. Um, but that makes up plus minus two to three pages of our newspaper and then the rest is essentially news that is happening throughout the week, but handled in a different way and very much people-focused, colour pieces, um, mini features, that sort of thing."

The discourses employed by participants reflected a very market-driven approach to newspaper content and style, with discourses around tabloid as an emerging news form centring firmly on the notion of giving previously marginalised readers what they want. This is represented in certain instances as necessarily involving a deviation from traditional newspaper approaches. In fact, the SS's success in the market has included its appeal to first-time newspaper readers, who were described as being excluded from the majority of print news media. As the editor put it:

"P: About 2.1 million readers we are having every Sunday, those are actually new readers. And the role we played is that, um… we we created a new kind of readership."

The notion of traditional news media forms imposing their approach on certain readership sectors emerged, and the principle of market-driven, reader-oriented news was framed as key in tapping these neglected sections of market. In describing the launch and success of the SS, the editor noted the following:

"P: At the time, prior to 2001, editors were thinking differently. *They had forgotten that the reader is king, give the reader what he or she wants, and you'll see the reaction* and that's what happened. When the Sunday Sun came into being, that was our, our, our motto, to give them what they want" (emphasis my own).

While the appeal to new readers was not overtly linked in the interviews to a race/class nexus of marginalisation by the media, this was implied in some of the interviews. Discourses surrounding "ordinary" people, or people "on the ground" were linked through

anecdotes and examples to the notion that mainstream print media forms have tended to marginalise working class, black readers. The role and success of the tabloid was posited as its ability to create a point of identification with, and discursive inclusion of, these readers. In response to a question on the role of the media in social transformation processes, the deputy editor raised these issues as being central to the role of the tabloid press in particular.

> "P: There is a strong belief especially among the tabloids that it's not also only about politics and stuff like that, but it's getting people, um, I think to some extent to feel a bit *more part or involved about what is happening in the country*, and and and people, *and for people especially ordinary people in the street to be able to express more, what they feel about what is happening in the country*, and stuff like that and they usually weren't able to do that with papers like Weekly Mail or Sunday Times for instance. I'm not saying that they never used to write through there, but um… they feel with these kind of papers, they have a much more, better voice..... because *they feel it's more closer to them, you know, at their level*" (emphasis my own).

This extract illustrates a discourse describing privilege and exclusion in the print media, and tabloid as a medium through which to include and create a sense of identification with "ordinary" people. The "ordinary" person is discursively portrayed as self-evident, in that what constitutes "ordinary" was not directly articulated. However, as the following extract shows, issues of class and race, including attendant issues around education, socio-economic position and geographic location, are strongly linked to this.

> "P: And the type of stories that are dealt with are very much with people that they [readers] deal with on a day to day basis, you know, ordinary type sort of people, it's not only about politicians or top business men, or the Tokyo Sexuale's[56] or whatever, but it is about Mama Mnisi or something like that, around the street corner, who's house was burned or petrol bombed."

One key aspect of inclusion was the use of accessible, simple and colloquial language. As the editor described it, the newspaper uses what he calls "spoken English", and

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[56] A well-known businessman and politician.

colloquialisms such as "Jozi" instead of "Johannesburg" are incorporated. One of the participants linked this to the LSM characteristics of the SS.

"P: Because you know our LSM is… is, we're catering for, for any other lay…man….. It shouldn't be too heavy and it should also have an entertaining element to it. Because, um… I don't think that our, our readers don't want to be.. loaded with, with, you know, the whole technicalities as well."

The editor further described the move to colloquialism and simplicity in tabloid as a new development to counter urbane mainstream journalistic approaches that are increasingly irrelevant to many people. In the following extract, he discusses this by comparing tabloid's contemporary success to the success of the new brands of affordable cars on the market.

"P: It's, it it even happens with cars today. We expected cars to go.. more sophisticated for, and and, you know mo-, mo-, more complicated and all that. But look, you have the Tatas, you have the Chinese cars coming in cause they start to realise that let's give people what they want and not put all these gadgets in that we think they want. And I think it's similar… policies working here."

In this way, tabloidisation is also discursively framed as a form of **democratisation of the print news media**, in its use of accessible language. The notion of democratisation of print media through tabloid is also linked to its appeal to what is described as universal human-interest (the personalisation of tabloid), as well as the socially relativistic approach taken by the newspaper. In the following extract, for example, the editor discursively renders human-interest stories, at the heart of tabloid, as democratising the news:

"P: I've got a dream of of, my my dream newspaper would be a newspaper which knows no race… um.. no creed.. no religion. That would be, um… the the *ideal* one. But it's not possible. But, but what I've observed is that a human-interest story knows no colour. Uh, because it it touches the heart….. And… anytime it will touch anybody who reads it, because it it it's about, it's about human nature" (emphasis original).

In terms of the socially relativist approach referred to, it is argued that the newspaper engages with the beliefs and values of readers not generally embraced, for example, by secular society or the rhetoric of the privileged "mainstream" media. One participant elaborated anecdotally on tabloid's appeal to readers in its inclusion of these beliefs, values and experiences, often marginalised in traditional print media. In this regard, tabloid was discursively linked to the democratisation of what constitutes "news", or knowledge production.

> "P: For instance with Daily Sun they will report about witchcraft and people will say there's no witchcraft. Because no-one has come forward, no research has been done. But black people believe in the township that there is witchcraft, and who is the market for Daily Sun? Market for Daily Sun are people in the township. So those are news that are relevant to them. For you as individuals in the suburbs we've got nothing to do with witchcraft. But somebody in a village has something to do with witchcraft, it's a belief."

It is interesting to note that in the interview with the editor of the MG, this notion of democratised print news through tabloid emerged as well. She observed that tabloids play a certain function in putting newspapers "back in touch with their readers", and described them as "organically" linked to and growing out of communities. Despite some of the charges lead against tabloidisation, including those noted by the MG editor, a discourse of inclusion of, and identification with, marginalised communities and readers contributed towards framing the value and market appeal of tabloid.

The market appeal of the SS was also related by some participants to **post-apartheid socio-economic aspirations**, particularly among the youth. The significant coverage of black local celebrity stories, in this regard, was rendered as a point of aspirational identification among a relatively young readership interested in climbing the socio-economic ladder. This resonates with my observations of the discursive orientation of the SS during component one of the research, which highlighted what I called an "aspirational" discourse. The term "aspirational", however, was initially derived from one of the first interviews I conducted with the deputy editor of the SS. In relation to the SS's focus on celebrity news, she noted the following:

"P: A lot of people these days obviously want to know what their celebrities are doing, because *they always aspire to that sort of life* ….. when people see it they want to actually read it, go out and say 'I saw so-and-so, the TV star' or whatever, 'I wonder what is he up to', or 'gosh, who is he seeing, who is he dating' or whatever, ja. So it's, *it's perhaps a bit aspirational to some extent because these, these people are essentially, you know, a lot of people's role models, particularly for the youth*, you know" (emphasis my own).

The editor further elaborated that these local celebrity stories offer a means by which black working class readers can identify with, and therefore imagine, a wealthier lifestyle. This was especially linked to the working class background of the celebrities covered in the tabloid news, as well as the way in which these celebrities are exposed as fallible towards a greater identification with them.

"P: I think what they [readers] enjoy is that the Sunday Sun gives them, opens a window for them….. every Sunday *you go into the lives of those people that they see as the elite*. The people they s-, the people they see as the achievers in society….. But this is also so that people should also know that *those people are not there because they are born to be there*, how they they, *they worked themselves up to become what they… they are today*. And, and that they also live a normal life….. *they also have personal problems which are similar to theirs*" (emphasis my own).

In addition to the focus on celebrities, the sections relating to careers, role model of the week, consumer guide and so forth were described as close to the hearts of the editors. The editor described how these sections are aimed at encouraging and informing a township youth readership with little educational guidance in relation to careers. Both tabloid features and additional sections were therefore framed as appealing to and serving an aspiring black youth through information and identification. The values and appeals of emerging newspapers, such as the SS, are therefore shaped by South Africa's historical legacies and changes taking place, including socio-economic changes.

A third key discursive theme related to tabloid market appeal and the SS relates to the notion of what I have called the **weary South African reader**. This describes a readership

that is psychologically run down by the persistent barrage of troubling social, economic and political issues represented in the news in South Africa. There was a sense that the post-apartheid honeymoon is over and that pervasive and controversial societal issues continue to frustrate and tax South African people, who are in need of some respite from this traditional "hard" news coverage. The need for a light read was further highlighted as being important for a Sunday newspaper, which is meant to be a "relaxing" read at the end of a busy week.

> "P: I think people on a Sunday, you know, after coming back from church, if
> they go to church, just want to sit down and relax and have a good laugh… and
> you laugh. They don't want serious stuff where it is sad or political stuff."

The editor elaborated on this in relation to market research undertaken, and a sense of post-apartheid weariness of continuing political debates.

> "P: In our first research, people said, we realised that people were tired about,
> about issues, about blaming apartheid and everything. Life goes on. And uh,
> um, we like to to to to talk about things which make.. life fun. And, ja. I think
> that's what they find [in SS]".

In this way, tabloid is framed as serving an alternative social function for readers to traditional print news. "Soft" news, in a sense, is refigured as socially functional rather than trivial. This resonates with the literature reviewed in Chapter 4, which pointed to the ways in which tabloid challenges the "hard" news/ "soft" news dichotomy, and has evoked arguments that legitimate tabloid news as a democratised and reader-oriented form of news.

Finally, and linked to the above, the SS's inclusion of religion, in particular, was linked to the idea of reader-oriented news. While most large newspapers maintain quite a secular discourse, the notion of reshaping newspapers away from traditional "hard" news approaches and towards meeting readers where they are was extended to the Christian orientation in numerous SS spaces. In this respect, the editor noted that while the SS is a tabloid, it is a Sunday tabloid specifically and that "the majority of people are religious people, they go to church." Therefore, religious sections such as Sun Churches as well as religious columns are included. As discussed in Chapter 6, the discourses emerging in these

spaces of the SS were of particular interest in terms of gender, and I will be expanding on this issue later on. Suffice it to say here, however, that the inclusion of religion in the newspaper was, to an extent, framed as part of the democratisation of knowledge production and the inclusion of discourses commonly separated out of mainstream print news. This included what I described as often quite problematic gendered instantiations of religious discourse, linking the democratisation of the media to the idea of social relativism, where values are valid if seen as shared by groups of people (in this case readers).

7.4.2   Getting stories, writing stories

For participants at the SS, getting stories was often articulated as a key challenge as well as a source of excitement and satisfaction. Staying ahead of other tabloids, in particular in terms of the celebrity scandal stories "cracked", was described as a significant part of the job, as well as one of the greatest areas of competition with other newspapers. Given the rising economic incentives and competition among both weekly and daily tabloids, scooping new local black celebrity stories, or at the least covering them from a novel angle, was very important for participants. Due to the nature of the stories covered, journalists' contacts were figured as central to the story-gathering process, and maintaining good relationships with contacts as important towards professional success.

The fact that the SS is a weekly newspaper was described as further heightening the challenge and importance of accessing novel, cutting-edge celebrity stories that would not already have been covered by other weekly tabloids. The issue of potential legal (and hence also financial) ramifications of pushing the boundaries of privacy towards getting these news stories was frequently raised by both journalists and editors. Therefore, familiarity with the law as well as maintaining rapport and a relationship of trust with contacts (for example, by ensuring that facts are checked and documented) were regarded as extremely important.

When it came to writing stories, most journalists reported writing between two and four stories per week. The style of writing was described as highly market-driven and brand-oriented. While participants said that personal style was exercised in the writing of stories, this was done within the bounds of both general news reporting protocol (for example, covering the "five w's" - what, where, who, when and why) and the newspaper's brand

identity. The latter included, for example, the use of "simple" language, keeping stories short, the use of certain colloquialisms such as "papgeld" and "Jozi", and general style rules regarding how sources are introduced and quoted, which are also defined towards a more conversational style (for example, not using titles such as "Mr" or "Ms"). As one participant put it:

"P: Normally it's, it's, it is good to have your own, you know, personal writing but you need to adjust, you need to check your newspapers. Like for instance, the writing with Daily Sun or Sunday Sun is different with the, the, the broadsheet papers, you know like Star, they write differently….. [We] need to write like a tabloid."

As such, texts were described as forged through both individual agency and style and the more formal as well as informal parameters of the brand.

7.4.3 Role of the media

Discourses surrounding the role of the media were, in all three newspapers of the study, significant towards unpacking current and potential constraints to (and opportunities for) gender transformation through the media. These discourses communicated various (and often contradictory) journalistic values, both generally and related to the specific newspapers. It is these discourses around journalistic values and roles that inform the scope and trajectory of social transformation through the press, and that reveal points of tension at the nexus of simultaneous but varying notions of journalistic responsibility within a transforming society. Not all of these discourses came through in response to direct questions about the role of the media or the press, but emerged frequently as part of responses to other questions, for example, questions related to what makes a good journalist or a good news story.

Four main themes emerged in the SS interviews in relation to the role of the media. First, discourses legitimating tabloid as a media form emerged, centring on the notion of reaching out and giving voice to readers on the ground. This echoes with discourses surrounding the democratisation of the media through tabloid, and includes journalistic values maintaining

the primacy of readers' own views and beliefs (**reader primacy**), reliant in part on a conception of the media as a reflection and voice of society. It also extended to notions of the news as something relatable to readers, and of journalists as story-tellers.

Second, great credence was given by participants to the notion of **journalistic "objectivity"**, as dichotomised with "bias". Discourses in this regard often conflated objectivity with notions of "fact" and "balance", and bias with notions of extreme ideological leanings or direct personal involvement. However, tensions and contradictions surrounding these conceptions of objectivity and bias revealed important points of negotiation between the dual objectives of social transformation through the media and the media as objective informer.

Third, a discourse of **didacticism** emerged as an interesting contrast to the emphasis placed on "objectivity", whereby the media in general was configured by some as society's political "watchdog", and tabloid in particular as part of what I have called the "moral police".

Finally, the media's function as a business, and attendant notions of news and journalistic values linked to this aspect of newspapers' political economy, was raised. In other words, the fourth theme related to the strong **economic imperatives of the brand**, shaping textual creation.

In terms of the first theme, discourses reflecting the notion of print news media (particularly the SS and other tabloids) as functioning to create identification with and give voice to their readers emerged strongly among the editors. In determining newspaper content and style, questions pertaining to how a story relates to the reader's own context were of great importance. Upon being asked what kinds of stories his readers thirsted for, the editor noted the following:

> P: Stories which relate to their… they're tired of hearing about.. uh, politicians and business people and how other people influence their lives….. *But they want to see in the newspaper someone they know*….. They want to see their areas being mentioned…… Like….. how is the 2010 [World Soccer Cup] for example going to affect us? It's one thing to say South Africa and Africa and

the world….. They want to know, in Soweto[57], *how are we going to benefit? What can we expect? And once you start to involve people around that.. they start to become your marketers*, because they go 'ei, did you see, uh, what Sunday Sun said today?'" (emphasis my own).

In this way, SS is framed as further democratising the print media and also as linked with political economy; the newspaper creates a sense of identification with "ordinary" people, and this in turn benefits the newspaper economically. In an extract introduced earlier, in which a participant raised the issue of witchcraft as a legitimate base for a story if readers relate to and believe in it, political economy also validated these kinds of stories, for which tabloids are often criticized. As the same participant noted, "in the newspaper, actually it's a business and also to satisfy your particular market."

In addition, this approach to the media's role in relation to society often included a discourse incorporating aspects of social relativism. Readers' beliefs and values were given primacy even when they are controversial or can be perceived of within broader transformation discourses as marginalising or discriminating against certain social groups. With reference to controversial columns in the SS in which, for example, attacks are borne against legalised abortion and gay rights to marriage, the editor at one point noted: "who are we to judge? Because we are just a reflection of, of society." This sense of the media's role as *reflecting* (rather than constructing) the views of readers was, however, often articulated with immense discursive tension, with much negotiation between the values informing enshrined rights and liberal paradigms, on the one hand, and controversial reader views on the other. The editor expressed this tension as shown in the extract below.

> "P: It's not easy because, um.. especially if you say listen to what your readers say. If your readers are against.. for example, uh, gays and they feel that it's, it's not a a a... I think the majority of our, of our nation, they are Christians. And the other half they are… Muslims, and they are, I also think they are not pro-abortion and all that and, but it's a matter of one would have to keep the balance and say minimise the harm."

In this extract, the discourse articulated earlier by the editor, maintaining a reflective role for the media, is in contestation with a discourse that holds the media to be influential on

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[57] A Johannesburg township.

society. By now noting that there is a need for balance views and to "minimise harm" in conveying these views, the editor is engaging in a discursive negotiation between the notion of reader primacy, and the notion of media responsibility and agency. Interestingly, the concept of "balance" (linked also to "minimising harm") emerges here as a discursive strategy through which to deal with these tensions. This will be discussed further in relation to the section on discursive strategies for transformation.

Another issue raised by one participant under this broad theme related to the role of print news media in expressing the post-apartheid frustrations of readers around issues such as service delivery and crime. In this discourse, the media was rendered a vehicle through which readers can air their views and frustrations, similarly to the airing of views counter to broader transformation discourses as discussed above.

Journalistic values informing what are considered desirable attributes for journalists, as well as what constitutes a good news story, are shaped by broader discourses surrounding the role of the media. In this case, conceptions of news as defined by whether it can relate to and create a point of identification with readers were linked to the discourses discussed above. As a point of identification, journalists described a good news piece not only as something that is "new", but also as related to something that *impacts* on readers' lives, interests the readers personally, and in this way also stimulates engagement and discussion among readers. News was therefore conceptualised as relative to, or highly oriented towards, its particular readership rather than statically defined or abstract. The following extracts are examples of this.

"P: What is the news? It's something that brings change into normal life, if it is different from normal life….. can it change people's lives? Or can it.. what would it have, what interest would that bring to people's lives?"

"P: Before you write the story you have to ask yourself that: how will Denise [the reader] want to read my story? If you can answer that….. then she will. But if I don't answer that question myself as a journalist, how will I expect someone, someone to buy that newspaper?"

Certain desirable journalistic traits were also linked at least in part to this theme, such as the role of journalists as story-tellers, building narratives that reach the readers, or the need for journalists to be good with people, able to listen to and engage with them.

The second key theme was related to the importance of the media as a vehicle for the provision of "objective" information. This was commonly conflated with the notion of "fact", generally conceptualised in a positivistic sense as both distinct from subjectivity and a clearly defined conduit for "truth".

> "P: We know we have to be objective, unbiased, um, we have to always tell the truth, you know don't twist and turn."

> "P: They [contacts] give you a story, make sure you, you write it factual. Don't be biased. Because once they complain about a story, say 'hey, but there you misquoted me', they will not inform you anymore, they will not contact you."

As can be seen in the last extract, it is in the presentation of "facts" that some participants saw the avoidance of bias and the achievement of "objectivity". As long as the story conveyed verifiable facts, it was considered objective and by implication untarnished by subjective input. This reflects a positivistic paradigm that is in contrast to a social constructionist paradigm upon which much feminist writing and critique is based. From a social constructionist perspective, one could argue that even if there were verifiable facts, seeking, selecting and presenting them is not objective but situated.

Numerous participants did, however, also articulate contradictory or dynamic discourses around the issue of objectivity. Especially when it came to questions around the role of the media in transformation processes, or specific examples of social issues, these points of tension tended to emerge quite strongly. In some discourses, the presentation of objective fact was discursively harmonised with the role of assisting in social transformation processes. Interestingly, where social values were articulated by journalists in relation to the way they covered particular issues in the news, the notion of fact was incorporated as a means through which social values are *legitimately expressed*. In other words, certain *social values* were articulated as being naturally *inherent in fact*, or in a sense factual themselves. In some of the interviews, I posed a question to the participants about the Zuma rape trial

and how they felt the media had handled it. The extract below was part of one participant's response to this question.

"P: The media did their best, they really did their best, but Zuma also felt they were there to damage him, they were there to destroy him. Which he [Zuma] was wrong. They were just, *they were just looking at the facts that why will somebody who is at the forefront of moral stability go and do something like that*, without even consideration to the issue of HIV/AIDS?"

That Zuma's decision to engage in extra-marital, unprotected sex with an HIV-positive woman was socially or morally wrong (a social value) is expressed as a fact, or as self-evident through the presentation of facts. In this way, the notion of objectivity based on verifiable facts is *discursively harmonised* with a social transformation agenda. This response was from the same participant who noted the importance of fact in the avoidance of bias, and who elsewhere in the interview firmly expressed that journalists should not attempt to engage in a social transformation agenda through their work, but simply objectively report facts. This view was expressed below in response to a question around whether he felt social transformation as a media role and objectivity as a media role were compatible.

"P: No, you need to be objective. *Forget about transformation,* forget about social responsibility as a person. *You need to be objective. Look at the facts*" (emphasis my own).

These seemingly contradictory responses - on the one hand advocating that transformation agendas should be kept separate from journalism and on the other (in another part of the interview) implying that the media can and should be communicating social values - are made discursively compatible through conceptions of fact. As the continuation of the above response shows (see the extract below), the withholding of fact due to *overt personal involvement* is what is conceived of as bias. This was a theme emerging among numerous participants, who expressed notions of "bias" as involving overt monetary incentives or personal/emotional involvement in stories. However, as the extract also shows, where fact is presented to the effect of highlighting social values, a transformation agenda is in some way

legitimated. The relatively long extract below is included to illustrate these tensions and discursive strategies.

> "P: Look at the facts. Not because of… it's Mandela involved then how will that dent his image because you look at him globally as a great leader. That because of.. he has beaten up his child. We should write about that, we should. That's being objective. You've checked. You've balanced. You've ensured that… for instance, if you look at the issue of Amabokoboko[58], it has touched me personally. They did well. But look at the attitude towards the people who have supported them throughout their their their… the tournament. When they came back with the trophy everyone wanted to see that. But did they parade in the township? No. South Africa's big. Why would they choose Soweto only? We've got Limpopo. We've got Kwa-Zulu Natal. They did not bother to go there. But they go to Cape Town, their own mother home. In Soweto they went as far as six o' clock early in the morning, so that nobody will see them. The media needs to highlight that."

The issue of Amabokoboko's failure to parade in areas in which many of their supporters resided is expressed here as wrong, as well as an example of objective reporting forming part of the media's responsibility. After insisting that transformation should not be an issue for journalists ("forget about transformation"), this participant highlighted the need to foreground problematic social issues such as those related to Amabokoboko. The inconsistencies and tensions in these discourses, to me, seem to express an attempt to marry the importance of highlighting social issues clearly close to the participants' heart and the journalistic value of objectivity. In many ways, the notion of "fact" remains the medium through which these can be made compatible.

In another participant's response to a question around the media's coverage of Zuma's rape trial, a distinction between the media's role in conveying fact and the role of *other* sectors of society in ensuring transformation was made. I asked one participant what she thought about public misconceptions about HIV/AIDS fuelled by the media's wide coverage of Zuma's comments that taking a shower prevents HIV transmission. I wanted to know what

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[58] South African rugby team, who had recently won the Rugby World Cup.

she thought of the press' role in these misconceptions, as it was through the media that these comments came to be so widely heard. She had the following to say:

"P: The media was doing the right thing, they had to report that [showering to prevent HIV infection] was said, what he [Zuma] said….. *What people do out there, that's another issue*, it is um… I think the job of the NGO's and the government who is supposed to teach people there about AIDS" (emphasis my own).

I should note that my own scepticism about the compatibility of notions of objectivity and social transformation, which came through in the kinds of questions I asked, seemed to be peculiar to a number of participants at the SS. For many of them, objectivity was not mutually exclusive from social transformation agendas, and this is linked to the ways in which broader journalistic discourses around facts and the concept of bias are configured.

A number of journalists advocating journalistic objectivity conceded that this was often an ideal state which journalists could not always reach, and noted the tensions encountered in balancing "free speech" and their own subjective inputs, on the one hand, and journalistic objectivity on the other. In the extract below, this tension is evident in the participant's discourse, and it is framed as a somewhat irresolvable conundrum as well as something that can be mitigated by including different perspectives and content.

"P: You can not always be objective and sometimes it clashes with the freedom of speech, ja so you you'll think when you are being objective here and you can't tell, like, *you can't distinguish between the two, being objective here or am I exercising my freedom of speech*, you see? Um, which you still need to do, *I have the right of freedom of speech, so I'll write what I think, and at the, at the other hand I am wrong, because I am not being objective*, yes… so it is difficult that one, um … to be objective always, *but you have to try by all means to be objective and unbiased*. (*Pause*) So I think, maybe if you are writing about gender issues, don't just stick on women, write about males, just to be on the safe side (*laughing slightly*) or something like that" (emphasis my own).

The following extracts also illustrate some of the ways in which journalists conceded to being able to shape a story in addition to the provision of facts, thereby framing news stories as constructed, not just presented. This included reference to word choice, selection of what information will go into the news piece, and the shaping effect of a chosen angle for the story. These responses followed from a variety of questions, including one related to the agency and responsibility of journalists in changing gender representations in the media.

"P: As a journalist you get to choose the angle of the story that you want. So whenever you pitch an idea, it's because you've already decided on the an-, on the angle that you're going to take. And how you're going to, um, approach the story and which langu-, which ty-, what type of language you're going to be using."

"P: I think, ja i-, i-, in a way the media does take a role in issues because… as I tell you, as journalist we need different people and even though from time to time we are reminded by the ethics that when you write a story, you have to be very objective, but I tell you that thing of establishing rapport with our sources and stuff like that, at the end of the day you do.. (*laughs slightly*) somehow address it in a certain manner or you write a story because it was influenced by a certain source."

"P: Out of the whole interview I've got my own individual focus, not every thing that the person said is going to be included in the interview, but I'm going to take a certain focus and base my story on that."

"P: The way you write your story, the way you use your words, you don't have to lie to make a story to be juicy….. you don't have to lie and say, oh, she was climbing the mountain and while she wasn't even climbing the mountain….. it might make the story juicier to other people, but whereas accuracy, the two actually go hand in hand. The writing, the way you write the story, the accuracy, it makes the story juicier."

As can be seen in the extracts given, some participants were uncomfortable conceding to the unattainability of, or strategies of getting around, objective reporting. Some laughed

uncomfortably, and some were carefully choosing their words. However, in many cases the notion of fact, again, was the centre to which they returned to at least partially resolve these tensions, as the last extract shows.

Responses to questions around the values and traits of a good journalist resonated with notions of objectivity through factuality. This is shown in the selection of extracts below.

> "P: To be a good journalist is to stick to the facts. That's I think number one. Stick to the facts. Accord your facts."

> "P: To be a good journalist, uh, you must actually be a … and I don't know how to actually put this, but be an honest journalist. There is this culture in people's minds, in everybody's minds that journalists are liars….. that whatever you see on the papers, it's not true, journalists are good liars. I don't think that is true. I think being uh, honest, reporting honestly and accurately, is one of the things that a journalist and a good journalist should have."

For participants at the SS, objectivity was therefore a very central journalistic value, despite tensions surrounding its application in various cases. At times, social values were incorporated into the notion of objectivity through discursive strategies that will be discussed further in the section on discursive strategies for transformation. It is important to note that these inconsistencies and tensions reflect the impact of diverse *broader discourses* relating to the role of the media and the importance of certain transformation issues in South Africa (as will be unpacked as I go on). In other words, there is a discursive welding together and weighing up of traditional journalistic norms, broader historically shaped ideas about the media in South Africa and the broader perceived transformation needs of the new dispensation (such as transformed race relations, for example, or specific understandings of what kinds of gender transformation need to take place).

The third key theme I have mentioned in relation to the media's role is that of didacticism through the news. Particularly with regard to tabloid news stories, such as celebrity scandal, discourses implying the press as a sort of "moral police" emerged. As can be seen in this extract of an interview with the deputy editor, celebrity scandal stories are seen as functioning to highlight the fallibility and moral shortcomings of celebrities:

"Hopefully eight times out of the ten they [celebrities] will admit it and say .. 'look I'm sorry' or.. whatever, or 'I didn't mean to' or something, so it's, it's just sort of like to have a lesson at the end of it all, these people that you idealize are not necessarily.. perfect, you know?"

Another participant noted the following:

P: Our role is to show the, well, the readers what their role models are doing, do you understand? Ja… If they don't behave well, children must know that this person is not a well-mannered person and … Ja."

Therefore, some discourses framed celebrity scandal stories as functioning to let readers aspire to the lifestyle and achievements of celebrities, while at the same time a number of participants also framed these stories as functioning to humble celebrities and provide caveats for the consequences of personal behaviour. The discursive implication that these stories serve as part of a moral police also came through in the language some participants used to describe their approach to these stories, such as the somewhat legalised discourse below.

