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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF THE GENDER POLICY ON
JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES AT THE
TIMES OF ZAMBIA NEWSPAPER**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the Times of Zambia gender policy on journalistic practices. The policy was formulated to address issues of representation of women both in news coverage and at an institutional level. In spite of the implementation of the editorial gender policy, no change in gendered representation is evident. As a media practitioner and a Zambian woman concerned with social justice, I set out to investigate the impact of this policy on journalistic practices.

The study is informed by a Cultural Studies approach to media studies, specifically drawing on the 'circuit of culture' (du Guy et al, 1997) and focused on two specific 'moments', namely representation and production. Data was collected using two qualitative methods, namely document analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The document analysis established that this policy is informed by a liberal feminist approach to media and identified the weaknesses in its formulation. The subsequent semi-structured in-depth interviews probed the practices and perceptions of male and female journalists and editors in relation to the degree of change in gendered representation in the news.

This study finds that the editorial gender policy at the Times of Zambia has not had any significant impact on the journalistic practices and it probed the reason for this lack of effectiveness. It argues that this can be partially attributed to the orientation of the policy within a liberal feminist paradigm which neglects the internal and external factors that influence the representation of women and men in news production. Further, this position ignores the societal structures and power relations which impact, albeit unintentional, on the treatment of news. Inter-organisational factors such as profit maximisation, political interference, the use of news values and news beats are identified as leading to the exclusion of representations of women in hard news. At an intra-organisational level, lack of importance attached to the policy by senior staff and their attitudes to news production in general have meant that the policy was not enacted or ensured in any meaningful way. The study also established that the patriarchal values that characterise Zambian society influence journalists' and editors' treatment of news, thus making the implementation of the policy ineffective.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the two most important men in my life, my late dad for loving me so much and instilling the value of education in me. To my husband and best friend Mike, for moral and intellectual balance and above all, for enduring the eighteen months of loneliness.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

The media play an important role in the constructing, reinforcing and naturalising of patriarchal gender roles in society because of the way they present issues and events to the public (McDonald, 1995). In response to this, a number of initiatives have been put in place to address the imbalanced coverage of women in the media, most of which came about after the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. One of the initiatives is the formulation of gender policies at both governmental and institutional level “to address the pluralism of women’s roles and images in the media, fair and sufficient news coverage of women” (Pandian, 1999:59). This study focuses on one such policy, the Times of Zambia gender policy formulated in 2003 to address the representation of women in news coverage and at institutional level. My view is that this policy has not been effective. Therefore, I set out to investigate its impact on the journalistic practices and the representation of women in the news coverage. As a Zambian media worker with a concern for gender justice, I feel that the intended changes might not have been achieved.

The research is theoretically located within the broad field of media and draws particularly on cultural studies and post-structural understandings. This chapter provides the general background to the study. It begins by outlining the political context of the media in Zambia, before focusing on the Times of Zambia in particular. Before considering the gender policy, it gives the context at both global and regional level that gave rise to the policy, after which it presents a brief description of the structure of the policy and its stated major objectives. Against this backdrop, the chapter discusses the patriarchal power relations in Zambian society that the gender policy seeks to address. Finally, I outline the goals of the study, its significance and a layout of the thesis structure.

The Zambian media: a political context

It is argued that there is a strong relationship between journalism and politics and it is therefore necessary to take into account the broader political context when studying the media (McNair, 1998). The importance of context is foregrounded by a German sociologist

Josef Ernst who proposes that “news is a product of biases which derive from the foreknowledge individual journalists have about their own political environment and the pressures this environment places on their work” (1988:126 in McNair,1998:82). This section provides a historical overview of the media in Zambia in relation to its political context and distinguishes between three periods, namely from 1906 (when the first newspaper emerged) to 1964, from 1964 to 1991 and 1991 to present day. Although emphasis is on the state owned media, some attention is also given to the interaction between the state and privately owned media. The shifts and changes of the print media in Zambia mirror those of the political transformations from colonialism to post colonialism and to the present day.

The colonial press (1906-1964)

During the colonial era, a largely English speaking press existed in Zambia and it was owned by the capitalist white miners whose main concern was to serve the colonialists. The first newspaper, Livingstone Pioneer, was established in 1901 by William Trayner who registered it as Livingstone Pioneer and Advertiser (Kasoma, 1986). Five years later, the Livingstone Mail a six paged tabloid, was started by Leopold Frank Moore. It is argued that these newspapers only published stories about black Africans when they were of direct concern to the white settlers. “They were channels for communication of local gossip and social news for white miners around the mine camps” (Kasoma, 1986:19).

Zambia’s national mainstream press however, started in 1943 with the founding of the Northern News which later became known as the Times of Zambia. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter under the history of the Times of Zambia.

The press under one-party state system (1964-1991)

After Zambia gained independence in 1964, the United Independence Party (UNIP) took control of government under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda. Post colonial Zambia experienced a multi-party system of politics until 1973, when the country was transformed into a one party state, a move justified by the political leaders’ argument that multi-party system wasted resources at the expense of development. This pronouncement granted UNIP political monopoly as the only legal political party in the country (Mwanakatwe, 1994). In this environment, Kenneth Kaunda as president took advantage of the one party state to maintain his authority and clung to power until 1991 when his party lost elections to the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) (Mwanakatwe, 1994).

At independence, Zambia inherited from Britain a press which was largely private but the new republic which was underpinned by communist doctrines, nationalised important institutions and made them subservient to state machinery. This included the media and it was argued that “the press became the mouthpiece of the party-state structure” (Banda, 2001:5). Moreover, as the communist authorities realised the importance of the media for public control (Asante, 1997), Kaunda exercised great influence over the media, and his authority extended to appointing and dismissing editors (Kasoma, 1986). The major daily newspapers, the Times of Zambia, and the Daily Mail, as well as the only broadcaster, the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), with its exclusive radio service, were deployed as tools for propagating Kaunda’s ideology of humanism and communism (Kasoma, 1997). The only independent newspaper at that time, the National Mirror, owned by the Catholic Church, tried to present a dissenting voice but was repressed by the state through a presidential order banning government-owned companies from advertising in the paper (Kasoma, 2000; Banda, 2003). These actions were reinforced by the repressive laws inherited from the colonial past which included the State Security Act, the State of Emergency and the Penal Code Act (Banda, 2001; Kasoma, 2000).

The kind of media control that obtained during this period is consistent with what has been described as an authoritarian system of control (McNair, 1998). It has been argued that authoritarian media policies enable government intervention at both the level of the content and the structure of the media institution (Golding, 1998). In such an environment, the role of the media is seen as restricted to supporting and advancing the policies of the party in power, thus the media lacks freedom to criticise government policies and operations. It, therefore, becomes an extension of the government rather than playing its watchdog role as espoused by the liberal system (Golding, 1998).

The unpopularity of the Kaunda government coincided with the poor performance of the economy. From 1964 to 1973 the economic growth was steady due to the favourable copper prices on the world market. Subsequently, the rise of oil prices on the world market and the simultaneous fall of copper prices had disastrous effects on the Zambian economy (Bernstein et al, 1992). As a result of increased international borrowing, the external debt increased to a massive \$7 billion by 1990 (Bernstein et al, 1992) and the country experienced high inflation

rates and food shortages which later led to food riots, a situation which forced Kaunda to call for early elections in 1991.

The press under multi-party system (1991 to date)

After the multi-party elections in 1991, the new Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) government led by then President Fredrick Chiluba, raised loans for the international money lenders and committed itself to the mandatory structural adjustment programme in line with 'free market' principle (Mwanakatwe, 1994). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank asked the country to reduce spending on public services, decontrol prices, remove subsidies on consumer products and to privatise state owned companies in order to attract foreign investment (Bernstein et al, 1992). Apart from insisting that the countries that received their loans liberalise their markets in line with capitalistic principles, international money lenders required such countries to embrace a multi-party political system and to liberalise the media industry. In order to access capital loans from the IMF and World Bank, most African counties including Zambia, consented to these conditions (Bourgault, 1995).

Although by the year 2000 Zambia had sold more than 300 state-owned businesses to private investors, the privatisation program did not extend to the state owned media as pledged in the MMD manifesto. Multi-party politics however, had changed the media terrain through liberalisation of the press and the airwaves which led to the emergence of privately owned media organisations in the early 1990s (Bourgault, 1995). Despite the MMD's failure to honour some of its promises regarding press freedom, it is arguably easier to start a newspaper in Zambia now than prior to 1991 (Banda 2001). Presently, there are approximately 12 privately owned newspapers in Zambia.¹ While government still owns and controls the two major daily newspapers, the Times of Zambia and The Zambia Daily Mail, as well as the only national broadcaster ZNBC, several tabloids such as The Post, The Monitor and The Sun joined The National Mirror as privately owned newspapers. Moreover, a private radio station (Phoenix) was founded in 1996 for the first time in the history of Zambia (Kasoma, 2000; Makungu; 2004).

¹ While it is relatively easy to set up a newspaper, it is hard to keep it going due to high cost of newsprint and low sales figures (Banda, 2001)

Despite the liberalisation of the media, the situation as regards press freedom in Zambia has not changed much from that of the previous authoritarian regime (Chirwa, 1996; Banda, 2001). The Minister of Information and Broadcasting continues to interfere with the editorial content of state owned media. “They [state-owned media] have continued to operate in more or less the same way they did under the one-party state” (Phiri, 1999: 60). The Times of Zambia is an example of a state owned media institution that lacks editorial autonomy (Chirwa, 1996; Kasoma, 2000).

The Times of Zambia: a historical overview

The Times of Zambia is the country’s oldest newspaper. Since its inception in 1944, the newspaper’s ownership has changed from private, to multinational, parastatal and now state owned. It was founded by Roy Welensky, a white trade unionist and campaigner for white settlers’ interests (Kasoma, 2000). Welensky used the Times of Zambia then known as the Northern News, as a vehicle to promote a particular political agenda, namely the establishment of a federation of the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi) (Banda, 2003).

However, due to economic challenges which included low sales, high production costs and competition for advertisers from other newspapers that opposed the federation, the Northern News was sold to the South African Argus Group in 1951. Shortly after independence in 1964, the Northern News was sold again to a multinational company, the London-Rhodesia (LonRho) (Kasoma, 2000; Makungu, 2004). LonRho also acquired the daily Zambia Times and the weekly Zambia News newspapers. It merged the Zambia Times and the Northern News into what is now known as the Times of Zambia, while the Zambia News subsequently became the Sunday Times of Zambia (Banda, 2003).

In 1975, the Times of Zambia and its sister paper, the Sunday Times were taken over by the UNIP government and became a parastatal under the management of the National Media Corporation (NAMECO). However, in 1983, the UNIP government acquired total ownership of the publication (Moore, 1991) and presently, the Times of Zambia remains wholly owned by the government.

It has been argued that this change in ownership effectively rendered the Times of Zambia an agent for the government and its party (Kasoma, 2000). Subsequently, successive

governments have not taken steps to facilitate the paper's editorial independence in any form. Presently, the MMD government, through the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, appoints the Times of Zambia board of directors. Even though the board of directors is mandated to appoint the Managing Editor who oversees the operations of the newspaper, the Managing Editor of the Times of Zambia continues to be appointed by the President of Zambia through the Minister of Information and Broadcasting.² Therefore, the Managing Director of the Times of Zambia is in effect a political appointee who controls the editorial policies at the institution to avoid censure from government officials. It is thus reasonable to argue that the Times of Zambia, like most public media in Zambia works ideologically in the service of government.

In spite of government control however, the Times of Zambia functions commercially and is one of the three leading daily newspapers in Zambia. It has a circulation of between 10,000 and 15,000 copies per day, making it the second most widely read newspaper after the privately owned The Post newspaper (Banda, 2003). The Times of Zambia holds 83% of the total newspaper advertising market share in Zambia. The standard space sharing is 60% for editorial and 40% for advertising. The paper gets approximately 70% of its income from advertising and 30% from newspaper sales. At present, the Times of Zambia does not receive any grants from government making it a self-sustaining state-owned newspaper.³

What is of particular importance about the Times of Zambia in this context is its introduction of a gender policy. It is the first Zambian media organisation to introduce such a policy.

The Times of Zambia and its gender policy

The Times of Zambia gender policy (TOZGP) established in 2003, came about as a response to recommendations that came out of monitoring studies conducted at both global and regional level to investigate gendered representations in the news media. At global level, the first Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was conducted simultaneously in 71 countries on a single day, namely 18 January 1995 (Gallagher, 2001). In addition to findings about institutional practices, it established that women constituted a mere 17% of the news

² This information was established in an interview with the head of editorial who did not want to be named (28.12.05)

³ This information was given to this researcher by the Times of Zambia news editors and corroborated by sales and marketing personnel. It must be noted that staff in media organisations have been known to inflate circulation and readership figures to attract advertisers. It is also noteworthy that there is no official body mandated to audit such figures in Zambia

sources and subjects of news reporting radio, television and print on that day (Gallagher, 2001). Five years later, the second GMMP conducted in 70 countries, found that the figure had increased marginally to 18%. Hence, it was argued that this unequal coverage demanded a policy to address gendered imbalances in the media. At an international level, policy was proposed as means of ensuring “the diversity of women’s roles and images in the media, fair and sufficient news coverage of women and a more balanced employment pattern of women media practitioners” (Pandian, 1999: 459).

Subsequently, the Gender and Media Baseline Survey (GMBS) was conducted across 12 Southern African countries to investigate the representation and portrayal of gender in the news (MISA/GL, 2003). The key findings indicated a strong gender imbalance in relation to both sources and representation of women in Southern African. Women constituted only 17% of the identifiable news sources and were portrayed in a limited number of roles. Where the study focussed on news representations in Zambia, the GMBS highlighted the discrepancies in news representations along gender lines in the Times of Zambia in particular (MISA/GL, 2003). The report indicated that women constituted only 16% of the identifiable news sources at the Times of Zambia and its sister paper, the Sunday Times of Zambia (MISA/GL, 2003). Most of them were identified by their private or familial roles whereas men were represented in numerous roles and identified by their public or professional roles (MISA/GL, 2003). Following the release of the report, a gender policy was developed by management of the Times of Zambia covering editorial, employment and conditions of service (TOZGP, 2004).

The Times of Zambia gender policy: a description

The decision to pilot a gender policy was reached by the Times of Zambia management with the support of Gender Links, a gender and media advocacy Non-Governmental Organisation at a workshop in Lusaka in December 2003. Following the workshop and internal gender staff audit, management accepted the proposal by Gender Links that the Times of Zambia pilot gender policies, together with the Mauritian Broadcasting Corporation for the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (TOZGP, 2005:5).

As a first step, the newspaper devised a framework for a gender policy covering editorial content, employment, and conditions of service in February 2003 in conjunction with a media

consultant who had been involved in the GMBS and Gender Links (Moolman, 2004). The first draft of the policy was formulated at a meeting held in February 2004 and focused on editorial content, human resources and employment issues. As part of the consultation process, comment was sought for from a range of media bodies and gender activists including journalist unions, press associations, and editors' forums, civil society groups and government (Moolman, 2004). The resulting 12 page policy document is made up of 10 sections.

Although this study is concerned only with the editorial section of the policy, a synopsis of the complete document is presented to provide context for my analysis. It is noteworthy that some of the concepts in the policy document lack clarity and it was therefore difficult for the researcher to logically summarise some sections as they were confusing.

Section 1: Editorial

In relation to news content in particular, the policy's purpose is defined as "to provide men and women⁴ with equal freedom of expression through fair portrayal and representation".

The gender-sensitive editorial policy is expected to make the newspaper more responsive to the increasing demand for gender equality, equity and protection of people's right to express themselves regardless of their sex or social status.

In addition, it seeks to address the "under-representation of women news sources and actors and the negative stereotyping of women as objects, sex symbols and as victims of violence". According to the policy document, these editorial concerns would be addressed through the house style manual into which gender has been incorporated. In order to foster 'equal freedom of expression', particular clauses have been added in the house style manual, which include the following:

- No single sourced stories will be accepted since a diversity of voices gives a balanced picture and keeps the public better informed.
- The avoidance of gender stereotypes, such as "all men defile young girls" "all men are strong, wise, rapists" and "all women are weak, jealous" is key to the achievement of objectivity.
- Reporters and editors will avoid trivialising women's concerns.
- The [newspaper] will promote a holistic and realistic portrayal of women by challenging stereotypes that promote stigma and discrimination. Women have other intellectual-based attributes other than just their physical ones. These should be brought out.
- Women should not be portrayed as sex symbols (*Times of Zambia* style manual, 2004:3)⁵

⁴ Here, it is not clear whether 'men' and 'women' refers to journalists or potential news sources. However, the researcher took it to mean news sources.

The editorial section also identifies “gender stereotypes” in advertisements which it states will be addressed by rejecting adverts considered as portraying women “negatively” or “promoting gender-influenced discrimination and stigma”.

In the clause that focuses on circulation, the policy states its aim to address the current situation whereby profit maximisation informs the choice of the company’s editorial and advertising products by rejecting both news items and advertisements deemed ‘gender insensitive’

Times Printpak⁶ shall reserve the right to reject an advertisement it considers to be gender-insensitive, that is if such advertisement tends to directly or indirectly promote gender influenced discrimination and stigma.

This section which deals with the editorial policy is important to this study as it sets out to change journalistic practices as regards the portrayal of women in the editorial content. The stated general objectives of the editorial policy can be summarised as, first; to provide women and men with “equal freedom of expression” as well as “fair portrayal” of women and men. Second, it seeks to contribute to the “development” of the country through providing “equal” and “objective” coverage of both women and men. These objectives will be analysed in detail in chapter 4.

Section 2 Times Printpak gender policy

This section ascribes a powerful status to the policy as determining all others and that the general objectives of the policy shall be incorporated in every department of the company.

This shall be a stand alone policy and shall be the mother [sic] of the editorial policy, house style manual, HIV/AIDS and human resources policies. Gender is cross-cutting and therefore shall be in the mainstream of the company’s corporate and social interactions. All departments shall mainstream gender in their planning, programmes and daily operations.

Section 3: How the policy will be managed

Section 3 outlines the intended forms of management of the policy through an appointed gender committee. It also states the procedure for forming the committee responsible for

⁵ The style manual was revised after the enactment of the gender policy. Although these clauses are not specifically included in the actual policy document, they are deemed relevant to this study as they relate directly to news production and journalistic practices.

⁶ After it was nationalised, the Times of Zambia was merged with a printing company known as Printpak therefore, whereas the newspaper is known as the Times of Zambia, the organisation as whole is registered as Timesprintpak

coordinating and implementing the policy, the tenure of office and responsibilities of the incumbents.

The Gender Committee shall comprise six persons (three women and three men) and shall be in office for two years. The tenure of office shall automatically dissolve on the lapse of the one-year tenure of office, but management shall reserve the right to reappoint any member of or the entire committee after the expiry of the tenure of office.

Section 4: Audit and mapping

The findings of the staff audit exercise along gender lines revealed that men constituted 70% of the overall staff at the Times of Zambia. Particularly, it identifies the sub editors' desk where only one out of 12 sub editors is a woman. The gendered implications of the unequal distribution of staff are described by the policy as follows: "The unequal distribution of staff reinforces the stereotype that women are care-givers who should not work as they are supposed to be performing family roles at home" (TOZGP, 2005:6). In addition, "a demotivated female workforce which does not aspire to rise to management level" is attributed to such inequality.

Section 5: Access

Three major issues, namely affirmative action, recruitment and selection are addressed in this section. Regarding affirmative action, the policy states that it intends to create an environment in which women and men are represented equally regardless of rank. To achieve this goal, the policy states that the gender committee shall designate a time frame to ensure effective implementation.

Times Printpak Zambia Limited shall come up with its own affirmative action plans from time to time to create an environment in which women and men have equal representation broken down by rank and shall designate time frames for the achievement of the affirmative action so devised.

Where recruitment is addressed, it refers to equal opportunity in terms of gender representation.

Times Printpak Zambia shall be an equal opportunity employer and this shall be reflected in all internal and external advertisements.

Accordingly, all advertisements are required to encourage women to apply. It states that the company will ensure a deliberate initiative to encourage young women to take up careers in the media. It stipulates that interviewing panels for selecting potential employees should be

gender-balanced and should not discriminate against anyone on the basis of sex or social status.

Section 6: Participation and advancement

The creation of a gender-friendly working environment to address the issue of sexual harassment for both women and men is also addressed in this section. Accordingly management should ensure “family friendly practices” to guarantee that female employees are not adversely affected by maternity.

Section 7: Capacity building

This section states that the company is required to provide equal access to staff development for both women and men and to encourage them to undergo training relevant to their line of work. In relation to gender training, this section stipulates that management be responsible for institutional gender training for both management and unionised staff.