"P: OK, I did the interview with the husband, *I posed those allegations and he could not answer the allegations* because they were quite strong and quite hurting, that a third person is actually intruding into my private life in a way, you know" (emphasis my own).

The creation of certain spaces within the newspaper, particularly columns, was also linked to moral didacticism. The editor noted that these spaces were created to fill a moral void and engage readers with respect to moral issues, posited largely as existing in the private and especially familial spheres.

"Then talk about people's issues… it could be a….. moral problem thing, *moral degeneration.* Then we got, um, Bishop Sibiya to write a, a column, so that he should, should write about issues, about moral issues and all that. We also have um, um, um, Reverend Jentile who writes about relationships. Um, eh eh, sexuality….. And problems in marriage. Pre-counselling. He tells them what to

look for. *Which we think that can help society*. We also have, uh, uh, Mbuyiselo Botha who is um, uh, a columnist with us, he's actually the secretary general of Man-, Man's Forum. And he's an activist, um, uh, um, against, uh, women and children abuse. And we think that that could help, because he talks to men as to how real men should behave, he highlights.. men who are role models."

It is interesting, to me, that the strength of discourses surrounding objectivity is contrasted with strong discourses of didacticism. As will be discussed further in relation to discursive strategies for transformation, discourses of didacticism through, for example, columns pages, indicate that the communication of certain social values is supported through various spaces in the newspaper. The moral police discourse that specifically related to celebrity scandal stories, in my opinion, also functions to legitimate these kinds of tabloidised stories, which are so often critiqued as being a sign of the ethical debasement of news journalism.

Related to the discourse of didacticism was the lesser-mentioned role of the media as a political watchdog for society. The deputy editor noted, in particular, that this role was one that was served more by traditional print news media, and that tabloid newspapers tended to focus less on the trials and tribulations of large institutions and political figures than on the personalised, localised issues faced by readers. However, she noted that views of the media's role as watchdog were particularly prevalent at the moment due to the historical context in which the media in South Africa is operating. This issue will be taken up further in relation to other newspapers in the study, among whose participants the media as watchdog discourse was more pronounced. Linked to discourses of didacticism in the SS, however, were also similar journalistic values of persistence, doggedness and a critical perspective in order to expose public figures.

Finally, issues of political economy or the economic imperatives of the brand were threaded through the interviews, including in relation to notions of the media's role in society. There was a fair amount of reference to "rivals" in the newspaper business, and the need to shape content in a way that would enable the SS to compete. This included discourses, as discussed earlier, related to giving readers "what they want". The editor asserted that, in terms of economic imperatives, he did not allow advertisers to dictate content. However, as he noted in an extract provided earlier, giving readers primacy in terms of content and style serves as a marketing tool, and one that is successful according to the SS's circulation

figures. Linked to discourses framing the media as a business were responses to questions around what constitutes news. Largely prizing the bizarre, unusual and exclusive as news, these responses link the construction of newsworthiness to rarity, competition and therefore political economy. As the deputy editor put it, news stories, particularly in the tabloid business, need to stand out to attract the attention of readers and compete with the plethora of emerging rival publications. The bizarre is therefore valued.

> "P: You've probably heard this, but it's true, you know that whole adage of dog bites man? OK*, they say in journalism, if a dog bites a man, OK that's run of the mill, but when man bites dog … then that's a hell of a story*. So it is anything that is out of the ordinary, very unusual, um … for want of a better word… that has a wow factor, um, that gets people talking. Especially in our line of work, *in tabloid, if it is run of the mill, you're dead*, you know, it has to get people talking essentially, it has to be, it has to spark some sort of thing in people" (emphasis my own).

I have already pointed out in relation to the literature and the first component of the research that journalistic discourses that prize the bizarre and unusual have been implicated in trivialising social issues and perpetuating problematic stereotypes and constructs, including those with an impact on gender transformation. It is therefore important to note, here, the political economy dynamic to these discourses. They also appear to be linked to the notion of the "weary reader" served by tabloid news style, offering an alternative to the repetition of pervasive social problems in the news.

Finally, discursive constructions around journalistic ethics were also linked to political economy. Some of the key guidelines and codes in terms of the ethical acquisition of stories, particularly those of a tabloid nature, were frequently discussed in terms of the need to avoid legal action, such as lawsuits for defamation. The editors also highlighted the *Constitutionality* and *ideological ethics* around these guidelines and codes of conduct. However, the discourses employed by participants largely indicated a *political economy* dimension to the responsibility of journalists to conduct their work within the bounds of these ethical codes of conduct. In this way, journalistic values are again shaped by political economy.

7.4.4   Notions of gender transformation and gender issues

Due to the concept of "gender transformation" being at the centre of my research, questions aimed at eliciting responses from participants that could reveal their understanding of and views towards this term were posed. I realised soon into my research, however, that limiting my questions to "gender transformation" would provide very limited responses in terms of participants' conceptions of gender. As such, I variously used the terms "gender transformation", "gender issues" and less often "gender relations" to see what these different terms evoked. Depending on the particular interview, however, these questions were not always asked in a uniform way and responses were shaped in part by whatever discussion had gone before. Nonetheless, I have chosen to group responses from the SS broadly according to whether these were in response to the term "gender transformation" or "gender issues", to illustrate some of the rudimentary discursive divisions between perceptions of the two. Generally, I asked participants what first came to mind when they heard "gender transformation", and therefore what they considered to be the most important gender issues in South Africa. I will also briefly discuss some of the key responses to questions around journalists' roles in transforming gender relations through the media.

Responses to questions around what **"gender transformation"** involves were very much reflective of a **liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm** focusing on women's numerical representation and advancement in the workplace. Some participants also immediately responded by focusing on these issues in relation to the newsroom specifically. In fact, that responses to the term gender transformation were so limited to these issues of numerical representation in the newsroom and the workplace generally, not at the heart of my research concerned with symbolic representation in media products, led to the incorporation of other terminology and more examples to explore my research topic further during the interviews. This probably reflects one of the key findings for my research, however: that understandings of "gender transformation" are still very much limited to liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms, suggesting a lag in the trajectories of progressive feminist thought. The following kinds of responses were common.

> "P: OK, in our field and anywhere else… because in South Africa, these days especially I have seen women given great opportunities, both in the government and in the private sectors."

"P: (*Pause*) Like normally in the newsroom I believe that women have been oppressed in terms of, of positions. Like in still all the newspapers, [] I don't think I can give you an example of where there's an editor as a woman, besides you know these magazines."

An extended theme in line with this included the notion of women's empowerment, or the need to build capacity for and promote women's positions in the public workforce and leadership. The editor also articulated the importance of ensuring that once women are in these positions, they are able to employ their skills and power rather than being sidestepped due to perceptions that they have not earned their positions there. After noting that women are increasingly being employed in newsrooms, he elaborated the following.

"P: But what is actually happening is that…. it's fine to have them [women] in those positions, *but what powers do they have to change*… do they.. do we give them enough power to say, or do we still as, as the male editor sit there and say 'I don't think it is necessary, this thing is working all the time like this. Not now'….. Do we bring them in to, to, to… *make up certain quotas set by the government* and.. other people involved, *or do we do we change it, for real change, for example, to say 'bring your perspective*'?" (emphasis my own).

This response moves beyond purely numerical issues around representation towards questioning the organisational culture into which more and more women are stepping. This extract also leads into another theme expressed by a few participants, namely that introducing more women into the newsroom will bring a different *perspective* to the news. The editor continued his response by saying the following.

"P: I ask everyday, I told [her, the deputy editor], 'your challenge [] is to see to it that when we publish the newspaper that you must be proud to say.. if a female reader gets hold of this newspaper can she put it down and say I've gained something.'"

The deputy editor herself noted the following:

"P: We're trying desperately to also fill in the fashion content of the newspaper so that it has *more of a woman's voice.* We have a female columnist, we only have one female columnist and we're still thinking of ways to actually, you know."

The discursive implication of these extracts is that, to some extent, women journalists bring a particular perspective that women readers will be able to better identify with, and that there are particular types of content that interest women specifically. I would call this a kind of simplified and/or unquestioned assumption about a "**woman's perspective**". To some degree, this discourse dichotomises men and women, homogenises women and therefore associates women with specific interests. Of course, this issue was not discussed in any detail with participants, and these observations are therefore anecdotal. However, it is noteworthy that a discourse linking women with what is in some respects a naturalised notion of a woman's perspective emerges, a theme that also arose in the interviews with participants from other newspapers.

One participant observed that women are at times responsible for lags in the achievement of gender equity in the workplace. She argued that women do not focus enough on their work, choosing to give more of their time to endeavours on the home front at the expense of their work.

"P: Sometimes women lack confidence, sometimes they concentrate on, on other things that are not important to our work. We don't take our work really seriously, and if you put….. more effort into our work, and even our seniors, they will treat us as such…
D: Why do you think it is like that though?
P: OK, I'll tell you… um with Sunday Sun, I see more male employees more keen to go out on stories, to go out at parties, [   ] but we see women always saying (*in a damsel-in-distress voice*) 'aah… I'm going home, oh, my husband, oh my boyfriend, oh my [ ], oh my space, oh, my time, oh my' all the time….. Working is about compromising also, you can't just be paid, without taking effort. But men, for most of … all the time, I don't see men complaining much about their work….. about taking pains, going an extra mile."

Interestingly, the extract above appears to convey a discourse in which gender transformation is framed as **women emulating men**, particularly in the context of their focus on work in the public sphere. That women tend to take on (and be expected or obligated to take on) far greater responsibility in the domestic arena in terms of house work and care work, as well as to be socialised more as care-givers and intimate partners than as breadwinners, is not considered. Gender transformation is therefore discursively focused more on inserting and adjusting women into male dominated public arenas than on redefining masculinities or gendered relationships between public and private spheres. This resonates strongly with early liberal feminist paradigms.

Another participant raised the issue of **women's "voice"** in relation to gender transformation, also an interesting discursive offshoot of the general responses around women in the workplace. The idea of voicing - of being heard rather than silenced or remained deaf to - echoes aspects of a feminist epistemological approach to gender transformation discussed in Chapter 3. An extract follows.

> "P: OK, I can say, basically, years back women in South Africa, they didn't have a voice when talking about gender transformation, for women it's like now you've got a chance to voice out whatever that you've been.. having, whatever that you you've been wanting to say, you've got a chance. Gender transformation, I can basically say women have been given a chance in South Africa to actually stand up and have 50/50… a 50/50 chance…"

Finally, while all of the responses to questions around gender transformation concentrated almost primarily on women as a broad social group, two participants directly noted that when they heard the term "gender transformation", they immediately thought that it is something that **principally relates to women, not men**.

> "P: Aaah… for me as a woman I think it is about women. (*Laughs slightly*) Ja, it is not much that I think of that it relates to men. I think it all, it all relates on women because woman has always been the one, the ones with problems relating to gender."

"P: Uh, well.. for me it would mean, um, uplifting women. Um… because that has been the gender that has been, you know, previously disadvantaged."

This resonates with a general conflation of "gender" and "women" in various public discourses around transformation, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. In these extracts, it is linked to women's historical disadvantages (similar to dominant discourses around racial transformation in South Africa) as well as to a notion that it is primarily women who experience their *genderedness* as problematic. From a feminist perspective, these viewpoints have a good deal of salience with regard to ongoing struggles for gender transformation, in a context in which women have and continue to bear the brunt of patriarchal constructs and institutions. However, progressive feminist theory, as I have described it, calls for a move away from isolating women as a homogenous disadvantaged group, and towards identifying not only differences among women at the nexus of race, class, sexuality and more, but also the relational nature of gender and the location of masculinities within patriarchy and gender transformation. The parameters of discourses around gender transformation, such as the ones discussed above, have a bearing on the kinds of changes (and approaches to change) envisaged and pursued. In other words, if women are seen as the locus of "gender" then gender transformation strategies (within and beyond the media) will only address women, which in my view will significantly curtail the reach and impact of gender transformation.

Questions pertaining to the key **"gender issues"** in current South Africa evoked a slightly broader range of responses than those related to "gender transformation", although mostly (all with the exception of one participant) **elaborating or expanding on the issue of women's representation in public spheres**. Most responses included more detail on the underlying issues and sources of resistance to gender equality in the workplace. For example, the extract below conveys a concern that when women reach positions of power, there is a backlash against them.

"P: If president Mbe-, Thabo Mbeki takes a woman to be hi- his deputy [president], what happens, what do you do? We boo her, we we don't listen to her, we are a suicidal, not a suicidal, but we have the pull-down syndrome, that's what is leading us."

Notably, in many of the interview responses around issues of gender and gender transformation, women were located discursively as **(passive) recipients of gender transformation**, which was framed as if conceded, allowed or promoted by male gate-keepers. In the extract above this comes through ("takes a woman to be his deputy"). There was a sense of gates being opened by men, and of women being inserted into a largely unchanged public sphere. This discourse came through in phrases such as "give/allow women a chance" and "bring women in". This perhaps reflects broader gendered discourses around transformation, and while subtle is potentially important in terms of refiguring gendered power relations.

There were quite strong concerns regarding the **legitimacy of women's gains** in the workplace, or perceptions of the merit of women in positions of power and leadership. Two key issues arose here. Firstly, gender affirmative action was considered potentially problematic in that it sometimes promoted transformation tokenism rather than real transformation in the workplace. In the extract below this issue is likened to tokenistic approaches to racial transformation.

"P: Generally speaking, there are still whites that are.. leading in….. they put blacks in the front, but at the end they are still the ones pushing and pushing at the back and they are the ones benefiting… so it goes the same way with women… at the end of the day, who is in the front? It is still men."

Related to the issue of transformation tokenism in the workplace, two participants (one male and one female) expressed concerns that reverse sexism was resulting from gender affirmative action in the workplace, whereby men were being unfairly discriminated against when it came to taking certain positions. These concerns cast a shadow on the legitimacy of gender affirmative action policies, at least in their current state.

"P: Now since the women must also get senior positions….. I think we're happy as women that it is actually happening and women are being given a chance to, to.. and respected equally like males, and on the other hand, sometimes we feel, let me say a position is being advertised, a male candidate is actually qualified, more than the female candidate and he also has got some

experience, but the gender of taking females, sometimes it gets very unfair to males… ja…"

"P: Magazines yes have been transformed, but still they are not transformed because you don't find a certain man as editor in a women's magazines. So that's a problem. We need to be, you know, transparent, be able to accommodate men. Men can do well in women's magazine. And then women can as well do well in the newspapers. So I think there need to be given chance, and that need to be reviewed."

Secondly, pervasive sexual politics and the patriarchal economy of sex being exploited in the workplace were raised as considerable obstacles to any meaningful gendered changes in the workplace, including perceptions of women's legitimacy in the workplace. I was personally taken quite by surprise by the number of participants at the SS to raise this (three out of the seven participants interviewed, or three out of the five journalists interviewed). All three participants were young women, and one participant in particular discussed these issues with great passion. One concern raised by a participant was the undermining impact of sexual harassment on women's advancement in the workplace, and another concern raised by three participants was what one participant called the "casting couch". This refers to requests or expectations for women to have sex with men in power to be hired or promoted at work. This was not seen as limited to the media industry, but broad-based. The casting couch was implicated in undermining the credibility of women's advancements.

"P: [An important gender issue is] how you are treated, how people view you as a woman, ja, especially when you are in that position … I think what should go away is what *people think that you got that position …like, you got a position because you've slept with someone* or … which happens a lot and still happens.
D: Those perceptions, or…
P: Ja, *the perceptions about women in power*, because *they say that they are using their.. they are using their bodies to get there*, ja" (emphasis my own).

The extract below was taken from one interview in which the participant spoke lengthily and passionately about this issue. In fact, this participant redirected almost all the questions

posed subsequently back to the issue of the casting couch, and it was therefore clearly a point of serious concern for her. I have included quite a long extract here, combining various parts of a lengthy discussion about the issue.

> "P: OK, I am not saying this is like, um, happening, but I hear people say it is happening. *Most of the time like females there is this thing of sleeping your way to the top.* I don't know if you've heard about it.
> D: Ja, it's come up with a few of the interviews, ja.
> P: Aah, nowadays women in in every industry, I'm sure you have been reading papers where some government manager slept with the secretary or was sexually harassing the PA[59], or stuff like that. Suddenly, there is this thing….. to get this kind of a position. Yes, you've got the qualifications, yes, we see from your CV[60] that you can actually do this, *but you've got to go to the casting couch….. Some people end up doing that because they are desperate*, they actually need.. a job, they actually have to make ends meet….. People are convinced, they've got the wrong mentality and they, it *it now becomes a culture,* a culture in a way that women in our country they sleep with anybody who is in charge for them to get a job….. *Sad part is, if you refuse doing that, if the manager is interested in doing it, in giving you the job and you don't want to go down that road, you don't get a job*….. I'm not saying all the successful women they slept their way to the top, but 50% (*slaps the table with her hand*) of those women, in the top, they actually slept their way there, the other 50%, they're the normal, uh, actual citizens and women that… they just went their way in. OK, let me say that they were fortunate that their, (*laughs*) their bosses did not ask to shag them" (emphasis my own).

A culture of sexual economics in the workplace, with women as the sexualised objects and men as the gate-keepers exploiting these sexual economics, is described here. Women are discursively portrayed as both co-conspirators and as victims within this patriarchal system, and the effect is conveyed as men in power profiting from it and women's credibility being undermined even as they rise to higher positions. The participant herself emphatically insisted that half of all successful women have reached their positions of success in

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[59] Personal assistant.
[60] Curriculum vitae.

exchange for sex, a suggestion that would hold women's advancement in the workplace to be a farce and perpetrate the notion that women's primary value is located in their bodies.

Discourses surrounding the casting couch and other issues in the workplace are not directly linked to my research question, which relates to how gender is portrayed in the media rather than playing out in the newspaper. However, these exchanges exemplify some of the circulating discourses around gender transformation with a potential impact on how gender issues are represented in the media. Furthermore, if sexual politics define and significantly impact upon the newsroom context, this could have negative implications for opportunities to change gendered thematic and discursive content in newspapers.

One participant raised gender issues unrelated to women's position in the workplace, namely the issues of **HIV infection among women** and **domestic violence**. This was the only direct response to questions about gender transformation or gender issues that related to gender beyond issues of economic and workplace empowerment. Overall, discourses related to "gender transformation" and "gender issues" signalled a focus firmly located within liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms, with instances of progressive gendered discourses also relating primarily to workplace issues. It is important to note that discourses around "gender issues", in particular, linked gender transformation to more qualitative issues of gender representation and construction, or how women are viewed. However, little was said directly about masculinities or the impact and significance of gendered identities and shifts for men beyond the notions of reverse sexism and the benefits accruing from the casting couch. The discursive focus was still very much on women, how their position in the public sphere is changing and how they may become greater role players in the public sphere.

When asked about their encounters with gender issues in the field of journalism, particularly in how stories are covered or what they thought journalists' roles were in transforming gender relations, some participants did not see a link, returning to discussing issues around gender and the newsroom. Another common response was to refer to legal rules on how to report on certain events and phenomena (for example, not naming a rape victim). However, a few participants raised issues around the representation of gender in newspaper texts. One participant raised the **sexualisation of women in the media**, and also criticised the tendency to **portray women as victims**. When asked what role she felt journalists played in transforming gender relations, she articulated the following:

"P: I would say they [journalists] do [play a role], because um… I mean you… you you you read newspapers such as… Sowetan where you find that, um… *whenever you read a story about a woman it's either she's experienced tragedy or she has been raped and such things. So now you you get to question, you know: what are we trying to say about women?* If in, what are we saying that, um, they still remain the weaker sex regardless of, um, whatever….. accomplishments we're trying to get after 1994. And sometimes, um, when you get an article that… that uplifts a woman is when a woman has won best farmer of the year award, you know? Only, only when there is sort of a momentous thing or….. *In a way they are still perpetuating stigma that women, irregardless of everything else, they still remain, uh, victims.* And… you also get newspapers such as the Sunday Sun and City Press where *women are also… still projected as sex symbols* with a very big picture of a woman who is almost naked there. You know?" (emphasis my own).

Two other participants raised the issue of women's sexualisation in the media, but did so indirectly in talking about the need to "balance" newspaper content. The inclusion of spaces in which, according to one participant, women's empowerment could be addressed and, according to the other participant, "moral" issues could be discussed, were described in the context of the need to "balance" content against the "page three girls" in the SS. Therefore, the sexualisation of women was tacitly acknowledged as part of the SS's content, and as something that is potentially damaging or limiting. However, that this is "balanced" with other content was viewed as part of a commitment to women's empowerment and moral reform. One of these participants noted the following in relation to her specialist beat of covering "women's empowerment" stories in the SS:

"P: You know, the normal page three girls where people will be naked and such things. But then, *we also want to portray a different and a serious side of women* and, ja. So *women empowerment is a very big deal in our newspaper.* Ja. (*Quietly*) In terms of [] and such things" (emphasis my own).

Another participant understood journalists' roles in terms of gender transformation through the media as challenging the tendency for newspapers to depict women in a negative light.

It also shows how decisions regarding the perceived appeal of a news piece have (perhaps unconscious) gendered implications

> "P: As a journalist you can come up with an idea saying I want to do this, um…
> put women in this way, but then the gate-keepers will say, 'no it will look better
> if it is written in that way … if it is written this way, if the story is written this
> way', always bringing the woman down, always saying the women are the
> wrong ones."

One participant appeared to interpret a question regarding his encounters with gender issues when investigating and writing news pieces in a personalised way, whereby he discursively implied the potential gender issue as being his own ability as a man to objectively write stories with gendered topics.

> "P: I'm flexible, I'm not biased in any gender issues. If I write about women
> abuse I will criticize men. If he is wrong, I feel he is wrong, I will do it. If a male,
> like a woman is abusing her husband, I must do it to my best ability without
> being involved. But I don't have a problem with gender issues.. whatever
> stories.. gay or lesbian. I can still write about that."

Particularly when viewed in the context of the full interview with this participant, this extract illustrates what appears to be the discursive implication that a **journalist's gendered subjectivity** can impact on how stories relating to various gendered subjects are written, but that through journalistic objectivity this (biased) gendered subjectivity can be overcome. This links with discourses holding women to have a particular (and what some perceive as more legitimate) perspective on gender issues. This participant is challenging the assumption that women can do a better job at covering gender issues in the media, and crediting journalistic objectivity as the means through which such gendered personal perspectives can be overcome. This is linked to this particular participant's discourse of bias as personal or emotional involvement, and to his passionate earlier assertions regarding the unfair assumption that men cannot write on women's topics, for example, in women's magazines.

Gendered discourses not related directly to issues around the media or questions related to gender transformation emerged through some of the examples of contemporary events

discussed. In particular, it should be briefly noted that discourses elicited in response to discussions around, for example, Zuma's rape trial or the "casting couch" revealed tensions around **gendered sexual politics**. Discursive tensions related, in particular, to the framing of female and male subjects in sexual situations as either victims or perpetrators within the boundaries of acceptable sexual behaviour, and some interviews showed contradiction and inconsistency in this regard. This perhaps indicates the battle of various discourses converging at the point of intimate and sexual heterosexual relationships.

I should further note that issues of race, "culture" and class were not directly referred to in views expressed around gender issues in South Africa. Gender discourses were constructed primarily around gender differences, without distinctions made in the interviews in terms of race, class or "culture". This is not to suggest that participants do not have views in this regard, however; it is just to indicate that discourses around gender were generally framed in homogenous terms in the interviews. Direct mentions of race, generally, were few, and centred primarily on the market for the SS, intersecting more often with issues of class and geographical location. References to the "black community" emerged, framing race in quite general, homogenous terms with the only real distinction being made in terms of location (linked to class), such as references to townships. However, gender issues were **configured largely around the broad concepts "women" and "men"** (and especially with a focus on women).

7.4.5   Discursive strategies for transformation

Finally, drawing together findings for SS presented thus far, I will outline some of the key discursive strategies through which social and gender transformation in relation to representations in the media were described as being (potentially) promoted or resisted. This theme - of discursive strategies for transformation - began to grow as I observed in the transcripts some of the contradictions, tensions and negotiations in discourse that were taking place, for example around notions of the media as playing a didactic role and yet needing to be objective. Varying discourses appeared to be in the active process of being negotiated towards determining a path of action in relation to a specific event or news story, and in many senses these processes emerged as a key finding of the research: discourses reflected not only values and meanings around gender transformation, but told me

something about how journalists navigate a complex discursive environment, with competing interests and values, and therefore how gendered news is and could be understood and contextualised.

This section on discursive strategies links together perceptions of the SS's market, notions of the media's role in society and understandings of gender issues, in a negotiation of discourses towards the possible parameters of gender transformation through the media. It is important for the purposes of the research question and feminist agenda of the research to explore potential constraints, opportunities, spaces and strategies for gender transformation through the media. Many of the discussions with relevance for this section did not touch directly on gender transformation. However, it is through interrogating broader discourses informing what and how news is put forward, in conjunction with the theoretical foundation on gender and the media laid for this research, that this thesis can suggest discursive openings for change.

In the interviews with SS participants, while discourses of objectivity were very strong, there were various ways in which notions of objectivity could be adapted and negotiated towards the objectives of didacticism and social commentary. In addition, participants described ways in which didacticism could be incorporated even where readers may not agree with the slant given (problematic in terms of the reader-driven approach of the newspaper). The editor, for example, maintained the centrality of market-driven approaches, but pointed to the scope within this for introducing didactic perspectives on certain issues.

> "P: When the Sunday Sun came into being, that was our our our motto, to give them what they want. And they, they said it's impossible [] to give the readers what they want. You, you may have an idea what you want to give them, but the thing is that, what do they want first? *Give them what they want. And give what you want to give them as an addition. And try to change their habits from that*" (emphasis my own).

In this extract, there is a sense that not only are there issues and perspectives that could or should be introduced towards influencing readers (and that news therefore is not only a reflection of society), but that spaces can in fact be carved out to do so. As discussed earlier, much of the value and success of SS was credited to its delivery of relatable issues,

characters and views to the reader, even where these could be conceived of as problematic in terms of social transformation. However, participants' responses highlighted numerous tensions with regard to this, as I have mentioned.

One of the key strategies towards dealing with these tensions was through the **creation of various spaces** in which different perspectives, and in particular "free speech" or overt opinion, could be shared. As one participant noted, the precepts of journalism such as objectivity restrict what journalists can write, while spaces such as columns allow for a higher level of engagement with issues through opinion-sharing.

> "P: OK… There are journalists, reporters like us we write that… we are … restricted by guidelines that we, we shouldn't be….. what I was talking about when I was speaking about objectivity. So now, columnists.. writing a column is something that are totally different. You can write any nonsense and… the, the main duty of a columnist (*humorously*) is to create controversial, controversy, something to talk about. Usually they tackle issues that we.. that we wouldn't be given the opportunity to write about."

Therefore, the tenet of journalistic objectivity can be harmonised with didactic objectives and/or the objective of reflecting the views of the readers (and therefore attracting readers) through the creation of more spaces associated with free speech. In tabloid, in particular, these spaces can be maximised, tabloid challenging certain conventional news formats and growing conversationalism in the news.

The deputy editor noted that the editorial is a significant space through which the perspectives of the editor, as well as underlying or foundational values of the newspaper and its direction, can be seen. Columns came up a few times in the interviews, however, as spaces in which more controversial social issues could be addressed, not only because columnists are not limited by the precepts of objective reporting and are instead expected to give opinions, but also because their professional location outside of the publication protects the newspaper from having the views expressed attached to the newspaper itself. When asked what would happen if a journalist wrote something controversial for the newspaper, the editor answered the following.

"P: In mo-, in most cases I don't even publish that. Then I tell them I say 'no, you are part of Sunday Sun'….. Now, once you start to have an opinion… it's….. just going to send the wrong message. (*Pause*)….. And so, I'd rather not have internal opinions, because once you're full-time staff.. you are Sunday Sun. So that opinion is very difficult, to have a personal opinion whilst you are a full-time staff. So I'd rather.. not have them. Rather have people from outside who cannot be linked to Sunday Sun."

Columnists are framed as the free agents of free speech, and there is implicitly less accountability in terms of what they write. As such, selecting columnists for a publication (who will tend to have their own particular perspective on issues) can be a strategy through which to create space for particular perspectives without risking the same level of accountability for controversial things that may be written.

Another key strategy I identified was the promotion of a **"balance" of views and content**, which was discursively made compatible with the notion of objectivity. "Balance", fitting well within the broader journalistic values, could we strategically used to negotiate tensions between, for example, popular reader-oriented discourses and transformative didactic discourses. To illustrate this, I include a small extract from the editor's interview, which overlaps partially with an extract already introduced earlier. In this extract, the editor notes that a balance is attempted between spaces that sexualise women (and are, implicitly, part of "moral degeneration") and spaces through which "moral" issues such as healthy relationships, marriage, women and child abuse and so forth can be addressed, namely through columns.

"P: And then we [thought] how about also considering that um, *to put a balance between.. we've got a Sun Babe on page three, and then talk about people's issues…* it could be a….. moral problem thing, moral degeneration. Then we got, um, Bishop Sibiya to write a a column, so that he should, should write about issues, about moral issues and all that. We also have um, um, um Reverend Jentile who writes about relationships" (emphasis my own).

One of the participants argued that it was this kind of negotiation over space and attention given to different perspectives (free speech) that was more important and valuable than

pure regulation or control of content in accordance with particular values. One of the main methods of introducing free speech, she noted, was through different spaces in the newspaper catering for individual perspectives, which also served to give voice to different readers. Regulation and controls restricting the expression of various views, including those linked to "what readers want", did not blend well with the journalistic value of media independence. When asked about the importance of free speech versus regulation, she had the following to say:

> "P: Well, both are very important….. because at the end of the day we cannot say we, we have, um, freedom of speech in the media if every now and then we are going to be regulating what, what these journalists are saying….. Sometimes we don't normally get that [free speech] *which is why I think we have the open section for people to say that "but I did not agree with this and that". You know just for people to write in and say that.* And ja. And and and, at the same time it it is a good thing because, you know, as a writer *you do have a sense of some feedback on what do people think as well,* you know. *Not necessarily that I'm just going to feed the reader this thing and this is what they have to consume*" (emphasis my own).

At the level of news reporting, in which normative journalistic values and approaches are required, the sections above have already outlined some of the ways in which journalists conceded to shaping stories in a particular way without breaking the rules of journalistic objectivity. To repeat part of an extract already introduced, one participant said: "the way you write your story, the way you use your words, you don't have to lie to make a story to be juicy." The **selection of "facts", words and an "angle"** for a particular story are other strategies through which meaning is shaped within the parameters of journalistic values and approaches.

In addition, a discourse assigning a kind of **agency to "facts" or "stories"**, which are framed as conveying issues, meanings and values in and of themselves, appeared to be a discursive strategy through which to harmonise social transformation agendas and journalistic objectivity. In this discourse, agency was given not only to the facts or stories themselves (facts and stories being perceived of as engaging with the reader rather than the journalist), but readers were also given agency to "decide for themselves" as one participant

put it. While no overt opinion can be given, "facts" or "stories" were framed as inclined to convey a particular meaning. A good example of this is provided below, where didacticism is appropriated for the newspaper through a discourse that holds the *story* to be the agent through which social issues are raised.

"P: A personality may be involved in an AIDS campaign….. that personality goes out to different schools and speaks to school kids on a weekly basis and tells them to abstain [from sex] and if they can't abstain to use condoms, and that very same personality then goes and sleeps around with three or four women and impregnates all of them. Hello! You understand what I mean? So in that way we try to raise awareness in that way, and *it is not a case of having to preach to readers and say look at this person, he did this and this and that, but it comes out in the story and the person [reader] can see it*" (emphasis my own).

Two of the participants also ascribed **agency more directly to the broader public**, both as readers and as potential sources for news stories. In the following extract, while the participant discursively indicates some level of agency for the journalist in shaping ("judging") the news story, she highlights the agency of news sources to create possibilities for social transformation issues to be tackled in the news. In this way, responsibility and agency is shared with the public.

"P: I'm going back to the legal implications, if you're talking to me on record, like this is on record, then you are giving us as a journalist a chance to write and analyze and judge the situation, and let the readers judge everything that is happening regarding the gender transformation, but some *of the things, we are unable to do that because they [sources] don't want to talk on record*".

With regard to the handling of gender issues in the media, in particular, no specific related guidelines or policies were identified by participants. The editor mentioned having undergone training, and some participants noted the legal rules around reporting on issues such as rape. With no policies or guidelines addressing the coverage of gender issues specifically, it is important to look at broader discourses relating to social transformation and

news coverage, as well as gendered aspects of discourse, which will to some extent shape how gender issues will be viewed and covered.

Other strategies raised in relation to covering gender issues were again **equity for women in the media** and a **women's perspective approach**. This included especially the recruitment and promotion of women journalists and editors towards bringing in a woman's perspective. Furthermore, creating specific sections with content considered of particular interest to women, as well as using women as sources and experts informing news content, was suggested by the deputy editor. A discourse holding women to have a particular perspective, particular interests and a particular sense of identification with other women's views emerged.

As I have already discussed, this is potentially problematic if not interrogated or supplemented with other strategies, given the heterogeneity of women's experiences and interests, the need to challenge rather than merely reproduce the status quo of contemporary femininities, and the importance of considering men and masculinities (not just women and femininities) as impacted upon by patriarchy and significant in gender transformation.

The notion of letting facts or stories speak for themselves towards highlighting social issues was also raised specifically in relation to examples around gender. As already discussed above, one participant noted that the "objective" reporting of facts around the Zuma rape case highlighted Zuma's moral or social shortcomings. The editor also noted the following with regard to attempts to be sensitive to social issues, such as gay rights, without becoming "biased" towards one particular perspective on gay issues.

> "P: The other thing is that sometime when you want to, to, to, to accommodate too much people like for example.. uh.. the the the gay community and all that. And *then you start to be bias again*. Is that what what is the story. *I prefer to say 'what is the story? 'What is the issue?' And report on that*. And then if people really want to to to have opinions and bring sides we have the letters page to do that" (emphasis my own).

In this extract, returning to the "story" or the "issue" is discursively framed as a means through which to remove oneself from opinion and bias. As such, the story or the issue is
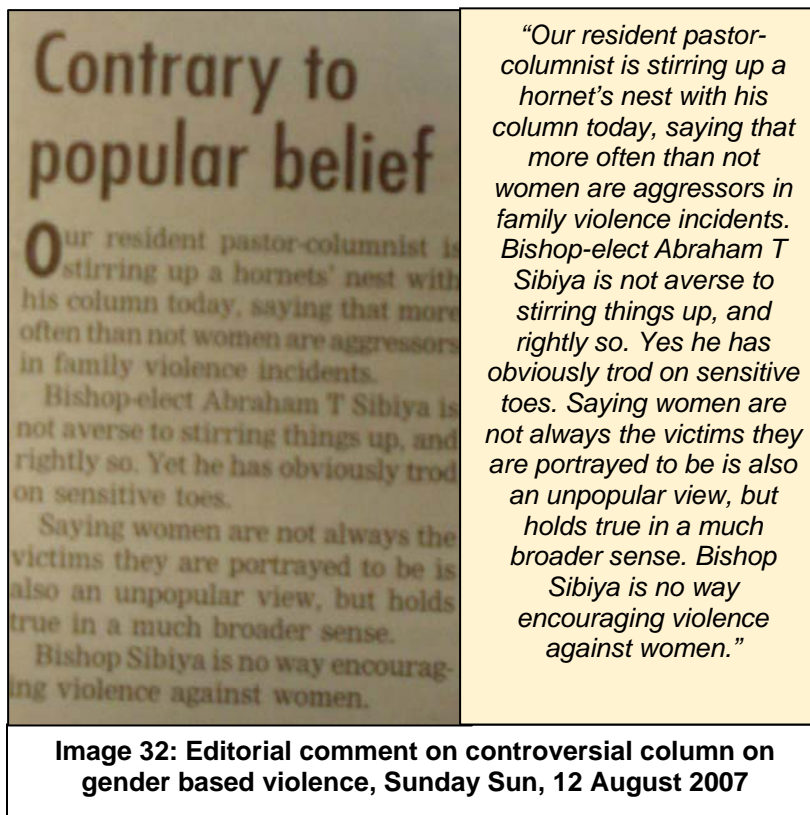
portrayed as being removed from subjectivity, self-sufficient and un-reliant on human opinion. This enables objectivity to be discursively maintained while social transformation issues are raised. The notion of "balance" works in a similar way to discursively satisfy the value of objectivity and be able to give different views through the media in terms of gender issues.

In conclusion to the interview findings for the SS, I will raise one particular example of a controversial gendered column published in the Sunday Sun, a column mentioned by the editor during his interview. This example highlights many of the most salient and challenging findings for the research, particularly regarding tabloid newspapers. In this case, the editor published a controversial and what he recognised as potentially problematic column by a regular but independent columnist, Bishop Sibiya, about the issue of gender based violence. While aware of some of its potential gendered implications, in the interview the editor contextualised this decision within certain discourses of journalistic value, and discursively legitimated and mitigated the decision to include the column through some of the strategies already discussed. The discourse raised in the interview suggests a significant tension and process of negotiation between different discursive values and approaches. The column in question has already been covered in more detail from a feminist perspective in Chapter 6 (see my critique of the column "Women must not be bent on pushing men too far" in Section 6.3.2.3). The following is a relatively lengthy extract from the interview with the editor regarding this column, which he raised on his own accord during the interview to illustrate issues around gender transformation and the print media.

> "P: Just a week ago, um, um, don't forget this is Women's Month, and Bishop Sibiya wrote that uh, um, it seems some women, if not most women, who are victims of.. a domestic violence, are sometimes not the victims they claim to be. In most cases, some are… actually.. pushing guys into this kind of situation. And you can imagine the reaction. And I knew that…. and he did say that 'I'm not promoting violence. I don't say wo-, men… are right, but women should know that not all men are equally matured. Some are less matured, some are less achievers. So obviously when you push him into…. To, to to a corner, he…. You you must be careful to, to who am I dealing with, that kind of thing'. And *I realised what the reaction was going to be, then I go to the, um, uh, uh editorial comment, then I do a comment for example to put things in*

perspective, to distance Sunday Sun from from what he's saying, and also to try to explain that people should not in-, misinterpret him and, and give our interpretation of what he's saying. (*Pause*) *Because that's where the problem is, especially if people, you have people like Bishop Sibiya, who who started to be… face of the public in the Sunday Sun. People start to see him as part of the Sunday Sun. And so we try to to really make a difference there"* (emphasis my own).

In this extract, the potential impacts of this problematic column are described as mitigated through the creation of alternative spaces through which dissenting views can be expressed. The editor later went on to say that the letters page to which readers can submit their views is important in this respect, creating a space in which views can be contested and balanced out. The editorial section also serves an important function in this respect. He further underlines the way in which the newspaper distances itself from the views of columnists.

"Our resident pastor-columnist is stirring up a hornet's nest with his column today, saying that more often than not women are aggressors in family violence incidents. Bishop-elect Abraham T Sibiya is not averse to stirring things up, and rightly so. Yes he has obviously trod on sensitive toes. Saying women are not always the victims they are portrayed to be is also an unpopular view, but holds true in a much broader sense. Bishop Sibiya is no way encouraging violence against women."

Image 32: Editorial comment on controversial column on gender based violence, Sunday Sun, 12 August 2007

My own observations of the editorial he mentioned, however, was that it did not actually refute or re-interpret the columnist's views, but rather reaffirmed the role of a columnist as being to present controversial views, stating that while the column was controversial it was not without grounds, and affirming the columnist's own assertion that the intention of the column was not to promote gender based violence (see Image 32 on the left). In addition, Bishop Sibiya's column in the following week's newspaper continued to perpetuate constructs of women as devious abusers within their relationships with men. The letters

page furthermore did not include any rebuttals in the week following the column discussed in the interview. It seems, from my perspective, that these strategies were not duly employed in this particular case.

The extract of the interview provided above, as well as the editorial to which the editor refers, raises some interesting discursive strategies and tensions regarding what is or is not fore-grounded as knowledge (even if in the form of opinion), and the thorny ongoing dialogue between market interests (or reader primacy), possible broader social transformation projects and journalistic norms and values around free speech. From the sample I looked at there were many columns with similar messages about the gender order in the SS, and these kinds of columns appear to be part of the market appeal of the SS if its concurrent content and growing success are any indication. If this is the case, then, is there perhaps not *enough* of an incentive (or perhaps is there a *disincentive*) to block these kinds of gender representations from the newspaper or to apply the strategies to which the editor refers with greater force and commitment?

In my view, this example shows that editorial and journalistic values and views on social issues are significant in perpetuating or challenging certain gendered voices (and silences) in the media. Whether they be values informing what good journalism or a good newspaper or tabloid is, values informing which voices published in the media are or are not problematic from a social transformation perspective (and to what extent), or the negotiation and struggle between these values, undoubtedly values drive the selection of particular news pieces - even columns by independent columnists, more distanced from the publication. Values also inform whether and what kinds of strategies will be employed to negotiate different views and how they are presented in the media. In this case, the editor identified the column as potentially problematic and both decided to include the column and implement strategies to offset it in some way, within the discursive boundaries imposed by journalistic norms and values, and wider discourses of gender transformation. In a sense, then, it is a case of **mediated agency** - agency employed but also informed and influenced by (sometimes conflicting) discourses.

Notions of balance and the creation of spaces through which to present and challenge views are important strategies through which social content is legitimated within the parameters of journalistic discourses of objectivity and reader-oriented content. As such, especially in the

context of values of free speech, it is not just content that is negotiated but the use and creation of *spaces*. As shown in Chapter 6, the balance and pattern of voices created through space granted (or denied) constitutes gendered representation. The use of space is a strategy beyond the use of content, therefore, through which social values are communicated. As such, editorial decisions on this level are very important and telling in terms of how gender transformation projects are valued and perceived, and because these decisions interface complexly with the readers and therefore gender transformation projects and values at a broader societal level.

I should highlight here that the editor, deputy editor and journalists at the SS, overall, expressed a commitment to gender transformation in South Africa and its media, and were very open, forthcoming and supportive when it came to my research on these issues, which were regarded as important. In many ways, it was from the analysis of the content of the newspaper that the interview findings were put into greater context, since the level of commitment articulated in the interviews seemed at odds to me with what I saw in the newspaper in some respects[61]. This re-iterated the need for the research I have done, not only because through triangulating interviews with analysis of gender representations I could explore these and other schisms, but because what I found supported the hypothesis that how gender transformation is *understood* will impact on how it is interpreted in terms of media representations and therefore what kinds of gender representations in the media will be challenged through a gender lens. In other words, the shape of the lens will shape the perceived status quo and the strategies used to address it.

How the issue of the column was addressed would also be shaped in part by how gender is perceived as a social problem. For example, from the interviews and the newspaper content there appears to be a lag in motivation to change or in any way revolutionise interpersonal relationships viewed as "private" (such as marital relationships) compared to the motivation to support public emancipation for women. So GBV, for example, as an abstract concept can be condemned (in line with its unconstitutionality and wider feminist discursive advancements) but Bishop Sibiya's column, speaking more to what is perceived as the "private" and "moral" interpersonal sphere of heterosexual marriage - while still recognised

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[61] Not in all respects, as I have mentioned, as there were efforts made to promote women's empowerment within the content of the newspaper, as discussed in Chapter 7.

as presenting a controversial gender issue - may not be so firmly located as a problem through the existing gender lens.

Finally, the example of the Bishop Sibiya column on gender based violence illustrates some of the ways in which the application of free speech, for example in columns, highlights **hierarchies of social values**. As the case of the firing of Bullard showed (discussed in Chapter 4), limits apply to "free speech". As such, which controversial or offensive views are included or excluded reveals value hierarchies in terms of what constitutes free (published, even if disapproved of) speech and unacceptable (barred from publication) speech. These hierarchies of social value are closely knitted, I would argue, with the shape of gender transformation lenses or how the gender transformation project is perceived. In fact, I would argue that they are mutually reinforcing: hierarchies of value shape wider gender transformation projects and the discourses surrounding (or constituting) existing gender transformation projects reinforce hierarchies of value (for example through the valuing of "public" over "private" transformation).

In conclusion, the **positions and political will of staff** on various issues, their **understandings of gender and gender transformation**, and the possibilities inscribed into the discursive strategies described above through **discourses of journalistic value** (from free speech to the political economy of reader primacy), are therefore important in carving the limits and possibilities for transformation through the media or mediated agency by media professionals. In essence, the findings for the SS begin to highlight the import of political will around gender transformation, the role of understandings of what gender transformation is in determining how this project is conceived of and applied, and the tensions surrounding the ways in which political economy intersects with these.

7.5 Straddling traditional and popular news polarities: Journalistic discourses from the Sunday Times

7.5.1 Market and market appeal

Unfortunately, key input from the editor of the ST with regards to market and market appeal was not available. However, most participants noted the diversity of content appealing to ST

readers, as well as the mix in broadsheet (or "serious") content and popular, tabloid style (or "light") content. One participant referred to a phrase coined by a previous editor to describe this approach, namely **"quali-pop"**. This indicates a duality in newspaper identity with regards to tabloid and broadsheet approaches, in so doing appealing to a diversity of readers rather than one niche market.

> "P: Look, the Sunday Times straddles a very weird.. it kind of tries to fence, it tries to be all things to all people. Which seems to work for it, it doesn't work for too many other things. So you know, page one is invariably kind of, um, sort of big investigations politics, but told in a kind of, um, *the term they used to used in the sort of late '80's early 90's was kind of quail-pop.*
> D: Pardon?
> P: Quali-pop, is the term. (*D laughs*). The, there's a previous editor who coined it and it is kind of quality reporting, but sort of popular kind of …
> D: Oh, oh, I see. (*Laughs*)
> P: ..feel to it, so unlike you know, *unlike the Mail & Guardian, which is a niche market publication*, which does these great investigations and actually… will give you the blow by blow almost forensic analysis of a story, *our readership is so diverse*….. we've got to tell them the tale, but they must, they're not going to go for the minutia of a bank transfers and whatever. You've got to tell them as simply and to the point as possible and that's the quail-pop sort of thing" (emphasis my own).

The same participant noted that ST readers often tend to buy the ST for particular sections that appeal to them.

> "P: You've got a very mixed readership….. Your average kind of Sunday Times reader seems to like a specific section in the paper, so it is kind of hard to pin them down….. you know, if you park off, you see people reading the paper, you'll see those who immediately grab Metro [section], those who immediately turn to the sports pages and the TV guide or whatever, um, I think, I think the TV guide is sort of up at the top, and news is further down, ja… (*D laughs*)"

In a sense, then, the ST has a series of markets, and readers have a range of different interests in the newspaper as a brand. However, one of the appeals of the ST, according to participants, is the inclusion of "light" tabloid style features and approaches within the broadsheet format and style. As the participant above noted, the "hard" news sections also tend to incorporate simpler and briefer narrative than, for example, the MG. Interestingly, while the ST market was located by participants partly in its tabloidised approach, unlike the SS the identity of the newspaper was not figured as a "tabloid".

> "P: I mean it's [the ST] more populist, *it's more tabloid than.. pretty much any paper in this country except the the, you know, tabloids themselves*. Um, you know, so there's a, there's an element of of… pop, of tabloid writing….. It's not the Mail & Guardian style, it's not worthy, it's not academic, it's not treatise. Any story has to be made pretty simple to be accessible to people. And that's really the style" (emphasis my own).

As the above extract shows, the discursive location of the ST is one that **straddles traditional broadsheet and tabloid** newspaper approaches, while maintaining an identity outside of the label "tabloid" itself. Again, a contrast with MG is articulated, and in this way ST' identity appears to be constructed in its relation to, and in the middle ground between, tabloid newspapers on the one hand and highly in-depth newspapers such as the MG on the other. Another participant described the of the newspaper section she sub-edited as more decisively tabloid, incorporating the label for this section more openly and contrasting it with other sections of the newspaper.

> "P: Ja, it's [my newspaper section] tabloid. So it's more, *it's a tabloid format*. So it's more pop, it's younger, and we can use words like 'Joburg' and 'cop', *which the main body section, or Insight [section] or anybody else never would*. So it's much more colloquial, and it's much more local, it's much more pop. We have an extensive art section in the back, and um, so, so we aim at… it's much more fun, it's more quirky, it's more… ja, we're less doom and gloom and… we have doom and gloom, believe me, we do. (*Laughs*) But we try and lighten it up considerably as well" (emphasis my own).

In this sense, the style of the ST is diversely oriented, with the overall product assuming a more fragmented identity than the other newspapers in the study. As with the SS, tabloidised features such as written accessibility and colloquialism, an orientation to the notion of "people on the ground" (for example, through localised and popular culture stories), and a purposeful withdrawal from a traditional news emphasis on problematic political and social issues ("doom and gloom") were raised. In many senses, this resonates with the discourses used to describe the SS, especially what I called the **weary reader discourse** and the **tabloid as democratised (localised, more accessible) media discourse**.

In addition to the more tabloidised features, participants indicated that the ST maintains an identity as an influential newspaper through its **investigative political reporting** pieces, generally presented on the front page. These investigative stories generate a lot of controversy and public debate, and it is most likely these stories that locate the ST as the most influential media source in South Africa (Media Tenor South Africa, 2007). One participant noted that a dedicated investigative unit had existed to work on these longer-term stories. While this unit had dissolved to a large extent, he noted at the time of the research that it was being revived.

While the approach, style and content of the newspaper were described as highly diverse, some participants noted that news content is oriented broadly to a particular market, with news stories selected in part in relation to how they will affect the lives of the readers themselves. One participant explicitly linked this broader market to a **"middle class"**, noting that this impacts significantly on what kinds of stories are selected and how they are approached.

> "P: So what makes news for the Sunday Times? Things that, um, affect the middle class. Ja. Things that affect wealthier people. Um… so…. A flood in a township? No. A flood in a township that's caused millions of people to stage a march in Sandton? (*Said humorously*) Yes. You know, I.. that's that's the reality."

Therefore, while the ST market and content was described as diverse, the impact of tabloidisation on the market profile and content emerged quite strongly, as did the broader market orientation in terms of class.

7.5.2   Getting stories, writing stories

While the same discursive emphasis on the "chase" of collecting stories expressed by SS participants was not present among participants at the ST, there were a number of references to story acquisition as an ongoing process and a way of life. Participants referred to the need to have a "nose for a story" or to always have one's "nose to the ground" in order to be a good journalist. As two participants noted, this involves approaching all daily experiences and encounters through the lens of journalistic "curiosity". One participant explained it in the following way:

> "P: You got to have….. a nose for a a a story. You got to be a person who's inquisitive, want to know what's happening. When you walk down the street and there's a hole on the side of the street, and then you walk.. down the same street the next day, the, the hole is still there, you just need to find out what's happening there."

Participants indicated that stories are accessed via a variety of methods, including regular contacts, anonymous tip-offs, people phoning in to the newspaper with stories and journalists' own observations (such as the one expressed in the extract above). As mentioned earlier, the ST' research-backed reputation as a highly influential media source, quoted regularly by other media sources, encourages those with potential stories to contact the ST over other publications (Media Tenor South Africa, 2007).

Participants noted that between two and three stories per journalist are generated each week, and that most of these stories are done within the week. However, as with the SS, the time between when the story is conceptualised and gets preliminary approval, and when the final version needs to be approved, is generally about two days. Therefore, time limits imposed on these weeklies are still quite tight. There are, however, some longer-term projects undertaken, especially those done by the investigative unit, and brainstorming sessions are held periodically to do longer-term news agenda planning.

In terms of writing style, most participants observed that this is very brand-oriented and that journalists pick up the newspaper's specific style over time. Two participants commented that the level of editorial intervention into written stories is largely dependent on journalistic

seniority, since more senior members of staff have, over time, learnt the newspaper's particular approach, editorial stance and "culture". Therefore, certain discourses within the newspaper function as connected bodies of knowledge defining the limits of acceptable speech or communication through the newspaper. That this is largely learnt through experience at the newspaper further indicates aspects of organisational culture and brand-oriented journalistic values as shaping the discursive parameters of news outputs. This has implications for journalistic agency located at the nexus of numerous "considerations" (Gans, 1980) in the process of news-making.

The ST is over 100 years old, and one participant in particular (a sub-editor) noted on various occasions the connections between journalistic approaches or values, and the historical trajectories of the newspaper and the South African media in general. This participant also mentioned the "culture" and "tradition" of the newspaper as informing style.

7.5.3   Role of the media

While the interviews at the ST produced less of a discursive focus on the democratisation of the media than the SS, especially for socio-economically marginalised sectors of South African society, a discursive emphasis on the need to **reflect the diversity of South African society** in the newspaper resonated in certain ways with discourses of democratisation from the SS. In addition, less of a focus on the particular merits of the newspaper's specific brand orientation was discerned in these interviews than in those with participants at the SS (where tabloid was directly and indirectly almost defended as a news form). However, discourses valuing aspects of tabloidisation emerged, such as mention of the need to ensure that news is **relatable and accessible** to the readership in terms of content and language (the "pop" in "quail-pop").

While highly positivistic notions of "objectivity" and "bias" were also not given *as much* discursive credence as in the SS interviews, similar tensions between journalistic values were also communicated including tensions between didacticism and objectivity. In this respect, discursive strategies were also articulated towards addressing transformation issues through the media while maintaining certain journalistic values. In particular, the notion of "stories" communicating issues without alienating or imposing on the reader (again,

the **story as agent**), the discursive acceptability of particular views among the perceived readership as functioning to assist as a gate-keeper for content (resonating with **reader primacy and social relativism discourses** from the SS), and **the provision of different kinds of spaces** within the newspaper through which to convey diverse views were introduced as ways in which these tensions could be mitigated.

However, as with many of the interviews at the SS, responses related to the relationship between the media's role as social transformation agent and as "objective" presenter of facts often produced contradictory, vague and vacillating discourses, making it difficult at times to discern what position the participants were actually taking. One participant, for example, began with one assertion about the media's role but, as she discussed and unpacked the issues at hand, she began to move through and consider various different positions, finally recognising with a sense of irony in her voice that her argument had come full circle. **Tensions and discursive negotiations around the media's role** therefore emerged as a strong theme for the ST as with the SS.

Some perspectives on the role of the media, as I have mentioned, were sometimes more clearly defined than others. One of the participants directly articulated a perspective of the media as informing the public towards strengthening public agency. Through information, she noted, members of the public are better able to make constructive decisions for themselves. In this discourse, final agency is located with the reader, and the media functions to provide the informational tools with which this agency can be exacted.

> "P: I think people need, should be informed, that information and, um, knowledge is power, and that it's better to be informed, you know, and know your rights and know what.. and *you can therefore act and be in control of your life* rather than to be uninformed and, you know, ignorant….. like I said our job is to inform" (emphasis my own).

The theme of **shared agency between readers and the media** was a recurrent one. In this discourse of shared agency, participants generally conceded the role of the media in highlighting certain issues and even in orienting stories towards a particular "angle". However, the transmission view of the impact of the media was strongly questioned on the basis that readers ultimately interpret and select information in accordance with their own

views and locations. Therefore, the media was seen as potentially strengthening, but not significantly shaping, readers' views.

> "P: *I would like to say the media plays a role. People also have a mind of their own.* People can think. Um, they don't, they don't really have to listen to what [I say] all the time to actually make a decision. So I can't actually blame the media, but *I can only say we do, uh, infuse in the thinking. We do, uh, enhance it in a way.* Because we push to an extent that we cannot push anymore. But, *at the end of the day it's that person's choice to make up their mind…..* At the end of the day you'll read it and take it with a pinch of salt" (emphasis my own).

One sub-editor participant insisted that her staff ensure that all relevant information is included in the news, but that readers are often selective in what they read into a news piece. As such, the media's agency in transforming society is only partial.

> P: *I think that we are…. there is a responsibility. But I don't think that we can be responsible for anything dumb people do.* (*D laughs*)….. I think that people blame the media very easily for stu-, for stuff that people, p-, politicians' mistakes. Like for instance, a mistake is a euphemism, when Thabo Mbeki stood up and said HIV doesn't cause AIDS, there was a woman at the HIV neo-natal clinic at Baragwanath[62], who the.. who was HIV positive, then began breastfeeding her child who was HIV negative at the time and the child became HIV positive, because this woman listened to what the president said.
> D: Then do you think it's… I mean in a situation like that would… would it be within a, within a newspaper's jurisdiction to say 'OK, he said this incredibly stupid thing, let's make sure we get, um, the other side'?
> P: But they do! They do! *The people don't read that far. It's up, it's not up to us to choose what people will remember, or do not remember because people… the very nature of people is that they choose to absorb what they want to hear*" (emphasis my own).

Another participant invoked a discourse holding the media to be a reflection of society. This links up with ideas around reader primacy and social relativism, where readers' (and

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[62] Hospital.

therefore society's) values and experiences are seen as necessarily determining what is produced in the media. However, as the extract below shows, this reflection is not always seen in direct and unmitigated correlation with "reality", but relates to *assumed*, *perceived* and in some cases even *ideal* set of societal values.