Section 8: Monitoring and evaluation

The method of monitoring the gender policy is identified here as content analysis and the responsibility falls on the Gender Committee.

Times Printpak Zambia Limited shall work in partnership with the civil society, government, private sector, international organisations and individuals to carry out research on the way and extent to which gender is covered by its publications, how it deals with sexist attitudes in society and how women and men are represented on its staff.

Section 9 and 10: Review and Concepts/working definitions

Policy review is required as need arises. The final section of the policy provides definitions of the concepts used in the policy.

The formulation of such a gender policy as enacted at the Times of Zambia has to be understood in the context of the unequal gender power relations in contemporary patriarchal societies like Zambia.

Patriarchal power relations in Zambian society

This study is concerned with the unequal representation of women, both in society and in the Times of Zambia newspaper. Key to this is the question of gender. The idea of gender stands in opposition to that of ‘sex’. Sex relates to biological or physiological characterisation and behaviour whereas gender is understood as a social construct which depends on differentiating between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’ While there are several conceptualisations of gender, in this study gender is understood as “social categories of

masculinity and femininity that relate to sex differences in complex ways which are produced by culture and not biology” (Moon, 1995:57)

As a category, gender is used to classify people as men and women, and most societies use gender as a major cognitive schema for understanding the world around them (Dover, 2005:46). Consequently, gender is also a socio-cultural construct which assigns meaning (identity, value, and status in the social hierarchies) to individuals within society (De Lauretis, 1987). It is socially constructed through institutional discourses (such as family, school, and notably for this research, the media) and other social practices that have the power to control the field of social meaning and thus, promote and implant representations of gender (De Lauretis 1987).

As a social construction, gender raises issues of the ‘gender order’ which is a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity (Connell, 1987). Accordingly, the ‘gender order’ “proposes a gendered division according to binary oppositions where for example, masculinity is constructed as powerful, physical and rational and femininity as passive, dependent and emotional” (Prinsloo, 1999:47). Such identities are dependent upon the discursive processes that shape group and individual expectations of what women and men ought to be. In other words, the ‘gender order’ privileges a hegemonic form of masculinity constructed in relation to femininity, a discourse referred to as patriarchy.

In Zambia, like in many other countries, a hierarchical patriarchal culture prevails. Women are assumed to be the inferior sex whose main duties in society are general domestic chores such as cooking and child care, while the men are the ‘authorities’ at domestic, institutional and governmental level (Ngulube, 1997). This socialisation into masculine and feminine roles is embodied through the social segregation of the sexes and gendered tasks which begins at childhood. Gendered upbringing starts at an early age, where boys are encouraged to be tough and self-reliant for the future roles as head of households, while girl are taught to be humble, shy and to respect men (Dover, 2005). Such bad practices reinforce patriarchal values and consequently lead to the marginalisation and repression of women in society. The forms of social domination differ along the lines of class.

In Zambia, patriarchy manifests itself through widespread discrimination against women and a virtual absence of women in socio-economic and political spheres (World Organisation Against Torture, 2002). Women in Zambia continue to be discriminated against, particularly as regards education and literacy, access to work and participation in public affairs (World Organisation Against Torture, 2002).

Where education and literacy is concerned, only 64% of women are able to read and write as compared to 86% of their male counterparts (United Nations Human Development Report, 2005). As result, women have less access to formal employment. Although the overall picture shows that women are increasing their representation in both the formal and informal sectors of employment, they are still in the minority in formal wage employment (Afrol News, 2003). The implication of this imbalance in both literacy and employment levels is that women are dependent on men for their livelihood. For example, it is argued that “women in Zambia supply the bulk of the labour on land whose rights are held by men” (Burdette, 1988:56).

Beyond access to education and employment, Zambian women have been discriminated against as regards participation in public affairs, particularly in politics. It is argued that women's representation in Zambian politics has always been unequal. In 1988, for example, only 8% of women held high posts in both central and local government. The trend slightly improved in 1996 to 12% and in this particular year, the first female high court judge was appointed (Ngulube 1997). Presently, Zambia has the poorest gender equality statistics in the region. With a total of 158 Members of Parliament (MPs) only 10% (16 MPs) are women (Afrol News, 2003). The representation in government offices is even lower, as only two of 25 ministers are women and four out of 35 deputy ministers are women. This lack of female representation in decision making structures has reinforced unequal gender relations in government policy-making and in the Zambian society in general (World Organisation Against Torture, 2002)⁷.

To address this gender imbalance, the Zambian government has put in place specific courses of action against social and economic marginalisation of women. Among such initiatives was

⁷ Literature on gender in Zambia is scarce; perhaps this underlines how naturalised patriarchal values are in Zambian society.

its commitment to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development,⁸ and various other charters and conventions impacting on gender issues. In response to the SADC Declaration, the Zambian government drew up a National Gender Policy (NGP) in March 2000. The NGP serves as a guideline for mainstreaming gender into all policies, programmes, plans, and projects.

The vision of the government through the National Gender Policy is to achieve full participation of men and women in the development process at all levels in order to ensure sustainable development and attainment of equality and equity between the sexes (NGP, 1998:2).

In this gender policy, certain gender issues and concerns are identified which need to be addressed to enable women and men to participate equally and equitably in the national development process (NGP, 1998). In particular, section 2.15 of the NGP deals with the media and information and makes reference to the unfair representation of women and men in the media. "Journalism has been dominated by males who in turn dominate positions in decision-making" (NGP, 1998:14). It further states that gender imbalances in both social and economic spheres have influenced the negative way in which the Zambian media portrays women.

In spite of this commitment to various initiatives, there has been no significant shifts in practices and "to rule, is still considered a prerogative and privilege of men in Zambia" (Ngulube, 1997: 158). Consequently, there are very few women in leadership positions in both traditional structures and central government. Presently, there is only 17% of women representation in decision making positions in the country. Zambia is therefore one of the SADC member countries that failed to attain 30% representation of women in decision making positions by 2005. The failure to do so can be attributed the conservative Zambian traditional values and essentialised notion of culture as fixed, unchanging and appropriate.

Research statement

Since the enactment of the TOZGP approximately two years ago, there has been no evaluation or follow-up study to assess how the policy has impacted on the journalistic practices and consequently the representation of women in the news. This research therefore

⁸ It was signed by the SADC heads of state and government in 1997. This declaration endorsed a number of decisions aimed at improving the status of women. Among them, was to achieve at least 30% women in political and decision-making structures by 2005 as well as promoting women's full access to and control over productive resources.

sets out to investigate this. Hence, the central question that underpins this research is: How has the introduction of a gender policy impacted on the journalistic practices at the Times of Zambia?

There are two aspects to be considered. First, this research investigates the suitability of the formulation of the policy to the stated objective of changing the news content along gender lines. For this reason, the study seeks to establish which feminist theory informs the policy and whether any weaknesses associated with that particular theory could render the policy ineffective. Secondly, the study seeks to establish to what extent the policy impacts on journalistic practices. In line with this, the study seeks to establish whether the journalists at the Times of Zambia conform to the gender policy during selection and treatment of news stories. This investigation also considers how other factors such as political economy, newsroom routines, professional ideologies and cultural values influence the implementation of the policy.

Significance of the study

As a media practitioner and a Zambian woman concerned with social justice, I am concerned with what I perceive as lack of effectiveness of the policy. If one is interested in social change, it is necessary to work from an informed base and it is important to understand the weaknesses and difficulties such a policy might encounter so that these can be better addressed in future. Further, investigating the effectiveness of this policy will provide understandings that would be useful in informing future editorial gender policies and for reviewing the TOZGP itself

Methods of study

This research is a qualitative study that employed both document analysis as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews to investigate the impact of the gender policy on the journalistic practices. Document analysis enables reflections on significant theory propositions, which link critical insights into the public policy processes. Recommendations from such processes pave the way for future policy actions (Yin, 1984). In this study, the document analysis of the TOZGP was also conducted in order to establish the framework that informs the policy.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed to probe the practices and perceptions of males and females in relation to the degree of change in gendered representation in the news since the implementation of the policy. It also set out to identify obstacles that the Times of Zambia faces in implementing the policy.

Thesis outline

This thesis report is divided into five chapters. This chapter presents the political context of the media in Zambia and outlines the history of the Times of Zambia and its gender policy. It then offers an overview of patriarchal power relations in *Zambian* society before stating the research problem, summary of the methodology and the significance of the study.

Chapter two provides the theoretical framework of the study. It is informed by a Cultural Studies approach to media studies, specifically drawing on the ‘circuit of culture’ (du Guy et al, 1997) for its framing. This Cultural Studies approach was deemed appropriate for the study as it avoids the stand-off assumed between some advocates of Cultural Studies and Political Economy (see Golding and Murdock, 2000, Kellner, 1995b) by incorporating understandings from both approaches. Consequently, the chapter is divided into two major sections, one of which focuses on representation, while the other one focuses on production.

Chapter three presents an overview and justification of the two qualitative methods of document analysis and semi structured interviews. For the purposes of qualitative research, the responses from the interviews were categorised thematically, as suggested by Hansen et al (1998) and Flick (2002), using the theoretical framework to make sense of the themes identified during interviews. The findings acquired from the interviewees’ responses are presented in chapter four.

Chapter four discusses the study findings in relation to the respondents’ practices and perspectives on the gender policy and news production. The ineffectiveness of the policy is attributed to various internal and external factors which are discussed in this chapter.

Finally, chapter five reflects on the study by providing a recount of the chapters preceding it and presenting recommendations for the policy and suggestions for further study.

Chapter Two

Literature review

Introduction

Having outlined the background to the study in chapter one, this chapter presents the review of the literature that focuses on how representation of women is influenced by media organisations within which news is produced and the wider societal aspects such as the prevailing political and economic influences on the journalistic output.

Media Studies is a field of study that has drawn on a range of theoretical approaches. Two branches of critical approaches to the media have included Cultural Studies and Political Economy. This study is located within a Cultural Studies approach to media studies, but one informed by the 'circuit of culture' (du Guy et al, 1997). This therefore avoids the stand-off assumed between advocates of Cultural Studies and Political Economy (see Golding and Murdock, 2000; Kellner, 1995b). This strand of Cultural Studies incorporates understandings from both approaches and is therefore relevant to the question of how policy has impacted on gendered representations and production of news. While I am aware of the need to focus on all the 'moments' of the 'circuit of culture' I will only focus on the inter-relationship of the representation and the production moments of news at the Times of Zambia, in line with the limited scope of the study.

The 'circuit of culture' approach is consistent with the constructionist approach and the feminist position that this study adopts is located within this frame. The chapter begins by describing the 'circuit of culture' and the 'multi perspectival' (Kellner, 1995b:102) approach it argues for. Then with this as a backdrop, the chapter gives a description of the poststructural feminist approach and explains why it is appropriate for this study. In order to argue the relevance of this approach, I establish other feminist approaches to media in the first instance. Finally, the chapter focuses on the production 'moment' of the circuit of culture by focusing on the factors that influence the representation of women and men in news production

The 'Circuit of Culture'

The 'circuit of culture' is a concept model which identifies those loci where cultural processes can be studied. Accordingly, there are five different 'moments' in which culture can be studied which include representation, production, regulation, identity and consumption (Hall, 1997). Each of these 'moments' is interlinked with the other 'moments'

in an on-going process of cultural encoding and dissemination, for example, the nature and form of production will impact on consumption or how the audience receive the cultural messages etc (du Gay, et al; 1997). Historically there has been three models of media research that have tended to focus on production, text or reception (Johnson, 1983). However, rather than privileging one 'moment' in explaining the meaning that an artefact comes to possess, it is argued that a holistic analysis enables a thorough study of cultural meaning in an artefact such as news (Johnson, 1983; du Gay, et al; 1997).

Consistent with the 'circuit of culture' approach, Kellner (1995a) argues for a multi-perspectival approach to Cultural Studies which combines the different circuit 'moments'. The multi-perspectival strand of Cultural Studies regards cultures as socially constructed phenomena interwoven with all social practices within a particular society (Lemon, 2001). In other words, it is positioned within the constructionist theory which assumes language as a social practice which enables us to give meaning to the world. It further argues that language does not reflect an already given social reality but constructs social reality within itself (Hall, 1997; Weedon, 1997) and that culture must be analysed within the social relations and system through which it is produced and consumed, i.e. society, politics and economics (Kellner, 1995b).

Within this approach, the concept of hegemony is important. Drawing from Gramsci's conceptualisation, hegemony is the process "by which a dominant group wins the willing support of subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination" (Fiske, 1987:259). Society is considered to be a complex network of groups in different power relationships to one another where powerful groups are constantly trying to define meanings in order to serve their interests rather than those of the less powerful groups (Fiske, 1987). The notion of hegemony as a "constant process of power struggle" (Fiske, 1987: 24) prompted Cultural Studies advocates to begin paying attention to cultural artefacts, practices and institutions within existing networks of power. This included investigating how culture provided tools for both forces of domination and for resistance and struggle (Kellner, 1995b; Fiske, 1987). Consequently, Cultural Studies extended its focus on how dominant groups win the support of the subordinate groups to include how the subordinate groups resist dominant forms of culture and create alternative forms (Kellner, 1995b). An example of hegemony and counter hegemony interaction is evident in the contestations between patriarchal discourses with various feminist discourses.

Feminism and Media Studies

Feminism is a social movement whose concern is to limit or eradicate gender inequality and promote women's rights, interests and issues in society. It responded to gender inequalities and discrimination in society (Stacey, 1993). Feminism is interested in understanding the cause of women's oppression at the level of social structure whether conceived of as capitalism or patriarchy (Barret and Phillips, 1992 cited in van Zoonen, 1994). Since feminism is by definition "a political and philosophical term" (Kaplan, 1987:214), feminists informed by varied theoretical positions analyse the media in divergent ways (Byerly, 1995).

The major feminist approaches include liberal, radical and socialist feminism and their key intervention within feminist media studies will be discussed in this section. Liberal feminism has had a powerful influence on feminist media studies and will therefore be discussed and critiqued in great detail as pertinent to the Times of Zambia intervention. Only a brief account of the radical and socialist strands will be given as they are less relevant to this study. In contrast to these approaches, I offer a detailed description of the "new paradigm" (van Zoonen, 1994:15) or the poststructural approach (Weedon, 1987) which provides important insights that enables media critique that goes beyond the focus on stereotypes and pornography, to address issues of how gendered power relations influence media production and reception of the texts. The poststructural feminist approach offers a theoretical and methodological framework that goes beyond constructing the problem as "under representation" and "misrepresentation" of women in the media (van Zoonen, 1994). This is consistent with the multi-perspectival approach identified above.

Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism has been identified as the first wave of feminism which developed in the United States and Western Europe in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Baxter, 2003). This early form of feminism began as a movement of middle to upper-class women who felt that they were excluded from economic opportunities and rewards (Parry and Karam, 2001). In other words, these women, who tended to be white, felt that they were being discriminated against in terms of access to education, jobs and the right to vote. Its major political objective was to create an environment that would ensure equal opportunities for the intellectual and professional success of both women and men through legal means, education and other social reforms (Donovan, 2000; Steeves, 1987; Parry and Karam, 2001).

Liberal feminists strive for equality with men in the male-dominated public work sphere, demanding equal access to jobs and institutional power of whatever kind, equal pay for equal work, and changes in family routines to accommodate their demanding careers (Enrique, 2000: no page number)

By working for change within existing structures and focusing largely on “individual rights and choices which women are denied” (Stacey, 1993:51), liberal feminism has been critiqued for its reluctance to confront systemic power and patriarchy. Its major flaw has been described as its failure to recognise other power dimensions in society that maintain the status of female inferiority such as class (Donovan, 2000). Consequently, the liberal feminist strand has been critiqued as conservative and naively reformist for its failure to propose deeper structural change (Kaplan, 1987; Stacey, 1993).

Liberal feminist approaches to media studies have been argued to assume a straightforward sender-message-receiver sequence in which media are seen as transmitting particular messages about gender to a wide public (van Zoonen, 1994). These studies have focused largely on three areas, namely effects of sexist media images on the audience, the stereotypical images of women in the media, and the occupational roles of women journalists (van Zoonen, 1988).

Media effects studies

Media effects studies have been argued to work within the sociological explanation of femininity as acquired and produced through socialisation (Macdonald, 1995; Steeves, 1987). The media, like other cultural forms, are seen as reinforcing and naturalising gender-specific roles in society (Macdonald, 1995). In other words, liberal feminism argues that particular feminine and masculine roles are acquired as a result of socialising practices. The division of sex roles, in particular, have been normalised over a long period of time and become embedded in societies. It is assumed that these can be transformed by a conscious process of eliminating patriarchal practices. If journalists have learnt to portray the feminine world in a particular ways (as weak, dependent, emotional) these practices can be changed (Trowler, 1988:100).

The main logic underlying the socialisation thesis is that the media can teach norms and values by way of reward and punishment for different kinds of behaviour as represented in the media (McQuail, 1994:360).

Studies on long term effects of the media have sought consequences in line with cultivation and agenda setting theories ⁹(Steeves, 1987; van Zoonen, 1994).

Most feminist studies informed by socialisation theory have examined media effects on children and they largely focus on investigating whether children's exposure to media is related to their perceptions and acceptance of stereotypical gendered behaviour (Steeves, 1987; Macdonald, 1995). While some findings of these studies argue that children exposed to sex-stereotypes in the media content tend to have stereotypic perceptions, attitudes and behaviours (Steeves, 1987), other studies have found contradictory results and argue that there are numerous intervening factors involved before a conclusion about media effects can be reached (Steeves, 1987; van Zoonen, 1994). Consequently, media effects studies have been critiqued for not taking into account the intervening variables such as education and class that also influence the way children understand and interpret what they see (van Zoonen, 1994; Steeves, 1987). Moreover, experimental research examines short term cognitive or behavioural effects and does not reveal much about the influence of mass media in the long term (van Zoonen, 1994).

Liberal feminist research also understands the socialising role of the media in relation to 'agenda setting' theory (Steeves, 1987). The news media can thus set the agendas for the public's attention to a small group of issues around which public opinion is formed. The theory further asserts that what the audience knows about the world is largely based on the messages it receives from the media (McQuail, 1994). The result of the mediated view of the world, it is argued is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent in the media picture also become prominent in personal experiences (McCombs & Estrada 1997). For example, the images of women in the media informs society's perception of women.

'Images of Women' Studies

A concern with media effects and stereotyping led to 'images of women' studies. While the media are critiqued for the role they play in reinforcing gender specific roles in society,

⁹ Cultivation theory proposes that media, particularly television, present a "pseudo" reality that is different from the social reality that most people experience and that people who watch longer hours of television tend to substitute their own social experience with that of television reality resulting in a "television view of the world" (van Zoonen, 1994:35).

The 'agenda setting' theory posits that media determines how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news (McCombs 2004; McQuail 1994).

liberal feminism argues that the media also have the potential to challenge patriarchy by providing other role models for women and girls (Steeves, 1987). Consequently, the media is critiqued for not achieving this function and this is explained by a perceived tendency to show women less frequently and then in stereotypical positions portraying them as “incompetent, inferior and always subservient to men” (van Zoonen, 1994:16). Such models, liberal feminists argue, are restrictive and limit advancement of girls and women as socially valuable members of society (Macdonald, 1995). Therefore, liberal feminism advocates for media portrayals to change by representing more women and men in non-traditional roles and by using non-sexist language (Donovan, 2000). For example, both women and men, in equal measure, should be shown in positions of power, such as heads of corporations, presidents of countries, etc.

From this perspective, several quantitative studies have been undertaken using content analysis (Steeves, 1987; van Zoonen, 1994). Since their major concern is the nature of images of women in the media, these studies evaluate texts on this basis in an attempt to identify the kind of role models media texts supply (Steeves, 1987). Some of these liberal feminist media studies conducted content analyses of soap operas, movies and advertisements and they identified and quantified roles of men and women portrayed in order to understand changes in the status of women in the traditional and professional roles (Kaplan, 1987; Parry and Karam, 2001). Given their appeal to many women, soap operas have attracted the attention of much feminist research (Gledhill, 1997). An example of soap opera content analysis is Meehan’s analysis of *Ladies of the Evening*. The study was conducted to investigate the kind of roles that women are portrayed in an American prime time soap opera. The findings were that women are portrayed in a limited number of roles such as the nagging wife, aggressive single woman, prostitutes or as witches. In addition, this study revealed that the number of occupations which women were portrayed were limited to a few, primarily housewife, receptionist and whore (Trowler, 1998).