> "P: We, we reflect the cou-, the society we live in. So… we, we want a society where women are respected. So as the newspaper we (*mumbles*).. Like for example, the Sunday Times represents.. mo-, mo-, mo- more than, I I don't know the exact figures but millions of readers, probably three or four million, or five million. So we [] like represent those values."

The selection and presentation of discursive content for the newspaper was also stressed as necessarily reflecting a variety of different views shared by diverse members of society, and as a process in which perceived sensitivities around certain issues are weighed against the need to voice differing opinions. In terms of didacticism, there was a discursive implication that certain social issues are highlighted through the media, but that **an openly didactic approach alienates** and patronises readers. As such, a discourse holding "stories" rather than overt discussions of or opinions on issues to be the best strategy towards transformation through the media emerged in some interviews. In this way, (perceived) agency is discursively shifted from individual journalist or particular newspaper brand to story, and the "story" is presented as interfacing with and therefore impacting on the views of readers.

One participant commented that openly didactic articles are "dry and boring and horrible", and that journalists instead need to introduce issues through a focus on the details of the stories themselves, or as a brief addition to the end of news articles (for example, getting an activist to comment on an event). This participant framed readers of the newspaper as perceiving overtly issue-driven content to be uninteresting and unduly imposing (something that is seen as forced on readers), and this kind of content therefore as economically unviable. As such, any strategies for the communication or highlighting of social transformation issues would need to be sculpted in accordance with the **economic imperatives of the brand**.

"P: You know, we are, we have to be an entertaining read, so *it's to sneak up the issues on the reader (laughing a little), sneak the issues up on the reader as opposed to shoving it down their throat*, cause then they're going to voluntarily consume this stuff, aren't they? Or choose not to" (emphasis my own).

Similar to the SS, a discourse holding facts and stories to communicate social issues and even certain social values emerged, and "objectivity" in terms of collecting and presenting accurate information therefore legitimated didacticism or activism around social issues. In this respect, some of the participants' responses reflected a sense that some values are self-evident in facts or stories, and a shared consensus with readers was therefore implied in relation to certain issues. This is illustrated in the extract below, in which the example of domestic violence as being "wrong" is considered evident through the presentation of accurate information or fact.

"P: *I don't think campaigning for an issue like that has anything to do with objectivity*, I mean there is nothing, you know, *a guy that beats up his wife, there is no objectivity necessary there, I mean if he did it, he did it, you know it's.. you can't be objective in a situation like that,* I mean it's.. *you can objectively interview them, you can objectively look at the story, but the bottom line is what he did is illegal and wrong and you know, should be appalled.* So, ja, I mean campaigning is, campaigning and objectivity are two sort of very different sorts of things, you know, *that's like saying that you've got to be objective on HIV/AIDS, um… the facts are there,* you know, it's not a question of having to say, you know, um, let's give the [AIDS] denialists equal space as the people in the mainstream, because unfortunately the scientific stuff is out there and if you do that it becomes a self-defeating nightmare" (emphasis my own).

In my view, some of the interview data for the ST, similarly to the SS, indicated that the journalists' own views on various issues shaped what was articulated as a case of self-evident "fact". The strength of discourses through and within which people operate and perceive social reality can, in a sense, function to naturalise and legitimate certain issues as inherent in fact. This is one reason why broader circulating discourses are also emerging as

so important in the shaping of news outputs; if these broader discourses shape peoples' understandings and perceptions of social issues, they will indirectly impact on what is naturalised as fact or story in the media. In the interviews, the selection of "facts" for the news was at times rendered in a way that **discursively naturalised fact** for journalists, and as such certain viewpoints were regarded as obviously credible while others were not. As a result, some "facts" are included over others.

The perceived relevance of information to a story was also linked, in my view, to **social currency and the power of various circulating social discourses**. For example, one participant discussed the example of the media's coverage of the Zuma rape trial, arguing that one strong view is that the media's duty is not to be selective in terms of the facts presented, since all relevant facts need to be communicated to the public in order for people to make informed decisions. In my view, however, the example she used illustrated the link between the social currency of certain discourses and the notion of relevant fact. That the "behaviour" of the woman who accused Zuma of rape on the night in question should be communicated by the media suggests, at least in part, that certain actions on the part of this woman were *relevant* to the story, which was about the issue of rape. This, in turn, is laden with gendered values and assumptions forming part of broader discourses around gender and sexuality, and as such the perceived relevance of this information is linked to those discourses.

Of course, Zuma's rape trial also involved an interrogation of the woman's "behaviour", and the relevance is therefore not determined solely by the media but also importantly by the gendered court proceedings on which the media reported. However, it is interesting to note that the hypothetical exclusion of certain information by the media in this regard was perceived of by the participant as a potential form of propaganda. She observed that the need for the media to "educate" or assist in social transformation is a contentious and complex issue in the context of the media's role to present fact, and there was significant tension between competing perspectives on the media's role in her discourse. However, the relevance of the information around the accuser's "behaviour" was raised in a way that appeared to suggest that readers would or should consider this information in making a "decision", and as such that it is linked to broader gendered discourses. I have included a relatively long extract here to illustrate this.

"P: I think the reality is that a lot of, a lot of us might say, 'well… yes our responsibility is to educate', *but educate as in… trying to slant it a certain way or educate as in just providing you with the information that allows you to make a decision*? Um, and I think that that differs, you see, and I think different people, some people would say educate where you actually present only certain information and, and leave it out. And you make, and y- and you…. You assess the information you give, you decide what people are going to, to see, you leave out things you don't want. So, so you're educating you're also…. *It's almost propaganda in a way*. Other people might say, 'well, you know what, just give it all to people' and then.. ja, in a healthy democracy they might not like the fact that….. some of us might think 'well, Jacob Zuma's acc-, [rape] accuser acted very strangely [on the night of the alleged rape] and could you call it rape?' And, you know. Some of us might question that from the outset. I mean, the whole situation is strange. Do you-, is that rape? And some people might think, 'well, you know, why are you questioning the woman?' But… I, I think, I do-, I just, I don't think that just because they're women they should be allowed to get away with behaviour, 'cause that's another gender bias, that they.. we wouldn't expect of men. So.. (*sighs*) *Yeah I mean that is a hard one*. Everybody you speak to… they-, *there are differences within the Sunday Times as to how far you go on that*. Um… and of course, you know, like I said it's a power we have so… the temptation is probably to tell people what to think (*laughs quietly*)" (emphasis my own).

The **journalistic value of informing the public on all relevant facts** is shown here not only as linked to broader discourses imbued with social values and assumptions, but also as a difficult position for journalists and editors to negotiate. On the one hand, as another participant pointed out, journalists should avoid providing too powerful a "platform" for certain problematic perspectives (such as AIDS denialists, for example) but, on the other hand, journalists are expected to present all "sides" of a news story. As with participants at the SS, some participants at the ST conceded to the powerful draw, or even inevitability, of imbuing news articles with a particular discursive slant. However, again agency was framed as shared with readers and limits on the parameters of journalistic responsibility in this sense were therefore set. The participant quoted above also had the following to say in this regard.

"P: And, you know, we do analyse information. And no information is just… completely there as an object. I mean *even a word is loaded*. So… (*sighs*) Look I I I *I have no doubt that we have an effect* but (*sigh-laughs*), you know, *we're journalists so we don't want be take responsibility* (*ironic sigh-laugh*) for what you're reading into a word, you know?" (emphasis my own).

In the extract below, a discourse of relativism as expressed by some participants at the SS emerges. The participant, in discussing her views on the press coverage of the Zuma rape trial, pointed to the fact that journalists will take particular "angles" when constructing a news piece, but that readers' individual viewpoints "at home" (their private or personal viewpoints) will ultimately prevail.

"P: I write a story in a certain angle, what I feel might suit that story. But it does not necessarily, generally.. I must go and generalise and say 'oooh, Zuma' or whatever, or 'the woman [who accused Zuma of rape] deserved it'.. or… what they [Zuma's supporters] were doing outside the court[63], as a human being I say that was just intolerable. I honestly felt insulted as a woman. Because I mean, which woman actually does deserve to be raped?..... They [Zuma's supporters] shouldn't have treated her in that sense. Somehow we.. well, some papers actually played a role in, in, fusing that, and publicizing the whole thing…. But I mean above everything else, it would be… an individual thinking about it at home. When I thought about it at home I thought 'that was so wrong', you know….. but… to tell you the honest truth we are all individuals and we think about things differently. I mean those women what they were doing.. honestly there was a point when I was thinking.. 'they are out of order'. But there was a point where I was thinking 'they are adults, they know what they're doing'. That's, that's fair in that way."

One participant commented frankly that habitually critically examining social issues is not something that is part of what journalists, particularly within tabloidised sections of the newspaper, do or should do.

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[63] As mentioned in the literature review, some supporters of Zuma, including a number of women, burnt placards reading "burn the bitch" and made various public statements against the woman who accused Zuma of rape.

"P: You know, we don't work for Insight [section] (*laughs*). We work for pop, tabloid, we don't think a lot about what we write, we just think, 'oh, that's a story' and we go for it (*laughs*). You know."

When asked about balancing the values of objectivity and transformation, this participant also noted: "we don't really think too much of issues." It is perhaps salient that this frank perspective on issues of objectivity and transformation was given by a participant without formal training in journalism, training that covers theory regarding the role of the media, in a sense allowing for this frank reflection on an aspect of organisational culture within the newsroom. However, the view that was not limited to this participant was that parameters are set on journalists' responsibility and ability (for example, under pressured time constraints) to critically think through the issues discussed in the interview in the day-to-day work environment. Interesting, through, when some examples were raised certain key guidelines were said to be followed to sensitively cover issues. Furthermore, social causes were also implied as being taken up by journalists who aimed to expose social injustices. As such, the limits on journalistic responsibilities or desires to critically think through and address social issues were not framed as absolute. The same participant quoted above, for example, raised the following examples.

"P: Obviously we are not going to.. mention somebody's race unless it's germane to the story, the Press Code stuff, it's basic. You know in the Press Code they have the … you know, you don't identify….. Like for instance Charles[64] has done a lot of gender stories, there's.. this lesbian couple that have been hounded out by their neighbours in Orlando, he [Charles] did it, we lead with it, you know. So… ja, quite a… strong sense of outrage for [our section of the newspaper] (*laughing*). So, you know, so injustice will, will be [run big]."

Another factor in determining the slant of a story was the acceptability of certain discourses to the assumed readers. This was framed as an ideological *and* political economy dimension to decisions around how news stories and various perspectives within them are represented. When asked whether the disapproval she expressed of the treatment of the

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[64] Pseudonym I have used to replace the name she used in the interview.

woman who accused Zuma of rape would come through in the way she would write the news story, one participant responded as follows.

"P: But the, the question is would that have made news?

D: Ja…

P: People don't generally like hearing good stuff. You know we don't want to hear… (*sucks air past teeth expressively*) Mr [Nelson] Mandela did this nice thing or… you don't want to hear nice stuff. People love controversy at the same time. Which is why you put a balance in your story. You s-, *you can't really speak what you're saying, you speak what people want to hear*. You know. *If I was to write what I wanted to hear, that's why I'd have a column, and speak out what I wanted to say*" (emphasis my own).

As such, the parameters of acceptable discourse are shaped by the perceived readership. "Balance" in a story was again also put forward as a mechanism through which to mitigate against what could be perceived of as an overt ideological slant, while at the same time the assumed values and interests of the readers were framed as contributing to the orientation of a news story. The theme of different spaces within the newspaper serving different discursive functions also came through. In the extract below, another participant responds to an example I gave her of a news article in which a case of gender violence was referred to as a woman being given a "klap" by a man. I asked the participant if a story with this kind of wording would be published in the ST, and if there are filters regarding newspaper content in this regard.

"P: I mean, look, you should always get lots of different views and perspectives about gender issues and anything else. Um.. and is there a filter system? Yes there is, there is for every story. Um.. if it was a question of…a… something like a man just giving a woman a "klap", I would argue that for most people in the Sunday Times we wouldn't, you know, we wouldn't allow that to.. hit, I mean…. In fact, the bias would probably be towards.. the woman, you know. Cause I mean gender violence, I think like we said we're, uh, we're, we're talking to a.. um, a more educated, m-m-, wealthier part of the the population. And as a result, you know, there is an…. Well, I mean, I wouldn't say that because wealthy men beat their wives too (*with humour*)! But generally, you

know, there is not this understanding that my, my wife or my partner's my slave and, you know, we're not going to write it…..I mean I think it's pretty.. you get very simplistic stories like [] domestic violence cases, women went to thing and her husband had beaten, you know, had beaten….. nobody here is going to say 'well, she deserved it'.

This participant notes that certain content would not be published if it were deemed unacceptable to readers as well as newspaper staff. A set of assumptions and deductions as to the values of the readers, therefore, in part determines discursive content, echoing political economy aspects raised in interviews with some participants from the SS. In fact, the above extract suggests that these perceived values could impact on content to the point of a certain degree of "bias" to a particular viewpoint. Journalistic values around objectivity are therefore also in negotiation with perceptions of the market.

This participant also raised the **link between South Africa's journalistic history and approaches to the issue of objectivity**. She asserted that the trajectory of journalism in South Africa has been shaped by its apartheid history. "Professional" journalistic approaches to news production, based on the presentation of fact, have not fully taken shape in South Africa, she argues, because of South Africa's relative newness to democracy. Instead, news journalism in South Africa is constituted of greater levels of advocacy and involvement in transformation processes, a characteristic she framed as counter to more "sophisticated" forms of journalism in developed countries.

"P: In South Africa almost the journ-, newspapers have become part of the story. So they are almost advocacy groups….. I mean it's a new democracy, I think people still think they're fighting for something. And I think they, journalists see themselves as, you know, the role of the Church, or something like that, then almost in opposition to government, depending on the government, or in support of government, you know, depending where you come from in this debate. And… so journalists play a lot more active role I think in… that, um… process than they would in other countries with longer histories of, you know, where they're not set up as the opposition and more as, like, these are the facts. But, it's much more sophisticated, it's a much more well-established, you know, you've got.. democracies there, (*ironically*) well democracies, well… but

England's been a a a around maybe….. ten centuries and for the last three or four centuries it's been the way you see now. So there is this established political sys-, this established society. Ours is not and I think journalists play, I mean we've got to be honest, South African journalists play a very…active role in the defining of the society."

South Africa's press is, therefore, framed as more didactic, active in transformation processes and prone to advocacy due to its historical location. While the participant discursively evaluated this in linear relation to a first world blueprint of journalistic "sophistication", she also intimated later in the interview the legitimacy of this approach within South Africa's current historical location, in which the trajectory of transformation processes and the shaping of democracy are unfolding, and therefore could use the active scrutiny of the press.

In terms of participants' inputs regarding desirable traits for journalists and the news, attention to the notion of factuality, as observed with participants from the SS, did not arise at all. The most desirable journalistic trait among participants at the ST was "curiosity", or the ability and inclination to ask questions about various phenomena and in so doing uncover the stories behind them. This came up with all of the participants. I asked one participant, a sub-editor, why this was so key to ST participants.

D: The word cur-, curiosity's come up with everybody that I've interviewed here so far. Is that something that .. gets, that is very much.. is that a word that is really part of the.. newspaper's culture?
P: No…
D: I'm interested that it came up for every person so far…..
P: Ja, but, um, I mean, any.. if, if anybody in any other publication doesn't say that then they're mad (*D laughs*). Because the idea is that… *journalists have to be curious enough about something to want to find out more*. Um, so.. if something happens somebody might say that's interesting. A journalist, uh the very good journalists are curious and *as a result are constantly saying 'oh, maybe that's a story'*. Even though its part of your everyday life doesn't mean, you know, it shouldn't be written about" (emphasis my own)

As such, journalism was framed as an uncovering or probing exercise into the underlying causes behind phenomena. Linked to this idea was the quality of having, as one participant put it, "a bullshit detector", and "doggedness", "scepticism" and "cynicism" as another did. This resonates with discourses emerging in some of the interviews with participants at the SS, linking journalistic practice to the persistent interrogation and underlying mistrust of authority figures towards uncovering dishonesty and iniquity.

Desirable characteristics of news stories were also linked to political economy dimensions, similarly to those raised by participants at the SS. These included the need for news to be relatable to, and in some way affect, readers' lives, as well as to be novel and extraordinary. Two participants referred to the latter as the "oh fuck factor". When asked how she selected stories to undertake, one participant said the following.

> "P: Can I swear? (*both D and P laugh*) *It's got to have what I call the 'Oh fuck factor'*, a regrettable term, but…
> D: As opposed to the wow factor (*laughs*)?
> P: It's like a 'Oh my… What? Did that really happen?!' You know, it's got to have, it's got to have that… either incredible irony or it's got to be big. A v*ery big impact, or an incredible irony* or it's, um… ja… it's got to have that X-factor" (emphasis my own).

This factor was seen as a motivator for readers to buy the newspaper. After describing the "oh fuck factor" one participant said the following:

> "P: It has to have that thing that tips you. If you loo-, *look at the headline and you say 'I really want to read that'* and you can't wait to get home, then that is what I think constitutes a news story, ja" (emphasis my own).

As mentioned earlier, the different sections of the newspaper were also pointed out as having somewhat diverse criteria for what constitutes a good news piece. However, an impact on and relevance to the reader was generally quite important. One participant expressed the constitution of news as having both an "objective" dimension and a "subjective" dimension. As can be seen from the extract below, the former was discursively framed as the broader, theoretical parameters of news, and the latter as the more localised,

market-oriented parameters within this. This extract forms part of the participant's response to the question: "what makes something news?"

> "P: (*Laughs, sighs*) Well… that is uh… (*laughs*) Now that is… that's a hard question. Because *there's an objective definition and there's a purely subjective definition*. What makes news? Something that's *new*.. Um, something that's *happening*… Um.. something that's *relevant*… Something that's *of interest to people*. Something that affects you, impacts on you. *That's objective*. What makes news? Um, *subjectively… what's the paper, you know, every paper's set up and it has a defined readership*. Now, what makes news for the Sowetan might not necessarily be news for the Sunday Times. So what makes news for the Sunday Times? Things that, um, affect the middle class…." (emphasis my own).

This participant then continued to give an example introduced earlier of a flood in a township resulting in a protest in Sandton as relating to these middleclass readers. This extract illustrates the negotiation and relationship between broader journalistic precepts and values, and the impact of political economy dimensions. Both the business aspects and ideological aspects of news production shaped how the role and location of the media were perceived by participants.

7.5.4   Notions of gender transformation and gender issues

Responses to questions related directly to "gender transformation" and "gender issues" were less confined to a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm than was the case with participants from the SS. There was also generally a greater engagement with issues related to the discursive and symbolic representations of gender through news media. However, while a more varied range of responses was given to questions related directly to "gender transformation" and "gender issues", the overall themes to emerge in response to these questions were still similar to the themes to emerge in the SS interviews and reflective of the dominance of liberal-inclusionary paradigms. These included the issue of **women's workplace and economic empowerment**, expanded to issues such as gendered resistance to this empowerment and the notion of reverse sexism as a consequence of

gender affirmative action. The notion of a **woman's perspective** and particular **women's interests** (with women-targeted sections of the newspaper, for example) also came through quite strongly.

Sexual politics in the workplace was not mentioned, although sexuality was raised in relation to **gender diversity in terms of sexual orientation**. As with the SS interviews, however, some interesting gendered discourses not specifically linked to the media emerged in relation to examples and events discussed in the interview, such as the Zuma rape trial. As with the SS findings, I will roughly present participants' responses to questions around "gender transformation" and "gender issues" respectively, before discussing additional gendered discourses to emerge. However, the overlaps between these responses is presented where needed.

One participant responded to both questions around gender transformation and gender issues with a concentration on the issue of women's numerical representation and empowerment in the public sphere, specifically the workplace and economy. In fact, questions aimed at broadening the scope of the interview discussion around gender were received with apparent confusion, with gender transformation and issues being framed entirely within the parameters of women's greater representation in the public sphere. I therefore found it difficult to sustain the interview, not wanting to make the participant feel uncomfortable by further pushing the gender theme through different questions. I have included below a relatively long extract to show the interview exchange around these questions.

"D: And what comes into your mind when you hear the words gender transformation?

P: Gender transformation and equity, what comes to my mind? Oh, number one is to… how can I put this? Eh… to… correct.. imbalances basically….. We know, I know for a fact that women didn't have the opportunities that they have now. Whe-, so when you speak about gender equity then I know that it's mainly about women getting a fair share of the economy, if I can put it that way. And as… getting the representation in the workplace.. right.

D: What do you think are the most… pressing gender issues facing South Africa at this.. at this point in post-apartheid South Africa?

P: (*Long pause*) Repeat the question again.

D: Eh, what do you think are the most… um.. important or serious gender issues that we face in this country?

P: Most important…

D: In post-apartheid South Africa…

P: OK, I I I I just say like, um, when looking at big companies like the senior management, that's where you don't find many women. So that's where basically the big challenge lies….. most of them [big companies] a- a- a- a- are run by men….. Like getting.. forty to fifty percent of women. That ea-, that's easy to deal with. But like the senior management that's where the biggest challenge lies….. Getting, like, women to get those… big pa-, big positions…..

D: Ja.. And when you you're busy working on your news pieces, do you ever come across gender issues or women's issues in.. in the stories that you cover?

P: (*Long pause*) Not really.. Because, there… The the most of the stories we do are.. based on issues. Issues like service delivery. Issues like, eh.. unemployment. Issues like… like your normal day to day issues. Crime. Not really gender related issues. For me I wo-, I wo-, I wo-, I won't say that I do come across those kind of issues."

This does not necessarily indicate that these are the only gendered issues and discourses with which this participant is familiar and engaged with. The participants' expectations regarding the interview and research, and both the terms "gender" and "transformation" may have functioned to elicit particular responses. While I did try to broaden the scope of the discussion via the example of the Zuma rape trial, with limited success, the discursive scope of responses appeared to illustrate a conception of gender largely within the confines of a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm. In many senses, a liberal-inclusionary paradigm appeared to be the most widely accepted and widely associated feminist trajectory when it came to "gender transformation". Another participant also conceptualised gender transformation as including these issues, relating them specifically to the newsroom.

"P: I mean, with the gender as well I also think about how women are actually being so empowered now, as opposed to before, and… I think of our newsroom, I mean we don't ha-, we don't really have that many women but..

most of them are subs [sub-editors] and such, but we have sufficient number of women, and that are actually in lead as well."

Another response to the question of gender transformation engaged more widely with gendered resistance to women's empowerment, especially perceptions about women. This echoed a theme emerging at the SS. However, this participant's discourse also raised interesting perspectives on the nexus between gender, race, "culture" and class in the post-apartheid South African context, the only *direct* reference to these intersections in all of the interviews for the study. Her initial reaction to the question of gender transformation was the following:

"P: Oh well… (*humorously*) It [gender transformation] would be a lovely idea (*D laughs*). What did Mahatma Gandhi say about.. about European civilization? Ja, when asked about what he thought of European civilization, he said it would be a nice idea.
D: OK (*laughs*).
P: I had the same thought on gender transformation."

She then raised some experiences of lags in gender transformation in relation to how women are viewed and the impact this has on their workplace empowerment. For example, she argued that women journalists are less likely to be assigned to stories requiring travel to what are perceived of as dangerous destinations, such as other parts of Africa or the Middle East, despite women journalists' willingness to travel there. She also asserted that women in the workplace are still expected to work more to achieve the same level of success as their male counterparts, and that men assume that women will take on many of the more mundane tasks around the office. Interestingly, while these imbalances were critiqued and linked to limited gendered *perceptions*, they were also discursively framed in somewhat *naturalised* terms.

"P: Women do all the work. The men flit in and out… and do very little work. And it sounds like a, like an extraordinary generalization….. And it's a proven fact that women have a higher sense of organization commitment than men do, and I think that is definitely the case here (*pause*). The men here, like for instance a a senior staffer here, did not pitch up for night shift Saturday night,

cause he he thought the women would sort it out, you know? The woman whose job it is to see, to see to the the duty roster and the re-jigging thereof, he thought no, she'll just sort it out."

Furthermore, the question of gender transformation elicited from this participant examples of how **race, "culture" and class were perceived of as shaping gender relations** and the trajectories of gender transformation in the workplace. As the following extracts show, this participant (a white woman) viewed lags in gender transformation as generally greater among black people in South Africa due to cultural legacies as well as post-apartheid sensitivities and politics around African "culture". Heterogeneity in terms of gender relations is discursively linked to "race" and "culture", terms used interchangeably and therefore concepts implied as closely linked in the South African context. Interestingly, while she conceded that gender transformation among white people in South Africa has not been achieved, she argued that it is a particularly thorny issue among black South Africans, and that racial transformation and the sensitivities related to it (for example, around issues of "culture") have been prioritised in South Africa over gender transformation. In addition, class hierarchies (discursively portrayed in not only social but also in spatial terms) were tentatively linked to lags in gender transformation in the third extract, through the vector of education.

"P: The []^65 department [of the ST], for instance, is run by a bunch of older black men. My young black women who go there seeking [resources] to be assigned to them, get the [resources] that [don't work]. Why? Because they do better, they have better career prospects, and they are, um… and they are seen to be BEE^66 upstarts by these old.. and not knowing their place, by these older black men."

"P: I mean cause you think that (*sighs*) *as white people, you think that the gender issues you have to deal with are big. Try it in other cultures*. I mean my black, young black women staff have got far more… in the way of… I mean you have to, *you have to remove sexism from society in order for there to be… you know, a transformed media, because obviously media is a reflection the society*

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[65] The department and the specific resources they provide are omitted here to protect the anonymity of those working within it.
[66] Black Economic Empowerment (affirmative action programme).

from which it comes. Like for instance there are certain questions that my staff can ask or not ask of people because they are women. I would never countenance that. I would never, I would never even.. consider those restrictions, but as young black women they have to do it. I mean *the whole race and gender merger also needs to be looked at*. I mean, the fact that *post '94, white people on en mass had to transform, and a lot of people did and a lot of people didn't, but the same, the same transformation was not required of other cultures*. Which is why you end up with a situation in which Zuma is existing, because he… being a struggle icon, is able to behave in the most sexist and reprehensible manner as he deems fit to behave in, and nobody says anything about it, because *there are some holy cows that you just don't touch. So.. transformation.. racial transformation has.. come… a lot further than gender transformation* and I think that we have concentrated on racial transformation at the expense very often of gender transformation" (emphasis my own).

"P: You have two different strata, you have the people that, *not the people here for whom gender is less of an issue, then the people down here for whom, who have to struggle with those kind of stereotypes every day, because people are less educated*, people have less experience, it's, it's quite tough" (emphasis my own).

Discursively, a good deal of tension is portrayed within and between issues of gender and racial transformation in South Africa, as well as the role of "culture" (discursively linked to "race") in the complexities of trajectories of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. This discourse resonates with some of the arguments around anti-feminist backlash in post-colonial contexts raised in the literature review, in which resistance to gender transformation is understood in the context of issues surrounding the identities forged and strengthened as part of the anti-colonial project. The majority of, or greatest prevailing, gender issues are also perceived of in this discourses as afflicting the "other". Another participant, a coloured woman, also made a similar link in terms of the role of class and education in shaping gender discourses, although this participant did concede that these links cannot be generalised.

"P: Cause I mean gender violence, I think like we said we're, uh, we're, we're talking to a.. um, a more educated, m-m-, wealthier part of the the population. And as a result, you know, there is an…. Well, I mean, I wouldn't say that because wealthy men beat their wives too! (*With humour*) But generally, you know, there is not this understanding that my, my wife or my partner's my slave and, you know, we're not going to write it.

Therefore, while there was some recognition of the diversity of gendered experiences among two woman participants at the ST, there was a tendency (even if uncomfortably so) to see gender issues as primarily affecting the "other" (in terms of class and/or race).

Another theme to emerge in relation to gender transformation resonated with one raised by SS participants, namely the notion that women may have a different perspective on gender issues than men. However, as the extracts below show, participants at the ST also challenged this paradigm. One participant, in particular, responded immediately to the question around gender transformation by challenging the notion of a woman's perspective or specific women's interests, which she appeared to regard as a key (and simplistic) discourse around gender transformation. Interestingly, what the following extract also shows is the idea, again, that black South Africans (and especially black men) are assumed the least likely champions of gender transformation, in the way that the scenario is met with a sense of mild surprise.

"P: The story that appeals to a woman reporter is not necessarily going to appeal to a man. (*Pause*) I don't have… huge problems with my staff in that regard, because, basically I think the biggest champion, unconscious albeit, champion of women's rights in this office is John[67], he's a 48 year old black man."

Another participant drew on ideas around gendered subjectivity to describe what kinds of news stories are of greater interest to men and women, but again pointed out at the end that one cannot generalise. In a sense, naturalised dichotomies existed in many senses in terms of how men and women's perspectives were described, but these interviews reflected a growing discomfort with these dichotomies.

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[67] Pseudonym.

"P: It [Zuma rape trial], it showed just how much hatred we had, I mean as women towards our own women…. It's something that hurts a woman generally. I mean you hear that a child is raped.. it's not your child, it's no-one you know, but emotionally you cry, you think about it, and you can't get it out your mind, and you sympathise with those people. Maybe men are not like that, you know. Maybe men are f- f- f- are built of steal, but… to tell you the honest truth we are all individuals and we think about things differently."

"P: Well, you know, I think… (*Pause*) I don't think often that there is such a difference between what is interesting to women and what is interesting to men. Um… (*Pause*) ja, and I and *I think people harp on about… you know, you need to write for women, it's like what are women… what are women interested in? Women aren't homogenous*. Any more than men are homogenous. So just because I'm interested in something, doesn't mean the next woman is" (emphasis my own).

The participant quoted in the last extract, in her emphasis on the heterogeneity among women and men (which she elaborated on with reference to her own interests as being different from other women's), appears to be challenging what she perceives of as a strong discourse around gender and the media. In fact, the perceived prevalence or strength of this discourse shaped her subsequent response to the question of the representation of gender issues through the media. The notion of an inherent gender difference in perspective as impacting on the ways in which media stories are covered came through as an important discourse around gender and media issues.

"D: Are there any, any circumstances where, uh, where people…covering a news story and, and, some sensitive gender issue comes up and…is it an issue of how to deal with it? Or.. what angle to take on the story? I mean something like the Zuma trial would be… an example. Uh, do you think that comes up for your journalists? Or it came up for you when you were writing?
P: Yeah (*tone suggesting 'well obviously'*) I mean I think, look, undoubtedly it does, you know, um you come at something from your… your point of view, your… reality. And if you're a woman and someone's talking to you about… rape or domestic violence, you probably believe it more than a man who

probably thinks 'well..' you know? Not all men, granted, but yeah you are coming, I mean, it's not to say that there is no thing as a gender difference."

Interestingly, this participant had a generally sceptical response to the question of gender transformation and the media, to which her first response was "political correctness." Her discourse suggested a sense of **weariness and wariness of circulating discourses about gender and transformation in the media**, such as the notion of a specific woman's perspective or particular women's interests. As she later noted, to her many of these discourses were not relatable to her experiences at work, but rather discourses emerging from an ivory tower.

> "P: I mean I, I understand why people talk about it [gender transformation in the media], but I sometimes think it's, it's, it's, *the debate is happening at a very lofty intellectual level*. Has no.. *that has no kind of meaning for people on the ground*, you know" (emphasis my own).

While this was the only participant in the study to suggest so directly that discourses around gender transformation are inaccessible or removed from journalists' experiences, this response highlights an issue to emerge in other interviews: namely that what I have called "progressive" approaches to gender transformation are still primarily dominant in academia and among gender activists and specialists, and that the trajectories of feminist thought within broader social discourses differ from these. Broader, more widely circulating discourses of gender transformation centre mostly on the notion of women - their inclusion and their perspectives. This will be important to consider in attempts to engage media professionals on issues of gender transformation.

The interview with this participant also illustrated a high level of negotiation and mediation of various gendered discourses, particularly around women, sexuality and the concept of "morality". As with many other instances of discursive tension around gender issues to emerge in the interviews for the study, this tension was raised in a discussion of the Zuma rape trial, as shown in the extract below. Here, the participant discursively separated the sociology of gender issues from the notion of morality. She discussed what she considered "difficult" cases of, or "grey areas" around, gender relations and the tensions emerging when notions of "morality" as well as social background function to shape gendered values. To

me, her discourse shows an attempt to **separate morality from sociology and power relations**, and later social background from gender, which serves to legitimate and negotiate particular gendered discourses, for example, around women's sexuality. However, to me it appears that she also considers patriarchal social values as problematic and to some extent politicised, by raising the notions of "misogyny" and "discrimination".

"P: Now, I mean, the more difficult cases are date rape, uh, some particular rape cases, you know. That's.. that's more difficult, even Jacob Zuma's rape.. accuser. That's more difficult because*…. It's not just a gender issue, it comes into.. a moral issue and where you stand on the moral… um, divide*. You know, same like prostitutes….. Some people want to call them street walkers and think 'shame', some people go 'well they're prostitutes and what do you expect'? You know, and I think that's obviously that's where it's more difficult, because those are grey areas in life. Um. You know. Some woman goes out, gets drunk, wears skimpy clothing.. now, obviously your brain says 'Ok, well it doesn't mean any-, it doesn't mean she..' But then, you know, all of us are thinking 'well, the, the behaviour is… questionable'….. we're called on to make a judgement. *And to be honest with you I don't know if that judgement is… gender as much as.. our up-, our upbringing, all of us, you know*. So somebody who's more religious may be less tolerant and go 'well, I'm sorry'. If a man went out like.. y-, you know, anybody, not that you deserve to be raped but, you know….. it's a grey area and I wouldn't be too quick to condemn or call, or or c-, call it rape or whatever. By the same token somebody else, man or woman, might say it's absolutely unacceptable, you know. So I think that's also.. where you come from. But then that is influenced by.. ja, misogynistic (*laughs*).. ja and I mean gender discrimination, gender bias, so… (*Pause, sigh*)" (emphasis my own).

This extract shows a discursive attempt to separate the social from the "moral", the "religious" and "upbringing", as well as discursive tensions around gendered values. This also highlights a more general dichotomy implicit in gender transformation discourses among participants and in the newspaper content overall - of the personalised (sexual, intimate, moral, religious) from the political, which is more associated with issues such as public representation and the public sphere.

Two participants raised the issue of sexual orientation, one in relation to the question of "gender transformation" and another to the question of "gender issues". These participants linked the issue of sexual orientation, and in particular the rights of gays and lesbians, to the notions of equality and diversity in South Africa, and the need for this to be reflected in the media. The following extract is from one of these participants.

"P: OK. One when you think of, when I think of gender, I think of gender equality, I think of… um… gender diversity. I mean we've got, we've got a whole lot [running] on us now in our country. Before sexuality wasn't such a big deal. But now in gender terms, now we are starting to accommodate the…. homosexual side of life, you know. We try, we're living up to it. We're not blocking them in any way. *I think that's what comes into my mind when I think about that, I think about all the different, the diversity we have in our country*" (emphasis my own).

When asked about encounters with gender issues in the news and stories they covered, discourses characterising these gender issues in broader terms than numerical representation or subjective gendered perspectives also emerged. Two participants raised issues around **gender violence** and the **nexus of socio-economic marginalisation and gender**, for example. These participants (one male and one female) also noted quite emphatically that gender issues in the stories they covered emerged regularly, and framed these as integrated into many broader issues.

"P: Well, it's something that you come across with all the t-, time, um, you know various stories. I mean, I'm trying to think of, for example, a while back, not a South African story, but famine in Niger, I went up there and the particular thing was that… you'd have, and we didn't quite know that situation, but you'd have women and children, sort of essentially starving and coming there trying to get food, um… but they'd leave and they'd take food away and come back again and they were still starving. And the thing is that the men were essentially taking the food. And that was actually, that became the story, was that along with a long host of other issues, but you know, I mean *you get confronted with it at all levels*. Um, service delivery protest, you know you, particularly small rural communities, um.. if you look at the hierarchies and the sort of, I mean

South Africa, for all intents and purposes is still a very patriarchal society. Um, you know just politically one has to look at it, you know, um, take the Zuma case, prime example. So I mean, you know, *those issues are out there all the time, it's it's in relationships, it's in, it's in, you know, pretty much any kind of sort of conceivable story you do, there are going to be elements of all those sorts of things*" (emphasis my own).

Notably, this participant's discourse appears to reflect what I have called progressive feminist thought in terms of both the apparent awareness of gender dynamics and the terminology incorporated, which link gender to issues of power (hierarchies, patriarchy). Furthermore, gender issues are not discursively limited to liberal-inclusionary feminist concerns over the inclusion and development of women in the public domain, but are extended to relationships and access to resources, for example. The second participant, a woman, asserted that gender issues emerged frequently in the stories investigated for the news, although she also emphasised later that she thought these issues are not actually directly considered by journalists who "don't think too much about issues."

"D: OK. And then in terms of your, um… the actual, the work that is done and the the stories you cover, how often do gender issues come up there? When you cover different stories, or language issues and those kinds of things…
P: (*Overlapping*) Oh, every day.
D: And what kind of issues come or what kind of issues stand out as… challenging in that sense?
P: Well, obviously I mean, OK….. A lot of it like the… I hate to say grass roots… like working class issues. Stories like a woman gets booted out of her home by her in-laws because she bust her nephew for raping her daughter, so she gets kicked out because she interfered with the family tradition. You know that sort of crap that goes on in South Africa all the time, it has to touch us because we write about it. Um, what else? I mean stories like that *all* the time… (*Sigh*)" (emphasis original).

Again, this participant has tentatively linked the gender issues encountered in her work to "culture", and more directly to class, in South Africa. While many of the themes around gender raised by participants at the ST resonate with those raised by participants of the SS,

discourses extending beyond liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms were more common, and discourses linking gender to various other social dimensions (even though at times with a problematic tendency to "other" gender transformation issues in South Africa) emerged more strongly. Considerations around diversity in sexual orientation, gendered power and class/race/"culture" intersections with gender, for example, were stressed by participants and in some cases linked not only to gender transformation in the newsroom but to the way in which gender relations are represented in the media.

7.5.5   Discursive strategies for transformation

Many of the discursive strategies employed to negotiate journalistic values and social transformation issues have already been raised in relation to the role of the media as expressed by participants, and I will therefore not elaborate much more here. As with the SS, the centrality of facts and stories in the newspaper is a discourse through which to address transformation issues without abandoning journalistic values such as objectivity and factuality. As one participant noted, through the **centrality of stories rather than overt engagement with social issues** in the news, journalists can "sneak up issues" on the reader. Readers were framed as having an aversion to what is perceived as the forcing onto them of social issues, and as such the "facts" and the "story" were portrayed as better strategies for engagement. This illustrates how tabloidised news forms (more personalised and story-based than analytical or "forensic" as is the coverage in the MG) can and are engaging in social issues. As with the SS, separate spaces such as editorials and columns pages were pointed to as spaces in which transformation issues could be addressed more directly. Even so, limits around what could be presented in these spaces were expressed, as shown in the extract below.

"P: Ja, because like the editorial pages are mainly about... the views.. like views expressed in editorial pages are seen as views of the newspaper. But, like say.. politically, even editorially the newspaper cannot really be seen to be taking sides. But if the newspaper feels that like women…. they can really take that stance and say 'you know what, as the Sunday Times we feel that this [treatment of Zuma's rape accuser] could have been prevented because of women's rights or whatever'. And then that's what they can do in editorial

pages. But, in the news pages, that's where you report on what's happening and you report on what you see. You basically… your view is not part of the article and shouldn't, and should never be part of the article."

As another participant (quoted earlier) pointed out, the limits of acceptable speech within any part of the newspaper are also shaped by the **perceived social values of the majority of the newspaper's market**. In fact, **shared agency with readers** in terms of the shape of newspaper content was raised in response to numerous questions. The role of readers' values in shaping news content through political economy, as well as their agency in interpreting and selecting information in the news, was variously raised. Some journalists were quite direct in saying that considering the complexities of issues in the news is not always considered part of a journalist's work. Some of the discursive strategies raised are illustrated in the extract below.

"D: So is there space to do that, to sort of really push certain issues or highlight certain issues? Or…

P: Ja, but *we don't really think too much about the issues, we obviously, or when the stories that illustrate these issues come out, then…we don't try to fit the…*(*Overlapping*)

D: So it's story-driven as oppo-, opposed to issue-driven?

P: Oh, ja *it's not issue-driven at all.*

D: The issues that come with the stories.

P: Ja.

D: OK.

P: When you've got a good illustration of an issue, go with it. *In the issue stuff you will find with [my section of the newspaper] that it's always at the back, always at the bottom of the story*… We'll phone the Human Rights Commission to comment or this kind of thing. Gender groups this and that. (*Pause*) It's a story, it's a hu-, it's the stuff that grips people, because if you say 'Er, the issue of so and so and this and this has come up', I mean, I don't expect the reader to go beyond the first paragraph or something like that. You know, we are not the Sunday Independent, thank God (*humorously imitating disgust*). Because it's so boring. You know we are, *we have to be an entertaining read, so it's to sneak up the issues on the reader* (*Laughing a little*), *sneak the issues up on*

the reader as opposed to shoving it down their throat, cause then they're going to voluntarily consume this stuff, aren't they? Or choose not to" (emphasis my own).

As this extract shows, a sense of scepticism and **aversion to overt didacticism** is present, but does not entirely exclude the role or application of didactic content in the newspaper. Instead, discursive strategies are used to negotiate these tensions, such as **positing the story as an agent** in illustrating issues or **including activists' comments** at the end of the article. Strategies are therefore developed within the parameters of readers' perceived expectations.

7.6 Balancing critical perspectives: Journalistic discourses from the Mail & Guardian

7.6.1 Market and market appeal

All participants at the MG sketched a portrait of a niche market of more **formally educated and influential** people than most mainstream newspapers. In particular, leadership and broader "decision-makers" in the country were highlighted as an important market segment, impacting on the kinds of news produced by and expected of the MG. The editor described the readership as "thinking South Africa", and pointed out that the readership is importantly constituted of leadership located across the private, public and civil society sectors. Another participant noted that the MG is "regarded as the newspaper that politicians and decision-makers…read." As such, the editor pointed out that the MG is not a "family read" in the way that other weekly newspapers such as the ST tend to be, nor a daily informational read such as the Pretoria News, but a more in-depth, political read. One participant had the following to say about the readership.

"P: We've got a very small readership. Intensely.. intelligent and vocal readership. Um.. They aren't fools. So they can spot rubbish. So do your work (*laughs*), you know, do your job. Um… and so you always, you know with that understanding I think the journalists really push themselves to… really write, the best that they can. So, um… ja, *our readers are intelligent, articulate.*

They're a higher LSM so they usually are very well educated. Um…. *So, you really have to know your subject matter* and, um… and and people come to expect a certain amount of, um… very… intelligent debate in the newspaper" (emphasis my own).

As this extract shows, the readership was distinguished along the lines of class and related educational and lifestyle (LSM) characteristics, as well as being distinguished as somewhat **politicised** and **vocal readership** interested in debate. That the readership is formally educated and well informed in various areas was also cited by participants as significant in determining the shape and style of the journalism practiced. As the extract above illustrates, a high standard of critical journalism is required to meet the expectations of the readership. As other participants pointed out a good deal of contextual knowledge in the journalist's field of specialisation as well as a broader general knowledge are thus critical characteristics for a journalist at the MG, in order to meet an informed and vocal readership where it is at.

In addition, an important aspect of the market appeal of the MG raised was **journalistic and editorial opinion**. In other words, participants at the MG highlighted the importance of space given and expertise in providing informed debate and opinion over straightforward news reporting in which overt expressions of opinion are proscribed. This emphasis on space and depth provided for opinion, comment and analysis has significant implications for the kinds of discursive strategies available to and employed by the MG towards social and gender transformation.

While other newspapers also include spaces in which comment and opinion are given, the MG market was framed not only as creating far more space in this regard, but also as expecting more educationally informed and in-depth scrutiny of issues in its opinion sections. Furthermore, these opinions were discursively framed as coming more directly from writers at the MG in addition to out-of-house staff such as freelance columnists and readers. As shown in the extract below, opinions were linked more closely to the newspaper itself than was the case, for example, with the SS which distanced itself as a brand or entity from the opinions expressed in the spaces it provided.

"P: *We are a very thinky newspaper, people take us seriously, our readership tends to be very highly educated, tend to be in positions of power, and to be*

very influential, so we're involved, I think, in the business of… of apart from the news that we generate and the investigations that we do and so forth, that are part of the package, *I think we're a paper that is very highly considered for the value of it's opinions*. And I think that goes for the political opinions stuff as much as it does for he arts stuff" (emphasis my own).

The editor noted that, at the time of research, all journalists were fully trained through universities in the journalism profession. This is unlike the other newspapers in the study, whose journalistic staff members were drawn from a greater variety of educational backgrounds, including those with tertiary education in fields other than journalism and those with diplomas or basic training programmes in journalism. A **privileged niche market** was therefore sketched, and staffing decisions as well as decisions around style and content are shaped around this.

Another key element of the MG's market appeal as described by participants is its **investigative and in-depth political coverage**. In contrast to more tabloidised newspapers - valued for the simplicity and broader accessibility of their language and content, as well as their "entertainment" and "light" features - the MG was described as providing more detailed analysis of state politics. Similarly to the ST, however, one of the MG's flagship features includes prominently displayed political investigations into issues such as corruption among government officials and others in power.

> "P: They [readers] expect things like our investigative team, who've got quite a reputation for the work they do, to pull out these stories and um… highlight corruption I suppose."

The editor herself placed the investigative news pieces high on the list of features that are most valuable and interesting to readers. As such, she noted that the MG as a publication identifies with a **"watchdog" role** within South African society. As mentioned earlier, the MG was recently ranked the second most influential media source in South Africa, after the ST, and this is linked to the investigative news covered in the MG. However, the MG's investigative news pieces tend to be more detailed in their approach than, for example, the ST. One participant from the ST noted the following:

"P: [Mail & Guardian is a] niche market publication, which does these great investigations and actually… will give you the *blow by blow, almost forensic analysis of a story.*"

Related to this, journalists at the MG were generally described by all three journalist participants as having a good deal of knowledge in their field, or as specialised in a particular area towards developing in-depth coverage in the newspaper. As such, participants' discourses reflected less of an emphasis on the normative journalistic values that were highlighted by participants at the other newspapers, for example, related to skills required in chasing stories, reporting simply and factually, and integrating entertainment into news content and style (although this is not to say that these elements are not included at all by MG participants). Instead, journalistic values around detailed and specialised coverage, and as such also knowledge on various subjects, were more notably emphasised.

"P: I think also that a lot of the writers [at the MG] are specialists in fields. And um… so…. You know, *they perhaps more than other newspapers they do tend to… uh be more in-depth on their particular subjects.* Um, you know, a a a daily newspaper basically wants to just get to the latest developments. Whereas… a newspaper such as the Mail & Guardian wants to look behind those developments and perhaps explain them" (emphasis my own).

"P: They [senior journalists at the MG] know the groundwork, they've done their homework. So they have, you know, excellent background knowledge on.. the big issues informing their section or their industry. And very often they have a lot of background knowledge on all the other stuff."

Highlighting all these market appeal features, as well as the broader content of the MG, one participant responded the following when asked what readers of the MG find most valuable and interesting.

"P: *(Pause)* Look I mean it seems, you know, just just… uh… based on the mix that the newspaper runs. I mean *it's a political newspaper, it's always been a political newspaper.* Um… it's… regarded as the newspaper that politicians and decision-makers, um, read. So… um…it will often get approached to write

those kinds of stories and feature them….. That's in the news….. It has a lot of other sections [] and so it's a *it's a broad ranging newspaper but upfront in the, in the news side it's about.. cutting-edge issues of the day and political issues. Decision-making*. Things that, that affect the way, the state of the nation" (emphasis my own).

That the MG is a "political newspaper" was highlighted by participants on two levels. Firstly, the editor and journalist participants pointed to the in-depth coverage of national or party politics through investigations as well as comment and analysis features. Secondly, as directly articulated by the editor and implicit in the discourse of the three journalist participants, the MG is a *politicised* newspaper in the way that it covers various news and features. By this I mean that issues beyond national party politics are **politicised**, with the social and economic politics shaping various contemporary phenomena unpacked and highlighted, and issues tackled in some spaces of the newspaper through what one participant called **"advocacy journalism"**. The editor also highlighted one of her goals as an editor as being to broaden awareness around the parameters of "politics".

> "P: We need to inculcate in people that political coverage is not just coverage of… um, party politics. It's classically, *classically*, Frere Hospital" (emphasis original).

She then continued to discuss the example of Frere Hospital[68] as an instance of politics within the sectors of health and welfare. I will discuss more with regard to the issue of MG's politicised approach in the section dealing with the role of the media. However, it is important to note that a political stance (conceptualised in a broader sense than state party politics) is more overtly adopted in the editorial orientation of the newspaper.

The editor noted that the newspaper's content and style reflects quite clearly a **particular editorial orientation in terms of socio-political principles**. In particular, she highlighted the MG's stance as "green", gender conscious (including "cutting edge" coverage of gender issues), pro-poor ("stand on the side of those who do not have"), anti-racist and pro-diversity. She also emphasised the editorial commitment to expanding coverage towards

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[68] An East London hospital that faced serious financial, managerial and health provision problems and incapacities, which were given attention in the media.

repositioning the MG from a South African newspaper to an African newspaper, also an undertaking I think could be laced through with a post-colonial, political perspective. Another participant observed that the MG is also secular in orientation and "progressive" in its underlying principles and values. While numerous participants from all the newspapers in the study included elements of moral, political or social didacticism and advocacy in their discussions of the role of the media, the discourses emerging from the MG suggested a more overtly embraced, or proud, editorial stance in this regard. One participant linked this in part to the MG's history as a "crusading" newspaper.

The editor pointed out, however, that the MG's approach was made possible in part by what she called an **"inverted" commercial model**. She noted that, unlike most other newspapers, the MG is premised on a commercial model that is editorial-led. In other words, the journalism is not so much shaped by readers' or advertisers' interests, but rather readers are attracted to the publication by the kind of journalism done and editorial stance taken by the MG. She stressed the role the publication's ownership plays in sustaining this model, even though the kinds of journalism undertaken by the MG (often controversial) have at times impacted on its commercial viability. She observed that the "quality" of the journalism in the MG is critical to the credibility upon which the brand rests, and that as such maintaining it is of utmost importance. Due to the resulting economic pressures experienced, alternative commercial endeavours are pursued towards the commercial viability of the publication, such as the publication of the *Women's Book* (a resource for journalists in which women experts in diverse fields are listed for easy contact by journalists). Therefore, many of the very distinctive features of the MG are also linked to quite a distinctive political economy dynamic, less common among weekly newspapers.

7.6.2   Getting stories, writing stories

Only one journalist participant directly discussed news collection processes, since one of the other two participants was a film critic and the other was only able to give a short telephonic interview. However, the participant discussing news collection sketched a similar picture, in some respects, to participants from other publications. This depended, however, very much on the section of the newspaper. For example, for feature writing about social development, contact with sources is initiated either by the sources themselves or by the journalist

following up with an existing contact. Sources could include institutions such as NGO's, or any person or body that wishes to have a particular problem highlighted in the press. As mentioned earlier, that the MG is a highly influential publication, as well as the fact that its market has a strong leadership component, means that it would be a desirable publication to contact with regards to highlighting issues.

Other sections, she noted, are more driven by events themselves, such as the fashion section in which the catalyst for stories would be current fashion events. Some sections of the newspaper that are less driven by events, human-interest components or "tip-offs", such as the business section, may be more planned out by the section editor in terms of content. The editor herself noted that when it comes to the identification of news stories, there is a mix of news that is event-driven and editorial-driven; sometimes the newspaper follows, and sometimes it sets, the news agenda.

As with the other publications in the study, stories are mostly written within a week, except for some longer-term stories that may require investigation. While participants mentioned that areas of specialisation existed among journalists, the editor also noted the flexibility in terms of beats or "turfs", with journalists writing for different sections. Related to this, two journalist participants stressed a sense of journalistic agency supported at the MG in terms of being able to take their own news direction and style. I raised an example with one participant of an article from another publication containing what I viewed as highly sexist content, and asked her whether or not this would be published at the MG, and why. After responding that she agreed it to be sexist in content, she observed that *one* of the reasons it would probably not be published in the MG was the probable reaction from staff.

> "P: Also… I think it would.. it [the article] would meet with a lot of resistance from staff but I've also got to say that *in this newsroom our staff are allowed to air their opinions quite, quite strongly*. Um, and so if they put up enough of fight or, or argued well enough to say 'I don't think this is right, we should not pub-, publish it for x y z reasons'… they wouldn't.. if if not be listened to be heard. You know, the, the decision might be taken [to go ahead with it]….. but they would be heard, definitely" (emphasis my own).

Another participant, primarily a film critic, also reflected the following with respect to agency and freedom at the MG.

"P: In terms of content, I pretty much write what I like, and that is one of the reasons why I'm still at the Mail & Guardian 18 years later, is that *it is pretty much the only newspaper, and I know a lot of people on other newspapers, it is pretty much the only newspaper in South Africa that will let you write what you like.* And I've never been censored and I've never been restricted, and *that is very valuable to me*" (emphasis my own).

In an interview with the editor shortly after her appointment, she noted that this freedom among journalists was one of the draw cards for young journalists to the publication.

"They [young staff] come to the Mail and Guardian [sic] not because they earn the best salaries, really they don't. They come because they get space and because their views are heard. Our editorials are very democratically decided, which is quite different" (Haffajee, 2004).

The editor also commented that journalists at the MG should ideally have a sense of political consciousness, and that while she does not like to dictate to journalists in terms of content and opinions expressed, she can choose journalists with social and political consciousness around aspects of the chosen editorial ethos (mentioned in the previous section). Therefore, the agency of journalists within the process of news production was also linked to the culture and editorial stance of the newspaper, and therefore the types of journalists attracted to and employed at the newspaper.

When asked about the style of the newspaper, participants noted that this was again dependent upon newspaper sections. Similarly to the other newspapers in the study, one participant observed that news coverage, in particular, is subject to more specific parameters and norms in terms of journalistic practice than feature writing, which is more flexible in terms of style. In the extract below she discusses this.

"P: It [style] depends on what section I'm writing for actually. Um, of course news it's quite.. you know, it's the news style, you would be writing with your…

as much information at the top of the story as possible kind of thing. Anything to grab the reader. In standard news [format]….. It's… varsity stuff. You learn, you know, your five w's and an h. *(Laughs)* Um… although when we do things, like being out on our internship programme, that you get to practice it a lot and… you have a news writing course for a week and, you know, all of those ideas are reinforced and you, you know you get to practice them. Um, when it comes to things like social development and arts, there's a little bit more leeway, um, in terms of the style of writing that I use. I find, um… ja, when…. I'm writing for social development, for example, the stories have to be even better written than normal. Because.. the issues aren't always, you see they're the marginalized issues, they're the marginalized people. So you really have to draw the reader in. So you really have to use story-telling techniques. A lot of voices, a lot of colour. And at the same time not lose the newsworthiness or the issues or the punch. So I find those stories often take a lot more work (*laughs a bit*)."

As the extract above shows, style and flexibility is directed in part by the section being covered and readers' expectations around this. Feature writing is also highlighted as requiring more creativity than news reporting. Participants further stressed the importance of - and the ample space given to - comment and opinion within the newspaper, observing this to be a significant part of its style and approach. Therefore, while some of the standard conventions around news reporting, as mentioned above, come into play, wider styles of writing were also said to receive significant space.

7.6.3   Role of the media

The discourses of participants at the MG were **more overtly oriented in terms of values around social transformation** and the location of journalism within transformation processes than the SS or the ST. However, some similar themes and strategies also arose in terms of weighing these values and principles against traditional journalistic norms and values, such as the balancing of different views. Unique to the interviews for the MG, however, was the consistency of **scepticism regarding the notion of "objectivity"**, which all participants expressed in one way or another.

The editor stressed the particular importance of the press as a media form in setting the news agenda. Furthermore, the role of the press as a **"watchdog"** for society was stressed, and desirable journalistic traits reflected this. For example, the editor considered a critical, political perspective to be a key journalistic trait. Another participant had the following to say about ideal journalistic traits.

> "P: Um… they [good journalists] have…*very critical and inquiring minds*. Um… and an *uncompromising ability to get to the issue, the heart of the issue*. They just… get in there, *they ask the tough questions*, they see exactly where the problems are and they're not afraid to put people on the spot and ask them. You know. So 'how much did your trip to America cost, Mr President?' kind of thing *(laughs)*" (emphasis my own).

The importance of a critical press performing a watchdog role, particularly in light of recent debates and interventions regarding press freedom and criticisms against the current government, was also highlighted in one of the post-interview questionnaires received back from a participant.

> "P: Any serious research into, and discussion of, issues in the media, is useful. Media freedom is constantly under threat in some way, whether it's proposed restrictions by the ruling party, or through attempts by various high-powered people such as Jacob Zuma to sue members of the media such as cartoonist Zapiro[69]….. The critical spirit must remain alive in the media or we lose out on a key element of our democracy."

A discursive tension between those with greater power and those without was variously expressed in the interviews, albeit in the context of engaging with a privileged market unlike the SS. Whereas the SS's participants' discursive orientation was more focused on voicing the concerns and interests of the "ordinary" people making up much of their readership, here the discursive orientation was more focused on engaging an educated elite in decision-making positions regarding **development concerns**.