While the focus of these 1980s studies was on fiction forms of media, more recent feminist research has investigated ways in which gender is constructed in the news media. An example of feminist news research is the GMMP and GMBS discussed in chapter one. The quantitative studies that investigate the gendered nature of news in several other countries bear similar results. Women were less frequently represented as news makers or as news

sources and they appear most frequently in human interest sections such as art, education, welfare and consumer affairs (Lowe-Morna, 2001).

Occupational roles studies

Part of the solution to the uneven news coverage has been related to the institutional contexts. Liberal feminism argues that increasing the number of women working in the media in both entry-level and decision making positions would lead to an increased number of women appearing in the media (Steeves, 1987; Byerly, 1995; van Zoonen, 1988). The underpinning assumption is that there are fewer women working in the media and consequently few of them hold leading positions, making it difficult for women to have a say about the content (van Zoonen, 1994; Steeves, 1987). In the Netherlands for example, an attitudinal research was undertaken using surveys and interviews to get journalists' opinions on this matter and the findings indicated that 67% of the female journalists and half of their male colleagues thought that news content would change with the increase of the number in female journalists (van Zoonen, 1988).

Within this feminist frame, 'bias' in representation of women in the media is attributed to male-dominated media ownership, management and employment practices (Janus, 1996) a position critiqued by van Zoonen (1994) she argues that this response is inadequate as opinions of journalists can not be conflated with their actions and that news production is a complex process which is affected by various internal and external factors. Moreover, women journalists are subjected to the same professional and institutional values as their male counterparts which they are required to strictly adhere to. Therefore, their news selection behaviour, goes the counter argument, would be no different from those of their male colleagues.

The idea that an increase in the number of women journalists will transform the news content appears to imply that female journalists all tend to seek the same objective and that they are collectively different from their males colleagues (van Zoonen, 1988:42).

Further, there is no empirical evidence that shows that the portrayal of women in the media differs when the text is produced by a woman (Gallagher, 2001).

Consequently, liberal feminists' studies have been critiqued on three grounds, namely their failure to recognise power imbalances in society and in media institutions, their flawed use of

stereotypes as critical tools of investigation and their use of content analysis as a research of research.

First, as pointed out earlier, liberal feminism's major flaw is its failure to address the social structures which are the contributing factors to gender inequalities and women's subordination in society (Janus, 1996; Macdonald, 1992; Kaplan, 1987).

Studying sexism apart from its social contexts including mode of production and structures of political organization leads to superficial hypotheses and misdirected research (Janus, 1996:6).

Secondly, liberal feminists' use of stereotypes as the only central focus of investigation has been argued to be inadequate because stereotypes can not be operationally defined. They are not images in themselves but "radicalised expressions of a common practice" (van Zoonen, 1994:42) which are assumed to reinforce the inferior status of women (Steeves, 1987; van Zoonen, 1994). However, poststructuralists argue that even these 'radicalised expressions of a common practice' do not have fixed meanings but are cultural signifiers which construct rather than reflect gender definitions and meanings. Thus, it is impossible to give a 'real' representation of both men and women because what constitutes masculine and feminine identities is strongly determined by the social and cultural context (Gledhill, 1997). Rather, it is argued that using stereotypes as a critical tool implies that women ought to be represented in a real and truthful manner and that the media can be 'objective' in the way they represent women (van Zoonen, 1994). However, it is impossible to establish whose version of reality is to be given precedence (Macdonald, 1995; Gledhill, 1995) since "arguing for more realistic images is always an argument for 'your' version of reality" (Brundson, 1988 cited in van Zoonen, 1994:38).

Thirdly, liberal feminist research is critiqued for its use of content analysis as a research technique. Content analysis as a research technique is considered inadequate in particular ways. What it does enables the quantification of manifest content (the denotative signifiers) ignoring why and how other factors such as media operations and cultural contexts can affect the content (Hackett, 1984). It also overlooks latent content, irony and parody.

The limitations of liberal feminism gave rise to other varied theoretical positions such as the socialist, radical and most importantly for this study, the poststructural feminist strand which

informs this study. This study does not focus on radical and socialist feminism and, therefore, less detail is given on these two strands

Radical feminism

Radical feminism is commonly linked to the second-wave feminist movement which was mostly concerned with issues of economic equality between the genders and addressing the rights of female minorities (Donovan, 2000). It is often described in terms of biological determinism due to its assumption that masculinity and femininity are innate and linked to genes and hormones. These innate qualities are understood to have a more determining influence than social and cultural factors (Macdonald, 1995; Donovan, 2000). This assumption that the characteristics of femininity and masculinity were fixed and preordained (i.e. essences) has led to them being labelled as essentialists (Macdonald, 1995:14; Baxter, 2003).

There is little feminist media research based on radical feminist theory and most of it is primarily concerned with pornography as the major cause of rape and other sexual injustices against women (Steeves, 1987)¹⁰

Socialist Feminism

Like socialism, socialist feminism looks at the world in a critical way by understanding the world in terms of antagonisms (Donovan, 2000). Unlike liberal and radical feminism whose primary concern relates to patriarchal power relations, socialist feminism's major assumption is that society is composed of hierarchical and antagonistic set of relations characterised by the oppression of the subordinate class, gender, race and ethnic strata (Kellner, 1995b).

Drawing on the Marxian premise that "those who own the means of production also determine the ideas to be produced" (Marx and Engels, 1986 in Byerly, 1995:107), socialist feminism assumes that since the media operates as part of the patriarchal ruling class, it often takes on the role of transmitting and reinforcing both economic and gendered relations in society (Byerly, 1995). It maintains that the media obscures its ideological nature by presenting capitalist and patriarchal relations as 'normal' thereby presenting it as 'common sense' (van Zoonen, 1994). It therefore considers it as imperative to investigate the structural

¹⁰ Radical feminism has been criticised for its essentialism and for neglecting the cultural and social variables that contribute to women's oppression (Donovan, 2001; Steeves, 1987). "It is concerned less with explaining the origins of women's devaluation than with describing and promoting radical alternatives" (Steeves, 1987:97). Its rejection of the male symbolic order also led to their proposing radical alternatives specifically production houses such the Women Press which was established in the UK.

aspects of social and economic relations and the role of both male and capitalist ideologies disseminated through the media (Byerly, 1995).

Socialist feminism assumes that human nature is not essential but socially constructed and changeable with time and within different economic contexts (Weedon, 1987). Therefore it seeks to analyse culture historically in the context of its social structuring. It argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression and this can only be achieved in a socialist society (Donovan, 2000; Steeves, 1987).

Socialist feminist research has been greatly influenced by British Cultural Studies and it mainly focuses on two forms of analysis namely textual and institutional analysis (Steeves, 1987). Within textual analysis, socialist feminism generally focuses on the ideological analysis of media texts by deploying psychoanalytic and semiotic analysis (Hackett, 1984; Steeves, 1987). However, while these structural analysis methods of research have been criticised for their focus on media texts as responsible for defining and perpetuating the ideology of patriarchy in society thereby ignoring social and cultural contexts (Steeves, 1987). This approach is critiqued for its failure to recognise the possibility of a multiplicity of meaning of any text. This critique argues that audience reception analysis is also necessary because diverse audiences read such ideologically shaped texts differently (van Zoonen, 1994).

Institutional studies, on the other hand, are informed by the assumption that media are closely linked to the dominant power structures. Thus such studies attempt to investigate how the structure and organisation of the media work to shape media messages. Researchers working in the area of institutional studies share the assumption that

an examination of the political, organisational and professional factors which impinge on the process of message production could shed considerable light on the power of the media (Curran et al, 1987:64).

Institutional studies frequently work within a Political Economy frame which posits that economic and political control of the media determines the content and thus the ideological power of the media. Consequently, studying of news media texts is enhanced by studying the way it is produced within the structure and organisation of the news media industry (Fourie,

2001; McNair, 1998; Manning, 2001; Kellner, 1995a). This approach has also been critiqued for its 'economic determinism' (see Golding and Murdock 1997).

The discussion of the lack of concern with audience is common to the three feminist theories outlined earlier. They assume that the media transmit particular messages about gender in fairly straight forward sender - message - receiver sequence (van Zoonen, 1994). The issues of 'text determinism' and 'economic determinism' are factored into poststructural feminism.

Poststructural Feminism

Poststructural feminism has been identified as third wave feminism and it attempts to respond to limitations that have been identified in the previous approaches (Weedon, 1987). It argues that "media audiences do not simply take in or reject messages, but interpret them according to the logic of their own social, cultural and individual circumstances" (van Zoonen, 1994:40). Hence meaning is socially and historically constructed through negotiation between the institutional producers and the audience (van Zoonen, 1994, Macdonald, 1995). Feminist media critique therefore needs to employ an approach that seeks to conceptualise "the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness" (Weedon, 1987:19), issues that are addressed within the constructionist approach (Hall, 1997), informed by Foucauldian understandings.

Poststructuralist feminism is informed by Foucault's theory of language, subject and discourse which locates discourses socially and historically (Weedon, 1987). It argues that the 'counter hegemonic' nature of feminism (Stacey, 1995) requires a theory that is able to, first, address questions of how social power is exercised and, second, how social relations of gender might be transformed (Weedon, 1987).

Responding to criticisms of the strands of feminism discussed earlier that assume a stable and easily identifiable distinction between men and women (van Zoonen, 1994), a poststructuralist approach understands gender as "a set of overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference" (van Zoonen, 1994:33). Since poststructuralist theory incorporates constructivist rather than essentialist principles, poststructural feminism deems women's subjectivities in relations to

their oppression as socially constituted and therefore changeable (Baxter, 2003; Stacey, 1995; Kaplan, 1987) rather than fixed and preordained (Macdonald, 1995).

Anti-essentialists attempt to understand the processes through which female subjectivity is constituted in patriarchal culture and do not find an 'essential' femininity behind the socially constructed subject (Kaplan, 1987:217).

Within this frame, gender is understood as a social construct and that ways of being masculine and feminine are dynamically constructed through socially interactive practices (van Zoonen, 1994; Kaplan, 1987; McDonald, 1995). In other words, the approach argues that gender is a discourse which proposes different identities for masculine and feminine subjects which vary according to history and culture (Prinsloo, 2003). Poststructuralist feminism is concerned with identifying and analysing the processes through which sexuality and subjectivity are variously constructed (Macdonald, 1995) and attempts to understand how sexual identity relates to the patriarchal order. It seeks to explore why women frequently accept the social relations where their interests are deemed inferior to those of men (Weedon, 1987; Kaplan, 1987). Concepts of subjectivity and consciousness are consequently central to poststructuralism. Its focus on social and cultural identities of both men and women makes poststructuralist feminism different from the other strands of feminism because while the others foreground women, it is concerned with gender and the relationships between women and men rather than a focus on the position of women alone.

Within this constructionist analytical frame, three aspects are central to conceptualising power relations and these include language, subjectivity and discourse. Language is the common factor that poststructuralists address in the analysis of these patriarchal processes (Weedon, 1993).

Language

Language has been considered the medium in which cultural meanings are formed and communicated and it is the means and medium through which we form knowledge about ourselves and the social world (Fairclough 1995; Hall 1997). Poststructuralist theorists assume primarily that language is a socially acquired practice which enables us to give meaning to the world. Then, language does not reflect an already given social reality but constructs social reality (Hall, 1997; Weedon, 1994). It is not a neutral medium for the formation of meanings and knowledge about an independent object world 'existing' outside of language.

Poststructural feminism draws on understandings of semiotics, particularly de Saussure's theory of the sign, which identifies two components of the sign namely the signifier (sound or written image) and the signified (meaning) (Weedon, 1987; Hall, 1997). The two components are seen as related to each other in an arbitrary way and the meaning of the sign is understood as not fixed but rather relational (Hall, 1997; Storey 1993). Each sign derives its meaning from its difference from other signs in the language chain. Thus the signifier 'whore' for example does not have an intrinsic meaning except through its difference to other signifiers of womanhood, such as 'virgin' and 'mother' (Weedon, 1987:23). These insights are important because they make language a social phenomenon and a site of political struggle (Weedon, 1987).

Although indebted to structuralism, a poststructuralist or constructionist approach modifies the essential aspects of Saussure's theory by viewing language as a system that always exist in socially and historically specific discourses (Hall, 1997). It questions the assumption that the sign is fixed by arguing that this undermines the plurality of meaning or changes in meaning (Weedon, 1987). Saussure's semiotic analysis focussed on "the state of the language system at one moment as if it had stood still and he could halt the flow of language-change" (Hall, 1997:35), yet meanings which individuals acquire from language are as result of an already existing social construct to which individual speakers are subject to (Weedon, 1987).

Secondly, Saussure's structuralist approach is considered to lack the explanation of the readers' possible diverse positions in relation to the text. It focuses more on the formal aspects of language rather than in its interactive and dialogic features (Hall, 1997) and consequently does not attend to issues of power relations between speakers of different group of classes. A poststructuralist approach goes beyond the structure to investigate who the structure is for (Easthope,1988). When the structures of the texts are analysed to consider the views of the subject, structuralism becomes transformed to poststructuralism and at this point that the issue of discourse and power becomes cardinal to poststructuralism (Easthope, 1988).

From language to discourse and power

If semiotics provided one of the two strands for constructionist approach, the discursive one informs the study of gender. It assumes that meaning is constituted through competing discourses rather than through language. Within this approach discourses are regarded as

competing ways of giving meaning to the world which vary according to historical moments (Hall, 1997). Consequently, a signifier can signify differently over time and between moments of representation. Consider how the word 'slut' might have derogatory connotations among heterosexual women and have a positive connotation among some homosexual men.

Whereas structuralist approaches to text focus on how language works and its role in meaning production, poststructuralists like Foucault were more concerned with how language is used in social and cultural contexts (Storey, 1993). Foucault sought to "analyse how human beings understand themselves in our culture and how our knowledge about the social embodied individual and shared meanings come to be produced in different periods" (Foucault, 1980:132). He was not concerned with words alone, as the term 'discourse' implies within linguistics but was more interested in the rules and practices that produced meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical periods. He defined discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about a particular historical moment" (Foucault, 1980:130). Foucault argues that discourse does not only construct the topic but it also directs the way the topic can be meaningfully talked and reasoned about. This it does by ruling in and ruling out certain ways of talking about a topic. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. It is because of this therefore that Foucault argues, like other constructionists, that "nothing meaningful exists outside discourse" (Hall, 1997:45).

Unlike the linguistic concept of discourse which is concerned only with language, Foucault's concept understanding of 'discourse' referred to language (representation) and practices. This is helpful for poststructural feminist media critique because unlike the essentialist focus on media content, poststructural feminism is also concerned with production practices, the social context, the power relations involved in the production processes and the reception of media texts.

Discourses in Foucault's terms are not limited to words or representations. They constitute our knowledge, attitudes and values which consequently have material effects through our actions on ourselves and others (Prinsloo, 2003:27).

Viewed this way, representation then becomes a site for the production of social knowledge and thus Foucault was concerned with exploring how this knowledge was inextricably linked with questions of power. The various discursive sites within a society have implicit rules or

conventions for organising discourse. Thus, discourse is an exercise of power and both the process and the product of discourse limit the possibilities of interpretation and privilege certain meanings over others (van Zoonen, 1994). Those who can control discourse in society work to define that society's truth (Enrique, 2000). This truth, however, is also always contested.

Foucault's conception of power shifts our attention from the usual 'sources' of power like the state, the business class and so on, to the many local circuits in which it operates: power is a pervasive social phenomenon, which can be felt not only in our relations with specialised institutions like the state, but also in our mundane encounters with 'private' individuals who are not connected to the state. Power is central to Foucault's understanding of discourse and for poststructural feminist analysis as it relates to transforming patriarchal power relations. Yet Foucault argues that "Power does not function in form of a chain - it circulates" (Foucault, 1987:51). Unlike the other strands of feminism, poststructural feminism therefore suggests that both men and women do have opportunities to exercise power because power does not exist outside social relationships (Gauntlett, 2002). Consequently, poststructural feminism is concerned not only with women's representation and the practices that implicate them but also with those of men and the relationship between the two.

As noted earlier, not everyone has equal access to power but this provides a new way of looking at power (Gauntlett, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994). In a family for example, men usually have more power than women and women more power than children. Thus, it is how these power inequalities are constituted that poststructuralism seeks to investigate (Weedon, 1987). Foucault further argues that this power can be resisted and that "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1998, in Gauntlett, 2002:120). Since societies vary according to particular cultural settings and historical periods, from culture to culture, from era to era, they are constantly subject to discursive struggle and negotiation (Gauntlett, 2002:120). For example, the efforts to control sex have produced not only numerous texts on the subject, but also new – and sometimes competing – discourses on the subject (Hall, 1997). It is such examples that help to explain why Foucault posited that both the intended actions of power and their effects are productive (Gauntlett, 2002). It is through discursive practices that power produces the objects and subjects of the discourse.

The subject

Subjectivity refers to the ways in which identities are constructed through discourse or “the conscious and unconscious thoughts of an individual” (Weedon, 1987:32). It is concerned with the sense that various cultures make with the individual and the sense of self that individuals have (Fiske, 1987). Whereas the other strands of feminism might deem subjectivity as unified and or essentially biological, poststructuralism argues that subjectivity is socially constructed and changeable, often influenced and informed by an individual’s experience (Macdonald, 1995).

Rejecting the conventional enlightenment notion of the subject as a conscious, autonomous, individual who is the core of meaning, Foucault (1982) argued that it is discourse, not the subject that produces knowledge. While particular subjects may produce particular texts, they operate within the limits of the ‘regimes of truth’ that particular discursive formations seek to create and sustain. For him, therefore, the subject is the *object* through which particular discourses are relayed and the media play a crucial role in such discursive work.

There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else’s control and dependence, and tied to his [*sic*] own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1982:208).

Through discursive practices people are constituted as willing subjects of that discourse. This is done not through overt domination but through practices that are normalised and naturalised. Therefore Foucault is concerned with how people constitute themselves as social subjects mostly as a result of subliminal socialisation (Prinsloo, 2002). Poststructural feminism is therefore useful in examining how women’s subjectivities are constructed whether as willing subjects of, or within a contesting discourse of patriarchy. It does this by examining how women revolt and how they comply with social forces and how this leads to change (Weedon, 1987).

Post structural feminist media research

Post structural feminists assume that studying media texts alone in order to investigate gender inequalities is inadequate for a deep understanding of gender. Media texts are influenced by production factors such as organisational rules and practices and professional expectations which shape the content. Poststructural feminism consequently advocates for digging beneath the media text’s surface to uncover such factors (Macdonald, 1995).

Since such research puts the social or discursive construction of gender at the centre of its enquiry, poststructural feminists often employ interpretive research strategies in their work (van Zoonen, 1994). This type of research assumes that reality is socially constructed and produced during the interactions between the self and other and that human beings differ in the way they interpret it. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews as well as textual analysis are the most common research methods associated with feminist media research (van Zoonen, 1994).

Textual analysis

Due to their assumption of gender as a discourse, post structural feminist researchers tend to engage in discourse analysis to understand the connection between language and power. Discourse analysis also involves an intensive examination of the structure of a particular text in order to examine the language and how words and paragraphs it is composed of privilege particular interests (Janks, 1997). It is the questions pertaining to interests that relate discourse to relations of power. When an analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in power relations, it is called critical discourse analysis (Janks, 1997)¹¹.

Audience reception

Assuming that patriarchal relations are constituted in social and institutional practices in our societies, poststructuralism argues that control over ideological meanings is no longer fixed to the text and its institutional producer, but involves the audience and his/her context (Enrique, 2000). It therefore includes reception studies to investigate how the audiences negotiate meaning of sexist media content. Feminist research on audience reception in America has been carried out to investigate how female audiences negotiate meaning in romance novels, adverts and soap operas. In South Africa, a recent audience study interrogated how women and men interact with the news (Rama & Lowe-Morna, 2005).

Media production research

Media production has been largely neglected by poststructural feminism and most of media production research has been in the area of investigating the relationship between masculine discourse in the media text and the qualitative dominance of men in production (van Zoonen, 1994). As discussed earlier, these studies have been critiqued for relying on the experiences

¹¹ An example of critical discourse analysis is Janks' (1998) analysis of an advert *Womanpower* which appeared in the South African press in 1992. Janks employed Thomson's (1990) modes of operation of ideology to investigate whose interests were being served in that particular advert. Critical discourse analysis offers both the means for producing research questions and for analysing the data (Janks, 1997).

and the views of individual communicators without taking into account the immediate context in which they carry out their roles. Poststructural feminism argues that the entire way in which the media operates including things such as technological factors, genres, the relationship of programming and sponsors, and the ideology embedded in the forms of production need to be studied in order to understand their influence on the content (Kaplan, 1987; Macdonald, 1995).