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[69] As discussed in the literature review.

As already discussed, the editorial stance of the newspaper with respect to social and political issues was discussed quite openly by participants in comparison to other newspapers in the study, and the approach to **news-making processes discursively framed as politicised** in a broad sense. Within this, the need for journalists at the MG to be well informed in various fields as well as socially and politically "conscious", as the editor put it, was highlighted.

When asked if journalists were able or encouraged to pursue particular social issues of interest to them within their work, one participant commented that journalists at the MG are comparatively free to pursue particular issues, as long as these issues are relevant to the particular story at hand. Again, as noted in the findings related to other publications in the study, the perceived relevance of particular issues to a story speaks to the journalists' perception of or consciousness around social issues, such as gender, within broader events and debates. A discourse in which the story itself is seen to conspicuously raise certain issues was employed here similarly to the way it was with participants from the other newspapers in the study. However, the MG's focus on more in-depth and opinion-driven coverage, as well as editorial stance, presents the opportunity to explore and highlight these issues in more detail.

> "P: No there's, there's plenty of freedom to do that [pursue certain issues]. It depends on the story obviously. Like, um, if the story is… about…. *(Sigh, pause)* I mean if it's just a general news story and I feel I have to put in gender *(humorous tone, as if to imply that would obviously be silly)*.. issues somewhere there, um, unless it's relevant to the story I can't do that. I must stick to the story. But when it's a, when it's, it clearly.. raises questions along gender inequality and stuff like that we are free to highlight that kind of th-, thing. In fact encouraged I would say….. No-one has ever said 'ag no, that's a tired topic' or 'don't talk about it' or 'don't bring it into things'. It's always, you're allowed to explore it."

As mentioned earlier, all four participants expressed scepticism regarding purist notions of objectivity in the media. The editor observed that she was more "comfortable" with the values and notions of "fairness" and "balance" than with "objectivity". For example, she noted that while the newspaper's editorial stance was premised on certain principles, this

should not translate into the shape of a social movement newsletter. Instead, she noted that "that's where fairness and balance come in", namely by giving both sides of a story (different views) and while highlighting social issues, avoiding siding with any particular political *parties* or *individuals*. With reference to the ANC succession race, for example, she commented that while the MG took a clear position on the characteristics a leader of the government and the ANC should have, it would not choose a specific candidate. In this way, the notion of objectivity is rejected in favour of an approach that unapologetically stems from particular social and political values, while the notions of fairness and balance function discursively to maintain broader journalistic values and norms, including the avoidance of overt partiality in terms of supporting particular individual or party interests.

Another participant expressed a similar discursive stance, in this case explicitly rejecting a positivistic notion of objectivity in favour of fairness and factuality. He offered an example, which I have included in the extract below, to illustrate his point that all voices are oriented in some way, a case for positionality.

"P: *I've never been a believer in the… you know, objective journalism thing because I don't think there is such a thing.* I think that in terms of news there are, um… rules and structures and guidelines by which *you can be fair or unfair. But I don't believe there is such a thing as truly objective journalism, no.* And I've never been interested in a particularly objective type of journalism, I mean either you present the fact accurately or you don't. I mean, *if you are a journalist and you are lying about information that you've got, then obviously that is wrong. What I think a lot of people see as objectivity is … uh, being fair to the people being covered in a story, so that if you have information that is condemning someone, you give them a chance to rebut it.* Um, and you know, *when people talk about objective journalism, I mean I think most of it is bullshit, quite frankly,* because you have someone like Carol Quin[70]…..who's on the board of [a company]…. writing in [another newspaper] saying 'I don't speak as the [board person of the company]'….. saying we have a lot of the.. that the media is not objective enough, the media doesn't allow enough voices. What is she really talking about? She is talking about the fact that in her view media….. does not reflect the government view point of 'everything [in the country] is

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[70] Pseudonym.

going fine, there is nothing wrong with Mmanto Tshabalala Msimang'[71]. Whatever it is, um, she's concerned about the fact that too much of the news in her view point is revealing.. problems in government and problems with individuals in government, she doesn't like that. Now is she making a case for objective journalism or is she not?..... I mean, *whichever way you look at it, it is not objective*" (emphasis my own).

This participant also emphasised the role of opinion pieces in the newspaper in facilitating an ongoing process of public debate - an important function in addition to the provision merely of information. In a way, I would argue that this emphasis on spaces created for opinion, analysis and debate, while in style and perhaps focus is quite different to the tabloidised newspapers, does resonate tabloidisation to the extent that it goes beyond more straightforward "reporting" of "news" and into the domain of more conversational engagement with readers (and other writers). Another participant noted the following with respect to the notion of objectivity.

"P: Perhaps *there's an old-fashioned view in a, in a, in a respect that you know journalists are always objective*. I think…um… you know that *that.. possibly applies more to dai-, daily journalists than the kind of… uh.. more feature writing that gets done*. Or weekly publications. Um..I don't know. *I'm not saying that you should… uh…put a spin on things. Um, when I'm, when I'm talking about advocacy journalism it's more…. um… try bring issues to… the attention and the awareness of the readers*….. So.. um… advocacy in the sense of trying to get the issues to the forefront and to make them news. And to get people interested in them. Um…whether, you know, that then doesn't mean that one has to be, punt a certain point of view in those stories. I mean you still in the, in the, *the tenets of objectivity still applies. So in other words you still need to speak to… you know, somebody who holds one view and then the per-.. the other person who holds another view so that you get a balanced report on the issue*" (emphasis my own).

In this extract, the participant does not explicitly reject the notion of journalistic objectivity but rather aligns it with the notion of balancing perspectives within a news piece. In this way,

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[71] The controversy around this minister is discussed in Chapter 4.

advocacy within journalism is made discursively compatible with traditional journalistic values (and the notion of objectivity is still included as one) through **a focus on the notion of balance** and an avoidance of overt or extreme ideological orientation within an article. Advocacy through journalism is also framed as a function of highlighting, or creating space for, particular issues and perspectives without overtly supporting them. This also echoes some of the discursive strategies employed by participants at other newspapers in the study. In addition, this participant regards weekly newspapers and feature writing as more open to advocacy journalism, again emphasising the differential functions of different spaces within newspapers.

One participant also raised the issue of balancing perspectives, as well as **the role of different spaces** (such as columns and letters) in doing so. However, she also highlighted the problematic aspects of balance, which is tacitly also linked to differing social values and their relation to the notion of fact. The following extract is part of her response to the example of the media's coverage of the Zuma rape trial, an example I introduced into the interview.

> "P: I think in…. in the drive, in the media, *I think the drive by the media to sort of create a balanced view like this.. like we're always being told like 'you must create a balanced version of events'… (Pause) So in doing that so many of the media I think… (Pause) allowed… garbage to be put out there like*…. like reinforced myths about women's sexuality and, um… and… and perceptions of women in particular the woman involved that I think should not have been allowed. *Yes, you have to portray a balanced view but then.. you gotta realize that… you, in doing so you… might possibly just be… letting… stupid people have a platform to spout their garbage*. And I really think then the media needed to be more critical of… of the people who were supporting him [Zuma] and…. (*Laughs*) Just like… if I had had my way I would not have let the Friends of Jacob Zuma[72] have a voice at all or.. because… it's just given, given them credence or… and and not just them credence but, ja. Bu-, it's just, it's just somehow reinforced or let people who have these.. dumb-ass ideas about women and.. what they deserve and don't deserve….. They shouldn't have...

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[72] An organised trust group set up in support of Jacob Zuma. Activities include fundraising for Zuma's legal costs and public announcements in support of Zuma, especially regarding his criminal trials.

been allowed to reinforce those beliefs. *(Laugh-sighs)* I just.. ja" (emphasis my own).

As with participants from other publications in the study, the introduction of an example with which the participant strongly identified acted as a catalyst for the expression of some of the discursive tensions surrounding journalistic values. Here, the notion of balance embraced above a positivistic notion of objectivity is also negotiated in terms of its relationship to the social transformation and the positionality also implied in the notion of balance. In other words, whereas some journalists struggled with what content constitutes objectivity, this participant struggles with which perspectives constitute balance. I then asked this participant if there are tensions between the journalistic values of promoting national good and presenting balanced, factual news. The following extract formed part of her response.

> "P: All the time! I think that, that.. *I think that the issue of objectivity and reporting in the public interest aren't necessarily mutually exclusive.* Very often just reporting the facts…. is in the public interest and reveals.. a lot of bad stuff….. But in the case where, you know, in the case.. like this [the Zuma rape trial] ….. it is very problematic because yes you are reporting the, the facts and this is what… Jacob Zuma said….. And to a certain extent, do you have to do that? 'Cause it is said. But… I think that there are ways then to, to counterbalance that. Like open up your comment and analysis pages to clearly criticize that kind of thinking. So invite a gender activist to write for you and say… 'clearly this is a load of bollocks because x y and z'" (emphasis my own).

She then continued to give the example of climate change, in which the notion of balance can be misused to represent equally what are largely scientifically discredited ideas, the same example raised by a participant at the ST. What this extract and these examples indicate, again, are negotiations between notions of objectivity, balance and public interest, negotiations this participant agrees are ongoing in journalistic work. Some strategies raised to deal with this include the **valuing of particular perspectives** and therefore giving them more room (for example, determining certain perspectives on gender issues related to the Zuma rape trial to be counter to transformation), **employing the notion of fact to determine balance** (for example, in the case of global climate change, presenting the "fact" of dissidents to climate change), and where perspectives presented in the news are

considered problematic, **carving out spaces within the newspaper** in which opinions against them can be made explicit without interfering with the notion of journalistic objectivity or balance.

This participant also observed earlier in the interview that while certain norms and values pertaining to journalistic practice and ethics are explicitly provided, for example through ethical guidelines similar to those raised by participants from the other newspapers in the study, that journalistic norms are largely approached in a more flexible way and on a story by story basis. **Prescriptions regarding journalistic content and approach were framed as potentially problematic** and avoided at the MG. However, she was also careful to stress that this did not preclude any forms of gate-keeping with respect to content and approach.

> "P: I don't want to make it sound like it's just loose, unthought-out stuff. Like it's like a 'play it by hip' *(Laughs).* [It's] practice in the newsroom I suppose. But not because it's um….. because we just think up what we want to think up whenever we like. It's more a case of, um, we try and apply ethics as flexibly as possible so that they apply to that story."

The editor also noted that she did not like to be too prescriptive with journalists, although a **broader ethos for the newspaper**, particularly with respect to certain issues, is cultivated.

While market factors were raised in relation to what content is negotiated for the newspaper, this theme did not emerge as strongly as in the other newspapers. One participant noted that certain social discourses would be subject to gate-keeping not only due to editorial stance but also due to the market to which the MG caters. However, as mentioned earlier, the commercial model for the MG was considered **more editorial-led than market-led**, and as such discourses reflecting a concentration on giving the readers what they want were not as prominent in terms of negotiating content as with the other newspapers in the study. However, another participant at the MG mentioned that reader response did, to some extent, determine the space given to particular issues. When asked what constitutes news, she had the following to say.

> "P: What actually constitutes news? Well… I guess, you know, you get to know the kind of people that are reading the publication, and, um… you know what,

what they would be interested in reading and and….wh-, what, what most newspapers including the Mail & Guardian try to do in their upfront news section is to… sort of shock people a bit and make them think….. That they get a reaction from them. And after a while you start getting a feeling for the kinds of stories that will.. um… get people writing letters to the newspaper in outrage or in response. So, you know, it's, it's sort of give and take I think.

D: Do you think the, the media itself sets, sets …. sets most of the agenda or is, I mean is it…

P: As I say I think it's a bit of give and take. I mean [] if you just carry on writing stories forever that, um, that nobody sort of writes letters about then you… it's a pretty good indication that people aren't all that interested in that topic."

On the whole, the role of the media, in particular of this publication, was framed in more critical terms than the other newspapers in the study. Objectivity within the media was less of a focus, and participants expressed a concentration of journalistic values around critical and informed opinion, balancing of perspectives and, particularly for the editor, the creation of spaces through which to address issues in a politicised way.

7.6.4   *Notions of gender transformation and gender issues*

Participants from the MG noted the editorial commitment to and encouragement of the highlighting of gender issues. Furthermore, gender issues were generally quite broadly conceptualised, **including but moving distinctly beyond liberal-inclusionary paradigms** and therefore questions of numerical representation within the workforce and newsroom, and related issues of empowerment of women in the public sector. For some journalists, the **importance of gender issues for diverse social problems**, from **HIV/AIDS** to **violence**, was discursively framed as **inherent or obvious**. However, some discourses oriented towards **mitigating overt feminist discourses** in the newspaper also emerged, in some cases reflecting aspects of the findings from the other newspapers. Again, it should be noted that there were fewer participants from the MG than from the other publications in the study, and that as such it is even more difficult to quantify, or in some cases qualify, the significance of these discourses in relation to the overall publication. However, the editorial stance on these issues is regarded as particularly important, given not only the emphasis

placed on gender issues by the editor but also the editorial-driven orientation of the newspaper.

Responses to the question of gender transformation included both reference to the issue of representation in the workplace, particularly the newsroom, as well as wider social issues. The extract below illustrates one response to the question of gender transformation directly linked to the former. Interestingly, however, this participant described gender transformation in terms of the *processes* taking place towards the advancement of women in the public sphere.

> "P: OK. When I, when I hear gender transformation that's what I'm, that's what I'm hearing, sort of what processes are, I don't know, are taking place to achieve that. So are there more women managers? Are.. more women being employed? Um, do you have a balance of men and women in the newsroom? Are women allowed to take leadership positions?"

Another participant's response echoed this focus, and included the power of women to execute their decisions once within these positions. However, less of a concentration on gendered workplace dynamics, particularly problematic workplace dynamics, was observed.

The editor's response to the question of gender transformation in South Africa was that gender issues are manifested in a variety of ways, from the question of HIV/AIDS to unemployment. In addition, she articulated these issues as being "obvious" in various spaces, as something that therefore cannot be sidestepped. As mentioned earlier, one of the principles shaping the **editorial stance** was a **commitment to addressing gender issues** through the newspaper. In an interview with the editor shortly after her appointment as the first female editor of a South African newspaper, she had this to say:

> "As a female editor, in South Africa, I will bring a different touch to the M&G [sic]. I will want to use our investigative resources to look at some pretty serious gender problems we have - like the rate of rape and the rate of sexual violence. And I hope that we will be able to profile the many young, black or coloured women who are coming up through the ranks, be able to show a different form of leadership in the way that I represent, I think, a different shape of leadership.

The Mail and Guardian [sic] has a history of women's leadership and its ethos,
its gender, its principles are very non-sexist" (ref.).

This quote mirrors some of the gender issues raised during my interview with the editor, particularly in terms of the MG's editorial stance on gender issues. The question of women's representation in leadership - including the way in which this emerging phenomenon is showcased within newsrooms and through the newspaper itself - as well as the impact of gender on various other social problems such as gender based violence were raised in the interview as part of the editorial stance of the MG. This also reflects some of the key findings for component one of the research, in which the MG was seen to carve spaces out for the voices of emerging women leaders and unpack some of the multiplicity of issues around gender based violence in South Africa. In the interview with the editor, gender transformation was discursively portrayed in terms of **transforming the newsroom and workplace**, as well as being **integrated or mainstreamed into the coverage of various issues**. In addition, a discursive focus on the location of women within contemporary trajectories of gender transformation was common. The particular vulnerability of women, also when intersected with issues of class, was highlighted by some participants.

Another participant to raise the question of gender based violence and the location of women in relation to various transformation processes was quite emphatic about the importance of gender issues in South Africa. While her response to the question of "gender transformation" was limited primarily to issues of representation in the public sphere, her response to the question of "gender issues" in South Africa was broader and quite passionate. She regarded these issues as integral to the stories covered in the news, discursively communicating what some would call a **gender lens** - a social perspective that "sees" manifestations of gender relations and power in various spaces. Again, this lens is shaped by a **focus on the location of women**, particularly, within gender dynamics.

"D: What do you think are some of the most important gender issues in South Africa today?
P: *(With certainty) Gender violence, absolutely. Um… it is prevalent, it is continuous, it is catastrophic. (Pause)* Um… it's so important and… it's such a hard thing to address. Like how do you stop a guy from beating his girlfriend? Um…

D: Do you cover a lot of news stories or, like, pieces like that?

P: Um…. It's funny, uh, a lot of the social development stories….. will always have that in them….. and it's not necessarily gender violence but it's always, you know, women… along with the, the issues of gender violence, the gender violence being a big problem, there's also just that *in South Africa.. women are still not equal. No matter what anyone says. We are on paper, but we are still paid less. You know? Women are more likely to be poor, more likely to be unemployed. Um…. you know, (Sighs) they have less protection whether it's physical protection, whether it's legal protection, they are just more vulnerable, end of story.* Um, and so a lot of the social development stories that I cover you always come across vulnerable women. Whether it's….. an old pensioner who can't access her grant or… it's…. a young girl who's a child….. a child-headed household run by a… 17 year old girl. *It's….. consistently prevalent. It's always there*" (emphasis my own).

Another participant, specialising in environmental reporting, was not as emphatic regarding the importance of gender issues in issues encountered through her work, but did observe that the particular location of women within environmental issues was a factor.

"P: Um, well, uh…. I think particularly with respect to the environment it's often the women that have…um, a) have to deal with the consequences of environmental degradation. Um…and b) in many instances actually lead.. um… the cause if I may call it that. But often they are leaders in the field."

When asked about gender issues more broadly, she pointed to the issue of numerical representation within the public sphere, as well as perceptions of women. The latter was largely discursively conceptualised in terms of a kind of linear progression of thought regarding women in society, with pockets in which a lag in this progression can still be seen. In the extract below, the perceived role of government in setting precedents in terms of gender is also highlighted as a strategy for transformation.

"P: I think they [women]….. have definitely taken a high profile, and….. the fact that the ANC is talking about a 50/50 mix, and that they're pushing it strongly, makes people think a lot more about it. Uh… on the ground….I think that there's still, um… a lot of conservativism, particularly in the area where I live

which is Nelspruit which is in many respects still….. the kind of gender…um…
mix and attitudes towards women sometimes appear to be pretty much stuck in
the… in the past. So although I think it's on the political agenda which is great..
if leaders are seen to be pushing this as something that needs to be done then
hopefully society over, over a period of time will fall in line and, um.. but I still
feel that in reality it's still… quite a long way from.. being transformed."

When asked about his encounters with gender issues in the undertaking of his work, one of
the participants at first appeared to be a slightly irritable in his response to the question,
reflecting an initial interpretation of the question based around gendered workplace
dynamics. In this regard, he said that gender issues in terms of work were of little relevance
within the MG, which he framed as progressive in terms of the gendered work environment
for many years, with implications for him as a gay man. He also then moved on to highlight
the inclusiveness and progressiveness of the MG in terms of tackling "broader" gender
issues around sexual orientation through its platform in the media, and the rights and politics
around this, which he described as having been given a voice in contrast to other
publications at the time. In other words, like participants at other newspapers he understood
the question primarily in terms of newsroom dynamics and organisational culture, but he
also expanded the parameters of this discussion in raising issues of voice and sexual
orientation within the media industry.

"D: Do you think of gender issues as part of your work or the kind of pieces that
you put together?
P: (Sigh) Not especially. Um… I mean .. you know I think a lot of newspapers
might have this problem in terms of gender injustice in terms of race and so
forth, in a sense that there is some kind of.. affirmative action taking place in
one form or another. But I think that.. my experience in the Mail & Guardian has
always been of a very, um.. a very, what you might call a gender neutral space
in the sense….. (discusses the impact and number of women in the newspaper
over the years). And I don't think there was ever a distinction really made, on
those terms. If you look at gender in the broader, broader sense and include
the fact that um.. I as a gay man felt comfortable to go and work at the Mail &
Guardian, in a way that I might not have felt comfortable at other newspapers,
because I didn't have to remain in the closet, I didn't have to hide anything, and

I could quite happily go into news meetings and news conferences and say 'listen, I want to write about this aspect of gay politics or gay issues and so forth, and I want to write about it from the perspective of a gay man'. And.. I think that brought something valuable to the newspaper, *I think that we are the first newspaper in South Africa to be saying, to be taking on the issue of gay rights in the early '90's and tackling them and writing…..* saying 'these are the rights we want, this is what the movement is doing and what we want to achieve'. *So there wasn't any pussy footing around* and we can't say this and we can't say that, *we just put it out there and the space was made for that. And I think that was a very valuable thing as well, in terms of the history of the paper*" (emphasis my own).

Some of the power dynamics of gender relations were raised and discursively **politicised** by some participants, and role of the media within this was generally considered quite important. The editor herself noted that the issue of gender transformation, as with racial transformation, is often treated poorly in the media due to fears regarding its implications for the future. She therefore highlighted aspects of the anti-feminist backlash, and the role of the media in fuelling this, also raised in Chapter 2. The role of the media in **creating spaces** through which to stress, unpack and showcase gender transformation issues was, for the editor, important.

The discursive strategies through which the processes of gender transformation, particularly through the media, were conceptualised mirrored aspects of the strategies raised by participants in the other newspapers. This included, for example, **discursive negotiations** towards harmonising gender transformation agendas and the journalistic values of objectivity and balance. However, three factors that appeared to distinguish the MG from the other newspapers were, firstly, the **open discussion of a broadly-defined gender agenda**; secondly, the **strength of the notion of mainstreaming gender** (made possible through a "gender lens"); and thirdly the **extent to which spaces are carved out** or made available for these issues. Some participants at the ST, to some extent, raised the latter as well. However, the editorial stance in this regard at the MG was quite distinctive.

The editor emphasised the importance of, and efforts around, **showcasing emerging local and international women leaders**, as news sources particularly. For example, the

Women's Book containing the names and contacts details of women experts and leaders in a diversity of fields was compiled by the MG to counter what she called the "informal discrimination" against women occurring at the level of news gathering and presentation. This discrimination, she said, springs from ingrained social habits such as the automatic contacting of men when an expert is needed for a news piece.

In addition to the carving out of spaces within the newspaper itself to "showcase new leadership" among women and address a variety of gender issues (including, for example, the *Body Language* column), the editor framed gender transformation as *woven* into various other issues and, as such, as something that should not only be highlighted as a separate issue but mainstreamed. She stressed the importance of gender in all key challenges facing South Africa, and argued that this should be shown through the media. **Gender consciousness**, she said, should be **"normalised"** within the media.

However, in discursive mitigation of some of the perceived impacts of overt feminist endeavours through the media, she stressed that this should not be done in a "self-conscious way", nor exaggerated in terms of relevance to all issues; this approach, she said, would deter readers. Discursively, this strategy resonates with findings for the SS and ST, in which **overt ideological orientations were framed as alienating** and patronising to readers, and in which subtler strategies towards raising issues, such as centralising "stories" and orienting language, were therefore considered more effective. However, where this discourse differs is in its conception of gender as inherently embedded within diverse social challenges rather than a separate social issue. The editor also raised advocacy programmes interfacing with the media, such as the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) as contributing to awareness around, and therefore greater mainstreaming of, gender issues in the media.

Other participants articulated a sense of consciousness and freedom in terms of addressing gender transformation issues through the media, noting the editorial contribution to this position. As raised in an extract introduced earlier, one participant stressed that gender was never seen as a "tired" issue, avoided or discouraged at the MG. However, as with another participant she observed that the centrality of gender to the story or issue needed to be evident if a journalist was to highlight it, and its relevance should not be exaggerated. Furthermore, similarly to the editor, she discursively framed the importance of certain gender

issues as inherent or "obvious" within stories. This speaks to the significance of a gender lens, discursively suggested in the interviews with both this participant and the editor, since the naturalised perceptibility of gender relations within diverse social phenomena rests on this aspect of their positionality.

This participant discursively contrasted addressing these obvious and appreciated manifestations of gender to perceived impractical or excessive attention to gender, for example through language.

> "P: Um… well like I said, I mean….. if it does have to do with gender dynamics in the story somehow… … [but] *I think we don't go overboard*. I would say that very often, with a news story in particular, the language remains quite neutral[73] I would say. It's chairperson, or chair… or people….. Where it's relating to a woman we will talk about a woman. If it's, you know, it's a man it's a man….. It doesn't try and like…. *(Sighs)* blank out gender issues. Um*, but neither will we go to the extremes of talking about a waitron and a waitress…., you know what I'm saying? Like, like, that kind of… that kind of like really… nitty-gritty nit-picky stuff*. In my experience we haven't.. done that. It acknowledges gender issues but does not make it… absolutely cumbersome to write the article" (emphasis my own).

This participant's discourse interestingly conveys an embracing of feminist thought while at the same time drawing a line between what is considered reasonable and unreasonable (petty) feminist strategies. Some **feminist ideas**, therefore, are portrayed as having more **social currency**, including approaches to transforming language or discourse. That these valuations are uneven is also likely to be linked to historical processes and feminist trajectories. Similar uneven trajectories, reflecting hierarchies or varying degrees of social currency around different feminist ideas (for example, attitudes regarding women in the workplace versus women and sexuality), were also echoed in the findings in Chapter 6, as well as in the interviews with participants from other newspapers. This is important, as it tells us about the nuances and complexities of feminist advancements rather than sketching a simple path to gender transformation.

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[73] This term was raised first by me in one of the questions, and is therefore not a term that may not have spontaneously arisen for the participant during the interview. As such, I have not given it more attention in terms of discursive meanings.

In the interviews with MG participants, the notion that **women journalists and editors** inherently have an impact on the kinds of news produced was also raised. As quoted earlier, in an interview with the editor after her appointment, she linked the editorial stance on gender issues to her location as a woman editor. Another participant also suggested that women journalists might be less likely to allow or sanction sexist content within the newspaper. Another participant raised the issue of women in management in the media as a critical aspect of transforming the media.

However, as suggested in some of the interviews with participants at other publications, gender transformation in the media was linked by one participant to **the need for broader social changes**. Therefore, strategies towards transforming the media in terms of gender are stretched to include change *beyond* the newsroom.

> "P: But again, *(Sigh)* for the newsmakers to become more women we need to see a bigger shift in society. We really need to make, like, to bring real change to women's lives. Give women.. access to stuff that.. education….. It's the basic stuff. Raising little girls to believe they can be astronauts as opposed to… teachers or, or.. And even if they want to be teachers, let them be teachers but let them be teachers because that's what they want….. to be….. Letting girls *(Sigh)* go to school as opposed to… running households, you know? Its… it's really… making it safe for them to go to schools so they don't get raped on the way. All of that kind of stuff."

Therefore, gender transformation strategies were conceived of as originating within the media as well as in broader society; the flow of power and influence was described as two-way.

7.6.5 Discursive strategies for transformation

Some of the discursive strategies towards enhancing the potential for transformation have already been mentioned. This includes the **editorial stance** taken by the newspaper, and the associated **culture inculcated** and **staff selections made**. In addition, the **spaces provided for in-depth comment, analysis and opinion** allow for more significant room in

which to engage readers with respect to the principles informing the editorial stance, while also allowing for dissidents to maintain the journalistic value of "balance". **Gender mainstreaming** into the broader content of the newspaper is another strategy facilitated by (although I would argue not entirely reliant on) the space and room within the newspaper to unpack and contextualise issues. As has been raised, however, the power of these strategies is possibly quite unique in some respects to the MG, given the **unique commercial model** described by the editor. In terms of broader application in the media, considerations of political economy and their relationship to ideological positions would need to be considered. The editor noted, for example, that under-investment is one of the greatest challenges facing newsrooms in terms of maintaining and developing quality journalism. That the MG has a niche market reliant upon a particular form of journalism that unpacks and politicises social issues, and provides ample space for these, facilitates these particular strategies.

However, as can be seen in reviewing the findings for the SS and ST, the majority of readers are attracted to shorter, "lighter", simpler content, and the various discourses maintaining power and privilege in various social spaces, including instances of anti-feminist backlash, play a significant role in shaping media content for most newspapers through (at least in part) the force of political economy. However, this is not to obliterate the role that editorial stance and commitment plays, given the impact this has on the spaces carved within the newspaper and topics addressed (not only for the MG but also shown in the interviews for the SS, for example).

Two participants also raised the skill of **writing and story-telling** as a strategy through which to **bend the rules and norms of conventional journalism** towards addressing issues in a way that appeals to readers. As with the SS, story-telling through news pieces with a human-interest focus was suggested as one way in which to do this. For the MG market, specifically, the artfulness of the writing was also suggested as a rhetorical devise through which to engage readers. Greater flexibility to do so was also highlighted as being inherent in features or opinion pieces rather than pieces characterised purely as "news".

Another strategy mirroring findings from the other newspapers in the study was the use of **diverse spaces in the newspaper** to present different perspectives. As the extract below suggests, opinion pages and other spaces carved out for more overtly ideologically

positioned text function to maintain a sense of freedom of speech and balancing of perspective, while at the same time being a significant platform through which to take an editorial stance through the space and value allotted to various perspectives. In other words, these spaces could be regarded as potentially serving to harmonise broader journalistic ideals and specific editorial ideals. This was also observed in the findings for component one, in which the power and force of certain discourses within the newspapers was shaped in part by the space given to them through columns, letters pages and so forth. The extract below is part of a participant's response to an example I introduced to the interview. I used the example of Bishop Sibiya's column on domestic violence in the SS (reviewed in Chapter 6), summarising the article and the SS editor's comments on it during his interview. This is a condensation of the exchange that took place in response.

"P: Oh, my God! Ja. Well… I think, I think our publication would probably not print that. Based solely on the fact that *(Long pause, then sigh)*… Ooh.. *(Sighing)* because we're quite a progressive paper and we're.. I don't think we identify with a religion for instance….. We're a secular paper…. we try to be very progressive. So the issue of women's rights is very important to us…..

D: So there are limits to what would, what would be filtered through the, the newspaper….. and putting forward different perspectives…

P: ….. There are limits….. I just doubt something like that would get in. And also I think.. it would meet with a lot of resistance from the actual staff ….. *If it were published it would be.. packaged so carefully*, and it would be….. a point count for debate, maybe, or something like that….. I doubt that it would get in….. [but] like I said if it was published *(humorously) there would be so much room for people to bash it*, for instance….. Or undermine, that kind of thing….. *I think the kind of unsaid rule is 'don't hush the columnist, let them say anything inflammatory, and let them say as much as they want'. And lots of room is given to people who object.* [So] it's not too prescriptive, in terms of gender, but if something really does clearly push the lines people do have the room to… say no" (emphasis my own).

As this extract illustrates, various factors are taken into account towards filtering and mitigating content at odds with the editorial stance, including the agency of the journalistic staff, the perceived market and market offering of the newspaper and *spatial* discursive

strategies within the newspaper. It highlights that the perspectives and voices alone do not shape the discursive orientation or constitute potential transformation strategies, but that the way in which these are **"packaged"** is very significant too. The ways in which various newspaper texts are packaged involves, as has emerged in the findings, discursive negotiations engaging a variety of considerations from political economy dynamics to ideologies of journalistic professionalism and the role of the media.

7.7 Conclusions

The aim of the interviews was to explore the perspectives held and discourses employed by journalists in their work as knowledge producers for the press media in South Africa, particularly in relation to gender and gender transformation issues. As this Chapter has shown, key themes to arise from the interviews related, in the end, to debates around notions of objectivity and situated knowledge. This was the case because, after the initial interviews were undertaken, I began to realise that these issues greatly affected how the potential nexus between "gender transformation" (a more overtly political and ideological agenda) and "the media" (coloured with journalistic discourses that experience tension in relation to political or ideological projects) could be explored. Furthermore, from my particular feminist stance based heavily on social constructionism, I experienced disconnects and tensions in conducting the interviews where discourses of objectivity in a way precluded or blocked any further explorations of gender issues in media representations.

This in itself is an important finding, I believe, as it highlights the schism between most feminist and journalistic discourses surrounding the media. It also resonates with the findings presented in Chapter 6, which show how discursive strategies are used to communicate social messages even within the spaces and conventions associated with "objective" journalism (for example complicit or spatial discourses). Therefore, this second component of the research also helped me to explore these identified strategies from the perspective of journalists and editors themselves.

Overall, the findings presented in this Chapter reiterate a key theme to emerge in Chapter 6, namely the relative advancement of liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms in relation to progressive feminist paradigms in the media. There were, of course, variations in this

regard. Participants from the MG, especially, articulated gender relations through a relatively progressive gender lens, and in all newspapers liberal-inclusionary paradigms were extended in some ways beyond the limits of concerns with numerical representation. In particular, the failures experienced around liberal-inclusionary approaches, over a decade after the introduction of many gender transformation strategies, to bring women the respect and equality they expected in the public domain seem to have forged discourses that extend beyond women's numerical representation to symbolic concerns around it. An example of this is the persistence of sexual politics in the workplace numerously raised as (still) to the detriment of women. In addition, escalating and persistent social and material problems that are increasingly demanding attention in South Africa - such as HIV/AIDS, gender based violence and poverty - also represented key areas of expansion into progressive feminist paradigms, concerning symbolic and discursive gender issues.

However a liberal-inclusionary paradigm, when it comes to gender, still appeared to be the dominant feminist trajectory, and a central point of agreement, cohesion or consensus among a wide range of participants and newspapers. The term "gender transformation", especially (as opposed to "gender issues" or "gender relations") was associated with liberal-inclusionary paradigms, which in my view is linked to the discourses and approaches encapsulated in key policies, government bodies and laws pertaining to transforming South Africa in terms of race and gender ("transformation" in many ways becoming synonymous with, and therefore limited to, quotas). This represents a site of discursive (and therefore also material and strategic) limitation when it comes to gender transformation.

The interviews also showed how discourses around media production are active, contended and in processes of negotiation. I have explored these discursive negotiations, which occurred actively during the interview process, in order to understand some of the tensions and considerations that journalists and editors needed to mediate in making decisions on textual production. This provided, in my view, rich data pertaining to some of the discursive strategies employed by media professionals in navigating the terrain, and resonated with findings from Chapter 6, in which I identified complicit, advocate and spatial discursive strategies. The findings in this Chapter probed these further and fortified ideas around how the discursive strategies identified in Chapter 6 reflected and connected with theories on the media and gendered media representations, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Standing back, what this Chapter presented in terms of discursive strategies was that editorial ethos and the culture cultivated within a newspaper play a key role in determining how conflicting demands and considerations are mediated. In addition, understandings of gender and gender transformation create a lens through which any considerations, contextual issues and ideological commitments will be seen. This lens therefore shapes how gender transformation issues are noticed, understood and subsequently where and how they are addressed. Political economy also provides significant input into the discursive negotiations that journalists and editors need to make. Tabloidised newspapers, and in the case of this study especially the newspapers marketing to lower LSM groups of readers, reflected discourses of reader primacy, linked to political economy, which in my view legitimated or allowed discourses counter to equality and gender transformation to be more prevalent in these newspapers. This left me wondering whether this was what readers actually wanted (for example representations of gender relations as fraught and highly sexualised, and inequality as naturalised) and, *if so*, what challenges this presents to the media industry in terms of its role in promoting or inhibiting gender transformation processes while remaining competitive and viable. While political economy dimensions were powerful, they were not omnipotent but negotiated through various strategies. So, the findings revealed a number of dimensions to the consideration and carving of texts for the media, some from within the trajectories of journalist ethos and professional discourse, some emanating from the complex location of individuals in terms of social issues, and some from the wider social context media consumers.

These findings have therefore raised not only questions about the media industry, but also about wider discursive milieus in South Africa, especially in terms of how different feminist trajectories are impacting on, and being impacted upon by, various post-apartheid contextual issues. I attempt to address this in the following concluding Chapter, reflecting on the significance of the findings and on the limitations and possibilities that I see as manifesting in the research findings. These are not neat conclusions and suggestions but, I hope, will add to (some nascent, some expanding) dialogue around gender transformation and media representation in South Africa.

8 FINAL REFLECTIONS

8.1 Introduction

"*The work of an intellectual is not to mould the political will of others; it is, through the analyses that he [sic] does in his own field, to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities, to re-evaluate rules and institutions and to participate in the formation of a political will (where he has his role as citizen to play)*" *(Foucault, 1989: 305-306).*

Through this research, I hope to stimulate debate and challenge approaches both in my own field(s) (the work of an "intellectual") and in wider spaces and fields such as journalism and the media industry in South Africa (the work of a feminist committed to change). I have not come to this study as a journalist or even as someone with a focus on feminist media studies, but as a feminist researcher I hope that this work can raise some useful questions in both of these areas in addition to those they may raise within my "home" field of gender studies.

As I put forward in the beginning of this thesis, South Africa in many senses represents a case of "unfinished revolution". This is not really to suggest that any revolution is truly finished, but just that while the transition in South Africa to democracy and to the kind of constitutionally enshrined rights for women represents a laud-worthy and, in some senses, quite revolutionary change, there are still significant and persistent problems that need to be addressed in terms of gender transformation. The media is one area that needs to be looked at in this regard, as a powerful epistemological tool constituting and contributing to processes of change. It tells us about, is an instance of, and impacts upon feminist trajectories in South Africa.

This thesis was premised on the hypothesis that understandings of gender and gender transformation among print news professionals may in some way have an impression upon the shape of gender and gender transformation discourses within media representations. It seems that there is much talk about gender and gender transformation in South Africa today, with many different organisations and institutions declaring their support (including

many media institutions). However, what would happen if we were to step back and consider critically the premise of the assumption that there is consensus on what this means? This study has aimed in part to contribute to this endeavour, unpacking assumptions and meanings behind the ideas of "gender" and "gender transformation" in the hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of why the contemporary advancements of gender transformation in South Africa and its media are still so apparently uneven. By re-examining evidence and assumptions, this research has raised questions about the nature of gender transformation discourses in South Africa, the role of the press (particularly the tabloid press) in processes of change, and the contemporary methodologies being used to look at gender and the media in South Africa.

In this Chapter, I will briefly draw together the key findings of this research, including its limitations, reflect on the contributions the research makes to the field and briefly discuss its implications for further research and wider contexts in South Africa.

8.2 Glancing Back: A Synopsis of the Research Approach and Findings

8.2.1 Approach

Throughout this thesis I have reflected upon the guiding principles, theories and politics that have constituted the research approach and, ultimately, the findings made. A social constructionist perspective includes reflexivity surrounding the research itself, and findings within a social constructionist paradigm, such as those presented here, are thus also considered as shaped by and oriented towards a particular discursive context. As such, I recognise what has been presented here as one interpretation of a collection of research data made through a particular theoretical lens, namely what I have conceptualised as a "progressive" feminist approach. This is, as I have pointed out, not only a theoretical foundation for the research but also a political one, reflected in the ways in which the findings have been harnessed towards speculating discursive gaps and linkages with potentialities for processes of gender transformation.

In addition to a politicised, social constructionist feminist paradigm, I approached the research data and the analysis through the vector of two key frameworks, set out at the beginning of the research but further evolving throughout. "Progressive" feminism and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism were used as basic frameworks from which to conceptually, theoretically and, to some extent, also historically contextualise and identify broad discourses around gender transformation. These frameworks were extremely useful in this sense, not only allowing me to, through brief descriptive terms, evoke a set of related characteristics and issues already discussed, but also because having these frameworks as a basis and then continuing on the journey of the research, I was able to reflect upon the question of feminist paradigms and trajectories in South Africa and to continually refine them. It therefore helped to define and identify issues in the findings, and to define and identify areas in need of further theoretical work. This process could, perhaps, be extended through further research.

Besides their descriptive and identification functions, these frameworks were also used as part of promoting a central message and approach through this thesis, namely that gender transformation is a complex process requiring more nuanced approaches than a focus on women's public participation, numerical representation and rights can afford. While this is indeed being more widely recognised, there is evidence that feminist trajectories in South Africa, it's media and its feminist media research and activism environment still reflect a prevailing dominance of liberal-inclusionary approaches at the expense of progressive ones, and applying these frameworks throughout has therefore been part of a kind of theoretical advocacy to further promote the latter.

I found that applying progressive feminist theory was very constructive in exploring the fluidity and dynamism of gender discourses. In the first component of the research, for example, a progressive feminist lens led to the consideration of gender constructs, which I felt would be more receptive to heterogeneity and internal inconsistency than a consideration of gender "stereotypes". Probing gender constructs in a relational way also flagged the significance of the ways in which masculinities and femininities were discursively constructed as actualising one another. As such, applying a progressive feminist lens strengthened the data and underscored the limitations of looking at media representations of women (or of men) in dichotomised or isolated terms.

Methodologically, too, I used critical thematic discourse analysis, which was applied towards an analysis of the latent themes in the data. As such, the findings have been presented in a way that not only details the content of the research data, but also theorises underlying causes. Furthermore, the data has been put in a form of dialogue with issues of power and the political imperative of interrogating the potential discursive sites for change within the media. I considered participants' discourses from the perspective that they reflect various circulating discourses and broader evolutions of meaning taking place, whether these discourses were assimilated or challenged by participants. This advanced my concentration on latent themes regarding, for example, how participants' discourses may link to negotiations of gendered meaning happening beyond the walls of the newsroom, such as wider discourses of gender transformation in South Africa.

I also approached discourse as constituted of various assumptions and presuppositions, which I have aimed through this research to begin to unpack. This theoretical approach was valuable in drawing out assumptions and values potentially masked by, for example, discourses of objectivity, such as the significance of political economy and related understandings of readers' values in determining the parameters of objectivity. Attention to power relations is also a significant aspect of critical discourse analysis. The conceptualisation of power for this research was, however, non-linear, challenging notions of absolute power or powerlessness. For example, while some discourses to emerge through the research were flagged as particularly powerful, variable discourses with less social and political currency were also considered to have an impact on the discursive milieu and, therefore, on struggles over meaning. More powerful discourses (such as those related to journalistic objectivity and factuality) were regarded as functioning to discursively anchor, stabilise or mediate the more variable discourses (such as those related to journalists' desires to apply didactic strategies in their work). The critical discourse analysis approach also involved attention to how power relations are often most reinforced when they are internalised and naturalised. I have therefore aimed to visibilise naturalised discourses, by interrogating many of the taken-for-granted constructs that constitute discourses of journalistic professionalism, gender and certain feminist approaches.

Reflecting back on the two key aims of the study, these were often met more indirectly than anticipated. For example, understandings of gender and gender transformation, and journalists' understandings of their role in transformation processes, were often quite difficult

to evoke in the research process through direct questions. This in itself showed some limitations and boundaries with respect to how these concepts and terms were perceived, a finding in itself. However, to further discover the issues these understandings were therefore explored multi-modally, through other but related themes that journalists were more comfortable or able to talk about (such as broader issues of social transformation through the news), through examples (such as the Zuma rape trial and the media coverage thereof) and through triangulation with the findings of component one of the research. That these aims could not always be tackled directly with participants is not, I believe, an uncommon situation in gender research. Gender as a fluid, subjective and complex experience is not generally experienced through the analytical or identified vector of "gender". Therefore, as previous research experience has also taught me, as a researcher one sometimes needs to cast the net of inquiry wider to see how gender and gendering manifests spontaneously or unconsciously in a looser range of related topics and discussions. This was certainly the case here.

To meet the first two aims of the research through discourse analysis was the final aim of the research. This was effected by choosing the type of analysis applied (to be discussed below), and by triangulating newspaper representation discourses with those emerging from the interviews. Therefore, discourses were explored through static texts (the texts being static of course, not the discourses) and through "live", unfolding communication via the interviews. Triangulating these discourses was very useful in attending to the aims of the study, not only offering thematic findings in terms of discourses, but also findings related to how different discourses are actively negotiated.

The analysis I applied employed elements of a Foucauldian conception of discourse as discontinuous and overlapping. The findings therefore reflect a particular interest in, and attention to, not only consistent patterns but also contradictions and inconsistencies. I considered these contradictions in the context of ongoing negotiations over meaning, and of discursive locations (including gendered locations) being achieved rather than inherent states. I also gave significant attention to discursive *strategies* in the negotiation of meaning. The findings arising out of this research in turn supported the value of a broadly Foucauldian approach to discourse. Without assessing the significance and meaning of discursive contradictions, for example, important aspects of the data could have been sidestepped as instances of "unreliability" in their inconsistency. Instead, by looking at these apparent

contradictions, I was able to identify discursive *strategies* employed by participants, further strengthening data on the perceived roles and agency of journalists.

8.2.2   Limitations of the study

The sample for this qualitative research was limited, and the findings therefore represent only a part of the story of print news production as it relates to gender transformation. For example, that race did not emerge strongly in the research findings does not necessarily suggest that issues of race are not importantly interwoven in engendered print news production processes; while it may indicate in part a discursive tendency among participants to conceptualise gender in terms of a male/female dichotomy rather than as multiply-constituted, it does not necessarily signify that discourses at the interface of gender and race do not exist among participants. Furthermore, I have also not, as discussed in the methodology, aimed to specifically pursue issues of and related to race in this research, especially in terms of the newspaper content, for both political and practical reasons. Therefore, this is a recognised limitation of the research, and it would be very interesting and encouraging to see this taken forward by researchers with greater ability in cross-analysing, and greater knowledge for contextualising, issues of race and gender in South Africa.

Another possible limitation of the study, emanating I think from the limited sample, was that there were very few noticeable differences (especially no qualify-able differences) in terms of the discourses of male and female participants. The fact that differences along gender lines among participants did not emerge very strongly in this research does not necessarily indicate that there are no differences, and with a somewhat extended sample I might have felt more comfortable with making connections. In one sense, that differences among male and female participants for the most part were not that distinct even in a limited sample could indicate a lack of significant distinction in the discourses around gender and gender transformation employed by men and women journalists in terms of the media. However, this would be an interesting area to explore further with a larger sample that could allow for better comparison, and an important one in terms of looking at how gendered identity and location impacts on interpretations and understandings of gender and its place in media texts.

Finally, another limitation of the study was that, while journalists' and editors' views on issues of political economy were very interesting, unlike other issues discussed in the interviews I was not able in this particular study to go back and explore this issue more directly through other means. In other words, while I was able for example to triangulate the interviews with newspaper content to explore the statements of participants about gendered media texts in comparison to the gendered media texts themselves, in this study I did not interview readers to further explore statements by participants about readers. Political economy emerged as an important aspect of the gender and media debate, and it would therefore be useful to explore readers' perceptions of the issues discussed with journalists and editors, to gauge their own interpretations of engendered media texts and what they expect from newspapers in terms of gender transformation issues.

8.2.3   Key themes arising from the study

8.2.3.1 Discursive devices and diverse spaces

One of the first and most important findings made was that gendered meaning in news texts is conveyed and effected through different *discursive devices*, and that various *spaces* within newspapers have different discursive boundaries and norms, allowing for the use of certain discursive devices over others in terms of forwarding gendered messages. I also found that spaces in the newspapers not always considered in engendered analyses of media texts, specifically more "informal" spaces such as columns, jokes pages and letters pages, played a very important role in shaping, negotiating and manifesting gendered meanings and debates, and that these spaces therefore merit greater attention.

Through the first component of the research, three key discursive devices were identified as conveying gendered meaning. Advocate discourses, openly stating particular positions on gender issues, were clustered primarily in spaces in which overt opinion was acceptable, such as editorials and columns. Complicit discourses were present in various spaces, but particularly in news stories. These were discourses that, through language and fact selection, discursively complied with the discourses expressed by subjects being quoted in the news text and/or the assumed readership. Due to a journalistic reliance on the notion of "fact" in the news as separated from opinion, complicit discourses were a powerful tool through which to (consciously or unconsciously) convey particular meanings within the news without overtly expressing an opinion or deserting factuality. Spatial discourses were those

that conveyed meaning through the prominence, location and formatting of different views and voices within newspaper texts. These emerged as particularly important in determining the overall discursive orientations of newspapers in light of the frequent contradiction between, for example, complicit and advocate discourses. By giving certain voices more room over others, the value of freedom of speech could be upheld, while at the same time giving dominant or preferred voices greater representational power.

Identifying these discursive devises not only helped me to visibilise and assess different discourses in the newspaper texts themselves, but also linked with the interview findings. For example, manifestations of complicit discourses in the news echoed journalists' discursive strategies around objectivity in news reporting, where wording and fact selection functioned to imbibe texts with a particular angle (often reflecting the journalist's social perspective). Identifying these discursive devises also helped to elucidate some of the apparent inconsistencies between interview assertions and my analysis of the newspaper texts. For example, advocate discourses in the newspapers generally reflected editorial discourses in the interviews, while spatial or complicit discourses in the newspapers highlighted greater lags in gender transformation discourses.

8.2.3.2 *Lags in "private sphere" gender discourses*

One of the most distinctive and early findings I identified in the study was the level of apparent *contradiction* in terms of gender discourses and discourses of transformation. As I looked more closely at this discontinuity of discourse, however, I identified a broad pattern, one resonating with the feminist frameworks I was developing. This was that "public sphere" gender representations were relatively well advanced and widely represented (echoing liberal-inclusionary approaches) while "private sphere" representations (which would also fall under the auspices of a progressive feminist approach) lagged significantly behind. In addition, the greatest lags in gender transformative discourses were located in the more "informal" sections of the newspapers, which had different parameters on content and style than traditional news reporting, as well as in the more tabloidised newspapers or tabloidised newspaper features.

This pattern in discontinuous discourse seems to resonate with the uneven trajectories of feminist discourse in South Africa and its media. These uneven trajectories were represented in both newspaper content and interviews in different ways. In the case of the

former, the question of women's public participation was the most prominent connection made with "gender transformation" and an anchoring feature in the face of variation and contradiction among participants with regard to questions of "private sphere" gender issues. In the newspaper texts, apart from in the MG (which had a very politicised perspective on gender issues) liberal-inclusionary values were quite consistently advanced while, simultaneously, progressive feminist values were not (or even actively resisted at times).

In terms of newspaper content, complicit discourses that naturalised gender differences and obscured the distinctions between sex and gender were quite prevalent within the SS and the ST. The visual culture and spatial discourses I observed in the tabloidised newspapers also contributed towards projecting women, in particular, as defined by their sexuality (represented through the male gaze), and entertainment features reproduced patriarchal dichotomies of men and women as active/passive and consumers/consumables respectively. Anti-feminist backlash emerged especially in columns within the SS. I discussed some examples in which feminist discourses were re-appropriated to undermine feminist advancements. In other cases, although anti-feminist backlash was not obvious, representations of gender issues were often depoliticised, or the gendered nature of certain problems (such as rape) deflected and framed as broader, un-gendered social problems.

Social constructions of hegemonic masculinity expressed through complicit and spatial discourses were a further important component of gendered discourses in the tabloidised newspapers, as was the significance of constructions of femininity as functioning discursively in the actualisation and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Discourses resisting gender transformation in the tabloidised newspapers were, however, often located side by side with discourses promoting gender transformation, highlighting the unevenness of feminist trajectories. Overall, I got a sense that anti-feminist and gender transformation-resistant discourses were better able to play themselves out in informal spaces, and around "private" or intimate relationship issues, the last frontiers of engendered change.

In contrast to the significant contradictions in the gender discourses of the tabloidised newspapers, the MG offered a more cohesive package in terms of gendered discursive orientation. Like the SS, the advancement of representations of women in leadership appeared to be an endeavour undertaken within the MG, both textually and visually. However, the discourses surrounding the private sphere in the MG contrasted with many in

the SS in terms of moving away from naturalised gender constructs towards socially and economically contextualising, as well as politicising, intimate gender relations. The MG represents a niche and elite market, however, and the study therefore raised difficult questions related to the link between the political economy of tabloid, related issues of class, and opportunities for progressive gender transformation discourses to be advanced in the news media.

8.2.3.3 Journalists and editors in discursive negotiation

The interviews showed that journalists and editors did battle with issues of gender representation, political economy and social transformation, all of which were sometimes difficult issues to tackle and to weigh against journalistic values. Overall, and especially when beginning to analyse the interview data, I felt that there was much tension between stated gender transformation commitments and what I saw in the newspapers. The theme of discursive negotiation, which became more apparent as I revisited the interview transcripts, went a long way to exploring this tension. Through the interviews, it was clear that competing pressures are brought to bear on journalists and editors when making decisions around the shaping of news texts for printing.

The professional values and norms of journalism (forged in a particular South African historical context), the economic imperatives of the brand, wider discourses of gender transformation in South Africa and personal social locations and understandings of gender issues were all actively negotiated. This resonated not only with a Foucauldian conception of discourse as discontinuous and a negotiation over meaning, but also Gans' (1980) theorisation of the media production process as involving the weighing of various "considerations" towards the production of an "acceptable" media product. Through reviewing the interview transcripts I also saw some of the ways in which participants attempted to discursively harmonise competing discourses, usually by making various discourses somehow compatible with the central journalistic tenets of objectivity and free speech through the media (the anchoring discourses in most cases).

The research findings around discursive negotiations also reflected the various levels at which considerations in media production - or, as understood in this research, discourses - originate. Micro-level considerations involving individual identity and agency were signified in the impact of participants' own views on how news content was discursively negotiated.

Some participants' discursive strategies shifted, for example, in accordance with the extent to which they felt that addressing certain issues was important, and some gender issues were framed as "obvious" in a way that reflected participants' own discursive locations in terms of gender. Meso-level considerations centred largely on ideological and practical concerns within the newsroom and those related to journalistic values and practices, such as discourses of objectivity and balance. At the macro-level, considerations derived from broader social and political contexts. These levels were shown, in many respects, to be very much interlinked and often inseparable. For example, micro-level considerations of personal perspective are shaped by macro-level discourses, and macro-level discourses were in turn impacted upon by meso-level ideologies. In a sense, all of these "considerations" or discourses were linked and negotiated in a dynamic way.

8.2.3.4 *Reader primacy, political economy and the democratisation of the media*

One of the most striking features of discourses related to the role of the media was the rejection of a transmission view of the media's impact. Far greater agency was sketched for readers, and a pluralist paradigm of the media's impact dominated. This was especially the case in the tabloidised newspapers, which also focused more on reader-centred news. This was expressed through a discourse that held tabloid or "popular" news to be a form of democratisation of the media, through accessible and colloquial language, stories with which readers ("the people") can personally identify, and localised, conversationalised news. Linked to this was a discourse that held readers to be weary from the "serious" traditional news that was seen as focusing on morbid and/or complex social issues. As such, tabloid was framed as respite for the weary post-apartheid reader through "light" and accessible features. Discourses of democratisation of the media appeared to be linked to both historical ideology and political economy: ideologically valued in a post-apartheid context in which many readers (or potential readers) may still feel marginalised from the mainstream (read: elite) press, and economically in terms of the imperatives of the brand, appealing to an emerging and potentially lucrative new readership market.

However, these discourses also offer up interesting and important questions about the accelerating tabloid media in South Africa: in this context, what does democratisation of the media through tabloid really mean? What voices are coming through and what are the implications? To use an example, some discourses in tabloidised news pieces upheld hegemonic masculinities that, from a critical feminist perspective, implicitly contribute to rape

culture. Are these truly supported by readers, which readers really support them, in what sense are they supported, and what does this mean for the values of gender transformation within South Africa and its media?

The value and potential of tabloid as a role player in democratising the media (one lauded in various academic writings and by participants) needs to be looked at more closely. It also needs to be weighed against the ways in which it is apparently, in my view, being appropriated towards propagating and legitimating pervasive gender constructs inhibiting transformation processes. Discourses of democratisation and reader primacy can enable the perpetuation of the status quo in many respects, due to their reliance on widespread existing social values (for example, patriarchal ones) to legitimate the existence of certain discourses in the media. These are very difficult issues that the media industry needs to engage with as tabloid establishes a firm (and financially powerful) foothold in the media industry in South Africa.

8.2.3.5 Indirect didacticism through the news

As I have mentioned above, most participants were quite emphatic about reader agency, and were not comfortable with "transmissions views" of the media (as discussed in Chapter 3). Discourses of objectivity were also quite prominent and some participants expressed in various ways that they were not comfortable or in agreement with the idea that the media must play a role in social transformation processes, as this would contradict the value of objectivity. While a number of participants did concede in various ways that they are able to (and often do) imbue news pieces with a particular discursive slant, these mostly emerged as *concessions* in the sense that there was an apparent reluctance to admit the limitations of the concept of objectivity or to render journalists or the media as too powerful in shaping the views and actions of readers (except for MG participants, who were more comfortable with notions of social constructionism and therefore sceptical of the notion of objectivity). Furthermore, reader agency was highlighted with respect to their ability to select and appropriate information in media texts, as well as influence content themselves through economic pressure, letters to the newspaper and as news sources. As such, news media texts were largely described as polysemic, while at the same time allowing for what van Zoonen (1994) described as limits to decoding possibilities, or "preferred" meanings.

Discourses of didacticism did, however, still emerge in all newspapers in some form, even those (like the SS) with the firmest rooting in discourses of objectivity. Through discursive negotiation this tension was mediated. Discursive strategies that were best able to function didactically while still meeting the demands of dominant discourses around the media's role (to be balanced and/or objective and/or a watchdog) were variously raised, especially where the motivation existed to apply them (as I have mentioned, for example, when the issue was considered important or "obvious" to the journalist). So, for example, participants mentioned "sneaking" social transformation issues and perspectives into news pieces via quotes by experts at the end of the news story (and the selection of who to quote and on what aspect of the story), or by populating different informal spaces within the newspaper (such as letters pages) with texts that may support or challenge a particular position. It appeared that the desire to teach through news media was experienced as a tenuous position for participants, but that where the motivation existed to do so, creative strategies could be used while satisfying broader journalistic values.