Media production is characterised by tensions and contradictions between individuals with different professional values and personal opinions and between conflicting organisational demands such as creativity and innovation on the one hand and the commercial need to be popular among a variety of social groups on the other hand (van Zoonen, 1994:31).

This draws attention to the need to study the immediate context of media production and to consider production not only in terms of how an artifact was created technically, but also how it was encoded with specific meanings during the process (du Gay et al, 1997) ¹².

Studying News Production

Having discussed representation as one of the ‘moments’ of the ‘circuit of culture’ in the first section, this section addresses another ‘moment’ relevant to this study, namely production. My study is engaged with media production and is particularly interested in exploring how the complex nature of news production influences the representation of women in the news. In news production, journalists’ and editors’ decisions are shaped by organisational factors such as policy, work routines and power relations in and outside the organisation (Tuchman, 1978). The relevant question here is how the gendered representations are encoded in the media texts, what contradictions and tensions in the production process give rise to particular discourses, and how amenable the production process is to innovation and change (Tuchman, 1978).

Within a poststructuralist frame, media production and news production in particular has been argued to be implicated in the production of social reality (Hall et al, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 2000). “It is the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality” (Schlesinger, 1972: 4). It is argued that news is a practice, far from reflecting social reality,

¹² An example of a poststructural feminist media production research is D’Acci’s analysis of *Cagney and Lacey*, an American detective drama. The study attempted to investigate the tensions that characterised the production of the drama among motion picture studios, sponsors, the audience and the producers. These tensions were due to the drama’s novelty of focusing on women’s work in uncommon jobs and the independence portrayed by the two women detectives in the drama. The motion picture studios, for instance, were not interested in producing the drama because the characters were seen as not “feminine, soft or sexy enough” (van Zoonen, 1994:44).

organised in such a way that it already serves the interest of the status quo even independently of the attitudes and the intentions of the journalists, editors and news sources (Fowler, 1991). Thus, news media function ideologically, working with other social and cultural institutions to reflect, reinforce and mediate existing power relations and ideas about how gender is and should be lived (van Zoonen, 1994).

News production studies draw on insights developed by theorists who advocate for a political economy approach to the study of the media and sociology of news which argue that the production and distribution of culture takes place within a specific economic system. It is argued that this places constraints on the meanings made available by the producing institutions (Strelitz, 2000; Golding and Murdock, 2000). The media operate within specific socio-historical, political, economic and cultural contexts (Golding and Murdock, 1997) and therefore to understand the media text, it is critical to analyse all contextual factors that have a bearing on the media's operation. Economic and political control of the media, for instance, impacts on the content and thus the discursive power of the media so that studying of the media texts (news in this instance) is enhanced by studying the way it is produced within the structure and organisation of the news media industry (Fourie, 2001; McNair, 1998; Manning, 2001; Kellner, 1995a).

This study draws on the sociological approach to news production (Schudson, 2000) to analyse the factors that influence news selection and treatment. For this purpose, this study focuses on the social organisational routines and will briefly discuss the social cultural factors to news production. Accordingly, this section will discuss how political and economic factors and newsroom routines influence the production of news and in particular the selection and treatment of news stories. The study focused on the most fundamental inter and intra-organisational controls (Soloski, 1997) in news production. Inter-organisational routines include selection, framing, sourcing and professional ideologies while Intra-organisational controls are represented by internal news policies and the role of editors (Soloski, 1997). Lastly, a discussion of how social cultural context of both the journalists and the news organisation shape news is presented.

Social organisational factors: Inter-organisational controls

Economic factors in news and source selection

It is important to acknowledge that many of the issues to be discussed in this section are at the core of commercial issues and that economic forces underpin any discussion of news determinants (Gans, 1979). These practices are arguably systems of rules which through selection and construction produce the discursive product – news.

Media like any other business entities are primarily concerned with issues of profit maximisation and are concerned with producing cultural products that draw large audiences in order to attract high advertising revenue (Golding and Murdock, 2000; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Napoli, 1997). The government and dominant private interests (usually through ownership and advertising) use their power to filter the news (and by extension all other content) that is printed. Profit maximisation for media firms typically involves two components namely “minimising costs and maximising audiences” (Napoli, 1997:210). These two profit maximisation strategies harshly impact on the news content. Audience considerations for example, affect the final news product by influencing the selection of items which become news and by suggesting ways in which those items may be presented (Gans, 1979; Golding and Elliott, 1979). However, the audiences addressed by the media are themselves selected on the basis of their importance to advertisers. Since men comprise the majority of the news audience (Rama & Lowe-Morna, 2005), news is often targeted at the male audience thus foregrounding ‘masculine’ issues such as politics and business where there are few female players.

The commodification of news by media companies has important societal implications in that it reduces diversity and pluralism of cultural goods in circulation as the same voices from the same companies, owned by the same individuals and corporations, are heard (Golding & Murdock, 2000:79). Undoubtedly, market forces often influence journalists’ decisions to ignore marginalised groups (Johnson-Cartee, 2005).

The role of news values in news selection

It is argued that the masculine hegemonic newsroom culture often enters the news content by means of inter organizational controls (Byerly, 2004; van Zoonen; 1998).

survey and interview data from various western countries suggest that it is in the definition of newsworthiness, particular angles, styles and professional norms and values that the masculine nature of journalism expresses itself (van Zoonen, 1998:35).

Journalists have a standard routine or operating procedures that govern much of their activities. As journalists cannot make decisions every day on how to select the fraction that would be included in news, they routinise their tasks in order to make it manageable (Gans, 1979). Routines are reinforced in the daily practice of journalists to the extent that they become, according to Sigal (1973:101), “the way things are done”. One of the routine newsroom practices which has been naturalised is the use of news values in news selection.

Large numbers of events occur everyday all over the world, but due to the ‘limited carrying capacity’ (McCullagh, 2002), the element of selection becomes inevitable, thus only some happenings are defined as important enough to ‘qualify to be called news’ (Oosthuizen, 2001a; Crotean and Hoynes, 1997). This is referred to as ‘gatekeeping’ (Staab, 1990; Shoemaker, 1991). Through the processes of gatekeeping, the intrusion of personal judgements and organisational needs, are inevitable thus, news gives us a partial view of the world (Fowler, 1991) omitting those events that do not adhere to these values.

News values are an informal set of rules and guidelines that have been normalised to assist journalists to identify ‘newsworthy’ stories (Mc Cullagh, 2002; Oosthuizen, 2001a; Hartley 1982; Hall et al, 1981).¹³ They have been identified as a list of attributes, which serve to provide definitions of news. They were first listed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) who argued that events are likely to meet the criteria of newsworthiness if they satisfied the conditions of frequency, intensity, unambiguity, continuity, cultural proximity, relevance, consonance, predictability, unpredictability, composition, elite persons and elite nations, negativity and ethnocentricity¹⁴.

It is sufficient to say that news values provide the criteria in the routine practices of journalism which enable journalists, editors and newsmen [sic] to decide routinely and regularly which stories are newsworthy and which are not, which stories are major lead stories and which are relatively insignificant, which stories to run and which to drop (Hall et al, 1981:336).

¹³ News values emerged with the commodification of news in the late 1900s in the United States and England. In order to facilitate a daily publication and also to ensure that papers are sold publishers determined a set of criteria still used today (Byerly, 2004).

¹⁴ This list of news values has been revisited and additional factors such as valence, dynamic identification, status, political, and geographical proximity and prominence (Shultz 1976 cited in Stabb, 1990).

However, news values are socially constructed (Oosthuizen, 2001a) and are therefore neither natural nor neutral; they are an ideological code, which frames social and cultural understanding in particular ways and not others (Hartley, 1982). Furthermore, news values are gendered. “They are man-made in both the generic and the gender sense of man” (Hartley 1982:81). Through its selection and construction of topics privileged as news worthy, the news media generally work to maintain the naturalisation of hegemonic gendered relations of power (Prinsloo, 1999). Some news values such as, prominence, importance, and negativity have been particularly identified as gendered.

The news value of prominence has implications for the representation of women. It regards news as actions of important people or personalities (Oosthuizen, 2001a). Stories are made easily comprehensible by omitting background information of both the individuals and their institutions by emphasising on the actions of individuals making news to be about people, and mostly about elite men (Gans 1979; Golding and Elliott 1979). Consequently, ordinary people (including women) find it difficult to become objects of news selection (Oosthuizen, 2001a). Since “most women are denied the decision-making power that would make their actions news”, women as potential newsmakers are placed in a very difficult position by the definition of news and its importance (Pingree and Hawkins 1978:122).

The news value of negativity facilitates for women without power and the consequent prominence, to be represented only for “their most obstructive actions” (Pingree and Hawkins, 1978: 57). For example, in a few instances where women are represented in hard news, they are generally covered as victims of rape, war or disease. In other words, the ‘positive’ events selected are almost entirely those that occur in the public sphere and concern the activities of men as they often occupy positions of authority and make up the majority of spokespersons for most public, commercial and social organisations (Byerly, 2004). For example, whereas politics, crime and finance are considered as masculine news topics and are normally considered as hard news, human interest, consumer news and culture are regarded as feminine topics categorised as soft news (van Zoonen, 1998; Tuchman, 1978).

Similarly the news value of ‘importance’ impacts negatively on the representation of women in the news. Importance is considered to be an audience-based news value and it is the frequently cited reason for including stories that might necessarily be interesting but rather

“something that the audience needs to know” (Golding and Elliot, 1979:118). This news value is argued to be rooted in the social role of journalism as a mouthpiece of the people and is often applied to political news. In other words most political stories are deemed ‘important stories’. However, since most political figures are male, coverage of important stories privilege male more than female news sources.

Selection of news sources

The term ‘news sources’ refers to individuals and organisations that journalists rely on either directly or indirectly for information which they later transform into news. “They are those who appear on, or who get quoted in the news” (McCullagh, 2002:66). Like in news stories, the choice of news sources is based on news values, and more importantly the news values of prominence and importance.

Most journalists view society as bureaucratically structured thus, the very basis upon which they are able to detect events (Fishman, 1980:51 cited in Schudson, 2000). Despite the growing number of female politicians, public officials and other professionals (van Zoonen, 1998) news is still about the views and statements of elite people such as the government officials, professionals and top business people among others as they are considered ‘prominent’ and ‘important’. Public officials are considered to be reliable, newsworthy and legitimate sources of news by journalists and therefore the information that such sources provide is by definition significant because it is deemed to come from significant individuals and institutions (McCullagh, 2002; Manning, 2001). The media often recognise certain groups in society as accredited sources and as such they have privileged access to media coverage. The result of this structured and preference is that these ‘spokesmen’ become what (Hall et al, 1978: 58) referred to as “primary definers”¹⁵.

Further, journalists claim that sourcing public officials is one way of achieving their watch dog role because this makes them accountable to citizens. “Reporting on them is in effect, a way of keeping power under scrutiny” (McCullagh, 2002:67). Conversely, this dependency on official sources, disadvantages ordinary people’s (including women) ability to become news subjects because the kind of issues that are covered in the news are often initiated by the government and corporate elites (Manning, 2001). “Those sources with economic or

¹⁵ The top positions of hierarchy of credibility that such sources have, make them capable of defining the most important issues in society and the manner in which they should be presented (McCullagh, 2002; Hall et al, 1978; Manning, 2001)

political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power” (Zoch and Turk, 1998:764)

Like elsewhere in the world, journalists in Zambia select their news stories from essentially bureaucratic institutions especially those that are political (Kasoma, 2000). Djokotoe (2004:15) supports Kasoma (2000) by arguing that:

In the government-owned media, the Republican President is the No.1 newsmaker. Whatever he says or does makes headline news, even when it falls short of news values.... The private media is guilty of the same excesses, except that in their case, they give editorial prominence to the political opposition or to reporters that scandalise the ruling party or embarrass it in one way or another.

The news beat

News beats provide another way in which news organisations limit production costs thereby ‘defining the world of possible news’ (Fishman, 1980 in McCullagh, 2002: 86). In an effort to maximise returns on economic investment and deal with the uncertainties of newsbreaks, news organisations go for the most easily available news coverage through the establishment of routines called news beats (Ettema et al. 1997; Tuchman 1978, cited in Soloski 1997:145). “The routine procedures allow them to allocate resources in a manner that ensures a regular output is produced”¹⁶ (McCullagh, 2002:86). However, because official sources at these particular institutions are unlikely to be women, women do not get the attention of beat reporters (Goldenberg, 1978). It is argued that news beats serve as an additional hurdle for women’s representation in the news because “women and women’s issues [are] generally not on news beat [structure]” (Pingree and Hawkins 1978:122).

In each of these arguments, there is an assumption that journalists on the beat adhere to the routines of the news sources which exposes them to dependence not only on facilities provided for their conveniences such as travel arrangements but also the timing of disclosures of news in the sources (Napoli, 1997).

News framing

Apart from providing us with information about certain issues and events in the world, the news media also provides perspectives on them (McCullagh, 2002). In other words, the news media offer ways in which particular stories should be understood by the audience. Framing

¹⁶ This involves routine assignments of reporters to locations which have been predefined as where news worthy events occur such as the courts, police, parliament, and press conferences of the power interests groups such as political parties (McCullagh, 2002:86; Goldenberg, 1978; Ettema et al. 1997).

refers to the particular 'angle' of the story journalists would want to foreground and why. This involves which aspects of the story are included and which ones should not (Hartley, 1982).

For certain events that fail to live up to their news potential, the news angle, a journalistic device for converting raw material into a story, is used to inject newsworthiness into an event (Golding and Elliott 1979:143). The characteristics of framing appear to be closely related to stereotyping as it locates framing in the area of 'common sense' (Perkins, 1996). For example in covering political campaigns, journalists often decide to unnecessarily foreground women's marital and family relations while representations of men were characterised by mentions of occupational and political success (Fowler, 1991).

Professionalism

Apart from news values and organisational routines, journalists' professional values and conventions also influence the news content (Oosthuisen, 2001a; Soloski, 1997). Journalists adopt professionalism as a personal value and at the same time commitment to the occupation to which they belong (Soloski, 1997). The journalism professional values include objectivity, impartiality and fairness (Curran et al. 1987; Croteau and Hoynes, 1997). However this study focuses only on objectivity as it is the value most emphasised by the Times of Zambia gender policy.

Objectivity is the oldest and still the key legitimating professional ethic of liberal journalism (McNair, 1998). It is used by the journalism profession to influence their audiences into believing that journalists are able to get facts straight by separating 'facts' and 'value' and to justify journalists' right to individual autonomy and their capability to stand apart from the real world, observe it dispassionately and report back with the 'truth' (McNair, 1998:67; Gans, 1979). Without it, all news stories could be distrusted and criticised as biased (Gans, 1979). Three characteristics of 'objective journalism' can be identified, namely;

The separation of fact from opinion, a balanced account of a debate and the validation of journalistic statement by reference to authoritative others (McNair, 1998:68).

Advocating for journalists to report news objectively and in an undistorted view of the facts, implies that journalists and the news media can be detached observers, separable from social reality on which they report and that the news media can be neutral and value free (Hackett, 1984). News bias as opposed to objectivity, is the intrusion of the subjective 'opinion' by the

reporter or news organisation, into what is purportedly a ‘factual’ account (Hackett 1984). However, despite it being the most contemporary way of evaluating the performance of journalists (Croteau and Hoynes, 1997), adherence to the standard of objectivity has been critiqued on several grounds which will be discussed in the analysis of the Times of Zambia gender policy in chapter four.

Organisational factors: Intra-organisational controls

News policies

While journalists are considered the primary shapers of news texts they are often not as free or autonomous as they might believe. Journalists operate within organisations and possess just as much of an ideological and cultural framework as other people. Thus, while the first salient step in the gatekeeping process may be determining which activities are to become news, we must bear in mind that these seemingly simple decisions are informed by a complex set of multi-dimensional forces. Decisions as to the definition of news – what will and will not be covered, are heavily influenced by organisations’ policies (Reese, 2001) which are often implemented by the executives in a news organisation. In case of news organisations, news editors are charged with the duty of implementing news policies.

This sub-section is central to this study which sets out to investigate how intra-organisational controls such as news policies can change journalistic practices. At the macro organisational level, journalism draws attention to how its content is an organisational product produced under complex power that is exerted implicitly or covertly by management (Reese, 2001).

If on one hand, creation of news is seen as the social production of reality, on the other hand, it is taken as the social manufacture of an organisation product, one that can be studied like other manufactured goods (Schudson, 1997:188).

It is often argued that management influence on journalists’ activities is not easily discernible as it is exerted in ways that are not directly noticeable in news products because overt interference would violate the notion of journalistic ‘objectivity’ (Soloski, 1997). To manage journalists’ behaviour within particular constraints, news policies are formulated.

A news policy can be defined as a course of action that determines what stories are published and how they are presented in terms of prominence or angle (Oosthuizen, 2001b) “more or

less a consistent orientation shown by a paper, not only in its editorial but also in its news columns and headlines as well as concerning selected issues and events” (Breed 1997:108). Policies are used as a means of directing the work of journalists according to the goals and interests of the organisation (Soloski, 1997). Further, policy determines the criteria in which certain aspects of a story are included while others are not (Hartley, 1982). Policy often contravenes the journalistic professional norms and most journalists might personally disagree with it and executives cannot legitimately command that it is followed (Breed, 1997). This idea will be made concrete in the study in relation to the Times of Zambia.

The role of editors in news policy implementation

In most news organisations, editors are charged with this responsibility of ensuring that journalists follow the paper’s news policies and they do this through editorial meetings, story assignments, reprimands and supervision of the paper’s production (Soloski, 1997). Editors are gatekeepers who primarily decide what is going to appear and how it is going to appear in the newspaper (Oosthuizen, 2001b; Soloski 1997). “Any examination of news policies must therefore focus on the news editor as the executive in charge of news production” (Soloski, 1997:148). However, Breed (1997:108) argues that policy is learnt during on the job socialisation or by ‘osmosis’ rather than through directives. It is affected by journalists’ own desire for promotion and to avoid reprimands (Oosthuizen, 2001b; Breed, 1997; Soloski, 1997).

Editorial meetings are crucial for understanding how the editors control the content of the newspaper because it is during these meetings that editors decide which stories to cover or ignore. Reporters’ confrontations over policy issues are minimised by the editors’ involvement in the news selection process as they (editors) control news treatment at the selection level (Soloski, 1997). Therefore, the responsibility of ensuring that news stories are covered in line with the news policies is clearly that of the news editor (Soloski, 1997). Gatekeepers do not only have the power to select the news stories that are to be published but they also emphasise or de-emphasise certain stories depending on the amount of space they allot to particular news items (Oosthuizen, 2001b).

As gatekeepers, sub-editors can change the emphasis of a report by assigning it a particular position using a certain size of heading and combining it with other reports (Oosthuizen, 2001b:202).

Journalists do not control story selection. Rather, they can only suggest stories or propose dropping them if the necessary information is lacking (Gans, 1979). Gatekeepers rank stories according to newsworthiness and this has an impact in the way women are represented since, as pointed out earlier, newsworthiness itself privileges men. Moreover, gatekeepers are seldom women as there are often less women in decision making positions in media organisations (van Zoonen, 1988).

If the editors play an important role in enforcing news policies, it is the proprietors that have much say in both long term and immediate policy decisions of what to be published as news (Breed, 1997).

Political interference in news production

It is argued that content decisions regarding political issues are ideologically motivated by ownership. Proprietors and politicians often put pressure on editors and journalists to represent 'reality' according to their interests or points of view. This is referred to as spinning or spin-doctoring (McNair, 1998). In this way we see how discursive rules are linked to the exercise of power; "how the forms of discourse are both constituted by and ensure the reproduction of the social system through forms of selection exclusion and domination" (Foucault, 1981:48).

Political forces can be powerful constraints for media organisations and the responses by media personnel to these constraints often impacts on media content. Apart from the significance of ownership in media, politicians gain access to the means of communicative production as both a derivative of power and a means for accumulating power (Louw, 2001). The key issue here is that those with power will have an advantage in any given context over news making (Louw, 2001).

Government control of the media is common in African countries and it is worth noting that in most cases government ownership and control of the media is more politically than economically motivated (Phiri, 1999). Consequently, decisions regarding political stories can have no clear relationship to maximise profits (Napoli, 1997). "There have been instances of media organisations sacrificing their economic well-being in deference to political objectives (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996 in Napoli, 1997:211).

Politicians' interference in the operations of news media are often in the form of complaints about news reports deemed 'embarrassing' to the government or individual politicians and in some cases government officials directly demand to be given 'positive' publicity in the media (Phiri, 1999). Journalists tend to respond to such pressure in several ways, the most obvious is the anticipatory self-censorship which compels journalists to cover news with regard for editors' and government officials' responses (Golding and Elliot, 1978; Gans, 1979). "Journalists are under pressure to censor and self-censor from public officials more than from business officials" (Gans, 1979:260). Apart from the factors discussed above, journalists' choice of news stories and sources is influenced by their social and cultural values.

Social-cultural factors to news production

A 'cultural' approach¹⁷, as opposed to the social organisational approach, emphasizes the constraining force of broad cultural traditions and symbolic systems. It reveals the symbolic determinants of news in the relation between 'facts' and symbols, and helps to explain widespread representations in the news that transcend structures of ownership or patterns of work relation (Schudson 2000). The media operate within a particular cultural set up and are obliged to use cultural symbols of their society. "Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world" (Hall, 1995:98)

A cultural account of news is also relevant to understanding journalists' vague rendering of how they know 'news' when they see it. Thus, selection of news necessitates the intrusion of personal judgement (Fowler, 1991) and this personal judgement is often influenced by the social-cultural norms and values of both the journalists and the news media's society (Schudson, 2000). These norms and values can be defined as "the unwritten rules of conduct that apply within a community" which act as regulators of newspaper content (Oothuizen, 2001b: 178). However, cultural norms and values vary according to societies and within particular moments.

They are not rigid rules to which society adheres; they change over time. A lot of things that are acceptable to publish today were not acceptable many years ago (Oothuizen, 2001b:179).

¹⁷ Cultural' approach of news has not been established as any sort of 'school', hence most understandings of news production often merge it with the social organisation view (Schudson, 2000).

It is argued that media reflect society's social values and journalists and editors' decisions in story and source selection are influenced by such values (Tuchman, 1996). This is necessitated by the fact that "societies like to keep their cultural concepts clean and neat and are troubled by the 'anomalies' that do not fit the preconceived categories of culture (Schudson, 1997:15). Similarly, in a patriarchal society, the representation of women tends to be influenced by patriarchal values leading to unbalanced coverage of news along gendered lines. Critical theorists attribute power relations and the way they are embedded in the political and social order of societies to the unequal representations of men and women in the media (Zoch and Turk,1998). For example, one reason why elite people (who are mostly men) are often used as sources is due to their centrality in power systems and therefore, "news is a representation of power and authority within society" (Zoch and Turk, 1998: 765). It is not a separate force outside the social relations it seeks to report, rather, it is part of the society in which it operates from, thus societal values are heavily embedded in the news (Schudson, 2000).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the 'circuit of culture' approach of Cultural Studies and how it can be used to study representation and media production. Under the representation 'moment', the chapter has discussed and critiqued various approaches to feminist media studies and in contrast argued for a poststructural approach. The second section of the chapter has explored how political, economic and institutional factors influence the kind of events that are likely to be selected and presented to the audience. Though news values are institutionalised as the right way of doing journalism, they have been argued to be ideological and gendered (Hartley 1994), and this has an impact on the representation of women in the news media. It is apparent, therefore that, despite the commitments to objectivity, accuracy and honesty, news provides only a partial account of the world, an account whose deficiencies are consistently rooted in the working routines and beliefs which sustain the daily practices of news production (Golding and Elliott 1979: 17).

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of my research design and the methods used for data collection and analysis in the investigation of the impact of the gender policy enacted at the Times of Zambia newspaper on journalistic practices. It identifies the goals of the research and then discusses qualitative methodology as it pertains to media research, as this is the methodology that informs this study. As I employ two methods, **namely** document analysis and semi-structured interviews, these methods are discussed and justified in relation to my research focus. I then turn to the practical aspects of the study which include the sample selection, sample size and the research procedure before concluding with a discussion on how the data was analysed and the problems encountered during the study.

Research Goals

The decision to focus on the Times of Zambia results from it being the first newspaper in the country to enact a gender policy. In addition, it is the second most read newspaper in the country and arguably therefore has a significant readership and potential impact. The research question that informs this study is as follows: How has the introduction of a gender policy impacted on the journalistic practices of the Times of Zambia? To answer this question, it was considered necessary to identify which feminist theory informs the Times of Zambia gender policy bearing in mind the Cultural Studies approach that informs this study. As established in chapter two, each set of feminist theories undertakes different discursive work and make different assumptions in relation to the media. Thus, it is essential to locate the Times of Zambia gender policy theoretically. Thereafter, this research focuses on the effectiveness of the policy in transforming news at the editorial level of representations of women and men.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been defined as the study of things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). It is predicted upon a prior set of assumptions about the

study of social reality and it is argued that there are three distinctive features of qualitative research which include, first, its concern with the issue of meaning, second, contextualisation and third its concern with interpretation.

As regards the issue of meaning, qualitative research assumes that meaning is embedded in social action and that the media and other cultural artefacts provide people with a sense of identity, a position from which they construct meaning. Thus, qualitative research seeks to explore empirically how media and other cultural artefacts generate meaning (Jensen, 1982).

Second, it assumes that, 'meaningful actions' should be studied in their naturalistic contexts and stipulates that the phenomena of interest should not be isolated from the contexts which facilitate their interpretations. Contextualisation can be defined as the need to provide detailed descriptions of the social settings and it is considered necessary as, it is argued, that events can be understood only when they are situated in the wider social and historical context (Bryman 1988:64, Struwig and Stead, 2001:12).

Thirdly, certain kinds of qualitative research depend on the human subject as a primary instrument which requires the use of a continuous form interpretation. As qualitative research is predicted upon a prior set of assumptions about the study of social reality (Bryman, 1988), the data collected, is often relatively imprecise, diffuse and context-based and thus, can have more than one meaning (Neuman 1997). The role of a researcher as an interpreter becomes inevitable in this regard. The researcher is emphatically defined as a "human interpretative subject" (Jensen, 1982:236). For this reason, my research findings are of necessity partial and located.

Research Methods

This section presents a description of the methods of data collection employed in this study and discusses the justification of my decision to these particular methods, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Document Analysis

While a document is defined as any symbolic representation that can be retrieved for analysis, document analysis is "an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents" (Altheide, 1996:2). It is argued that due to its naturalised features that are enacted in everyday life,

culture is difficult to study and consequently the purpose of document analysis is often to understand the process of cultural production and the selection of “objects, symbols, and meanings that make up social reality shared by members of a society” (Altheide, 1996:2).

Like other organisations, media are generators of documents that feed into the actual media texts (Jensen, 1982). Policy documents are among those that media organisations generate. Like any other kind of data collected for research, documents are not ready-made representations of social facts but are “the outcome of previous social interactions whose circumstances must be part of the object of analysis and interpretation” (Jensen, 1982:244). Therefore, in order to grasp the significance of the document, it is necessary to understand the social situation surrounding it because although documents are considered an important source of information most likely to ‘reflect’ an authentic situation that occurred at some stage (Lincoln and Guba, 1988), they are usually constructs positioned to serve the interests of particular groupings.

Peoples’ ideas, beliefs, hopes, fears and actions are recorded in and through a whole range of media and when dealing with documentary sources, then, we need to move beyond the page to consider all forms of representation (Deacon et al, 1999:21).

As policies, they are relatively stable and so lend themselves to scrutiny. The Times of Zambia gender policy accordingly provides such as object for analysis in relation to its particular social and power relations

Document analysis can be used either to supplement the data already collected or as a primary focus of a research (Deacon et al, 1999). In this study, it was employed to supplement the data collected through semi-structured interviews. The value of document analysis is in its ability to offer reflections on significant theory propositions and to offer recommendations that pave the way for future policy actions (Yin, 1984). In this study, the document for analysis, the Times of Zambia gender policy, is analysed in order to establish the nature of its constructs and its appropriateness in effecting gender transformations, particularly how it constructs its objectives and proposed processes. By considering the nature of these, I attempt to position the policy in relation to feminist theories, the first objective of this study. Thereafter, the policy might feed into policy review and pave way for future gender policies in the country.

In conducting the document analysis, I took a close reading of the document and identified the policy’s objectives and linked them with the insights and approaches to media of all the

feminist theories outlined in chapter two. As the Times of Zambia gender policy is meant to impact on practices, I identified those components of the policy that stipulate this change of practice and linked them to a particular feminist theory - the liberal feminist theory.

The policy is a 12 paged document divided in 10 major sections which include the following: Introduction, Context, Editorial, How the policy will be managed, Audit and mapping, Access, Participation and advancement, Capacity building, Monitoring and evaluation Review and concepts/ working definitions.

Although this study is concerned with the editorial section of the gender policy, I will give a synopsis of the whole policy focusing on the major sections.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The second method of data collection involved in-depth interviews which enable “face to face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informant’s perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expresses in their own words” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998:88). In this study, in-depth interviews were employed to obtain rich descriptive information on whether or not the gender policy is effective and the reasons behind that. This method was selected because it was considered appropriate to yield optimum answers to the study question based on three grounds.

First, interviews give an opportunity for independent assessment, explanations and a description of a phenomenon (Deacon et al, 1999; Jensen, 1982). Since the study was interested in getting independent perspectives of journalists and editors on success or non success of gender policy, in-depth interviews were deemed appropriate for the study as Bower (1973) cited in Jensen (1982:240) states that, “the best way to find out what people think about something, is to ask them”. Moreover, in-depth interviews allow substantial room for the respondents to express themselves more openly and for the researcher to be able to probe explanations.

Second, it is argued that the most obvious advantage of the in-depth interview is the wealth of detail that it provides (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to get elaborate data concerning respondents’ opinions, experiences and feeling. Consequently, they are particularly suited for studying peoples’ understanding of the

meanings they make of their lived worlds, and their descriptions of their experiences and self-understanding, for clarifying and elaborating their own perspectives on their lived world (Deacon, et al 1999).

Third, semi-structured in-depth interviews, in particular, involve the asking of customised questions to individual respondents which allows the researcher to structure follow up questions based on the respondents' answers (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). Further, customised questioning allows for the interviewer to retain control of the terms of the discussions by referring to an interview guide. Semi-structured interviews are better described according to Deacon et al, (1999:65) as "conversations with a purpose". This kind of interviewing is also believed to generate a well-rounded account of the interviewees since it requires minimum guidance from the researcher and allows considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves (Bryman 1998; Deacon et al 1999). In addition, my decision to use semi-structured in-depth interviews was validated by the argument that semi-structured in-depth interviews are commonly used for academic purposes (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000).

Sample size and selection

Given the qualitative nature of my research into the effectiveness of the Times of Zambia gender policy, I relied on non-random sampling methods. It is argued that the one element that all non-random sampling methods share is that sample selection is not determined by chance (Deacon et al 1999). For the interviewees selection, I employed purposive sampling which involves the selection of small, manageable and information-rich samples, whether in the form of informants or documents (Deacon et al., 1999). My decision to use this sampling method relates to its appropriateness to the research task.

I purposively selected 11 respondents constituting 2 female journalists, 2 male journalists, 2 female sub editors, 2 male sub editors, 2 news editor and the Editor-in-Chief. Thus the selection of the respondents was based on two criteria. First, they were included only if they had experience of working two years with the Times of Zambia, (This was not always possible as discussed later in the chapter). This was deemed important as research participants would have intimate knowledge of the way policy had transformed practice in comparison with the period prior to the enactment of the policy. Second, certain respondents were selected in consideration of their role or status in the news organisation in terms of their positions which gives them authority to ensure policy compliance. For example, the editors



were selected because they make final decisions regarding story and source selection and also because they are charged with the responsibility of enforcing news policies (Soloski, 1997).

The interview guide

In contrast to structured interviews which employ closed ended questions, this study employed semi-structured interviews because they offer a degree of flexibility in probing and in determining certain subjects in greater depth that structured interviews disallows (Fontana and Frey 1994). Semi-structured interviews however also require carefully and fully wording of each question before the interview, in order to guarantee that each interviewee is asked the same question in the same way and the same order to ensure that similar issues are discussed with each interviewer (Patton 2002).

Therefore, in preparation for the interviews, I formulated an interview guide in which questions were clearly formulated as the interview schedule. To direct the interviews and to establish the interview questions, I drew on insights emerging from the study's objectives and theoretical framework in chapter two. I used the insights gained from the pilot study as the starting point to probe issues during the interviews.

Completion of the pilot study provides an opportunity to test the credibility of the inquiry with respondents at the case site. The purpose is to check accuracy but also provide evidence of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:374)

The entire exercise was useful in assessing the soundness of the questions and the length of time needed for the rest of the interviews. From the pilot study, I discovered that some of the questions scheduled were repetitive and did not give enough data on the topic. In some cases, questions were vague and the schedule of the interview was quite long considering that the targeted editorial staffs were still involved in their daily work. The interview schedule was, therefore, adjusted accordingly. This was significant as the benefits of piloting include increased usefulness of the interview guide (Cohen et al., 2000:260).

The schedule that resulted draw on the theoretical insights of my research focus outlined in chapter two and included 4 areas of significance. The first set out to establish the respondents' knowledge about news policies, the second to investigate whether there has been any change in newsroom practices, the third to investigate the possible limitations to the

effectiveness of the policy and the fourth to establish the social cultural factors that impact on gendered representations.

To explore the area of significance, I also needed to establish the respondent's attitude towards the gender policy and the following questions were included in the interview schedule;

Knowledge about news policies

What editorial policies are in place at this organisation?

What do you know about editorial policies?

Tell me more about the gender policy. Do you actively support it?

Has it had any impact on your job as journalist?

Tell me, how easy do you think is it to implement a policy such as an editorial gender policy?

The second goal of the study was to investigate how newsroom routine practices impact on the representation of women and men in the news and as discussed in chapter two, these practices include issues of story and source selection, news beats, professional practices and editorial authority. To explore this, I needed to establish the respondents' daily routines, the roles they play in relation to selection and treatment of news. Consequently, the following questions were formed:

Newsroom routines and gatekeeping

I would like you to take me through your day as journalist from the time you report for work in the morning up to the time you knock off in relation to working on stories.

To what extent are you free to decide what stories to cover?

When you get a chance to choose a story, what do you consider as an important story and why?

Tell me about what happens in an editorial meeting.

How are decisions made in relation to what stories you cover?

Tell me about your editors, how do their decisions influence your work?

What do you know about news values?

News values and news beats

How do the accepted news values influence coverage of women and men?

Do you think news values privilege men more than women, if so which ones in particular?

What is your sense of news beats?

What particular beat do you cover?

Do you enjoy the beat you have?

How do news beats affect your choice and representation of news sources?

How easy is it to get women sources when covering beats?

Source selection

I have observed that public officials and politicians constitute the biggest number of the news sources covered in your newspaper. Why do you think this is so?

Why do you think is the reason why there are more male than female sources in your newspaper?

When you are selecting a story, what is most important to you, the source or the significance of the story?

Do you think 'fair' and 'balanced' representation of women and men (as stated in the gender policy) is attainable taken into account the news selection process you have outlined to me?

Apart from the adhered newsroom practices, it is noted in chapter two that news production is influenced by profit maximisation strategies and political interference and to establish how these factors impact on the representation of men and women in the news, the following questions were formed:

Political and economic factors to news production

What are the external factors that influence news production in your organisation?

How does ownership of this newspaper influence your work?

How does this affect your decisions to get female news sources?

Do you sometimes engage in self-censorship for fear of being reprimanded?

Who reprimands you when you write a story that does not conform to the editorial policy?

Tell me about your audience, does it in any way influence the choice of news stories?

What kind of stories do you think your female and male audience is interested in?

Do you think your newspaper currently gives the female and male audience what it wants?

How about advertisers and sponsors, do they influence your choice of stories? How?

As discussed in chapter two, the media operate within a particular culture and are dependent on the cultural symbols of their society and societies tend to impose their classifications of the social, cultural and political world (Hall, 1995:98). It was therefore necessary to establish how the Zambian societal and cultural values impact on the selection and treatment of news stories thus, the following questions were formulated in this regard.

Social-cultural factors to news production

In traditional culture there are certain assumptions about what kind of work men and women should do. In your opinion, does this influence news selection?

Tell me, do you think your editors take into consideration the gender of journalists when assigning stories?

What kinds of stories are assigned to women journalists?

Why do you think that is so?

Do your religious beliefs influence choice of news stories?

Which particular beliefs are those?

As most news organisations charged editors with the responsibility of implementing news policies and general supervision of the newspaper's production as well as deciding what is going to appear and how it is going to appear in the newspaper (Oosthuizen, 2001; Soloski 1997), I decided to formulate additional questions specifically for them to probe their role in

the implementation of the gender policy at the Times of Zambia. The questions included the following:

The role of editors

News has been described as 'masculine', does this make it difficult to advocate for a gender policy?

What problems do you encounter?

How can they be overcome or can they?

What role do you play in supporting the policy?

Do you take into consideration the gender of journalists when assigning stories? If yes, why is that so?

What do you do when a journalist writes a story that does not conform to the gender policy?

Out of the many stories that you assign to journalists how do you finally select what should be published?

What criteria do you use to rank stories?

After piloting and accordingly adjusting the interview schedule, I was ready to conduct the actual interviews and the procedure below was followed.

Data collection procedure

On 21 December, 2005 I had an appointment with the editor-in-chief of the Times of Zambia to negotiate my research at the institution. The editor-in-chief gave me permission to conduct the interviews and introduced me to a number of journalists and senior editors who were available on that particular day. I used this opportunity to build a cordial relationship with them by explaining the purpose of my study and established their availability for the interviews.

To ensure validity in my interview questions, I conducted a pilot study with one journalist and two sub editors from the Times of Zambia who provided me with helpful information ranging from newsroom socialisation to general editorial practices. I also obtained their perspectives on professional values and beliefs such as objectivity, fairness and general newsroom policies that are in place at the Times of Zambia.

In my approach to conducting the interviews, I was guided by the steps suggested by Berg (2001). At the outset of each interview, I thanked the interviewees for accepting to be interviewed and explained the objectives of my study. I also explained to them that my interviews were not meant to attribute for neglect of the gender policy but to understand

more fully its strengths and weaknesses. I assured the respondents of confidentiality and stated that the recorded interviews were purely for my academic purposes.

The interviews were conducted in the conference room which I considered as a conducive and non-threatening place for the respondents. The location was appropriate to the purpose of research, while also convenient and practically feasible. It was private enough not to impact negatively on the participants' contribution to the discussion (Hansen et al 1998:271). In other words, the conference room served as a non-threatening and non-bureaucratic informal setting that stimulated useful responses from the respondents.

During the interviews I used the interview guide to help me sustain the discussion and to get responses relevant to the study. I was able to steer a purposeful conversation with the respondents and following Deacon's advice, I "provided minimal guidance" (1999:65) whenever responses tended to fluctuate. In so doing, I encouraged normal conversation to prevail in line with the argument that semi-structured interviews do not allow standardisation as the interviews bear a resemblance to a normal conversation (Deacon et al., 1999:65). The interview guide was helpful in steering the discussion and enabled me to gather relevant information for the study and I asked additional probing questions especially in instances where the respondents could not give comprehensive responses. However, in cases where respondents gave rich descriptions and explanations, I found it difficult to keep to the strict sequence and series of questions as some respondents could answer questions further down the list of the interview guide while responding to the first one. In the process, I constantly adjusted and altered the sequence of the questions to suit particular responses in order to allow for a smooth flowing conversation. The openness of qualitative interviews

permits many on-the-spot decisions, whether to stick to the interview guide or to allow for new leads into an interviews situation as the absence of prescribed rules creates an open field of opportunity for the interviewers skills, knowledge and intuition (Kvale, 1996:84).

In order to capture all the details I tape-recorded the interviews and took notes during the interviews. The interviews ranged from between 45 to 90 minutes depending on the individual's style of delivery. In one instance the interview lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes as the respondent was very keen to give detailed data. I transcribed each interview before conducting the next one and this enabled me to identify the gaps in the responses which I then addressed in the following ones.

Data preparation and analysis of results

The qualitative data collected through interviews was processed beginning with the transcription of all the recorded interviews. In line with Jensen's method of analysing interview extracts, I categorised the answers from the various respondents into themes and compared the responses to capture the most frequently occurring themes (1982). The themes were drawn from theoretical insights as described in the literature review (chapter 2) and the structuring of the interview guide. This use of constant comparison enabled me to identify themes and sub themes that emerged during the in-depth interviews. The statements, ideas and explanations were then categorised into corresponding themes to guide the reporting of findings in chapter four.

Problems encountered

Certain problems were encountered in the process of gathering data related in the first place to, defensive responses relating job security, second, lack of interest in the topic, and thirdly issues of sampling along sex lines.