8.2.3.6 *Discursive strategies and negotiations in creating news texts*

Ideology, or the socially constructed dynamics of news texts, was often associated with extreme ends of the spectrum of partiality (for example, having very close personal, political or monetary ties to the news subject), resonating with Gans' (1980) assertions regarding journalistic notions of bias. To avoid crossing the boundaries of objectivity while also being able to highlight social issues participants felt were important, the import of sidestepping overt didacticism in favour of some subtler strategies was raised. These included, as I have mentioned, using or creating different spaces within the newspapers, crafting stories skilfully in a way that conveys a certain message, selecting facts for inclusion and selecting staff with particular broad perspectives to work at the publication. In many cases, journalists also spoke about stories or facts as having the agency to naturally or inherently convey certain values, so that "facts" and "stories" were ascribed with agency (rather than the journalist) in shaping meaning within the news text. Ascribing agency to, for example, "stories" or "facts" in shaping didactic meanings within news texts was therefore one of the strategies employed towards engaging in meaning making processes while at the same time remaining within the discursive margins imposed by journalistic professionalism.

A positivistic slant to discourses surrounding the media's role and function within society dominated among most participants. In these discourses, objectivity and bias were

dichotomised and applications of the notion of objectivity were negotiated through the vectors of factuality, balance and a lack of direct personal involvement with news subjects (a discourse which allows for the above strategies to be used). Interestingly, the more tabloidised the newspaper in the study, the more emphatic and rigid discourses of journalistic objectivity were. This reiterates Deuze's (2005) observations that tabloid media should not be simply discarded as a debasement or antithesis of traditional news, since many of the journalistic values (or discourses) driving the two approaches overlap. The greatest challenges against positivistic notions of objectivity were launched by participants employed within the "critical"[74] brand of newspaper, namely the MG, with some journalists from the ST as well. Among these participants, objectivity was either overtly rejected as a construct that obscures the inevitable positionality of journalists, or critically negotiated and reformulated in alliance with notions of "balance" and "fairness".

Wider discourses, and the relative social currency they maintained, also appeared to impact on how texts were mediated and how strategies around didacticism were employed. Again, fact was sometimes naturalised as inherently conveying a particular social value - especially where that social value was assumed to have social currency. This social currency comes through in what is considered acceptable or unacceptable for publication. Thus, for example, women's positions in the public sphere can be quite consistently promoted while their positions in relation to men within the "private" sphere can be consistently undermined. Discourses of objectivity, therefore, can be dangerous in my view because they can limit self-reflexivity and sidestep these issues of social currency, of *values*, even those impacting on "objective" endeavours like the seeking of "fact" for a news article. In essence, what this study has shown in terms of discursive strategies is that the politics, perspectives and understandings of journalists and editors - as well as wider society (in which news professionals are located) - play a major role in shaping the kinds of strategies used within the bounds of journalistic values and norms, and for what purposes they are used. Journalists' and editors' politics, perspectives and understandings around gender transformation therefore need to be further explored and more openly discussed, locating them as social, relational and dynamic.

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[74] Through this research, I came to define a critical newspaper approach as one which views a variety of social and economic issues in a politicised way, contextualising these issues within processes and relations of power.

8.2.3.7 Dominant liberal-inclusionary paradigms in understanding "gender transformation"

This key theme has already been raised at various points, because it overlaps with so many of the other major themes arising from this study. In terms of the interviews, a liberal-inclusionary feminist conception of gender transformation dominated, particularly when questions to participants were introduced with the terminology "gender transformation". When asked about "gender relations" or "gender issues", the parameters of conceptions of engendered change were generally widened somewhat into the realm of symbolic representation and power relations, but primarily through the discussion of certain organisational culture dynamics and social politics that undermine women's advancement in the public sphere. Broader conceptions of gender issues signified the movement of a gender lens into the private sphere, seeing the linkages between public and private, and between gender relations and broader social, economic and political configurations. This included the issue of HIV/AIDS and related welfare concerns, poverty and gender based violence. Particularly participants from the MG, and some from the ST, saw gender as infused into and contextualised by diverse social phenomena. Overall, however, a liberal-inclusionary paradigm was most powerful and consistent among the newspapers and participants. I have argued throughout that this approach, while offering a valuable contribution, also leads to the sidestepping of many crucial gender issues facing South Africa today, and to severe limitations in engendered change.

Whereas liberal-inclusionary approaches tend to focus primarily on equal participation with men in so-called public spaces, progressive approaches would go beyond this to interrogate gendered culture within these spaces (which did emerge to some extent in the discourses of some participants) and also to challenge the roles and statuses of women and men in the so-called private sphere (something which needs much greater attention). Rather than relying on women's voices through representation in the media (as writers or news sources), there also needs to be more questioning of the social construction of these women's voices. Rather than focusing primarily on quantifiable inclusion, the media also needs more awareness around the "invisible" values and ideas that underpin inequality in our society, including those relegated to the "private" sphere. And instead of using a relative male/female dichotomy in terms of conceptualising gender, variations in gender constructions need to be looked at.

It is my contention that approaches too dependent on liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms - at the expense of attention to subtler symbolic, identity-related, discursive and epistemological gender dynamics - will only lead to limited changes in the gender status quo. In my view, this point is supported by the research findings presented here, which indicate lags and blind spots in the trajectories of gender transformation, especially in relation to what I have defined as a progressive feminist perspective of gender. As a result, radical improvements in media representations of women's public participation, for example, run parallel to persistent gender constructs that tolerate and perpetuate patriarchal sexual politics that undermine women. In essence, feminist theory conceptualised as progressive challenges a primary focus on women's public participation and the related "gender" and "women" synonym, and this study highlights the progressions, lags and values of such an approach within the news media.

8.3   Looking forward: Contributions and Implications of the Research

8.3.1   So what does it mean? Implications of the research

8.3.1.1 Bringing gender activism and the media industry together

The rejection of a transmission view of the media's impact is important in the context of endeavours to gender transform the media. The implicit reliance on a transmission view of the media in many discourses of activism around gender and the media could lead to a discursive schism between gender activists and media professionals. This could undermine the credibility and effectiveness of feminist interventions. There is a need for feminist media researchers and activists in South Africa to consider more closely the complexities of media impacts over the assumption of a one-way flow of power. This could also deepen understandings towards generating more effective strategies to deal with the media's gendered implications.

8.3.1.2 Harnessing the dynamism of media roles in South Africa

In terms of the project of gender transformation, the historical role of the news media as watchdog offers some openings for strategic media interventions into gender injustice. The relative interventionist approach of the media in South Africa and the associated discourses of didacticism and activism emerging in the research, while paradoxically buttressed by

powerful discourses of "objectivity", alludes to the fact that the media industry is not entirely opposed to playing an active role in shaping the trajectories of South African transition and transformation - if these trajectories are seen as informed by inherently worthy, universal human values. Historically situated discourses on the role of the media have, to date, been forged largely around issues of racial transformation and state politics in the narrower sense, potentially keeping the focus in terms of the media's role centred on these issues. However, a progressive understanding of gender would certainly contribute towards gender transformation issues being regarded in a similar way, and therefore prioritised as part of the media's role.

8.3.1.3 Interrogating dominant gender transformation discourses

The discursive limitations surrounding conceptions of gender transformation have an impact on the scope and trajectories of current and envisioned strategies for transformation. Clearly, a critical mass of women in the media is not sufficient to address transformation issues, especially where a liberal-inclusionary paradigm and limited conception of gender is shared by men and women journalists. What it comes down to, in the end, is what is discursively supported and challenged. It would be interesting, for example, to ask why Bullard of the ST was fired for his racist discourse while the SS columnist Sibiya's overtly sexist stance, legitimating gender based violence, can be published. Of course, there are great variations between publications in this regard, differences I do not wish to sidestep. However, in essence what this research showed (and what the Sibiya and Bullard example illustrates) is that there is unevenness in the media both between and within publications in terms of what it supported or challenged with regards to transformation projects, and this unevenness deserves attention.

The interview findings, in my view, resonated with Gouws' (2004) remarks on the shortcomings of national feminist projects in South Africa as too dependent on what she calls state feminism. By centralising the state as the primary agent in gender transformation processes, Gouws (ibid) argues that interventions remain limited to achieving narrow gains through mainstream policies focused on getting more women into the state and other public structures, while most women do not see real gains on the ground. State feminism can also lead to a lull in the women's movement due to a false sense of security in the progression of feminist achievements in the hands of the state.

The Zuma rape trial, for example, drew attention to the limitations of South Africa's contemporary feminist movements and advancements. The trial threw into the spotlight the powerful social constructs perpetuating patriarchy that continue to exist side by side with liberal-inclusionary feminist achievements, a national gender machinery and declarations of women's equality. The gender transformation discourses raised in this research reflect some of these issues through a heavy reliance on liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms and large public structures to implement mainstream policies of affirmative action, with limited engagement with what the real changes to gender relations and quality of life (especially but not only for women and girls) in a broader sense will be.

Liberal-inclusionary feminist approaches serve in a way to stabilise gender debates, due to their more advanced historical trajectory and their appeal in terms of circumventing more challenging and controversial changes to the status quo. However, while these discourses provide a focal point at which some aspects of the gender transformation agenda can be more widely agreed upon, the status quo needs to be adequately challenged if gender transformation and widespread related social problems in South Africa are to be challenged in the longer-term. As Motsei (2007) noted in relation to the Zuma rape trial, the incredible ambiguity and contradiction to emerge in the trial between larger public and structural achievements, on the one hand, and intimate gender relations and identities, on the other hand, signal significant divisions within South Africa and lags in progress that need to be addressed.

Many of the media representations discussed as part of this study showed this divide. While a number of the more counter-transformative representations were communicated through humour, colloquialism and "light" features, these representations of intimate gender relations and identities are, in my view, significant instances of problematic meaning-making. From a progressive feminist perspective, these representations cannot be separated from wider issues of women's empowerment, often paradoxically promoted alongside these discourses. For example, complicit discourses that centralise and construct hegemonic masculinity as aggressively sexual, and feminine sexuality as a passive conduit for the expression of dominant masculinity, undermine advocate discourses (such as those in editorials) against gender based violence. The gendered values, identities and constructions being entrenched in these discourses are, in certain ways, implicated in the prevalence of gender based violence.

Research undertaken in South Africa by Vogelman (1990), for example, supports the assertion of linkages between gender identities, ideologies, discourse and very tangible forms of gender oppression such as rape. Through interviews conducted with a group of men, including rapists, Vogelman (ibid) found that rape was linked, among other things, to the reinforcement of masculine pride and power. This was attributed to powerful social ideals of masculinity and other gendered socialisation features including the objectification of women. As such, Vogelman (ibid) argues that transformation cannot take place without attending to these social relationships and ideologies, manifested in gendered discourse.

Earlier writers such as Smith (1987) have also pointed to the linkages between gender discourses and material realities. These works highlight the significance of constructions of masculinities and femininities in shaping manifestations of gender oppression; social constructs cannot merely be discarded as benign or entertaining stereotypes. Yet many of the gender constructs underlined in this research appear to be popular as part of the commercial appeal of the newspapers, signalling difficult questions related to the role of political economy. These questions in turn demand that we look at the gender transformation project *both within and beyond* the mass media - within the media through its role as knowledge producer and disseminator, and beyond the media in terms of the wider social values that lead to a demand for such texts from media producers.

8.3.1.4 Re-examining tabloidisation, political economy and gender in South Africa

As I have mentioned, the private sphere as the final frontier of gender transformation represents a particularly strong area of resistance to change. This appears to have been picked up on in tabloidised news styles, which have different discursive boundaries in terms of content, and generally more "informal" spaces through which private sphere discourses can be accommodated. Interestingly, in the MG the private sphere was also raised but contextualised and politicised in a way that enabled counter-transformative gender constructs to be deconstructed rather than reproduced through naturalisation. The MG has also picked up a feature of tabloidisation through the extent to which human-interest pieces are covered, and used these spaces to unpack social, political and economic dimensions.

Features of tabloidisation such as the greater visibility of, and a conversational approach to, the private sphere can thus potentially offer great opportunities for gender transformation through the media. However, as this research indicates, dismantling the master's house is

not only dependent upon the wielding of new tools, but on the ways in which these tools are wielded. While traditional news approaches have been variously critiqued as, in essence, being constituted of ideological and practical tools that function to perpetuate the status quo, newer approaches to news production (such as tabloid) have also been re-appropriated to perpetuate patriarchal constructs. This speaks to the extent and shape of progressive gender awareness among editors and journalists working within a variety of journalistic approaches, a factor that will impact on the ways in which the *tools* of journalistic ideology and practice will be wielded. It also speaks to the need for broader social change; if counter-transformative gendered constructs surrounding the private sphere are such a powerful source of resistance to change within broader society, how can editors and journalists create competitive products without appropriating these discourses through these informal spaces? In this way, macro-level gender discourses and gender transformation trajectories are linked to salient issues of political economy in the news media, whether it be tabloid or traditional.

The MG caters for a niche market to which progressive, intellectualised approaches to social issues appeals. In many ways, while it reflects some important discursive shifts in terms of perceptions of gender issues in South Africa, it is also quite removed from the far-reaching actualities of continued struggles over gendered meaning and power characterising South Africa's social landscape. As such, while the strategies at the MG in promoting a gender transformation agenda should be examined for the potentialities they represent, they cannot merely be transferred onto other newspaper brands with very divergent markets and, indeed, offerings to the public. While the strong entertainment and tabloid aspects of the SS and the ST place limits on certain discursive strategies for transformation, for example on the detailed contextualising and politicising of intimate gender relations, they already do and may also further present openings for engendered change.

8.3.1.5 The need to promote a progressive "gender lens"

If limited understandings of gender and gender transformation can be linked to limited approaches and strategies to transform gender relations, then the development of a gender lens that is able to more comprehensively see and challenge patriarchal status quos is central. Re-examining and developing gender lenses that are able to respond to the dynamic and complex nature of gender inequalities in South Africa is especially important given that what is dominantly valued is generally naturalised and subsequently made

invisible (as this study has highlighted). Therefore, there is a need to identify, make visible and challenge naturalised assumptions about gender transformation, and to promote politicised awareness around it.

Through this research, I have identified two broad potential strategies for gender transformation of media products. The first key strategy is the development and promotion of more progressive gender lens. I argue that liberal-inclusionary feminist approaches such as the promotion of more women in the media industry are not enough to truly challenge the status quo. Instead, more media producers (including women *and* men) with progressive and politicised understandings of gender relations are needed to change the media. The development of a **progressive gender lens within the media** should therefore be the central strategy if the shifting and changing tools of the media are not merely to continue to be re-appropriated towards rebuilding the master's house. By "progressive feminist lens" I mean an enhanced understanding, conceptualisation and appreciation of gender issues from a progressive, feminist perspective as I have defined it.

Through the expansion and strengthening of a gender lens among media professionals that lends itself to perceiving gender in a more integrated, relational way (seeing, for example, the links between complicit discourses of hegemonic masculinity and the issue of gender based violence in South Africa), the discursive limitations of liberal-inclusionary feminist discourses within newspapers could be slowly and strategically transformed. If journalists, for example, "see" through a gender lens that constitutes transformation issues primarily in terms of women's public participation, then the significance of representations related to the private sphere are unlikely to be palpable to them.

As Made's (2000) anecdotal observation about journalists in Zimbabwe showed, journalists can have very particular, and very narrow, understandings of what "gender" means, understandings that are in fact propagated by the media and in various other discursive spaces. Made (ibid) observed that, in a workshop with Zimbabwean journalists, when asked what "gender" was most participants gave answers such as "women's rights". Many participants, she says, were very surprised to hear the definition of gender as the social expectations and conventions associated with sex, which are varied and changeable over space and time, and one participant went further to say that "women's rights" must be the correct definition as he had read this in the media.

This study has taken these anecdotal observations forward more extensively in the South African context and shown that the features of the gender lens applied by many print news professionals in many respects run parallel to the kinds of advancements and lags in gender transformation trajectories in media representations. Furthermore, as many of the examples in the findings showed, whatever type of lens is applied, discursive strategies are adapted to support its social conceptions. The more entrenched the social lens, the more "obvious" certain issues (and the ways in which "facts" and "stories" were seen to support them). It is my belief that the steady integration of a progressive feminist lens in the media is therefore one of the foundations for engendered transformation in the media.

However, as much of the discussion in this thesis has pointed out, journalists and editors do not produce texts for dissemination into a social vacuum, but operate within various considerations. These include the imperatives of political economy, and the value of relating to a diverse public imbued with agency. In addition, "personal" and journalistic values (micro- and meso-level considerations) are also not constructed in a vacuum, but dynamically responsive to and constituted of wider social milieus (macro-level considerations), from discourses in media representations and government policies to local communities. Therefore, in addition to a progressive gender lens within the media industry, the cultivation of a **progressive awareness of gender transformation in broader society** is needed.

As the level of awareness of more than the promotion of women's careers and economic locations is gradually expanded, the transformation of gendered discourses pertaining to the private sphere, for example, could be stimulated and accelerated in broader society. Current macro-level lags in feminist trajectories impact to a degree on the scope of gender transformation in the media. This is by no means to suggest that media professionals can or should deny agency and responsibility in terms of engendered news production. However, the discourses emerging in this research signal wider gender transformation discourses in need of attention. In my view, an important part of this will be encouraging researchers and activists to generate knowledge around this. In addition, the representatives of state and civil servants should also be encouraged to learn about and understand gender from a more progressive lens, and to integrate this understanding into policies and public dialogues, as in my view state policy and discourse has been very instrumental (and successful) in advancing the dominance of a liberal-inclusionary paradigm in South Africa to date.

As I have already discussed, state feminism in South Africa is posited as one constituting force in the perpetuation of largely liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigms that resist the flow of change into all corners of social life. Discourses dominating in the political arena also tend to focus heavily on gender affirmative action in the public sphere. Some shifts towards progressive awareness of gender have taken place, however. In many cases, these have been contributed towards not only by increased dissemination and assimilation of progressive feminist theory and research, but also by the increasing *necessity* for more integrated approaches presented by persistent major social problems such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, discourses at various levels including, for example, government, civil society organisations and the media could be further transformed towards making a greater discursive impact in this regard. This would also require greater involvement in gender issues at all levels, rather than the perpetuation of a dependence on state feminism to take care of the goals of feminism.

8.3.1.6 *Exploring and harnessing discursive openings for change*

The second main strategy I would recommend to address the implications of this research relates to the central discourses I have flagged around journalistic agency (for example, assigning greater agency to readers), values (for example, of objectivity) and roles (such as the democratisation of the media through tabloid). While I do not support the appropriation of a positivistic discourse towards attempting to gender transform the media (as has been done in some cases of gender and media activism), I have also highlighted the fact that discursive schisms exist between the discourses of media professionals and most gender and media activists and researchers. Therefore, another strategy would be to use **existing discursive openings as a point of engagement** to promote change.

A Foucauldian conception of discourse recognises the power of various *existing* discourses in processes of developing *"new"* discourses (or rather, the continual *evolvement* of existing discourses). Therefore, carefully considering and engaging with contemporary journalistic discourses can reveal opportunities to strategically challenge prevailing gender constructs counter to transformation. As I have already said, it is not only the master's tools that need to be reworked but also often the ways in which they are wielded, to avoid mere patriarchal re-appropriation.

Many sites of discursive connection between the interests of gender activists and the professional values of journalists could be used as the platform for greater engagement. Within the news, for example, the use of complicit discourses can be more effectively interrogated and journalists' awareness surrounding the positionality of their writing can be further developed through interaction and discussion. Discourses placing stories and facts at the centre of the news can also, for example, be engaged with among journalists and gender activists towards unpacking the concept of "objectivity", and in so doing draw greater attention to the subtler (gendered) discursive mechanisms operating within the paradigm of objectivity. In addition, issues related to the power of spatial discourses in balancing and assigning greater power to different voices could provide a source of greater discussion between activists and media professionals. Strategic interventions aimed at highlighting subtler applications of positionality and agency could therefore help to raise awareness among media professionals and dilute the power and masking functions of many current discourses of objectivity. At the same time, gender activists can learn more about the complexities of engendered media production, journalistic approaches and journalistic imperatives towards revised strategies.

Most participants expressed significant scepticism at the idea of the media promoting one particular "line" in terms of gender issues, which was largely regarded as counter to the media's roles of reflecting the public's interests, maintaining objectivity and indeed reflecting a diversity of voices representative of South Africa within the media (democratisation of the media). However, as the research also shows, editorial and journalistic decisions were made in accordance with particular social values, and spatial discourses played a significant role in orienting newspapers in a particular way while maintaining values such as freedom of speech. There are, therefore, opportunities inherent in the political will of media professionals that can both reflect journalistic values and build on gender transformation discourses. Thus, as part of the second main strategy I would argue that endeavours to gender transform the media should include **creating/opening/capitalising on existing spaces amenable to gender transformation**.

Feature writing, for example, provides particular opportunities for the deconstruction and unpacking of gender relations. The importance of "informal" spaces highlighted through this research could also be looked at more closely in terms of the weight given to different discourses through spatial discursive devises. In so doing, the existing shape of newspapers

can be appropriated in ways that can stimulate more engagement with gender transformation issues. The constitution of a progressive gender lens, again, would provide a foundation in shaping the forms and functions of didacticism already existing within the media, away from the appropriation of didacticism to support the status quo. Here again, the issue of political economy re-emphasises the need for broader discursive shifts towards widening the scope and opportunities for this approach within a highly competitive market.

8.3.2   Contributing to the fields of gender studies and feminist media studies in South Africa

As I have discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the lines between fields of study of relevance to this research are fluid. Feminist media studies, in particular, is a transdisciplinary field, lending itself to affiliation with a variety of fields out of which it can operate simultaneously. My own location, and the location of this work, is therefore in some respects difficult to determine. I have aimed to contribute to feminist media studies in South Africa in particular, as well as more broadly to gender studies (especially those with a focus on media and representation).

I have aimed to make both theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of engendered media studies, with the purpose of stimulating debate and deepening understandings of engendered news production. In terms of theory, what I have "contributed" cannot be described as "new" in that it is built solidly on the back of previous work by a multitude of different writers and researchers. The contribution itself lies mainly in the way in which I have adapted the theories of others for more direct application to the media in South Africa and under more distinct frameworks that can help in identifying, denoting and understanding feminist trajectories in both media analysis and the media industry. By integrating key aspects of what I have conceptualised as progressive feminist theory into the analysis of both the newspaper texts and the interviews, I hope to contribute to the evolvement and strengthening of engendered media studies in South Africa beyond some of the perceived and described limitations of liberal-inclusionary feminist approaches, as well as those that focus on gender "stereotypes". In addition, I hope that the frameworks I have used offer a useful platform from which to begin to identify, name and therefore also discuss the lags and progress of feminist trajectories in South Africa and its media.

Empirically, I have endeavoured to explore an area thinly addressed in South Africa to date, namely the understandings and discourses of gender and gender transformation among print news professionals themselves, and in particular how they view their role within the production of engendered texts. By triangulating the analysis of news texts and the interviews with print news participants about their role in engendered media production, empirically this research has also been able to contribute in quite a unique way to feminist media studies in South Africa. I have finally also used the linkages between the theoretical frameworks I have developed, the newspaper content findings and the interview findings towards highlighting discursive consistencies and inconsistencies that may signal potential areas for strategic intervention in the future, making this in part a political project stemming from an empirical and theoretical one.

This academic work, in the form of a thesis, will probably make more of a contribution in terms of a political project within the field of feminist media studies in South Africa than, for example, in the media industry or the gender and media activism environment in South Africa. However, I have attempted to draw out and distil key strategies in a way that makes this work malleable to potential future applications with regards to the latter. Ultimately, this research will, I hope, challenge researchers, activists and the newspapers under study (and possibly beyond) to look anew - and in a more nuanced, detailed and self-reflexive way - at how gender and media issues are being tackled in South Africa.

8.3.3   And where to from here? Vistas for further research

Further research can strengthen the value and potential implications of these findings and suggested strategies. As I have mentioned, the nexus between gender and race (including associated issues of class and "culture" in South Africa) did not emerge strongly in this research, in part because I did not pursue these issues through the research design for both political reasons and reasons related to ability. However, this is an important area that could be further explored from a progressive, critical feminist approach. What may be particularly interesting and important are critical African feminist perspectives on the ways in which race and (racialised) class inequalities, and both material and cultural imperialism, have shaped and are shaping current day media representations of femininities and masculinities, especially in tabloids.

While I have highlighted the significance of diverse trajectories in gendered media representations of the "public" and "private" spheres, I have also briefly pointed to the limitations of this dichotomised conception of spheres. For the purposes of this research, this distinction has been useful in highlighting important issues. However, the linkages and the relationship between these spheres in feminist trajectories in the media could be interesting to unpack in greater detail, attending more closely to the ways in which they flow into and relate to one another.

Finally, the impact of political economy dimensions on the shape of the rise of tabloid media in South Africa (in my view representing both great opportunities and very problematic gendered appropriations of this emerging news form), merits further exploration from the perspective of the emerging market to which it is targeted. Many readers of the SS, for example, are first time newspaper readers. Clearly, the SS is offering something of value to a readership previously marginalised by mainstream media. As the triangulation of the analysis of interviews and newspaper content showed, looking at the question of gender transformation in the media from diverse angles is important towards unpacking the issues, especially since discourses are discontinuous and in processes of often tense negotiation with one another. Many interesting statements were made by participants about the value proposition of tabloid, alongside my own (quite scathing) analysis of certain aspects of tabloidised news in terms of gender. The value proposition for readers, then, is an important angle to further explore in relation to gender transformation.

Grabe, Lang and Zhao (2003) have also shown in their research that audiences respond differently to news content according its formal features, so that "form has been shown to transform content" (Grabe, Lang & Zhao, 2003: 409). In particular, they have observed in relation to tabloid news that the meanings derived from it by audiences are shaped by the tabloid form so that, for example, audiences tend to evaluate tabloid features as less believable. In addition, Grabe and Kamhawi (2006) have shown that gender can impact on the ways in which audiences receive the same news form and content. Given the impact of form on meanings derived by audiences or readers, in the case of print news media exploring the relationship between readers and emerging tabloid newspapers in South Africa could be very relevant to assessing tabloid newspapers' social significance. As such, I think it would be very useful and interesting to pursue the nexus between gender transformation, news media democratisation (in a context of great inequalities and divisions

reflected in newspaper readership statistics) and tabloidisation in South Africa, from the perspective of the readers and by exploring the ways in which they derive and interact with meanings from tabloid news features.

8.4   Conclusions

As I have said, South Africa represents a case of unfinished revolution with both opportunities for and constraints against comprehensive gender transformation. Great strides have been made in terms of inequality but these have not been enough to stamp out or, in some cases even to make a dent in, pervasive and highly gendered social injustices and inequalities. The media has its role to play and, in the context of ongoing change, opportunities need to be seized and limitations challenged. I believe that re-examining the foundational discourses and goals around gender transformation is central to this process, both within and beyond the media.

Nuanced issues need nuanced approaches, and a progressive gender lens within South Africa's media industry and wider society is, I believe, vital to making this broader shift in approach. Revolutions are not won on inclusion alone, but on the wave of collective shifts in thinking.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT GUIDE

The following indicators were applied for transcription extracts provided as part of these findings:

- Since participant names are not used, "P" indicates any participant.
- "D" indicates me, the researcher.
- Square brackets [ ] indicate that the text was somewhat or totally inaudible. If totally inaudible, no text will be indicated between brackets, if somewhat audible the brackets will contain what I thought was probably said. Alternatively, square brackets are used to indicate in more detail who/what the participant is referring to e.g. "They [readers] want a newspaper with variety."
- Non-verbal communication and long pauses are indicated between brackets in italics e.g. (*pause*), (*laughing*).
- Shorter pauses are indicated with between two and three dots e.g. "I… think so."
- Where pieces of the transcript in an extract have been removed to shorten the extract, this is indicated with five dots e.g. "Yes….. News must be unusual."
- Italics within the text are used to indicate emphasis, either by me the researcher to highlight specific parts of the text (in which case "emphasis my own" will be indicated), or by participants (in which case "emphasis original" will be indicated).
- I have *not* indicated participants by number (P1, P2 etc.) for the purposes of further protecting anonymity. Since together the interview extracts could lead certain potentially controversial comments to be linked to particular individuals, I have indicated all participants as P, and have only where necessary noted where certain extracts are linked to others.