It was difficult to get data concerning political factors that influence news selection especially from the editors who thought such information could jeopardise their jobs. It was moreover hard for me to probe more deeply especially in one instance where the respondent repeatedly defended the newspaper by giving one word answers. Difficulty occurred despite assuring the respondents that the purpose of the study was exclusively for academic purposes. I attempted to try to convince them that the study would not work against their interests and that I was asking questions in order to understand the process of news making from their perspective. Yet the quality of information elicited regarding political interference as a factor in news production from all the editors and a few journalists is limited.

An additional problem was the lack of knowledge about the policy among the journalists I interviewed. They knew little about the gender policy and did not show much interest in the study at the beginning. It was after I explained to them that the questions were not merely about gender but about the news production process that most of them agreed to be interviewed. Additionally, at the time of the study, the organisation was launching an

HIV/AIDS policy and most respondents were more interested in the new policy which they said was more important than the gender one.

Finally, the imbalance between male and female editorial staff posed a problem for my purposive sampling. At the time of the study, there were only three female journalists out of the total number of 13 journalists and only two out of ten sub editors at the Times of Zambia.¹⁸ This meant that I had no choice but to interview all of them instead of sampling them 'purposively'. However, since two out of the five interviewed had only worked for the Times of Zambia for less than a year (in fact, one of them had only worked with the institution for six months) they were not very conversant with both the policy and the particular journalistic practices in the newsroom. Therefore, the quality of information elicited from the two female respondents was slighter than desirable. Additionally, time constraints were a common feature for most selected subjects and I kept on rescheduling interviews before a convenient time could be agreed upon.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the two qualitative research methods used in this study namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews and how they enabled me to gain vital insights into the research question. It also highlighted the research procedure, the physical location of the study, sample selection and size, as well as the data analysis procedure, and the difficulties that I experienced in using the two research methods selected for this study. Under data analysis, I noted how the data generated from the two research tools was explored to enable thematic interpretations through constant comparison as a technique. The themes that emerged from the analysis are used to structure the reporting of the findings in chapters four.

¹⁸ These numbers represent journalists and editors from only the Ndola office where the study was conducted from.

Chapter Four

Study findings and analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and interpretations of a study that set out to investigate whether and to what extent the gender policy enacted at the Times of Zambia has impacted on journalistic practices. Generally, the responses of the Times of Zambia staff, who were interviewed, indicated a lack of effectiveness of the policy and while this might be disappointing for those interested in media transformation, there are many factors that intervene and will be discussed in this chapter.

The findings are presented in four main sections. The first section presents an analysis of the Times of Zambia gender policy and identifies how the policy is positioned in a liberal feminist approach. Then, against this backdrop, it highlights the policy's weaknesses and discusses the reasons for its non-effectiveness.

The other three sections of the chapter present and analyse the interview responses in line with the major themes drawn from the literature review. The themes are categorised in line with the two major critiques of the liberal feminist approach which include first, its failure to take into account the economic, political and institutional factors that influence news production and second, its failure to take into consideration the social context and the imbalanced power relations in society.

The Times of Zambia gender policy – a liberal feminist intervention

A liberal feminist approach to media critique has been argued to assume a straightforward sender-message- receiver sequence in which media are seen as transmitting particular messages about gender, and in this way ignoring other societal and institutional dimensions that shape media messages (van Zoonen, 1994). Thus, it has been critiqued for its reluctance to confront patriarchy and to propose deeper structural change (Donovan, 2000; Kaplan, 1987; Stacey, 1993). Liberal feminist studies have focused largely on three areas, namely effects of sexist media images on the audience, the stereotypical images of women in the media, and the occupational roles of women journalists (see chapter two). This study

established that the Times of Zambia gender policy's objectives and assumptions are consistent with the three main concerns of liberal feminism mentioned above and this section identifies these particular components of the policy beginning with the media effects assumption.

The Times of Zambia gender policy and its media effects assumption

Section one of the policy, which focuses on the editorial content, states that, "women are rarely sought as news sources and are often portrayed negatively and this perpetuates gender stereotypes and promotes stigma and discrimination against women" (TOZGP, 2003:3). Arguably, this statement assumes that exposure to sexist media messages is associated to perceptions and acceptance of stereotypic gendered attitudes and behaviours. This is consistent with the liberal feminist assumption that the media reinforce and naturalise gender-specific roles in society and that particular feminine and masculine roles are acquired as a result of media socialising practices (Macdonald, 1995). This approach argues that media often show women less frequently and in stereotypical positions rather than in a 'positive' and 'fair' manner which contributes to the negative way in which society views women (van Zoonen, 1994). In other words, the Times of Zambia gender policy is informed by the socialisation theory which argues that;

Journalists have learnt to portray the female world in a particular way; as classes and home and family based. They can easily unlearn this and begin to portray women differently (Trowler, 1988: 100).

This position is however critiqued as discussed in chapter 2.

The Times of Zambia gender policy and its concern with 'images of women'

In relation to the news content, section one of the policy seeks "to provide men and women with equal freedom of expression and to provide an 'objective' and 'fair' representation of women and men" (TOZGP, 2004:3). Under the same section, the policy states that it seeks "to put to an end the situation where women are rarely sought as news sources" and argues that "women are underrepresented and often portrayed negatively as objects of sex symbols, victims of violence or immoral people" (TOZGP, 2004:3). The above quotations suggest that the policy is concerned with the 'underrepresentation' and 'misrepresentation' of women in the news and this assumption is consistent with liberal feminist critique of media's tendency to show women less frequently and in stereotypical positions (van Zoonen, 1994:16). In contrast,

liberal feminism assures that change will occur by merely portraying more women in non-traditional roles and by using non-sexist language (Trowler, 1988; Fourie, 2001).

In line with its focus on images of women, the Times of Zambia gender policy proposes using content analysis, a research method associated with liberal feminist approaches. First, as discussed in chapter one, the policy was introduced in response to the findings of the GMBS which was conducted using content analysis. Second, section 8 of the policy which addresses the issue of monitoring and evaluation states that “the gender policy shall be evaluated by employing content analysis of the editorial content” (TOZGP, 2003: 8).

This narrow focus on stereotypes and its consequent use of content analysis is however critiqued by the constructionist approach which posits that language (both words and images) is not a neutral medium for the formation of meanings and knowledge about an independent object world ‘existing’ outside of language (Hall, 1987; Fairclough 1995). Hall (1997) argues that even the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ do not have fixed meanings but are cultural signifiers which construct rather than reflect gender definitions and meanings. This makes it impossible to give a ‘real’ or objective representation of both men and women because what constitutes masculine and feminine identities is strongly determined by the social and cultural context (Gledhill, 1997).

Related to this position, is the journalism profession value of objectivity (which the policy advocates for in relation to the portrayal of women). Firstly, social values of the society in which the newspaper operates are heavily embedded in the news; hence news can never be a reflection of reality (Schudson, 1997). For example, Marxist thinkers argue that as all societies are economically, politically and culturally stratified along class lines there can never be absolute truth in society and that journalists’ claim of objectivity is intended to secure a broad social acceptance of the dominant bourgeoisie world-view.

All cultural products including journalism is ideologically ‘loaded’ [biased] in favour of the dominant groups in society, hence the concept of objectivity is itself part of legitimatising ideology of capitalism (McNair, 1998:73).

Therefore, even the very rules that aim at preserving the ‘neutrality’ of the media also serve those in powerful and privileged institutions in society (Hall et al, 1981) and since men own and control the media, it is their ideas, view points and values that dominate the systems of production and representation (Dyer, 1987 cited in McCullagh, 2002).

The Times of Zambia gender policy and its concern with occupational roles

In relation to occupational roles, the policy states that journalism has been dominated by males who in turn dominate positions in decision-making and that “this lapse has had an influence on the negative way in which the Zambian media portrays women and has led to discrimination in the provision of space to women and men as the voices of men dominate space both in the print and electronic media” (TOZGP, 2003:5). In addition, section 4.2 of the policy observes that there is under-representation of women in the editorial department and other departments and that “management shall therefore encourage women to take up those jobs by, among other measures, sponsoring places at colleges for female staff” (TOZGP, 2003:5). It also states that the unequal distribution of staff reinforces the stereotype that “women are caregivers who should not work as they are supposed to be performing family roles at home” (TOZGP, 2003:5). This is consistent with liberal feminist assumption: that the underrepresentation of women working in the media results in the unequal representation of women in the news and that increasing the number of women working in the media would automatically lead to an increased number of women representation and an improved portrayal of women in the media (Steeves, 1987; Byerly, 1995; van Zoonen, 1988).

Based on the above analysis, I argue that the gender policy at the Times of Zambia is informed by liberal feminist approach on three counts: first, its media effects assumption, second, its concern with images of women and in particular stereotypes of women and, third, its focus on occupational roles by way of increasing the number of women in editorial and other departments.

However, the poststructural feminist approach in which this study is positioned, critiques this liberal feminist position on two main grounds which include, first, its failure to take into account the factors that influence news production and second, its failure to take into consideration the social context and the imbalanced power relations in society. These two critiques of the liberal feminist approach constitute the main themes in which the data collected through interviews was analysed. As pointed out in chapter two, the poststructural approach expands the liberal feminism concern with the media content to include production practices, power relations and the social context of media texts.

The production of news – production of social reality

This section provides a description of the discursive nature of news production practices and how they hinder the attainment of the policy's objective of "giving equal rights for people to express themselves regardless of their sex and social status" (TOZGP, 2004:3).

As established in my theoretical chapter (2), media production and news production in particular has been argued to be implicated in the production of social reality (Hall, 1978; Tuchman, 1979; Schudson, 2000). News, it is argued, is organised in a way that it already serves the interest of the status quo independent of the attitudes and the intentions of the journalist's editors and news sources. Thus, news media function ideologically, working with other social and cultural institutions to reflect, reinforce and mediate existing power relations and ideas about how gender is and should be lived (van Zoonen, 1994; Steeves, 1987). To understand news as a social construction, there is need to examine the manner in which news is encoded (Hartley, 1994).

This study looked at the production of news at Times of Zambia and how factors such as newsroom routines, organisational controls, political, economical and social-cultural values work to shape news.

This section addresses the question of how journalists make news. The study focused on the most fundamental routines of news production which include journalists' work routines and the methods by which they transform topics into news stories. These include attention to selection, sourcing, framing and news beats. It also focuses on intra-organisational controls which include news policies and the role of editors in newsrooms. It is worth noting that most of the newsroom routines discussed in this chapter constitute journalists' professional beliefs and values, hence professionalism as a factor that influences news production is discussed concurrently with newsroom routines.

News values – a strategy for profit maximisation

The study established that at the Times of Zambia like any other news organisation, the selection of news stories is based on the degree of their 'newsworthiness' which is often

defined according to news values. To explore whether newsroom practices impact on gendered representations, I asked the respondents questions in relation to the criteria used in news selection and various sets of responses emerged. While the majority of the responses revealed that the selection of news has a commercial imperative, a few others argued that story selection at this particular institution is influenced by 'the government appeasement' aspect. Most respondents however, articulated strong concerns for the interests of the readers when choosing news stories.

When asked how they determine what makes news, most of the respondents noted that they select news stories based on news values because they help them determine "what the audience wants to read" (interview with MJ2¹⁹, 12/01/06). In support of the above quotation, another respondent noted that,

Most of the times, we look at the news values because if a story has got news value, it will be more interesting for the readers so, it will sell. Like today's lead story, "15 die in road mishap". This story has proximity, negativity, magnitude novelty.....everything that would make people buy the paper (interview with MED2²⁰, 27/01/06).

Although most of the respondents recognised that the Times of Zambia's main objective was public service, they argued that the organisation still needed to make profits in order to sustain itself. Therefore, as much as the stories had to be of public interest, they argued, they had to be able to sale the paper and that this disadvantages women sources.

There is another aspect to news which is saleability. At the end of the day, state owned, privately owned, the sum total of all our activities is that we are looking for profits. This also disadvantages women. Journalists are not going to go out there to pacify the gender movement. If those women stories are not going to sell the paper, or are not going to interest the readers, unfortunately, editors won't use them. We are looking at the well-being of employees and that of the paper as a whole, how is it going to stay afloat? (Interview with MS/ED2²¹, 28/12/05).

Though we are government owned, we no longer get government grants. We are self-sustained, so we have to make profits. You know, the only way to do this is to attract readers and advertisers. Only newsworthy stories are saleable, and news values help us to come up with stories that our readers are interested in and the stories that our readers want are not those about women (interview with FS/ED2²², 06/12/05).

¹⁹ MJ - Male journalist

²⁰ MED - Male editor

²¹ MS/ED - Male sub editor

²² FS/ED - Female subeditor

'Prominence' / elite people as the most significant news value

In line with the use of news values as criteria in story selection, I asked the respondents which particular news values relate to profit maximisation and the widely held perspective was that the news value of 'prominence' is the commonly used. They argued that to them, a saleable story is regarded as one with an 'elite' source. For most respondents, a prominent source was described as one who holds a leadership position either in government, political party or professional and business institution and they argued that since most people who hold such leadership positions are male, it becomes difficult to increase the number of female sources as stipulated by the policy.

Our editors select stories based on the prominence of the source. So, I definitely know that if I do a story about a minister, regardless of the topic, it will come out. Now the problem is these public officials are mostly men. That is why it seems like we are covering only men. So I would say for us, the source determines newsworthiness of a story (interview with FJ1 on 15/01/06).

Even while acknowledging certain limitations, the idea of seeking prominent sources was considered inevitable to the Times of Zambia as explained in the following quotation.

Most newspapers including ours are still operating on the old definition of news. They are looking at the same old determinants and when you look at those determinants, most of them are gender insensitive for example prominence. Prominence is usually interpreted in terms of sex. There are not so many women who enjoy prominence in society. So when it is used as a selection criterion, it disadvantages women (MS/ED1, 17/02/06).

This is consistent with the argument that most news is about people, and mostly about elite men (Gans, 1979; Golding and Elliott, 1979) and that, "since most women are denied the decision-making power that would make their actions news", they are placed in a very difficult position as potential newsmakers by the definition of news and its importance (Pingree and Hawkins, 1978:122).

Apart from the above definitions of news sources, the respondents came up with other factors that compel them to seek prominent sources. They argued that their position of authority and their responsibility in society make them trustworthy.

Prominent people cannot lie openly. They are respected people in their societies. I mean, if a permanent secretary from a ministry gives me a story today, I don't even need to cross check the facts, I know he has consulted his superiors before giving me

an interview. So, you reduce the chances of being sued for defamation (interview with FJ1, 15/01/06).

When you get a news story from a politician or spokesperson for instance you know that they are giving you facts. So you don't worry about anything, you just write it the way it is (interview with FJ1, 15/01/06)

These responses are in line with the argument that news sources in official positions are assumed to be trustworthy by journalists because they are powerful and more persuasive because their facts and opinions are official (Gans, 1979). Viewed this way, official news sources are regarded as primary definers who define the most important issues in society and how they should be presented and arguably through a patriarchal lense.

If trustworthiness and reliability were cited as reasons for relying on official sources then tight deadlines and lack of adequate resources to enable the journalists to pursue non-official ones are others. Most journalists noted that they need 'easy to get' kinds of sources. One responded as follows,

With such kind of sources you can never run out of stories as a newspaper, because just when you think you are running dry, you just pick up a phone, you call them and there you are, you have a story. Now imagine if I have to interview women marketers in Masala.²³ They are not on phone so I have to start looking for transport etc. Besides, these people (officials) are always willing to talk anyway (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

Such responses are in line with the argument that because newsrooms everywhere in the world work under strict deadlines, journalists are under pressure to produce stories time cautiously. Consequently, journalists prefer material that is easy to access and that which conforms to prevailing conventions of what makes news in an increasingly competitive news market (McNair, 1998) and because prominent sources are assumed to provide that, they are the most preferred.

Reporters who have short time to gather information must ...attempt to obtain the most suitable news from the fewest number of sources as quickly and easily as possible, and with the least strain on the media organisation's budget (Gans 1997:128).

However, in contrast to the general view that official sources are easily accessible, one of the editors insisted that laziness on the part of journalists is responsible for their dependence on

²³ A local vegetable market about 15 minutes away from the Times of Zambia

official news sources. He argued that most journalists simply do not have interest in their jobs.

They just don't want to walk. They want to have it easy. There are so many stories out there and they say it is because I will say there is no transport. They never try. No one has ever presented a news idea to me that is outside the ordinary politics. If I think the idea is good and will have great impact on society, I cannot refuse to release transport. They are just lazy. When I was a reporter, I used to go into the villages with my own money to bring good pictures (interview with MED1, 20/01/06).

Politicians as 'prominent' sources

Although the respondents described a prominent source as one who holds a leadership position in other institutions apart from government, from their responses this study established that for most respondents government officials were regarded more 'prominent' than any other sources. Most of them admitted that this particular news value relates to politicians whom they said make up the majority of their 'prominent' news sources. Accordingly, two of the three editors interviewed said they have established that political stories sell more than any other kind of stories. Therefore, the editorial team has strategically decided to carry more political stories in the newspaper which they argue is what their audience wants. The respondents did not have empirical evidence to this effect but simply said "we know what our readers want, they want political news" (Interview with MED2, 27/01/06), their assumptions are in line with the findings of a study done by Panos Southern Africa and British Council on issue-based journalism. The study established that the biggest number (over 30%) of the newspaper readers in Zambia would rather the media reported politics than any other issue and 70% was divided among readers who preferred other types of news which included economics, environment, sport, court, while others preferred advertisements and editorials (Banda, 2003).

Since female politicians in the country constitute 12% (interview with MED1, 20/01/06), dependence on political stories impede the implementation of the policy which advocates for an increased number of women's voices in the news. Two out of three editors acknowledged that they publish few news stories that foreground women and stated that such stories are usually relegated to the inside pages because they do not sell the paper.

Our readers will not buy the paper if for example, for the whole week, we lead with stories like, 'women in Chipata demand hospitals' or 'women NGOs donate to orphanage'. They want hard political news. In fact, you might even run dry before the week is over because there is nothing much happening from that narrow view where you just look at issues at a gender perspective. Besides, you know low sales mean less advertisers so, in the end, we will just close down (interview with S/ED2, 28/12/05).

Similar positions were articulated by a male journalist but he extended this exclusion of women to include women politicians. He said that even the few female politicians and other female leaders are shunned by journalists for a number of reasons. His argument was that most female politicians are not knowledgeable enough to speak publicly and there was little respect for competence.

I think we have enough female sources. The minister of lands for instance, I think that is a critical ministry but journalists do not go to interview her. Maybe because one would think ah...what can she tell me she doesn't even understand these things. I would rather talk to the Permanent Secretary who is an expert because the minister is probably just a typist by profession (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

The above quotation could suggest that women in leadership positions are rarely elevated to such positions on merit and consequently are dependent on male experts when it comes to issuing media statements. On the other hand, if women are appointed on merit, they are treated with sexist attitudes. In elaborating his point, the respondent quoted above, noted that potential women news sources lack confidence in themselves and thus avoid speaking to journalists. "They do not want to be offended, so they avoid us. I think women are naturally not meant for such jobs" (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

From these responses, it can be concluded that news selection and prominence is largely conferred to men. Although other news values such as novelty, proximity and negativity emerged as criterion used to select news, the news value of prominence or elitism was predominant and this supports the argument that newsworthiness is related to the doings of elite men even if they have done nothing which might reasonably count as deviation (McNair, 1998). Moreover, it was clear that until these women in leadership positions are deemed to be adequate, they shall always be less women than men voices in the news.

News values as pointed out in chapter two became established with the commodification of news (Byerly, 2004). News selection and the use of news values in particular relates to an agenda of profit maximisation among other things. As Gans notes "Economic forces underpin any discussion of news determinants" (1979:43). The findings of the study were therefore consistent with the argument that media, like any other business entities, are primarily concerned with issues of profit maximisation, thus they focus on producing cultural products that draw large audiences in order to attract high advertising revenue (Golding and Murdock, 2000). However, since most journalists and editors perceive political news as the

most preferred by their readers, most of the news stories at the Times of Zambia tend to be about male politicians making it difficult to increase the number of women news sources as stipulated by the gender policy.

Based on the above discussion, the study concluded that acceptance of conventional news values as criteria to select 'newsworthy' stories is one of the major obstacles to the implementation of the gender policy. News values compel journalists and editors to think within their confinement during selection of news. It can be argued that news values constitute what Foucault (1981) refers to as a 'legitimate perspective' which makes it virtually impossible to think outside it and that to think outside the 'legitimate perspective', is regarded as madness. Further, since news values are ideological in nature (as discussed in chapter 2), they become journalists' 'common sense' way of news selection. Thus most journalists described the gender policy as 'unreasonable' 'overzealous', and argued that 'can't work under the circumstances' or that it 'contradicts the definition of news'. In some way, according to Foucault, by ruling out and ruling in certain ways of talking about a topic, journalistic discourse directs the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about .

Government appeasement as a factor in news production

If saleability as a factor in news selection was a naturalised position, there were some dissenting, more critical voices from three respondents who contested the argument that the audience is interested in political stories or that saleability determines news selection. One argument that came up was that of government appeasement. These respondents argued that at the Times of Zambia the appeasement of government officials influences the selection of news stories more than saleability. Asked whether they take their readers into consideration when selecting news stories, one male sub editor noted that fear of being reprimanded by government officials compel most journalists and editors to foreground political stories.

In fact, our political stories are not even balanced. I don't think our readers are interested in them. Most of the time we write stories that won't put us in trouble with the powers that be. I think what the audience wants is 'balanced' news and not only political stories about men. (interview with MS/ED1, 17/02/06).

Another journalist made similar observations,

We have made this paper a government instead of a public newspaper. So I would say we do take into consideration our readers because our readers are now only government and MMD²⁴ sympathisers and not the general public. The government

²⁴ MMD – Movement for Multi Party Democracy is the ruling party in Zambia.

does not care how many copies we sell or whether we make profits or not because they know when we start going under, they will bail us out anyway (interview with MJ1 on 31/01/06)

In relation to the above responses, another respondent pointed out that the drastic reduction in the newspapers' circulation figures implies that consumers are not taken into consideration in news production at the Times of Zambia.

I remember sometime in 1991, there was a survey that was done on media coverage in Zambia and the Times of Zambia had a minimum range of 71,000 circulations across the country. Today, the readership has dropped by 90% to 7,000. So, it shows that the interest of the readers is not taken into consideration. If we were taking into consideration the interest of our readers our sales could have risen to more than 100,000 now because the population has grown by about 100% now. So why should the sales come down? (Interview with MS/ED2, 28/12/05).

In relation to political stories most respondents, mainly editors, admitted that their decisions to select political stories was not entirely for commercial purposes but rather they argued that most political stories are selected based on their 'importance' to the public.

'Important' vs. 'saleable' stories

To establish other determining factors in relation to news selection, I asked the respondents whether saleability is the sole determinant of news. In response to this question, a number of contesting perspectives emerged. While most journalists said that news stories should be selected based on what the readers are interested in, the editors disputed this and argued that there are some stories that do not necessarily interest the readers but are considered on the basis of social responsibility and considered to have far reaching implications for society (Interview with MED2, 27/01/06). In line with this, most of the responses pointed to the news value of 'importance' which they said is not entirely tied to profit maximisation. This study established that most respondents referred to political, related statements or activities as being of national importance. One news editor noted that they did not only publish stories simply because they would please the reader rather, they published stories that are 'socially important'.

We look for stories that have impact on society or the country as a whole or a particular community. First and foremost it has to be an important story, one that is of public interest as you know we are a public newspaper. So we look at how many people is this story going to serve. So you find that we cover political stories for instance because they affect almost everyone. Secondly, it has to be one that can sell the paper (interview with MS/ED1 on 17/01/06).

To establish whose interest the 'important' stories serve, I asked the respondents who the beneficiaries of the important stories are, considering that they are often not appealing to the public and one respondent interestingly said,

Well, like I said earlier, we have our own target audience whom we intend to serve. Those who do not like our stories will read private newspapers who will give them the sensational stories they want. For us, we are public service. Some stories don't have to interest the readers, sometimes they have to be informative or educative (interview with MJ1 on 31/01/06).

These responses are consistent with the argument that content decisions regarding political issues are ideologically motivated by ownership and that often these decisions have no clear relationship to maximise profits. "There have been instances of media organisations sacrificing their economic well-being in deference to political objectives (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996 in Napoli, 1997:211). Given that that the Times of Zambia is owned by the government, it can be argued that most of the decisions regarding political stories are not necessarily for profit maximisation but for political mileage. However, whether news selection is influenced by political or economical factors, or both, it still privileges male more than female news sources. Both political and economic news sources are mainly official sources who are accessed through another naturalised practice, namely news beats.

The news beat as a limiting factor in source selection

When asked about other news routines that influence source selection, most respondents attributed the phenomenon of news beats in news production to the underrepresentation of women in the news. Most respondents, especially the business and the sport news beat reporters, described their beats as "very limiting" and noted that this can "constrain us from covering women" respectively.

In relation to business news, it was argued to be driven by events that promised a better economic climate in the country such as revelations about financial performance of the present government. Such stories were argued to fall under the news value of 'importance' due to their perceived impact on the ordinary citizen. However, the business beat journalist argued that business news sources are mostly male and this compels her to pursue men as sources. Yet, after further probing, the informant admitted that women sources for business news are available but because most of them own small businesses, they do not make 'big

stories'. This suggests business news is about big businesses and powerful corporate organisations.

You know like I said, editors want prominent people in business. Besides, I already have established sources where I go to get news from and my editor does not mind them, so why should I start looking for new ones? (interview with FJ1, 15/01/06).

Additionally, the sports beat reporter denied a bias in her reporting, attributing the unequal coverage to the nature of sports.

I think we have always represented women. For example, when the female national soccer team is playing we cover them the same way we cover the men. But then the problem is we have few women in sports otherwise if we had the same number of female teams as male teams there would be no problem (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06).

After further probing, the informant shifted her position to the issue of saleability again and expressed doubt on whether stories about sportswomen would sell the paper.

But I think we would have a problem, because people are not interested in reading about these new games. In the end, the coverage is not as prominent. You know ladies soccer is new in Zambia so, it is yet to start making headlines. So, yes we would cover them but not in the same way we can cover the men's national soccer team (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06).

In the literature on news production, it was proposed that news beats relate to official routines and that news is about officialdom (Croteau and Hoynes, 2000) thus it requires journalists to follow bureaucratically organised activities. From the responses of all the beat reporters, it was established that some sort of routine is the central feature of all news beats. One respondent covering the crime beat noted that beats limit the diversity of her news sources because she perceived the police and court activities as part of the same topic, as they are produced by the same people all the time. In all the interviews, the beat reporters noted that the availability of all sources is predictable because it is in itself a product of officially organised work within its various beat setting.

I think they [beats] are limited in a way. If I am covering the high court, I even know who my source will be and mostly it will just be sentences, so it limits my work. And like the police, there are very few cases about women there. It is mostly about male criminals and if you have to speak to the spokesperson you find that maybe 90% of them are male. The women will just be covered as the victims of the same criminals. So, when you want to follow up the story and interview the victims, your boss will tell you "you can't get transport to go all the way just to go and interview a rape victim" ((interview with FJ3, 20/01/06).

The above responses confirm Fishman's (1977) argument that news beats limit journalists' work as they tend to build their work around the routines and predictable established

institutions. Further the study found in line with (Goldenberg, 1978), that because official sources at these particular institutions are unlikely to be women, women do not get the attention of beat reporters. However, although it is significant that sports, crime and business are predominantly male oriented sectors, the attitudes of the respondents suggest that they are themselves docile patriarchal subjects who regard their acts as 'common sense' or 'news sense' (Foucault, 1981).

If accessing prominent news sources is argued as a response to time constraints and newsgathering costs, then news beats provide another way in which news organisations limit production costs thereby 'defining the world of possible news' (Fishman, 1980 in McCullagh, 2002: 86). When probed further about their dependence on news beats, in spite of their knowledge about its 'limiting' factor, most respondents alluded to the profit maximisation aspect and noted that news beats are a 'cheaper' way of newsgathering.

You can find that from the beat, you come back with two or more stories. This can help save money which you could have used for transport or phone trying to reach a source who might not even give you the story you need. So, they are economical (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

Two respondents however, proposed that beats would be a valuable way of implementing the gender policy. They argued that the best way to increase women news sources in the news would be by introducing a gender beat which would call for journalists to cover women and women issues everyday.

If we can have specific journalists on a gender beat like we do with crime and courts, it would help. Because you find that apart from politics, most of the times our stories are about crime and courts because there are specific beats in that area. I think it can work for gender as well (interview with MED1, 20/01/06).

Objectivity as 'bias in favour of the powerful'

There were contesting responses from the respondents when asked whether their professional beliefs such as objectivity influence the choice of news sources in relation to gender. Most journalists except one disputed the connection between 'objectivity' and the representation of women. It is worth noting here, that most respondents understood professionalism as being 'objective' and when asked about their sense of objectivity, a majority of them defined it as 'looking at both sides of the story'. The word objectivity was used interchangeably with the word balance by the respondents. One editor for instance said :

To be objective is to write a balanced story, one that has both sides of the story. For example, if the government official says the opposition is weak, I must get a response

from an opposition leader and give both of them equal coverage. That's being objective, it also means being fair (interview with MED2, 27/01/06).

In acknowledging objectivity as a hindrance in the implementation of the gender policy, one respondent noted that 'looking at both sides of the story' compels her to go to the same male sources all the time.

For example, if I am doing an article concerning some allegations. I should get the story from the interviewee and the other party that is being accused. In that way, my story will be balanced. But If I have to get a story like a political story from a man and I would be required to get a reaction to balance up the story, I end up getting a reaction from another man because there are few women who can talk. As result, we get to talk to men all the time (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06).

The respondent also stated that in most cases, stories about allegations are political stories.

Most stories which require 'giving both sides of the story' are political stories. You find this opposition leader accuses the government about this and that....you find yourself having to get a government official to respond or vice versa. So, you can see, you go round in circles interviewing men in the name of balancing the story (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06).

This response concurs with McCullagh (2000) point that objectivity is bias in favour of the powerful in society since organisational demands for 'source credibility' favours the elite groups as news sources.

In contrast to the above response, most respondents argued that their being objective had nothing to do with the lack of female sources and that the idea of seeking a wider representation in the news is not their priority.

I don't think reporters really look at it and say now, in my story let me consider the gender aspect. When they come from an assignment, all they do is ask what do I have in my notes? Then they punch in their story who, what, where..... (interview with MS/ED2, 28/12/05)

Another journalist had similar views.

What I am looking for is not the sex orientation of the story or the victim but I will look at what has happened. You know, the 5 Ws and the H. I am not looking at a woman who has died or the bus that overturnedhow many women died. No. I might not even pay attention to the gender sensitivity of the story.... For me, what is more important, firstly is, is the story newsworthy? Have I written it accurately? Not whether it's gender sensitive or not that's secondary (interview with ED2, 27/01/06).

The above quotations are consistent with the findings of a study done by Lavie and Lebam-Wilzig (2003) which revealed that the starting point for journalists is making news that

prioritises news values and other considerations such as saleability. The study conducted at an Israeli newspaper revealed the difficulty of considering gender in news making and showed that “those who take part in news production think of their occupation as a commitment to the news first and foremost” (Lavie and Lebam-Wilzig, 2003; 11). This suggests that journalists do not see their own construction as naturalised patriarchal subjects as they acquire a ‘common sense’ of news production through training, peer group pressures and newsroom discipline.

News framing - journalists’ ‘common sense’ way of writing

Apart from objectivity, one other issue that most journalists raised in relation to professionalism is the issue of framing news stories by using the inverted pyramid form of news writing, commonly referred to by most respondents as the 5 Ws and an H²⁵. Most respondents attributed the lack of female voices in the news to this form of news writing and argued that their idea of what makes news is centred on the 5 Ws and an H. One respondent noted that this kind of journalistic writing has led to what he termed as ‘personalised journalism’.

Journalists these days don’t even think of stories in terms of issues. They think in terms of the source and once they write about what this person has said, where, when and how then, that’s it. And this brings me to issue-based journalism. We have to go for the issue not the person who is talking about it. If the issue is of utmost importance, it is better to bring in the issue and then the source can come out much later (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

The above quotation is in line with the argument that the characteristic of framing appears to be closely related to stereotyping as it locates framing in the area of ‘common sense’ (Perkins, 1996) and often the kinds of frames that journalists select, are those that have particular ideological significance. These frames, particularly patriarchal ones, (which are the focus of this research) are not highlighted but appear to be natural and obvious ways of writing stories (McCullagh, 2002).

Another journalist highlighted an interesting issue concerning the ‘inverted pyramid’ way of writing which he said disadvantages women at the editorial level. He noted that there are times that he has taken particular interest in getting female sources but the sub editors have ended up ‘chopping’ the story for it to fit the space allocated to it.

²⁵ These include Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

You know, the editors decide what the most important part of the story is and most of the times due to lack of space, they chop some parts of the story and only get what they think is the most important part. So, if you quoted a woman towards the end, her views will be chopped by the sub-editors (interview with MJ2, 12/01/06)

This point brings me to the next sub-section which explores how organisational controls and the role of editors influence the representation of women in the news.

Organisational factors: Intra-organisational controls

The role of news policies in source selection

Apart from the inter-organisational controls discussed earlier, the study established that there are intra-organisational controls such as news policies which influence news production and source selection in particular. It is argued that every news organisation has a policy whether written or not and these policies are often demonstrated in the consistent orientation shown by the paper (Breed, 1987). At the Times of Zambia, the study found that an unwritten policy exists that requires the paper to serve the government of the day as explained by one of the sub-editors in the following quotation.

The editorial policies at the Times of Zambia largely hinges on ownership. So, our editorial policy is such that we have to bring out the positive aspect of what the ruling party and government are doing for the people of Zambia. In this case, we will run developmental news, certain aspects of parliamentary debates, economic achievement that the government has scored and we will look at the positive aspect in all those aspects of society be it agriculture, mining... [Note all these are masculine sectors] (Interview with MS/ED2, 28/12/05)

In the case of the Times of Zambia, it was established that the policy outlined above by one of the sub-editors is adhered to more than the written policies. When asked how this policy influences the representation of women in the news, most respondents reiterated the issue of few female government officials discussed earlier. Moreover, all editors and journalists noted that they conform to this unwritten policy for purposes of attaining personal goals and often to avoid censure.

Consistent with the argument that news policies are learnt during on-the-job socialisation, it was established that policy is acquired through “osmosis” (Breed, 1997; 105) and that journalists are never told about the policy. Rather, they discover and internalise the rights and obligations of their institutions as well as its norms and values. Such on the job socialisation was vividly apparent in the responses I got from both journalists and editors.

Before I joined this organisation, I worked for a private newspaper and the framing of stories in private organisations is different. When I joined this organisation, I was oriented to the 'Times of Zambia way of writing' by my colleagues and sometimes I write a story and when I read it the following day and I find that it has changed, the next time, I will try to write in a similar way so that the story does not have to be heavily edited the next day (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06)

The major reason why journalists follow a particular newspapers' policies it is argued is to avoid punishment or sanctions from the institutional authority. Similarly, for journalists at the Times of Zambia the only editorial policy which the editors are concerned with is the unwritten 'pro-government policy' which requires journalists to align themselves with the proprietor of the company. The journalists disclosed that in a situation where a journalist writes a news story portraying the government in a negative way, s/he is normally summoned and warned by the editors while sometimes, the story is simply trashed.

You can't even begin to think of investigating a corrupt minister, for example, because who is going to publish the story? It is just a waste of time and effort. Besides we don't blame the editors, they also have to save their jobs (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

Most journalists noted that their story treatment is influenced by that of their peers and colleagues and that they are compelled to follow the already existing system of doing things. Asked whether it is possible to change such practices, and here I had in mind gendered practices, almost all the journalists said it can only work if it begins at the editorial level.

The role of the editors in this regard is significant.

The role of editors in news selection

Newsworthiness, as noted in chapter two, is often debated by line editors in the editorial conference, they then come up with a collective decision of what stories qualify to be published as 'news' on that particular day. Therefore, as much as journalists are responsible in implementing the policy, editors bear a much bigger responsibility as they are charged with the duty of enforcing policies in newsrooms. As pointed out earlier, most journalists said they usually select and pursue news stories based on what they think is publishable by the editors. Editors have the final say on what is publishable and thus they have the power to define the news. It is argued that regardless of the source of an idea or a story, journalists write largely for each other, for their editors and their sources for whom they may expect to

read and comment critically on the results (Ellis 2000) and this was acknowledged in the following quotation:

I wouldn't say we are free to select stories because even if I choose a story that I might think deserves to go on page one, it might not see the light of day because the editors decide what should come out. No matter how hard I work. So, most of the times I just do stories that I know will be published. Some stories you can't even begin to think about them because you know you can even lose your job (interview with FJ2 on 20/01/06).

Consistent with this argument, this study found that journalists were more concerned with the reaction of their editors and their sources than they were with the audience. "When your story is spiked, it is very depressing so to avoid that we censor ourselves for fear of losing our jobs" (interview with MJ1, 31/01/06).

If the unwritten 'pro-government' policy is powerful, then the written gender one is toothless. It emerged during the interviews that editors at the Times of Zambia did not take particular interest in enforcing the gender policy, let alone understanding it. Asked whether they were reprimanded in any way for writing a story that does not conform to the gender policy, most journalists disclosed that there was no form of reprimand from the editors. This arguably is one of the major reasons why the policy has been ineffective as most journalists felt that it was the editors' duty to remind them about the policy.

Most of the times when you even know your story was not gender sensitive, it just goes just like that. Unless it is edited by an editor who is very sensitive then it will be changed. Otherwise, most of the time the editors themselves just let it pass like that. I think if it can start with our editors it would make a difference (interview with MJ2, 12/01/06).

The above discussion regarding how newsroom routines and organisational controls shape news, demonstrates the socially constructed nature of news produced in the interaction of the news-making players with one another (Schudson, 1997). Further, it reveals that the journalists' individual judgement is only a small part of what shapes news content (Breed, 1997). Apart from the factors already discussed, it emerged that news selection and treatment at the Times of Zambia is heavily influenced by the journalists' social-cultural and religious beliefs.

Social cultural context and power relations in society

It is essential to understand that news is not a separate force outside the social relations it seeks to report. Rather, it is part of the society in which it operates and the society's social

values are heavily embedded within it (Schudson, 2000). Moreover, Tuchman (1996) argues that media reflect society's broad social values.

I was told, for example, by one journalist that not only are there professional imperatives to guide the selection of news, but sensitivity to societal values becomes the unspoken working rules that are put into consideration during story selection and treatment (interview with FJ2, 20/01/06). The study found that journalists fail to cover gender issues in a 'fair' and 'balanced' manner (as the policy stipulates) because they themselves are the 'willing' subjects of patriarchy.

Firstly there is a backlash because it [the policy] is attacking the status quo and the status quo is always stubborn. It refuses to go even if it is negative and retards development, it wants to remain the way it has been. So, we are facing some resistance from within and outside (interview with MS/ED1, 17/01/06).

As pointed out in chapter one, Zambian society is characterised by deeply-embedded patriarchal cultural values and widespread discrimination against women and this it emerged, influences the choice and treatment of stories at the Times of Zambia. This was acknowledged by one respondent, who noted that,

Journalists are a product of the community. All of us were brought up here in Zambia. So we can not run away from our socialisation. From our childhood to the time we were being recruited as reporters, editors and sub-editors we were carrying that baggage on our backs. And it takes a lot time and education to start shedding off our baggage. This baggage is cultural beliefs and traditional attitudes. Our cultural backgrounds creeps into the way we write the news and it moves further from the point of writing into the selection process (interview with MS/ED1, 17/01/06).

Although most journalists and editors were aware that their selection of news stories and sources is often positioned to enforce patriarchy, most of them said they do not in most instances, deliberately insert their own values in the news. One journalist pointed out that "there is just what I call a natural instinct that makes me select some stories. I don't even consider the sex of the source that I will end up interviewing" (interview with FS/ED, 06/01/06). Another reiterated that:

The way the editors select the news, they don't even realise that they are being influenced by traditional attitudes which they picked up from childhood. Even when they are going out looking for sources they already have particular people in mind because of culture and tradition they believe that women can not speak on particular topics so they will go to straight to the male sources (interview with MS/ED2, 27/12/05).

This suggests that the journalists operate according to a sexist 'common-sense' which has been naturalised. The above quotation was consistent with one female sub-editor's opinion that cultural norms designate men with authority to speak both at a domestic and official level and this influences the non-representation of women in the news.

Naturally we live in a male-dominated world and most of the time we don't even realise that our stories are gender insensitive unless someone comes to point it out to us. It is not only in politics, even at domestic level you find that, if there was robbery at some home, naturally journalists would talk to the husband as he is considered the head of the household (interview with FS/ED, 06/01/06).

So, in spite of their defence of professionalism, and objectivity, a range of responses which revealed that patriarchal cultural norms are deeply entrenched and naturalised were apparent. For instance, one male journalist explicitly said that there are some instances when he has knowingly selected news stories based on his cultural and personal beliefs.

Most of us do it, I have done it before. I go to cover the court beat and I find that the only story there is about a man who has been sentenced for wife battering and I say to myself. I don't believe in that. So why should I cover it? I have been brought up to believe that as a husband, am in charge of my woman. If she has made a mistake, there is no harm of slapping her. I am a traditional man and that will influence me on what kind of stories I would want to cover. I think the problem is that Africa suffers from an identity crisis. Most of the times we borrow ideas often from the West, as a result, we end up copying ideas even when they do not suit well with our culture (interview with MJ1, 15/01/06)

This sexist position reiterates the common-sense discourse that informs his personal and professional practices. As argued within a constructionist position, dominant discourses circulate widely in sections of society and learned at such an early age that they appear not to be constructed (Hall, 1980). Although the above is only one such explicit response from the journalists and editors interviewed in this study, it is an indication of how deeply embedded patriarchal values are among journalists at the Times of Zambia.

Espousal of certain religious beliefs was conflated with traditional beliefs and used to legitimatise patriarchal cultural values that impact on the news at the Times of Zambia. Three of the respondents offered the rationalisation that their Christian beliefs compelled them to portray women in an inferior position to that of men. Asked about his attitude towards the gender policy, one sub-editor said,

I am not really interested in it ...maybe because of my Christian beliefs and African beliefs. On my part, I strongly believe that men and women are different and certain

roles men will fulfil them better than women and visa versa. The Bible for instance, tells us that man was created before a woman and that a woman was created using the man's rib. So how do you expect them to be equal? It is just natural, even in the news; there can never be equal representation of men and women. It is simple, men are the authorities and so they make decisions even in the newsrooms. So I don't think it (gender policy) can work in a Christian or African society in general (interview with MS/ED2, 29/12/06).

One female respondent who argued from a 'Christian point of view' similarly is constituted as a willing patriarchal subject. She implied that, women willingly accept their inferior positions in society and stated that the Christian faith requires that women be loyal and submissive to their husbands which should be extended to all men in general.

I am an Adventist and in my church we don't believe in female preachers for instance. So when it comes to writing a news story about that, I will definitely take a side with the men. I can never even think of going to interview a woman preacher for a story because I am strongly against that because women are not supposed to do some of these jobs. It is just not in order (interview with FS/ED, 02/02/06).

Consistent with the above statement, one male respondent stated that in most cases, female journalists at the Times of Zambia refuse to take up particular assignments which they deem 'masculine' and argue that some assignments are meant for male reporters. The editor argued that this has consequently led him to give some assignments based on the sex of the journalists as some female journalists identify domestic responsibilities as preventing them from carrying out certain duties.

They will tell you that, but I am a woman, how can you send me to cover a riot I am not dressed properly and stuff. Sometimes a female journalist could tell you I can't cover a late assignment because there is no one at home to look after the kids the maid has knocked off.... (Interview with MED1, 20/01/06).

Interestingly, in general conformity to patriarchal practices, only one out of the five female respondents, expressed optimism about the gender policy. Most of them expressed ignorance and lack of interest and felt that the policy was unrealistic and unattainable. They argued that the social-cultural values on which the Zambian society is built sees a man's point of view or argument as being more valid than a women's.

These things are not easy. You see even now, I don't think that the percentage of women in leadership positions represents the percentage of women in the news. The number of women sources is still lower than that of women in leadership position. So I think it is beyond the numbers, it is just how we are, it is historical, it is so much patriarchal and it is annoying but that's just how it is (interview with FS/ED2, 02/02/06).

Other respondents believed that women's inability to speak to the media is related to the patriarchal nature of their family relationships and the social structures of society.

Some social cultural values make it awkward for women to talk to media people. Some may think, if I am seen with a male journalist I am having an affair with him and it will destroy my marriage' (interview with MJ2, 12/01/06)

One male editor blamed women for their absence in the news and accused them of not doing enough to change the prevailing situation.

The problem is that most women are in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and they concentrate much on irrational issues which for me don't make news. Most of the times they are complaining about equality...the government this and that...for me such kinds of stories only get a few paragraphs on page 3 or 4 if they are lucky. Unless they do something really dramatic, if they can refocus on issues that have impact like health issues, economics, then I will promote them to page 1 (interview with MED1, 20/01/06).

One other interesting issue that emerged during the interviews is the presumed lack of support of women by fellow women. Women were generally constituted as backstabbers. When asked whether they think increasing the percentage of women in decision-making positions would improve the number of women voices in the news, one male editor explicitly said,

I don't think so. I have found women to be very jealous of each other so I think it can't work because they don't support each other. Even this gender policy here, it is the men who are even implementing it. In this organisation, it is the editor-in chief (male) who is always talking about gender in the news conferences. I have never found any female employee who is interested in this policy (interview with MED1, 20/01/06).

Another male respondent echoed these sentiments and gave an example of the Zambian women NGO's decision to not to back a female presidential candidate to justify his sexist position.

I will give you an example of the NGOCC²⁶ when Edith Nawakwi²⁷ went through as the party president, these women issued a statement saying that they will not support a presidential candidate based on their sex but on their potential to deliver. They said if they are not convinced that Nawakwi can deliver, they will not support her. You can imagine that. Now, how about me as a journalist, how am I supposed to support Nawakwi when her fellow women don't believe in her? Women just like pulling each other down. When one of them is doing well, you will hear others saying, this one also what does she want on our screens So for me this gender thing is a non-starter (interview with MS/ED2, 28/21/05).

²⁶ Non Governmental Organisation Co-ordinating Committee is an umbrella body of women NGOs in Zambia.

²⁷ Nawakwi is the only female presidential candidate for the 2006 elections

In this quotation, the fact that they were making a rational decision on the ability of the candidate to deliver is overlooked in this construction of gender disloyalty.

It is also worth noting that patriarchal values and generalisations about women were inferred in most of the statements of male respondents in particular during the interviews. The researcher found out that most male respondents for instance, used the pronoun 'he' when referring to a news source, suggesting that they news sources are generally male. On the other hand, one editor repeatedly used the pronoun 'she' when giving examples of journalists' derogatory behaviour. Explaining how difficult it is to change journalists' way of writing, one editor said, "Some of them don't change, you tell them this today, the next day you find she does the same thing" (interview with MED1, 20/01/06). One wonders if this could imply that female journalists are deemed to be more prone to making mistakes or that they are simply untrainable.

As the views of many respondents have demonstrated, this study found that issues of cultural dynamics and newsroom routines have much to do with the neglect of women as appropriate news sources and therefore influence the manner in which women are represented in the news. All the male respondents except for one and two of the four female respondents saw nothing inappropriate with the issue of gender imbalance. They thus made statements such as "Gender is a non-issue" "It's natural, that's who we are" "We can't change it, it is God's will" "We are Africans let's not imitate the West" "Let us deal with real issues like HIV and AIDS and poverty - gender is not a problem".

Conclusion

This study has shown that the gender policy at the Times of Zambia has not had a significant impact on the journalistic practices. The chapter has discussed the major factors responsible for the non-effectiveness of the policy. The major findings include, first that the formulation of the policy was inappropriate to the stated objective of "increasing the number of women news sources by protecting people's right to express themselves regardless of their sex or social status". It established that the policy is informed by the liberal feminist approach and that the problems associated with this particular approach rendered the policy ineffective. Second, the chapter has established that the accepted procedures of news production, which includes conservative newsroom routines and organisational controls, are not very amenable

to change. Lastly it established that societal structures that privilege men over women influence the choice and portrayal of women news sources.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter reflects on the salient issues that emerged from this study that set out to investigate the impact of the gender policy on journalistic practices at the Times of Zambia newspaper. It begins by presenting the main arguments of the various chapters in the study. Then, it provides a recount of the major findings, before finally presenting the recommendations in relation to the gender policy and offering suggestions for further study.

Chapter one provided the general background to the study. It outlined the political context of the media in Zambia in relation to its political background distinguished between three periods, namely from 1906 (when the first newspaper emerged) to 1964, from 1964 to 1991, and from 1991 to present day. It described the operation of the press in Zambia, and in particular the Times of Zambia during three different political systems, namely the colonial one, the post independence one party system, and the current multiparty system. The chapter also provided the context, both global and regional that gave rise to the gender policy, after which it presented a brief description of the structure of the policy and its stated major objectives.

The theoretical framework that underpinned the study is presented in chapter two. It is informed by a Cultural Studies approach to media studies, specifically drawing on the 'circuit of culture' (du Guy et al, 1997) in particular two moments: representation and production. The 'circuit of culture' is consistent with the constructionist approach and the appropriateness of post structural feminism, the position that informs this study, is argued by means of a comparison with other feminist approaches to media.

The second section of the chapter addresses the production moment of the ‘circuit of culture’ particularly in relation to news production. It focuses on how news production is influenced internally by organisational and occupational demands such as news routines, news policies, professionalism, and externally by political and economic realities and how these factors impact on the representation of women and men in the news.

Chapter three outlined the research design and justified the research methods used to investigate the impact of the gender policy on the journalistic practices. Two qualitative methods, namely document analysis and semi-structured in depth interviews are discussed in this chapter. While document analysis was employed to establish the framework that informs the policy, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to probe the practices and perceptions of male and female journalists and editors in relation to the degree of change in gendered representation in the news.

Chapter four presented the findings of the study. This study has shown that the gender policy at the Times of Zambia did not have a significant impact on the journalistic practices. I have argued that this can be attributed to the orientation of the policy within liberal feminist position which fails to consider the internal and external factors that influence the representation of women and men in news production. Further, this position ignores the societal structures and power relations which influence the choice and treatment of news. In what follows I present a recount of the major study findings

The Times of Zambia gender policy – liberal feminist initiative

Through the use of document analysis of the policy, the study identified three major liberal feminist characteristics which link to the policy’s objectives and these include the policy’s concern with media effects, with stereotypical representations of women and with occupational roles. The study therefore concludes that the Times of Zambia gender policy was informed by a liberal feminist position. However, the liberal feminist approach to media critique is argued to have two major weaknesses. First, it fails to take into consideration the factors that influence production of media texts. Second, it neglects to consider the social-cultural context and the imbalanced power relations in society. It was established that these weaknesses were some of the reasons for the inappropriateness of the policy.

Discursive practices of news production render the policy ineffective

As noted in chapter two, the liberal feminist approach is informed by a philosophical position which assumes that femininity and masculinity are inert but equality of opportunity is possible (Macdonald, 1995). It therefore assumes that the media can assist in such equality of opportunities and that media texts can and ought to be objective, balanced and provide a reflection of social reality rather than stereotypical images of women (Tuchman, 1996). However, this study maintains a constructionist approach which argues that various structures, from routine journalism practices to ideology and culture, interacting at all levels, play a fundamental role in shaping the news. Highlighting these complex influences of discourse, economics, politics and organisations, this study demonstrates that the notion of objectivity is in itself a construct. Illustrating the interplay of these factors it argues that news cannot be a mere reflection of reality, but a socially constructed product that produces particular interpretations of reality. A number of newsroom routines both at inter- and intra-organisation levels contribute to the 'masculine nature' of news. At inter-organisational level, the use of news values and news beats were identified as being central in the unequal representation of women in the news, while at intra-organisation level, editorial policies and the role of news editors were found to have a major influence on the gendered treatment of news.

Some respondents viewed the commercial goals of the newspaper as having a crucial influence on the treatment of news and argued that the use of conventional news values facilitates a selection of 'saleable' stories which enable the newspaper to operate profitably. Conversely, this study established that some news values such as prominence and importance privilege male more than female sources thereby rendering the policy's objective of "increasing the number of women news sources" unattainable. It seems likely that if news values did not focus more on elitism, (as occurs in some tabloids) then news would not be so much about male sources.

Similarly, news beats were identified as another hurdle for women's representation because "women and women's issues [are] generally not on news beat [structure]" (Pingree and Hawkins 1978:122). Most respondents argued, consistent with the above quotation, that news beats make it difficult to give a voice to ordinary people including women because they are structured in ways that privilege official sources at particular institutions who are unlikely to be women.

At intra-organisation level, the study established that the unwritten policy that requires the paper to serve the government of the day influenced journalists' choice of public and government officials as their key news sources. However, since women constitute only 12% of such sources, this policy is an obstacle to the implementation of the editorial gender policy.

Additionally, while news editors are charged with this responsibility of ensuring that journalists follow the papers' news policies, this study found that at the Times of Zambia, the only news policy enforced by editors was the unwritten 'pro government' news policy. When the question of the role of editors in implementing the gender policy was raised, most journalists and some editors stated that journalists are not reprimanded in any way for not conforming to the policy. There is consequently no commitment by journalists to the gender policy as most of them revealed that their news treatment responds to "what their editors want".

Social-cultural values and imbalanced power relations in society - a disadvantage to female news sources

When the question of under-representation of women in the news was raised, responses among both journalists and editors pointed to the issue of cultural values and socialisation. The study established that the patriarchal values that characterise Zambian society strongly influence journalists' and editors' treatment of news. If news is a discourse, then news stories are constructed in ways that favour the powerful, who in Zambian society just happen to be men.

Apart from the cultural values that reinforce and naturalise the marginalisation of women, this study also found that espousal of religious beliefs, particularly Christian beliefs with selective reference to Biblical passages, play a major role in legitimatising patriarchal cultural values that impact on the representation of women in the news at the Times of Zambia.

In addition to the above factors, there was a general view among many journalists that women are to blame for their under-representation in the news as they have restrained themselves from speaking in the news and that the few that feature in the news, do so by virtue of their political positions. Some respondents attributed this scenario to social

structures that reinforce 'private sphere' roles of women while others observed that most women lack expertise needed to be in the mainstream news.

The gender policy, while not successful could be considered an early step in the direction of gender justice at the Times of Zambia. Yet, there is need to rethink some aspects of the policy and I would therefore like to make the following recommendations.

Recommendations to the Times of Zambia gender policy

The following are my recommendations to the gender policy at the Times of Zambia

1. To encourage participation of journalists in the review of the policy

The study established that most journalists lack interest and most of them feel detached from the policy. This it emerged, was due to lack of their involvement at formulation stage. Consequently, most of the respondents felt that the policy was being imposed on them. I recommend that during the evaluation and review of the policy, all journalists should be involved and should be asked to give suggestions.

2. To train journalists and editors on the objectives of the policy

Most of the respondents (both editors and journalists) demonstrated ignorance on the objectives of the policy. I suggest that serious training be conducted to create understanding of what gender is and how the media work to naturalise gender relations in society before training them on the expectations of the policy. In particular, editors need to be convinced that the policy is meant to achieve social justice.

3. Reviewing of some routine newsroom practices

As much as I understand that some practices are deeply rooted and have become journalists' 'way of doing things' I suggest that the gender committee at the institution should begin to encourage journalists to diversify their choice of news stories and sources rather than restricting them to politics and business. In other words, issue based journalism should be encouraged.

4. Sensitivity to societal values

Studies including mine, have shown that for gender mainstreaming processes to be effective they need to address the complex realities of people, and be sensitive to the values of communities in their implementation. I therefore recommend that for the implementation of the policy to be successful, the gender committee at the Times of Zambia should work with local people's beliefs and realities, and allow sufficient time for attitudinal change of the Times of Zambia staff.

Areas for future research

Whilst this study obtained important insights about the reasons behind the ineffectiveness on the gender policy at the Times of Zambia, follow-up studies related to newsroom practices might be useful to validate my findings and I therefore suggest that studies could usefully be done in the following areas;

1. Initially, I had set out to conduct a content analysis similar to that conducted by the GMBS to establish if there has been any change in the gendered representations in the news but due to limited scope of the study, I could not. I therefore suggest that a content analysis be repeated to see if there has been any change in the representation of women and men since the GMBS was conducted.
2. This research only investigated source selection from the point of view of the journalists and the editors. It would be useful to do a follow-up study that should include views of the sources themselves as well as the newspaper readers to find out their views about the representation of women in the news.
3. During the interviews, a number of respondents noted that they are more committed to the HIV/AIDS news policy than the gender policy. I therefore suggest that a study be done to investigate the effectiveness the HIV/AIDS policy in comparison to the gender policy. The findings of such a study would help identify gaps in the gender policy and it is very possible that they could serve similar ends.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that news production in general and source selection in particular is greatly influenced by both internal and external factors which lead to unequal gendered representations in the news. These factors make it difficult for the implementation of a news policy such as the Times of Zambia gender policy as most of the news production practices have been naturalised and legitimated. Therefore, the study has revealed that the liberal feminist approaches to gender policies which are mainly concerned with 'images of women' are flawed processes, this is in relation to a more contextualised approach to gender policies which focuses not only on the text but the production and reception processes as well as to the unbalanced power relations in society.

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Appendix 1

To explore the area of significance, I also needed to establish the respondent's attitude towards the gender policy and the following questions were included in the interview schedule.

Knowledge about news policies

What editorial policies are in place at this organisation?

What do you know about editorial policies?

Tell me more about the gender policy. Do you actively support it?

Has it had any impact on your job as journalist?

Tell me, how easy do you think is it to implement a policy such as an editorial gender policy?

The second goal of the study was to investigate how newsroom routine practices impact on the representation of women and men in the news and as discussed in chapter two, these practices include issues of story and source selection, news beats, professional practices and editorial authority. To explore this, I needed to establish the respondents' daily routines the roles they play in relation to selection and treatment of news. Consequently, the following questions were formed:

Newsroom routines and gatekeeping

I would like you to take me through your day as journalist from the time you report for work in the morning up to the time you knock off in relation to working on stories.

To what extent are you free to decide what stories to cover?

When you get a chance to choose a story, what do you consider as an important story and why?

Tell me about what happens in an editorial meeting.

How are decisions made in relation to what stories you cover?

Tell me about your editors, how do their decisions influence your work?

What do you know about news values?

News values and news beats

How do the accepted news values influence coverage of women and men?

Do you think news values privilege men more than women, if so which ones in particular?

What is your sense of news beats?

What particular beat do you cover?

Do you enjoy the beat you have?

How do news beats affect your choice and representation of news sources?

How easy is it to get women sources when covering beats?

Source selection

I have observed that public officials and politicians constitute the biggest number of the news sources covered in your newspaper. Why do you think this is so?

Why do you think is the reason why there are more male than female sources in your newspaper?

When you are selecting a story, what is most important to you, the source or the significance of the story?

Do you think 'fair' and 'balanced' representation of women and men (as stated in the gender policy) is attainable taken into account the news selection process you have outlined to me?

Apart from the adhered newsroom practices, it is noted in chapter two that news production is influenced by profit maximisation strategies and political interference and to establish how these factors impact on the representation of men and women in the news, the following questions were formed;

Political and economic factors to news production

What are the external factors that influence news production in your organisation?

How does ownership of this newspaper influence you work?

How does this affect your decisions get female news sources?

Do you sometimes engage in self censorship for fear of being reprimanded?

Who reprimands you when you write a story that does not conform to the editorial policy?

Tell me about your audience, does it in any way influence the choice of news stories?

What kind of stories do you think your female and male audience is interested in?

Do you think your newspaper currently gives the female and male audience what it wants?

How about advertisers and sponsors, do they influence your choice of stories? How?

As discussed in chapter two, the media operate within a particular culture and are dependent on the cultural symbols of their society and societies tend to impose their classifications of the social, cultural and political world (Hall, 1995:98). It was therefore, necessary to establish how the Zambian societal and cultural values impact on the selection and treatment of news stories thus, the following questions were formulated in this regard.

Social-cultural factors to news production

In traditional culture there are certain assumptions about what kind of work men and women should do. In your opinion, does this influence news selection?

Tell me, do you think your editors take into consideration the gender of journalists when assigning stories?

What kinds of stories are assigned to women journalists?

Why do think that is so?

Do your religious beliefs influence choice of news stories?

Which particular beliefs are those?

As most news organisations charged editors with the responsibility of implementing news policies and general supervision of the newspaper's production as well as deciding what is

going to appear and how it is going to appear in the newspaper I decided to formulate additional questions specifically for them to probe their role in the implementation of the gender policy at the Times of Zambia. The questions included the following;

The role of editors

News has been described as 'masculine', does this make it difficult to advocate for a gender policy?

What problems do you encounter?

How can they be over come or can they?

What role do you play in supporting the policy?

Do you take into consideration the gender of journalists when assigning stories? If yes, why is that so?

What do you do when a journalist writes a story that does not conform to the gender policy?

Out of the many stories that you assign to journalists how do you finally select what should be published?

What criteria you use to rank stories?

